



# THE HATCH WAY

A RAPID-TRANSIT OMNIBUS

*Containing Three Full-length Novels*

FIVE DAYS

SPENDTHRIFT

A COUPLE OF QUICK ONES

BY ERIC HATCH

Author of MY MAN GODFREY





THE HATCH WAY  
*A Rapid-Transit Omnibus*





# THE HATCH WAY

*A Rapid-Transit  
Omnibus*

BY  
ERIC HATCH



LONDON  
ARTHUR BARKER LTD.  
21 GARRICK STREET, COVENT GARDEN

*First Published 1937*

*All rights reserved*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
BY WESTERN PRINTING SERVICES LTD., BRISTOL

## CONTENTS

FIVE DAYS . . . . .	<i>Page</i> 3
SPENDTHRIFT . . . . .	179
A COUPLE OF QUICK ONES . . . . .	325



## **FIVE DAYS**



## CHAPTER ONE

**B**EADLESTON PREECE sat on the flagged terrace of his Long Island home and contemplated the night. It was a soft night of gentle hushed sounds and moonlight; a night for lovers and gardens and pleasant philandering thoughts. It was the sort of night nature brings in the early summer expressly for the furtherance of her own ends, yet to Beadleston, for all its loveliness, it was a horrible night.

Beadleston Preece was young—twenty-eight. Being young, his mind, on such a night, should have been crowded with visions of oodles of fair ladies clad in clinging gossamer garments, and one particular lady probably dressed as a bride. It should have been occupied with thoughts of bright hearths and seductively furnished boudoirs. Quite a different procession of visions crossed before his staring eyes.

Instead of fair ladies he saw grubby men in blue working clothes with the striped aprons peculiar to moving-van people. He saw them over and over again as they carried from the great house behind him things he had come to love. He saw the auctioneer, tall, gaunt; heard his rasping voice making bad jokes about the low prices offered for the knick-knacks and curios that had been Beadle's particular pride. He saw Milton Sands, whom he had thought his true friend, sitting behind a huge glass-topped desk in his office, telling him with a nice show of sadness that he had succeeded in losing for Beadle in the stock market the several millions of dollars he had inherited from his father the year before. Beadle didn't see the look of relief on Sands' face when he accepted his explanation. But then Beadle had no reason to suspect there had been any irregularity.

Along with the visions of the moving-van men and Milton Sands came others. There was the vision of a girl—a tall,

stately girl named Madelaine—who had been engaged to Beadle and who, when the crash came, had suddenly ceased to be engaged to Beadle. There were the visions of many people he had thought were friends; people he had wined and dined and who had left him as quickly as Madelaine as soon as they saw he couldn't wine and dine them any longer.

He saw the house behind him stripped of its furnishings—as empty as his life.

It occurred vaguely to Beadle that his life had been empty all along and he just hadn't known it—he saw himself now clearly, stripped naked as the house. He saw that because he wasn't really handsome and not really bright, people hadn't ever liked him for himself but simply for what he could give them. This led to another procession of thoughts; bitter, self-damning thoughts that reached all the way from his childhood to the present moment; thoughts of failure, of letting himself be walked over; thoughts of another girl, also tall, named Carlotta, who had walked over him for years and bedeviled him and teased him because he was prissy; thoughts of his timidity (for Beadle was frightened of almost everything), wretched, grinding, galling thoughts.

When he had sat so on the terrace for an hour, he started to get up. He had decided to go up to his room and quietly hang himself. He didn't like the idea of hanging, but it would be an end and he thought he could find courage enough to go through with it. Then suddenly he realized that he was no longer alone. He turned and peered into the darkness toward the house. A man was standing there. The man had a gun and the gun was pointing directly at Beadle's head.

It didn't surprise Beadle that a man should be standing on his terrace, pointing a gun at him, because in the past month his mind had grown accustomed to accepting revolutionary happenings.

“Stick 'em up or I'll shoot!”

Beadle stared at him. Then he sighed and said, “I wish you would.”



"You *what*?"

"I wish you would shoot. You see," Beadle explained almost apologetically, "I haven't got anything to live for now, so I wish you would shoot me."

The man came closer and looked at Beadle almost as though he were afraid of him. He said, "You're no friend of mine—why should I do you a favour and go to de chair for it?"

"But I thought you wanted to shoot me."

"Naw, I don't want to shoot you."

"But——"

The man waved his gun menacingly.

"I ain't gonna shoot nobody, see?"

"Then why carry that pistol around?"

The man thought about this. He lowered the weapon and looked at it as though he were seeing it for the first time. There was about him the air of one who is completely stumped. Then he said, "I'm blamed if I know!"

Many people would have thought this a strange answer to come from the lips of a hardened criminal. To Beadle it seemed perfectly logical. He said, "I didn't think you knew. What's your name?"

"My name's Swazey," said the burglar. "What's yours?"

"Preece."

Instinctively, after the American manner, they shook hands.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Preece," said Swazey.

"Sit down," said Beadle. "I'd like to talk to you."

Swazey sat down. He said, "About you havin' nothin' to live for, I suppose."

Beadle nodded. Swazey cocked his head on one side and said, "Ain't you 'shamed, sayin' a thing like that—you with your fine horses an' your *automobiles* an' butlers an' *maids* even. Maids!—An' you say you got nothin' to live for!"

"I haven't any of those things," said Beadle. "I used to have. I—I'm leaving here to-morrow. It isn't mine any more."

"Oh!" Swazey looked down for a second in thought. "What was it? The ponies or women?"

"Neither. A friend of mine lost it for me in the stock market."

"Nice friend," said Swazey. "That's tough." And then, being a man of few words, "Tough!"

"It's a horse on you," said Beadle. "You came to burgle the house and there's nothing in the house."

"Oh, dat's all right," said Swazey. "I don't mind. Dere's lots of houses."

"It's nice of you to take it that way," said Beadle.

A silence fell between them. Beadle was thinking about Swazey—wondering, vaguely, why he liked talking to him. He supposed it was because he was so horribly lonely and that in a way Swazey had saved his life by keeping him from going up to his room just then. Swazey, on the other hand, was thinking about Beadle. He admired Beadle for being brave enough to look into the muzzle of his gun without flinching. He liked Beadle for it. In his simple code, people he liked were his friends. He was annoyed that this new friend had been so put upon.

"Say," he said, "did you beat up dis guy what lost your chink for you?"

"Oh, no," said Beadle. "He's much too big."

"Didn't you do nothin' to him?"

Beadle shook his head.

"Where does he live?"

Beadle sighed and said, "He lives in a lovely big house about a mile from here."

"Oh," said Swazey. "Dat's different."

"It's pretty awful," said Beadle. "I lost almost everything I had in the world—he didn't lose anything in the deal. There he is with his house and his yacht and here am I—busted."

This seemed to cause some train of thought to pass through Swazey's mind. He wriggled and screwed his enormous face into an expression of pain that clearly indicated he was thinking. Presently he spoke again.

"Say, you ain't going to pinch me for burglary?"

"Why should I? You haven't hurt me or taken anything."

"Dat ain't my fault."

"Milton Sands is the guy who's hurt me—he's the one who's done the taking around here."

Swazey didn't feel like entering into comparisons about himself and Sands. He had a mind which, when overtaxed, became easily exhausted, so he stuck to the one idea. He said, "Never mind about me bein' a burglar."

"I don't mind about your being a burglar."

"You said this bozo's name was Milton Sands?"

Beadle nodded.

"Well, I don't get down this way often."

"You must stop in again," said Beadle. He smiled. "I like talking to you."

"A nye for a nye," said the burglar.

"What?" said Beadle.

"I mean Milton Sands," said Swazey. "Look here, why don't you go steal somethin' of his? I'll help you."

For a long time Beadle didn't answer. He was thinking; thinking along clear, simple lines. Swazey had started something with his "nye for a nye" talk. The poetic justice of it appealed to Beadle.

Normally, the thoughts he was thinking would have shocked him, but to-night his whole being was undergoing a strange metamorphosis. Things he had loved he now hated. It naturally followed that things that had once revolted him should now seem quite pleasant. He sat up abruptly and turned to Swazey.

"Come up to my room," he said, "and we'll have a snort before we get going."

## CHAPTER TWO

TWENTY minutes later Beadle stood alone in the panelled hallway by the front door. He had wanted to be alone for a moment to bid farewell to the house and so had told Swazey to get his car and wait for him under the *porte-cochère*. He stood now with a suitcase in one hand and his hat in the other, a picture of desolation. One snort with Swazey had led to another and Beadle was a little drunk. He wasn't used to being even a little drunk, so it made him sloppily sentimental. He thought of how he must look, standing there in the half-lighted hall, saying good-bye to his home for the last time—and was properly moved. He thought about it for several minutes, raised the hand with the hat in it and said, "Good-bye, house!" Then he bowed his head and with a heavily dramatic gesture, spun on his heel and started for the door.

But he forgot that in his left hand he held a suitcase. It swung between his legs and he fell over it. When he picked himself up and started again for the door, much of the sentimental twaddle had been shaken out of him and he realized that it was really rather exciting and agreeable to be starting off adventuring with a professional burglar. Without any dramatics at all he went out on to the front porch, closed the door of his home behind him, and looked about for Swazey.

Swazey was nowhere in sight. Beadle called to him. Presently a car that had evidently been driven up behind some bushes on the lawn came out into the driveway. Beadle got in. He said, "Why did you drive into the bushes?"

Swazey snapped his fingers apologetically.

"I just couldn't help it!"

"Had I better drive?"

"Oh, it ain't the drink," said Swazey. "You see, it's like dis—when all's said an' done, after all, I'm a burglar."

"I know," said Beadle. "You told me before."

"Well, you know, Mr. Preece, a burglar can't drive right up to the front door, now can he?"

Beadle was silent. Swazey waited patiently for his answer, the car still standing under the *porte-cochère*. Swazey was incapable of talking and driving simultaneously and he wanted the point cleared up. As Beadle didn't answer, he said again, "Now can he, Mr. Preece?"

Beadle had forgotten the question and had been pondering other matters. Now he looked up. "Oh, no," he said; "but I wish you'd call me Beadle. Everyone does."

"O.K., pal," said Swazey. "Where to now?"

Beadle showed him. A little while later the car, which was a noisy and unpleasant car, rattled into Milton Sands' driveway. Swazey at once swung off the gravel on to the lawn, where the wheels made no sound. He seemed to think this deadening of the wheels would make their passage silent. He forgot about the motor. He couldn't think of the wheels and the motor at the same time. Beadle prodded him with his elbow and said, "Hey, where are you going?"

Swazey smiled broadly and again snapped his fingers in apology.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I forgot youse was wit me, Mr. Preece. You know, when all's said and done——"

"I know," said Beadle. "Stop right here."

The car stopped.

"Have you got the note?"

"It's tied to de steering," said Swazey.

"Fine."

Beadle got out and picked up his suitcase. Swazey took it from him and Beadle set off across the smooth turf of the lawn toward the foot of it, where the white railings of a yacht landing could be seen faintly standing out against the black water of Hempstead Harbour. Halfway to the landing Swazey stopped.

"Say," he said. "I forgot to shut off de motor."

Beadle chuckled. "That's fine."

He chuckled again, thinking that in a little while the car would begin to steam and boil and spout geysers of water and quite possibly blow up, and that Milton Sands would be awakened and then would be given the note. He laughed softly and led the way on to the dock and down a precipitous incline to the landing float.

"There she is!"

The two of them stared over the still surface of the harbour to where Milton Sands' yacht *Electra* lay. A few hundred feet offshore, she looked like a grey shadow in the darkness. High above her the anchor light winked at them.

"What is she?" said Swazey.

"Fifty-foot express cruiser."

"Oh," said Swazey. "Freight boat, eh?"

"No," said Beadle. "That means she's very fast. She'll do thirty knots."

"Why knots?" said Swazey.

"You call it knots on the water."

"I see," said Swazey, like the blind man. He looked sharply at Beadle.

"Say," he said, "suppose there's some crews on it. What do we do?"

Beadle smiled. He said, "There isn't. I called up a while ago and asked to speak to the captain. They said he and the crew hadn't come back from the village."

Swazey nodded respectfully. He knew strategy when he saw it.

"They'd gone to the movies," said Beadle.

"What'd they see?" asked Swazey, but Beadle didn't answer. He was bending over the painter of a tiny rowboat that lay alongside the float. Presently he got it undone and clumsily stepped aboard. Swazey followed him with the suitcase and they each took an oar and paddled out toward the *Electra*. It was very quiet on the water, almost frighteningly quiet. There wasn't a sound except the inexpert splashing of their oars.

It took them several minutes to go the little distance between the boat and the dock, because Swazey pushed harder on his oar than Beadle and it made them go corkscrew fashion; but presently they came up under the bow and caught hold of the wearing strip and pulled themselves astern to where they could see a gangway leading over the side. They climbed up it and stepped on to the deck. Protective instinct made them pull the steps up after them. The rowboat they let drift away.

It was even quieter aboard the yacht than it had been in the rowboat. The night was so still she scarcely swung at all. The stars seemed much brighter than they did on shore because their reflections were all about in the water. They seemed to hang in space—like the yacht. Nothing in all the world seemed moving or alive or real.

“Cheez!” said Swazey. It was his compliment to nature’s beauty. He had never before been on the water at night. He was impressed.

Beadle, too, was impressed, but differently. The occasional glint of mahogany reflecting a gleam from the masthead light, the outline of the deck-house against the sky, the ship smell, gave him a curious sense of exaltation. He felt like a child who has suddenly discovered some unbelievably wonderful Christmas toy hidden away in a cupboard. A toy of fascinating mechanical possibilities, gleaming with bright new paint—waiting to be played with. The fact that he knew he had no legal right to be discovering and taking the toy made the joy of it a hundredfold greater. Beadle in all his life had never done anything he shouldn’t. Westminster, Harvard, and two aunts who had brought him up had seen to it that he didn’t do anything he shouldn’t. Now, as he stood on this captured deck, he felt as happy as an Oriental emperor swiping a juicy chunk of somebody else’s country. He turned to Swazey.

“Isn’t it splendid!”

Swazey nodded.

“Fat of de land,” he said. He gestured toward the deck-house. “Let’s go in de front parlour dere and look around.”

They walked together, uncertainly, along the deck; found a door and entered. Beadle groped along the walls for an electric switch. He pressed it and the room sprang into light. Swazey looked about him, snapped his fingers and said, "Back in a minute, Cap'n. You give me an idea."

Left alone, Beadle stared about him in fascinated interest, for the yacht's wheel and engine controls were there; burnished brass levers, mysterious instruments with shiny dials and figures. Beadle had been in that deck-house before, with Milton Sands, but he had never noticed any of these things that now seemed to whisper of power to be commanded and beg to be turned and pulled and pushed.

He stepped up to the wheel, spread his feet apart and gripped the spokes firmly. He stared at his reflection in the heavy plate glass of the windows and smiled to himself.

"Avast," he muttered. "Avast below!"

He peered ahead and gave the wheel a savage twist, as though trying to avoid some obstruction in a seaway. He smiled again. "I think it's fun," he said, "being a sailor."

Then he heard Swazey coming along the deck and tried to pretend he hadn't been pretending to steer. Swazey had two glasses and an open bottle of champagne. He entered the deck-house beaming, his heavy face made almost attractive by the obvious pleasure written all over it.

"I found dis," he said, "and t'ought we might drink some toast to de *Electra*."

"Drink some toast?" said Beadle. "What do——" Then he caught on and said, "Oh, yes, let's." Swazey filled the glasses and held his aloft.

"To de *Electra*, de queen of de wave!"

They drank the toast. Then they drank a toast to each other and then the urge to adventure came over them again. It hit Beadle first. It had been hard to resist the brass levers before the glass of champagne; now it was impossible. He turned to Swazey and tried to assume a commanding air. He had heard Milton Sands go through some mystic ritual whenever he



had gone out on the boat with him. He remembered some of it.

"Cast off the moorings," he said.

"Fine talk," said Swazey. "What is moorings?"

Beadle looked at him in disappointment.

"Untie the thing," he said, "up in front."

"I'll try," said Swazey.

"Hurry," said Beadle. "It just might be awkward if we were found here."

This was a point of etiquette Swazey understood perfectly. For years and years he had been going places suddenly to avoid being "found" in other places. He said, "You stay here and twiddle t'ings. I got an idea."

Swazey started forward. Beadle saw him take a large knife out of his hip pocket. A moment later he heard a splash and noticed the bow of the yacht slowly swinging around. Then the ebb tide began to carry them sideways toward the Sound. Beadle, thoroughly delighted, swung the wheel back and forth and peered ahead of him the way he had seen sailors do in the movies. Swazey came back and said, "What do we do now, row?"

The remark nicked Beadle's pride. He gave Swazey a withering look.

"Certainly not!"

"O.K.; I was just wondering."

"We let her gain headway," said Beadle, though he knew it didn't make sense, "and then we start the motors."

As he spoke, hope and inspiration came. It suddenly occurred to him that the motive power was undoubtedly similar to an automobile engine. He looked carefully at the instrument board and saw a switch that had "On" and "Off" written on it. He turned it to "On." Then he looked for buttons in the floor, found one, and pushed it.

Almost immediately he was rewarded by a tremendously noisy rumpus from somewhere beneath his feet. The boat vibrated and a throaty roar issued from its stern. He pulled

on what looked like an automobile throttle and the turmoil quieted to a steady hum. Then he noticed another switch and pushed another button, and started the second engine with a great hullabaloo. He grinned at Swazey.

"This is fine!" he said. "Isn't it, Swazey?"

"No," said Swazey. "De noise scares me. It don't sound like nothin' I ever hoid."

"Rats!" said Beadle.

Swazey looked about him nervously.

"Where?"

"Just an expression," said Beadle. "Now we'll start."

Applying his motor-car knowledge to the mechanical proposition confronting him, he located a clutch pedal for each motor and realized that the long brass handles must be what he termed in his own mind "the gear shift levers." By means of a gymnastic feat that would have shamed the *Electra's* professional captain, he succeeded in jumping on both clutches and pulling both levers at the same time. When he jumped off the clutches, he opened the throttles wide and the next second the *Electra* was shooting through the water. But the manœuvre had failed, because she was shooting backwards. Beadle was afraid Swazey might notice it. He jumped on the clutches again and seized the levers.

"Just testing her out," he said.

He shoved the levers the other way. The *Electra*, with a churning of foam and phosphorus at her stern, moved forward. Beadle took a deep breath. It was probably the first time in his life that he had ever mastered a problem alone and unaided. He opened the throttles wide. The *Electra* gathered speed, her bow lifted out of the water, two sheets of spray rose on each side of her, the deck shook as the power of four hundred horses pent up in the great engines drove her on.

A wild exhilaration now possessed Beadle, filled him with a strange sense of power. He swung the wheel back and forth and felt the flying ship answer his touch like a polo pony. Staring through the window, he saw ahead of him the Sound

with moonlight shining on it, making a streak of silver down its length.

“We’re off!” he called to Swazey.

The *Electra* rushed on, past the last high bluff of the harbour, out into the moonlight. The spray that flew from her bows turned into platinum and diamonds now, and where it fell back, into sapphires. Beadle looked to his left and saw the moonlight made a great wide silver road down the middle of the Sound; a road without borders, fenceless, alluring. He swung the wheel and headed into the shining way. He forgot about Milton Sands and that he had been unhappy. He forgot everything but the sense of new power and freedom and the bright beauty all around him.

The *Electra*, straightened now to the new course, raced onward down the moonglade.

### CHAPTER THREE

MR. SWAZEY'S unpleasant automobile had not blown up during the night and so awakened Milton Sands. Nor was he awakened when his crew came home from the movies and found the rowboat and the *Electra* missing. The crew had stopped off on the way home from the movies and assuming their master had taken the yacht, were content to lie down on the float and sleep.

Milton Sands was awakened by a very courteous and puzzled butler, who handed him a note saying he had found it tied with red ribbon to the steering wheel of a car that some person had left on the front lawn.

Milton Sands frowned and looked sharply at his butler. Then he sat up and began to read:

Dear Milton,

I am going away and am taking the *Electra* with me. I have bought Mr. Swazey's car and am giving it to you in exchange for the *Electra*. Under the circumstances, I'm sure you will understand. . . .

Innocent line, that, about under the circumstances. Beadle had simply meant that he thought Sands might be big-hearted enough not to kick up much fuss. Milton Sands, whose conscience was heavy upon him that summer's morning, read quite a different meaning into it. It looked to Milton as though Beadle had caught on. He proceeded:

Mr. Swazey said you ought to be shot, Milton, for losing all my money for me and was anxious to do it for me, but I think I'd rather have the *Electra* and let you stay alive to worry about things.

Yours truly,

Beadleston Preece.

Then there was added at the insistence of and dictated by one Swazey:

P.S. If I get any of your lip about this, I'll send Mr. Swazey to see you and let him do what he wanted to do about you losing the money in the first place.

B. P.

Milton Sands read his letter over three times. He had always known Beadle was queer, but he had never dreamed he was this queer. He had always thought, too, that if he were suspected of any funny business in connection with the estate, he could frighten Beadle into silent acceptance of the situation. Milton Sands was not used to being told what he should and should not do. To be told so by Preece, whom he had always regarded as a weakling, was almost too much. He reached out his hand for the telephone. The police, he thought, would handle Beadle nicely; would take a real pleasure, probably, in arresting him for the theft of the *Electra*. But second thoughts stayed his hand. It struck him that the police would mean publicity, and publicity, he realized, was something he was in no position to stand. He wondered if Beadle knew he had this hold over him. He thought it probable.

Then another thought struck him. If Beadle, so entirely ignorant of maritime law that he probably didn't even know there was such a thing, did something horrible with the *Electra*, he, Milton Sands, would be responsible. He summoned his secretary. Before his eyes floated visions of Beadle steering the *Electra* on a wild, wild course through crowded waters.

Milton Sands was sorely troubled.

The secretary entered.

## CHAPTER FOUR

AS the sun rose over the silver spires of New York, Beadle Preece, snug in the owner's stateroom of the *Electra*, was sleeping peacefully. In the forecandle, Swazey slept equally peacefully, though more loudly.

It is wonderful, really, that either of them could sleep, for the *Electra* was anchored just off Quarantine and liners were continually tooting at her and then passing by and rocking her madly in their swell. But since neither Beadle nor Swazey had ever slept on a yacht before, they assumed that the terrific motion and the bellowing of the horns and the indignant cries of tug captains whose path their anchoring impeded, were all part of the game and so should be enjoyed.

By a series of miracles that would have made the twelve apostles blush for shame at the smallness of the miracles they thought stupendous, Beadle had navigated through Hell Gate, down the East River with its Sound steamers, tows and ferries; under the bridges and at last past the tip of Manhattan Island to Quarantine. There, seeing other ships stopped and apparently sleeping, it seemed fitting and proper that they should anchor too.

There had been a little doubt in the minds of both these gallant sailors as to the ethical way of securing a ship to the bottom. But before Beadle could even suggest anything, Swazey had drawn on certain technical knowledge he had acquired driving a milk-wagon. It had been his custom to anchor the horse with a large, round weight. Unable to find such a device aboard the *Electra* he had seized upon a bit of metal that struck him as the next best thing. It had, by the last and perhaps greatest of the night's miracles, turned out to be the anchor. The second greatest miracle had been when, just as they were about to run head on into a Sound steamer,

the bow wave of it had thrown them out of their course and they had missed it. Now, unutterably wearied by their adventuring, thoroughly pleased with themselves, and like all tyros disgustingly proud of what seemed to them the mastery of a new art, they were resting. It was noon before they stirred.

Swazey awoke because the *Aquitania* just happened to throw a larger swell than any of the liners that had so far passed. The *Electra* heeled far to one side and deposited him on the floor. The shock was so sudden that he instinctively pulled his gun. When he realized what had happened, he felt like an ass and put the gun away, and suspicious, cautiously climbed the iron ladder to the deck. Swazey, out of his element, craved human companionship. The sight of the great ships that surrounded them, the strange smell of oil, salt water and garbage, the screaming, darting seagulls, scared him.

The same swell that threw Swazey to the floor lifted Beadle Preece into the air, but the bed in the owner's stateroom was constructed so that no one, however tossed about physically or mentally, could fall out of it, so his awakening was comparatively gentle.

He lay for a little time with his eyes closed and his heart heavy, for he remembered that he had passed through tragedy—that his world had been torn and twisted like burnt metal, and that life was empty. Wearily, sadly, he opened his eyes, looked about him and started violently as he realized where he was. Then a slow smile spread over his face. The owner's stateroom of the *Electra* was a pleasant place to awaken in, even if your world had been torn and twisted and your life was empty. The mahogany-panelled walls and marine water colours and the rich carpeting and curtains were comforting. One felt reassured by such obvious, expensive evidence that one was living in comfort. Beadle sat up, stuck his head out of a porthole and sniffed.

The sight of the big ships and the smell of the sea that had

frightened Swazey had quite the opposite effect on him. Perhaps he had somewhere in his veins one small drop of buccaneering blood willed him by a doubtful ancestor—at any rate, the effect of the sniffing experiment was tonic. He leaped out of bed, stretched, expanded his chest and very nearly beat upon it with his fists in a primitive gesture of exuberance. Then he dressed—in white flannels and blue coat and went to the cupboard to hang up his other clothes. In the cupboard his eye lighted with glee on Milton Sands' yachting-cap.

The cap, with its golden fouled anchors, yacht-club insignia and shiny black visor, drew him like a magnet. He snatched it from its shelf, went back before the mirror, and trying to look like the captain of an ocean greyhound, put it on. It promptly fell down over his ears, giving much the effect of a sunbonnet. Beadle could have cried with disappointment. He so much wanted the feeling of power and authority he knew the hat would give him. To a yachtsman—that is, to a new, inexperienced yachtsman—the yachting-cap is sword and armour.

Quite desperate, he went into the bathroom and began savagely to tear and fold bits of tissue paper and stuff them under the sweat-band. Then carefully he put the cap on again and looked in the mirror. Even with the stuffing, it didn't give exactly the natty effect Mr. Knox the hatter had planned for it when, with pride in his work, he had whipped it together for Milton Sands. But now it unquestionably looked more like a yachting-cap than it did a sunbonnet. Beadle was delighted.

With an almost naval air he strode up the companionway to the deck. Booted and spurred, so to speak, he was ready to face his empty life with a smile.

On deck he spied Swazey, sitting chin in hands, staring gloomily out at the harbour traffic. There was about the expression on his face something that told as plainly as though he wore a sign, that he had fallen prey to an illness famous since men began to go down to the sea in ships. Even as



Beadle spied him, he rose. With a grimace of pain and eyes that rolled dizzily skyward he prostrated himself over the rail.

"Whee-wheet!" screamed the pleased seagulls.

"Ohhh!" said Swazey. "Oh, my!"

The scene was one that demanded an iron constitution in any observer of it. Beadle Preece did not have an iron constitution, but he had on a yachting-cap, and the mental vision of a man in a yachting-cap hanging over a rail doing the things that Swazey was doing simply could not be tolerated. He went forward to the deck-house and, by way of getting his mind off the horrible spectacle, started the engines.

"Now," he said, "we will plot the day's course."

He hadn't the faintest idea what he meant by that. It was just one of the things he'd heard Milton Sands say and he thought it sounded well, which it did. Then he realized that let alone not knowing what plotting a course meant, he hadn't any place to plot a course to.

All the world lay before Beadle Preece. The roadstead where the *Electra* rolled and tossed led, he knew, to the far corners of the earth. Like an escaped canary, who at first fancies its little wings are strong enough to carry it on long, migratory flights, Beadle assumed the *Electra* was quite large enough to sail the Seven Seas.

"We might go to Bermuda," he thought, and said aloud, "We might go to Bermuda."

Beadle almost always expressed his thoughts aloud when he was alone. He liked to take the opportunity of saying things when he knew he wouldn't be contradicted. People nearly always contradicted him.

He sat down on the long seat at the after-end of the cabin and thought for a time about going to Bermuda. The engines hummed agreeably, their vibration giving a sense of life to the little ship. Then Swazey came in. Beadle said, "I guess we might go to Bermuda, Swazey."

"No," said Swazey. He looked at Beadle, saw the cap and instinctively added, "sir."

Beadle noticed and smiled.

"The magic of brass buttons," he said, "Why don't you want to go to Bermuda?"

"It's over de ocean."

"Well, we've got a boat."

Swazey looked gloomily at the water.

"Dis is a hell-ship," he said. "I never been so sick. I wanna go home."

Beadle looked his disappointment.

"Oh, Swazey!"

"I wanna go home," said Swazey. "I know when I've had enough, see?"

"But last night you thought it would be swell to go to sea. You drank a toast to the life on the rolling wave."

"Dat was last night. I t'ink different to-day."

"I think you're being very silly," said Beadle. He was hurt that Swazey could think of deserting at the very start of so alluring an adventure as sailing to Bermuda. "You're stupid, Swazey."

"No," said Swazey. "Just sick."

"I haven't much money, but we've got the boat, and you want to go back to burgling. For what?"

"For I don't like to be sick."

"Oh, very well," said Beadle. "We don't have to sail on the ocean, though it's better. We can sail up rivers and things. We can sail to Florida."

"Florida, eh?" said Swazey, brightening.

"Florida," said Beadle. Pleased that Swazey seemed to be coming around, he thought to dress up the idea a little. "Florida—palm-trees, canals, bayous—delicious ripening fruit——"

"Don't!" said Swazey and gulped.

"Sorry," said Beadle.

The spasm passed.

"O.K., pal," said Swazey. "Let's go to that river now. How do we go to Florida?"

Beadle had found it easy enough to plan going to Florida

in the abstract—as easy as going to Bermuda—but the problem, presented concretely and brutally by Swazey, was different. He knew it was done. He'd heard Sands talk about inland waterways and rivers and canals, but he hadn't the faintest idea how it was done.

He shifted from one foot to another, nervous in the fear that he would lose command of the situation and sink in Swazey's eyes. His mad navigation and mastery of the wild horses that dwelt in the engine had won him Swazey's respect and open admiration the night before. Beadle wasn't used to admiration. He treasured the little he had of it as a doctor treasures a life-giving serum. He thought so hard and worked the muscles of his brow so fast that the tissue paper in his hat began to squeak. Then Swazey said, "Where do we go foist?"

Beadle brightened.

"New Brunswick," he said. He didn't say it because he thought you really did go to New Brunswick first. As a matter of fact, he rather doubted if you went there at all, but he knew he had to say something, since a direct question demands a direct answer—and he remembered that the trains to Florida did go through New Brunswick. "Of course," he added, as a hedge clause, "we've got to find a map."

"There's a map," said Swazey, pointing to a low, square, glass-covered box on the ledge in front of the wheel. They went over and inspected it. It was a chart of New York Harbour, the Lower Bay and the Raritan River. Beadle's heart leaped as he saw the magic name New Brunswick and saw what looked to be a water road leading to it. Then his hopes sank again, because he saw so many confusing things on the chart; strange crosses and black marks and dots and everywhere tiny printed figures. He thought he had never seen such a silly map and said, "Look at all the numbers. I wonder what on earth they're for!"

Swazey, who was staring at the chart with a concentration so great that it caused him a sense of physical discomfort, straightened.

"Nerts!" he said. "I got it. Dem numbers is de popolation!" Proud, he explained patronizingly to Beadle. "You see, so many people live here, so many people live there. You got to know how many people live where dey live."

"Why?" said Beadle absently. He felt positive that Swazey was wrong about the figures and was studying the chart.

"Why?" said Swazey. "Why? Why, because——" Then he stopped and hung his head, abashed because he couldn't figure out why, for instance, Milton Sands or he or Beadle should have to know how many people lived anywhere. Analysed, it just didn't seem to matter. His eye fell on the map again and his shame grew greater because he saw that his "population figures" never appeared on land but only in the parts of the chart that were obviously water. There was a deep silence until Beadle spoke.

"You know," he said, "it's quite wonderful, but I really believe those numbers tell you how deep the water is."

It was Swazey's turn.

"Why?" he said.

Miraculously, Beadle was ready for him. He expected this and had prepared himself by quick thought.

"Because," he said, "we have to have a certain amount of water in order to float."

"Now we have to float, eh?" said Swazey.

Beadle went back to his studying, and though he still found the chart confusing, assisted by the legend at the bottom, he saw that by sailing along the shore in a generally southerly direction he would, in time, come to the mouth of the river that obviously led to New Brunswick. He turned to Swazey.

"Now we'll pull up the anchor and start."

"O.K., pal."

Swazey went out onto the forward-deck. Again his past life stood him in good stead. Swazey, at the acme of his career, had once hoisted a safe out of an office window. The anchor, with its near-by davit and block and tackle, presented no problem at all. He heaved and hauled and it came up.

As the boat began to drift, Beadle went through his acrobatic routine with the clutches and levers. The screws bit into the water and they were away, slowly at first, then faster and faster. The thrill of the night before came back to him—the romantic thrill of commanding a ship at sea bound for foreign parts.

It is a strange thrill, this—men with boats no bigger than dories know it. One sees them on bright summer days tied up to moorings and docks, polishing brass, painting, splicing anchor-lines, dreaming with a far-away look in their eyes of the great cruise they are never going to take. One sees them, sometimes, quite idle, staring at the mouth of their snug harbour, but their eyes—always their eyes—are far away, fixed on headlands and rolling, spray-capped combers they will never see; knowing in their imagining the smell of far wharves and the still, still beauty of coves at dusk and the sighing soft hush of night in strange ports, when their ships come in. But mostly their ships never come in. Always it is the *next* year they are making ready for, when fortune shall have smiled on them. Always it is the day beyond to-morrow that they are thinking about, when the tiny power boat or sloop shall have given her place in their hearts to a schooner with towering masts and sails that shine whiter than angels' wings.

Beadle Preece knew nothing of these men, yet standing splendidly in command of his fleet craft he became their brother. His eyes took on the look of their eyes. His mind joined theirs in those far ports where the waters, being purely the waters of imagining, are littered with hula dancers, maidens in distress, tramp steamers from places with lovely names, pearls and coral, and where the tang of salt in the nostril is so strong one could season a soup with it.

In fact, Beadle might have, in his condition of "Boatman's Trance," actually sailed to Bermuda had not the reliable Swazey, just as they were nearing Atlantic Highlands (miles out of their course, for the *Electra* was fast) touched him on the arm and made a remark that had no place in the lexicon

of the dream sailors Beadle was consorting with. He said, quite simply and forgetting the yachting-cap, "Buddy, I t'ink we better go back. It looks deep here an' I don't like it here."

Beadle started, saw he had overreached and laughed.

"Sure," he said.

"What about de river?"

"We'll head for shore and sail north till we come to it. We must have got 'way south of it."

Beadle put the helm over and, for good measure, slowed down the engines a little. He didn't want anything to break down out there in the open sea. He hadn't realized before how big the ocean can seem once you get really on it. Like Swazey, he was glad when the coastline loomed ahead of them, changed from a blue cloud to a distant picture of hills and smoke, and then, as they came nearer, changed again, like a lantern slide coming into focus. They could see the detail now of ugly houses and the stark, belching factories of the ugly towns along the shore.

Beadle cut the speed of the ship still more. The excitement of the start was past and the exhilarating sensation of escape of the night before had worn off. Common sense asserting itself told him it was unwise to hurl a heavy piece of machinery through a crowded harbour.

He ran slowly to within a hundred yards of the shore and headed back toward New York, scanning the banks for the mouth of a river, but they presented a solid front of docks and mudbanks and moored scows. He began to grow discouraged, and spying a tug near by drawing a string of wallowing barges, steered over close to it. The tug captain leaned lazily in the pilot-house window, idly watching, as is the manner of tug-boat captains.

Beadle hailed him.

"Hey!" he shouted. "How can I get to the Raritan River?"

The tug captain didn't care for yachts. Like mosquitoes, they got in his way and bothered him. He slowly took a large stubby pipe from his mouth and so, having cleared that organ

for action, pointed and said, "Well, ye can land at that dock there an' take a street-car."

Swazey felt his hero was being insulted. He leaned over the rail, shook his fist and addressed the captain in a language he understood.

The captain's mouth remained open during the conversation. It was something of a surprise to hear such a linguist as Swazey speaking from the deck of a yacht. Somehow it restored his faith in mankind. When Swazey finished, he smiled.

"Why didn't you say you wanted to sail there? Go on like you are till you come to a big spar sticking out of the water. Then head in under the bridges."

The *Electra* drew away. Swazey turned importantly to Beadle.

"It's child's play," he said, "child's play. Just go on till you come to a big spar stickin' out of de water and turn to de left under de bridges."

Beadle smiled at Swazey's careful explanation. He was so obviously delighted to have a chance to give directions and so totally oblivious of the fact that the captain's voice being what it was, not only Beadle but several hundred people on shore had already learned how to get to the Raritan.

Before they reached the spar, Beadle saw the bridges and the mouth of the river. He headed in and began to look for a place to land, so that he could walk on to the bridge and make arrangements about having it opened. As they approached it, he threw out the clutches, and the boat drifted at snail's pace with the tide. Beadle was worried, because he couldn't see any place at all to land and knew the *Electra* wouldn't fit underneath the low highway bridge. Then a little fishing-sloop, with a high mast, putt-putted past him, her skipper looking at him curiously. The fishing-boat headed straight and fearlessly at the bridge.

"My goodness," said Beadle. "He's going to break his mast!"

"Naw," said Swazey. "He'll fold it up."

They watched intently. Presently the little boat's skipper put a whistle to his lips and blew three shrill toots. Beadle, fascinated, saw the lines of automobiles stop and the bridge swing open. He jumped gaily onto the clutches and followed the sloop.

"Now I wonder," said Beadle, "how in the world he managed that!"

"Nerts," said Swazey. "He's probably de brother-in-law of de guy what owns de bridge. We could do it too, if we was a brother-in-law."

Beadle was thinking. It was incredible to him that one little whistle had stopped all those cars, but there seemed no denying it. He looked around him for buttons to push that might be connected with a whistle. There weren't any, but he found a little chain hanging from the ceiling and reached up and pulled it. At once an ear-splitting blast rent the heavens. He turned to Swazey.

"That makes us a brother-in-law," he said.

The fishing-boat ahead of them pulled to one side. Beadle gave the engines a little more gas and they swashed past it. He was glad he'd found the whistle—it gave him the sense of mastery again that had been lacking since the adventure with the tug captain. He began to sing—"A life on the ocean wave—a home on the roll-ing deep——" Though he sang softly, he put into it all the reverence of a patriot singing his national anthem. He was very happy.

But Swazey cut short the song.

"Say," he said, "when do we eat?"

Swazey was very hungry.



## CHAPTER FIVE

**B**EADLE, now that Swazey had brought the subject up, found that he too was very hungry. He had not eaten since dinner the night before. The night before belonged to another era of his life, so that it was really quite some time since he had taken nourishment; months, years, an eternity. He shut off the engines and steered the boat out of the channel and ordered Swazey to drop the anchor. It was fun ordering Swazey to do things because Swazey was so impressed by nautical terms.

When the *Electra* swung around to face the tide and the anchor showed its intention of holding, the two of them set about exploring what Beadle referred to as the bowels of the ship—an expression which confused his lieutenant and caused him embarrassment. The tour began at Beadle's (or Milton Sands', if you prefer it) stateroom. There was a narrow hallway in front of this room, with another companionway to the deck. The walls of the hallway were panelled in mahogany and the floor of it carpeted in deep blue. On the port side was another bathroom, but without a bath. At the end of it was another room like Beadle's, only smaller lengthwise, with a low door at the forward-end that led into the engine-room.

The engine-room was a rather frightening place to Beadle. It seemed to him to be appallingly full of engines. There were the two big ones, glistening with grey paint and shiny brass, and then another little engine at one side whose function he couldn't imagine, until he read on it a legend having to do with kilowatts and volts and by a creditable cerebral process, guessed it furnished the electricity for the boat.

At the forward-end of the engine-room was another low door. This led to what was obviously a dining-room. There was a table, a bright shiny table, down the length of it, with eight chairs in their places around it. At each end of the room

were dish-racks and buffets. Beadle looked at the dishes. They all had tiny crossed flags on them. He thought they were pretty and was glad he'd stolen such a smartly equipped yacht. The glasses too, he saw, had the crossed flags.

In front of the dining-saloon was the galley and in front of that the fore-castle, but the tour ended in the galley.

Because the stove was like any gas-stove, except for the fact that it carried its gas around with it in tanks, the eating proposition was simple. Milton Sands provided well on the *Electra*; cans of everything imaginable lined the galley cupboards, and in the electric ice-box were cold meats and, much better than that, several bottles of champagne. They lunched in the galley. Then they repaired to the deck-house, Swazey struggled with the anchor and they got under way again.

All afternoon they sailed up the winding stream—past mile after mile of mud-banks crawling with fiddler crabs, of swooping gulls and terns, of long-legged cranes standing in one-legged contemplation of the sins of their brothers, the storks; past mile after mile of turnings and twistings, and boys with now and then girls who slipped, quick flashes of white, into the muddy water and stayed with just their heads above it and waved as the yacht passed. Beadle waved back and was hardly aware that they didn't have any clothes on. He was glad they waved to him, glad the few fisher people he passed waved to him; glad to be travelling through a friendly world that on the face of it seemed not at all like the world he had known.

For the river wound through the backlands and marshes, and there was nothing anywhere about it to remind Beadle of the tragedy he had passed through. The fact that he had lost a great fortune seemed here not to matter at all.

Swazey too appeared to be enjoying the trip. He lay on the forward deck and dozed and dreamed of burglaries he had committed and wondered rather doubtfully if he would ever commit another. He didn't think he would, so long as Beadle wanted him as mate of the *Electra*. Under the influence of the

pastoral peace of the afternoon, Swazey, though he didn't put it that way, was willing—nay, almost eager—to beat the jemmy into the ploughshare. He even went so far as to leave his gun down in the crew's quarters. It seemed unnecessary in such peaceful surroundings and it made an uncomfortable bump to lie on.

At dusk they passed under the broad white arch of a highway bridge, swung around a last wide turn of the river and saw ahead of them the smoky outline of New Brunswick. Swazey nodded toward the city, sniffed once, and the scent of civilization blew the pure resolutions of the marshland country clean out of him.

"Fact'ries," he said. "Good pickin's!"

Beadle looked at him sadly. He respected Swazey's abilities as a burglar and could imagine occasions when they might come in handy, but he wanted no traffic with cities and courts and lawyers. He didn't want the spell of peace that had begun to settle on him in the past few hours broken.

"No," said Beadle.

Swazey looked his disappointment.

"O.K., pal."

Beadle threw out the clutches. The river, he saw, grew shallow by the town. On the left side of it was a high, grass-covered bank. Sailing apparently toward them, along the top of the bank, he saw a boat. At first he thought it was a mirage; then his eye followed the high bank to its beginning and he saw the rough wooden gates of a lock. He nudged Swazey.

"The canal!" he said. He was a little excited because he knew he had found the inland waterway to the South and was proud of it. Swazey was unmoved. He said, "What canal?"

"*The* canal—it goes to Florida. See?"

"See what?" said Swazey, staring about him.

"There!" Beadle pointed.

Swazey glanced at the lock. The wooden gates of it had done service for many years and were hoary and looked as

though their years of service had been centuries. He nodded and said, "So *that's* the canal, eh?"

He said it in such a challenging, disgusted sort of a way that Beadle laughed outright. Swazey delighted him. He never said a thing just because he thought it was the thing to say. It made him a refreshing companion after the convention-bound set Beadle was accustomed to play with. Still laughing, he steered the *Electra* alongside an empty wharf near the lock and let her coast to a stop.

"Make her fast to the posts there!"

Swazey, turning from his sorrowful contemplation of the lock-gates, stepped ashore. They made fast with lines that lay coiled on the deck, then went back aboard.

"I think," said Beadle, "we might have a drink."

"You *t'ink!*" said Swazey and disappeared below. Beadle stretched out in a chair on the after-deck and tried to catch up with himself. In the past twenty-four hours things had been happening a little fast for Beadle Preece.

Presently Swazey returned with a bottle of whisky and two ponies. Beadle smiled and told him to go below and bring ice and tall glasses and mineral water. Swazey snapped his fingers in his quaint gesture of apology and hurried on his errand. When he came back, Beadle poured the drinks.

The formality of the glasses and ice seemed to upset Swazey. He was used to pouring a drink and drinking it, and that was that. He grew class-conscious over the accessories, which was silly of him, and silent, which was very wise, because the hush of evening was settling over the river and Swazey, had he talked, might have profaned it.

Beadle raised his glass and nodded to Swazey, who followed suit. A deep swallow of the cool drink slid down his throat. He stretched his legs out straight in front of him and wiggled his toes and gave himself up to luxuriating. He found it incredibly pleasant, sitting there in the quiet, looking out over the still river. It was so entirely peaceful; so little was happen-

ing, yet there wasn't at all the sense of dead stillness that lives in quiet houses. The river whispered, softly, daintily, like a well-bred lady in church. From the town came the faint hum of wheels and traffic, from across the river, where there was a sort of playground, the occasional laugh of a self-conscious lover.

There came too the soft splash of well-handled oars from the skiffs belonging to three shanty scows anchored off the playground. Beadle lazily wondered what sort of people lived on them. They were unpleasant, dirty-looking things, these scows, long since abandoned by towing companies as unfit for service. The shanties, constructed crazily of odd shingles and tarpaulin, looked as though they had been built by drunken architects in a high wind. Beadle looked away from them. Though shanty scows and their people are part of every harbour, there is something sinister about them at dusk, when the faint oil-lights begin to show through the tiny windows. Later, when full darkness comes, their sordidness is covered and the denizens, who look dirty by day and evil in the dusk, become romantic misadventures.

