AUGUST

REDBOOK
MAGAZINE

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ROMANCE seems in the very air tonight! There's a moon to inspire unforgettable words, a lovely girl ready to listen. But there's no man to whisper them to Jane!

Too bad someone can't tell her that a girl must be more than pretty—more than smartly dressed to attract a man. Unless she *stays* nice to be near, how can she win his heart—how can a man stay in love?

The shocking thought that she's careless has never entered Jane's pretty head. She bathes each day, of course, before dates, too—shouldn't that be enough? She forgets that a bath's job is to remove *past* perspiration. To prevent risk of *future* odor, so many popular girls rely on *dependable* Mum.

With Mum your bath-freshness lasts for long hours. Mum keeps you a charming companion, helps your chances for romance! You will like Mum for its:

SPEED—30 seconds to use Mum! Even when you're late for business or a date, you still have time for Mum!

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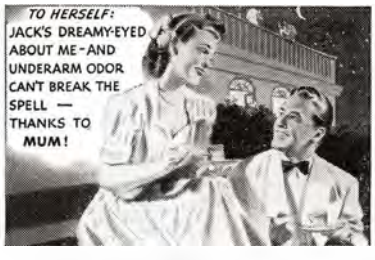
SAFETY—You can use Mum even after underarm shaving, even after you're dressed. Mum won't irritate skin. Mum won't harm fabrics, says the American Institute of Laundering. Guard your charm with Mum!

QUICK, CONVENIENT MUM KEEPS YOU BATH-FRESH FOR HOURS



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Published in this space every month — The greatest star of the screen!

The theatre is now the junction of the Crossroads to Pleasure and Duty.

★ ★ ★ ★

For, with bonds and stamps on sale in all lobbies, you can buy your two tickets—one to Joy, one to Victory.

★ ★ ★ ★

The word "crossroads" throws us into a paragraph or two about Jack Conway. "Crossroads" is this sure-fire director's latest film.

It stars WILLIAM POWELL

and HEDY LAMARR no less.

But more about them anon.

Meanwhile back to JACK CONWAY

Possessing the charm of a music-box and the gallantry of a Walter Raleigh, our hero Conway has worked side by side with this leonine columnist for many years.

★ ★ ★ ★

He has been an M-G-M standby, having directed "Honky Tonk", "Boom Town", "A Yank at Oxford", "Viva Villa" and a whole card-index of hits.

★ ★ ★ ★

"Crossroads" is his latest. And his most different. But it is the same in one sense. It is a hit.

★ ★ ★ ★

William Powell gives a dramatic performance that provides a complete change of pace from his equally brilliant comedy-ness. It is something to see.

★ ★ ★ ★

And Hedy Lamarr is something to see, too. We don't know about you, but Hedy gets *us*. And if she doesn't get you, there are a lot more like us than like you.

★ ★ ★ ★

"Crossroads" is ably abetted by Claire Trevor, Basil Rathbone and Margaret Wycherly. John Kafka and Howard Emmett Rogers wrote the original story; Guy Trosper, the screen play. Edwin Knopf produced.

★ ★ ★ ★

An incident to the drama is a song by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz, entitled "'Til You Return". It's hum but not drum.

—*Leo*

VOL. 79 AUGUST • 1942 No. 4

REDBOOK MAGAZINE

EDWIN BALMER, Editor

Associate Editors, DONALD KENNICOTT *and* VOLDEMAR VETLUGUIN

GERARD MOSLER, *Art Editor*

REDBOOK'S NOVEL OF THE MONTH

REDBOOK'S NOVELETTE OF THE MONTH

REDBOOK'S ENCORE OF THE MONTH

TWO SERIALS

SIX SHORT STORIES

FOUR ARTICLES

WHERE ARE WE GOING? AND WHY?

TEN SPECIAL FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

Cover: Natural-color Photograph by Thill-Patston

The short stories, serials, novel and novelette herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence

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The Redbook Camp and School Directory will be found on pages 106 through 114

"All that . . . and You, Darling . . ."

THIS was the beautiful hour of triumph for a woman who took from life a "double brush-off," as Broadway puts it —*and came back.*

Through the warm dark she could see her name glowing in lights . . . a rising star at 27. Holding her close was the man she loved and was going to marry.

"Darling, darling," she whispered, "It's all too wonderful to be believed! Just think, Jim, only a year ago I was broke and unknown". . . and patting his arm, "and unloved, too."

She never spared herself the truth. Only a year ago Smedley, the producer who was starring her now, left orders that she was not to be admitted to his offices again, "Sure, she may have talent . . . but she's got something else, too!" he said flatly.

And Jim who now held her so tenderly had once publicly declared, after dancing with her, that she was simply impossible. And, like Smedley, he explained why.

Luckily the shocking truth got back to her—and she did something about it.* Later she actually forced herself into Smedley's office and read the part so beautifully that she got it. Then she trapped Jim into a date which showed him that his first estimate of her was wrong . . . that she could be completely desirable.

Two Strikes Against You

Sometimes fate hangs on the thinnest of threads. Habits and personality are weighed against ability.

Make up your mind to one thing, however: if you have halitosis (bad breath)* your good points can be lost sight of before this bad one. And, unfortunately, if you are found guilty only once, you may be under suspicion always.

Any one—you included—might have halitosis at this very moment without realizing it. So you may offend needlessly.

Since you do not know, isn't it just common sense to be always on guard? Why not let Listerine Antiseptic look after your breath? Why not get in the habit of using this amazing antiseptic every night and morning and between business and social appointments at which you wish to appear at your best?

Be At Your Best

Fortunately for you, while sometimes systemic, most cases of bad breath, according to some authorities, are simply due to bacterial fermentation of tiny food particles in the mouth. Listerine quickly halts such fermentation and overcomes the odors which it causes. Your breath becomes sweeter, fresher, purer, less likely to offend.

Always bear in mind that people who get places and go places after they get there are usually the ones who are careful about such things as their breath. Lambert Pharmacal Co., *St. Louis, Mo.*

LISTERINE ANTISEPTIC for oral hygiene

HONESTY
shines forth from a product just as it does from a man. You will find it in
LISTERINE TOOTH PASTE

News About Redbook

Peggy Steele (left) and Helen Riickert (right) are making their début on our cover. The brown-haired Peggy comes from Kansas; and red-headed Helen is a New Yorker. It was windy and chilly the afternoon this cover was taken on the roof of a New York skyscraper, and the girls were all but frozen. So give them a big hand.

A WRITER we know dropped in to see us a few days ago and said: "I don't mind sugar and gas rationing, and I am certainly willing to do my share for victory, but it is plenty tough on my heroes and heroines." How come, we wanted to know. He explained: "Nowadays when I write a young-love story, I have to make sure that my hero is not any too young and not any too healthy. Otherwise my readers will immediately say: 'If the blankety-blank is as good as all that, why isn't he in the Army, Navy or the Air Corps?' My heroine, too, should not waste much time on frivolous pursuits. She's got to be either a member of a women's corps or work for the U.S.O. or something of that sort. And above all things, they should do their lovemaking at home. No more romantic drives. That is to say, not if they are good patriots and don't want to be accused of using bootleg gasoline or wasting rubber."

ALEC WAUGH, whose story "Live For the Moment" will appear in our next issue, is at present in Syria with the British Expeditionary Forces. In a recent letter to his New York agent he had this to say about himself and the hardships of war in the Near East: "At the moment I am not writing anything. I am working much too hard as staff-captain (8:30 to 1:30; 4 to 8:30). It is very much the same work that I was doing in England—administration, supplies, requisitions, etc. It sounds dull, and in London it was dull; but here it manages to be varied and amusing, and it is a new experience for me to be working with French soldiers and officials. And the place itself is everything that I like. The blue Mediterranean with the mountains in the background—and the long dark hair and long-lashed dark eyes. It will be a pretty background one of these days for a REDBOOK story. England is beginning to seem very far away, and America seems correspondingly near. It is very good to feel that we are all in the same boat, and when it is all over, we will all start level

"I wonder how the publishing world in America, and particularly Hollywood, will stand up to this changed existence. Perhaps it will be like England in the last war, when life itself went on, theaters, magazines, business careers, etc., in spite of the tragedies elsewhere. (One of the chief changes about this war, as far as we British are concerned, is that one ceases to think of oneself as a person with personal careers or ambitions.)"

A FEW minutes ago our telephone rang. It was Vincent Sheean; he wanted to tell us that he was about to receive his commission in the Air Corps. Knowing Sheean, we are not surprised. His tremendous knowledge of the various European and Asiatic countries, and his fluent command of several foreign languages will enable him to be of real use in the Air Corps. As most of our readers will remember, it was Sheean's hunch last fall that something was cooking in the Far East.

IN our next issue: "Big Doc's Girl," a complete book-length novel by Mary Medearis, a newcomer of considerable talent who may be hailed as a discovery of the year; a novelette by August Derleth; short stories, articles and special features by Rufus King, Whitfield Cook, Henrietta Ripperger, Harry Hansen, Deems Taylor, John Chapman; and serials by Margaret Ayer Barnes, —author of the Pulitzer Prize winner "Years of Grace,"—and by Peter Paul O'Mara.

AUGUST FASHION CREDITS

The two girls on the cover are wearing dresses from American Spectator.

In "City of Women" the housecoat illustrated comes from Joseph Whitehead.

The suit shown in the illustration for "A Man, a Girl and a Dog" was created by American Spectator, and the snood was designed by Madame Pauline.

The bathing-suits displayed in Mr. Lawson's article are all from Jay Thorpe.

TOMORROW'S EXCITING LITERARY EVENTS ARE IN TODAY'S REDBOOK

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ACTUAL VALUE $3.75

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KINGS ROW

674 Thrilling Pages. A Coast-to-Coast Best-Seller at $2.75!

Over 330,000 Sold—And Now It's America's Smash-Hit Movie!

KINGS ROW—sensational best-seller which strips the masks from an American town! KINGS ROW—the town they talk of in whispers! KINGS ROW—now thrilling millions in the exciting movie, as it thrilled thousands in the original novel at $2.75! Reveals the secret thoughts, suppressed passions, pent-up desires of people in a small town—where everybody THINKS he knows everybody else!

A human face can become a "mask"—hiding love, hate, ambition. But 14-year-old PARRIS MITCHELL took people at face value! He liked affectionate Renee; loved girl-crazy Drake McHugh; trusted Jamie Wakefield, who wrote poems and whom people secretly called "too pretty for a boy."

Cassie Tower, the town's prettiest girl, he thought "strange." She was always kept home by her father, a physician living mysteriously well without patients. But PARRIS feared cold-faced Dr. Gordon, whose patients' hearts were so often found "too weak for chloroform." Once Parris heard (and never forgot) frightful screams from a farmhouse, when Dr. Gordon was there!

"A Powerful and Passionate Book"

Through his sensitive reactions, PARRIS developed the intuition of a born doctor; discovered that each person's protective mask hid a gnawing fear, paralyzing inferiority complex, or cherished vice. And later, as DOCTOR Parris Mitchell (trained as a psychiatrist in Vienna) he stripped off their masks!

How their masks were removed, how tangled lives met in thrilling conflict, is an extraordinary story—gripping in intensity, exciting in action, fascinating in suspense. A truly great novel—packed with Kings Row's passions, loves, hates, hypocrisies, tragedies, comedies and, sometimes, nameless horrors! The N. Y. Times called it "a grand yarn, full of the sap of life." N. Y. Herald Tribune said, "Emotional, powerful, passionate."

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IN ADDITION to KINGS ROW, you ALSO get (for $1.39) this 502-page volume—the greatest works of literature's most daring story-teller! Here, *complete and unexpurgated*, are the frankest stories of their kind! Tales of love, hate, intrigue, passion, madness, jealousy, heroism—plots that will startle you with horror and amazement!

Nearly 100 Stories!

Read of "BALL-OF-FAT," demi-mondaine who alone could save a party of more respectable people in German-occupied France—and what she did. Read FORBIDDEN FRUIT—in which Henrietta, tired of being married, begs her husband to take her out for an evening as he would a mistress!

Would you like more bargains like this? You can—IF YOU WISH TO—get a double-bargain every month! 105,000 people are doing so now; building two libraries (of modern best-sellers and great classics) for only $1.39 a month! But YOU ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION WHATEVER if you accept this offer! YOU MAY JOIN US OR NOT, AS YOU PLEASE. But, in any case, Kings Row and de Maupassant are YOURS, to send back if you wish—OR to keep for ONLY $1.39, if you're delighted with them.

Rachel—who avenged France because of just one German kiss too many!

Examine BOTH BOOKS Free

Send No Money—No Obligation

You don't have to send any money to receive Kings Row and Short Stories of de Maupassant for FREE EXAMINATION. The coupon will bring them at once. Pay nothing to postman. If you LIKE the books, send only $1.39, plus few cents postage and handling costs. Remember, $1.39 for BOTH books! IF NOT ABSOLUTELY PLEASED, RETURN THE BOOKS; PAY NOTHING; BE UNDER NO OBLIGATION WHATEVER. (And there's no further obligation even if you accept the books and pay for them.) We have only a limited supply for this liberal offer. When these are exhausted, offer will not be repeated. Send coupon today!

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My acceptance of this offer does not obligate me in any way to join or to take any books, and no one is to call upon me about it! You may, however, mail me literature so that I may, IF I CHOOSE, join the Book League and be entitled to similar bargains each month.

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REDBOOK'S PICTURE OF THE MONTH

SELECTED BY

John Chapman

Yankee Doodle Dandy

Mary (Joan Leslie) and *George M. Cohan* (James Cagney) give an audition to a theatrical firm in an attempt to sell one of *George's* songs.

"YANKEE DOODLE DANDY," the story of the theatrical career of George M. Cohan, is the best film musical your correspondent ever saw—and one of the finest pictures in any category. There are many angles to its excellence, but topping them all is its perfectly timed patriotic wallop. Being the tale of a noted flag-waver, it waves the flag, and its stunning sequence of the birth and first performance of "Over There" may well make that song the marching melody of this war, as it was in the old. The picture's Americanism is never cheap, because it is always honest, and your pride in your country will get another boost when you see, at the conclusion, President Franklin D. Roosevelt giving the Congressional Medal of Honor to a song-and-dance man who happened to have been born on the Fourth of July.

Warner Brothers, who have specialized in biographical films, made a splendid American picture in "Sergeant York," and for it Gary Cooper won the 1941 REDBOOK Award and later the 1941 Academy Award. James Cagney may well win this year's award for his portrayal of George M. Cohan. It is Jim's finest bit of work, and vaults him into a new position as an actor. He is out of his groove, and no longer will he have to be content with playing himself—his likable, two-fisted, highly successful self—in wood-pulp melodramas fashioned to fit him.

Cagney's impersonation of Cohan is a miracle of good judgment, for it is not too slavish in detail. The make-up department wisely left him looking like Cagney instead of trying to make him look like George M. with a rubber face. But Jim moves and talks and thinks like Cohan, waggling his finger, nodding his head, speaking from the corner of the mouth a little—but not too much. And his dancing really *is* Cohan to perfection; it will bring fond tears to those who have followed George M. through at least part of his long, great career—and its authority will impress others who, because of youth or geography, never had a chance to see the Yankee Doodle Boy.

It takes more than a star's performance to make a good picture; it takes excellence in all departments, and "Yankee Doodle Dandy" has it. The scoring, singing and routining of the many songs and production numbers are as admirably professional a job as Hollywood has ever done; the sets and costuming make almost a "documentary" on backstage life; the scenario is absorbing, and equally deft whether it is presenting a fact or evading one; and the whole cast matches Cagney's pace.

The film is a biography of Cohan's public life, rather than his private one—a cavalcade of song and show. For dramatic convenience and because George M. wanted *(Please turn to page 8)*

Now - Such a thrilling difference in your hair

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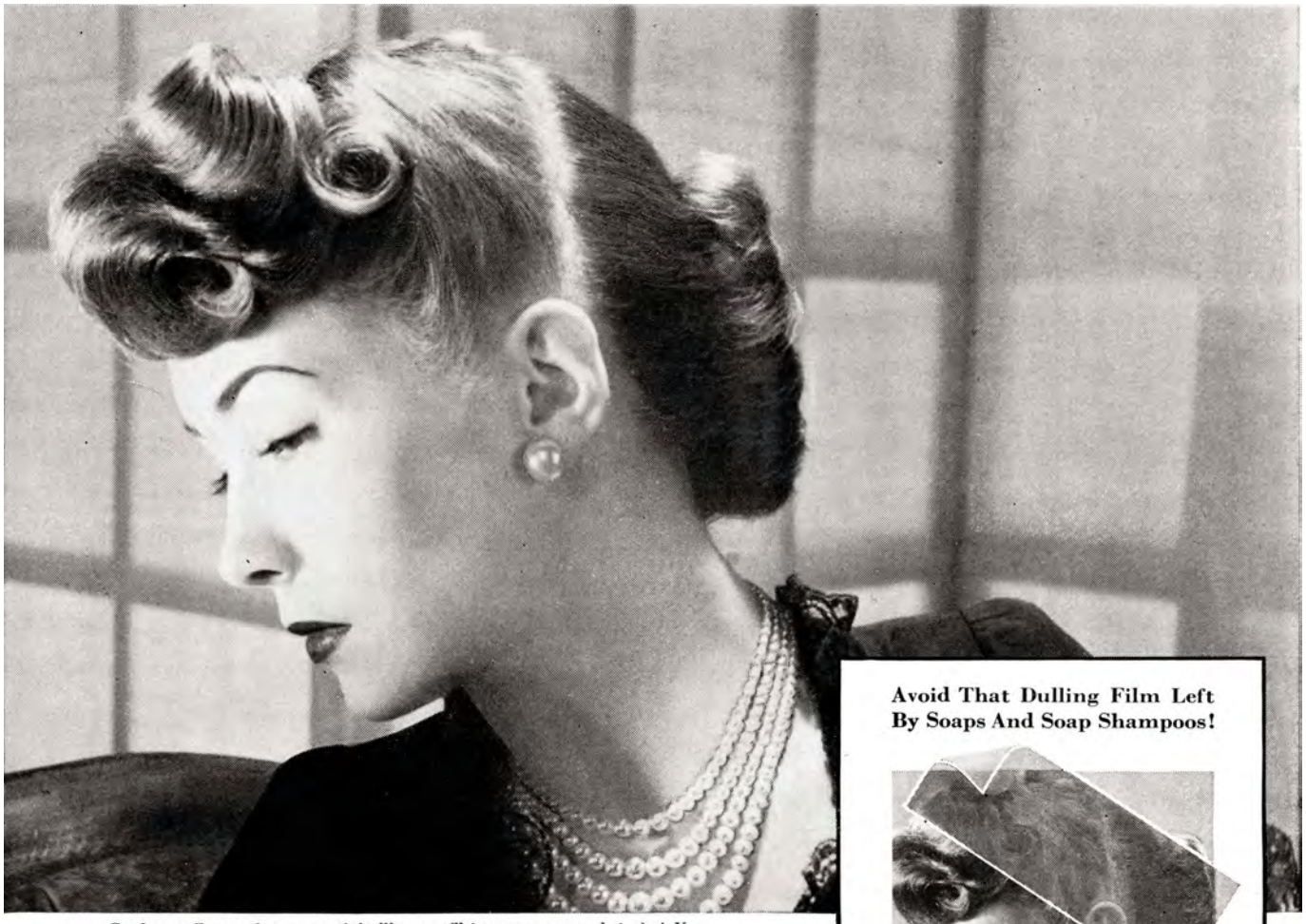

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Amazing results due to hair conditioner now in wonderful, new improved Special Drene Shampoo! Leaves hair lovelier, far easier to arrange!

The minute you look in your mirror you'll see the difference . . . after your first shampoo with new, improved Special Drene! You'll be amazed at how much silkier and smoother your hair looks and feels . . . because of that wonderful hair conditioner now in Special Drene. And you'll be delighted, too, when you discover how much better your hair behaves, right after shampooing!

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So, for extra beauty benefits, plus quick and thorough removal of flaky dandruff, insist on Special Drene. Or ask for a professional Drene shampoo at your beauty shop.

Guaranteed by Good Housekeeping — If Defective or Not As Advertised Therein — Replacement or a Refund of Money

Trade Mark Reg U. S. Pat. Off.

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Avoid That Dulling Film Left By Soaps And Soap Shampoos!

Don't rob your hair of glamour by using soaps or liquid soap shampoos—which always leave a dulling film that dims the natural lustre and color brilliance! Use Drene—the beauty shampoo which *never* leaves a clouding film. *Instead, Drene reveals up to 33% more lustre!* Remember, too, that Special Drene now has hair conditioner in it, so it leaves hair far silkier, smoother right after shampooing!

Special DRENE Shampoo with HAIR CONDITIONER added

REDBOOK'S PICTURE OF THE MONTH (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

it that way, his two wives—Ethel Levey and Agnes Nolan—have become a fictional girl named *Mary*. I don't think anybody will quarrel with this substitution.

IT has been a well-kept secret that President Roosevelt is impersonated in the picture—doubly so, in fact. The opening scene is of *Cohan* backstage after a performance of the musical, "I'd Rather Be Right," politico-musical satire of 1937, in which he impersonated F.D.R. He gets a summons from the White House, where he goes, fearing that the *President* may be upset at the lampoon. The *President* —well played and uncannily well spoken by an actor the studio declined to identify in advance of the picture's release—asks *George* to tell about himself.

The rest, then, is a flashback. . . .

It begins in Providence, R. I., on July 4, 1878. Irish *Jerry Cohan* (played for keeps by Walter Huston) finishes a song-and-dance turn in a vaudeville theater, and dashes for the hotel in which his wife has been expecting a baby. When his way is blocked by a parade, he persuades the driver of a gun-carriage to give him a lift and break out of line. Handing *Jerry* a small American flag such as everybody carried in July Fourth parades those days, the driver makes the dash and enables *Cohan* to greet his new son between shows. The doctor suggests that the lad be named George Washington, on account of the holiday; but *Mrs. Cohan* (Rosemary de Camp) says it might be too long for billboards. The parents settle on the Irish middle name of *Michael*, and *Jerry* puts his flag in the baby's fist. The flag stays in that fist for many years.

Jerry Cohan (Walter Huston), *George M. as a boy* (Douglas Croft), and *Nellie Cohan* (Rosemary de Camp).

After *George* comes *Sister Josie*, and it is not many years before there are four *Cohans* in show business—*Jerry* and *Nellie*, and a little boy who hoofs and plays a squeaky violin, and a little girl billed as "the youngest skirt-dancer."

George M., telling of those times at the White House, says: "They kept putting new stars in the flag, and the Cohans kept rushing out to meet them." They roamed the country, playing vaudeville, playing in a traveling Daniel Boone show, getting stranded, hoping for the Big Time in New York.

Little *Georgie* made his first hit when he was about thirteen in Brooklyn, in the title rôle of "Peck's Bad Boy." And he was *Peck's Bad Boy*—insufferably cocky, an unsquelchable show-off. In the picture his brassiness loses the family a booking in the Big Time with *E. F. Albee*, and once again there are long hard years on the road.

CUT, now, to a time when *George M.* is a young man, and the *Cohans* are in Buffalo, and *George* in a Bernard Shaw beard is playing his mother's father in a dramatic sketch. Afterward a young girl comes backstage to ask the seemingly venerable actor's advice about seeking a stage career on Broadway. She's a girl named *Mary* (excellently played by Joan Leslie) and she's the one who ultimately becomes *George's* wife. . . .

Up to here, the film has been mostly story and the establishment of characters, but from now on it is pure show business. It builds carefully and interestingly; then it lets go—wham!—with the best-timed and best-photographed musical production number I've ever seen on a screen up to this point. *Cohan* has had his struggles: the family have had long lay-offs because cocky *George M.* has literally been blacklisted, and he can get no one to buy his scripts and songs. *(Please turn to page 68)*

THEY WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED

This striking photograph of General Douglas MacArthur was taken in the Philippines. It shows the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Nations in the Southwestern Pacific in a characteristic pose.

Do you recognize the gentleman above? He is Sergeant Alvin York, the greatest individual hero of World War I, as he looked on the day he answered the fourth draft last April.

DEBUNKERS and left-wing historians to the contrary notwithstanding, individual heroes and outstanding acts of personal courage do play a tremendous part in wars. Even the Soviet communiqués spare no words in describing deeds of company and squad commanders, machine-gunners, tank-operators, pilots and such. The second World War may have been an almost anonymous one in its earlier stages, but by now the world is aware of its outstanding military leaders. Timoshenko, a name that was a tongue-twister only a year ago, has become almost a household word. In our own case, we are fortunate to have had a generous quota of heroes whose names are on everybody's lips.

It is impossible to estimate how much we owe to General Douglas MacArthur, not only for the miracles he performed in the Philippines, but for the tremendous uplift he has given to our morale. This business of being a hero is not a new one for MacArthur. When he became a brigadier general at the age of thirty-eight,—one of the youngest men to be given that rank in the American Army,—he was already almost a legend. His performance in the battle of the Argonne, where he commanded a division, was an inspiration for all the Allied armies. People who knew him then fully expected that when another emergency arose he would give, to use Winston Churchill's words, "a good account of himself."

It is interesting that the same year which saw MacArthur become a general, saw another American, a former conscientious objector, perform a feat which left war correspondents speechless. The man was Sergeant Alvin York of Tennessee. Single-handed he captured 132 Germans. Twenty-four years later, almost at the very moment MacArthur assumed supreme command of the Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific, Sergeant York, no longer a conscientious objector, again answered the call of his country.

General MacArthur as he looked twenty-five years ago while in command of a division in France. He was made General at thirty-eight.

He does not look like Gary Cooper who portrayed his part in "SergeantYork"; nevertheless, here is Sergeant Alvin York as he looked in 1918.

You Don't Need Water to

SWIMMING is easy. You needn't be strong; you needn't have "wind;" you needn't be built in any particular fashion. If you can walk, you can swim. Yet six people out of ten who go to the seaside in summer suffer from a peculiar feeling of helplessness. They imagine that they cannot swim, and so they lose one of life's greatest pleasures—pleasures and best possible exercises. No other exercise can surpass swimming as a body-builder. It keeps the back straight, the stomach in, the chest out, the chin up. It develops the entire body symmetrically without overdeveloping any part of it. It is not an accident that some of the loveliest girls in America are excellent swimmers. Neither is it an accident that some of the world's most dynamic personalities are swimmers. When I

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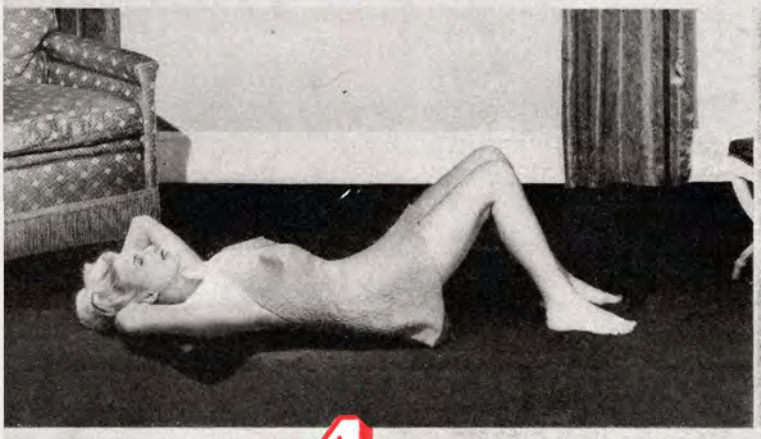

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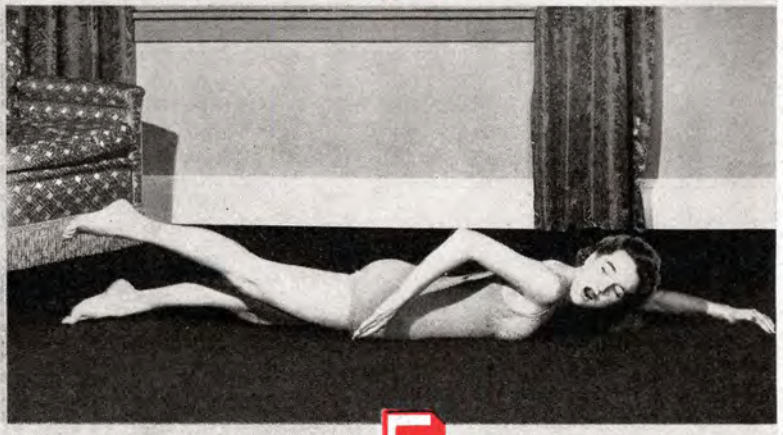

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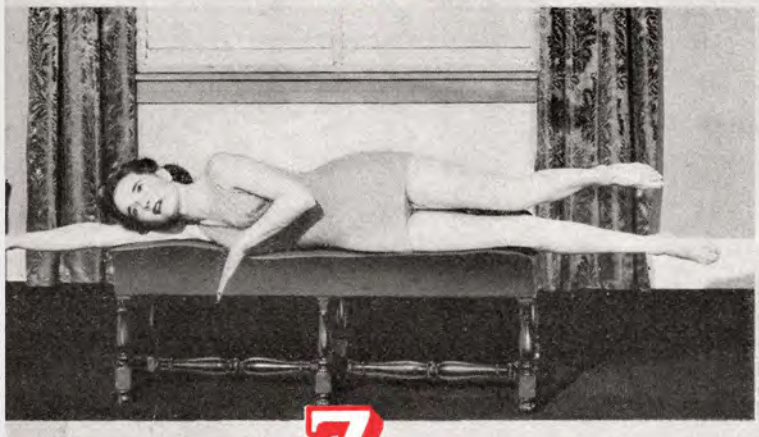

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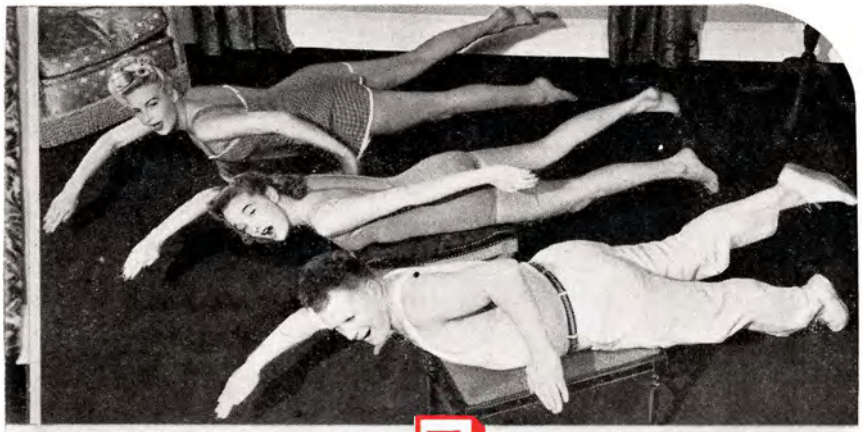
Learn to Swim

by Victor E. Lawson

SWIMMING COACH of WINSTON CHURCHILL and the DUKE of WINDSOR

worked as swimming-instructor at the Mayfair Club in London, I would see, almost every afternoon, Winston Churchill dashing in with the same greeting: "Fifteen minutes, Victor, not another second."

And now I am going to teach you to swim. You needn't even get your feet wet. Try it in your bedroom. Just look at the nine photographs on these two pages; then follow the nine instructions.



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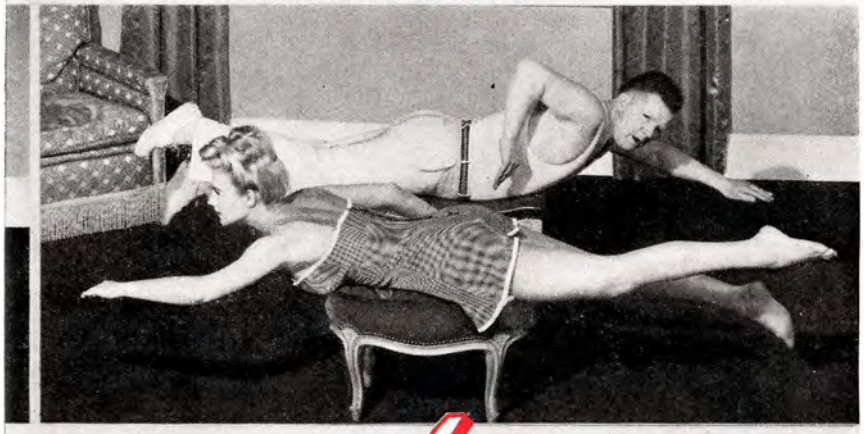

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1 Coach Lawson shows his pupils a simple exercise all must do in order to become good swimmers. Lie down on the floor and relax on your stomach; then straighten, with back arched and head held as high as possible. Hold that "spine-straightener" position ten seconds, relax. Repeat four times daily.

2 A front view of the American Crawl as featured at home. Place a bench or backless chair in the middle of the room. Put a cushion on it. Balance yourself on the cushion and raise arms and legs, leaving them free, supporting yourself on your stomach. Extend your right arm forward on a line with your right shoulder, palm down. Then pull your hand back until it reaches the hip, bending your elbow slightly toward the end of the stroke. The left hand repeats the performance.

3 Full speed ahead with all aboard. A full-length picture of the Crawl, showing legs beating up and down, "pigeon-toed," and arms reaching alternately forward and backward to the hip.

4 English Floating Position: When tired, either at home, or in the water, simply turn over on your back, and with knees up, and arms resting under the head, just relax utterly. Three minutes every day after your dry swim.

5 Pupil Peggy Tippett plows along at a rare speed, turning her head to gulp in a breath of air. In swimming you need plenty of *air-conditioning*.

6 Pupil Choo-Choo Johnson is watching, through a mirror, Mr. Lawson's feet thresh, while he admires her straight legs moving from the waist up and down, like corn in a wind.

7 The reliable old Side Stroke with its "scissors" motion of the legs — so called because it clips sideways and back again—just like the family scissors. Straight under arm is extended past the head, scooped down and brought back to the hip, just as the other arm, elbow bent, starts from the chest, sliding up the body until it reaches the head. Practice the arms alone until proficient, then the legs. Now try the two together, moving legs and arms alternately.

8 American Back Crawl: Actually the pupil is featuring a combination of floating and American Crawl. A backward motion of each arm past the head, sideways to the body and down to the hip. Each arm moves backward, alternately. An easy loose motion of the legs up and down with a bend at the knee. This stroke will give you a perfect posture.

9 Breathing at home for the Crawl, in a *basin* of water. Place a washbasin full of water on a table. Take a good gulp of life-giving oxygen sideways, as per illustration, then close your mouth instantly, turn your head and duck your face into the basin of water, expelling the air through the nose. Have some fun by placing a mirror at the bottom, and by opening your eyes, you can see the bubbles caused by expelling the air. This will wash the eyes, too.

And now that you have followed the above instructions, there is little more that can be told about swimming; it is up to you now to put into practice what you have just learned.

Matson ships ARE GRAY NOW

THE graceful LURLINE, MARIPOSA, MONTEREY, and MATSONIA were more beautiful in their peace-white. But war cares nothing about beauty. And the Nation's war-mood has no time for it. Levity and leisure are only memories.

Now, only grim determination to win this war counts . . . and every American, in some kind of uniform, bespeaking that determination. So . . . MATSON *ships are gray now.* Gray, for their part in our common struggle.

To have any part in our country's fight is a privilege! To have such an important part is an inspiration. Proudly, our flotilla of freighters and our passenger liners are serving our country. *Ships, ready when our country needed them, because we started at our job 63 years ago.*

MATSON men . . . on our fleet of freighters . . . on our passenger liners . . . are weaving lifelines to the battlefronts. Resolute men, asea and ashore, joined together with patriotism. Experience, determination and courage, deep-grooved, webbed and worn into their faces. Men charged with enormous responsibilities and consecrated to them.

In this opportunity and performance, MATSON has placed its faith and pride.

Matson Line TO Hawaii · NEW ZEALAND · AUSTRALIA VIA SAMOA · FIJI

SHIPS FOR VICTORY

Navy Wives

CIVILIANS, give us a break! Who are we? We are the family who moved into the little furnished house down the block last week, and as yet you've seen no husband. We may live here a month or two before you do see him, because we are Navy Wives. Not officers' wives—just the wives of enlisted men.

This is a new community for us, perhaps even an entirely new section of the country, and we don't know a single person in town. We have moved into your neighborhood, and we want to be friendly. After we have become sufficiently acquainted, we want to run into your house for a cup of coffee once in a while, and we'd like very much to have you come to ours for hot rolls or some of our famous banana bread.

Granted that we looked like gypsies when we arrived—the children were dirty and cross from the long train-ride, and the baggage did look as if it came from a junk-pile; but if you will just make a visit or two after we are settled, you might find us to be quite a normal family.

You ask what we want of you. All we want is to be part of the community, because the neighborhood in which we live becomes, however briefly, our neighborhood too. Our children go to the same schools, churches, playgrounds that your children attend, and yet we seem to be a race apart.

Can it be our broader viewpoint to which you object? How could we live in eight or ten different sections of this country without developing a more tolerant outlook? Could it be that our excessive leisure time makes you feel that we're indolent? The answer to that is, that having no husband at home each night as you have, a large amount of our daily work is done at night to fill empty hours. Or could the largest issue be that our husbandless state makes you suspicious of our virtue? We'd be foolish to deny that some of these "shadowy sisters" exist among us; but if you happened to see a telephone operator or waitress out with someone who quite evidently was not her husband, would you immediately jump to the conclusion that all telephone operators and waitresses are alike?

Most of us stay at home and mind our own business. We take care of our children, write cheerful letters to our husbands (whether or not we feel cheerful), knit and crochet, wash and sew. We sound human, don't we? Then why not give us the chance to be the neighbors we want to be? All we ask is an even break. Who knows—you might even like us!

Rhode Island.

Brotherhood—a Law of Life

YOU'D almost think that a person exempted by law from military service would have no worries at all in this present emergency. But on the contrary, there rests upon us who are so excused a greater responsibility than upon the majority of people.

I am a young minister. I fall well within the draft age; and had I been in any other profession, I should have long since been serving in the army. At first I was rather provoked that clergymen were put into a separate class. I felt that it was "taking the wind out of our sails," setting us apart as different from other men, and making our ministry a mere useless appendage to the lives of our people.

Gradually, however, it has dawned upon me that my first reaction was wrong. I believe that the church has a part, so tremendous, to play in this present crisis, that it needs leadership as never before. Let me make a confession: I entered the ministry with some hesitation. I was not exactly sure that the church was worth saving. It had become so settled in its ways, so much the mouthpiece of the *status quo* that I doubted if it could ever really do much to better the condition of men here and now. The church could no longer appeal to youth; it could not capture their imagination. It had become the place where a few old faithful members came to get hope of some reward in a future life.

But with a shocking suddenness, the war has changed all that. The church has been forced to stop in its easy-going path and ask itself in all seriousness if it is worth saving in a time like this. People are being bombarded with appeals for money now. Can the church honestly demand that people keep her alive? Such questions as these have hounded me, and made me rethink my whole idea of the value of the church. Today I can say without any hesitation that I believe in the church more strongly than ever. I said that the church has a tremendous part to play in this conflict, and it has. It is not the part that some might assign. The church must not become a recruiting station nor a war-bond station. It must not deal in hatreds or atrocity stories. This would only bring it shame and degradation when the war is over.

Let me try to state what I believe the church must do now. The church must act as a balance-wheel for the lives of the people. Parents are sending their boys to camp; boys are entering into a new kind of environment; men and women are working in war industries which heavily tax their nervous systems; family life is being thrown out of joint; people are living, day after day, on the breaking edge. Let the church, then, try to put into people's lives some measure of normality, of calmness and of assurance. Let it concern itself with those things which are permanent, so that people may seize upon those things as guides for their hectic lives.

But even such a task is not enough. The church must have a more positive approach to men's problems. For two thousand years now, we have been talking about the brotherhood of man. We've talked about it so much that it has become encrusted with a film of familiarity. We think of it as a beautiful ideal, but utterly impractical. But the war proves this above all else: the brotherhood of man is not only an ideal; it is a law of life. Mankind is heading for utter chaos unless *(Please turn to page 105)*

On this page we publish short contributions from our readers, dealing with personal problems affecting many of us in these perplexing days—simple statements of what's on your mind. We pay one hundred dollars for each accepted contribution. All contributions become the property of the McCall Corporation, and none can be returned. Address: What's on Your Mind, Redbook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York City.

MARGERY'S

The love story of a puritan wife

By

MARGARET AYER BARNES

who wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "YEARS OF GRACE"

MARGERY DARIAN loved the look of her kitchen. Small, spotless and bright it was, with shining white paint, and blue-and-white linoleum, and a little white stove with the new "table top." Jerry'd bought that stove when he rented the apartment, two years before, at the time of their marriage. He had said the old black one wouldn't do for a bride. Because it was black, he'd explained upon inquiry, with the whimsical twinkle that Margery loved. She'd told him indulgently he was much too extravagant. Very young brides are apt to be indulgent. But an instinct for economy was bred in her bones, for she was from New England, a daughter of Maine. She had always been impressed by her husband's improvidence. They'd argued about it the first night they met.

Margery often thought of that night, recalling romantically the scene of their meeting, a small Italian restaurant in the depths of Greenwich Village. At that time she'd lived in New York just a year. She was dining with two girls who worked in the publishing house where she was employed as a reader of manuscripts. The picturesque quality of the dusky café, the foreign flavor of its food and the vivacity of its Verdi had struck her as very amusing and gay. It seemed strange now to think that if they'd picked another restaurant, or if she'd dined with other friends, or if Jerry had not been there, in all probability she would never have met him. On such trivial coincidences her happiness hung. But there he was, providentially, alone at a table, and one of the girls had happened to know him. He had smiled and waved promptly and come over to their corner. Then he'd been introduced and asked to sit down.

"Are you having spaghetti?" he'd inquired immediately, his elbows informally on the red-and-white tablecloth and his handsome face glowing in the guttering candlelight; and added: "I'll order a bottle of Chianti." He had ordered three bottles before the evening was over, and even insisted that they all have some brandy.

Margery had liked the taste of the wine and the look of the straw-covered bottles that held it. But the brandy was, literally, her first drink of hard liquor. She had eyed her small glass doubtfully, thinking of her father, and specifically, absurdly, of his humorous eyebrow. How quizzically he would raise it, not quite approving, if he could see her sitting there with that glass in her hand. "Lay off hard liquor, young lady," he'd said. "It gets girls into trouble." That was when she left home for her job in New York. It was with a sense of actual guilt she'd raised the glass to her lips. But after one sip she'd set it down hastily. That wasn't the trouble, she knew instantly, she'd get into. The brandy tasted bitter, medicinal, fiery. She found herself wondering why men took to drink. Women too—even girls. It seemed incomprehensible.

But no one drank too much at that pleasant little party—or if Jerry did, it wasn't apparent; and the fact he could give three girls such a good time was the proof of his incontrovertible charm. The evening had ended with his calling a taxi and taking Margery home luxuriously, after dropping the other two girls at their apartment. That was the moment she first referred to his improvidence.

"We could have taken a bus," she said, smiling. "I always ride on buses."

He laughed. "I never do."

And all that wine, she thought, to say nothing of the brandy. It must be admitted that Margery was provincial. Moreover, she was living on such a small budget that it had never occurred to her to glance at a wine-card. It was "out of the question," she'd have said philosophically. That was a phrase you heard so often in Maine.

MARRIAGE

and of a spendthrift husband.

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM REUSSWIG

"She's been pretty lonely. . . . You know that the baby's put a crimp into our style."
"Don't you like to have the baby?" she cried.

"You can have lots of fun in a place like New York, without spending much money," she saw fit to observe.

He had said he'd bet you couldn't, there or anywhere else, and she'd promptly reminded him of the free days in art galleries.

"Do you call art fun?" he'd asked with a grin.

Why, yes, she did; but that wasn't all. At the very best concerts you could get a cheap seat. She'd seen marvelous plays from the balcony rail; and had Jerry, she wondered, ever ridden on a ferryboat? Just for pleasure, she meant, to explore the sparkling harbor? Or taken the excursion boat around Manhattan Island? As for the buses, she simply loved to ride on them, on warm summer evenings, up Riverside Drive. If you had an early supper, you could always catch the sunset. It flamed for you over the hills of New Jersey and the river reflected the incandescent clouds. He had laughed at all this, and they'd had their little argument. But it only increased their sense of sudden intimacy, of exciting proximity in the seclusion of the taxi. He'd continued to be charming; he had talked of other evenings. Back in her boarding-house, she knew she had been charmed.

That was the beginning of so much enjoyment. His courtship had been lavish, wasteful—and flattering. But she very often wondered why he'd fallen in love with her. "Fantastic little Puritan." he'd called her at the time. Her intelligent gray eyes, with their disarming honesty, had clouded as he spoke with artless perplexity. He had never met a girl so adorably innocent. Everything about her was simple and straightforward: candid gaze, sweet mouth and country-pink cheeks, even her hair, light brown, straight and fine, brushed back from her forehead to a knot on her neck struck a note that seemed to accent the absence of artifice.

His own marked good looks had a quality of boyishness and he did not seem his age, which was then twenty-six. Margery, though she was four years his junior, often felt old and wise in his company. It was his constant gayety that first won her heart. Jerry could be gay even when he was dead broke, a state of affairs that occurred periodically. He was a bond boy in an office on Wall Street, and lived with his mother in a suburb on Long Island. As he had no expenses to speak of, his money disappeared in pursuit of entertainment. This was so foreign to Margery's philosophy that she ventured to remonstrate, once they were engaged.

"Old Sobersides," he had said, with his light-hearted smile, "have you the optimism to think you can reform me?"

IF she'd thought that, she thought it no longer. Two years of marriage had convinced her of the contrary. But she'd never ceased to love him, and he'd made her very happy. Especially happy since the baby had come. For little Jerry Junior seemed to justify extravagance.

"It's so awfully important he should have the right surroundings," she had said to Jerry Senior, when their son was no more than a bundle of afghans. He had laughed at her of course, for he was always laughing, and she'd explained further: "I mean, this apartment was sort of expensive for us two alone, but now it seems right that the baby should have it —doesn't it?" she added, in search of reassurance.

"Sure it does," he'd said. But she was well aware that he did not understand the relief it had been to her to feel that Jerry Junior, by merely existing, had made it seem right to spend so much money. The rent that they paid had always troubled her conscience. The apartment was situated on Washington Square. It formed the top floor of an old red brick house, made over into flats by an absentee owner. Margery loved the picturesque neighborhood and the memories it held of an earlier New York. They had five sunny rooms, high ceilings, open fireplaces, and Jerry'd had every room papered and painted. If only it were easier to make both ends meet!

She was thinking these thoughts one pleasant April evening—for financial anxiety was never far from her mind—while she waited in the kitchen for the after-dinner coffee to materialize, as it did without touch of human agency, in the new electric affair that Jerry had just bought. This novel little gadget, bright with glass and chromium plate, had caught his roving eye in the window of the skyscraper where he went to pay their light bill. He was paying the bill, which had run for four months, because the company had threatened to cut off the current. But nevertheless, having settled the account, Jerry's thoughts had turned promptly to further expenditure. The tricky little gadget had seemed the perfect present to bring home to his wife, as proof positive that his credit was happily restored. It made very good coffee, but no better than Margery had made in her percolator—or than her mother had made in a coffee-pot, with no trick to help her but the shell of an egg.

This evening she hoped it would be irreproachable, for Jerry's mother had dined with them and was sitting with her son at that moment in the living-room, waiting for Margery to bring in the coffee-tray in the style to which Jerry had always been accustomed. Whenever her mother-in-law came to the apartment, Margery wanted to have everything especially nice. She wanted his mother to know that she was a good housekeeper, and that Jerry was comfortable and that they were happy. It had been a good dinner, she thought with a smile, and glanced with satisfaction around her tidy kitchen. On the sill of the window that looked over city roofs she kept pruned and blooming two pots of geraniums, whose bright scarlet flowers always made her think of Maine.

There, in her father's house, the kitchen had been the center of life, just as his study was the center of learning. A professor of English in one of the good colleges of New England, he had spent the better part of his time in that study, but the kitchen was her mother's unchallenged domain. Sometimes with "help" and often without it—for you couldn't always count on engaging farmers' daughters—she had cooked, cleaned and sewed there for her husband and child. In the small-paned south window, all winter long, the potted geraniums had flowered and flourished, and from the creaking rocking-chair by the table with the darning-basket, you looked out through their red flowers at the drifts of spotless snow.

Margery's geraniums, in the pale city sunshine, would never grow tall like that. But their presence on the window-sill recalled that other kitchen, the kitchen of her childhood, and her father and her mother. Sometimes it seemed to her that they must still be living there, that the shocking motor accident had never occurred. They'd been motoring to the railroad station—it was only last December —to take the train to New York to spend Christmas near Margery. A truck had come thundering around a hidden corner. It had happened in an instant, a skid and a crash— Margery closed her eyes as she thought of it. Now she had only Jerry and the baby—and of course Jerry's mother, who had tried to be kind.

Yet she still felt sustained by her parents' solicitude. This had little to do with a concrete belief in personal immortality —though she wanted to believe in that and sometimes succeeded—and less with the provision they had made for her future. That provision was modest, consisting of her father's life-insurance policy for five thousand dollars, which Jerry had invested in Government bonds. She always liked to think that this little nest-egg was going to be spent on Jerry Junior's education. That would have met with her father's approval. She wished he could have known that he would educate his grandson. She was always very conscious of how he would feel—and of course her mother too—about everything she did. That was the sense in which their solicitude continued to sustain her. She had a conviction they would always understand. Understand perhaps best the thoughts and the sentiments that Jerry, quite frankly, found incomprehensible. Take, for instance, this matter of suing the truck-company, of collecting compensation for the tragic crash. She had tried to explain why this action distressed her.

"Compensation?" she had said. "But there *is* no compensation. Money can't pay me for the loss of my parents. If I sue for it and take it, it's as if I thought it could. Don't you see that it's putting a price on their death?"

But Jerry was determined that she must go through with it. He had hired a lawyer, brought her papers to sign. "You have to be practical, darling," he'd said. And when she'd asked, "Why?" he had only assured her that the case would take months to come up in court. "You'll feel differently then," he had said, with easy optimism. But this hadn't convinced her that she would. "They'll probably settle," he had added consolingly. What difference would settlement make in her feeling?

She was wondering whether, if the money were offered, she could then and there refuse it, regardless of Jerry, when the water bubbled up through the coffee grounds and miraculously descended, a small cataract of coffee, to the lower glass receptacle that was waiting to receive it. Margery filled the three cups on her tray. That was the answer, she thought as she did so, the answer to grief—to have something to do. She picked up the tray and pushed her way with her shoulder through the swinging pantry doors to her candle-lit dining-room. There, on the instant, she was happily distracted by the sight of her table. She glanced with the pride of a very young housewife at the three amber finger-bowls on the white Wedgwood plates, at the tall amber goblets and her best linen centerpiece and the little bowl of daffodils between the four candlesticks. Because of that pride she preferred to ignore the obvious fact that every object on the table bore eloquent witness to Jerry's improvidence. Yet in passing she paused to blow out the candles, which were still plenty long enough to serve another night.

Having accomplished this act of minor thrift—it was by small economies that she tried to mitigate extravagance—she left the darkened dining-room to enter the hall and heard, through the open door of the living-room, her husband's low voice, but not what he was saying.

Then, "Jerry," cried her mother-in-law, "you're utterly shameless!"

"Oh," thought Margery, "they're quarreling again!" In spite of her husband's natural buoyancy, he and his mother did quarrel much too often, marring family parties with their wrangling disputation. They gave way to their feelings with a careless abandon that offended the reticence which was another heritage that Margery owed to her native New England. Yet the bond of affection between them was strong.

"You know I can't afford it," her mother-in-law continued.

So money was in question. It very often was. "Oh, I wish Jerry *wouldn't*," thought Margery helplessly.

WHEN she entered the living-room, they were both silent, but the silence was vibrant with subtle antagonism. Jerry stood on the hearthrug, his back to the fire, his face, which was usually so open and cheerful, clouded for the moment with sulky chagrin. His mother's expression was one with which Margery was familiar. She was obviously torn between indulgence and indignation.

"I increased your allowance when the baby was born," she observed very crisp-

ly on a note of vexation, paying no attention whatever to Margery, who was placing the coffee-tray on a table near the fire.

Jerry said nothing, but his silence was provocative.

"Money slips through your fingers like water."

"Will you have some coffee, Mother Estelle?" The question was Margery's, and she spoke very meekly.

The odd appellation "Mother Estelle" was the name that the senior Mrs. Gerald Darian had chosen, by which her son's wife should familiarly address her. The use of her first name made her feel young. The suggestion it held of a Mother Superior in conventual walls had never occurred to her. But Margery had thought of it, and it always amused her.

FOR Mrs. Gerald Darian Senior bore no likeness to a nun. She had been, one could see, a pretty young woman, and though now she looked worn and sometimes sharp and petulant, she had managed to preserve certain traces of coquetry. A widow of more than twenty years' standing, she had long ceased to mourn the husband she had lost, and *dressy* was an adjective you would have applied to her. Like her son, she loved pleasure, though she would have denied it, and was gay as a lark at the age of fifty-three. She liked to play bridge and to go to the theater, and to shop and have luncheon or dine in smart restaurants. Living as she did in Wycherly Gardens, half an hour by subway from the center of Manhattan, it was simple enough for her to find such distractions. She enjoyed them, as a rule, with other middle-aged women, for middle-aged men were not easy to come by, and always, when discovered, preferred to go out with young girls.

Estelle Darian often spoke cuttingly of this preference. She clung to the illusion of youth with tenacity. But yet she was proud of being a grandmother, and perfectly devoted to Margery's young son. She adored her own son, Jerry, in spite of all their quarrels, and was dimly aware that she had thoroughly spoiled him, trying to correct that mistake by constant nagging. She lived very comfortably on her late husband's life-insurance, and was one of those women who have no interest in finance. Jerry managed her affairs and her few small investments. In return for this work, which could not be called arduous, she gave him an allowance to eke out the commissions he obtained from his bond sales, often inquiring irritably how he spent it. But that was invariably when he asked for a loan.

Now she accepted her coffee from Margery, and stirring it absently, returned to her argument. "I don't know where it goes. Your money, I mean. I can't imagine, Jerry."

"Neither can I," said Jerry disarmingly. He picked up his coffee-cup with an air of detachment. "One minute I have it, and the next it's disappeared."

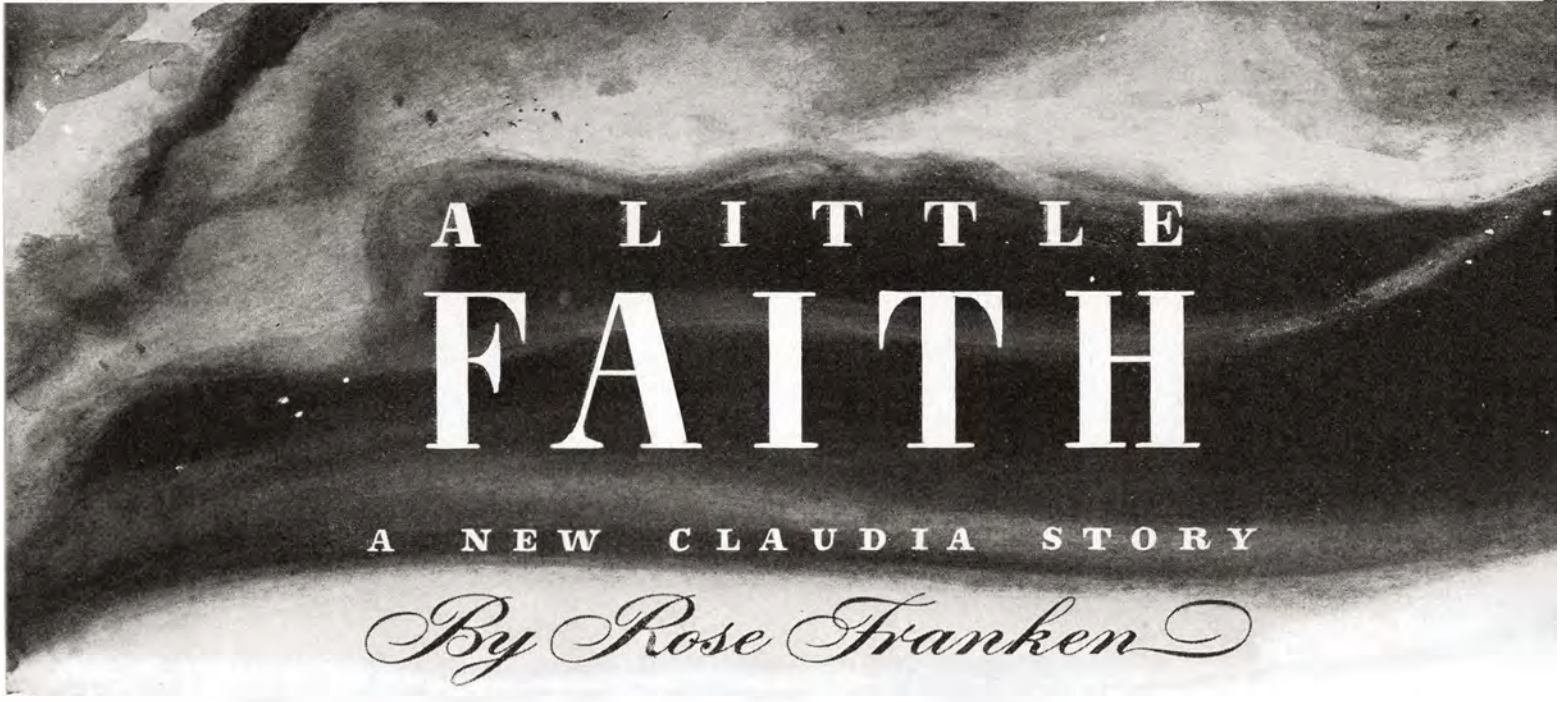
Mrs. Darian made no comment on this act of black magic, and presently he continued: "But, Mother, we can't go on living like this."

Margery looked up at him in startled astonishment. For the way that they lived seemed to her nearly perfect.

Mrs. Darian *(Please turn to page 98)*

What a conflict of heredity in that little body! Why did she want Jerry Junior to be different—when Jerry Senior was so charming?

"Bobby," said Claudia, "could I trust you to hold Matthew's hand very tightly? I want to go with Daddy."



ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

SHE could have sworn, from the jaunty way he walked across the station, that something was wrong. The minute he caught sight of her sitting in the car, he began to act silly and walk bow-legged. The sad part of it was, he wasn't even funny. "What's up?" she demanded suspiciously.

"Good news. Slide over."

"What kind of good news? I'll drive."

"Who says? Go on, slide. Very good news. . . . How's everything home?"

"Fine. . . What's the good news?"

"Electrician come?"

"Yes. It was a defective cable. He'll fix it tomorrow. For the third time, what's the good news?"

"Guess."

She knew that it wasn't going to be good news, but she hazarded a guess, anyway. "The war's over," she said bleakly.

"No, but it's as good as. I passed my physical today. Behold the perfect specimen of American manhood."

She could only say, "Oh." All along, she'd been praying that there'd be a small slip-up to prevent his enlistment. Nothing serious, she'd been quick to impress upon some invisible chairman of human fate—nothing like lungs or heart or kidneys. "Maybe flat feet. Or color-blindness. Or even varicose veins," she had thrown in recklessly. Roger Kinlan had them, and although they weren't dangerous, they certainly seemed to be anything but an ideal background for a soldier. But no. David had to go and be perfect from top to bottom.

"Are you sure they examined you all over?" she queried with one last ray of hope. "Feet and eyes and everything?"

"Feet and eyes and everything," said he. "Nothing to worry about."

"Nothing to worry about," she echoed bitterly. "Couldn't you have had just a little something wrong with you—like Roger?"

"Hey!" he protested. "What are you wishing on me?"

"It's better than getting shot."

"A fine patriot you turned out to be!"

"Women aren't born to be patriots," said Claudia. "They're just born females." She swallowed the lump of cold fear that clogged her throat and forced herself to ask: "What happens now that you've passed your physical?"

"I wait."

"For what?"

"Red tape."

"I hope there's reams of it."

"There will be. It might be a matter of days, weeks or months before I'm inducted."

"That's going to be nice and restful. Where will you have to go?"

"Anywhere they send me."

"Who's *they?*"

"Now, who do you think 'they' is? Look, what have you been doing to the car? I don't like the way it's acting."

"I took it out today and bit it," she snapped back, to cover the heartbreak in her soul. "David, suppose they send you to Persia?"

"Why Persia?"

"It said over the radio today—"

"Listen, darling," he interrupted, "stop torturing yourself with where I might be sent. For all you know, I'll be stationed right here."

Her heart leaped. "Right here where?"

"Washington, New York—I don't know. Right here."

"Who said so?" she inquired breathlessly.

He saw at once that he'd raised her hopes. "Nobody said so. It stands to reason. They're using construction architects all over," he hastened to amend.

She gave a short laugh. "Which might mean Africa or Australia."

"Why not? I'm no different than anyone else."

"But you are!" she burst out. "That's what makes me so furious. Not one married man in this whole town has enlisted, and those that have been drafted have been trying in all sorts of ways to get out of it!"

"Where'd you pick up that pretty gossip?"

"I met Nancy Riddale, marketing. She's opened her house up here early."

"Afraid of New York getting bombed," interjected David, who couldn't abide Nancy.

"Well, anyway," Claudia continued, making no issue of Nancy's frailties, "she said she couldn't understand why you should volunteer, with two children and another coming."

"Maybe it's because I've got two children and another coming," said David. "Ever stop to think of it that way?"

"No, because it's sophistry. What about all the men with families to protect that haven't the decency to go out and do what you're doing? It just makes me boil."

DAVID pulled up on the side of the road and shut off the motor. "Better let's talk this thing out," he said, "or it'll get to be a kind of sickness in your soul."

"It is already," she admitted miserably.

"Let's see," he said. "Stick out your tongue and open your eyes." He shook his head. "Your tongue's not so good, but your soul's all right. A little bruised, not used to such a lot of exercise, but it'll come along nicely."

"Well, you're wrong. I hate war, I hate it, I hate it!"

"You're not supposed to like it, you cluck."

She laughed shakily. "Oh, well, that's different. Why didn't you tell me so?"

"I guess I forgot to mention it." His voice deepened. He put his arm around her. "It's a rotten business, darling, but we've got to get through it, each one doing the best he can, in his own way. Maybe the town plumber can do a better job staying right here. I don't know. I only know that I've got something to give that the country can use. And I'm giving it, no matter where, or how, or when."

"Well, I should hope you would!" Claudia replied with asperity. "If you think I could look Nancy Riddale in the face if you didn't, you're mistaken. Now come on, let's go home. We're having broiled lobster for supper."

David grinned. "Crazy as a loon!"

"What's the matter—don't you like broiled lobster?"

"I love broiled lobster," he said, and drew her toward him and kissed her long and hard. "How's your soul feel now?" he whispered.

"Soul's improving, but heart's kicking up," she whispered back.

Bobby was waiting for them, his nose buttoned against the window-pane. He was already in his pajamas, having been bathed thoroughly and against his will by Jane, who had also washed his hair, and slicked it off his forehead with a firm hand on the brush.

"You look like a peeled onion," said Claudia at once, and ruffled it up. Bobby clutched at the ruins of what had been a flat sleek pompadour. "You spoiled it!" he cried accusingly. "Jane's training my hair like Daddy's!"

"Oh, dear," said Claudia, "can't she find something else to do?"

"Mamma wants to keep us both sissies," David sympathized. "She doesn't want you to grow up, and she doesn't want me to go to war."

Bobby was quick to read between the lines. "Did they take you?" he asked eagerly.

"Yep."

"Whoopee!" said Bobby. "Are you going to be a pilot?"

"Nope."

Bobby's face fell. "Don't you want to?"

"Sure I want to."

Bobby brightened as if an illusion had been restored. "Then why don't you?" he demanded bluntly.

"Too old for the Air Corps, worse luck."

"Always grateful for small favors," Claudia grimly remarked. She spoke lightly, but she was conscious of a vast companionship between the two that she could never share. They understood each other, and they spoke the same language. "Men will fight this war with blood," she thought, "but women will have to win it with agony." She knew herself at this moment to be a poor soldier. She turned away lest they glimpse the unreadiness of her spirit, and despise her for it.

SHE was grateful for the diversion of a lobster supper. Lobsters were expensive, but Jane obligingly got a rash from shellfish, and Edward preferred pork chops, which made lobsters quite economical after all.

It was a messy meal, with nut-crackers, and a flock of paper napkins, and finger-bowls for purely functional purposes. Bobby sat with a large confusion of amputated legs in front of him and chewed air, blissful in the erroneous impression that he was imbibing heavily of an indigestible and grown-up food.

"Here," said David, magnanimously donating two small crimson flanks of tail off his own plate.

Bobby was mute with gratitude.

"Dear generous Daddy!" Claudia applauded.

Jane, jealous of any festivity that excluded Matthew, brought him down from his crib and put him in his high-chair. Immediately he reached fat, businesslike hands toward Bobby's pile of lobster legs. Bobby cupped them protectingly. "You can't have any; you're too little."

" 'Twon't hurt him," said Jane, and chose a meatless spike, and gave it to him. He didn't like the taste of it, and threw it to the floor. Shakespeare, biding his time beneath the table, lost no time in capturing it, while the dogs raised a perfunctory interference, since fish was not their especial dish. "This is a madhouse," thought Claudia, loving every instant of it. She looked around the room as if she would print it indelibly on her vision. Thank heaven, neither she nor David ran to knick-knacks. A dining-room was an easy place to run wild in, what with so many flat surfaces to hold bottles and plates and candlesticks. But the two old lowboys boasted only a single bowl apiece for flowers, and a pair of knife-boxes flanked the Sheraton sideboard which might have been a priceless antique if they hadn't shared the guilty secret that it was merely fashioned of old wood.

"I like this room," Claudia suddenly remarked, out of a yearning desire to hold everything exactly as it was now, forever.

"I like it too," said David.

Neither of them voiced what they were thinking,—that the room was a symbol of their being a family, and that thousands and thousands of families must be sitting around their dining-room tables, wondering how much longer they would remain together, undisrupted by the hideous cleavage of war. And then the thought came to her that there were thousands of families who would remain untouched by the tragedy of separation; she remembered, anew and with bitterness, the men in this very town who were willing to let others die for them. Perhaps, she thought resentfully, mankind was not worth the saving. Perhaps David's quixotic gesture would go for nothing in a cause that was already lost.

"Mother—" said Bobby coaxingly.

"Mamma doesn't want you to grow up, Bobby," David

She pulled herself from her unhappy absorption. "What is it?"

"Can I have a real piece of lobster?"

"Of all the rank ingratitude!"

"But there's nothing in the legs," he protested, with an air of having uncovered one of life's major disillusionments.

She knew how he felt. She felt a little that way herself. She leaned over and kissed him. "Poor baby," she murmured.

"Can I have some more?" he followed up hopefully.

"You certainly mayn't," she said.

"Cheer up, son," said David. "I've been putting up with that kind of thing for years."

Bobby grinned in utter comprehension, and suddenly the lobster was no longer important to him.

"He's a nice youngster," David remarked, after they had left the table and Bobby had gone to bed.

Claudia nodded. Her heart was too full to speak. What they were both savoring was the simple perfection of their little world, a world that was to be blasted into a hell of loneliness and pain. Rage flowed into her that this must be. People like David and herself did not ask for war; they wanted only to go on living their quiet inconspicuous lives. "It's evil and unfair!" she cried.

He looked up from his pipe. "What is?"

"Wars. What do you suppose 'what is'? What is it that anyone talks or thinks about these days? It's always there in the back of your mind."

He shrugged. "That's your mistake," he said. "You have to go on living just as if."

"Just as if what? As if you weren't going to go away? As if we mightn't be separated next month, or maybe next week? Or maybe even tomorrow?"

sympathized, "and she doesn't want me to go to war."

"There's only today—and that's as much as there ever is."

She made a face. "That smacks of philosophy."

"What's wrong with philosophy?"

"It's a drug. Used chiefly in middle-age. I'm afraid the only emotion I'm capable of at this point is rage. Just pure rage."

"Pure rage is a pretty good emotion," David commented. "Shall I light the fire?"

"I'll do it."

She held a match to the neatly piled kindling with its rosette of paper beneath it, and watched the blaze catch hold. "What do you mean, rage is a pretty good emotion?" she reverted.

"With enough of it, we'll be able to win this damned war. Plus a little hope and an ultimate belief in man," he added.

"Sorry. I seem to be lacking most of the necessary requirements." She took the evening paper from the table and sat down in the big chair opposite the sofa. She opened it blindly. She didn't want him to see the despair in her eyes, nor the tears that she was trying to fight off.

The paper backfired at her, as it had a way of doing.

"Good Lord," said David desperately. "Must you?"

"Must I what?"

"I haven't read the editorial yet."

"It's all right. I'm being particularly careful."

"You're being particularly careful to get the backside front and the frontside back, and the inside out—"

"That's because you're watching me and making me nervous." She tossed the paper over to him. "Here, take it. It's not worth what I have to go through. I read enough, anyway. They're sending our men all over the world: Alaska, Australia, Africa—India—" Her voice broke. "I hope they don't send you to India."

"Why not? India would be a swell place to be stationed."

"You mean to get your head blown off."

"Nonsense. Look at statistics—"

"I won't look at statistics. All I know is that an ocean is no place to be on."

"That's where you're wrong. In the last war we didn't lose a single transport carrying troops."

"Thanks."

"And our casualties on the field," he continued, unperturbed, "were seventy-five thousand."

"Which was good, I suppose?"

"Darn' good, out of four million soldiers! It's a lower percentage than in civilian life."

Claudia made a sound that was halfway between a sob and a snicker. "To hear you talk," she said, "a person would think it was safer to go to war than to fall asleep in your own bed."

He was brazen about it. "It is," he acknowledged complacently. "That's what I've been trying to make you understand."

"If you don't mind, I'd prefer bed for both of us."

"It's only eight o'clock," he objected. "We can't go to bed yet. It isn't done in nice families."

Jane came in at that moment, looking like a visitor in hat and coat and gloves.

"Leaving us?" David inquired amiably.

"She's afraid the new baby's going to be too much work," said Claudia.

Jane laughed. "Edward's going into Bridgeport to pick up the cream separator, and I thought in case you weren't going out, 'twould be a good chance for me to do some shopping."

"'Twould indeed," said Claudia. She remembered suddenly how pretty Jane had looked the time she'd had the flu, in a white nightgown and her hair in braids over the pillow. "Why don't you and Edward take in a movie in Bridgeport?" she suggested.

A faint blush crept over Jane's cheeks. "We'd thought of it," she admitted.

"And don't hurry back—have a good time!" Claudia called after her.

"Stop matchmaking," said David.

"Why should I stop? It would be wonderful if they got married. We'd save on sheets. Of course Jane's quite a lot older than Edward, but I don't mind that at all."

"That's awfully big of you," said David.

"I'd like to be brave," Claudia said wistfully. "I really would. I'd like to be able to take this war with gallantry and courage and fortitude and all the rest of the worthy qualities that you read about."

He scowled. "Listen, I don't want to be married to a pamphlet! Besides," he murmured against her hair, "I think you're taking it swell."

"It's such a new experience," she faltered.

"It's new to all of us, darling," he said. "We're not a war-loving nation. We don't know anything about it. But we'll learn. We'll very well have to learn."

For the first time, she heard a note of uncertainty in his voice; for the first time she realized that strong men, too, had their moments of doubt and struggle. They were like children feeling their way, and their very weakness was their courage. "We'll both learn," she whispered. For a moment they clung together, bewildered and lost in a world where human life had become a negligible incident in a savage scheme.

"I wish I drank," she said. "If I did, I'd get drunk now."

"I'll fix you a highball," he offered.

She shook her head. "I'd rather have a lemonade."

"Then I'll make you a lemonade."

She shook her head again. "There aren't any lemons. Besides, I'm not thirsty, I'm just scared."

"Scared of what?"

She had to bare the shameless torture that was eating into her. "Suppose something happens to you—"

His gaze was steady. "You'd have to take it, darling."

"I couldn't!"

"Look," he said patiently, "we're right back where we started when I got off the train tonight. Let's go to bed."

UNEXPECTEDLY David sat up in bed and said: "I smell smoke."

"You do smell smoke oftener than any man I've ever known!" said Claudia. "Lie down and don't be silly."

"Don't you smell it?" he insisted.

"Suppose I do? We left the fire burning in the living-room."

"I banked it. And anyway, it's not that kind of smell—"

"Listen," she shouted after him, "what's more important, me or smoke?"

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DREAM JOBS

BY

FREDERICK VAN RYN

The seventh of a series of articles dealing with those of our contemporaries in whose shoes most of us would like to be. Meet Jack Warner, who until he joined the Army Air Corps was the production head of a motion-picture company with an annual pay-roll of thirty million dollars.

WHEN a man stands at the very top but his office-boy says he would hate to be in his shoes, something must be radically wrong either with the man or with the job.

There is nothing wrong with Jack L. Warner, except, perhaps, his pronounced partiality to the long-distance telephone and the five-set doubles tennis matches. There is practically everything wrong with his job. The production head of Warner Brothers, a motion-picture company with an annual pay-roll of thirty million dollars, he rules over a jungle in which even butterflies bite. A kind, jovial fellow, he is frequently forced to deal with individuals who are neither kind nor jovial. A mixer extraordinary, he often runs a mile to avoid a person grimly determined on precipitating a row. His is the personality of a cheer-leader. His is the task of a martinet.

The thirty years spent by him in the motion-picture industry have brought him into a close (probably a bit too close for comfort) contact with those glamorous boys and enchanting girls who beam at you from the screen of your neighborhood theater; and five will get you fifty that he sighed a super-colossal sigh of relief when he received his commission as lieutenant-colonel in the Air Force two months ago and went to work for Uncle Sam. It is the contention of a great many people in Hollywood that the Blitzkrieg was first introduced to the world not on the dusty roads of Poland, but in the sunkissed studios of Warner Brothers at Burbank.

For a man who began his business career as an errand-boy in his father's meat-market in Youngstown, Ohio, Jack Warner has done quite well.

His house in Beverly Hills is one of the most charming places in California. Parties which he used to give, while there was still some gayety left in America, were described as "the last word" by such experts as Elsa Maxwell and Lady Mendl. The Hollywood Park, a racetrack founded by him several years ago, is considered one of the finest and best-arranged "plants" in the world. The Warner Brothers studios in Burbank, a pet project and the crowning achievement of his career, leave a European visitor gasping for breath. The list of the smash hits produced, supervised and promoted by him includes such pictures as "The Life of Emile Zola," "The Life of Pasteur," "Dark Victory," "The Old Maid," "Sergeant York," and "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

Altogether, Jack Warner seems to have traveled a long, long way since that afternoon in the year 1904 when he made his début in the industry by singing ditties in a nickelodeon in Niles, Ohio—a nickelodeon operated by his late brother Sam. He was twelve

From left to right: Jack Warner, appearing on a radio program with Dick Powell and Joan Blondell; Jack Warner, Michael Curtiz, the director (standing), and Hal B. Wallis, the executive producer, studying the script of a forthcoming picture.

then. When he celebrates his fiftieth birthday next month, he will have completed the first part of that amazing steeplechase which can be run in no other country under the sun. That it was a steeplechase and not a flat race will be readily confirmed by all those who have watched him take the hurdles and jump over the water-hazards. When he drives nowadays past that enormous billboard at the entrance to Burbank which announces to the dusty travelers that they are approaching "the home of Warner Brothers, the site of the largest studios in the world," he cannot help but think of that original studio of theirs, which he and Sam opened way back in the 1910's—a dilapidated barn for which they paid sixty dollars a month.

THEIR only equipment at that time consisted of a small camera which they brought from New York in a trunk. Harry M. Warner, Jack's oldest brother, recalls with a mixture of horror and amusement a conversation he had in 1917 with James M. Gerard, our ex-ambassador in Berlin. Harry tried to talk Mr. Gerard into selling the Warners the motion-picture rights on his best-selling book "My Four Years in Germany." Mr. Gerard hesitated. In the first place, he had never heard of Warner Brothers. And in the second place, he already had an offer from the late Lewis J. Selznick, accompanied by a check for seventy-five thousand dollars. No mean debater, Harry went on talking, advancing a formidable array of reasons why a percentage deal with the Warners was better than an outright sale to Selznick.

Finally he wore Mr. Gerard down.

"Look, Mr. Warner," said Mr. Gerard. "I like you all right, but give me some time to think this thing over. I've got to go West anyhow, to visit my wife's relatives in Montana. So suppose we adjourn this conference and meet again in your studio in Los Angeles."

Cold shivers ran down Harry Warner's back. "I thought," he relates, "of that messy barn where Jack and Sam were shooting the quickies, and my heart was in my mouth. When I regained my powers of speech, I said: 'Mr. Gerard, I wouldn't dream of dragging you all the way from Montana to Los Angeles. I'll meet you in San Francisco."

Jack Warner's first full-fledged smash, "My Four Years in Germany," was by no means his first attempt at producing a feature picture. Five years previously, when he was still a minor, he helped his brothers with a lulu known as "The Glass Coffin." At least one exhibitor in the United States still remembers "The Glass Coffin," not because of its beauty or the *(Please turn to page 89)*

Left: Jack Warner, who has received a commission as Lt. Colonel in the Air Corps, lunching with his big chief, Lt. General Henry H. Arnold, the head of our Army Air Forces.

REDBOOK'S NOVELETTE OF THE MONTH

IMPOSTOR in HEAVEN

By
Ben Hecht

Co-author of "THE FRONT PAGE" and "TWENTIETH CENTURY"

ILLUSTRATED BY FLOYD DAVIS

THEY'RE dying off, all my exuberant and artistic friends who were the landmarks of a mirage known as Happy Days. They came bounding into the Century like a herd of unicorns, and fell to writing, painting, banging on the piano, and—as a side-line—to garroting the conventions. They were part of the last high old time when news was made by madcaps rather than madmen, and they were sustained through hunger, calumny and hangovers by the conviction that they were improving the world.

Now whenever one of them falls, brought down not so much by the barrage of years as by disillusion and a drop too much of alcohol, I mourn doubly. I mourn the passing of another of the moonstruck gentry, and of the era that specialized in hatching their dwindling tribe. Every time one of these battered old iconoclasts waves good-by, that era grows dimmer and all its carnival fades a little more.

For there's a wilder day around us. In fact, those gabby gentlemen of my youth who jousted with windmills and stood a generation on its head and shook a thousand *clichés* out of its psychopathic pockets, seem a childish lot in retrospect. It was a naïve little war they fought—a war to make the world more livable by filling it with more wondrous music, words and paintings.

Never was a cause more lost than theirs. And as they die off one by one—these attic knights—I marvel anew over how futile were all their works, and how aimless all their victories. They seem like so many hairdressers who battled over the proper coiffure for a golem.

Last month the past retreated another step with the dying of Louis Andrel.

It was a month in which so much death was loose in the world that Louis' finish, for all his one-time greatness, made hardly a footnote to the day's troubles. A few scribblers sighed briefly on the art pages, and one critic remarked wistfully that Louis Andrel was probably the last of the mad artists. Let us hope this isn't true, and that a day will come again when mania will be once more confined to gentlemen who dreamed of conquering no more than a few squares of canvas.

Louis died in the vacant four-story brownstone house where he had lived for thirty-eight years like some sleepwalker with a paintbrush in his hand. Three of the floors of this habitat were as void of content as a skull. The top floor contained a cot, a single kitchen chair, a forest of canvases and a Gobi Desert of dust. I had known Louis' house for twenty years and had never seen it other than echoing, tomblike and empty.

Older friends of Louis have told me of tapestries and great painted Venetian beds large enough for horses to sleep in, of billowing divans and gilded mirrors, and an opulence like unto the days of the Grand Turk. Their tales smacked of truth, for no house could look as empty as Louis' unless it had been gutted. And besides, I knew always that Louis had once been another man.

The story of Louis Andrel bears so little relation to the world being reshaped by bombers and submarines that its telling is almost like the spinning of a fairy tale. Like many other writers, I would rather be using what talents I have to shout whoever reads to battle, and to celebrate the valor of our youth at Armageddon. Yet I turn my back and whistle at ghosts in an empty house, and set my mind to matters as far away as a grasshopper's dream. And I think—a little bitterly—how strange life has grown, when a writer feels he must apologize for writing of a man whose heart was broken not by politics but by a woman.

I have known Louis' story for a long time. He told it to me years ago while I sat on a window-ledge watching him paint one of his memorable seascapes—paint it in the half-dark, with no hint of sea or sun around him. And I would have written it long ago when such stories were perhaps more popular than they are now—except there was no ending to it. There are stories complete in themselves, but others come alive only when they have endings.

Louis' was one of these. Two weeks after Louis' funeral, something beautiful tacked itself on to Louis' mad story, something happened that refilled suddenly the darkened and empty house in which he had sat away his life like a heartbroken gnome.

I knew for many years that Louis' life was a tragedy lived by a clown. Had anyone but Louis told me such a tale of pain and shock as he did through this entire night, whilst I sat on a window-ledge, I would very likely have wept. But I shed no tears listening to Louis, nor ever afterward remembering, for it was a difficult thing to weep for Louis. He was too unreal, and much too florid and derisive a gentleman to touch your heart. He could divert and fascinate, but there were too many layers of motley over Louis' pain for it ever to seem part of any truth.

I knew that this motley, this ragbag of manias in which he had clothed his soul, was Louis' trick for keeping alive. Unable to live as a man, he had magically changed himself into something humanless and bizarre, and survived the thirty-eight years of his grief as a bit of surrealism.

The only thing too strong for this wand of mania had been Louis' talent—a talent that had remained intact despite his constant efforts to sabotage it. However irrational his canvases became—and there were whole years when he painted nothing but enormous cubes of white sugar—his hand and his eye refused to join entirely his flight from existence. There was never an inch of paint he put on canvas that did not breathe or shine with life. . . .

On his death a number of us who had been his friends examined the thirty-eight-year crop. The muddy basement and all the closets of the empty house were piled with pictures—and they were as strong and amiable as if the serenest of mortals had given them being. Such in the happy days that are gone was the history of mania—beauty and not disaster was its epilogue.

UP to the time Louis told me his story, I knew him as a man devoted to eccentricity. I had often wondered why anyone as talented as Louis should spend so much time making himself ridiculous and uncomfortable. But knowing that in the world of art greatness as often as not is the flower of infirmities ranging from fainting spells to astigmatism, I accepted Louis' idiotic behavior without argument. In that day, in fact, all schizophrenics and paranoiacs enjoyed the more romantic classification of Bohemians.