As Beadle turned away from the scows, he felt that someone was staring at the back of his neck. He looked up at the dock that was still above them, since the tide was only half-way in. A girl was standing there gazing down at him. Beadle couldn't see much of her, except that she looked, even in the half-light, indescribably poor and dirty. He thought she was probably imagining him a "wealthy sportsman," which was what the newspapers sometimes had called him, and envying him. He wondered if she would stop being interested, like Madelaine, if she knew he had lost his money. He nudged Swazey and said, "Won't you come aboard?"

The girl started at the sound of his voice.

"Naw," she said. "I went aboard a yacht once."

It was definitely an exit line, but she stayed and continued to stare. Beadle instinctively liked her better for not giggling and darting off. Swazey, masculine and candid under the influence

of the highball, muttered, "Nerts!—Women!" and scowled. Beadle kicked him. He said, "Ouch!"

The girl said, "Why did you kick your friend?"

"He said something I didn't like."

"About me?"

"Not about anything. I just didn't like it."

"Where're you bound? South?"

"South."

"Florida?" said the girl. She said it, "*Flahriddah*."

"Yes."

"Aw, gee!"

She managed somehow to get a good deal of pathos into the expression. Beadle guessed that her knowledge of Florida could only have come from newspapers and the yachts that passed into the canal—he imagined, from the tone of her voice, that she must think it a place simply rotten with millionaires, where Cinderellas in wretched dirty garments stood a good chance of grabbing off a fortune. He was downright sorry for her and was going to offer her enough money to buy a dress or two, when she straightened up and said, "Well, I got to be going. So long."

She walked away to the end of the wharf and disappeared. Presently Beadle heard the sound of oars against rowlocks just astern of the *Electra*. He got up and went over to the rail. A rowboat slid out from the dock and headed across the river. He watched it until the strong strokes of the rower drove it out of sight into the darkness. He stood there long after it had gone. He wasn't as contented as he had been. The girl with her tattered clothes and her "Aw, gee!" had depressed him. He realized she probably couldn't even afford decent food and he felt like a swine about having taken his own loss so seriously.

"Swazey," he said, "let's cook up something to eat and get to bed. Things'll look better to-morrow."

"Do they look bad?" said Swazey, who had just helped himself to another nip.

“Yes,” said Beadle.

“Look here, you ain’t feelin’ bad again about dat Madelaine jane, are you?”

Beadle sighed.

“No, Swazey,” he said, “I’m not feeling bad about the Madelaine jane.”

“Well den, let’s eat.”

Swazey was a swell influence for Beadle.

“O.K., pal,” he said, and started for the galley.

## CHAPTER SIX

**B**EADLE and Swazey dined well. Afterwards they sat on the after-deck again and talked; that is, Swazey talked, for Beadle was unable to throw off the depression that had settled on him. He thought he was miserable about that girl, but he wasn't—the girl had merely echoed the hopelessness he himself had felt when Swazey came to him on his terrace—and had brought it back to him. The quiet of the Upper Raritan was a let-down after the wild excitement of the night run down the East River.

Swazey, who was having a royal time, tried to brighten him up. He told stories, but the stories were all alike and filthy, and when Beadle didn't laugh he had the grace to switch to anecdote. All his anecdotes began with, "I remember de time I was all set for de" (bank, second-storey, house-break or stick-up) "—job." Here he would laugh. "It was dis way. . . ." The stories were good. It was too bad Beadle scarcely heard them. At eight-thirty they went to bed.

At about two o'clock Beadle sat bolt upright in his berth. From across the river there came a woman's screams, followed by cries for help. He heard a man's voice swearing—gruff, husky, cursing—then more screams. He raced up the companionway to the deck and fell over the mooring-line and thought he recognized the woman's voice.

There was silence for a second, then the fracas began again. It obviously came from one of the shanty scows. The swearing grew louder. The screams reached a crescendo—Beadle listened, tense with excitement. Then there was the sound of a heavy fall and scuffling and a long-drawn-out cry.

"Help! Oh, help—help!"

Beadle was sure now it was the girl who had stood on the dock looking at him. With an absurd gallantry and not having



the faintest idea what he intended to do, he dove over the rail into the river, went deep down into blackness, and felt his hands touch the mud of the bottom. The touch of the slime frightened him. He began to swim hard, long before he came to the surface and heard the cries again, high, plaintive, coming from straight before him.

He swam on as fast as he could, visions fleeting before his eyes of the girl being beaten and attacked. He was more than two-thirds of the way to the scow when the cries ceased. His heart sank as he pictured the girl overcome—perhaps dead. With his teeth gritted and an expression of ferocious determination on his face, he thrashed on, reached the scow and clung to it exhausted, unable to lift himself out of the water for sheer want of breath. His lungs ached and though the river water was warm, he felt chilled. For almost a full minute he stayed there, gulping deep breaths. Then he climbed onto the scow and made his way toward the shanty at the other end of it. The door stood wide open and light came through it and fell in a square on the deck. He listened and heard only the rippling of the river. Then he stepped into the doorway.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

ONE room constituted the entire accommodations of the shanty. It was a poor room, dingy, barely furnished, lighted only by a smoky oil-lamp that stood alone on a kitchen table. In one corner was the sort of sofa one sometimes sees gracing the tops of dump heaps. In another corner was the sister-piece to it. Gunny sacking covered them both. The room had two small windows, so dirty they didn't even reflect the light of the lamp. The floor, or rough boards, had no covering.

On one of the sofas sat the girl who had talked to Beadle from the dock. Her eyes were wide and staring, as though she were looking fixedly at something that had been in the room a little while before, but was there no longer. Sweater and skirt had been replaced by a flannel nightgown that was patched and darned in many places. In her hand was a wooden mallet of the type roustabouts use for driving stakes. On the floor at her feet lay a man—a young man of huge stature, with a shock of red hair. He wore sea-boots and a blue sweater. He was quite senseless.

Beadle stopped stock-still in the doorway. The scene was far more of a shock to him than it would have been had he found the girl's torn body flung across the table. He said, "Holy *Moses!*"

The girl looked at him then and he knew why she had upset him so when she had stood on the dock. It was something about her eyes that he had felt even though he hadn't been able to see them; an intangible something that they had in common. Her eyes were large and very dark and wistful. They seemed more wistful than they were really, because her face was hard in contrast to them. Her eyes looked the way Beadle felt a good deal of the time and he recognized the

look and somehow knew she was a friend. Because Beadle was really a rather curious person, he did a rather curious thing. He walked straight across the room, stepping carefully over the debris on the floor, and shook hands with her. He said, "Hello, it's nice seeing you again. Now tell me what I can do to help you."

The girl, who, as she said, had once been aboard a yacht, had formed her own opinion of the men one found on yachts. Beadle had looked to her, with the highball glass in his hand and his absurd yachting-cap cocked over one eye, like about the lowest specimen that had tied up to the wharf. He was neither large nor handsome nor sunburned, the way most of them were; nor brave looking, although of course out for whatever they could get from a girl. It was simply beyond her understanding that such a person should have swum the river at night because she called for help.

"What do you-all want with me?"

He still held her hand. The water dripped from his clinging pyjamas.

"I don't want anything. I want to help you; you're out of luck—I'm out of luck too, so I'd like to help you if I can."

She looked at the figure sprawled on the floor and said irrelevantly, "Pop died a couple of weeks ago. I think he's happier now. The liquor finally got him, like I told him it would."

Beadle followed her glance.

"Poison?"

"I don't know—Hines," she pointed, "that one—gave it to him. Pop was almost a South'n gentleman once—his pa was an officer in the war—his sword is hangin' over the bar at Uncle George's to-day—I don't know why I talk like this to you."

"Why, because I said I wanted to help you, of course."

The girl looked around the room, her eyes still wide, startled and frightened. Beadle had seen hares look so, when the beagles had cornered them.

"I gotta get out," she said. "He's been at me ever since I been alone here. To-night he tried to—tried to——"

"I understand," said Beadle. "But look, there must be something I can do. Swazey'll help me."

The fright in her eyes suddenly gave place to a look of hope.

"You honest-to-goodness mean it?"

Beadle nodded. She stood up and let the mallet fall to the floor.

"You can take me back to my Uncle George. I only left there 'cause I thought maybe I could keep Pop straight—now he's gone an' I gotta get back. He'll beat hell out of me when he wakes up."

"Who?"

"Him." She gestured toward the man on the floor. "Hines."

"Oh," said Beadle. "Isn't he dead? I thought you'd probably killed him."

"Naw," said the girl. "You can't kill a mutt like that just with a wooden mallet!"

She stooped and picked up the mallet, which alarmed Beadle. She was trembling with rage now, her voice high and almost hysterical. He realized clearly the absolute necessity of removing her silently and swiftly from the region of the scow shanty before the enterprising Hines was able to take his feet again. He grabbed her hand and led her to the door.

"Come on," he said. "We'll go root out Uncle George. Where does he live?"

"On the Chesapeake."

"My God—way down there?"

He turned and blinked at her. She saw his expression of shock.

"I suppose you-all don't want to help me now—and you with a fine yacht over there."

This wasn't quite so. Beadle did want to help her, but he had no desire whatever to have for a cruising companion this

startling, ragged young woman who went about carrying mallets. He'd assumed that of course Uncle George lived within taxi distance. He stood and shifted from one foot to another, horribly worried. The girl shook her hand free and drew herself up very straight.

"You don't have to," she said. "When I saw you this evenin' I didn't think you were the kind of man that would help a girl. Then when you swam over, I thought you maybe were, but you sure don't have to."

Beadle knew she was talking so in order to shame him into taking her. It made him mad. People were always putting things like that over on him. He turned from her and stepped onto the deck, ready to swim back to the yacht. A second later he felt her clutch desperately at his arm.

"Please—I didn't mean it. An'—an' he's waked up!"

Beadle looked down. Her face was close to his and he saw that her eyes were bright again with terror. From inside the shack came a groan followed by a curse. The girl shook violently. Beadle raised his hand in one of Swazey's half-salutes.

"O.K., pal," he said. "Come on!"

"Oh, hurry!"

Still holding tight to his arm, she led him over the deck of the scow to its stern and jumped lightly into a skiff that was tied there. Clumsily he followed her and loosed the line.

"Now quick—the other one too!"

Beadle reached over and groped for the mooring-line of another skiff that lay beside them. He found it. A shout came from the cabin.

"Hey, you, come back here!"

Beadle looked up and saw the red-haired man looming in the doorway. He jerked at the line in a frenzy of haste.

"Hurry!"

The red-haired man heard the rasping of the rope against the wood and started for them. Beadle gave a final jerk and the knot came free. The girl began to backwater hard. Beadle

held on to the other boat so it moved a little from the float, but the big man had reached the edge of the deck.

He gave a jump for the skiff, landed on the gunwale and fell into the bottom of it. Then he picked himself up and caught the bow of their boat.

“Hit him!” cried the girl. “Hit him with an oar!”

The big man was half-way into their boat now.

“With an oar—my hat!”

Beadle reached behind him and grabbed the mallet that had fallen onto the floorboards when the girl jumped in. He raised it over his shoulder and swung with all his strength. With a thud it landed on Hines’s chest. Beadle could hear his ribs crack as he fell backwards into his own skiff.

“Attaboy, Mister!”

Beadle sat down suddenly. His quaking knees were no longer able to support him.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

ALL the way back across the river Beadle sat in the bow and wondered why he'd been such an utter ass as to mix himself up in something that didn't concern him in the least. He was sure he had killed Hines and equally sure that Hines's ghost would in short order flit over to the *Electra* and begin haunting him. Hines as a man was bad enough. As a ghost, he would be unbearable. He sat still in the bow, shuddering.

The mallet girl, like Beadle, was content to remain silent and ply her oars with vigour. Unlike Beadle, she hadn't the faintest idea Hines was dead and she suspected that as soon as he got his breath he'd start searching for them. Just as they swung in beside the yacht, Beadle found his voice. He turned and said, "I guess I killed him. I'm sorry."

She stood up.

"I guess you didn't," she said, "and I'm some sorry."

They started to climb over the rail to the deck. Swazey was pacing and snapping his fingers. When he saw the girl coming aboard, he stopped pacing and his mouth dropped open. He looked from Beadle to the girl and back.

"What a man!" he said. "What a man!"

Beadle looked at him severely. Then he noticed that the girl still wore the flannel nightgown. He said, "Good Lord! You've still got on that flannel nightgown!"

"I can't help that," she said pleasantly. "We've got to get the hell out of here."

Beadle stepped aboard.

"Of course," he said. "To the Chesapeake."

The girl shook her head.

"No," she said, "the other way. Home's the first place Hines would look, now that he knows you're with me."

Beadle felt there was no use arguing the point. He was still

dripping wet and cold. He went to his cabin and took off his pyjamas. To his surprise, he heard the boat get under way and felt her gather speed. Just as she started, he thought he heard a shout.

When he was fully dressed, he returned to the deck-house. The girl heard him as he stepped through the doorway. Without turning from the wheel, she said, "I'm sorry 'bout startin' off while you were below, but there wasn't time not to."

"There wasn't time not to," echoed Beadle. "Wasn't time not to." He was trying to puzzle out what she meant. "Oh, I see. You mean because I didn't hit Hines hard enough."

The girl laughed.

"I'll say you didn't! He was tryin' to climb aboard just as I got her going. This is a good boat. Is it yours?"

"No," said Beadle. "I stole it."

She turned away from the wheel now and stared at him. When she spoke again her voice showed the awed respect Beadle's simple statement had given him in her eyes.

"Gee! You sure have got nerve!"

She went back to her steering, which was as well, because the Raritan, even with the tide at flood, doesn't allow overmuch room for a yacht to travel at speed. Beadle put his hand to his chin and thought deeply. It seemed curious to him that doing such an outrageous thing as swiping a yacht should make someone so obviously respect him. He knew, from her conversation on the dock, that when they had first met and she'd thought he owned the *Electra*, she hadn't any use for him at all. It was nice, he thought, having a girl think he had a lot of nerve. He couldn't remember anyone ever thinking that of him before. He said, "It's nice, your thinking that. Where are we going?"

She pondered this for a while. Then she said, "Long Island Sound, I guess, is the best. The Sound's pretty big."

"I wouldn't want to be caught there. That's where I pinched the boat."

"Say," the girl turned again, "it's funny you weren't caught



comin' into the river. I wonder—did you have anything on the guy that owns this boat?"

"Did I have anything on him?" Beadle laughed. "No, I didn't have anything on him. He was a friend of mine. He just happened to be careless enough to lose all my money for me, so Swazey thought it would be a good idea to take his boat."

"How did he lose the money?"

"In the stock market."

"If you asked me quick-like," said the girl, "I'd say he was scared of you and didn't want to do anything 'bout your havin' his boat."

It hadn't occurred to Beadle that there could have been any funny business in connection with the way Milton had handled his estate, but what the girl said certainly made sense. If there had been an alarm out for the boat, it would have been easy enough for the coastguard to pick them up in the Lower Bay while they were asleep. Beadle had learned in the past month that Milton Sands was not the great-hearted type of man who gives away yachts to clients who have suffered financial setbacks—and he didn't think Sands would take very seriously the threat about Swazey shooting him.

He thought and thought and thought, which was hard for Beadle. The more he thought, the more clearly he saw that running away was a stupid thing to do. The yacht could be found too easily. If, on the other hand, he cruised around the Sound and went to places like Newport and Larchmont and Manhasset Bay, where the *Electra* was well known and would be seen, and if he behaved so unconventionally that people would talk, and if then Milton Sands didn't have him arrested or anything, he'd know there had been funny business and maybe could do something about it.

"I think you're right."

"What?"

Beadle had been silent so long the girl had forgotten what they'd been talking about.

“You’re right. He’s afraid of me.”

“Oh, him. Sure he is. Then we’ll go to the Sound ?”

Day was breaking. The marshes on either side of the river stretched away into grey distance. The river ahead of them lay flat and smooth and looked more like metal than water. It was a sight worth looking at. Beadle, now that his mind was made up and he didn’t have to think any more for a while, should have appreciated it, but he was staring at the girl, who, by daylight, looked even more incongruous there than she had before.

“We’ll go all sorts of places,” he said, “if only you’ll go downstairs and change that gawd-awful nightgown.”

## CHAPTER NINE

WHEN the girl went below, Beadle called Swazey to him. Swazey had been gazing at the pastoral dawn as though he didn't know just what to make of it. He came into the deck-house and sat down. Beadle said, "We're going places where there's lots of people, Swazey, and be conspicuous."

"I don't get it," said Swazey.

"We want people to talk about us," said Beadle.

Swazey glanced toward the companionway down which the flannel nightgown and its owner had disappeared.

"Dey will. Say, do you t'ink dat's nice, takin' a unmarried girl cruisin' around?"

Beadle was amused at the idea of his burglar being such a stickler for convention. He said, "Maybe she is married."

"Dat makes it worse," said Swazey. "Besides, she ain't got any clothes with her."

"She'll probably put on some of my white duck pants and a shirt and sweater."

"Pants!" said Swazey. "I don't hold wit' it, see? You're makin' dis into a hell-ship!" He looked away and shook his head sadly. Then Beadle explained about the ideas that had come to him anent Milton Sands. When he had done, Swazey held out his hand.

"I'm wit' you," he said. "On a percentage basis. If we get some of your dough back, I gets a cut, eh? A commission for startin' you in business, eh?"

"Sure," said Beadle. Then he heard a step behind him and turned. The girl was standing just outside the deck-house door. She had put on trousers and a shirt and had chosen a bright yellow sweater. She'd combed her wild hair and caught it with a brightly coloured necktie. She was something to look at.

Swazey, eyeing the girl once more as she took the wheel, shook his head. Now that she was cleaned up, she was undeniably pretty—but disturbing. Swazey feared the worst. Beadle didn't find her disturbing, but he thought the trousers and sweater became her well. She had that type of figure, rare among women, that looks well in trousers, even when seen from the back. He said, "You look very nice in those things."

She nodded her head. She too thought she looked nice in them, but she was glad to be able to stare at the mouth of the river and the drawbridge ahead of them and the channel, because she wasn't used to compliments and might have blushed if she had had to look around.

"Thanks. I like 'em."

"And she *likes* 'em!" said Swazey.

The girl blew three long blasts on the whistle. The drawbridge swung open and they passed through. The silence that had followed Swazey's remark began to grow oppressive. Beadle said, "My name's Beadleston Preece."

He expected her to say, "My name's Mamie Mulligatawny," and hold out her hand as Swazey had, when they'd introduced themselves. She didn't. She turned away from the wheel and stared at him as though the name had tinkled a bell whose tone she recognized. When she spoke, there was a distinct note of awe in her voice.

"Are you—the—Wealthy Sportsman?"

Beadle was fussed. There had been one particular article in the Sunday Magazine section of a much-read newspaper that had used that particular phrasing in referring to him. It had been a bitter article, citing him as one of "Fortune's Favourites"—a man who came by his wealth without effort and who, being typical of his class, had been able to find nothing better to do with it than to spend it on polo ponies and curios and several unnamed chorus girls. The article had been published for the simple reason that Beadle had personally refused to buy it from the society reporter who wrote it. Secretly he had enjoyed its publication immensely, because it made him

seem dashinglly sophisticated. And the twitting his friends had given him about it he had found highly agreeable—even Carlotta Townsend had seemed faintly impressed, though she'd said she didn't believe a word of it. He felt quite differently now. This girl undoubtedly took the thing at its face value. She must think him an ass—a despicable ass and probably a cad too. He didn't answer her.

She gave her attention for a second to navigating the yacht past a coal barge. Then she faced him again.

"His name," she said, "was Beadleston Preece—and the pictures looked like you."

Beadle's mind leaped ahead. The girl, living as she did, was unquestionably a socialist or a "red" or something. He thought it might be wiser to cover his identity. Reds and people like that always resented anybody having a lot of money and acted unpleasantly about it. Sometimes they even got violent.

"You see," he began, "you see——"

Then Swazey interrupted him.

"It's him," he said, "but de poor mug's lost it. He's lost his automobiles an' his polo hosses an' his maids even, an' his house."

The girl at the wheel looked off over the harbour.

"Aw, gee," she said, "that's tough! What's it feel like to have had it—an' then to lose it?"

Beadle smiled. "It felt like hell," he said, "until Swazey came along."

"My pal!" said Swazey.

"It must be fierce!"

"It would be," said Beadle, "but you see I didn't have very much fun before. There weren't any chorus girls and I was a lousy polo player, and I did the same things always, and I don't think anybody liked me much except for what my money could give them."

The girl nodded.

"I know," she said, "it's like that in books. But, gee, imagine me bein' here on a yacht with somebody like you!"

Beadle began to grow embarrassed. He shifted from one foot to another.

“By the way,” he said, “you know my name now; what’s yours?”

“Winlock,” said the girl, and stuck out her hand.

## CHAPTER TEN

AT eleven o'clock they stopped at the petrol barge off City Island. The Winlock miss, whose other name was Mary, and who had been brought up on the waters of the Chesapeake, had taken command and had suggested that for cruising in petrol yachts it was sometimes a good idea to have a little petrol. It gave Beadle his first chance to be conspicuous, for the man on the barge knew the *Electra* well. He seemed puzzled, as he made the lines fast and the familiar face of her professional captain failed to appear in the deck-house window. He seemed more puzzled still as he noticed that Beadle obviously wore a yachting cap several sizes too large. His puzzlement reached its limits when Mary Winlock came up from the engine-room where she had been shutting off the petrol pipes to the motors.

"Where's Sands?" he said to Beadle.

"Oh, Sands," said Beadle. "I don't know—at his office, I guess."

"You chartered the yacht?"

"Oh, no," said Beadle. "No, indeed. I stole it."

The petrol man slapped his thigh and roared with laughter.

"That's a good one!" he said. "That's the best one I ever heard. Sands is meetin' you up at New London, I s'pose?"

"Why New London?"

Swazey leaned over the rail.

"Yeah," he said, "why New London?"

The petrol man smiled—almost coyly.

"You're a great bunch of kidders," he said. "You'll make it in under four hours with the old *Electra*, I guess."

This obsession on the merchant's part that he go to New London began to get on Beadle's nerves. Then a thought came to him. He said, "What day is to-day?"

"Friday," said the petrol man, "the twenty-fourth of June, and I'll give you two to one against Harvard."

"I'm a Yale man myself," said Swazey. "Hotcha!"

Harvard and Yale—the river—hundreds and hundreds of yachts bearing gay flags and gayer parties. The red-tipped oars and the blue flying down the straight lane to the bridge. It all came back to Beadle in a rush and he saw the scene as clearly as the time he last had seen it five years before, when he'd graduated from college. He remembered he had met Madelaine that day on one of the yachts. He'd had an awfully good time. He turned on Mary Winlock.

"Mary," he said, "can you drive us to New London?"

"Why not? You got charts, I suppose. I can run you anywhere you got charts for."

The petrol man pulled in his hose and shook his head. Each year on boat-race day strangely manned craft stopped at his barge. Often the yachtsmen were in such condition that it seemed miraculous they were able to remember where they had meant to go when they pulled away, but to the petrol man, Beadle's outfit seemed the strangest of all. He thought Milton Sands must have gone out of his mind. Still shaking his head, he said, "You want that tankful of petrol charged to the boat, I s'pose?"

Beadle beamed at him.

"That's a lovely idea," he said. "Thanks for thinking of it."

The lines were cast off. Mary went below and opened the valves. Beadle started the engines and headed east. Swazey rummaged around in the deck-house lockers and brought out a huge roll of charts. Mary came on deck and began to study them. The morning sun shone brightly on the water around them and a little breeze flicked the spray from the bow against their faces. It felt good. Although the first experiment at being conspicuous seemed to have failed, Beadle was happy. He began to sing softly to himself and presently, turning the wheel over to Mary, he stretched out on the forward deck. He



thought it was fun, swiping yachts and heading for the boat races, and he wondered why he had never done it before.

A little way down the Sound they came upon other boats, all going the same way. The *Electra* was a little faster than most of them, so she went by them, but passed slowly. Each one they passed was crowded—some with young people, boys and girls, stretched like Beadle ahead of the wheel-houses. Others, with older, soberer people sitting in deck-chairs in the stern, obviously “Yachting.” Most of them waved greetings. When they passed close enough to be within shouting distance, Swazey would lean far over the rail and wave and yell, “Get a horse—two to one on Yale——” and the people on the other boats would laugh and wave back and shout things at him.

Far up the Sound they overhauled a big black barquentine yacht, making good time with all her white sails billowing. She belonged to a man Beadle knew, a steel magnate with a huge house in town and a place at Newport. She was a pretty sight, this ship, so Mary steered extra close in passing. The bearded magnate came to the rail. It was more than Swazey could stand—he was so very bearded and looked so rich.

“Hey dere, Pink Whiskers!” he shouted. “Glad to see ya! Glad to see ya!”

Beadle’s mouth dropped open. He was shocked—thoroughly and horribly shocked.

“Judas!” he said. “It’s James Arthur himself!”

Then a strange thing happened. The magnate went away from the rail. A second later he came back and in his hand was a gold-topped bottle. He threw it to Swazey and shouted:

“Have one on me, Ham-Face!”

Then he waved to Beadle.

“Come aboard any time, Beadle—So long!”

Beadle walked aft. Swazey was standing holding the bottle and staring at it.

“De idea,” he said, “dat guy callin’ me Ham-Face!”

Half an hour later they rounded the lightship and steamed cautiously into the mouth of the River Thames.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE harbour, as they journeyed up its length, was nearly deserted. But above the railway bridge Beadle could see the double line of yachts that stretched for four miles up the stream. Nearly all of them had bunting reaching in long triangles from stem to stern. They were anchored side by side, close together; hundreds and hundreds of them, gleaming white in the bright sunshine and glistening black, reflecting the water in their shining hulls.

Beadle looked at them. Then he looked at Mary and Swazey. It seemed funny to him that now he wasn't really a part of this scene. He had been so very much a part of it that year he'd met Madelaine—a whole crowd of them from Harvard had been together on one of the big yachts. Thinking about it and realizing that there he was, steaming up the old river with a burglar and a girl from a shanty scow on a stolen yacht, made him feel suddenly lonely. He was, he thought, cutting himself off from his kind; that people wouldn't speak to him if they knew; and to young men brought up as Beadle had been, that meant a great deal. He sighed. Then he remembered that of all the good things of life he had had in those days, not one of them had he gained for himself. At least, he had stolen the boat himself and he had rescued Mary; and Swazey and she were there with him simply because they liked him and not for what they could get out of him. The feeling of loneliness passed and gave place to a wave of friendliness for his two companions. After all, both of them were much worse off than he, yet they didn't grouse about it. They passed under the railway bridge and into the immortal lane between the lines of yachts.

“Where do we drop the hook?”

This was something Beadle knew about. He looked at the flags marking the course.

"They'll row downstream to-day," he said. "Look around for a place in that line on the left and sneak into it. We put out two anchors. One in front and one behind."

Mary nodded. Swazey said, "De parking spaces are all taken, I t'ink."

"No," said Beadle.

They crept on. A hundred yards farther up Mary saw an open space between two huge Diesel yachts. She inched the *Electra* into it and Beadle dropped a light anchor, that he found in a locker, over the stern. He forgot to make fast the line attached to it so he lost the anchor. He went back to the locker and found another one and pitched it, with the line attached this time. When the *Electra's* stern was even with the others, Mary stopped her and told Swazey to throw out the big anchor in the bow. Then she shut off the motors and joined Beadle on the after deck. Swazey made an interesting snarl of knots on the bow anchor line, then he too came aft.

For a long moment he and Mary stared about them, fascinated by the sight of so much floating evidence of money all around them. Presently Mary sighed and Swazey said, "Ain' dis somethin'!"

Mary turned to Beadle.

"What happens now?"

Beadle smiled.

"We sit here," he said. "We sit here for hours and hours and hours, and then way up there"—he pointed—"you see two little dots on the water. Then you hear the whistles begin to blow and then the dots get bigger and then pretty soon they come close and you see two long thin boats, with eight awfully decent guys in them, rowing their hearts out; and no matter who's ahead, you yell yourself hoarse because you can't help it and then, down by the bridge there, they stop and the guys in the boat that's come in last collapse over their oars and shoot their lunches and you wish to hell you were back in college."

"So I'll wish I was back in college, eh?" said Swazey.

"I'll wish I was," said Beadle.

Mary looked at him.

"Maybe we oughtn't to be here with you," she said. "These people look so—so swell and everything."

"They're not," said Beadle. "There aren't this many people who are really swell—most of them just pretend they are. That's why they have yachts."

Mary nodded. Then she said, "You don't feel funny 'bout us bein' here? If any of your friends come or anything?"

Beadle shook his head.

"No," he said. "But I think Swazey ought to offer us some of that champagne of his, don't you?"

Swazey turned around as though Beadle had stuck him with a pin.

"I apologize!" he said. "I apologize! I forgot all about it—fancy that!"

He went below and came back with highball glasses and the bottle. He gave the bottle to Beadle.

Beadle opened the bottle. When he had it open he filled the three tall glasses and sat down. Mary said, "I never had champagne before." Swazey gave her a look. It was easy to see by his look that he had had champagne before. He took a sip and tasted ostentatiously.

"It's fair," he said. "Fair."

While they were still drinking champagne, a speed-boat came slowly up the lane. It was filled with young people. In the bow was a large young man with a pair of binoculars held to his eyes. He swung them from right to left, scanning the after decks of the anchored yachts. They focused on the *Electra* and held steady.

"Starboard your helm!" he bellowed to the man beside him. "*Eureka!*"

He had seen the gold-topped bottle on Beadle's table. The speed-boat turned and headed in. As it came nearer, Beadle recognized the man in the bow as a classmate—a thirsty classmate—and realized he'd spotted the champagne. It was the old story of the bees flocking toward the honey flowers. It

annoyed him a little. Then he forgot about being annoyed because he recognized a girl in the stern of the boat; a girl with bright copper hair who, even though sitting down, was unmistakably tall and stately. He hadn't seen her in over a month—since the night she'd broken off the engagement. He wondered how he'd feel when she came aboard—if touching her hand would excite him—how she'd treat him. He wasn't at all sure he was glad Bill Van Nostrand had found him through those glasses.

The speed-boat was alongside.

"Beadle," roared the man in the bow, "though he live in a deep forest, the world will beat a path to his door if a man makes a better souse-trap than his neighbour."

"Meaning I'm elected host," said Beadle. "Come aboard."

There were five in the speed-boat. Beadle knew them all; Bill, and Josh Bradley and Helen Martin and Ted Pinkus and Madelaine Bruce. The Martin girl came up the landing stage first. Beadle said "Hello!" and helped her aboard. Then he reached out his hand to Madelaine. He thought she looked more beautiful than ever. She took his hand and smiled at him.

"Hello, Beadle."

"Hello, Madelaine."

"I hoped you—you might be up here for the races." She looked about her. "Why, this is Milton's boat, isn't it?"

Beadle smiled. He was still holding her hand.

"It was. I guess it's mine now."

She looked at him quickly.

"But I thought—are things different with you now than they were—a month ago?"

For a man who was not normally a quick thinker, Beadle had a most astonishingly quick thought. It would be fun to let Madelaine think he had money again. She had it coming to her.

"Yes," he said. "Things are—quite a lot different with me than they were a month ago."

"Quit cooing," said Bill Van Nostrand, "and let somebody else get up that gangway."

Madelaine turned.

"Oh, sorry, Bill! I hadn't seen old Beadle in such a while. We have *so* much to talk about!"

"I'll bet!" said Bill. He pushed past Madelaine. His roving eye lighted on Mary Winlock, who was sitting with Swazey on the after deck, pretending to be much interested in a black schooner anchored across the lane. "Who's the ba-ba?"

A devil—a newly-born and so a very young devil—danced into Beadle's head. He said, "Oh, that's a friend of mine. She and—and Mr. Swazey are cruising with me. Come on back and meet them."

He looked at Madelaine. She was staring aft. She was certainly very tall and she was being much, much too stately.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

WHEN Beadle introduced them, Madelaine shook hands with Mary Winlock. Had she known her better, she would have kissed her the way women always kiss other women when they're about to try and knife them in the back. It looked to Madelaine as though she had passed up a good thing and this "ba-ba," as Bill called her, had got it.

The ba-ba didn't know who Madelaine was but the extreme cordiality frightened her. Instinct told her that for some reason this glamorous young lady hated her guts. She thought it was probably because of something to do with social position, so she was very quiet and didn't speak unless somebody spoke to her, because she didn't want to say the wrong thing. Madelaine hadn't expected that. It threw her a little off her stride.

Swazey threw her off too. As he was presented to each guest, he shook both his hands together over his head, after the manner of prizefighters, and shouted, "Glad to see ya—glad to see ya," and then added a phrase he'd grabbed from James Arthur, "Come aboard any time!"

Bill Van Nostrand took Beadle to one side. "What *is* this?" he said. "As I remember you at school, you never had nice amusing friends like this. Who is he? Rich oil man or something?"

"No," said Beadle. "He's a burglar."

"Who's the girl? A fairy princess?"

"No," said Beadle. "She's just a girl who used to live on a shanty scow."

Van Nostrand closed one eye, stepped back a pace and looked at Beadle.

"*You* must have had enough," he said, "but can't *we* have a drink?"

"I'll go downstairs and make cocktails."

"No champagne for Billy and friends?"

"Haven't any."

"Where'd that bottle come from?"

Van Nostrand thought Beadle was holding out on him. Most people did. Beadle said, "Oh, that. Why, James Arthur gave it to Mr. Swazey this morning."

"Is Swazey a friend of James Arthur's?"

Beadle laughed.

"Sure," he said. "He calls Arthur 'Pink Whiskers' and Arthur calls him 'Ham-Face.'"

He went below, leaving Bill Van Nostrand more confused than he had been since his last college reunion. Bill Van Nostrand had known Beadle very well. But he had had the feeling ever since he came aboard the *Electra* that he had been speaking to someone he had just met. He went aft to see if Madelaine could shed any light on the matter.

In the galley, Beadle made cocktails. He thought they were Martinis. As a matter of fact, they were not Martinis for the simple reason that he put in twice the required amount of vermouth, a touch of tabasco, and, without knowing it, used Milton Sands' alcohol instead of Milton Sands' gin. He tasted one and thought it was awful, so he put in a little more alcohol, adding some sugar, shook it and tasted it again. This taste tasted much better than the first taste, so he carried glasses and shaker on deck.

While Beadle was below, things had become a little strained on the after deck of the *Electra*. Bill and Madelaine had been whispering together and the others had been trying to pretend to be amused by Swazey's self-conscious efforts at small talk. Beadle was sighted with all the joy a marooned Arctic party feels when it sees the old ice-breaker ploughing toward them. They took their glasses with eager fingers and drank deep.

Had they not been ladies and gentlemen trained to endure hardship for the sake of manners, nothing would have induced these young people to swallow the awful mixture they had



in their mouths. But they were ladies and gentlemen. They swallowed; some easily, some with difficulty. Even Beadle, who didn't like cocktails anyway, gulped one down.

"Whew!" said Helen Martin, who was the first of the little group actually able to speak again. "What a cocktail!"

"I've never had one quite like it," said Bradley.

Beadle was afraid he might have erred. He said quickly, "Do you mean it's good? Or is it rotten?"

"It's positively the——" Madelaine paused to think of a sufficiently strong descriptive, but suddenly she wasn't sure. "What do you think, Helen? It's either delicious or terrible. I—I can't make up my mind."

"It's the——" Helen, too, stopped in mid-speech. The cocktail she had taken had gone down and stayed down and now it was lonely. "Let me try another and I'll tell you."

Then the other four guests and Swazey found that their cocktails too had grown lonely and five minutes later no one, however gloomy an outlook they might hold, could have said that things were either strained or awkward on the yacht *Electra's* after deck. The shaker was emptied and filled and emptied again, and these people who had come aboard so world-weary and sedate grew young again and frolicked. They sang together and from time to time shouted the strange cries Americans give forth when they are enjoying themselves. Cries of "Daddy!" and "Wow-wow, whoopee!" and "Sweet Mamma!" and "Hot diggety!" floated skyward. Swazey danced for them—a great stomping kind of jig and fell down doing it. There were roars of laughter. The people on the yacht to port of them retired to their deck-house, where their contract bridge could go on uninterrupted. The people on the big yacht to starboard did the same, except for one man who came and leaned against the yacht's rail and watched a little enviously. He was married to the lady who owned the yacht and it had been a long time since he'd had much fun. He wanted awfully to join in.

Mary Winlock and Beadle took but one cocktail apiece.

Mary, because for all her lack of sophistication she knew straight alcohol when she tasted it, and Beadle because the one was more than enough for him. It had given him a pleasant exhilarated feeling and he was afraid another might make him sick. He was delighted with the success of his party. He felt he was making good progress about being conspicuous.

He was thinking about this when Madelaine came and settled herself on the arm of his chair and began to stroke the back of his neck with gentle fingers. She had done that, Beadle remembered, on that other yacht five years ago. It made him feel sentimental about her, though he knew perfectly well she was cock-eyed as an owl. He took her hand. She leaned her head down so her cheek rested against his. Madelaine's cheek was soft and smooth and cool. It was a good cheek.

"Beadle dear, remember five years ago—just here?"

Beadle nodded. He was experiencing a strange sensation. He'd caught on to himself about Madelaine and wasn't a bit in love with her, so he found that her tactics, which were obviously commercial, revolted him, yet he found her nearness decidedly pleasant. He'd always thought you had to be in love with a lady to enjoy nose rubbing with her. It surprised him to find he had been mistaken for so many years. The little devil, an hour older than when it had first popped into his brain, danced there again. He threw both arms around Madelaine's slim body, hauled her down into the chair on top of him and squeezed. He thought doing that might be fun, and even if it weren't, it would be fun to see what she did about it.

She lay limp in his arms for a second. Partly because he'd knocked the breath out of her and partly because it seemed a good idea. Then she murmured, "Oh, Beadle—my darling—you still care!"

It was decidedly fun. Beadle squeezed her again. This time, for all her stateliness, she giggled like a milkmaid and struggled free.

She turned to give Mary Winlock a look of triumph, but Mary Winlock had been reared humbly and wasn't used to such goings-on in broad daylight. She had gone below to comb her hair.

Madelaine leaned close to Beadle again.

"At the Griswold—after—after the party—I'd better go now."

Beadle looked up. The others were clambering down the gangway into the speed-boat. Madelaine hurried after them. At the head of the steps she paused and kissed him swiftly full on the lips. It was a pretty gesture and Beadle enjoyed it thoroughly, almost as much as he enjoyed her next one, which consisted of waving to him with one hand, throwing him a tender glance and falling kerplunk into the speed-boat as she missed her step on the gangway.

Bradley caught her and set her upright. With much laughter and shouting, they pulled away. Beadle walked slowly and just a little unsteadily back to the after deck. As he walked, he saw the man from the big yacht watching his late guests' departure, and recognized him as Harris Payton, whom he'd known slightly since he'd been a boy. Payton had the reputation of being a libertine—a gigolo libertine at that, for everyone was certain he'd married Mrs. Payton because her father had been such a highly successful purveyor of patent medicines. Beadle had always thoroughly disliked and disapproved of Payton.

He leaned out over the *Electra's* stern and looked up the river to see if there were any signs of the race starting. There weren't. He straightened. When he regained his balance, he saw that Payton was standing facing him.

"Hello, Preece."

Their eyes met. Suddenly Beadle was reminded of Mary. Payton's eyes had that same wistfulness. Beadle thought he looked years older than his known forty—and tired. It may have been that awful cocktail, but he found himself being sorry for Payton now and, oddly enough, wondering if he could do anything to cheer him up. He smiled.

"Hello, Payton—how are you!"

Payton rolled his eyes toward the deck saloon of the big yacht. Beadle could see four people inside, at a card table. Four stiff, overdressed, disapproving people.

"I'm having a rotten time. I—you seem to be having such fun on your boat. I—I wonder if you'd mind if I came over for a little while?"

Beadle was amazed to find that he felt decidedly flattered.

"Come on," he said. "Next time we swing close you can make it."

Payton climbed over his rail and stood ready. As the yachts began to come closer and closer, he nodded toward the deck-house again.

"That's a hell of a way to see a boat race," he said and jumped.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PAYTON and Beadle sat for a long time in the deck-chairs and talked. They were alone, because Mary was offended about the Madelaine business and Swazey had taken himself off to see if he could make another cocktail like the ones he'd just had. Swazey had a head like a steel tank.

It seemed funny to Beadle to be sitting there with a man like Payton. He expected him to tell smutty stories and get drunk. When he offered him a drink, Payton turned it down and lighted a cigar.

"Thought you'd lost all your money," he said.

Beadle nodded.

"I did."

"Seems to agree with you. Milton lend you the boat?"

"No. I swiped it."

Payton raised his eyebrows. It made the pouches under his eyes seem bigger than they really were.

"You see, Payton—Swazey—that's my burglar, suggested it, and I didn't have anything to live for, so it seemed like a good idea." He laughed. "As a matter of fact, I was going to hang myself just before I met Swazey." Beadle told him about the night on the terrace and the cruise up the Raritan. Payton listened attentively. When Beadle finished, he said, "So you see, not having anything to live for, I couldn't lose, and it was fun going adventuring. As I told Mary, I didn't use to have much fun."

"No, you didn't," said Payton. He seemed to be turning some thought over and over in his mind. He looked up at his wife and her friends, still intent on their cards, and scowled. "Do you know," he said, "I haven't much to live for either."

Beadle's complete candour was having its effect on him. He bent forward and looked Beadle in the eye and said, "You've

heard I'm drunk all the time—well, I am! You've heard lots of rotten things about me—everyone has—well, they're true. Do you know why I'm drunk? I'm drunk because I can't stand life. I can't stand my own house—I can't stand her. People think I married her for her money—well, I didn't. I was in love with her and thought she was in love with me. All she wanted was my name. She treats me like a damned lap dog. If I get drunk enough, I forget. It's—it's a hell of a way to be!"

He stopped, glared at his wife's yacht once and then looked down. Beadle, who had never had any intimate friends, had never heard a man pour out his heart. It moved him deeply. On the strength of the cocktail, he was moved to such an extent that he felt almost a personal responsibility for Payton. Something ought to be done about him.

He said, "What is it you want, Harris? Can I help any?"

Payton looked at him again and smiled. He had a rather nice smile.

"You've always disliked me, disliked me intensely, haven't you?"

"Yes. I guess I didn't understand about how things were. I'd like to help you now—what is it you want?"

"I want to go somewhere with real people and work with my hands and sweat and go swimming and be rude to all the people I've had to be polite to and be happy enough so I wouldn't have to get drunk an hour after I woke up in the morning. I'd like to do things and not care what anybody said about it. I—I'd like to be myself."

Beadle said, "Why don't you chuck it for a while?" He gestured toward the Diesel yacht.

"Chuck it?"

"Sure," said Beadle. "Swazey's himself, Mary's herself—they don't know how to be anything else. I'm absolutely myself, because I've got nothing to live for. Listen—sneak on board your boat now and get some clothes—then sneak back again and we'll move to another parking space."

Payton's eyes lighted up. For a second he looked almost young. Then he shook his head.

"If she ever caught me, she'd throw things."

"Don't let her catch you. You can stay below until we get moved."

"But what'll she think? She'll think I've fallen overboard."

"Leave a note. That's what I did for Milton, when I swiped the boat. Leave a swell note. Say—say—'Dear—dear whatever her first name is—Have gone adventuring with Beadleston Preece.'"

Everything about Payton showed he was begging to be persuaded.

"But—after this party you had. She'll think I'm on an awful bender, if I'm with you."

"Will she really?" Beadle was delighted. It gave him a feeling of being dangerous; of being a bad influence. "But she won't dare do anything about it once you get clean away, because it would mean publicity and make a fool of her. Come on!"

"I will!"

Payton stood up and put one foot over the rail. The yachts were swinging close again. He held out his hand.

"Preence," he said, "you're a priss."

"What?" said Beadel.

"You're a prince," said Payton and stepped on to his wife's boat. Then, in a gesture of tremendous mysteriousness, he put one finger to his lips and began to tip-toe over the deck.

"Sssh!"

Beadle copied the gesture.

"Sssh!"

Swazey came up from the galley.

"I got it!" he called. Then he saw Beadle and Payton, fingers to lips, saying "sssh" to each other. For an instant he stared, open-mouthed. Then he shook his head and dove back into the galley. For once in his life he thought he had had too much to drink.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHILE Payton was on his own boat getting his things, Beadle noticed for the first time that Mary Winlock wasn't on deck. He went down to her cabin and found her sitting on her berth, with her feet curled under her. She was staring out of the porthole. As he came to her doorway, she looked up.

"Anything wrong, Mary?"

"Wealthy Sportsman!"

"Why, Mary, what's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter. Why should anything be the matter? Who was the tall girl with the boiled hair you-all were neckin' in front of me?"

Beadle smiled to himself and sat down on the bed. He reached for her hand. He reached for it out of friendliness. She snatched it away.

"Don't you come cosy with me after what I seen just now."

Beadle grabbed the hand firmly and held it. "Mary, listen to me."

He'd remembered the circumstances under which she'd come to be aboard. It didn't seem quite cricket to let her think that after all he was just the sort of yachtsman she'd first thought him; the kind of yachtsman who shows little girls etchings and locks the stateroom door. It wasn't fair.

"Mary. That girl and I were engaged once. When I lost my money, she dropped me like a hot plate. When she came here to-day, she thought I'd got it back and wanted to make up. I thought it would be a good idea to let her think I wanted to, too. I thought she had it coming to her."

"What about this 'after the party at the Griswold' business? What about it? I don't go sailin' with people who have 'after the party at the Griswold' business an' neck in public."



Beadle smiled again and let go her hand. He said, "I'm not going to any party at the Griswold, Mary. I just wanted to let her think I was. She—she—a stand-up will do Madelaine an awful lot of good. She needs it. Just the way some girls need to be socked."

"Oh," said Mary. Her hand lay softly in his. Then it grew stiff. "You mean me? You mean I ought to be socked for criticizin' your behaviour?"

"No," Beadle laughed. "I mean Madelaine's one of those girls who walk through life taking what they can get and not giving a damn thing. She's so beautiful she doesn't have to. I think she needs a come-uppance. Besides, I want to put to sea again and I think Payton does too."

"Payton? Who's he?"

"Harris Payton. He's coming adventuring with us."

"Harris Payton?"

Mary turned and looked at Beadle wide-eyed. Harris Payton's name was much more familiar to her than Beadle's had been. Harris Payton was a regular performer for the Sunday magazine sections of the papers Mary read. In real life he was something of a social tiger; in the magazine sections he was four social tigers.

"Is Harris Payton comin' cruisin' with us?"

Beadle nodded.

"My Gawd!" said Mary. She shuddered with delighted awe, mingled with a most agreeable sense of excited fright. "He—he's a Social Tiger!"

"No," said Beadle. "He's a very lonely, very unhappy bastard who needs some help."

"Oh!" said Mary. "A bastard too! The papers never said *that*."

Beadle began to laugh. He laughed so hard and so loudly that he woke up Swazey, who had gone do-do on the galley floor. Presently he stopped.

"Why were you-all laughing?"

"Listen," said Beadle. "I didn't mean he was illegitimate

when I said that. You see, people——” He got stuck. He wanted to say nice people, but somehow it didn’t seem the word to use. “The kind of people who have yachts and things call people bastards when they like them. It’s like—like calling them pal or something.”

“Oh,” said Mary. She thought about this and found it a little hard to understand. Then she quickly withdrew her hand and jumped to her feet. “Here he comes,” she said. “I gotta fix my hair!”

Beadle went out into the hallway and saw Payton coming along it, carrying a suitcase. He was still walking on tip-toe.

“Sssh!” said Payton in a whisper. “I made it!”

“Good man! Now we’ll move.”

But they didn’t move, because at that moment the sound of many whistles came to them and they forgot about Payton’s wife and went on deck and leaned over the stern.

Far up the river two dots were coming toward them, slowly and then faster and faster, as the dots grew and became lean racing shells that shone like burnished copper in the rays of the late sun. The whistles of the yachts swelled into a titanic chorus—the voices of the big boats calling to the two little boats that swept down the course. Mary came up from below, forgetting her hair, and Swazey from the galley and they leaned on the rail. As the shells came near, they cheered, and the four of them put arms around each other’s backs and felt lumps rise in their throats because the crowd and the noise and the racing shells thrilled them.

As they passed, the blue-tipped oars were ahead. Beadle and Payton were shouting like madmen: “Harvard—Come on, you Harvard!” Mary, without knowing why, screamed with them. The red-tipped sweeps came up, even with the blue. Nothing in all the world seemed to matter except which of those two shells would first pass the little flags by the bridge. The red forged on and won. Beadle and Payton threw their arms around each other and danced together on the deck. Mary, without really knowing what it was all about, but feel-

ing it intensely, began to cry. Guns went off on some of the yachts. It was all tremendously exciting and did seem to matter a great deal.

Then the big Diesel yacht to starboard of the *Electra* began to move forward and drew out of the line. Payton stopped dancing and watched her with staring eyes.

"You know," he said, "they haven't even noticed I've gone!"

Beadle put his hand on Payton's shoulder. He felt like the leader of an expedition. He must cheer Payton up somehow.

"Nuts," he said, "that's because you sneaked over here. Come on—we've got to get the hell out of here, or we'll get smashed when this mob of boats comes down river! Get up that back anchor! I'll take the bow!"

He raced toward the deck-house. Payton turned wearily to the stern. Swazey, beaming, saluted—not anything or anyone in particular, but just saluted.

"Cheez!" he said, "I wish I was back in college!"

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE *Electra* got under way and joined the mad parade of hurrying yachts, racing for their anchorages in the harbour. Just below the bridge she passed the Payton yacht. Beadle could see the people aboard her had gone back to their contract in the deck-house. He winked at Payton and blew the whistle. Payton grinned.

"Where are we headed for, Miss Winlock?"

She turned and gave Payton a nonchalant look and spoke as she felt a lady should speak when addressing social tigers—in a bored drawl.

"Oh, Newport, I suppose."

"Fine!" said Payton. "We'll give a dinner."

"And we'll ask," said Beadle, "all the swell people we know who can't stand the sight of each other."

Mary gave him a sharp look. It seemed to her a very strange idea.

Payton smiled thoughtfully, and said, "We ought to have fun. What'll we use for money?"

"We'll charge everything to Milton Sands. If we need any small cash, we'll send Swazey to burgle it."

Swazey put up his hand.

"Not me," he said. "I'm on my vacation."

"I wish I'd thought!" said Payton. "There was a lot of cash in my wife's stateroom. I think it would have been all right for me to take some, don't you?"

Beadle nodded.

"Were you on a salary? You should have been."

"All husbands who marry rich wives should be." Payton shook his head sadly. "Boy, they earn it!"

"If we could figure out what your salary should have been,

we'd know how much it would have been all right for you to take, in lieu of two weeks' notice."

Payton laughed.

"What are you-all talkin' about?"

"Life," said Payton.

"It sounds goofy to me," said Mary.

They passed out of the harbour and headed east. It was growing dark. Mary switched on the running lights and the light in the binnacle. Before they'd started she'd put the chart for the eastern end of the Sound in the glass-topped box beside her. Beadle thought it was very exciting to be out on the open sea in the dark and to be steering by compass. He thought it was more thrilling than going down the East River the night he'd taken the boat and it seemed to him much more adventuresome.

They went on in silence for twenty minutes or so, plunging into the long rollers that came in from the Atlantic; smashing each one into great sheets of spray, then leaping almost clear of the water and diving into the next. The *Electra* ran as though she actually enjoyed meeting the seas and tossing the white water away like a horse shaking its head to be free of the curb. Presently Mary said, "Take the wheel, Beadle; I want to get my lights right."

Beadle stuck his head out of the window.

"They look right to me," he said.

"I mean the lighthouses. I want to see on the chart which one's what."

"Oh."

"The course is eighty."

"Eighty?"

"Look," said Mary and pointed to the compass. "There's Number Eighty, see? Steer so that little black line on the front of the compass is just over the eighty."

Beadle nodded and took the wheel. Mary bent over the chart. Swazey and Payton stood close on each side of Beadle. All three of them were intent on the compass card, watching the "eighty" and the black line, like men watching a roulette

wheel. Every time it swung away from the line, Swazey would say, "A little more to de left, I t'ink," or, "To de right, Chief, an' you got it."

Fortunately, the *Electra* was one of those rare boats that sticks to its course without much help. When Mary, having "got her lights right" and spotted Point Judith, took the wheel and started to head inshore, Payton said, "Wait a minute—about this money thing. Beadle—my wife has an aunt who lives at South Bleynton. That's just up a little ways."

"Interesting," said Beadle. "Carlotta Townsend lives somewheres around there too." He smiled to himself at how surprised she'd be if she could see him now.

"We could burgle Aunt Sophie for my back salary and she could collect from Jane."

"Not me!" said Swazey. "I told you I was on my vacation."

"You can coach us," said Beadle. He turned to Mary. "I'll steer the thing. You find South Bleynton on your map. We'll go to Newport to-morrow."

Mary was a little disappointed. Since the advent of Harris Payton, her mind had been running in social channels. But although she didn't quite understand what was up, it sounded entertaining. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Oke—put her back on eighty."

She turned again to the chart and the three men bent over the compass. Mary found South Bleynton and plotted her course to it. There was a breakwater there which they could anchor behind and a lighthouse near by so it would be easy enough to find the breakwater. She wondered if all society people were like Beadle and Payton and made jokes about burdling their friends' houses and about having trouble with their wives and losing their money.

She made up her mind that if they actually were going to rob a house she'd stay on board.

Behind the breakwater at South Bleynton there is a little beach and then there is a long sweep of meadow with a cart

track running across it. At the edge of the meadow is a tiny forest with a wide grass lane running between the trees. After a little the forest gives way to formal lawn and the lane forks and becomes two. At the ends of the lanes are twin houses. Great, rambling, solid-looking houses. They were built by sisters and are identical. In one of them lived Mrs. Payton's aunt. In the other Mrs. Archibald Townsend of Boston. They did not care for one another. As a matter of fact, the Boston lady had never forgiven her sister for selling her house.

At the fork in the grass lane Payton stopped. Behind him Beadle and Swazey stopped.

"It's this way," said Payton, and started up the right-hand lane. Beadle followed him, walking very softly on tip-toe, because he was being a burglar, and he noticed that Swazey walked on tip-toe. Presently the house loomed in front of them. They could see lights glinting behind the curtained downstairs windows. The upstairs ones were mostly dark. They crossed a formal garden and came to a halt on the flagged terrace.

"Now what do we do, Swazey?"

"Let me t'ink," said Swazey.

"Go ahead and t'ink," said Beadle.

"I gotta t'ink of a plan."

Swazey thought. Beadle and Payton stood still beside him and listened. The sound of low, well-bred voices came softly from inside the house; from the kitchen wing louder, happier sounds. Swazey snapped his fingers.

"It's a second-story job," he said. "Dere's nuttin' to it. Nuttin' to it. Where does she keep de stuff?"

"In her room, somewheres," said Payton.

"O.K.," said Swazey. "If de ivy on dem pillars is in good shape, you won't have no trouble."

Beadle looked at Payton and felt sunk. Payton was obviously much too fat to porch-climb. Swazey wouldn't go and so it was up to him. It was one thing to chat lightly about com-

mitting grand larceny. Quite another actually to break into somebody's house. The idea scared him. He thought Swazey must have been very stupid to select burglary as a profession. He was about to suggest chucking the whole thing. Then he saw that that was just the sort of thing he'd have done in the old days and which didn't fit in at all with this new, dashing personality he was developing. He took a deep breath.

"I'll go. When I get inside, I'll sneak down and let you in when I get a chance. Then you can hunt for the money."

He turned and walked quietly to the pillar Swazey'd pointed out and began to climb.

The actual climbing wasn't hard, because the ivy, like everything else, about the house, was in excellent shape, but it took all his courage. He kept having visions of the awful things that would happen if he were caught. The higher he got, the worse were the visions. When he finally reached the top and clambered over the eaves on to a little porch, his teeth were chattering.

Before him he saw an open window. He had been hoping up to the last that he'd find everything so securely locked that he could give up. Now he had to go through with it. He crossed the porch and stepped carefully into the dark room and stood perfectly still, trying to get his bearings. The door would be on the other side of the room. Holding his breath, like a man walking on glassy ice, he started over the carpet. He took three steps and then tragedy overtook him. Something bumped into his shins and he fell forward, face down. In the split second while he waited for the floor to come up and hit him, he spread out his hands and prepared himself for the crash and the downfall that must follow it. But the floor didn't hit him. He fell on something soft and springy and clutched at it wildly, thinking it was a sofa.

It wasn't a sofa. It was Carlotta Townsend.

Being a girl who was never, never startled out of her presence of mind, instead of screaming, she reached out a hand and snapped on the light. Beadle, trying to scramble out of the



bed, found himself face to face with her and was too shocked to move.

“My God!” she said. “It’s you!”

Beadle nodded open-mouthed.

“And *I* thought,” said Carlotta, “that it was undoubtedly the bishop!”

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

**B**EADLE had first met Carlotta Townsend in a baby carriage in Central Park. Although but a year old, she had, even then, pronounced likes and dislikes. When she saw Beadle, she didn't like him, so she straightway burst into tears and threw her bottle at him. All down the long years since then she had, metaphorically speaking, continued to throw bottles at him whenever they met, and the dislike had grown. It was one of those strong mutual dislikes that come only to people who have known each other since childhood. As he knew, she thought Beadle was prissy and delighted in being just as naughty and vulgar as she dared, whenever he was near. Being exceedingly well-born and having an unassailable social position, she dared be shockingly vulgar. Invariably it made Beadle pull into his shell and be disgustingly refined and much more prissy than he really was, and that made Carlotta act more hoydenish and her acting more hoydenish made him act still more refined and so it went.

Beadle was simply appalled to find they were in bed together, or nearly in bed together. Carlotta always had a paralysing effect on him. Now he was literally stricken dumb as well as motionless. He sat on the bed and stared at her with his mouth open, incapable of closing it.

Carlotta stared back at him. Presently she said, "Not that I object, of course, but would you mind telling me just what in hell you're doing *here*?"

The direct question brought him to himself and in a flash he saw that Carlotta had him entirely at her mercy. She was capable of frightful behaviour in drawing-rooms. There was no telling to what lengths she might not go in her bedroom. He blushed at his own thoughts. But there seemed a chance—a bare chance—that for once he might get the upper hand and

shock her first. He said, "I came to burgle Harris Payton's wife's aunt."

Carlotta seemed to ponder this strange statement. Then she said, "I remember now. You lost your money. It's just like you to turn into a second-story man."

"Swazey wouldn't do it and Harris is too fat, so I had to." He laughed a little self-consciously. "I suppose I ought to explain. We're giving a dinner to-morrow night on my yacht, so we need a little money, and we figured that Harris's wife owes him some back salary, that's all." Then he added, by way of making things entirely clear, "You see, Harris is adventuring with me."

Carlotta's face, which was a rather beautiful face even when it was fixed for the night, took on a puzzled expression.

"Are you tight?" she said.

"No," said Beadle. "And—and of course I'm sorry about breaking into your bedroom."

"Oh, quite all right," said Carlotta. "What was that you said about adventuring? I don't think I just understood."

"Swazey and Mary and Harris and I are adventuring, that's all. We're—we're——" He tried to remember how Payton had put it. "We're going places and working with our hands and sweating and being rude to all the people we've had to be polite to and we're being ourselves."

Carlotta looked at him with interest and nodded.

"That sounds pretty good. Give me a cigarette."

Beadle fumbled in his pockets and produced cigarettes and matches. He gave her one and lighted it for her.

"Who's Mary?"

"A girl," said Beadle.

"One of Payton's girls?"

Beadle shook his head.

"I found her—right after I stole the yacht."

"One of us," said Carlotta, "is nuts."

The sound of a low whistle came through the window.

"That's Payton and Swazey," said Beadle. "They're probably worried about me."

"Ask 'em in. I want to learn more about this business."

Beadle started for the door.

"Swazey probably won't come," he said, "because he's on his vacation. I'll sneak down and let Payton in."

"I'll get dressed while you're doing it."

She swung her legs over the side of the bed. Beadle looked away. An almost naïve lack of the conventional self-conscious modesty was another of Carlotta's characteristics that had always made him dithery. He opened the door.

"And for heaven's sake, stop going tip-toe!" yelled Carlotta. "You're not a burglar."

Beadle turned; Carlotta was doing things with her nightgown. He looked away again quickly.

"Dammit, I *am* a burglar."

"You're not," said Carlotta, "because this isn't the house you meant to burgle. So you're not."

"Oh, have it your own way!" said Beadle and slammed the door.

When he had gone, Carlotta stood for a long moment, staring vacantly. For the first time in all the years she had known him, she felt a spark of sympathy for Beadle. She had understanding enough to appreciate what a terrific shock the loss of his fortune must have been to him. From the way he talked, she thought the shock might have knocked him a little crazy, but on the other hand, if it hadn't, he was acting rather well about it. The nightgown slipped to the floor.

"I wonder," she said. "I just wonder."

Then she laughed. It had struck her as so utterly absurd for her, Carlotta Townsend, baby bottle-thrower, to be standing stark naked in her room, thinking intently about Beadle Preece. Beadle Preece simply wasn't the sort of person who was supposed to be thought about intently. She laughed again and hurried with her dressing.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

**B**ELOW, at the door leading to the terrace, Beadle was having whispered converse with his colleagues. He didn't go into detail about what had befallen him, but simply confined himself to saying over and over again, "A fine bunch of burglars you turned out to be!"

"Aw, Chief!" said Swazey. "Be fair, be fair!"

Payton said, "I'm sorry about picking the wrong house. After all, it was pretty dark, you know."

"It wasn't dark when she turned that light on in my face and—and——" He broke off and finished, "I've never seen anything less dark."

Payton interrupted.

"Beadle, it was my fault. I'm sorry. Now tell us what happened."

"Nothing," said Beadle. "She asked us in. She wants to hear about the adventuring. I said Swazey probably wouldn't come."

"Who asked us in?" said Payton.

"Carlotta Townsend, of course."

"Oh, my God!" said Payton. "Was it her room you landed in?"

Beadle nodded.

"Wonder she didn't shoot," said Payton. "That girl would love an excuse to shoot somebody."

Swazey thrust his head between them.

"Would youse guys mind," he said, "if I went back to de *Electra*? Maybe—maybe we hadn't ought to leave Mary alone."

Without waiting to find out whether they'd mind or not, he was off.

"You know," said Payton, "I think Swazey's afraid of Carlotta."

"So am I," said Beadle. "Are we going in?"

"Mrs. Townsend," said Payton, "has awfully good things to drink, if we can get her to crack out with them. I think you probably need a bracer. You've had a hard day."

"Yes," said Beadle. He heard a step behind him and turned. "Hello, Carlotta. You know Harris, don't you?"

"Hello, Harris," said Carlotta, and then because she always did that sort of thing, "How's *Mrs. Payton*?"

"How's your Aunt Minnie!" said Payton.

"Come on in. Mother's entertaining the bishop. The poor brute probably needs help by now. I was so bored I went to bed."

She led the way to the living-room. As she turned, the hall light fell full on her. She'd put on black velvet evening pyjamas. They had practically no back to them. She'd done her black, black hair old-fashionedly—parted in the middle and drawn tightly to a knot low on her neck. The effect was startlingly regal—so much so that she'd have looked like a grand duchess if grand duchesses could be bred healthy enough to have really splendid bodies.

Beadle stared at her as he followed. Since the Madelaine incident of the afternoon, his eye for feminine beauty had keened. He found himself thinking what a perfectly magnificent back Carlotta had; saw in his mind her properly moulded legs as they'd popped over the side of the bed, and he blushed. Then he laughed to himself. It had struck him as absurd to be following Carlotta into her living-room and to be thinking there was anything lovely about her.

Inside the room, four people were sitting—Mrs. Townsend, carrying her fifty years with majesty in a soft grey evening gown; a Mrs. Bollingston, of the same age, who was proud of her name because she liked the sound of it; an old coot named Sebastian Vanderpoel who published religious books; and Bishop Hartley.

Bishop Hartley was the resident bishop of the current summer at the Townsends' private chapel. It was a small chapel

and didn't really need anything as important as a bishop, but on the other hand the Townsends were sufficiently important so that, having a chapel, they absolutely needed a bishop in it; just the way they needed a hundred-and-ten-foot schooner anchored off the meadow. They never used the schooner and they rarely used the bishop—a cat-boat and a vicar would have done them as well, but bishops and schooners they had always had, and, one supposes, always would have. The schooner grew barnacles on its bottom which were periodically scraped off. The bishop, too, suffered a little from sitting idle. Unlike the schooner, he didn't have a masseur to keep him fit.

Half-way into the room, Carlotta paused.

"Mother," she said, "I found this"—indicating Beadle—"in my bedroom and this one howling under my window. I thought in case there might be any scandal, I'd better ask them in." Then, after the manner of Beadle, she added by way of explaining everything, "They're adventuring together."

Mrs. Townsend smiled. Carlotta quite often said things like this. It was her way of enlivening the summer. If Mrs. Townsend were knocked off her poise, Carlotta won. Mrs. Townsend, even as on the occasion when Carlotta had brought in the second gardener's natural son, saying she wanted him to meet a bishop, in case he had any trouble later, extended a graceful hand and said, "I'm so glad, Carlotta."

Carlotta grimaced. She'd lost the game again. Then Mrs. Townsend recognized her guests.

"Oh, it's Beadleston and Harris." She smiled at her wicked daughter. "Why didn't you tell me they were here, Carlotta, instead of keeping them waiting while you got dressed?"

Beadle shook hands with her and said, "Hello, Mrs. Townsend. It's awfully nice seeing you."

Payton followed him. Then they were introduced, as a team, more or less, to the bishop and Mrs. Bollingston and Vanderpoel. They bowed and said, "So glad," and "How do you do." Payton whispered to Beadle. He said, "There isn't a chance she'll crack it out for this bunch."

When the greetings were over, Mrs. Townsend looked at her daughter.

"Carlotta, push the bell, please, for Hobbs to bring the whisky." She turned to Beadle and Payton, who were standing, feeling foolish, by the fireplace. She laughed—it was a funny laugh, a terribly polite laugh, but with humour under it.

"If you're adventuring, you probably need something to drink. Carlotta said she found you in her bedroom, Beadleston?"

Beadle swallowed quickly.

"Oh, yes, of course," he said, "I just dropped in to call."

"How did you happen to climb up there? Wouldn't anyone answer the door?"

Beadle floundered. He felt he was in a spot that called for quick thinking and quick thinking wasn't one of his long suits. He said, "I thought it would be fun to surprise her."

"He surprised me all right," said Carlotta. "I was sound asleep and the first thing I knew he was on top of me."

"You see, I tripped over the bed," said Beadle. He spread his hands in a gesture of apology. "I couldn't help it if Carlotta happened to be in the bed when I fell."

"I bet you loved it," said Carlotta.

The bishop glanced away. He felt it might jeopardize his standing if Mrs. Townsend guessed he was amused. Beadle looked at Carlotta indignantly.

"I didn't love it at all," he said, and then thinking this might be interpreted as prissy and lead to vindictiveness on her part, he added, "You were lumpy and hard."

"Pull-ease!" said the old coot named Vanderpoel, who published religious books. Mrs. Bollingston made low noises in her throat. The bishop almost laughed. Payton said, "Besides, he didn't know it was you. He probably thought it was my wife's aunt, and if he did, he couldn't have loved it."

"I should think not!" said Mrs. Townsend.

There was a silence. One of those silences. It was broken by Hobbs the butler, who was a very good butler and knew



instinctively the right times for butlers to appear with trays and things. This particular tray was, to use the coarser expression, a *darb*. It was a silver tray and it had on it two kinds of whisky, a decanter of brandy, a decanter of *crème de menthe*, silver-banded siphons, a combination cigarette and cigar salver and various assorted glasses. It was the sort of tray one cannot look upon without feeling better for the looking. Even Mrs. Townsend, who rarely drank, always felt the teentsy-weentsiest bit more cheerful when she saw Hobbs carting it into the room. Beadle sprang toward it almost before it alighted on the coffee table.

"Mrs.—Mrs.—Mrs.?" He was looking at Mrs. Bollingston.

"Bollingston," that lady said and nodded, indicating that she would accept refreshment.

"Bollingston," said Beadle and, busy with the glasses and bottles, "Bollingston, Bollingston. Curious name." He finished making a drink and looked up. "Ah," he said. "It gathers no moss!" He handed her the glass with a courtly gesture. "Now you don't gather moss, do you?"

"Moss?" said Mrs. Bollingston.

"No moss," said Beadle. He felt his attempt at lightening things up with a bit of wit wasn't getting across. "A bollingstone gathers no moss. Get it?" He laughed feebly.

"Lousy!" said Carlotta. "Hobbs could do better than that, couldn't you, Hobbs?"

Hobbs, half-way to the hall, about-faced.

"Oh, no, Miss Carlotta," he said. "I couldn't really—I thought it was very——"

No one ever knew what Hobbs thought it was very, because, suddenly stricken, as even the best butlers sometimes are, he clapped his hand over his mouth and, emitting a little squeaky noise, absurd in so large a man, fled the room.

Mrs. Townsend fixed Carlotta with an eye. It was a good eye for fixing. Carlotta should have quailed. She didn't. She said, "Oh, Mother, I bet Hobbs *can* make splendid jokes when he's let."

Payton and the bishop laughed.

"So can Beadleston!" said Mrs. Townsend. Class loyalty made her say it. Her saying it made Mrs. Bollingston spill some of her drink on the carpet, because she felt the insinuation that a Bollingston could gather no moss was derogatory and it agitated her. The fact that Beadle had simply been trying to ease tension by being smart was beyond her comprehension.

"I saw nothing funny in it," said Mrs. Bollingston. "And I see nothing funny in the idea of permitting a servant to make jokes."

Beadle, who was now definitely barkeeper *pro tem.*, handed the bishop a brandy and soda. The bishop took a long sweet sip. Then he winked at Beadle.

Beadle took a quick step backward and nearly tripped. He had never seen a bishop wink.

"Dear Mrs. Bollingston," said the bishop, "are not all men thy brothers?"

Mrs. Bollingston, who took her religion pretty darn seriously and who felt a bishop was a bishop, even when he was acting curiously, said, "Of course, Bishop Hartley."

"Then shouldn't thy brother be allowed to make a joke?"

"Not if he's a butler!" said Mrs. Bollingston.

The bishop winked at Beadle again. This time Beadle winked back. Carlotta saw the winks and was going to say something, but didn't. She was a little surprised at Beadle having a bishop wink at him and Carlotta was thoroughly used and accustomed to bishops. She found herself wondering again; trying to make out just what was different about Beadle now that would make bishops wink at him. She watched him as he poured the others drinks and handed them around and finally poured himself a really laudable hooker and sat down on the sofa opposite her.

The silence that had followed the bishop's remark was broken by Vanderpoel. He said, "Just before these—these—ah, people came in, Bishop, you were telling us the trend in the diocese—how that last little book of mine was going!"

His tone of voice and expression made it evident he wanted to talk about bishopry things. The bishop on the other hand had scented amusement. He'd been bored stiff for a month and welcomed the advent of Beadle and Payton. He raised his eyebrows and said, "Must we talk business?"

Vanderpoel never forgave him. Hartley went on.

"I understand you two are adventuring. What particular form does it take?"

"They're going places and sweat," said Carlotta; "and they're going to be rude to people and be themselves."

"Why, Beadleston!" said Mrs. Townsend. "What would your aunts say!"

"And he's stolen a yacht and he's got a girl on it he swiped right after he stole it."

"What's her name?" asked the bishop.

"Winlock."

"Oh," said Mrs. Bollingston. "One of the Chicago Winlocks?"

"One of the Raritan Winlocks," said Beadle, smiling.

"Is she pretty?" Carlotta asked.

"She wasn't when I got her off the shanty scow, but she's awfully pretty now."

Mrs. Bollingston put the wrong interpretation on it. She bolted her drink and rose.

"Clara dear, I'm going to bed."

With a robin-like nod, she fluttered out of the room.

"Oh, dear, dear," said Bishop Hartley to Beadle. "Now that we're alone, so to speak, although it doesn't properly fall among my duties, if you wish to confess, I shall be glad to jump into a box and hear you. *Why* is she prettier now?"

"Bishop!" said Mrs. Townsend.

The mellow whisky was lending Beadle of its mellowness. He was enjoying himself. Also, he felt he was registering a distinct impression on Carlotta. Somehow he didn't feel that at the moment she was against him, and the little devil, now almost grown up and full of wickedness, was dancing again

in his mind. He said, "It's mostly because of her getting my pants."

"Pants!" said Vanderpoel. It was as though he had said, "Ouch!"

"Yes," said Beadle quietly. "You see she had on a gawdawful flannel nightgown. I got her to take it off."

Carlotta took one look at Vanderpoel and burst out laughing. Without a word, he departed. Mrs. Townsend raised her needlework and scrutinized it closely. She was nearer to being knocked off her poise than she cared to be.

"You see," said Beadle, "I sent her down to my cabin and told her to change. She found some pants of mine and a sweater and when she came back all cleaned up, she was really very pretty."

"Oh," said Mrs. Townsend, torn between relief and disappointment.

"Tell 'em the works," said Payton. "Then we've got to get back to business."

Beadle told them the works. He talked mostly to Carlotta as he unfolded the yarn. He felt it was a pretty dashing sort of yarn and ought to impress her. Like Stede Bonnet, who took up buccaneering because he was henpecked at home and wanted to frighten his wife, Beadle thought it would be a good idea to let Carlotta see just what sort of a man she'd been picking on all these years. Having had practice on Payton, he told his story well, so well that a certain aura of romance and adventure settled over him, the way it does over African explorers, as they sit in calm, quiet living-rooms, telling of turbulent days in the jungle and roaring nights on the veldt.

He was a little nervous about how the burglary part would go over with Mrs. Townsend, but he didn't reckon on her feelings toward Payton's wife's aunt. When he had done, she set down her needlework permanently and sighed.

"I'm sure, Beadleston, that it's a very wicked idea, but I think I know how you could get that money from Mrs. Weems."

"Why, Clara!" said Carlotta. "I'm surprised at you!"

"No, Carlotta, there's nothing for you to be surprised at me about. If Harris wants to give a dinner, he ought to be able to. I think it's a very good idea about paying him his back salary."

"And," said the bishop, "we all think Mrs. Weems is such a charming woman, don't we, Clara?"

Mrs. Townsend winced. Then she said, "What if I do think it would be rather entertaining to help Harris at her expense? She has plenty of money and poor Harris hasn't any!"

"You communist!" said Bishop Hartley.

"Communist nothing! I'm just sticking up for my own kind."

"That's what I meant," said the bishop.

Beadle chuckled and winked at Hartley. Carlotta again saw and was even more surprised than when the bishop had winked at Beadle.

Mrs. Townsend ignored the interruption.

"I think if you were to telephone her, Harris, and say you were from the *Tribune* or the *Times* or—or—one of the papers, and that you wanted to know if she had any objection to your publishing an article about her generosity in presenting her chauffeur with a speed-boat, you might——"

She got no further. Harris Payton slapped his thigh.

"Good Lord! Did she do that?"

"She did indeed."

Payton looked at Beadle.

"A gold mine!" he said. "A bonanza! We ought to sell stock in it!"

"Of course, I wouldn't want you to say I told you," said Mrs. Townsend.

"Of course not," said Carlotta, "but you'd give your under-shirt to see her face when Harris calls her up."

Mrs. Townsend turned to her daughter.

"So would you," she said.

Carlotta Townsend was a remarkable young woman. She had a remarkable dam.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MRS. WEEMS came through handsomely. Harris telephoned her as prescribed and said that for a consideration his paper could be persuaded to substitute another article for the intended one. Beadle, accompanied by Carlotta, went over, as the paper's representative, to collect. While he rang the door-bell and nervously waited, Carlotta hid in the bushes and shouted coarse remarks at him. Two months ago he couldn't have stood it; now he found it rather pleasant to be one of the adventurers of the world and to have a young woman with a magnificent back hiding in bushes as his ally. Somehow the coarse remarks didn't seem nearly as coarse as they once had.

The door opened and a large figure filled it. A hand was outstretched toward Beadle.

"Here, you blackmailer! Take it and go!"

It was just about what Beadle had expected so he wasn't particularly overwhelmed.

"Sticks and stones," he said, "can break my bones, but words can never hurt me."

Carlotta, in the bushes, lost control of herself. Beadle pocketed the money. Then, partly because he wanted to impress Carlotta with his audacity, and partly because he didn't like the idea of taking money under false pretences, he said, "Of course, Mrs. Weems, I'm not really from any newspaper. That was Harris Payton on the telephone—we figured Jane owed him four thousand in back salary, so I'm collecting it for him."

Mrs. Weems stood in the doorway and quivered like a jelly. She said all the things that Carlotta hoped she would say. She even went so far as to make a grab for Beadle's pocket. He stepped out of reach. Then he said, "You can probably arrest us, but if you do, there'll be such a stink they'd

never let you anywheres near Bailey's Beach again—and Jane Payton will pay you back."

"The hell she will," said Mrs. Weems, and made a sort of enormous running tackle for him. But Beadle, having foreseen an attack, was already racing over the lawn. Presently Carlotta, breathless, caught up with him. She slipped her arm through his and they walked swiftly over the grass toward the Townsend lawn. Both of them were panting. When the borderline between the two places was passed, they slowed down and walked more as people should on a June night.

"What's come over you, Beadle?"

Her arm was still through his.

"Did losing your money send you off your nut?"

He was thinking of how strange it was that he and Carlotta Townsend should be returning from an adventure together.

"Hungh?"

"I said, what's happened to you?"

"You know; I lost my money." He laughed. "It's funny, though; do you know I've had an awful lot more fun since—since the house was auctioned than I ever had before. I—I've been free!" He laughed again. "It can't go on, of course, this crazy business with Swazey and Mary and Harris and me tooling around in Milton Sands' boat." He had been looking ahead at the lights of the house; now he turned to her and forgot, for a second, that she was an enemy. "But it's swell fun, while it lasts!"

"Of course it is. My, you used to be wet, Beadle."

"I guess so. I used to think Harris was awful—now I like him. I used to simply hate you!"

"Please hate me, Beadle. I wouldn't know what to do if we couldn't go on hating each other." She was terribly serious when she said it, then she snorted with her own particular brand of ill-concealed mirth. "Of course, it would naturally be much harder for you to hate me after we've been in bed together, wouldn't it?"

"No, it wouldn't," said Beadle. She was at him again. They

went the rest of the way to the house in silence. Payton was waiting for them on the terrace. The bishop was with him. Payton was pacing nervously.

"What happened?"

Beadle reached in his pocket and handed him the sheaf of crisp, new notes. He took them.

"Do I get a percentage?" said Beadle.

Harris counted the roll and handed Beadle several notes.

"Grafter," he said with a grin.

Beadle looked at the bills in his hand.

"Do you know," he said, "that's the first money I ever earned in my life."

"We've both earned it," said Payton.

Bishop Hartley smiled into the night.

"Well, so long."

"Thanks for a swell evening," said Carlotta. "I'll go to bed early every night after this in the hope it'll happen again."

"Really," said Bishop Hartley. "I'm so glad to have met you."

They all solemnly shook hands and Beadle and Harris started down the lawn toward the meadows.

Carlotta and the bishop watched them go, a little sadly. To both of them it was something like watching the final set-piece of a Fourth of July fireworks exhibit, or the yacht-club water sports that mark the end of the summer, or leaves falling in November.

"I suppose Mother's gone to bed?"

"She felt she should."

They went into the house.

"Life's a funny business, isn't it, Hartley."

"The longer I'm a bishop, the more *I* find it so."

"Beadle's free now. He's free of all the things that he thought were so swell and that made him impossible."

"I know."

"I'm not a bit free—I'm not even as free as Hobbs."

"Look at *me*," said Hartley, "if you think *you're* trapped!"



"Let's have a quick one," said Carlotta. She kicked the door-sill savagely as they went into the living-room. They sat down on the sofa side by side. Carlotta poured each of them a drink. They sipped slowly for a moment. Then she sat bolt upright and cocked her head on one side.

"Listen!"

Faintly from the edge of the meadow came the sound of singing; rotten singing, but gleeful. Harris and Beadle, walking arm-in-arm down the Pleasure Glade, as the grass road was called, were improvising.

"We feel much better when we see  
Hobbs coming with the tray!"

Carlotta glanced at the bishop. He had risen and was standing by the open french windows, a strange musing look in his grey eyes.

"A better sight there could not be  
Than Hobbs coming with the tray."

Then the voices went into a curious chorus arrangement:

"Hobbs coming with the  
Hobbs coming with the  
Hobbs coming with the  
TRAY!"

Carlotta caught Hartley's eye.

"They're like boys let out of school," she said. "I envy them."

The bishop nodded slowly. He had just been surprised to find he had gained a new parishioner. A small, bright red parishioner, with horns and a forked tail, who at the moment was pricking him with a golden tine he carried for that purpose. The parishioner was undoubtedly a blood brother of the

devil that had been riding Beadle. Presently the bishop looked out slyly from under the corners of his eyes at Carlotta.

"Of course, I don't suppose . . ."

"No," said Carlotta, "of course not."

Then they both laughed and arm in arm left the living-room.

Aboard the *Electra*, pyjama-clad and ready for bed, Beadle stood on the after deck, puffing at a night-cap cigarette. For the past half-hour, since he had come aboard with Harris, he had been supremely happy. He had ventured into the world he'd known and had come away victorious. Now he was enjoying that strange sense of comfort that only boat people know when they return to their private kingdoms and the water is dead still all around them and full of stars.

Mary was asleep in the deck-house; Payton and Swazey softly snoring in the guest stateroom and forecastle respectively. The world, behind the South Bleynton breakwater, was filled with a great peace. Beadle sighed and said, "It's fun to be adventuring." He raised a hand toward the lighthouse. "Master of your own fate, treading the stout deck of your own staunch vessel!" He trod the stout deck for a pace or two. The lighthouse winked at him. Then a voice hailed him from somewhere near by.

"Hey, can we come aboard your staunch vessel?"

Beadle felt like a fool. He peered over the rail. In a tiny rowing-boat alongside sat Carlotta and the bishop. Between them were two suitcases.

Beadle passed a hand over his eyes. Quoting Carlotta, he murmured, "One of us is nuts!"

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

CARLOTTA climbed up the gangway. The bishop, carrying the suitcases, followed her.

"It occurred to us," he said, "that your expedition needed a chaplain more than Mrs. Townsend needed a bishop. Of course, since I was visiting there, I couldn't offer you my services unless one of my hostesses came with me. What a nice boat this is."

"And now that everything's explained," said Carlotta, "let's get to bed."

Beadle stared at them, dumb for a second with astonishment.

"You don't mean you're actually coming with us?"

Carlotta put a hand on his arm.

"We are."

"But there's no one to chaperone you."

"There hasn't been anyone to chaperone your Mary girl, either."

"That's different."

"No," said Carlotta.

"We heard you singing in the meadow," said the bishop. He set the suitcases down on deck. "I don't think we'd have come but for that—you sounded so free."

"Free?"

Beadle's mind hadn't accepted the situation as yet. He could understand, perhaps, Carlotta wanting to come out of sheer devilment, but the bishop's arrival was too much for him.

"You see," Hartley went on, "Carlotta is so fed up with being a woman and having to pretend to be just a lady." He sighed. "And I am so very tired of being a man and pretending to be a bishop."

Beadle had the strange feeling that these two were actually pleading for official permission to come with him. They were

like Payton, leaning over the rail of his wife's yacht and saying, "I wonder if you'd mind if I came over for a little while?"

He thought for a moment—after all, it would be nice for Mary to have another woman on board and the bishop must be a pretty good skate or he wouldn't want to come.

"I really won't be in the way—if you can manage just to think of me as a man. I haven't brought any backwards collars with me." The bishop sighed again. "As a matter of fact, I've always hated the damn things—make me feel as if I'd forgot my necktie."

Beadle held out his hand. He said, "I think it's swell, your coming. Now where on earth can you sleep to-night?"

Hartley looked about him.

"Jacob," he said, "managed to have some fairly snappy dreams sleeping on the hard earth—how about the deck, if your berths are all full?"

Beadle laughed.

"It isn't that," he said, "there are lots of berths. It's just which you'd like best. Harris is in the guest stateroom and Swazey's in the fo'c'sle."

"Oh, bully!" said Hartley. "I'll take the fo'c'sle." He chuckled. "What fun to sleep with a burglar and how very frightened he'd be if he knew I was a bishop!"

"I'll show you the way. Carlotta, you can sleep in the dining-room."

Beadle led the way forward to the galley companionway and down it into the forecastle. Carlotta waited on deck. He turned on a light in the galley and opened the forecastle door. They could see Swazey sleeping with his hands crossed on his chest. His huge face in repose had something almost infantile about its expression. He was giving a two-note snore. Hartley looked at him and grinned.

"You know," he said, "it really doesn't seem right for that man with all he must have on his conscience to sleep so peacefully. I ought to wake him up."

"He hasn't any conscience," said Beadle.

"Then it wouldn't be right for me to wake him," said the bishop and softly closed the door behind him.

Beadle went back through the galley to the dining-saloon with Carlotta's bag and turned on the lights there. When she saw the lights, she came down.

"I like your boat, Beadle."

He was rummaging in the drawers under the port sofa berth.

"The blankets and things are in here. I'm sorry about not being dressed."

"I wasn't dressed when you called on me."

"That was fierce," said Beadle. He looked up at her. "Holy Moses, Carlotta, I didn't know *what* I'd got into. You honestly are the damndest person—all my life you've been embarrassing me, and of all the beds in the world I had to pick your bed to fall into!"

Carlotta snickered.

"At that," she said, "I'll bet you're glad it wasn't Mrs. Weems you dropped on."

"Lord!" he said. "If that had happened!"

He fished out an armful of sheets and blankets and started to make up one of the berths. Carlotta sat down on the other and watched him. The bag that had been resting on a chair tipped off and fell to the floor with a thud. A sleepy voice came from the deck-house.

"Beadle honey, is that you?"

Beadle addressed the ceiling.

"Hello, Mary."

"Did you-all get back all right?"

"Yes. We got the money too."

"Attaboy, Beadle. 'Night."

"Good night, Mary."

Carlotta tilted her head on one side.

"Beadleston."

He looked down and met her eyes.

"Is that little bundle of love you've got up there a South'n gal?"

He nodded.

"She's from the Chesapeake. Why?"

"And she's never seen the high life? And she's never been on a yacht before with a wealthy sportsman?"

Beadle smiled quizzically. He couldn't make out what she was getting at.

"No. Why, Carlotta?"

"I just wanted to know." She stood up as though she'd made up her mind about something. "You go on and get to bed. I'll finish the berth."

"All right." He held out his hand. "If you want anything—if you want to wash or anything, there's a bathroom just through that door."

"If it's like most boat bathrooms, I'll wait till to-morrow. I'm too sleepy to pump."

Beadle blushed. He'd received his social training in the days before Thomas Maddux' Sons and the Crane boys filled their smart shop windows with pastel plumbing. Any mention of plumbing in mixed company gave him shivers. But Carlotta mustn't know this. He said, "It's—it's electric. You just push a button in the floor."

"Oh," said Carlotta, rolling her eyes. "How perfectly charming. I just can't wait!"

"Good night!"

He hurried up the companionway. A low ripple of laughter followed him. Carlotta came to the foot of the stairs and called softly, "Good night, Beadle honey."

Then she laughed again. Beadle heard the laugh and gnashed his teeth. As he passed the deck-house, he saw Mary, chin on hands, staring out the window. He controlled his wrath enough to tell her good night again, then swiftly and indignantly he trod his own stout deck to his own private stateroom and got into bed.

"Damn!" he muttered. "Damn, damn, damn! She knows she's got my goat again!"

But in spite of his honest rage, he was too tired to lie awake.

So he didn't hear his door open, a few minutes later, and a soft step on the carpet between the two beds. Nor did he hear the still softer rustle of silk against fine linen, nor the yet softer sigh a lady always breathes when her head touches the pillow and she drifts off to bye-bye land.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

MORNING came to South Bleynton the way morning so often does to places on the Massachusetts coast—wrapped up like cigarettes in cellophane, in a fog that isn't quite as thick as the fog that people in Newport and Southampton and penthouse apartments find themselves in, but much more eerie. The fog came suddenly, walking like St. Paul over the surface of the water. With the fog came the yachtman's alarm clock; the siren on the South Bleynton light. It came in a great stentorian bellow, that, to people hearing it for the first time, is horribly alarming. It sounds like an accident or a hungry animal. It awakened the little company of six souls aboard the *Electra*, blast by blast.

In the forecabin Swazey sat bolt upright and reached for his gun. He'd forgotten where he'd put it, so he looked around, and when he looked around he saw the bishop. He didn't know it was a bishop and he thought this usurper had made the awful noise that had awakened him. He said, "Hey, you, can it!" The noise came again. He leaned over and looked at his sleeping partner intently. The sound didn't seem to emanate from him, after all.

"W'ales!" said Swazey. "Dem's w'ales an' dey're wailin'!"

The bishop, who had been dreaming of this and that, sat up and looked at Swazey.

"Good morning," he said. "Did you make that shocking noise?"

"Naw," said Swazey, "an' I don't like it." Then, feeling he was possessed of superior knowledge, he added, "Dem's w'ales, wailin'."

The foghorn came again.

"No," said the bishop.



"All right," said Swazey belligerently, "den wot is it, an' who are you, an' wot are you doin' in my private cabin?"

"I *was* sleeping," said the bishop. "You're Swazey, aren't you?"

"Maybe I am an' maybe I ain't," said Swazey, on his guard.

"I'm Bi—— Waldo Hartley. Beadleston Preece told me I was to sleep here."

"So Beadleston Preece told you to sleep here, eh?"

The bishop smiled to himself.

"He told me I could either sleep in the guest stateroom with Harris Payton or sleep in here with you."

"What are you? Another wealthy sportsman like Beadle?"

"No," said Hartley. "I'm—I'm—what are you?"

"Never mind what I am. I'm on my vacation, see?"

"I am too," said Hartley, "and I'd just as soon people didn't know what I am any more than you want them to know what you are. Miss Townsend and I joined up last night."

Swazey swung his legs over the bed and faced Hartley.

"Has dat guy lured anudder woman on to here?"

The bishop nodded.

"Cheez!" said Swazey. He snapped his fingers. "Has she got clothes wit her?"

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"De last one just had a nightshoit," said Swazey, "when she come aboard."

"Well," said Bishop Hartley, "this one was wearing pyjamas when she came on last night."

"Tell me dis," said Swazey. "How does he do it?"

In the guest stateroom, Harris Payton sat up and looked out of the window. He didn't think what he saw really was fog, because he was so used to waking up mornings with his head drumming and the feeling of fog all around him. He said, "Brrrrh!" shuddered, and lay down again, pulling the covers over his head, waiting for the awful morning sickness that is the curse of the man-about-town to come over him and take

him to his private hell of nausea, remorse and self-damnation. Strangely, it didn't come this morning. He had forgotten that he had gone to bed entirely sober the night before.