Louis' Bohemianism compelled him not only to live like a hermit in an empty house, but to a score of other manifestations. He wrote bushels of letters to the press, offering prophecies and panaceas. It was his habit to announce himself every springtime as a Messiah, and in these letters he was also constantly challenging famous figures to duels. I doubt if there is a single distinguished New Yorker who has not received an invitation from Louis Andrel to meet him on the field of honor and battle to the death with

"I sat looking at her, still reading. Suddenly I spoke. 'Tanya,' I said, 'it's over. I know you now. I'll never again disbelieve anything you say. I'll never, till I die, doubt you again.' "

pistols, sabers or bludgeons. Louis also spent much time making speeches on street-corners in a language he had invented himself. At such times he distributed gratis to his gaping listeners a dictionary containing two hundred and fifty words of this new tongue. In a foreword in this little volume Louis contended that unless the human vocabulary was cut to two hundred and fifty words, disaster was certain to overtake the entire race.

And God knows, he may have been right. In fact, there was a flavor to nearly all his antics, as if they were being performed more out of cynicism than aberration. Though everything except his painting seemed and sounded mad, I for one never thought him so. I think that is why he told me his story.

I was sitting on the window-ledge breathing dust, and sneezing and watching him paint one of his most famous seascapes, and marveling at the certainty with which he attacked a canvas he nor I could hardly see. He was past fifty at the time, and he looked like an aging comedian. A riffle of gray hair rose like a handful of ghostly cock's-combs from his scalp. His pointed nose was turned a little to one side, as if he were everlastingly peering around the corner. He had a wide smile-haunted mouth, and a pair of popping dead eyes that seemed as idle as a parrot's. He was a tall and shambling man when he stood up, a reedy limpish clown with no more physique than a scarecrow. Yet despite his obvious lack of muscle or any hint of physical prowess, he was forever cackling of his Homeric victories as a boxer, swordsman, swimmer, mountain-climber and swift runner. These were lies of course, and part of the fantasy world in which Louis had hidden himself—and I usually listened to them with half an ear.

I WAS listening in such fashion on the night Louis started telling his story. It was only after a time that it struck me he was speaking truth. I waited for him to beat some heavyweight boxing champion to a pulp, or embark for a swim down the coast of Norway through snow and ice, but Louis diverged into no such exploits. He continued to paint in the half-dark, and in a soft mocking voice to recount his travels in Italy and his career in Venice.

"I have an interesting problem," he said. "My problem is that nobody knows me any more. Even I don't remember what I was—hardly. This comes of telling lies from morning till night, dreaming lies and living lies. The truth gets mislaid. You get lost. I am," said Louis solemnly, "the idiotic ghost of a man. Whole months pass when I swear to you I have neither body nor voice. I float. I cast no shadow and I am not to be seen in a mirror."

"How about turning on a light?" I said.

"Why?" he answered. "I know these colors by heart. Besides, I like to be surprised when I see the picture in the morning. I have also deeper reasons for painting in the dark. If you own a great and brilliant brain such as mine, you know every truth. The greatest truth about life is that it is something you can't see. You can only guess at it, as I am doing at the moment."

He painted in silence for a time, and then resumed, talking apparently not to me but to the canvas.

"We remember who we were," he said, "on occasions. Light breaks through, and the past appears. A museum lights up. You take a walk through a hundred rooms, and there it is—under glass with labels—things done and dead. The dormant odds and ends of your life, preserved like the artifacts of a vanished race. Every man has this secret museum of dead selves. You walk through it like a stranger on tiptoe. The great mystery is that all these dead selves under glass, with labels giving name and time, are as strange as the gargoyle souvenirs of the Aztecs.

"Well, sir," Louis chuckled, "I sometimes behold the remains of my life—decades laid out in state—and am moved to throw away my brushes and turn antiquarian. This is always a temptation for one who has been as brilliant as myself—to turn curator and haunt a dead ego."

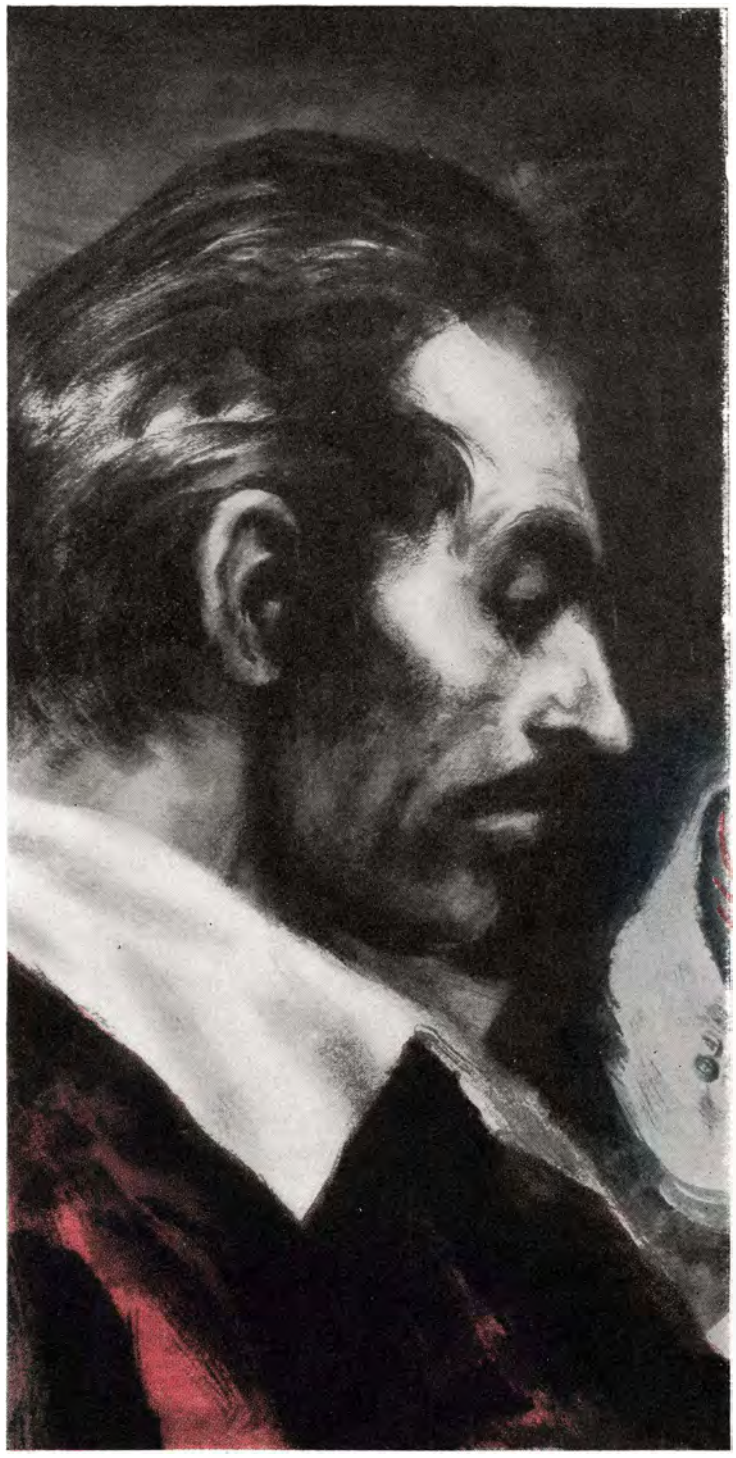
He paused—and then announced suddenly:

"I was a stupid and despicable young man. Do you remember Byron in Venice, me lord of rhymes—and his hundred wenches? Well, sir, I inherited their granddaughters and his boredom. Don't misunderstand me. I am speaking neither with regret nor repentance, but aloofly as an antiquarian.

"I was, to sum up," said Louis, "a nasty fellow, and at seventeen a *roué*. I was, to repeat, stupid and despicable, for with all my conquests, I never found an hour of pleasure. Nor is there a single dream to haunt my old age. Hold!" cried Louis suddenly. "I am beginning to lie again. There is one."

Louis became silent. He brushed more slowly, and he fell to remarking at intervals: "Hi-de-ho." He was obviously waiting for the courage to enter the great room of his museum.

"Hi-de-ho!" said Louis for a fifth time. "We arrive in our anecdote at the time of trouble. Yes, trouble. Pain. Collapse.



" 'I am destroying the Tanya who exists so beautifully in your

A man goes along armored, witty, superior to life, laughing at it and using it. Then suddenly he is a fool and naked and running in a rain of spears. And what is it strips him and leaves him twitching like a dog run over? Accident? The machinations of villains? No. Never that. His own hand, sir. The hand of folly with which every man shapes his own fate. With it we arrogantly and senselessly destroy ourselves, as I will proceed to demonstrate for you move by move."

Louis chuckled again. "The business of my destruction," he said, "begins with my father's death. My good sire died and thoughtlessly left me his fortune: this house, and gold enough to preserve all my unsavory habits.

"I was thirty-four when I returned to my native shores. A woman I had met abroad followed me, a lady who professed to be mad with devotion, Marguerite by name. I gave her no reason for her so-called love, which existed chiefly because I refused to believe in it, and had no use for it. She was blonde and owned a face of considerable aquiline beauty—although it reminded me of a horse. She had powerful wrists, and there was a sort of steam rising from her, as if a boiler were about to explode somewhere in her depths.

soul—destroying this lovely creature just as she destroyed me.' "

"However, she is not important. I remember her solely for her words one spring afternoon.

" 'Louis,' she said, 'I want you to meet Tanya.'

"I was instantly revolted by the name.

" 'I brought her home,' Marguerite continued, 'because she is such an unusual type. I thought you might like to paint her.'

"There's Fate for you," Louis chuckled, "seeking you out in as crude and antic a way as if it were a salesman of disaster working on commission. And that infatuated imbecile Marguerite, standing there as its accomplice—holding its Pandora suitcase, so to speak. And smiling like some demented Lady Bountiful. I often look at that afternoon. I call it 'Afternoon of Jest.' It hangs here,"—Louis tapped his forehead,—"as the most comic picture in the world.

"I stood there purring, as was my habit in the presence of strangers, and examined this unusual face brought me to paint. It was less a face than an expression—an expression of despair. Let us say, despair that had fallen asleep. Actually I saw a shapely girl with a certain ugliness in her face that was as touching as the weeping of a child. The features were delicate but somehow negroid. The hair was black, worn modestly in a pompadour roll. The eyes were flat—like watermelon seeds. There was no curve to the eyeballs. There are some eyes that speak, others that sing. These whispered. The voice was like the eyes. It whispered too. A gentle monotone of a voice like that of a child talking to itself while falling asleep. It was a voice without sorrow or personality.

"Ah, that little empty voice—I used to think: 'It's never grown up, that voice. A child still speaks out of that delicate throat.' In fact, when Tanya spoke, it was always as though she had never spoken at all. Nothing moved in her face. Her heavy lips remained stiffened as she talked, as if she were a ventriloquist. I understood almost immediately the reason for all this facial rigidity. The minute her face grew animated, a mysterious ugliness seized it. It was really a bewitched face. Even a smile corrupted it.

"I won't describe her any more," said Louis, "because my story has nothing to do with her looks. Beauty in women is a quality which appeals chiefly to old men and amateurs; I was neither, at the time. The thing about Tanya that fascinated me from the first minute I saw her was that expression of despair. I wanted immediately to know how it had come to be. It took a long time—but I heard the story—blow by blow.

"I will try to sum it up for you," said Louis, chuckling, "or else it will take too long. There are people who have a sort of magnet in them for every kind of disaster. That was Tanya's story. It was the story of a magnet that had drawn out of every crevice of life every nuance of pain, injustice and defeat.

"You have heard perhaps of the Poltergeist," said Louis. "The Poltergeist is an evil spirit that occupies the soul—usually of women—and devotes itself to attracting misfortune. This spirit is capable even of causing stones to leap through windows and pelt its owner—and of creating out of nowhere fires to devour its unfortunate host.

"Tanya's twenty-seven years of life had witnessed matters almost of this nature. Bricks had fallen from the sky and cracked her skull. Two times she had been run over by cars. Her right leg had been broken twice. Her face had been disfigured twice, once by a fall and once by a madman whom she had trustingly married some years before. She was, however, in fine repair when Marguerite coaxed her into my life.

"But these were all minor items. Tanya's magnet attracted worse enemies than bricks and automobiles and even madmen. From her earliest childhood Tanya had pulled out of everyone who knew her—hatred. At two, her Russian nurse had pinched her black and blue, convinced she had the evil eye. Tanya's mother had detested her from birth, and forbidden her all diversion, including the privilege of speaking in the presence of adults. And every associate had turned on Tanya a similar malevolence.

"Tanya told me the long tale, an incident at a time. I listened. I painted her and listened. What fascinated me as much as the story was Tanya's way of telling it. Never a complaining sound in that empty little voice. Never a phrase of anger or righteousness. In fact, it was no victim talking, but an impersonal onlooker who had watched twenty-seven years of cruelty and injustice.

"WELL, sir,"—Louis smiled in the half dark,—"I fell in love with this tale. I became its champion; I repeated it day by day to Marguerite, and she became its champion too. Together, Marguerite and I, we denounced the multitude of villains who had been outraging our heroine since birth. Of course I began asking questions. A thousand questions. I wanted more details of these myriad disasters—quotes, backgrounds. These Tanya obligingly supplied me. I got to know every one of her villains thoroughly. I became privy to all the dastardly plots that had beset Tanya's ill-fated feet.

"I got to know also Tanya's father—not in the flesh, mind you, for I hated relatives. But as part of the tale. She was living with her father. He was a musician, bedridden, half blind. A man of genius. He still wrote music. His cubbyhole room was piled with manuscripts. Tanya helped him. She put the notes down for him. I was interested in her father's genius. I asked her to let me see some of the music. She brought me manuscripts, and I had other musicians play them on the piano. They were excellent. I arranged for their publication and got them performed by the Boston orchestra. Tanya was quietly grateful. She brought me a pair of cuff-links that Liszt had given her father. Her parent wished me to have them. They were his last souvenir of happier days.

"I even painted her father. She let me have an old photograph of him as a youth playing the piano. I did a small canvas, very sentimental but very well painted. She took it home to her father, and brought me back a letter from him written in Russian. She read it to me. I was touched by his fine style.

"There was also," Louis chuckled, "another leading character in Tanya's memoirs: her ex-husband. She had divorced him five years ago. They had lived together for eight months. He was a madman, madder than any of the associates Tanya's Poltergeist had ever whistled out of the woodwork. She married him without love, but his adoration persuaded her. On her honeymoon he broke her nose. He was a very jealous fellow, and no sooner had he married Tanya than he was assailed by the lunatic conviction that his bride was an evil and wanton creature. He fell to thinking, this madman, that Tanya was not faithful to him. He followed her, harassed her and beat her. After each beating, he wept. He would grovel at her feet and beg to be forgiven. Tanya would stroke his head, take him back—and suffer another beating the following night.

"Tanya assured me she did everything in her power to convince her husband of her innocence. She used to spend weeks locked in her room and speaking to no one. But nothing could persuade this lunatic fellow that she wasn't a lady devil floundering in a thousand hells.

"He took to accusing her in public of these misdemeanors and denouncing her to the four winds. Their romance, sir, degenerated swiftly into mayhem and fisticuffs. And after eight months our heroine decided finally that domesticity was not for her. Loyal child, she would have remained content to spend her life as a punching-bag and target, but she began to fear he might murder her in one of his rages, and be executed for it under the laws of society.

"So Tanya got a divorce and decided then and there that no more men would ornament her life. They were too dangerous. Tanya's Poltergeist was not to be trusted with men. And for five years she avoided all contact with the male, as one might avoid association with a tribe of murderers."

LOUIS became silent and painted more quickly in the half dark. He started whistling, and then took to chuckling as if his mind were crowded with irresistible jests.

"You are perhaps curious," he said suddenly, "about the more practical side of Tanya. How had she and her unfortunate genius of a father existed before my money provided for them? The answer to this was part of the tale. Tanya had toiled in a hundred guises—as a chambermaid, waitress, governess, model, chorus girl, secretary. I will spare you the accounts of the injustices that ended each of her endeavors. And I will give you the third dimension of Tanya and call the portrait done. She was a lady of culture, sir. There was no book or piece of music our heroine did not know. She knew anthropology, art, history, the sagas of royal families and the languages of France, England and Russia. She knew the history of the ballet, of all the art movements. She knew a thousand poems. Good God, I think she knew everything. An encyclopedic, delicate mind. No talent, no clamoring ego under her talk. A proud, cool and shapely little savant.

"I come now," said Louis owlishly, "to the time of love. Did I tell you that despite the women who had been infatuated with me, I had loved none? Never before Tanya. First love is a remarkable business. It is a transplanting. You uproot your heart and place it tenderly like a very costly bulb in alien and dubious soil. You then sit by tending it and watching it with a lunatic excitement. Your heart beats inside another, and this is a grave and dangerous situation.

"No woman before had ever frightened me for a moment. This one lay like a terror in my throat. My impulses were all to turn tail and run. I dreaded seeing her; yet did she appear ten minutes late for a rendezvous, I was already in a sweat of despair and frustration.

"What in God's name I was frightened of, I couldn't tell. What it was drained my very soul out of me, I had no name for. It took me two months to summon up enough courage to kiss her. And when I did, I felt so stinging a sense of disillusion that I almost became ill. Her kisses were nothing—empty as her voice. Cool and empty kisses that left a hole in your heart. There was neither resistance nor participation in her. I knew when I kissed her that she was too beaten to feel love, too shocked by life to feel even the tiniest of hopes. Yet, I swear to you, sir, no kisses had ever before meant anything to me.

"I kissed her again. I held her again.. And not as her lover. I was a champion embracing a lost cause. I wanted to bring back something that life had taken out of her. I wanted to restore that sad and withered heart into a flowering garden.

"I began to find myself incredibly preoccupied with Tanya. I had many friends. All of them, without exception, hated her almost on sight. The injustice she had told me about relived itself before my eyes. It was almost like witnessing a demonstration of black magic. People hated Tanya, or what was worse, despised her. Or sometimes they merely shrugged and said she was a queer girl who made them uncomfortable. They refused to admit she was full of a sad strange beauty, that her body was literally exquisite, that her manners were cultured and her mind sensitive. Apparently the Tanya I knew was invisible—a creature bewitched and concealed by some evil mist. I talked Tanya, and argued Tanya to scores of people, as if Tanya were some far-away cult. I fought like a *Cyrano* against a hundred Tanya foes—reshaping now not Tanya but the world around her. I was determined to make that world habitable to her, to fill everybody's heart with love and admiration for this child of misfortune.

"My friends were for the most part bored and not a little astounded. Some of them humored me by pretending concern and politeness, but I knew they were humoring me. I knew that Tanya filled them with irritation or aversion. The upshot of this was that all my friends became fools in my eyes. I saw them as crude, cheap and cowardly. Tanya alone grew more and more perfect—her cause more and more just.

"There's one thing I remember," chuckled Louis, "that illustrates her great and superior soul more than anything else—that will give you a vision of her tenderness, of the depth and sweetness of her virtue."

And Louis went off into a full minute of laughter.

"This is it: She refused to marry me, sir, because she couldn't bear to bring pain to Marguerite. Marguerite was her friend. Marguerite had introduced her to this haven. She would not bring grief to Marguerite, who loved me.

"I did as much arguing as kissing. It took a full month of both to convince her that Marguerite had no claim on me, or on her.

"I persuaded Tanya finally," said Louis, and his brush remained motionless for some minutes as he went on. "I remember sighing and dreaming in her arms, staring at her, needing her when I held her as if she were a continent away. Hunger for something there's never enough of—that's love. There was never enough of Tanya. She never smiled enough, nor kissed enough, nor talked enough.

"I recall," said Louis, his brush still motionless, "that I was tender. Tanya was a convalescent in my arms, a wounded gazelle whom I was wooing back to life. She was afraid to love, to believe in anyone's goodness, to trust anything human. I took this fear from her. My Tanya thawed out. The knotted look left her face. She smiled and laughed and believed in me. She felt protected against all her old friends—that worthless crew of villains.

"Yes, she loved me now. Yet there was still something unsatisfying about her love. It had no tenacity. There were no talons to it. It hung on to nothing. Tanya loved with all her soul, but she was as ready for disaster as if she were adrift in a leaky canoe.

"During all these months," said Louis, his brush moving again, "I painted nothing but Tanya. I painted her a hundred times in a hundred different positions. I got to know every turn and shading of her body. I got to know not only her face but the bones under it. She was happiest while I was painting her. I felt her closer to me then. It was as if at such times she was giving me some perfect gift.

"Around this time," said Louis, chuckling, "my friends—such as I had left—began to feel a little differently about Tanya. They admitted that she had become more or less a human being—but that it was all my handiwork. I had given her charms, social graces, and somehow drained a certain malevolent quality out of her. This was nonsense, but I was

(Please turn to page 92)

"Where are all the portraits you made of her?" I asked. "I burned them. It was like committing a satisfying murder."

Grandma—and Redbook

Which has changed the most—Redbook or Grandma? When I was young, Grandma kept Redbook hidden—especially when our minister called. When a child, I tried but I could never find anything "shady" about Redbook. But Grandma, who was no different from my friends' grandmas, considered Redbook too risqué for children. Today I smile when I see Redbook being used in church and school libraries.

Mrs. Eva M. Denst,
Denver, Colorado.

The Letter to End All Letters

I am fourteen years old, and have been reading Redbook for eighty-five years. I love (hate) *Violet*. I think your articles and stories are tops (bottoms). I wouldn't be without Redbook for anything, or may my right hand wither if ever again I reach for Redbook. Good luck to you and your magazine, or may Allah permit you to get the mange!

(As nearly as I can average it, this about summarizes your letter page. Why bother to print ten letters?) *M. L. G.,*
Andover, N. Y.

P.S. I almost forgot that good old tag—I bet you don't dare print this!

Seagull Cry

What a diet Redbook gives us from soup to nuts. "Nuts" of course refers to "our *Violet*." Anything from Robert Nathan's pen leaves me with a feeling of love and laughter and simple things, like taking a walk in the woods after a rain. We need his stories more than ever to-day.

Mrs. Helen Dyer,
Los Angeles, Calif.

A Pound of Light Reading

I quote from a letter received from my brother, an Army first sergeant. "We are on foreign soil, miles from railroad and settlement. We have close to twenty hours of daylight in each twenty-four. Rivers are rampaging; there are no roads, so we are marooned until the freeze. No radio, no newspapers here. Reading matter is at a premium. Supplies and mail reach us by air, so packages must be light. Why not tear off the book-length Redbook novels, staple them and mail me a pound?"

Fred T. Bresnahan,
Minneapolis, Minn.

A Child and the War

My daughter came home yesterday with a MacArthur button on her coat, and to my surprise, she thought it was a political button. I blamed myself for her ignorance, because I had forbidden my husband to mention the war in her presence.

Then we read the article, in your April issue, "What to Say to Children About the War," and after discussing it, decided to follow the advice given. I dare say now that our daughter is informed of current happenings without being terrified by them.

K. B.,
Illinois.

It Is Very Odd

Violet stories simply bore me to death. "U. S. Today" doesn't interest me. Cynical? Of course I am; but don't get the impression that I don't like your magazine! I have a swell time reading *all* the stories and criticizing them. But don't stop publication on my account. Oddly enough, many people seem to enjoy it.

Muriel Singer,
New York, New York.

They Are Based on a Very Nice Family

Can you tell me if "U. S. Today" is taken from true family life?

I don't think there has ever been a better group of family stories written. Let us hope they always continue, for they are just what we need in times like these. They have such spirit and true warmth.

S. M.,
Milwaukee, Wis.

We Have Changed

My June Redbook was delivered today. Mrs. D. B. R. of Tyler, Texas, writes that she read one of the first Redbooks.

Would you be interested in knowing that Redbook has been a part of my life since I can remember? *My dad was foreman of the pressroom where it was first printed.*

I remember so clearly the rough paper and no-picture copies of my childhood. There is no comparison to the beautiful issue delivered today.

Loretta Fahrner Edling,
Mt. Vernon, Washington.

Hope Springs Eternal

My Redbooks are quite the wanderers, because the neighbors, too, want to know what's happening now to the family in "U. S. Today" and whether someone has poisoned *Violet*. *"N. A."*
Lincoln, Nebraska.

Self-Defense

Those *Violet* stories have added another Redbook reader in my family. My nine-year-old daughter thinks they're tops—but to me they are impossible, and have no place in an adult magazine. She reads and re-reads "Violet" but nothing else, while I read everything else and then—horrors!—am forced to read that one to join in on her days and days (or daze!) of conversation about *Violet*. *Mrs. H. L. F.,*
Masontown, Pa.

We Like This

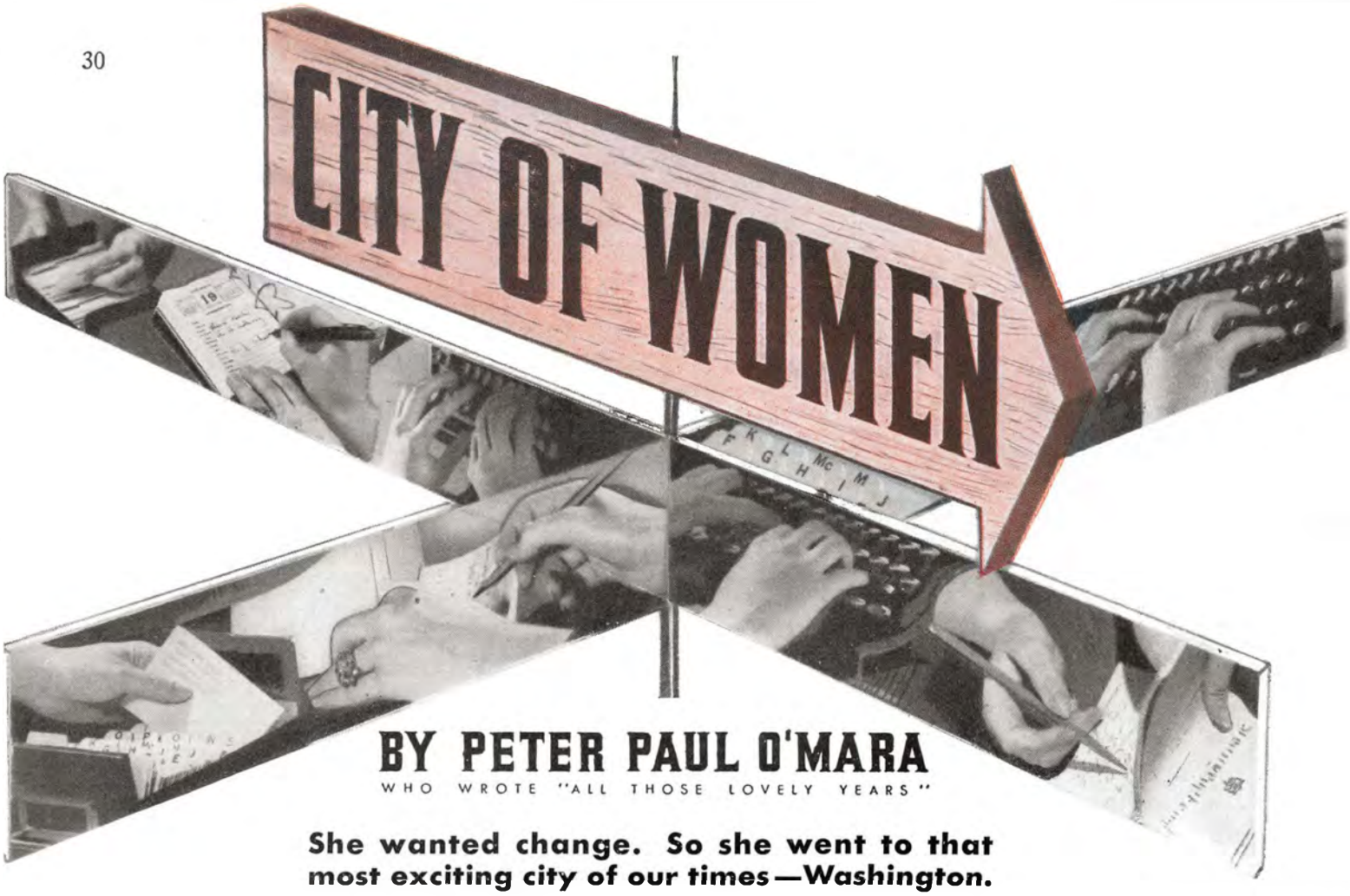
As I walked to the mailbox this morning, my thoughts turned to this evening, and I pictured myself spending the long hours alone with our baby while hubby was free to go fishing. When I opened the mailbox, I spied a companion—the June issue of Redbook. Thanks for sending it *today.*

Mrs. H. H.,
Mason City, Iowa

It's a Part of the American Way of Life

How wonderful to live in a country where a non-existent twelve-year-old brat can provoke more controversy than war and politics, with the sugar rationing thrown in for good measure! *Frances Hellwig,*
Ann Arbor, Michigan

EACH month we will publish not less than ten letters from our readers, and will pay ten dollars for each one published. Address all letters to Editor of Letters, Redbook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y. Keep letters within one hundred words. No letters will be returned, and all of them will become property of McCall Corporation.



BY PETER PAUL O'MARA

WHO WROTE "ALL THOSE LOVELY YEARS"

She wanted change. So she went to that most exciting city of our times—Washington.

The Story Thus Far:

THE door at the head of the stairs said "MR. CONISON," in chaste black simplicity. Caroline fastened her eyes on it when she was halfway up the steps, and did not allow herself to hesitate even for a second.

"Mr. Conison," she said briskly, when she had been admitted to the office of the young editor of the Samberley *Southerner*, "I came to ask if you had a position open on the paper."

"You mean, you want a job?"

"I said that!" she snapped.

He grinned. "Not quite," he said. "You insinuated that you wanted a position as a lady journalist. So—your father's gone broke."

"He hasn't!" she said quickly. "It's just—"

"Come off it!" Bill told her wearily. "Everybody's been expecting it. If he can't get the material, he can't make his little gadgets; if he can't make 'em, how can he sell 'em? Hence, he goes broke. Logic. Blame Hitler. —What kind of a job?"

"I could write things," she said. "Club news and society and things. I was on the paper in college."

Again Conison grinned. "I know. The Agnes Hazleton Branchurst Seminary Weekly *News*. But we have a society editor. Miss Willie does fine. . . .

"Listen, baby: why don't you just marry one of those kids that chase around after you? Douglas Hale's son, for instance. Priorities won't hit his old man's bank. And you'd probably be all right as a wife, if you had a good colored girl to do the work. After all—"

But she would not listen any more. She grabbed the door, and slammed it behind her, cutting off his sentence in the middle.

"Oh, nuts!" Conison said aloud, and reached for the phone.

"Get me Palmer Chaddock in Washington," he told the girl on the switchboard.

While he waited for her to locate the Rt. Hon. Palmer Chaddock, duly elected to the House of Representatives by the people of Samberley and the help of the Samberley *Southerner*, he grinned to himself for the first time since Caroline had left the office. This might be the hell of a lot of fun! And if she had any nerve, it might do her a world of good. . . .

"Daddy, do please be sensible!" Caroline said for the tenth time. "You know it's a miracle that Mr. Chaddock should write the League to ask if they knew a nice girl who wanted a job in Washington. Happening right now, it's a miracle."

Caroline gained his consent, and went to Washington—and found the city so crowded that she could only find shelter in a very crowded boarding-house. She found her Bureau housed in a big building that still wore a sign announcing itself as a hotel. All that morning she and five other girls had been pushed from one office to another, from one person obviously too busy to know what to do with them, to another person just as busy. Even the doctor who had given them their physical examinations had looked haggard and half sick with exhaustion and the heat.

Finally a young man started assigning them to various departments. And—

"I've saved a very nice job for you, Miss Hasbrey." He leaned toward her confidentially. "In the section of the second head of the Bureau. . . . My name is Harworth," he said, "John Harworth. I'll take you to the office myself. I'm smothered with work, but it can wait."

A few days later this same Harworth called at her boarding-house and invited her out, and she was so lonely that she accepted, though she didn't like him very well. She liked him even less after a dreary evening at a sordid place, listening to his boastful talk.

"Caroline, you had a nice time?" inquired her one friend Christina Gustaben, when Caroline got back.

"I had a foul time. I'll tell you about it tomorrow. Good night."

Christina's eyes were wide with astonished disappointment. "Good night," she said. "Never mind. There will be other men." *(The story continues in detail:)*

THE summer was hot, and seemed very long. And yet sometimes it was only the days that seemed long; the weeks and the months went swiftly, too swiftly, June and July and August. Caroline's days were filled with work, the office, the refresher course in shorthand she was taking at the Y, the practising she was doing on a rented typewriter. She and Christina took long walks and saw all the sights. They stood in lines for hours a couple of times a week for the privilege of seeing a movie. Everything settled into routine, dull and busy and time-filling. There was nothing to make one day stand out from another.

"You know," Christina said once, on a Sunday afternoon when they were walking in Capitol Park, "in the papers every day

"There's something we've got to settle," Lacey said, "—men. The rule is, no poaching. . . . O. K.?"

you read about so many important people in Washington. I never see any of them."

"Nor I," Caroline said. "It does seem odd, at that."

Actually, she had never felt so cut off from the events of the world as she did that summer. Everything seemed incredibly far away—China and Libya and Russia—sometimes even America. Only the week before, Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill had attended church together in the middle of the Atlantic. It had seemed interesting in a vague, impersonal sort of way; it was impossible to realize that one of the men concerned was the man who lived in the white house she passed so often during the week. Instead of feeling nearer to things in Washington, she felt much farther away, much more completely separated. Was Washington, she wondered, a sort of vacuum in the middle of the whirlpool?

"Daddy seems to think I ought to have inside information about everything," she said. "I guess he imagines me with ambassadors and cabinet ministers hovering about."

Christina nodded. "My father has asked me to keep him informed about farm laws. If I tell him I don't know, he will say that is right, I must not give away any secrets, but please to remember that he is my father."

Caroline laughed. "Men are idiots."

"Yes," Christina said. "But nice."

Caroline glanced at her, so fresh and lovely in her new printed voile, like a flower herself, pink and golden in the sun. The blue eyes were wistful, watching the progress of a couple of sailors, dazzlingly young in their white uniforms as they crossed the park. Caroline smiled to herself as she suppressed a desire to go over and stop the two boys and pick out the nicer of them for Christina. Poor Christina, she thought. So beautifully designed by God to be a good wife and a wonderful mother, and then to be thrown away like this, a seed on barren ground. It seemed a shameful waste, and a loss to the world.

"Never mind, darling!" she said aloud. "One of these days you'll catch yourself a regular Tyrone Power."

"Too skinny," Christina scoffed. "Make it instead that Victor Mature."

"DAMNED if I know why I'm doing this!" Bill Conison told himself as he climbed the front steps and put his finger on the bell-push.

A sense of responsibility, maybe. After all, he had more or less been responsible for her coming to Washington. It was only right that he should keep an occasional eye on her. And curiosity, of course. It would be interesting to see what the big town had done to her. Probably, though, she wouldn't be at home. Was Caroline Hasbrey the kind of girl you'd find hanging around a Washington boarding-house on Labor Day weekend?

A colored girl answered the door. Her face split into a wide white grin when he asked for Caroline.

"Yes sir, she certainly is at home. Just you come right into the sitting-room and sit. She'll be glad to see you; she certainly will!"

Bill sat on a lumpy Mission chair, covered with peeling leatherette, grinning to himself.

She'd be glad to see him, would she! Not unless she'd changed a lot, and he doubted if she had. She was too well insulated with good breeding—and conceit—for anything to change her much.

He grinned again as he looked around. This room, with its fumed-oak furniture and its red-and-purple roses on the wallpaper, was certainly quite a change from the old Hasbrey house on the river. He tried to imagine Caroline entertaining her young men here, and gave it up. She probably made them take her to the Mayflower or the Shoreham—some first-rate place.

He heard a rustle at the door, and looked up to find a strange girl there, gaping at him with wide and disbelieving eyes. She stared for a minute, paralyzed, and then turned away. He could hear her voice talking to somebody else in the hall.

"Believe it or not, Mary, there's a man in there."

"Go on, you're seeing things."

"No, honestly. Look for yourself."

Another girl, a small, very thin one, came and looked in skeptically. She blinked when she saw Bill, looked at him without answering his smile, and disappeared.

"Damned if you're not right!" he heard her say. "I wonder who owns him?"

"Somebody's an awful fool, letting him hang around loose like that!"

There was silence then, but Bill could still feel himself being peeped at. He shifted the stiff leg uncomfortably. What kind of place was this, anyway? It sounded not too sane.

He saw Caroline coming down the steps then, hurrying, wearing a white piqué dress that made her look cool and exquisitely clean, and hauled himself to his feet, smiling with relief.

Caroline stood in the doorway, blinking through the gloom, quite certain that her eyes were not seeing what they thought they were. It looked like Bill Conison, and it looked as though he were smiling at her, and actually standing up.

"Well, for heaven's sake!" she said at last. "Look who!"

"I was in Washington," he said. "Thought I'd drop in and maybe get a couple of paragraphs for the paper. You know, local girl takes town."

So—he was coming around to gloat!

"I thought that was Miss Willie's department," she said coolly. "I hope Miss Willie is as well as ever?"

"Oh, yes. Still burping from party to party. You don't look too bad yourself."

"So kind of you!" she murmured, wondering if he actually remembered how often she had worn this dress last summer, if he actually could see the changes she had made in it, or whether it was only her imagination.

"Everybody misses you in Samberley," he said after a silence. "Wherever I go, I hear somebody saying how much better everything went last year, when you were there to run it."

Caroline told herself that nothing he said, not even that sardonic, sarcastic grin of his, was going to make her get mad.

"I imagine the Samberley *Southerner* will keep everything going smoothly," she said. "Such a helpful little paper, as I remember it. For a small town, of course."

She was surprised to see by the tightening of his mouth that that had touched him, and made a mental note to remember in future that when she wanted to get Bill Conison where he lived, she must attack through his paper. Apparently he was fond of it, and a little proud. Good!

His next words rocked her back on her heels. "How about having lunch with me?" he asked.

Caroline stared, conscious that her mouth was hanging open, and unable to do a thing about it, not quite sure that she had heard correctly. Why in the name of heaven should he want her to have lunch with him, and why should he think for a moment that she would be caught dead eating in the same room with him?

"I'm meeting a friend," he went on. "We could all eat together. Palmer Chaddock got her a swell job here."

There was something fishy about this, Caroline thought. He must want her for protection or something. It certainly was not that he wanted her company. Still—Palmer Chaddock had got her present job for her; perhaps he could help her get a better one, now that she could type and take shorthand.

"Why not?" she consented. "I'll get my things."

Besides, she thought, running up the stairs, it would be a novelty to have somebody pay for her lunch. Especially a man. And even Bill Conison was a man.

LACEY MORLONE'S eyes widened with amazement when she saw Bill Conison ushering a girl through the restaurant door, actually opening it for her, and letting her come through first. She did not know which surprised her more, the fact that he was bringing a girl to lunch with her, or the display of manners. Bill, she knew, had a phobia about manners; he insisted that manners caused most of the trouble in the world. This girl must have him properly buffaloed!

He had a lot of nerve, bringing a girl to lunch when he was meeting *her*. And a pretty girl, at that. She forced herself to smile as they came up to the table.

"Hi, Lacey!" Bill said, and she saw that he was embarrassed. She could not remember ever having seen him that way before. "This is Caroline Hasbrey. Miss Hasbrey, Miss Morlone."

The girl smiled, and Lacey decided that she was a little bit better than pretty. Perhaps, one day, she might even be beautiful, when she had grown up enough.

Lacey caught Bill's eye as he pulled out a chair for Caroline and grinned at him ironically. He flushed, and pushed the chair in so quickly that it caught Caroline in back of the knees and caused her to sit down hard.

"Thank you," Caroline said softly. "A little more practice, and you'll be able to go any place."

Lacey laughed, and decided that she was going to have a good time. It was a change to see Bill Conison embarrassed and resentful, on the defensive. And the girl looked as though she might be fun when you got to know her better. Certainly it was obvious that she was not in the slightest interested in Bill. . . .

It must have been instinct which had made her accept that invitation, Caroline decided. Or intuition. Anyway, some blessed foreknowledge that out of evil would come good. Though how could even a subconscious mind, or whatever it was, guess that Bill Conison would know a girl like Lacey Morlone?

Any way you looked at it, Lacey was wonderful. Caroline had decided that in the first five minutes, and had not changed her

ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR SARNOFF

"I don't suppose you'd be free next week-end?" he asked.
"Next week-end?" Caroline frowned at him, slightly puzzled.

opinion in the hour and a half they had spent since then, eating and talking. She could talk, for one thing; and Caroline could not remember ever having met a girl before who could talk. At least, not an attractive girl.

Attractive? Lacey was easily the most attractive woman in the room, and perhaps the ugliest. A triumph of art over nature, Caroline decided. Or was it a triumph of nature through art? There was nothing false about her, no application of those subtle little hints the beauty-parlor doctors pass out for minimizing that bad point and making the most of this good one. What make-up there was made the long, horsy face look even more long and horsy, and her lipstick made no attempt to conceal the bigness of her mouth. It was as if the mind behind the face had decided that beauty was a toy for children, that it possessed something stronger and more compelling than beauty. At any rate, it was Lacey whom the men passing their table turned to took at. They would glance at Caroline, and then look back again at Lacey.

"Washington is a nuthouse," she was saying now. "It's a state of mind. It doesn't exist at all, really; it's just a fantasy invented by politicians and newspaper men to keep the voters amused. Conison, you probably had something to do with that, and you ought to be completely ashamed of yourself."

"Listen what's talking!" Bill said grinning. "The Duchess of Sixteenth Street. You know damn' well you'd scrub floors in this town if there wasn't any other way for you to stay in it."

"So what? The fact that I love it doesn't make it any better. In my time, and it isn't over yet, I've loved some awful messes."

"You certainly have," he agreed heartily. "Is that interior decorator of yours still hanging around?"

"Walter? Poor darling, they took him in the draft. I can't imagine why."

"Good place for him," Bill said.

"I wonder why the men who are so anxious to see everyone else in the Army are always the ones who are too old to be called themselves?" Caroline asked mildly.

Bill stared at her in astonished anger. "What do you mean, too old? If you're talking about me, I'm twenty-nine."

Caroline made her eyes wide. "Is that all? My goodness!"

Lacey laughed, a small husky sound deep in her throat. "It's the life he's led," she said. "And the mind he's got, like an evil old man's. Conison, I like your friend; I'm glad you brought her along."

Caroline knew that Lacey liked her; she had known it even without her saying so. The two of them had clicked, one personality fitting neatly into the other. Friendship, she thought, was sometimes as definite as love, as quick and unmistakable. Perhaps it would be this way also when she met her love, whoever he might be? *Click!* Like a light being turned on.

"What do you do with yourself besides file things?" Lacey asked now.

"Not much of anything. I've been working on typing and shorthand. To advance my career, as it were."

Lacey grinned. "Sounds dull. Where do you live?"

"Out near Georgetown, in a boarding-house for females."

"A stableful of mares? How horrible!"

"It isn't so bad," Caroline protested weakly.

"I've been in a couple of them. Baby, I've my own memories!" Lacey grimaced and was silent for a moment, looking at Caroline with speculative eyes. "Listen," she said then. "The girl who shares my apartment is going home. Some hick she's been turning down for years visited town, and now he looks awfully good to her. A year in Washington does that to a girl. So she's off to get married. Anyway, I can't swing the place alone. Why don't you come out and case the joint? You might like it."

"Take it easy!" Caroline said to herself. It sounded wonderful, but there was sure to be something or other that would prevent it. Money, for instance.

"It's nice of you," she said with careful lightness. "But I'm a pauper, you know. Fourteen-hundred-odd a year."

"I'm no Morgenthau myself. Gert and I used to get along cheaper in the apartment than we could have in a boarding-house. Think it over and drop in tomorrow, if you like. I can give you a cup of tea and an idea of the expenses. Do you cook?"

"Not very well, I'm afraid."

"Fine. I'll do the cooking. You can keep house."

It was settled; Caroline knew it was settled. There would be more talk, and a careful pretense of due consideration, but it was really *(Please turn to page 62)*

They

Janet never became a stage star. She has two daughters, little blonde girls who get good marks on their report-cards.

Donny never wrote the play. He became a druggist in the town, and is now doing well enough some four hundred miles from Broadway.

She remembered how Tim had danced so often with Rhoda and how Rhoda had stared up at him with those baby-calf eyes and how he had held Rhoda more closely, too closely.

Tim never became a college football hero. He is foreman of a warehouse gang. The All-American teams managed . . . with Cagles and Kinnicks.

We're Very Young—

A ROMANCE — AND A MEMORY

BY FRANK BROOKHOUSER

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK BENSING

DONNY McINSTREY never wrote the play. As a matter of fact, he became a druggist in the town, and is doing well enough some four hundred miles from Broadway, where the lights blink gloriously, but sometimes, given a nod from that crotchety old Lady of Fortune, interject a malicious wink at someone carrying a dream in his suitcase. And Janet Willmar never became a stage star. She has two daughters, bright little blonde-haired girls who get good marks on their report-cards and will soon be ready for the junior set at the country club. Katherine Cornell's throne wasn't even swayed gently by the brief-lived onrush of a brown-eyed, pert-nosed girl who felt things "terribly deeply" in a town four hundred miles away, one winter and spring. And Tim Johnland never became a college football hero. He is foreman of a gang in the warehouse. The All-American teams managed to get along with their Cagles and Kinnicks and Luckmans.

So maybe they would laugh a little if you mentioned these things to them. But once they wouldn't have laughed. There would have been slow-gathering tears, possibly, and certainly that slow tired walk of martyrdom, of being a victim of the world's whims, or that resigned drooping position in a chair, with a distant expression in the eyes. Maybe even now, after the first ripple of innocuous laughter, they would think a bit and stop a bit in whatever they were doing, and their minds would drift back to the vanished years, to pep-rallies and assemblies and chocolate sodas in Nick's, and front-porch kisses; and they would remember how these things had been so terribly important to them, to the three of them—Donny and Janet and Tim. Put together and interrelated, this one year in their lives—quite some time before war communiqués and "Chattanooga Choo Choo"—these things were vital and significant, because Donny and Janet and Tim were young; and that is the time for things to be big and wonderful, for their importance to be magnified and glamorized, to counteract or atone beforehand for the cynicism, the blasé attitudes that will come inevitably and almost unknowingly with the advancing years.

What would they remember, reminded of these things? Donny, taking the tube of toothpaste from the shelf for Mrs. Schmidt, the butcher's wife, and adjusting his horn-rimmed glasses as he takes the money, rubbing his thinning hair as he returns the change? Janet, bustling about in the kitchen preparing dinner, waiting for the girls to get home from school? Tim, lunch-pail under his arm, going into the smoke-begrimed factory for the late shift?

The raw winter afternoon that Armistice Day when the team was playing Prenton City, its big rival, the wind knifing across the athletic field and cutting through the spectators like a huge phantom arm, making Drayford's clever passing attack worthless. The day in February, sitting in her room and watching the snowflakes fall pell-mell outside in a silly kind of helter-skelter reckless game—the day she discovered Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. The Junior Prom, the three hamburgers and what followed. A hundred sodas, a hundred kisses. Maybe many days, fleetingly, in a hodge-podge of scenes and memories, the focus changing swiftly without direction. Certainly one or two. Certainly that cold Armistice Day for Janet and Tim. . . .

The ball was snapped back from center, sharp knee-high. It came to him, and he took it easily, feeling it smack into his stomach, quickly punching it into his armpit, holding it tightly. No passes today. Not with this wind. They'd tried them before. They had been wabbly or out of reach—time and effort wasted. No passes today!

Tim cut for tackle, legs churning as his cleats dug savagely into the frozen ground to give him sure footing. Fatty Tompkins had opened the hole. He gave a second's silent thanks to Fatty, ruddy, laughing Fatty, as he slashed through. He met the fullback backing up the line, saw the grim expression, the hands grabbing wildly. Tim straight-armed him, saw the dulled expression cross his surprised face as he started to flop to the ground, felt good, felt strong and powerful and free, running with the wind at his heels. He swerved to the right, moving too quickly for the right half-back and encircling end.

Silent until this moment in the bitter cold, stamping their feet to keep warm, blowing steam into their hands, shivering huddled along the sidelines, the spectators rose now in a body, taut and eager, forgetting the freezing temperatures, conscious only of the running figure, focusing all eyes on a lithe, blue-eyed, speedy high-school boy running with a pigskin. For these seconds, all thoughts, all hopes, and all fears were built around a boy of fifteen carrying a ball over the frozen turf.

Janet rose with the crowd, with the proud parents of the boys out there on the field, the loyal townspeople, the excited students—with Joe Raskowski, whose boy played tackle; with Nick, who ran the Ice Cream Shoppe; with Burgess Timothy Wilson; with Mary Collins, her friend. She rose and craned her neck to see it all, to thrill to it, holding tightly to Mary's arm.

Tim ran easily now in the open, his long legs moving past one white stripe after another, past the thirty, the twenty, and racing toward the fifteen, where the big safety man for Prenton City stood poised, set, moving forward, ready. One man to go.

Watching him, Tim felt calmly sure of himself, felt that for this moment, this once at least, nobody could stop him, nobody now, not with the score tied, with the goal-line so near. Not with the wind at his heels and the crowd standing there, shouting with husky, pleading voices now, shouting like mad, urging him on:

"Yeah, Tim. . . . Go, boy. . . . Keep going!"

The safety man lunged forward savagely. Tim felt the arms grasp his legs below the knees, tighten. From some hidden unexpected source new strength surged through his body, and he drove on. He felt the grasp weaken, the hands slide off, and with a final burst of speed he was over and putting the ball to the ground beyond the goal-line. And he grinned and looked back to where it had started, eighty yards away, and he felt warm and glowing inside.

"Oh, Mary! Mary, isn't he wonderful?" Janet was shouting, pounding Mary on the back.

"Yes, Janet. Of course." Mary was smiling.

"There's nobody like him."

"No, Janet."

YOU would not know her now. There are wisps of gray in her hair—slight, yes, but there. And she has become stout—pleasingly plump, call it. There are lines in her face, and the cheeks are somewhat different.

But this afternoon the cheeks were red apples, and the eyes were not tired at all, but alive with excitement. She wore a sweater under her coat. It was in the school's colors. She had big mittens that she never could—or would—wear now. Mittens are for high-school girls, vibrant with the joy of day-to-day living, thrilling to a secretly passed pencil-scrawled note, to a soda, to a popular love-ballad that will last a few months and be forgotten.

For a moment this day her eyes turned sad. "Mary," she said, "if he would only give me a tumble! I only wish I had the nerve to write him a note. Would you give it to him?"

"Sure."

"But I guess I'll never be able to get up the nerve. I just couldn't do it. It's—well, it's chasing him."

"What's the matter with that? Hilda Dunlap does it. I know, because I saw her give a note to Jack Donley."

"But I just couldn't—there's something not right about it."

"Listen, he'll notice you. You're pretty. He'll notice you one of these days, and then he'll be a goner."

"You're just saying that because you're my friend."

"I'm saying it because I see your eyes." Mary was a year older, and she was now going with her third boy friend. Mary was a wise girl for her age, with that depth of understanding that sometimes comes to a child born in a poor home near a noisy factory.

But it wasn't the eyes alone. Partly it was the Junior class play, which made Janet a figure of some note in the school. Even Janet admitted that. "I'm just lucky I got the lead," she said.

THE day after Miss Duval, the English teacher, chose her for the lead, she was walking through the hall late after rehearsal, and Tim Johnland happened to be walking through the hall too, after football practice. Those things always just happen.

"Where you going in such a hurry?" he asked, smiling.

She stopped, and she didn't know whether to laugh or be stern or shout, or maybe cry. Her hands fluttered nervously, and he looked intently at her, and he seemed a little embarrassed too, and this allowed her to relax slightly; and although she hadn't spoken before, when he said, "You just seemed in an awful hurry," she could answer. She could answer quite calmly and feel that she was sophisticated.

"Well, I was sort of, in a way," she could say.

"Too much of a hurry for me to walk along?"

"I guess not."

"Swell."

And that night she had to tell Donny when he came to the house. She and Donny had been going together steady, in a way. He had taken her to the Hallowe'en dance. But she had never cared for Donny, not in this idolizing, complete way that she did for Tim. With Tim, just walking in the hall with him, the drab school walls had faded away entirely, and flowers had bloomed along the rubber pads, and birds had sung in the trees that sprouted suddenly like magic. With Tim, the world didn't matter—only Tim, Tim smiling down at her, Tim taking her arm strongly, protectingly. With Tim, it was love, real true love. . . .

Donny was whistling when he knocked at the door.

She had been watching for him, feeling a sense of guilt, of unfairness, but determined to tell him. She answered his knock at once.

"Come in, Donny," she said.

"Hyah, Janet," he said. Donny was average height, with sandy hair, rather thin. He played good tennis, but he was on no athletic teams, only the debating squad.

"Sit down, Donny."

"What's up? Aren't we going to Nick's?"

"Not tonight, Donny."

"How come? Did I do something wrong?"

"No, of course not, Donny." And then she couldn't go on, because she thought of all the times Donny had bought her sodas, and how he was always willing to take her anywhere, and how much fun they had had, playing tennis together in the summer.

"Go ahead, Janet. Don't be afraid to tell me. I know there's something wrong. I can tell by the way you're looking at me."

"It's just that there's somebody else. I mean, you know I've never felt real strong about you. I like you, but—"

"But that's all."

"Don't say it that way, Donny. It sounds—I don't know; it makes me feel miserable."

"I didn't mean to, Janet. I'm sorry. Who's the lucky guy? Tim?"

"Yes. How'd you guess?"

"I just had a hunch. He's a nice guy, Janet. I don't blame you at all."

"It just started this afternoon, Donny. And I'm going to meet him for the first time tonight. But I wanted to be fair with you. Maybe he won't even like me, but it didn't seem right not to let you know."

"I appreciate that, Janet. Honest—"

"And we'll still be friends?"

"Sure."

He looked so disheartened, so sad and neglected, sitting there across from her on the worn sagging couch, that she leaned over and kissed him impulsively on the cheek and said: "Donny, I'm awful sorry, because I think a lot of you." And she wanted to make the kiss important, wanted it to express all of her gratefulness to him, and she touched his cheeks and his eyes tenderly with her fingers, and it was the most tenderness she had ever offered to Donny, this tenderness that came in the moment of parting.

He seemed better, then. He touched his hand to his cheek, where she had touched it, and he smiled at her.

"Best of everything," he said; and he patted her shoulder and walked out quickly. . . .

So there were dates with Tim, and dances, and hamburgers at Looie's Lunchroom late—eleven o'clock on weekdays, even—and walking through the park, holding tightly to his arm, sensing, delighted by the bigness of him beside her, the sureness in his step. And the good-night kisses on the porch, hasty inept ones when the lights were still on upstairs in the room where her mother and father slept; long, more polished and impassioned ones when they found the lights out and only the stars and the moon were there to watch, the stars and moon that twinkle and shine over a million towns, and see the same young happy couple everywhere on a million front porches, and merely twinkle and shine, approvingly, never lecturing, never cautioning.

Those nights they must remember, Janet and Tim.

Those nights when they walked through the town's streets so late, when only the factory-workers were on the streets hurrying to the big entrance gates along the railroad tracks which bordered the sprawling steel-works, when lights in the small frame houses would go out one by one, as though a ghostlike lamplighter of *John Bunyan* stature was making the rounds, until only the sudden vivid flares from the factory, the dull reflections from the all-night lunchrooms, the foggy street-lamps, and the pale lights from the store fronts on Main Street shattered the blackness that hung over the smoke-smudged town nestling between the mountain foothills. Those nights they must remember, because they were oblivious, then, to all of this, to the world—self-sufficient unto themselves, feeling and believing that this was the beginning and the end and the reason for everything, this being together, walking and laughing and talking of unimportant things, and speaking of love that was important—sensing the strange wonder of it, yes, but not fully appreciating this wonder until many years later, many kisses after.

"I want to go to Pitt and play under Jock Sutherland," he would tell her. "Boy, he sure turns out the teams. Real football teams. One more year in high school, and I'll get plenty of experience, because we have a tougher schedule next year."

"And I'll come down to see you play," she would say, holding his arm tenderly and thinking of it, visualizing the scene, sitting in the huge bowl with thousands of other people and watching Tim—her Tim—below on the green, hearing the throng cheer for him, picking his figure out in the open field, in the scrimmage, in the mud. Oh, it was great to be walking with Tim, who was big and strong and the hero of the school—and—and *hers*. And she forgot Donny. When she met him in the halls and on the street, they said nothing to each other because there was nothing else to say.

IN January winds whipped between the hills, flaying the town with their bundles of snow for days at a time. The snow piled high on the streets, and the children shouted as they rode their sleds over lanes of ice in the moonlight, the shouts mingling eerily with the ominous whistling of the winds.

It was a night in this January that she walked along the silver-coated streets alone, the night she had the four hamburgers. Funny, it was the last night, too. Funny to end it all with four hamburgers from the greasy griddle in the window of Looie's Lunchroom!

They had gone there after the dance, and she felt miserable and alone, felt a sharp dagger cutting through to her defenseless heart, as she remembered how Tim had danced so often with Rhoda Noble, and how Rhoda had stared up at him all the time with those baby-calf eyes of hers, and how he had seemed pleased and had held Rhoda more closely, too closely. She hadn't believed it, hadn't believed it at all, that Tim was meeting Rhoda in the hallways, not even when Mary told her, not even when the supposed secret, delighting all the high school, had become a screaming headline that raced crazily through the halls and met her head-on wherever she turned. But tonight she felt that it was true, that he had fallen for Rhoda's baby-talk. Suddenly, as they sat down on the stools, the hamburger part of the night, always so gay and enjoyable and satisfying, had become merely a part of the accepted routine.

But she was hungry from the cold, from the dancing. She ordered four hamburgers. Even Looie, accustomed to gargantuan schoolboy appetites, was surprised.

"Four?" he asked.

"Yes, Looie. I'm hungry. I don't know why I have any appetite at all, but I'm hungry."

"That's good," Looie said. Looie was a cook, and no man to bother with the science of gastronomic desire.

She hadn't spoken to Tim since they had left the school.

"What's eating you?" he asked. "Now that you're ready to put on the feed-bag, maybe you can tell me."

"Nothing. Nothing at all," she said, with an air of resignation and sadness.

"How come the silence, then? It doesn't make things very enjoyable."

"I'm sorry, but I can't help it if I don't feel like talking."

"You could try to say something, couldn't you?"

"I'm all ready to go to work. Wouldn't it be funny if maybe some day you would be the star of one of my plays?"

"I'm sorry, but I don't feel like anything tonight," Janet said.

"You must feel like hamburgers."

"Don't you want me to have them? I'll gladly do without them."

"Go ahead and eat them. It'll save you from talking."

She finished them, quickly, hardly bothering to chew them, eating them for some silly reason she never could understand.

When she was finished, Tim said: "For a girl that don't talk, you sure can eat."

The others in the crowd laughed heartily, the laughter slashing into and accentuating the dull, lost feeling in her heart, the heaviness in her chest.

"I'm sorry I cost you so much," she said, thinking, "Oh, Tim, if you only knew how I feel, if you could only realize that I'm sensitive and easily hurt, and I'm hurt now, terribly hurt!" And suddenly she could stand it no longer, could not stand to look at Tim or the others, to hear their laughter and their chatter; and she ran out.

Tim came to the door. "Hey, come on back," he shouted. But she walked on, and he didn't follow, and she heard the door slam, knew that he was saying, "Well, if that's the way she feels—" knew that it had all been true, knew that he was relieved, glad it was all over, when he didn't follow her, when he didn't come after her. And she walked on alone, more slowly now, more tiredly.

The stomach-ache came next day, and then the influenza that accompanied the sickness of heart, and she lay in her room, neglected, miserable, forlorn. It was Donny who brought her the book on the Brownings, with many of their poems, after she had been absent from school for a week. He was embarrassed when he walked into her room, and they talked of school happenings without spirit. The next day, as the snow fell like huge masses of confetti outside her window, rushing headlong to extinction on the ground, she read about the Brownings, read avidly of their great love. And she wanted to be like Elizabeth Barrett Browning—wanted to "terribly much," she told herself, because that was living, it was living life to the utmost.

Donny would remember the first day she was out of the house after the siege—Donny, now the rather old-looking man selling the toothpaste to the butcher's wife.

She had seen Tim walking in the hall with Rhoda after Latin class, and it hadn't made her feel badly at all. Her "Hello" had been casual, unconcerned. Somehow, after reading the Browning poems again and again, after contemplating the full and complete love the two poets held for each other, she realized that her affair with Tim had been inadequate, a mere physical attraction. No depth, no depth at all. Oh, Tim was a swell guy, but there was nothing deep about him. And rightly enough, he was but a mere chapter in her life. She had been tormented and forlorn at first; she admitted that. But it was one of those phases that everybody passed through. In a way, there had been something dramatic about it, and it had brought her growth. She felt much older now, much more understanding about life. She was—yes, really sophisticated at last. And the chapter was ended, and when she met Donny on the street, she acted as one full-grown, obviously sophisticated and knowing. She didn't rush up to him, as she would have only a few months before. She said: "Hello, Donny," a trifle distantly.

"Hello, Janet. Gee, I'm glad to see you out again. How you feeling?"

"Fine and dandy."

"Did you like the book?"

"It was excellent, Donny. Thank you a lot."

"I'm glad you liked it. Have you seen Tim yet?"

"Tim? Oh—Tim! Oh, Donny, that was over long ago. Didn't you know?"

"Well, I heard it, but I wasn't sure."

"Of course. It was just one of those girlish crushes. I guess we all go through them. Now that I look back on it, I don't see how it lasted as long as it did. All he talked about was football. I suppose it's all right for that Rhoda. She's silly, anyway. But I got awfully tired of it. I guess I'm the more thoughtful, intellectual type. And he isn't at all. He's shallow, if you know what I mean."

"Do you think, now that that's the way it is, maybe we could go out again sometime?"

"I'd love to, Donny."

"That's great. Janet, do you think you're well enough to try out for the Thespian Players play? I should think you'd be swell in the lead."

(Please turn to page 97)

EUROPE

REDBOOK'S ENCORE OF THE MONTH

A Norwegian youngster, engaged in the underground battle against the Nazi oppressors, grins happily when he sees the sign "Long Live King Haakon VII" painted upon a wall in his home town. There are many others who hold similar sentiments in Norway.

"Under penalty of death" seems to be the slogan of the Nazis in Norway. At the left, we see them posting curfew regulations which begin with the significant line "Under penalty of death."

A wave of hatred is sweeping Europe. The enslaved peoples are getting ready to strike at the aggressor. By special arrangement with the Macmillan Company, we are reprinting these excerpts from "Europe in Revolt," a most revealing book

THE father of the "V for Victory" campaign is not by mere coincidence a Belgian. Remembering that his own initial, V, stood for "victory" in English, *victoire* in French, and *vrijeid* ("liberty") in Flemish and Dutch, Victor De Laveleye launched his great idea on January 14, 1941, in his Belgian program at the B.B.C. Today, from the South Pacific to the Arctic Circle, V is by far the most popular letter in the alphabet.

It was a typical Belgian idea, a product of the spiritual heritage of a grand little nation that has never learned to accept defeat. At present, as a quarter of a century ago, the Belgians are again suffering all the misery of enemy occupation. After the Greeks, the Poles, and the Czechs, they are, perhaps, the worst treated among the oppressed nations. But they are undaunted.

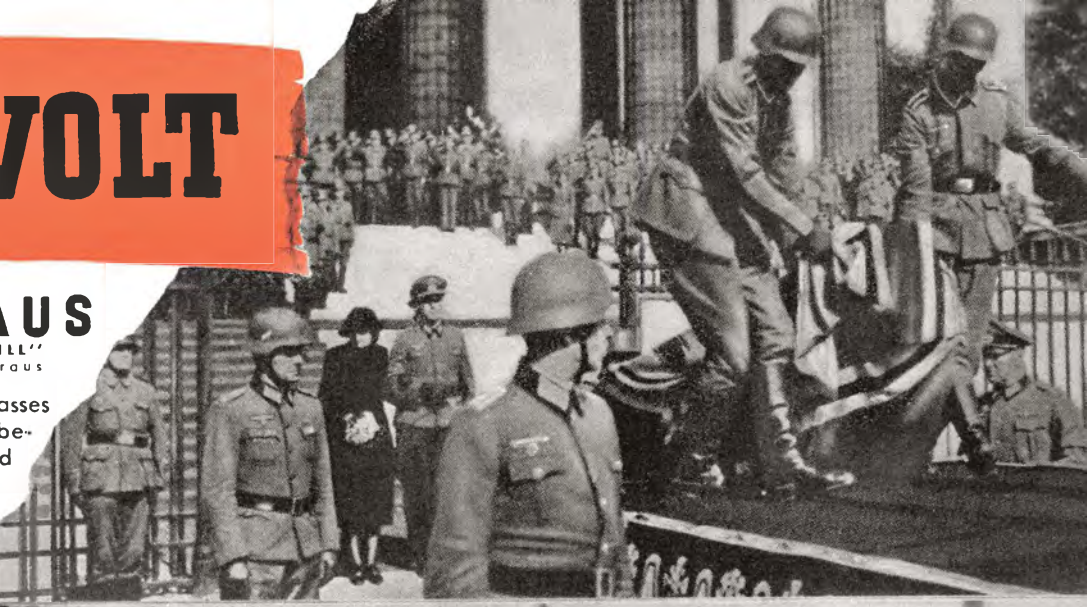
The sabotage of railways and waterways is favored by Belgian activism. This hurts the Germans most. Within three months, from October to December, 1941, one hundred twenty-five trains, transporting material for the Germans, were derailed, and wires were cut four hundred and five times. Sabotage, of course, is not confined to the railways. It interferes with all the lines of communications. The Germans are building a magnificent express highway from Berlin to Paris—one of those famous strategic roads which allow Hitler to throw his armies rapidly in any direction. Unfortunately for the German High Command the Paris-Berlin road crosses Belgian soil, passing through Liége. The work, in the hands of Belgian labor, does not proceed. Every time a piece is completed, one may be sure that mysterious explosions will tear it up again.

All the important buildings on the beach of Ostend, the world-famous resort, were blown up, and not by British raiders. Only the Kursaal still stands in solitude and glory. Ostend is an important German naval base, and the civilian population has been evacuated; yet even in their military stronghold the Germans cannot maintain order. The haystack of the German cavalry garrison at Bressoux near Liége was burned down—again an assault on a German military objective. But Belgian sabotage scored its biggest success on German soil. A batch of Belgian labor conscripts, all highly skilled workers, was forcibly transferred to the Krupp works in Essen. Two days after their arrival a gigantic explosion devastated one of the most important Krupp plants. One hundred twelve persons were killed—by the grace of God not a single Belgian among them.

Sabotage extends to every economic field and affects every person every day. The Nazis called in the coins containing nickel, which they need badly for military purposes. The population, understanding the reason, withheld the coins. School children hid their savings, and the peasants' stockings—their "banks"—disappeared. Against "reluctant" farmers exemplary measures are being taken. They are accused of promoting the prevailing famine. But hunger is rampant in Belgium, only due to the well-known German pillaging.

IN REVOLT

By RENÉ KRAUS
who wrote "WINSTON CHURCHILL"



Subdued as France is, not a day passes without a German officer or soldier being killed "somewhere in occupied France." At upper right, the funeral of a waylaid Nazi soldier, at the Madeleine Church in Paris, attended by the high German officials.

Train-wrecks are likewise a daily occurrence in France. Risking their lives, French patriots are derailing a great many trains taking supplies to the front. At right, a sabotaged train near Lille.

Famine looks out of the eyes of the Belgian people. Most of the men are pitiful. Their belts can go twice round their middles. Their necks have shrunk so that they seem to be wearing collars much too large. Many faces are marked with the deadly pallor of starvation. In the schools, the children faint with hunger. Switzerland magnanimously organized a campaign to help children in occupied countries, which opened with a convoy of four hundred fifty-six children from Belgium. Thirty-three of them . . . were no longer able to eat, and died of undernourishment.

At the beginning of 1942 the German terror ran riot. The military courts were working day and night. Every morning execution squads riddled blindfolded victims with twelve bullets—which, as General von Falkenhausen expressed it, was an excellent way of training young soldiers for the Russian campaign. He did not, however, convince his own men of the advantages gained from this training. The morale of German airmen and soldiers stationed in Belgium deteriorated visibly. Desertions increased. Some German soldiers asked not to be detailed to the execution squads any longer. It had been great fun, they admitted, but in the long run it became unsupportable.

If any individual groups may be singled out as the pillars of a whole Belgian nation's seething resistance, they are the returned prisoners of war, organized labor, the women, and the Church.

A classic witness to the attitude of the released prisoners is Léon Degrelle's own *Pays Réel* which stated:

> The prisoners returned from German camps still keep a feeling of hatred against the enemy. As soon as they reach home they join the opponents of the New Order. They are of weak character, they have understood nothing before the liberation of our country by Hitler, and they will again be deceived in the future.

For the time being, however, it appears that it is the Nazis who are deceived in Belgium. Their authorities complain incessantly of an underground organization of released prisoners of war which they accuse of most of the anti-Nazi outrages committed. If such an organization, indeed, is in existence it is well concealed. Thus far, no member has been ferreted out.

BELGIAN labor is involved in a life-and-death struggle. Its ranks are the first targets of the Nazi attack. Germany is suffering from a grave lack of man-power for the preparation of the "industrial offensive" which, according to Hitler, is to outbalance the rapidly increasing American war production and equip the German armies on the Eastern Front with new weapons for the counterattack against Russia. Although the Germans are well aware of the fact that enforced labor's productive capacity and willingness cannot be compared with those of free labor, they envisage, as this is written, the introduction of general labor service throughout occupied Europe. Belgium is to be the testing-ground for this measure. Hence the whole world is vitally interested in the outcome of the desperate and heroic struggle Belgian labor is putting up to resist enslavement.

To a much greater degree than Adolf Hitler has ever realized, women influence, and perhaps decide, the psychological attitude of a nation. In Belgium, at present, every woman is a belligerent. She has to cope with almost unsurmountable difficulties. Food is becoming scarcer and scarcer. Another hardship of the women of Belgium is the recently decreed introduction of compulsory female labor—a measure, incidentally, for which the Germans did not dare to assume the responsibility, and which, therefore, they had M. Romsée, their puppet, sign. To add their customary vulgar touch the German authorities have reintroduced prostitution, banned in most Belgian cities for many years.

Small wonder that the women are the most violent demonstrators in the upflares that occur regularly. When the news spread that the heavy pounding of Cologne by the R.A.F. had killed six thousand workers from Brussels, dispatched to the well-known target of enemy air raids and forbidden by the German regulations to take to the shelters while the raids were on, thousands of widows demonstrated on the Grand' Place in Brussels. In the prov-

This pot of flowers has been placed on the exact spot where a resident of The Hague was slain by Nazi Storm Troopers.

Not satisfied with enslaving the men of Czechoslovakia, the Nazi invaders force these Czech women to work in the coal mines.

This innocent-looking book for children, on sale in occupied France, contains instructions and directions for saboteurs.

inces of Charleroi and Namur women carrying black banners paraded in front of the German labor exchanges, until German motorized squads, driving at full speed into the crowds, dispersed them.

In Antwerp the housewives staged a hunger demonstration as a protest against the insufficient food supplies. Preceded by banners with the inscription: "We want coal and potatoes, more bread, milk and fat," they marched to the Town Hall, where their delegation tried to hand in a petition. The women composing the delegation were arrested. Against the demonstrating groups platoons of German soldiers were set in motion. Most of the fleeing women sought refuge in the churches.

THE church is the only place in which the average Belgian can still breathe. There he breathes the air of independence. Despite the incessant vicious attacks by the Nazi officials and their lackeys on hierarchy and clergy, as "scoundrels in cassocks," "cassocked accomplices of the British murderers," and "valets of Churchill," the church in Belgium maintains, and strengthens, the spirit of resistance.

In the Flemish extremist press curious articles were to be found in which the Church of Rome was ranked among the international conspirators, and its activity was compared with that of Freemasonry and international Bolshevism. Following such denunciations, Catholic social organizations were dissolved, and through the "synchronization" of the trade unions an effort was made out to destroy the whole structure of the Christian-Social movement in Belgium. Several priests at Namur were forbidden to officiate at church services. A Catholic priest in Antwerp was sent to a concentration-camp because he had encouraged his parishioners to resist the Nazi looting. All Catholic schools in Brussels and Antwerp were closed. In Ghent, the Bishop was ordered to kill three of the six hens he had, since his palace was inhabited by only three people, and according to a German regulation each person may only possess a single hen.

The clergy has shown great courage in defying the Nazi rule. The Bishop of Bruges and the Dean of Sainte-Gudule refused to celebrate High Mass in memory of the traitors shot at Abbeville, since they knew well that this holy service would be used as an anti-Belgian, pro-Nazi demonstration. The Rexists and Flemish Nationalist storm troopers are refused Holy Communion. Revengeful, the Quisling rabble threw paving-stones into the windows of the Bishop's palace at Bruges, and smeared the Archbishop's palace in Malines with the words "Down with the Pope!" In both towns the citizens immediately chased away the mob. All over the country the religious spirit is reviving. Services, courses for adult instruction in religious matters, and pilgrimages are crowded. The village churches were never as heavily attended as now. Is it a spiritual revival alone? Without, of course, attempting to minimize the religious urge of the people, brought about by the anti-Christian and anti-humane behavior of the invaders, another reason may explain the packing of the churches. They are the only places where the Belgian people can hear the "Brabançonne" and "God Save the King."

Countless Belgians, men and women alike, were sentenced to death for harboring British pilots and helping them to escape. Young people among them accompany the British in their escapes, to serve with the Belgian forces in England.

Among the proudest escape stories is the tale of two young Belgian mechanics who stole a German plane and crossed the border, saluted by the Luftwaffe's air police. A similar story involves two young patriots, one a hairdresser and the other an office apprentice, who took thirteen months to get from Brussels to London, traveling the roundabout way through occupied France, Spain, Africa, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, China, and finally via Canada to England. "Here we are," they reported, arriving at the London Belgian recruiting office. "Forgive us the delay." All escape stories include accounts of smuggling, exhausting marches at night over stony hillsides or along river beds, descriptions of disguises which must be assumed in order to pass safely through enemy-occupied countries, and finally the hazards of stowing away on shipboard.

Such escapes are not isolated cases. Thousands of young Belgians have devised schemes for breaking the jail into which their country has been transformed by the Germans. Some steal boats at night and cross the North Sea at the risk of foundering or being caught by some U-boat. Others walk for days and weeks, tramping the highways of France, risking denunciation and concentration-camps, entering Spain by swimming the Bidassoa River near Hendaye or crossing the Pyrenees at night, and arriving at last in Portugal, where they find passage in a ship. The French arrest them whenever they can, and so do the Spaniards, for Madrid like Vichy takes instructions from Berlin. But most of the Belgians somehow work their way out of the French and Spanish jails, give the slip to Portuguese international police and reach their goal.

NORWAY is girded for a decisive fight. The battle stations are manned. Three million patriots are eagerly awaiting the combat signal: the counter invasion by the Free Nations. They know that the forces of liberation will not come tomorrow, nor the next day. But come they will —about that Norwegians have no doubt. Almost two years of agony have not broken their spirit, nor shattered their confidence. Perhaps the greatest glory of the Norwegians, and other oppressed peoples, is the fact that they have not even grown cynical in this world for sale; a world of double-dealing and of bartering honor for profit: Hitler's world. Their countries are blacked out. Sometimes it seems as if life itself were dwindling. Many, indeed, have fallen, and passed away. But the Norwegian does not fear the New Order. It is a nuisance. It is an insult. It is a criminal assault. It is, however, not the end. The bugles will blow again. Grinning English, American, Canadian boys will plunge through the surf. Their parachutists will drop from the skies. Even if, at first, they should only be a handful—three million Norwegian men, women, and children are ready to join them. Each is already at his post.

The enemy is warned. He, too, is preparing. In itself the elevation of Quisling

The Nazis are robbing the enslaved countries of everything that may help the German war effort. Above, we see an iron bridge being taken away by German trucks in Amsterdam.

Hunger is spreading throughout France. The news that a little store is serving hot maize-pulp attracts enormous crowds. No one, however, is allowed to buy more than six ounces.

to the rank of Premier on February 1, 1942, was an empty formality, by no means indicating even a strengthening of the puppet dictator's shaky position with his own masters. But it clearly presaged Nazism's plan to deal the deathblow to Norway.

Hitler is attacking because he cannot escape. We shall see this strategy of his as long as he lasts in this war. We shall see it applied on larger fronts than the Norwegian side line. But the case of Norway, as it unfolds at present, is a test case. Preparing for his spring drive against Russia, and probably also for his push across the Mediterranean, Hitler, it appears, needs no additional trouble with a "colonial" war. But he cannot avoid it. His troubles in Norway have become so grave and so pressing that he must once more resort to the age-old German adage: To strike first is the best defense.

Conditions in Norway have become almost unbearable both for the downtrodden people and for the invaders with their Quislingite appendix. The people are on the brink of starvation, robbed of—literally—even their shirts, which they must deliver to the German army in Russia, and squeezed by the Gestapo, their best men executed by the score. The army of occupation, on the other hand, is visibly deteriorating, and not entirely on account of the shift of most of the troops to the Eastern Front. Quisling, on his side, is confronted with one unsurmountable obstacle: a total lack of following. Not one in a hundred of the Norwegian people is in his camp. The small number of traitors is sufficient to replace the seven members of the Supreme Court, and to find a few henchmen for the administration, or to replace those editors and writers who would not comply with Goebbels' perversion of the Norwegian press. But Quisling cannot refill the cadres of the restive police with men he can trust, although most of the professional criminals have been enlisted in the newly established secret police and in the ranks of the *Hirdmen*, the Norwegian brown-shirts. Quisling has dismissed teachers and professors by the hundreds. But only one professor at the Oslo University belongs to the Nasjonal Samling, the single permitted party. Even the Nazification of the theater and the arts—in Norway an extremely important branch of public life—has proved impossible because of the absence of Hitler-inspired artists and, strangely enough for Norway, the silence of Wagner singers.

The gravest handicap the Quisling system incurs is the lack of coöperation by the municipal administration. An order issued by the Nazi-appointed Minister of the Interior, for municipal employees to take an active part in work of the Nazi party, has met with this response: fifteen civil service men replied that they were members of the party; fifty-one merely acknowledged receipt of the circular order without making any comment, and three thousand nine hundred and eighty-two answered categorically that they could not understand what the order from the Interior Department had to do with their duties as municipal and county employees.

IN spite of the arrival of an ever-increasing number of German "specialists" in Norway, Quisling and his real boss, Gauleiter Terboven, simply have not enough men to organize Norway in the totalitarian style. It has proved quite impossible to find an adequate number of Quislingites for mayors of villages, and where "reliable" men could be found they have shown themselves so completely incompetent that half of the Norwegian countryside is in a state of complete administrative chaos.

The labor situation presents the same picture. Last September, Quisling had a few of the most popular labor leaders executed. Others were sent to the concentration-camp Grini, where twenty-two died of "heart disease." The trade unions were "new-ordered." But not enough traitors were available to run the complicated and widespread organization of the unions. At present, most of these unions are functioning underground or have simply ceased to exist. The workers are not paying their membership dues and are sabotaging all instructions from their appointed head men.

Forty-three of the most important Norwegian labor and professional organizations sent a sharp protest to Reichskommissar Terboven against the conditions which have dominated Norway since Quisling was put into power. In bold words this protest blamed the German and puppet authorities for the brutal behavior of storm troopers, for threats and acts of violence against loyal Norwegians, for the thousands of arrests that have taken place, and for heedless destruction of law and order in general.

The German administration's answer was to introduce general labor conscription on a nation-wide scale. The Social Department of the puppet government, with the approval of Terboven, issued an order providing for the registration of industrial and construction workers. This order, in its own words, "creates a legal basis for requiring able-bodied persons to carry on their work in a designated place." Whether this designated place lies inside Norway or outside is not specified. Norwegian youths in the labor camp at Trögstad, however, received an inkling of the plans in the making. They were informed that they should all "volunteer" to go to Finland and do work behind the lines. All protested bitterly against the suggestion. For though drafted into the German-style work camps, these Norwegian lads were wholeheartedly anti-Nazi. On the following day the request was repeated, but again the boys shouted. "No!" Whereupon all were called together in a meeting to hear the following pronouncement from the camp leader: "We have asked you whether you will go to Finland voluntarily, but next time we won't ask. You will just go!"

The system of espionage developed in Norway has been of constant and considerable aid to Great Britain. Information is regularly supplied to London on the land activities of the German troops in Norway, such as the construction of airports and submarine bases, or the shifting of troops and the size of the occupational forces. Information is also steadily sent to London on the movement of German ships along the Norwegian coast. It was in this way that the British first learned the new German battleship *Bismarck* was heading out *(Please turn to page 83)*

ON a soft wind the scent of fresh grass and blossoms puffed up the street where Joe Purvey lived in one of Mrs. Tynedge's furnished rooms. It puffed, not quite vanquished by the city's dust and gasoline, as far as the Endoll Radio Repair Shop. This was the season of the year when Joe bolted his lunches and made, with long strides, for the park.

It was the hour when all manner of dogs led forth all manner of humans for midday constitutionals. Joe seated himself in the sun and regarded the canines with an indifferent eye. He was not what he called, contemptuously, "a dog person." Yet all at once, today, his eyes became fixed on a pom—a newcomer. It had somehow lodged itself in Joe's head that of all pampered "mutts," poms were the most irritatingly pampered. Nevertheless this particular animalcula he forgave all its aristocratic sins, for the sake of the soul-stirring creation to which it was attached by the thinnest of swanky leashes.

She was like a strong yet flexible reed. Her walk was a glide of gracefulness. The breeze rippled a green skirt and blew dark strands across a brow so fair that not even in dreams had Joe encountered its equal. A green sweater molded straight shoulders, and proud, youthful bosom.

"Gosh! Where's she been all my life?" Joe exclaimed, with a catch of breath.

Not infrequently, of late, Joe had entertained a nebulous idea: it must be swell to be married—to the right girl. It was plenty lonesome, sometimes, eating in a lunch-room, even if you did gas to fellows at the counter about politics and baseball. You got tired of the grub! And it sure was lonesome, all by yourself, sometimes, in a furnished room. Besides—it was spring; the air carried a fragrant provocativeness which did funny things inside you.

Another notion that had imbedded itself in Joe's head of crisp brown hair was that the right girl would burst on him some day with all the sudden force and glory of an incomparable dawn. He would recognize her instantly. And for that high and sacred moment he had kept his life uncomplicated; because, "you've got to think of the future—you can't afford to make a bull."

And here she was! It had happened! The incomparable dawn had risen! Beneath the smooth ruddiness of his cheeks, Joe paled; for the scene seemed steeped now in a terrifying solemnity, and this spring grew greener, more profusely strewn with buds and blossoms, deeper, richer, than any hitherto. It was the spring he had been waiting for.

The marvel glided to a derbied man parading a Russian wolfhound. That guy was well-fixed—you could see it; one of these retired guys, Joe guessed, with nothing to do, only take a dog out. And *she* had plenty of dough. You knew it, just by looking at her. You can tell the folks with dough—the "high-ups," as his mother used to call them. With an inward groan, Joe saw her as the unattainable. He felt suddenly shabby—although he was "bugs" on neatness, as his well-pressed brown suit, orange tie and polished shoes testified.

No, he considered; she wasn't the kind you go up to, talk to, just like that—the way he felt desperately urged to do right now. You had to get introduced to her, formal. When with the well-to-do guy she floated past his bench, Joe sent after her an intense gaze; so that maybe she'd feel it, might even feel how he felt about her. Maybe she'd turn around, and it would happen to her as it had to him: love at first sight.

But she was gone without that tremendous revelation. Joe watched her cross the avenue, the wriggling pom now in her beautiful protecting arms. She vanished through the chromium doors of an apartment-house that vaulted aërially into the blue.

Drawing slowly on a cigarette, his brow knotted, Joe nervously meditated on the chances for that evening or the morrow. Maybe if he started in by praising that tan caterpillar she called a dog—these dog people, they open right up if you pay their mutts a compliment. But the swagger and self-assurance that had always served him so well with the dames, Joe felt fast oozing out of him. After a while he walked dejectedly back to the Endoll Radio Repair Shop; and despite his cataclysmic experience, he did his afternoon's work with a sense of the dignity of labor. He meant to have a shop of his own, pretty soon.

"I'm not afraid," she retorted. "I just didn't know I had a dog for a neighbor."

In the eating-place, Joe could scarcely have said whether he was listlessly toying with lamb stew or with brown paper and tasteless gravy. He hurried off down the street.

But *she* was not there in the evening light. She did not appear when the purple deepened to a pellucid blue in which the ends of Joe's cigarettes burned redly. The outlines of lovers began to melt into close, smothered shapes; and never—not even in his first days in New York—had Joe felt so lonely.

He was crazy, anyway, thinking she could even want to look at him! No use telling himself he was just as good as anybody. That old line didn't go, now. He was in love; and one is never in love with an equal, but always with a transcendent being. When the sense of equality asserts itself, love is on the wane. Joe was almost ill with the feeling of unworthiness. He dragged himself homeward, a mere imitation of the once carefree Joe Purvey.

In the upper hall he came within an inch of colliding with "Second Floor, Rear." He was "Second Floor Front, Left;" and "Second Floor Front, Right" was occupied, in the grayish impersonality of Mrs. Tynedge's house, by someone of singular silence and singular invisibility.

"Second Floor, Rear," flushed hotly; for she had on a kimono and slippers, her hair was a sight, her hands clutched towel, washrag, soap, hand-brush, tooth-brush. She had looked out into the hall, as she always did, and the road to the bathroom had been clear. And then *he*, with his head bowed, had to barge into her! He—of all people!

SHE recalled how, some weeks ago, she had peeped, with a tremulous, guilty glance over her shoulder, at the mail on the marble shelf of the tall gilt mirror in the entrance hall. *"Mr. Joseph Purvey."* That must be he—"Second Floor, Front." Mrs. Tynedge had told her he had come from "somewheres up the State;" and the postmark on the envelope bore the stamp, "Delstock, N. Y."

She had been angry, very angry, with herself, for her curiosity. Her cheeks had gone red. She had looked a moment or two in the glass, once again conscious of the something deep inside her which made a thickness rise in her throat when she wanted to speak—to certain people; wanted, even, just to pass the time of day with them. What she saw was, undeniably, a lovely image, of delicate oval face, an aura of golden hair, a small rich mouth and violet, long-lashed eyes.

"Excuse me!" said Mr. Joseph Purvey, in the yellowish light of the hall. "Didn't mean to knock you over."

Vaguely gallant, hat in hand, he grinned, his mind elsewhere. Although now and then he had seen the gold of "Second Floor, Rear's" hair illuminate the dinginess of this house, now it made no impression on him. Mrs. Tynedge had told him, "Her name's Carewlin, Enid Carewlin—she's a milliner's model, and real sweet." Real sweet! *He* hadn't noticed it! She hardly responded to his good-mornings and good-evenings. If you asked him, he'd say she was a pretty cold proposition.

"I should hope you didn't!" she said now, with trembling severity, acutely knowing that as usual she was saying what she didn't want to say. She felt like a fool, too—her hands full of toilet things!

"Didn't what?" asked Joe, his thoughts on a dark-haired vision.

"Mean to knock me over!"

It simply had to stop—that stupid quivering whenever she caught a glimpse of "Second Floor, Front," or thought of him during the weary day. It had to *stop!*

Joe could never resist mollifying girls when they got sore at him. Though why she should be sore at him, he couldn't imagine. "I was just over to the park," he offered. "It's a swell night."

"Is it?" The tone was short. In her heart she felt the barb of her shyness.

"You bet! Swell! I spend lots of time in the park. I work up on Columbus. Endoll Radio Repair—guess you know where it is." He leaned his big frame against the distempered wall and produced cigarettes. "Around noon, the park is a regular dog-house. . . . Have one?"

"No, thanks. I rarely smoke." And she cried to herself: "Why am I standing here like this with him?"

"I don't think a girl should smoke too much," said Joe, lighting up. "Unless she don't inhale."

"Don't you, really?" It had a mocking sound. "Well, good night." She swept away from him.

Real sweet! Oh, sure! Mixed with plenty of vinegar! And then she was forgotten. In his room Joe sank into utter glumness, gnawing a thumbnail. How he could ever reach his ineffable vision, he did not see. You just go up to a girl like her and start talking—you spoil your last chance!

Presently he heard a padding of slippers, a rustling of silken kimono; then the click of the key in the lock of "Second Floor, Rear." He sat far into the depths of night, until there were no sounds save such as an old house mysteriously makes with walls and timbers. At the very bottom of despair, he was rising to go to bed—he had smoked himself out of cigarettes—when a smile, brilliant as sunlight, flashed to his lips, ignited his blue eyes.

"Oh, boy—oh, boy!" He slapped a large, solid thigh. "Oh, boy! You sure were a dumb cluck, not thinking of that sooner!"

"HOW can I get me a dog?"

Mike, Joe's fellow repair-man, looked up from the workbench. "What do you want a dog for?"

"I just want a dog." It was none of Mike's business, what for.

If you had a dog, you could talk to anybody, in the park. You could just go up to *her* and start in talking about your dogs—about what they ate and if they had the pip, or something. And she wouldn't think you were trying to flirt with her. She wouldn't freeze you. Talking "dog"—that was okay. He'd just stroll up to her, sort of casual: "That's a cute little pom you've got there. Mine? Say, he's only a mutt." For probably it would be only a mutt. Well, all he needed was a chance to get talking to her. After that—a cinch.

The boss stepped out of the cubbyhole office. "If you aint particular," he said to Joe, "you could maybe pick one up down at the Speyer Hospital. It'd cost you only two dollars. That's where my kid got his."

Joe grabbed his coat. "I'll have a look at Mrs. Larsen's set, over in 386, and then I'll beat it down to this Speyer place. Where is it?"

When Joe reappeared at four-thirty, the boss asked: "Did you get a dog?"

"I picked one out, but I haven't got him yet. They investigate you, first. They must be afraid you'll bite the dog."

But at last, having been investigated and certified as to his not being cruel or something, Joe found himself in possession of a creature. Two imploring brown eyes, behind which wagged a bush of tail, had studied Joe through the bars of a cage. It was part setter, part collie, and entirely rangy. It was half-and-half, if you wished to be lenient. Otherwise, you would have had to deal in fractions. There was a touching meekness. He and Joe had instantly clicked; and on the ride uptown in a taxi, Joe had dubbed him, "Cæsar;" perhaps because Joe felt that now he himself had crossed the Rubicon. . . .

Just then, May took a notion that it was March. A dirty, swollen sky pressed on the murky city, pouring down wind-driven cold torrents. The dog people, Joe included, sloshed about the muddy park, water dripping from hats and noses. Joe spied the pom, which now resembled a drowned and bad-tempered worm. But it was not the dream, it was a colored maid, whom the beast yanked from tree to tree.

A dreary, fruitless week!

Toward the end of it Cæsar, shaking a mighty spattering of raindrops, bounded straight at Second Floor, Rear. He had taken, then and there, an unmistakable fancy to her. His paws smeared the blue kimono; his friendly baying filled the house. "Second Floor, Rear" frantically waved towel, soap, brushes. Her face was crimson, at this new, unutterable surprise. On his hind legs, Cæsar wagged the whole latter half of him.

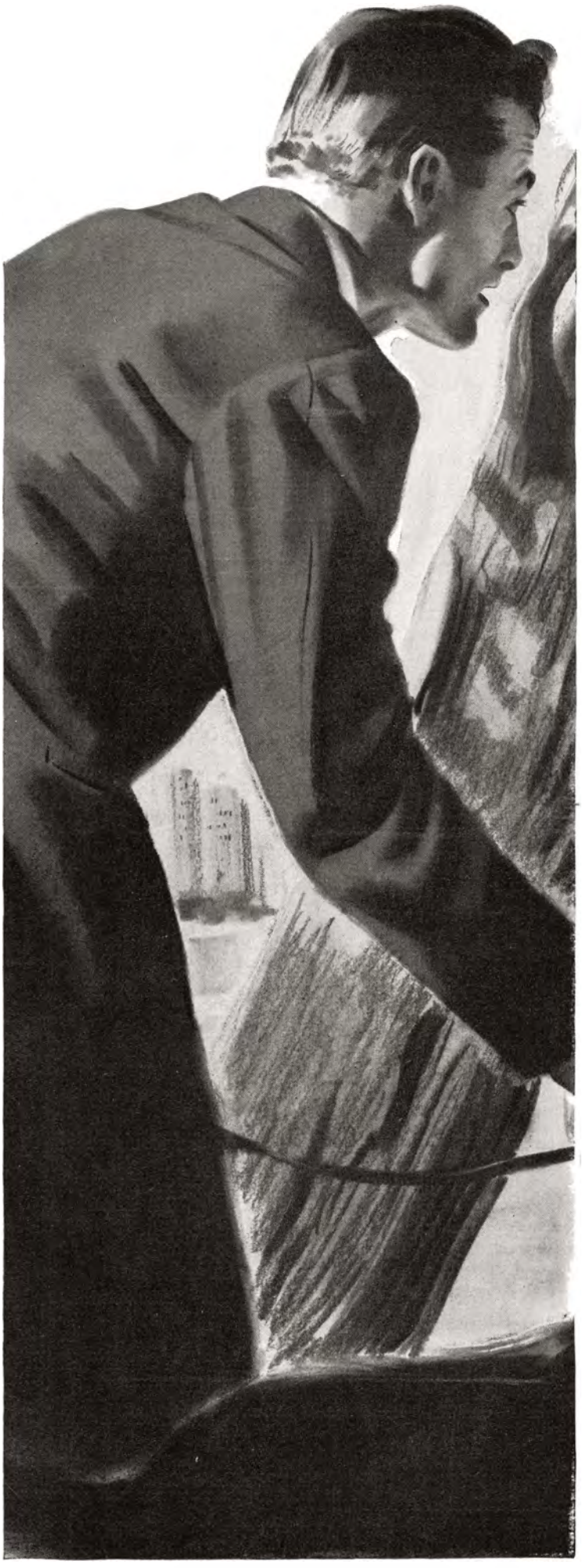
"You don't have to be afraid," said Joe, pulling Cæsar down and tangling a hand in the dog's dripping coat.

"I'm not afraid!" she retorted. "I—I just didn't know I had a dog for a neighbor."

"That's right. He's nice and quiet, mostly. Lie down, Cæsar! I got him because I felt kind of out of it, over in the park, without a dog. So I got me one. If you want to talk to somebody, in the park, all you need is a dog—you don't need an introduction, formal; only a dog. Then you can talk to anybody, and they won't think you're trying to flirt with them." Here Joe laughed, aware that he had overspoken. An uncomfortable warmth spread through him.

"I see," said Second Floor, Rear.

Still feeling the uncomfortable warmth, Joe laughed again. "I ought to start cutting down on lunches or maybe cigarettes. Figuring it out, I bet he costs me a couple of bucks a week—I mean, to



"I guess with dogs it's like with people—

ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL

some take to each other and some don't."

feed. I thought I got me a dog, but I got me a hippopotamus—I mean, his appetite."

Enid found that she was stroking Cæsar's wet head. "He's nice," she said. "He's worth it, isn't he?"

Amazingly, there was no constriction in her throat; the unaccountable, terrifying inhibition which had so long bedeviled her seemed to have melted away. After all, she was talking to the dog, not directly to the man; and that made it beautifully simple. But then she thought, with a rush of painful bitterness: "You needn't be introduced—not if there's a dog!" That was what *he* had said! And that was why he had got a dog! Someone in the park, whom he wanted to talk to! A woman—no doubt of that! Tears started to her eyes.

Oh, what did she care? He and his dog! But he mustn't see these idiotic tears! So once again she fled; and the click of the key in her lock was savage.

"What's biting her?" Joe wondered. "She gone nuts? She can't be friendly, even when she tries!"

A ponderous footfall approached from the nether gloom. The stairs creaked under Mrs. Tynedge's expansiveness, as a head of gray hair done up in curlers rose into view.

"I think there's a leak in the bathroom," Mrs. Tynedge said. "Oh, dear! This time of night!"

"Let's have a look around," said Joe affably.

No leak was discoverable. "Guess maybe it's in the pipes, somewheres," said Joe. "Say, that Second Floor, Rear—she's kind of crabby, isn't she? She starts talking to you; then all of a sudden she looks at you like she wanted to snap your head off. And she beats it. What do you mean—she's real sweet? That gives me the laugh."

"But she is!" insisted Mrs. Tynedge. "Real sweet! If you ask me, though,"—her voice fell to a confiding whisper—"she's timid, too timid for her own good. There used to be a nice young man calling on her when she first came to me. But she's man-shy, if you ask me. So he quit."

"That so?" Joe was disinterested. Cæsar also had investigated the leak; and looking at him, Joe anticipated the first day of sunshine, when Cæsar would fulfill his glorious mission. With this promise gleaming before him, Joe went, whistling, to his room. . . .

He woke up next morning with a shout of joy. The sun blazed in a speckless sky. Immense in orange-and-green striped pajamas, Joe sprang to the window, to verify the miracle of sparkling street, gilded cornices, dulcet air. In the sheerness of his joy he lunged at Cæsar. There had been but scant play in Cæsar's three years of life; and distrusting these antics, which might end with a clout on the head, Cæsar shriveled into a corner, tail between his legs.

"You son-of-a-gun!" Joe bawled, rumpling Cæsar's nondescript ear. "We'll be seeing her today! We'll be seeing her, you old son-of-a-gun! That's what I got you for!"

Cæsar caught on. So this was what they meant by play! It was good! Great stuff! He made a noise in his shaggy throat, and it sounded like: "Son-of-a-gun yourself!"

NOON! . . . . There she was! There!

Then followed long moments of hanging back; and again, a welling sense of unworthiness, while Joe watched her glide, pure and cool in crisp white, dark head poised proudly, over the lush grass. He gave a characteristic squaring of his shoulders, a jerk at his blue tie. But he couldn't get himself to move! What was the matter with him, anyway? Wasn't he Joe Purvey? He had a fair idea of how handsome he was. With a scowling effort he forced his legs into slow motion.

"That's a cute little pom you've got there." He couldn't be talking to her! Why not? He was! He had a dog, too!

She paid Cæsar no compliment in return; and Joe's prepared speech evaporated. His whole plan fell to pieces. He grew red. His dream snatched the yapping pom to her breast, as though the mutt Cæsar were a plague. Joe's head spinning, he plunged:

"Say, that certainly is a swell little dog. A pom—huh? He don't take to Cæsar, though, does he? I guess with dogs it's like with people—some of them take to each other and some don't." He laughed, hollowly. He wasn't getting anywhere. "Some people take to each other, straight off, and some don't. See what I mean? And dogs—they're like that—" He was gazing full at her, hopelessly; and still wildly hopeful.

"Yes," she said. "That's very interesting." She sent chill, gray-green eyes right through him, to the marrow. Her features, which he had thought so wondrous, looked sharp as if cut out of flint. She turned her back. Through a blur, Joe saw her walk over to the man with the derby and the wolfhound. She set the pom down on the grass.

Joe tugged Cæsar to a far bench. The *(Please turn to page 70)*

U.S. TODAY

An Incident of Family Life

By

HENRIETTA RIPPERGER

"DO you really think Dick will like it when I get it fixed up? Do you think he'll be glad he married me and has a nice little home, even if it's no bigger than a minute?"

Eileen, my new daughter-in-law, sat on the foot of the studio bed and looked eagerly up at me. In her red-striped suit and soft buttoned blouse and amber curls, she looked like a lovely child. Childlike, too, her wide eyes asked anxiously for a favorable answer.

I glanced around the rented ground-floor room that Dick and Eileen had taken after their wedding, so Eileen could be near the army camp. The gas-log fireplace, the red wallpaper, the carpet with its sprawling flowers, showed it had once been a parlor. Now a bureau stood beside the mantel, the studio bed occupied one side of the room, and to the right a gas-ring, a sink, a refrigerator and a hanging shelf filled with dishes and groceries were only partially concealed by an ornate screen. Since Dick had successfully finished his officers' training course, he would presumably serve here for three months, perhaps, or if he was picked for instruction, for much longer. So Eileen had decided to decorate.

"He'll love the way you're going to do it," I said. "You just wait and see when he gets home tonight."

"I've tried so hard to give this room an air." Eileen walked to the bureau and stood straightening the objects on it: a picture of Dick in uniform in a blue leather frame, a square perfume-bottle with her initials in gold. She turned to the bed and smoothed an invisible wrinkle in the crêpe-de-chine blanket cover. "I made this myself," she said. "I even sewed on the satin initials, and I bought this." She indicated a splashy plant with great pointed leaves that stood in front of the window. "But now I can make the entire room over so it'll be just darling. Dick simply has to agree about the colors and the materials. I do so want him to like it. Oh, Mother Breton!" She crossed the room and gave me a soft hug. "Isn't it wonderful! Just think, Dick and I are really married and living in a place all our own!"

My eyes, focused idly on the gas-ring on top of the refrigerator, filled suddenly with hot tears. I thought of our house, of Norah's big sunny kitchen, Ed's and my bedroom with the sleeping-porch and the pear tree beyond it, the cheerful living-room with Freddy and Charles playing jacks on the floor, Babs in the big chair near the radio. I glanced at Eileen, so eager, so terribly in love, making such a gallant attempt to create a home in one room, in somebody's dreary extra parlor. I felt distinctly irritated with Dick. Even if he *did* have so much to do all day, marching people around fields and that sort of thing, he ought to find time to be appreciative of Eileen's efforts. I told myself he must be made to take an interest. In spite of being married, she seemed so alone in the world.

"Eileen," I said, "I've never asked you about your family, but Dick has told me that neither your father nor mother is living."

"They were both killed in an automobile accident in my freshman year in college. They were driving back to Kansas," Eileen said. She looked down to shield the expression in her eyes, and picked up a cigarette. "After that, there was just me. But I made some pretty good friends. I roomed with Twick."

"Twick?" I asked. "The one who couldn't get to the wedding? Oh, is she the girl who is here now, helping you fix things up?"

"Yes. I had an apartment with her in New York. She decorated our whole place there all by herself. Twick's so clever, and knows so much. I wouldn't know where to begin without her. It was just like her to offer to come out here and do this."

"Let's see what she found this morning—the—the—" I held out a hand.

"Swatches," Eileen said promptly. "Twick used to work in a decorating place. She knows all the words and music. These are the ones we liked best," she went on. "Twick brought them from New York." She handed me a piece of gray wallpaper, an inch or two of reddish-brown carpeting, a bit of maize taffeta, and a scrap of heavy turquoise-colored silk. "I'd have had a *chaise-longue* of the turquoise, and used the corn color for draperies and a ruffled dressing table," she said. "It would have been lovely with an oak-leaf red rug and gray walls. But it seems the red velvet fleur-de-lis wallpaper is the pride of my landlady's heart, and can't be touched. So good-by to all this!" She gave the scrap of turquoise silk a regretful little kiss.

"What's that one?" I reached for a creamy sample with huge cabbage roses on it, smoothed it onto the arm of the dingy chair. "It's really lovely." I peered at the price tag. "Whee!"

"I know, and you'd never believe how much it takes to cover just one chair. And as for hangings and the couch—" Eileen stopped dismally.

"Yes, we'll have to count that out." I was firm. "I'm sure your Twick will be back soon with something we'll like better, anyway." I got up and started for the door. "I brought along my electric sewing-machine. It's out in the car. Tomorrow we can buy the material and all get to work. Between the three of us, we'll have things done in no time. I also picked up the organdy bedspread and curtains from Dick's room at home, and the pair of silver lamps that came after the wedding."

"Did you?" Eileen's face warmed up with a big smile. "Oh, Mother Breton, you're a darling! Let me go out with you and get them."

"What on earth!" I stopped on the back steps and stared. Across the back yard, and down it, soldiers in khaki came sauntering along in twos and threes. "Are we in barracks, or something?"

"Oh, that's my landlady's war effort. She feels sorry for the boys out in that dusty camp, so she's turned her woodshed into a bathroom, with two tubs, and lots of big soft towels, nice soap, and hot and cold water. Anybody in uniform can take a bath here." she laughed. "One day somebody dropped his identification tag. Instead of sending it back to the camp, she mailed it to his mother! It made quite a stir. . . . . Hiya, Joe!" She lowered her voice as she said to me: "That's one of Dick's buddies who *didn't* pass. He's back with the buck privates again."

"Was it such a stiff course?" I undid the trunk at the back of the car.

"No, but it was put into such a short time—seventy days. There was so *much* to remember, and the reserve officers were always talking in your ear when you were trying to give orders. A lot of men just couldn't take it. Here, give me some of those." We went back into the house, our arms full. "If Dicky hadn't been so smart, we wouldn't be sure of staying here."

"Sure?" Only the young are sure, I thought—and dismissed it. Why not be like them—gay, hopeful and full of courage?

INSIDE, we found Twick had come in—a small compact girl, becomingly dressed in navy and pink, with a somewhat indestructible air. She was pretty like the china with rosebuds on it in a store window; it's only after you'd looked at it for a while that you saw it was not quite as nice as you'd thought. Twick settled herself sidewise in her chair, crossing one knee over the other, and spread out a new batch of samples.

"Oh, they really are lovely," I said. I leaned over the pieces of soft gray-blues in various materials. It would be fun to have a free hand—to start almost from scratch, and do even one room.

"Well, we'll get an interesting effect by using the different textures," Twick said; "and at the same *(Please turn to page 80)*

Photo by Nick Lazarnick

"Don't you care how your home looks?" asked Eileen. "You know, darling," said Dick, "I'd like to go on a party tonight—just one bang-up party."

"It's an awful gamble; but if it works, we'll go places. Are you with me?"

The story of a gallant girl who knew that marriages go bust not with a bang but a whimper.

BY WINIFRED HALSTED

ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

A TALL rangy young man and a small dark girl shot out of the kitchen door and slammed it behind them with such excited violence that a flurry of elderly flakes of paint shook down like a benign flurry of blessings. They skipped the bottom step of the back porch entirely, and were halfway across the lawn, making wonderful time toward a car parked on the side-street, when a wild yell of frustration rose from the front of the house, and a mob scene sprinted around the corner and filled the air with confetti, rice and shrieks of laughter. But the car jumped away from the curb cooperatively, and Migs Branfrith,—Migs Taylor until an hour ago,—waved a derisive hand at the mob scene. Then she leaned back comfortably, flicked off the top layer of confetti from her new tweed suit, and said cheerfully:

"First time in my life I ever ran out on a good party!"

Tom Branfrith shifted gears with a happy, careless scrape. He said he'd always heard that people didn't enjoy their own weddings, but that it must have been all propaganda.

"Because I never had a better time in my life," he said. "Let's do it often, what do you say?"

"Often as you like," said Migs. "I'd marry you *any* day in the week!" Their eyes met for an instant, and expanded their inadequate words into something so articulate that Migs felt even more breathless than when she had tumbled into the car.

She moved a little, just enough so that her shoulder brushed Tom's, to prove to herself that they were really together, and that now, for always, when she wanted to turn toward him, he would be there. When anything especially good happened, or anything bad, so that she wanted to reach out and touch him for sharing, or for reassurance, she could, instead of having to imagine him with her. And no more small good-bys—for overnight, until day after tomorrow at lunch, until Saturday night. Small good-bys, but stretches of emptiness, gone now for good. Migs had to look out at the extreme realism of the neatly groomed Westchester landscape that was sliding backward as they drove toward New York before she looked at Tom again.

He was there, all right, his hat a gay fraction of an inch farther back on his forehead than usual, his blue eyes darkly bright with excitement. He *had* enjoyed his own wedding, Migs thought, already reminiscent about it. He had been in a glow. She smiled, remembering it, and thought that if Tom's gift for expansive enjoyment was what his father interpreted as an indication of his not being altogether grown-up, she was glad he wasn't. She loved the way Tom could turn a beam of happiness on a moment and illuminate it until it became an intimate sort of aurora borealis.

"Tom's a great boy," Mr. Branfrith had said. "Never saw anybody get more fun out of life than he does. His mother and I used to worry about how far he'd really grown up, but we figured just the ordinary course of events could take the joy out of life for people fast enough these days, without our doing anything to help it along—"

The aunt, or the cousin, or the old family friend—whoever it was he'd been talking to behind Migs' head—had probably made some appropriate answer, but it had been lost in the din of congratulations. There had been a terrific amount of noise for a while there! Migs rested her head against the back of the seat, suddenly conscious that she was glad to have left it behind.

"Tired?" asked Tom.

"Not exactly; a little winded. All those stalwart friends of yours—"

"And all those beautiful hyenas who roomed with you!"

"Now, now, only one. What size rooms do you think I got my education in, anyhow?"

"Speaking of being stalwart, the weight some of those guys have put on! Four or five years out of training, and *baby!* First time I was ever really glad I'd managed a football team instead of playing on it."

"Just a touch vain, aren't you?"

"Why not? I've been so vain since four-thirty this afternoon that the buttons on my nice new suit are all hanging by a thread!"

Migs pushed her arm through his and gave it a quick squeeze, to the detriment of his steering. Her mother had said once that Tom was certainly very attractive, but she wondered if he'd ever learned to think much about anyone else. . . . Well, Migs thought magnanimously, her mother practically had to think up something to wonder about. The men daughters married couldn't be flawless; that would be against nature.

Her mother and father had been very reasonable, though, and hadn't insisted that she and Tom put off being married until they could get along on Tom's salary, or anything equally impractical and tiresome. She'd heard her mother talking about it during some of those long telephone conversations she carried on with friends.

"Oh, yes, Migs will keep on working," Mrs. Taylor would say, happily sharing details of the romance as it progressed. "These children don't manage things the way we did, but they manage! And Migs is so active, and used to being with people, I don't know what she'd do with herself in a tiny apartment all day long."

Usually the discussion went on from there to the part about how much more interesting a time husband had than wives, or used to have, in their day. Seeing all their friends on the commuting trains, and having business luncheons, instead of seeing no one but the ice-man and the children, and the green colored girl in the kitchen. That was a familiar color-combination which had first puzzled then amused Migs in her youth. . . . She gave a small giggle, and Tom said, "Now what?" flatteringly, and instantly aware of everything she did.

"Nothing. . . . Wasn't it swell that nobody cried?"

"Why should they? Beautiful bride; handsome groom, rising member of large insurance company. At least, if he's not noticeably rising, a good, solid forty-dollar-a-week wage-slave with a job he can't lose unless he kicks the president in the pants! What more could you ask?"

"Nothing," said Migs, "absolutely nothing."

SHE sat for several moments in a thick haze of happiness, just thinking about it. Apparently Tom was a little hazy too, because he stopped for a red light several yards late.

"People shouldn't cry at weddings," went on Migs, jarred back into coherence. "But they often do; sentiment, I suppose."

"And wishing *they* were young again, and all of that."

"Well," said Migs, "from what I've seen of it, getting old doesn't attract me. And if you have to worry about money, on top of everything else. . . . I guess if they feel like a few sentimental tears, they have it coming to them. But imagine—"

She felt tender toward all humanity: Unhappy humanity, and humanity whose happiness had come and gone, or had worn thin at the edges and disappeared. She invited Tom to look at their parents, both sets.

"They're lucky, really," she said; "they still have homes, even if the paint has practically left ours naked. But think what fun they'd have had out of this if they could have dropped houses and lots, and flat silver, and checks in our laps."

"I'm just as glad they couldn't. You know what I mean."

Migs glanced at him in surprise. Every so often, Tom exploded depth-bombs of realism which startled her, agreeably. She said she knew what he meant.

"But nice for *them.* Sort of a—a vicarious way of still being in on things—"

"Listen, how did we get on this sprightly topic?"

"I don't know," said Migs, "but maybe you began it. Or maybe I started to think about limping through the years hand in hand with you, while you got straggly and bald and doddery!"

"Why look at the future, simple, when the present's swell? Today's good enough for me; it always has been."

That, thought Migs, was one reason he enjoyed things. He boxed it all up right where it was. It was a good system, she thought; it made a person pretty nice to live with. . . .

Bermuda was wonderful. It was all there, just like the pictures: pink roofs, white sand and blue, blue water, Migs marveled at it.

"Here I was," she complained, "all conditioned against falling for advertising after years of being disillusioned, and now you drag me off to Bermuda—"

"Struggling—"

"Fighting every step of the way; and here's Bermuda, just as advertised, only more so! If my sales-resistance's all broken down again, remember you're to blame!"

"I can take it. What's one more problem to a man who has a wife like you to start with?"

"You went into it with your eyes open," Migs reminded him unsympathetically.

"Wide open," said Tom; "and what's more, I didn't need a second look! Quick on the trigger, the Branfriths are. . . . I'm only warning you for your own good."

Migs gazed at him fatuously, she couldn't help it—things were too good. When they spoke, understatement was some defense, but you can't look an understatement, the truth will out. She said plaintively that they never seemed to keep more than one step ahead of the maudlin.

"If that," agreed Tom; "and who cares?"

"Not I; I like it."

Migs was liking everything. She was glad Bermuda had turned out so well (although what wouldn't have?), because Tom had saved the money for the trip with much groaning and puffing. As he explained, he wasn't used to it; but it had proved, Migs thought, what he could do if he put his mind on it.

They went out to wander around in the sun and saunter up and down the streets of Hamilton. They commented unfavorably on other people's bicycle technique, looked in shop windows, and were lured inevitably by certain windows in particular. Migs agreed weakly that it wouldn't break any bones to go in and look around.

She could feel Tom watching her while she looked at the beautiful soft tweeds, warm and glowing as the Bermuda colors themselves.

"How about buying a yard?"

"Waste of money," said Migs firmly, in a "Get thee behind me, tweeds!" voice. "I can't sew a stitch, for one thing."

"Oh, my socks and buttons," muttered Tom. "I knew this would happen! Can you cook? Tell me now and get it over with!"

"What do you think I've been reading all those articles about dinner for six on two burners in ten minutes for?" she asked indignantly.

"Show, probably, vain show. . . . Well, then, how about a sweater?"

Migs started to protest; but the cashmere sweaters did tempt her painfully, though she tried to conceal it. Tom suggested that the orange-yellow one might be—something!

"With that brown suit, wouldn't it be?"

"It would be marvelous," admitted Migs. "But Tom—"

"Can't a man buy his wife a sweater?"

Some useful atavistic instinct kept her mouth closed while a man bought his wife a sweater. It was a queer thing, but Tom looked even taller than usual as he paid the clerk and waited for the package. About eight feet tall, instead of his customary six feet one. He expanded in a way that fascinated Migs, and she saw that this was one of those moments over which he shed enjoyment so intensely that it became so bright it almost hurt.

It made her thoughtful to see him get so much pleasure from giving her something she wouldn't have bought herself, and to watch the assurance that it gave him adding inches to his stature.

"This gives me an idea," began Tom, uncannily echoing her thoughts.

His idea was for her to dress up in the orange-yellow sweater, and then they'd go on an excursion to the Swizzle Inn.

"We can't go home without having had a swizzle," he explained; "what would people say?"

"It would cause talk," Migs said solemnly, "and we can't have that. Gossip about the Branfriths? Never!" ("The Branfriths," she repeated in her mind. "The Branfriths!" She loved it.)

When they sailed out of Hamilton Harbor a few days later, lightly toasted by the sun and as shiny with happiness as a couple of mirrors, they were pleased to discover that they had none of that flat, end-of-vacation feeling. They still had something extra special to look forward to, for one thing, because they had saved the last fraction of their respective three weeks' holiday for setting up housekeeping.

"That's one thing to be said for working for large corporations," said Tom. "The approving way they hand you another week as a bonus for getting married makes things pretty nice."

"They're Indian givers when it comes to females, though," said Migs. "At least the Orion Bank and Trust Company is. Here's an extra week, and have a good time and so on; but you're out of a job within six months after the happy occasion, all the same."

"What of it?" said Tom. "You've been saying you were fed up with the place for months, anyhow. No reason why you shouldn't find another job right away."

"No reason at all," echoed Migs.

They started briskly around the deck and Migs said she certainly expected somebody to snap her up, a good secretary like her. . . . Their constitutional proceeded in time to the rhythm of financial plans. They planned their budget all over again, in spite of knowing it backward, on the firm foundation of their combined weekly incomes. They congratulated themselves for the hundredth time on the apartment they'd discovered, which was perfect and yet within their means.

"*That* was genius," said Migs dreamily, "sheer genius!"

SHE found no reason to qualify her opinion after the strenuous but interesting process of moving in was accomplished. The apartment was on the top floor of an old house on Twelfth Street, and you had to be in good condition to walk up the three flights of stairs without arriving in a state of collapse. But, as Tom pointed out, the exercise was good for a couple of office workers, and Migs said it was worth a little Alpine climbing to have a fireplace.

The bathroom plumbing was a little less than strictly contemporary, but the walls were papered with fat silver fishes who blew insouciant bubbles at tubby red-and-blue boats. The kitchenette had almost certainly been a closet in an earlier incarnation, but Tom painted the shelves and containers bright red, and the stove worked very well, except for the oven. The living-room was really good-sized, and when they had arranged the wedding presents, the yield from the Taylor and Branfrith attics, and the two or three pieces of furniture they had bought at the August furniture sales, the effect was not only livable but attractive.

Migs enjoyed doing it. She discovered an unexpected flair for coaxing a room into

"Well," he said finally, "let me know, if you ever want to try it. There's no one I'd rather have with me."

putting its best foot forward, and thinking up ways that gave it added personality, like the right costume jewelry on a dress. . . . She found she'd like to have spent a lot of time on that sort of fussing about.

"Probably just as well I sha'n't be able to," she told herself. "I might develop into a curtain-twitcher and a furniture-shifter. I might get one of those compulsions to move things around just to fool myself into thinking I was busy, filling up time."

Filling up time, it soon developed, was not to be one of Migs' problems. By organization, and division of labor, she and Tom developed a morning routine that got them out of the apartment in time to make their desks by nine, but it was the other end of the day that Migs found a little complicated. Between five o'clock, when she left the bank, and six o'clock, when the chain stores close, there isn't any time to spare if even the simplest dinner is to be prepared before too Continental a dinner-hour. And there's not much time to shop around for economy's sake and find the place that happens to be selling chopped meat for three cents less a pound than the next one. It worried Migs a little when it occurred to her that if she had more time to spend on collecting food, she might spend noticeably less money on it.

Tom was very good about helping (to his mother's frank surprise), and wonderful about dishes. But just as the smallest bugs seem to bite with the most virulence, it was the little things, like keeping track of laundry, in addition to the familiar and inevitable dress-pressing and stocking-washing, which contributed most noticeably to Migs' occasional impression that life was rather like a fireman's response to a continual series of three-alarm fires. Still, she and Tom were together, and that more than made up for a certain permanent breathlessness. And while it did shove going to bed and getting up pretty close together, it was fun to entertain, and to be entertained and then talk it all over with Tom. Evenings when they were alone were just as good. They could linger over dinner in a warm domestic lassitude, and trade events of the days, happily sure of reciprocal interest and amusement.

Migs often brought home echoes of the recurrent crises in the life of Archer Templon, the young junior officer at the Orion Bank & Trust Company whose secretary she was. That his wife's name was Bee, and that there were many things Bee had to have and do, Migs couldn't help knowing after almost two years of unavoidably overheard telephone conversations.

"I'd like to take the day off next time the directors meet and promotions are announced," she said one night. "I don't think I'll be able to stand the strain. Our Archer will be just like a sophomore waiting in a cold sweat for a bid from the right fraternity. If he's not hiked up a step, I *don't* see how he can go home and face Bee!"

"That guy," said Tom commiseratingly, "had better be a success—or else!"

"It won't be Bee's fault if he doesn't make the grade," agreed Migs, and then went off into a brief but meditative silence.

THEY went out of town for week-ends fairly often, visiting a doubled list of friends, and going to the elder Branfriths in Jersey, and the Taylors in Westchester. Migs and Tom liked going away on Saturday afternoons, but they loved coming back to their own fireside. When they came in one Sunday night early in December after a week-end with the Branfriths, Migs flopped down in a chair, pushed her hat back on her head, drew a long breath, and looked affectionately around the room. Tom set a suitcase down in the middle of the floor and sank with equal promptness into a chair.

"Me too," he said with a grin.

Migs explained hastily that it wasn't that she didn't like going to his family's. It was just that sometimes when you listened to older people, life looked a little difficult.

"It's like mountain-climbing," she said: "you're all right as long as you keep on looking up; but if you look down, the height gets you, and you're ruined. We know *we're* going to get along, but to see people working away to keep things from getting any worse, without any idea of their ever being *better*—it's scary."

"The casualty list is what gets you," Tom told her. "The mortgages that have been foreclosed since the last time, and the operations, and the companies that blow up—"

"I have to hand it to them," Migs followed her own train of thought, "—those women who go around saying that if they can't afford a maid any longer, they're really better off in an apartment, or living with their children, than in a big old house without the latest conveniences. And that if they can't poke around in their gardens any more because of their rheumatism, they don't mind giving up the gardens."

Because Tom didn't agree with her as quickly as she had subconsciously expected, Migs looked at him inquiringly. He seemed to be revolving something in his mind as he absently took off his topcoat and wandered about with it. At last she said: "Well, *don't* you think they're good about it?"

Tom said that naturally he did, but he hadn't been thinking of that. He'd been thinking that suppose Migs had a garden, or a pet rubber plant, or something.

"It never struck me exactly this way before," he said, "but—I'd hate like hell to see *you* lose a garden, if it had meant a lot to you."

"Relax," advised Migs. "I haven't got a garden. . . . I will say, though, at this dark hour, that it looks to me as though if a war didn't get you when you're young, a depression knocks you off when you're old."

Tom said he didn't know what you could do about a war, but there were ways in which you might pile up a few sandbags for protection from depressions.

"Aha," said Migs; "there comes the insurance point of view!"

"All right, but there's a lot in it," said Tom with one of his rare fits of earnestness. "I believe in it."

Migs said casually that that was probably the correct sales attitude, and that as a matter of fact if Tom felt that way about it, she'd bet he *could* sell insurance if the fancy ever struck him.

"Believing in things certainly makes you convincing," she said. "And then people *do* seem to take to you. . . . I can't see why, but I do myself!"

"White of you," said Tom amiably. "Well, I never really considered it, but that's what Uncle George does, of course. He was the one who helped me get my job here."

Migs liked Uncle George. He wasn't Tom's real uncle; he was his father's cousin. George Branfrith had never married, so he'd always taken a pleasant avuncular pride in Tom's progress, and been pleased about things like elections to class offices, and being man- *(Please turn to page 76)*

Mrs. Britchett Speaks On Strategy

"Mrs. Britchett gave an interesting account of General Timoshenko's early life, describing in detail his rise from a Ukrainian peasant boy to the savior of Russia."

By EDWARD STREETER
who wrote "DAILY EXCEPT SUNDAY"
ILLUSTRATED BY CARL ROSE

MR. BRITCHETT produced a long cardboard tube from the hall bench. He sank with a grunt into his easy chair and unbuttoned his vest, an act of relaxation which always annoyed Mrs. Britchett. Then he carefully extracted a large map from the tube. Mrs. Britchett eyed it suspiciously.

"What's that thing?"

"Map," replied Mr. Britchett simply. "War map."

"You don't think you're going to hang it up in here, I hope?"

"Where would you hang it? Cellar?"

"After listening to radio news from the time I wake up in the morning, I don't see why I have to sit here and stare at a map all day."

Without bothering to reply, Mr. Britchett tapped his teeth thoughtfully with his fingernails. Having thus warmed them up, he whistled a little tune through them while he inspected the room. He selected the west wall, and held the map against it with outstretched arms.

Mrs. Britchett's voice was shrill: "You can't. You can't do it. It spoils the whole room."

"So'll the Germans and Japs if we don't get busy," muttered Mr. Britchett cryptically, wincing as he drove home a thumbtack. "There!" He stood back to see if it was straight. "Now, at least you'll get some idear of what's going on. F'rinstance, somewheres around here is the place where they got the Germans in a pocket—"

"Please don't say, 'They got.'"

"And please don't interrupt. This is war. What difference does it make how you say things? Now I can't find the place. Why do they put so many names on these maps?"

"Men always make everything so complicated," complained Mrs. Britchett. "Now

and my people. I do not desire [illegible] and despoilment [illegible] with a brilliant [illegible] ruthlessly galloped by the fortunes of war to humiliation [illegible] terms of justice and mercy. This [illegible] set to fetch them

Mrs. Britchett's voice was shrill. "You can't. You can't do it. It spoils the whole room."

"Then the Russian lines would come together like a lobster claw and bite off a division or two."

what the Russians ought to do is to go straight through to Berlin. Then they might get somewhere, instead of pushing each other around in circles."

Mr. Britchett ground his cigarette into an ash-tray with an impatient gesture. "How? Just how? That's the stupidest thing I ever heard."

"Just go, that's all."

"That's all! Just go! It's hopeless to talk war with women. Why don't they read the papers? I won't say I'm an expert, but at least I've tried to use my bean about these things. Just let me show you—"

The telephone rang. Mrs. Britchett answered it. As member of the Red Cross Motor Corps, Fairview Manor Unit, she spent most of her time answering the telephone.

Mr. Britchett gave a final glance at the map and retired sulkily to his armchair. It seemed to him that his home life consisted of listening to one-way conversations about the Motor Corps. You might think it was fighting the Axis single-handed.

It annoyed him particularly that he was not allowed to turn on the radio during these monologues. "In one way or another," he reflected, "the war gets in everybody's hair, sooner or later." The thought comforted him. Perhaps, after all, he was doing his bit by having to listen to this drivel. He would have a good laugh, anyway, he felt, when the Motor Corps ran out of tires.

WHEN he returned home the following night, it was obvious that Mrs. Britchett had something out of the ordinary on her mind.

"I'm so glad you're back, Smedley. I need your help."

"She's probably been asked to be chairman of another committee," thought Mr. Britchett gloomily as he hung up his overcoat. "I only hope they don't meet here. Let 'em drop their cigarette butts on somebody else's rug for a change! And what's more, I'm not going to address envelopes!" He slapped his hat decisively on the shelf. "Perhaps I better mix a cocktail," he suggested, emerging.

"You see, it's like this," explained Mrs. Britchett when he returned a few minutes later, juggling the shaker, glasses and a cracker-box under one arm. "I'm in the Current Events Club. You know—I told you about it. We meet once a month, and someone reads a paper."

"Why?" asked Mr. Britchett.

"What do you mean, *why?* That's what the club's for. You have to write a paper on some current topic, and read it at the meeting. You'd be surprised if you knew how interesting some of them are."

"Sure would," agreed Mr. Britchett shaking vigorously.

"Well, next time it's my turn. I have to write a paper comparing Napoleon's Russian campaign with Hitler's. I just want you to fill in the high spots for me. You're always studying these things."

Mr. Britchett glanced at her suspiciously over the rim of his glass. She appeared quite sincere, however. "What do you know about Napoleon?"

"Why, *everybody* knows about Napoleon. What I mean is, not *all* about him, of course, but Josephine and all that sort of thing. And he could get along without hardly any sleep. And he had a terrible figure for such a famous man. And—well— You confuse me when you stare at me like that. I can't think."

"I will shut my eyes."

"Oh, yes. He used to take very hot baths. And do you remember we saw his tomb that time we went to Paris in '29? I always thought it was such a sweet idea to have it sunk down in a hole like that. My, Paris was fun! I don't suppose we'll ever get over there again. Do you think?"

Mr. Britchett plunged his hand into the cracker-box. "That sure is a wonderful picture of Napoleon in Russia."

"Don't be silly. I haven't even come to that. As I remember it, though, the Russian part was quite simple. Napoleon marched in, took Moscow; then somebody burned it. The French army had to retreat, and froze to death on the way home."

"Except Napoleon."

"Naturally. That was all there was to it. Now what I want you to do is to compare that with Hitler's campaign."

"Well," said Mr. Britchett thoughtfully, "for one thing, Hitler didn't take Moscow."

"That's an interesting point," said Mrs. Britchett. "Wait till I get a pencil and paper. . . . Now go ahead. Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why didn't they take it?"

"Timmyshenko wouldn't let 'em."

"What have the Japs got to do with it?"

"They haven't. Timmyshenko is a Russian general."

"It certainly sounds Jap to me. Is he the one with the handlebar mustaches?"

"No. Definitely not."

AT this, Mrs. Britchett looked disappointed. "That's too bad. I could have remembered him by those."

"Stick 'em on if it makes you happier. It won't hurt my feelings, or his, if you give him a beard like a prophet. Now if you can forget for a minute what people look like and what they wear, I'll try to give you the picture." Mr. Britchett rose and walked over to the wall-map.

"Do we have to use the map, dear? It confuses me so. I can see things better in my mind."

"All right. Just picture in your mind last summer and last fall—"

"That was when we motored out to the Canadian Rockies," murmured Mrs. Britchett. "Beautiful!"

"And don't interrupt. All last summer and last fall the Germans were pouring into Russia. Tanks and trucks and guns. Hundreds of thousands of men. The air full of German planes. Have you got that?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Britchett, her eyes half closed. "Yes. I have it."

"The Russians were falling back, fighting desperately. The Germans were using pincers on 'em." *(Please turn to page 88)*

The Coming German

UNTIL AUGUST 8, 1918, THE GERMANS WERE WINNING WORLD WAR I

The late Kaiser (center), Hindenburg (left) and Ludendorff (right), photographed at German headquarters in the halcyon days when they believed that victory was just around the corner.

LESS THAN THREE MONTHS LATER

Beginning of the end . . . the photograph (left) shows a group of German officers being taken prisoner by the French at the Somme front in the late summer of 1918.

The author of "Days of Our Years" draws a striking parallel between the summer of 1918, when Germany felt convinced she was on the eve of victory, and the summer of 1942—and predicts that the end will be the same: that this time too Germany, after defeat, will collapse suddenly and swiftly.

WHERE ARE WE GOING? AND WHY

TO the outside world, the Reich may still give the impression of colossal strength. Yet underneath this terrifying outer façade the germ of defeat is gnawing away at the Reich's vitals.

During this summer the Nazi armies may still deliver some telling blows. They may roll up one spectacular victory after the other. Nevertheless, Hitler's dream of world conquest is over. The gray dawn is near. Before the snowflakes fall again from Russian skies, there will be a rude awakening in Germany. The German people once more will know that they have been led to useless slaughter.

While the Nazi leaders are keeping up and even intensifying their bellowings about the invincibility of the Reichswehr, and while they threaten the democracies with dire disaster, they know in their hearts that the game is up. The military masterminds of Germany realize today that the democracies have weathered the storm, that in the midst of calamities we have consistently increased our strength and are now getting ready to measure the German military giant for the final blow. To the men around Hitler, it is no longer a secret that his hysterical screams of triumph in reality amount to nothing more than a frightened boy's nervous whistling in the dark.

Symptoms are multiplying that history is about to repeat itself in that the German breakdown will once again come like a thunderbolt out of the blue—overnight, with scarcely any prelude of noticeable disintegration of Germany's military power and her people's morale.

The astonishing victories Hitler has won so far, have made the world forget that the Nazi military machine and the Reich's economy were geared for a short Blitzkrieg, a lightning war designed to annihilate the democracies before they had time to muster their strength for a combat on even terms. Time and again Hitler and his generals have boasted that they preferred sacrificing three million men in six months to losing two million in six years, if it meant avoiding a long-drawn-out conflict.

Hitler has succeeded in losing three million men—not in six months, it is true, but in a protracted war of thirty-odd months of sporadic fighting. This figure has more than statistical significance. Undoubtedly it represents the flower of Germany's youth, the cream of her best troops, the very backbone of the whole Nazi fighting machine. Yet despite this huge casualty total—equal in dead to the entire German losses in World War I—even the most op-

Defeat . . .

By PIERRE VAN PAASSEN

HITLER'S GENERALS ARE STILL HOPING AGAINST HOPE

Marshal Hermann Goering, Chancellor Hitler and Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel (Hitler's chief of staff), studying the supposedly fail-proof "Plan" at German headquarters on the Eastern front.

IF WINTER COMES

When and if the fourth winter of the war comes around, it is likely that many more Germans like those depicted above will be taken prisoner on the Russian front.

timistic appraisals of the Germans concede that the end of the gigantic conflict they have unleashed is not in sight. After almost three years of triumphant warfare that has resulted in the occupation of some seven hundred thousand square miles of foreign lands (exclusive of Russian territory), and in the subjugation of over a hundred and ten million conquered people, final victory still eludes Hitler, as it eluded the German imperial war lord after three years of victorious fighting a quarter of a century ago.

Let us look back at the German position in early 1918:

It was impressive indeed. The German armies had smashed Russia, forced her to a separate peace, and occupied the rich, unscorched granary of the Ukraine. Serbia and Rumania, with their tremendous oil and wheat reservoirs, defeated in 1915 and 1916, respectively, were under complete German control. Virtually all of Belgium and the eastern part of France had been conquered by Potsdam's invincible legions. Italy, fighting on the side of the Allies, had been invaded, and Austro-German forces had reached the Piave River, threatening to capture Venice.

Yet notwithstanding these great military achievements, Germany, as early as December 12, 1917, projected a peace offer, which the Allies refused. That offer was made not because Berlin believed that France, England and the United States were ready to surrender and acknowledge defeat. On the contrary! The German General Staff urged the Imperial Chancellor to make such an offer because it realized that the war could no longer be won. The Quartermaster-General of the German Army, Erich von Ludendorff, later revealed in his memoirs that the German victories had so depleted Germany's man-power and had exhausted her reserves to such a degree that the final outcome was a foregone conclusion; the more so since the Allies, despite their defeats and retreats, had grown stronger, and their reserves in man-power and material were becoming more plentiful every day. When the collapse did come, less than a year later, the German military position still seemed, on the surface, powerful enough to carry on a long defensive war. But it was merely a hollow shell.

In the thousand and one ponderous volumes that were published in the Reich after the first World War to explain and analyze the causes of the German defeat, every conceivable factor was microscopically examined and dissected. Scientists, sociologists, efficiency engineers, politicians, literary critics and even theologians all set to work to clear up the mystery of that "sudden" breakdown. Not one of these experts, however, saw or wanted to see that the catastrophe had not been so sudden at all, but was the culmination of a series of fundamental errors, of which the primary one was the unchaining of a world struggle.

The German mind never wanted to accept a rational explanation of the defeat. To a German, it was painful to think that the Kaiser had miscalculated or that the fool-proof plans of the infallible General Staff had miscarried.

Were not Hindenburg, Ludendorff and Falkenhayn without peers in strategical and tactical warfare? Surely the collapse of the German army could never have been of their responsibility. There must have been some mysterious insidious influence at work to bring about the debacle of 1918. The Jews, for instance, or the Social Democrats, the Freemasons or the Jesuits—trickery, intrigue, betrayal or even secret magic. Every excuse, no matter how improbable or idiotic, was invoked. But in their hearts the German people knew the real reason. While they proudly boasted that their armies had never been beaten on the field of battle, they no longer doubted that final victory had been *(Please turn to page 84)*

"We Cannot Escape History"

The revealing story of the emotional, moral and economic dislocation caused by the war.

WHERE ARE WE GOING? AND WHY

"ARRIVED by taxi. The house is on a broad tree-lined street, one of those streets so typical of Washington. Beside the entrance there is a sign saying: '*Vacancies. Double and Triple. Meals included.*' Reservation had been made for me in advance. I tried the door, but it was locked. I rang the bell and waited. In a few minutes a woman came to the door and helped me with my bag. I told her my name, and she said: 'We are putting you on the third floor with two roommates—will that be all right?' I said: 'Yes, that will be fine.' The woman explained that my roommates were two sisters who were also new in Washington. They seemed very nice."

The above is from the diary of a woman investigator who spent two weeks in a boarding-house in Washington. Her diary consists of seventy-four pages, seventy-four pages of truth that is much stranger and probably more absorbing than the usual run of fiction. What was she investigating in the national capital? The living conditions in one of the most overcrowded cities in America? Yes; but that was only a small part of her assignment, and she was only one of the many investigators employed by REDBOOK MAGAZINE to assist us in a survey conducted under the general direction of a social scientist of recognized standing and experience.

What are we surveying? What are we trying to find out? And why did we single out Washington? We are surveying history in the making. We are trying to find out how much economic, emotional and moral dislocation has been caused by the war so far. We did not limit our investigation to Washington, but we decided to begin in Washington because a veritable cross-section of the country can be found today under the roof of almost every large hotel, boarding-house and apartment building in the national capital. All of this sounds like a very tall order; but then, the times we live in call for tall orders. Once again humanity has struck its tent and is on the march. Once again this nation will do well to recall the peroration of one of the most profound speeches ever made:

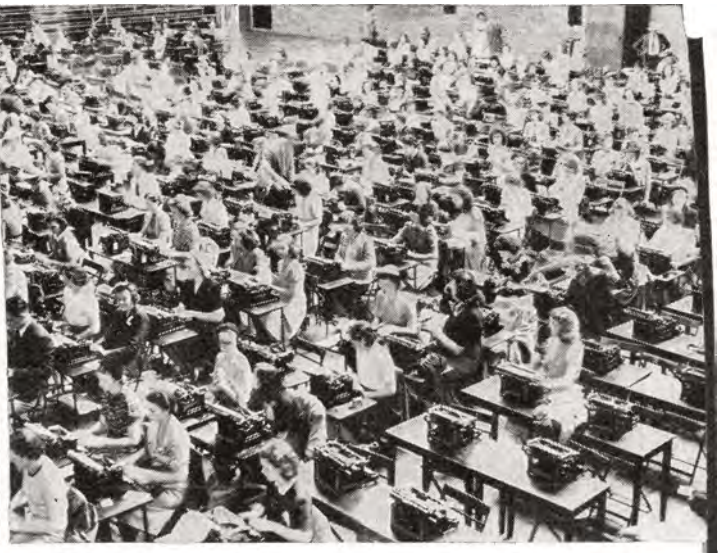
"Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. . . . No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation."

Fully seventy-nine years before the Pearl Harbor tragedy, Abraham Lincoln uttered those wise words in his second annual message to the Congress of the United States on December 1, 1862. "We say we are for the Union," went on Lincoln. "The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility. . . . We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless."

Substitute "freedom" for "Union" and you can use these ringing words as a battle-cry of the United Nations.

All of us, no matter how rich or poor, old or young, can and should do everything in our power to contribute to the cause of freedom. We are engaged in a battle that is raging everywhere, not only on the plains of Russia, on the sands of Africa and on the

A typical scene in a room in a boarding-house in Washington, shared by several girls. An ironing-board is something which no Washington migrant can do without.



Eighteen hundred men and women, taking the two-day Civil Service stenographers' examination. The list of eligibles is being completed at the rate of hundreds a month.

The dining-room in one of the boarding-houses in Washington. Noticeable is the scarcity of men; in some boarding-houses the ratio of women to men is fully eight to one.

So crowded is the National Capital and so difficult is it to obtain a room there that a great many people are forced to live in trailers and camps as well as in "motels."

Seven Seas, but in every American city, town and village as well. What is happening today to the average American is of tremendous importance. We will never behold again the world existing before December 7, 1941. It is up to us to see to it that the world that will come into existence the day after the victory has been won is a much better world than the one we lost. The last time, we won the war but lost the peace. We must not repeat that fatal mistake.

As we peruse the many hundreds of reports gathered for us by our investigators, we feel as if our finger were on the pulse of the nation. We follow our fellow-Americans around the clock. We see them as they get out of bed, breakfast hurriedly and rush to work. We watch them at their typewriters, behind the counter of a shop or handling the tools that will turn out the weapons of victory. We ride with them on the crowded streetcars back home. We share their hopes and despairs, their joys and sorrows. We stand behind them as they tune in on news-broadcasts and swing bands; but most important of all, we witness their transformation, that slow but relentless process of transition which moves like a gigantic glacier—the transition from peace-loving, law-abiding citizens to aroused and angry fighters.

When we started our survey, we expected, naturally, that it would produce a great mass of relevant data. It produced that, but it produced something else too—an X-ray picture of America's heart. It is beating fast, possibly a bit too fast for our comfort, but it is in the right place.

The director of this investigation set out with an open mind. He was guided by no theories or preconceived notions. It was his task to find out, not what he or we would have liked to find out, but what actually existed. His investigators, a group of highly trained men and women, rang the doorbells, lived in boarding-houses, circulated in the lobbies of hotels and in that labyrinth of offices which is Washington, and talked to people. They distributed questionnaires consisting of about fifty questions, and they followed up by interviewing the men and women who answered the questionnaires in order to check and double-check on their information.

Their survey of Washington completed, they moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut, a typical war-boom town. The many thousands who were attracted to Bridgeport because of the high wages paid in war industries will face a great problem after victory has been won. They will have to readjust themselves to peace.

It is our conviction that the forthcoming series of articles which will be based on our survey is a most significant series of articles. The first article will appear in our next issue. It will present a composite portrait of a white-collar woman worker who went to Washington to work for the Government. The second article will deal with a white-collar man worker in Washington. We have chosen the composite portrait method of presentation, because we do not believe in frightening our readers with a formidable array of statistics. Statistics will stand behind every sentence in those articles, but they will be invisible.

If you are interested in what is happening to you and your neighbor at this solemn moment, do not fail to read the series of articles which we will usher in next month.

And once more remember: *"Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. . . . No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation."*

—The Editors

WHERE ARE WE GOING? AND WHY

MOST of us have shared a popular impression—during the years between the last war and the current one—that the days of heroes were ended. Mass combat, mass tactics and the machine development would kill all opportunity for individual exploits of valor. The men who won military or naval decorations would be the staff officers and brilliant strategists, not the line officers or individual soldiers.

This opinion was as wrong as most other theories about modern war which we cherished in peacetime. With relatively limited conflict, the United States already has an impressive list of heroes, and one that grows so rapidly that any estimate is out of date before it can be printed.

Our brief experience in war already has proved that all the mechanization of modern armies and the extraordinary devices invented for use in the air and on the sea make the individual fighter of greater rather than of diminished importance.

The pilot at the controls of a bomber or pursuit ship, the submarine skipper with an eye glued to his periscope, and, as always, the individual man with a rifle and a belt of grenades—all make their marks as individuals. Whether veteran generals or youths, there is plenty of room for heroes, as witness MacArthur, Doolittle, Nininger, Kelly and O'Hare; duplication of their feats does not cheapen them.

Putting aside the routine medals awarded for faithful routine service, the Army and the Navy have an impressive list of decorations which are awarded exclusively for "gallantry." A few of these may be won only in battle itself. Others recognize skill, regardless of whether the risk is run in battle or is simply a fight with elements and fate against which contestants must pit deadly skill. The relative importance of these medals is listed elsewhere.

The questions most often asked are: How are these decorations won? How can the Government be certain that the wrong men do not get undeserved honors? How can it be sure that the qualified men all receive due honor?

I put these questions to authorities in the War and Navy Departments. What I learned from their replies, and by long research in the "hero files," showed that the Government never can be sure that all deserving men are honored, but it is quite sure that no one is decorated simply out of favoritism or because some officer likes the cut of a man's jib.

I also learned that all of our decorations, except the Medal of Honor, are relatively new—so new, in fact, that the several thousand sailors and soldiers who were decorated for World War service got their decorations only after the war was ended. Today the same series of decorations, and all except the Medal of Honor, may be awarded on the spot by a commanding general or an admiral of the fleet, where the comrades of the hero may pass quick judgment on the award.

Prior to the Civil War, the Government had no standard medals. Congress occasionally voted some special decoration. In 1776 it gave a gold medal to George Washington for capturing Boston. In 1787 it got around to commemorating naval action for the first time by ordering a gold medal to be struck for "the Chevalier John Paul Jones," then living in Paris, in recognition of his services "in the late war."

Early in the Civil War the Congress provided the Medal of Honor, to be awarded "by the President in the name of the Congress," to enlisted men and noncommissioned officers. The Navy Medal was approved on Dec. 21, 1861; the Army Medal on July 12, 1862. In later years these awards were made available to officers. Through all the years, presentation of these medals has been so rare that a large proportion of the awards have been posthumous.

From 1919 to 1940 there was a constant stream of awards of decorations for exploits in the last war. Several thousand soldiers got the Purple Heart as evidence of wounds. Many other thousands received the Silver Star on showing, by application, that their records bore citations for heroism in official dispatches.

Review boards consisting of high-ranking officers of the Army and the Navy sifted records to determine who should receive military and naval medals and crosses. To the select few went Medals of Honor. So rare was this decoration, however, that it was bestowed only on ninety-five soldiers who served in the last war.

AMERICAN HEROES

HOW THE U.S. MAKES SURE

Capt. Colin P. Kelly of the Air Corps, who sank a Japanese battleship of the Haruna class. Captain Kelly was shot down, soon afterward, and killed.

Brig. Gen. James H. (Jimmie) Doolittle, leader of the history-making raid by American bombers on Tokyo on April eighteenth.

Capt. Hewitt T. Wheless, singled out by President Roosevelt—in a speech broadcast by radio—for his feat of bringing to safety a damaged bomber.

Major Thomas J. Trapnell, (he was taken prisoner on Bataan) whom General MacArthur praised for extraordinary heroism in action.

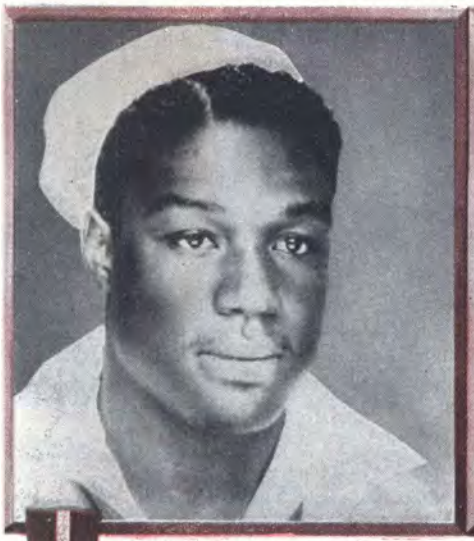
ARE REAL OF ITS FACTS

by CHARLES HURD

OF THE WASHINGTON STAFF OF THE NEW YORK *TIMES*

Lieut. Commander Edward H. O'Hare, who shot down five Japanese planes and damaged a sixth one in the single engagement, an all-time combat record.

Lieut. John D. Bulkeley. Using a speedboat of the PT type, he sank probably more enemy tonnage than John Paul Jones sank in his whole naval career.



Doris Miller, a mess-boy, decorated by Admiral Nimitz for bravery in standing over and shielding a wounded officer while fighting was at its height.

Lieut. Alexander R. Nininger, Jr., posthumously awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism displayed in action on Bataan peninsula.

Perhaps the system today is more liberal, with about a score of Medals of Honor thus far awarded; yet there appears to be no doubt as to the validity of the award in each case. Oddly enough, the defeats at Pearl Harbor and Bataan developed more cases of individual heroism than have many of the country's notable victories. Perhaps the gallantry of men is developed more in fights for hopeless causes against overwhelming odds than in contests where the enemy collapses quickly and is defeated easily.

General Douglas MacArthur lost the Philippines against treachery and odds of ten to one; yet there was unanimous approval of the bestowal of the Medal of Honor for the manner in which he prolonged the fight by sheer force of inspiration.

The military Medal of Honor constitutes the nearest approach possible to conferring immortality upon a hero. Its bestowal is preceded by the most searching inquiry. A board in Washington studies every detail of the action for which it is awarded, and in addition decides whether the character of the decorated man is above reproach in the past and, if he is alive, promises to remain so in the future. The soldier or sailor who wins it has walked closer to death than most living persons.

The Medal of Honor is a bronze trinket costing at most only a few dollars. The action that wins it, states the Army's description, must be "so conspicuous as clearly to distinguish him (the soldier) for gallantry and intrepidity above his comrades, involving risk of life or the performance of more than ordinarily hazardous service, the omission of which would not justly subject him to censure for shortcomings or failure in the performance of his duty."

So the award of a Medal of Honor begins with a bright, heroic action performed unnecessarily in general action. The act must be witnessed and reported by superior officers. Every detail, plus contesting statements if there are any, must be forwarded to the field commander, to headquarters and then to Washington. The approved report finally goes to the President.

Through this routine Lieutenant Alexander R. Nininger, Jr., a twenty-three-year-old "shavetail" known as "Sandy," won the first Medal of Honor in this war. But he was dead when the honor came.

Nininger's company was "resting" on Bataan Peninsula, after a spell of savage fighting, when another company in the same regiment was attacked by a much stronger force of Japanese. He voluntarily joined the hard-pressed company, grabbed a rifle and some grenades, and helped in a counterattack through a field spotted with Japanese snipers.

Three bullets hit Nininger during the general fighting, but did not stop him. There was heavy hand-to-hand fighting, and Nininger pressed ahead. He finally outstripped his fellows and got lost among the Japanese. Hours later, when the Americans and Filipinos captured the field, they found Nininger's body. Beside it were three Japanese he alone had killed. That is action "above and beyond the call of duty."

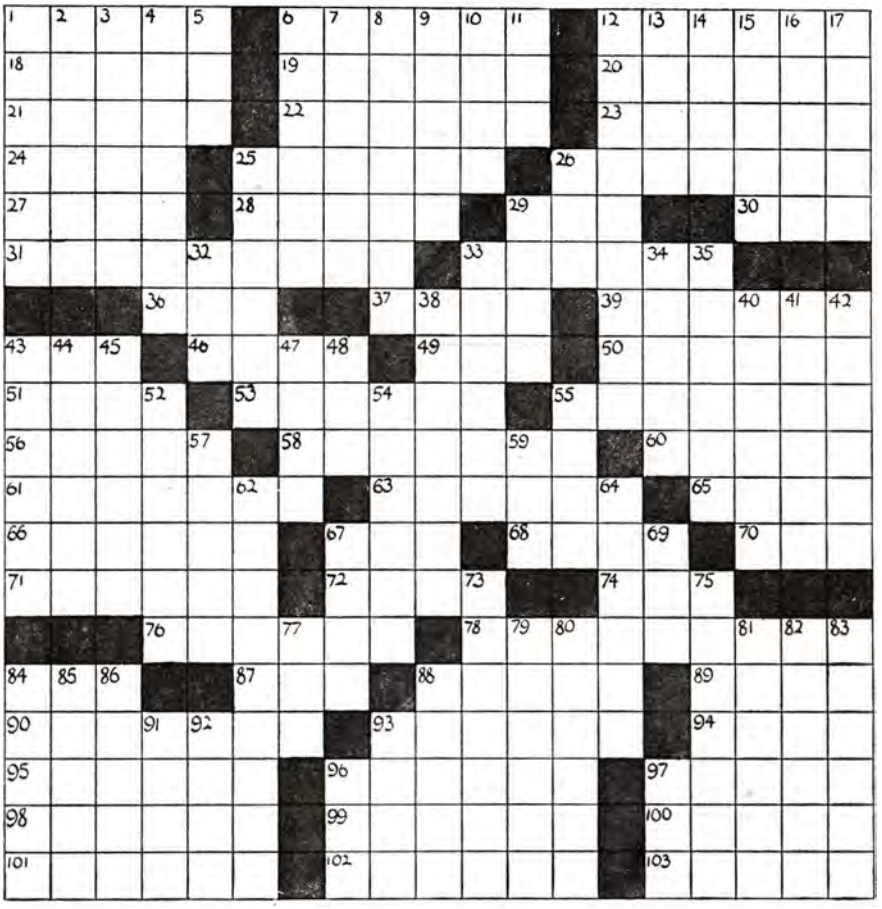
The Japanese themselves wrote the citations behind the award of the Congressional Medal of Honor to Brigadier General James Doolittle, and of Distinguished Service Crosses to the men who rode with him on the hedgehopping bombing of Japan. The enemy's own frenzied descriptions of damage, broadcast on the official radio before the propaganda machine stepped in and toned down the descriptions, lay behind the ceremonious descoration of "Jimmie" Doolittle by the President, in the White House offices.

Lieutenant Commander Edward H. O'Hare, of the Naval Air Service, flew out on a mission as a junior lieutenant during the short-odds fighting in the early days of the war. His comrades bore witness to the fact that he shot down five Japanese airplanes and damaged a sixth in a single engagement, an all-time combat record. He lived to stand beside President Roosevelt while Mrs. O'Hare fastened around his neck the white-starred blue ribbon from which is suspended the Medal of Honor.

The Navy board recommended, and the President awarded, fourteen Medals of Honor as a sequel to Pearl Harbor. Of the recipients, eleven were killed in that action. They were the outstanding heroes of a battle in which men fought desperately against treachery and the carelessness of their superiors.

REDBOOK'S CROSS-WORD PUZZLE OF THE MONTH

EDITED BY ALBERT H. MOREHEAD



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THE SOLUTION OF OUR CROSSWORD PUZZLE APPEARS ON PAGE 76

Two of the posthumous awards went to distinguished captains of ships of the line, whose equally brilliant careers were ended by parallel deaths—Franklin Van Valkenburgh and Mervyn S. Bennion.

To fight their ships well was not sufficient reason for bestowal of Medals of Honor, and neither was death sufficient cause. But although each captain possessed a safe control-office situated deep in the bowels of his ship, each went to his exposed bridge to direct the fight. Each was fatally wounded in the abdomen, and courts of inquiry verified the fact that each, when wounded, refused to be carried to safety. That is Medal-of-Honor conduct.

Only recently Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander of the Pacific Fleet, bestowed the Navy Cross on a young Negro messboy named Doris Miller. The citation revealed that Miller, when the fighting was at its height, stood over and shielded one of these wounded officers (which one was not specified), and after the officer collapsed, Miller removed the officer's body to a sheltered spot.

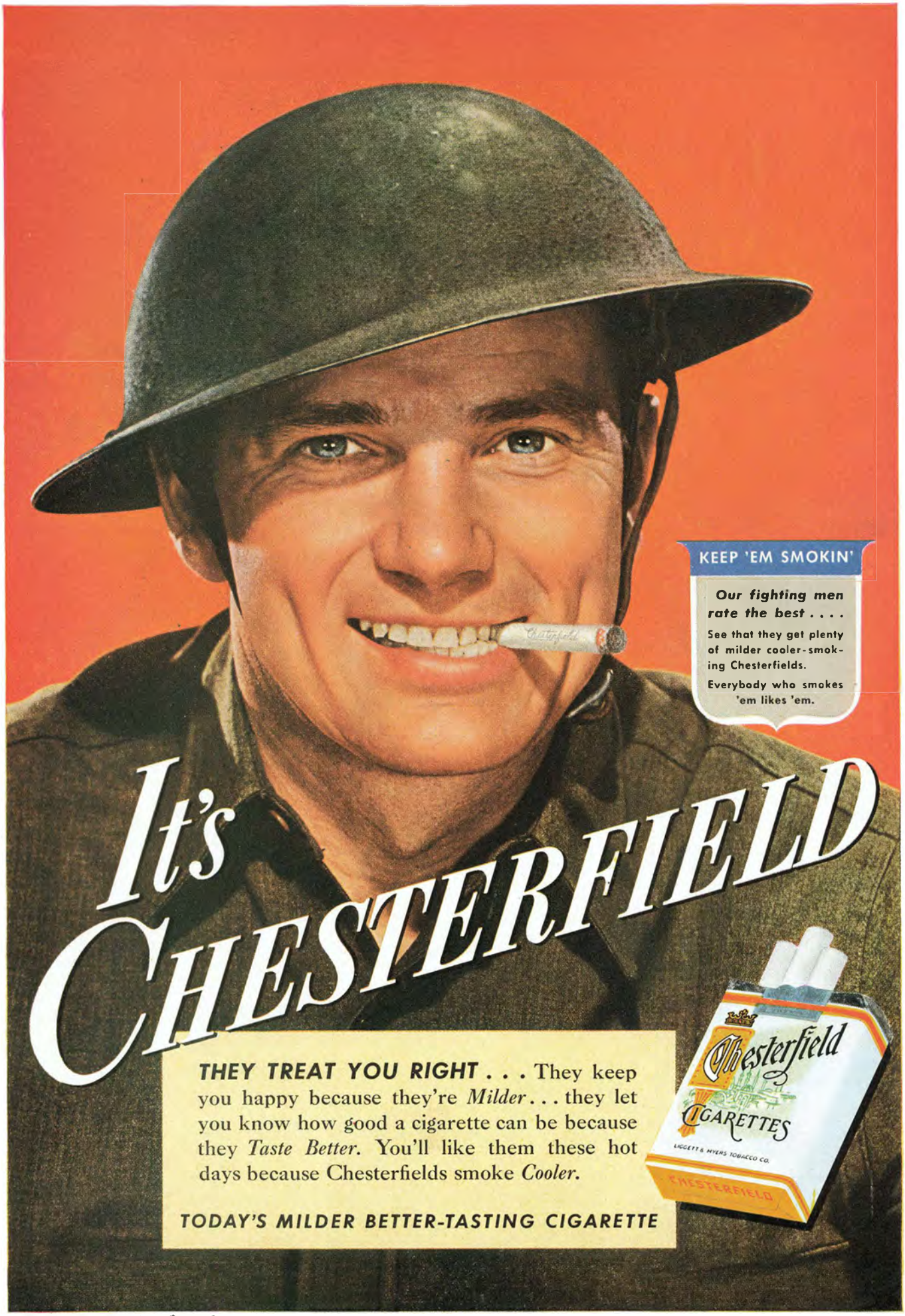
It often is difficult to distinguish between deeds which merit the Medal of Honor and those that are rewarded simply with the Distinguished Service Cross or the Navy Cross. One such case is that of Captain Colin Kelly, of the Air Corps, who sent his bomber crew to safety by parachute and then alone bombed and probably sank a Japanese battleship of the *Haruna* class. He was shot down soon afterward, and killed.

Captain Kelly is one of the best-known heroes of this war, and yet he got only the Distinguished Service Cross, despite complete attestation of his feat. The reason is that he was assigned to bomb the battleship; even though he lost his life, he was performing a mission in line of duty. Yet it is difficult to draw the line between his feat and that of O'Hare.

AMONG the less dramatic but none the less heroic figures is Major Thomas J. Trapnell, now presumably a prisoner on Bataan, concerning whom General MacArthur made an eloquent report regarding an action that provided an extraordinary detail in a heroic pattern.

Trapnell had a small independent command in the Bataan Peninsula, assigned to a reconnaissance in force. The soldiers finished their assignment, only to find an overwhelming force of Japanese attacking them. Trapnell personally organized a rear guard to hold a bridge while his soldiers crossed it to safety. When all were across, he alone set fire to the bridge, waited calmly in a hail of bullets to be sure it was well burned, and then retreated.

Early in May, the War Department announced one of the most poignant stories in its entire honors list—the conferring of both the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Distinguished Service Cross upon Major Stanley K. Robinson, of the Army Air Force, for a series of feats which ended in his death last January 29. All of the intervening time was required for mail dispatches to reach Washington from Australia, with word of the honors bestowed by Lieutenant General George H. Brett. *(Please turn to page 81)*



CITY OF WOMEN

(Continued from page 33)

settled now. In a few days, or a week, she would be leaving the boarding-house, and what a wonderful thought that was! She had never let herself realize quite how much she hated a boarding-house. Now, she wondered how she could face another hour of it.

"Hey!" Bill Conison said protestingly. "How's it about you two dames paying some attention to me?"

Lacey looked at him pityingly. "Be quiet, pet!" she said. "Try to remember you're only a man!"

She meant it, too. Caroline could tell she meant it. Only a man! Anybody, any woman, who could say that in Washington and mean it, was strictly wonderful. Still, if it had not been for this pathetic Conison creature, she would never have met Lacey. For that, at least, she was grateful to him.

THE house in which Lacey Morlone lived was within walking distance of downtown Washington. It was an old house which had obviously seen better days, but it still had an air of graciousness about it, like a very clean old lady in a faded gray silk gown and a mended lace cap.

There were four bells in the shadowy foyer, and Caroline had to bend down to peer at them before she found out which one was Lacey's. She pressed the button and waited, her heart tripping along inside her with a kind of doubtful excitement. Lacey, she kept telling herself, could not possibly be as wonderful as she had seemed the day before. Besides, this other girl, the roommate, would probably change her mind about marrying. Anyway, it was sure to turn out that the whole thing was far too expensive.

Lacey herself opened the door, her big mouth swiftly grinning when she saw Caroline. She was wearing a scarlet hostess gown, and her crisp black curls were pulled up on top of her head and tied with a scarlet ribbon. Any other woman would have looked merely untidy, but she managed to be spectacular and deliberate, as though she had carefully calculated the total effect of the ribbon and the gown and her bright big mouth.

"Hi, baby," she said. "I was afraid you wouldn't come. Come on in. Isn't the weather foul? In summer, this town gets delusions of grandeur—thinks it's hell."

They were in a wide, shadowy, handsome entrance hall, from which wide, handsome steps ascended. Everything—the floor, the stairs, the stair-rail, the solid Victorian furniture—shone with the restrained patina of well-rubbed wax.

"I'm upstairs," Lacey said, taking her arm.

They were halfway up when one of the big double doors leading off the entrance hall opened, and a very old lady came out. Caroline blinked. She was wearing a na-

val's officer's dress cape, and a hat from which three ostrich feathers cascaded down her back. Her hands, thin and clawlike, rested on a gold-knobbed cane.

"Ah!" said the old lady. "Miss Morlone. How well you look! I thought it might be the Admiral, come to tea."

"Perhaps he was detained at the Navy Yard," said Lacey.

"These are anxious days," said the old lady, and the ostrich feathers quivered and billowed in the light that streamed through the door behind her. "And what a lovely child this is!" she went on, looking at Caroline. "The Admiral's young men will be quite mad about her, I assure you!"

"Won't they?" Lacey agreed. "Madame Redcreight, may I present Miss Caroline Hasbrey?"

Madame nodded graciously. "Ah, of course! Daughter of Captain Hasbrey, formerly of the *Connecticut*, no doubt?"

Caroline started to deny this, but Lacey's fingers on her arm warned her.

"Captain Hasbrey sends his regards, madame," Lacey said. "He asks if he may call when he is next in town?"

"The dear man must come to dinner," Madame said. "I always have time for the young men who were under my dear husband's command. And now, my dears, I bid you good afternoon."

She went back through the double doors, the ostrich feathers streaming behind her. Caroline turned to Lacey, her mouth open to protest, but Lacey made a warning grimace and pulled her along up to the next landing.

"Never mind, baby!" she whispered then. "You'll get used to her. She's the landlady. She's had a stroke; and now she likes to imagine things."

"But my father isn't—"

"I know. Neither was her husband; she never had a husband. And there's no Admiral coming to tea. But it's better not to argue with the old lady. She likes the Navy, and come hell or high water; she's going to have the Navy."

Caroline sighed. For a moment, there on the stairs, she had had a vision of the Admiral's young men, all of them gay and unattached and handsome.

Lacey read her mind. "Never mind, baby. They'd probably get in your hair, anyway. Come along. Here's the hovel."

She threw open the door of a big sunny room, beautifully proportioned. Caroline stood for a moment, gasping with admiration; it was the first really pleasant-looking room she had seen since she left Samberley, and the contrast with the rooms at the boarding-house made it seem almost unbearably beautiful. There was an old flowered carpet on the floor, faded and evenly worn, and the furniture was heavy carved mahogany that suited the room. In the west wall three windows reached from the floor almost to the high, carved ceiling.

"And a fireplace!" Caroline said. "Does it work?"

"It does. This used to be the drawing-room before Madame had the house done into apartments. The Redcreights were quite a family in the old days."

"Is the furniture yours? It's lovely."

"Some of it Madame lent me. I was her first tenant; I've been here—oh, a hundred years. And some of it I picked up myself. Come look at the bedroom."

The bedroom was an almost shocking surprise. It was completely modern, with low twin beds on a single headboard, and very simple furniture of some pale wood. Like the living-room, it was big and well-lighted, and the only breeze in Washington was stirring the bright print draperies.

"I never feel Victorian in bed," Lacey said, grinning. "And here's the bathroom; I think it must have been a den, or something. Come back in the living-room, and I'll show you the kitchen."

In the little kitchen, Lacey turned to her. "Well, baby?"

Caroline knew she was lost. "I've got to have it," she said. "I don't care if it means going barefoot; I'm your new roommate."

"I like a woman who can make up her mind," Lacey said heartily. "We'll have a drink on it. Tom Collins all right?"

Caroline twisted the tall hobnailed glass tinkling with ice. "This is marvelous," she said. "I haven't had a drink since I came to Washington." She remembered something and added honestly: "Except for three beers one night."

Lacey, sitting opposite her, lifted a disapproving eyebrow. "Three beers? Steer clear of guys like that."

"I will," Caroline said.

"And there's something we've got to settle," Lacey said, "—men. The rule is, no poaching. O.K.?"

"Of course!" Caroline said, and flushed without quite knowing why. She was ashamed, because she had no men for Lacey to poach. And she was flattered that Lacey thought there was even a possibility that Caroline could rob her of one of her men if she wanted to. One of her men? Yes, Caroline decided. Lacey Morlone had the definite and indefinable air of a woman who had many men around her.