He waited for a full minute, sat up again and stared hard at the grey mists. His eyes lighted up and he took a deep, deep breath at the sweet damp air.

"My God!" he said; "it's real fog!"

Then he began to sing softly to himself the little song about Hobbs and his tray.

In the owner's stateroom, Beadle, hearing the great snoring of the light, sat bolt upright. He too glanced out of the window, and feeling the mystery of the fog, rested his chin on the sill and stared. Presently he said, "It's a fog and that's a foghorn."

Then a sleepy voice called to him.

"'Morning, Beadle honey."

He turned quickly and looked across the stateroom with much the same look on his face a man will give a brick he's tripped over. The enormity of the significance of what he saw shook him to the core. Most men, finding they had slept the night, however respectably, in the room with a lovely lady, would have felt a certain sensation of prideful thrill.

"You!"

Carlotta's jet hair lay in a swirl on the pillow. Her nightgown had slipped partly off one shoulder. One arm was crooked under her head, which was turned toward Beadle; the other lay extended. She was looking at him out of sleepy brown eyes that blinked. Carlotta had soft, almost bossy eyes when they weren't glinting with mischief; the sort of eyes it is good for a man to look into when he greets the new day.

She yawned and stretched and spoke through the yawn.

"Beadle honey, you know your maiden aunts would never have forgiven me if I'd let you sleep in here alone last night with that little South'n gal probably just waiting to leap into bed with you."

"Carlotta, you're being coarse!"

"Well, you know how it is with Southern girls, Beadle, and somebody has to look after a man like you."

"Oh, go to hell," said Beadle.

"Naughty word," said Carlotta. "Shall we get up?"

Beadle glared at her. He was thoroughly angry and, for all his buccaneering, shocked. Sitting there in his bed, looking across at Carlotta lying in her bed, made him feel unreal. It seemed more fantastic to him that he and Carlotta Townsend should have slept in the same stateroom than that he should be gallivanting on a stolen yacht with a burglar. He got up out of bed and started for the companionway leading to the deck. As he reached it, he heard a knock on the forward door of the stateroom and Harris Payton called him, asking if he could come in. A second later Swazey hailed him from the deck.

Beadle stopped in his tracks. Then he started toward the forward door, took two steps and started back for the companionway. He felt like a ball player caught between bases. Carlotta laughed and stretched again. Presently she reached out and caught his hand and drew him to the edge of her bed. He shrugged his shoulders and sat down beside her, completely defeated.

"Look what you've done! Carlotta, why couldn't you have stayed in your own room? Everyone's going to know now that you've slept here. I—I've—things like that get out—your reputation—your mother—Bishop Hartley——" He paused and gestured with his hands. "Oh, I know you just did it for fun, the way you socked that champagne bottle at me at the Brown's dance, but don't you see it's really my fault? I've got to blame myself for it, because I invited you to stay last night. I—I feel like hell about it, Carlotta."

Carlotta saw that he meant it. She thought it was surprisingly quixotic of him to feel like hell about her reputation when she'd slept in his room simply to plague him. Carlotta was not a sentimental girl, but she was a little touched. She patted his hand.

"Beadle, I'm honestly sorry I did it."

"Of course you are. We're caught."

Carlotta's hand rested on his.

"That isn't why," she said. "You know me better than that, Beadle. I'm sorry because—because I just did it to annoy you and you're being so damned sporting about it! I thought you'd be funny and nancy, and say *I'd* ruined *your* reputation."

Even Beadle couldn't mistake the sincerity of what she said.

Swazey and Payton, thinking Beadle was still asleep, didn't call again. Beadle heard Payton go up the companionway in the hall and join Swazey on deck, heard them say good morning to one another. He was glad. They couldn't help knowing about what had happened, because it would be obvious that Carlotta hadn't slept in the saloon, but their going away would give him time to adjust himself. He turned his gaze from the window (which he had been staring at for propriety's sake) and looked at Carlotta. He looked at her long and silently.

He saw her, really, for the first time in all the years he'd known her, for this was the first time, except for the little second when she'd slipped her arm through his on the way back from the Weems adventure, that she definitely hadn't been an enemy. He was rather surprised to find that looking at her that way she seemed a rather beautiful woman. Perhaps not as beautiful as Madelaine—he paused in his looking and tried to picture how Madelaine would look there, in Carlotta's place—tried to picture her hair and the nightgown and her white shoulders, and tried to picture how he would feel if he were sitting on the edge of Madelaine's bed, Madelaine whom he'd been so in love with. Then he stopped trying to picture Madelaine, because for one thing she wasn't there and never would be, and for another reason because Carlotta was speaking again.

"You know, Beadle, this isn't so very dreadful—after all, most people who get married haven't known each other one half of one per cent as long as we have."

"Get married!" said Beadle. "For God's sake, you aren't suggesting that——"

Carlotta laughed. Beadle's utter horror wasn't flattering, but it was funny.

"No, of course not! I was just going to say that, after all, when our nurses were friends and used to shove us around Central Park together, we were probably on a much more intimate basis than we—are now."

"That's true," said Beadle. He was thinking. "That's quite true."

"For instance, there must have been the little matter of putting on my fresh——"

"Of course!" Beadle laughed. He didn't feel like laughing but he thought laughter might drown out the things Carlotta was going to say. He stood up and went over to the dresser and lighted a cigarette. The yachting cap was on the dresser. It reminded him that he was supposed to be the leader of an expedition and that leaders of expeditions are hardly ever floored by finding curiously outspoken ladies in their cabins. Actually the sight of it brought him to himself—not the himself he'd used to be, but the new himself he'd been learning to be since he'd lost his money. Once his point of view got adjusted, he felt better. Almost nonchalantly, he resumed his seat on the edge of Carlotta's bed.

"Well," he said, "are we going to try and explain?"

Carlotta said, "Sure. We'll tell 'em we're engaged!"

Beadle really laughed, this time.

"Damn you, Carlotta!"

She looked up at him. Her eyes were not glinting.

"You're sort of a good guy, Beadle. If you'll get the hell out of here now, I'll get dressed. We've got to get under way before Mother swims out and stops us."

"Good Lord, yes!"

He went up the companionway. On deck he met Swazey, who was sitting on a hatch, peering gloomily at the fog. When he saw Beadle, he shook his head sadly. There is honour among

thieves, but sometimes even burglars can't help overhearing laughter—feminine laughter—when it occurs in the wrong places.

“Chief,” he said, “I’m sorry. I’m tellin’ you, I’m sorry!”

“Sorry?”

“Sorry,” said Swazey. “I can’t go on wid you. De kind of people you’re loadin’ dis ship up wit’! What would my folks t’ink, if I had folks? What would dey t’ink?”

Beadle smiled. He knew what Swazey was driving at, and having accepted the Carlotta situation, he was beginning to get a certain amount of pleasure out of Swazey’s reaction to it.

“We’ve some very nice people on board,” he said.

“Who?” said Swazey, “besides you an’ me an’ Mary?”

“Well,” said Beadle, “we have a bishop.”

Swazey’s eyes grew wide. His jaw hung loose, like a broken fender on an old Ford. He gasped.

“Cheez!”

“He was the gentleman who slept in the fo’c’sle with you.”

“Cheez!” said Swazey again, nodding. Then he snapped his fingers and smiled. “I apologize! Honest, I apologize!”

“No,” said Beadle, “that’s all right.”

“I apologize,” said Swazey, “about what I said just now about de lady laffin’ in your cabin—if we got a bishop here—why, it’s O.K.! But . . .”

He broke off.

“But what?”

“But cheez, chief, if I’d a’ known last night, I’d have took off my socks when I went to bed, instead of just sleepin’ like I was.”

Beadle grinned and looked at the flatboats Swazey called his feet. A typical Carlotta thought passed through his brain. He said, “I don’t think the bishop minded your keeping them on.”

He patted Swazey on the back—why, he didn’t know, except that he suddenly felt rather pleased with himself. For a

person who had been shocked as much as Beadle had, it was rather fun to shock somebody else for a change. He proceeded to the galley. He had decided to keep his pyjamas on for breakfast. As he passed the deck-house, he met Mary returning from an inspection of the anchor line. They met face to face in the narrow passageway.

"Beadle!"

He said, "Hello, Mary," and wondered why she seemed so glad to see him and why her eyes were so bright on such a damp foggy morning.

"The gentleman in—in number—who slept with Swazey, told me you got four thousand dollars last night!"

"I just collected it," said Beadle, "for Harris, in case we might need a little money at Newport."

"A little. . . . Why, you-all are just wonderful!"

She put both hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes. She stood for a second so. Then she said, "'Long with the four thousan' dollars, did you bring a girl back with you?"

He forced one of his futile laughs.

"Carlotta Townsend came aboard with Bishop Hartley—the—the man who slept in the fo'c'sle with Swazey."

"Where'd she sleep?"

"In . . ."

He caught himself. It was more than possible Mary had already found out where Carlotta had slept.

"In my cabin," he said, "I slept on deck. I—I thought the air would be good for me here."

Mary Winlock continued to look him in the eye. The look made him uncomfortable.

"After all," he said, "she's an old friend of mine."

"So," said Mary, "was your red-headed friend."

She turned and went down the companionway into the saloon. Beadle watched her go. He stood for a long time, scratching his chin, staring at the empty companionway, feeling the way other men have felt, when things like that have happened to them. But it was the first time anything like

that had ever happened to Beadle. He felt like a dog who's being taught a new and unheard-of trick. His lips puckered, he was thinking so hard—thinking of Carlotta back there in his cabin and of Mary down in the saloon and of himself in this ambiguous position. Presently he nodded his head.

“Swazey's right,” he said. “It's a hell-ship!”



## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

MANY hours later, as quickly as it had come, the fog lifted and the *Electra*, with her eager if inexperienced crew of Corinthians, steamed from behind the breakwater.

Mrs. Townsend, from her sleeping porch, watched the departure, just as the night before she had watched the stealthy exodus of Carlotta and Bishop Hartley. She didn't in the least mind their going. She felt, if anything, that Beadle would be a good influence on Carlotta, who had seemed a little out of hand lately; and entertaining the bishop, because of the people she felt she had to ask to the house to meet him, had tired her. She sighed and, relaxing, stared at the ceiling. Presently she spoke, very slowly and carefully.

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star, what a nuisance bishops are."

Then she laughed and rang for Hobbs. She rather expected he'd have two notes for her and she was curious to see just how Hartley had explained himself.

"If I were a betting person," she said to the ceiling, "I would bet that he blames it on having to take care of Carlotta, the old hypocrite!"

The notes, when they came, were entirely satisfactory. She read them and then telephoned a friend of hers who lived on the point at Newport. She asked the friend to telephone her when she saw the *Electra* round the point.

It must be said for Mrs. Townsend that she wasn't doing it because she felt Carlotta needed an eye kept on her—that wouldn't have seemed honourable. The real reason she was keeping tabs was because she thought Beadle was very likely to land in jail and if he did she wanted to bail him out. As has been said, Mrs. Townsend was a remarkable woman—and she had always been fond of Beadle.

The *Electra* rounded Newport point at six that evening and

headed in the general direction of the New York Yacht Club landing. Peace reigned aboard her, because Carlotta, when she met Mary Winlock, had been simple and direct and friendly and not at all like Madelaine. Mary had expected either open or saccharine enmity. She was surprised almost into liking Carlotta.

Swazey was frightened by Carlotta and the bishop at first, but as time passed and Hartley failed to whip beads out of his pocket and Carlotta failed to produce a lorgnette, his fear wore off and his high spirits of the day before returned. When they passed James Arthur's black barquentine, anchored well off shore, he even went so far as to nudge Hartley and say, "Dere's my pal's boat. I gotta go call on him later."

They dropped anchor inshore and Mary shut off the motors. The anchor dragged.

"Bad bottom," she said. "We'll move and try again."

She started the engines and moved a little farther out and once more ordered the hook dropped. This time she kept the engines running and let out more anchor line, but still it dragged. She looked at the chart.

"It says 'soft'; we oughtta hold."

Just then Payton came up from below. As soon as he saw what was going on, he began to laugh. Mary turned on him in anger.

"This ain't my fault," she said; "let's see *you* anchor this scow!"

Payton laughed again and said, "All right."

He took the wheel and had the anchor raised. Then he ran the boat west, away from the Yacht Club. When he'd gone about a quarter of a mile, he told Mary to let the anchor down again. It held perfectly here. The others gathered around him.

"What's the gag?" said Mary. "I don't get it."

"Just that you can't anchor on glass," said Payton.

"Glass?" said Beadle.

"On glass?" said Bishop Hartley.

"Glass," said Payton. He smiled. "You see, for so many

years people in perfectly lovely boats have anchored near that landing and thrown so many perfectly lovely bottles overboard that there isn't any bottom any more—just glass."

"Hotcha!" said Swazey. "He's a great kidder! He's comical, he is!"

"I know," said Payton, "because I've placed so many of the bottles there myself."

Mary looked at him and shook her head.

"You're nuts," she said, "but I don't mind."

"The anchor's holding, isn't it?" said Payton.

Mary shut the engines off and went below to close the petrol valves. Carlotta turned to Beadle.

"Well," she said, "here we are; what do we do next, Captain?"

Payton said, "Let's go to the club there and find out who's giving a big dinner, and then we'll all go to it and surprise them. We can give our dinner Monday night."

Beadle nodded. Then a thought came to him. He said, "Mary hasn't anything to wear."

Payton said, "That's all right—we'll all wear flannel trousers and undershirts—we'll be a knockout."

Beadle shook his head.

"No, Harris—that wouldn't be fair to her and we can't go."

Carlotta looked at him. She had known for years that Beadle was definitely not one of the deep thinkers of the world, but she was surprised at this flash of understanding.

"Too bad my clothes won't fit her," she said. Then: "But look, why can't we go to Thoren's on James Street and get her something?"

"It's too late," said Beadle.

"Oh, hell," said the bishop, "and I've never been to a Newport party. I did want to go, but you're quite right about Mary. Quite right."

"I wonder." Beadle was thinking again. He turned to Swazey. "Are you pretty good with locks?"

"I'm on my vacation," said Swazey. "What locks?"

"I think," said Beadle, "that if we were to hire a snappy car and get ourselves all swelled up, we could probably drive right up to Thoren's and pick open the front door."

"Oh, yeah?" said Swazey.

"We could, if you were any kind of a burglar."

Payton said, "I don't believe he knows how to pick a lock."

Hartley, who was trying very hard to be a man and not a bishop, said, "Of course, if this man is just pretending to be a burglar and isn't, we should have him arrested as an impostor!"

Swazey leered at him.

"So you don't think I'm a burglar, eh? How do I know you're a bishop?"

"I can prove it," said Hartley. "Can you?"

He sighed and sat down on the transom. His bolt was shot.

Beadle and Payton and Carlotta waited expectantly. They could tell by the fact that his lips were knocking against his teeth that Swazey was about to say something emotionally important. Swazey's lips, which were really too big for practical purposes, always did that when he was incensed. It was a habit that had bothered his mother when he was nothing but truck fodder on an East Side street. Which way the cat jumped, so to speak, seemed to mean a great deal. Presently he got the lips under control.

"So I ain't a burglar, eh? I'll show you! Let's go!"

When they blew the horn for the Yacht Club launch a few minutes later, with the exception of Mary, they were as smartly dressed a landing party as has ever left a yacht. Even Swazey had been re-issued in the bishop's extra pair of white flannel trousers, and, as a special favour, Beadle was allowing him to wear the yachting cap. They reached the landing and climbed out and the steward, who had recognized Payton as a member—a tipping member—came down to greet them.

"Glad to see you aboard, sir," said the steward, which Mary thought was rather silly since he meant "ashore."

"I want a Rolls-Royce," said Payton.

"Lots of us do, sir," said the steward, who had to have his little joke, "and for how long, sir?"

"Just this evening. Get it here right away."

"Yes, sir."

The others had gone on up the gangway. Mary Winlock lingered behind. Her little Sunday-Magazine-section mind was steeped deep in tales of this Newport place. She was watching Harris Payton arriving, or, in her mind, "dropping in" at his club, with an enormous fascination. She didn't want to miss any of it.

The steward, who was a very old friend, leaned close to Payton. Mary heard him say, "Mrs. Payton came in last night on the *Colyrium*. She was fair hopping, sir."

Payton nodded.

"Where is she now?"

"Sailing. She'll be back any time." He glanced at Mary. "I'll hurry the Rolls, sir."

"That, Luther, is worth five," said Payton.

Mary very nearly screamed with delight. The steward hurried up the gangway of the float. Tremulously Mary slipped her arm through Payton's.

"Would it really matter," she said, "if Mrs. Payton found you-all walkin' up the dock with me?"

Payton looked down at her over the pouches under his eyes and lied like a gentleman.

"It would make her furious!" he whispered. Mary was thrilled and clutched his arm more tightly. Payton had done his Boy Scout act for the day. On the way down to the yacht the night before, Beadle had told him that he was a social tiger. It had come as news to Payton, but he didn't want to disappoint Mary.

In less than ten minutes after they reached the street, a Rolls town car drew up. They clambered into it and Carlotta gave the chauffeur Thoren's address. In another five minutes they were there, and according to the plan Swazey had "t'ought" up, Beadle got out and tried the door. It was, of course,

locked. Still according to plan, he said loudly, "Thoren promised to keep open, the dirty dog—let's pick the lock and see if we can find the dresses—they're sure to be marked." He crossed the pavement and addressed the chauffeur. "Can you pick a lock?"

The chauffeur smiled and shook his head. He'd lived in Newport for years and was used to being asked funny questions. Beadle turned to Payton.

"Can you?"

Payton shook his head and said, "Really, Beadle, Thoren might get sore."

"Rats," said Beadle. "How about you, Carlotta?"

"Let's try!"

Carlotta grabbed Swazey's arm and dragged him out of the car. They approached the doorway.

"Why not a brick?" she said. "Have you a brick, Bishop?"

Swazey forced a laugh. He'd been carefully rehearsed in his part, but the laugh was really lousy.

"*Burglars* use bricks," he said. "*We* can't use 'em."

He went up to the door and rattled it. Then he inexpertly tried to open it with a nail he picked up off the sidewalk. While he was ostensibly failing at this, he slipped a thin piece of isinglass through the crack by the lock. The tumblers fell away and the door opened.

"It wasn't locked," he said with a grimace, "just stuck."

He stepped back, in pardonable pride, and allowed the others to lead the way into the shop. Hartley patted him on the shoulder as he passed and said, "I take it back. You're a wonder. How on earth did you do it?"

"Dat's a trade secret," said Swazey. "You don't tell your trade secrets, do you, Bish?"

Hartley shook his head and grinned. His trade secrets consisted of always having been polite to the right people in the right places. He certainly didn't tell about it.

Thoren's on James Street was a branch of Thoren's on Fifth Avenue. It was one of those ultra, ultra dress shops that

couldn't possibly be as smart as they make you feel they are. Its prices were in keeping. Two square yards of duck, normally worth a few cents, if bought at Thoren's roughly sewed into the shape of a skirt, cost you not less than ten dollars. Mr. Thoren and his wife were very happy. Along with their children they had, after years of association with the rich, come to believe in Santa Claus.

To Mary Winlock, Thoren's was paradise. The neatly written price-tags hanging to the sleeves of the dresses there dazzled her. For some time now she had been sure she was living in a dream. She was glad to see concrete evidence that it was a really snappy dream, as dreams go.

Mary thought it highly probable that she would get into a great deal of trouble along with the others for busting into such a swell place, but she thought even if she did, it would read well in the papers and that made it all right. She went from rack to rack, studying the tags, feeling the materials—smiling. She was thoroughly happy.

Beadle, watching her, whispered to Carlotta. He said, "She's having a swell time, but you'd better help her. What ought she to get?"

"Beach pyjamas, an afternoon dress, and an evening dress and a street dress and a bathing suit."

Beadle turned to Payton.

"Can we afford all that, Harris?"

Bishop Hartley intervened.

"It doesn't seem to me," he said, "so much a question of can *you* afford it as can Thoren afford it."

Payton nodded.

"We'd better look at his books and see," he said. "Come on, Swazey."

"I ain't interested in books," said Swazey.

Beadle said, "Carlotta, you pick out some things and put Mary into them. Then call us. We'll be in the office." He addressed Hartley. "I think we all ought to pass on the selection, don't you?"

"Oh, absolutely," said Hartley.

"Come on, Swazey, we may need you."

He led the way toward the back of the shop to a room that was obviously the office because it said "Private" on the door, and the only room that ever has the least privacy connected with it in a dress shop is always the office. The door was locked.

"Go on, Swazey, do your stuff."

Swazey shook his head.

"Why not? After all, you got us into the place."

But Swazey went temperamental on them. He took off his hat and rubbed his foot against his ankle.

"No."

"Oh, go on, do!" said Harris.

"No," said Swazey. "No."

"Please," said Beadle. "We won't know what Thoren can afford to spend on Mary unless we get in here."

Swazey still shook his head. Apparently something was bothering him.

"Is it your conscience?" said Beadle.

He shook his head again.

"Come on," said Payton, "tell papa." He drew back his arm and made his hand into a fist. "Why doesn't itsy-bitsy Swazey-cums want to unlock door-door for Beadle?"

"Oh, pshaw," said Swazey. "I don't want youse to see how I do it, dat's all!"

"Oh," said Beadle.

He and Payton turned their backs. Swazey employed his strip of isinglass, opened the door and called to them.

"Nuttin' to it," he said. "Nuttin' to it!"

The books, which should have been in a safe, were not, because Thoren had been treated so well by his gods that he had, as time went on, grown over-confident in them. They lay in plain sight on a mahogany desk. Beadle and Payton knew something of books. They rather expected to have fun.

Beadle said, "This makes me think of when I was at West-



minster. I wanted awfully once to get a week-end on credits, and I almost had it when one of the mug masters gave me a demerit. It would've killed the week-end, but another guy and I sneaked down into the faculty room that night and pried open the drawer where the masters put the slips with the demerits. We got mine out, then we looked over the list and rubbed out all the demerits of the guys we liked and added a lot more to the guys we didn't."

Payton looked around and smiled.

"I did that at Westminster ten years before you did, Beadle. Did you get your week-end?"

Beadle nodded.

"How was it?"

"Swell! I wanted to go to the spring United Hunts races."

"I got mine too," mused Payton. "It wasn't so hot. I think I'd rather have kept the demerits."

"What happened?"

"I went to Chicago to a dance," Payton was absent-mindedly turning the leaves of the ledger, "and I met Jane."

He looked down at the page in front of him, still absent-mindedly. Then he bent his head quickly and wasn't absent-minded any more.

"Holy Mike!" he said. "Look at this!"

Beadle peered over his shoulder.

"This one. It's a lalapaloosa!"

Payton's finger was marking a line in the ledger. It read: "MRS. HARRIS PAYTON. . . . \$3,000.00

Paid June 20, 1932."

"Beadle honey! Mr. *Pay-ton!*"

Payton turned away from the ledger and looked through the doorway of the office. He saw Mary. She was in an evening gown—a cloth-of-gold evening gown. He saw that she was begging for approval and he realized she'd probably never had an evening gown. Not necessarily a cloth-of-gold evening gown, but probably not even a simple mail order evening gown. He caught Beadle's eye.

"On the strength of these books," he said, "Mary can afford the works!"

"Just a Robin Hood, aren't you?" said Beadle.

They walked back into the showroom, where Mary was prancing for the bishop.

Beadle went up to Carlotta and said, "It's swell! Thoren's doing fine—he just got three thou from Jane Payton. Don't you think we're morally justified in taking anything we like for Mary?" Then he added, "She looks swell in that, doesn't she?"

Carlotta cocked her head on one side and looked at Mary Winlock. She was pacing back and forth, trying very hard to look like the pictures of models she'd seen. Then Carlotta looked at Beadle and wondered if the glint of admiration she saw in his eyes might possibly, if encouraged, turn into little Beadles. She said, "Swell isn't exactly the word, Beadle. She's putting on an act."

He didn't notice the hard note that had got into her voice.

"I think she looks perfectly lovely! You know, I wouldn't have believed she could look like that when I first saw her." He went over to Mary and ambled around her.

"We'll take that," he said. "Now put on the street dress."

When Carlotta's five selections had been passed with approval by the jury, Mary put the beach pyjamas on while the men rooted around and found boxes and packed the other clothes. Then they bundled into the Rolls and started back to the Yacht Club, all very pleased with themselves and each other; except Carlotta, who was beginning to wonder if, after all, she hadn't made a slight mistake in joining the party in the first place.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

SOME time later, the six seafaring souls aboard the *Electra* sat comfortably about on her after-deck, sipping cocktails and waiting until it would be decent time to go to the particular dinner they had chosen from the list that Luther had prepared for them, of parties happening that night. Luther had had the list all neatly typed for them. He had classified the parties. It ran:

Mrs. Vanderbilt—(She's having lobsters) Luther didn't specify in which sense.

Mrs. Reid (Japanese Ambassador)

Mrs. Tailer (She's got a golf champion there).

Mrs. Arthur (On yacht—pretty quiet, lobster too).

Mrs. Wilson (Mostly family—look out, maybe music after).

Mr. Banks (Big dinner and dance after for niece. I recommend highly. Everybody go there after).

Mr. Wanner (He's got a Vice-President there. N.G.).

Mrs. Payton (On yacht—you know best, sir).

Others (You wouldn't bother with rest, sir).

The vote had been unanimous in favour of Banks. His shindig sounded like the only one where adventurers would be in the least appreciated. The bishop, who knew literature when he saw it, had taken the list down to the fore-castle with him to study as he dressed. He still had it in his hand.

"Just who," he asked Payton, "is this so highly recommended Mr. Banks?"

"He's a stockbroker. He handles the accounts of most of the really big men up here," said Payton.

"Why isn't he broke?" asked Beadle. "Or is he?"

"You can judge for yourself to-night," said Payton. "I gather it's going to be a nifty."

"A nifty?" said the bishop.

"I mean he's going to spread himself. He's supposed to be giving the party for his niece, but I have a hunch he's really giving it to get old Rumblegrist launched in society."

"Why should somebody named Rumblegrist *be* launched in society?" asked Carlotta.

"So Banks can get him to trade through his office."

"I'm against it," said Carlotta.

"I'm for it," said Beadle. "If Rumblegrist didn't want to get launched in society, and Banks didn't want him to trade through his office, there wouldn't be a nice party for us to go to to-night."

"Dear, dear," said the bishop. "Do you know, I think I too am for launching Rumblegrist. But just how does Banks' party get him asked anywhere else?"

"Because," said Payton, "if he trades through Banks, Banks will know what stocks are likely to go up, and if people here are nice to Banks and ask his little friend to dinner and elect his little friend to things, why maybe Banks will wink at them some evening and say, 'Yoo-hoo, buy XYZ to-morrow,' and then they'll all race out and buy XYZ in enormous quantities and XYZ will go up simply because they bought it, and Banks, who probably bought some all on his own, will have money enough to give another party for the next Rumblegrist who comes down the pike."

"Don't the mugs here ever catch on?" said Mary.

"No," said Payton. He laughed. "The funny thing about it is that half the people here got in via the Rumblegrist route and they all pretend there're no such things as Rumblegrists."

"You mean," said Mary, "they pretend you can't buy a ticket and get in."

Bishop Hartley was feeling relaxed. He had had a pleasant day. He stretched his legs and thought about how comfortable Carlotta's brother's evening-clothes were, and said, "Ah, well, I find it most agreeable, either way."

"So do I," said Mary. "I think it's exciting. Can we really go to the dinner, Harris?"

Swazey, who had been going through his ankle-rubbing routine by the companionway, came forward.

"Not me," he said, "I don't go where I ain't asked; see?"

Beadle smiled at him.

"You're asked to the dance afterward, Swazey. You're a friend of James Arthur, aren't you? All his friends would naturally be invited to the dance."

Swazey beamed at him.

"So if I'm a pal of Pink Whiskers, I'm O.K. here, eh?"

"You bet you are! He'll be there."

"Will he—will he have any more of dat scamper juice wit' him?"

Bishop Hartley looked up from pleased contemplation of his patent-leathered feet.

"Bill," he said, "I'm afraid I'm going to have to reform you."

Swazey's eyes had been bright with enthusiasm; now a cloud of worry dimmed them.

"Aw, gee, Bish," he said, "wait till after to-night, can't you?"

The bishop, who like Beadle had caught Swazey's habit of saluting, swung his right arm.

"O.K., pal."

"I think it will be fun," said Payton, "to see Banks's expression when we're announced."

"Ain't he apt to have us thrown out?" said Mary.

Payton smiled at her and, reaching up, caught her hand and drew her to the arm of his chair.

"No," he said. "No man in his right mind would be apt to have you thrown out."

"Why not?" said Mary. "I don't belong there."

Payton looked at her. Carlotta had done her hair for her and helped her fit the cloth-of-gold evening-dress. She gave it a pertness—an *esprit*—a something that would have delighted Thoren. She was what he had pretended to himself would be in it when he designed it. Mary Winlock looked like a million.

"He might be nasty to *me*," said Beadle, "because he knows

me, and if he'd wanted me at his party he'd have invited me, but he'll be really glad that you've come to it. We wouldn't take you if we didn't think you'd have fun."

"I'm scared about it," said Mary.

"Banks' niece is more scared about it than you are," said Beadle. He looked at his watch. "It's half-past eight. I think we'd better get started." Then he looked at Payton. "Besides, I see something over there that looks very much like the *Colyrium* dropping her anchor."

All the way to the Banks house Beadle thought about Mary being scared and decided he would be very sweet indeed to her. When the Rolls stopped in front of the door, he offered her his hand and bowed low as he helped her from the car. It pleased her.

Mr. Banks' butler was not surprised to see the Beadle group pouring over the portal. He took their hats and Carlotta's shawl and led them through a hall and a couple of reception rooms and a music-room or so and finally paused on the threshold of the drawing-room and whispered to Mary Beadle, who was right behind her, said, "Miss Winlock and Mr. Preece," and gave her a shove forward.

"Miss Winlock and Mr. Preece!" boomed the butler.

The fifteen invited dinner guests, standing and sitting before the huge empty fireplace, glanced casually around. Mr. Banks, who was a large man with nicely combed grey hair, rose with a surprised expression. He looked a little like a papa rabbit who, upon examining the fortnightly litter, finds a couple of extra bunnies.

"By George!" he said to himself. "I forgot all about having asked Preece and that girl!"

The fifteen invited guests stopped glancing casually and stared the way only very nice people can stare. When Mary in that dress stepped into the room, it was as though someone had switched on a bright light.

"Mr. Payton!"

Banks, who was standing now, clutched at the mantel.

"Must've done it at the boat races," he muttered. "Must've seen 'em on one of the yachts and asked 'em then." He looked toward the doorway and saw two more people lurking there. "Good God!" he said, "I *must* have, but I don't remember—I don't remember!" He put his hand to his temple. Mr. Banks led a strenuous life—a life of terrific mental exertion. Times had been strained now for a long while. He'd worked harder than ever before in his life. He wondered if his mind could be cracking.

"Miss Townsend and BISHOP HARTLEY!"

Mr. Banks's butler always gave tongue much louder when he had a title to mouth.

Banks's eyes grew wide and a glazed look came over them. He was no more than an automaton as he shook hands with his new guests. Bishop Hartley being there had cinched the thing. He'd been comforting himself with the thought that Beadle and the girl and Harris might have just cheeked in for the hell of it, but a bishop, no! Oh, no, not a bishop. Bishops were even more cautious in their conduct than politicians. He took a long breath. Banks was a brave man who could face things. He'd go to his doctor in the morning—then he'd rest up for a week or so. He clenched his fists, took another deep breath and was himself again. He greeted the bishop cordially.

"I'm so glad you could come, Bishop Hartley. I—I—when I asked you I was so afraid you wouldn't be able to make it—Saturday—day before Sunday, you know—sermons. Was afraid you'd be preparing a stiff lecture for us and all that—ha-ha-ha!"

"Ha-ha-ha, yourself," said Carlotta, imitating his forced laugh. "You weren't afraid of any such thing when you asked him. I know."

"By George, maybe I wasn't!" said Banks.

Beadle reached behind a Mrs. Plant's back and tried to pinch Carlotta's arm. It was a quick gesture, which no doubt would have done her good had the pinch landed on Car-

lotta's arm instead of where it did, on the lady who happened at that moment to be standing beside the bishop. The lady happened to be Mrs. Rumblegrist. She also happened to be slightly loaded. She leaned against Hartley like a big friendly horse and leered up at him.

"Naughty, naughty!" she said. "Ooz a big bad bishop to pinchy-winchy strange girlies."

"*What?*" said Bishop Hartley, suddenly realizing that he and this large lady had become the centre of what appeared to be a highly dramatic situation. He didn't know what had happened and looked around, hoping to find out. He saw Beadle's face, bright red, working in a spasm and Carlotta holding her hand tightly over her mouth. Neither of these sights helped him in his dilemma. He started to move away but soon realized that Mrs. Rumblegrist would undoubtedly fall if he removed his support without warning her.

Mrs. Rumblegrist shook a diamond-decked finger at him.

"I know," she spoke in a high, cosy voice—a voice more suitable for addressing Pekingese than bishops—"Ooz pretendin' not to know what big bad bishop did to 'ittle girlies."

Bishop Hartley had had enough of it. He didn't know yet just what the game was, but he didn't want to play it. He fixed Mrs. Rumblegrist with an unclerical eye and drew himself to a position of greater dignity.

"Whatever it is," he boomed, "I didn't do it."

"Hartley," whispered Carlotta, "you slay me!"

With that Hartley bowed and walked over to where Mary was standing alone. He smiled at her.

"Charming house, isn't it, Mary?" he said. "I think that's a Romney over there between the windows. Is it, now? No, I don't think it is, after all." He turned to Banks. "Who did paint that?"

Bishop Hartley could carry a thing off when he chose. He kept up a running conversation with himself until the butler came again with more cocktails. Banks by now was certain he had gone stark cuckoo. He was nearly as sure that several of the people around him had gone cuckoo with him. But



when everyone had partaken of a glass or so of Banks' butler's particular brand of soothing syrup, the tension relaxed and the dinner party became again as other dinner parties. People formed little groups and talked about tennis and golf and polo. Harris Payton went over to Mary, who was making heavy weather of it with a Mrs. Jones, and took over the conversation. Beadle ranged alongside Carlotta and pinched her arm. He pinched it good and hard and told her to behave herself, and she told him he'd better not go pinching Mrs. Rumblegrist any more or she'd tell on him. Banks fluttered from group to group, dishing out soothing syrup and making himself particularly nice to the Beadle party, because he felt badly at having forgotten about asking them and didn't want them to know he had.

Dinner was served at nine-thirty. Mary Winlock sat on Banks' right, Carlotta on his left. Beadle drew Mrs. Rumblegrist and enjoyed the food. The bishop sat next to Mrs. Plant and because it seemed a suitable subject to discuss with a lady of such a name, talked about gardening. Payton sat on Mary's right. He'd had to force Rumblegrist out of the chair in order to do it, but he'd caught the look of panic on Mary's face when they'd gone into the dining-room and it had touched him. He wanted to be where he could help her, so he just plumped himself down in the chair beside her. After one or two abortive efforts to get into the chair with him, Rumblegrist shrugged his shoulders and, like a man playing "Going to Jerusalem," darted about until he finally got himself placed.

The dinner, once Rumblegrist caught himself a chair, proceeded as most nice dinners do. There was some laughter, much eating, and, after the wine, a little indigestion. At the close of it the ladies returned to the drawing-room and the men went into Banks' private library. Beadle found himself next to the host in a corner of the room. For the past twenty minutes his conscience had been bothering him—Banks had taken the imposition so nicely and had obviously been uncomfortable all through the meal. Beadle leaned toward him.

"It was nice of you to have us to-night," he said.

"Nice of you to come," said Banks.

"Of course you realize, don't you, that you didn't invite us?"

Banks felt like a man getting parolled from an asylum. Beadle thought it odd that he should look so pleased at being imposed on.

"Didn't I really?"

"No," said Beadle. "We just came."

"Thank Heaven!" said Banks. He laughed. "You know, Preece, I've been working so damned hard this year—I was afraid my mind was skidding. You don't know how much your saying that means!"

"I was afraid you'd be sore."

Banks laughed again.

"I would have been sore if you hadn't got me so worried." He paused and lighted a cigar. Then he looked at Beadle sharply. "Now you speak of it," he said, "it was a curious thing for you to do. How did you happen to, anyway?"

"We wanted to go to a party. Hartley especially wanted to go to one. We weren't asked to any, so we had Luther at the Yacht Club make us up a list of the parties that were happening to-night. Yours looked much the best."

"Thanks," said Banks. "By the way, is that really Bishop Hartley, or do you just call him that because you think it would be nice to have a bishop around?"

"He's the real stuff," said Beadle.

"Who's the little four-minute egg?"

"Just a girl I found on a scow. This is her first evening-dress. She was terribly afraid about coming. I don't think she thought it was quite the thing to do."

"No."

"I want awfully for her to have a good time at the dance, and I want Harris to have a good time too. You see—you see, neither of them have had much fun."

Banks nodded.

"No man who marries a bank-roll has much fun. He loses

all respect for himself and everybody else does too. We all know about Payton. It's his own fault."

"I don't think any of you know about Payton. I only found out about him the other day. Then I made him join the expedition."

"Expedition? What expedition?"

"An expedition to sail places and be natural and conspicuous, so that people will talk about my having the *Electra* and I can find out whether Milton Sands dares object or not."

They were coming over the plate too fast for Donald Banks. He said, "Why Milton Sands?"

"Because he lost my money for me. That's why I swiped his boat."

Banks was suddenly interested.

"Milton Sands lost your money for you? How?"

"He had me in an investment trust and in a pool he said Moorehouse, the railroad man, was running, and they both went blooey, that's all. I didn't know anything about money, so I'd always let him run the thing. He ran it, all right."

"Did you say he had *all* your money in those things?"

"Oh, no, the rest of it was in a land-development company." He laughed. "I busted in easy stages."

"When did the pool crash?"

"Two months ago."

Banks looked at the ash on his cigar.

"It may break your heart to hear it," he said, "but I happen to have certain knowledge that Moorehouse hasn't been in the market this year."

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Beadle.

"I don't suppose your money was in a trust fund, was it?"

"Some of it was."

"Interesting," said Banks. "Of course, you know margin accounts and land-development companies aren't legal investments for trust funds?"

Beadle hadn't the vaguest idea what he meant. He said so. Banks explained.

"There's a state law," he said, "that makes it illegal for any administrator or trustee to buy anything except certain kinds of bonds for trust funds. Maybe—just maybe—you're not so broke, after all. It's just possible you weren't in any of those things—that your friend Sands just said you were and slipped the money in his sock. But you'd want to be awfully sure before you accused him."

Beadle thought for a long moment. The idea that he might still be wealthy frightened him. He saw himself as he had been before. Definitely, he didn't want to go back to being like that again. He was finding things in life now that were real—companionship, the fun of helping Mary and Payton. That was much more real than collecting curios that anyone with money could buy—Swazey was a swell curio.

He saw himself sitting on his terrace with the empty house behind him, planning to go up to his room and hang himself because he'd lost everything in the world that was worth while.

He pictured Mary and Harris having come to him; and Carlotta, whom he hated. Getting his money back would mean giving up the *Electra* and not being a captain of anything any more. Carlotta would despise him again, the way she used to. Suddenly Banks was surprised to hear him say, "By golly, I don't hate *her* any more!"

"What?"

Beadle started.

"Who don't you hate?"

"Carlotta Townsend." He laughed and went on naïvely, "Ever since I fell into her bed and then we held up Mrs. Weems together, I haven't hated her. Golly, that's funny! I haven't hated her at all!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE dance in honour of Rumpelgrist *alias* Donald Banks' niece, got off to a big start about half an hour after the gentlemen of the dinner party rejoined their ladies. The flower of society and some of the wild flower of society, too, came in droves. Music blared, champagne-corks popped. The rooms of the rambling house filled and spilled over onto the terraces facing the sea and into the gardens. The air grew heavy and scented and exotic and put thoughts in people's minds that blended nicely with the wine they were drinking.

The ballroom grew crowded with expensive, jostling bodies. Ladies' hearts thumped against gentlemen's shirt-fronts. Little feet were trod upon and twinkled and were trod upon again. Big feet shuffled and winced when sharp heels came down upon them. The lights were bright. People talked in snatches. Here and there dowagers ploughed their way backwards through the crowd, leaving wakes like battleships behind them, their eyes ecstatic, they were so glad still to dance; their faces were serene, as though they were unconscious of the blows their bodies gave and took, as they made their titanic progress. They were dancing on memories. The younger people there were making them, living hard the scenes that would be memories when their own tonnage grew to battleship proportions. The young people lived fast and hard, so that they would have many memories—of ballrooms and trysts where the floodlights looked like moonlight; of spray dashed in moonlit faces that were laid close against other faces; of roaring motors hurling boats over the water into the darkness and of other motors that hummed quietly and sighed as they stopped far into leafy lanes. Memories of headaches and heartaches, of feet stepped on and bodies held too close; of angry,

exhausted-from-waiting-up parents. It showed in their dancing faces.

Beadle and Carlotta stood in the terrace doorway and watched the dancing. They saw Mary flash by with Payton and saw a young man cut in. The young man got but a few steps before another replaced him and then still another and another, right after that. They were standing near the orchestra. It was a good place to stand, because the whole pagan effect of the party was before them and the music sounded better close by—the drum was louder.

“The tribes are up,” said Carlotta. “Hear the tom-tom?”

“I hear it,” said Beadle. “You know, I kind of like these parties. They make me feel good. It’s some brawl, isn’t it!”

“One of the best. Banks does himself proud, doesn’t he?”

“Rumplegrist ought to be proud. It’s all for him. He’ll get into Bailey’s Beach sure, after this!”

“If it took all this to get me invited to the old swimming-hole, I’d go shoot myself,” said Carlotta. “Let’s get some fizz and sit down out there. It looks cool.”

She gestured toward the terrace. Beadle fought his way through the crowd of stags at eve trying to drink their fill at the long tables where the corks were popping, and after practising a feat of sleight-of-hand that the younger men hadn’t yet learned, came away with a bottle and two glasses. He joined Carlotta and they went out and sat at one of the tables on the terrace. It was cool there because a small wind was blowing from the sea. He thought about how strange it was that he didn’t hate Carlotta any more. It made it fun to be sitting there with her. It was exciting, their having slept in the same cabin the night before, but he thought that now he didn’t hate her any more it would be twice as embarrassing if she did it again.

Now and then people they both knew passed the table and stopped for a word. After a while, the lights in the ballroom went out and a spotlight was turned on. They could see that someone was doing an exhibition dance.

"Want to watch?"

"No," said Carlotta. "I've seen dancers before."

Somebody touched Beadle on the shoulder. He looked up. It was Swazey.

"Hotcha!"

Beadle saw he was in evening-clothes. He hadn't been in evening-clothes when they'd left him. Swazey, seeing his look of surprise, leaned forward, a hand on each of their shoulders.

"Dey're de showfer's—swell, ain't it? How was de eats? You wasn't thrown out or nuttin'?"

"No." Carlotta patted him on the back. "You look grand, Swazey. Have any trouble getting in?"

Swazey snapped his fingers.

"Trouble? Naw! Not me—not me! It was dis way." He jerked a chair up under him and sat down. "I come up to de door, see? In de Rolls. A guy snaps open de door of de car an' I says, 'Is dis my friend Banks' joint?' An' he yessirs me. Den I goes in an' a swell guy comes up—dressed to kill, no foolin'—an' says, 'Here, let me have your hat, sir.' 'Not dis hat,' I says, 'it belongs to de chief.' Den I winks at him. He winks back an' says, 'I got you, Steve, dere's enough watchin' de ground floor now, you better keep your eye on his joolry on de second floor.'" Here Swazey began to rock back and forth with laughter, pound his left hand on the table and snap his fingers with his right. "Can you beat it? He t'ought I was a dick!"

"A what?" said Beadle.

"A dicktectiff," said Swazey. He grew serious. "Say, what kind of a joint is dis, where dey got to have dicks? Dey don't have dicks at no parties I ever been to."

"You know," said Beadle, "I've often wondered about that, myself."

"Not dat I mind de guy's mistake," said Swazey. "It gives me what you'd call card blanche. I can drink an' I can eat an' I can look de joint over an' I don't dance, anyhow. If anybody

asks me what I'm doin,' I just says, 'Second floor's my job—his joolry.' Den I winks. Hotcha!"

"Have some scamper juice?"

"Yahoo!" said Swazey, reaching for the glass Beadle handed him. Then suddenly his good spirits seemed quite to leave him.

"Say," he said, "I saw my frien' James Arthur. Can you beat it? He wouldn't have nuttin' to do wit' me!"

"No!" said Beadle.

"No. I said, 'Hey, dere—glad to see ya aboard, Pinky,' an' he walked out on me—just like dat!"

Carlotta snorted.

"That was because you'd never been introduced properly. He—he's funny that way. Come on with me and we'll find him and I'll introduce you."

"Oke!" said Swazey. He and Carlotta stood up.

"So long, Beadle—if I get stuck with something, come rescue me, will you?"

Beadle nodded and rose and watched them go into the ballroom. Then he sat down again and finished the wine and grinned. He was thinking of how much more ill at ease Arthur would be than Swazey. After a minute or so, he noticed the main lights had sprung up again. He went into the ballroom to look for Mary. He found her and cut in and they shuffled slowly around the floor. Mary was very happy. She still expected to be arrested or thrown out of the house, but she thought it was all splendid while it lasted.