"As a matter of fact," Caroline said in a sudden burst of confidence, "I don't know any men."

Lacey looked mildly astonished. "How come?"

"I don't know. I don't seem to meet any."

"Well, you're not missing much. They're fools, all of them. The Washington men are worst than most, because they're conceited. Too many women floating around make them that way."

There spoke the woman who owned one, Caroline thought wistfully. Or two or maybe a dozen. It would be very nice to be able to hold men in contempt; she remembered dimly that she had felt somewhat that way back in Samberley, and was mildly shocked at her former self.

"Take this guy Conison," Lacey said after a moment. "He's dull too, only in a different way."

"No argument."

"Known him long?"

"About three years. Since he came to Samberley." Caroline was puzzled. Lacey still sounded brisk and offhand and careless, but there was a subtle difference in her voice, in the way she squinted at the sunlight through her drink.

"We don't get along together," Caroline said experimentally. "He thinks I'm useless. And what I think of him isn't printable."

"Oh, I don't know," Lacey said in a considering voice. "Bill isn't so bad when you know him. I've known him for years, and I like him all right."

Like him? Caroline thought, knowing suddenly what had puzzled her. Lady, you love him! And it seemed astonishing and rather pitiable that a woman like Lacey Morlone should love a man like Bill Conison. What could she, who could probably have her pick of men, see in that lazy, bad-mannered, ill-natured man?

CAROLINE had been home from the office only a few minutes, and was sitting on the couch with her shoes off and her legs doubled under her, when Lacey came in with a rush of vitality that was like a strong breeze on a still day.

"Baby, I'm going out to dinner; I hope you don't mind. Here's the chicken for your meal. Why don't you have the Swede over? . . . . Mr. Croonshaft, Miss Hasbrey. Mind him while I get dressed, will you, Caroline?"

Mr. Croonshaft emerged from behind her; Caroline had not even seen him until Lacey indicated his presence. He was a thin, beautifully dressed man, and his eyes followed Lacey to the bedroom door with evident adoration. When the door closed, he turned back to Caroline.

"Wonderful, isn't she?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Isn't she?" Caroline agreed. "Will you excuse me while I telephone?"

Mr. Croonshaft smiled at her all the time she was calling Christina, and she smiled back at him every time she caught his eye. She felt silly, but she thought it

would have seemed rude not to. When she hung up, he spoke to her again.

"I suppose you're a popular young lady, too?" he said. "All the time on the go?"

"Oh, yes!" Caroline said brightly. "You know how Washington is."

He glanced at the bedroom door and dropped his voice. "I don't suppose you'd be free next week-end?" he asked.

"Next week-end?" She frowned at him, puzzled.

"I was thinking of getting up a little party for a trip down to Virginia Beach," he told her. "And Lacey says she can't come."

Really, thought Caroline with more amusement than shock, the old idiot was a fast worker! What on earth made him think that she would be eager to hop off on a week-end party gotten up by a sack of bones ten years older than her father?

"I'm sorry," she said with a straight face. "I'm afraid I'm busy next week-end."

Mr. Croonshaft sighed. "Ah, well! Perhaps some other time. Vile weather, isn't it?"

They chatted about the weather until Lacey came in, radiant in a white jersey evening gown and a long red cape. She immediately swept Mr. Croonshaft back into her wake.

"Come along, Willie!" she commanded. "I hope you have your checkbook with you, because we're going to do the town."

At the door, Mr. Croonshaft turned to smile at Caroline. "Goodnight, Miss Hasbrey," he said in his whispering voice. "Perhaps I'll take you out one evening soon, eh?"

"Oh, no, you won't!" Lacey said, and pulled him after her. "Good night, baby. Have a good dinner."

Caroline went to the window, and as she watched them get into a long black limousine at the front door, she wondered what Lacey saw in the man.

As the car drove away, Christina hove into sight around the corner, walking rapidly and strongly. She looked around as the car passed her, and then up at the window and waved to Caroline.

Caroline met her on the stairs. "I'm glad you could come, Chris. Mmm, that's a new dress. Pretty!"

"They were having a sale," Chris said, but she was never interested for long in anything else when there was cooking to be done. "What have we got tonight, Caroline?" Her eyes were bright with anticipation.

Caroline grinned and went to get the chicken. Chris, dropping her hat without even stopping to look where it fell, came into the kitchen and took it out of her hands, pinching it and feeling the breast-bone, making very sure that everything was satisfactory before she finally gave way to enthusiasm.

"It's a wonderful chicken," she said at last, beaming. "Tender, and so plump!" She shook her head. "That Lacey! Why should she go to a restaurant when she has such a good chicken at home? Couldn't she entertain her friend here?"

"She likes excitement, I guess." And was able to get it, Caroline thought, which was more than most people could.

She sat on the kitchen stool, tucked in a corner out of the way, and watched Christina operating on the chicken with the calm zeal of a surgeon. Christina in a kitchen was completely happy and completely competent. Here was a crime, Caroline thought; perhaps it was the greatest and the most common of modern crimes —the freeing of women like Chris from the chains that bound them to the kitchen and the nursery. For some women it was all right, for women like Lacey and possibly even herself. But for girls like Christina, it was a freedom as of death—the death of the soul.

Chris put the chicken in a casserole and put little onions on top of it. She caught Caroline's eye and smiled somewhat apologetically. "It is wonderful, doing this," she said. "I am always so happy when you ask me."

"It's wonderful of you to do it," Caroline said.

"But I don't understand that Lacey!" Christina sighed. "I thought, when you came here, you and she would—you know —stay home a lot and enjoy the apartment."

Caroline laughed. "Not Lacey! She's never home. Always off doing the town with some man or another."

Christina opened a can of mushrooms and poured them into her casserole. "I should think she would introduce you to some nice young men, too," she said, a little too casually.

And again Caroline laughed, remembering Mr. Croonshaft. "You know," she said, "I've about come to the conclusion that Lacey doesn't know too many nice young men."

AT four o'clock on Saturday afternoon Caroline sat down on the window-sill of the filing-office to stretch her weary body, glad to be through at last. She was alone in the office. Everybody else had been gone since one o'clock; but Betty, the other filing-clerk, had been out for several days with a cold, and the filing had fallen badly in arrears. Caroline had stayed to finish it.

She got up and pulled on her hat, reminding herself that she had to hurry. Lacey had said that morning that she would bring a few people home for cocktails, and Caroline did not want to miss them; it seemed years since she had been to any kind of a party.

In the big front office, usually so intense with business, there was a ghostly atmosphere of suspended life, the chairs empty by the empty desks, the typewriters wearing black shrouds. But the room was not quite devoid of life. Caroline saw with a start that there was a small colored man standing near the door, looking around him with near-sighted bewilderment.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" she asked.

The little man snatched off his hat, blinking at her anxiously. Caroline saw that he was very old, and that he looked frail and sick. His skin, which should have been very black, had a gray tint to it, as though it had faded.

"Thank you, miss," he said. "I was looking for a Mr. Grey."

His voice surprised her. It was soft with the softness of the Negro voices of her childhood, but the words were enunciated with an educated clarity.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Mr. Grey must have left at one. The office closes a half-day on Saturday."

His face filled with such dismay that for a moment she was afraid that he was going to cry, but he only looked a little grayer and a little more frail and sick.

"Can't you come back Monday?" she asked. "Was it so urgent?"

"Urgent only to me, I fear," he said with tired dignity. "You see, I had hoped to go home on tonight's train. My wife is not very well, and she misses me when I am away."

Caroline shook her head with a mixture of irritation and sympathy. She wished he would go, so that she could get to the party. But all her life it had seemed pathetic to her that old people, tired with the long burden of years, should still have trouble.

"I wish there was something I could do," she said.

"It's my notes," the old man said. "Mr. Grey has somebody type them for me, and I sign them, and then I go home."

Caroline thought of the cocktail party, of the fire burning in the fireplace on this first really cool day of autumn, of the radio playing, and people laughing and chatting and drinking together, of the gracious old living-room filled, as it was meant to be filled, with quick, gay life. With men in it, too. ("Oh, damn!" she thought. "Damn and double damn!")

"I'll type them for you now," she said, trying to sound gracious and afraid she was not succeeding very well. "We can leave them on Mr. Grey's desk for him."

She was glad that he did not overwhelm her with thanks; if his manner when he accepted had been less quietly dignified, some of her own bad temper would have been sure to show. . . .

Later Caroline wrote her father:

It was eight when I got home, and of course everybody was gone. Lacey was a little angry, I think, though she was very nice about it.

But who does this old Dr. Hathrow turn out to be but Abraham Hathrow, you know, the colored scientist. And a great pet of Mr. Grey, who thinks it's marvelous to have him doing research for our office. And this morning a letter came from Dr. Hathrow to Mr. Grey telling him how nice I had been to him.

So I'm out of the converted bathroom and I've got a desk and a typewriter and a raise.

How's them for apples?

She signed her name with a flourish and read through the letter again. Somehow, despite her good news, it lacked a certain gayety, a youthfulness, that her father would look for and expect to find. She picked up her pen again.

P. S. I bought myself a new hat to celebrate. It's the silliest thing you ever saw, a hunk of fur the size of a button and six yards of black silk veiling. It makes me look like a beautiful international spy.

That she decided, would have to do. She sealed the letter, feeling the nostalgic longing that always haunted her for a little while when she was writing to her father.

She got up and moved restlessly around the room. It was storming outside, the wind driving the rain savagely against the windows. The sound made her feel unhappy and lonely. She leaned against the

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kitchen door for a minute, watching Chris trim the edges of an unbaked apple pie into neat ruffles.

"Have I time to mail a letter before dinner?" she asked.

"I can mail it when I go," Christina said.

"I thought it might do me good to walk in the rain."

Christina put the pie into the oven and turned to her. "You're worried," she said accusingly. "You're worried because that Lacey has not been home early."

Caroline for some reason felt bound to deny it. "No, I'm not. She often stays out late."

"Where does she go?"

"I've never thought it my business to ask. She knows how to look out for herself," Caroline said, and was sorry immediately, as soon as she saw the painful color surge up beneath Christina's fair skin. "Darling, I didn't mean to be nasty! Really, I didn't!"

Christina smiled somewhat mistily. "No, you were right. I should mind my own business."

"Chris, don't be silly!"

They smiled at one another then, forgivingly, and Caroline wandered back into the living-room. She found herself wishing Christina had not brought up the question of Lacey She could not help wondering about it herself. Still, Lacey was her own boss and well able to take care of her own affairs.

She had her coat on and the letter in her hand, ready to go out, when the front doorbell rang

"Lacey's forgotten her key," she called to Christina.

"Well, there's enough dinner for three, I think."

Caroline ran down the front stairs, now wishing a little that Lacey had not got back so early; for she was not too fond of Chris, and Caroline tried to keep them apart so that they would not get a chance actively to dislike one another. But after all, she thought as she unlocked the front door, it had been Lacey's apartment first.

But it was not Lacey standing in the rain. It was Bill Conison. She stared at at him, feeling a little stupid.

"Hi!" he said. "Is Lacey home?"

"No. No, she isn't."

"She wasn't at the office. I thought she might be laid up with a cold."

"She took the day off. Probably went to see some friends in Maryland."

Bill looked down at her for a moment without speaking. In the light of the street lamp she could see him frowning.

"I'm going back home tonight," he said at last. "Tell her I'm sorry I missed her, will you?"

He was turning to go when she noticed that he was wearing a tweed topcoat instead of a raincoat, and that the shoulders were black with rain. Before she could stop herself, she was calling after him:

"You're soaked!"

He half-turned back. "Perceptive, aren't you?"

"I was going out to mail a letter," she explained. She hesitated a moment, and then, "You can come up and have a drink if you'll take the letter along when you go and mail it."

He limped up the steps, grinning now. "I was wondering what had happened to that well-known Southern hospitality," he said, coming through the door she held open. "I thought you were afraid to trust yourself with me unchaperoned."

"I might have been," Caroline said. "Fortunately, I shan't have to."

BILL sat in the red velvet chair in front of the fireplace, feeling well fed and properly cared for. Caroline, opposite him, looked sulky, but Christina was beaming. He liked Christina, he decided; she was a swell girl. It was because of her he was here now. She had insisted on his taking off his shoes as soon as he came into the apartment.

"Your feet are soaked. You'll catch your death. See, it will only take a minute, here in front of the fireplace."

"He's just staying for a drink!" Caroline had protested.

"Oh, Caroline, no! See, he is all wet!"

Caroline had thumped the drink down on the table next to him. "He always is."

He would not have accepted Christina's invitation to dinner if Caroline had not been so eager to have him decline. Now, he was glad that he had stayed. It had been a good dinner.

"That pie was the nuts," he said now. "I haven't had pie like that since I was a kid. Not even then, probably. I've made a pig of myself."

"You certainly have," Caroline agreed.

Christina looked at her, shocked. "But, Caroline, look at him! So thin!"

"A bag of bones." Bill agreed, grinning at Caroline.

"That's not starvation," Caroline said. "It's his disposition."

Christina's face was distressed. "But, Caroline, didn't you have enough? Perhaps—"

"Of course I had enough!" And then, looking at Christina, Caroline softened. "Don't be silly, darling. Sit down, stop your fussing, and drink your coffee."

"If you had a disposition like hers," Bill said to Caroline, "you might become quite popular. Though of course you probably can't cook."

"It's only that Chris doesn't know you yet. When she gets to, she'll treat you the way everybody else does—though she does have a soft spot for stray cats and the like."

They sat for awhile without talking, Bill sipping at his third cup of coffee. He watched Caroline without seeming to do so. She had something on her mind, he thought.

"What are you making faces about?" Caroline asked him suddenly.

"About you, probably. I thought the city would rub the corners off your disposition, but it's only sharpened them. When you get to be old, you're going to be a very prickly sort of spinster."

HE wondered a little at the sudden blankness of her eyes, and that she did not answer insult for insult. She just turned her head and stared into the blazing fire. "A very lovely head," he thought —not for the first time. Pity it belonged to Caroline Hasbrey!

He glanced at his watch and jumped to his feet. "Look at the time! I've got to catch that train."

Christina was getting his shoes for him with such hasty solicitude that for a moment he was afraid that she was going to put them on for him, too. She did not go that far, though for a moment she looked as though she were considering it. Tying his laces, he grinned up at her.

"That was a wonderful dinner, Christina! Sometime when you can get out by yourself, I'll buy you one. If there's one thing a man appreciates, it's a womanly woman." And he hurried away. . . .

Brushing her hair in front of the mirror, Caroline wondered if she really were getting a little sour and old-maidish. Certainly, Christina had been shocked by her treatment of Bill Conison, and had said so in no vague terms after he left. Poor Chris seemed to think that Caroline had a potential admirer in Bill, and was as horrified by her wasting the chance as she would be by the lighting of a cigarette with a ten-dollar bill.

Caroline was still brushing, absent-mindedly, when she heard the apartment door open and close softly. In a minute, Lacey came in. She looked tired. She looked her age, Caroline thought suddenly, and wondered for the first time how old Lacey was.

"I was sneaking in, baby. I thought you'd be asleep."

Caroline smiled at her in the mirror. "I should have waked anyway. I was worried about you."

Lacey threw herself on her bed and closed her eyes. "Don't ever worry about me, baby. I don't."

"Did you have a good time?" Caroline asked, and hoped it did not sound as though she were prying.

Lacey did not seem to mind. "So-so," she said. "I sometimes wonder whether I really like young men."

That was all she said, and Caroline knew that she was welcome to think anything she liked. If she wanted more information, she could probably have it for the asking. But as long as things were kept vague and in the background, they would not bother her unduly.

"This place feels different," Lacey said suddenly. "Not so—so sterile. Have company?"

"Chris was here for dinner. And Bill Conison dropped in, looking for you."

In the mirror, she saw Lacey open her eyes and sit up very slowly. Abruptly, she looked older even than she had when she came in.

"Bill was here?" Her voice was quiet.

"He called you at the office. He came out here because he thought you might be ill."

"What did you tell him?" The voice was still quiet.

"I said you went to see friends in Maryland."

There was a long silence before Lacey said, "Thanks, baby," and lay back on the bed. Then, "Did he stay long?"

"We fed him. At least, Chris did, practically with a spoon. He left in time to catch the eleven-ten."

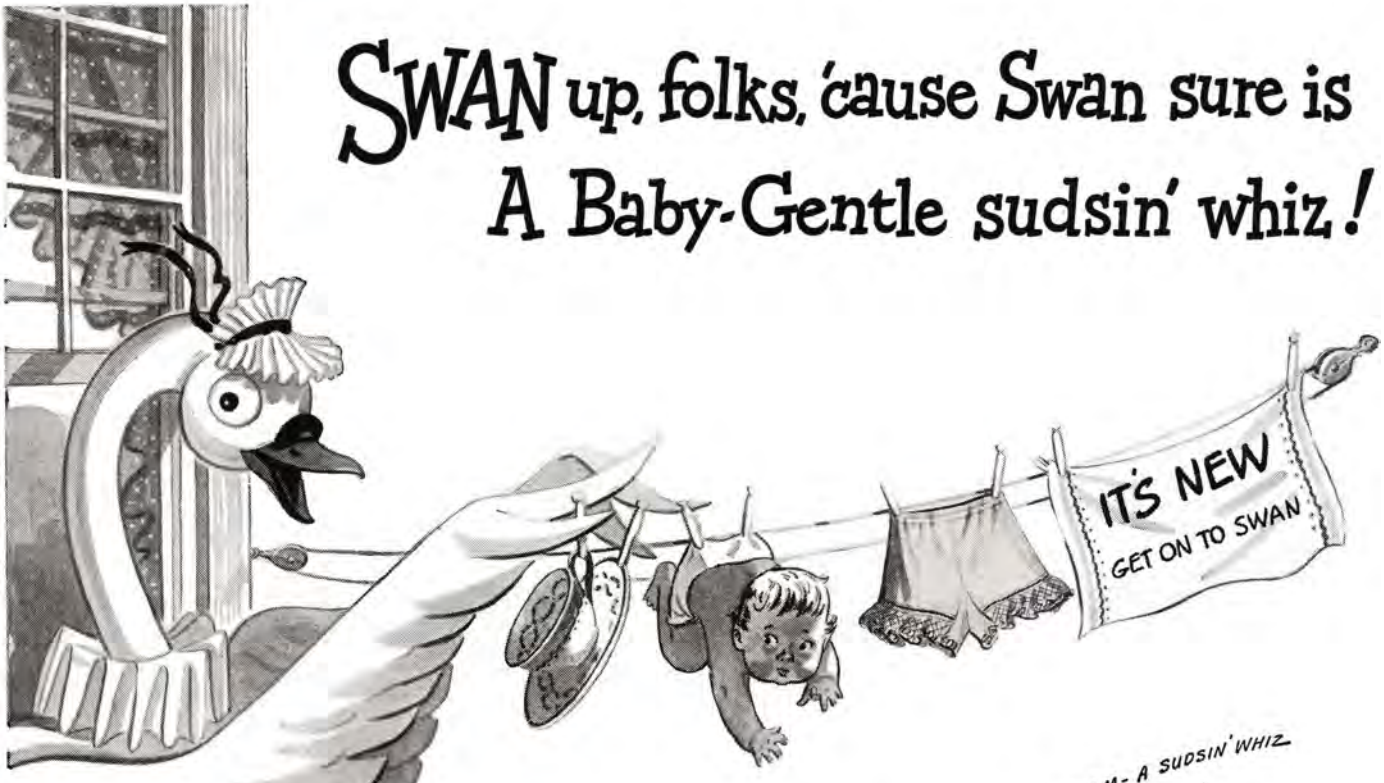
"I'm sorry I missed him," Lacey said.

Caroline was suddenly terribly sorry for her, and a little angry at her, too, and at Bill Conison, and at the world.

"You're tired," she said, and to her own ears her voice sounded a bit sharp. "Want me to brush your hair for you?"

For a long time, as she sat brushing out Lacey's thick black curls, neither of them said anything. The room was so quiet that Caroline could hear the tiny whirring of the electric clock, and the sound

SWAN up, folks, 'cause Swan sure is A Baby-Gentle sudsin' whiz!



You cannot buy a purer soap
Than baby-gentle Swan.
No wonder it's the sudser
That babies beam upon!

Swan goes *swoosh!* and ooh what suds!
Fast'n, rich'n, creamy...
For doing dishes folks all say
Swan soap is a dreamy!

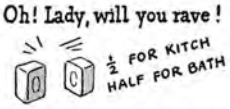
Two convenient sizes —Large and Regular

Guaranteed by Good Housekeeping
IF DEFECTIVE OR NOT AS ADVERTISED THEREIN
REPLACEMENT OR REFUND OF MONEY

Because it's extra kind to hands
Folks use Swan for all soaping
The duper-mildness of Swan suds
Will win you, too, I'm hoping!

I'd like to say just one word more
Silks an woolies both adore
The baby-gentle suds Swan makes-
So won't you try a dozen cakes?

If you like suds aplenty
And yet you want to save
Just buy some Swan and try it.
Oh! Lady, will you rave!



(P.S. Don't forget, when a Swan bar breaks, you get two thrifty handsome cakes!)

SWAN

The baby-gentle floating soap that's a sudsin' whiz!

MADE BY LEVER BROTHERS COMPANY, CAMBRIDGE MASS.

of the dying fire in the other room. She could feel Lacey beginning to relax under the soothing strokes of the brush.

"You know," Lacey said abruptly, "once, that guy almost fell in love with me. I keep hoping it will happen again. Next time, he won't get away."

Caroline did not speak; there was nothing she could say. After another silence, Lacey spoke again, her voice dreamy.

"It was after he came back from China with that leg," she said. "I was the only person he would have around. I used to go to the hospital to see him every day."

"What happened to his leg? We used to wonder, in Samberley."

"He got a Jap bullet in the knee. They thought they were going to have to amputate. Bill wouldn't see anybody but me."

Again, there was the sound of the clock and of a spark exploding in the fire. Caroline kept very still and continued to brush the lovely, vital hair.

"Once, I sneaked in a bottle of whisky," Lacey said. "The doctor said I might have killed him, but he was wrong. Bill needed that whisky."

Caroline did not say anything. She brushed the curls slowly, from root to tip.

"He kissed me that afternoon," Lacey said after a while. "You know, in ten years, that was the only time that guy kissed me? But he almost loved me that day because I was the only one who knew how scared he was—scared of losing that leg, and scared of dying. And I had sense enough to have a drink with him instead of bawling about it."

Caroline tried to imagine Bill Conison scared and sick, trying not to show it, angry at the sickness and at the fear. He must have been the very devil of a patient.

"I guess that was the trouble," Lacey said, her voice sleepy now. "I was the only one who knew how it was with him. That was why he almost loved me. And that was why he didn't. Men don't like women to know too much about them."

CAROLINE and Christina were having a party. There were only the two of them, and the dinner was pork chops, but it was a party because they had made the table very formal with candles and flowers, and were having an old-fashioned cocktail each to begin with.

While they were sipping their drinks, Lacey came in unexpectedly; she had told Caroline that she would not be home until late. She looked at the table and at their drinks with obvious astonishment.

"Who's been elected Queen of the May?" she asked.

Caroline felt oddly embarrassed, as though she and Chris had been caught playing a children's game. "We're just having a little party," she said defensively. "Will you have a drink?"

"Don't mind if I do. I'm going out again; I'll take the drink as soon as I change this dress. Spilled ink."

She went into the bedroom and Caroline and Christina carried their glasses into the kitchen and mixed three more drinks in almost complete silence. They were ready by the time Lacey came back, and she took hers and tasted it. She looked more than a little surprised.

"Not bad," she admitted. "You mix it, baby?"

"Christina did. We found a recipe in the cookbook, and Chris can make anything that comes out of a cookbook."

Lacey looked with raised eyebrows at Christina, who was blushing. "I'll bet she can," she said without expression. "Why the celebration?"

"Oh, we just felt like a party."

Lacey put her glass down and looked from one to the other of them, shaking her head. "If that isn't the most pathetic thing I ever heard of! What do two women together have to celebrate? That's no party; that's a wake."

Caroline saw Christina's brightness beginning to wilt, and her own irritation mounted unexpectedly to anger. "Perhaps we like being together," she said. "Perhaps being with someone you like is reason enough to celebrate."

"If either one of you had anyone else to be with," Lacey said patiently, "you wouldn't be with one another. And how you think you're going to find anyone else, the way you're acting, is more than I know."

Christina was terrified of Lacey, and Caroline was amazed now when she showed an unexpected spark of rebellion. "Perhaps," she said stiffly, "the someone else will find us. Nice girls do not go out looking for men."

"In Washington," Lacey said pityingly, "the men are not going to force their way in through the window or down the chimney to join you and your girl friend at your cute little party. You can take that from me; it's gospel."

In the silence that followed, she looked at her watch. "Well," she said, "I'm off. Got a date."

She left, taking the party spirit with her. Caroline and Christina washed their glasses and put them away in silence. Caroline was seething with anger, but loyalty kept her silent for a time, until at last she could not keep it in any longer.

"It's all very well for her to spoil other people's fun," she said. "But maybe I could have dates, too, if I wanted to go out with the kind of men she goes out with."

Christina said nothing for a moment; she was busy arranging the chops on a platter. When she had finished, she turned to Caroline, frowning unhappily.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "I don't know. Sometimes, I think maybe she is right. Perhaps people like you and I are fools. Perhaps it is old-fashioned, the way we live, and does not belong in this time, in this place."

Caroline looked at her in astonishment; with a little fear, too. It was all right for Lacey to say such things, or even for herself to feel them occasionally. But Christina was a symbol of strength and security in a world of paper; to have her doubt the values for which she stood, even for a moment, was a little terrifying.

"That's wrong!" she said. "You know it is."

"I know it is right that women should meet men," Christina said, her eyes still puzzled. "That is nature."

Suddenly, Caroline did not want to talk about it any more. She did not want Chris to say things like this!

"And I'm starving," she said. "That's nature, too."

Christina laughed and turned back to the stove to serve the vegetables. But the whole conversation had shaken Caroline and it continued to worry her, all through the meal and through the evening afterward, for it echoed too clearly something that was already inside her—a longing, a rebellion.

In this strange wartime Washington, young women meet life and love on strange new terms . . . . The next installment of this most timely novel will appear, of course, in our forthcoming September issue.

REDBOOK'S PICTURE OF THE MONTH

(Continued from page 8)

In an amusing sequence he meets another discouraged young man of the theater, *Sam H. Harris;* they promote money from an "angel," and the first Cohan & Harris show hits the boards.

It is "Little Johnny Jones." The show was a hit in 1904, and it should be a smash in the picture. Into a few minutes have been packed the highlights of a musical comedy—the song, "Yankee Doodle Boy;" a race-track chorus number, "Hurry Up;" a steamship sailing and *Johnny* left behind, singing "Give My Regards to Broadway," and finally a solo dance.

This sequence is the first of many splendors. It is craftily photographed by James Wong Howe, so that it looks as though it really were made in a theater, instead of being tricked-up in typical Hollywood fashion. Its pace is a fine example of the little-known art of film-cutting; the songs become a great new delight, and Cagney's dance is the first revelation of just how remarkable his impersonation of Cohan is. His singing, too, is Cohanesque, for Jim talks his tunes.

The shows George M. Cohan wrote and played in take up more than two columns of small type in "Who's Who in the Theater." This picture hits the high spots, using the ones which will make a point or advance the story. Thus, another big number is built around "George Washington Jr." and the song, "It's a Grand Old Flag." Again, *George M.* writes a song for the girl he loves—"Mary Is a Grand Old Name." But *Mary* doesn't get the song; it goes to Fay Templeton in "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway."

Irene Manning, who plays the *Templeton* rôle in "Yankee Doodle Dandy," is a beautiful, able singing star. In addition to the "Grand Old Name" song, she has a fetching number with a chorus—the well-remembered "So Long, Mary."

The *Cohan* career rockets along to 1917. Rejected because of his age by an army recruiting officer, he serves his country in another way. Fooling around with three bugle notes, he contrives his country's war-song. And at an army camp on Long Island one night, in the beam of truck headlights, Elsie Janis sings "Over There."

Glorious News For A Glorious JULY 4th!

THE FIRST TIME AT POPULAR PRICES!

After one whole year of acclaim, beginning with the 4th of July you may now see this greatest of great pictures at your theatre's regular admission prices! See it—*and celebrate!*

GARY COOPER as "Sergeant York"

Exactly as shown at advanced prices

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WALTER BRENNAN • JOAN LESLIE
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Produced by JESSE L. LASKY and HAL B. WALLIS

Original Screen Play by Abem Finkel & Harry Chandlee and Howard Koch & John Huston • Based Upon the Diary of Sergeant York • Music by Max Steiner

This is a number! Able Frances Langford does the singing, as *Miss Janis*, and she is backed by a band and a big men's chorus. At the first *reprise* Cagney looks at you out of the screen and says: "Everybody sing!" If you can just get that lump down out of your throat, you'll sing your head off. . . . There has been much comment that this war so far has inspired no great patriotic song. We don't need a new one, and I have an idea that "Yankee Doodle Dandy" will sell "Over There" to the nation all over again.

As *George M.* continues his tale for the *President*, the *Four Cohans* dwindle to one. *Jerry* and *Nellie* retire to a farm. *Josie* marries. *Nellie* and *Josie* die, and so, then, does *Jerry*. *George M.* himself takes to the farm, is miffed when some young jitterbugs don't know him, his name or what he did. Finally he comes back for a new hit in "I'd Rather Be Right"—and the *President* sends for him. He's worried—but all *Mr. Roosevelt* wants to do is give him the Congressional Medal of Honor (Civilian). Congress has voted a song-and-dance man—"just an ordinary guy who knows what ordinary guys like"—the nation's highest civilian honor for "It's a Grand Old Flag" and "Over There." *George M.* does a dance down the steps from the *President's* study, goes out into the night—and there is a moving *reprise* of "Over There."

"YANKEE DOODLE DANDY" cost about $1,500,000 and looks it. Its stage sets are authentic, its period costumes beautiful. Willie Collier, Sr., was technical consultant on the old-time theater, and Johnny Boyle, who used to dance with the Cohan & Harris Minstrels, was one of the dance directors. Robert Buckner worked for eight months on the scenario, spending much time with Cohan and changing things to suit George M. The shooting script, as finally completed by Buckner and Edmund Joseph, is the right mixture of song and story. It sticks to the musicals, and covers good Cohan plays like "The Song and Dance Man" in a montage shot. It takes pardonable liberty with fact and time once in a while; for instance, it puts "I'd Rather Be Right" in the time of the present war instead of in 1937.

"Yankee Doodle Dandy" tops the career of Director Michael Curtiz. The word-mangling Mike has evoked a performance from practically everybody in the show. Walter Huston, who just can't give a bad performance, plays *Jerry Cohan* with splendid and quiet authority. Young Joan Leslie (seventeen) is very much all right as *Mary*, and winds up being a very creditable lady of fifty or so. Richard Whorf as *Sam H. Harris*, S. Z. Sakall in a comedy bit as an angel, Eddie Foy, Jr., in a fine funny scene as *Eddie Foy, Sr.*, and many others give Jim Cagney the support he rates.

Really, it is George M. Cohan's picture. When we go rushing along, scrambling for a living, making war and trying to keep up with things, we are inclined to forget what even we ourselves did yesterday and the day before. "Yankee Doodle Dandy" serves to remind us that George M. Cohan has been quite a guy: an American master of a very American art, show business.

A MAN, A GIRL AND A DOG

(Continued from page 45)

brilliant sunshine seemed to have grown thickly overcast. Joe was not angry—not angry at all; there was only a searing disillusionment—about everything. Life was just cockeyed! He stared somberly at Cæsar, and Cæsar pounded the pavement with an anxious tail. This friendly tattoo failed to dispel Joe's gloom.

"What do I want with a dog?" Joe growled. "I had to go get myself a mutt! Just a big dope!" He felt compassion, now, for neither man nor beast. So he wasn't good enough! That was it! Okay! Okay! His mother could have told him how it would turn out, with one of those "high-ups."

Cæsar rose to his haunches; and still thumping the pavement, looked steadfastly into the morose eyes, a cajoling grin on his face. But the morose look persisting, with a sigh and a shudder Cæsar lay down again. His tail made the merest despondent stir.

"I'm not going to have a mutt hanging round!" Joe declared, aloud.

Cæsar rolled his eyes in agony.

JOE stood atop the stoop, that same night, watching Second Floor, Rear, approach down the row of brownstones. He felt heavy—just punk. He longed to tell somebody that tomorrow he would take Cæsar away. Several times that afternoon he had announced the fact, in the shop.

"So you're going to take him away," said Mike, finally annoyed by the repetitions. "So what?"

But just talking about it lifted some of the weight off Joe's chest. He had to part with Cæsar now; for he had said that he would; and it was in his creed that when you make up your mind, you do it!

Cæsar tugged on the leash.

"Wait a minute!" Joe said. He greeted Second Floor, Rear. "Been for a walk?" he asked, by way of opening up, before telling her about Cæsar.

"To the movies," she answered, laying a hand on Cæsar's head, as if it were he alone she spoke to. She looked up at the stars. How many of them, tonight! How dazzling, yet tender!

Sitting at her window, Enid had let a book drop to her lap. She had seen a powder of starlight sprinkle the leaves of eucalyptus trees. The silvery transfiguration of sordid backyards had filled her with a sense as of choking. The walls of her room had begun to press in on her. She had hastened forth, for an aimless walk—just to get out, to get air. She had wanted to think of nothing—nothing at all. The lights of a movie theater had drawn her. So she had tried to follow a story passing on the screen before her, but she lost the thread of it and she left the theater as abruptly as she had her room.

"Well," said Joe, trying to be his coolest, "this is the last time I take this mutt out, nights."

A tremor ruffled Cæsar's hair; a doleful howl awakened the slumbrous street. Veritably, rather than part with this man, Cæsar would give up the ghost.

"Why?" Enid asked, with an odd sharpness. She flashed her dark eyes from dog to man. The color left her cheeks.

"I'm taking him back, tomorrow," Joe explained, not in the steadiest voice.

"Back? Where?" Her tone still sharper.

"Down to the Speyer, where I got him. They'll find him a good home."

"You're giving him up?"

"Well, he's kind of hard to have round, in a small room, and all," Joe mumbled. He couldn't get himself to look at the mutt, whose sorrowful eyes were searching his face.

Then, fully, Enid realized what she feared. Cæsar gone, how could she ever again find the courage, the very little courage needed, to linger, talking like this —to *him?*

"You can't, you *can't* give him up!" she cried. "Don't you see how attached to you he's become? Oh, don't you see?"

"He's not so attached to me, yet," Joe muttered. "I haven't had him long enough." She sure was a queer kid. But pretty—much prettier than he had imagined, with the star-dust on her uplifted face. Pretty? She was beautiful! A swell looker! Built to knock your eye out, too! Only, he didn't like them cold.

"You're cruel!" she asserted fiercely, clenching her hands. She was fighting, dimly, for herself. Oh, it was fantastic! She must be mad! But suddenly she felt only for Cæsar, who had given that long, mournful howl. "You give him a home, and then—" she cried. She dropped to her knees on the stoop and passed her arms around Cæsar's neck. Cæsar emitted a sniffling sigh. His rough, moist tongue found Enid's hand. Quietly, the stars looked down.

Joe scowled at the strange spectacle, trying to think it just plain dumb. But he could not. He felt sort of sick.

"Give him to *me*—I'll take him!" Enid said, quite forgetting herself, thinking only of Cæsar shivering in her arms.

"Oh, sure, if you want," said Joe, hastily. "Only, you're not home all day. That'll be kind of hard on him—you know how it is, with dogs. And taking him out, early mornings and late nights. That'll be kind of hard on *you.*"

"That's all right."

"Okay! And look—I could sort of pinch hit—take him for a run, noons. Like I do now. I wouldn't mind."

"Wouldn't you, really?" She stood up, smiling.

SHE was a swell kid, feeling like this about a mutt. She had a heart! Sure—sure, she had a heart—for dogs! People didn't count with her! Only dogs. And maybe cats. He knew that kind: nuts about animals and sour on folks! But maybe not; maybe he had her all wrong. Maybe it was like Mrs. Tynedge said—she was timid, man-shy. A gorgeous kid like her! She must be crazy—man-shy, with her looks!

He fished out a cigarette, lit it. The flare of match illuminated her smile, close

to him; illuminated long, glistening lashes. Aw, she was crying!

"And once in a while, mornings," he went on, "I could take him out. And if you happen to be kind of tied up, once in a while, nights."

"I'm sure Mrs. Tynedge would give him a little run," she said.

Joe blew a cloud through his nostrils. "You don't have to bother Mrs. Tynedge. I like to go to the park, noons. So I could easily take the mutt." Go to the park, noons; and see her—*her!* Well, so what? He wouldn't crack a smile even at the tan caterpillar that was too high-up for Cæsar to sniff at! *Her?* He'd give her the glassy stare—the iceberg, the snob!

"All right, at noon, then," he heard Enid agree. "It's so good of you!"

"Well, so long as we're neighbors, like my mother used to say. And look!" Certain that now he was going to make a first-class dope of himself, he nevertheless rushed on: "I guess I better warn you. Remember, I said he *costs?* He could eat a cow."

"Yes." Enid's forehead creased with a little frown of calculation. "Couple of bucks a week," he had told her. Take *that* out of her salary! Mm! And sending money home every week, too!

The calculating little frown did not escape Joe. He preferred not having Second Floor, Rear (Miss Carewlin, first name Enid—sweet name), think that he was giving Cæsar up because of the expense. Besides, he wasn't.

"You let me buy his grub," he said, blowing smoke volcanically.

"But if *you* take him out—"

"Only noons," Joe interrupted her.

"Well! And if *you* buy his food—he might just as well *be* yours!"

"Oh, no. He'll be *yours.*"

"Well, it's a funny kind of transaction!"

"That's how some transactions are."

"I wouldn't dream of letting you pay for *my* dog's keep!"

"That's the only condition I'll give him to you," Joe said, flatly. "You better be careful, now; he isn't yours, yet!"

AND Cæsar never did become Enid's—except half of him, so to speak.

Somehow, what with Joe taking him out rather oftener than had been stipulated for, more and more frequently, when the summer nights came on, accompanied by Enid swinging along lithely at his side; and what with Joe paying the couple of bucks a week, the other half of Cæsar seemed to remain Joe's property.

The complicating fact was that Joe's half liked to stray into Second Floor, Rear; so that Joe had to stick his head in: "Excuse *me.* Is he in here?" And Enid's half persistently strayed into "Second Floor Front, Left," so that Enid had to stick her golden head through that doorway: "Excuse *me.* Is he in here?"

Of course they excused each other readily enough. But after a month or so of this performance they decided that it would be less troublesome if they joined the two halves of Cæsar together; less troublesome for Cæsar, and also for themselves.

And then, the more comfortably to accommodate both halves, and themselves, they rented a cozy, prettily furnished apartment, to which they went to live, as soon as they were married.

A LITTLE FAITH

(Continued from page 21)

"Smoke!" he threw back from the stairs.

"That's chivalry for you," she muttered. She pulled the covers up to her chin, and waited. She was used to his jumping out of bed at odd moments on some wild-goose chase. She was like that about the children—let them so much as stir, and she was on her feet in an instant. David was exactly the same way about the farm. Only last week, he'd heard somebody prowling around in the middle of the night, and he was off like a shot, grabbing a big cane on the way. He hadn't had to use the cane, because it had turned out to be Edward going out to the barn to check on a sick lamb.

"Why in blazes did you have to follow me?" he'd demanded when he'd found Claudia running after him across the lawn.

"I'm not letting you get into any fight with any burglar by yourself," she'd enlightened him. "And don't look so long-suffering about it."

"Please, idiot—buttinsky—angel-face—fool," he'd implored her, "if there's ever any real danger, just stay put and don't tie my hands."

She hadn't even bothered to argue with him. She might be all the things he called her, but she wasn't the sort of woman to stay put when there was any excitement around. Now, however, she didn't think it worth while to stir herself in the pursuit of a little smoke. He'd be back soon enough, looking very sheepish, and cooling off the whole bed with his chilled limbs. "I shall be sound asleep," she decided brutally.

She might have known that he'd steal her thunder. No sooner had he gone, than he came dashing back up the stairs like a lunatic. "Get up," he ordered hoarsely. "Quick! Telephone the operator there's a fire—"

Claudia switched on the lamp. This was carrying a joke too far. "Don't be silly," she said. Then she saw that he was already prancing into his trousers, and stuffing his pajama-coat down inside his belt. "Stop wasting time!" he commanded. "Phone the operator and get dressed!"

Still she didn't believe him. "David, this isn't funny," she reproved him. "Really, it isn't." But even as she spoke, a faint, acrid smell of smoke belatedly reached her nostrils. She picked up her robe from the foot of the bed and flung it over her shoulders. "No!" he shot at her. "Put on something warm! Hurry!"

HE was racing down the stairs again before she could ask any questions. She grabbed the telephone on the bedside table, notified the operator, and then almost broke her neck getting into some clothes.

It was distinctly anti-climactic to find the living-room looking just as usual, with the embers glowing harmlessly in the grate, and Shakespeare enjoying an illicit nap in the wing chair. "Now, honestly!" she re-

marked aloud, as she explored the peaceful order of the dining-room and kitchen. David certainly had a complex when it came to fires. "My poor benighted neurotic!" she called out. "Where are you?"

He seemed to get the general gist of the query, if not the more subtle implication. "In the cellar!" he shouted back. "Don't come down!"

It was as good as an invitation. She hurried to the cellar door and opened it. Involuntarily she stepped back, for it was as if a blanket of smoke were tossed into her face.

"I told you not to come down!" he yelled up, when he saw her standing there. "See if the children are all right!"

She hated to leave him in the middle of so much smoke; but after all, there was no sign of flames. It was probably the furnace acting up again. Annoyed rather than alarmed, she hurried to the nursery. The upper hall seemed fresh and clear after the heavy odor that filled the downstairs rooms. She pushed open the door, and switched on the light. She sniffed. The smell was stronger in here, there was no doubt of it. Matthew was coughing a little, and tossing restlessly in his sleep. Automatically she moved to his side, and put his arms beneath the covers. It was then that she noticed a black scorch on the white wall against which the crib was placed. As she looked, it grew larger, and blotted its way down toward Matthew's golden head like an ominous hand. An instinctive fear swept her suddenly into action. She picked him up, and tried to pull Bobby out of bed at the same time, but he was heavy beyond belief. She tugged frantically at his shoulder. "Bobby!! Wake up! You have to get out of here! Quick!"

He frowned in his sleep, and pushed her away impatiently, curling back into the eternal crescent of childhood.

She shook him again. "Bobby, please!"

He whimpered. "You're waking me up," he complained. "Go away—"

Panic filled her. The black scorch was spreading, and she knew without knowing how she knew it, that there wasn't a moment to lose. She stumbled blindly to the living-room, and threw Matthew onto the sofa, grateful that he kept on sleeping. Then she rushed to the cellar door and clambered down the wooden steps, gagging on the gusts of smoke that stuffed her mouth and stabbed her eyes. For a moment she could not find David, and her knees went boneless until her vision cleared, and she saw him chopping at the far wall with an ax. She stood there drenched in horror as a thin red tongue of flame darted out at him like some sly foe crouching for attack. She got to his side somehow. "David! Come quick. The children's room!"

He dropped his ax. A groan tore from him. "Oh, God!" he said. He dragged her after him up to the kitchen, and thrust her by main force to the entry. The effort to talk seemed to tear at his lungs. "Wait out on the lawn where it's safe," he gasped.

"Don't be silly," she retorted briskly.

The familiar phrase pulled the ghost of a smile across his swollen lips. "Stay put, or I'll knock your little fool block off!"

She made no retort. In the full glare of the light, his face frightened her. It was pallid, and covered with thick beads of yellow sweat. "I'll wait," she assured him quickly.

She waited, but only until she heard him on the floor above. Then she raced after him, throwing a quick glance at the sofa to make certain that Matthew had not wakened. "Childhood's wonderful," she thought.

When she reached the nursery, David was getting Bobby to his feet. He struggled up through layers of sleep, rallying immediately to equality. "What's the big idea!" he swaggered in a deep voice.

"None of your business what's the big idea," David barked back at him. "You're going for a walk—"

He swooped up an armful of clothes from a chair and started to untangle them. Claudia whisked them away. "Those are Matthew's, simpleton—"

His fingers closed around her arm. "I thought I told you to stay outdoors!!"

She pulled free of him. "Shut up—this is my department—"

She moved to the closet for Bobby's coat and shoes. Her panic was lifting. The black scorch on the wall had grown no larger, and the smoke in the room was not as noticeable as it had been before. Whatever little trouble had started in the cellar, was probably dying down. She wondered if it were necessary to get the children out of the house. A March wind was blowing up, and they'd be asking for sniffles, sure as fate.

"Hurry!" David commanded hoarsely. "We've got to move fast!"

"I really think we're foolish to lose our heads like this," she ventured, as she opened the closet door.

The words were crammed back into her throat. She stifled a scream. The thin red tongue of flame had followed them up here, and was licking its sly way along the closet wall.

SHE would always remember two things about that night. First, the way Bobby stood, ludicrous and pitiful, with his shoes on the wrong feet, looking up at the cloud of rosy smoke against the black sky. "Our house is on fire," he said.

The second thing she would remember was the way David bent to kiss her. "I'm sorry," he told her brokenly. "I tried to save it for us, darling, but I couldn't."

She put her arms around him. "We've saved *us*—that's all that matters—"

In her heart, however, she knew that this night would leave a scar upon her for as long as she lived. Strange that she had always felt that fires happened to others, but never to oneself. It was something you had to experience, to know.

She was aware of Bobby growing tense against her. "Daddy!" he screamed, as David dashed back to the house. "You'll get burned!"

"I've got to get the dogs out!" David called back. "Stay with Mother!"

Claudia felt the monstrous conflict, the desperate helplessness that was more nightmare than reality. Not even Jane or Edward was there to turn to. Their only chance lay in themselves.

"Bobby," said Claudia, "could I trust you to hold Matthew's hand very tightly? I want to go with Daddy—"

Bobby's safe world was crumbling. His voice climbed to childish anguish. "Please, Mother, please stay here, Mother! You'll both get burned up!"

"But the dogs haven't any collars on!" she besought him desperately. "Daddy won't be able to manage them alone—"

Matthew understood nothing of what was going on. He knew merely that he had been taken from his warm bed, and that he was cold and sleepy. He began to cry.

Bobby's jaw stiffened. "Stop being a baby!" he commanded. Dignity settled upon him, and age came into his soul. "I'll watch Matthew," he said.

Claudia looked at him, and knew that she could trust him. He was the projection of David's very being. She gave Matthew's hand into his. "I'll be back, darling," she promised. "We'll both be back."

DAVID was having trouble with the Danes, as she knew he would. They wouldn't budge from the soft rug in the passageway outside the kitchen, where they always slept. They were creatures of habit, and since they had not committed any breach of etiquette, they could see no reason for this premature expulsion into the chill outdoors. They planted their huge bodies firmly on the floor, and looked righteous.

"You damn' fools!" David exhorted them hoarsely, between shoves at their stubborn rumps. "Get moving, will you!"

Claudia rushed to the icebox for a piece of meat, damning Jane for the tidiness which made her hide things under covers. There was no time to pick and choose. She grabbed a steak meant for tomorrow's supper, and tore it from its wrappings.

Smoke cut into her eyes and lungs. She could scarcely see for the stinging tears that glued her lids together; she could scarcely speak above the pain that slit her chest. She reached for breath. "Here, Bluff! Here, Bluster!"

She gave up a prayer of thankfulness, as the incredible offering electrified them into action. They made a competitive leap for the steak, only to stop short on the threshold of the smoke-filled kitchen. They backed away distrustfully.

David's face was gaunt. "I was afraid of that," he muttered. He bent, and with a superhuman strength, encircled Bluff's massive body with his arms. He staggered with him to the entry, and pushed him out onto the lawn. He came back for Bluster, but Bluster would have none of such indignity. He made a dash for freedom.

They watched the dogs disappear into the night. It was a black night, and sparks were flying instead of stars.

David uttered a sound that was prayer and blasphemy combined. "The wind's changed. Get back to the children. I'll see if the barn's all right!"

Claudia felt a new despair. The barn was full of lambs, and a litter of baby pigs. Would this nightmare never end? She ran toward the front of the house. She could see Bobby and Matthew standing obediently as she had left them—small motionless silhouettes against the sky. Bless them, they were giving her the right to follow David—

Halfway across the lawn, she remembered Shakespeare. Had he escaped? Or was he still sleeping on the wing chair, waiting innocently for death? It was unthinkable. Shakespeare was part of the family. David had bought him for her the first year they were married—a ball of yellow fur, small enough to fit into a candy-box. She turned and sped back toward the house, with its rose-colored halo of drifting smoke.

She didn't want the children to see her, so she used the kitchen entrance again. The gritting, acrid taste of the fumes no longer affronted her lungs or shocked her lips; for now she knew how to hold her breath and close her nostrils against it. It made her a little dizzy. She had to catch hold of the kitchen table to steady herself. Jane's alarm-clock was on the table. Nine o'clock. It must have stopped. A lifetime ago it had been eight o'clock, and she and David had gone to bed. She was probably still in bed, dreaming that there was a fire. In a little while she would wake up and tell him about it. "I dreamed that I had to save Shakespeare, and when I ran through the dining-room, flames were bursting out from everywhere. . . ."

It was interesting to dream that you were dreaming. She could even hear the sound of the fire as it curled along the dining-room wall. She hadn't realized that fire made a noise, but it did—a hollow, crackling noise like bones breaking in a human body. It had probably frightened Shakespeare off the wing chair, for he wasn't there. She had to crawl under the sofa to find him, and he kept pulling his paw away just as she tried to catch hold of him. He'd always done that, even as a baby. . . . Baby—it rang a bell in her mind. There were lots of bells, all at once, and the dream became silly, as dreams usually did. The room was full of people now, all appearing out of nowhere. There was the tall plumber, and the short tailor, and the fat butcher and the electric-meter man, and every one of them was dressed up like children in large fireman hats, and rubber coats that were much too big for them.

"Hey there!" yelled the tall plumber. "What are you doing in here?"

"I'm looking for a yellow cat," said Claudia politely. . . .

She opened her eyes and saw Nancy Riddale, of all people. She wanted to ask her where on earth she'd come from, but she didn't have a great deal of breath, and it was more important to know about David and the children.

"The children," Nancy answered briefly, "are fine."

Claudia tried to sit up, but Nancy's restraining hand pushed her back. "You'll see them tomorrow," said Nancy. "I sent them to my house with my chauffeur. Now lie still, and drink this."

Claudia closed her lips against the flask. "I never drink, thanks."

"Well, you'll drink now, thanks," said Nancy.

Claudia drank, for Nancy had a surprisingly compelling way about her, in spite of her double chin and bleached hair which David could never abide.

"Lucky for you," Nancy continued, "that your husband's still over at the barn and doesn't know you were scrabbling under the sofa in the middle of a fire, looking for a cat."

"Don't tell him," Claudia begged.

"Completely mad," Nancy disapproved. "I thought you were supposed to be having another baby or something."

"I was. I am. I forgot," said Claudia contritely.

"A fine thing to forget."

"I don't think the baby really minded, though," said Claudia. "It's used to running around with me." The drink was getting warm inside of her. She hated the taste of whisky, but once it got past her throat, it wasn't so bad. It seemed to take away the rubber feeling in her knees. "This looks like a station-wagon I'm in," she discovered in astonishment.

"No *looks* about it. It is," said Nancy.

"Whose?"

"I don't know. Somebody's out there."

CLAUDIA followed the vague direction of Nancy's bejeweled hand. People and cars crowded the side lawn, and in the bright glare of the many headlights she could see the plumber, all dressed up in his fireman's hat, unfurling hose from an engine. A sublime sense of relaxation stole over her. Her house was burning down, but it had ceased to be a personal responsibility; it had become instead, a community event. "How do they manage to carry all that water in those hoses?" she marveled.

Nancy stared at her. "I don't think you're overly bright," she said.

"OH, BOY — AM I PACKING THEM IN!"

"Oh, I'm not," Claudia conceded affably. "I never was." She leaned her head back, and closed her smarting lids. "How do they?"

"They're siphoning it from the brook, of course."

"That's very clever of them," said Claudia.

Nancy peered out of the window. "They're certainly doing a grand job for a small-town volunteer fire-department," she remarked respectfully. "You'll have to rebuild a couple of rooms, no doubt, but your insurance'll pay for it."

Insurance. The warm feeling that had been spreading through Claudia's veins abruptly disappeared. Her blood froze. David would never forgive her. Like an idiot, she'd scolded him for squandering money every year on a premium against a fire that she knew they'd never have. And now they'd had it. "We haven't any insurance, anymore," she told Nancy weakly; "I made him give it up. I thought it was silly."

"My God!" said Nancy.

"Could I please have another little drink?"

Nancy uncorked the silver flask. "For a girl who doesn't indulge," she remarked dryly, "you're doing all right."

BY the time David sought them out, Claudia was again feeling relaxed. David regarded her anxiously. "Are you sure you're all right?"

"I'm fine," said Claudia. "And terribly grateful that we only lost the dining-room and nursery, and that nobody's hurt, and I think it was darling of the firemen to save the damned old sideboard."

"Are you *sure* you're all right?" David insisted. "Better go home with Nancy."

"You could stand a good night's sleep, too," Nancy put in. "Better both come."

"I'll have to watch these ashes tonight. I don't trust this wind."

"Then I'll watch too," said Claudia. "It's as much my fire as yours."

David sighed deeply. "Look, darling," he explained, "I have to be here first thing in the morning to make a settlement with the insurance people. You run along without me."

Claudia could scarcely believe her ears. "Will they actually let you take it out over again and pay?" she exclaimed incredulously.

"Take out what over again, and pay who which?" asked David wearily.

"Pay us!" she explained impatiently. "The insurance! After you canceled it!"

David frowned. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. "I didn't cancel any insurance. How many kinds of a jackass do you think I am?"

Claudia set her lips. "I must say I love the way you listen to your wife's advice," she remarked coldly. "However, I'll forgive you this time."

"Thanks, Mamma," said David humbly.

Nancy cleared her throat. "When I came over here tonight, I felt sorry for you two kids," she said gruffly. "Now I feel sorry for myself. Here's my chauffeur, calling back for me. I'm going home."

David remained silent until Nancy had driven away in her shiny black limousine. He seemed to be remembering all the unpleasant things he had ever said about her. He seemed to be wanting to take them all

back in one salute. "She's a good old slob," he brought out finally.

"Everybody's a good old slob," said Claudia, "when there's any real trouble around."

"I guess you're right," said David.

They were especially touched when the plumber, who turned out to be the chief of the fire-department, insisted on both of them going up to bed. He gave them clearly to understand that the fire, from start to finish, was his personal pride and obligation. "We wouldn't leave a fire in this condition," he explained; "we'll be watchin' in shifts all night, so you've got no need to worry. You just go on up and get yourself a good sleep—you and the missus sure can use it."

Claudia wished that she could find the words to thank him. "Those men aren't even getting paid for what they're doing," she said to David as they walked upstairs.

"Nope," said David.

"It's not even their house!"

"Yep," said David.

"I don't know what you mean by 'nope' and 'yep,'" Claudia retorted, "but I can't get through my head why they should run the risk of being burned to death for people they hardly know."

"That," David replied with a superior air, "is something a woman wouldn't understand."

IT seemed strange to find their bedroom just as they had left it less than three hours before—except that Shakespeare had drawn himself into a hump beneath the blankets, and was dozing in peaceful seclusion. "The nerve!" cried Claudia. *"Scat!"*

With one accord they climbed in Shakespeare's place, and drew the covers to their tired chins. "Oh, Lord," breathed David, "this is good!"

"I smell smoke," said Claudia.

"Go ahead and smell it," said David, and put out the light.

"You know," Claudia remarked thoughtfully, "whisky doesn't taste as bad as I thought it did."

David sighed. "Darling, are you going to get full of conversation?"

"I think so," said Claudia. "I'm feeling awfully well." She broke off as a car stopped in front of the house, and quick steps came running up the path. "It's Jane and Edward back from Bridgeport!" she hissed. "Make believe we're asleep—don't say a word!"

"That's what I'm trying to do," said David plaintively.

"Shh!"

"Mr. Horneledge," Edward whispered from the doorway, "are you there?" It scarcely sounded like his calm New England voice. "Mr. Horneledge!"

Claudia switched on the lamp. "What is it, Edward? Do you want something?"

Jane and Edward were clinging unabashedly to each other. Jane's face was white. "The children!" she gasped.

"The children are fine," said Claudia. "Why?"

Edward was wringing his hands. "Mr. Horneledge, could it have been that defective cable that started the fire—"

David started to speak, but Claudia nudged him to silence. "What fire?" she asked in surprise. "We didn't know about any fire; we've been asleep."

"Praise be to God, you weren't all burned to death!" Jane sobbed. "And us not here to help you!"

"David," said Claudia sadly, "Jane's been drinking again."

Edward swallowed his Adam's apple several times, and his eyes bulged.

"Take pity on him," David advised. "He'll have a stroke."

Jane shook her head in awe. "It's a wonder to me," she said, "that you can take it so good. Most folks would be wailing and weeping—"

"We'll wail in the morning," said David, "when we see the mess we'll have to clean up. I'd better take off a few days from the office, Edward, so we can get the new building started before I'm called."

"Before I'm called." The words were like a knell to Claudia, marking ironically the death of all that they had saved. She had forgotten the war. For these past hours, the war had ceased to exist. There had merely been the bare struggle to survive, and the fighting side by side, against a mindless, reasonless enemy. Perhaps that was all war was, this fighting side by side to preserve a way of life. Homes were bombed, and people knew fear and hurt, but after a time they found the courage and the will to rebuild what had been destroyed.

Long after Edward and Jane had gone downstairs, she thought about it. Anguish at the thought of letting David go still resided within her, but the resentment in her heart was gone. She began to understand what David had meant when he said that each one must give what he had to give in his own way and in his own time. The road that stretched ahead was a long and bitter one, full of pain and desolation. But she knew that when the time came, it would be all for one, and one for all.

"DAVID," she whispered into the dark, "are you asleep?"

He was sweet, and said he wasn't.

"I have good news," she said.

"What kind of good news?"

"I found something tonight that's going to help me win this war."

He reached for her hand in lieu of asking her what it was. She moved into his arms.

"A little faith," she answered his unspoken question.

SOLUTION OF OUR CROSSWORD PUZZLE

APPEARING ON PAGE 60

T	R	I	C	E	■	A	P	P	E	N	D	■	A	P
R	U	M	O	R	■	B	A	L	L	E	T	■	C	R
A	B	O	V	E	■	S	T	O	V	E	S	■	C	O
G	A	G	E	■	C	U	R	V	E	D	■	D	O	D
I	T	E	R	■	A	R	I	E	S	■	H	E	R	■
C	O	N	T	E	N	D	E	R	■	B	U	N	D	L
■	■	■	S	A	Y	■	■	S	P	A	N	■	A	I
C	P	A	■	T	O	R	E	■	E	L	K	■	N	A
R	O	V	E	■	N	A	T	A	N	T	■	O	T	R
E	L	A	L	A	■	C	A	R	D	I	N	G	■	S
A	L	U	M	N	A	E	■	D	E	C	A	L	S	■
T	E	N	O	N	S	■	W	E	N	■	B	E	T	A
E	N	T	R	A	P	■	A	N	T	E	■	■	A	R
■	■	■	E	L	I	C	I	T	■	B	O	O	M	E
A	M	I	■	■	R	A	F	■	P	O	S	S	E	■
Q	U	O	N	D	A	M	■	D	E	N	T	I	N	■
U	N	S	E	E	N	■	F	U	T	I	L	E	■	D
A	C	C	E	N	T	■	L	O	I	T	E	R	■	O
S	H	O	R	T	S	■	A	S	T	E	R	S	■	T

E	A	R	■	■
L	E	■	■	■
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THIS BUSINESS OF BEING A WIFE

(Continued from page 51)

ager of the university football team, and being voted the best-liked man in the senior class. When the job problem had arrived, it had been Uncle George, an out-of-town sales manager for the Interamerican Insurance Company, who helped Tom find his job in the late 1930's, when getting any job at all was far from easy.

Migs had only met Uncle George once, at the wedding, but they'd clicked. She had felt that *he* felt it was right for Tom to be marrying her, and she'd been pleased. He'd done the handsome thing in the way of wedding presents too; consequently, when Uncle George turned up in New York on one of those bright, energizing winter days, Migs reacted instantly to Tom's telephone call. She said that of course he must invite Uncle George to dinner, particularly if it was his only free night in town.

"Certainly I can manage," she assured Tom. "And I couldn't bear it if he went back without seeing the apartment and —everything."

She put down the telephone, apologized to Archer Templon, who'd been in the middle of dictating a letter, and picked up her pencil. Archer was very nice about the interruption, in a resigned way, as though it were second nature to be patient to women's interruptions. He asked Migs to read back the last sentence; but before he remembered what it was he'd been going to say next, his telephone rang again.

HE had a telephone technique of focusing most of his voice into the mouthpiece, but enough of it was bound to leak out to make it impossible for Migs not to know that Bee Templon had had a new idea which was going to cost a little more than Archer could afford. This time it seemed to be an apartment.

"I don't know, Bee," Archer said in muted, doubtful accents, while Migs tried to look as though she didn't hear him; "it sounds like a lot of money. . . . It may *be* a bargain, but still. . . . I know a good address is worth paying for, but if rent is going to take all our—"

Migs began making plans about dinner. She rejected steak, reluctantly. Still, it had to be something that didn't take too long to cook. Chops? Cut thick, she decided, and a green salad; and frosted peas; they were time-savers. . . . But dessert? It would have been fun to experiment with something spectacular, but there wouldn't be any time for that. . . .

"All right," Archer said sadly, "all right. All right, I'll meet you there on the way home and look at it. What's the address again?"

"Dessert," thought Migs, "dessert. . . . The poor soul, now he's going to pay more rent than he wants to. I shall certainly arrange a cold in the head for the day of the directors' meeting. If he's not tapped

for assistant cashier, I refuse to be on hand to watch it."

They finally got around to the letter, several letters, and a memorandum that Archer Templon worried about, and said had to be sent off, for sure, before three o'clock. Migs promised to take care of it in a faintly maternal, "There, there," tone, and Archer looked at her gratefully and muttered that he hated to think of her leaving the bank and he thought that was a silly rule about not keeping girls who married. Migs simultaneously decided he was pathetic and ruminated on the unsolved dessert question. She did want to give Uncle George something special in the way of hospitality.

At three-thirty that afternoon, she still hadn't thought of any satisfactory dessert, and what was worse, somehow or other she'd slipped up on the memo. Migs was upset, and the fact that Archer was generously forgiving in spite of an obvious tensity, made her more so. The result was a flustered afternoon, during which she struggled to make up for time that had insidiously escaped—and she continued to feel flustered and disorganized while she hurried around the apartment fixing things for dinner. It wasn't until after Uncle George had eaten everything in sight with flattering gusto and admired the apartment with enthusiasm and discrimination, that Migs felt smoothed down again. He beamed upon her with unmistakable approval and let her know he thought she was a pretty cute trick to be good-looking, a good cook, and have a job, all at once. Restored to confidence, Migs told Tom and Uncle George to talk the situation over, that she didn't need any help from anybody. . . .

She heard them begin a masculine, now-we'll-get-down-to-brass tacks conversation as she went about gathering up dishes and removing the dining-room by means of folding down the leaves of the gate-leg table.

"Things aren't so bad," Uncle George answered a question from Tom, "but they could be better. Oh, we make our quota of business all right, but there's more there to handle than we get. Group insurance would be the thing, but none of my men seems able to get it going. It's those small factories around us; if we could sell the idea to one of them, I'm sure several would follow along. But the difficulty is in getting started—like breaking out a log-jam."

AFTER the dishes had been tactfully disposed of until she and Tom could attack them later, Migs joined the party too. Uncle George and Tom had progressed to Tom's affairs by that time, and Migs was privately surprised to hear Tom describing how he'd asked his division manager just what he could expect about his future.

"You see," Tom said, "when you helped me land the job, I was glad to get anything; but I didn't go in for advanced math in college, and I'm not much taken that way besides, so the idea of passing the actuarial examinations and getting ahead that way is sort of out, for me. Still, I *am* absolutely secure, and I'll gradually get small raises just by length of service, so I can't see much point in doing anything drastic for the present. . . . Between us Migs and I can swing things for

a while. . . . You know how it is; there aren't so many ways of working up in the Home Office. You have to do something pretty world-beating to stand out at all in a place that size."

Uncle George agreed with him reflectively, and then said going out in the field and selling was always another alternative, but that of course it was a gamble.

"That's it," said Tom; "it's a do-or-die proposition. Twenty dollars a week the company guarantees you, and take a chance on the rest. And if you don't make a go of it, it's next to impossible to get your inside job back. It seems to me you'd need a pretty strong incentive to risk it."

"M-m-m," commented Uncle George, "that's true. And yet it wouldn't surprise me if you found *you* had quite a lot of sales ability."

He studied Tom in a detached, appraising way and glanced thoughtfully at Migs as well. Migs could almost hear him thinking, but just what it was, she wasn't sure.

"Well," he said finally, "you let me know, if you ever want to try it. There's no one I'd rather have with me. And I know there's a lot of business there for the right man—I wish I had one."

Tom thanked him, and Migs could see that he was pleased by Uncle George's offer. But that, as far as she could see, was as far as it went with him. The conversation turned to unimportant pleasant things, and the evening ended on a thoroughly congenial note. Migs and Tom congratulated one another on it over the dishpan.

"Whoosh," she said, when they began turning out lights at last, "I'm a little licked! Tomorrow's another day, and I wish it weren't quite so near!"

Nevertheless, before she started on the serious business of putting in as much sleep as possible, her mind went back to Uncle George's suggestion. Tom had said they could swing things as they were, with her help; and while she couldn't assemble them into definite words, Migs was bothered by some tentative ideas she was beginning to have about the right way to help Tom. She had almost begun to suspect that there were other effective ways of being helpful besides contributing to the rent. There seemed to be more to this business of being a wife than you might think—incentives, for instance. . . .

Time can drag you along by the hair sometimes. Perhaps, in New York, windows filled with Palm Beach clothes in January, and fur coats in August, have something to do with it. Whatever the explanation, Migs couldn't make herself believe that February was almost gone. She decided that one reason the winter had gone so fast was that the deadline for her job at the bank fell early in March. She also thought that it must be the unsettling feeling of the seasons getting ready to change that gave her an almost apprehensive sensitiveness to things she'd never especially noticed before.

DURING her last weeks at the bank she went to several employment agencies and registered, but the immediate problem of a new job occupied her mind less than the unexpected relevance of several other matters. The question, for instance, of whether there might conceivably be a happy medium which it was up to her to find, between the familiar spectacle of Bee Templon's demands, which were accelerating her husband painfully but rapidly up the official ladder, and Sandra Prayne's way of handling things. The evening Migs and Tom spent with the Praynes had given Migs something to think about.

Sandra had married Forbes Prayne while Migs was still in the airy state that sent her off to each new party in the heady, uncomplex anticipation of more new people, and more new places to go. Since then, Forbes had done well enough at his statistical job, and Sandra had made quite a success in the advertising agency she had joined right after college. They lived on a considerably more spacious scale than the Branfriths, and Migs had had to admit to herself that Sandra's life did look attractive.

And yet there was the question Sandra hadn't heard. Sitting at Sandra's interestingly laden dressing-table after dinner, Migs had asked Sandra something and Sandra hadn't answered—because, Migs discovered turning around comb in hand, she was poking her head out of the opened upper half of a window in an alarming way.

"Just getting rid of an awful wave of stupor," she explained, withdrawing her head and calming Migs' agitation. "It's neither the hour nor the company, darling; it's the advertising business. This was one of those days when high-pressure rose right up into apoplexy!"

"I thought you were planning to stop working," said Migs.

"I always am," said Sandra, laughing at herself, "but you know how it is. Subtract half the family income, and you subtract half the things you like to have. . . . I'm sort of used to having certain things that I *could* live without, but still I'd rather not. *You* know, habit and all that. . . . I keep putting it off."

Sandra had shrugged, they'd changed the subject, and that was all there was to it. But Migs told Tom about it on the way home, and said she didn't quite see the point.

"Facts are facts," she said, "and if you need the money, that's one thing. But Forbes has done pretty well, don't you suppose?"

"I guess so," said Tom, "as well as he's had any particular incentive for, outside of keeping up with Sandra. Only, I can't see that he gets much fun out of it—I wouldn't, in his place, if *you* went around sticking your head out of windows to keep awake!"

"Oh, well," said Migs, "but you have so much fun to begin with, being married to *me!* You don't even have to struggle to keep up with me—aren't you grateful?"

She had expected a retort in kind, but Tom had said flatly: "Yes, I am!"

Migs returned to the subject after they were at home, and paused with half her face cold-creamed to remark that she'd be out of a job in less than two weeks.

"And *then* how do you think you'll feel," she said inquiringly, "with an unemployed incentive on your hands?"

"'*Time* on my hands, and *you* in my arms,'" Tom corrected her tunefully, and Migs accepted the correction gracefully, her attention effectively diverted from economics.

"NO, I HAVEN'T EVER CONSIDERED USING PAPER PLATES! NOW GET BUSY!"

ONE night, just before Migs left the bank, she came home after a day of handing out the right answers to Archer Templon and innumerable other people, and found she didn't have any left for Tom. She could hear herself, in a disembodied way, being argumentative when it would have been equally easy to be agreeable about several things that didn't matter anyway, simply from a weary, tyrannical perversity.

She put an early end to an unpleasant evening by going to bed, but she didn't go to sleep. Instead, as she lay there, Migs tried to escape from a pursuing double-edged fear. The nagging practical difficulties that would beset them if she didn't find a new job frightened her, and the evening just ended alarmed her even more. She turned uneasily as she thought that they could get along, if she spent her days in an office; but what was the use if she brought home at nights only an edgy, increasingly unattractive version of herself?

"That's the way marriages go bust, too," she reflected allusively, "not with a bang, but a whimper."

She lay suddenly rigid, terrified that her mind should follow such a path, and resolved to abandon speculation then and there. She'd concentrate on getting a job, and theorize later.

The industrious cultivation of employment agencies, the help-wanted columns in the morning paper, and all the hopeful contacts she could think of, adequately occupied her mind for some time. The only concession Migs made to her buried uncertainties was to tell Tom that she wasn't going to rush things; she wanted to find a job she really liked. Tom thought that was very sensible, and Migs refrained from examining her own reasons for it too closely.

However, "interesting" jobs are scarce —unless, as Migs subsequently remarked rather wearily to Tom, you wanted to work for the love of it, or to express yourself, or something equally fancy. Her job-hunting went on too long; it got to be hard work. It was the walking, and the waiting, the disappointing interviews, and too many punctured hopes. Migs did her best not to let Tom see how much the whole discouraging process was getting under her skin, but once or twice she suspected that if his had been a stamping, furniture-kicking temperament, he might have taken to relieving growing unhappiness inarticulately but violently.

"Complicated," reflected Migs, thinking the whole situation over, "complicated."

THE weather grew warmer almost as rapidly as the small sum they had been able to put aside from Migs' salary was vanishing. Migs said one morning, appraising herself critically, that it was bad management to be looking for a job during a change of season: the clothes-problem was one too many, and too important. She was sorry she'd spoken, instantly, and for the rest of the day remembered the expression on Tom's face.

She turned down a temporary job in Yonkers, and one in an office where they told her the staff had to be willing not to be fussy about hours, and that seven was quite an ordinary time for leaving. Tom said she was perfectly right to run out on it; that they'd have been like two ships passing in the night, at that rate. But things were creeping past the point of leaving Migs much latitude of choice. The bare bones of bills began showing through; they thought twice before they went to the movies, and then didn't go; they squeaked along on Tom's salary, but that's what it was—a narrow squeak.

"The rent," said Tom one morning at breakfast, "is due tomorrow."

Migs said that was all right, they still had this month's rent in the bank. Tom said thoughtfully that after this one, there would be another month coming on hell-for-leather.

"There usually is," Migs had to agree. "Well, up and at 'em! This is the day I stop being even a trace hoity-toity about jobs. Anything that comes, I take, and no questions asked!"

Tom offered no comment; he simply went after the last of his oatmeal with incongruous determination. When he was ready to leave, Migs linked her arm in his and walked to the door with him. Tom

held her to him for a moment, after he'd kissed her good-by.

"Migs, you're—swell."

"*You* are—"

"I'm not, but you make me sure I will be—or bust!"

Migs went to the window, after the door closed behind him, and waited to see him reappear and start toward the subway. He stepped out with a do-or-die stride that affected her throat. . . And affected her mind, because her mind went back to that evening with the Praynes, and with Forbes, denied an incentive.

"What an out-size incentive *I* turned out to be," Migs reflected soberly, but whether she was a help or a hindrance, she couldn't decide at such close range.

She went out herself presently, ready for the familiar round of agencies, any job that offered, and no questions asked! But she didn't have a chance to ask any questions; it was an empty day. By the time she came back to the apartment late in the afternoon, she was tired enough, and depressed enough, to be in a brutally practical mood. She felt very clear-sighted, and saw with unavoidable plainness that the thing she and Tom must do was not to pay the rent tomorrow, but to break the lease. Temporarily, at least, they'd have to go to their parents' home—either home. It would hurt Tom's pride, and she didn't care much for the idea herself, but there was no use in fooling themselves.

Migs tried not to see any more of the apartment than she could help as she went toward the tiny bedroom to change her clothes. She couldn't think exactly how she'd put it up to Tom, but she would. . . . She rummaged through a drawer, looking for something to wear, and found the yellow sweater, the one Tom had bought her in Bermuda when he had still been sure that Santa Claus was just around every corner.

For the first time in several weeks, and for no practical reason, Migs felt exuberantly cheerful.

"I *couldn't* have done it on purpose," she silently told her reflection in the mirror, "but—"

She had to count on Tom, now, and Tom knew it.

Migs turned the knowledge in her mind like—a present. She'd been holding out on Tom, all this time, without knowing it. Loving him, but doubting him a little; letting him see, she admitted, that she knew a lot of responsibility was hers to assume. It was—there was a gift she could have given him more completely long ago, the gift of her confidence in him. She stood stock-still, immobilized by a deep excitement like that dammed up in the moment before the first shattering flourish of sound when the parade sweeps into sight at last, with drums, and glitter, and flying banners.

Tom startled her back to the present with a jump, as he came in with a crash and a bang of his own. She flew out to meet him, and as they settled themselves in one chair with practiced economy of motion, Migs said she could see he had news—and quick, what was it?

"It's more of a confession," said Tom, "and I *have* to tell you quick, before I lose my nerve!"

Migs thought he'd never looked less nervous. He glowed with all his old contagious enthusiasm for the moment and with a new assurance that was unfamiliar, until Migs recognized it. She'd caught a glimpse of it once before, in a Bermuda shop.

"You know me," Tom was saying, "I coast along—yes, I do," he affirmed to Migs' contradictory head-shaking,—"and I'd have kept right on, if it hadn't been for all of this."

He waved an embracing hand that took in the rent, the bills, the worries, with an air of pleased hospitality. He looked at Migs as though she had done him a tremendous and not-altogether-comprehended favor.

"I asked to be transferred," he said with a rush. "To work with Uncle George, selling. Remember when he said he'd take me on? It's an awful gamble, but if it works, we'll go places! And I'll *make* it work; I have to. Only, what do *you* say? Are you with me?"

Migs glanced down for just an instant at her cashmere sleeve.

Again she saw Tom, in Bermuda, buying her a sweater and expanding visibly before her eyes.

"I'm *with* you," she said without hesitation.

And to be with Tom, in anything that he did, wasn't any gamble; it was betting on a sure thing. And it was happiness, the indestructible kind.

"*I'm* not afraid!" said Migs, and that was ribbon and tinsel and shiny wrapping, tying up her present to Tom, and making it complete.

U. S. TODAY

(Continued from page 46)

time, they'll be all right with the carpet and the red walls, which I hear we're not to do anything about."

"I think Dick will like these," I offered. "I think he'll like them better than the others." As a matter of fact, men are apt to hate yellow, and they usually think flowered materials are awfully feminine. I know Ed does.

"These are so fresh-looking," Eileen said enthusiastically. "They'll be just right with the organdy spread and curtains, too. Dick will think you're wonderful."

"Well, I hope so." There was a hint of exasperation in Twick's even tone. "He hasn't been very much help to date."

"Dicky works so hard." Eileen looked up quickly—her eyes defensive. "He's the *goodest* boy."

"Where is he?" I asked. "Isn't it almost time for him? I just can't wait." I hadn't seen him since the wedding. "Think of having a whole evening and then a week-end together!"

Twick lifted the organdy curtains out of the box.

"If we hurry," she said, "we can have these hung before he gets home." She dragged a small stepladder from behind the screen. "Here, I'll hand you down the poles, and you and Mrs. Breton can run the curtains on."

It was then that Dick came in. He is tall and lean and—and stronger. Stronger than when he used to be at home. He saw me. In two strides he crossed the room and gathered me up in a rocking hug. He turned to Eileen, looking down at her very gently as if she were something wonderful.

"You didn't tell me Mother was coming," he said. "Hi, Twick!"

"We're the decorating crew," she offered.

Dick's eyes went suddenly dead. For the first time I noticed the marks of strain at the corners of his eyes. He turned his head and stood looking out the window.

"You'll never know the old place." Twick sat down on top of the ladder. "D'you think you're going to like this?" She held up a piece of blue.

"Yes. Sure," Dick said. He didn't even look at the samples.

"When we get it all fixed up." Eileen put in, "it'll be just sweet, Dick. You wait and see. Just look at these materials Twick found."

DICK glanced at them briefly and nodded without speaking. I'm as fond of Dick as any mother can be, but I must confess that right now, he gave me a feeling of exasperation. Even if he wasn't particularly interested, he could at least pretend. Eileen was so eager, so anxious. I started to say something, but Twick cut in ahead of me.

"We're planning to re-cover that chair," she said, "with this. Don't you think it'll be nice?"

Dick said: "What? Oh, yeah. I guess so."

A little shadow swept across Eileen's face; then she gave a bright, determined smile.

"Aren't you interested, Dicky? Don't you care how your home looks?"

For a few seconds Dick didn't say anything. Then he put a hand on Eileen's shoulder, and said slowly: "You know, darling, I'd like to go on a party tonight—just one bang-up party."

Eileen brightened. "That'll be fun, dear. But let's decide about the color for the chair first. You know it's awfully important. This is our home, Dicky, yours and mine."

Dick's eyes drifted about the shabby room. He glanced briefly at me. I had a strange feeling that he loved this room—loved it so much that he didn't care if it was never fixed up. He reached over and took the samples that Twick had brought, out of her hand, stared down at them, and absently fingered them. Then it came to me, I don't know how—but all of a sudden, I realized that something was wrong, desperately wrong. I went sort of dead inside. My own voice sounded queer to me as I said:

"Dick—what is it, Dick?"

"He's just like all men," Twick put in. "Women do all they can to make a place look nice, but men don't really care."

Dick glanced at her. His mouth shaped itself into a one-sided smile, but there was no smile in his eyes.

"It isn't that I'm not interested. It's only—it's only—" He turned again to

Eileen, and put an arm around her shoulder. "It's only—" He stopped, and just stood there very still, holding Eileen tightly and looking at her.

After what seemed like a very long time, he said: "I suppose I might as well tell you now." His voice was level. "I was going to wait until a little later tonight, till after we'd had our binge."

Eileen's blue eyes turned dark as she looked up at him. "What, Dicky? What is it?"

"Well, it's just—it's just— Look, darling, you've got to take this like a soldier. I've been trying to think for hours of some way to tell you this gently, but there isn't any."

"Dicky!" That one word was nothing but a soft little cry of distress.

"We won't need this place, darling—after tomorrow." He wasn't looking at Eileen now, just holding her tighter. "Mother and Dad will take care of you for me. . . . I've got my orders. We're—we're leaving tomorrow."

Twick's awed, "Oh, gosh!" was drowned out by Eileen's cry, "Dick! Oh, Dick!" She twisted around in his arm and buried her head against his shoulder.

I heard myself say: "Where are you going, Dick?"

"I don't know," Dick said. "I guess—I guess it's kind of far—Australia, maybe."

I GAZED at Dick, standing there, real, near—so near I could have put my arms around him. I would have to tell Ed. My heart hurt inside, as if it had been struck. Then slowly something happened. It happened to me. I saw us—our family—a little close circle, always eager to be at home, always glad, unconsciously, to shut out the world. Now the walls were down. We were part of something enormous that was going forward. Our neighbors, our whole country, we stood together. Home wasn't just a cozy nest any longer; it was a campfire, and its warmth was vital. Our job now was to take care of Eileen—and all the Eileens—and give them courage; to be proud of Dick and of all our men; to set up, wherever they went, a supply-line of love and pride and—yes, of hope.

Dick's hand, the hand that was holding the blue and gray swatches, stroked Eileen's hair.

"I'll be back, darling. I'll be back sooner than you think. We'll take 'em."

He tilted Eileen's head back and kissed her fiercely. From between his fingers the colored samples fell and lay like little flags upon the floor.

AMERICAN HEROES ARE REAL

(Continued from page 60)

Major Robinson won the D. F. C. for leading in seven days four bombing missions of B-17's, which resulted in heavy destruction of Japanese ships and no losses to the bombers, despite swarms of Japanese fighter planes. After completion of the last mission, on January 27, Major Robinson was ordered to remain on the ground and rest for several days. Nevertheless, on January 29, he went aloft, particularly to watch over the crews of three bombers who were making their first com-

"GOOD EVENING, ALL CARS! THIS IS THE AMATEUR HOUR!"

bat flights. He led them through an attack and was piloting them homeward when his plane was shot down. The newcomers all survived. This last flight won him the D. S. C.

Major Robinson's dual honor was made public simultaneously with details of the exploits of Captain Hewitt T. Wheless, another bomber pilot, whose heroism that won the Distinguished Service Cross was described on April 28 in a radio speech by President Roosevelt.

A young naval officer, Lieutenant John D. Bulkeley, won two Navy Crosses, two Silver Stars, the Philippine Order of Merit and the Army's Distinguished Service Cross for using a speed-boat of the PT type to sink probably more enemy tonnage than John Paul Jones sank in his whole career.

BULKELEY'S exploits were reported and verified by aviators, soldiers and sailors. Navy and Army boards passed on his decorations. He was the leader of the two speed-boats that sank five Japanese transports in Subic Bay and halted one of the Japanese invasion efforts on Bataan. He piloted General MacArthur from Corregidor to the rendezvous with an airplane that took the General to Australia. Finally, at Cebu, he torpedoed a Japanese cruiser. How he escaped is a secret not yet known.