Strangely, although it was Payton who had taken care of her and introduced her to the first young man, that had led to her meeting dozens of others, she gave her gratitude to Beadle. When the music stopped, she looked up at him out of shining eyes and said, "I can't ever thank you—all for this, Beadle, an' I'm sure you're gonna get in trouble 'bout the dresses."

He smiled and shook his head.

"The worst that could happen about them is that we'd



have to pay for them. Lord knows that would be bad enough. How do you like being in high society?"

"I think it's wonderful, don't you?"

"No," said Beadle. "But I'm glad you do. I so wanted you to have a good time."

The music started. Beadle was still looking down at her. He saw her eyes fill with tears.

"I think you-all are the finest man I ever heard of!"

He put his arms about her and started to dance. Impulsively she clung to him, pressing herself close, her head thrown back, her eyes on his. It was the gesture of a child, clinging ecstatically to a parent who has given it a present.

When the music stopped, they wandered out into the gardens hand in hand, walking silently in friendliness, listening to the cool sound of the summer surf on the beach far below them.

Presently Mary spoke. What she said was, to Beadle, like a bomb exploding in the quiet garden. "Why'd you have that girl sleepin' in your cabin with you?"

He spun around, tried to think of a plausible lie, and slipped into the truth.

"I didn't know she was there. She sneaked in after I was asleep. I—I've always hated her."

"Then I reckon I better sleep there to-night, before she gets you to stop hatin' her."

Beadle was horrified. It had been bad enough having Carlotta, whom he'd known always, sleep in his stateroom—it would be infinitely worse to have Mary, whom he hardly knew at all. He sputtered like a damp fuse.

"N-n-n-n-not that!" he said, and then, because he realized he wasn't acting at all like a leader of an expedition, he strained every sinew and managed to recover his dignity.

"Just why," he said, "would it be so—dangerous—for me to stop hating Carlotta?"

Mary, who had been partly in earnest and partly deliberately plaguing him, grew serious. Mary was fond of Beadle. She'd

meant what she told him back there in the ballroom about his being fine. The life she'd led, her childhood, had given her a quickness of perception, and like Androcles' lion, she didn't want to see her benefactor get hurt. She said, "Don't you see, Beadle? If she goes on sleepin' there, you'll fall in love with her an' then you'll marry her, an' then you'll be just like Harris?"

"Just like Harris?" Beadle laughed. He couldn't be like Harris Payton—he laughed again—the idea of his marrying Carlotta Townsend! That was a lot of damned rot! He fished in his pockets for a cigarette, found one and lighted it. The little physical effort of finding the cigarette and lighting it brought him out of the daze Mary's suggestion had knocked him into. He began to think. He remembered about finding out in Banks' library that he didn't hate Carlotta any more. He thought about sitting on the terrace with her outside the ballroom; there had definitely been something between them then. He thought about how he'd looked down at her that morning, when she was holding his hand on the edge of her bed, and he had suddenly noticed that she was a beautiful woman. It didn't seem possible, but there might—there just might—be something in what Mary said. Carlotta was lovely to look upon. They had a great deal in common—supposing he did fall in love with her—really in love, not just half-heartedly, calfishly, the way he'd been with Madelaine.

Suddenly, perhaps due to auto-suggestion, it struck him that for some unimaginable reason he already was a little in love with her. Then he remembered Banks saying, "No man who marries a bank-roll has fun—loses all respect for himself—everyone else does too." Carlotta wouldn't have any use for such a man. It made her unattainable and, therefore, alluring. He remembered what Banks had said about his money—maybe he wasn't poor—maybe he wouldn't have to be a Payton—but that was just a white hope—one of the things that didn't happen. The fact remained he was broke—didn't have a dime in the world, and, incredibly, like Payton, was in love

with a lady who had a million or so iron men who would fight always to keep them apart.

He shuddered. All the fun had gone out of his life again—he turned to Mary.

He said, “Let’s go in and get corned.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

**B**EADLE was about half-way through his pickling process when Payton came over to the table and asked Mary to dance. He was a little farther along when Bishop Hartley, who had been wandering around with Mrs. Plant, spied him alone and came over. Beadle greeted him listlessly. The bishop looked at him closely.

“Are you celebrating something?” he asked. “Or consoling yourself about something?”

“Consoling ’self.” Beadle pushed the bottle toward the bishop. “Want console yourself too?”

“Here,” said Hartley to himself, “is a young man who needs help. I will help him.” Aloud, he said, “Thank you, yes,” and took a little of the wine. “What are you consoling yourself about?”

“’Bout Payton.”

“Payton?” He doesn’t seem to need consoling about.”

“No man,” said Beadle thickly, “no man who marries bank-roll has any fun. He doesn’ suspect himself an’ nobody else suspects him.”

“Isn’t that all right? Not to have anyone suspect you?”

Beadle shook his head.

“No-no-no-no-no, ’s’awful!” He pointed a finger at the bishop. “Might happen to you—might happen to me—you can’t ever tell who it mightn’t happen to!”

“No, I suppose you can’t,” said Bishop Hartley.

Beadle sighed and putting his hand Napoleonicly across his breast, bowed his head. Presently he raised his eyes again. Hartley noticed they seemed quite cheerful now.

“What were we talking ’bout, Bish?”

Beadle had become so confused in his explanation that he couldn’t for the life of him remember what it was he was trying

to explain, and not being able to remember that made it impossible for him to remember why he felt so grief-stricken. The corning cure had worked one hundred per cent. He really felt quite cheerful.

"Good old Bish!"

"Good old Beadle!" said Hartley.

"*Good* old Bish!"

"*Good* old Beadle!"

Beadle grinned affectionately at Hartley, who should have been outraged and wasn't, being at the moment more man than cleric.

"You're not really old, Bish—that's just an expression, you know, sir."

"I know."

Beadle grew thoughtful again.

"My, there're lot of expressions."

"There get to be more all the time," said Hartley, obligingly entering into the spirit of the thing.

"Like babies," said Beadle. "How many do you s'pose there are?"

"At the last census I believe there were about fifty million."

"Then there're only forty-nine million, nine hunnerd an' ninety-nine thousan', an' ninety-nine now!"

"Why?"

Beadle laughed uproariously.

"'Cause we just used one—aha, you didn' think I'd know why, did you?"

"Used one? What do you mean, used one?"

"We just called you old Bish—that's one expression. I wonder—I wonder how long it would take us to use up all the nine hundred thousan', nine hundred and ninety-nine others. How long do you think?"

"Too long," said Hartley, who was beginning to be worried.

"It'd be nice if we could, though—there wouldn' be any left then—people would have the hell of a time until they made new ones."

"It wouldn't be fair."

"You're right!" said Beadle. "You're dead right, sir. Probably wasn't nice of us to take that one, when all over the world people are going hungry in Serbia."

"Why Serbia?" said the bishop.

"Just happened to think of it." Beadle having exhausted that subject glanced around him at the ballroom. As he looked he saw the glint of lights on bright copper hair. He jumped to his feet and almost upset the table. "S' long, Bish, I got to see a man."

Madelaine was not surprised when he cut in on her. You could have bowled her over with a feather, however, when he promptly squeezed her and said, "Hi Goldie, ole kid, ole kid, ole kid, ole kid!"

Beadle felt he had found a treasure. Madelaine was not like Mary and Carlotta, who said strange things and were upsetting and whose motives he couldn't understand. Madelaine's motives were thoroughly obvious. Quick as light he snapped her down to the second terrace.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

**B**ISHOP HARTLEY, finding himself alone, mopped his brow. The conversation had been wearing, but on the whole he'd rather enjoyed it. It isn't often that a bishop is given the opportunity of joining in such a discussion.

Presently he chuckled, thinking of his recent confab, and went in search of Carlotta. He had an idea Beadle might need watching after a while and Carlotta would probably know how to cope with the situation. As he walked to the house, he chuckled again. "How long would it take us to . . ." Then he put his hand to his chin in thought. "Something's happened to that boy," he said aloud. "I—I must help him—or get Carlotta to help him."

He wandered on through the house and found her finally in the drawing-room. She and Swazey and James Arthur were sitting about a table, having supper. Swazey saw him coming and waved his napkin.

"Hi, Bish! Come an' wittle wit' us—come an' wittle wit' us!"

Hartley approached.

"Dis is my friend, Mr. Arttur. I t'ought a while back he was all wet, but he's oke. A hunnert per cent. Meet de Bish, Pinky."

The bishop bowed and shook hands with James Arthur. Then he said, "Excuse me," and leaned over to whisper to Carlotta. He said, "I think you'd better come. Something's happened to Beadle." He was rather astonished to see that her face went white and the laughter that had been in her eyes while Swazey was doing the honours, vanished. He said, "No, my dear, he isn't hurt—as a matter of fact, he's having a wonderful time but he's very, very intoxicated."

"Beadle really lit? Good Heaven!"

“Like the stars and moon. I sat with him for a few minutes—he wanted to see if we could use up all the expressions in the world so there wouldn’t be any left for anyone else to use. Then he jumped up and went into the ballroom and grabbed a young lady by the middle and practically carried her into the garden.”

“Was it Mary?”

“Oh, no, it was a very tall girl with—with pretty red hair. She—she seemed to—to want to go to the garden with him. I mean, when he grabbed her, she looked surprised but pleased.”

Carlotta was on her feet. About her mouth was an expression her mother would have found familiar; as a child, she had looked that way when her brother had occasionally tried to swipe her favourite rag doll. Carlotta knew all about Madeleine.

“I really think, Carlotta, you’d better look after him.” The bishop chuckled again. “There was nothing in my training to equip me for it.”

“I’ll look after him!” said Carlotta.

Bishop Hartley glanced sharply at her. Although he had never been married, in the course of his duties he had had occasion closely to observe a great many people who were. With some surprise, he recognized the tone of voice and tried to connect it with whatever it was that had happened to Beadle to start him off. He wasn’t able to. A sadly puzzled bishop, he followed Carlotta from the drawing-room and through the quarter-mile of reception rooms to the ballroom and followed in the wake she made through the thinning crowd of dancers to the first terrace, where he should have stopped, but didn’t, and followed her with lengthening stride down the steps to the second terrace, where there was a bench that overlooked the sea and the full moon over it and where, silhouetted against the moon, there sat a lady and gentleman who plainly were rubbing noses.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

WHEN Beadle took Madelaine onto the terrace he had the *idée fixe*; he wanted to squeeze her and kiss her and kiss her and squeeze her. As Madelaine was both kissable and squeezable, Beadle put in a busy quarter of an hour. In a sense, it was a love scene. In another sense it wasn't, for there had been no conversation at all.

Beadle had a rollicking time throughout the scene. He had never been properly lit before and was finding the sensation pleasant. It made him forget about the money and about Carlotta and Payton—and it had made him feel strong—made him feel a regular hell of a fellow—a thruster, a dasher, a grizzly bear of a man, who took his fun where he found it.

He was just about to take a little more fun where he was finding it when the gleam of moonlight on a white satin dress caught his attention. The white satin dress was so near he could have reached out and touched it. He looked up and found himself staring full into those brown eyes that were the kind of eyes it is good for a man to look into when he greets the new day, but not at all good for him to look into when he's so cockeyed he can't tell which two of the four of them to focus on. He sat up straight as a ramrod, with the result that Madelaine, who had been leaning against him, caught her balance with difficulty.

Then Beadle's mind and senses began to go. The drink was winning out at last. He saw Carlotta and the moon and the ocean and the trees on the cliff all as one, with the bishop hovering in the air somewhere in the background. He saw Carlotta's eyes far away; then they seemed to come forward and grow bigger and bigger until he couldn't see anything but them; alive and glowing. "Know I'm drunk," he thought—"know I'm drunk—awful for her to have seen me this way

—Carlotta—beautiful—wouldn't be out here with Madelaine if I hadn't got drunk—got drunk because Carlotta's got so much money can't marry her. That's why Payton gets drunk, but I couldn't be like Harris Payton—can't even tell her 'bout it—can't tell."

Things were spinning now—the lawn, the bench, the bishop and Carlotta—spinning and spinning in great circles—all the moons up there were spinning too. He stood up. Madelaine had already risen; she rested her hand lightly on his arm.

"Come on, let's go in, Beadle."

He was holding on to the bench, trying hard to keep his balance—being drunk wasn't fun any more—it was frightening; too much light and then too much darkness all around. He shook his head.

"Can't," he said. "Can't go in."

"*Au 'voir*, Beadle—see you anon."

Madelaine, stately and tall and entirely unruffled, swept up the stairway toward the house. Beadle closed his eyes and held them tight shut—the bishop whirling around the moon and Carlotta's eyes shrinking into the distance and then growing again, troubled him. But he wanted to explain.

"Carlotta." He was fighting to keep his words straight and to stand. "Carlotta—you—you wouldn't understand."

It was the classic line, but Beadle was too inexperienced to know that all men when in drink think the women they are fond of couldn't possibly understand the shining thoughts they would express if they could only manage to speak distinctly enough to be intelligible. It is probably man's greatest fallacy, because the women understand only too well without their bothering to speak.

"Judas, Carlotta! I—I——"

He started to fall. Bishop Hartley, for all his lack of training, stepped quietly forward and put his arm around Beadle's shoulders.

"Steady, Beadle."

Beadle opened his eyes and smiled at him.

"Good old Bish! We know, don't we, Bish!"

"Sure! We know!"

Carlotta hadn't spoken. When she'd arrived on that terrace, she'd planned a few things to say to Beadle that would have singed the clothes off his back about escorts who go off and get cockeyed and make whoopee with other ladies. Somehow, since she'd arrived on the scene, she had realized that there was something behind it—something he wanted to get across to her that would explain it and some eerie intuition told her it had something to do with herself.

"I just used up another expression, Bish."

"That's all right, there are plenty to go around—use still another, if you like."

"Oke!" said Beadle. "Which one shall I use?"

"You just did—you said 'oke'; that counts as one."

"How many are there left now?"

"Forty-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-seven."

Carlotta stepped forward. She too put an arm around him. She was sure now that Hartley was right—that something, which to Beadle was of tremendous importance, had happened. She said, "Whatever it is, kid, I'm with you! Let's shove off, shall we?"

"*You're with me?*"

Beadle stared at her. For a second the clouds lifted. Her arm felt strong and warm and friendly on his shoulders. He wanted terribly to tell her that he loved her and couldn't possibly have her and that was why he'd got tight.

"You see, Carlotta—I didn't know until to-night, but——"

The mists closed in again and the lawn began to dance.

"You're swell!" he said. "I'm sorry I got corned! Truly I am!"

He felt Carlotta's arm tighten about him, heard her say, "Why the hell not get corned, if you felt lousy?" and heard her whisper to the bishop, "Go find Payton—tell him to tell

Swazey and Mary we're going on—I'll send the Rolls back for you."

He heard the bishop, as though he were speaking from up in the clouds where he'd been whirling, answer, "Can you manage it? He's pretty heavy." And Carlotta say, "Beadle will manage it himself; I'll just stick with him and steer."

He looked into Carlotta's eyes again and said, "You're swell!" Then he set his teeth and unaided walked with her to the front of the house and stood while she went in and got her wrap, and then gave her his arm as the car drove up and she got in and then he got in beside her. As the car started, he said, "Thanks for thinking I *could* make it under my own power."

Things were whirling again. He let his head slip down onto her shoulder and unconsciously reached for her hand. She helped him find it.

"You poor slob," she said. "Had a hell of a time lately, haven't you?"

He opened his eyes and smiled at her. The whirling wasn't so bad now that he didn't have to stand up and face people—it was sort of comfortable. He shook his head as it lay on her shoulder.

"No. You're swell."

He sighed and drifted off to sleep. The car turned into Belleview Avenue, where lights shone in through the windows. Carlotta looked at him. Not being married to him, she felt motherly and kindly and really quite tenderly towards this man, who lay as helpless as a rag doll against her shoulder.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

**B**EADLE was surprised to find he was drinking coffee, because he couldn't remember having started to drink coffee. He was also mildly surprised to find he was sitting up in his own bed aboard the *Electra* and that Carlotta Townsend, in a *négligé* and with cold cream smeared all over her face, was sitting on the edge of his bed, holding the cup to his lips.

He tried to reconstruct, remembered he had been terrifically blotto that same night, found he couldn't remember anything else about the evening except having a long, serious talk with Bishop Hartley, and was tremendously surprised and pleased to find he was entirely sober and didn't feel really badly at all, but just comfortably drowsy. He smiled at Carlotta and said, "Hello."

"Hello, dopey," said Carlotta.

"Why don't I feel like death?"

"On account of Nammack's Magic Powders. I gave you a couple when we came aboard."

"Hungh?" said Beadle, and wiggled his toes. It felt good to be conscious once more that he had toes and could wiggle them.

"Nammack is a doctor," said Carlotta. "I call him Charlie and he whips up magic powders."

"Magic powders—why?"

"For people like you."

"Oh," said Beadle, finally catching on. "What happened? I mean, how did I get out to the boat and everything?"

"In the launch."

"I—walked?"

"Sure."

It wasn't true.

"I got myself to bed?"

"Sure," said Carlotta again. Beadle looked across at the dresser and knew she was lying. He always hung his trousers in the top drawer so they'd press and they weren't there. He thought it was nice of her to try and make him feel better about what had happened. He sat up straight.

"Did you put me to bed?"

"If you must know, the bishop of the diocese put you to bed, Beadle. I intended to spare you the knowledge, but he doesn't hold it against you. He's quite a booster of yours, apparently."

"Even after to-night?" Beadle began to remember snatches of his chat with the bishop. He thought he'd feel funny next time he saw him.

"As a matter of fact," said Carlotta, "he seemed to think you'd shown extraordinarily good sense in getting potted. In his own words, as he smoothed the pillow under your little head, you'd apparently 'Suffered a cataclysmic emotional upheaval' and were 'Employing the logical means of self-preservation.' It was over my head. I said to him, 'Nuts, Hartley,' but he insisted he was right."

"Oh," said Beadle. He remembered clearly now how he'd happened to go off the deep end.

Carlotta lowered the coffee-cup.

"Did you suffer a cataclysmic emotional upheaval?"

He couldn't answer. He couldn't possibly answer. He said, "You know, I always thought women must look perfectly ghastly with cold cream all over their faces. You look all right enough."

"That's because I am not as other women," said Carlotta. "You'd be surprised."

"It was nice of you to—to take care of me."

"Somebody had to."

The sound of the club launch heading toward the *Electra* came to them. It stopped by the gangway and Beadle recognized Payton's voice thanking the launch-man. Then, when the launch had gone, he heard him say, "Thanks for to-night, Mary."

"You-all are thankin' *me*?" Then, "I haven't done anythin' for you."

"You've done—you've done——" Payton laughed. "There wouldn't even be any use my trying to tell you what you've done, except you danced with me and you let me talk to you about my vast sorrows and what-not."

"But I liked dancin' with you, Harris."

Beadle heard Payton give a sigh as vast as his sorrows and say, "It will be dawn in a little while—would you like to sit up in the bow with me and watch it come in over the hills?"

"I'd love watchin' a dawn come in with you!"

Their footfalls, as they went forward, were in step. Beadle looked at Carlotta. He said, "Payton's going to fall in love if he doesn't watch out. Mary's a damned attractive girl."

Carlotta rose and went to the hall door. With her hand on the knob she turned.

"I noticed you thought so," she said and went out of the room. She was gone before Beadle could think of a reply, which isn't strange, as there isn't any answer to that one. He reached up and snapped out the light. Then with a final wiggling of toes he closed his eyes. As he dozed off to sleep, he muttered, "It's nice to be alone—God knows who I'll find in here when I wake up, but even if I do love her, 's nice to be alone. Good night, Beadle."

Presently Carlotta returned and climbed quietly into her bed.

Then she snorted once and spoke to the darkness.

"Beadle!"

"What?" He awakened wearily.

"Do you know," she said, "I always thought my husband would kiss me bye-bye on my wedding-night."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

BEADLE sat up in bed again. He had just had the most alarming thought that had ever popped into his head. He'd come to, drinking coffee in his stateroom. Carlotta had been there with cold cream all over her face. Women put cold cream on their faces when they were *married* to people. He had only the haziest recollection of what had happened to him from the time he and Hartley had had that absurd conversation. Hartley was a bishop. Whenever Townsends married, they were always married by bishops. It was possible—tremendously possible—that Carlotta had told the truth.

Then Beadle turned on the light and looked at Carlotta.

"Did I really marry you to-night?"

Imps danced in Carlotta's eyes.

"Don't you wish you knew!"

"You're darn tootin' I wish I knew."

"What do *you* think?"

"I think it would have been just like you." Beadle had forgotten all about her taking care of him at the party. He was mad at her the way he'd always got mad at her. He'd made up his mind he couldn't marry her and had gone through a private hell of sorrow over it and got himself drunk for the first time in his life because of it and now apparently he had married her.

Carlotta partly relented. She said, "Do you know it's very difficult to get married at half-past two in the morning?"

"I don't know anything about it," said Beadle. "I know if you set your mind on it, it wouldn't matter if it was difficult or not. Besides, you've got a tame bishop. Maybe he did it."

Carlotta smiled sweetly.

"Why don't you wake him up and ask him?"

"By gosh, I will!"



He climbed to the floor. Carlotta sank down into her bed and rested on one elbow, pillowing her head on her hand. She smiled at him sweetly.

"Of course, I realize you're eccentric, Beadle, but would you really have the nerve to ask a bishop whether he'd married you or not because you couldn't remember?"

"Damn you, Carlotta!"

Beadle knew perfectly well he couldn't ask Hartley that—it was going to be bad enough to face him, anyway. He got back into bed.

"Don't I really get kissed bye-bye on my wedding-night?"

"You certainly don't!"

"I'll scream."

"Go ahead and scream!"

"I'll scream and I'll shout and I'll yell awful things about what you're doing to me. Doubtless the police will come."

Beadle got up again. With the air of a man who is routed from bed to take a dog for a walk, he crossed the stateroom, bent over Carlotta and pecked at her cheek. As he raised his head she grabbed him by the neck and held him.

"Do it right," she said. "Yah, you're a sissy and you don't dare do it right! Fraidy-cat, fraidy-cat; Beadle is a fraidy-cat!"

Beadle had stood enough.

"Fraidy-cat in a weasel's valise!" he said ungallantly and, throwing both arms around her, kissed her full on the lips. He started to kiss her in anger and pique and for the hell of it, as he had kissed Madelaine. As he held her there so closely in his arms that he could feel her heart against his, he stopped kissing her as he had kissed Madelaine and kissed her the way a man kisses the one woman in the world he really loves. In the second it lasted, he found a heaven he had never known there was. Then he remembered the only reason for the kiss was a dare. He loosed her and went quickly to bed and snapped out the light again.

"'Night, Beadle—that was fine. We—we must do it again some time."

Her voice sounded strange—there was a vibrancy in it he had never heard there before. He supposed it was because she'd been properly kissed and hadn't expected to be.

"And, Beadle—we're not married, so you don't need to feel so bad about it."

He lay for a long time in the darkness, staring at the dim outline of her, tasting the sweet fragrance of her kiss, wishing to God he had the nerve to tell her that he loved her and that, loving her, it was torture to have her there where he could feel her nearness, where he could hear her breathing, where the broad gulf between them was only widened by the false sense of intimacy.

Grey light began sifting through the windows. The chill of dawn came into the room. Beadle sighed.

"Carlotta, Carlotta!" he murmured. "I——"

She stirred in her sleep and turned. The covers slipped partly off the side of her bed. Once more Beadle got up. With an infinite tenderness he drew the covers back over her, stood for a second looking down at her, thinking. Then he took the blankets from his own bed, went quietly up the companion-way and stretched out on the deck.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

WHEN Beadle first batted an eye at the new day, it was so late it really should not be referred to as a new day at all, but rather as an old day that he'd slept through. But at that he was the first aboard to awaken; cramped and stiff from the hardness of the deck.

He opened his eyes and saw that the sun was shining and glinting and dancing on the tops of the waves kicked up by a south-west breeze. The sky was very blue and the yachts anchored near by were very shiny and tidy as they nodded to one another and dipped their bows into the sparkling water.

The brightness of everything about him was wasted. Beadle felt perfectly awful. Common sense told him he probably wasn't going to die, because people so rarely did after Donald Banks' parties, but his head, which was throbbing, and his insides, which were turning somersaults, warned him that he might unless he was very careful and moved slowly. He didn't think he'd been bad enough to justify the retribution that was being visited on him, but there it was. He moaned and got to his feet. Then he remembered he'd kissed Carlotta good night and remembered how he'd felt for the little second she lay in his arms, and the brightness of the day came into its own.

He turned away from the rail, thinking to go below to the bathroom, where Milton Sands undoubtedly maintained a large supply of cures for the particular illness he was suffering from. Then he noticed a mahogany tender speeding over the water toward him. It was one of those tenders that have glass cabins and fringed canopies and a brawny sailor in the stern holding a boat-hook and keeping his arms folded at the same time. It screamed of money.

He looked to see where it had come from and recognized the *Colyrium*. His smarting eyes nearly popped out of his

head when he saw in the cabin of the tender none other than Jane Payton. Even at a distance there was no mistaking the vivid determination on her face. With a bleating sound, Beadle fled for his cabin.

“Carlotta—Carlotta!”

She opened her eyes and blinked at him.

“Oh, hello. What time is it, Beadle?”

“Carlotta, Jane Payton’s coming aboard!”

She sat up and stretched.

“You should worry.”

“You’re darn right I should worry. She’s probably heard from her aunt.”

“That’s different.”

“And I feel perfectly gawd-awful.”

Carlotta laughed, a rare thing for a lady to do when she’s just been wakened. She said, “Think how gawd-awful Payton will feel when he opens his little eyes and sees that sweet face glowering down at him.”

“She’ll be horrible to him, won’t she?”

“Oh, yes.” Carlotta stretched luxuriously. “But then he expects that. He’s had to get used to it.” She yawned. “Well, it’s too bad. It was fun having him aboard.”

“You think he’ll go back with her?”

“She’ll whistle,” said Carlotta, “and snap the leash back on and that’s that.”

The sound of Mrs. Payton boarding the yacht came to them. It was a separate and distinct sound, unlike any other. It was made up of elaborate and unnecessary orders trilled to the tender’s crew, sniffs of superiority and an undertone obligato of jingling gold. Then they heard her heading aft, champing her diamonds as she came. Beadle went into the bathroom and opening the medicine-chest searched frantically through it. In rapid succession he took two aspirins, a restorative, a sedative and a stomach settler and went back to the state-room.

“Go up and receive her,” said Carlotta. “This is your boat.”

"I can't," said Beadle. "I'm not dressed."

Mrs. Payton could now be plainly heard sniffing at the companionway.

"Get dressed," said Carlotta.

"I can't, with you here," Beadle was frantic.

"Why not? I'm not sitting on your clothes. They're on that chair over there."

Beadle looked at her piteously. He was almost in tears.

"Isn't it enough that I feel gawd-awful and that that woman's prowling around my door and I've got to see her, without you have to go and act like that?"

"Like what?"

"Like you do."

Carlotta was enjoying her morning work-out of being hellish. She said, "But, Beadle, everyone thinks of us as married now and that's practically the same as being married. You shouldn't get upset because I suggest——"

She stopped in mid-speech, because Beadle had suddenly grabbed his clothes and fled to the bathroom. In less than two minutes he stamped back through the cabin, fully clad. It wasn't until he had opened the companionway and heard Carlotta laugh that he realized he'd put on his evening-clothes. He started back down the steps, but Mrs. Payton had already spied him and as he was the first living soul she'd been able to find aboard the *Electra*, she began right there.

"Where's my husband? Where's my husband? I want to get my hands on the loafer. Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm Beadleston Preece."

"Oh, you're Beadleston Preece, eh?"

Beadle didn't like the way she said it.

"Why shouldn't I be Beadleston Preece? I've got just as much damn right to be Beadleston Preece as you have to be Jane Patent Medicine Payton!"

"You cad!"

Beadle had hit the chink in the armour. It wasn't like him to be nasty to a woman, but just as he was catching the vitupera-

tion intended for Payton, Mrs. Payton was catching the venting of wrath that properly belonged to Carlotta. Besides, he hated women like Mrs. Payton, and the mere sight of her out to rannygazoo her husband reminded Beadle of his own unfortunate circumstances—that seemed so much more unfortunate since Carlotta had thrust herself into his heart.

“Where is he? They told me at the Yacht Club he was here.”

Mrs. Payton’s voice would have filled—or emptied—the Metropolitan Opera House. What it lacked in quality it made up in volume. In the forecabin Swazey heard it and said, “Cheez! What a horn!”

Bishop Hartley heard it too, and, gathering his nightshirt about his knees, climbed the iron ladder to the deck.

Mary stuck her head out of the deck-house window. She was surprised to hear such a voice in such a place.

Payton stared at the ceiling. He said, “Hard luck, old man.”

He managed to smile, but he didn’t feel much like smiling. For the first time in years he had been happy—had gone to a party and stayed sober and had fun. He knew it was a good deal because of Mary—because she’d seemed to enjoy being with him. “I guess I go back to the cell now,” he said, and wearily began to dress.

Then he paused, one foot half in a trouser leg, and regarded himself in the mirror.

“Why go back? Other guys have earned their own living.” Then he added cryptically—“By God, she might be worth it!”

He put on his trousers and headed for the deck. He arrived as Beadle was beginning to get that defeated look on his face that he knew he himself so often wore.

“Jane,” he said, “you get the hell off this boat!”

## CHAPTER THIRTY

HARTLEY, nightshirt and all, and Swazey and Mary had come aft. Beadle, nearly as surprised as Jane Payton, stepped back. The scene was like that little moment in the prize-ring when the heavyweights have shaken hands and gone to their corners and are waiting for the bell to ring. Then Carlotta's head rose out of the companionway. She looked at Payton and called out.

"Sic 'em, Prince—he bit your father!"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Payton. "Oh! Oh!"

She'd used up her better expletives on Beadle. All she had left was this one weak monosyllable.

"Scram," said Payton.

"Amscray ickquay," said Carlotta.

"Brazen hussy!" said Mrs. Payton.

"Itchbay," said Carlotta.

"Oh, dear, dear," said the bishop. "I probably shouldn't be here, but it *is* so exciting."

Mrs. Payton threw her nose in the air and addressed her lord and master.

"You go get your clothes," she said. "You're coming with me!"

"No," said Payton. "I'm not coming with you, Jane."

"You damn well are—if you think I'm going to support you and have you running around disgracing me, you've got another think coming."

Payton winced.

"You'll do what I say when I say it, see? Go get your clothes."

He shook his head.

"No, Jane—I've stood you and stood being ordered around for fifteen years. I'm through now. Please go."

"Where's that four thousand dollars you blackmailed my aunt into handing over?"

"I'll get it for you—most of it's here."

"But, Harris!" Beadle stepped into the ring. "Don't you remember? That's yours. We decided she owed it to you."

Harris smiled at him. It was a sad, wistful smile. He was being hurt and trying not to show it.

"Jane owes me lots of things," he said. "She owes me fifteen years when I should have had a home and kids and friends of my own."

"You had a home. You had the swellest damn home in New York."

"Swellest house," said Harris.

"You won't have one now—you won't have a cent now and don't you forget it."

Payton turned to go for the money.

He hesitated at the top of the companionway. Then he shook his head and went on below. Jane Payton leaned her head down the companionway, partly because she was over-eager about the money and partly because she wanted one last chance to be a good fishwife to Payton. She forgot that the others could hear the awful things she was saying and she hated Payton. She hated him because he was a gentleman and she could never be a lady; she hated him for having been worm enough to put up with her and now she hated him for ceasing to be a worm and becoming a man. In that minute or so of flowing speech, she said things to him that no woman should ever say—even to herself.

For Beadle and Hartley and Mary, it was ghastly. Swazey and Carlotta, being harder boiled and broader of perception, found it fascinating at first, but after a bit her language became to Swazey stupefying and to Carlotta revolting. Jane Payton was the sort of woman who beats show dogs if they fail to win prizes. Carlotta stepped onto the deck.

"The water," she said, "looks pretty cold this day."

She fixed Beadle with the Townsend eye. He caught her



meaning and nodded. A second later, without knowing how she got there, Mrs. Payton found herself in the briny, with a gold-plated boat-hook grappling for the seat of what would have been her pants had she worn pants.

Bishop Hartley glanced at Carlotta. For all his nightshirt, he looked every inch a bishop.

"By gad," he said, "she made a wonderful splash!"

Swazey peered over the rail at the sailor with the boat-hook that looked gold-plated.

"I allus *wondered* what dem t'ings was for," he said musingly.

Payton came from below with the money. Beadle went up to him and said, "We couldn't stand it, Harris. We chucked her overboard."

Payton went to the gangway. His wife, spluttering and in a state of nervous collapse, had been lifted into the tender's cabin. He turned to Beadle, a look of horror on his face.

"I can't keep this money." Then the look of horror went away and a smile began to take its place. The smile spread. It wasn't the smile of a man who was being hurt; it was the smile of a genius who has just had a brain-storm. He went down the gangway and addressed the officer in command of the tender.

"I won't be seeing you any more, Williams," he said. "But I want to show my appreciation of your service. Divide this amongst yourself and the crew."

With that he gave him the huge roll of notes he held in his hand and turned to Beadle, grinning from ear to ear.

"She'll never forgive me for that, will she? I hope to Heaven she won't!"

Beadle shook his head. There was a hardness—a bitterness—about the thing that frightened him. He had never realized before the depth of the hate that mis-marriage can develop—the tragedy of men who have married money for love. The tender streaked away from the yacht's side. He looked at Payton. He was still standing on the bottom step of the gang-

way, watching the little boat. The smile had gone. Beadle, looking at him, knew he scarcely saw the boat because his eyes were fixed on the distance beyond it. It seemed probable he was seeing dozens and dozens of other scenes that had built up to this one—seeing his wedding perhaps. Seeing Jane as a girl—pretty, young, warmly responsive.

“Fifteen years is the hell of a long time.”

Payton said it aloud, but he wasn't talking to anyone. Mary went down the steps and put her arm through his. He turned and looked down and smiled at her. Beadle was touched. The thing had upset him to such an extent he'd even forgotten about his headache. He went forward to the wheel-house and started the motors. Presently Carlotta joined him there and Swazey came and stood in the bow. Hartley had gone below to dress. Carlotta said, “It stinks, doesn't it? *I* think maybe he really cared about her once.”

“I know he did,” said Beadle. “He told me about it.”

“It must be rotten—to love somebody and then have them go haywire like that.”

Swazey, who had been musing deeply on what he had heard and seen in the last little while, said, “I t'ink we better get out of here, Chief. De people here doesn't behave right.”

“We're getting out. Haul in that anchor.”

“Where to?” said Carlotta, as Swazey bent over his own private tangle lines—from the beginning making fast the anchor-line had been Swazey's job, because it was always so interesting for the others to watch him undo it. “Where to?”

Beadle let in one clutch so they'd ride up on the anchor. Carlotta saw that he was upset and that there was an expression of terrific determination on his face. She wondered why he didn't look ridiculous standing there at the wheel in his full-dress suit.

Swazey hauled on the anchor-line; it gave as the anchor broke away. Beadle savagely threw in the other motor and opened the throttles.

“Where going, Beadle?”

He looked into her eyes.

"I'm going to Glen Cove and see Milton Sands and beat the hell out of him until he gives me back what he stole from me; that's where I'm going."

On the face of it, the idea of Beadle beating the hell out of Milton should have seemed almost laughable. Carlotta didn't feel the least like laughing. She looked at him in amazement.

"Good man, Preece. Why?"

"Because I don't want to have that hap——"

He caught himself.

"Because I don't want to have that guy making a fool of me."

Carlotta knew perfectly well that wasn't what he'd been going to say.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

IT was six o'clock in the afternoon when the *Electra* hiked up her skirts and hurried from Newport Harbour, heading into a quickening south-west breeze in the general direction of Point Judith. But it took them a long time to get clear of the harbour because Mary was sitting on the after deck with Payton and Beadle wasn't at all sure of his buoys. At that point, he wasn't at all sure of his cosmos, let alone being sure of his buoys. Gradually they made their way out to the open sea.

At seven-thirty they were well out on the ocean, rolling the way cruisers will in the ground swell that is always off Newport and the point. The bishop had completed his dressing and come into the deck-house. Mary and Payton still sat in the long chairs on the after deck. Their hands were clasped. Beadle, recovered now from his hang-over, but not from the emotional effects of the one-act drama, stood straddle-legged at the wheel. The determination that Carlotta had noticed had grooved itself into his brain. He was in love with her. He realized he was probably in love with her because of the absurd intimacy she'd created between them. He felt sure it was just the propinquity that had done it to him, and standing staring fiercely at the westering sun, he knew that how the thing had happened to him made no difference. It had happened. He was in love with her and he had to get to Milton Sands and beat the hell out of him so he could get his money back and ask her to marry him.

He knew now, beyond a doubt, that, cussedness and all, she was the most charming woman he had ever met, and because he knew she'd always despised him he had gotten self-respect out of the fact that she wanted to join his cruise to nowhere. She hadn't been joining Swazey or Mary or Payton; it was he she was joining. Carlotta, without meaning to, had been

giving to him the things he'd set out to find when he'd said to Swazey, "Come up to my room—let's have a snort before we get going."

Five days! A man's life couldn't be so changed in five days. Then he remembered that his life had been completely changed in five seconds—the five seconds when he could have missed Swazey's arrival and gone up to his room in the great bare house. Five seconds or one second, for that matter, had made all the difference. It was perfectly understandable then that five days should have changed his life around.

Such is the natural egotism of man that when for one reason or another he can't ask a lady to marry him, it never enters his head she might not want to if he did. Approximately six miles south by south-east of the Point Judith siren, this appalling thought miraculously hit Beadle. At the same instant, the *Electra's* engines sighed as wistfully as ever did Payton, and stopped. Beadle, who hadn't spoken a word since they'd left Newport, came out of his condition of fierce determination. Even to a person of his marine ignorance, being stalled off Point Judith in the open sea in a small boat is something of a sensation.

The *Electra* coasted a hundred yards or so and then slowly swung around until she lay broadside to the long rollers. Beadle turned from the wheel and addressed Hartley.

"The engines have stopped," he said.

"It's funny," said Carlotta, "but I noticed that, too."

Beadle pushed the starters frantically. They spun the motors but nothing happened. He shook his head.

"They won't work."

"I know," said Hartley. "It's Sunday."

"Don't be funny," said Carlotta. "If we can't fix them and can't pick up a tow, we're plenty in for it."

Mary came forward and stuck her head in the door.

"What have you-all done now?"

"The engines seem to have stopped," said Beadle.

"Seem to," said Mary. "Do you know anythin' 'bout 'em?"

Beadle laughed a little feebly.

"I was hoping *you* would," he said. "Hartley wouldn't and I don't think Harris or Carlotta would."

"I'll find out if I do or not," said Mary. "Come on down an' help, Swazey."

But Swazey was already showing symptoms of a return of the malady that had so stricken him in the Lower Bay off New York. He just stared back at her, but through the glassy stare of his eyes you could see what he thought of people who go down to the sea in ships and of perfectly respectable burglars who are fools enough to join them. Presently he sank to the deck and leaned against the windlass. The bishop, who was really alarmed at the situation they were in, but didn't want anyone to know it, said, "Bill, when you want unction, I'm ready for you."

Swazey didn't think it was funny. Mary started for the engine-room. Beadle stopped her and said, "You know, I think maybe we're out of gas. Let's look there first." They went to the stern where the tanks were and looked. There were two of them and they were bone dry. Beadle said, "I guess we forgot to fill both the other day."

"I guess we did," said Mary.

They looked at each other. Beadle said, "I'm sorry I got you into this, Mary."

"Nerts," said Mary, "I could swim ashore from here—but I'd lose those dresses if I did."

"Isn't there some way we can signal or something?"

Mary looked over the heaving rail at the sea. It was as empty as Swazey would be in a little while. She said, "Sure, there're lots of ways we can signal, but who we gonna signal to? The man in the moon?"

Beadle nodded. He had that sickening feeling of approaching disaster. He said, "I see." Like Hartley, he was genuinely alarmed, for it was perfectly obvious that if the wind kicked up much, the *Electra* would swamp.

"We can make her roll less if we put out a sea-anchor."

"It looks too deep," said Beadle.

"Listen," said Mary. "Sea-anchors float. You tie a lot of canvas together and dump it overboard on a line—it drags and keeps you end-on to the wind. Sometimes they call it a drag."

"I used to ride the drag at Meadowbrook once," said Beadle. "It used to scare me to death."

"You used to what?"

"You do it with horses—hounds just follow a line that's already picked out, so you go pretty fast. I had a horse called Jingo. He was a swell horse."

"You *what*?" said Mary. "Snap out of it!"

Beadle had been staring at the gathering dusk. That foreboding feeling was strong in him. It had started him reminiscing—the way drowning men are supposed to see their past lives flash before them. He snapped out of it and smiled at her.

"That was another kind of a drag," he said.

"I thought it must be, if you used horses," said Mary. "We're gonna use canvas. Come on help me rig it up."

"Will I have time to change my clothes first? This is no kind of a suit for a shipwreck."

He went below to his cabin and rooted around in the cupboard. He didn't like it down there with the boat rolling that way. It made him feel trapped, because he thought she might roll over at any moment. He wondered if Mary were scared too. When he went on deck again, he found her surrounded by khaki-coloured canvas. She told him she'd taken the weather curtains from the after deck. He helped her tie them together and fasten one of the anchor-lines to a sort of bridle she made out of flag halyard. Then he picked up the billowing mass and started forward with it. Mary yelled at him, "Hey, throw it over the stern. You have to with motor-boats, 'cause the propellers and the sheer make 'em want to head that way."

He dumped it overboard. Mary fastened the end of the line to a cleat.

"Have you stopped hatin' her yet?"

The sea-anchor began to take hold. The stern slowly swung into the wind and the rolling stopped. Beadle looked at her.

"Yes," he said.

"Well, it ain't my funeral," said Mary. "I just don't like the idea of seein' a good guy take it."

"What do you mean?"

She let out a little more line and nodded toward the deck-house where the others had stayed, being considerate enough not to get in the way of the somewhat elaborate marine manœuvre of making the sea-anchor.

"I mean like my friend."

"Thanks for thinking I'm a good guy," said Beadle. He felt better, now that the sea-anchor was holding and the rolling had stopped. He went forward to the deck-house. Carlotta and Harris and the bishop were sitting on the floor, playing three-handed bridge. He asked who was ahead.

"I am," said Carlotta. "I don't think Hartley and Harris have their minds on it. Did you find out what was the matter?"

"We're out of gas," said Beadle.

"Pleasant, in certain cases," said the bishop; "horrible in others. Your lead, Harris."

"What are you-all playin'? Can I play too?"

Mary was standing in the doorway. Payton smiled at her and said, "You bet you can—we're—we're——" It struck him that Mary couldn't possibly know how to play contract, but he didn't want her to feel out of it. "We're playing hearts."

She came into the room and sat down between him and Carlotta. Beadle snapped on the lights. Hartley grabbed him by the leg and he bent down. Hartley said, "How the hell *do* you play hearts?"

"I don't know," whispered Beadle. "Ask her—tactfully."

"Mary," said the bishop, "we've been playing South Bleynton hearts—it's—it's slightly different from the usual game. Which game do *you* play?"

Mary obligingly launched into a complete description of the garden variety of hearts. They all listened attentively.



When she had done explaining, she said, "What are you-all playin' for?"

Payton laughed and said, "Matches."

"Oke," said Mary.

"I know," said Beadle; "we'll play for the four thousand dollars Jane Payton isn't going to be able to get back from her crew!"

"And then," said Carlotta, "we'll play for the four thousand you and I swiped from her aunt. That makes eight thousand—it's much more exciting to play for eight thousand you haven't got than for four thousand."

"Oh, much," said Hartley.

Mary looked bewildered. She said, "What do you win if you win?"

"You can't win," said Harris. "That's why Hartley can play, even though it's Sunday."

Beadle looked out through the open door. The sun had sunk and the wind had risen. He was thinking about how gaily he and Swazey had started out adventuring. The *Electra* had supplanted her rolling with a wicked pitching. The Point Judith light was growing dim in the distance. He said, "You're perfectly right, Harris; you can't win."

Harris looked up at him and their eyes met. He too was thinking.

"Of course you're right, Beadle," he said. "You can't possibly win, can you!"

"You two give me a pain in the neck," said Carlotta. "Let's get going here."

The bishop dealt. They played three hands. Then Swazey, who was still stretched out on deck, began to moan.

Beadle stuck his head through the forward window.

"What's the matter?"

"I wisht I was in jail!" said Swazey.

"Hung?"

"In jail."

Carlotta got up off the floor and went below.

"I'll skid him a Magic Powder."

"We'd appreciate it," said Hartley. "By the way, why don't the rest of us get something to eat?"

Mary sprang to her feet.

"Cheez," she said, "I forgot to put on the running lights. We oughtta be right in the steamer channel now!"

She turned on the red and green and bow and stern.

"Whaddaya say, Harris? Shall we eat? We ain't had nothin' all day, come to think of it."

Beadle said, "After all, an army moves on its stomach."

"We're a navy," said Harris. He too looked out of the doorway. The wind was still rising, flying scud slapped against the windows each time the *Electra's* stern crashed into the waves. "I'll say we're a navy!"

The bishop and Beadle came and stood on either side of him.

"Navy the twain shall meet," said Beadle.

"What twain?" said the bishop. "Mark Twain?"

Mary Winlock had come from that island in the Chesapeake where each house has its private graveyard between it and the picket fences that line the main street, so she had never heard little boys whistling to keep up their courage, as they force themselves to walk past a village cemetery at midnight.