Bulkeley's honors fell to him in three duplicate sets, we learned when he came home in May. He wore the ribbons of seven medals, all pinned on his tunic with MacArthur's own hand.

Relatively few of the exploits which have won the Navy Cross can be described, since the actions were part of the large and secret pattern of naval operations. Many of these have gone to submarine commanders, at the completion of long missions, lasting sometimes sixty days and during which officers and crew breathed foul air, lived in their flimsy hulls and dared not go on deck even at night in the Jap-patrolled China Sea. Such awards constitute honors to the entire crews of the undersea boats for valor and endurance.

The Navy Board of Awards broke its traditional rule by giving Navy Crosses to two officers without knowledge of the details of what they actually accomplished, after these men were taken prisoner by the Japanese. These symbolic awards were made to Commander Winfield S. Cunningham, of the Navy, and Major James P. S. Devereux, of the Marine Corps.

Cunningham and Devereux jointly commanded Wake Island during its long period of resistance to Japanese naval forces, which cost the enemy several ships, hundreds of lives and whole flights of airplanes, before the capitulation. The awards were so unusual that the Navy issued a special explanation, which read in part as follows:

"The Board of Awards, which submitted the recommendations from which recipients of medals and letters were selected, pointed out that complete, official facts regarding the stand at Wake are not known, but that on the basis of available information Commander Cunningham and Major Devereux deserve Navy Crosses.

"'This action,' the board stated, 'will not jeopardize further consideration of these officers or others involved in the defense of Wake Island when the official facts are received in the Department.'"

In other words, at some future time, Cunningham and Devereux may receive Medals of Honor, and suitable awards will be made to the men under them who participated in the gallant fight.

THERE are honors, too, other than medals, which sometimes go to persons who for technical reasons may not be decorated with the metal symbols of gallantry. There is a woman telephone supervisor at the Naval Air Station on Oahu who holds, as the result of a naval inquiry, a letter from President Roosevelt. The letter testifies to the courage of Alice Beckley Spencer, who, with "distinguished devotion to duty, extraordinary courage, most efficient action and utter disregard for her personal safety," stuck to her switchboard for twenty-four hours, often under fire by attacking airplanes.

The authority to issue decorations on the spot was issued soon after the outbreak of war. Secretary Stimson conferred this power on General MacArthur three days after the outbreak of the war, and later passed it on to General Wainwright. The generals also were given authority to promote men for gallantry. As a result of such promotions, twenty-five-year-old Boyd Wagner, at this writing serving in Australia, became the youngest lieutenant-colonel in the Army. Wagner, a pilot, was credited with shooting down five Japanese airplanes, with leading a squadron that destroyed twenty-five Japanese airplanes on the ground, and other undetailed exploits.

Later in December, Secretary Knox authorized all flag officers to promote enlisted naval men for gallantry regardless of the vacancies that might exist on ships. To the commanders in chief of the three Fleets he gave authority to award the Navy Cross "in the name of the President."

All records of such decorations, with complete details, must be forwarded to Washington for review. But there is a long list of records which will not be made public until peace has come. A further list may never be reviewed.

The secret records concern primarily submarine and airplane operations. In some of these the names have been announced, and in others records and names both have reached Washington, but the records are suppressed on the ground of secrecy.

The lost files are in the catacomb offices of Corregidor, if not destroyed or removed by the Japanese. These concern hundreds of men who have been cited for decorations which could not be delivered to them, and of thousands whose names would have figured in dispatches if there had been mail service to supplement the radio communications. No question, however, will be raised at any future time about the right to wear his honors of any man whose name was transmitted.

In the lost records of Corregidor is a chapter of Marine Corps history which one hopes may some day be told, when the men this chapter concerns are restored to the active list. This is the story of the famous Fourth Regiment.

The Fourth Regiment was in China as guardian of American interests. It escaped only a few weeks before December 8, and was sent to bolster the forces in the Philippines.

The fifteen hundred men in this regiment were seasoned campaigners, and so good that MacArthur and Wainwright together decorated an average of more than one in ten among them. The fifteen hundred Marines—all now dead or prisoners of the Japanese—won 176 decorations for valor.

The Marine Corps has the names of the heroes of its lost regiment, but when it made them public, it could give no description. With the laconic phraseology of its historic tradition, the Corps could only announce:

"No information is available as to the meritorious actions for which the awards were made."

We can only be sure that each of these medals, and all the others bestowed in Bataan on soldiers and sailors, were won in battle.

EUROPE IN REVOLT

(Continued from page 41)

to sea. Numerous other German ships have been sunk by the British along the Norwegian coast as the result of "tips" supplied by the espionage service in Norway, which has its own ways and means of communicating with London. It is an important phase of the battle which Norwegians are carrying out on the home front.

With the news of the United States' entry into the war the oppressed people of Norway took new heart, confident that the day was now not far off when they could rise to help drive the enemy from their country and to settle accounts with those of the Quisling ilk who had betrayed them.

The news was celebrated by a large gathering around Abraham Lincoln's statue in the Frogner Park of Oslo in order to pay homage to American democracy and American ideas of freedom. Speeches were made eulogizing the spirit of the United States, so cherished by the people of all Nazi-occupied countries, and wreaths were placed on the statue of Abraham Lincoln amid the singing of patriotic songs.

A clash occurred when members of the Norwegian storm troopers tried to take away these wreaths. The crowd attacked the storm troopers, who got the hottest reception of their lives and howled for protection. After the skirmish had gone on for some time about fifty policemen arrived in motorcars and made a few arrests. However, the Norwegian patriots had already effectively commented on America's entry into the war.

Norwegian labor was so heartened by the good news from America that it staged a small rebellion. It began with a strike involving some forty thousand metal workers. The Nazi Commissar, Josef Terboven, promptly clamped martial law upon Oslo and the surrounding districts, following it with mass arrests.

ALL other classes of the population keep in tune. The resentment of Norwegian farmers against all attempts to Nazify their organizations has now become so bitter that it is openly stated the German authorities will ask Quisling to leave the farmers alone, although he is now Premier. Members of the Quisling party have been chased away from farmers' meetings, and Quislingites who had gained a foothold in agricultural organizations with the backing of storm troopers, have been forced to resign.

The professions are no less steadfast in their resistance than the working people. The teachers demonstrated their courage when Quisling's Department of Education attempted to bring them within the fold of Nazidom by demanding that they sign a pledge on their "honor and conscience" to work for the "New Order" in Norway and "to counteract any attempt on the part of pupils or colleagues to oppose cooperation with the new [Nazi] government." Teachers were also invited to sign a declaration that they would resign from their jobs if they ever hindered the progress of the "New Order."

But instead . . . . the members of the five teachers' organizations in Norway drew up a counter pledge:

I hereby declare that I will remain loyal to my profession as a teacher and to my conscience, and that I will carry on my work as before and follow those instructions which are rightfully given me by my superiors.

THE flow of escapes across the North Sea to England is steadily rising. Norwegians are slipping away by boatloads to join the Free Norwegian forces in England and Canada. One day a two-hundred-ton ship sailed out of a remote harbor on the west coast with two hundred persons aboard, including some sought by the Gestapo for political "crimes." On the next day another steamship with ninety passengers made a similar get-away. Within a short period, it is estimated, 10 per cent of the remaining Norwegian fishing-fleet succeeded in escaping to Great Britain; so did numerous small steamers. Early in January, 1942, all police chiefs of Norwegian towns were instructed that the family of every citizen believed to have fled should be "examined," and their property confiscated. Yet the Norwegian Crown Prince, speaking at a gathering in New York City, could express his reasoned opinion that at least two thousand Norwegians had found their way to England in small boats. Most of them enlist in the gallant Norwegian navy, sixty units of which, including destroyers, submarine, mine sweepers and other craft, are assisting the naval effort of the United Nations.

Equal admiration is due to those who continue the underground fight at home. The number of sabotage acts is persistently and dangerously increasing.

At Holmestrand, a mysterious and violent explosion on the waterfront cost the lives of five imported German workmen. At Trondheim a large factory caught fire; controlled Norwegian newspapers attributed it to "gross carelessness," but the real cause was sabotage. Saboteurs burned a famous Gladtvedt Hotel at Hönefoss and the Strömmens timber factory near Hamar. One wing of the hotel, dating from the eighteenth century and containing valuable paintings, was destroyed. Authorities of the Quisling regime and German officials had taken over the hotel before the fire. Extensive stocks of lumber were destroyed in the other fire.

"Accidents" have so often broken the power-lines to German airports in western Norway that Nazi authorities have resorted to wholesale fining of the communities nearest the scene of sabotage.

The city of Trondheim was recently fined sixty thousand crowns because an unidentified assailant threw acid in the face of a German sailor; while Stavanger had to pay a levy of fifty thousand crowns for a "power failure" in that town.

The destruction by fire of two large gasoline storage-tanks, also in Trondheim, was attributed to sabotage. One man was arrested. Another fire, which destroyed a number of Trondheim warehouses containing food and ammunition destined for German forces in Finland, has also been blamed on saboteurs.

Finally, about a million gallons of gasoline were recently destroyed by a fire. This storage represented the entire fuel supply of the army of occupation, which had been careless enough to store its most valuable goods in the neighborhood of—Trondheim.

Similarly railway lines in increasing numbers were damaged.

Slow-down strikes followed, and indiscriminate destruction not only of German goods but even of the Norwegian people's own belongings, which were to be handed over. The Norwegians practice not only the scorched earth, but even the scorched cupboard and larder. Peasants destroy their foodstuffs. Many people burned their haversacks rather than turn them over. All woolen clothes were burned before the German collectors came to confiscate them for the army in Russia.

At the end of February, Josef Terboven, a little breathless, took the air. "Recently," he said over the radio, "Norwegians have assisted the British in different ways and on several occasions. These acts were so grave that the German Supreme Court Martial was obliged to order the death penalty. I am afraid this obligation persists in ever-increasing measure. He who conspires against Führer Hitler and Premier Quisling is forsaking his life."

The Norwegian insurance companies, however, although amalgamated with German combines, take a different view. In Norway life insurance is issued only after a thorough investigation of the applicant's political record as well as his health. If the authorities confirm that the man who wants to buy life insurance is a known follower of the New Order, the companies, to their regret, forgo the business. They find a thousand excuses to explain why they are not interested in the proposition.

THE COMING GERMAN DEFEAT

(Continued from page 55)

snatched from them because of their leaders' fatal mistake of "provoking" the United States into entering the war.

But Hitler's scientific thinkers "knew better." Their analysis proved beyond doubt and to their entire satisfaction that America had not been the cause of the defeat. They agreed that as a whole the plan devised by Wilhelm's military brain-trust had been flawless, but added that "the direction of individual military operations was not on a sufficiently high plane." Consequently Hitler's Munich master-minds decided to re-adopt the plan, but to perfect it by introducing important revisions. The Nazi leadership held the unshakable conviction that these improvements of the original plan meant the difference between victory and defeat.

What were these improvements?

Incredible though it may appear today, they referred solely to military strategy. Hitler's High Command, while younger and more daring than their predecessors, still belong to Germany's Nineteenth Century military tradition, in which Von Moltke and Von Schlieffen were the unassailable gods. Accordingly they never questioned the wisdom of these military giants, but merely ventured to examine it more thoroughly. Thus they came to the conclusion that the 1914-'18 campaign had been a failure because it had not carried out the plans of these prophets with sufficient exactitude.

The Nazi military academy therefore promulgated three cardinal principles as guarantees of the success of their own war of conquest:

1. No simultaneous attacks on two big fronts—*i.e.*, against France in the West and against Russia in the East. (The Nazis adhered to this.)

2. The efficient execution of the Von Schlieffen plan in the French campaign, which the German commanders had messed up in 1914. This meant a breakthrough by the German right wing and the subsequent advance along the coastlines of Belgium and France, which would make the French central position untenable and lead to a complete German victory in the West. (The Nazis carried this out.)

3. No unnecessary extension of lines of communication which would at any time make it difficult to concentrate the total striking power of the German army on any given point. (Although the Nazis failed partly in this, since their coastline extends today from the northernmost tip of Norway to the Bay of Biscay, and their land front from Finland to the Black Sea, it does not matter, since actual fighting has been restricted to one front at a time. But this spreading of their forces would represent a terrific handicap in the event of the opening of a second front by the Allies.)

Hitler, on the whole, skillfully avoided the strategic military pitfalls of the 1914-'18 campaign. Yet he repeated the fatal blunder of ignoring the inevitable entry of the United States into the war, and of completely underestimating its capacity for effective participation in the struggle. This, coupled with the full but belated realization that the striking power of the Soviet Union immeasurably surpasses that of Imperial Russia, has now convinced the German General Staff that there was something fundamentally wrong with their "flawless" grand strategy, and that their own collapse now is a mathematical inevitability, only a question of time.

Even Hitler must recognize today that the deadly parallel between the wars of 1914 and 1939 is not due merely to a strategic similarity in which Kaiser Wilhelm's inability to deliver the knock-out blow to France in 1917-'18 has its counterpart in his own impotence to overcome Russia's heroic resistance. The comparison holds good particularly in the psychological aspect, in the very thinking of the Nazi military leadership and in the minds of the German people. Hitler's flamboyant tirades about the new Germany he has created cannot hide the incontrovertible truth that the German character is the same today as it was a quarter of a century ago, under the Hohenzollerns.

OBEDIENCE is a cardinal trait of the German character. The Fuehrer principle was not invented by Hitler. He merely exploited this inborn eagerness of the German people to submit to authority, to the man in uniform. It was because of his shrewd understanding of the German psychology that Hitler provided his fol-

lowers with uniforms long before he came to power. If, therefore, the people of Germany still unquestioningly accept Hitler's leadership and blindly trust him to achieve victory, it is because they are firmly convinced that everything that has happened thus far in the war was foreseen by the Fuehrer down to the minutest detail.

Germans never doubt for one instant that the British Isles were not invaded because the immediate conquest of England did not fit in with the general military plan. It has not as yet dawned on them that perhaps the German military machine was not prepared or properly equipped to follow up its quick victory over France with such an invasion. No German suspects that the political masterminds of Munich expected England to throw up the sponge as soon as France collapsed. Nor have the people of the Reich grasped that the Red Army commanders have outmaneuvered and outsmarted Hitler's generals on the Eastern front. Even a glimmering suspicion of this would have impaired German morale irretrievably.

IT was because Hitler began to fear that the German people might "misunderstand" the Nazi failure to finish up Russian resistance on schedule that he rushed back to Berlin last October to reassure them in a public speech that all was well. Being an expert on German psychology, the Fuehrer repeatedly underscored that the plans had not miscarried. His speech revealed the full extent of his fears: "Up to the present day every action has developed just as much according to plan as formerly in the East against Poland and then against the West and finally against the Balkans," said Hitler. "Everything has proceeded according to the plan. We have not been wrong in our plans. We have also not been mistaken about the efficiency and quality of our weapons. We have not been mistaken about the smooth working of the whole organization at the front and extending over a gigantic area in the rear. Our plan has worked."

Hitler knew that he could not oversell the point that his mysterious recipe for total victory still remained valid. He knew that if the Germans lost faith in *The Plan*, no power on earth could spur them on to another try for victory. To the German mind, the failure of *The Plan* means the loss of the war.

What perhaps more than anything else constitutes the basic difference between the Allies and the Nazis is that neither German leadership nor its rank and file has ever been able to think while in action. A German defeat comparable to that at Dunkirk or Crete would have ended the war. It would have been psychologically impossible for the German General Staff to revamp its plans and start all over again. The German General Staff does not know what it means to muddle through and change its strategy in the midst of a conflict. It has been trained by tradition to cling to its blueprints irrespective of unforeseen conditions, fanatically believing that *The Plan* is almighty and contains within itself the answer to all problems. When, for instance, the commander of the Ninth German Army on the Russian front in 1915 received instructions to attack with gas on a certain

day, he did so unhesitatingly, although the wind was blowing in the wrong direction, and inflicted severe losses on his own troops. This is typical.

Military education in Germany is based on a complete lack of faith in human intelligence. A perfectly trained German soldier is an individual so completely automatized that all his reactions in the field are strictly mechanical, blindly obeying the commands of his immediate superior. No German officer, not even a general, is supposed to ask questions. His task is to follow the instructions laid down by General Headquarters' advance plans. No margin is left for individual initiative. While this may, basically, be true of almost any other army, it cannot be denied that in the French, English, American and Russian armies the soldiers and officers are not entirely paralyzed by their advance instructions. If something goes wrong, they do permit themselves to resort to their own intelligence. But, brave and daring though the German soldier may be, he falls into the greatest confusion when faced by unforeseen circumstances, and when the preconceived plan fails to work even in minor matters.

EVERY man who fought in the last war recalls incidents of mass panic on the German side when one little detail in the execution of a specific task did not come off as per schedule. I remember, for instance, how a German infantry battalion during the battle of Passchendaele, having been told that the British artillery supporting the Canadian front line had been completely silenced, and that they needed merely to walk across no-man's-land to take our trenches, threw up their hands to a man when suddenly a single hastily repaired piece of field artillery fired a few shots from the British side. That lone piece of artillery could neither have thrown up a barrage against the oncoming mass attack, nor could it have protected the Canadian line. The surprise of a few whiz-bangs whistling over their heads, however, when they had been definitely told there would be no artillery fire, completely unnerved the Fritzes, and they surrendered *en masse* to an enemy very much inferior in numbers.

I recall another personal experience from the First World War which illustrates the amazing faculty of the Allied soldier to think in action and use individual initiative:

On the Somme front the casualties from German snipers were growing alarmingly heavy in our sector. The strangest part of it was that most of the casualties inflicted on us by these expert sharpshooters occurred at night. Work parties sent out to repair barbed wire under cover of darkness came back with fifty or even seventy-five per cent of their numbers left behind in the ice-cold mud of no-man's-land. The thing that puzzled the Canadian staff was how the Germans managed to pick off our men one by one in the impenetrable darkness of that winter, especially since neither the Germans nor we employed Very lights to illuminate night operations. It was a mystery indeed, since on many nights a drizzle of rain fell, and more often it even poured, and never did we catch sight of a single German prowling there in the Godforsaken night between the two lines of death. Yet our men were being killed —and they were not killed in cold-steel encounters between rival working parties. They were neatly shot by musketry fire. Who were these men who could shoot with such precision in the dark?

It was one of our Indian scouts, a soldier commonly known as Moses, a Cree tribesman from the Hudson Bay District, I believe, who finally unraveled the mystery. Moses discovered that the Germans had smeared luminous paint on the stakes to which the barbed wire was attached. But their night patrols had painted only those stakes nearest our front line, and those on but one side, that facing their own lines. The effect was that when our men crawled out into no-man's-land past those painted stakes, their bodies darkened part of the shining posts, and the German snipers, who had their special rifles trained on those luminous targets, merely had to pull the trigger to nick our unsuspecting men.

Moses, in his own slow and silent way, without consulting any superior officer, worked out a device that not only mystified the German snipers but threw them into consternation. One night he and a few cronies, loaded with straw sacks, went into no-man's-land—not venturing beyond the row of stakes shielding our front line, however. Into the area where most of our men had been killed, the Moses crew now flung out their sacks. Then, by means of ropes, they slowly pulled the sacks past the luminous side of the posts. No sooner did a sack darken the bright side of one of the stakes than a rifle-shot would ring out. Moses and his friends watched carefully where the flash of the rifles was coming from, and then systematically killed the German snipers thus located. The Indian had, all by himself, outsmarted the clever scheme planned by the German General Staff.

Unimportant as such an incident may be as against the gigantic factors involved in a global conflict, it nevertheless demonstrates the ability of the rank-and-file man on the Allied side to solve his own difficulties. That peculiar gift of considering defeat a challenge to ingenuity and a spur to greater effort is something the German soldier woefully lacks.

Until August 8, 1918, the German Imperial Army was winning World War I. That is, at least so far as the German people were concerned. The army had not experienced a single substantial defeat, although it had swallowed many a disappointment. Yet on that day Ludendorff, who for a year had been teetering between the highest hopes and deepest despair, conceded that it was all over but the shouting. He himself described what he called "the black day of the German army in the history of the war" in the following words:

"Early on August 8, in a dense fog rendered still thicker by artificial means, the English, mainly with Australian and Canadian divisions, attacked between Albert and Moreuil with strong squadrons of tanks, but otherwise in no great superiority. The divisions in line allowed themselves to be completely overwhelmed. . . . Our war machine was no longer efficient. August 8 put the decline of our fighting power beyond all doubt. . . . I had no hope of finding a strategic expedient to turn the tables—I became convinced that we were now without the safe foundation for the plans of General Headquarters. . . . The war must be ended. . . ." Less than three months later the German delegates left Berlin to treat with Marshal Foch for an armistice.

Yet all that had happened on that eighth day of August was that the Germans had suffered a sectional defeat after four years of continuous victories.

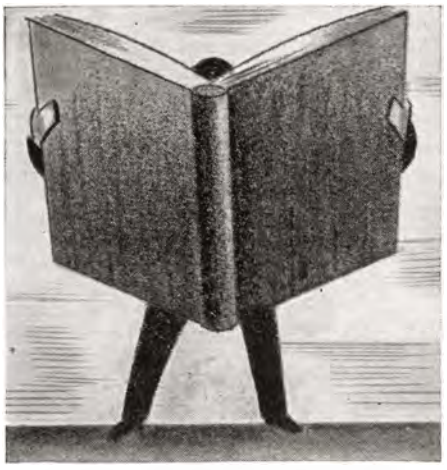
But this was all that was needed to bring German military power tumbling down like a house of cards. In those three months which elapsed between "black" August the eighth and the Armistice, the people—in the final analysis indivisible from the army—lost its will to resist. The soldiers in the field as well as the civilian population yielded to an overwhelming sense of the futility of all further sacrifices. The foe's superiority in numbers and material had grown too great, they felt, and the longer the war would last the worse the German position would become. And even more demoralizing was the German realization that *The Plan* had not correctly gauged the psychology of the other nations, which had never been expected to surpass Germany in martial determination and will to win.

It was therefore not so much the initself unimportant Allied victory on the Somme that served as the final blow to the German people. What broke their morale was the crushing knowledge that the odds were too great against them and that Britain, France and the United States would go on fighting to the last man out of an inexhaustible reserve of man-power.

Today, twenty-five years later, these same Germans—a nation's character does not change in one generation—have their eyes glued as if hynotized on Russia's inexhaustible human and material resources. Almost petrified with fear, they wait for the avalanche which sooner or later will sweep them away. Through the barrage of Goebbels' propaganda they are slowly perceiving that the enemy on their Eastern front in this war will never give way, just as the Allies on their Western front kept gaining strength in the first war. Only a few weeks ago Major Otto Mossdorf, military expert attached to the Von Brauchitsch staff, let the cat out of the bag when he admitted that "the real core" of the Russian army is still intact and that "the Germans last year met only a gigantic protective screen of secondary troops of inferior quality. The Russian 'barbarians' fooled us," indignantly concludes this candid German observer in an article in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, for which he presumably has been purged by this time.

DEFEAT may come at any time. For all we know, that defeat may already have taken place and may have been passed on to the outside world as an occurrence of no importance, just as happened in the case of August 8, 1918, the far-reaching consequences of which were revealed only long after the war.

Before the fourth winter of the war comes around it is most likely that the people of Germany will have inescapably sensed the tragic parallel between World Wars I and II. And when that happens neither Hitler's whip nor his cajolery will be able to stem the collapse. The Third Reich will have come to an end.



BOOK SUGGESTIONS
For August
BY HARRY HANSEN

WALT DISNEY is not only one of the foremost entertainers of the nation; he is the gifted developer of an art form that has tremendous possibilities. In "The Art of Walt Disney," Robert D. Feild, of Tulane University, describes the history, aim, drawing and filming of Disney's famous pictures, showing how the idea grows.

If you chuckled with nostalgic glee at "Life with Father," you may find amusing Sally Benson's sketches of family life in St. Louis in 1903, when the Fair was in the making; she calls it "Meet Me in St. Louis."

We know so little about Australia today that we are doubly grateful to Margaret L. Macpherson for her lively account of a personal visit to Australia and New Zealand, "I Heard the Anzacs Singing." Not a long book and not a description of scenery; it deals with the people.

The war is responsible for a new collection of soldier songs—"Sound Off!"—which run all the way from "Yankee Doodle" of the American Revolution to "Hinky Dinky Parley Voo" of the last war. Collected with great care by Edward Arthur Dolph, with historical sketches and voice and piano scores, the book serves a new purpose in these times.

("The Art of Walt Disney," by Robert D. Feild; the Macmillan Co., $3.50. "Meet Me in St. Louis," by Sally Benson; Random House, $2.50. "I Heard the Anzacs Singing," by Margaret L. Macpherson; Creative Age Press, $2. "Sound Off!" by Edward Arthur Dolph; Farrar & Rinehart, $3.50.)

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This noted critic will briefly review in each issue the recently published book he deems the most interesting

SELECTED BY

DEEMS TAYLOR

SERIOUS

Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4 in F minor; played by the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski. Victor Album M-880

The first album release of a new conductor-orchestra combination. Judging from this one, they're going to be very, very happy.

Bidu Sayao, singing "Deh, Vieni non tardar" from "The Marriage of Figaro," and "Caro Nome" from "Rigoletto," accompanied by the Victor Symphony Orchestra under Wilfred Pelletier. Victor 18496

In these the little Brazilian is at her best—which is no faint praise.

POPULAR

Songs from the musical comedies of Jerome Kern, rewritten in extended form by the composer and played by the Gordon String Quartet. Decca Album 293

Here are your favorites—"Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Bill," "The Way You Look Tonight," and three others, in a new and enchanting form. Charlie Miller's string quartet arrangements are flawless, and the playing is exquisite. To call this one "popular" is to describe its reception, not its character. A "must."

Jimmy Dorsey's Orchestra, playing "I Remember You" and "If You Build a Better Mousetrap." Decca 4132

Hurry up before priorities make this unobtainable.

Deems Taylor, one of America's leading composers and music critics, will select each month two or more records he believes our readers will enjoy playing.

MRS. BRITCHETT SPEAKS ON STRATEGY

(Continued from page 53)

"How ghastly!"

Mr. Britchett explained carefully:

"What I mean is, a column of tanks would smash through the Russian lines, fan out, circle back—and there you are. That particular outfit of Russians were surrounded by tanks."

"Like Custer's Last Stand," murmured Mrs. Britchett dreamily. "I *do* wish I could remember who took Custer's part."

Mr. Britchett stared at her curiously, but made no comment.

"Well, anyway," he continued, after a pause, "the Russians were driven back till they were within sight of Moscow. It looked like the end; then came the snow." Mr. Britchett's early study of the silent movies began to pay sudden dividends. "Out of the north came the snow, covering that vast and barren land—"

"Wait a minute. I want to get that. It's good. 'Out of the north—' And then did you say 'vast and barren'?"

Mr. Britchett looked pleased. "I said 'vast and barren.' The snow covered everything with a thick white blanket. And with the snow came intense cold, freezing the German army in its tracks. Then Stalin telephoned Timmyshenko—"

"Did you say 'telephoned'?" asked Mrs. Britchett. "I don't mind, of course, but it sort of spoils things."

Mr. Britchett ignored the interruption. "He gave Timmyshenko orders to advance. The Russians counterattacked. The German tanks foundered in the snowdrifts. Their planes couldn't take off. They had to fall back. Day after day the Russian tanks and planes pounded away at them—"

"Wait. I don't understand. If the Germans couldn't get their tanks through the snow, and their planes wouldn't fly, how did the Russians manage it?"

"They were prepared for cold-weather fighting."

"How?" asked Mrs. Britchett.

"They just were, that's all. How does anyone prepare for cold weather? Their men were dressed for it. Heavy underwear and all that sort of thing."

Mrs. Britchett looked slightly confused. "But—"

"I'm merely telling you what happened," said Mr. Britchett with simple dignity. "This isn't a lecture on engineering. It's history. The Russians spread out on both sides of the German columns as they retreated. Then every once in a while the Russian lines would come together like a lobster-claw, and bite off a division or two. *So!*" Mr. Britchett illustrated with his hands.

"Isn't that what you said the Germans used to do on the way in?"

"Exactly."

"Then why did they quit all of a sudden?"

"Because the Russians were using motorized sleighs and things and could get around better."

"I thought you said they were in tanks."

"They were in everything," shouted Mr. Britchett. "Tanks, sleighs, skis, sampans. They even used dog-teams."

"That's cute," observed Mrs. Britchett, making a note.

"Well, anyway, that's the story. Timmyshenko saved Moscow. He saved Russia. Perhaps he saved the world."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Britchett, writing furiously. "You know, I think I could make that Timmyshenko a little more interesting. He sounds like a darling character, with that name and those mustaches and everything. I think I'll just work up something about his boyhood. You know—barefoot peasant boy. Red-sails-at-sunset stuff. And a sweet old peasant mother all covered with wrinkles and one of those adorable colored shawls."

Mr. Britchett looked at her with surprise. Then he looked at the cocktail shaker. It was almost empty. He poured in a dash of gin, jiggled it and filled his glass. "All gone," he said, helping himself to a cracker. "How about dinner?"

"LOOK at this." Mrs. Britchett met him as he entered the front door. She was holding a copy of the Fairview Manor, Long Island, *News*. "Never mind hanging up your hat and coat. Come in and listen to this. It's about my talk on the Russian business. Here's what it says:

"'At the monthly meeting of the Fairview Manor Current Events Club, held on Wednesday afternoon at the charming home of the Chairman, Mrs. Smedley Britchett'" (Mr. Britchett glanced involuntarily at the rug), "'Mrs. Britchett read an exceptionally interesting and informative paper on the Russian situation.

"'She compared the ill-fated campaign of Napoleon with the present struggle of Hitler's armies, laying particular stress upon the part which the Russian General Timoshenko has played in hurling back the enemy from the gates of Moscow.

"'Mrs. Britchett gave an interesting account of General Timoshenko's little-known early life, describing in colorful detail his rise from a Ukrainian peasant boy to the savior of Russia, and perhaps, as Mrs. Britchett so aptly put it, of all the world.

"'Mrs. Britchett is a student of military strategy. It was generally agreed that she contributed one of the most time-

ly papers which has been read before the Club to date, and one which did much to foster a better understanding with our great and mysterious ally.'"

Mrs. Britchett finished, and beamed at her husband. "What do you think of that?"

"Donkey-dust," said Mr. Britchett.

"That's right. Always disparage anything I've done. I get so tired of it. I don't sneer at *your* work!" There were tears in her voice.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Britchett. "It's a swell write-up. I'm proud of you."

MR. BRITCHETT'S competent secretary stuck her graying blonde head through the door of the inner office. "It's Mrs. Britchett," she announced with the subtly sympathetic voice of an understanding old-timer. "She's on the phone. Says it's important."

Mr. Britchett picked up the receiver: "Yes, dear."

"Darling, the most exciting thing! Would you mind very much?"

"Mind what?"

"Well, it's like this: I've been asked to go to Washington with a committee of women from different States. It's a national meeting to discuss what American women can do for Russia during the war."

"Why, in heaven's name, should they ask you?"

"Why *shouldn't* they ask me? I *suppose* they want people who know a *little* about Russia and the war. You don't mind, do you, dear? I'll only be gone a few days, and it really won't cost much."

"No," said Mr. Britchett. "No, I don't mind. Only—well—what I mean is—For heaven's sake!"

DREAM JOBS

(Continued from page 23)

box-office appeal but because of a slight altercation he had with the post office. He insisted that the Warner Brothers had shipped to him "The Glass Coffin," but the postmaster kept on saying that no coffin, not even a wooden one, had arrived from New York. Both sides were right.

Very early in his career Jack Warner realized that two things were uppermost in the business of picture-making: that writers and ideas were more important than stars and directors; and that discipline in the studio must be maintained at all costs. Realization number one was of a pleasant nature. It enabled him to grasp the value of such properties as "Main Street," and "Babbitt." Realization number two was directly responsible for the birth of that most dreaded word in Hollywood slang—*suspension.* There is a slight disagreement between Jack Warner and Noah Webster as to the real meaning of *suspension.* The latter describes it as "temporary forced withdrawal from the exercise of office, powers, prerogative, privileges as a member or communicant." The former maintains, stoically and whole-heartedly, that when he says that such and such actor or actress is about to be "suspended," it means just one thing: that the culprit disobeyed orders and will therefore be suspended from the studio's pay-roll and will stay suspended until he regains his senses.

Now then: the Warners are not the only motion-picture producers who suspend temperamental stars; other studios do it, every day of the year (Sundays and the Fourth of July included). But there is something about Warners' suspension, perhaps the gusto with which they announce and execute it, that earned for Jack Warner the coveted title of the Great Suspender. The men and women who have been suspended by him are not inclined to take much stock in that profound statement of T. S. Elliott's, according to which "The world will come to an end not with a bang but a whimper." They know only too well that their particular world came to an end with a hell of a bang.

It is a pleasant duty to report that at least ninety per cent of Jack Warner's suspensions have wound up in happiness and bliss, and that the enraged stars who have dashed out of Jack's office ready to commit arson and mayhem, are to be found at this moment working, cheerfully and contentedly, on the Warner Brothers lot. The remaining ten per cent would come back too—if Jack would only give "the nod."

Had anyone told Bette Davis seven years ago when she was fighting the Warners tooth and nail before a stern British judge that, a few months later, Jack Warner would greet her with outstretched arms at the entrance gate at Burbank, she would have undoubtedly derided the daring prophet. Having run away to England and having sworn that never, never again would she put her foot on the Warner soil, she was grimly determined to stay suspended for the balance of her natural life, come hell and high water. Today, seven years later, she howls with laughter when she recalls that battle, and cannot understand how anyone could possibly fail to make friends with Jack Warner.

IT would appear as if the Great Suspender was, at the same time, a Great Conciliator. There is one actor in Hollywood who talks of Jack's peace-making talents with a mixture of admiration and regret. "I went to his office," he says in a hushed voice, "to ask for a raise. I stayed there two solid hours. I never had such a good time in my life. We laughed and laughed and laughed. It was not until I was ushered out that I suddenly realized that he never gave me a chance even to mention that small matter of one grand a week more. The man's a genius."

NOT much of a sleeper, Jack begins his working routine a bit ahead of the sun. Depending on how many disputes he has had to arbitrate the previous day, he wakes up anywhere between four and six A.M., switches on the light and begins jotting down various thoughts and ideas on a large writing-tablet which always lies by the side of his bed. He gets up at seven-forty-five and tackles an impressive mountain of scripts (plays, screen-plays and original stories) that he brought the night before from the studio. His particular attention is centered on the shooting scripts of the pictures that are either already in production or are about to go into production. A small change here and there may improve the quality of the picture. The director and the script-writers, experienced and efficient as they are, do get on the wrong track once in a while, and it is up to Jack to pull on the reins. It is his stout belief that "the play is the thing."

By nine-thirty he has read more stuff than an average man consumes in a full month. His eyes are tired by now, but not too tired to fail to spot the battery of the telephones on his desk. He calls up every department head of the studio and checks the start of their day's work. For the next hour and a half he discusses a most bewildering variety of subjects, which range all the way from the grand finale of a new Errol Flynn picture to a disgruntled exhibitor in North Dakota who feels that the Warners did him wrong.

The clock strikes eleven. New York is on the phone. It's two P.M. in Manhattan, and the home office has managed to prepare a brand-new series of headaches for Jack. The sales manager is having a tough time with a certain chain of theaters. The treasurer wants Jack's opinion as to how to handle a rather bothersome financial problem. The Warners' lawyers, than which nothing is whicher under the sun, are somewhat doubtful as to whether or not Clause Number Twenty-seven in the proposed contract with a new star provides a sufficient margin of safety for the company.

The promotion department comes next. One of the boys has had a brainstorm and dreamed up something which would either panic the whole nation or merely waste so many thousands of Warners' money.

Jack is still hanging on the long-distance phone when he is advised by the butler of the arrival of an important actor's agent who says it's a matter of life and death, and can be discussed only in the privacy of Mr. Warner's home. Often the agent lies like a doormat, but once in a blue moon he is telling the truth. So it is better to receive him than tell him to go and fly a kite.

Fifteen miles separate Jack's house in Beverly Hills from Burbank. The idea of being cut off from his beloved telephone for an endless twenty-five minutes upsets Jack considerably. But then he is the first to admit that some of the brightest ideas have come to him during that long drive. One day he picked up the tabloid which his chauffeur was reading and saw a headline which announced that "G-men raided an opium den downtown." Up to that time Jack Warner never heard anyone refer to Federal agents as G-men. "What does that G-man business mean?" he asked.

The chauffeur explained.

"Is it a brand new slang expression?"

"Oh, not so new," said the chauffeur; "must be at least two weeks old."

"Is that a fact!" said Jack Warner. He would have given ten thousand dollars at that moment to have had a telephone by his side.

When he finally arrived at the studio, trembling with excitement, he summoned all the department heads and announced that he was going to put into immediate production a picture entitled "G-Men," and that in order to save time, two companies were to do the shooting—one from eight A.M. to six P.M., the other from eight P.M. to six A.M. No, he did not have a story yet, but that did not matter. "Notify all our exhibitors," he ordered, "that in eight weeks from now we will deliver to them the finished print of 'G-Men.' Tell them that the Warners are, as usual, well ahead of everybody else." (P. S. "G-Men" was finished in eight weeks and made barrels of money.)

"YOU'RE NEW HERE, AREN'T YOU?"

EVEN on the days when he fails to concoct a bright notion, plenty drama surrounds his arrival at the studio. The air is always charged with electricity in and around his enormous office on the second floor of the Administration Building. Actors, writers, stars, associate producers, directors, costume-designers and publicity men see to it that there is nothing trivial or routine about Jack's entrance. Something is always cooking. An actor has quarreled with another actor and threatened to punch him in the nose. A director is five days behind his shooting schedule, meaning that the picture will cost about ten per cent more than indicated by the forecast. A woman star has had a knock-down and drag-out fight with

an associate producer who dared to suggest that her interpretation of a certain dramatic scene was definitely hammy. The head of the publicity department has spent a sleepless night trying to solve the riddle as to which city would be the most logical place for the world première of a picture entitled "One Foot in Heaven." And so on and so forth.

A broad smile on his lips and a fresh carnation in his buttonhole, Jack listens to complaints, suggests remedies; and when he reaches a particularly tough situation, begins telling jokes. He knows he is dealing with overgrown children, and he is determined that they shall not be permitted to run a company that distributes six hundred thousand dollars each week in salaries and wages.

BY one-thirty he succeeds in restoring a certain modicum of peace, disposes of his mail and is ready to eat his lunch. His secretary advises him of the name and the background of his luncheon guest or guests (not a day passes without some visiting fireman dropping in at Burbank), and he proceeds to the so-called executives' dining-room. It is a large, beautifully decorated bungalow with a seating capacity of about fifty. Jack Warner takes his place at the head of the table and plunges into a rapid-fire conversation. In no time his guests discover that they are on the witness stand. A foreign correspondent has to tell everything he knows about the situation in England, Soviet Russia, Germany, Italy, Libya, Egypt, India and all other battle-fronts. A railroad president must be prepared to explain why there aren't enough tank-cars to carry gasoline from West to East. A surgeon who came to discuss motion-picture stars and have a good meal, finds himself all but performing an appendectomy long before the dessert is served. A military attaché of an allied nation is given coffee-cups, spoons, knives and forks to demonstrate the principles of the mechanized warfare. It is the consensus on the Warner Brothers' lot that some day a blood-transfusion will be performed in the executives' dining-room, with Jack Warner supervising the operation and picking the flaws.

Having pumped his guests dry, Jack glances at his wrist-watch and gets up. It's two-fifteen. He is due in his projection-room (a huge affair larger than an average neighborhood playhouse) to view the stuff which had been shot the day before, and to cut and edit the completed pictures. As can be expected from a man who spent thirty years in the motion-picture business, he has developed a technique of his own. Very often he breaks the hearts of his directors and stars by eliminating a scene which they thought was "the" scene. But later on, when the picture is shown before an audience, they realize that he was a hundred per cent right, and that their beloved scene would have played havoc with the pace of the picture.

At four-thirty he returns to his office, summons his secretary and dictates innumerable memos about the material he viewed in the projection-room. He indicates what scenes are to be changed, what scenes thrown out, what new dialogue added, etc. This over, he is ready to receive his callers. From twenty to thirty people are waiting in his outer office. The agents who have come to discuss various deals, the casting director who has brought with him a long list of suggestions, the production manager, whose duty it is to give a detailed report on the work in progress. While all of this is going on, Jack's telephone buzzes constantly. His visitors listen to his conversations with New York and Chicago, Washington and Philadelphia, Palm Springs and San Francisco, and it is a source of ceaseless wonder to them how in heaven any man can keep track of so many subjects. He does not accept all calls, of course. The bores, the four-flushers, the nuts and the woodpeckers constituting at least ninety per cent of the population of Hollywood—a man in Jack Warner's position cannot afford to let these waste his time. A certain well-known producer who shall be nameless, spent two weeks in unsuccessful efforts to get Jack Warner on the phone. Finally when he raised his voice and wanted to know why that blankety-blank would not talk to him, Jack smiled sweetly and said to his secretary: "Tell that guy that before I agree to talk with him, he must promise me that he will spend at least a month in one of those progressive schools where they teach the grown-up morons how to listen to what the other fellow has to say."

JACK leaves the studio at seven-thirty. Once or twice a week he's able to go home and get reacquainted with his wife and children, but as a rule he has to at-

tend what is known to the trade as a "sneak preview." In plain English, it means that a recently completed Warner Brothers picture will be shown that night at some small theater somewhere within one hundred miles of Los Angeles. The audience won't know that the picture will be shown until the very last moment, and therefore no professional kibitzers will be present. During the showing of the picture, Jack Warner sits in the last row, watching the people's reaction and checking on the laughs and tears. It goes without saying that on a great many occasions he discovers that what had seemed very funny to him and his associates left the audience cold and failed to bring a single chuckle. When he makes that sad discovery, he does not rave or rant or accuse the audience of being too half-witted for words; he merely makes a note of it and orders the scene to be re-shot. The showing of the picture over, he rushes outside and takes a position in the lobby, where he will be able to listen to the people's conversations and to read their comments on the cards which were distributed by the ushers.

What baseball is to Brooklyn, the motion-picture business is to greater Los Angeles. Every man, woman and most of the children know all about such things as "double-takes," "long-shots," "close-up," "the fade-in," "the fade-out," and so on. One night when Jack Warner went to a sneak preview in Pasadena, an elderly man whom he had never seen before put his hand on his shoulder and said: "I'll tell you what, Jack. You've got a good picture there, but certain things have to be done to it. Take two hundred feet out of the first reel. Eliminate the long-shot of the harbor in the middle. It really doesn't mean a damn' thing. It simply slows down the pace. And never mind the final close-up. We all know what is going to happen, so just leave it to our imagination." Jack blinked. "Are you—are you in the motion-picture business, by any chance?"

"Who, me?" said the fellow. "Hell, no. I am raising oranges near Riverside. The best damn' oranges you ever tasted. Come and see my place some day."

MIDNIGHT finds Jack at the Brown Derby, surrounded by his executives and engaged in the inevitable post-mortems. The man who directed the picture usually thinks that there was nothing wrong with the picture, but almost everything wrong with the audience. "Listen to me, Jack," he says convincingly. "You know me. I never throw bouquets at myself, but I know a typical audience when I see it, and tonight's audience was not a typical one. In the first place—"

Jack yawns.

"In the first, second and last place, we are going to re-shoot that scene." "But Jack, listen to me—" "I won't," says Jack amiably. "You listen to me. Stop me if you've heard this one before, but I am sure you haven't. It seems that a fellow had to go to Chicago—" The director's jaw drops. With his last dying breath he will swear that tonight's audience was not a typical one. . . .

And so to bed—to bed with a script which just arrived from New York, and on which he has promised to report within twenty-four hours because three other companies are bidding for it.

Ladies and gentlemen, is there anyone in the house who is in need of a job? How would you like to become the production head of Warner Brothers, now that Lieutenant-Colonel Jack L. Warner has gone to work for the Air Force? The pay is good and the hours are easy.

(Continued from page 28)

pleased to have Tanya admired on any grounds.

"And now, sir, I can say I loved her as completely as it is possible to love. I was idiotically pleased by everything she said and did. I sported about in the purity of her soul like a fish that has found perfect water. No woman had ever been able to flatter me before. Tanya flattered me. I felt large because of her approvals. I was delighted when she took to identifying things we had in common—our similar love for certain colors, objects, people, books. When Tanya discovered she was like me in this or that matter, I glowed with achievement.

"All this delicious business took a year," said Louis, "and at the end of the year a very amusing thing happened. My work of remodeling and recreating Tanya produced a most remarkable result. I, Louis Andrel, emerged a new man. Completely refurnished from head to foot. Full of morality, monogamy and the dreams of a suburbanite.

"My fidelity to Tanya delighted me. It also rewarded me. For my fidelity succeeded in accomplishing something all my yells had failed to do—the disposal of Marguerite. That clamorous and steaming lady trotted away moaning like a lost soul. She paused to sprinkle the doormat with a last burst of tears. She wished Tanya happiness and me everlasting bliss, and concluded her rôle in my life with the announcement that she was going to choose within a week between suicide and a nunnery. A month later Marguerite married the son of a department-store owner. How she ever got around to doing this is still a mystery to me. But on the other hand there is never anything mysterious about a woman, if you'll just keep in mind that her soul is not an orchestra but an acrobat.

"Marguerite went out of my life," Louis went on, "and several other sources of diversion fluttered off or withered away. I was, sir, finally for the first time since I had been able to talk in two-syllable words, an honest man. No duplicities, no lies, deceits, no cynicism. An honorable, faithful heart devoted to the love of one woman. That's what I became. A poem of a man! And my habitat was the Garden of Eden. This is a dangerous land to dwell in. It is too beautiful. It frightens you. When God walks beside you, you may know one thing for certain. He is out only for a stroll. What did I fear? This is difficult to remember. Perhaps, an ending. Perhaps I was afraid only of growing old and dying—and of not remaining always young in Paradise. Heine wrote it—'When you say I love you, then I must cry bitterly.' Lamartine wrote it—'This moment of joy darkens a corner of my heart, and there doom sounds.' They've all written it, all the poets who've ever caught a glimpse of Eden.

"Perhaps it was no poetry at all, but my cynicism refusing to take the count entirely. But I began to grow mystically aware that there was something wrong. The most meaningless and trivial things assaulted my nerves and started me to brooding. What were they? It's difficult to remember so long after. For instance, we would pass a fat man on the avenue—a slovenly-looking nobody. And he would tip his hat to Tanya and smile hello. And there would be something in that gesture and smile that would excite a corner of my brain. Or we would meet a woman in a department-store, and Tanya would nod to her. The woman would stare back at Tanya and with a frozen face pronounce her name in greeting. Why the frozen face? Why the curtness? I noticed, brooded and asked questions.

"Once, after many such vague and irking encounters with Tanya's past, something a little more concrete happened. We had been having dinner in a Russian restaurant. And the waiter tried to help Tanya on with her coat as we were leaving. He was a Russian. A middle-aged, motheaten, ex-human being. He smiled, beamed, and danced a curious attendance. Tanya talked sharply back to him, refused to let him help her with her coat, and her face seemed to me filled with a sort of panic.

"It was nothing to the panic that filled my own head. Why had she been so eager to put this smirking, motheaten fellow in his place? She had worked in restaurants, I remembered. Why had the fellow beamed so knowingly at her, and why had he seemed so bewildered by her abrupt, impolite answers—all in Russian?

"I demanded answers. It was the strongest glimpse I had had of any world that knew Tanya—before me. Tanya answered. She wept, and her face grew ugly. It was the beginning, she whispered; my suspicions were the beginning. Now the end would come. It would be the ending that had always come—hatred and injustice. She clung to me and told me about this waiter. He was more a friend of her father than of her. He had once loaned money to her father, money that was still owed him. Two hundred dollars. I apologized desperately and insisted that she take the two hundred at once to the smirking, motheaten Samaritan.

"YOU may well imagine," Louis chuckled, "that I was astounded by these doubts. And horribly ashamed of them. They were proof to me of only one thing: They proved that poor Tanya's old friend, the Poltergeist, was still alive and kicking. This Pied Piper of misfortune that lived in her soul was now whistling seductively at me. Corrupting me. Trying to make me distrust and hate Tanya. I tried to throw my doubts away, but it

was like trying to throw flypaper out of a window. The doubts still stuck to my brain. And they increased. I began to ask questions. I began to investigate her many tales. I accused her wantonly and stupidly of having lied about one thing and another.

"She would sit patiently listening for a long time," said Louis; "then she would begin to cry. She would cry all night. She would stand in a corner or in front of a window, doubled up with sobbing as if in the throes of some horrible stomachache.

"I did everything I could to control this new mood, but it haunted me—through her kisses, through all her pathetic tears and protestations. And this phase of our love lasted for several months. I swung between brutal accusations based on nothing, and desperate repentances—just as her ex-husband had done. There were times when I almost duplicated his physical activities. I had to control myself from beating her.

"Well, sir, I got to brooding and feeling miserable and to looking on myself as an accomplice of evil—the evil that had beset poor Tanya from the cradle. I had made her happy, restored her trust in life, brought a deep love into her heart—and all to what end? So that there would be a more radiant victim than ever before for the hangman's noose?

"All this and much more I confessed to Tanya, and begged forgiveness for my doubts. I was, I assured her, stronger than her destiny, and too tough to be thrown by any Poltergeist.

"Yet my mind—or rather a single twitching cynical brain lobe—kept seeing, noting and catching overtones. But I finally conquered. My will was stronger than any witchcraft.

"A sudden sense of calm came to me one night. We were alone in my studio. This very room, sir. I was painting her. A remarkable portrait, this one. She was dressed in plain black with a white lace collar at her throat, sitting in a chair and reading a book; and I had caught something in her face that had evaded my brush up to that time. A wondrous purity, a glow of such tender innocence as you sometimes see on the face of a sleeping child. I smiled excitedly as all this appeared on the canvas. I knew that I had finally laid my eyes on the thing I had been looking for—that all the virtue and goodness and tenderness that existed in Tanya had finally been seen and painted for all time.

"I FINISHED, and sat looking at her. She was still reading, her head tilted, her lips parted, a happy flush in her dark eyes, and an aura of purity and serenity around her little head. And I suddenly spoke to her.

"'Tanya,' I said, 'it's over.'

"'What is over?" she asked.

"'My doubts,' I said. 'I've seen you now. I know you now. I'll never again disbelieve anything you say. I'll never till I die doubt you again.' I felt as I spoke that someone wiser than I was saying these words. It was like being possessed suddenly with a great religious conviction. As I spoke, my eyes were on her. I was staring at something—I didn't know what. Something was happening—I didn't know what.

I continued to talk like one possessed.

"That night I woke up. Something was haunting me. A bad dream, I thought. No, it was no dream. A memory. I remembered what had happened when I swore eternal belief in Tanya. I remembered now her face. At my words, a curious look had come over it. A look of pain. And her eyes had slid into their corners as if trying to run away. And her color had changed. A pallor, like a thief's light, had passed over her face. Terror makes such a light come to people's faces, I lay thinking. Fright stops their heart for a moment, and the face is left without a beat of blood for that instant. What frightened Tanya? That I believed in her? Why hadn't she smiled with pleasure or triumph? Why hadn't my belief in her meant happiness?

"My head ached with thinking these things. I gathered all my will-power against them, and I called them the visitations of the devil.

"In the morning I was smiling again on Tanya. The thoughts of the night were gone. I felt that I had finally wrestled with Tanya's malevolent destiny and conquered it.

"I kissed her, and we sat for several hours planning a house we would build together in Vermont for the summertime. Then she stopped before the last portrait of her that sat finished on my easel.

"'I am going to call it "Maiden Reading,"' I said to her.

"She stood before it a long time and smiled. It was the best I'd ever done, she said. It was a lovely and beautiful painting. She put her arms around me and

kissed me gratefully, and went off to buy things.

"'I have several fittings,' she said, 'so if I'm a little late for dinner, don't worry—please.'

"'Don't worry?' I looked at her, beaming like a favorite citizen of Eden. 'What about?'

"'I adore you,' she whispered, and full of smiles and trust and love went happily out of my house."

LOUIS was almost done with his invisible painting. He sat dabbing at it and growling to himself.

"He came at three-thirty in the afternoon," he announced suddenly. There was a change in his voice. It had grown sprightlier. "I was sitting here just as I am now, poking away at a finished canvas, 'Maiden Reading.' I was very happy. When you're in love and have done a fine piece of work, you have a feeling that life is solved. My man came in and said there was a visitor. A visitor—who? Vovo Fantikoff, said he. Fantikoff? Impossible. That's Tanya's name. Exactly, said my man. My visitor said he was Tanya's father. 'Show him in,' I said, and sat waiting for a blind man to come tapping in with a cane.

"And in he came," Louis chuckled, "with no cane. A youth! Blond, and under thirty. And very pompous. A bulgy dirty pink face with smudged-in eyes. And fat lips that squirmed up and down and back and forth. He came in, walking slowly, stiff-legged like an old fashioned tragedian. 'Mr. Fantikoff?' I said, and this tall dirty-looking youth with fat lips and fat hips bowed.

"'You're a liar,' I said immediately. 'You are not Tanya's father.'

"Again he bowed.

"'That,' he said, 'is what I have come to discuss. If you please.'

"He stood with his head raised and his fat mouth pulled to one side, and he continued: 'You do not know me physically, but you know my soul. And admire it too', he added triumphantly. 'You're an idiot,' I said. 'Go home. I'm a busy man.'

"'One moment, if you please,' the fat lips squirmed. 'When I speak of my soul, I am referring to my music. You have been kind enough to admire my music and assist to have it published, and played by a great orchestra. I am grateful.' And he bowed. 'And now I am here,' he went on, 'in the capacity more or less of a blackmailer. No—not even that.' His smudgy eyes closed with pain, and his fat mouth took up another position. 'A blackmailer is a sensible creature. I am not. I am here on an uncommercial but very cruel errand. . . . Allow me to finish, please.' He raised a pudgy hand. 'I have come to destroy Tanya and myself. And perhaps you. And my only reward will be her destruction. I ask for nothing else. So you see, I am no blackmailer.'

"I said nothing and did nothing," Louis chuckled. "I sat looking at a gangly, uncombed. fat-lipped and oily-spoken monstrosity named Fantikoff, exactly as if he had been something that had suddenly appeared painted on the wall. And he kept on talking, his voice sliding up into a half-falsetto. 'I am grateful to you,' he squeaked. 'I admire you. You have saved me from suicide.' He bowed. And I asked him in what way. I was very polite, for all this was unreal, something transpiring on the moon. 'In this way,' he squeaked, 'by bringing my genius forth to the world. If you will pardon me, I am very nervous. I am shaking all over.'

"'Sit down,' I said, 'and don't squeak so much when you talk. Relax.'

"He said, 'Thank you,' and sat down and started panting. Then he said, 'Tanya thinks I am too greedy to revenge myself against her. She thinks I am too great a coward to speak to you. So much is true. I am greedy. And I am a coward. But yet I am here—speaking.' The fat mouth jumped around for a while in silence. Then he went on: 'She presumes I am afraid to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.' 'Me?' I said. 'Yes,' he said beaming, 'the goose is you. And I will show her if I am afraid to kill him or not.'

"I felt nothing. Neither fear nor anger. And less and less interest. It was all something taking place on the far side of the moon. A dim, murmuring business happening far away. 'Proceed with your disclosures,' I said.

"'Tanya has deceived you about me,' the fat mouth answered, 'as she has probably deceived you in everything she has told you. Fantikoff is not her true name; even I do not know what her true name is. Morally speaking, she is not a woman. Nor yet even a human being. I will tell you what she is—a morass. A creature without a soul. One sinks deeper and deeper into such a morass. And finally one disappears.'

"I nodded and said: 'Proceed with your goose-killing.' He proceeded. 'She told me,' he said, 'that she could get all the money she wanted out of you, if I played the rôle of her father—sick, blind, unappreciated. She assured me that if I would accept this rôle, my fortune would be made. I am a scoundrel. A man of genius—but without honor. So I accepted. I was rewarded. She brought my music to you. You were kind enough to admire it and to publish it and give her money for me—half of which she kept for herself.'

"A great wave of anger almost swept me out of my chair. But I said nothing and did nothing. I knew my visitor was a delicate creature. The slightest bellow from me would send him scurrying out of the house. And I wanted him to remain—for a certain time. Until I had learned all he had to tell.

"'So she lied to you and betrayed you,' he said, 'and I consented to the betrayal. I groaned and sank deeper into the morass. But I must tell you that it is not the only time she has betrayed you. Perhaps you know of a certain Russian waiter."

"'I have heard of him,' I said.

"'Good,' said my visitor. 'You will be interested perhaps to learn that I met him only a few days ago. He boasted to me that Tanya had swindled two hundred dollars out of you with lies—and given him half. You remember that occasion.'

"I nodded, and now began to feel a sensation in the back of my neck as if someone were holding a lighted match to it. 'I came here,' the fat lips went on, 'because this woman corrupts and destroys all that she touches. You are a fine generous person who has been kind to me, and I cannot consent to take part in this evil any longer—to see you destroyed as she has destroyed others. You think perhaps that you have made her over into someone sweet and pure and lovely. You have never changed her. She is what she always was. She knows the same pack of scoundrels she always knew. I tell you, she is evil. Perhaps you know about her last husband?'

"'I know about him,' I said.

"'Impossible!' the fat lips squeaked. 'What has she told you?' 'He used to beat her shamefully,' I said. 'No, no! my visitor cried. 'Lies! It was not like that. It was poor Manuel who was beat. Killed. Not him—his soul. Ruined! Worse! It was very sad. Poor Manuel, he was a great 'cellist. He married her—as you have done. He was like you—uncynical. He believed she was a poor, abused little girl whom everybody hated. So he must love her, and so he married her. For two years. Two years of hell broke poor Manuel. He was not evil, you see; such a woman was foreign to him. She destroyed him, as she will destroy you. He was placed in an asylum. He is still there. Such disillusion! Such a horrible feeling! I have seen him once. He weeps in a corner.'

"My visitor rubbed his own eyes dry with dirty fingers. 'Now,' he whispered. 'I have had my revenge. Manuel too.' 'I can't figure out,' I said, 'what you are avenging.' 'Yes,' he nodded eagerly, "it must seem very complicated. To me, it is simple. I am revenging myself, my lost honesty. I am destroying Tanya—the Tanya she created for you, to swindle money out of you—the Tanya who exists so beautifully in your soul. I am destroying this lovely creature just as she destroyed me. She made me an accomplice of her evil. She turned me into the lowest of human beings. I, a man of genuis, have been mired in the morass with her. Have taken money that she has swindled from others—decent men like you.'"

"I stood up. The lighted match against the back of my neck had gone out. 'You have told me a number of interesting things,' I said. 'I thank you for your visit, and suggest that you leave.' He stood up and bowed. The fat mouth shifted positions. 'You believe me?' he wanted to know. 'I will think it over,' I said. 'Thank you.' He bowed again. 'Whatever you think of me, please remember that among my motives was a desire to repay you for your kindness—to Tanya's father.'

"He left. I sat without moving till it grew dark. I thought very little. It's not necessary to think, when you become aware of something. You can study life for a thousand years. But when you know it, you know it in a moment. As it got darker, I began to dread Tanya's coming. I began to dread the questions I would have to ask her."

THEN Louis stopped. He stared into the moonlit room and made faces. His eyebrows went up, and he fell to chuckling. Then he went on:

"Sir, I have never made this part of the confession to anyone—even to myself," he said. "I have refused to remember it. It comes to me as something new. I am delighted." He laughed loudly and went on again. "Here's what happened. A half-hour before Tanya arrived, I had decided not to unmask her. I'd

made up my mind to ask no questions. To let her continue as my Tanya. So deeply did I love her, that I was willing to accept even her lies.

"She came home at eight o'clock," Louis smiled at the moonlit room. "It was a cold autumn night. Outside, the wind was howling. She found me sitting just where she had left me—in front of her portrait. She turned on the light and started toward me, to kiss me and caress my head with her gentle hands. But when she saw my face, she stopped.

"'What is it?' she said.

"And as if by magic, an expression that had been gone from her face for a long time returned to it. The expression of despair—the sleepy, knotted look of eyes and mouth that Marguerite had brought me to paint. She straightened like a fencer with a foil in hand.

"'Your father paid me a visit this afternoon,' I said.

"SHE stood very erect, and remained silent.

"'He told me a number of things,' I went on. 'Are they true?'

"She seemed to grow taller. The despair thickened in her smoky eyes. She stood looking at me—looking and looking. I had the feeling of witnessing magic. A transformation was taking place. I sat looking back at her, and she seemed to be growing a new face, a new body. I was reminded of the beady stare of an insect, magnified a thousand times.

"'If you love me or have ever loved me for a minute,' I continued idiotically, 'you must answer me, yes or no. Quickly, please.' I kept myself from standing up and rushing to embrace her. I was afraid I would not only embrace, but possibly choke her to death. For I needed no yes or no from this tall insect. I yelled at her suddenly: 'Is it true?'

"And she whispered something. It was the incredible word, *yes*.

"I acted. I called my man and gave him instructions to pack Tanya's clothes.

"'And now,' I said to Tanya very quietly and even politely, 'you will leave at once.' She kept looking at me and answered the same word again: 'Yes.' It was a word that flung open too many doors. Mr. Fantikoff had merely showed me the doors. This word flung them open. It was impossible to look past all of them. Yes indeed, doors kept flinging open in my brain. One after another. . . . Thousands of doors were opening.

"'I did what I have done,' said Tanya in her little empty voice, 'because I was already guilty of so many things. Horrible things. I could only become—guiltier. My guilt made me run from you. . . . I have wanted to die.'

"'A logical ambition,' I said, and grinned at her. 'But we will not discuss anything—please.'

"'If there is anything you want to know,' the tall rigid insect whispered pathetically, 'ask me.'

"'Nothing,' I said; 'please go.'

"'I have loved you,' Tanya said; 'but that only makes it worse, doesn't it?'

"'I am not interested in nuances at the moment,' I answered. 'You are too cheap to talk to. Please go.' I got up, and we stood looking at each other again without moving or speaking. The desire to embrace her almost drove me crazy. I wanted to kiss that knotted mouth, to weep over her. To forgive everything known and unknown. But I stood still. I could almost hear myself laughing and saying to her: 'I'm just like you, Tanya. As wretched and evil. A creature like you. No better. So let's forget all this.' But I controlled myself from laughing or speaking. It elated me to say nothing, and finally to walk to the door like an actor, open it and repeat: 'Please go.'

"TANYA walked out. She looked very beautiful to me as she moved through the doorway. Proud, fearless, fascinating and wondrously strong. I closed the door. I sat down then and waited to hear the street door open and shut. There was no sound. So I knew Tanya was waiting in the hall for me to come rushing to her. She was aware of the elation her evil had stirred in me. A morass was waiting in the hall.

"A half-hour passed, and still no sound. That was too much. I tell you this so you may know all the colors of this comedy. I stood up. I rushed to the door, opened it, my heart, body and soul aching for Tanya. And the hall was empty. She had slipped away without making a sound. Like a burglar.

"And that," said Louis, chuckling, "was the end of Tanya—in a way of speaking. I never saw her again. I remained elated and even amused for several days. Then I fell ill. I began to burn with outrage. The mind burns up, feels destroyed. You can't think. You start yelling, *'No, no!'*

to things that cannot be yelled away. At things that have more existence than yourself. It's what people mean when they say life is impossible. What was in my mind was impossible to think. I darkened my room and lay in bed and spoke to no one. I turned my face to the wall and wept. I ate nothing. I did nothing. I vanished. My tears were a requiem. Somebody else shed them—not I. There was no longer a burn or ache of grief. Only a disappearance. The world was a grave, and I lay in it.

"After some months," said Louis, chuckling, "I returned to my feet. And there was a long time of disturbance. I resumed painting. But talking to people was still too difficult. You have perhaps lived in a house in which a rat, trapped between the flooring, has died and started decomposing. Nothing can dislodge the filthy little carcass. An odor pervades the entire house. It drifts through all the rooms, even the cleanest ones. The dead and dissolving rat can remain a long time.

"Well, sir," Louis smiled at me, "a rat lay dead in my heart. The fumes disturbed me for a long time."

After a pause Louis said to me suddenly: "Do you like my story?"

I nodded.

"Do you understand it?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

"What is it?" said Louis softly.

"It is the story of a girl who tried to re-create herself," I answered him. "A girl who had been meant to grow into a lovely, sweet woman. Who had been meant to be a Blessed Damozel. And for a time she became what she was meant to be. She lied herself back into decency, life and love. And lived in heaven for a year. An impostor in heaven."

"Yes," said Louis, "I have often thought of it like that. I've thought how sweet and happy she must have felt, to be loved as—my Tanya. And how terrified, too. There must have been great pain and great fear during the time I loved her—for something she was not."

"Where are all the portraits you made of her?" I asked.

"Destroyed," Louis chuckled. "I burned them. One a night for a hundred nights. It was like committing murder—a long-drawn-out and very satisfying murder."

That was Louis Andrel's story. We discussed it casually over a number of years. But nothing new emerged. It pleased Louis to take up a portion of it and retell it with witty and florid phrases. And I sat down often to write it while Louis was alive. But each time I thought of writing it, it seemed unfinished. And I would think: "Some day an ending'll occur to me. I'll wait till then."

TWO weeks after Louis' death, the ending occurred. The missing finale was given to me unexpectedly. Not a moment of Louis' tragedy had made me want to weep. But the finale did.

I was attending the auction of Louis Andrel's paintings, at the Vandecker Galleries, which had always exhibited him. The room was only half filled. For Louis' fame lay hidden for the time under the furious headlines. War was everywhere, and art glimmered only faintly in the crevices of a battered world.

Louis' seascapes were put up for bidding. They brought modest prices. I watched eagerly for the sea and sun painting he had made during the night he had told me his story. And while I was waiting, the attendants suddenly produced a large framed picture from behind the velvet drapes at the back of the auctioneer's platform. It was a larger canvas than any of his seascapes. When it rested finally on the stand, my heart started pounding, and I could barely make out the painting for a moment, so great was my excitement. It was a life-sized portrait of a girl in a black dress with a white lace collar at her throat. The head with its pompadour roll was gracefully tilted. The eyes looked flushed. The figure held a book in its hands.

There was a rustle in the room, and a flutter of catalogue pages turning. The auctioneer explained that this was a work of Louis Andrel's not in the catalogues. It had been discovered in his house three days ago, hidden away in the attic under a pile of debris. The title lettered on its back was "Maiden Reading." We were asked to study this greatest of all the Louis Andrel canvases before starting our bidding.

I saw what Louis had described to me that night—a girl almost halo-ed by purity and sweetness. She was reading a book. And as I looked and looked, her dark face and the roll of her hair over the forehead glowed as if a brightness were within the painted flesh.

MURMURS filled the gallery, and eager exclamations as the auctioneer began his harangue. This was the only portrait, he said, that Louis Andrel had ever painted. It required no great knowledge of art to know it was a masterpiece. And apparently this was true. The portrait excited the little crowd. I felt that everyone desired to bid, to own it. The bidding started at five hundred dollars. I offered quickly a thousand. There was a third call of one thousand five hundred dollars and a fourth of two thousand dollars. The auctioneer interrupted the bidding with another flight of information.

And during his talk I became aware of a woman sitting in front of me and two chairs to the left—a fatty, ornate creature of sixty or more, with an overpainted face. Her short plump arms were covered with bracelets. A diamond brooch glinted from her heavy bosom, which billowed almost to her saggy neck. Rings sparkled on her chubby fingers. And under an absurd little green velvet hat, a mass of straw-like reddish hair lay in skimpy coils. A nostril-stinging scent arose from the creature as if she had dipped her entire wardrobe in cologne before putting it on. I sat looking at this vulgar and half-comic antique, and was reminded of those battered and peeling circus wagons that I used to see in my childhood. This was just such a creaking, wheezing veteran of gaudiness. And there was no mistaking its history. It had rolled its fading glitter through a generation of muck and hurrah. Its many colors and lingering bits of tinsel told of ancient parades and the hullabaloo of wilder days.

I wondered what such a cartoon of bawdiness could be doing at Louis An-

drel's auction, and I changed my seat to have a better look at her.

The eyes of this puffy old witch were like dark little slits of life in a painted pillow face. They were cold and knowing and almost invisible. And they were looking at the painting on the auctioneer's stand, looking at it with a trancelike calm.

I noticed the brooch below her neck dancing rhythmically. A pulse was beating violently somewhere within that fat and goose-rounded bosom.

The bidding had started again, and the little greedy eyes were colder. There was a smug and bloated air of disdain about her that made her first movement all the more surprising. When the bidding had reached four thousand dollars, this woman stood up slowly. She raised a fat little jeweled hand in the air and called out in a colorless voice:

"I bid fifteen thousand dollars."

HEADS turned excitedly for a look at this new bidder, and I heard some voices behind me.

One of them spoke a name.

I knew that name. It was part of the underworld history of the town.

Her bid was the last. The auctioneer concluded the sale with three bangs of his gavel. And the portrait of "Maiden Reading" was hers.

I was at her side when she stood before the cashier's desk ten minutes later. She was removing her jewels. She held out two handfuls of brooches, bracelets and rings.

"These are worth more than fifteen thousand," she said in a sleepy empty voice. "I will call for the painting when you have sold the jewels for me. It should not take long. If there is any money left over, please let me know. And I would like to see all the bills of sale."

The cashier beamed on her and on the loot in front of him. . . . And she walked off toward the back room where her purchase had been taken.

I followed her.

The painting stood on the floor against the wall. She stood in front of it. Then slowly she bent her fat legs and lowered her heavy body and knelt before it. She remained kneeling and looking steadily at the radiant figure on the canvas. She neither moved nor made a sound, but her little slitted eyes began to grow red. Tears were trying to bubble out of them. Suddenly they were weeping.

She remained kneeling while people came and went away, staring at her—some amused, some a bit disgusted. She was aware of none of them. She was aware only of a girl with flushed eyes, sweetly reading a book. And she remained kneeling and weeping before the canvas. Her hand fluttered shakingly to her chin. She held it there like one full of grief and wonder. Her tears were still running down the paint of her face when she smiled. It was a curious smile. It pushed away the fat and painted cheeks. It was a smile full of longing and despair such as one might raise to an altar. I watched her for several minutes. I have never seen such tenderness as lighted that ugly, painted face. It remained wet with tears, and swooning as if it had suddenly found a loved one long lost—as if the soul of this battered and gaudy old relic were giving itself into the arms of heaven.

FINALLY she stood up. Her breath kept catching, and the goose-rounded bosom jumped with a sobbing deep inside it. I spoke to her.

"Are you Tanya?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered without looking at me, with her eyes devouring the serene and innocent figure on the canvas. Her voice gurgled softly with tears. "Yes, once I was Tanya. . . . I was Tanya."

THEY WERE VERY YOUNG

(Continued from page 37)

"Of course, I'm well enough. And Donny, I love acting so much. I want to be an actress, a big one. It's my one ambition."

"That's funny, isn't it? I'm going to write a play. That's my one big ambition." He tried to make it sound casual, nonchalant, but its very significance prevented. This statement was too filled with implications to be casual.

Nor could she quell the excitement in her voice. "You are?" she asked, her tone emotional.

"Yes, I've been thinking a lot about it. I'm all ready to go to work. Wouldn't it be funny if maybe some day you would be the star of one of my plays?"

"Oh, Donny, wouldn't that be wonderful!"

She took his arm, and as they walked down the street together, she thought of the Brownings. That's the way she and Donny would be. Two intelligent people, stirred by the beautiful, artistic things in life. She acting and Donny a playwright. It was wonderful! Just like the Brownings—almost, that is. The same sort of partnership, at least, although she wasn't exactly a poetess, and Donny wasn't exactly a poet.

Everything in life was perfectly wonderful again, she thought, and she wondered what she had ever seen in Tim at all. She walked proudly beside Donny the playwright. She felt that the actress and the playwright formed a rather imposing picture as they walked down the street, a picture that foreshadowed their future eminence in the arts.

"Will you go steady with me?" he asked. And she said: "Yes, Donny, I'd be proud to." And they smiled happily at each other, happy within themselves, and all that spring she walked down the street beside him proudly. And when she sat across from him in Nick's, sipping a soda, she saw the future so clearly, so vividly, so full of promise and goodness, that she wanted it to come quickly.

It came more quickly than she ever imagined. School ended suddenly in a rush of graduation activities. It didn't seem possible that it was all through, totally ended, after twelve years of preparing for this diploma written in Latin which nobody could read.

That was the year that the depression arrived. And the crotchety old lady of Fortune doesn't limit her malicious winks merely to Broadway, and somebodies who

are nobodies carrying their dreams in their suitcases. The field of endeavor for the crotchety old lady is an extensive one.

Donny didn't go to college. He went to work, and then he lost a job, and then he found another, and lost that; and he was always too tired, too despondent, too lacking in time to write the play.

That fall Tim broke his leg in a practice scrimmage and never got to Pitt.

Janet moved to her aunt's home in a town a hundred miles away, because she could get a job there. And Donny was a hundred miles distant, and the youthful dreams of that spring were dissipated in work and worry and new problems, lost in the sustained struggle for existence. And three years later, when Janet came back to Drayford, she was married.

So you see, maybe they would laugh a little if you mentioned these things to them, because it was a long time ago, and they were young, very young. But if they stop a bit when you tell them, and seem to look far away into distance, it is really not distance at all, but time. And they are still not too old to remember how thrilling and important an eighty-yard run, or merely planning to write a play, or be an actress, or simply walking down the street together for a chocolate soda could be, once—before they became druggists and warehouse foremen and housewives—once, a long time ago.

MARGERY'S MARRIAGE

(Continued from page 17)

questioned him sharply: "What do you mean?"

"I mean," he said calmly, "it's not fair to Margery. She's been working like a drudge since the baby was born."

"Oh, Jerry—I like it," said Margery faintly.

He gave her a look that said, "Will you keep out of this?" and continued aloud: "She cooks three meals a day, keeps this flat tidy and takes care of young Jerry. He's seven months old now, and he's getting to be a handful. That means that she can't let him out of her sight. The trouble with a baby is, it's always there. We can't even go out after dinner to a movie, unless we've arranged for the laundress to come in and sit with him. We can't ever do *any*thing on the spur of the moment, and the things you do that way are always the most fun. He's an awfully cute kid, but he's just a ball and chain—"

"Oh, Jerry—" sighed Margery, on a breath of reproach. But she knew that he hated to stay home in the evening. He liked to make the round of night-clubs and taverns, to dine in queer foreign restaurants, have a beer at a bar. As a matter of fact, that was how so much money went. . . .

Mrs. Darian was remarking with obvious irony: "Well, Jerry, he's your baby. I didn't have him."

"But you're mighty glad that we did."

That was patently true.

He pursued his advantage. "We ought to have a maid. A cook or a nurse girl."

"I can't raise your allowance again," said Mrs. Darian.

"Oh, Jerry!" cried Margery for the third time, quite futilely. She had thought that her husband was asking for a loan. A small sum in advance, perhaps, nothing substantial. But a raise in their allowance, which was already generous— She felt her face flushing in mortified protest, and said: "I think we ought to live on what we have."

Mrs. Darian paid no attention. She might even not have heard her, so absorbed did she seem in gazing at Jerry, with eyes that were troubled and angry and irresolute. He had turned his back upon Margery and, one elbow on the mantel-shelf, was staring perversely at the fire. Margery was aware that he was annoyed with her, though much more profoundly annoyed with his mother. Oddly enough, she thought of Jerry Junior. Would he grow up to quarrel with her, ever, like this—over money? How dreadful! But she could not conceive of it.

The uncomfortable pause grew into a silence, before Mrs. Darian broke it. "Jerry, you know I simply can't do it. You know what I have and what it costs me to live. Your father wouldn't want me to skimp on my expenses. He wouldn't want me to move out of the house. He was so proud when we built it."

Margery was moved by the note of apology perceptible in her mother-in-law's tremulous tone. It made her feel sorry for all mothers, everywhere, who were always at a disadvantage when quarreling with their children. Moreover she thought of the old-fashioned photograph that still stood, framed in silver, on Mrs. Darian's bureau. On more than one occasion she had looked at it earnestly, trying to construct for herself her husband's father. The man in his late thirties who looked back at her from the photograph had dark eyes like his son's (only very much more serious), and a patient expression that touched Margery's heart. Patience was not an attribute possessed by her mother-in-law, or indeed by her husband. Their virtues were of a more volatile nature, and all were conducive to having lots of fun. Mr. Gerald Darian, Senior, did not look as if his life had always been funny. He was the son of an Illinois farmer, had worked his way through the State university, then drifted to Chicago in search of a job. He had found one and prospered before he ventured to marry, and Jerry was born to a sense of security. Four years before his death, Mr. Darian had moved his family from Chicago to New York—carried there by his business, which was that of a mail-order house—and had settled in the suburb of Wycherly Gardens because he thought the country would be good for his child. Jerry, who was seven when his father succumbed to an attack of pneumonia, remembered him but vaguely, and very rarely mentioned him. But yet, as Margery had often reflected, it was Mr. Darian's industry which still sustained his son.

NOW, at his mother's tremulous reference to this half-forgotten father—it was more moving, because she seldom made one—Jerry had the grace to look somewhat ashamed. "I don't want you to move," he said. "But what can we do?"

She replied indirectly, "You have outstanding bills?" in the tone of a questioner who already knew the answer.

"Well, yes, we have," he admitted reluctantly. "And I have to make the payments, of course, on the new car."

"You shouldn't have bought it," said Mrs. Darian tartly. It seemed as if their quarrel were going to flare up again.

But, "Now, don't bring that up," Jerry said pacifically. "I've said I was sorry."

He had turned to face his mother, and they smiled at each other. That was the way their quarrels always ended. Mrs. Darian could not steel herself against her son's smile. To Margery's surprise, they never felt degraded because they'd lost their tempers. On the contrary, the storm quite often cleared the atmosphere and brought in a period of bland and sunny weather.

It must have done so now, for Mrs. Darian, still smiling, seemed ready to consider the problem of insolvency with a modicum of sympathy. "I can quite understand," she said very reasonably, "that you'd like a wider margin."

Jerry's gaze merely deepened and sharpened in intensity.

"But there's only one way I can think of you could get it."

Suspense, for an instant, hung breathless in the air.

"You and Margery and the baby could come to live with me."

The twelve words fell in a little pool of silence. As the ripples from their splash seemed to rise and widen noiselessly, Margery hoped her gasp hadn't been audible. Her eyes went straight to Jerry, who stood motionless on the hearthrug, frozen for an instant in a posture of surprise.

"I've often considered it," said Mrs. Darian pleasantly, with the air of one discussing the happiest of solutions. "You'd be really very comfortable. You could have the two back bedrooms."

The pause that ensued seemed just a trifle awkward. It was Jerry who broke it by inquiring diffidently: "Would you—do you mean you'd continue my allowance?"

"I might have to cut it a little," said his mother. "Or else you could contribute toward paying the household bills. But you'd save all your rent. That would make a big difference. And one household can live much more cheaply than two. When you and Margery wanted to go out, I'd look after Jerry Junior. Or Joy could. She'd love to. Colored women are always devoted to children. For that matter, then you could afford to have a nursemaid. I dare say Joy would know of some nice girl."

Margery felt as if it all had been settled, while she sat there, quite speechless, behind her small coffee-tray. Of course that was ridiculous, but she couldn't protest. Not here, not now, in the presence of her mother-in-law. Her eyes, fixed on Jerry, were dumbly imploring.

He said, "Well, Mother, we'll have to think it over," and these noncommittal words were a blessed reprieve. He couldn't, he wouldn't, he'd never let it happen! As relief swept over her, she remembered her manners.

"It's awfully good of you, Mother Estelle, to want to take us in." But her voice sounded hollow. She had been too much frightened.

"Would you like to do it, Margery?" Jerry asked carelessly.

Terror swept over her swiftly again. But the smile in his eyes, which met hers with intimacy, immediately reassured her. Of course he was joking. Or being polite. The joke, if it was one, was rather unkind, since his mother did not share it, and Jerry's good nature argued against it. The theory of politeness was much the more tenable.

But she did not have to answer the disturbing question, for Jerry, without waiting for her to reply, had thrown a glance at the clock on the mantelshelf. "Nine o'clock, Mother. Want to go to a movie?" he asked just as casually as if nothing had happened. "We'd be just in time for the second show."

Mrs. Darian looked delighted. She loved to go out in the evening with Jerry, and very often did when she dined in the apartment. But she always remembered to make a slight protest. "It's too bad to leave Margery, Jerry," she said.

"Oh, she doesn't mind." His jocular tone was conclusive proof that he had not the faintest inkling that Margery had been so panic-stricken. "She prefers that baby to any picture ever filmed. You *don't* mind, do you, sweet?"

"No," she said cheerfully. It was all there was to say. Moreover, she thought it was clever of Jerry to have changed the conversation by suggesting the movie. If Mrs. Darian stayed in the apartment all evening she would certainly continue to talk of her plan. The picture would distract her. She might never bring it up again. Jerry had dealt tactfully with an embarrassing situation.

"Run along, dear," she said, "and have a good time."

Chapter Two

FIVE minutes later the front door had closed on them, and she had not had a chance to speak privately with her husband. But the fog of her fear had been dissipated by his smile. That was what those few moments of terror had been like—a cold, clammy fog creeping over her spirit. His smile had cut through it like the warmth of the sun. It was with a thankful sense of deliverance that she stood in the living-room, looking gravely about her; at the two tall windows with their yellow cretonne curtains, at the white marble mantelpiece with its clock ticking time away, at the mirror above it and the sofa and the armchairs, at the table with the lamp and her shelves of precious books, even at the blue and yellow paper on the walls and the blue and cream drugget under her feet, seeing all these dear possessions as threatened with destruction, their happy combination in this room that she loved as irrevocably demolished, the room itself lost to her.

But it wasn't going to happen, she told herself resolutely, dismissing the last floating wisp of her fear. Then, feeling quite herself again, she went to clear the dinner table and wash the waiting dishes. This was a task that tonight she enjoyed. It was somehow reassuring to feel the glass and china, the linen and the silver—all hers, hers and Jerry's—in her capable hands. It gave her a sense of domestic stability to be alone and working in her

familiar kitchen, and presently she decided she'd been rather hysterical.

But she felt she could not *bear* to live with her mother-in-law. Not that she wasn't, quite honestly, fond of her. Mrs. Darian had made no secret of her growing appreciation of her daughter-in-law's character and this approbation was all the more flattering because her son's marriage, at the time, had not pleased her. She had hoped to see Jerry make a very brilliant match. Why not? So she used to ask herself. New York was full of wealth. And so many rich families—though of course, she knew, not all of them—had social connections of the most exalted kind. A newcomer herself, Midwestern by birth, she had never aspired to meet such privileged people. But Jerry, at Princeton, had met some of their sons. He was meeting their daughters in the night-clubs of New York. Girls went everywhere now. It was easy to meet them. And he was so attractive, so bright and vivacious. From any chance meeting a romance might spring. So indeed it had happened, but not as in her daydreams. The penniless daughter of a college professor had seemed totally unworthy of her son's potentialities.

Though none of these sentiments were vocally expressed, Margery had been uncomfortably aware of their existence, and she had sometimes wondered if her parents suspected them. At the time of her wedding she'd been nervously conscious that Mrs. Darian impressed her mother as a very silly woman. Maine, as a background, was not becoming to her future mother-in-law. Mrs. Darian had looked overdressed in the little white town, where few women had clothes that came from farther than Portland, and among the college faculty she had seemed somewhat scatterbrained. Even Margery's father, who was always so genial, seemed to find little of interest to say to her. In his rambling cottage she had assumed the gracious air of one who politely ignored its deficiencies. Its paint *was* rather shabby and its furniture worn. But she did not seem to notice the thousands of books, or the paneling in the parlor that was centuries old, or the little spiral staircase with the delicate rail. Jerry was prepared to admire these things, for Margery had told him all about Maine. She was practically certain—as certain as you could be, coping with New England reticence—that he'd made a good impression.

Though, "Margery," said her mother, "you've not known him very long."

"Long enough to love him," Margery had replied, with that unclouded look of soft, shining confidence which was, at that period, her habitual expresion.

She could still look like that, as Jerry knew well, for she'd never had cause to question his devotion. But by this time she knew their family backgrounds were different. His was alien to her and she frankly disapproved of it. She had done her level best to suppress this disapproval, because it made her feel disloyal and a prig. But sometimes, as tonight, it rose up to trouble her. Her most serious objection to living with her mother-in-law was based on her dislike of perpetual quarreling. How could she have consented to take her little son to live in a house where he'd listen to his father and his grandmother squabbling until he grew into a child who took family rows for granted? Family rows about money—the very worst kind!

She was roused from these thoughts by the sound of the clock in the living-room striking ten. It was time for Jerry Junior to have his evening bottle. As she took it from the icebox to warm it in hot water, she was thinking rather wistfully of her childhood in Maine and of family traditions she found it hard to define. Self-control, thrift and honesty were as close as she could come to it. Honesty in word, as well as in deed. Self-control, prompted by native reserve. Thrift—for thrift's sake, as Jerry would have said? Partly, she admitted, with a smile for New England. But much more essentially, thrift because through it you won independence. You didn't want to be "beholden" to anyone. Jerry didn't have that iron in his soul. At the time of their wedding she had shown him a sampler her great-grandmother had worked which hung in the parlor, hoping he would take its rhymed adage to heart.

Eat it up, wear it out,
Make it do, go without,

the sampler sternly admonished in old-fashioned cross-stitch.

"I never heard anything so grim in my life," had been his blithe comment. "How grisly, to think a ten-year-old worked it!"

She was thinking of that adage, which had been a family joke—though no one ever questioned the soundness of its advice—as she ran back with the bottle to the front of the apartment and entered on tiptoe the fresh darkness of the nursery. Little Jerry Junior, pinned down in his blankets, was just waking up in his white iron crib. In the streak of yellow light from the door she'd left open, she could see his fair hair just beginning to curl, and his fine little features so absurdly like his father's—except for his eyes, which were gray and wide-set and suggested his mother and her father before her in the shape of the orbit and the arch of the eyebrow—and one small upflung arm relaxed on the pillow.

She picked him up tenderly to prepare him for his bottle and held him, soft and sleepy, for a moment in her arms. What a conflict of heredity in that one little body! Ancestral strains tangled before he was born. Temptations and tendencies oddly assorted. Curious that she could love her husband so dearly and yet not consider him a model for his son. Why did she want Jerry Junior to be different—more stable, more responsible—when Jerry Senior was so charming? She stood by the cribside puzzling over this problem—which rather disturbed her in its full implications—till the bottle was finished and the baby dropped to sleep again.

There was nothing to do then but go to bed herself. For Jerry was a night owl and might not be home for hours.

SHE was roused from deep sleep by a sound in the bedroom, a small bumping crash that penetrated her consciousness, and by Jerry saying, "Damn!" in a low aggrieved tone.

She stirred and murmured sleepily: "Darling, did you hurt yourself?"

"Oh—are you awake?"

"I am now. What time is it?"

"Something past two. I barked my left shin." She could hear him in the darkness

as he picked up the chair. Then he turned on the light and pulled up his trouser leg. "Skinned," he said cheerfully, and came over to kiss her. Jerry knew how to kiss with significance. But she caught the harsh odor of whisky on his breath.

"Sweetheart, I missed you," he said, smiling down at her. "After the movie we went to a night-club."

"To dance?" Her inflection was slightly incredulous.

"Sure. Mother loved it. I taught her to rhumba." Jerry, by his lights, was a dutiful son. "She's quite light on her pins," he added irreverently.

He had had enough to drink, she decided, not too much—despite that collision in the dark with the chair. Sometimes she worried about Jerry's drinking. At night-clubs you had to drink; you couldn't stay and not drink—at least, if you did, the noise overwhelmed you. The blare of the saxophone shattered your ears. You grew sleepy and bored. Margery always did, certainly. Jerry called it antisocial. Slowly she remembered the events of the evening.

"Jerry," she said, "you were awfully clever."

Perhaps, after all, he'd had one too many highballs, for he did not seem to know to what this referred.

"I mean about your mother. To take her to the movie."

"Yes. She enjoyed it." Then he asked inconsequentially, "Where d'you keep the iodine? I ought to fix this shin."

"In the cupboard in the bathroom. Let me help you—"

"No, you needn't."

He was gone, as he spoke, and she lay there thinking. Thinking of Jerry and liquor, with a frown. It didn't surprise her he'd been drinking with his mother. For Mrs. Darian's views on night-clubs were indulgent. Not that Margery had ever seen her mother-in-law tipsy. A trifle high, perhaps, after three or four cocktails. But nowadays everyone was sometimes slightly high. If you didn't drink yourself, you couldn't help noticing. She was often ashamed of her cold sober eye. But it wasn't the liquor Jerry wanted. It was gayety. It was music and dancing and a jolly careless crowd. She liked that herself, within reason, up to midnight—though she couldn't forget the inevitable reckoning that the waiter would present, with a veiled discreet face.

When Jerry came back he was ready for bed, wearing the dark maroon silk tailored dressing-gown that his mother had bought for him. It was rather a joke. "You look like Clark Gable in his hours of ease. Or perhaps in Reel Three!" Margery had scoffed at him. She privately thought no professional heartbreaker had half Jerry's good looks. But now she was preoccupied with her major anxiety.

"Jerry," she asked, "did your mother say anything—anything more? I mean, about us?"

"Why, yes. She did. She really wants to have us."

"You couldn't head her off from talking about it?"

"Why shouldn't she talk?"

Then Margery stared at him. His innocent question was an unpleasant shock. For she realized instantly that he *hadn't* been clever—that he hadn't even sensed the awkward situation. Or what was much worse, hadn't felt it was awkward! He had gone to the movie—just to go out! This was so like him that, in the split second of silence, she wondered, exasperated, why it hadn't occurred to her.

"She talked quite a lot," he volunteered amiably. "I think her heart's set on it. She's been pretty lonely, you know, since our marriage."

MARGERY abruptly sat up in bed: a slim, startled figure in her sleeveless nightgown, her face, with its anxious eyes, framed in brown hair. "Jerry," she gasped, "you can't want to do it!"

"W-e-ell," he said hesitantly, "I don't say I *want* to—"

"Neither do I," said Margery quickly.

"But it would have its advantages, darling. You know that the baby's put a crimp in our style."

"Don't you like it?" she cried. "Don't you like to have the baby?"

He treated these questions as foolishly rhetorical, not bothering to reply, but merely saying virtuously: "I'd like, my dear girl, to live within our income."

This was so out of character that her eyes widened blankly. "Jerry, listen to reason—" Then she stopped. The word mocked her. Some poet had said that. *"Bright reason will mock thee, like the sun from a wintry sky."* Shelley had said it, and she knew just what he meant. She knew because she forced herself to face a painful fact. It wasn't in the least reasonable to live as they did, with bills piling up and no prospect of paying them. Indeed, she'd been brought up to think it was wrong. "Perhaps this is a Judgment," she said to herself, reverting in thought to the parlance of Maine. "A Judgment on me, for permitting such shiftlessness." But she knew that some other solution could be found. A sterner self-discipline, a rigorous economy—

After a moment she said very soberly: "Of course I agree that we spend too much money."

"We pay too much rent." His tone was still virtuous.

"We could take a smaller flat in a less expensive neighborhood." It cost her a pang to make this suggestion. But much as she loved it, and happy as they'd been there, it wasn't this apartment, in itself, that was important. It was merely the possession of a home of their own.

"Sure," he said scornfully. "We could move to a slum. We could bring Jerry Junior up in a tenement."

Again she was surprised by the drift of his argument. The picturesque exaggeration of its phrasing could be discounted, but she couldn't help thinking that it didn't ring true. For if Jerry had never seemed to worry about the bills, he worried even less, she was sure, about the baby.

"I don't want to move," she said, a trifle sharply. "I'd make any sacrifice, in fact, to stay here."

"Such as?"

There were so many! She picked the most obvious. "We could balance the budget if we didn't go out so much."

"You mean if we never had any fun."

"Well, fun of that kind. Or at least, not so much of it. I don't think you realize what it all costs." She herself had often wondered how he managed to pay for it. "Theater tickets and taxis and

cover-charges and supper and cocktails and highballs—" She paused to draw breath. "And tips," she added fiercely, before he interrupted. "And fifty cents an hour for the laundress here at home. We can't leave the baby alone in the apartment. But Jerry, when we're out, and I think of her sitting here, it seems the last straw. It's like a taxi ticking."

"I hate this penny-pinching," said Jerry with some violence.

"It isn't just pennies. It's often enough to pay a month's grocery bill."

"Darling, I'm rather fed up with your thrift-complex."

"How many dollars did you throw away tonight?"

AT that he looked so angry that she was really frightened. "We're quarreling," she thought, "as we never did before. I, who hate quarrels, said that to hurt him. It was utterly inexcusable. He *was* hurt. I'm sorry." She would have liked to cling to him and burst into tears. But to cry in a quarrel was to take a mean advantage. "Jerry," she said, when she could control her voice again, "I didn't mean to say that. I wish—I wish I hadn't."

He was instantly mollified. He never bore malice. His face was illumined by his quick, sunny smile. Sitting down on the bed's edge and clasping her hands, he said: "You're tired, and it's nearly three o'clock. Let's stop talking about it."

But Margery couldn't. She was much too excited. Moreover, she wanted to make further amends. "Don't think I don't know that it's my fault, too, Jerry. I sometimes think luxury went to my head. Before we were married, I lived *so* economically. But that's why I know I could do it again. Do it and like it."

"I couldn't," said Jerry.

There it was in a nutshell. No argument would shake him. He had to have money in his pocket to spend. After a long moment in which she faced that conclusion, knowing it to be true and that nothing could be done about it, "Jerry," she said slowly, "I might try to get my job back."

"Don't be ridiculous!" was his instant reply.

"My salary would pay a nursemaid's wages," she reminded him.

"When I let a woman pick up the paycheck—" began Jerry wrathfully. The wrath was sincere. He saw himself that way. Though he hadn't minded pressing his mother for that increase in his allowance! He dismissed the preposterous thought and said briefly: "You'd hate it, dear."

"I liked it once," said Margery, but without much conviction. The year that she'd worked as a publisher's reader now seemed very far away, and indeed a different life. Yet she could remember how happy she'd been when she took that first job and how much she'd enjoyed it. The publisher, old Mr. Jefferson Tuttle—the head of a house both sound and conservative—was a friend of her father's who summered in Maine. His interest in her was amused and benevolent; but leaving friendship out it, she knew she'd made good. She'd had a raise to prove it, two dollars a week—how much that had seemed, what a margin it gave her!—and on that encouragement she had dreamed of a career. Jerry had entered her dreams to transform them to something much simpler and closer to her heart. She herself was transformed to a very different woman from the girl whose interests centered in other people's manuscripts. And now the very thought of having to read them, of working in an office eight hours a day, above all of leaving her beloved little son to the mercenary mercies of a nursemaid distressed her.

"I wouldn't permit it," said Jerry with finality.

"You're not much of a feminist, are you?" she smiled. But the edict relieved her, and she never thought of questioning it, although it provided no solution for their problem.

Jerry inquired, on a note of curiosity: "What have you got against living with Mother?"

She had not expected him to ask this directly. How answer, how argue, if he did not understand? With all her native reticence she shrank from explanations which would imply a criticism she had never expressed. After a moment of discomfort she said gravely: "Jerry, I want a home of our own. These young married years are so terribly precious. I think we have a right to live them together. I mean, by ourselves. Just us and Jerry Junior."

"But what do we live *for*, darling?" he asked. "It's just as you say. We're only young once. *Carpe diem*, you know."

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way! I meant—" She couldn't phrase it. For an instant she faced bleakly their differing sense of values. When she spoke, she was unconscious of any irrelevance: "If Father and Mother could only have lived—" She broke off abruptly, not knowing why she had said this. It had nothing to do with the matter in hand. Except that in her trouble her parents seemed a refuge. She added, in an effort to make it seem sensible: "They would have made such wonderful grandparents."

"Is that knocking Mother?" Jerry inquired, but not disagreeably, merely with humor.

"No. No, of course not." She really had not meant it so. She had only been groping for a way to explain. She continued to grope. "It's just that being married—no matter how happily—seems to make you look back upon your own family, upon their way of living, with—well, appreciation."

Jerry grinned cheerfully at this tactful utterance. "You have something there, dear: The relative-in-law problem! It goes back to the day when Cain's bride first saw Eve."

"Maybe it does," said Margery stoutly. "But I want to control my own baby's environment."

"What's the matter," he asked, "with Wycherly Gardens? It's practically country. He'd have a swell time."

"I wasn't thinking of that," she said slowly.

"Of what, then?" he pressed her.

Because of Jerry Junior she knew she must tell him—though it outraged every instinct of delicacy and reserve. What she needed at the moment, however, was courage, and she summoned enough of it to say with quiet dignity: "I was thinking of you—of you and your mother."

"What about us?"

"Oh, Jerry—" She paused in distress. Then, with much more apology than accusation in her tone, she managed to articulate: "You argue—you dispute. . . . You would do that before the baby."

His astonished expression could not have been assumed. He was honestly amazed, and she might have expected it. For both he and his mother forgot their fits of anger. Or perhaps they did not think they were very important.

"Oh, all families scrap," he assured her good-naturedly.

"That's just what Jerry Junior would grow up to think."

"Well, he'd be right."

She shook her head stubbornly.

"You're making a mountain out of a molehill."

"I'm not. I'm not, Jerry. You don't know how it sounds. I couldn't endure it. You quarrel about money—"

"Well, we won't any more. Because I'll have enough of it." His voice had turned sharp, and his eyes surveyed her coolly. After a moment he stood up beside the bed. "She intends to continue my allowance. That means that at last we'll have plenty to spend. We won't have a care—not a care in the world." His eyes began to smile at this pleasant prospect, meeting Margery's once more as if to share it with her. "We can give up this apartment next month, on May first. It's lucky our lease only ran for two years. We can pack up our furniture and put it in storage—"

He had thought it all out. He had everything planned. "Oh, Jerry," she cried, "I couldn't bear to do it! I love all our things so—the things that you bought for me—"

"Sweetheart, we must. We're broke, and you know it."

For the first time she felt the impotent helplessness of a wife who is utterly dependent on her husband. With it came a new sense of money's importance. She put it behind her. She tried to deny it. His voice had been plausible, kind and considerate. But for that very reason, it seemed to her false. He was speaking a piece, and he went right on speaking it.

"Don't look so despairing. It needn't be forever. Suppose we just say that we'll try it for this summer. We can look for another flat in the fall."

IT was all much too facile, too soothing, too specious; he spoke as he might to an obstinate child. It was with the pathos of a child that she pleaded with him: "Jerry, I *beg* you not to do it—for me."

"Margery, I'd do anything for you—that was possible. If I had a red cent, I'd share it with you. But I haven't, you see. So there's no other way—" He paused, for her eyes were suddenly eager.

"Jerry!" she said, her voice breathless.

"Yes?"

"I'd forgotten. And you must have, too. I have five thousand dollars; I have Father's life-insurance."

He looked too surprised, for an instant, to answer. Then, "Darling," he said, quite blankly reproachful, "you can't really think that I'd let you spend it?"

The woman picking up the pay-check again! There was nothing more foolish than masculine pride.

"I thought," he continued, and his tone was a reminder of all she'd ever preached on the subject of thrift, "I thought you were saving that for Jerry Junior's education."

"I—was."

"And you should. Why, sweet, it's your nest-egg—your pot of gold hoarded against a rainy day."

"This day's pretty rainy." But her voice was uncertain.

"It's only a shower." He tried to speak lightly. Yet he looked more concerned than she had ever seen him. "Darling, I'm convinced that you shouldn't touch those bonds. If you sold them, I know you'd always regret it. I'm sure of it, Margery. I know you so well. You like to have money in the toe of the sock. I've often thought you like that really more than anything. Perhaps more," he smiled, "than you like even me."

"I like it *for* you—for you and Jerry Junior."

"Well, doesn't that settle it?"

She knew from the thread of anxiety in his voice that he hoped that it did; and she shared that anxiety. His protest, his surprise, his reproach, had arrested her. He had saved her, perhaps, from an act of utter folly. To squander a nest-egg was reckless and wrong. Her conscience was awakened. She felt suddenly deflated. "I guess you're right, Jerry," she said, with a sigh.

"Good girl," he said pleasantly, then turned from the bed, as if this admission had closed the discussion.

"But Jerry—" Her tone was an attempt to reopen it.

His was edged with annoyance. "Daring, we can't go on talking all night. You'll feel better about it when you've had a good sleep. Shall I turn out the light now?"

"If you like," she said dully, too tired to cope with him, and conscious that Jerry could never be coped with, in the sense of inclining his will to her own. She watched him cross the room and turn at the light-bracket to throw her his usual light-hearted smile.

"I think you'll like it at Mother's," he said, and the click of the switch, as he snapped it to darkness, put a definite period after this, his last, word.

Margery heard him walk across the room again to his bed beside her own and the rustle of his movement as he slipped between the sheets. The fact he had not kissed her was proof he was aware, though he'd tried to ignore it, that the difference between them had not been resolved. In their two years of marriage this had not happened before. "Never turn the electric light out on your anger," Jerry had once paraphrased, and how they'd both laughed, their minor dispute—she'd forgotten what it was—seeming suddenly unimportant.

Now she lay motionless and rigid with constraint, waiting and hoping to hear him say, "Good-night," till the silence seemed strained. But she would not speak first. Presently she heard one silvery *"Ting!"* from the clock in the living-room. That must be half-past three, she thought; and very soon afterward—unbelievably soon—she heard Jerry's even breathing in the darkness beside her. It made her feel lonelier to know he was asleep. And angrier too, because he'd dropped off like that, without speaking again, without trying to comfort her, and

as if he had nothing to trouble his mind. She lay thinking over the things he had said and the things she'd retorted, which she'd like to recall. But yet, when she thought of more bitter retorts, she wished she had made them.

It was all very puzzling and very discouraging. In spite of the strength of Jerry's purpose, she thought of him—for the first time and reluctantly—not as boyishly, charmingly and gayly irresponsible, but as weak in moral fiber. For what it came down to was that he'd sold her out—and Jerry Junior too—for a little more freedom and less responsibility and plenty of money to spend on entertainment. Much more was at stake than the loss of their home, perhaps even more than the baby's environment. For didn't the development of Jerry's own character depend on his accepting his natural obligations, on assuming the duty of providing for his family, on growing up, in short, on cutting loose from apron strings, on refusing to lean on his mother's indulgence?

Wide-eyed in the darkness, she wrestled with these problems and she never remembered how she slipped into rebellion, except that she found herself thinking defiantly: *"Well, why do I stand for it? It doesn't have to happen. I have five thousand dollars' worth of bonds in the bank."* At that desperate moment Jerry Junior's education seemed far in the future. He wouldn't enter school for five years and more. They could pay his tuition—they'd have to—when the time came. What he needed at present was to grow in understanding in a home where he'd never know anything but love. And what her husband needed was another opportunity, a little space of time in which to learn self-reliance. *You shouldn't spend a nest-egg.* But this was an emergency. To meet it she had only to go to the bank. She had only to open their safety-deposit box and take out the bonds and discover how to sell them. Any bank-clerk would tell her. It couldn't be difficult. Then what would she do? That was harder to determine. But it came to her presently, with the light of revelation. With the money in her hand she would go to the agent; she would go to his office and pay the rent for the apartment—pay it in advance, for two long, precious years.

THE audacity of this plan made her catch her breath fearfully. A quick qualm assailed her, a feeling of guilt. It was dreadful to do this without telling Jerry. But she could not endure another word of argument and no number of words would make her change her mind. "He'll be awfully cross," she thought apprehensively; and then, like a wife and a woman: "He'll get over it!" Decision was bringing her blessed peace of mind. She felt sleepy at last, and it was no wonder, for the sky above the city roofs was paling in the dawn. She watched it, from her bed, turning softly, swiftly luminous. The hum of early traffic came in the open window. She could hear the sparrows twittering in the treetops in the Square.

But before she succumbed to a deep and delicious drowsiness, she murmured: "Dear—I'm sorry." And then: "Goodnight, Jerry." He did not hear the whispered words, and of course she did not want him to. But they healed, in her own heart, the unhappy breach between them. She had offered an apology for outwitting the man she loved.

Chapter Three

AT the stroke of high noon the very next day Margery was descending the broad marble staircase that led from the bank to its underground vaults. It opened on an anteroom furnished like an office, with red leather armchairs and a thick-piled gray carpet and a long walnut counter which ran the full length of it. Behind this two bank-clerks were chatting discreetly, their backs to a row of tall metal files. In the opposite wall an enormous steel door, at least a foot thick and circular in shape, was standing ajar, with a policeman on guard by it. Margery caught a glimpse of the complicated mechanism which stood out in relief on its smooth inner surface—something too intricate for her understanding, a time lock, she thought—and through the round opening and the thickness of the wall she could see down the lengths of a long, narrow corridor, which was lined from floor to ceiling with security boxes.

The bank-clerks stopped talking at Margery's appearance. She hoped they did not know how nervous she felt, as, approaching the counter, she mentioned her name. "I'd like," she said meekly, "to open my box."

"Certainly, Mrs. Darian," said the elder clerk civilly. "Could we please have your signature?"

Her hand shook a little as she grasped the pen he offered, and she thought, "I must look as guilty as hell." Ridiculous, childish, this sense she had of wrongdoing, of subterfuge, deceit, and, of course, of uncertainty. She had only been once before to the vaults. That was on the day Jerry'd rented the box, when she'd met him at the bank to sign as joint owner. The day that they'd given her the precious little key. Jerry's hung on his key ring, but hers she'd put away, with never a thought that she'd ever have to use it. She'd found it that morning, safe in her jewel-box, beneath her father's watch and her grandmother's cameos and her mother's engagement-ring and a few lesser trinkets. Now, she smiled at the bank-clerk over her name. But meeting his calm, impersonal gaze, she felt that she needed further credentials. "The last time," she said, "I was here with my husband."

"Yes," said the clerk, "we know Mr. Darian." As he spoke, he took a card from the file at his elbow and compared what she'd written with the signatures on it. It all seemed a matter of indifferent routine. "Right through that door," he said, as she still hesitated.

The policeman on guard, who was dignified and elderly, touched his cap at her approach and his smile was benevolent. But yet she still felt on the wrong side of the law. The door was disconcerting, so thick and impregnable, suggesting the entrance to a very safe jail. However, an attendant who met her immediately, appearing around the corner of the nearest box-lined corridor, seemed perfectly satisfied when she showed him

her key. She could hear her heels tapping on the polished steel floor as she followed him in silence down a broad center aisle from which the corridors branched. In several she saw men standing by boxes which they had pulled out from the shiny metal walls. The place had a curious subterranean privacy. It was a fastness where men buried treasure—the modern equivalent of Captain Kidd's hoard. The precautions that were taken to guard it were oppressive; they made one feel thievery was common in mankind. Some boxes, she noticed, were larger than others, corresponding, perhaps, to the fortunes they housed. Her own, when they reached it, was one of the smallest. And tied to its handle was a little red tag.

The attendant, at the sight of it, threw a quick glance at her and, meeting the candor of her eyes, seemed embarrassed. "I guess, ma'am, that somebody has forgot to make a payment."

"A payment?" she echoed.

"Yes. On the box. That's what we do, you know. Tie a red tag on them. You have to pay up before it can be opened."

How exactly like Jerry! How absurd, how *incorrigible!* If so much weren't at stake, she would have laughed aloud. Her voice shook with anxiety, as she asked, "How much is it? I hope—I hope I have it."

"Three-thirty," he answered, consulting the tag. "That's for three months. It was paid last in January."

She was searching her purse for the housekeeping money. She always had some with her, for one saved by paying cash. "Here," she said hastily, pressing three dollar bills on him, a quarter, a nickel—

He produced a little key-ring. "Look," he explained, as if he sensed all this was strange to her, "we unlock it together. I have a key too. We have to use the both of them."

"Goodness," she said, "you're certainly careful! Has anyone ever fooled you? I mean, stolen anything, from under your nose?"

"Here?" She had shocked him. "No, *ma'am,*" he added, his tone weighted with emphasis.

With these words, the keys clicked, and he drew the little box out. There it was, lying in Margery's hands. The attendant turned away, with a certain ostentation, and Margery knew that was part of the privacy. Her heart was beating fast, her breath was coming quickly. She lifted the cover—*and found the box empty.* Just an empty metal box, black and shiny, nothing in it. She drew in her breath in a gasp of dismay. The attendant caught the whisper of it and glanced at her curiously. But she was not aware of the direction of his gaze. Oh, Jerry! she was thinking. Oh, Jerry! Oh, Jerry! Just his name, for an instant that seemed like eternity, was sounding and echoing in a desolate world. Later she was to remember and to think it extraordinary that she had known then that the bonds had been taken. What latent distrust of her husband's integrity, what doubt of his word had impelled her to know? Whatever it was, or how deep in her subconscious mind, she had jumped with instant accuracy to the monstrous conclusion. He had taken her securities, had sold them, spent the money— And the things that he'd said drifted into her mind. "I thought you were saving that for Jerry Junior's education—you can't really think that I'd let you spend it? It's your pot of gold hoarded against a rainy day. . . . Darling, I'm convinced that you shouldn't touch those bonds—" Oh, Jerry! Oh, Jerry! She wanted to weep for him.

But here she was, standing in the vaults of the bank, with the empty box still in her trembling hands. You didn't weep there. Oh, no, you hid, you sheltered him. So she met the attendant's inquiring gaze. She managed a smile that she hoped was convincing, though she knew her lips were white and her cheeks had turned pale. Her voice, when she spoke, didn't sound like her own. Too high, and too brittle, with a queer breaking catch in it. But that didn't matter, for the ear of a stranger.

"I forgot my husband told me my pearls were in his safe, and so I was startled to find the box empty. Would you please put it back now?"

The double keys clicked.

There was nothing to do then but walk away quickly, head high and eyes steady, heels tapping again. She passed by the irony of the lanes of locked boxes and the great round steel door with its time lock and policeman and the counter where the clerks still stood by their files. She thought of Jerry doing this, with her bonds in his pocket, and it was with an irony of her own that she said, "I'd like to cancel the rental of our box. We have no more use for it."

But even as she tossed her key on the counter, this bitter bravado ceased to sustain her and irony sank to contemptible farce. She turned to ascend the broad marble staircase, which seemed at the moment to lead only to Jerry. What could she say to him? And how would he answer? It wasn't a matter of five thousand dollars. She could not put a value on what was now gone from her: but first she must find out exactly what had happened.

When Margery learns from Jerry just what he did with her securities, she loyally tries to bridge the growing gap between his point of view and hers. . . . In the next, the September, issue.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

(Continued from page 13)

it accepts this law and lives by it. It is the business of the church to call people to repentance and to start them thinking and acting upon this law of our universe.

True, this is no easy task, but it is absolutely essential. In Germany, in Russia, and in other lands, youth has been captured by an alluring ideal held out for them to act upon. Why not here, in this land which was founded upon the assumption of brotherhood, start youth acting upon that law? The scope is world-wide. The church offers a nucleus of good-will upon which can be built a permanent

(Continued on page 113)

July 4, 1942

by ANGELO PATRI

THE Fourth of July is the anniversary of this nation's birth. This year we will celebrate it solemnly, reverently, as servitors at the altar of our country to pass in review before the assembly of our spiritual Founders and Defenders. This day they are assembled to pass judgment upon our worthiness of the heritage of freedom they bestowed upon us.

There stands Governor Bradford, his feet firmly planted on Plymouth Rock, a Bible under his arm and a musket on his shoulder. Behind him a group of Pilgrims, men and women, dedicated to the Glory of God and the freedom of men's souls.

In this cause they served through starvation and sickness and death, until triumphantly they passed on to us a land conceived in liberty and dedicated to the idea that all men are equal. As they stand to take our salute today, their steady eyes question us: And you?

There stands General Washington with a handful of ragged, barefooted men supporting a tattered flag on which gleams thirteen stars and thirteen stripes. For that flag they went hungry and cold, suffered illness and death; but they never surrendered in the battle they fought and won for your freedom and mine. Today they face us, and their sharp challenge touches our souls: And you?

There stands Lincoln, his face lined with grief but his spirit triumphant in the faith he died to serve. With him a great host of people—men and women of every degree; soldiers, bearded men and fresh-faced boys; Americans of every color, race and creed; and over them floats a great bright banner bearing thirteen stripes and thirty-six stars.

These too served in the cause of Freedom. They gave all they had, all they ever hoped to become, that this nation might be preserved, strong and forever free. Today they measure us with anxious eyes that pray and plead: And you?

There stands President Wilson, his shining spirit aglow with his appeal for the unity, the dignity, the freedom of mankind. Behind him stand a gallant army of youth, upholding a flag, our flag, with its thirteen stripes and forty-eight stars, the symbol of our maturity, wealth and power.

Silently stand these our Founders and Defenders, and their silence voices a warning that rends high heaven this Fourth of July Day: "If ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep—"

They who died that this nation might live in freedom challenge us today. As they wait to take our salute, they watch to see our spirits soar, our resolution take form. They wait to hear us pledge our lives to the defense of the liberties they died to win. They wait to see us fall into step under the Stars and Stripes and march, march, march to victory.

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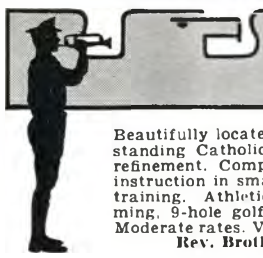

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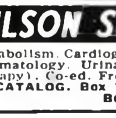

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(Continued from page 105)

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The church has (to use an old term) the "key to the world's salvation." Not by offering people a happy home in some future world, but by calling them into brotherhood here and now. If the church can do this, and I believe she can, she can win for the world a great and lasting victory. I'm proud to be in such an important position. My only hope is that the church may see its mission clearly and help a lost world to find itself.

Massachusetts.

Glad Everybody is Not Alike

I AM living with my aunt and uncle here in Canada, but really I am English and come from Sussex. Two years ago I was fifteen, and Father sent me and my sister, who is three years younger, out to this country to be away from the war. We didn't like it then, but actually it was a good idea; which is why I am writing this. I should like people to know how we feel, because it is quite important.

When first we arrived in this country, we were tired from the journey on shipboard, as it had been very exciting, with drills, and so many strangers all at once. Then we didn't sleep much on the train, because it was much larger and noisier than our trains, you know, and there were tickets to watch, and telegrams from Aunty Betty and Uncle Jim. So perhaps when we came here to the house, and all the laughing and hand-shaking was over, we were a little off our feed for a while, and grumpy. I remember thinking our cousins, of seventeen and eighteen, very cheap and scatterbrained with their lipstick and silk stockings and terrible slang.

I suppose we seemed very ungrateful and horrid sometimes. I remember being very shocked at the food, which was strange and extravagant, and at everyone's tolerant and lackadaisical attitude. We were very positive and outright with our opinions and dislikes. We felt we must make defence against the disadvantage of our position; we resented kindness and refused to be understood. These people knew nothing of England, we felt.

But two years have somehow gone by, and now we don't cry like babies over our letters from home, or write back little spiteful things about our cousins. My sister, who is fourteen now, said the other day that after the war she is going home, but only for time enough to get her things and to persuade Mother and Father to come back with her.

I still intend to live in England when it is over, but I see now that this was all a very good idea, because I understand it now. You see, I have gone to high school here and met people of all sorts. I have sat in a schoolroom with boys, and this makes you work much harder, because if you are stupid, they laugh at you; also I have learned to care whether I look pretty or frowsy.

(Continued on page 114)

(Continued from page 113)

But most of all, I get along with Canadians (and Americans too, as I have met several very nice families of them), and they like me; and this is going to be quite different, I think; and we are the people who will have grown up and who will never forget the lessons we have learned. You can't know how narrow-minded we were—why, we couldn't even laugh at your jokes!

I have decided something, and it is really the thing I wrote this to show. It is wrong to make everyone alike. You should be glad you are not Canadians, and Canadians should be glad they are not you.

And the same with us. Our being English is what we are best at, and no one should envy us any more than we envy them; because it is very charming to be individual, and charm is the most beautiful part of everyday living.

To respect individuality, one must appreciate, and to do that one must understand. This was all a very good idea, because now I understand.

Toronto

In Love—and a Soldier

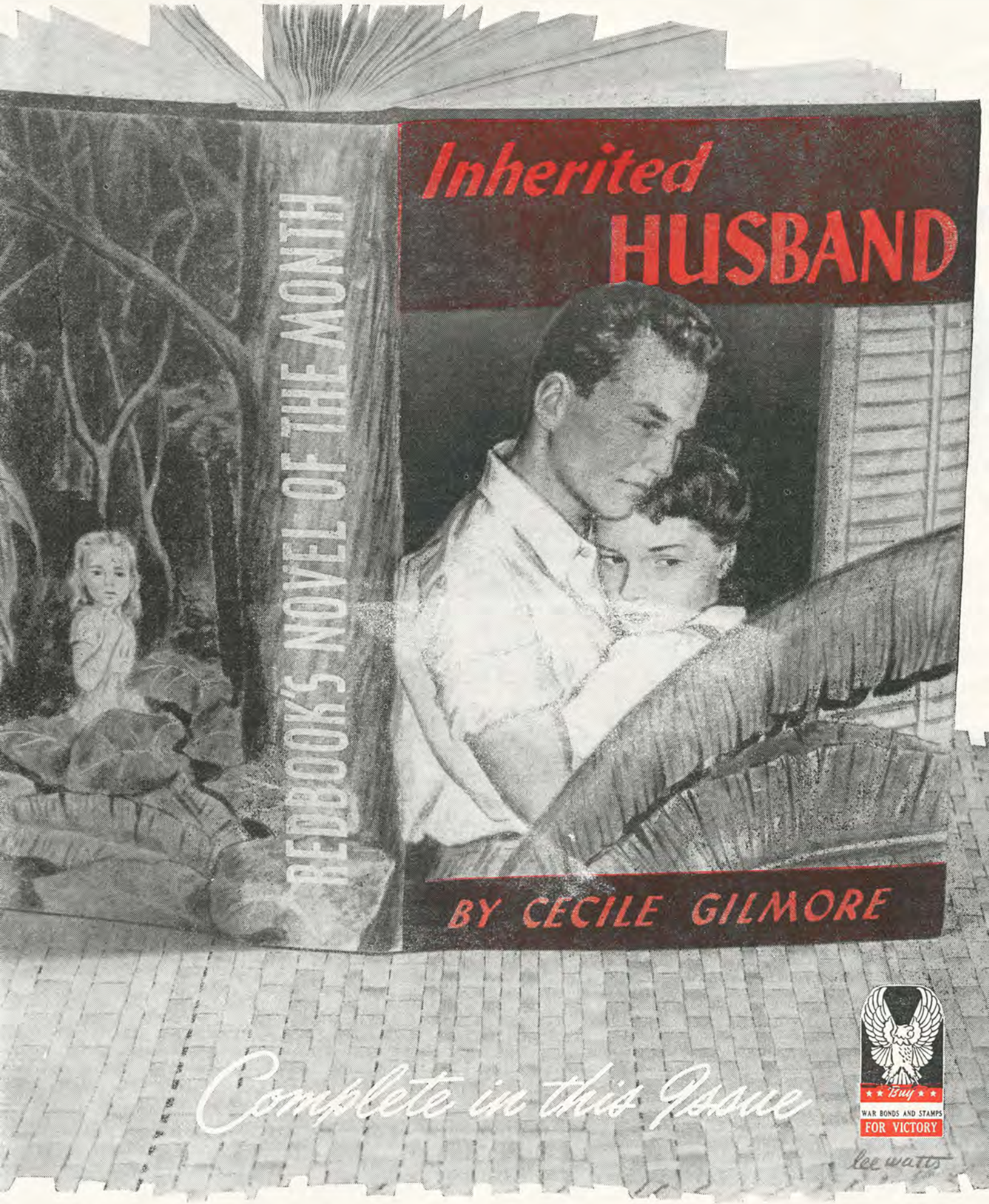
HERE'S another lonesome soldier doing a little thinking out loud. I'm young, and in love, and it's spring! That's enough to make any normal fellow feel that life is sweet. But since one Adolf Schickelgruber has undertaken to upset my promising little world, I find myself in the Armed Forces of My Country, where I have undergone stringent training for almost two years, and am now awaiting orders any day to be sent wherever duty calls.

While on maneuvers in the Carolinas last fall, I found Southern hospitality everything it's cracked up to be, and then some. That might have been because in a quaint old Southern home set in a grove of magnolias, I met the one girl I'd always dreamed of but never hoped to find. It was like a storybook romance, except the ending; for how can I "live happily ever afterward" when I may not even live at all? I've got sense enough to know this war isn't going to be fought from armchairs, and that many swell lads won't come back, and some that do will be in such shape they'll wish they hadn't. That's why I wouldn't be selfish enough to ask my little girl to marry me now, regardless of the joy it would give me. I love her too much to subject her to such uncertainty.

When I think of these things, it's only natural that I get pretty blue sometimes. But that mood passes when I remember the debt I owe America. You see, my parents were Russian immigrants. My father came here as a penniless lad, and through hard work, thrift and ingenuity, built up a business that enabled him to give all of his children the education he was denied in his oppressed poverty-ridden homeland. Nowhere but in this glorious free land of opportunity could he ever have had such a chance. So it is only fitting that I show my gratitude by pitching in with all I've got to help win this war to preserve our American way of life—a privilege worth living for, worth fighting for, worth dying for.

"On maneuvers in the Carolinas."

The story of the honeymoon of a man who had not wanted to marry and a girl who had not expected to marry again.



Inherited Husband

By Cecile Gilmore

SOME small sound in the stifling tropic night awakened Coles Laseby.

It was very late; she could tell that by the stillness outside, and by the chalky whiteness of the Haitian moonlight slashing through the big room.

There was a far-off pulsing of drums. Perhaps, thought Coles, that was what had wakened her. Yet she was used to the drums now, more or less—as used as she would ever be to that savage, senseless, irritating syncopation.

No, it was something else that had pulled her out of her dream. The dream she almost always had now, familiar and beloved yet maddening, in which Marco held her close to his heart and told her—told her—what was it?

Somehow her dream always broke in two just there. Something snatched her back to real life, back to this dark primitive nerve-rasping island which she hated—and feared.

With a quick, silent movement Coles rose on one elbow and peered through fuzzy netting toward the bed next to hers. It was so close that but for two intervening walls of net she could have reached out and touched the child, Melissa.

Her sigh of relief was a gentle obbligato to a droning mosquito ballet going on around the net overhead. Missy was safe, thank heaven. No matter what Marco said, it would be unthinkable to let the child out of her sight at night. *No* mother would, Coles told herself. It was a thing Marco couldn't understand. . . .

A wave of mother-love filled Coles' heart. Missy looked so small and sweet and absurd! She lay in one of those hump-backed sleeping postures that only a four-year-old can manage, her little behind arched like a belligerent caterpillar in the exact center of the big bed. . . .

Fully awake now, Coles parted her own netting and put her face out of the smothery, maddening stuff for a breath of fresh air. Big blocks of moonlight made sections of the room as bright as day, while the rest was in blackest shadow. The double doors leading to the balcony were set wide open to catch whatever breeze might spring up, and the shutters of the unglazed windows were flung wide.

Warm air touched Coles' face like a breathy kiss, trailing the honeyed sweetness of frangipani and night-blooming jasmine across her nostrils. Her thin cheap white cotton nightgown clung damply to her body. Some corner of her mind made note to ask the laundress in the morning what she was putting in the water that was wearing out the clothes so fast. This gown was less than two months old, and already it was shredding. . . .

Her long dark hair falling about her shoulders was like a sable cape. She pushed it back with the tips of her fingers and felt the microscopic beads of perspiration at the hairline.

Another shampoo tomorrow, she thought. Three this week and it took so long to dry it. Perhaps she ought to cut it off short, after all. Only—

In a flash her mind brought back a night when Marco had buried his face in the soft thick pillow of her hair, and how he had muttered queer, incoherent, wonderful things to her. How her body had seemed to float beneath his touch. . . .

A shiver ran like ice across the delicate nerves of her skin. She drew back and closed the netting, as though by that gesture she could shut out a confusing memory.

Because Marco had really belonged to her that night. . . . Or had he? She had been so careful to claim nothing, to demand nothing. Yet he had seemed—he acted so. . . . Still, perhaps it was only a physical thing. Or perhaps he had expected her to be much more attractive than she had turned out to be. . . .

Two parallel lines of worry dented the soft flesh between her brows. Absent-mindedly she put up a finger to smooth them.

At that moment a faint breeze sprang up, stirring the lofty folds of the two nets, plucking mildly at a strand of her hair. Missy groaned and kicked a little in her sleep like a huddled rabbit. In the next yard a cock, confused by the intensity of the moonlight, crowed lustily.

At the sound, Coles determined to worry no more tonight. With a sigh she shook back her hair and turned to lie down again. . . .

On the other side of the bed, dim through the netting, stood Marco Laseby.

"Marco!" Coles' whisper was loud with astonishment. Her hand involuntarily caught up a corner of the sheet and held it across the thin bosom of her gown. "I didn't hear you come in."

"I'm sorry. Did I startle you?" His voice, even in a half-whisper, was low, resonant, unemphatic.

"No," said Coles. "Oh, no. How long have you been there?"

He moved slightly, and the movement brought him into a band of moonlight. Coles saw that he was dressed in slacks and a white shirt. She surmised that he wore straw slippers; otherwise she would have heard him approach across the bare tiled floor.

HE shook his head a little, brushing aside her question. "I thought the drums might upset you," he said.

His voice and manner were casual, but the fact that he had thought of her was like a warm hand on a cold heart.

"I don't mind them any more," Coles lied. "Really, I hardly hear them. When did you get back? Have you had anything to eat?"

"Oh, yes," he said carelessly. "I had supper at Mirebalais, and got here soon after midnight. At different places along the road, I heard them drumming. A big hullabaloo going on. I thought: 'That'll scare the daylights out of Coles, if she wakes up and hears it!' How's Missy?" He lifted his chin and looked across at Missy's bed. There was a queer quality of tenseness about him, some strain that went unnaturally with his easy stance and vigorous physique. He was like a pacer-thoroughbred too tightly checkreined.

"She's all right." Coles tilted her face upward and searched his features in the moonlight—searched his firm man's face with the finely arched nose and steadfast mouth

for something that might give her courage. Marco had thought of her, hadn't he? He'd come in to see if she and Missy were all right, hadn't he?

"What were you sitting up in bed for?" he asked curiously. "Sure the drums didn't scare you?"

"No, really, I—as a matter of fact, I'd been dreaming of you." The confession came out in a rush, and she hurried on: "I dreamed that you—that I— Well, you see, my dream never comes out," she ended lamely. "It never does come out. I wake up."

She was sitting now with her arms clasped around one knee, her back as flat and straight as Missy's, and a worried, earnest expression on her small oval face. Her hair, released from its plain daytime knot, made her look childish and sweet in the moonlight. She was not a raving beauty, but she was small, and beautifully boned, and very graceful. The man looked at her thoughtfully.

He had been standing with his forehead against the netting, looking in and down at her, listening attentively, as he always listened, to her words. When she stopped speaking, the shadows about his lips and eyes deepened suddenly, as though the muscles of his face had changed.

Abruptly he made a movement as though to open the mosquito bar and come in to her. Coles felt her heart leap like some powerful captured thing. Her own face, naked under his eyes, smoothed itself expectantly. She made a small movement of her hand, and drew back ever so slightly to make room for him on the edge of the bed.

"Dear Lord, make it all right between us now," she found herself praying quite literally. "Make him in love with me. If I could only believe he loved me a little, I could stand this place or anything else."

AT that moment Missy made a choking sound in her sleep, sat up with an angry bounce, and began to cry.

"Oh, damn!" whispered Marco.

Coles flashed out of bed and ran to Missy, jerking aside the mosquito bar.

"What is it, my darling?" she begged anxiously, clasping the little girl in her arms. "What's the matter? Tell Mommie!"

Missy's head drooped against her mother's shoulder. Both eyes were tightly shut. With her free hand Coles smoothed the fair ringlets back from a forehead as round and satin-smooth as a chestnut. "Melissa," she murmured. "Are you all right, dear?"

The hair felt like live silk beneath her fingers, clinging and springing with a mysterious life of its own. In her arms Missy was a warm dead-weight. Queer, thought Coles, how they feel twice as heavy asleep as awake. She listened to the child's breathing, felt of her cool forehead.

There was absolutely nothing wrong, Coles decided, and bent to put Missy back on her pillow. Carefully she tucked the net and turned, suddenly conscious of her thin, shabby nightgown and of Marco, still standing where she had left him. Somehow that pleased her.

The tiles felt pleasantly cool beneath her bare feet as she padded back to bed. Marco held her net aside for her. She gave him a glancing smile, and got in, and waited. . . .

Waited as though the delicate thread of their relationship had not snapped at the moment of Missy's waking. To Coles, this was still her bedroom, and the night was tender as only the nights in Haiti can be, and this was her husband standing beside her. Suddenly she felt beautiful and young and proud, as women do in love.

How could she know that to the man her room had become a nursery? That with the cry of a child the moment had passed, the spell broken. . . .

Marco dropped the curtain in place again. His hand fell to his side. It was as though his hand had struck her. "It's silly to be so sensitive," she told herself; nevertheless her shame and disappointment overflowed. To stop the trembling of her chin, she bit her tongue. If a tear should spill, no matter, since she had her back to the moonlight.

("But don't let him see!" she told herself with the terrible tight pride of the shy. "Don't let him see you make a fool of yourself!")

"Did you have a good trip?" she whispered at last. "Did you see Dubois?" (No one would know. No one would guess that she had just been about to fling herself into the arms of a man who didn't want her!)

"The trip was all right," he replied softly, with a glance toward Melissa's bed. "Old Dubois thought he had a scheme for shipping sisal to me cheap enough to make it pay." He thrust his right hand in his trousers' pocket and jingled the small silver coins there. "Only, it wouldn't work. I had to tell him so."

Out of wounded vanity she kept him talking there awhile, as though nothing had happened. Marco talked; Coles produced questions that would show she was listening and understood. But deep inside, her thoughts ran like blind mice, silent and desperate. "Perhaps he's sorry he made his bargain with me," she thought. "Perhaps he wants to be free. Only, he'd never say so."

"How big a plantation was Dubois planning to put in, Marco?"

"Oh, only a few acres. He has the right soil, but—"

("Ought I to make the first move? Should I offer to get out and free him of his burden? He hates being poor; he hates it bitterly, because he's a proud and independent man. And without us, he'd get along very well. I ought to leave, but I can't. Anyway, I won't. Oh, Marco, my darling, please try to understand! Please see that I'm doing the best I can! I love Missy so. . . . How can I help that?")

"Look, why don't you sleep late tomorrow morning, Marco?" she said, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "This morning, I mean. You must be dead tired. I'll keep the servants away from you, and Missy will be quiet all morning if I tell her it's for you."

His laugh was muted but attractive in the big, quiet room. "No, thanks. No need to cork up Mam'zelle Lazybones. I'll be in as usual to wake her up. Good night, Coles. It's time I turned in."

There it was, this terrible distance between them. She rummaged quickly through her mind for words to hold him a moment longer—to give him the final, ultimate opportunity.

"It's a little cooler now," she said in what he called her social voice. "I had Alexandre put a thermos of fresh coconut water by your bed. Do you think you'll get to sleep without any trouble?"

What if he should offer to kiss her good night! Suppose he quite naturally and simply opened the mosquito bar and bent to kiss her lips, as once he would have done?

"Oh, sure," he said carelessly. "Sleep's my middle name. Well, good night again. See you in the morning."

"Good night, Marco." ("Good night, my darling. Sleep well, my love.")

Stiffly, like one of Missy's mechanical tin clowns running down, Coles lay flat again. The drums were silent. They must have stopped while she and Marco were talking. The air was much fresher now, even inside the net. Little things, she told herself. Think of little things. The moon is on the wane. See how those big black shadows around the room have thinned and shifted. In an hour or two it will be first-dawn.

It was no use trying to sleep any more now. Marco had said he would sleep, but would he? Night after night she had heard him moving about in his room next door, often as late as this. Strange how their lives had become so tangled. Until six months ago when old Mr. Pettiford's will was read, she had never even heard of Marco Laseby.

Chapter Two

CHARLES PETTIFORD had taken the business of dying much as he had taken the business of living—fretfully. Not that he knew he was dying then; no one did, of course.

For so young a man—Charles was three years younger than Coles—he was exceptionally critical, cranky over trifles, inclined to be sarcastic.

Still—he's an artist, Coles told herself, trying to think up excuses for him. It was midwinter, and for so small an apartment the two-rooms-and-kitchenette seemed to be remarkably dank and drafty. Twice that morning Coles had been down to see the janitor; twice she had wrung from his reluctant Polish soul the promise of more heat. This was the third breakfast she had brought Charles, and if *this* one didn't suit him, she would be at her wits' end.

"Try this egg, Charles. It's good and hot. See, I've kept it covered with a hot dish." She put the tray on the chair beside the bed, tugged at his pillows, and handed him the poached egg on toast and his own special pot of coffee.

Charles lifted the inverted cereal bowl and put the tip of a thin finger to the surface of the egg. "Well, it looks better," he mumbled. "Don't ever bring me a cold poached egg again. Ugh!"

Absently Coles started straightening the shabby bedroom, listening anxiously for the postman's whistle in the hallway downstairs. If the check didn't come this morning, there was going to be another unpleasant scene with the landlord, and Missy couldn't be left any longer in the nursery school, which was the cheapest thing of its kind you could put a two-year-old child in, mornings. . . .

"This yolk hasn't set properly. Egg's not fresh."

Coles turned at the sound of Charles' voice, ready for a tart reply. But the sight of his thin white face, the nervous twitching of his long nose and his large, handsome, unhappy eyes moved her unexpectedly.

"I'm so sorry," she said gently. "Let me bring you a glass of Missy's milk. *That's* the best quality I can buy, anyhow."

He brushed the suggestion aside fretfully. "Where *is* Melissa?" he asked.

"I took her over to the nursery school to get her out of here, Charles. She gets on your nerves so."

His mind made the obvious leap. "Has Uncle Simon's check come yet this month? I suppose you've worried yourself sick about money, in that quiet way of yours. No fun being married to an unsuccessful artist, is it? H'm? Not what you bargained for when you gave up that job, was it?"

"Charles, don't," said Coles, and sat down on the straight chair beside the double bed. "Don't bother about money now." She took the hand that had laid down a fork for a moment. "We've always managed, with your uncle's help. We'll keep on managing, somehow." Her fingers opened to release his tugging hand. "I could teach again, if it weren't for Missy," she added.

"Our little mistake," murmured the man on the bed, and Coles flinched.

"What folly! What madness," said Charles bitterly. "Marriage for a man of my age and temperament! Right off, a child."

"Charles, stop!" cried Coles. Her lips were trembling, and her voice shook as she got up from the chair. For a moment she hated her husband, the father of her child, who could speak like that about dear little Missy. Missy, who was as good as gold, whose wavy yellow hair and big brown eyes were so like, yet unlike, Charles Pettiford's.

"Sometimes," she said aloud and swallowed, "sometimes I think I don't know anything about anything, Charles."

He stared at her in silence for a moment. Then, with one of his weathervane reversals of mood, he laughed quite charmingly. "There's the spirit I like to see in a woman," he declared amiably. "Come, wife—fetch the morning paper and a cigarette, before I lay about me with my cat-o'-nine-tails." He paused, coughing weakly. "Damn this cough; damn this town; damn everything!"

Coles picked up the small tray, studying him uncertainly. "I'll run down to the corner and get something for your cough," she offered. "It will only take me a minute. If the buzzer rings, it will just be the postman. I'll bring the mail up when I come back."

When she came back from the drugstore, Charles was dead.

IT was a shock, of course—a terrible experience that repeated itself in some remote cell of Coles' brain night after night for months.

Charles had been like a second child to her, really. After they found out about his heart, she had babied him and looked after him just about as she did Missy. He had had not much more training for life than Missy, either. He had wanted to write, so he had written a little. Then he had wanted to be an artist, so he had painted a little.

There was always a meager but regular check from Uncle Simon Pettiford, a cranky old man who bribed him in this manner, Charles had always said, to keep away from him. "That goes double for you and Melissa," Charles had added with a grin. "Uncle Simon has no use for females."

That was all right, Coles had agreed. She was capable and businesslike; she liked seeing how far she could stretch a dollar, and goodness knows, she was used to doing without things. Small-town Missouri school-teachers didn't exactly live on the fat of the land.

But now there was nothing, literally nothing, to go on with. The funeral was held in one of the smallest chapels of an uptown funeral home. There were exactly three people there besides herself, the minister, and the four professional pallbearers.

It was a raw, blustery day, and Simon Pettiford wired (Coles had no telephone) to say he was not well himself, and that he was unable to go out. His blanket of white carnations was impressive, though. Coles glanced at it thankfully through her veil. A blanket of any kind of flowers lent face to her own tribute: yellow chrysanthemums, which she had chosen because the color suggested a little warm sunlight for poor Charles, and also, frankly, because they were the most for the money at that season of the year.

TWO days later Coles began frantically looking for some kind of a job.

The trouble was Missy. Finding work when you have a full-time baby-tending job of your own on your hands was like looking for a needle in a haystack, Coles discovered.

She tried for positions as nursery governess, with the understanding that she could keep her own child with her, and was turned down. But she would not, she absolutely and violently would not, put her baby out to board. An office job would have been ideal, if there were anything that paid well enough to hire a good housekeeper-nurse, but Coles had no office training.

Simon Pettiford, as she had suspected he would, cut off his checks with the death of his nephew. While she considered it mean, Coles had to admit that his nephew's wife and daughter were pretty remote connections. The old man had never even seen either of them. Coles was down to her last five dollars when she got a job teaching French in a girls' commercial school.

The pay wasn't much, but the hours were light too. Two one-hour classes in the morning, two in the afternoon. Coles could correct papers in the furnished-room-light-housekeeping living quarters she and Missy shared.

For three dollars a week Coles hired a young girl named Tilly to look after Melissa, take her to and from nursery school, and if Coles were detained by a faculty meeting, give the child her supper and put her to bed.

It worked very well. Tilly was neat and clean, and seemed good-natured if not over-bright. But presently Missy, now a fluent talker, began using a jargon that combined New York City East Side slang with a few high-powered expressions that sent Coles into a seething horror.

Tilly went, and then there was Edna, who was older, and spoke, as far as Coles could discover, very nicely. Edna cost a dollar a week more, but the sacrifice meant nothing where Missy's welfare was concerned.

Things went quite satisfactorily. Then one night Coles, coming in late, bent to kiss the sleeping child and detected a startling odor on Missy's breath.

"Good heavens!" she cried aloud, and sniffed again. "I can't believe it!"

She remembered then that Missy's behavior on one or two evenings had been oddly exhilarated during supper, even for the super-dynamo that the child normally was. It developed, of course, that Edna had been taking Missy walking in the afternoons, dropping in now and then for a genteel nip of beer in this or that family saloon. Missy was given a taste as a bribe to be "a good girl and not tell Mommie."

After that, Coles gave up. She quit her job at the school and tried once more for resident work where Missy could be actually on the premises with her. Never again would she leave Missy to a stranger's care, even if they both starved.

And then, timed with the precision of an old-fashioned melodrama, Simon Pettiford died and left his all to be divided between his great-niece, Melissa Pettiford, and his only other surviving relative, a remote cousin, Marco Laseby.

Coles wept with joy and relief. It was like Christmas and the Fourth of July rolled into one. There would be no delay, no hitch whatever, the lawyer assured Coles, as soon as Mr. Laseby had been located and notified. Coles was the child's legal guardian and would, of course, administer Melissa's share of the estate.

Marco Laseby was a hard man to find, and even after Granley and Timmard, Attorneys-at-Law, had located him,

there was a lack of enthusiasm about his laconic note, saying he would be in New York shortly and could the matter wait until then?

Coles fretted and fumed, and was grateful for the small sums of ten or twenty dollars at a time that the law-firm was willing to advance her against a final settlement. Otherwise, she and Missy couldn't have subsisted.

Coles was packing their few small possessions when Mr. Timmard's call brought her flying to the public telephone in the hall. She had no idea what the fortune of Charles' uncle amounted to, but she was sure of one thing: she and Missy would be able to move to a better place than this. She was debating what neighborhood would be best for Missy as she climbed the stairs again.

"I'll have to take you downtown with me, darling," she said. "We're going to see your Uncle Simon's lawyer. That man's come at last."

Mr. Timmard, of Granley and Timmard, was courteous but brisk. Anyone could see, his manner suggested, that he was a busy man.

"How do you do, Mrs. Pettiford. This is Mr. Laseby. And this is Miss—er, little Mistress—"

"I'm Melissa Pettiford," said Missy distinctly. "You can call me Missy if you want to."

The man standing beside a chair came forward, smiled at Coles, and bent to offer his hand to the child.

"How do you do, Cousin Missy," he said gravely. "You may call me Marco, if you like."

Mr. Timmard hustled them all into seats and began looking into long envelopes and unfolding papers.

There was a short silence. Coles, opening the small fur collar of her coat a little, became aware of a curious sensation. It was as though a personality stronger than her own were in the room; as though the air were charged with masculine competence, and her own feminine spirit had found itself abruptly on the defensive.

Mr. Timmard had begun to read, and she looked at him. He's not the one, she decided. He may be a good lawyer, but he's not—not—

She turned her eyes surreptitiously to Marco Laseby, and had a fleeting impression that his own eyes had only that moment left her ankles. Hastily she uncrossed her knees.

"*He's* the one," she decided. "He's the one who's bullying me." Deliberately she let her gaze rest on the man sitting with his left foot crossed carelessly over his right knee. He seemed to slouch, but with reservations, as though he might at any moment spring up and perform some astonishing muscular feat. His clothes looked good but carelessly put on, giving the impression that the set of a collar or the crease of a trouser were trifling matters in his happy-go-lucky life.

Self-confident, decided Coles. Extrovert type. Probably has plenty of money of his own, and doesn't give a darn about anybody else's.

She caught herself back from the verge of becoming indignant at this stranger. ("Pay attention to the lawyer. That's what you're here for. This man's character is no affair of yours.")

Nevertheless, it *was* from this man, sitting there quietly with his eyes on the tip of his excellent cordovan oxford, that the feeling of exuberance came.

"Probably just his healthiness," decided Coles. "All that fresh tan and clean look means he's been gallivanting around in the sun somewhere. While Missy and I sat here—like two meek little rabbits in a pen," her mind added a trifle bitterly, "waiting for his Gracious Highness to show up! I don't like that man," she reflected, and set her gaze firmly on Mr. Timmard's necktie.

A MOMENT later she stole another glance at Marco Laseby and flushed slightly to find his eyes fixed steadily on hers. His were a very dark hazel set well back beneath thick but lightish brows. There was a speaking look in them, quizzical but pleased, like a well-bred dog willing to make friends.

Unconsciously Coles tightened her lips a little, clasped her black gloved hands firmly in her lap and turned her chin with dignity—offering him, as it were, her neat little profile.

If the man took it for a small typical gesture of coquetry, he was mistaken. Something in Mr. Timmard's voice, some inner warning that rang in her own mind like a warning bell, had disturbed Coles. She gave the lawyer now her entire, and worried, attention.

"So, to put it quite simply," intoned Mr. Timmard, "Mr. Pettiford's entire residuary estate is to be divided equally between the legatees Melissa Pettiford and Marco Laseby. So much for that. Er—ahem!"

Clearing his throat and plucking off his glasses, Mr. Timmard came now to the heart of the matter. Coles fixed her eyes on the two little shining disks of glass held between the man's bony fingers and listened.

"The estate of Simon Pettiford was once a considerable property—as you may or may not know. Quite considerable. However—"

However— At the sound of the word, Coles could feel her heart beginning to slide like a melting snowball toward her plain little black leather pumps. No good, she thought, was going to come of that word.

"However," continued the man who held her livelihood and that of Melissa between his clean flat fingertips,—"Mr. Pettiford's residuary estate is not, I fear, as large as you may have expected. There will be—ah—the usual taxes and—ah—quite a number of outstanding bills—"

"Bills?" murmured Coles.

"Bills," said Mr. Timmard firmly.

Coles thought about the blanket of carnations.

"In short, since Mr. Pettiford's house in New York was so heavily mortgaged as to—shall we say—eat up its own value in a forced sale, and since his other tangible assets in this country are now so depleted as to be almost negligible, I'm afraid there's very little to the estate except that which remains in the island of Haiti."

"Haiti!" exclaimed Marco Laseby. "For the love of heaven! What was the old boy doing down there?"

MISSY, sitting quietly in a hard wooden chair with arms, leaned forward and peered around her mother at the source of this new voice.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Mr. Timmard primly. "The—uh—assets in Haiti consist of a house, or villa, and the remains of what was once, I believe, a fairly large and profitable sisal export business. Both are situated on the seacoast of Haiti near a town called Fort Freedom."

Coles swallowed painfully. "Could this property be sold?" she asked timidly. "I mean, would it bring much money?"

"I'm afraid not." Mr. Timmard jabbed his glasses back across his nose and briefly studied her. "You see, there is a law that no foreigner can buy land from the government in Haiti; both the villa and the plantation are on government-owned land." He paused, searched out a paper, and coughed. Then he continued:

"Mr. Pettiford leased the land for, I believe, ninety-nine years. Quite long enough for the mortal affairs of most of us—" The junior partner of Granley and Timmard paused again, this time to smile indulgently at his little joke. Coles could have stuck a pin in him. "But not, I'm afraid, of much help when it comes to settling the estate. Indeed, we're in somewhat of a quandary—"

Marco Laseby's laugh cut across the dry pedantic voice like a careless breeze. "'Quandary' is right," he said, turning to Coles. "Obviously, we can't sell the estate, and I doubt if we can give it away. What do you say we match to see which one gets the villa and which one gets the sisal outfit?"

It was like drowning, thought Coles. You struggle and struggle to stay up, and then you're just too tired to struggle any more. There would be no money coming in; no anything. Unless you could get a job that would let you keep a little child with you, you sank, that's all.

"Mommie, what's a sy-sle?" inquired Missy in her high small voice.

"Stuff you make rope out of, dear."

"Twine," corrected Marco briefly.

Coles roused herself from her misery. "You do make rope and doormats and things out of sisal, I believe," she said with dignity. "It's a sort of century plant, with a hard fiber."

It was like being back in a schoolroom in Missouri. Unconsciously her voice took on the firm, reasonable pleasantness of the conscientious teacher.

The man looked at her good-naturedly. "It's a century plant, all right," he said. "But you don't make rope out of it. Rope's made from hemp, and hemp comes mainly from Manila." The words were deliberate and unemphasized, and he was smiling at her, but Coles half expected him to add: "So don't be so smart, young woman!"

She opened her mouth to reply and closed it again. ("What *difference* does it make?" she thought wearily.)

She smoothed one gloved hand with the fingers of the other and fumbled nervously with the bag on her lap. There was a feeling of cords about her throat—some of Mr. Laseby's sisal twine, she thought, trying to force a little lightness, trying desperately not to show her disappointment to these two indifferent men. She only hoped she could get out of here without having to talk, because with this hard, tight knot in her throat, she would probably not be able to speak above a croak.

There was silence except for a rustling of papers on Mr. Timmard's desk.

"I'll get busy at once on the details," said his far-away voice. "Have both your addresses. . . . communicate with you at the earliest possible moment."

Somehow, without ever knowing how she did it, Coles found herself in the marble corridor of the old-fashioned office-building, Missy's hand clasped tightly in hers.

"What's the matter, Mommie?" Missy stared upward in alarm. "Have you got a pain?"

"No, it's all right. Everything's all right, dear." Coles let go the hand and buttoned the top button of the child's coat with trembling fingers. "Here comes the elevator—see? You'll like riding in that, won't you?"

"I guess so," replied Missy dubiously, as they stepped into the well-filled car and turned to face the door.

Marco yelled "Going down!" and sprinted along the hall. The elevator man held the car for him.

"Thanks," he panted, squeezing in beside Coles and Missy. "Glad I caught up with you," he said to Coles, and worked his right arm up until he could remove his hat. "Wanted to have a word with you—"

Chapter Three

"YOU should have taken a cocktail," said Marco, glancing at her over the rim of a long-stemmed glass. "Nothing like a Manhattan to pick you up after a session with a lawyer."

"But I like tea." Coles lifted a silver dish-cover and took out another slice of hot cinnamon toast for Missy.

"I like tea too," said Missy promptly.

"Drink your milk, dear. Let Mommie divide that piece of toast in two for you. It's too large."

She looked up suddenly at the man across the restaurant table and managed a fair imitation of a smile. "This is Missy's supper, really. I have to see she doesn't swallow everything whole. She's so excited. It's like a party, isn't it, dear?"

Missy nodded, her eyes on Marco. His widened in mock astonishment.

"*This*—her supper?" He made little clucking sounds and shook his head. "It's not enough to keep a bird alive! Let me order a joint of beef, and a flitch of bacon, and a curry of lamb with appropriate condiments, and—let me see—" He gazed soberly at the little girl, whose eyes and mouth were now wide with astonishment. "Oh, I know," he finished, "—a blackbird pie."

Missy came to with a start, her mouth slowly widening in a delighted smile of recognition. "Four and twenty blackbirds?" she asked uncertainly. "Baked in a pie?"

The skin around Coles' eyes felt like hot, drawn parchment. Her fingers were cold, and in spite of everything she could do, they continued to tremble slightly.

It occurred to her that Marco had observed these small signs and was deliberately distracting Missy's attention for a moment while Coles collected herself.

("Which is all very well," she thought dully. "It was nice of him to ask us to have tea with him, and if there's another piece of toast under that cover, I won't have to buy myself any dinner. But what am I going to *do?* How are we going to live?")

"You shouldn't worry," said Marco quietly. "Because when you worry, you frown; and when you frown, you make marks in your forehead—which is much too beautiful, I might add, to be disfigured that way."

Coles looked up at him with an absent, preoccupied air, as though the meaning of his words required careful study to understand. "I wasn't worrying—much," she amended with reluctant truth.

"Why worry at all?" he asked lightly with an oblique glance at Missy. "I mean, unless you were counting on the old boy's leaving some real dough." The corners of his level mouth deepened with inner amusement. "You can speak freely to me. I've been remembered in wills before—with somebody's old hunting-case watch, and a horsehair wreath, when a few hundred dollars in cash would have meant heaven. Is it—is that by any chance how it is with you?"

There was a lightness in his voice that his eyes belied. What a strange man he is, she thought, and wondered if he could possibly be sincere. His sympathy was so ready—too ready?

Coles stirred her tea and met his friendly gaze with eyes so large and swimmingly unhappy that a child could have read them.

("I ought to put him in his place," she was thinking. "I ought to say something like, 'My affairs couldn't possibly interest you, Mr. Laseby!' There'd be no need to add 'and *vice versa.*' He'd get it, all right. He isn't stupid, this Marco Laseby, whatever else he is.")

Instead she said: "I'm sorry, Mr. Laseby, but little pitchers have enormous ears."

His eyes smiled. "They do, at that, don't they?" he commented affably. "By the way, most people just say 'Marco.'"

Missy, who had not once taken her eyes off the man, piped up. "Why do they call you Marco?"

"Well, it's a long story." He pulled out a limp package of cigarettes and reversed it against his palm with the same motion, so that one cigarette came out of the small hole in a corner of the package. "Oh, excuse me," to Coles. "Smoke?"

Coles shook her head. Thoughts whirled through her head like angry bees, noisily but without pattern.

("I was a fool to have counted on this will. Luck like that just doesn't happen. Maybe there'll be a way to get something for the property in Haiti, after all. Maybe that lawyer doesn't know much about it.")

A wave of loneliness swept over Coles. She thought about Charles, comparing him unconsciously with the man across the round table. Certainly Charles had never bothered much about the things that bothered her now; he'd always let her do all the worrying, but at least he was—companionship.

It sounded silly, reflected Coles, but actually it *was* easier to cope with things like being-hard-up, and doing-without, if you were part of a little family circle—if you were a link, and not just a woman totally alone against the world.

Through her planless, formless thinking floated an occasional word from the long, rambling and absurd life-story with which Marco entertained Missy.

IT came to Coles that this Cousin Marco was really putting himself to a great deal of trouble on account of two females—one a very remote young relative, and the other no relation whatever. And that this was more charity than anyone should expect or accept from a stranger.

"This has been lovely, and so kind of you," said Coles, interrupting. "But we must be getting home. Mr. Laseby, you've set a new high in bedtime stories." She reached behind her for Missy's coat. "The adventures of *Peter Rabbit* are going to sound a little on the pale side after you go out of our lives tonight."

"I—haven't quite gone yet," he said with a faint touch of irony. "But as a matter of fact, I am going West in the morning. Stick Missy into bed and come out for a bite of dinner with me. It'll save time, and I have a lot of things to see to. First, I want to have a business talk with you about the Haitian stuff." He paused, frowning reflectively. "You and I can agree to what we like, and I'll write a letter to old—to Mr. Timmard. How about it?"

"Why, I—" There he was again, she thought. Taking charge, not asking, *telling* her what to do.

("Don't push me!" she felt like crying out. "Stop ordering me around! Just because this bequest isn't important to you, *I'm* not going to be rushed into something foolish.")

"I can't," she said, and felt as though she sounded far too meek. "I've no one to leave Melissa with at night."

He stared. "You mean to say you *never* go out at night? For any purpose?"

Coles shook her head.

"Wow!" His deep-set eyes slid easily across her face before he picked up the check and glanced at it.

Bracing herself for a clash of wills, she took Missy's hand and walked before him out of the restaurant.

He was too smooth for her. Like honey pouring over a hot plate, his plans advanced according to his announced schedule. He even had Missy on his side.

Over Coles' faint protests he called a taxi and drove them home, all the way up to their brownstone rooming-house off Amsterdam Avenue.

LATER, while she was putting Missy to bed, Marco lingered in the visitors' parlor. Reluctantly Coles asked the landlady to look in once in a while and see if Missy were safely asleep. She had never made such a request before.

But it was just this once, she thought, picking up her brush and smoothing her neat hair. He was going away in the morning.

Casually, not asking herself why she bothered, Coles changed to her best white satin blouse. and instead of pulling on her plain little black felt hat again, wound a soft white jersey scarf into a sleek turban around her black hair.

Against this more sophisticated setting her eyes looked larger, more reserved than ever, the faint shadows beneath them giving her face a delicate, rather helpless air that was wholly deceptive. She felt neither delicate nor helpless, just confused and worried.

"You look," she murmured irritably to the misty, creamy oval in the mirror before her, "like a sick cat to me. Anyway, your forehead's nice—he said so." She ran the swan's-down puff once more lightly across the wide satin-smooth brow, and went quickly downstairs.

From there on, Marco took charge.

"Now," he said, after he had ordered a steak from the charcoal grill of a restaurant catering almost exclusively to men, "now, let's see where we stand."

Coles took a sip of water.

"Oh, and waiter—" he called, "bring two glasses of pale ale with that! I wonder," he said, turning once more to Coles, "if it's true what you hear—that women alone don't eat the right things. Don't get enough vitamins and stuff."

He studied her face for a moment with detachment, a small, impersonal scowl denting his brow. "Well," he continued, brightening, "about this sisal outfit, and this so-called villa. I tell you what I'll do. I'll make Missy a present of my share."

"You'll *what?*" Coles could hear her voice rising on a note that was more like panic than surprise.

"Um-hum." said Marco. "I renounce my half of Simon Pettiford's estate. Me, my heirs and assigns hereafter, henceforth and forever, or whatever the legal spinach is."

He made a care-free, brushing gesture with one tanned hand. "You can have the works. That way, if you want to bother, you can probably get somebody to go down and run the sisal business for you, rent the villa, and get things running so that if there's any income to be had, it'll trickle back to you here, eventually. Frankly, from what I know about Haiti, you'll never get rich."

Pride rose like a physical thing in her throat. This stranger, flinging his charity at her feet like an old hat! This man with money to spend carelessly on good living and travel and fun for himself, daring to be sorry for her!

To her absolute horror, Coles felt a warning prickle high inside her nostrils. Moisture formed just inside her lower lids. She swallowed hastily and looked off to the left, at a point above Marco Laseby's shoulder. Never let the first tear come, and you were all right. Keep your head up and your eyelids stretched wide—

It fell. One small tear landed on the pale oval of her cheek. Coles blushed hotly and stole a glance at Marco. He met her eye with a wary but desperate doggedness, like a man looking down the business end of a rifle.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed uncomfortably. "Please don't cry. I'm sorry; I didn't mean to upset you." He jerked a roll apart and buttered it. "I thought it might help you to have all the property, such as it is—"

"Thank you," she said coldly. "I don't need any help."

"Well, no hard feelings." He seemed puzzled, somewhat at a loss for words. "What would *I* want with villas and sisal plantations in Haiti? Do you know anything about Haiti?"

"No, not much." Seeing his confusion had helped to restore her own calm. Her voice sounded all right, thank heaven!

"It's the damnedest, hottest, toughest island of rocks and mountains and jungles you ever saw. I was there once; I know."

He hesitated, looking off reflectively across the crowded room. "I'll grant you Haiti's beautiful, in a hard, bitter, proud way. Like—like a prize-fighter," he finished unexpectedly.

"You know, people always seem to speak of countries as 'she,' like ships. But to me, Haiti's a man, black as night, with hard, smooth muscles that shine like ebony in the sun. Not much ambition. Not much in the head, maybe. But somewhere deep inside, a streak of reserve strength about a mile wide and a mile deep, and a punch like a mule's." He grinned. "How's that for poetic license?"

Coles thought a moment. "We might," she offered seriously, "match to see which of us takes the villa and which the sisal factory. As you suggested in the office this afternoon."

He glanced at her, laughing a little. "I was joking."

"But how *would* we divide? I can't take charge of half a house and half a business, whatever the business is. Neither can you, can you?"

Marco stared. "But my dear sweet innocent child!" he said in amazement. "Nobody's going down there and take over either one of them, actually and physically. It's a matter of getting some Haitian—"

"I'm going," Coles announced, as calmly as though the idea hadn't at that moment sprung into her brain.

He smiled uncertainly, then frowned. "A white woman in Haiti? Alone? You're kidding!"

Coles tightened her lips ever so slightly, and looked at him in the level, calm way that had always been her best weapon against the older boys in her classroom.

"Oh. no. I'm not," she said. "Part of it's mine, or Missy's, rather. and I'm going. You can fix up your share with Mr. Timmard any way you like."

He was watching her warily now, with what might have been a new respect—or perhaps it was only a solid masculine terror of more tears.

"As you say," he agreed. "I don't think it's at all wise, and I think old Timmard will have a coniption fit. But—"

The steak arrived, and a captain of waiters uncovered it with a flourish at Marco's elbow. "Looks all right," muttered Marco absently. "Carve it, please."

Coles leaned back with a small feeling of triumph glowing somewhere inside. She had shaken at least *some* of the assurance out of this individual. She had felt obliged to sit on him and he had taken it rather well, on the whole, she reflected.

In fact, he seemed underneath to be a nice, thoroughly well-meaning and kind man. The way he wore his medium brown hair was nice—short, crisp, clean-looking. She liked his voice and hands, and the abounding but unobtrusive vitality of the man. He looked about thirty-three or a little more—it was hard to tell with a man who has been out of doors as much as this one. Those wrinkles at the corners of the eyes obviously were from strong sun.

AND certainly, reflected Coles with a small smile, no mother could resist his charming and highly successful efforts with Missy. She'd like him to know how she felt about his gentle manners toward her child. Later, perhaps, when she got to know him better, she'd tell him. . . .

But there'd be no "later," she realized with dismay, and drew a sharp little breath. After tonight she'd probably never see him again. Unconsciously she sighed.

"You know, you bother me," Marco was saying in a hesitant voice. "Oh, don't misunderstand! I'm not butting in. Only, well—tell me a little bit about yourself, won't you? Where you come from—what you've been doing all your life—anything, just so it's personal."

How attractive, how disarming his smile was, thought Coles.

"There's not much," she murmured. "I was born in Missouri, and my father and mother died and I got a job teaching school there. I have no relatives at all. And then Charles Pettiford—he was my husband, you know—came along, and he was a writer, and we sort of drifted toward each other in the dull little town where I taught, and so we were married. And that's all."

"But you came here to New York," he suggested.

"Oh, yes—that. Charles got tired of trying to write, and wanted to paint. So we came here where he could study art. His uncle, this same Mr. Pettiford, used to send him—us, I mean, a little money from time to time. I would have taught school again, only there was Missy."

"Missy," he repeated reflectively, and suddenly he laughed. For the first time Coles heard his special laugh for all little, tender, helpless beings who made an impression on his unsentimental man's heart.

"She's a sweetheart," he said, plying his knife with neat, efficient strokes. "In the South, they'd very likely call her a card to draw to, although that doesn't quite express her, either. You play poker? You know what the term means?" He regarded her with anxious eyes. "I haven't offended you again?" he wound up on a rising note.

Coles' laughter came from somewhere deep in her throat. "No, I don't play poker, but I know what it means to draw to a good card. Of *course* I'm not offended! Do you come from the South?"

"Me?" He sounded surprised. "No. Why?"

"You said a minute ago—"

"Oh, that," he said. "I was born in the Argentine."

At her look of surprise, he shook his head. "No, I'm not an Argentinian. My parents just happened to be there. Both of them were engineers, always wandering from place to place on some job or other. I think it gets into your system like a virus, after a while. I mean—the wanderlust."

"You have it too," Coles said quietly, not as a question; as a statement.

"Yes. That's what I meant," he said. "The thought of settling down, of having goods and chattels tied to you—"

He broke off, darting her a sober glance out of his intelligent, friendly eyes.

"I know," she agreed. "I understand, Marco." It had slipped out; she looked up quickly, but as far as she could tell, his face had not changed expression.

"I wonder," he said softly. "I've never believed women understood it. They think it's something hard and insensitive in a man; or else something underhanded, like running away from responsibility, that makes us that way. Women are different."

"Yes," said Coles, and the tiniest of sighs escaped her. "Women are different."

There was a short silence between them. At length he said: "So you're really going to tackle Haiti, are you?"

He said it again, as he told her good-night in the musty-smelling, harshly lighted vestibule of the brownstone rooming-house.

"So you're really going," he said reflectively. "You've made up your mind."

She smiled, and her mouth and eyes reminded him for a moment of Missy's. "I've made up my mind."

He took her hand. "Well, good night. And if I don't see you again—good luck, Coles."

"Thank you, Marco. Good night."

She went inside and closed the door quickly. And then because the visitors' parlor was empty, and she had a sudden impulse to see him again, she darted into the darkened room and looked out the front window. She was just in time to see him hand the cab-driver something and walk off down the street.

Chapter Four

THE telephone, ringing like a frenzied thing, awakened Coles.

"Why doesn't someone answer it?" she thought sleepily, and glanced at the small alarm clock on the bureau. It was half-past five.

"Oh, dear," she muttered. Still the phone rang. She got up and went downstairs and answered it herself, her voice thick with sleep.

"Hello," she mumbled, propping her elbow automatically against the spot where the front hall wallpaper had been worn away by thousands of elbows.

"Coles? This is Marco Laseby. Sorry to waken you."

"Why—why—what's the matter?" asked Coles. "Has anything happened?"

"I've been thinking over our talk of last night," he said while Coles admired, as a matter of record, the excellence of his telephone voice. "And I want to know—that is, I wonder if you'd be willing to marry me."

"Marry you?" repeated Coles. "Did you say *marry* you?"

"Why, yes. That's what I was hoping." His voice seemed to hesitate; then he rushed on engagingly: "There's no reason why we shouldn't, is there? I mean, *I* think it's a fine idea. Then we can all go down to Haiti and give Uncle Simon's estate a going-over. You know, cultivate the sisal and the natives, rehabilitate the villa—things like that."

IF she hadn't known him for what he was, Coles would have thought he was embarrassed. Certainly, she reflected, this flow of words sounded more like schoolboy babbling than anything she would have suspected him of yesterday. Suddenly a horrid suspicion struck her.

"Marco!" she cried. "You haven't been drinking, have you?"

His surprised laughter was a shout in her ear. "If that isn't a woman for you," he exclaimed. "Of course I'm not drunk. Didn't you just hear me say 'rehabilitate the villa?' Try that on your lingual muscles after a few drinks!"

"I don't drink," murmured Coles absently, her mind still reeling with shock.

"Look, we aren't getting anywhere this way," he said, and she could imagine the gesture of his free hand. "There's a lot of detail to be fixed up before we can leave town. Before we can get the license, even. I'll come up there, and—"

"But I haven't said I would," she protested. "I don't think I want to. I—I don't *know* you!" she cried in final confusion.

"Well, look. We'll start all over," he began in the tone one uses with a child. "I'm Marco Laseby. You had tea with me, and dinner, yesterday. Remember?"