She took one look at the three of them and made her way quickly to the galley.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

AT three in the morning the wind dropped. Beadle and Carlotta and Hartley and Mary and Payton were still in the deck-house. Swazey had been removed to the forecandle. The five of them felt that they never wanted to see another heart as long as they lived.

All through the night they had played. The worse the pitching of the ship grew, the harder they had played. Only twice had they knocked off, when steamers had passed near them and they'd tried to attract attention by flashing lights. It hadn't worked. One steamer had gone so far as to throw her searchlight on them, but not seeing the sea-anchor and thinking they were just cordial, as yachtsmen are apt to be at night, had bored on her way. It had been a bad moment; she'd looked so large and steady and safe from the *Electra's* heaving deck. The bishop and Payton had taken their coats off after that and they'd all played like demons.

In an incredibly short time after the wind went down the sea grew entirely calm, because the waves had rolled out of the Sound and weren't deep and strong the way they are when they come in from the sea itself. It seemed to Beadle his luck had turned again. He said to Harris, "Maybe you can win, after all."

They left off the game and stood up and stretched wearily, like men who've been in an all-night poker game, playing for high stakes. Then one by one they went out on deck to make sure they weren't imagining that the boat wasn't tossing any more and that driven spray wasn't crashing against the wind-dows. And then they saw that fog was all around them, swirling slowly in circles as dance the ghosts of drowned sailors. Beadle shivered at the clammy touch of it.

"I guess we better go back and play some more hearts."

"Hearts my eye," said Mary. "One of us gotta get out of here an' get help."

"Why?" said Beadle.

"We're in the steamer channel," said Mary. "We're in the steamer channel an' they don't stop—they cut right through you an' don't stop."

"Oh, dear," said Bishop Hartley. "It sounds very unpleasant indeed."

"You bet your hat it's unpleasant. Here, Harris—give me a hand. We can use this now, if it'll float."

She was snatching at the ropes that held the power tender in place on top of the cabin. It was a tiny cockleshell of a boat.

"You've got to go," said Beadle. "No one else can run it."

She nodded. "I s'pose."

Once the ropes were untied, Mary lowered the dink over the side almost unaided and, after a few minutes of groping, started the diminutive motor. She looked up. In the lights from the *Electra's* deck Beadle could see her face. It looked white and frightened. Then she called, "Go get my dresses, will you, Harris? They're under the seat in the deck-house."

Harris started for the dresses. Beadle and Carlotta and Hartley stood looking down at the tender. It lay quite still on the water beside them, its engine humming.

"If we head straight off there," said Mary, pointing toward the north, "we'll hit some kinda shore. We can carry three in here, safe enough."

From somewhere ahead of them came the long low blast of a foghorn. Beadle took Carlotta's arm.

"Get in, lady," he said. "It's been nice knowing you."

Carlotta faced him.

"Get *in*?"

Beadle, hoping she wouldn't see how he'd been frightened by what Mary'd said, forced one of his feebler laughs.

"Go ahead," he said. "There certainly isn't room for more than three. I wouldn't trust myself to a—a cockleshell like that."

Carlotta looked at him steadily.

"I wouldn't either," she said.

Harris came back with the dresses and handed them over the rail. Beadle said, "Carlotta and I don't want to go. You and Bish go and take care of Mary."

"Do you mean I can't persuade you to go, Beadle?"

He nodded.

"You mean it?"

"Go ahead," said Beadle. "I've nothing to go for; maybe you have." He gestured toward Mary. "Maybe Banks will give you a job, too."

"What about Swazey?"

They had forgotten Swazey. But Swazey hadn't forgotten himself. He came out of his coma when he heard the engine chugging alongside. As soon as he'd realized, from overhearing the conversation, what was going on, he came reeling up the companionway. Swazey knew when he had had enough. The awful motion of the yacht since her engines stopped had sapped all the courage out of him. If there were any chance, however risky, of getting to dry land, he was for it. Then, as he reached the deck, he saw Beadle and began to feel like a quitter. He stood for an instant, holding tight to the rail.

"I don't like to leave de mug," he said, "don't like to leave de mug. He's—he's been a prince to me!"

The *Electra* took a big slow roller.

"I gotta—cheez, I gotta, but—but——"

Beadle had seen him coming, so had Bishop Hartley, who turned and whispered, "As a Christian gentleman, Beadle, I *can't* allow him to go on suffering. I'll stay aboard." He sighed and added, "I ought to be better equipped for it, anyway. I *ought* to be—I wonder."

Beadle looked at him. Their glances met and he smiled. He said, "I'll *order* him to go. Then he'll feel better about it." He called to Swazey, "Hey, get in the tender—you and Mary and Harris are going for help."

Swazey saluted.

"O.K., Chief! We'll do our best!"

Then he came next to Beadle.

"Honest, Chief—I feel like a bastard—but I ain't no good to youse dis way. Can I see you when we—when you get on land, if you gets on land?"

"Sure," said Beadle. "I'll get hold of Harris and tell him where I am." He felt like Napoleon at Fontainebleau, bidding farewell to his troops.

"Oke," said Swazey and lifted a foot over the rail.

"Get going," yelled Mary.

Swazey looked down at her. Then he looked at Beadle, and in spite of the seasickness, grinned.

"Here!" he said. "Maybe dis'll carry you till we get togedder again!" He shoved his hand into Beadle's pocket and dropped down into the tender. As the little boat slid away from the yacht, Mary called, "We'll make it, Beadle honey, and get you in all right." And Harris shouted something that sounded like "White man!" Beadle reached in his pocket and fished out a handful of jewellery; diamond shirt studs and waistcoat buttons and scarf-pins. He turned to Hartley.

"This is awful," he said. "They're Donald Banks'!"

"It isn't awful," said Hartley. "It's one of the nicest gestures I've ever seen." He laughed softly.

Carlotta turned away. It had occurred to her that Swazey had probably wanted those little things quite badly. She was impressed.

Without speaking, Beadle waved once and walked to the other side of the boat. The expedition—his one achievement in life—was coming to a crashing close. Without turning, he listened until the chugging of the tender drifted away in the fog. Unlike Napoleon, he was much too moved to speak, even after he knew Carlotta had joined him and was standing with her arm about his shoulders. When the last faint chug had died, Carlotta said, "Now what are we going to do about things?"

"I think I'll pray a little," said Hartley, "and blow the fog-horn, if I can find it."

He went off toward the bow. Carlotta leaned against Beadle.

"Anything left to drink on board?"

"I'll look. I think there's part of a bottle of whisky."

"Part's enough. It'd be rotten to get cockeyed," She laughed. "If we got cut in two and not stopped for, Hartley probably couldn't get us tickets for the right place if we were cockeyed."

"He'd try, though," said Beadle. "But of course we won't get hit. One doesn't. I've never heard of anybody we know getting hit by a steamer. Have you?"

"No," said Carlotta, "but maybe the steamer wouldn't know how important we are. Then it might hit us."

Beadle was making a mighty effort to match her gaiety.

"We should send dolphins out to tell them," he said, and went below to the galley.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

AN hour later Beadle and Carlotta left the deck-house where they had gone to keep Hartley company while they had their snack. Daylight, a sickly, grey daylight scarcely preferable to the darkness, had come over the ocean. During the hour, horns and giant whistles had blown all around them and the bishop had blown back at them like Gabriel himself. In fact, he'd remarked at one point that if he found out later Gabriel could blow better than he could, he'd sue St. Peter. Then the electricity failed and the *Electra* could do no more blowing, so the bishop stretched himself out on the deck-house transom, remarking that, "One should always rest before a long journey."

It occurred to Beadle, as he and Carlotta walked aft, that Hartley had been trying very hard to pretend he was just a man, when in reality he was absolutely a hundred per cent bishop. He wondered if Mary and Payton had been pretending to enjoy being with him and if Carlotta had been pretending to like him. His stupidity in allowing this shipwreck business to happen had knocked out from under him the pillar of self-respect he'd been fighting so hard for since his life had been twisted and torn like burnt metal.

He sank into one of the easy-chairs and sighed a long, whistling sigh.

"Don't," said Carlotta. "You sound like my Aunt Nell used to sound after dinner."

A foghorn blew, far ahead.

"Oh, hell," said Beadle, "anyway."

"I know," said Carlotta. "You were the leader of something and it went phut. By the way, have you been scared?"

"And how!"



"So have I—so's Hartley. We never let on, do we? Aren't we silly not to?"

"No," said Beadle. "We'd be more scared then."

The foghorn came again, much nearer.

"Every time I hear those things," said Carlotta, "I want to go down to our room and bury my head under the covers."

"Do you really? I didn't know you were really scared. I thought it was just me."

Carlotta kicked her legs over the arm of a chair and looked at him. He'd grown quite a creditable beard during the past thirty-six hours.

"There are a lot of things you don't know, Beadle. I wish this damn fog would lift."

"I wish so too."

Again the horn, much nearer. The blast seemed to fill the world and it sounded as though it were directly in front of them.

"We can't answer," said Carlotta, "and let them know we're here."

It never occurred to either of them that they could ring the bell.

"Don't the decks look lousy and wet?" said Beadle. He was picturing that steamer, a mile, half a mile, a few hundred yards ahead of them, racing through the fog. He wondered idly what her name was. He hoped it had a good steamer name and wasn't called the *John P. MacGeehan* or something like that. He said, "I suppose we ought to put on life-preservers. I don't know where they are."

"Let's pretend we can't find them," said Carlotta. "Then we won't have to worry about them. Wouldn't do any good, anyway."

The next time the horn sounded it was so near they could almost imagine they could see the bulk of the ship ahead. There was no longer any doubt but that it was ahead—directly ahead. Beadle hunched his chair across the deck next to Carlotta's and took her hand.

"Carlotta."

"Hello."

He was breathing deeply.

"Do you know why I wanted to see Milton and—get my money back?"

"Yes," said Carlotta. "Because of Jane Payton."

"But you couldn't know that. I—I never said anything about it."

Carlotta turned her head that was resting on the back of her chair.

"Beadle"—her voice had the same odd vibrancy of the night before last when she'd said, "that was fine—we must do it again some time," after he'd kissed her. "Beadle."

"Hello." His hello was lost in the blast of the on-coming ship.

"Come near here."

He hunched his chair still closer.

"Beadle—do you know why I've always hated you?"

He felt he was on the verge of hearing something epochal. He quite forgot about the foghorn ahead of them.

"I hated you first because I didn't like your face."

"I've got used to it," said Beadle.

"Then after that I hated you because you seemed to be all the things I've just found out you're not."

"What?" said Beadle.

"Don't be dense," said Carlotta. "I'm trying to tell you something and I don't think I've much time to say it."

Beadle, inspired possibly by the look in her eyes or possibly by the thought that in a few seconds things were going to happen quickly, took her other hand so that he held both of them—tightly. The horrible example of Jane Payton was still fresh in his mind, but even Carlotta's million or so iron men couldn't stop him now.

"And I'm trying to tell you something," he said, "I—I—Judas, Carlotta—I love you."

The foghorn blew again, right under their bows.

"Nothing matters in the world to me except that. It—it's been torture, honestly, having you sleeping there with me. I've wanted you so."

Incredibly he felt she was pressing his hands. It gave him courage to go on, wildly, impassioned, pouring out his heart, telling her in quick, broken words of his loneliness, of finding he loved her, of the shock of seeing what had happened to Harris Payton and, finally, as all men do, of his unworthiness.

She listened appreciatively. When he'd done she leaned forward.

"You're an awful dope," she said. "I suppose that's why I love you."

Then she kissed him.

She was still kissing him when the crash came an instant later. She was still holding his hand when the bishop bounced out of the remains of the crumpled deck-house and yelled, "Who the hell woke me up?" and when the crew of the trawler that had rammed them swarmed aboard and lifted the three of them bodily to her fishy decks. The *Electra* bowed once, the way a smart yacht should, before she settled by the head and sank.

But Beadle didn't realize it. Being naturally clumsy, he'd banged his head against the deck as he fell out of his chair and, only half-conscious, merely thought the bishop had, after all, succeeded in getting him a ticket to the right place.



**SPENDTHRIFT**



## CHAPTER ONE

THE Derby Special with its ultra-special and wildly assorted cargo, or human freight, rolled slowly on this soft May evening into the heart of the South. The front car was devoted solely to three animals belonging to one Townsend Middleton: a black racehorse, a Dalmatian dog, and a pink-and-white stable pony that looked like James J. Farley and was named, regardless of its neuterness, Elvira. Elvira always accompanied the racehorse. His presence soothed her nerves.

Behind this car came the Pullmans filled with professional racegoers, touts, bookies and ordinary run-of-the-wool suckers. At the back of the train came two private cars loaned by a railway president and devoted solely to the use of Townsend Middleton and his friends. The friends were, socially, terrifically snappy—almost as snappy as Townsend Middleton—with a couple of exceptions. The exceptions were a moving-picture actress who had invited herself, a chorus girl who, Middleton knew, was a friend of the railway president, and Bill. Bill weighed two hundred and ten pounds, was superbly dressed, and had a face that looked as though his mother on seeing it for the first time must, in a fit of pique, have stamped upon it. Bill, of unknown origin, was to Middleton what the stable pony was to the race-horse.

The train slowed for a station. Bill immediately rose from his lonely seat at one end of the car and addressed his highball with all the courtesy he would have shown a human drinking companion.

“Gotta leave you for a minute,” he said. “Be back.” With the easy swinging grace of a he-elephant he swung himself down the car to where Townsend Middleton was talking to the picture girl. He raised a forefinger in the air in a sort of informal salute and said, nodding toward the town appearing

outside the windows, "I'm wit' you, Chief." Whereupon he promptly left.

The picture girl turned to Middleton. She had often dreamed of going places in a private railway car with one of the big-shot heirs (her expressions) of the country and it seemed to her Bill struck a hopelessly discordant note. She said, "Do you always take that man with you when you travel?"

Middleton looked at her, saw right though her to what she was thinking and laughed. He had a nice laugh. It was as full of the joy of life as a kid throwing banana-skins on a pavement.

"Sure," he said. "I like Bill."

"But why . . ." She caught herself. "I mean who is he?"

In Mildred Hughes's world everyone was someone. They had a tag, a label. It made it so easy to know whether to be downright insulting to people or just refined-snooty.

Middleton laughed again.

"If I was a big-shot movie producer," he said, "Bill would be called a yes man. Actually he's a no man."

"But what's he *do*?"

"He says, 'No,'" said Middleton, and drank deep of the good whisky in his glass. He drank it almost as though he were afraid this might be the last batch of good whisky he'd ever have.

Mildred came all over coy.

"Would he say 'No' to me, Towny?"

Middleton shook his head and patted her hand because it seemed the indicated thing to do and said to himself, "If you knew about me what I know about me, Baby, you wouldn't give me that Lubitsch look."

Mildred sighed. The train suddenly jerked to a halt, upsetting the chorus girl's drink on her dress. She said, "Some rattler, Towny, wait till I tell Popsy what I think of how he runs his railroad!"

Across the way from her Mrs. Ashton, who had been born



to the purple and for the past three or four years had been more blue than purple, but who still had a horse running in the Derby, turned slightly green. She had never admitted—even to herself—that railway presidents mingle, so to speak, with chorus girls and she didn't like being practically told so. As she turned green she looked out of the window and when she looked out of the window she gave a little yelp and said, "Oh, *Towny!* Look at that *man!*"

Townsend knew by "that man" she meant Bill. He looked. On the station platform what might be described as all hell had suddenly broken loose. A small group of the local citizenry had got inextricably entangled in a semi-private free-for-all. Fists were flailing, noses were bleeding. In the centre of the maelstrom, like Gibraltar buffeted by a choppy sea, stood Bill. It took Townsend Middleton a little under five seconds to get out of the car and perhaps another five to fight his way to the side of his "No man."

Bill saw him coming. From his pocket he hauled a small implement of warfare whose name was but a diminutive of his own. He plied it. As he plied he muttered.

"Dis ain't *my wish*" (*socko!*) "I ain't one not to retain sudden hospitality in *kind*" (*socko!*) "But I can't *take*" (*socko!*) "chances" (*socko!*) "wid de Chief!" (a sort of soft, almost half-hearted *socko* as the last of the most violent fighters subsided).

Middleton grabbed him by the arm.

"Cut it out!" he yelled. "For God's sake cut it out and get back on that train!"

"Okay, Chief," said Bill. He raised his voice so that the conductor of the special, who was frittering around the edges of the melee like a hen with ducklings, could hear: "De next time you kidnappers send trets to us, remember dis time when you sent trets to us! Look what's happened!"

Middleton led him toward the train. No one sought to interfere with them. As they reached the conductor, he said, "This is outrageous!"

Middleton meant that it was outrageous of Bill to have, in his own small way, re-started a war that had been settled some sixty-odd years before. The conductor said, "I'm *sorry*, Mr. Middleton! They flagged the train, sir—the gall of them!"

Middleton pushed Bill up the steps.

"Gall of *who*?" he said.

"Dem!" said Bill, shaking his billy toward the fallen warriors. "De gall of dem flaggin' de train!"

The conductor hustled them into the vestibule and pulled his tooting-cord. The train started. Middleton turned to Bill.

"Bill," he said. "Why did you do it? I'm ashamed of you. By God, I really am ashamed of you!"

Bill looked down. He felt like a soldier of the Foreign Legion who, having captured an enemy fort, finds his commander doesn't think it is really a fort at all, but more a camel stable. He knocked his knees together as was his habit when embarrassment overtook him. Then The Right To Be Heard asserted itself. He straightened.

"I tell you," he said. "I saw a coupla guys. I said to myself, 'Bill,' I said, 'dem's plasterers sure!' So I sailed into 'em."

"Plasterers?" said Middleton.

"Sure!" said Bill, the way one says "Don't you know nuttin'?" if one is the sort of person who says "Don't you know nuttin'?" Bill nodded, solon-fashion. "Dey was too. I got dese."

He reached in his billy pocket and pulled out two folded papers. They were blue—that unpleasant-coloured blue that is the standardized colour for judges' stationery the country over.

Middleton looked at them. He still had Bill by the arm. His grip tightened now.

"Thanks, Bill," he said.

"Aw, shoot!" said Bill, knocking his knees again. "We owes it to de filly in de baggage car, don't we?"

"Yes," said Middleton. He laughed. "You know, Bill, I'd clean forgot my stud farm was in this state."

"I hadn't," said Bill.

"How did you know they were process-servers?"

Now Bill laughed.

"I didn't," he said. "I just t'ought dey might be." Feeling this sounded too cocksure, he added, "An' I wanted to keep my hand in anyhow."

Shrouded in gloom, modified slightly by Bill's exhibition of loyalty, Middleton started to make his way back into the car. He was tired—awfully tired—of being a rich man without any money. He was tired of dodging summonses and wracking his brains on how to keep the ancestral place on Long Island going on nothing until his uncle died and he inherited. He was sick to death of the people who surrounded him: the moochers, the spongers, the inane "nice people," the cooing babes with the glint of gold in their eyes.

He turned and headed for the front of the train to visit with the race-filly. He knew that, like Bill, she would run true for him till she dropped. If she pulled it off to-morrow—he sighed vastly—if she pulled it off to-morrow he could stop worrying for a couple of months anyway, what with the purse and what he had on her at long odds.

"To-morrow!" he said half-aloud.

## CHAPTER TWO

**C**HURCHILL DOWNS. . . . Hot sunshine and the sweet smell of honeysuckle and roses and Paris perfume and Havana cigars and Kentucky Burton and green grass growing. . . . Thousands and thousands of people milling and shoving and joking and picking pockets and waving racing programmes and hoping. . . . Flags on the grandstand and club-house; and the track, freshly combed, lying like the brown rim of a teakwood roulette-wheel. . . .

Middleton stood in the paddock watching Black Mamba being slowly walked in a circle behind Elvira. With him were his trainer, Pop O'Connel, and Bill. All three of them were trembling violently inside their clothes, but outwardly being very calm and suave as became the dignity of the Owner, Trainer, and No Man of the Greenhill Stable. They spoke little in this tense moment of expectancy when the world seemed almost to stand still and wait for the gods of chance to tell it that it could go on again. They spoke not at all of the race.

Middleton said, "She looks fit, O'Connel. You've done a good job."

Bill said, "Yeah."

O'Connel said, "Mr. Middleton, look at Boots, will ye? I done my damndest to get her to dress up an' let the boy do that leadin' around just for to-day. But no! Look at her!"

Middleton looked. On Elvira, dressed in the oldest imaginable boots and breeches and wearing a worn yellow turtle-neck sweater, rode O'Connel's daughter Valerie.

"She told me the Mamba filly was used to lookin' at her there in them clothes and'd be upset else. Bah! She's a fair disgrace to us! I should think the filly'd be ashamed."

The filly wasn't ashamed. It seemed right to her that Boots should be there on Elvira dressed just as she was. It made her

feel at home and eased the unknown terror and joy that coursed through her and brought white sweat to her flanks and made her slim legs tremble as Bill's big ones did when he was embarrassed. Middleton put his hand on O'Connel's shoulder.

"You're wrong, Pop," he said. Still looking he said, "She's a pretty kid, Pop. Don't see how you did it."

Valerie (Boots) O'Connel wasn't a kid at all. She was eighteen and she had wide violet eyes and a tiny-featured face that was all screwed up now into an expression of fearful, childlike determination.

Pop O'Connel said, "Oh, pshaw!"—belittling his achievement, yet definitely recognizing it.

Bill said, "She thinks she trained the horse, I bet."

"Did she?" said Middleton.

"Well, she helped," said O'Connel.

A bugle blew. Wee Willie Walker, the Greenhill jock, came up adjusting his cap.

"Any special instructions, sir?"

"Yes," said Middleton. "For God's sake win!"

A voice he had never heard; a low voice and soft after the manner of voices in that part of the world, spoke over his shoulder.

"Does it mean as much as that to you, Mr. Middleton?"

He turned quickly. A girl—or young woman—was standing beside him. She was smiling in a friendly sort of way. He looked at her then, he looked at her hard and blinked, for this lady was startlingly easy to look at and she was so very superbly turned out in just the right thing to wear to the Kentucky Derby that one knew instinctively she must be the daughter either of a Kentucky Colonel or of that roving sportsman the Earl of Derby himself. Middleton caught the look in her eyes and grinned.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "it does."

"I didn't think it could—to men like you."

It suddenly struck him that it was very odd, this, standing

talking so with a total stranger at a place like Churchill Downs, but he continued to grin. The girl was so friendly and matter-of-fact and outright that he warmed to her.

"But then you see," he said, "you obviously don't know very much about men like me."

"I see them every year when they come here," she said.

Wee Willie Walker was tossed high into the saddle. The girl smiled once more, said "I hope you do win—truly I do," and walked away.

O'Connel and Middleton slowly followed the black filly as she made her dainty way over the grass to join the other horses on their way to the post. Before her still tramped Elvira and Boots. Boots was openly trembling now; but Elvira, as always, gave forth an aura of great calm. Elvira thought all of this rather silly. But then she didn't know about money to be won and lost and glory and fame and such things. She knew clover when she saw it, and oats, and did very well thank you without greater knowledge.

Middleton, watching her, his heart bashing around in his chest, envied her with all his heart.

### CHAPTER THREE

TOWNSEND MIDDLETON never knew afterwards how he got through that afternoon. The race was for ever in his mind an indelible picture, or series of pictures—hazy, the way golden dreams and vivid nightmares are hazy, but always to be remembered. He watched it, of course, through his binoculars, oblivious to his party surrounding him in the box, oblivious to everything except a great noise and the coloured shimmering dots he saw that became horses as they drew near, dancing dots again as they drew away.

Black Mamba, quiet at the post—nervously quiet the way a thoroughbred should be. . . . The bell, and a thunder of steel hooves drowned by the thunder of many voices blended in the great sigh, "They're off!"

Dancing dots as they reached the first turn. . . . His own colours indistinguishable in the ruck. . . . The second turn and the field strung out. . . . His Grey and Red fourth now, the black filly fighting Wee Willie for her head. . . . *This* was what she was frightened of—*this* was what she was joyful of: to run and run and run as fast as ever a horse *could* run, until those others were behind her, not flinging gravel and dust in her eyes—until she was in front with only the brown ribbon of wondrously springy dust ahead of her to spurn under flying feet; to hear the roar of the crowd as she came into the stretch and crossed the line—to trot back proudly to the winner's circle—to have much fond rubbing and one hell of a swell feed, and to be walked in clover in the dusk and talked to in soft worshipful voices. . . . Wee Willie, crouched like a tiny monkey, fought her back. He muttered over and over, "Not now, Mamby, not now. *Wait, Mamby!*"—and in the stands Middleton's heart grew faint as they came to the end of the

back stretch and the Grey and Red still stayed fourth. They went so, into the last turn.

Then through his glasses he saw Wee Willie move—inch forward in the saddle.

“Now!” he said aloud.

“*Now!*” Wee Willie screamed to the heaving black neck topped by flickering ears that made up his entire windswept world. “Now! Run, Mamby, run!”

The little ears flicked sharply back and laid there as the weight on her moved forward and the pull on her mouth relaxed. Three shapes and lots of flying gravel ahead—a space between two of the shapes. . . . *This was it.* Her neck thrust far out, her hooves scarce touching the ground, her heart near bursting within her from the effort, she made for the hole. High above her Wee Willie shrieked pleadingly, “Run, Mamby!” They’d passed two of the shapes, the third hung on ahead; “Oh, Goddammit Mamby run! You’re winning a Derby for God’s *sake* Baby! *Please!*”

Black Mamba ran. Foot by foot she caught up with the leader, swung level—there was the brown ribbon of dust ahead, there was the roar of the crowd—but she couldn’t pass. There was a weight—a new strange weight from the side—dragging her back. It was as though someone were actually tugging at her saddle-cloth. She could feel, even in the excitement, the back of a bony hand there by her girth.

“Bastard!” The word was flung on the wind—it sounded absurd in such a small voice as Wee Willie’s. Then there came a thud—only a horse could have heard it, it was such a little thud; and then that new weight was gone and Black Mamba, free again, raced down the brown ribbon to victory.

But no one—at least no one who would admit it: not the judges, not even Middleton—no one but Wee Willie Walker had seen that hand clutch Mamba’s saddle-cloth, hang on for dear life, try to jerk her out of her stride. All anyone had seen was Wee Willie Walker raising his bat and clouting the other jockey on the head.



No one listened to Wee Willie in the stewards' stand when all of the sixty thousand people there waited in dead silence to see what the decision would be and while Black Mamba pranced a little like a tired lady who has done her stuff and just for the hell of it kicked over the broadcasting-apparatus. The other jockey was an old-timer. Wee Willie was just a kid riding his first Derby who'd got excited. They didn't suspend him. They merely disqualified Black Mamba and broke his heart—and broke Townsend Middleton—to the wide.

It was a little unpleasant for Wee Willie when he left the stewards' stand. In fact there were a great many people who wanted to revive the old Southern custom of lynching. But Middleton was on one side of him now and Bill on the other, and Wee Willie couldn't see very well through his tears anyway, so he didn't realize his danger.

When they got through the track gates (behind Mamba who was still pleased as punch with herself because *she* knew she'd won) Willie became coherent.

"Mr. Middleton—he grabbed my saddle-cloth. *You* saw him, didn't you?"

Middleton looked down at the boy. He too was dazed at the moment. In fact he didn't see how he was going to raise money enough to get the horse home, even.

"No, Willie," he said, "I didn't see him."

"And no one else did!" put in O'Connel.

Middleton ignored O'Connel. He had raced too much not to know the unholy fury of trainers when this and that goes against them. He put his arm around the tiny jock.

"Did he grab it, Willie?"

"Yes, *sir*! Mamby was goin' like hell; then——"

Middleton lifted his arm, made a fist and struck the boy sharply with it.

"Listen, Willie," he said. "*I* believe you. There's no good my telling the stewards so, because they all know I'm broke. You—rode—a swell—race. See? It's all swell, see?"

"Gee, I feel fierce!" said Willie. He didn't really feel so

awfully fierce, because he *had* ridden a Derby winner. It was only Middleton's magnanimity and friendliness that made him feel that a little self-pity was, perhaps, in order.

"Go see the filly gets a sweet feed," said Middleton, who knew Mamba would like to be cried on by a jockey—whereas he hated it, not being a horse.

"Yessir!" said Willie.

His shoulders went back. He saluted with his bat and hurried on after the filly. Middleton heard murmurs of sympathy from this sponger and that—in fact from all the people who had come down with him in the private cars and who had all bet on the horse that was given the win. He said the right thing in each case and tried to look as though losing even the remains of a fortune was nothing. He was very busy doing the simplest and most generally used sort of mathematics—namely, subtraction.

Middleton, doing his subtraction, had unconsciously followed the horse back to the paddock. He was standing now, staring vacant-eyed as O'Connel sponged out her mouth and Boots worked on her back that twitched luxuriating under the motion of the sweat-scraper.

"Say, Chief! Say, Chief!" Bill, who had seen Wee Willie safely into the jockeys' room, arrived out of breath. "I tink I got de horse sold!"

Middleton snapped out of his reverie.

"What's that?"

"Colonel Jeffords. He wants to buy de filly. He said tell you he'd give a hundred grand!"

Middleton's eyes opened in amazement. A hundred thousand was more than he'd have made had he won. It would go a long way toward creditor-stalling. He walked over to O'Connel.

"Pop," he said quietly, "we're temporarily saved. Colonel Jeffords will buy Mamba."

"Fine!" said O'Connel and went on with his sponging.

Boots stopped her scraping and looked suddenly at Middle-

ton, her eyes filled with horror. Then with her head hidden from him she went on with her work; but there were tears, now, mingling with the sweat. Middleton saw this, in spite of the fact that Boots tried to hide it.

"Boots," he said.

She went on scraping.

"Boots," he stepped up beside her. "If I sold Mamba I'd have to sell you along with her to take care of her, and I'm not at all sure Colonel Jeffords would want to buy you."

"What kind of talk's this?" said O'Connel.

"I was just telling Boots," said Middleton, "that Black Mamba's not for sale."

He turned and strolled slowly in the direction of the clubhouse. Behind him Bill and O'Connel looked at each other and shook their heads. Boots threw her arms around the filly's sloppy neck and clung there. Middleton, looking back at them over his shoulder, laughed.

"What the hell," he said. "It'd be like selling Bill!"

He was moved and he didn't like being moved. Too much emotion had been crowded into too short a period of time. He wanted now, above everything else, to get unemoted. Across the lawn he saw the figure of the girl who had spoken to him in the paddock before the race. He headed toward her.

## CHAPTER FOUR

SALLY BARNABY was definitely crinoline. She thought all handsome men were wonderful and that rich handsome men with racing-stables were ultra-wonderful. She thought life should be made up of rose gardens and cotillions and moonlight and soft music and love; and for some years—in fact since she'd come out—had been vaguely disappointed to find it made up of a father who was blowing-in most of a dwindling fortune on stimulant of inferior vintage, of scrimping for clothes, of Country Club Saturday-night dances, and of uncouth local yokels taking the place of the rich handsome swains of her imagining.

To Sally Barnaby, Townsend Middleton walking across the club-house lawn looked like manna to Moses. To Townsend Middleton, Sally Barnaby looked like someone it would be frightfully nice to go and bust a bottle of champagne with. He somehow didn't feel like being with his own party. He wanted a strange shoulder to weep on. What he needed was a good bartender with time on his hands; failing that—for all the bartenders at Churchill Downs were frightfully busy—something lovely to look upon who seemed sweetly sympathetic would suit him nicely.

"Look," he said. "Let's go get something to drink." Then, this not sounding quite right to him, he childishly added, "It's hot."

"That's a *nice* idea," she said; "it's often so hot in Louisville."

"I can't for the life of me remember your name," said Middleton, "but it was nice of you to say you hoped Mamby'd win."

"You don't know my name because we'd never met. It's Sally Barnaby."

"Oh," said Middleton—"Colonel Barnaby's daughter."

"D'you know him, Mr. Middleton?"

He shook his head.

"No—but I was sure he'd be one."

She looked puzzled, so he amplified.

"I mean this being Kentucky and you being so damned attractive. I didn't see how he could have missed it."

She skipped this. It was over her head and seemed to her merely to be confusing things. She said, "I don't suppose I really should have spoken to you—without our having been introduced I mean."

They passed into the club bar and sat down at a table. Townsend ordered champagne, then settled himself comfortably and looked across at Sally Barnaby. This sort of thing was right up her alley. She looked back at him—winsomely.

"Did you-all lose a fortune when your horse was disqualified?"

"I certainly did!" said Townsend Middleton. "And I didn't have it to lose!"

"Oh, come on," said Sally. "Everybody knows you're one of the richest men in the country."

"If you want to think that, go ahead," said Townsend.

"But I do! It makes you so exciting. You see"—here she looked down, letting her lashes, which, as lashes go, were quite something, caress the rose petals of her cheek—"you see, father and I haven't any money. Just pride."

"Southern pride," said Townsend.

"We're lousy with it," said Sally. Then they both laughed.

"Lots of birthright and no pottage," said Townsend. "I know all about that. I've even incorporated my rich uncle's blood pressure. I sell shares in it. When it goes up the shares go up."

"I think you're cute," said Sally.

The champagne arrived, was served. They drank, looking into each other's eyes. At this moment Topsy Martin, the railway president's chorus girl, also arrived.

"Well!" she said. "If it isn't Charley the Wine Buyer! Me too." She sat down. "Who's your friend?"

"Sally Barnaby. She's helping me forget."

"I see. I'm intruding. My name's Topsy Martin." She held out her hand.

"I'm glad to know you," said Sally.

Topsy Martin went on. "Towny, what happened to that prize bacon-bringer-homer of yours? I lost my shirt on her."

"Wee Willie got impetuous," said Townsend. "He didn't like that jockey grabbing his saddle-cloth."

"I wouldn't like him to grab mine," said Topsy. She seized Townsend's glass and emptied it. "S' nice fizz."

"Why don't you beat it?" said Townsend. "Sally and I are talking."

Topsy made a face at him.

"I don't mind," she said. "Say anything you like. I've been around." Then, to Sally: "You native talent?"

Sally instinctively liked this fresh creature. She smiled.

"Not from choice," she said. "I was raised here."

"Must be tough," said Topsy.

Townsend gave her a look. He said, "Don't mind her, Sally. She's been gushing about the South ever since last night."

"I don't mind," said Sally, "because you see I really do hate it here." Suddenly her eyes, which normally were entirely bovine, grew bright. Her whole expression changed to one of intense seriousness. It made her really beautiful. "I'd give *anything*—to get away from here."

"Hell," said Topsy, "that's easy. Come back in the private car with us to-night." She shoved Middleton with her elbow. "Charley the Wine Buyer here'll take you over the hurdles."

Townsend saw the look of Alice going through the looking-glass cross Sally Barnaby's face. He didn't know that she felt the emotions of a dainty slave maiden going on the auction block mingled with those of a small child being set in the middle of a strawberry shortcake and told it can eat its way

out. All he knew was that he seemed to hold in his hand a full cup of joy for someone who was more than lovely enough to deserve it.

"Why not?" he said. "You could stay with Topsy."

"Oh, I couldn't possibly go!" said Sally. She laughed nervously, high colour in her cheeks. "Why, I've only just met you-all and we're really terribly respectable. I couldn't." She paused, then added: "I've never been to New York." It was as though she had said, "I've never been to heaven."

"Have some more champagne," said Townsend. "It'll make it look easier."

Sally thought she had never seen a man smile at her so kindly. She said, "I—really, I——" stopped, tossed off a glass of the wine, glowed, and said, "I'll come—if I can get Daddy to let me!"

"Daddy?" said Topsy, arching her brows.

"Father—Colonel Barnaby." She stood up and took Middleton's hand, her eyes turned on, full candlepower. "Do you really mean it—Townsend?"

He nodded and pressed her hand. He was surprised for a second at how pleasant pressing this hand seemed. It made him want to do all kinds of things for and to its owner.

"Of course I mean it. Tell the old loon—I mean, tell him Mrs. Peter Ashton will be chaperoning you—on the car."

"I'll see if I can find him."

With a quick smile over her shoulder she was gone. Topsy looked at Townsend Middleton and shook her head the way one does when one sees a peculiarly pathetic half-wit. She said, "You've bought something, Towny."

He didn't seem to hear. He was supremely engrossed in watching the back of Sally Barnaby moving through the crowd.

"I said you've bought something, Towny."

"Hungh?"

"I think it loves you. Do you care?"

"Don't be an ass," said Townsend. "Come on, let's watch this race."

"But howsa boutsa girl friend?"

"We'll come back here after. Come on."

"Poor Towny."

"You think she'll come?"

"With bells—church bells—on."

"We'll take her to the Sefton Club for dinner. She'll get a kick out of it, poor kid."

"Poor Towny," said Topsy again. For a little girl, Topsy Martin knew a lot. But then, as she herself said, she had been around.

Townsend Middleton and even Topsy, who had been around, would have been very considerably surprised had they followed Sally Barnaby as she lost herself in the crowd. She went directly to a telephone-booth and called a number. When she got it, she asked for Colonel Barnaby; and then after a moment she said, with scarcely any perceptible Southern accent at all: "Well, you loafer, I got him."



## CHAPTER FIVE

THE Sefton Club is now to Louisville what The Brook is to Saratoga. Ivory balls spin merrily in teakwood wheels. Ivory cubes rattle merrily on green baize and in whirling wire cages. Near-ivory chips slide hopefully from pockets and evening-bags. Practically no water is drunk there. Things are frighteningly, delightfully expensive.

Townsend Middleton got a great kick out of having Sally Barnaby with them there because, judging from her elated condition, Sally Barnaby was getting a great kick out of it. He didn't know this was not because she had never been there before but because the Sefton Club was the one place in Louisville where she could be sure of not stumbling over her father snoozing loudly in some hallway. Its doors had been closed to Colonel Barnaby for some time—for obvious reasons. All through dinner and for some little time afterwards Townsend enjoyed to the full the pleasant sensation of a genial philanthropist taking an unusually charming and well-behaved female orphan on a picnic. He liked her, his friends seemed to like her, dinner was excellent, the wine was stimulating and mellowing, and, all in all, in spite of his immediate financial crisis things seemed pretty fine.

This condition of things seeming pretty fine lasted until a few minutes before eleven. At this point a captain of waiters came to him at the table where he and Sally were playing hazard for dollar chips and drew him aside.

"There's a Colonel Barnaby outside to see you, sir."

This was just the captain's way of being nasty. He knew perfectly well this wasn't any old "A Colonel Barnaby."

"Tell him to wait," said Middleton. He turned to Sally as the waiter went off. "By the way," he said, "what did—the Colonel—say when you told him about the proposed junket?"

Sally Barnaby, who had been doing her utmost to seem intent on hazard the while she was practically stretching her ears off to hear what the waiter said, smiled innocently the way only Southern girls can smile innocently, and answered.

"He said he was glad for me to have the chance to go get a look at New York."

This was, of course, an out-and-out lie.

"Swell!" said Townsend. "Play these for me, Sally. I've got to go and see a fella."

Sally, pretending misunderstanding, accepted a handful of chips and shoved them on Number Four. Townsend, with that sense of impending disaster that comes to all of us now and again, headed for the front of the club. Frankly, he suspected Sally of chicanery. Since, due to his own background and upbringing, he couldn't conceive of any father allowing such a daughter to go rollicking off with practically strangers, he guessed that she had left a note and he guessed further that this Colonel Barnaby would be none too pleased. The Colonel part of the name instinctively frightened him. It conjured up such a picture of horsewhips and horse-pistols and what not.

Half-way to the reception room he paused, looked in a mirror and straightened tie and shoulders, and then, trying to look as dignified as possible, advanced to meet what he felt were terrific odds. He was thoroughly surprised to find, lounging comfortably on a divan, a small, though walrus-moustached, man in nearly correct dinner clothes. The dinner clothes would have been absolutely correct except that the trousers plainly belonged to a business suit.

"Colonel Barnaby?" he said, by way of getting in the first shot, and bowed.

"Middleton?" Colonel Barnaby also bowed, but much lower than Townsend who, as he saw the depth of the bow, could already feel that bullet searing his skin.

"Yes," said Townsend.

"Son," said Colonel Barnaby astonishingly, "Ah'm proud to know you!"

Middleton forced a smile. He wasn't prepared for this son stuff.

"I'm proud to know *you*, sir," he said, feeling this was safe to say to practically any one.

"If your boy had had enough weight in his whip," the Colonel went on, "you, suh, would have won a Kentucky Derby!"

"Hungh?" said Middleton.

"Certainly!" said Colonel Barnaby. "You-all had the better horse, and then the other jockey wouldn't have been able to protest."

"Why on earth wouldn't he?"

"He'd have been unconscious," said Colonel Barnaby.

Middleton laughed. He found it impossible to be afraid of anyone who was possessed of such simple, accurate logic. The next instant his sense of security passed, however, for Barnaby said: "I should shoot you, sir, I should shoot you down like a dawg."

He said this calmly, as a man speaks when he states a simple fact. Townsend winced. He decided to bluff.

"Oh, come," he said. "I wouldn't say that."

"You——" Here Barnaby paused and shook a long finger at Middleton. "You, sir, are not Magnolia's father!"

Middleton laughed again. He couldn't help it. The irrelevancy was too much for him.

"Are *you*?" he said—then, instantly regretted the words. This was the sort of crack men got lynched for in this part of the world. Surprisingly enough, the Colonel took it quite calmly. In fact it seemed to remind him of something he wanted to be reminded of, for he smiled.

"Well," he said, "strictly speaking, no, but I raised her since she was a pup. Matter of fact, sir, I'm glad you brought that up, because it wasn't Magnolia I was speakin' of."

Here he smiled. His smile, oddly enough, had in it much of the charm of Sally Barnaby's. It was simple and it was

unutterably frank. As he smiled he sank to the sofa as though his knees were suddenly tired.

"One of those dizzy spells," he said. Then he straightened and became Kentucky Colonelish again. "I was saying, sir, that you should be shot for running off with my daughter Magnolia, I meant . . . I *meant* that you should be shot for running off with my daughter Sally!"

"Oh," said Middleton. "I get it now."

"But instead, sir, instead," here Barnaby rose to his feet again. The feet were teetery, but they held. "Instead, I say, God bless you!"

"Oh, not at all," said Middleton. "A pleasure."

"God bless you!"

"No, really. Glad to have her come along."

Colonel Barnaby stiffened to a terrific straightness. He looked for the moment every inch what he was supposed to, and not at all what he was.

"Dammit, Yankee!" he said, "I'll brook no contradiction. I say . . ."

He was interrupted by the small face of Boots O'Connell thrusting itself around a corner of the doorway, shortly followed by Boots herself. She was way out of her world and she was scared, but she had a lot on her mind.

"Mr. Middleton," she said, "you better come with me quick—there's been trouble and—and Bill's tryin' to get Mamby to go into the private car and . . ." She ran shy of breath.

Townsend Middleton looked at her. Then he looked at Colonel Barnaby. Then, being a wise young man, he flagged a waiter who was hovering in the background and ordered a drink.

## CHAPTER SIX

SOME few minutes after Boots O'Connell's inaugural and final appearance at the Sefton Club, she and Middleton stepped out of a taxi at the railway siding where the midnight special to New York waited. The front of the special, where were the Pullmans, was quiet. The rear of the special where were the private cars was not quiet. It was not quiet at all—in fact about it there was the general air one would expect to find around a circus train with half the roustabouts loyal and the other half on militant strike. Bill once again was lined up against The Interests. Assisted by Wee Willie and Paddy, the stable boy, he was boosting Black Mamba from behind as she stood hesitant half-way up an impromptu runway leading into the last car. As Middleton arrived on the scene, Bill, with a final shove, succeeded in doing what it is doubtful if any other man—even Hannibal, the elephant mover—could have done. He got Mamba into the car. Then he turned and glared at his enemies.

“If you boys in de blue suits don't want dis fine horse in dis car, get her out of it.” Then, as an afterthought as he mopped a dripping brow: “It'd give me pleasure to see you do it.”

Middleton addressed the nearest representative of the railway.

“Bill drunk again?” he said affably. It seemed to him that affableness was indicated.

The railway man turned to him with a start and said reproachfully, “Oh, Mr. *Middleton!*” He said it with the shocked yet awe-filled voice Rockefeller's secretary might use should he suddenly come upon Rockefeller giving away quarters instead of dimes.

“Is he *that* drunk?” asked Middleton, who knew perfectly

well Bill wasn't drunk at all but merely going through one of his more active phases of loyalty.

"No, but you see, Mr. Middleton, we . . ." He broke off as he saw two ladies in evening-clothes. Middleton nodded.

"I know," he said. "Boots told me. You wouldn't let the horses into their own car because you'd somehow heard I wouldn't be able to pay for it, hadn't you?"

The man nodded.

"It's not my fault," he said. "It's . . ."

"Orders," finished Middleton. He sighed. He'd been half-expecting something like this. He went through life half-expecting these things, and they made him feel sick inside when they happened because he'd been brought up to think of them as dishonourable. "Well," he laughed. He had enough wine in him so he could make the laugh sound quite real. "What are we going to do about it?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but we'll just have to unhook that car if we can't get the horses out of it—and leave it here till we can."

At this point Topsy Martin, who, having for years been technically divested of honour, didn't think this sort of happening dishonourable in the least, went to the mat.

"The hell you will!" she said in that ultra-refined voice chorus girls use for squelching—which invariably makes such a honey of a contrast between what they say and the way they say it. It touched the railway man on the raw.

"The hell we won't!" he said.

Middleton, embarrassed now beyond the point where he could conceal it, gulped and flushed simultaneously, and was a little glad that Boots had gone on into the car to lie to Mamba about how she happened to be there. He thought Boots would probably tell her it was because she'd really won a Derby and that Mamba, the stuck-up babe, would probably believe it.

Then, in the midst of his agony, he felt his arm pressed softly and heard Sally Barnaby's even softer voice say: "I just love all this, Townsend. It's so *dramatic!*" and then, with that unerring instinct of Dixie ladies for making themselves seem

the one comforting companion in the wide wide world to any man they happen to be standing next to, "I'm *glad* to be here with you—in case you need me."

He looked down at her. A mangy station lamp was doing all sorts of swell things to her hair: shooting it full of little lights and shimmers. It did things to her face too, although her face was lovely enough not to need much done to it in the way of lighting.

As he looked, Middleton forgot for a second where he was and who he was. He forgot to such an extent that he didn't even hear the railway man repeat himself to Topsy and didn't hear Topsy say, "You come along with me, boy, and get your boss, and I'll get Popsy to tell him on the telephone whether or not that car goes out of here on the special!"—and he didn't hear her add, as they went off up the platform: "Who do you think runs this railway anyhow? The *stockholders*? I run it, you Hot Box you—see?"

Townsend Middleton, still looking down at Sally Barnaby, took her hand. He felt, absurdly, as she had intended him to feel, that she should always have been beside him and, what was much more important, that she always should be beside him.

"You're a sportsman!" he said. It was as though another man had said, "You're an angel," for in his lexicon it was the peak compliment. He pressed the hand.

Sally said, "You're so gallant about"—she gestured toward the loudly commenting crowd—"all this. You're like Father!"—She saw him wince—"Used to be!"

"Aw," said Townsend. He was going to deprecate his gallantry and sympathize because Father was like that no more, but Sally cut him short.

"Let's get inside," she said. "They *might* hurt you out here, Townsend."

This, on the face of it, was a purely romantic speech made out of whole cloth. Obviously, there wasn't anyone in the curious crowd who felt the slightest desire to do damage to

Townsend Middleton, but the speech got in its work. He pressed her hand again and, shoving aside some of the too-close curious, led her up the shiny brass steps of the private car.

Daintily the slave maiden stepped onto the auction block, or rear platform, eagerly the child stepped over the polished brass sill into the glittering, champagne-flavoured strawberry shortcake from which, her father not making too much trouble, she could eat her way out, into Townsend Middleton's private car. It was a milestone for both of them, though neither of them knew it. Still hand-in-hand, they laughed as they saw, in the middle of the lounge part of the car, Elvira, Bill, Black Mamba and the Dalmatian, and Boots, each, in his or her own way, engaging in a favourite pastime. Elvira, Black Mamba, and the Dalmatian were munching sugar. Bill was munching aged whisky; and Boots, in an ecstasy of joy at what she considered an eleventh-hour rescue, was practically munching Black Mamba.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

“POPSY” having kicked through to his protégé or babe with the authority to let the race-horse stay put, the Derby Special pulled out at midnight, complete with private cars but minus some of Middleton’s less well-bred guests who had voiced loud and, in the case of the picture actress, coarse comments on their objections to sleeping with—horses. At twelve-fifteen, as the train passed into the open country, Middleton, who had given up all hope now of becoming unemoted and merely wanted to relax, took himself, a bottle of champagne, and a highball-glass full of ice to the observation platform. He had settled himself foggily in a camp-chair before he realized that Topsy Martin and Sally were sitting together on the opposite side of the little deck. He was so very foggy, what with all that had happened that day, that he wouldn’t have noticed their presence even then, but Sally leisurely reached out a hand and rested it on his. He jumped, spilling his drink. Topsy laughed.

“Steady, Yank,” she said. “It’s only them rebels.”

Them rebels laughed too—honeyedly, as became rebels who were swishing through the darkness on observation platforms of private cars. She said, “Topsy’s been telling me about you.”

“Topsy’s a liar,” said Middleton.

“As Daniel said when he got into the lyron’s den,” said Topsy, “‘I think I’d better get out o’ here.’”

“Oh, stick around,” said Townsend. He liked Topsy Martin. She was no bother at all and she never got in his hair the way most people did.

“No,” said Topsy. “Where do I sleep? With Elvira or Mamby?”

With that she popped into the car, leaving Townsend alone

with the Southern girl and the Southern night, and she knew that both of them were oozing romance and that Townsend was, emotionally, not quite himself. In its way it was probably the dirtiest trick she'd ever played on a man. It was like giving a child with a penchant for playing with matches a stick of dynamite. It is certainly not to her credit that, as she went into the car, she chuckled.

Sally Barnaby said, when she and Townsend were alone again with the rushing wind and the darkness, "I think Topsy left us alone together on purpose!"

If Townsend had been in anything like a normal condition he would have spotted this crack for what it was worth and yelled for Bill to chaperone him. He would have realized what many a Mormon has—that two women against one man are utterly unfair odds. But he wasn't in a normal condition, and so instead of realizing that no girl could be so stupid as to say a thing like that innocently, he thought it did a lot towards advancing the coziness of the world in general. He drank deep of his drink and, for the second time that day pressed Sally Barnaby's hand. Sally Barnaby's hand pressed back. Sally Barnaby's chair inched over so that it was close to his. Sally Barnaby said, "You're a darling, with all your other worries—to be so nice to me!"

She almost said, "To *little* me." It would have put the kibosh on the works if she had; Middleton would have waked up. As it was, he merely changed his glass to his right hand leaving his left hand and arm free to drape themselves about Sally Barnaby.

"You're nice to *me*," he said. "You care!"

An instant later he couldn't imagine what had possessed him to say such a thing. It was the sort of stock answer that he despised and that any girl as lovely as Sally must despise too. It was yokelish—the sort of thing the boys who squired her to the Saturday-night dances she'd spoken about would say. For the first time since he'd left the Sefton Club he was beginning to be comfortable again. He was enjoying the night

and whirling through the midst of it with this girl. Now, he felt, he'd spoiled it. He hadn't, however, reckoned on the mental processes inherited from her old man which actuated Sally. She gave him a look that he could see even through the cinders was ineffably tender, and said, "I do."

"Why should you?" The champagne was getting in its work now. "We only met—to-day."

His arm held her much closer. He set his drink down so that his right hand could take hers.

"I think I must have waited for to-day always."

"It's been a hellova day," said Middleton, forgetting where he was.

"It's been a wonderful day—for me!" She was, as Topsy Martin had thought, simply oozing romance—soft, gooey, Southern romance. "It's brought me you!"

"And it's cost me seventy-five thousand berries!" said Middleton ungallantly.

"I know what that's like," said Sally. "I don't mind."

Middleton shook his head as though there were clouds before his eyes he could shake off that way.

"Have you ever lost seventy-five thousand berries? I mean"—he snapped his fingers—"just like that?"

"Yes," said Sally Barnaby. She hadn't, but she could see no harm in saying she had. "You see I understand all about how hard things are for you, Townsend. I mean Topsy told me."

"Topsy told you, eh? You beautiful lady!"

"She told me how foolish and gallant you were—trying to keep on all the people who'd worked for your daddy and your granddaddy when you didn't have any money at all of your own and never letting on that was the real reason you were in such debt."

Townsend Middleton had never thought about his chaotic financial condition in quite this way before. He *had* kept on any number of totally useless employees for the simple reason that he couldn't find it in his heart to fire them. He had tried

to live in the same tradition, or on the same standard, as his father; but that was because it was a pleasant standard and of course much the nicest way to live. Lots of his friends had bawled him out for it. Some of them had said he was silly to spend the money to keep the Long Island estate going; other, older friends had told him he was a wastrel, a spendthrift, for doing it. Now this girl saw what must have been in his heart all the time—the sense of the rightness of things, the monument to the family name, the *noblesse oblige*. That was why he'd hocked the inheritance he was to get from his famedly rich uncle with the incorporated blood pressure. That was why Mamby had run in the Derby. *Noblesse oblige!* This girl—this lovely girl of high station, who had fought against the same things as he because of her drunken father, was the first who had ever even guessed (he hadn't, himself, till she brought it to him). She understood!

He turned his head so he could look down at her as she rested snug as a bug against his shoulder. There was something about the way that head rested against him—something sweet and trusting and cozy that raised in him the team spirit.

He continued for some little time to look at her. Right now Sally Barnaby was the only comforting thing he could see in the whole world. His uncle *was* so *damned* healthy. Sally Barnaby was so *damned* beautiful.

Ridiculous, his having let Topsy get away with asking her to come back on the car with them. Awful, having to have Mamba and Elvira and Pete the Dalmatian there too, because he hadn't credit enough to have them sent back home the proper way. Horrible, the whole experience; yet Sally didn't mind. Sally liked him. Maybe Topsy'd been right. Maybe Sally loved him. As he looked at her he thought maybe he loved her and, though the idea would have struck him as absurd a few hours ago, he found himself suddenly hoping quite desperately that she did love him.

“Sally——” His voice was so sentimentally deep he sounded

like a plumber in a basement calling to his helper one flight up. "Sally, I love you."

She made no answer. She simply looked at him for one wide-eyed second. Then he kissed her and then she said, after a time, "I love *you*, Towny—terribly."

She didn't love him, she loved the glamour of him. He didn't love her. He loved the comfortable sensation of her—the sweet, stupid sensation of being understood—the warmth of her surrender—the unorthodoxness of their meeting which made it romantic.

Townsend Middleton, who had failed completely in everything—even in the business of living—was, at the moment, like a successful man who has worked too hard and cracked under the strain of it. He had become a straw-grasper-at. Sally Barnaby meant comfort and, probably, happiness—at least companionship—for a little while.

"Sally Barnaby," he said, "will you marry me?"

"Oh, *Towny!*" said Sally Barnaby much as Topsy Martin must once upon a time have said, "Oh, *Popsy!*" And then, being fundamentally a thoroughly nice person with right ideas about things, "But, Towny, maybe you don't really want to marry me. Maybe you're just a little tight or something. I wouldn't dream of marrying you if that was the way it was."

That was the way it was, but Townsend didn't know it. Matter of fact, he wouldn't have admitted it if he had known it. He was that kind of a guy. He freed his hands and shook her very gently.

"Will you marry me? Will you marry me right away?"

"Oh, *Towny!*"

Her face buried itself on his shoulder. Bill, looking through the door, put on a tough expression, shook his head sadly, and muttered.

"Good *night!*" he muttered. "After all I can't oney perfect him from *some* things! Dis is outa my realm!"

He started off, dodging horses as he went; then he turned and looked again. The shapes on the platform were so close

he could only see one united shape. Not having been able to overhear the conversation the significance of this was quite lost on him. He slapped the race-horse on the flank as he passed.

“You should see the boss, Mamby!” he said. “*Zowie!*”  
*Zowie* wasn’t the half of it.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

THEY were married, a few hours after the special reached New York, at a little church on upper Broadway where Middleton had been coerced into worship as a child. Mrs. Theodore Ashton stood up with the bride, who was given in marriage by Theodore Ashton, borrowed from the backgammon room at the Union Club for the afternoon. A girl, dug up from somewhere by the minister, played an olio of gush on the organ which, in spite of her trick of getting her feet crossed on the base pedals and then being unable to uncross them, made tears come to Middleton's eyes, because it was the music at his wedding and he took his wedding very, very seriously.

Bill was best man. He didn't quite understand that the duties of a best man are, properly, merely to be present and see that the bridegroom doesn't jump into the potted palms that always surround altars and escape at the eleventh hour, and to turn over the circlet of bondage. Throughout the entire proceeding Bill kept his hand at his billy pocket and glared threateningly at Theodore Ashton, who looked at him like a pretty fly sort of lad.

Sally Barnaby, rapidly becoming Mrs. Townsend Middleton, looked properly starry-eyed and exceedingly happy. To her Middleton was the Prince Charming of all time. If he'd had warts on his nose he still would have been almost a Prince Charming. Being a nice normal attractive-looking young gent *and* standing for what he did he was a super Prince Charming. She couldn't understand why God had been so good to her when her daddy hit the booze so hard. She was in love. As the minister said "man and wife," tears filled her eyes and made them look like violets covered with new dew.

As the minister said, "I . . . pronounce you man and wife,"

Middleton's eyes also filled with tears and he felt very strong and noble and protective. Through his mind there flashed an idea of going to work to provide security for this lovely creature that was now his, in case—just in case—something should skid about that will of his uncle's.

As the minister got off that clincher line, Bill shook his head and knocked his knees together. "Dere goes de Chief!" he muttered to himself. "Tings won't be de same like, now."

As the minister nodded, as much as to say, "I've done it, lad; twenty bucks, please," Middleton took Sally in his arms and, in front of God and the assembled company, kissed her. Then he patted her cheek because he thought in that moment she might feel lonely and friendless and, perhaps a little afraid, and he wanted her to feel that he would take care of her. Like most American men, in his mind he reversed the marriage ceremony. *He* would comfort *her* and so forth. The gesture was nice—it made everybody feel pleasantly weepy—even Bill, who slapped Middleton on the back and unbent to the extent of holding out a hand to Theodore Ashton and saying, "Congratulations, old man! Congratulations!"

Theodore Ashton looked at him in dismay. He'd met Bill before and hadn't liked him. He was, in fact, a little afraid of him. To be truthful, he was scared pink of him.

"Eh?" he said.

Bill pressed his hand and glared. But he glared with a sort of soft glare now as though sentiment had weakened his normal glare.

"I said congratulations!"

"I know," said Ashton. "I wondered why."

"Hell!" said Bill. "At weddings everybody congratulates everybody. God knows *why*! Dey just do, *see*?"

Townsend Middleton missed this little interchange. He was walking, bride on arm, toward the door of the church. His car was waiting for them there, luggage aboard, ready to whisk them away to Niagara Falls or Westchester or White Sulphur or wherever two socially prominent total strangers



who proposed to live together might want to go before letting life and what-not start trying to separate them.

Still in a state of exaltation, he reached the church door, passed through it, and promptly faced seven cameras and a whole host of reporters. He was used to this sort of thing at race-tracks. He didn't like it at his wedding. That, in spite of his name, belonged to him, not to the public. The cameras clicked.

"Now kiss her, Mr. Middleton—we got to get one of you kissing her."

He stood straight and stiffened. Sally Barnaby, an almost unbearable happiness surging through her, looked up at him lovingly.

Another reporter urged, "Go on, Towny! This is *news!*"

A sleek, prosperous-looking reporter walked through the photographers and leaned close to him.

"Mr. Middleton, I've got to get your story." He lowered his voice so not more than half the other newspaper men could hear him. "Now I know you're—shall we say—not too flush right now. My paper's willing to pay——" (the amount he whispered) "for your signed story. What about it? Yes?"

"No," said Middleton.

Suddenly, Sally Barnaby was frightened. She was frightened by the staggering realization of the prominence she had achieved. She clung to his arm.

"Towny, let's go 'way."

He looked down at her and found it awfully nice to have someone clinging to his arm looking to him for protection, and a little shyly realized for the first time that she was his wife. He couldn't, to be sure, offer her what you might call steady protection, but he could protect her from this sensation-hungry mob. He looked at the sleek reporter coldly.

"Will you—gentlemen—please step aside and let Mrs. Middleton and me get to our car?"

They ground their cameras and snapped their cameras and

thrust themselves closer. The sleek one said, "You're a fool, Towny, not to co-operate. There may be a day, you know, sometime when . . ."

He didn't finish because Middleton lowered his head and one shoulder and, so to speak, bucked the line. The line gave, toppled back upon itself; cameras fell to the pavement. The sleek reporter went down, but even as he fell he was mentally dictating to his secretary: "What can be wrong about Towny Middleton's *sudden* marriage to Sally Barnaby that makes that well-known Rolls-Royceterer . . ."

At that point in his mental dictation he lit on the sidewalk and Middleton, dragging Sally by the hand, entered his car. As it started and lost itself in the midtown traffic, they unscrambled themselves from the undignified position in which they had landed aboard, due to the haste of their departure, and realized that now they were alone together for the first time since they'd met—with the exception of that brief hour on the observation platform—and that they were actually married.

The business of going away after the wedding does that to people. Wherever they're going they're going together—openly, publicly together. They have to, although it would be much easier for practically all brides and bridegrooms if they could first go to their separate dens or lairs and then go off together sometime when nobody happened to be noticing them, the way they used to before they were married.

Sally and Townsend, from far corners of the car, looked at one another. They saw one another as complete strangers; attractive strangers whom it would be nice to know better and of whom it would be nice to see quite a lot. Townsend saw himself too: as a man who had had a reputation for being wild and giddy but who, at heart, wasn't the least bit that way, but who had done a very wild and giddy thing. Sally Barnaby saw herself as Mrs. Townsend Middleton. She liked very much seeing herself as Mrs. Townsend Middleton.

"Towny—where are we going?"

Still thinking quite hard about himself, he answered: "I told Bill to meet us at Briarcliff Manor."

"You told *Bill!*" Sally Barnaby Middleton snapped out of the pleasant little reverie she'd been enjoying, with horror in her eyes. "Is *he*—that *lug* going on—*our*—honeymoon?"

"Well, you see . . ." said Townsend. Then he stopped. He simply didn't have the crust to say he'd told Bill to keep himself unobtrusively present to look after any financial difficulties that might arise due to the Derby fiasco. It just somehow wasn't the way a Middleton started off married life. He patted her hand as inspiration came to him.

"I thought," he said softly, "that you and I would be more alone together if Bill was around to bite the ears off reporters and photographers."

This got across like a house afire. Sally melted.

"After all," she said, "I suppose important people *have* to have someone to stand between them and the—the rabble."

It was a fool remark, but satisfied Townsend. He knew that in Sally's eyes Bill had now changed from *lug* to Captain of the Household Guard and he didn't foresee the complications that were bound to arise since Bill himself couldn't possibly know of his promotion.

The first of these unforeseen complications arose almost immediately after the bridal couple's arrival at Briarcliff. They had gone by a circuitous route—through the Park and around the Park, then around the Park again and then up Riverside Drive, all in the most approved manner of starting on wedding-voyages.

They had talked little at first, on this journey, being content to sit as close together as the warmth of the day allowed and to dream the homely, sentimental, good lusty dreams honeymooners should. This in the Park. As they started up the Drive, Townsend began to talk. He told her, in fact, all about himself, from boyhood on; and she listened fascinated to his dreams and ambitions which, as such, for a grown man were

pretty feeble, but had grand names in them such as Liverpool Grand National, Derby, Cup Polo Team at Hurlingham, and so forth. By the time they turned off the road and began the long climb up to the hotel, Sally was practically blistering, so warmly loving and prideful were her thoughts.

She continued practically to blister with these loving and prideful thoughts until, amid much managerial bowing, they were ushered into the living-room of the bridal suite and she saw the Captain of the Household Guard sitting with his feet on a table guzzling his customary Scotch-and-soda. She stopped blistering and bristled. Bill rose.

"To de bride!" He polished off the last half of his highball. "Everyting's okey dokey, Chief. I give de boys a signed inter-view before I left de church and dey tink you're at White Sulphur."

Townsend looked at him.

"What else did you say?"

"I said it was a real love match. I said, 'Boys,' I said, 'it's a real love match. Lots of babes have been after de Chief's money but dis babe knew he didn't have none.' Was I right, Towny?"

"Oh, God," said Middleton. Sally went quickly into the bedroom. Bill, not getting it, continued.

"I said, 'Dis babe's a real lady. She knew he'd been done out of de cash for de Doyby. She knew he'd toynd down a hunnert g's for de filly because his trainer's kid liked de filly, an' she knew he was flat, an' *still* she married him!' Was I right, Towny?"

"Sure," said Middleton. "That was fine, Bill. That was fine. Thanks. But don't tell me any more."

"Should I go for a walk, perhaps?"

"Yes." Middleton wanted to tell him he should not only go for a walk but should also find a deep quarry pit and then should jump into it. But he didn't. Instead, he went to the bedroom door and knocked.

"Sally?"

"Send him away."

Bill heard this.

"Gosh," he said. "I didn't mean to *intrude!*"

Townsend turned to him.

"Listen, Bill," he said. "This is a honeymoon. For the love of heaven, beat it, will you?"

Bill merely looked hurt and rubbed his knees together and said, "You know me, Chief, I'm your friend——"

"I know," said Townsend.

"You know I wouldn't do nuttin' to spoil our honeymoon."

"SEND HIM AWAY!"

Townsend shrugged his shoulders.

"It looks," he said, "as though I'd have to struggle along without you on this honeymoon. I'm sorry, Bill."

"Me too, Chief!" Bill picked up his hat. "I was sorta lookin' forwards to it. Where should I go?"

"Go to Greenhill—you'll probably find enough financial trouble there to keep you busy."

"Okey dokey, Chief."

"And quit saying that. I hate it."

"Okay, Chief."

They shook hands and then Bill, after the manner of Napoleon's troops bidding their famous farewell, took his leave. When he had gone Townsend went again to the bedroom door.

"Sally—I've sent him away."

There was no answer. He opened the door and went into the room. Sally Barnaby Middleton was lying on the bed quite obviously weeping. She was weeping with those great sobs frequently produced by brides during the first emotional hours of their bridedom. Sally Barnaby Middleton had, as brides do, realized the welter of complications she now had to face. She had realized that she hadn't married a man, she'd married a mess left by his optimistic sire; that she had to compete with Greenhill and his horses and his trainer and his trainer's

daughter and his No Man for his affection; that the small-scale dodging of creditors she'd been accustomed to in Louisville was a piker game compared to what she'd let herself in for.

For a tiny frightened second, as she heard Middleton come into the room, she wished with all her heart she were home. Then he was sitting beside her and had laid a large hand between her shoulder-blades in a firm gesture he thought should be soothing.

"Sally, I'm sorry about the Bill business. I—I didn't have him here because of reporters. I had him here because I'm darn near flat and he's so awfully good with—about handling money things." He took a deep breath, "You see I didn't want you to bump up against—all the unpleasant part of being married to me—till——" He laughed. "Till we knew each other better."

She stopped crying. The great Middleton was showing depths of tenderness she hadn't suspected. He went on.

"You're in a lousy spot, Sally. I know that—hell." He said the "hell" conversationally, not as a cuss-word. "But I told you about me and you didn't seem to mind, and I'm only sorry I was so dumb as to tell Bill to meet us here."

Sally took out the hand that had been beneath her head and with it found his.

"That's all right, Towny."

"Is it? Is it really?"

"'Course it's all right. I knew you were—flat."

She hadn't *really* even dreamed it. She sat up and looked at him, bright-eyed.

"Will I have to cook and get your meals and things?"

He began to laugh, slowly at first, then heartily.

"Not while I have creditors you won't, Babe!"

"I could, you know. I *would*, Towny."

"Sportsman! Swell small sportsman!"

It began then to seem to both of them much more as a honeymoon should seem. Briarcliff took on some of the

attributes of the observation cars of trains rustling through Southern nights in the springtime.

The creditors, each of whom Townsend knew would see to it that he was never poor while his Uncle lived, lest some other creditor might grow wary and thrust him into bankruptcy—so none of them would get anything, might have shed sentimental tears—might even have knocked a little something off their bills—had they been near enough to Briarcliff to feel the sentimental aura that now properly surrounded these two. One creditor (Townsend's tailor, who was a stupidly soulful ass anyway, and had seven children) would likely have offered him a partnership.

To Sally Barnaby, in her new realization and understanding, Middleton had been promoted from the position of Gay Young Wastrel sure to get into the chips sometime to the Last Duke clinging with his teeth to the ancestral bailiwick—and, *ipso facto*, she was promoted to the post of the Last Duke's Duchess. She kind of liked the idea of being the Last Duke's Duchess. She went on liking it until a heavenly untrammelled week had passed. She went on liking it better and better as the honeymoon moved with almost royal spendthriftness up through the Berkshires; west a little, north, and to Niagara Falls. She liked it until Townsend received a telegram from Bill that made his face go white and struck him, for the moment, dumb, and seemed to make him forget, almost, that she existed in his preparations for hurried departure. Then she worried—as Last Duchesses should.

## CHAPTER NINE

THE telegram was very much to the point. It said, simply:

POP HUNG HIMSELF LAST NIGHT GUY FROM BANK  
HERE TO TAKE OVER GREENHILL BOOTS NEAR  
CRAZY YOU BETTER COME P S ME I'M NEAR CRAZY  
TOO.

Sally, as Townsend was hurling clothes into his suitcase, picked up the telegram from where he had thrown it. As she read it her face went nearly as white as Middleton's and tears welled slowly into her eyes. It spelled the end of the honeymoon, of course, but she knew it meant much more than that. She knew it meant that life had once again caught up with her. It gave her the sort of chill spiritual mediums feel when once in a great while they see a real ghost. It practically scared the pants off her.

But because Sally was fundamentally Southern with all the Southerner's ability to glide over bumps instead of smacking them head on, the chill didn't last. She got over it as she packed, for although he hadn't said anything about her racing home with him, she hadn't the slightest intention of letting Townsend feel he could face a tough situation without her or of turning him loose to comfort any pansy-eyed stableman's daughter who looked like a woman and dressed like a boy.

As the plane he'd hired dived to its landing, at the Long Island airport, she clung to her husband's hand.

"Towny—I am so sorry and—and frightened about everything."

Peering at the ground, looking for his car, he answered over his shoulder.

"I'm sorry too, Sally. It may be—sort of nasty." He



turned. "We're coming down out of the clouds now, you see."

"I love you, Towny."

Her hand was pressed violently. So violently it hurt, and she was glad. But she wasn't glad at all when, after they had landed and got into the car, he said, "Poor, poor little Boots! I guess I'll have to adopt her or something. She'd no one but O'Connel—and the horses, poor kid; and it doesn't much look as though there were going to be any horses now."

They fell into silence then, that lasted until they were home. As silences go, it was a pregnant one. Townsend was deep, deep in gloom. He thought the whole thing was pretty awful and that having the guy from the bank around at such a time was still awfuller. Then, too, he loved Boots. He loved her the way the British love their king, the way he loved his horses and seeing his silks flash by the winning-post; the way he loved Greenhill. Boots was as much part of Greenhill as the great rambling house itself. By the time they passed under the colonial arch of the lodge-house and into the bluestone driveway, he had almost forgotten Sally Barnaby.

By the time they passed under this archway of the lodge-house Sally Barnaby had, mentally, got her loins girded for battle. She felt a shiver of thrill run down her spine—the way she had when she'd realized the new importance she'd attained after her wedding—when she saw the lodge-house, and the broad green acres of pastureland spotted with woods that lined the driveway. *This was hers* now. No guy from a bank was going to take it away from her. She'd dreamed too long of something just like this to be willing to see it mist into a memory almost before it had become an actuality. Presently the chauffeur sounded the horn three times, the car swung under a *porte-cochère*, and Bill bounced from the house and flung open the limousine's door.

"Aw, Chief! I'm some glad you're here!"

He put a welter of feeling into this, that was added to by the worry that lined his big homely face.

"Dey've run me ragged." He looked slyly over his shoulder. "Say, why'n't you slip in de back door an' go to your private smoke-room, eh, Chief?"

Townsend smiled. He nearly always smiled when he saw Bill labouring under emotional stress. It was like coming upon a child of four grappling with a problem in trigonometry. He helped Sally out and shook his head.

"No, Bill. It's still my house, you know."

"Okey do——" Bill caught himself. "Okay, Chief." Then, to Sally, "Hi, Toots!"

Sally gave him a look—a look such that the trigonometric-child expression swarmed back to his face.

In the main hall, as Townsend entered, there was quite a little reception committee waiting for him. There was, as advertised, Ranson of the bank, there was Buel the butler, looking sorrier than most butlers can look, there was the feed-and-seed man from whom Towny bought most of his horse provender; there was a fat little man in pince-nez—Whitsun, the tailor; there was, looking like a proud ship in the midst of a storm, Mrs. Ashton; and, over by one wall looking like something the tide had washed up, Mr. Ashton.

Behind this group, whoever had charge of the reception committee—probably either Mrs. Ashton or Bill—had corralled a complete set of lesser creditors—namely, the butcher, the grocer, a couple of department-store credit men, three jewellers, a dressmaker (who should have had better taste than to close in at such a time), and behind these—pressed against the French windows on the lawn side of the hall—six process-servers.

Even though he had to receive them, under the circumstances, Bill would never let process-servers into the front row of creditors. It simply was not in his code.

Townsend handed his hat to Buel and said, "It's a damned shame, this!" He gestured toward the crowd of people, all of whom had been awed into silence by the actual appearance right smack in their midst of the ogre they were seeking. He

managed a grin. "Must make you feel like a fool. I'm awfully sorry about it, really."

Buel, who had paddled Townsend in his youth for throwing rocks at him, blinked—his eyes were full of tears, so he had to blink—and said, "It would have killed your father, sir, if he could see this!"

Townsend looked him full in the blinking eyes. He said, "Father's not having seen this has damn near killed me. It was bound to happen—I just didn't know it was coming—right now."

Townsend Middleton straightened and then he looked at these people, one by one, for a long time. He saw, as he looked at them, all sorts of things besides the people themselves. He didn't like the things he saw, but particularly he didn't like these people. He owed them money and he'd pay them money—the money he owed—in time; but they had no business coming here now—just because Pop O'Connel had lost his nerve and gone to join Domino and Troublemaker and Sysonby and all the other great horses he'd always talked of. They had no right here anyway!

Townsend Middleton looked at them. He clenched his fists in hate: in hate of them—in hate of the situation he'd been born into, that could make this happen to him. Then he got himself under control and remembered that there was more than hate mixed up in this. He turned to Mrs. Ashton and spoke as softly and as calmly as though he were sitting next to her at dinner.

"Sybil, show Sally where she lives, will you? This is sort of—sort of messy for her." Then he raised his voice: "BILL!"

"Right wit you, Chief!"

Bill mushroomed up beside him.

"Bill, throw these swine out and the *hell* with the consequences!"

Bill knew he didn't mean the Ashtons or any of the household people. A broad grin spread over his features. He

unbuttoned his coat and hitched up his belt and rubbed his hands together and started for the group of process-servers.

In a moment or so the hall was quite empty. Townsend turned to Ashton.

“What happened, Peter?”

Ashton, who always felt much more at ease when Bill was non-present, lighted a cigarette and puffed on it with all the luxuriance of a mystery-story hero when the villain of the piece had spared him.

“*What’s happened, Peter?* I mean here. What happened to O’Connel—why were these lice hanging around? Where’s Boots, Peter? This is ghastly for her.”

Ashton shuddered.

He said, “Oh, perfectly frightful.”

“Where is she, Peter?”

“In their cottage—alone—didn’t seem to want anyone around. We buried Pop this morning—it was quick, I know, but Sybil and Bill thought it best.”

Townsend nodded. Then he went across the hall and out onto the lawn and over it to a wood where there was a tiny path that led to the stables. He felt frightfully about the whole thing, yet he didn’t see what he could have done to prevent it. He thought perhaps, though, he could do something for Boots to make up to her for the extreme misfortune of having been born with her fortunes linked to his own. He was a man. As a man, he was supposed to bump the bumps—to have, and to stand up under, misfortune. Boots was a little girl. It wasn’t fair.

She wasn’t at the cottage—he hadn’t really thought she would be; so he went on to the stables, the great Greenhill Stables with its indoor exercise track and its sweet smell of fresh straw and bran and alfalfa and crushed oats. He walked slowly by the rows of box stalls, some occupied, but most of them empty now. Occasionally a head thrust out and soft lips whickered at him. Presently he came to the corner box, bigger than the others, reserved for the current cham-

pion—like a star's dressing-room. He stopped a few paces off.

"Boots." He called softly. "Boots, it's Townsend Middleton."

There was no answer, but he thought he heard a stifled sob. In the half-darkness, he heard Black Mamba stir in the box and saw her head thrust over and heard her blow at him through her nose and whicker. He went to the box and opened the half-door and went inside. Then, in the corner of the stall, by the manger, he saw Boots. She was dressed as she had been at the Derby, in the battered riding-things. She was sitting on the straw under the manger and her head was bowed on her knees. She was weeping her soul out to the only two living creatures she had left there to love, Mamba and Pete, the Dalmatian dog, who lay sprawled ungracefully in her lap.

"Boots, it's Townsend Middleton." He knelt beside her and laid a hand gently on her shoulder. "I want to help you, Boots."

She raised her head then and looked at him, though she couldn't see him very well, what with her tears and the darkness. But he could see her and he could see how she was looking at him and it chilled him.

"You!" she said. "You want to help me. You wasted everything and it killed my father and *you* want to help me!"

Townsend knew this was almost, but not quite, true. He knew too that he would never be able to help her if he let her go on feeling that way about him, so what he said wasn't meant as a rebuke, but as an explanation. He said, "Remember, Boots, I tossed a hundred thousand dollars out the window when I didn't sell Mamby—just because you didn't want me to."

This stung her.

"I could kill you for doing that. It's what killed Pop."

Middleton got to his feet and walked to the door.

"I'm sorry you feel like that," he said, "because I needed

that money more than I've ever needed anything in my life."

He went out into the passage. He had walked almost ten paces before she caught him up and in a fresh and awful paroxysm of weeping, flung herself about him.

"I didn't mean it, Mr. Middleton. I didn't mean it. Don't think of me like that. It's just I'm so damned bloody lonely and unhappy I don't know what I'm saying right."

She clung to him then, fiercely, shaking with all the grief of all the Irish, for ever, surging through her. He held her and patted her back and then when she was quieter, he said, "I think they're going to take Greenhill away from us, Boots."

"Oh, *sir!*"

He nodded.

"I came here to tell you I'm giving Black Mamba to you, Boots." He saw a white shape at his feet. "And Pete. They're both yours, really, anyway."

"But I *couldn't!*" She stopped crying instantly as a child does when it sees the stick of candy that is rainbow's end being handed it.

"You'd better take them—before the bank does." He managed a laugh. "I'd so much rather you had them than they."

"Oh, *sir!*" Tears came again now, but they were of a different sort. Still with his arm around her he led her from the stable.

"We'll have a talk with Mrs. Ashton," he said, "and see what we can work out about you and your racing-stable."

Valerie Boots O'Connel loved horses even as her father. She'd got it from him, so she can't be blamed, really, for being a little happy through her grief; nor for feeling that the man who was undoubtedly responsible for his death wasn't such a bad *shaughran* at that.

## CHAPTER TEN

**B**ACK at the house, Townsend immediately took Bill and Mrs. Ashton and Boots to his private smoking-room or office. Then he drew up a contract—one of those “For a dollar and other valuable consideration” contracts—making the filly over to Valerie O’Connel. When it was signed and witnessed he handed it to her and said, “I want you to stay here at Greenhill, Boots, as long as we can hang on to it.”

Boots looked at him very steadily. Her excitement during the past few minutes had brought back all her customary composure, but it had done more than that too: it had brought sudden light to her eyes. Townsend thought she looked really quite beautiful, yellow turtleneck sweater and all. Sally would have thought she looked hoydenish.

“I can’t thank you, Mr. Middleton.”

Suddenly, something in Townsend snapped. He had been more upset the past few hours than he knew. The future looked so utterly dismal, the idea of losing Greenhill, O’Connel’s death, those horrible smirking people yelling for money, had made him lonely.

“Boots,” he said, “for the love of heaven don’t go on calling me Mr. Middleton. After all you’re the only one here who *really* belongs to the place now—you and I.”

He looked away out of the window where the dusk was heavy. Mrs. Ashton and Boots looked away too. Bill didn’t. Instead he slapped Townsend on the back and said: “I got it! She can call you Chief! Like I do! Say, there’s an idea for you, solves every little thing!”

“Bill, you’re wonderful,” said Sybil Ashton. She meant it and she didn’t.

“Aw, shoot,” said Bill, batting his knees together. “I ain’t so much!”

"Aw shoot, yourself; you are too!" said Sybil Ashton. "You *know* you think you are, Bill."

"Well, maybe."

"Maybe nothing. You think you're the snappiest thing that ever came down the pike. Don't you, Bill?"

Sybil Ashton was trying to talk Townsend out of that window-staring state. That she was talking to him through Bill was simply her way.

"Aw shoot," said Bill again. "I know I dress snappy—that's all."

Boots cut in.

"He's been swell to *me*, Mrs. Ashton. I don't know what I'd have done without him—and you."

"Nuts," said Mrs. Ashton. "Bill's the local Rock of Gib—I know that."

"I ain't!" said Bill. "I definitely ain't. Look here, Mrs. Ashton, I know I ain't pretty, but you shouldn't say things like that."

Townsend turned from the window. There suddenly was a sort of horror-stricken look about him.

"My God!" he said, "I'd forgotten I was married!"

"Why not?" said Bill. "You ain't been married long enough for it to hurt."

Sybil Ashton thought quite hard, but didn't say anything. Boots thought hard too. She thought: "Then it can't mean much to him—she just grabbed him when he was feeling lousy, the bitch—poor Townsend Middleton!" She always thought of him as Townsend Middleton rather than Townsend or Mr. Middleton.

"I darn well should have told Sally I was giving away the filly."

"Yes," said Sybil. "You should."

Boots's heart dropped, but she had been schooled right in sportsmanship. She held out the paper Townsend had given her.

"You can take her back, sir, if you want. I—I won't mind."



Townsend smiled at her. He had seen the light die out of her eyes and her full lips droop at their corners. He shook his head.

"Oh, no," he said. "She's yours." He turned to Mrs. Ashton. "Sybil, square me with Sally, will you? Tell her—tell her anything."

Again Bill sprang into the breach.

"I'll square it, Chief. I'll tell her you just forgot an'——"

"I said you were wonderful, Bill, but I never dreamed you were that wonderful."

None of them noticed that Sally had, just a moment before that, stepped into the room, until she said, over-softly, "Just what did you forget to tell me, Towny?"

Since none had seen her, none knew how much she had overheard and all were most embarrassed. Bill did what he thought of as rallying to the rescue. He said, "It wasn't nothin' much; just that he'd forgot to tell you he was givin' de Mamba filly to Boots."

Sally Middleton looked as though someone had slapped her face.

"Nothing—much!" She threw a quick glare at Boots, then turned to Townsend. "But she's worth a hundred thousand dollars, Towny. You can't. You-all simply can't do that—now."

Boots crossed to her and laid a tentative hand on Sally's forearm as a child grabs at a grown woman's dress to attract attention.

"But, Mrs. Middleton, you don't understand."

"Maybe I do," said Sally.

"Oh no, because you'd understand if you understood."

This speech was perfectly sound logic, but to Sally it sounded like gibberish. To Bill it was perfectly sound logic. He gestured.

"You see?" he said, "dat's all dere is to it—nuttin'."

Townsend crossed to her now.

"Sally *darling*," he began, but she shut him off.

"I don't want to speak to you, Towny—I don't want to speak to you *a-tall!*"

She turned with sweeping dignity, that dignity all Southern ladies seem in some miraculous way to have inherited from Lord Baltimore (who must have been quite a traveller) and dished out an exit line.

"You can find me in my room, Townsend, when you're quite finished."

With that she was gone. She left behind her a thick silence. It is always so hard to think of anything to say when one has the bad luck to be present at the primary ticking off of a bridegroom by his bride.

Townsend started to follow her, but Sybil Ashton laid a hand on him and said, "Steady, boy, don't be an ass." Then Bill said, "Cheez! It's on!"

Boots said, "Gee, I'm sorry, sir! Won't you take Mamby back?"

Townsend snapped around.

"Shut up on that," he said, "and for the love of God stop calling me 'sir'. I can't stand it!" Then he got control of himself. "I'm sorry, Boots. I—I didn't mean to swear at you." He smiled a crooked smile. "You know I didn't—don't you?"

"I'm used to swearing, Chief. I expect I'd—miss it if I wasn't to hear it—any more. Pop *always* . . ."

Boots began to cry again. Bill and Townsend both immediately looked as though they were going to cry too. Sybil Ashton, who, in spite of the fact that she had never been willing to admit that chorus girls and railway presidents mingle, was quite wise about many things, took a hand.

"Look here, youngish Boots," she said. "Suppose you and I go to the library and figure out what you're going to do with Mamba."

Boots, doing some quick sob-stifling because she realized it wasn't sporting to sob when one's friends were in trouble, followed Sybil Ashton. As the door closed behind them Bill turned to Townsend.

"Looky, Chief," he said. "I knows you wants to go and square it wid Tootsy, but you gotta see dese creditors. You just gotta. Dey've got *me* worn out."

"Right."

Bill went to call them. Townsend started looking out of the window again. He had, naturally, a tremendous urge to go quickly upstairs and make Sally know there was nothing wrong between them. But the urge was tempered by an anger—a slight anger that was growing—and a sense of injustice. Sally had had no right to act like that in front of people, regardless of what she thought. This was an emergency, an acute emergency, and she knew it. It was up to her to stand by him the way she had when he'd run into that little difficulty with the railway people in Louisville. She'd stood by swell then. Anything he'd done she would have thought was swell.

But that, for Sally, hadn't been an emergency. It was just a Saturday-night party that was one hell of a lot more exciting than the others she had known. That had been entirely his emergency, not partly hers as this one was. Townsend Middleton didn't like the idea of thinking such thoughts about his wife so soon after his marriage, but he was man enough to admit to himself that he was thinking them. He heard the door open and swung back to the room. Bill was showing in Ranson of the bank—Ranson, whose bank held the mortgages on Greenhill . . . Ranson who was going to take Greenhill from him. . . .

With a long sigh he turned, started to greet the man; then, as he was half-way across the room, the telephone on the desk tinkled. With a gesture of apology he answered it, half-heartedly, simply because it was ringing and not because he hoped anyone he might want to talk to would be on the other end of the line.

"Hello." His "hello" was weary.

"Hey, Buttercup, this is Topsy Wopsy—I hear you're in a jam."

"Hello, Tops. I am—*et comment!*"

"Popsy Wopsy an' I'll fix it. Stall till we get there, see?"

"No," said Middleton.

"Your unkie's blood pressure's way up—I've sold Popsy some shares. Hold the fort, Towny!" Her voice grew suddenly dead serious. "Please, Towny—hold the fort."

Townsend really had only the faintest idea what she was talking about. He was far too upset to be able intelligently to understand Topsy Martin's language, but he knew Topsy liked him with all the grand, full, thoughtless liking that he felt for her. He was glad she'd called him.

"Sure, Tops," he said. "I'll hold the fort."

From across the room Ranson looked at him and furrowed his eyebrows. Ranson, the ghoul, didn't like the sound of it.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

TOWNSEND'S method of holding the fort was wonderfully simple. When Ranson said, "I'm afraid, Mr. Middleton, we'll have to foreclose on Greenhill," he said, "Why, of course you will, but you can't go around foreclosing at this time of day. Have a drink."

When Ranson, after sipping part of his drink, said, "I've brought some papers for you to sign," and reached in his pocket and produced them, Townsend said, "What's the good my signing papers when you've just told me my signature's practically worthless?"

Ranson had not come there to joke. He never went anywhere to joke, for that matter, and he wouldn't have recognized a joke if it came up and bit him. He lost his temper.

"We've fooled with you long enough, Mr. Middleton."

"Then why make bad jokes about my signing things?"

"I am not making jokes, sir!"

"Sure you are; that's a swell joke you made."

"To-morrow the sheriff will be here."

"He's a friend of mine," said Townsend. "I helped elect him."

"You *what*?"

"Sure, I loaned him the money for his campaign—just in case."

He laughed.

"Then," said Ranson, with a great air of triumph, "his duty when he comes here to-morrow to seize this property will be a painful one."

Townsend smiled. He really smiled. The idea of Cletus Brown seizing Greenhill was pretty priceless. He shook his head.

"Give you seven to five he doesn't come."

"And why shouldn't he? He's got to when I show him my papers."

"He won't see your papers," said Townsend, "because he'll be miles away from here. I'll tell him to be."

"Oh, my God!" said Ransom, and then, more rationally, "Look here, Middleton, you——"

Townsend held up his hand.

"*Mister Middleton, please.*"

"*Mister Middleton—you can't stall me.*"

Townsend grinned at him.

"But don't you see, Ranson, that's just exactly what I'm doing?"

"You——"

"I've got to, Ranson." He smiled again. "You see, a rescue expedition is on its way here right now. I've simply got to stall you till it gets here."

"Who'd rescue *you*—at this point?"

"Oh, fella called Popsy."

"Popsy!"

"Sure, Popsy. Topsy calls him Popsy—bet you can't say that when you've finished your highball. I mean twenty times. You're a clumsy egg; bet you twenty berries you can't!"

"Don't be an ass! I'm not here to play games!"

"Now, Ranson, you're in a very sporting section of the country right now—I've offered to make you a wager, don't tell me you're afraid to accept it, Bill here'll hold the stakes."

Bill, who had been hovering near the door stuffing bits of paper into the keyhole in case any of the other creditors might be trying to listen, came forward.

"Okey dokey, Chief! I'll lay you a side bet of five at dem odds dat he can."

"You're on, Bill!" They shook. "Well, what about it, Ranson? Are you a sporting man or are you just a bluff?"

Ranson, for an instant, looked like a rabbit caught in a trap. He didn't know whether he'd make himself more ridiculous by accepting or by refusing the challenge. He had never been

in a position like this before. He did get, though, a faint, a very faint, glow from the fact that Bill, whom he had grown to hate in the past day or so, wanted to back him. He tossed off the rest of his highball and found courage to decide.

Slowly he hauled or, rather, fished, two ten-dollar notes from his pocket and handed them to Bill. Then, even more slowly and with deadly earnestness, he began:

"Topsy—calls him—Popsy. Topsy calls him Popsy. Topsy calls him Popsy, Topsy calls . . ."

Bill stopped him.

"It ain't fair to de Chief," he said, "for you to do it so slow. I'm bettin' on you an 'even I admit dat. You gotta jazz it."