"Don't be silly," Coles rapped out briskly. "I meant—"

"That's better! Now, I'll come up there within half an hour," he told her firmly. "Don't upset yourself. Just get dressed." He hesitated, seeming on the verge of adding something. But all he said in the end was, "Good-by," and hung up.

Coles replaced the receiver with fingers that tingled coldly and turned to find her landlady, in dressing-gown and filthy white bunny-fur slippers, staring at her.

"Anything wrong?" The woman's voice and eyes were eager.

"No, nothing." Coles brushed past and ran quickly up to her room. There was a pounding in her side and a queer, light feeling, like the rising of a thousand bubbles to the surface of her mind.

Something wonderful was happening to her—something shy and new and lovely was being born somewhere inside her. And no landlady was going to be a witness to its birth!

"I could tell you almost word for word what that woman thought," Coles was saying a few hours later to Marco. "She thought the Worst. It was written all over her face like that, with a capital *'W.'*"

"What's so scandalous about a proposal of marriage?" Marco was busy filling in a New York State application for a marriage license.

"I don't know. The hour, I suppose. The telephone. The way I looked, perhaps. Anyway, she turned very nice afterward and *volunteered,* mind you, to keep Missy for me while we did this."

"Good for her," he murmured. "What was your mother's maiden name?"

"Amanda Coles."

"Where were you born?"

"Sherforth, Missouri."

"Age?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Color? Oh—brunette, of course."

"You put 'white,' there," she told him. "And for 'nationality,' put 'American.' Marco, why did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Ask me to marry you."

"Oh, that." He put down the pen and stood looking at her. All the seats around the writing-table in the marriage clerk's office were taken, so they stood side by side at a shelf-desk along one wall. The brim of Coles' hat had more than once brushed the tip of his ear as they labored together over filling out forms.

"I don't know," he said softly, almost as though he were talking to himself. "I don't know why it had to come just this way. It was something—"

There was a queer, far-away look on his face. Coles, hanging breathlessly on his words, felt her heart freeze in her body. Panic seized her.

Suddenly he smiled and touched her lightly on the shoulder. "You looked so very little and proud and independent last night," he said. "Sitting there with your chin in the air, telling me to go chase myself. You looked so darned cute, Coles."

She let her lashes drop to hide the anxiety writhing there just behind her eyes. He had not once said that he loved her, and yet he *must* care something for her.

("Dear God, either let him love me, or else help me to hide this—this miracle that's going on inside of me. Because I love him. . . . I'd do anything on earth to make him love me. . . . I'd get down and scrub floors, if that would help. . . . Only, that's one thing he *doesn't* need—he seems to have plenty of money.")

"I hope it's going to be all right, Marco," she quavered. "For you, I mean. I'll try to keep Missy and myself from costing you much. Don't ever think we have designs on your money, because we haven't—"

Again Marco's laugh rang out.

"My money! Darling, I haven't a cent! What made you think I had?"

"Why, I—why, it doesn't matter." She felt covered with confusion, her cheeks crimsoning. "I thought you seemed to be spending a great deal yesterday, but—"

"Oh, that!" he said cheerfully. "I have some cash for the ordinary things, like the license and the minister and our passages to Haiti and so on. But when all that's done, we'll be starting life with about eighty dollars to our name —Mrs. Laseby."

"I'm not Mrs. Laseby—yet," said Coles in a faint voice. "There's still time to get out of it, Marco."

He took her hand quickly, her small straight ringless fingers crumpling against his palm. "What's the matter?" he asked, looking at her with steady eyes. "Losing your nerve?" The hand tightened. "Is that it? H'm?"

Gravely she lifted her eyes to his. It was all she could do by way of showing him her heart. She had no words. There was so much about this weird courtship that she had no way of understanding. So many questions, so many doubts. If he were marrying her out of pity— But why? *Why?*

His eyes, moving over her face, seemed to darken. "All right," he said and opened his fingers so that her hand lay there on the flat of his palm. "All right. But I wonder."

Coles took a deep breath and stiffened the backbone of her mind. ("It's going to be all right," she told herself firmly. "It's all a little confusing just now. We're such strangers. But it's going to be all right. I know it will.")

There was a necessary wait for the examinations required by State law but then they were married; and thus, eventually, they arrived in Haiti.

Only, in the meantime Coles had fallen utterly, madly, mutely in love with Marco Laseby. Despite all her doubts, all her misgivings and apprehensions, it was a wonderful honeymoon.

They sailed on a neat little freighter with passenger accommodations for four. Luckily there was no fourth passenger—only Marco and Missy and herself. The ship was almost their own.

EVERY day was a joy. To Coles, the sight of Marco standing in the bow, his hair bleaching in the hot sun and wind, his thin shirt fluttering against his strong, straight shoulders, was a rapture to pierce the heart.

The touch of his hand, the brushing of his knee against hers in the close quarters of the tiny dining-saloon where the three of them ate with the ship's four officers—such things were the little everyday happinesses of the voyage.

It was like being well again after a long illness, thought Coles. Like coming out of prison. This was love. This was a thing she had never before known in all her life.

And yet—she was afraid. Marco was kindness itself to Melissa, playing with her, talking to her, watching out for her on shipboard as carefully as though she were his very own. Yet Coles would have been a fool not to know that there were moments in Marco's mind when Missy very definitely came between them. Missy, awake or asleep, was never actually out of her mother's thoughts.

As a matter of course, Coles had arranged for the child to sleep on the narrow second bunk of one tiny cabin—Coles' cabin. Marco, coming below after a last look at New York's skyline, took in the arrangement at a glance and gave Coles a queer look. But he said nothing.

He seemed, reflected Coles, genuinely fond of the child; and that was a blessing, for Missy's one aim in life now was to please this strong, careless male person who bestowed no unnecessary blandishments on little girls. Far from trying to please *her,* it seemed to Missy that Marco took it for granted she would be only too happy to please him. Thus if he ordered her to eat her bread and butter at table, it was an order given pleasantly enough, but without the slightest coaxing.

He never said, as Mommie sometimes did, that bread and butter was what made little girls grow strong and tall, and she wanted to be a big, strong girl, didn't she? Marco said, briefly, "Eat it, Miss Muffet," and after that turned his attention to more important matters. Missy ate, enthralled.

Coles, watching them explore the ship hand in hand, felt a lump of sheer happiness fill her throat. The small, straight, golden-haired figure beside the larger, stronger one, talking and laughing like old friends. . . .

"What luck," Coles would whisper to herself. "What did I ever do to deserve a break like this? How many men would marry a ready-made family—take another man's child along with the wife?"

"When we get to Haiti I must give Marco much more freedom from Missy," she mused. "He's been as good as gold about this trip, but after all, he's my husband."

Coles had no illusions about the situation. She was no wide-eyed innocent, but a woman of experience. New love was a tender-enough seedling at best. A man expected his wife's undivided attention. But it should be possible, she told herself, to be a loyal wife without being a disloyal mother. She could do her duty to both.

AND this was a time for straight thinking, reflected Coles wisely—this little interlude before the three of them actually launched their brave adventure. No man wants to share his bedroom with his stepdaughter. She'd get someone good to take care of Missy, and there'd be plenty of room for a separate nursery, surely, in a villa.

It sounded very grand—a villa. Probably it was somewhere on a mountain or hillside. Perhaps in time they could afford a staff of devoted native servants, white-jacketed, soft-footed. There would be royal palm trees and bowers of bougainvillea somewhere in the picture, and hibiscus and rollicking native babies—picturesque old women in the marketplaces, and laughing girls and boys—and singing at night in the servants' quarters. . . .

And then one afternoon Marco called her to the rail. "There's Haiti," he said, and pointed to a great stony mass of dark green mountains. It was enormous, and it rose out of the sea like a gaunt-boned savage beast, aloof, forbidding, furred with a coat of rough, bristling blackish green.

A shiver caught at Coles' flesh. If any living soul inhabited that island, she thought, it was surely the loneliest and most unhappy soul on earth.

The boat drew nearer, and she made out thin blue columns of smoke rising here and there straight up into the evening dusk. Even these symbols of family hearth and home looked miles apart, utterly forlorn. Silently Coles moved a step nearer Marco, and Missy squeezed past her mother's skirts to stand between them, a hand in each of theirs.

Coles stared at the land, which grew larger and larger as the ship approached it. A village of perhaps a dozen huts drifted past, near enough for those on shipboard to catch the sound of voices, to see the poverty and squalor of the little settlement.

There was no laughter, no rollicking children. Only gaunt, dark-skinned people standing among their starving dogs and tumbling shacks, staring.

Farther along, a larger settlement came into view, then a dock and a few sheds fringing the shore of a little inlet, and a hint of houses rising steeply behind the cover of trees.

"Fort Freedom, my dear. The steamer is making this stop just for us." Marco said it carelessly, but she was aware that he watched her closely to see what her reaction would be.

Coles swallowed. Already the anchor-chain rattled in the hawser, and big flat-bottomed lighters were coming out from shore to meet the ship. The boys manning the sweeps were black young Haitians, skinny, and for the most part grave.

As the first lighter touched the side of the ship, its ragged crew looked up and saw the little family group standing at the railing. Instantly there rose a curious babbling jargon that Coles assumed to be Creole—an earnest, hoarse, persistent shout, with palms outstretched.

Suddenly it dawned on her that the words were not Haitian French or Creole, but English.

"Fi' cents, please; fi' cents, please; fi' cents, please," the chant ran, over and over, without change of expression, without even an ingratiating smile.

"Why, they're begging," she said, turning to Marco. "In English!"

"Well, this is the waterfront," he said carelessly, and tossed a few coins overboard, starting what looked like a massacre below. "It's the only English they know."

Coles tightened her grip on Missy's hand, and deliberately sketched a cheerful expression on her own face.

"You're a fine companion, a fine wife," she told herself severely. "Marco wouldn't even be here, except for you and Missy. This is what you were going to tackle *alone!*"

She caught her breath and shuddered, little phantom ice-cold feet running up and down her spine. Feeling smaller and less courageous even than Missy, she stood rooted to the deck while some magic lantern of the mind showed her the whole of this island that was to be her home.

No warning of another, and lovely, side of the picture came to her. No hand of Destiny flipped the dark coin and permitted a glimpse of its reverse shining side.

Later, when she had actually seen the real Haitians, black, aloof; when she was to read cruelty into everything, from the terrible heat of the sun to the great fastnesses of the incredibly high, steep mountains; when she had come to know an unreasonable fear for Missy's safety in this widely reputed voodoo-ridden island in the Caribbean; when above all, the terrible coolness between herself and Marco had sprung up like an evil mist out of the sour soil—then she was to remember her premonitions.

But all that was later. Now was only the moment of arrival. Somewhere along that frowning façade nestled Simon Pettiford's villa.

Chapter Five

"BONJOUR, *madame! Bonjour, monsieur!*" The small coffee-colored Haitian clipped his felt hat under one arm and bowed until his starched white ducks creaked. "Welcome!"

Coles, trying to arrange Missy's little pink linen hat so that its brim would shield the child's neck from this incredible sun, looked up. "Oh, good morning," she said.

Marco shook hands.

"I am Justin Fougère, the manager of your hotel."

"Hotel? What hotel?" She spoke briskly, without waiting for Marco. There was something in this man's face that disturbed her—something too smooth, too affable, in the smile slanting crookedly across his bony brown face. It was his eyes, thought Coles. She didn't like that bloodshot look.

Marco pulled a white handkerchief out of his hip pocket. "I neglected to tell you, Coles," he said, mopping his brow. "The Pettiford villa has been running as a sort of boarding-house, hotel, or whatever you want to call it. Old Timmard mentioned it." He turned to Justin Fougère, who blinked a little at this casual description of the villa. "Mr. Pettiford built it originally as his home, didn't he—then made it into a hotel?"

"It was built by nuns," replied the man primly. "The Sisters built it as a school and—what do you say?—day nursery for little Haitian children." His glance darted toward Missy, and away.

"What happened to the day nursery?" asked Coles, her interest caught at once.

"They were obliged to discontinue," said Fougère blandly. "So many mothers brought their babies to the school but found it hard to pay even the moderate expenses." He shrugged. "You see, it was very well run, that place. *Too* well run. The Sisters soon had many more little charges than they could care for. So—"

Coles looked at the man to see if he meant it, and glanced at Marco. His eyes met hers with a look of amusement.

"Well, Mr. Pettiford changed all that, I suppose?" he asked casually, offering the other a cigarette.

"Thank you. Yes. The entire place was—was *rehabilitated* into an hotel. Monsieur Pettiford made many improvements. I myself was made resident manager," he added pointedly. "Yes, many improvements."

"All right," said Marco cheerfully. "Let's go up and have a look at it. Are there any guests now?"

"Alas, only one," murmured Fougère. "A traveler selling sewing-machines. And he, unfortunately, departs by this same steamer. Here he comes now."

COLES, holding Missy by one hand, went to stand beside Marco on the hot, sun-baked boards of the dock. Silently they watched the progress of a man approaching on foot, his seersucker suit wrinkled, and his face drenched in perspiration.

"Put 'em in the boat," commanded the stranger to a half-grown boy staggering behind him under a pile of luggage. "Here." A coin flipped through the air.

"There goes our first paying guest," murmured Marco, watching a damp back lower itself into the waiting dinghy. "Too bad," he added regretfully.

Coles, edging nearer, caught the glint of mockery in his eyes, but nevertheless she was uneasy. How curious, she thought—springing the hotel business on her this way, without warning. Naturally, she had thought the villa was simply a house to live in. . . .

"Will Madame walk, or take a taxi?"

At Justin Fougère's polite inquiry, Coles looked around her wildly, half-certain now that the whole thing was a practical joke. A taxi in this jungle clearing, where the only civilized things in sight were the steamer anchored offshore and their luggage piled in the center of the scorching dock?

She saw then the elderly auto with the brass radiator parked a little way from the water's edge, and the driver standing a few feet back of Fougère, smiling hopefully.

Marco went over to the man and spoke to him half in French, half in gestures.

"There's a shortcut by path, directly up the hillside," he reported, coming back. "And there's a road that goes up through town. I suggest you and Missy take the taxi along with the luggage. I'll walk up with Fougère."

He helped them in, slammed the door of the car, and stood back as the motor came alive and the car started.

Coles, looking back at him standing there, felt her heart surge with sudden love, as though new wells had sprung up freshly to overlap and overflow the love already moving quietly along her veins. He looked so sure, so competent, so unperturbed by circumstances—so *trust*worthy.

To Missy, sitting with unexpected quietness on the seat beside her, Coles said an odd, impulsive thing. "Marco will take care of us, darling," she said warmly; and as the little girl's gaze met hers in mild inquiry: "It's going to be lots of fun, isn't it?"

The sisal business, Marco and Coles found immediately, had been allowed to run to rack and ruin. An apathetic American named George Simplon was the manager. The plantation, close by the dock where the Lasebys had landed, was choked with weeds and dead growth.

Marco went through the books, and found that more than a thousand workmen had once been employed; now there were less than two hundred. The business straggled along, with notes coming due at a bank in Port-au-Prince, a small cash balance which barely covered the pay-roll, and almost no assets except one light station-wagon which was more valuable than it looked, cars being scarce on the island.

"I had to fire Simplon," Marco told Coles a week later. It was the hour of siesta. Marco, who never slept in the daytime, generally spent the period in the hotel's office, looking at three-day-old newspapers and listening to news-broadcasts on the radio. But today he had followed Coles upstairs and sat smoking and watching her put away clothes.

"I hated to do it; the poor devil's going to have a tough time finding another job here, I expect. He's not much of a business man."

"That man Justin Fougère will have to go too," said Coles, bending over an open trunk. "I don't like his looks. And besides—"

"I know," replied Marco. "You don't trust him. I saw that when he met us at the dock."

He spoke without unfriendliness. ("In fact," thought Coles, "we must look like a happily married couple, here alone in our bedroom. Mr. and Mrs. Laseby, settling down to married life in Haiti. Talking things over. Yet last night we quarreled.")

"I don't distrust Fougère," she said in a voice carefully normal. "But I don't see how we can afford him, and I don't like him, anyway." She gave Missy's coat a little shake and hung it away in a closet.

Marco flung one leg over the arm of the wooden rocker. "Where's Missy now?" he asked, as though there were some connection between Coles' words and his question.

"Oh, Tinette has her out in the side yard, in the shade. I don't worry about her in the *daytime,* Marco."

"Good." He blew a cloud of smoke through his nostrils, gave it a glance, then looked at his wife. "Tinette seems to be catching on to her job now. Missy already bosses her unmercifully. Lucky you taught the child French."

"Yes, isn't it?" murmured Coles, and thought: "We are being so carefully indirect with each other. Like strangers at a party. He blames me, of course—"

She straightened to give her back a rest, and glanced around the enormous bedroom. Its plain walls and lofty ceiling were tinted the palest blue. The simple wood furniture was white to match the white iron beds. The netting, swung aloft on pulleys for the day, was fresh; she had bought it yesterday and supervised its installation herself.

Her eyes toured a series of big shuttered windows. It was queer, living in a house without a single pane of glass. But you soon got used to it; and the shutters, although much in need of paint, gave an effect of seclusion and coolness.

But only an effect, reflected Coles. She drew a crumpled handkerchief from her belt and touched her forehead with it.

"No wonder Haitians are an indolent people," she said aloud. "In heat like this, I don't see how anyone gets anything done. Marco," she plunged, "why didn't you tell me this place was a hotel?"

"Afraid you'd be upset," he admitted promptly. "Things sounded bad enough, without throwing in a broken-down hotel to boot." He put his head back and blew a curlicue of smoke, but through it he was watching her attentively.

"Besides," he added, "I'd no intention of our keeping on with the hotel business. The villa was a place to live, that's all."

"But you should have told me," she reproacned him. "I might have brought along some books and things on how to run a hotel."

Marco's hazel eyes flickered. "You know," he said, "it's hard to make you out, sometimes. You're so terrified of the whole country, so—appalled by it; and yet you're willing to tackle a job like this without experience, without capital, in this climate, with only a bunch of servants you know nothing about—" He broke off with a baffled gesture.

"But you will let me try!" she cried, bending to search for the mate of the glove she held. "Do let me, Marco; I want to help."

HAD she looked up then, she would have caught the sudden spark of pride that came into his eyes—the half-tender, half-surprised look with which parents sometimes regard their offspring. But all he said was: "Go ahead, if you like. It's as much yours as mine, you know."

Coles brushed the back of one hand across her forehead and gazed fixedly at nothing, a speculative look in her eyes. "If that Haitian could make expenses," she murmured, "the way *he* runs things, why, I could do better than that, you know, once I got the place cleaned up."

"Maybe so. But you don't have to go at it like a house afire. Fun's fun, but the way you've been cleaning this place has got everybody on the jump. Fougère's been like a cat on hot bricks. He never knows where you're going to turn the hose next."

Coles looked quickly to see if he spoke in good humor. "You're mixing your metaphors," she said, smiling uncertainly. Then a small frown appeared between her brows.

"Marco despises bustling women," she thought uneasily. "He told me so once, a long time ago."

A long time? Why, they had known each other less than a month! So short a while it seemed incredible that they had met, married, come to Haiti and fallen in love. At least, *she* had fallen in love. What Marco felt and thought was not always easy to guess. . . .

As though he sensed the play of Coles' thoughts upon him, Marco rose and strolled across the room, pushing open the shutters and stepping out on the shallow balcony.

"Take it a little easy just at first," he said over his shoulder. "People seldom get sunstroke down here, but they do get heat exhaustion."

She came to the long window and stepped out beside him. Below them and a little distance away lay the harbor, glittering in the sun. The villa's two-story structure clung like a clumsy cream-colored beetle part way up the mountain, with everything worth seeing directly behind its back.

The entrance to the villa, despite straggly flower-beds, a ragged lawn, flowering shrubs and stately royal palms, was nothing more than a clearing in the mountain-side. But the balconied windows at the back overlooked the dancing waters of the Windward Passage, and gave a glimpse of the dark, narrow island of Gonave.

The view, she was obliged to concede, was lovely. By day it sparkled. By night, with the moon quivering like quicksilver over the water, it was enchantment. There had been a moon to greet them on their first night—a welcoming moon, Marco had said, standing beside her on this very balcony.

"Maybe it was put there to make you love Haiti—and me," he had said. And without warning he had turned and taken possession of her, kissing her throat, and the corners of her mouth, and then the mouth itself, with a quiet intensity that transfixed and paralyzed her, so that she was afraid to breathe or move.

The moon had danced this way and that as she leaned, letting her weight rest backward in Marco's arms. The moon had swung like a pendulum behind his head, and the sky had closed down over them; the sky was like a great glass bell shutting out the rest of the world.

That night Missy had slept in the room next to theirs, in her nursery with Tinette, the Haitian nurse, on a cot in the corner.

Tinette had been Marco's discovery. He had found her working in the hotel's laundry, and had persuaded her to sleep in the room with Missy. Later that night Coles had gone into the nursery and seen that Tinette's cot was empty. The woman had slipped out, and Missy was alone, sleeping quietly under her net.

All of Coles' fear had rushed back then. All the distrust and troubled brooding she had felt at sight of Haiti had flowed in like panic among her thoughts. Missy, she had told Marco excitedly, must never be left alone again. Never. She would not have one moment's peace if things like this could happen.

"What do you want to do?" Marco had asked quietly.

"Why, move her in with us," said Coles. "Of course. What else can I do?"

"Leave her here, with the door open."

"Way in here, alone?"

He was silent. Even the next morning when Tinette, shamefaced and full of mumbled excuses, helped move Missy's bed into their bedroom, he had said no more to Coles.

There grew between them this faint unease, this miserable feeling of each keeping something back from the other. At night he had kissed her, but not as he had the night before. And last night, in the night, Marco had asked Coles to arrange a room for him next to hers.

She had wept a little, wiping her tears surreptitiously on the hem of the pillowcase.

"I'm so sorry," she'd whispered over and over. "I'm so sorry." She felt humiliated, and at the same time outraged, as though he had said in so many words that he was tired of her overzealous motherhood. Almost as though he had reproached her, or even ridiculed her. And yet he had said nothing. . . .

"It *is* lovely here," she said now, slipping her hand through his arm and feeling the good muscles hard beneath his thin shirt-sleeve. "It's the most romantic place I was ever in," she added shyly.

His glance slanted down across her upturned face. "Think you can stand it?" he asked. "Or is the going too tough? Don't hesitate to say so, when it is."

"How about you?" asked Coles, flushing a little. "Is it too much for you, Marco?"

"Don't be absurd," he admonished her. "I've tackled worse places than this—much worse."

"Yes, I know—'places,'" she said, and gulped. "But how about people? I mean, if Missy and I get to be too much for you—don't you hesitate, either—"

He looked down at her curiously. "You *are* a sensitive-plant," he said. "Of course I meant 'places' and not 'people.'"

Out in the bay a little boat, its faded sails flapping in the languid air, crept forward under oars. He regarded it thoughtfully. "I don't think you quite realize," he said at length, "how fond I am of Missy—to say nothing of you."

In the silence that fell, Coles could feel her spirits illuminate, as though someone had gone about a room inside her, turning on one light after another. It was on the tip of her tongue to say something straight from the heart in reply, but a cautious shyness held her back.

"I've written letters to everyone I know," she confessed abruptly. "Telling them about the beauties of Haiti and the comforts of the villa and so on—" Her voice quivered with mirth. "And really, it sounds wonderful, the way I tell it."

Clearly the thought of Coles (of all people!) extolling the charms of Haiti amused him, but when she looked up and met his eyes, he was silent, smoking.

"And I thought that soon—when you're not quite so busy at the plantation—you'd go with me to see the American consul. He might be willing to recommend our place to some of the people who come to this end of the island on business—"

She broke off, raising her eyebrows inquiringly. Marco nodded.

"That leaves the staff to think about. Toussaint's a marvelous cook, and when I've shown him one or two little things the way Americans like them—"

She rattled on, unaware of the puzzled look that had come into the man's eyes. To him, she was a dainty, graceful, rather appallingly sensitive young woman whose flow of emotions was as completely baffling as the deviations of an underground river.

At times she was so practical, so earnestly the housekeeper and mother, that he wanted to flee to some masculine sanctuary until the storm of her efficiency blew over. Yet there were times when his touch or his lightest word brought an eagerness into those big, candid eyes of hers, a trembling warmth and tenderness to those extraordinarily fresh, soft lips that was like—like—

He tamped his cigarette abruptly and pitched it over the railing with a glance for where it fell on the ragged grass.

"And the head boy," Coles was saying, "—I couldn't get on without him. He could run the place single-handed, if he had to. In fact, I rather suspect he's done all the work's been done around here, and that Justin Fougère just sat in the office and lorded it over the servants. They all seem scared to death of him. Marco, will you tell that man to go? Tell him—"

She paused, a thoughtful forefinger against her chin. "Oh, of course! Tell him we simply can't afford a manager. That from now on, I'm the manager."

She was so small and straight and amusing, her manner crisp as a lettuce leaf in this colossal heat, that he found her suddenly and irresistibly enchanting.

"Very well," he agreed negligently, and would have kissed her, only at that moment Missy appeared in the yard below, with black Tinette trailing behind her.

"Pull your hat forward, dear," called Coles. "Not back, forward. —*Tinette!*" She finished her instructions to the nurse in French.

Behind her back Marco's face changed, and he withdrew his hand and lounged against the wall of the building, thumbs hooked in the edges of his trouser pockets.

"You shouldn't speak such correct French to Tinette," he murmured lazily. "You'll spoil her ear for her native patois. Learn to speak Creole, as Missy already has, apparently."

Coles, unaware that a moment had passed, laughed. "You're a fine one to talk!" she said cheerfully. "I never heard such French in my life as you speak around here. Don't you put anything into its proper tense—past, present or future?"

"Too much bother." He turned to go indoors. "I say what I have to say, and add either *'yesterday,' 'now'* or *'tomorrow'* at the end of it. The Haitians understand me perfectly."

Coles smiled, and shook her head at his back. With a glance to see that Missy was in shade again, she followed him inside.

After supper Marco called Justin Fougère into the office of the hotel and dismissed him.

Chapter Six

THAT week their first guest came. He arrived out of nowhere in one of the town's tired taxis, asked for and accepted a room without inquiring about rates, and signed the register.

Coles, who had never in her life asked a person to pay for their room and meals, came through the ordeal of receiving him better than she had expected.

"Harold Haybrook," read the signature, written in a blunt, stubby style at the very top of a page already carefully dated in Coles' neat little hand.

He was a nice-looking man, taller than Marco, but stooped a little; older than Marco, but not much; and decidedly thinner on top, as she discovered when he bent to sign the register.

She gave him his choice of rooms, and he took one over the entrance—without the view, but with the windows that caught an occasional breeze as it rolled down from the mountain.

All the rooms were enormous, with crude but effective built-in showers, and interior walls left open at the top for ventilation.

The place was really beginning to look fresh and clean, Coles decided the morning after Harold Haybrook arrived. She was standing in the doorway of her office and looking out over the vast lobby, which was tiled in a more elaborate pattern than the bedrooms, and was open on three sides, with giant roll-up shutters that could be pulled down at night or during heavy storms.

Actually the lobby was a combination lounge and dining-hall. Because of its great size and openness, it was the coolest, pleasantest place in the villa. There were hanging ferns and tubs of flowering quince, and around its edges were the small green-painted tables for dining.

"Alexandre, who's on night duty tonight?" she called to the elderly Haitian crossing the lobby.

"Elie, madame."

"Well, I want him to stay strictly on the job," said Coles. "We're a hotel now; we have one guest, and we're going to have a lot more. I want the boys to put on fresh white uniforms *every* morning, you know! You're the head one, so I'm holding you responsible."

"Yes, madame." Alexandre gave her an unexpected smile. "Everything be very nice from now on, madame. You will see."

Alexandre spoke good English, and wore shoes as though he were accustomed to them. He was infinitely wise and ingenious about running a place of this sort, and Coles felt that she could not have undertaken the job without him.

He was very old, she decided, and thin even for a Haitian. "Funny," she murmured to herself as she started toward the kitchen. "Come to think of it, I've never seen a fat Haitian."

Coles had meant to get up before sunrise and go to market this morning; but she had already found Toussaint, the cook, utterly reliable; and there was an unspoken agreement between them, that if she were not down by five, Toussaint was to do the day's marketing.

He had housekeeping money and rendered strict account. Also it gave him, she fancied, a certain prestige among his friends to shop with the hotel's money. This morning she had slept through, and he had gone to market instead.

It was still early and the sun not yet high as she went out through the serving pantry, along the narrow gallery and out the side door. The kitchen was a separate house in the side yard—strictly Toussaint's domain.

She was annoyed, then, to see, as she approached the open doorway and glanced inside, a small blue denim hat

bent over something, and a circle of dark faces standing around.

"Melissa!" said Coles, and at the sound of her voice, the group seemed to melt and fade away. Quietly the yard boy, the laundress, two "boys" from the main building and even Tinette shuffled away with dark, uneasy looks.

"Darling, I told you not to come here and bother Toussaint," said Coles. "What's that you have?"

Missy held up a small object, dangling it across the palm of her hand. "Look at the doll, Mommie," she said. "It's mine; I found it."

Coles glanced at the little two-legged thing made of glass beads and bits of rubbish to simulate crudely a human being. By chance she caught a glimpse of the cook's face before he turned and busied himself at the big charcoal range.

"Where did you find it?" she asked, glancing curiously at Toussaint's rigid back.

"On the steps. In front of the house." Missy got up from the kitchen chair and began a sing-song, dancing around her mother. "It's mine; it's mine; a dear little dollie; it's mine."

"I think you'd better throw it away," said Coles, with another uneasy look at the man's back. "It may be dirty."

"No! No, Mommie—"

Coles took the little thing in her own hand. "Toussaint, have you ever seen one of these before?" she asked. "Is it all right for her to keep it?"

Thus directly addressed, the cook turned. "That's a bad thing," he said in French. "Not good." He made a small expressive gesture, rolling his eyes and not quite meeting Coles' inquiring look. "Of course, some people don't believe in it, but—better not to take a chance."

"In what?" asked Coles. "Believe in what? What is it?"

"A *wanga,*" he said reluctantly. "Charm for bad luck. Sometimes people die—" He hesitated. "Somebody made that for somebody here. Leave it on doorstep in the night. It makes no difference who finds it." His eyes swiveled over to the prancing Missy, who hopped impatiently around with her gaze glued to the object in Coles' hand. "Mademoiselle Laseby find it, but it could be for anyone."

"Oh, for goodness sake!" thought Coles. "All this fuss over some sort of superstition—"

She marched over to the big covered refuse-can, lifted the lid, and dropped the *wanga* inside. There was a fatalistic look on Toussaint's face, as though that simple gesture were no way to ward off the evil that threatened. In spite of herself, Coles felt a small chill of apprehension tickling her spine. These queer, primitive people! She had heard of their charms and their voodoo, of course. But—there *couldn't* be anything in it! "—I hope," she added as a mental footnote and seizing her daughter's hand, walked rapidly out of the cook-house and across the yard.

Missy's mouth had long since opened for a wail of protest, but the novelty of hearing herself called Mademoiselle Laseby was just delightful enough to offset the loss of her plaything.

"I'm Mademoiselle Laseby now," she told Coles. "I'm not Melissa Pettiford any more; I'm Mademoiselle Laseby. Toussaint said so."

AND that was Missy's news for Marco when he came home to dinner.

"I'm your little girl now," she declared, clutching him around the knee with frantic affection. "I'm Mademoiselle Laseby! Pick me up, Marco!"

Coles said, "Hush, Melissa." And to Marco: "Come and meet Mr. Haybrook, dear." For Haybrook had gone out last evening before supper, and not returned until the others had gone up to bed. She led the way across the lounge to a small table on the far side.

The two men shook hands; and Coles, watching them, confirmed her estimate that Harold Haybrook was really the taller, but the way he carried his sloping shoulders made him seem shorter than Marco.

"Glad to have you with us," Marco was saying. "If there's anything you want and don't get, just sing out."

As they turned away toward their own table, the one nearest the serving-pantry, Missy met them and took up her chant again.

"I'm Mademoiselle Laseby, Marco. Please don't call me Melissa Pettiford any more."

Coles, meeting Marco's eyes, gave a little helpless shrug. "Toussaint called her that," she said, unfolding her napkin. "I hope you don't mind." She smiled apologetically. "It will blow over, I think."

"Not at all," said Marco courteously. "I'm flattered. What has Mademoiselle Laseby been doing all morning?"

Melissa gurgled delightedly and talked, looking up at her stepfather with eyes that worshiped. Coles thought for the hundredth time how sweet Marco was with Missy; how wretched it would have been if he had not this gift of kindness with children.

"I'm driving over to Jacmel this evening," said Marco presently. "I have to see a man over there. Want to come along?"

"You mean, after supper?" asked Coles.

"Yes. Man named Frank Browell, knows a lot about the sisal business, because he was in it once. I called him up and asked if I could have a talk with him, so he suggested this evening. Asked me to bring you along, to meet his wife. I don't know what sort of people they are, except that they're Americans. But—"

He paused, looking at Coles inquiringly.

"I'd love to go," she said in a low voice. "But Marco, I can't. You know I can't leave—" She broke off and glanced toward Missy.

"Oh." Marco ate a mouthful in silence, his eyes on his plate. Suddenly he looked up; and Coles, waiting uneasily for the storm to break, thought how terrifyingly cold a pair of hazel eyes could seem.

But all he said was: "Who's on night duty here tonight? Which one of the boys?"

"Elie."

"Oh, Elie. You trust him, don't you? Or you could get Alexandre to change with him for tonight, couldn't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"Look, darling," he interrupted quietly. "Some day you've got to make the break. You can't live here like a hermit, just because you have a—responsibility. I don't know whether these Browells are people we'd like or not, but the point is—I want you to go with me. Please."

COLES was conscious of the keenest disappointment, of a sense of distress that grew in her like a great gray bubble. She would have loved to go visiting with Marco; he might not understand at all if she refused—yet she must refuse.

"Marco, I'm really and truly sorry," she began, "but I'd be on pins and needles the whole time. Perhaps later," she pleaded. "Later on, when I'm more used to this place, these people—"

"You mean, when you get used to being a mother," he replied. "And that's something you'll never do, at this rate."

Coles bit her lip and glanced sidewise at Missy, who was eating her dinner hungrily and paying no attention to her elders.

"Little pitchers—" began Coles.

"Oh, damn little pitchers!" Marco whispered under his breath, but loud enough so that Coles caught the words as well as the look that went with them. "I'm sorry," he said instantly. "I'm terribly sorry, Coles."

She nodded and shook her head in quick succession, a ridiculous motion indicating that she forgave him, but that it was impossible at that moment for her to speak.

A sense of dismal failure choked her. A feeling that Marco would never again ask her to join him in anything, to take part in his life, after this. Tears gathered in her throat and drowned her voice, as though she were strangling in some bitter, salty marsh.

"Well, I'll be getting back to the plantation," said Marco. "Did I tell you a new order came this morning from a firm that may mean a darned good connection for us? This is sort of a trial order, I imagine." He crumpled his napkin beside his plate and rose. "See you at supper, anyway," he said pleasantly.

Coles, trying to avoid his eyes, felt that he was looking at her with insistence; that he was determined to make her look at him.

"Good-by," he said, still lingering beside his chair.

Briefly she fought to hide her unhappiness, but the force of his will was too strong for her. She lifted her eyes to his. "Good-by, Marco."

"Sorry you couldn't come along last night," said Marco at breakfast. "The Browells were nice. I think you'd like them." He ate a golden segment of papaya. "And guess who's coming to see you, Missy?"

"Who?" demanded Missy.

"Betty Browell," he said. "She's a little girl just your age, so I invited her to come and spend the day with you. Was that all right, Coles?"

"Oh, Marco!" Sudden tears rose to Coles' eyes. "That *was* thoughtful of you!" She paused to collect herself, her eyes on Missy's eager little face. "You couldn't have done anything nicer."

"When's she coming?" demanded Missy.

"Today."

"Oh, *today!*" squealed Missy, and began frantically spooning her breakfast. "Oh, Mommie! Isn't it wonderful?"

"Don't try to talk with your mouth full," murmured Coles automatically. "Who's bringing the little girl over, Marco?"

"Why, Mrs. Browell said she'd send Betty's nurse with her." He said it blandly, watching his wife. "They ought to be here about ten."

"You mean to say they're letting that child come all the way here with just a servant?"

"Of course. Why not? What could possibly happen to her in broad daylight? They are not afraid of everything in Haiti. Really, Coles—"

He stopped, and was silent while the waiter cleared away the melon and brought coffee, toast, scrambled eggs.

"Really," he finished after a moment, "you should try to get over your feeling about this place. There's probably not one tenth as much actual crime committed here as in Chicago or New York, in proportion to the population."

Coles nodded submissively, her mind on what she would give the children for lunch.

FROM then on, the tempo of Coles' life seemed to quicken —as though Harold Haybrook's coming had broken the ice, or brought the hotel luck, or whatever it was. The villa began to do business.

While he was a solitary guest, she had got rather well acquainted with him; in fact, he was almost like a member of the family now. He called them all by their first names, and Coles and Marco called him Harold.

He was around a good deal during the daytime, which was when Coles was in and out of her office, in and out of the lounge, the pantry, the laundry-house and cook-house; often picking up her hat, phoning for a taxi, and rushing off to the center of town to shop for this or that forgotten item.

It seemed to her that Harold was lonely and bored. He had given out that he was a business man on an enforced holiday for his health, and that his hobby was archeology.

"There are some lovely things in your little museum over at Port-au-Prince," he said to her one day.

"Are there?" asked Coles in surprise. "I didn't know it. I must go see them. What kind of things?"

"Carib artifacts. Shards. Carvings. Fragments of a very curious, very ancient culture. The people who had this country before the Spaniards and the French came were a highly civilized Indian race, you know." He darted an inquiring glance at her. "The very word, *Haiti,* is an Indian word meaning *mountainous,* it's not a name the Haitians themselves devised. But of course you know that—"

"No, I didn't," Coles told him candidly. "I rather thought the present inhabitants were responsible for whatever there is around here.'

Harold's face took on the look of the born lecturer. "Haitians, whom I admire very much, by the way, were just slaves imported from Africa by the Europeans who drove out the Indians here," he began. "They—"

"Oh, I knew *that,*" interrupted Coles. "I expect if I'd thought about it, I'd have known the other, too." She turned on him her soft, friendly smile. "I used to be a school-teacher, you know."

"Really? You don't look it."

"I do when I wear glasses," Coles assured him seriously.

She felt perfectly at ease with Harold Haybrook in a way she seldom did with strangers—with men; and whenever he offered to do her a small service, she let him do it. For soon she became very busy.

Almost immediately she got a letter making reservations for three people. In addition, her cousin Isabelle Cowbridge of Baltimore, arrived unannounced. Coles was on the terrace spraying insecticide on a wasps' nest when the cab drove up.

"Isabelle!" she cried, running out to embrace what Harold later described as a willowy moonlight blonde. "Why, for heaven's sake! What brings *you* here?"

"Why, you wrote me yourself, silly," replied Isabelle, searching out a dime tip for the driver. "You were positively lyrical about this—this—"

The visitor glanced down at the wrinkles in her beautifully cut gray gabardine traveling-suit and looked about her with such an air of pained discomfort that Coles found herself blushing.

"Yes, of course," said Coles. "But I never dreamed— Well, I'm awfully glad to see you. Come in. You'll be my own guest, of course. I wouldn't let you—"

"Not on your life," cut in the other. "I'm here officially. Where's the register? I'll sign on the dotted line."

A moment later she put the pen aside. "Well, how are you, chickadee?" she asked, looking down from a good six inches above Coles. "What's the get-up you're wearing? Some little native number?"

Coles smiled without answering. "Put Miss Cowbridge's bags in Number Eleven, Alexandre," she directed. "Come on upstairs, Isabelle. You must be dead. How did you get here? Imagine your coming all the way to Haiti just because I wrote you that letter! I'm so sorry Marco isn't here; he had to go on a trip to the north of the island. But he'll be back tomorrow—"

They were strolling up the wide stairway together. Coles slipped her arm through Isabelle's, and felt the elegance of the fabric under her fingers, smelled Isabelle's expensive toilet-water, and admired the dashing lines of the feather-light straw that shaded a creamy skin and long, silken blonde hair. "She must have come into money since I last saw her," reflected Coles idly.

Halfway up the stairs, Isabelle glanced back over her shoulder at Harold, who had come in out of the sun and was crossing the lounge toward the water-cooler.

"Who's *that?*"

"Oh, he's Harold Haybrook, a guest." Coles touched her hair absently. "We have three more coming tomorrow; that makes four now—five, counting you."

They reached the bedroom, where the head porter was busy arranging the bags, opening the shutters, glancing in the shower-room to check up on towels.

"That will be all for now, Alexandre," said Coles, and waited for him to leave the room. "I suppose," she contined, "you're wondering about me and this hotel. Well, Melissa and Marco inherited this property together—there's a sisal plantation, too—and I've made the hotel my job, so—"

"Wait! Back up a little," pleaded Isabelle, taking a lipstick out of her purse. "Who's Melissa, and who is Marco? Darling, all your letter said was, 'Come to beautiful Haiti for your vacation. Visit our villa,' or something." Isabelle's laugh bubbled throatily.

"Why, Melissa's my *child!*" cried Coles. "Didn't you know I had a daughter?"

"I haven't heard a word about you—or from you—in four years, my dear," said Isabelle dryly. "Until your glowing description of this place arrived. You did mention Marco as being your husband, now I come to think of it. Tell me about him."

After which amiable command she leaned toward the mirror, pulled off her hat, and re-outlined her mouth in a vivid shade of scarlet.

COLES, sitting on the arm of a chair and watching her cousin in the mirror, began to remember all the things she had not liked about Isabelle when the Baltimore girl had spent one summer at Coles' home, before Coles' mother and father died.

Still, she thought, it *was* good to see one's own cousin! And Isabelle's smart, decorative appearance would dress up the hotel.

"I said, tell me about your husband," repeated Isabelle, and shucked off her jacket. "Lord, it's hot here!"

"Marco? Why, he's—he's difficult to describe. You'll meet him tomorrow and see for yourself."

Isabelle put down her lipstick and turned suddenly. "Coles, you poor little idiot," she said kindly. "You've done it again, haven't you?"

"Done what?"

"Married another lame duck. Oh, I know Charles is dead and all that, but from the little I heard— And now look at you! Another one! A man who makes you run a

third-rate hotel in a steaming little town in the tropics! Look at your skin, your hair, your clothes—"

Obediently, moved more by alarm than common sense, Coles got up and looked at herself in the glass.

It *was* a boy's shirt, admitted Coles silently, and it was quite badly faded, as everything did fade down here; but its collar lay open coolly and pleasantly against her smooth brown throat, and her bare legs beneath the full, very short white duck skirt were a perfect match for her arms, so there was no need to wear stockings. Her legs and ankles were the one thing about her that Charles had approved of strongly during his painting days. The sandals on her bare feet were exactly like those Missy wore.

AS though in answer to her mother's passing thought of her, Missy strolled in at the open door.

"Hello," she said, staring at Isabelle. "Hello, Mommie."

"Hello, darling. This is Cousin Isabelle, who's going to stay with us awhile. My daughter Melissa, Isabelle."

"Why, Coles, she's lovely!" exclaimed the other. "Who in the world does she get it from?"

"I've no idea," said Coles shortly.

"Come here, darling," commanded Isabelle. "Let me look at your lovely hair. And those eyelashes—"

Missy put her hands behind her back and glanced at her mother. "Do I have to?" she asked.

"Shake hands with Cousin Isabelle," Coles instructed her briefly. "Then you may go back to Tinette. Where is she, Missy? You're never to leave her sight, dear. I've told you that again and again."

"She's out there." Missy gestured carelessly toward the shadowy upstairs hall. "Mommie, when's Marco coming home?"

"Tomorrow, I hope."

"Oh. . . . When can Betty spend the day with me again?"

"Why, any time her mother will let her, dear."

Isabelle raised her eyebrows, and Coles explained. "They're Americans—business friends of Marco's. Mr. Browell's in the export business. They have a little girl just the age of Missy—"

She looked around, but Missy had drifted away.

"Come down to supper when you're ready," Coles said, rising. "Don't bother to dress up. There's only Harold Haybrook and you and me tonight. The others are coming tomorrow."

On the way downstairs Coles made up her mind that after tonight she would have to change for supper. Isabelle was right; an outfit like this wouldn't do for a first-class hotel manager.

"Hello," she said to Harold Haybrook, who had picked up a magazine and stood by the table, flipping pages.

"Oh, hello, Coles." He glanced toward the stairway and back to her with a quizzical look. "I'm not to inhabit this paradise all alone any more, I see."

"No, that's my cousin, Isabelle Cowbridge— Oh, excuse me," said Coles. She had caught a glimpse of Justin Fougère standing just inside the main entrance to the lounge, his hat in his hand.

Coles went over to him. "Good evening," she said civilly. "I didn't know you were here."

He bowed, and his white ducks were as starched and dazzling as ever. "Good evening, Madame Laseby," said the man. "I came to see if you would not like me to come back, now. I heard you're having guests. Madame will be busy, need my assistance, perhaps—"

"Why, only two, so far," said Coles mildly.

He darted a glance at her out of the corner of his eye. 'But more tomorrow, perhaps?" he said.

"Why, how did you know?" asked Coles before she could catch herself. "That is—I'm afraid we can't afford a manager now," she finished.

"I would work for half what Mr. Pettiford paid me."

"No, really, I—"

"But madame, I know the business so well. I understand the bookkeeping. I—"

He began to talk excitedly, gesticulating.

Coles backed away a little, unconsciously. Harold Haybrook strolled up, his magazine under his arm. "Is this a private conversation?" he asked. "Or can anybody get in?"

"I was just telling—I was just saying we didn't need a manager," Coles began, when the Haitian interrupted her.

"*Bon soir, monsieur-dame,*" he said, using the favorite Haitian contraction. "Another time, perhaps. *Bon soir.*" His eyes swept over the pair before him and flicked just for an instant toward the waiters who had ostensibly been laying the tables for supper. Then he departed, stepping out jauntily into the dusk of the driveway.

Coles, turning, saw the expressions on three dark faces as the men hastily went on with their work.

"Haiti!" she said in a low voice to Harold. "I don't care what Marco says, there's something about it that gives me the shivers."

It was barely daylight when Marco got home next morning. The fishing-boat that had taken him to Jeremie and back in search of a trained plantation foreman came tacking into harbor while Coles was brushing her hair.

"Hello, dear," she called as he paid off the sleepy-eyed taxi-driver. "Have a good trip? Guess what—we've got company!"

"Have we?" Marco smiled at her over his shoulder. "Just a minute—"

Coles, waiting for him at the top of three shallow terrace steps, took a deep breath of the good early-dawn smell—a chilled distillation of dew and fresh forest odors and a scent like sandalwood from the hundreds of little charcoal fires cooking hundreds of frugal Haitian breakfasts.

"All right," said Marco, turning to her. Coles put up her face shyly, and he bent and kissed her. "Now: who's our company?"

"A cousin of mine from Baltimore," said Coles, lowering her voice. "Isabelle Cowbridge Just dropped out of the sky, without a word of warning Did you find your man, Marco?"

"No, but I talked to another one, who may do. Tell me about your cousin: what's she like—how long's she going to be here?" He looked down at her as she walked beside him across the deserted lounge. "You're going to enjoy her, aren't you?" he asked in a voice that sounded pleased. "This place is lonely for a woman."

"Oh, I'm not *lonely!*" she declared vehemently.

At the foot of the steps Marco paused. "Have I got time for a shave and a shower before breakfast? Mlle. Laseby is still asleep, I suppose. I'll get her up for you."

At her nod, he started upstairs. A moment later Missy's engaging laughter floated down, threading through the resonant undertones of her stepfather's voice.

THEY were still at it—Missy and Marco—when the family sat down to breakfast. Missy adored his bantering. Coles watched them a moment, smiling. Then she glanced up and saw Isabelle descending the stairs. She looked, thought Coles with just a shade of wistfulness, like an expensive advertisement for a smart resort hotel.

The immaculate white sharkskin slacks and white silk blouse were belted at Isabelle's slim waist with crushed red leather. The long, fair bob, fresh as silk and reaching to her handsome shoulders, looked somehow too expensively improbable for Haiti and Fort Freedom. She looked *groomed,* Coles reflected.

Marco rose.

"Good morning!" called Isabelle, and clattered over to them on her high, fashionable clogs. "Where do you want me, Coles?"

"Here," said Coles. "Isabelle, this is Marco. My cousin Isabelle Cowbridge, dear. Sit there on Marco's right, will you, Isabelle?"

"So you're Marco," said Isabelle, glancing over her shoulder at the man who held her chair. "Well!"

"So you're Isabelle," he replied lightly. "I'm well too, thank you. Won't you sit down?"

"How did you sleep?" asked Coles.

"Very fine, thank you." Isabelle made a droll face. "Once I got used to the shroud you hang over people down here." She picked up her little faded blue linen napkin, shook open its folds, and laid it across one knee. "Haiti's lovely, isn't it?" she said, turning to smile at Marco.

"It is if you can stand the climate," he replied.

"If it doesn't get on your nerves," interjected Coles.

"Nerves?" Isabelle scoffed. "Be like me—I haven't a nerve in my body." She laughed reminiscently. "Coles was always afraid of things when we were younger. I suppose it's because you're so small, dear."

Marco, glancing up from his coffee, gave his wife's cousin a curious look. "It has nothing to do with size," he said without emphasis. "Coles isn't really afraid of anything, anyway. What boat did you come down on, Isabelle?"

"I flew," replied the other briefly.

"Why," thought Coles in astonishment, "they aren't getting on well together at all! And on my account, of all things! Isabelle's offended because Marco sat on her. . . . But she started it."

There was a moment's silence while Elie passed fresh hot rolls. Coles came out of her daydreams.

"What would you like to do this morning?" she asked politely. "I'm afraid there isn't much in the way of entertainment here—"

"Oh, I'll find things," answered Isabelle, and waited while Missy asked to be excused, folded her napkin, and slipped down from her chair. "What do *you* do all day?"

"Lots," answered Coles. "I work."

"And you, Marco?"

"I work too," he said flatly.

"Can I come and see you at it?"

"Of course, if you like," he said more cordially. "There's not much to see on a sisal plantation. But whenever you like, I'll show you the works."

DURING the forenoon the three other guests arrived. They were Dr. and Mrs. Everd and their daughter Sheila. Coles fluttered a little, getting them settled.

Isabelle spent the morning stretched full length in a wicker swing at the coolest end of the lounge. Coles, passing by with a stack of dish-towels over her arm, felt a twinge of conscience for having neglected her.

"How do you stand it?" called out Isabelle. "Heavenly fathers, I should think you'd go mad in this heat!"

"You do," agreed Coles, flopping for a moment in the nearest chair. "You almost do, sometimes."

"Does it go on like this *every day?*"

"Every day," Coles assured her. "Except that when you think you can't stand another minute of it, a shower comes up. Then everything's fresh and cool, and smells like a greenhouse."

Missy came flying through the lounge, her yellow hair streaming out behind her.

"Don't *run,* darling," ordered Coles as Missy arrived and flung herself across her mother's lap. "What is it now?"

"Nothing," said Missy mildly. "Oh, yes—I know. Mommie, what's a revolving door?"

"What? Why, it's— Who's been talking about revolving doors?"

"That new lady." Missy pointed upward without taking her eyes off Coles' face. "What is it, Mommie?"

"Why, it's a—it's hard to describe," said Coles. "It's a door that goes round and round."

Missy looked at her blankly.

"Well," began Coles again, "I'll tell you. It's—" She made a circular movement with her hand, glanced over at Isabelle, and burst out laughing. "Isabelle, *you* describe a revolving door."

Isabelle sat up obligingly. "It's like this, Missy," she began. "You have this door, and it's divided into four little compartments—like little rooms—"

Her long white hands began sketching vague outlines in the air. Coles, weak with laughter, said, "It's no use, Isabelle. We'll never get anywhere with it. Missy, you'll just have to wait until we go home and I'll take you through one." Then she caught sight of Harold Haybrook.

"Go ask Mr. Haybrook what a revolving door is, dear," she said mischievously. "He'll be able to tell you, I'm sure."

Missy trotted off, and Isabelle fell back on the swing's cushions with a groan. "Revolving doors," she muttered. "In this heat! Coles, who is that man? Is he anybody? I mean, has he got money, or does he work here, or what?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said Coles indifferently. "I know he doesn't work here in Haiti; he's from New York. He's an amateur archeologist. Isabelle, don't quote me, but I'd give ten years of my life to be going through a New York revolving door right this minute."

"And whizzing up a mile a minute in an elevator?" asked Isabelle.

"Yes, and hunting for my galoshes," capped Coles with a chuckle, "because it was snowing blizzards outside—"

Isabelle's laugh cut her short. "Getting you down, hey? Love in the tropics isn't all it's cracked up to be?"

Coles stiffened slightly in her chair.

"Don't be silly," she said with cousinly frankness. "I was talking about climate, and—well, just the lack of ordinary things, like good movies, nice shops, theaters and music. You wouldn't understand unless you'd been here awhile."

She had been on the verge of telling Isabelle her little private horror of the island itself; of the way it depressed her with its monotonous dark faces and its curious sadness. There was something about Haiti that was hopeless and sad as well as poor and primitive, she thought; something that perhaps only a woman would understand.

But she had remembered in time, and was glad she had, Isabelle's unfair remark at breakfast—about her being a coward.

"It's almost time for dinner," she said. "Toussaint's making coconut mousse in your honor. I must go see if it's frozen. Shall I bring you a magazine, or something?"

"No, thanks," said Isabelle. "I'll just lie here and stew. Tell me when it's ten minutes before dinner. I'd like to run up and take a shower." She put an immaculate white trouser-leg over the side of the swing and started a gentle motion with the pressure of one toe.

After dinner it rained. For a week thereafter it rained each day at the same time, and it was as though the sky opened for a waterfall.

After the shower came resurrection. Leaves and petals straightened themselves and stood taller and firmer than before. Colors intensified. The smell was, as Coles had said, like a well-tended greenhouse—clean, moist, delicious.

One afternoon during the rainy week Marco was in the drying-shed testing a batch of fibers when he heard his name called.

"Marco! *Mar*-co!"

"Here," he called, and went toward the entrance.

Isabelle stood there smiling at him.

"Is this where visitors enter?" she asked, untying the big square of scarlet silk that had covered her long hair peasant fashion. "You said I could come any time."

"I certainly did." Marco took her outstretched hand. "This is nice, Isabelle. I'm glad to see you."

"Are you?" she queried. "Or is that just your pretty manners? I've had a funny feeling you don't like me very well, Marco." She laughed a little, showing her fine white teeth. "I can't imagine why."

"Neither can I," he said, glancing into her gray eyes so nearly on a level with his. "You don't look like a girl who imagines things like that. Come on; I'll show you how sisal grows."

Whether she had come for that or not, he took her through part of the big plantation, where rows and rows of the prickly plants grew in orderly fashion; where Haitian workmen in wide straw hats stirred the ground around each plant with slow, rhythmic movements of a special prong-tipped hoe; where men down on their knees garnered the young shoots, or suckers, that sprang up around the parent plant.

MARCO glanced up as a cloud suddenly blotted out the sun. "Hey, we'd better get back to the sheds; there's a storm coming."

"Oh, let's not hurry," she said perversely. "It's too hot to run from a little bit of rain. Look—your skin's damp with heat now."

But they did run, and even so they were drenched before they reached the sheds. The storm broke furiously, and Isabelle ran beside Marco, laughing as the great drops bounced around them.

"Look at me!" she cried gayly, stamping her feet on the sisal doormat at the entrance to Marco's empty office. "I'm soaked!"

"You are that," he agreed, eying her ruefully. Her thin blouse clung to her breasts and shoulders like a second skin. Her handsome slacks bore long dark streaks of rain. Part of her longish, carefully trained hair had broken loose into stray ringlets that were rather charming around her face. "I'm afraid your clothes are spoiled."

"Oh, it's nothing," she said lightly, glancing around her. "What a drab little office you have here! I might come down and fix it for you one day, if you ask me nicely. I once took a course in interior decorating."

Ignoring her banter, Marco pulled forward the room's one extra chair, a stiff splint-bottomed affair on which Isabelle collapsed gracefully. For himself he found a place by sitting down before his desk. His own shirt was soaked too, but his white linen coat had been left hanging over the back of his chair. He rummaged in his coat pocket now, found cigarettes, and offered her one.

"Thank you," said Isabelle, and waited for a light. "You know, this may be a heaven-sent chance for me to have a talk with you," she added, watching the lazy flight of a gray smoke plume that came out of her mouth.

"So?" Marco got his own cigarette going and glanced at her briefly. "What about?"

"About my cousin. I'm sure you're a kind husband and a good stepfather and all that, Marco. But Coles is eating her heart out to get away from here. I wonder if you know how unhappy she is?"

"Unhappy?" he said uncertainly. "Why, I don't—I never noticed that she was."

"You're a man; you wouldn't," she told him succinctly.

Marco smoked for a moment in silence, considering. "How do you know?" he said at last, and as their eyes met and glanced off, he flushed slightly.

"How do you know?" he repeated brusquely. "Did Coles talk to you about it?"

"Why, yes, she did," replied Isabelle with an air of simple truth. "We were talking one morning. Missy asked some question about revolving doors. That brought up the subject of home and—well, before she realized it, Coles had broken down and told me how homesick she was."

There was another short silence. At last the man roused himself. "I can't believe it," he murmured more to himself than to her. "It doesn't sound like Coles."

Isabelle crossed her knees and smiled. "Ask her yourself," she said. "Ask her if we weren't talking about revolving doors and how happy she'd be to get out of all this."

Something like a hurt look flickered in Marco's eyes for a moment.

"Maybe I will ask her," he said slowly.

Isabelle tapped the rouge-tipped end of her cigarette with a long white thumb. "Of course," she told him, "there's this: you'll never get Coles to admit to *you* how unhappy she is. She's much too fine and loyal for that. But with me, it's different. She's known me since we were children. I'm practically all the family she has."

"BUT, Marco, I don't *want* to take Missy and go back home!" Coles put down the shirt she was sewing on and looked up at him suspiciously. "Are you trying to get rid of me, or what?"

"Look," he said, and came over to sit down on the edge of the bed beside her. "You've had a tough time of it down here; I know that. You deserve a holiday, you and Missy. I admit this is next month's pay-roll money, but I can swing another note at the bank, and in a few weeks our profits will more than cover it."

He looked down gloomily at the button Coles held in one hand, watching the needle creep up through the little hole, followed by the thread, and then the sweep of Coles' arm. They were in his bedroom, and he was waiting for the fresh shirt to put on for supper.

Coles felt a lump rising in her throat. She was half-sorry for herself, half touched by Marco's thoughtfulness. All by himself he had thought up this plan for her supposed pleasure.

On the other hand, he might be tired of her. Suppose—suppose he sent her back home, calling it a visit, and then broke the news that it was for good.

"Marco, don't send me away from you," she said miserably, and turned and rubbed her nose like a child against his bare shoulder. "I don't want to be where you're not."

He looked down at the top of her smooth head, where the neat parting made perfect alignment with her small, well-tanned nose, and whatever the thoughts that flitted behind his eyes, the expression of his face was inscrutable. Suddenly he bent and rubbed his chin hard across the top of her head, and moved one arm and put it around her.

"You little Coles, you!" he whispered, and she looked up quickly and saw that he was smiling. "Isabelle said—"

"Isabelle?" The hand holding the needle stopped in mid-air. "What did Isabelle say?"

"I was about to tell you, darling. She thought—*ouch!*"

He withdrew his arm and glanced at his hand, at a small dot of blood standing out brightly on the fleshy part of his palm. "She thought—"

"Darling, I'm so sorry!" cried Coles. "Let me put something on it for you!"

"It's nothing. I forgot you had a needle in that hand. Look out—you'll get blood on my clean shirt—"

"Oh, Marco," mourned Coles.

He laughed then, and bent and kissed her troubled face. "Don't look so tragic," he said lightly. "I'm not going to die, my dear."

And then his wrist-watch was there almost before her eyes and Coles gave a gasp and scrambled to her feet, in a rush to get downstairs and see that everything about supper was as it should be.

AFTER supper everyone stood around in the lounge talking about what to do with the rest of the evening.

The Everds said they would hire a car and drive out along the road, where the view of the moon on the mountains was said to be magnificent. They invited Isabelle and Harold Haybrook to go with them.

Isabelle accepted a little too quickly; Harold declined, saying he had driven along that same road a few hours ago and thought he would take in a movie, perhaps. Isabelle let it be known that she was not interested in driving with Dr. and Mrs. Everd and their daughter, alone.

Then Sheila, the daughter, said she would like to see a movie too. She looked around for Harold Haybrook, assuming he would escort her to the movies. But Harold had disappeared.

So in the end Dr. and Mrs. Everd chaperoned their daughter to the nearest cinema.

Isabelle stalked up and down the lounge, declaring herself greatly disappointed. "*Somebody's* got to take me driving," she complained. "Coles, let's you and Marco and I go."

"I can't," said Coles briefly. "I never leave Missy here alone with the servants."

"Well, will you let Marco take me?"

"Of course."

She watched them go, a feeling of jealousy and self-pity curling around her heart. The thought of Isabelle and Marco speeding through the velvety night was faintly bitter in her mind. Frowning a little, she went into the office and turned on the light above the desk. Might as well work on the books until they came back.

Waiters cleared the supper tables quickly and vanished. The lounge, well-lighted and empty, looked enormous.

Odd, she thought, how Harold had vanished. A moment later he turned quietly in at the office door.

"So, you ran away," said Coles sternly. "How do you do it—this disappearing act of yours?"

"I couldn't take the gay whirl," he admitted. "I'm a solitary man by nature. Let me help you with what you're doing there."

"Oh, these are just the books. They never quite balance, but I give them a working-on now and then, anyway."

"Well, let me try," he said pleasantly. "There's nothing secret about them, is there?"

"Not in the least," said Coles. "Go ahead, if you like."

They worked together peacefully for a while, and at last the Everds returned, paused for a while to chat, and went up to bed. The night porter, on a chair in his little cubby-hole behind the office, sat very still and exercised his Haitian powers of making himself almost invisible.

"I wonder where they are?" said Coles several times, and once she got up and walked out onto the front terrace and looked off down the dark drive. "Put out the lights in the lounge, Christophe," she said to the porter after that. "It's eleven o'clock."

"Why don't you go to bed?" suggested Harold. "There's no need for you to wait up, is there? I'll stay here until everyone's safely in, if you like."

She shook her head and settled back in her straight desk chair, turning a pencil over and over between her fingers.

At that moment Isabelle and Marco came in, and for some curious reason Coles let them cross the lobby without speaking—without indicating that in spite of the lowered lights and the silence around them, she and Harold were there in the office.

"Well, good night," she heard Marco say, and by moving her head a little, Coles could see him standing at the foot of the stairs, with Isabelle on the first step looking down at him. "Good night, Isabelle."

"Goodnight, Marco." Suddenly, as Coles watched, Isabelle leaned down and took Marco's face in her hands. "Good night, Cousin Marco," she said, and kissed him on the mouth, laughing a little.

Something like the stab of a long steel needle went through Coles' breast, so that what followed had the quality of a dream.

"Now Isabelle's going upstairs," whispered Coles' stunned brain. . . . "Now Marco's turning . . . In a moment he'll find me here—and I shall have to see the look on his face when he sees me. . . . And then I'll know—I'll know."

Chapter Seven

MARCO walked toward the office. His face wore a surprised, faintly irritated expression. Absently his right hand squeezed the cloth of a pocket, exploring for cigarettes.

"Hello," said Coles. Her voice was like a leveled finger, halting him in the doorway.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know you were—Great Scott!" He seemed boyishly chagrined rather than guilty. "Did you see that?"

Coles was silent.

Harold rose hurriedly from his chair beside the desk. "Well, good night, you two," he said. "Time I turned in."

"Good night, Harold." Coles' voice was tight and hard.

Marco said, "Good night," and waited for the other to go. "Harold's heading for the storm-cellar before the cyclone hits," he commented with a grin. "Did you get the look on his face?"

Coles gave him a stricken glance. "I—" She clenched her hands in her lap and sat very straight, swallowing desperately. "Marco, I—oh, *Marco!*" she wailed, and burst into sobs. She buried her face in her arms on top of the open ledger and wept—sad, discreet little sounds in the quiet office. A pair of night moths danced indifferently in the hot, white circle of light just above her head, making an incongruous gayety of their flutterings.

Marco, standing over her, looked down for a moment with a baffled expression.

Once he touched her quivering shoulders tentatively and withdrew his hand and looked around helplessly. Then his eye fell on a corner of the ledger and he eased it from beneath Coles' elbows. A small smile etched the corners of his mouth.

"There, now," he coaxed. "Look at what you've done! You've made our Petty Cash for April run over into our Petty Cash for May."

This she ignored, but presently she sat up, trying to regain lost dignity. "Don't worry," she said. "I won't cry any more." And she looked at him with wet-lashed, accusing eyes. "I suppose you're in love with Isabelle."

"Holy cats, *no!*"

"You kissed her—I saw you!"

"Isabelle kissed me. That's perfectly accurate, if ungallant."

"But you—you let her do it," she accused, wiping her eyes and giving a little sniff against the linen. "You must care *something* about her."

"Well, I don't," he said cheerfully.

Faced with his unconcern, it was impossible not to feel a little better. Coles leaned back in her chair and let her arms rest limply along its rattan sides. Emotion had made her head feel hot, her throat dry.

Without a word Marco left her, went out to the water-cooler, and returned with a glass of water. "Have a drink," he suggested.

"Thank you." The curving glass soothed her palms. 'Marco, you needn't tell me what happened, if you don't want to. On the drive, I mean—"

"Nothing happened," he said impatiently. "Not what you mean, anyway. We drove a little way along the shore road, heard some drums, turned off and got out to look for the celebration."

He smiled reminiscently. "It *was* a celebration, too. Tag-end of a cockfight. *Clairin* and *tafia* flowed like water."

Coles felt a puff of envy blow up suddenly out of nowhere. She had never seen a cockfight or any of the native doings here. She could imagine it, though—the circle of faces black as the night itself, the white teeth and the rolling whites of excited eyes.

"Isabelle created quite a stir," Marco was saying. "She wanted to bet on the fights, which would have been all right, I suppose, only she never could remember that a *gourde* was twenty cents and accused one man of short-changing her." He had leaned against the edge of the desk with his hands braced at his sides. Now he took out a cigarette and lighted it.

"Then she upset one of the kerosene lanterns and almost set herself on fire. So we left. I don't think the Haitians cared much for our company."

Suddenly Coles thought: "No wonder Isabelle has fallen in love with him! He's—he's the kind of man women can't let alone—hard and clean-looking—and so sure of himself in the way men are. Not mean or bullying, just sure."

She put out a tentative finger, tempted suddenly and irresistibly to touch the hand nearest her, fascinated by the pull of tendons beneath tanned skin, by the little forest of sun-bleached hairs that sprang beneath the cuff.

Marco, not seeing the gesture, lifted his hand to dispose of his cigarette. Coles drew back quickly.

"As a matter of fact, I was wishing the whole time you'd been with me," he said. "I think you would have enjoyed seeing real Haitian night life."

"I wish I had too."

He hesitated, drummed on the desk with the fingers of one hand. "Coles, I promised myself I wouldn't bring this up again, but—well, I don't think it's fair to Melissa to baby her as you do."

"What?" she asked in surprise. "What's that got to do with *this?*"

"You know very well," he said in a low voice. "All this business of not leaving her here with the servants—it isn't fair to the child. You keep her tied to you as though she were feeble-minded! How is she ever going to develop self-reliance? Coles, believe me, I'm thinking of Missy's good as well as yours and my own. I—"

"Oh, you're doing nothing of the sort," she broke in angrily. "After all, Melissa's not your child, Marco. How can you possibly feel about her as I do? I don't expect you to."

Marco's shoulders lifted and fell once, a gesture more eloquent than words.

("I wanted to hurt him," she thought; "make him feel an outsider after that kiss at the foot of the stairs. I've practically said, 'You're fickle, heartless, incapable of loyalty to *me,* so how can you talk about what's best for my child?' I even wanted to accuse him of getting the subject away from himself and Isabelle on purpose.")

Suddenly, almost without volition, the words slipped out: "Anyway, you're just trying to change the subject."

Marco laughed. "All right," he said. "Let's throw Isabelle to the wolves—what do you say? And forgive me for reminding you, but—she's *your* cousin, dear." There was a glint of mockery in his eyes as he stood up. "How about turning in?" He took her hand casually in his and started toward the door.

A sudden thought struck Coles and she stopped in her tracks. "Marco, what were you going to tell me before supper, about Isabelle? You got as far as 'Isabelle said,' and then my needle stuck you."

"Oh, that! Isabelle had got the idea you were homesick. Something you said to her." He grinned. "I rather discount it now."

Coles nodded, bit back the scathing comment that rose to her lips. Isabelle and her tricks!

THE important thing was not to be bitter, reflected Coles. Not to let your whole world be upset because you had found your own cousin making passes at your husband. Only—it was disturbing. It was a constant nagging little worry at the back of the mind, no matter what Marco had said.

She was leading Dr. and Mrs. Everd down the short-cut path to look at the sisal plantation. It was a blazing hot morning. Missy clung to her hand and insisted on mounting every log and stone on the way, poising like a high diver and jumping off.

At that moment Marco came out of his office to meet them. He was thinner, harder, browner since his arrival on the island, and the hair on his forearms was bleached almost colorless by the sun. Contrary to local custom, he wore a tie at work; and he had, reflected Coles, that gift which sometimes the least vain of men are born with—he looked trim and *scrubbed.*

Coles looked at him closely. Beneath his pleasant manner, as he spoke to his guests, there was something wrong.

While the others wandered through the enclosures, she made an excuse to drop back to his side. "Is anything the matter?" she whispered. "Where are all the workmen?"

"I don't know." He frowned. "They began dropping off yesterday. Today less than half showed up." He shook his head angrily, as though an invisible wasp circled it. "Something's queer, but nobody will tell me what."

Before Coles could say any more, Dr. Everd left his wife and daughter with Missy between them, and came back to these two. Dr. Everd had come down to make some studies of tropical conditions and he was conscientiously learning all there was to learn about everything.

It was nearly dinner-time before the visitors went back up the mountain, leaving Coles and Missy to follow later in the station-wagon with Marco.

"What do you suppose has happened?" she asked, wasting no time once they were alone. "Are the workmen complaining of their pay, or what?"

"Not to me." Marco shrugged. "I can't make it out. One funny thing, though. Yesterday when I came back after siesta, I found Harold Haybrook prowling around."

"*Prowling* around?" echoed Coles. "What do you mean?"

"Well, just looking. People often do, of course. But it's queer he didn't tell me he wanted to see the layout."

"Yes, it is, rather," she replied thoughtfully. "Marco, you don't think—he can't have had anything to do with—why, it's ridiculous!" She broke off, glancing at him across Missy's head. They were all three sitting in the front seat of the station-wagon.

What a shame, thought Coles, for the workmen to start acting up—just as Marco was getting new orders, too. . . .

She asked to be let out at the front entrance, leaving Missy to drive around to the side with Marco.

Isabelle sat reading in the lounge. She looked, thought Coles, as decorative and untroubled as the pretty girl on magazine covers. "If her conscience bothers her," thought Coles, "she certainly doesn't show it. I ought to have it out with her now, before I get complexes and things about it. I shouldn't have put it off even this long."

"Hello," said Isabelle. "I hear you've been showing the Everds through the works. Whew! What a day for sight-seeing!"

Coles chose a chair and sat down, pulling off her hat and fanning her brow with it. "Yes, they wanted to see Marco's plantation."

"So you had to escort them," mocked the other. "Catch me catering to them like that! But then," she added, "I suppose when customers are as scarce as they are here, you have to humor their little whims."

"I didn't mind," said Coles mildly. "And customers aren't so scarce that I—that I have to put up with what I don't like," she added with a sudden rush of courage.

"Meaning anything special?"

"Meaning, the sooner you've had enough of Haiti, the better it will suit me, Isabelle."

Having taken the plunge, Coles felt her face color from throat to brow.

"Well!" Isabelle exclaimed, staring. "Well, of all things!" Suddenly her mouth widened in amusement. "*Really,* Coles!" she chortled, laughing a little. "Darling, it's all very well to be frank in the bosom of the family, but you can't afford to insult your boarders, you know." Her laughter bubbled forth.

"What's funny?" inquired Harold Haybrook, coming up. "Can I laugh, too?"

Isabelle's glance was indifferent. "Coles has been showing the Everd tribe over Marco's plantation in all this heat," she said, and without further explanation picked up her book again.

"I had a look around there yesterday," said Harold. He sat down and glanced from one to the other. "Marco has a nice set-up there. In my opinion the sisal industry can be built up to compare with the hemps of Mexico and Central America. Manila, of course, is another story."

Isabelle turned a page. "What do you know about it?"

"Why, not a great deal," he replied. "My firm in New York imports hemp fibers; we've never bothered much with sisal. I think we should, but we never have."

"But Harold!" exclaimed Coles. "Why didn't you tell us? Imagine your being in almost the same sort of business we are, only the other end of it, so to speak—" Well, anyway, she thought, that cleared up his being at the plantation. Naturally he'd want to look around.

Isabelle yawned. "Personally, the whole thing sounds fishy to me," she said candidly. "If you had a business, why didn't you say so? *I* understood you were an archeologist."

("She's being very blasé about it," thought Coles, "but in a minute she'll be looking at him with dollar-marks in her eyes. . . . That's what despising someone does to you; here I am, ready and willing to think the worst of her—the worse the better!")

"I only do this during vacations," Harold was saying with that deceptively gentle air of his. "You see, eleven months a year I have to talk about fibers." He turned and looked directly at Coles. "The other four weeks are my own to do with as I please, and—" He hesitated, his voice changing subtly. "And it pleases me to hunt for what's left of beauty in the world."

"Yes," said Coles soothingly in the pause that followed. It was as though he spoke to her with some urgent, inner need; he was like a child, she thought, tugging at her attention. It was not his words, but the cadence of them, that was like a hand laid on the arm of a listener.

"Sometimes," he was saying softly, "I discover a rare and beautiful thing, and then I want to own it—"

And at that moment Marco came across the lounge and joined them, dropping easily into the vacant place on the sofa beside Isabelle. "Hello," he said. "What's going on? Coles, Alexandre's looking for you."

("Why did he sit beside Isabelle?" she thought. "Why doesn't he stay away from her? He knows how I feel about the other night. . . . There you go," she told herself, "behaving like a child. Are you so terrified of sharing him? Is one little kiss going to haunt you the rest of your life? But the only time a woman's willing to share even a little of her husband's love is when she doesn't want it herself. If Marco falls in love with Isabelle now, I'll die. I'll—I'll—")

Harold said: "I think it might be fun, if Coles doesn't mind."

"Mind what?" she asked, glancing up in surprise.

"The picnic, silly. You've been dreaming!" Isabelle reached across and patted her knee. "I just said the Everds and I would like to pack our dinners and go for a picnic Sunday. Why can't we all go?"

"Yes, why not?" Marco put up a hand and rubbed absently at the space between his brows. "Do us good."

"All right." Coles rose. "Let's ask the Browells, Marco. Missy would love having Betty along."

"Angel," said Marco, smiling at her.

Alexandre came up and told Coles that a guest had arrived while she was out. "A lady by car, from Cap-Haitien. I put her in Number Sixteen."

"Oh, good," replied Coles. "I'll come at once."

She crossed the lounge and looked at the register, which read: "Anne Rethledge, Chicago."

"Blessings on you, Miss or Mrs. Rethledge," murmured Coles aloud; "we could use about ten more of you, but every little bit helps." She went upstairs to knock on the door of Number Sixteen. The hotel business was fun, if you could get enough guests.

Downstairs there was talk and laughter, and someone had turned on the radio, and there were cars outside in the drive. Five or six bachelors who worked for a near-by American sugar company had started dining at the hotel. It put the villa nicely on the black side of the ledger.

Chapter Eight

MISSY was bored. Why couldn't every day be like yesterday? Yesterday had been the picnic, and she and Betty Browell had ridden real donkeys, and afterward, around the campfire, they had been allowed to eat off paper plates and drink out of paper cups and keep the little paper forks and spoons to take home.

She had spent the morning telling Tinette all about the picnic and showing her the little forks and spoons. Telling her over and over how they had ridden a long, long way straight up a rocky mountain path, and when they got there there was nothing but a few old cannon-balls and a big square stone place with grass growing out of it. How everybody had said, "Oh, look at the marvelous view!" Then they had all come back down and had lunch around a camp-fire.

How she and Mommie and Mr. Haybrook had come home in the late afternoon with the Browells in their car and left

Marco and the others to come back by moonlight, in the station-wagon.

No use telling Tinette that she had cried when she found out Marco wasn't coming home with them—how he had picked her up and said, as though he were talking right over her head to someone else: "Look, Miss Muffet. There's all this food left from lunch, and the others decide all of a sudden that they want to picnic some more up here by moonlight, and it's Sunday and there's nothing else to do, anyway, and how can I refuse?"

And Mommie had said without any smile at all, "Stop crying, Melissa, and let go of Marco. Don't you see we're boring him?"

"You don't fight fair in the clinches, Coles." Marco had looked angry when he said that, and Mommie had turned red and walked away.

So Marco said, "Go with her, Missy," and set her down. "Tell Mommie we won't be any later than midnight getting home."

Missy glanced over at Tinette. They were in the side yard playing in the shade of the tall hibiscus bushes that separated the villa from the next-door neighbor's—only Tinette had tired of playing and was dozing with her back against the trunk of the flamboyant tree and her legs stuck straight out in front of her on the ground. Missy prodded her gently in the leg with the tip of one sandal to waken her, and then lay down on the ground and put her head in Tinette's lap.

Alexandre came around from the back of the house, carrying a shoebox and a lard bucket and wearing a black felt hat. Missy opened her eyes just a slit and peeped at him.

He and Tinette conversed for a moment in rapid Creole, in undertones. Missy caught most of the words: He was going home for a three-day visit. . . . He would ride on a bus like a man of means. . . . His son was now six years old. . . .

All of which Missy knew. Then they lowered their voices still more, as grown-ups do when they have something interesting to say to each other, and Missy caught the words *bocour—wanga—Platon.*

She knew well, from listening to servants' talk, what a *bocour* was—it was a witch-doctor. She knew what a *wanga* was, and had actually possessed one for a minute, before Mommie had thrown it away.

Platon sounded like a person. It would have been nice to sit up and ask questions, but she knew from experience that it would only make them stop talking entirely.

"Alors," murmured Alexandre, "don't worry. It's nothing." And he told Tinette good-by and started down the driveway.

Missy, pretending to waken, jumped up and waved to him. *"Au'voir, Alexandre!"*

He turned and took off his hat. *"Au'voir,* Mam'zelle!"

Coles was in the pantry, mixing beetle-poison. Insects had started devouring Marco's books. Today she would mix this solution, and tomorrow she would buy a camel's-hair brush and paint the covers and spines of all the books. It would be a labor of love, to make up, in part, for the way she had acted at the picnic yesterday.

"I was a fool," she told herself candidly. "It wasn't Marco's doings, that business of splitting the party up and coming home at midnight; it was Isabelle's idea. But if I hadn't had to get Missy to bed, I could have stayed too. And it was a lovely picnic, until then."

Through the pantry door came the sound of the telephone ringing.

Alexandre was away, she reflected. It wouldn't occur to anyone else to answer it—and went through the door to her office.

Ethel Browell was on the phone, inviting them all to a dance on Saturday night. . . .

"I don't understand you, Coles." Marco threw his cigarette over the terrace railing and watched it disappear. "First you say you can't go to this dance because of Missy, and then Mrs. Everd offers to sit with Missy, so that excuse is out. Now you say it's because you haven't anything to wear. What—" He turned and faced her squarely, where she stood a little apart, looking off into the night with set features. "What is it? Are you still sore at me about Isabelle, or have I done something else to offend you, or what?"

She was silent, fighting for coherent words with which to tell him her disappointment. If he had only taken a different tone; if he had tried to understand! Even if he'd **had** sense enough to see she was on the verge of tears and **not** scold her—

Looking back, she could see a whole series of mistakes she had made in her life with him here: That first time he had called on the Browells and wanted her to go with him; she should have managed, somehow, to go. Even the picnic and his coming home late; she should have let Missy curl up and go to sleep in the station-wagon as he had wanted her to; then they could have all come home together.

Today, the day of the party, was the worst mistake of all, and she had no one to blame but herself. She had foolishly put off getting out her one evening dress until this morning; and when she touched it, it fell apart in her hands. The ants literally had devoured it.

It was a calamity that no man—only another woman—could understand. She had no way of knowing that his own disappointment made him sound cold and critical. At noon they had quarreled in a quiet, bitter way.

After that she would have died rather than tell him she had already tried on Mrs. Everd's only evening gown, and the smaller of Sheila's two extra ones, and that both had made her look like a little girl dressed up in mamma's old clothes. Even Mrs. Everd admitted that no pinning or basting would make any of them possible.

But there it was—they had quarreled. And because she could not hate Marco,—never that,—she had transferred the scorch of her bitterness to the island itself.

"How I hate this place!" she had said. "I believe it has an evil eye on me; everything turns against me here."

"You're sure you mean the place?" he'd asked.

But she was silent, standing there.

"I'll have to go up and dress," he said, breaking the silence. "Is it definitely all right with you if I take Isabelle?" He came and stood looking down, not touching her. "Or are you going to make me pay for that too?"

"It's all right," said Coles curtly, and walked away.

Chapter Nine

ANNE Rethledge had declined the Browells' invitation and gone off overnight to Jeremie to sketch. Dr. Everd and Sheila came down, dressed and ready, followed by Mrs. Everd, who lingered to see them off.

While they waited for Harold, Sheila turned on the radio. A trickle of war news, locally broadcast in Creole, came to an end and was followed by band music.

Then Harold appeared, his black tie hung at loose ends. He went up to Coles and asked her to tie it for him.

"I wish you were going," he murmured as she shaped the bow with her fingers. "Why don't you? I'll wait for you to dress if you'll change your mind." His chin was an inch from her forehead.

"I'm not going," she replied, and realized that Harold was probably the only person in the villa who hadn't heard about her dress. "Thanks just the same, Harold."

Marco came downstairs, and her heart jumped at the sight of him. He said: "Does my tie look straight?"

"Yes, it's fine. You look marvelous," she added, wanting at the last moment to be friendly. "You both look beautiful in your boiled shirts."

Isabelle came downstairs in a cloud of lace and scent. Marco took her arm as the others moved off toward the terrace steps. "Come on," he said.

Coles snapped off the radio and followed them outside. She and Mrs. Everd waved, and then Mrs. Everd went indoors again, complaining of mosquitoes.

Outside on the terrace the night was warm and sweet. Coles lingered. She was startled when a voice spoke out of the darkness almost at her elbow:

"Good evening, madame."

"Who is it? . . . . Oh, it's you!" replied Coles as Justin Fougère stepped into the light. "Good evening."

Oddly, he seemed to want to talk about Isabelle; how long she was going to stay, and—incredibly enough—how much money she had. Coles dismissed him sharply, and turning on her heel, went inside.

Crossing the lounge, a sudden thought struck her. Alexandre was back from his holiday, and she stuck her head in at the pantry door to see if he were still there.

"Alexandre, do you think Justin Fougère could be sneaking in here nights and—and looking around in my office?"

The old man put down the handful of silver he was rubbing. "Is anything missing, Mme. Laseby?"

"Oh, no. I just wondered. He was here a moment ago," said Coles. "And the last time he came, he seemed to know about what was in my mail."

Alexandre looked troubled. "The night porter is supposed to watch the office," he said dubiously. "We could pull the shutter down if you wish—"

"No, don't do that," replied Coles. "If he comes again, I want you to order him off the place."

Alexandre's features contracted, his whole face taking on a curious hue.

"That Fougère," he said, glancing around him, "—it would not be wise to insult him."

"Well," she said impatiently, "what could he do?"

"He is Platon's grandson," the man replied simply.

Even Coles had heard of Platon, the most talked-of *bocour* in the neighborhood. No Haitian, however well educated, derided the influence wielded by the witch-doctor.

"Oh," she replied. "Yes, I see. I didn't know that. Don't do anything, of course, until I've talked to Mr. Laseby."

The villa was almost deserted. She wandered out into the lounge and presently went upstairs to glance in on Missy, asleep and angelic-looking.

Mrs. Everd was coming out of her room with her knitting-bag. "Well, they got off," she commented. "It's a shame you couldn't go too, dear."

Coles nodded dismally.

Mrs. Everd looked at her sharply. "I bet anything you've got *something* you could wear, if you'd still like to go."

("She means to be kind," thought Coles, "but if she keeps this up, I'll scream.") "What would you like to bet?" she said idly. "Come see for yourself, if you'd like."

Queer, thought Coles afterward, how a stranger's eye sees what your own passes over among your things. There it was, hanging on its special hanger, beneath its special muslin cover—the one elegant garment in her wardrobe, the one thing she had never worn. But it was a nightgown.

And you don't, somehow, think that a nightgown can be made into an evening gown.

It was white, and it was silk, and it was sheer, its skirt done in thousands of knife pleats that rayed out with the slightest movement and fell about her hips in flat, lovely lines when she stood still. The top was pleated too, and brought up in two delicate points that were held by tiny, almost invisible straps.

While Coles arranged her hair, the older woman darted out to the side yard where flowers grew in profusion against the walls of the villa and came back with sprays of white jasmine, quince blossoms, small pink rosebuds and lengths of delicate tendril-like vines with leaves like a baby's thumbnail.

Under her fingers the scented blossoms began to take the shape of two short ropes of flowers. "There," she said when they were finished. "Now we'll fasten them over your shoulders right above the straps. We'll sew them so they can't fall off." She stood back and admired her handiwork. "*Now* if anybody can figure out how this dress started life, they're a genius, that's all I can say."

Coles found a few yards of fresh pink maline that the ants had overlooked and draped it about her head and shoulders, where it made her look like a lovely little houri in a pink cloud.

HAROLD HAYBROOK appeared at the foot of the stairs just as she started down, and after a quick glance of surprise stood back politely for her to pass.

"What are you doing, back?" asked Coles.

"My God!" His lips shaped the words soundlessly. "I didn't know you," he said aloud. "Are you going to the Browells', after all?"

"I certainly am," smiled Coles. "Have you come home for good, or what?"

"No," he said, and put up his hand to touch his tie in a dazed gesture. "No, I came back to see if you wouldn't change your mind. It's a nice party, nice crowd."

"Very well," she told him solemnly. "Since you insist, I'll change my mind. Let's go, shall we?" She slipped her hand through his arm, and suddenly her laughter was a young, care-free sound in the quiet lounge. "Won't Marco be surprised!"

"Have a good time," said Mrs. Everd from the top of the stairs. "And don't worry about the little girl."

"Thank you again a thousand times!" Coles turned and waved. "Good night!"

And now suddenly it had all become a marvelous, wonderful thing—the fact that she would arrive at the party and find Marco and go up to him quickly to enjoy the very first of his surprise. And he would be pleased because she looked as well as anyone. Her dress—her nightgown of all things!—was beautiful. It would be fun telling Marco, whispering to him, waiting for the sound of his deep laugh.

THE young American who had come to Haiti to build roads relinquished Isabelle when Marco touched his arm. "I enjoyed that so much," she said mechanically and danced away with the beginnings of a dreamy smile on her lips.

Presently she said: "This floor isn't much, is it? Don't you think it's terribly hot in here?" She took her hand from the back of Marco's neck to touch her hair. "Let's go outside, where it's cooler." She eyed the long French windows leading out into an empty veranda.

"Don't be fretful," Marco replied, looking over the roomful of people revolving languidly to recorded dance music. . . . A dress; he was thinking. She might as well have come in anything at all; these people wouldn't care. . . .

"Heavens!" gasped Isabelle. "You don't have to squeeze the breath out of me—not right here in public, Marco."

"Sorry." He laughed and led her out on the veranda, where the moon came down like rain, and the view was a grove of mango trees. "Would you like a cigarette?"

"No, thanks. Are you angry about something?"

"I? No, why?"

"I don't know. You seem a little—upset tonight." She moved nearer and spoke softly, her full, smiling lips not far from him. "Don't worry about Coles being lonely. Harold Haybrook's already back there by now."

He had an impulse to seize her by the shoulder and demand to know what she was talking about, what she was hinting at; but he held himself in check and waited.

"He slipped out twenty minutes ago," murmured Isabelle. "Of course it's all perfectly innocent, I'm sure. Only—when I offered to lend her a dress and she was so indifferent, I thought—I wondered—"

She broke off, laughing.

"You're crazy." He said it flatly, without inflection.

She drew away a little, still laughing softly, and glanced at him over her shoulder. "Oh, go off, Marco! Everybody's seen there's something between them. Mind you, I don't say it's Coles' fault. He's attractive, if you like the type. I imagine he's rich, too."

"What are you trying to say, anyway?" he demanded in an undertone. "What are you trying to do?"

"Why, anything you want to make of it," she replied teasingly. "No, but seriously, Marco. I think he's at the bottom of all your trouble at the plantation. I think he's trying to break up your business as a way to come between you and Coles. You see," she added piously, "I notice these things, because I'm fond of my little cousin."

"Like hell you are." He turned her then, as you'd turn a child around to speak clearly to it. "You'd better give me the rest of it now," he said directly into her face. "You've got something else on your mind."

Isabelle hesitated. "You knew he's connected with a firm in America that imports hemp?" she asked tentatively. "You didn't? That's funny—Coles knew."

Piling it up, piece by piece, she watched his lips and eyes for the score. That he saw through her motive only served to add spice; she liked his insolence as long as it centered his attention on her. Smiling, she put her hand beside his collar and waited.

"Isabelle," he said sternly, "if you're making this up, I'll—I'll murder you. Coles *couldn't* have married me just to make a home for Missy. I won't believe it. She's not the type—"

"Oh, stop worrying," Isabelle said crossly. "If that's all you're going to do, let's go back in and dance, my unromantic— Well, dear me!" she broke off softly. "See who's in there now!"

Coles had just come in; behind her, with a look in his eyes that all the world might read, was Harold Haybrook. Dancers moved about them as they stood speaking to Paul

and Ethel Browell. Coles' eyes darted eagerly about the room, not finding the person she was looking for.

Marco said something under his breath and took Isabelle's arm. "Did you say you wanted to dance?"

They went in, and Isabelle walked before him to the edge of the waxed floor and held up her arms. Coles saw them just as they began dancing, and made for them with a radiant face.

Smiling couples moved aside to let her pass. And then it happened. Marco met her eyes; he looked straight at her. Isabelle saw her, too. And they kept on dancing.

She hesitated, bewildered, feeling the blood drain out of her heart. Harold caught up with her. "Let's dance," he said.

"No. No, I—" Coles hesitated, swallowed. "I want to speak to Marco, please," she said in a tight voice.

"Well, come on, we'll find them. There they are over there."

("Cornered," she thought disjointedly. "They're literally cornered in this end of the room, and now Marco will have to speak to me. He'll have to stop dancing with Isabelle, and at least *look* polite.")

"Hello," she said.

"Hello, Coles." Marco's eyes were blank.

There was a short, ugly silence broken by Isabelle.

"Why, hello, dear. I thought you weren't coming."

"I changed my mind."

It was like standing up for execution. *("What has happened? What have I done? Marco, how can you treat me this way?")*

Nothing aloud, just questions from eye to eye; and Marco's eyes on hers were bleak, unanswering.

Suddenly Coles turned, her dress coming alive with a whirling grace of its own. She could feel Isabelle's eyes taking her in, from the flowers on her bare shoulders to the tips of her silver sandals. "Shall we dance, Harold?" He put his arm about her without a word.

Poor Harold! He was a man in love and too intelligent to hope for anything. That night his face was not unlike Marco's, watching her. He danced very little.

Coles was an exquisite dancer (it was her one accomplishment), and there were Jack Clark and Higgins and Henderson and the others; there were English and Americans from all over the island—men who had not danced with a perfect partner for years. She was never more than three minutes in one man's arms.

Around midnight Harold cut in. "You'll die of exhaustion," he muttered. "Let me take you home, Coles."

"Have—is—" Finally she got it out: "Have Marco and Isabelle gone?"

"They left half an hour ago. I told Marco I'd bring you."

"Oh, you did!" All her hurt and anger flared unsteadily. "Suppose I want one of the others to take me home?"

"Coles, darling—" Harold's serious face bent above hers with a troubled look. "Don't fight so hard. Maybe it isn't all you think it is. Anyway—don't, my dear."

It made her want to cry; it brought back everything she had been fending off all evening—remembrance of gentleness and goodness, of Marco when he had been tender and kind, not as he had been tonight, hard, cold, indifferent.

"Yes," she said suddenly, "let's go. Let's go now, if *you're* ready."

Theirs was the last car in the yard. While Coles said good night to Paul and Ethel, Harold went to wake up their driver.

As they moved through the warm night, Coles in her corner sat perfectly still and wept.

Presently Harold took one of her hands and crushed it against his shirt bosom in a queer, helpless gesture. "I can't bear to see you cry," he said at last.

She tried, then, to check her tears. Just thinking of how embarrassed Harold must be, helped some. She was only vaguely conscious of his pounding heart against the back of her hand.

"Coles—tell me one thing: You love him very much?"

"You know I do."

"Oh. Well, yes. I guess I did." Harold sighed and glanced at her through the semi-darkness. "This driver speaks no English," he said abruptly.

Coles turned her head in faint inquiry.

"I mean that—well, if I were to say I was in love with you, it wouldn't mean a thing to him. Or," he added after a short pause, "to you either."

"Oh, Harold, I'm sorry—"

"Never mind," he said. "Want my handkerchief? We're almost home."

"No, thanks, I have one. You're very kind." She withdrew her hand from his and opened her little bag.

As he helped her out Coles said, "Good night, Harold," and went quickly past the night porter and up the stairs.

Past Isabelle's room, where the light was on and Isabelle moved about; past Marco's door (his light snapped out as she passed) and into her own room, where the blessed darkness met her like arms enfolding.

This was at least familiar—her room and her few simple possessions around her; Melissa asleep beneath her net. Beyond the door was Marco, but the door stayed closed.

"I was right," she thought, "I was right from the very first. He doesn't love me. He married me in a whirlwind of chivalry, or something. Pity, perhaps. And then—pity wasn't enough."

What was to be done? Which way to turn? . . . Not tonight, she thought, not now, and pressed her palms over her hot eyelids. Tomorrow would do. . . .

Tomorrow was more than just another day. All her life she would remember that next day—it was the day Missy disappeared.

It happened between two ticks of the clock, two beats of the heart. At one moment Missy was around, playing, and the next she was gone. . . . Not only that, but every servant in the villa, except old Alexandre, disappeared. It was as though an evil wind had swept down out of the mountain and blown them all away.

Coles went quietly and quite literally out of her mind.

Chapter Ten

MISSY had no idea where she was going. The path meandered upward and she followed it, singing little snatches of French nursery songs. She sang softly and progressed only a little at a time, for every now and then it was necessary to sit down on the grass and rest.

In the shade it was cool; in the sun it was intensely hot. Now and then a lizard ran out over a sun-baked rock or a frog hopped from under a leaf. These things required her prolonged attention.

Missy sat down for a rest and laid her straw hat beside her on a ledge of rock by the path. It was so quiet the slightest sound was startling, so that when a partridge sprang up suddenly out of a near-by clearing, she jumped and laughed, leaning back on her hands to watch it vanish into a small patch of blue between the treetops.

She had eaten nothing since breakfast, and her internal clock told her it was about dinner-time at the villa. But the villa—and her mother—seemed far, far away; and while she had not the slightest idea how to get back to them, neither had she any doubt that her mother would come and fetch her. Only—if Mommie didn't come soon, she was going to be very, very hungry. In fact, she was really quite hungry now.

At this depressing thought, tears rose to Missy's eyes and overflowed roundly, falling on her plump little hands. With a sob, Missy tucked up her feet and twisted her body so that she lay flat on her stomach on the warm stone, and wept. Presently she discovered a shiny brown ant coming up over the curved side of the rock. The ant, within an ace of being deluged by a falling tear, drew back from the splash and stood waving his antennæ. Missy, her face wearing the rapt, inscrutable expression of a chess-player, moved her chin a fraction and waited for another tear to fall. There was only one left, and it missed him.

Vexed, the little girl exerted all her considerable power of will, but no matter how she squeezed her eyelids together and heaved her chest, no more tears would come. So after a while she got up in disgust and walked slowly along the path, her eyes on the ground in case something good to eat should appear there.

The man standing in the clearing was someone Missy recognized perfectly well, having seen him twice before, but she chose to pretend that he was a total stranger, and that she was a casual passer-by. Perhaps she thought that if she spoke directly to him, he might stop what he was doing, and it was something she particularly wanted to see.

He was making dolls. They were very much like the little one she had found on the front steps once, that had been taken from her and thrown away.

"Hello," said Missy, and laughed with delight when Justin Fougère gave a little leap and turned around quickly. "I'm lost," she added engagingly. "Are you lost too?"

AT the villa it was after ten o'clock before Missy's absence was discovered. When Coles thought back over it later, she could remember each minute of that morning.

She had overslept, so that when she came down to breakfast at eight o'clock, Marco had finished and gone off somewhere, leaving her no message.

Alexandre had brought her breakfast, and while she ate, Missy had come in from the yard and given her mother a good-morning kiss. Coles had sent her out again to play.

Then Sheila Everd had come in from the terrace and up to the table, obviously dying to talk about the party. Coles asked her to sit down and have another breakfast with her.

"Another? I haven't had any yet," laughed Sheila. She wore a dewy-eyed look that Coles took to be the normal expression of a young girl after a party.

"Did you have a good time?" she'd asked, watching the girl tackle an orange served local-fashion, the whole peeled fruit speared on a silver fork.

"Oh, lovely," breathed Sheila. "Jack Clark brought Daddy and me home. Afterward we went for a little drive. It was perfectly beautiful!"

"You—ah—let Dr. Everd out here first?" asked Coles, amused.

"Naturally. Mrs. Laseby, do you think Mother and Daddy would let me stay on here? In Haiti, I mean."

"Why—what for?" Coles pushed a fingerbowl across the table. "You don't mean permanently, do you?"

"Um-hum," nodded Sheila, her thick chestnut hair bobbing vigorously. "Maybe."

Coles lowered her cup thoughtfully. "Who is it, Sheila? Not Jack Clark?"

"Why not? Have you anything against him?"

"Not a thing," said Coles. "All I know about Jack Clark is that he's a blond, blue-eyed New Englander, and that he works for the sugar company at Fort Freedom. If I were your parents, I'd want to know a lot more than that. I like him, of course, but after all—"

"I know. Don't say it." Sheila put up her hand. "Item one: I'm too young. Well, I'm not too young; I'm almost twenty. Item two: I haven't known him very long. But listen, Mrs. Laseby: Ever since the picnic, I've been nuts about him. People don't have to know someone a hundred years nowadays to know what they're like. Why, Jack is—is—" Her voice had trailed off and her blue eyes widened with dreamy intensity. Then her smile flashed out. "Don't give me away, will you?"

"Like a streak, of course," Coles bantered gayly.

Presently it was time for Missy's lesson. Coles taught her regularly every day for thirty minutes, even on Sundays, according to a curriculum she had devised to combine pre-school and Sunday-school training.

Melissa was not in the nursery or the bedroom, or in Marco's room or any of the others. Isabelle, breakfasting with a book, looked up to say she had not seen the child. Coles came downstairs and stood on the terrace, calling. "Melissa! Oh, Missy! *Missy*—where are you?"

Once she called Tinette's name; then she circled the yard. The cook-house was strangely silent, and there was not a soul inside it, or anywhere in sight. Suddenly, in blind panic, Coles began to search.

By the time she got back to the front driveway, Sheila, standing on the terrace, took one look at her and ran down to her side. "What on earth's the matter? You're as white as a sheet!"

"Missy," Coles managed to say. "You *have* seen her, haven't you?" She put a pleading hand on Sheila's arm. "She was out here awhile ago, wasn't she?"

"Why, yes, I think so. Yes, she was." Sheila's eyes grew large. "Can't you find her?"

Coles gave a little moan and turned to go inside. "What shall I do?" she whispered. "What shall I do?"

Sheila looked distressed. "Don't worry, Mrs. Laseby," she offered dubiously.

"But the servants—they're all gone!" cried Coles frantically. "You don't understand; something's happened—"

"Here comes Jack!" Sheila's face mirrored relief. "He'll know what to do!"

At first, regarding Missy, Jack seemed unimpressed. But when he heard about the disappearance of all the Haitians on the place, his eyes betrayed him. Coles could feel her heart freeze over, and she turned away.

"I must find Marco," she whispered, and suddenly every atom of her being was filled with the need for Marco here at her side. *He* would know how to find Melissa.

"He's down at the plantation," said Jack. "Anyway, he was on his way there awhile ago. I'll get him on the phone and tell him."

Then everyone seemed to arrive together. Dr. and Mrs. Everd returned from church, and Harold and Anne Rethledge came back together, having met down in the town, and even Isabelle dressed and came down—all of them in the space of fifteen minutes or so.

They gathered and stood looking at her helplessly. Harold and Dr. Everd agreed that the Civil Guard, which was also the police of Haiti, should be notified; but each hesitated to do anything until Marco came. Jack Clark said, "I'll phone him again," and at that moment Marco arrived. He came through the little crowd there in the office and took Coles' hands and bent over and kissed her.

"Is it—true?" she asked, looking up uncertainly. "She really is gone, Marco?"

There was no need for him to answer. She saw his eyes and her own pupils widened with such a look of raw fear that involuntarily he put his hand across her upper face and held it there, pressing her head gently against him.

Someone said: "Why don't we send for the police?" And Marco, his hand sliding back across his wife's hair, said: "I've talked to them already. Some of them will come along here soon. Meanwhile—"

He turned and spoke directly to Coles, forcing her to look at him. "Nothing can happen to Melissa," he said quietly. "She's strayed off and is lost, that's all. We'll find her soon. They promised to send out whole platoons of men to search, Coles. Pull yourself together, dear. I'd like to go out and hunt too."

There was a brisk stir of relief among the men present. All of them were ready to go; none of them, except perhaps young Jack Clark, realized the particular kind of fear that made Marco keep his voice so carefully casual, that squeezed Coles' heart dry.

IN the little stir of general movement caused by Marco's words, Mrs. Everd exclaimed: "Why—here's Alexandre! I thought you said the help had all left—"

"I came back," said Alexandre in a dull voice. He went directly up to Coles and stood in a curiously limp, beaten way, his shoulders drooping.

Looking at him, Coles felt the last of her hope wither and die. This was a man terrified almost beyond speech. His eyes, when he lifted them from the floor, rolled wildly, like those of a frightened horse, and his hands holding his old felt hat trembled visibly. Marco took one of Coles' hands in his.

"What has happened to her?" whispered Coles. "Tell me, Alexandre. You *must tell me!*"

"I don't know," said the man, in the slurred, rapid patois of his country. "I know nothing—I swear it." He glanced at her pleadingly.

Marco said: "Where are the others? Tell us why they ran off like this." His quiet, level voice was perfectly impassive.

"Sir, I tell you I know nothing. I came back because you and Madame have been kind to me; I would not leave Madame alone with no one to care for the guests. That is all." Even in his shattered state, there was a certain dignity about the old man.

Marco let go of Coles' hand and stepped forward. "Listen carefully, Alexandre," he said. "Our child means more to us than anything in the world; the rest doesn't matter. Tell us where we can find her, and you may go too, if you like. No one blames you for what has happened."

In the silence that followed, Coles could hear the loud, uneven beating of her own heart. She tried to hold her breath, as though that might help her to listen. In that circle of white faces Alexandre's looked like the burnt-out ashes of an old charcoal fire.

And then, for no apparent reason, Alexandre's manner changed. He seemed to stand a little straighter, to lift his head with some confidence. "I told you, I don't know," he said. "Alexandre does not lie to anyone, not even the *touriste blanc*. As for me,"—he shrugged philosophically

—"if the eye is on me, it's on me." He turned and walked out of the room.

"Well!" murmured Mrs. Everd. "What does he mean by 'the eye?' "

"The evil eye," said Jack Clark. "Voodoo stuff."

"Jack!" whispered Sheila with a glance at Coles' face.

"That Alexandre," said Isabelle clearly, "knows what's become of Missy. What Marco should have done is beat it out of him."

Coles looked at her with faint horror.

"That," put in Dr. Everd, "would be a very grave mistake. They tell me it's a high crime down here to strike a Haitian with your fist or hand; it's the worst insult they know; worse than shooting a man, even."

Marco, who had been studying Coles' face with grave eyes, glanced up. "Let Alexandre alone, all of you," he ordered sharply. "The man was decent enough to come back. He didn't have to. Whatever this is, we'll get to the bottom of it without"—he shot a cold glance at Isabelle—"without hysterics."

Harold said: "Here are the police, Marco. Do you want us to clear out?"

A captain of the *Garde d'Haiti* and a guardsman in khaki were crossing the lounge.

"If you'd all wait outside, I'd appreciate it." Marco walked toward the office doorway and stood there waiting to greet the officials. "And Harold," he added as the other passed him going out, "stick around, if you will. Maybe we can work out a couple of searching-parties of our own."

"You bet," said Harold fervently.

Questions were put to Coles by the police, and she answered somehow. She heard the captain's courteous assurances, heard Marco offer a reward (far larger than he could afford) and watched the two men finally take their leave.

From long habit she had risen to say good-by, and now she stood at Marco's side, and they were alone. He turned and put his arms around her, and she leaned limply against him.

"Darling—" was all he said. But his cheek was warm on hers and she felt a little comforted. No need to keep up a decent front with Marco. He understood. . . .

Shame filled her when she recalled Marco's words to Alexandre: "Our child means more to us than anything—" He had said *"our* child," not "the little girl."

She began to tremble so violently that Marco took her by the arms.

"Listen," he said, and he said it urgently, his lips and eyes only a little way from hers. "Listen to me, Coles: I've made fun of all your dreads and fears of this place. I've said nothing could happen; but it has. But remember this! When we get her back safely—and I know we will—you'll never be tormented again."

He had been edging unconsciously toward the door as he talked, and there was a bright, almost fanatical flame in his hazel eyes. "Good-by for a little while." He came back quickly across the short distance between them and kissed her. "Try not to worry too much. I'll keep in touch—"

He went out fast, collecting Harold and the other men around him as he passed through the lounge. A moment later Coles heard cars start up and drive away.

Chapter Eleven

THE man named Justin Fougère stood stock still and looked at Missy, who returned his stare with unembarrassed interest.

"What are you doing here?" he asked at length. "Who's with you? Who came up the mountain with you?"

"Nobody," she explained patiently. "That's why I'm lost."

Fougère had not once taken his eyes off her all this time, and now he seemed to make up his mind.

"Come with me," he said abruptly, and walked over to her, putting away his claspknife as he came.

Missy backed off in sudden uneasiness.

"Come *along,"* he said impatiently, and reached behind her for one of her hands.

Missy stood her ground, but she began to cry, first a little and then louder and louder, so that when he stooped and picked her up, her face was a bright convulsed pink, and her eyes were tightly shut.

Even then she was not so much frightened as confused. To be lost, and then to be found by a grown-up you didn't like after all, and on top of that to be so hungry you were all hollow inside—it was altogether too much for her.

"Be quiet," ordered the man as he walked on. "Hush!" He gave her a little shake and tightened one arm across the calves of her legs, for her sandaled feet were kicking him lustily in the hip-bone. "You be still," he commanded, "or I'll put you down right here and leave you. Then you'll *really* be lost."

Missy subsided somewhat. The thought of being left behind, hungry and weary, had a sobering effect. "All right," she managed through her sobs. "Where are we going—to your house?"

"I'll take you to my grandfather Platon," he muttered, apparently as much to himself as to her. "He'll hear about this, anyway. Why, he might even—"

"I know," said Missy precociously. "Alexandre and Tinette talked about him. I heard them. Will there be any dinner?"

"Of course, of course! Listen, *ti fille.* Tell him I found you all alone in the woods. Tell him you found *me,* in truth. That you came out for a walk and got lost, and we met by accident. Will you remember that?"

"Of course," said Missy in disgust. "Put me down and let me walk. We'll get there faster."

The path, after all its elaborate twists and turns, had broadened, but it still climbed in wide tangents always upward. Fougère put the little girl down on the ground with relief, and they went on together hand in hand. . . . She was about to mention her appetite again, when suddenly they arrived at the modest *caille* of Platon.

To Missy there was nothing sinister about the old man who sat smoking just inside the doorway. He had dark ivory parchmented skin with many varieties of wrinkles, all running south. He had a nose that curved like a scimitar, and a straggly set of old-man whiskers. His color was many shades lighter than that of his own grandson; for Platon, like another and more famous man of Haitian descent—Alexandre Dumas—was a *quarteronne.*

When Melissa first saw him, he had already fixed his eye on Justin Fougère with so ferocious an expression that the dapper little man dropped her hand and approached the doorway like a schoolboy expecting the whip.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the quadroon in Creole. "Is it possible you have brought here the child of—"

"Hold your tongue, Grandfather." Fougère slipped in through the doorway with Missy trailing after him. "One understands French and most Creole."

"Bonjour," said Missy politely. Brought up to expect some kind of introduction, she waited. When no one spoke, she added, "I'm Mademoiselle Laseby," using her favorite name for herself. "What's *your* name? Are you Platon?"

Platon's wrinkles rearranged themselves, and a most peculiar expression flitted across his face. "You've heard of me?" he asked civilly in his own language.

"Oui." Missy glanced around her at the plain, rather bare cabin. "At our house we sometimes have supper very early," she said. "On Sundays, especially."

"Indeed?" Platon tipped his head on one side and studied her. "Won't you sit down, Mademoiselle Laseby?"

Missy perched herself on a plain wooden chair. "When I left home, it was *before* dinner-time—" she began.

"She's hungry," explained Fougère briefly.

Platon, who seemed to be alone there, hurriedly put together what seemed to Missy a very satisfactory meal. There was a little rice, a little fish, coffee black-burnt in the Haitian fashion (she had never before tasted coffee, and set it down quickly) and a plump, enormous mango.

While the child ate, the two men went off in a corner and talked furiously.

"But Grandfather, I tell you I *couldn't* just take her back to the villa," Fougère said in a wild voice. "There were reasons—you don't understand. As it is, if they find out I—"

"So you had to bring her here!" said the other bitterly. "A child who speaks Creole like one of us! Who knew me even before she came! God knows what trouble may come of this, you chicken-hearted fool—"

"But I thought you might think of something we can do—"

"Do? I'll tell you what you're going to do! You're going to take her down the mountain as fast as your legs

will walk, and you're going to find a *gendarme* and put her in his care. I ought to make you take her back to the villa yourself, personally."

Missy got down from the table in a welter of sticky yellow mango juice and asked to have her face and hands wiped. When that had been done, she said she wanted to go home.

"Oui; sans doute." Platon nodded to her gravely. "You are an extraordinarily self-possessed young girl," he told her, using the full French *"fillette,"* instead of the usual Haitian diminutive, *"ti fille."* "Thank God," he added, "for all our sakes, that no harm has come to you."

COLES was so exhausted that her mind seemed to have shrunk. She was unable to think sensibly, or finish her own thoughts. Her brain felt withered like a brown hickory nut rattling around in her skull. To wait and wait, and to do nothing! Was there any torture like it?

She went over to the washstand and dipped a towel in the pitcher and wiped her face, pressing the damp cloth for a moment over her throbbing eyes and forehead. After that she ran a comb across her hair and went out, closing the door quietly. From the head of the stairs she heard a low hum of voices in the lounge. At the turn of the landing she saw the little group sitting near Isabelle's swing, and in their midst was Jack Clark. She had not heard his car arrive, and she paused in surprise at seeing him there, They were all so intent, no one noticed her come downstairs.

"I wouldn't tell her," Anne Rethledge was saying.

"But what does it *mean?"* demanded Sheila Everd. "I mean, finding Missy's hat in one place and those ashes and all in another isn't—"

"Near by," corrected Jack. "Oh, it may not mean anything, of course, but this big black tree is what they call a *mapou.* It has something to do with their religious ceremonies."

Coles, reeling slightly, thought, *"I will not faint,"* and hung on to consciousness with all the power that was in her. After a moment she was able to let go of the newel-post and slip out through the pantry door.

Curiously, she felt drawn by some inner necessity to talk to Alexandre, and she sought him out now, walking with quick, nervous steps and tense shoulders across the yard.

"Alexandre," she began without preliminary, "I think they've found Melissa's hat."

The man, having offered her a chair, went back and stood behind the kitchen table where he was making sandwiches for supper.

"Have they, madame?"

"Yes." In her desperation Coles felt suddenly very strong. Her head seemed phenomenally clear. It was as though she had all the rest of her life to sit here and deal with this situation. "Now," she said slowly, "I think it's time you told me the truth. Who took her away? Was it Tinette? Toussaint? One of the boys?"

"No, not any of them. I don't know who."

"Then why did the staff run away? Did they think they'd be blamed? Are they afraid of us?"

Alexandre nodded. "Not of you; of Fougère."

"Fougère!" cried Coles. "What has he to do with this?"

Alexandre put down the silver knife with which he was spreading potted ham and reached for a fresh loaf of bread. "For a long time," he began, "Fougère has been after all of us to leave you. Naturally he feels you cast insults on his honor when you dismissed him. He has been here, telling us we must leave our jobs. The same at the sisal plantation of M. Laseby, too."

"Go on," Coles said faintly.

"After the little girl disappeared, they were afraid to stay here. Because if he dared do that, he might do—other things—to the rest of us. It was he who left *wangas* around where one could see them."

Coles, trying to get her voice back, swallowed painfully. 'Where can this Fougère be found?" she asked at last. "If you'll tell me that, I'll do anything you ask, Alexandre. Anything."

"But of course, madame. His home, where his mother and father live, is just beyond Fort Freedom. Only—"

"Only what?" prodded Coles.

"Platon," whispered the other, glancing across his shoulder. "Without his grandfather, Justin Fougère is nobody," he added contemptuously. "But if, as he says, Platon is helping him—"

The old porter ceased abruptly and gave her a half-pleading, half-suspicious look. Coles held herself together by sheer will-power, her nails biting like raw metal in the thin palms of her hands.

"What's he like, this Platon?" she demanded. "Tell me about him. What can he *do?"*

"Anything," said Alexandre simply. "He can stop the croaking of the frogs as easily as you or I can stop the whistle of that teakettle there on the stove. All he does is something in his mind, and every frog in Haiti stops at precisely the same instant. Then, when he is ready, he can start them up again. That," continued Alexandre, "I have heard with my own ears. Moreover, I have seen a big strong man in his prime sicken and die within a week, because Platon willed it. And I have seen—"

Coles got up hurriedly. "Where is this Platon? Where does he live?"

Alexandre withdrew a few steps, looking startled. Whether the idea she suggested was new to him, or whether the thought of anyone deliberately seeking out Platon in person horrified him, there was no way of knowing.

"Where does he live?" Coles insisted.

"Near the top of this mountain," mumbled Alexandre; and walking to the open door, he pointed vaguely. "Up that way. Anyone will direct you." He crossed the yard toward the servants' quarters and went inside, shutting the door after him.

Coles, sitting there alone in the clean, humid kitchen, thought: "Frogs. Charms. The evil eye. Why, none of those things could harm Missy—"

And at that precise moment she heard Missy's voice calling her, and she thought, "Now I *am* out of my mind!" —and fainted.

Sheila Everd and Jack Clark found her, and Jack carried her into the villa. A moment later she opened her eyes on Missy's uneasy little face.

"You sick, Mommie?" Missy had that slightly embarrassed look that she wore when she expected a scolding.

Coles gave one convulsive grab and held the child against her heart. It was almost more than she could bear.

"Are you all right, darling?" She ran her hands quickly over Missy's little body. "Have you—has anyone hurt you? Who brought you home?"

"That man." Missy pointed, and the feminine crowd around her moved aside a little. Jack Clark nodded at a young Haitian soldier whom Coles in her excitement had not even seen.

At that moment Marco and Harold came in, and Missy sensed immediately that she was the center of interest, not only to all these grown-up women but to the men as well.

She went over and put up her arms, and Marco picked her up and kissed her. "Well!" he said. "Look who's here! It's about time you came home, Miss Muffet."

The soldier explained that he had found Missy standing in the middle of a main road; that she told him who she was (anyway, he'd recognized her at once) and said that she wanted to be taken home. She would not tell him, the young Haitian said, how she got there. And that was all.

So Marco gave him his reward and shook hands with him, and he went away.

"Now," Marco said, when everyone had settled in a semicircle of chairs, "let's hear about your trip, Missy."

MISSY told her story with great satisfaction, never having had an audience like this one before. She told everything: How Platon had scolded his grandson and ordered him to return her at once; how Fougère, a grown man, played with dolls.

Coles took a tighter hold around Missy's waist. "Darling, aren't you even *hungry?"*

"I had my supper." Missy rolled her eyes up at her mother. "Mommie, did you save me some ice cream?"

It was then that everyone become aware that the servants had come back. Two waiters moved about near the pantry door, preparing to lay the tables for supper, and Tinette hovered about, apparently waiting for Missy.

No one commented, and Coles was glad. Suddenly it was like any other Sunday in the late afternoon. Outside, twilight came down abruptly, and in ten minutes or so it would be dark. Dark—but Missy was safely home and in her arms!

Somehow, without going out to see, Coles knew that Toussaint and his helper had come back and were in the kitchen preparing supper. Missy's head began to nod.

Coles gathered her and tried to rise, but Marco got up from his chair and said, "I'll take her upstairs for you," and picked the child up in his arms.

He put Missy down on her bed and stood around while Coles undressed her. Missy was as limp as a rag doll.

"I'm not even going to bathe her," said Coles, looking up. "Would you? She's so dead tired, and it won't hurt her this once, do you think?"

"I shouldn't think so," he said, and came to stand looking down at Missy sound asleep in her white pajamas. "She's a cute kid," he said softly. "If anything had happened to her, I'd—"

"So would I," said Coles quickly, and got up off the side of the bed. "Marco, I'm so happy I could fly. Please kiss me."

Instantly his arms were around her, and his mouth was on hers. She could feel his heart beating against her.

After a while she drew back and looked up at him, her hands resting along his arms.

"Marco—"

"What?" he asked.

"I suppose it's too late tonight, but tomorrow I think I ought to go and find that man Platon and—and reward him, somehow."

Marco's eyes widened. "Good Lord!" he said softly. The corners of his mouth deepened. "And you're the girl who's afraid of the sound of their drums!"

Chapter Twelve

THE path the young Haitian soldier had pointed out to her was rough, and the sun was a blade of fire darting at Coles' face and arms and hands. Glancing this way and that, she ran over in her mind the things she would say to the witch-doctor.

"Platon," she thought. "What's he like? How will it feel to shake hands with a voodoo witch-doctor?"

She had insisted on coming alone to thank the creature for letting her child go. To give him a reward of money. It had been her own idea to do this thing—to toil on foot up the steep, rough incline (indeed, there was no other way to get there), and to take no guide and no protector with her. She had an instinct to do it the hard way.

It was almost as though deep down inside she had her own atavistic instincts—about paying tribute, making a humble return of thanks. No matter who or what this man was, he had given her the greatest gift within human power: he had given her back Missy, alive, well, unmarked physically or spiritually. She had already thanked her God, and now she would thank this *bocour*. . . .

It was the most lonely place Coles had ever been in; there must be people living somewhere on this mountain, she reflected, but there was no sound, no trace. No ax rang against a tree bole, no voice shouted commands to a beast at plow. Didn't these people ever get out and work lustily, noisily? Didn't they ever call at the top of their lungs to their children, or sing over a washtub? Or did they sleep all day and spend their nights at cockfights and pagan ceremonies, dancing and drumming?

Thinking these things, Coles turned left around the thick bole of a gnarled mahogany tree, and came face to face with Platon.

Somehow she knew instantly who he was—the curving nose, the kinky hair that lay like gray fleece against a pale brown skull, the straggly white beard. He wore faded denim trousers and a clean shirt, and both hands rested on a peanut-straw hat held like a warrior's shield against his chest. His hands were the color of very old, yellowed ivory; they were strong, beautiful hands, neither withered, nor gnarled with age, nor knotted with hard labor.

"Bonjour, Madame Laseby," the man greeted her. Their eyes met and held a moment before Coles managed to say: *"Bonjour.* Are you—Platon?"

"Oui, madame."

"You knew my name," said Coles suddenly.

"Oh, yes. I was on my way to meet you. But now you are almost at my door, it seems."

"Why, how did you know I was coming?" she asked in surprise.

"One hears," murmured the other, glancing off across the valley. "Won't you come in?"

Platon's cabin was set in a little clearing at the edge of a deep gorge, so that from his doorway the eye could travel hundreds of miles across treetops and into the blue.

Coles, as the man stood aside to let her enter, glanced around her with a quick, nervous flutter of the eyes. No one else was visible; the place had an indescribable air of being deserted except for the two of them.

Platon offered her a chair, a gourd of icy spring water, a bowl of fruit and a feather fan. She sat down and drank the water gratefully.

"Thank you," she said in French, handing back the dripping gourd. "That was delicious. No; nothing to eat, thank you."

He sat down opposite and looked at her with the chocolate-brown, unfathomable eyes of his race.

"You look," said Coles suddenly, "as though you were reading my mind."

"Oh, no!" replied the other, smiling a little. "I would not be so impolite, I assure you."

"But you *can* read people's minds?" she persisted, casting about for clues by which to judge the man.

"Everyone reads the minds of his fellow-men to some extent," Platon told her gravely. He spoke in French, with only the faintest Creole slurring of his syllables.

"I heard," replied Coles after a moment, "that you could make all the frogs in Haiti stop bellowing at a given signal, and that no one else could do that—no one. Is it true?"

Platon looked amused. "There are a great many frogs in Haiti, madame." He darted a sly glance at her. "Rumors are so often exaggerated, don't you think?"

It was as though he had said aloud: "Come, now; what else have you heard about me?" But Coles would not be drawn yet. She was sizing him up, waiting for her thoughts to clear, her pounding blood to settle.

He was a great deal less formidable than she had expected. Subconsciously she had expected a rather dirty old man stewing something horrible in an iron pot. It was disconcerting to have him look so like a sepia edition of one of her father's friends, especially when she had come to present him with money. She could not help admiring the smoothness of his social polish.

Astonishing, she thought, and glanced again about the bare whitewashed walls and up at the thatched ceiling, wondering if the absence of all outward signs of witchcraft was not in a sense more sinister than a few gaudy feathers and beads, a few bleached bones.

"You're looking for the *wangas?"* inquired Platon politely.

Coles jumped. "Why, no," she lied, and let it go at that.

"How is Mademoiselle Laseby?" inquired the other. "She reached home well and safely, I hope?"

"Thank you, yes," said Coles. "You were very kind to her."

"She told you she was found near here by my grandson? That he brought her straight to me?"

"Yes—oh, yes," agreed Coles. "We know now that she ran away from home."

A look of relief crossed the old man's face.

"I don't suppose," continued Coles, "that we'll ever know all her adventures, but she told us you sent her home in charge of that—of your grandson. You are not at all like him," she added in a burst of candor.

Platon was silent. There was an air of great dignity about him as he sat there across from her, his hat beside him on the clean floor, his curiously elegant, aristocratic hands folded in his lap.

Coles played with the wooden clasp of her green linen bag and thought: "How can I offer this man money? How can I tip him as though he were a servant?"

"To tell the truth," she said uncertainly, "I came up here to thank you for what you did—and to offer you some sort of—compensation. But now that I've met you I—well, I—" She rose suddenly and held out her hand. "All I can do is thank you from the bottom of my heart, both for my husband and myself."

He had risen quickly, and the look on his face as he shook hands was all Coles needed to tell her she'd guessed right. He was enormously pleased.

"Thank *you,* madame," said Platon. "It was an honor to be of service. Your coming here was most gracious—most kind—"

"It's you who've been kind," murmured Coles. "You let the staff come back to the villa too. I appreciate that. It's very hard to run a hotel without help—"

"That grandson of mine!" The old man's voice was harsh with annoyance. "Madame, please sit down and let me explain: Justin is a conceited boy, badly spoiled by his mother—"

Coles sat down again.

Justin Fougère, Platon told her, had loved having the title of the villa's manager under the absentee ownership of the late Mr. Pettiford. When the new owners came and relieved Justin of his duties, the young man complained bitterly to all his friends and to his grandfather.

"I told him to forget what could no longer be his, and to divert himself with politics, cockfighting or literary composition," said the old man contemptuously. "He is well provided for financially; his father is one of the well-to-do men of Fort Freedom."

However, the grandson had turned his back on advice and spent most of his time devising ways to discourage the newcomers and thus eliminate them from the island. He had hoped that the Lasebys would find business conditions intolerable, give up, and go back to America.

"To that end, he has been coaxing the staff to leave the villa, I hear; and from time to time has deposited a simple charm for them to find, in hopes of scaring them into running off. More than that, I'm afraid, he's been using my name to give his threats authority."

Platon got up and paced a few steps back and forth behind his chair. When his intelligent old eyes were no longer on her, Coles felt the spell of his personality beginning to fade. ("That's all very well," she thought. "He's clearing himself nicely. But I wonder—")

"As for the affairs of madame your cousin," Platon continued, "there was no excuse whatever for Justin's meddling in them." While Coles stared in astonishment, he added: "Please convey my apologies to Madame Cowbridge."

"Mademoiselle Cowbridge," she corrected mechanically. "Why, what do you mean? What *else* do you know about us?"

Platon studied her shrewdly for a moment. "She hasn't told you, then," he said. It was a statement, rather than a question.

Coles, listening to the soft liquid syllables that followed, felt her spine stiffen with amazement. When Platon finished, she sat for a moment, trying to collect her wits for an orderly departure. Once more she sensed the forceful personality of this man who worked his will, perhaps, through weaker men like Justin Fougère.

"How could you possibly know all these things?" she asked, looking at him with troubled eyes.

Suddenly Platon surprised her. He laughed. It was a pleased, artless laughter, and Coles found herself smiling a little in sympathy without knowing why.

"You came expecting black magic, didn't you?" he asked. "Once I saw in motion pictures a *bocour*—what they called a voodoo witch-doctor. It was most amusing."

Coles, meeting his glance, felt a little self-conscious.

"In every business there must be some showmanship," continued the old man tolerantly. "In your country the young doctor writes a prescription in Latin, when a pinch of soda would give the same results."

"You mean, the customers pay their money, and they're entitled to a good show," said Coles suddenly in English.

"Pardon, madame?"

"Nothing. You still haven't explained how you knew all that about my cousin."

Platon's shrug was all-French. "It's quite simple. Justin goes everywhere and knows everyone. He is a born gossip, and attracts news. Tidbits of it cling to his mind like burrs to a dog's tail. I have only to comb out his mental reservoir once in a while to know all that goes on for miles around, I assure you."

"He has made trouble enough for us in our household," suggested Coles with a frown. "Why, he must be the one who's been driving away my husband's workmen at the plantation, too! Of course!"

"It will not happen again," Platon assured her. "I have dealt with Justin. He knows better than ever to try his childish tricks on any of you again. Believe me, you may rely on me."

Somehow, Coles did. She was satisfied, as she rose and picked up her hat and bag, that the old man spoke the truth and would keep his word.

Platon walked with her part of the way, conversing politely and holding back the branches across her path.

"But what about the frogs!" exclaimed Coles suddenly. "If that isn't magic, then what is it?"

Platon chuckled. "Madame insists on being credulous, even after I myself deflate my reputation?"

It passed through Coles' mind that when he had gone his way, and she hers, they might never meet again. That Platon would stay on his mountaintop and she in her own little circle nearer the towns and the sea. But they were somehow friends, and always would be.

She had gone searching for him in fear and trembling, and come away with a better understanding of the Haitian mind and way. She had climbed a mountain thinking of Platon as a sinister creature; at best only an illiterate witch-doctor—

Hastily Coles checked her thoughts, almost as though she had been thinking out loud. Was there, or wasn't there, a twinkle in his eye at this moment?

"*Au revoir,* madame," said Platon. "My respects to mademoiselle your daughter, if you please. And madame—"

"Yes?"

"Watch out for the little girl's tonsils. Even an illiterate witch-doctor notices certain signs."

Definitely there *was* a twinkle in his eye! Coles blushed. "I will," she agreed, and smiled at him.

Platon returned her smile, took off his hat for a small bow, and left her.

Chapter Thirteen

NOW the villa had visitors. As Coles turned in at the gate, she counted four strange cars parked along the driveway as well as the usual dinner-hour number of cars belonging to Jack Clark and the other bachelors. Marco's station-wagon stood at the side entrance.

Sheila Everd came running down the driveway to meet her. "Are you all right, Mrs. Laseby?" she asked anxiously. "We've all been worried stiff! Mother and Dad wanted to come up there after you."

"I'm fine, thank you." Coles glanced down at the beggar-lice clinging to her short navy skirt. There were leaf-stains on her once fresh white blouse, and her shoes were dusty. "But look at me, Sheila: What the well-dressed woman does *not* wear to receive guests! Who are those people in the lounge?"

"Well, there's Mr. and Mrs. Browell, and the American consul's wife, and—oh, I forget the others' names. People have been calling all morning to ask about Missy."

Coles put up her hand and felt of the knot of hair on the nape of her neck. "How do I look—terrible?" she asked, and smiled at Sheila.

"No—all right. Pull your belt straight. And there's a smudge on your left cheek. Give me your handkerchief . . . . there!"

"Thanks. Listen, be an angel and go tell Alexandre to serve something—anything, as long as it's cold. Will you?"

Sheila trotted off, and Coles went up the steps alone.

It seemed as though news of Missy's adventure had reached everyone they knew in Haiti. The local manager of an American tobacco company and his wife; the buxom wife of the hardware storekeeper; the bride of a young civil engineer staying at Fort Freedom—all were there.

"Why in the world," demanded Ethel Browell, "didn't you telephone us? We'd have come over at once, Coles."

Paul, standing a little to one side and talking to Marco and Harold, overheard his wife's words. "Lord! We'd have got up a searching-party like a shot!" he said. "Next time, remember that, will you—you and Marco?"

"There isn't going to be a next time," said Marco, and came over to Coles' side. "Thanks just the same."

A little chilling wind seemed to blow lightly across the surface of Coles' mind. He meant to send Missy and her away.

"Well, I won't go," she thought. "Not unless he gives me another reason. A *real* reason for getting rid of me." . . . She glanced across at Isabelle, and shivered.

Alexandre came with a trayful of frosty drinks. "M-m-m! What *are* these?" The consul's wife put her glass against the light and peered at it. "Something delicious, whatever it is."

"Coconut milk and passion fruit—as far as I know," replied Coles with a rueful head-shake. "It seems we've had an electric mixer here for ages, only the cook was afraid of it. I've taught him how to use it properly, and now everything we have is *frappé*."

"Paul, we must be getting started," said Ethel. The waiters had begun quietly laying tables for dinner around the edges of the vast lounge. Everyone else said they had to go too.

"Please, please stay and have dinner with us," urged Coles. She felt suddenly warm with gratitude toward the whole world. Everyone had been so kind to her—everyone! She would have liked to make a little celebration of it. "All of you," she urged. "Marco, make them stay."

"Sorry, but *we* can't," murmured Ethel, and the rest refused too.

When the last car had gone Coles ran lightly up the terrace steps, squinting a little from the blinding sun. She had visions of a cool shower before dinner, but there would be time before that to tell the others about her morning. And she thought: "How wonderfully pleasant life can be here if you just accept things as they are!"

She thought of Platon, and the amazing things he had told her about Isabelle; but mostly she thought about the good news she had now for Marco.

"Doesn't anybody want to hear about my trip up the mountain?" she asked, pausing beside Marco's chair.

"Yes, of course!" they assured her. Sheila came and sat on the arm of Mrs. Everd's chair. The others drew up chairs, and one of the bachelors said: "You've got more nerve than I'd have—going up there alone to talk to a witch-doctor!"

"He's no more a witch-doctor than you or I!" declared Coles. "At least, there's nothing—nothing—"

"'Sinister?'" suggested Harold.

"Nothing sinister, or mean or ugly. And listen, Marco—"

Still standing, Coles leaned on her hands, resting her weight on the arm of Marco's chair. Her face, not far from his, had a lively happy expression. "You don't have to worry any more about the labor situation, either," she assured him. "Platon explained all that. It's all his grandson's doings, and he's going to put a stop to it."

"Swell," he said soberly, and laid his hand for a moment across her knuckles, but it was apparent at once that he took no stock in what she had said.

"We had a stroke of real luck this morning, though," he went on. "Harold and I have been looking up planes. It's hard as the devil to book passage on one now, but I've got a tentative promise of seats for you and Missy on the same plane Harold's going back on." His voice sounded flat, and there were tired lines about his mouth and eyes.

"Marco!" whispered Coles. It was as though a hand had struck her across the face. "He's doing this because of Isabelle," flashed across her mind, to be followed immediately by a surer, deeper knowledge that the thought was unworthy.

"Why didn't you tell me what you were going to do?" she asked in a voice tight with pride, then straightened and walked over to an empty sofa and sat down. Marco looked at her with an air of faint surprise.

Isabelle, her shining yellow head held gracefully against the high back of a wicker fan-chair, said: "You didn't know Harold was leaving us, did you, Coles?"

"Harold!" cried Coles, and turned and half held out her hand. "I'm stupid today! I didn't understand—"

"I'm going back home to enlist," said Harold. "Sorry to leave this lovely place, but it's time I quit loafing and put in a lick for Uncle Sam."

COLES, looking down at her clasped hands, said quietly, "We're going to miss you very much," and turned and smiled at him.

"You're darned right, we're going to miss him." Marco gave his head a little shake and ran his hand across it. "Lord, I wish I were free to get in it too, Harold—"

It was a perfectly natural remark for any man to make, but in her sensitive state the words goaded Coles ungovernably. She rose, a small frown between her brows, and murmured an excuse. "I'll have to wash and dress for dinner. Don't anybody wait for me." She ran upstairs.

Her bedroom steamed in the noonday heat. Next door in the nursery Coles could hear Missy and Tinette in one of their long rambling conversations. She tiptoed over and closed the connecting door quietly, in order to think.

"Suppose Marco *does* want me out of the way—why doesn't he say so?" she fretted, stepping out of her skirt and unbuttoning her blouse. "How can anyone you love so much be so hard to understand? Yesterday, in this very room, when he kissed me, it was like—like being taken into his heart."

Coles flung off her thin little undergarments and pulled an old faded pink dressing-gown tightly around her body. Her hair, with the pins out of it, hung in glossy dark ripples across her shoulders. Marco came through the connecting door.

"I thought you understood about the plane," he said without preamble. "I'm sorry if I pulled a boner downstairs. You see, I've had it so darned much on my mind that you hate this place, and that after what happened yesterday you'd be frantic to get Missy away from here, that I—well, I'm going to miss you like the devil, Coles."

IT was like the rolling away of a stone from her heart, those few simple words. He took her lightly in his arms, holding her a little away from him and looking down into her upturned face.

"You didn't really think I'd leave you here," she reproached, touching his tie and straightening it with little proprietary gestures. "Who would take care of you? Who'd run this place? We—we have an investment here in this hotel, you know—"

"I know," he said, and smiled at her. "We'd have to get someone. Maybe we could talk Mrs. Everd into taking the job."

"Oh, *Mrs. Everd!"* exclaimed Coles impatiently. "Marco, tell me absolutely honestly: would you send me away for any other reason except Missy's welfare?"

"Absolutely honestly," he said gravely, "no."

"Well, then!" She put her hands on his shoulders. "That's settled. Now listen: Did you get what I told you about the laborers? About Platon's promising to fix that all up for us? Isn't it marvelous? Marco, wait till I tell you *everything*. I was never so surprised in my life. He's amazing—"

"I want to hear every word of it," Marco interrupted. "But just a minute, dear. We're getting off the subject."

"How?" she inquired innocently. "What subject?"

"Melissa."

"Oh."

"Yes, 'Oh,'" he said softly. They were still standing with Marco's arms about her shoulders, and he lifted one hand now and touched her lightly over the heart.

"Yesterday was like seeing you held up at the point of a gun aimed right *here,"* he said quietly. "While I stood by, helpless. I'd belittled your fears for Missy, and then—when the moment came—I could do nothing for you."

He let go of her and ran his hands roughly through his hair. "Nothing, do you understand? I was as helpless and as scared as you were. *I* didn't get her back for you—a couple of Haitians did that. Oh, we were lucky this time; but another time—"

His voice, always so low and controlled, had risen a little. Coles said, "There needn't be another time," then realized she was quoting almost his exact words of half an hour ago. "I mean," she added hastily, "I feel much less nervous about her being here now, Marco. She *ran* away, dear; no one *took* her away. That could happen anywhere."

"I know. But where else would you shake like a leaf at the very thought of Missy being off the premises without you? Where else would you have her sleeping within arm's-reach of you—"

There was a knock at the bedroom door, followed almost immediately by Isabelle's slim immaculate appearance in the room.

"Tut-tut!" she commented, her eyes sliding from one to the other. "Still quarreling over Missy?" She glanced humorously toward Missy's bed on the far side of Coles'. "There's just no love like mother love, is there?"

For a minute no one said anything. Coles stiffened and stood in silence. Marco took out a cigarette and tapped it on the heel of his shoe. If Isabelle hoped for approval from that quarter, she got no inkling of it, for his face was perfectly impassive.

"Isabelle—" Coles took a deep breath. "That business about mother love," she said in a level tone, "—that doesn't sound very well, coming from you. Just what kind of mother are *you*, Isabelle—treating those little children the way you have?"

The room's temperature seemed abruptly to drop to freezing. Marco sat with a lighted match in one hand, his eyes bright and motionless on Coles' face. Isabelle had seemingly turned to stone.

"Well?" Coles broke the tableau by tightening the loop of her dressing-gown belt. "How about it, Isabelle?"

"How dare you read my mail!" It was a statement rather than a question. Isabelle's furious face was pale to the lips.

"I didn't read your mail." Coles spoke crisply, now that she was certain of her ground. "It seems you took so long to start the divorce you promised to get here, that your husband wrote straight to inquire about it here! There's no record that you've even applied for one."

"That's my affair," said the other, sitting down suddenly on the nearest chair. "What else did you find out, Mrs. Snoop?"

"Only that your husband has two small sons—your stepsons, Isabelle—and very little salary. And that you've held him up for all sorts of alimony terms, and finally made him get together one big lump sum in return for your promise to come here and divorce him—which you don't even know whether or not you can do. Anyway, you've deprived those two children of things they really need, necessities, I mean—not to mention a mother."

For a moment Isabelle was silent, staring at her cousin with stony eyes. Then—"Roger wouldn't write that," she whispered. "Not to a little clerk in the Haitian government. I don't believe it. You—you—"

"If it isn't true, say so." Coles turned and walked over to her bureau. "I admit it's no business of mine," she added, picking up her comb and running it through her hair. "But you used the money to buy a lot of clothes instead, didn't you? If Justin Fougère can find out things like that through his friends in Port-au-Prince, you might as well have been honest with *us.*"

Isabelle looked thoughtful. "Well, all right," she agreed with surprising mildness. "I'll be honest now. Never too late to reform, is it? I did come down here to get a divorce from Roger—Roger Cowbridge. You wouldn't remember him, Coles. He's the Ohio branch of the Cowbridges; same name but almost no relation at all. He's a civil engineer—and a drip, as far as I'm concerned. The next check he sends me, I'll start proceedings."

"You gave your word of honor to divorce him," insisted Coles. "Without alimony—for a flat sum of money, which he gave you. Since then you've written him for more—and more—"

"You shut up!" shouted Isabelle. "I've never been so insulted in my life! Never—and by my own cousin, too!"

As she reached the door, she turned and cast an oddly triumphant look at the smaller woman. "You're one to talk to *me,*" she said scornfully. "Going off and leaving your husband stuck in this hell-hole on account of one spoiled child! When is it you leave?"

"I'm not going," said Coles wearily.

A look of disappointment came over Isabelle's face. "Well—" She hesitated, eyes narrowed. "All right, then —I *am!*" she decided. "I'm leaving here as soon as I can pack. Make out my bill and send it up to me." She went out, closing the door noisily.

Instantly Coles turned to Marco. "Maybe I shouldn't have been quite so rough on her," she said on a rising note. "It's all true, though."

He blew smoke, gave it a glance, and asked in a level tone: "Where did you learn all that about Isabelle?"

"From Platon. He got it from Justin Fougère and—"

MARCO gave her a queer look. "How did you happen to get on the subject of Isabelle? I mean, you weren't consulting him professionally, were you?"

She glanced at him quickly to see if he were serious and was reassured; there was a smile at the back of his eyes.

"Oh, Platon just brought it up himself," she replied vaguely, and rose. "I'll have to get my shower now, or I'll be too late for dinner. Go down and see that Missy gets started, will you, dear?"

As he reached the door, Coles gave a gasp of horror. "Marco! I've just thought of something!"

"Why, what?"

"We're losing *two* guests! That's going to make an awful hole in the villa's budget."

Marco laughed. "Oh, there'll be plenty of others," he assured her pleasantly. "Remember the men Higgins spoke of? Besides, there's a lot of new life coming into the island—technicians, experts of all kinds. The sugar business is expanding, tobacco, coffee—all the industries. I even expect a pick-up in the sisal business, if I can get it running decently again."

"You will," she said, and smiled at him. "Thank heaven I went up to see old Platon."

"Well—I hope so." He sounded skeptical, but Coles was comfortably sure that he would see. And soon.

Chapter Fourteen

DINNER was over. Coles went across to the kitchen to talk to Toussaint about supper. Then she came back and went into her office to telephone a few small orders.

A small, ragged urchin wandered up the driveway, box under arm. Marco stuck his head in at the office door. "Here comes *le shine.* Got any shoes you want shined?"

"No, thanks, dear."

He went back and sat down on the terrace just outside the lounge. "Okay," he said, and the little boy scrambled up the steps and knelt before him. Then, as Harold came out onto the terrace, he invited: "Pull up a chair and have a shine, Harold."

The other drew one of the light wicker chairs forward and sat down. "Cigarette?"

"Thanks," said Marco.

"I was looking for you," said Harold. "I've got kind of a proposition to make to you, Marco."

"So? What is it?"

Harold smoked a moment in silence. "Well, it's about your work," he plunged. "I'm sort of a junior partner in a firm back home. We've never fooled much with sisal, but it looks now as though we were going to have to. Oh, we've got a certain stock on hand, of course, but when that runs out—"

Marco grinned. "Best hemp in the world comes from Manila, of course."

"Exactly."

"I suppose," suggested Marco more soberly, "it'll be a long time before you work that market again. What are you people doing about it?"

"Well, that's just it. I'm not sure. I do know this, though. We can get a contract any time we want it for a million gunnysacks, and that's only a starter. If we can find the right fiber and produce a high-quality sack, there's practically no limit to the thing."

Marco turned and met the other's eyes casually, but there was a faint glow of excitement in his own. "What are you looking for—good jute?"

"No, good sisal. Or rather, cheap sisal. Somebody who'll work with us, experiment with using a lot of the stuff that's now wasted. I believe *you* could do it. Eh?"

"It would take money," Marco replied cautiously. "I could get the machinery to begin with here in Haiti. But it needs backing."

"We'd back you."

"Lord!" breathed the other, and spun his cigarette away. "What a chance!" He reached in a side pocket, drew out several centimes, and handed them to the boy at his feet. "All right; do his," he said absently, and pointed to Harold's brown shoes.

"I don't want to rush you into anything," said Harold presently, "but I could send you the specifications as soon as I get back. And get things going at our end before I check out of the firm for a while."

"Harold, it's awfully decent of you to do this. Coles is going to appreciate it, too."

"It's just ordinary good business," said the other hastily. "You don't need to tell her."

"Of course I'll tell her!" Marco looked surprised. "It seems we're always indebted to you for one thing or another. I thought—" He hesitated, ran his hand over the back of his head. "Having you travel back to America with Coles and Missy would have been a stroke of luck for us, I can tell you, in times like these. Only, she won't go."

"I didn't think she would," said Harold simply.

"You didn't? Well, what did you let me argue that guy into saving me two seats on the plane for, then?"

Harold shook his head without answering. . . .

At breakfast next morning the American friend of the Browells called up to say she was giving a small-fry "swimming-party" in honor of two little visiting nephews. Missy was invited.

Coles, horrified, protested that Missy couldn't swim.

"Oh, it's just a wading-party in the lily-pond," the other assured her. "The water's six inches deep, but the children have fun. Do let her come!"

Coles, promising to call back later, hung up and went in search of Marco.

"*I'd* say yes," he told her after a little reflection. "And of course, if she were mine, I'd let her go without you."

Ethel Browell phoned to say she was letting Betty go, and that Betty and her nurse would be glad to come by for Missy and Tinette.

With a strength of will that surprised even herself, Coles made up her mind to agree. Missy was wild with delight.

At dinner she was too excited to eat. In addition, perhaps as a result of her excitement, she was rude to old Alexandre. Somewhere, Coles never knew where, Missy had picked up a new expression, and for the last two days she had been using it industriously whenever she thought her mother might not hear her. It was "Pooie!"

Alexandre, with the familiarity of an old and privileged servant, urged Missy to have some of the dish he was passing, and suggested she would learn to swim faster if she ate up all her dinner.

Missy shook her head vigorously, screwed up her face at him, and said: "Pooie!"

There was a small, quiet scene, in which Coles demanded and got from Missy an apology to Alexandre, after which she sent her upstairs in Tinette's charge.

Isabelle, who had looked on with malicious amusement, was silent until Missy disappeared up the stairs. Then she turned to Coles.

"Are you going to let her go to the party after that? Lord, how you spoil her!" Which was sheer malice, since Isabelle herself was rude to the servants whenever she felt like it.

"Well, she did apologize," declared Coles. "I don't think —oh, maybe she is a little spoiled," she added uncertainly, and glanced at Marco, who refused to be drawn into it.

Instead, he lighted a cigarette, strolled off toward the office and turned on the radio. A loud burst of static came through the air, and he snapped it off impatiently.

IN the back of his head there was an idea for a report on the plantation's resources, assets and possibilities. Might as well try to outline a draft of that, he thought, and got a pad of scratch-paper from the bottom drawer of the desk and set to work.

Now and then he crumpled a sheet of paper and flung it in the waste-basket under the desk. He was conscious of a vague hope that Coles would come down so he could read her what he had written.

Instead, it was Missy who came floating in, her little white terry-cloth bathrobe hanging rakishly from her shoulders. She had come down expressly for Marco to admire her new pink bathing-suit, but some obscure feminine impulse made her divagate to get his attention.

She said, "Hello, Marco," and he said, "Hello, there," and went on writing.

She laid her bathrobe carefully across a chair and picked up the newspaper he had put down, rattling and disarranging it as she imitated her elders by staring first at one column of print, then another.

Marco brushed a hand nervously over his head without looking up. Missy put the paper down, then went over and turned on the radio.

Piercing static penetrated Marco's wall of concentration and he looked up. "Turn it off, Missy. There's no music on now."

Marco put down his pencil. Missy gave the knob a little turn, and the volume of jumbled sound rose to a roar.

"Don't do that," he said; and although Missy was looking at him over her shoulder, and laughing, obviously she couldn't hear his words.

He rose and strode over to her.

"Stop that at once, Missy," he commanded, wincing a little as his eardrums tingled. But Missy, carried away by her own daring, was laughing and dancing about.

Marco reached across her head and snapped off the instrument. In the vibrant silence that followed, she looked up at him, made a rude face, and said: "Oh, pooie!"

Without a word he scooped her up deftly under his left arm and raised his right hand. That small expanse of bright pink wool was a tempting target to an irritated man, and Missy made no resistance whatever; but in mid-air his hand checked, and a moment later he had set her down on her feet again untouched.

"Go ahead, Marco," Coles said from the doorway. Both he and Missy turned in surprise. Coles' mouth was set determinedly as she came into the room. "You were quite right to spank her," she said in a voice that shook slightly. "Isabelle was right. Missy *is* spoiled—"

She stopped, swallowed, and turned on Missy. "How dare you speak like that to Marco?" she demanded. "I'm surprised at you, Melissa!"

"I'm sorry," said Missy quickly, looking up at both of them with wide eyes.

"All right," Marco nodded. "We'll call it quits, then. You can run along now."

"But Marco—aren't you going to spank me?"

"No," he said, and turned to Coles with a small, abashed smile. "When it comes right down to cases, I find I can't chastise another man's offspring. Sorry I lost my temper."

Missy came around for a better view of him. "What?" she demanded. "What, Marco?"

"I said, I don't spank little girls who don't belong to me. Now scram, before I change my mind."

Slow tears filled Missy's brown eyes. She burst into sobs and dashed out of the room.

Marco turned to his wife in amazement. "Now, what?" he asked helplessly. "I swear I didn't lay a finger on her."

"She—I—oh, Marco!" wept Coles, and reached out blindly for him.

"Somebody in this place is nuts," he muttered as he drew her head against his shoulder and smoothed her hair. "Coles, I wouldn't hurt so much as that child's little finger, I give you my word—"

"Hush," said Coles, and suddenly she was not crying, but laughing. "Oh, Marco, darling! We're such fools!"

"What do you mean, 'we,' " he demanded, holding her off and looking at her suspiciously. "Melissa is your child, Coles. You've made that pretty clear, and most of the time I manage to remember it. Just now, if I seemed to forget for a moment—"

"No. Oh, no! That's what made me cry just now—seeing you do just what any father would have done: correct something at the moment it occurs. That was right, you know. I believe in a little spanking of children by their parents. I'm old-fashioned." She walked over to her desk and straightened a rug beneath the chair, not even aware that she had said something surprising.

Marco, regarding her with puzzled eyes, said: "Isn't this rather a sudden change in your views? I mean, Missy's been pretty strictly private property up to now, you know."

Coles glanced at him appealingly.

"Incidentally," he added with a small quirk of the eyebrows, "I *don't* approve of corporal punishment, in theory. The sight of a grown person beating a little helpless child shocks me."

"I know," nodded Coles. "It depends on the point of view, doesn't it? And the child's temperament. In Melissa's case, I'm convinced it's better to punish her quickly and get it over with. But you see, I've never quite been able to spank her myself because—well, because I was all she had. I mean, there was no one to share the responsibility, no other parent to give the child a feeling of balance and security when she was being punished by one."

"You mean, no one to pass the buck to," he corrected with a little grin. "I know. You're one of those women who say, 'Wait till your father comes home—' "

Coles laughed, and went up to him and put her arms around his waist. "Darling," she said, "please be Missy's father. She loves you very much."

Chapter Fifteen

THE remainder of the week seemed to fly by. Everything appeared to be happening at once, although actually, when Coles looked back on it, she could recall nothing remarkable.

Higgins triumphantly brought six new guests to her for the hotel, all men except one young couple. There was

some difficulty getting them all settled—two of the men changed their rooms twice before they were suited.

Just as Coles was about to knock on a new guest's door, Mrs. Everd came out of her room holding a handkerchief and blinking eyelids that were faintly pink.

"Coles!" she called softly. "Have you heard?"

"What's the matter, Mrs. Everd?"

"It's Sheila. She's eng-g-gaged!"

"No! Really?" Having heard it from Sheila herself half an hour ago, Coles did her best to sound surprised.

The older woman nodded. "I'll never leave here now," she declared tearfully, "as long as Sheila and Jack stay here. I don't care *what* Dr. Everd's next job is!"

"Jack seems such a nice boy," murmured Coles soothingly.

"But why couldn't she have married some nice boy in America?" wailed Sheila's mother. "And not have to live in *Haiti,* of all places!"

"Now, Mrs. Everd!" Coles sat down on the edge of a big wooden linen chest. "You mustn't feel that way about Haiti. You know, it could be a lot worse—"

"That's damning it with faint praise, all right," put in Harold, coming along the hall with a market-basket of gray moss. "Even I, a mere tourist, can give Haiti a better build-up than that."

Coles laughed. "Sheila and Jack are engaged, Harold."

Harold made appropriate remarks to Mrs. Everd, and presently that lady went downstairs to telephone the news to some of her friends.

HAROLD sat down on the chest beside Coles, his basket of moss between them.

"What's that stuff for?" she asked idly.

"Packing souvenirs," he grinned. "I'm carrying off some of the nicest primitive carvings I've ever found anywhere."

"What do you do with the—the antiquities and things you find in your travels, Harold?"

"Some of them I give to museums; some I keep. I wish," he added suddenly, "that you'd been free to go around with me a little. There's so much more to Haiti than heat and insects. I'd like to have shown it to you. Why, you've never even seen the Haitians dance, have you?"

"No."

"It's one of the last purely primitive art forms left in the world. Not even in Africa will you find anything more traditional than the *congo* and the *méringue.*"

Coles smiled at him sidewise and crossed her ankles. "If the Chamber of Commerce could only hear you!" she murmured teasingly.

As though her light tone threatened to raise a barrier between them, he reached over and put his hand on hers where it clasped the edge of the linen chest.

"When you're fond of two people," he said softly, "somehow you'd like for them to be fond of each other. Haiti's almost like a person to me, Coles. And you know how I feel about you."

Something caught at her throat. She turned her hand palm upward under his, and sat for a moment waiting for her thoughts to clear. She would never quite understand how a man could fall even a little in love with a woman so obviously in love with her own husband. She would never see herself through Harold's eyes—her reticences, her curious and enchanting little dignities, the veil of instinctive privacy she kept about her inmost feelings.

It was part of the immense charm she held for this fastidious, shy and rather scholarly man, who hated the obvious and easy-to-get-at, who never bought a work of art when he could dig for his own treasure, who had no use for the commonplace.

It was Harold Haybrook's fate to be never more than a gentle obbligato for the high, sweet melody of her love for Marco. At this very moment her thoughts turned to the man who had come into her room last night, kissed her good night, and gone out again. Was it her imagination, or was there a faintly withdrawn look in Marco's eyes?

Almost in echo of her thoughts, Harold spoke.

"One thing I want to say before I go," he said, his fingers firm against hers. "Marco's a swell person, Coles. I don't know anybody I'd rather trust. He—please don't think I mean to be impertinent—but he understands both of you better than you think."

"Both of us?" Coles looked up, startled.

"You and Missy. And now I've got to finish packing. Will I see you tomorrow morning before I go?"

"Why, of course!" she cried. "We'll be down to see you off."

"Seven o'clock's pretty early," he said doubtfully.

"Not in Haiti, Harold," she reminded him, smiling.

AT dawn the gardener came out with his red machete and started chopping at the weeds around the rose-bushes. Coles, awake but drowsy, heard the *swish-swish* of the big blade and hopped out of bed.

After a glance at Missy, she went over to the window and stood for a moment, stretching and yawning. The waters of the harbor were indigo in the morning light.

Below her, anchored offshore, was the ship that would take Isabelle and Harold to another mainland, where they would catch their plane for home. The thought of that ill-assorted pair of traveling companions made her smile.

Missy woke up, and Coles called to Tinette, who was moving around in the nursery next door.

"Tinette," she said in Creole, "look. While I am at breakfast, I want you to move Melissa's bed into the nursery. Get Christophe to help you. You understand?"

"Oui, madame."

"There!" Coles thought, and gave the belt of her dressing-gown a determined hitch. "I've done it!"

A wave of optimism swept over her, as though the outward, visible change were a symbol of her newfound, inner strength. Inwardly she reproached herself a little—not too much—for having so long and so stubbornly held out against Marco's stronger spirit. "Strong," she thought, "because he was right. Only I wouldn't admit it."

Early though it was, Marco had breakfasted and left word for her that he would join her down on the dock at sailing-time. Coles ate rapidly, sent a tray of breakfast up to Isabelle, and hurried through her morning's duties. At a quarter to seven she was ready to drive down with Isabelle and Harold, leaving Missy to follow with Tinette by the short-cut.

Beyond the mole the ship lay at anchor. The lighter waited at the dock. Boys from the hotel were busy stowing away luggage.

Marco, walking over from the sisal sheds, said, "Well, so it's really good-by," and shook hands first with Isabelle and then with Harold. "Let us hear from you."

Isabelle bent and kissed the hair beside Coles' cheek. "Good-by, chickadee. Look me up sometime. When are you coming back home?"

"I'm at home now," replied Coles, and called to Missy to come and say good-by.

The little girl, busy trying to climb the fence that separated Marco's plantation from the docks, said, "Yes, Mommie," and kept on climbing.

Marco called, "Missy," and she ceased being a tomboy and came over with ladylike composure to shake hands. "Good-by, Cousin Isabelle; good-by, Uncle Harold."

Coles, turning to Harold, said, "We're going to miss you," and put her hand in his. "Good-by, Harold."

"Good-by, Coles." His fingers were warm on hers. "I'll be back one of these days. Good luck."

After that, Isabelle ventured a handsome leg over the side of the lighter, and a moment later Coles was standing between Marco and Missy, waving, watching the primitive wooden boat dance away over the water.

"It's going to seem strange without them," she murmured as Missy broke away from her hand and ran back to Tinette. "I hate farewells. But there's lots to do, and I'd better get on back to the villa."

She let her hand slide upward on Marco's arm and stood looking off at the lighter, now halfway to the ship. "You must have been down here at the crack of dawn, Marco—" For the first time she noticed the set of his mouth and eyes. "Is anything the matter?"

He looked down at her with a quizzical expression. "Was it you who told me there'd be no more labor trouble on the plantation?"

"Why, *is* there?"

"Not a single workman showed up at the place this morning. There've always been a few on hand; today there weren't *any.*"

"Oh, Marco!" Coles was on the verge of tears. "Why, Platon promised—you must be frantic with worry. What *can* be the matter?"

"I'm damned if I know," he said, putting his arm around her. "But I'll get to the bottom of this thing yet. Don't cry, dear."

"I was so sure! I thought I had everything all fixed for us after—after that day on the mountain. I was just beginning to feel friendly and trustful toward this place—"

"Never mind," he said, and helped her find her handkerchief. "You can still feel friendly and trustful." He bent and kissed her lightly. There was a gleam of masculine satisfaction in his eye; he seemed to take a peculiar pleasure in her failure to run his business for him.

She sensed that he would not have accepted her sympathy, but that her confusion was in some way comforting to him. For a moment Coles was puzzled; then understanding caught her up cleanly, in one clear sweep.

Marco was the man of the family—that was it. She planned her plans, and made her little sorties against life, but underneath it all, she was resting her real weight on the solid rock of Marco's strength. And in her heart she was glad that it was so.

Cautiously she had divided her loyalties, dealing out to Marco his share, to Missy hers.

And now she saw clearly that she must trust him, and hold nothing back, and let her love for him fill her life completely, submerging all else. And that Missy's happiness as well as her own depended on this.

The lighter was far out on the blue water now, little more than a black dot nearing the side of the ship. Coles fixed her eyes on it, and somehow got up courage to tell Marco what she had been thinking. The words were not easy—but she knew in her heart what she wanted to say, and somehow she said it.

He listened, looking down at her with thoughtful eyes. When she had finished he pulled her close and held her for a moment against his heart.

When he spoke, his voice was hardly above a whisper, but she heard it clearly: "Oh, Coles! I love you so very much—"

And then he kissed her, there in broad daylight, on the docks of Fort Freedom, with the morning sun beating down around them in a hot haze. It was a long kiss, for with it he was telling her his answer to the things that she, being a woman, had found words for.

A SMALL cough and a curious shuffling of feet sifted across his consciousness at last, and he looked up.

A long line of Haitian workmen straggled toward the sisal plantation. There seemed to be hundreds of them, and they came softly on their thick-soled bare feet down the mountain and along the path that ran beside the docks.

"Good Lord!" muttered Marco. "That's my foreman leading the parade, and those are all my men—"

The foreman detached himself from the queer procession and came forward with a bashful glance at Coles, then addressed himself directly to Marco.

"We have come back," he said simply, as the others kept moving on down the path. "Platon himself orders it."

"He did?" Marco drew out a cigarette and offered the pack to the other man. "Where," he inquired casually, "was everybody this morning when the gates opened?"

The foreman twisted around and pointed toward the mountain-top. "Up there. He sent for us. You see, m'sieur, the one called Fougère had arranged to have the eye put on all of us, so *he* said. Some believed him; some did not. One could not tell what to do.

"So this morning Platon called us all up to his *caille* and explained everything. No evil had been set against any of us, really. *But—*"

Eloquently the man took off his battered straw hat and wiped his gleaming black forehead on his shirtsleeve. "If Platon hears of our staying out after this, there *will* be danger!"

"I see." Marco looked at the other with an air of gravity. "Well, all I can say, Toulouse, is that there'll be lots of work for everybody who's willing to work for a fair wage. And that if there's any more talk of trouble among you, please come to *me* about it. We'd like to run our business without outside interference if we could. Although," he put in quickly, "Platon is a friend of ours especially of Mme. Laseby." His lips were grave, but there was a wicked gleam of laughter in his eye at the end

THE foreman nodded, removed his hat for Coles, and dog-trotted off to catch up with his men.

Marco turned to Coles. "It seems," he said teasingly "that even in Haiti a man can't prosper unless his wife cultivates the right people. I'm terribly glad you called on the head *bocour*, darling."

She was only half listening. "He was such a *convincing* old man," she said meditatively. "I wonder if he was right about Missy's tonsils."

She was still shaken by Marco's kiss, still bemused, so that she appeared on the surface to be genuinely absorbed in this new thought. There was a radiant feeling around her heart, and the corners of her mouth felt permanently lifted, but after that mass-spectator business she was determined to preserve her dignity.

Marco said, "Have I got to kiss you again?" and when she looked startled: "Missy's tonsils, at a time like this!"

"But darling, he said—"

"I know. We'll attend to that too, eventually. Now that you've decided to take me into the family, we'll have lots of plans for Missy."

"Marco, I never—you always *were* in the family," she reproached. "If you thought you weren't, you could have spoken to me at any time—"

She stopped. Marco was shaking his head. "No," he said. "I wanted you to say it of your own free will. The things I've wanted for Missy have been good things, Coles," he said earnestly. "You've opposed me just because you felt you had to, you know. I've wanted to see her develop self-reliance, to be a normal child in a normal family, not to feel that one of us was protecting her against the other. Believe me, it's better for the child."

"I had her bed moved into the nursery this morning," said Coles, and blushed. Suddenly she raised her voice. "Darling, *please* get down off that fence!"

"What Missy needs is a younger brother," murmured Marco, putting his arm around Coles and walking her slowly toward the shade. "Heaven help him, unless he's a tough little bruiser."

"Marco, I was wondering—maybe one of these days we might take Justin Fougère back to run the hotel. From his point of view, we injured him; and he's really all right. Then we could build a house of our own. A hotel is no place to bring up our children in."

"By heaven," he said softly, "I *am* going to kiss you again!"

THE END

REDBOOK'S FILM SELECTIONS FOR ALL THE FAMILY

SEVEN SISTERS

WITH big news breaking all over the world, a stock-type reporter-photographer (Van Heflin) draws an assignment to cover a tulip festival in the hamlet of Little Delft, Michigan. He lands in a hotel staffed by seven daughters of the proprietor, a musical-comedy Dutchman (S. Z. Sakall). The journalist falls in love with a honey named *Billie* (Kathryn Grayson), and before the romance comes to its happy end, there are a number of engaging complications. This is the first Metro production of Joe Pasternak. All the girls are young and beautiful; Miss Grayson sings remarkably well; and Heflin is refreshingly different as a leading man. Escapist, you'd call this one, but first-class. (Metro)

LAZYBONES

THIS time Judy Canova is teamed with Joe E. Brown, which should give you a rough idea. Judy accidentally shoots a pigeon carrying messages for a Nazi spy ring, and the Nazis set out to liquidate Judy. Action embraces the Ozarks and a big-town night-club, with sidelights of Judy besting a Jap spy at ju-jitsu and sinking a Nip sub with a champagne bottle full of nitroglycerin. Mr. Brown plays a theatrical agent; Eddie Foy, Jr., is his partner; Jerome Cowan is the chief spy. Nonsense, but goofy. (Republic)

MISS ANNIE ROONEY

FOLLOWERS of Shirley Temple will want to see this picture, for Shirley is a young lady now. She is in her teens, has a pretty good little figure and the old Temple knack of knowing what to do in front of a camera. She plays a poor girl who is the granddaughter of a cop (Guy Kibbee), and is a jitterbug. A crush develops between the girl and a fancy-pants rich lad (played by Roland Du Pree) from Sutton Place. There are some other youngsters, a good deal of jive talk and some rug-cutting. There is also a plot about the girl's father (William Gargan), a big-talking dreamer who finally puts over a process for making rubber out of milkweed. (Edward Small-United Artists)

How to make a Four Roses Mint Julep: Place some mint in a bowl; cover with powdered sugar and a little water. Crush the mint or simply stir, as you prefer. Place mixture in bottom of tall glass or silver Julep cup. Fill glass with shaved ice. Pour in Four Roses till glass is brimming. Garnish with mint. Let stand till the frost forms thick!

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