Ranson, who at this point was so anxious to win the twenty he had no idea at all that he might possibly be making a fool of himself, said, "I suggest you time me then. I know now I can do it—say we make the wager that I can do it in thirty seconds?" He added, as a sort of guess-that'll-show-you-whether-I'm-a-sporting-man-or-not gesture, "Just to make it more sporting."

Bill snapped out his stop-watch.

"Go!"

He clicked the button. Ranson began spouting that Topsy called him Popsy. He unquestionably spouted that Topsy called him Popsy accurately twenty times incredibly swiftly. As he finished, Bill clicked his watch again and shouted, "Twenty-two and two-fifths—flat! Attaboy! Ranson of the Hanoverian Trust Company, wins—under wraps!"

Ranson, for a man who had just finished saying what he had just finished saying, addressed Middleton with an amazing dignity.

"There!" he said. "That'll show you! My twenty, please—*and* the other twenty."

Bill handed over the money. Ranson, as he took it, almost strutted.

"Now, about those papers . . ."

Middleton shook his head and grinned. He said, "In about

ten minutes a gentleman named Humber, president of the B.P. and E. Railway, will be here. I want you to see him."

Ranson took it big.

"Not Joshua Humber!"

"Some people call him that," said Townsend, edging toward the door. "But I notice you call him Popsy. At least you told me a minute ago that was what Topsy calls him."

He bowed. Almost before Bill had burst into his great guffaw, Townsend was out of the room and on his way to Sally.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

SALLY had been waiting for him for nearly an hour. During the hour her emotions had run their gamut; but towards the end of the hour what passed for her intelligence began to work, so that by the time Towny knocked on her door she had every intention of being pacified, but no intention at all of being pacified without a struggle. The struggle was too trite to be worthy of record. The end of the struggle was too sloppy to be worthy of it; what is worthy of it is the fact that neither participant was entirely sincere.

Townsend, because he'd been so upset by the real trouble at Greenhill and by her snippity attitude, was half in love with her, half peeved at her. Sally was half in love with him and wholly in love with the idea of making it perfectly definite she was mistress of Greenhill and Townsend's first consideration. The first, she was. The second, she wasn't. Towny didn't let her find this out. He kept right on with his pacification until a tremendous pounding on the door announced Topsy Martin. The pounding was accompanied by a shout.

"Hey, buttercup, get out of the hay; you're on your way to a conference."

Townsend turned to Sally.

"Fix your face," he said. "The angel of mercy's here."

Sally smiled at him. She thought it was awfully nice to have a husband who could produce millionaires out of a hat just like that.

"I'll be right down, Towny."

"Hi, *Buttercup!*"

Towny, hoping Sally wouldn't get any absurd impressions of intimacy from Topsy's nickname for him, sped to greet

her. As soon as he stepped into the hall, quickly closing the door, Topsy wrapped herself about him and gave him an enormous kiss.

"Oh, Towny, I'm so sorry about your mess!"

He unwound her from his person.

"Hey," he said, "I'm married now—lay off, will you?"

"No," said Topsy. She kissed him again. Then she stood back and looked him over from head to foot. "You don't look any different. Are you, Towny?"

"Yes," he said.

She squinted her eyes.

"The hell you are. I know. I can tell from looking. You're not in love with her."

"Topsy," he took both her hands. "You're swell to bring Humber down here. How did you know they were swiping the place?"

"Bill called me."

"How did you work it with him?"

"Like I told you. I sold him a thousand shares in your uncle's blood pressure at fifty dollars a share. You remember, in the game we used to play at Saratoga, where you'd give us all so many shares at such and such a price and then you'd telephone the old bastard's doctor and get his latest reading and the one whose price was nearest the blood pressure won? Well, you always said I had a thousand shares. I sold them to Popsy, that's all."

"I've got to thank him—right away."

"I thanked him," said Topsy. A funny look came into her eyes. "I thanked him a lot." She paused. "He wants to marry me, Towny."

"Oh, swell!"

"Not swell. I won't do it."

"You're a fool."

She shook her head very slowly.

"No," she said, "I'm not a fool. Being a chorus girl, I sort of glorify him now. Being a chorus girl, if I let a railway

president marry me I'd just make him look ridiculous. Tough, but that's how it is."

"You're too darn noble."

"No, I'm not. I sort of love him and he loves me. He wouldn't even like me, the other way."

He kissed her, then, brother-fashion.

"Let's go down, Tops, and confer."

"Sure"—they started downstairs—"but you won't find anything to do. Popsy's a bearcat as a conferrer. It's his life."

Sally joined them on the stairs and greeted Topsy as though she'd known her always.

"Darling! How nice of you to come all the way out here to our house and see us."

Topsy handed Townsend the wink. Sally went on.

"Isn't it silly—this ridiculous mess Townsend's in?"

"Which mess?" said Topsy. It went over Sally's head.

"Why, the one you and Mr. Humber are helping him out of, of course."

"Somebody has to," said Topsy. "He's a nice guy but dumb."

"Sally doesn't think so," said Townsend.

"Sally does," said Sally. She thrust her arm through his. "Sally thinks he's awfully nice."

"Three rousing cheers," said Topsy.

They went into the den. The scene there was quite different from what it had been when Townsend left it. Ranson had assumed the grovel, or unctuous, expression; Bill, so relieved to be with someone who wanted to give money to Greenhill instead of to take it away, could hardly contain himself. Behind the desk sat Joshua Humber, tycoon; fifty-odd, grey, lean and hard-faced. But as soon as they entered he stopped looking hard-faced and smiled.

"I've drawn up sort of a document," he said. "I don't think my partners would approve of it, but secretly *I* think it's quite—snappy."

Townsend said, "Hello, Josh." He'd known Humber ever

since he'd started moving through the bright white lights of Broadway. "This is—pretty damn swell of you." He suddenly snapped his fingers again as though he'd forgotten something, stepped back and said, "By the way, this is Mrs. Middleton."

"Oh, I'm so glad to meet you," said Humber.

"Let's see this document, Popsy," said Topsy.

Humber winced at the name. But he didn't wince anything like as much as Ranson. He handed Topsy a sheet of paper which she and Towny and Sally read together:

I hereby acknowledge receipt of one thousand (1,000) shares of Morton Middleton's Blood Pressure which I have purchased from Winifred Martin at fifty (50) dollars per share, the money to be deposited to the credit of Townsend Middleton at the Hanoverian Bank and Trust Company and to be paid by him to her with interest at six per centum (6%) upon liquidation of the above-mentioned Morton Middleton's Blood Pressure or upon demand.

L.S.

(Signed) Joshua Humber.

Townsend Middleton's acceptance of the above transaction acknowledged:—

LS———.

Townsend looked up at Topsy and grinned. The idea of the president of one of the greatest railways in the country signing a thing like that delighted him. He said, "Tops, it's really *your* money. You're saving Greenhill, but do you know, I feel positively kept?"

Topsy grinned back at him.

"You know," she said, "oddly enough, so do I!"

Sally, being very chatelaine, crossed to the desk.

"Mr. Humber," she said, her voice dripping roses and moonlight and other Southern props all over the lot, "I can't thank you enough for helping Townsend!"

"He's foursquare!" said Bill. "Foursquare and a yard wide!"

Humber looked at him, puzzled. Topsy patted Bill's arm and said, "There, there, it's all right, handsome." Then to Townsend, "Sign it, you mug, it saves the farm—and a little more."

Townsend signed and gave the paper to Humber who promptly gave it to Sally. Then Townsend grinned again.

"Tops," he said, "I hope you and Josh will stay to dinner."

"Mr. Humber, you just must!" said Sally, getting some chatelaining in quick before it would be too late.

"I think you'll find you and Topsy have some pretty swell champagne laid down here, Josh," said Townsend. "Maybe you own some horses and things too."

The business man in Humber fought its way to the surface.

"Black Mamba part of the place?"

Townsend shook his head.

"No," he said. "When I thought the place was going I gave her to Boots O'Connel."

Towny shouldn't have said this. He should have waited until Sally said, as it was on her lips to say, "We've given Black Mamba to the trainer's little girl." But he did say it and Sally's face froze.

Humber said, "Nice gesture, Middleton. What'll she do with her?"

"Race her—Sybil Ashton's talking to her about it now."

"But Bill told me O'Connel didn't leave a nickel."

"Oh, I'll take care of——" He stopped. All his life, until a few hours ago, Townsend had been a rich man. Whether he happened to have any cash around or not made no difference. He had credit, hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of credit. It was as natural to him to say, "Oh, I'll take care of it," as it was for him to flip a quarter to a cigarette girl. Now he realized that this was the sort of remark an inmate of an asylum who thought he was Napoleon might make.

"But," said Humber, "you——"

He stopped because the door to the room opened and Buel entered.

"Mr. Townsend," he said. "The—persons—are getting a little violent, sir. *Won't* you speak to them?"

"But what'll I say to them, Buel?"

Sally put her arm through his again.

"Towny, tell them Mr. Humber's here and you can't be disturbed."

Towny patted her on the back.

"Sheer genius," he said. "That'll hold 'em. Go on, Buel."

The butler withdrew. As he did so the telephone on the desk tinkled. Bill answered it. Everyone was silent, ostensibly out of politeness but really because everyone is always silent when somebody in the room is telephoning, so they may be able to pick up a nifty tit-bit they're not supposed to hear.

"Naw, you can't talk to him!"

He started to put down the 'phone. Stopped.

"Whassat?"

He gulped as though an emotion far too great for him to control suddenly possessed him.

"Okay, okay, I'll tell him!" He slammed down the instrument and looked at Townsend. "It's happened!" he said. Then, mysteriously, he took off his coat and began to roll up his sleeves, the while an expression of savage anticipation lighted his face, or puss. "Lemme-at-'em!"

He strode toward the door, the others too confounded by his sudden lapse, so to speak, to talk. Just as he got to it Topsy Martin found voice.

"Hi!" she cried. "*What's* happened?"

"His rich uncle!" Bill stopped and gestured. "At de age of ninety-eight, never having give de Chief a nickel in his life, finally agreed to pass away. Lemme-at-'em!"

He shot through the door. No one in the room he left knew quite what to do. They couldn't be sorry; the old skinflint had been practically in a coma for years. They couldn't congratulate Townsend. So they just looked at one another—except for Townsend, who looked out of the window again. He could see practically nothing there with his eyes because it was quite

dark. But in his mind he could see the whole estate and all the beauty of it and Boots and O'Connel and the horses and most of his own life and the horribleness of the past few months. Presently he turned from the window.

"I hate," he said, "profiting by anyone's death."

Topsy Martin answered him.

"Don't worry too much about it," she said, "until you do." She laughed. "Let Bill's friends with the blue papers do the worrying."

Sally came to him.

"I know how you feel, honey—I'll take everyone in the other room. I feel awfully about it too."

As they filed out and he stood by the desk the sham of her nearly nauseated him.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FOR the week following, the feeble passing of Uncle Morton's affairs at Greenhill progressed so smoothly that to anyone at all versed in the perversity of nature it would have been perfectly obvious Things were going to happen.

Boots, at Towny's insistence, vacated the cottage and came to live in the big house. Sally insisted on this too (after Towny had begun to insist on it). Sally, by way of getting even with Towny for asking her to live at the house, carried the thing further with her insisting, and insisted that Boots should feed with them. She did this because in her heart she felt Boots was an enemy and in her heart she felt that Boots, having been brought up in that strange class between servant and friend—the class in which the men are called Mister by their employers—would be horribly embarrassed and show herself gauche and foolish and so would cease to be any sort of a menace at all. Sally erred.

She erred particularly because, on the Saturday following Boots' transition, she invited the Ashtons to dinner and, the Ashtons being the Ashtons, she assumed they'd dress and so turned herself out in a little Chanel number with a train. Ashton appeared in flannels and a yachting coat; Mrs. Ashton and Boots, in coolish linen dresses.

The dinner from Sally's point of view was not a startling success. As the savories were passed she tried to start what she thought would be a properly social conversation by saying to Sybil Ashton, "My dear, I've been having such a time getting things straightened out here! I mean the servants and everything," she amplified. "It was easy to see there hadn't been a woman in this house in years and years!"



Peter Ashton guffawed in his napkin. Sybil gave him a look that turned the guffaw to a choke and Middleton blushed. Sally's statement was, to put it mildly, inaccurate.

Boots, seeing Towny's blush, sensed what had happened. She didn't like to see him uncomfortable when he'd been so kind to her. She said, "But, Mr. Middleton—I mean Chief's—had lots of women here."

"Ouch!" said Sybil Ashton.

"Some were nice," said Boots. "Some weren't."

"Boots!" said Townsend, reprovingly.

"Oh, they were all plenty pretty," said Boots. "I didn't mean they weren't that."

Then Ashton, whose ancestors had been intimates of Lord Chesterfield and Sir Walter Raleigh, strangled his choke and came out of his napkin to the rescue.

"I say," he said, "I say, Boots, what've you done with the Mamba filly?"

"She's being kept fit," said Boots. "I've got her down with Frayling's string at Belmont." Her eyes grew bright. "I gallop her myself."

For just an instant Sally Barnaby Middleton was surprised out of her social paralysis caused by having the Ashtons dining with her at Greenhill. She said, "Do you mean you actually *ride* that *race-horse*?"

Boots looked up at her and smiled.

"I always did," she said. "I galloped her for months before her Derby."

Of course Boots shouldn't have said "her Derby" because legally or technically it wasn't hers—she was disqualified. Boots went on.

"You see she goes quieter for me than for any of the boys." She raised her hand in a self-deprecating gesture. "Oh, I know it's sissy of her, but there it is anyhow."

Middleton, forgetting the social *contretemps* of a moment before, broke in, snapping his fingers as though he'd forgotten something.

“Good Lord, Boots—in that contract I didn’t give you Elvira! Will Mamby work without her?”

Now Boots flushed. She flushed so crimson that everyone there except Sally, who hadn’t any idea at all what the conversation was about, laughed. Boots was hideously, horribly embarrassed. She came out of her embarrassment exactly as her father would have.

She said, “I’m sorry, sir,” and the brogue came in strong on her now. “If you’d bothered to be around the stables this past week you’d have known.” She paused and hung her head. “I took him too, sir.”

“Oh, swell!” said Towny. “It was awfully stupid of me not to think of including Elvira.”

Sally Barnaby Middleton felt she had been left out of things long enough. As the soup arrived she leaned confidentially toward Peter Ashton and said, “Mr. Ashton, I don’t *really* understand about all this horse business—do talk to me about something I *do* understand, Mr. Ashton.”

Peter Ashton lowered his soup spoon and looked into Sally Barnaby’s eyes. He found there things that made him forget all about soup, and he was a man who really liked soup. He swallowed quickly.

“Oh, call me Peter.” Then, leaning towards her with equal confidentialness, “I *hate* horses.” He wiped his moustache. “One of Sybil’s bit me—last time we were at the track.” He seemed to go through a sort of mental struggle as though he were seeking the *mot juste*. Then, “I’ve got it,” he said. “We’ll talk about you!”

That was all right with Sally. They talked about her at some length for some time while Boots and Sybil Ashton and Towny merrily prattled on about horseflesh. The more Boots talked the more pleased with her Towny became. She had an instinctive social poise, so that she didn’t seem the least out of place there. With dessert, he shoved back his chair and contemplated his home table with something like pleasure for the first time since marriage had overtaken him. He’d had a good

meal accompanied by good solid horse talk in place of the flibbertigibbet remarks that constituted Sally's table conversation. Also he had now a sense of security—Morton's will would be read as soon as his late Uncle's lawyer got home from Europe, which would be in a week; then everything would be lovely. He was glad he had Boots around, though. He sighed, comfortably.

"Let's have coffee here," he said. "It's so comfortable and sort of peaceful."

It was both of those things. The crickets just beyond the open windows were having a swell time knocking their hind legs together; from the pantry came a faint musical chiming of silver being washed, the candles in their high candelabra battled with the last rays of daylight and made the ladies look pretty and old-fashioned and the men clean-cut and brave. In short, it was summer evening at her best.

It continued to be summer evening at her best and sort of peaceful until just after the coffee had been served the front door-bell pealed its mellow chime. Buel went softly to answer its command. A moment later he returned. He looked worried. He had what Towny had come to recognize as the "My God it's another creditor look" on his face. Only it wasn't another creditor. The man bowed to Middleton.

"Mr. Townsend," he said. "A Colonel Barnaby's outside." Here Buel seemed to be struck with a sort of ague. He lowered his voice. "He's brought his baggage, sir!"

Sally Middleton heard and went tense. A quick "Damn him!" escaped her lovely lips. Boots' eyes met Towny's. Her lips twitched as though she wanted to grin. *She* had once seen Colonel Barnaby. Sybil Ashton did grin and whispered to Boots. She whispered, "Of course, my dear, he's heard about Uncle Morton." Boots nodded. Only Ashton, the noble soul, lord bless him, who was under the influence of Sally and old port, came through and said the right thing which, of course, at the time, was absolutely the wrong thing.

"Your father, Sally! How perfectly splendid to have him come barging along just at this time!"

It didn't get across. He didn't know why, but he knew it didn't, so he floundered on.

"Share your happiness and all that, I mean."

It still didn't get across. Sally, as a matter of fact, hadn't heard. She was engaged in a more or less scientific problem.

*Q.*: If Colonel Barnaby was sober enough to have got himself here was he sober enough to be presented to the Ashtons? *A.* (which she arrived at quickly): Probably not. *Q.*: What to do about it? *A.*: Pass the buck to Towny. She did.

"Honey, you go and greet him and if he's tired from his journey make him lie down for a little spell before we introduce him to a whole lot of strangers."

Townsend Middleton was furious. Not being much of a psychologist, he'd never dreamed Colonel Barnaby would show up just when he was about to be able to relax for a while. He got out of his chair and spoke the first unkind words he had ever addressed to his bride.

"Boots and Peter and Sybil—a whole lot of strangers!"

That was all he said, but Sally knew what he meant. Angry spots showed in her cheeks. Townsend strode out of the room.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IN the fine old hallway of Greenhill, just inside the fine old doorway, stood Colonel Barnaby Barnaby. No one in the old South or the new, for that matter, knew just why he'd been called Barnaby Barnaby instead of being given a regular name, but it was generally assumed that at the time of his christening his father had probably been too plastered to think of one and so, like other men before him, had taken the path of least resistance. It would have been interesting, as he stood there, to pry into the secrets of his mind and see just what he thought of this and that; but, since it is practically impossible to explore an unlighted and tangled wilderness without machetes or other surgical instruments, one has to be contented with more or less surface readings.

As he stood there Colonel Barnaby Barnaby was almost glad he hadn't had that one extra one at the railway station, which would have made it impossible for him to appreciate his good fortune, and he was exceedingly glad he'd managed to float a loan on the prospects of what Sally would give him as soon as Morton Middleton's will was shoved through and so had been able to afford the journey from Louisville.

From Colonel Barnaby Barnaby there emanated now a sort of cloud of good will toward all. He looked about him and felt, not unjustifiably, that, after struggling for years against unjust odds, he'd finally succeeded in snooking the truffles.

Colonel Barnaby tore his gaze away from the expensiveness surrounding him when he saw Middleton heading down the hallway. For an instant he was appalled by the ferociousness of Middleton's expression. Then, through his private haze, the idea arrived that, since he was going to be one of the household, if the head of the household was mad about something he should be mad about something too. He put on a ferocious

expression. Middleton didn't care for it. He still had thoughts of the horse pistol in the back of his head, so, as he approached, he changed his expression. The Colonel promptly changed his. Middleton advanced and, finally, held out his hand.

"Well, Son!" said Colonel Barnaby. "I'm glad to see you, suh!"

Townsend was so impressed by the sudden change in the man that he forgot himself and said what was in his mind instead of what he'd meant to say.

"You didn't lose much time, did you, Colonel Barnaby? Uncle Mort's only been dead a week."

Colonel Barnaby waved a hand in a large gesture and looked past Townsend at nothing.

"A week?" he said. "A day? He is of the immortals. I got here as soon as I could float a small—huh—I got here" (he said it *heeyah*) "as soon as possible, suh! Thought I should be with little Sally in her bereavement."

Townsend didn't like it. Since Colonel Barnaby *was* his wife's father, he'd been prepared to ignore, if possible, his sudden haste in arriving at Greenhill the instant Greenhill seemed to be solvent. He *wasn't* prepared to stand for complete hypocrisy. He had felt so peaceful and at home just a moment ago. Now, hearing this, there occurred to him what had occurred to Topsy Martin on Derby Day. He remembered her saying, "You've bought something, Towny." He stiffened, and probably for the first time in his life was out-and-out rude.

"You came here," he said, "because you knew I wasn't busted any more. You came here to sponge—I know all about you, see? Sally's told me."

Colonel Barnaby, who wasn't awfully large anyway, shrank a little. In another man it would have been wincing. He said, "Sally knows very little about me." He leaned, or teetered, toward Townsend. "In fact, just in fact, in case you haven't found it out yet, Sally knows very very very little about anything!"

His having said this seemed to bother him. It bothered him

particularly because Middleton didn't seem ready to subscribe to the idea. That is, he didn't nod, man-to-man fashion, confidentially. Colonel Barnaby amplified. He said, "She's just a child—a little child blinded by the glamour of a rich man." Then, either the liquor he'd had before he got on the Long Island Railway or the effects of riding on that railway seemed suddenly to get him, for he did a complete about-face.

"I'll be frank, suh!" he said. "I'm a poor, broken old man and I've come to live here with my daughter Magnolia and you——" he paused, as though he felt something should be added. "Because"—he paused again—"because it's the loveliest spot I've seen on creation, suh!"

Townsend was fish. That business about Greenhill being the loveliest thing this yap had seen on the face of creation struck home. He nodded, shook hands with the man, and said, "It *is* lovely here, isn't it!"

"Yes, *suh!*" said Barnaby.

Then Middleton's mind got working.

"By the way," he said. "I married Sally, not Magnolia—just for your information, of course; and are you too potted to be presentable or can you come in and have coffee with us?"

Colonel Barnaby began to sputter. Middleton cut him short. He said, "Sally told me you might maybe have to lie down for a while if you were tired from your journey. Can you make the grade?"

"Make the grade, suh?" Barnaby did a terrific straightening. He looked, for a second or so, almost like a Kentucky Colonel. Middleton thought once more of the horse-pistol. He thought of it even harder when Barnaby's hand seemed almost unconsciously to glide toward his hip pocket, though of course Towny should have thought of the empty flask there and not pistols. To sort of ease things up he forced a laugh.

"If you're a little stinko it's all right," he said and—because he suddenly thought Barnaby looked pathetic standing there surrounded by his battered luggage which none of the servants had been willing to move till they had his, Middleton's,

orders to do so—put an arm around his shoulder. After all this was Sally's father—ought to give the old louse some sort of welcome to Greenhill. "Would you go for a touch of Napoleon brandy, Colonel? I mean the real thing?"

An expression almost of reverence lighted Barnaby's face.

"My son!"

Townsend didn't like the way he said it.

"Your son-in-law," he said.

"Oh, no," said Barnaby. "I don't feel like that about *you* at all!"

Townsend for a fleeting second recalled again the words of Topsy Martin at Louisville when she had suggested in no uncertain way that he had bought something. Quite apparently, he had.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SOMEHOW, after the advent of Colonel Barnaby, things were intangibly different at Greenhill. He wasn't really a bad guest or member of the household, with two exceptions: he would persistently fall asleep in hallways where he'd be tripped over, and then when he'd been tripped over he'd get frightened, and there'd be a great to-do calming him down and he'd have to be given brandy which invariably made him drop off to sleep again in some odd place; and he would insist on acting as host to whoever came there, treating Townsend more or less as a little boy he was *very* fond of who had married the daughter of the house.

It got under Towny's skin. Sally, because she (as naturally she would) fitted into the old boy's act perfectly, also began to get under his skin. He began, in short, to feel his home was not his own, and he didn't care for it. But, on the other hand, he couldn't see anything he could do about it. He took to driving Boots down to Belmont and clocking the early-morning gallops. Then, after he'd come home for breakfast, he and Bill walked over the broad acres of his estate fixing fences that the foxhunters had broken the previous autumn and doing odd little things like that which any one of the many employees of Greenhill could have done much better. Sometimes Boots came along on these tours, sometimes not—she was usually too busy superintending the care of and exercising the remaining horseflesh in the stables.

Toward the middle of this week following the night of Barnaby's arrival, she was riding old Wrack-By, to try to get some of his spring grass-stomach off him, so he'd feel better and wouldn't look so foolish when, as, and if Townsend were able to send him to Frayling at Belmont to have him polished up for the summer steeplechasing.

She had been riding through the woods with that ridiculously serious expression on her face she always wore when she was "working" with race-horses. But the expression was habit. She hadn't been thinking about horses—not even about old Wrack-By, who strode strongly beneath her with the assurance an ageing steeplechaser should have. She had been thinking how very odd it was that she had suddenly become officially a lady, and she was thinking how she really hated living on Townsend Middleton's bounty and how she especially hated it since, as yet, there wasn't a nickel of honest cash in the Middleton exchequer—it was all still just the anticipation of Morton Middleton's will.

Valerie Boots O'Connel, though her old man was a horse-trainer, had been raised in a tradition of high honourableness. Living—and living with a splurge—on something you didn't have wasn't part of it. Besides, she hadn't found being officially a lady much fun. Sybil Ashton and the Whitneys and the Vanderbilts who raced had always been her friends even though she was naturally never asked to their houses. She *knew* they were friends because of the horse talks they had together at the tracks—which were arguments, half the time, in which things she had to say were listened to and respected. Since she'd been officially declared a lady all she'd had was trouble. The non-horse crowd Sally Middleton invited to the house treated her with a forced politeness that went right through her. The others—the ones she knew—seemed to feel funny about coming to the house, now that Sally was its chatelaine.

Wrack-By stopped to garner some of his beloved and now forbidden grass. She didn't even notice. She was thinking it was awful sweet of Townsend Middleton to be trying to help her but just typical of the muddleheaded way he went through life: ready to give anyone connected with Greenhill the shirt off his back, even if he didn't happen to own the shirt. Suddenly, to that horse's great surprise, she drove her small sharp heels into Wrack-By's ribs.

"Get on!" she said. Then she took her reins up racing short and growled at him the way jockeys do to get a slow starter moving. "It won't hurt you, you cow!"

The steeplechaser grunted, turned his head to look at her once in surprise; then, feeling the short rein and remembering his last racing, started off at what, considering his grass belly, was a considerable pace. There were a couple of fences ahead of them. He soared over them in his stride, then they came to the far woods and Boots checked him.

The woods were on top of a little hill. She rode into them and then pulled Wrack-By to a walk, thinking he'd be cool enough to drink by the time they reached the stream that ran through the bottomland. Presently as she reached a clearing she pulled up to a dead stop. She could hear voices raised in laughter—voices she recognized.

"Chief! If we can swing dis big rock down we can call it Boulder Dam!"

Then Townsend Middleton's half-grunted answer.

"Boulder—doesn't—begin to describe it. Shove, Bill."

And then:

"For all de years I spent makin' big ones into little ones I *never* saw one *dis* big!"

Valerie Boots O'Connel forgot what she'd been thinking about. She could see from where she halted that for no apparent reason Townsend Middleton and Bill were bent on building a dam, more or less beaver-fashion, across the stream. It looked like fun. She wanted to be in it.

"Come on, Fat Cow!" she said and drove the 'chaser down to the point where the men, stripped to the waist, were struggling with the rock.

"Chief!" she yelled as Wrack-By made gingerly progress. "Chief—I'm a Mahout and I've got an elephant to help you!"

Both men looked up. Both men looked, at the moment, sort of foolish, as though they'd been surprised at a wicked orgy. Boots went on.

"Chief, if you don't think I've got an elephant, look at his grass-belly."

Towny and Bill looked. Both of them understood. When a race-horse gets fat he looks *so* much fatter than anything else. Middleton said, "Right, Boots, back him up against Bill and we'll get Bill backed up against the rock and there we are!"

Townsend Middleton was laughing—really laughing, and it occurred to Boots it was the first time she'd seen him really laugh since the Derby fiasco. Inside she was glad. Bill looked troubled; but then, Bill always looked troubled.

"Okey dokey, Bill!" she said. "Get going."

But Bill wouldn't. He took himself off a few paces muttering comments about what sort of people it was that was willing to rub a man against a rock preferable to a horse.

Boots said, "What *are* you doing, Mr.—" She checked—"Chief?"

"Building a dam," said Middleton. Without knowing why, he was sort of glad Boots had happened on him and Bill half-stripped, perfectly natural, playing. He somehow hadn't liked the idea of her thinking of him, as she must have, as being constantly stuffed-shirt and social. "It just seemed a good idea," he added.

Boots surveyed the smooth course of the little stream. It was interrupted now by rocks they had placed here and there, that had made more of a rapids than anything even approaching a dam.

"It looks fine the way it is," she said.

Townsend looked down.

"I know it," he said, "but Bill and I just thought we'd like to accomplish something."

Valerie Boots O'Connel was suddenly stricken with a hate and she wasn't one to know hate. She hated this man, who had been from her earliest childhood imaginings a sort of Prince Charming, for never in all his life having accomplished anything and for now, when his house was still tottering round his head, being so childishly excited about building a dam.

“Good grief!” said Valerie Boots O’Connel and with that she spun Wrack-By on his heels and, even though he had a long catalpa branch in his mouth and was really quite interested in it, made him back up against the boulder.

The boulder stirred, moved, began to roll. By the time it had crashed into the little river she had yelled, “Get on, Cow!” and had slammed her minute heels into Wrack-By’s sides and started off through the woods at a pace many really great horses had found it awfully difficult to keep up with on a nicely turfed track. Grass belly and all, she took him straight over the fields and fences to the stables, where she turned him over to a wee stable boy to walk until he was cooled out.

Townsend Middleton watched her go. He was puzzled. Presently he said to Bill, “You know, Boots acted kind of funny, I thought.”

Bill nodded.

“All women’s funny,” he said.

“She acted,” said Towny, “as though she were sore at me for building a dam.” Then he laughed again. “That’s too absurd.”

“Nothing’s absurd where women’s in it,” said Bill. He looked at Townsend, who was still staring in the direction Boots had gone. “We gonna go on playin’?”

Townsend shook his head.

“I want to find Boots and see what’s biting her.”

They started walking slowly back toward the house.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

**B**UT Townsend Middleton didn't find Boots when he got back to the house. He found Colonel Barnaby "resting" in the front hall; was tempted to kick him as he passed, but restrained himself and went on up to his room to change into dry clothes. He was vaguely troubled about Boots. When he reached his room he stopped being vaguely troubled and became violently so.

On his pincushion was a note—an absurdly childish note because its writer had so obviously tried to be dignified. It said:

Dear Mr. Middleton,

I appreciate more than I can tell you your great kindness in taking me into your home, but it's just no use. I can't stand living on something we have not got and always pretending like we have and not doing anything about it.

So if you will excuse me I am taking Pete the Dalmatian and going off to work and support Black Mamba and Elvira which you so very kindly gave me. I am sure I can.

You will find Wrack-By needs a lot of work to get his belly off. The others are nearly ready to go into training as soon as you get the money from your uncle.

Thanking you again I am,

[*Here a phrase culled from her sire*] Your obedient servant,  
Valerie O'Connel.

P.S. [*And here the pull of Greenhill began to get her*] I think you'd better watch Paddy. He's drinking. Also, Bright Rain looks to me like she might be in foal.

V. O'C.

P.P.S. [*And here a smear on the ink that looked as though it must have been made by a tear.*] I hate leaving Greenhill, Mr. Middleton, and leaving our cottage and the house and everything, but I know I've got to. Please understand, Mr.

Middleton. You're so nice even if you don't do anything that I know you will. Good-bye.

Boots.

Middleton had half-smiled as he read the letter. When he read the P.P.S. he wanted to weep. Then he grew, for him, oddly thoughtful. Sally Barnaby had shown him how high-idealed it was of him to do nothing grandly, so that Greenhill might go on. Boots O'Connel had just shown him, naïvely, honestly, how she felt about it. For the first time in his life it occurred to him that Boots's viewpoint might be the right one. But he couldn't stand there thinking about himself; little Boots had run away to face the world—to try and smack a living out of it. Dangerous, that—too dangerous for somebody as pretty as she. He stepped to the bell, pushed it savagely, and began to fling off his dirty clothes.

Buel came, morning-coated.

"Tell Bill to get dressed in a hurry, and then have my car brought round."

He figured he could probably get to the Long Island Railway station in New York as soon as Boots and could meet her there and then persuade her to come home—at least until he could get her a suitable job.

"Dammit," he said aloud as he dressed, "she's practically my ward!" Actually he was thinking, "Little Boots—heart-broken—no father—no friends—no anything—alone in the big city."

Dressed, he started downstairs. On the landing he met Sally. She laid a hand on his arm and stopped him.

"Why, honey! Where you-all going? It's time for luncheon."

"Town," said Middleton. "Dammit, Boots has run away! Got to get her back!"

Sally smiled. Her moment of victory, that she'd so been looking forward to, was turning out to be a washout. She'd driven out the opposition (she thought) and Middleton was hell bent to go and bring it back. But she smiled, because she was pretty sure the opposition wouldn't be having any of it.

"Oh, Towny! But you must, honey—hurry!"

He pecked at her cheek and went on to where Bill was already waiting for him in the car, climbed in, and roared off down the driveway. When they got on a straight road so that he didn't have to hold on quite so hard, Bill nudged him.

"Hey, Towny, what's up? Lawyer got back?"

"Boots beat it." He handed Bill the note. Bill read it and whistled.

"Dat's hell, Towny. Must make you feel fierce."

"It does."

"She as much as says she likes you but you're such a lazy good-for-nothing bum she can't stand to be round you." Bill laughed, uproariously. "De noive of Bootsie!"

Middleton shut his lips tight and drove on at terrific speed. Bill stayed silent for a moment or so. Then, fearing from the look on Middleton's face that he might have hurt his idol's feelings by treading on the clay part of the idol's feet, he sought to make amends.

"You ain't, Towny. I know you ain't."

Middleton swung the car with a wild shrieking of tyres into the North Country Road and rammed the accelerator to the floor. Bill tore his eyes from the dancing instruments on the dashboard and looked up at the sky, because that at least didn't seem to be going by as fast as the trees and telephone-poles and cars they passed. In the sudden comfort of this he found speech again.

"I know you ain't, Towny; what the hell, you took me from de gutter straight when I come from de Big House an' made me what I am to-day."

Their speed dropped from eighty to seventy and Middleton smiled. He couldn't help it. Bill's pride in what he was to-day—No Man for a penniless Rich Man. . . . But the fact that he was proud of his position was something for him, Middleton, to be proud of. He took a hand from the wheel and patted Bill's knee.

"Don't *do* dat," said Bill, suddenly embarrassed; "we might have accidents."



"We won't," said Middleton. "I *can* drive a car." He laughed into the wind. "Bill, I think if I had to I *could* be a chauffeur—if I ever was broke."

Bill settled this train of thought swiftly.

"*If you ever was broke! My gawd! If you ever was broke!*" He paused, lost in heavy thought; then, "But Boots wouldn't think much of your bein' a shofer." His ponderous thinking continued. "Say," he said after a few miles. "What makes you think you're gonna be broke some more—again, I mean?"

"I don't," said Townsend. "I just meant there were a couple of things I could do, Bill, if I had to."

Bill nodded. Then he said, "You could be a jock, but you weigh out too heavy." He chuckled. The idea of the idol being anything except just what he was was too ridiculous even to traffic with in his mind. "You could be a cheff, Towny, but you can't cook."

He roared with laughter again and presently they hit the Queensborough Bridge traffic and Middleton parked the car and the two of them took the subway to the Penn Station. There they waited while train after train arrived, discharged its suburban ladies, in for an afternoon's theatre, movie or what not; and after three-quarters of an hour they met by agreement at the news-stand in the main waiting-room. Bill noticed that Middleton was white-lipped.

"She's disappeared, Bill."

"Let's go have a Scotch-an'-soda," said Bill, "and discuss the situation."

They did. Townsend did most of the discussing, which, naturally, consisted of thinking things aloud; but Bill contributed comments from time to time calculated to aid his thought—comments such as, "Well, if it was you where would you be?" And "If it was me, I'd be at such and such a place." Eventually he scored a winner. He said, "Well, when I gets out of jail"—caught and corrected himself, accompanying the correction with a silly smile—"I mean when I *used* to get out of jail, I always went to de guy or de dame I knew,

in what town it happened to happen in, who for my money knew de most about dat town."

Middleton, miserable over his third Scotch-and-soda, looked at Bill as though he were an oracle. Then, quite calmly, almost unappreciatively, Bill thought, he said, "Of course."

He got up and buried himself in a telephone-booth and dialled a number. A maidservant answered his ring.

"This is Mr. Middleton, Lucy—Miss Topsy there?"

"Topsy's here," came a voice, obviously from an extension 'phone in the apartment. "What the hell, Towny?"

"Listen!" His voice sounded to Topsy so agonized that she was not only amused but delighted, because she knew what was coming. "Listen, Boots has run away. I've got to find her. I've simply got to, Tops. Have you heard from her?"

"Put your shirt-studs back in," said Topsy Martin. "She's here."

"Be right up," said Middleton.

"No," said Topsy, "you won't."

"But I'm here in town. I've come to tell her she's got to come home and—and—not be a damned fool."

"Snap out of it, Buttercup," said Topsy. "I'll take care of her."

"Oh," said Middleton.

"I wouldn't let you see her anyway. She's making the Great Gesture and," Topsy's voice softened, "apparently leaving that moss-covered worm-eaten manse you run down on the Island has got her down. It took most of her guts to do it, but I'm backing her."

Most guardians, either legal or otherwise, of pansy-eyed wards would undoubtedly have felt that to have such an utterly and frankly unmoral person as Topsy Martin harbouring and backing their charges was a thing impossible to condone. Towny thought it was swell. He wanted to see Boots and tell her there wasn't any reason on God's green earth why she should leave Greenhill; but, since he couldn't, the idea of Topsy flapping the protecting wing over her was the nuts.

He said, "You're a good kid, Tops—I like you."

Whereat Topsy grew coy.

"I've always liked you, Towny—might have married you"—a chuckle distinctly followed this remark—"if you'd had any dough."

"You swine!" said Townsend. "You utter swine!"

"By the way," Topsy went on, taking this in the complimentary way in which it was intended. "Speaking of this and that, that lovely bunch of roses and moonlight you married telephoned a while ago. She said to tell you Uncle Morton's lawyer was back and, if you could be got there, the will would be read to-night. Apparently if you're not there the reading won't count."

A little thrill shot through Middleton. This meant the years of creditor-stalling were over. He told Topsy good-bye, called Sally, said he'd be home in time for dinner, and rejoined Bill. He felt satisfied with himself and with the world. As he walked across the café toward the place where Bill was sitting he had sweet visions and plannings. One of them was that, when he came into his own, he would make Boots O'Connel trainer of the Greenhill string—actual trainer, boss of the works. She'd love it. Bill saw his smug grin.

"What's up?" he said. "Find Boots?" Middleton nodded. "Glad I was a help to you," said Bill. Middleton continued to grin. Presently, having ordered another drink, he placed his arm about his No Man's shoulders.

"Bill," he said, "to-night—after dinner to-night at Greenhill, we're going to hear that sweet, sweet music of the lawyer's voice reading aloud, to all of us of Greenhill, the final will and testament of my wretched tightwad uncle!"

"Three rousing cheers!" said Bill. A few moments later they rose and started a leisurely progress to the country. Each of them was so filled with relief it is a wonder they started at all and didn't, instead, just stay on where they were and celebrate.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE will-reading, as such things should, took place in the library at Greenhill immediately after an unpleasant dinner at which Colonel Barnaby was hosty beyond belief and insisted on toasting, over and over again, "Our good fortune."

After he'd done it three times Bill, who was sitting next to Towny, leaned over and whispered to his chief.

"Want me to do anything about dat, Chief?"

"Later," Middleton whispered. "Later, Bill."

Sally had worn a black evening gown for the occasion. It really wasn't the best of taste on her part, since Townsend wore tennis flannels and a dinner jacket, but when they filed into the library—she, Colonel Barnaby, Ranson of the bank, Bill, the lawyer, and Towny—and she had draped herself in a straight-backed chair, she looked magnificent. Townsend, sitting across from her, thought so. He thought so to such an extent that he was sorry she'd rung her father in on him, and had got so very society-conscious, and hadn't acted at all the way she had in Louisville since they'd been married.

The lawyer, as lawyers do, went to the desk, and after opening a brief-case, ruffled a lot of papers just as though he didn't know all the time just exactly where the one he wanted was; and, eventually, hauled out the will. This will of Morton Middleton's was a very important bit of paper. Actually the lawyer himself didn't know what was in it, because his father had drafted it, sealed it, and had never happened to tell him its contents; and so, although he was as sure as everyone else in the room how it would read, his hands trembled as he opened the envelope. Any document disposing of something over twenty millions of dollars is, *ipso facto*, a pretty exciting document.

He started to read, waded through pages of stilted legal

phrasing giving this person and that person one—five—ten thousand dollars; distributing personal effects—gold watches and such to various people who'd been nice to Morton Middleton because they thought maybe Morton Middleton would carve up swell. The residue was the meat—everyone in that room was waiting for the official wording on that residue business, because *that* meant where the millions went. All of them, as the lawyer began approaching this, wore the expressions of a group of civil executives waiting for the mayor to cut the ribbon opening a brand new highway that everyone knew was open anyway.

“The residue of my estate I leave to the first male issue of my brother John. . . .”

He was interrupted for an instant by Bill saying, “Dat’s you, Towny, you old Male Issue you!”

“Go on,” said Townsend.

But for some reason the lawyer didn’t seem able to go on. He was, at heart, a kindly man. He’d really looked forward to reading this will; and yet, at this instant he looked like a man on the verge of a stroke. His face was bright purple. Middleton jumped up and went to him.

“Well?” he said. “Go on.”

The lawyer swallowed a couple of times; then, looking only at the paper before him, went on:

“Provided said manchild shall at no time have borrowed against the prospects of this specific inheritance.”

The lawyer paused. The silence in that room was so very dramatic he couldn’t help pausing—dramatically. He knew as well as everyone else that Towny’d been borrowing against the prospect of that specific inheritance for the past five years. After a moment, while he recovered his own composure, he said, “Of course you could try to break the will, Townsend,

but there—isn't—a—chance. That spendthrift clause—it holds every time!"

"Dere goes twenty million berries," said Bill.

"It's an outrage!" said Sally Barnaby Middleton.

"A *damned* outrage, *suh!*" said Colonel Barnaby. He turned sharply to Townsend. "You-all have swindled me, *suh!* You have married my daughter Magnolia under false pretences!"

Townsend Middleton heard all these words as though they were being spoken from afar off. It had never, but never occurred to him that this could happen. He passed his hand over his eyes, then, suddenly, the shock passed and he began to laugh. He laughed a little hysterically. Bill came over and stood by him.

"Towny! Dis ain't nuttin' to laugh at!"

Townsend met his worried look. Bill saw that his eyes were bright; they looked, to him, bright with merriment, but that seemed goofy, so he decided they must be bright with fever.

"Towny, for God's sake don't laugh at twenty million berries goin' down de sink!"

Townsend Middleton stopped laughing and smiled. He smiled with the corners of his mouth twitching with real amusement.

"Lord knows I'm not laughing at that," he said. "I'm laughing at all the people who've been sucking around me for years because they thought I was going to be rich. It's a howl, Bill, really it is! Look at Colonel Barnaby there. He looks as though he'd been struck by lightning."

Colonel Barnaby straightened for an instant at this and let his hand stray toward his hip. Then Sally, who was, if one could call it that, the brains of the Barnaby group, went over to the lawyer.

"Mr. Preece," she said. "Docs this mean we'll get nothin'? I mean nothin' at *all*?"

The anguish in her voice was not quite ladylike. The lawyer nodded.

"Absolutely nothing," he said. "While you have," he coughed, "been recovering yourselves, I've glanced ahead. The will says that certain of the personal debts of this said male issue shall be paid—out of the residue—then it goes to," he looked down at his papers, "a long list of charitable enterprises." He coughed and, for just an instant, got human. "It does seem a damned shame, Townsend, all that money just—disappearing, but——" He shrugged. "There it is."

Townsend also shrugged.

"There it is."

"I'm wit you, Chief!"

Colonel Barnaby rose from the settee he'd been favouring. He made one of his remarkable efforts and, as usual, succeeded for a second or two in looking like a Kentucky Colonel. He crossed to Middleton and stood, nearly erect, before him.

"I shall bring suit, suh! I shall indeed. Meanwhile—meanwhile, my daughter Magnolia and I will leave this house to-night!" He too paused dramatically. "Tell your lawyer to provide whatever may be necessary for us."

With that he stalked from the room. Before he closed the door he called, "Come, daughter."

He really created, by all this nonsense, an exceedingly awkward situation. No one there knew quite what to do. Presently Sally rose from her straight-backed chair. She looked like a lovely musical comedy star making her heartbreak exit at the end of the second act.

"Townsend, I've got to stand by my father."

Middleton gestured.

"Go ahead."

"But, Townsend, you've got to understand—he's *terribly* upset."

"So am I," said Townsend Middleton. Then, something that had been boiling in him for some little time—boiling and puzzling—rose to the surface. He spoke to his wife as he had never dreamed he could speak to any lady. He said, "And just what the hell is this Magnolia business the old louse keeps

getting off? Are you his daughter or aren't you? and is your name Sally or Magnolia or what?"

"And just what might that be to you?"

"Please!" said Mr. Preece, the lawyer. He was getting confused.

"I only wanted to get things straight," said Townsend. "You see," he smiled crookedly at Sally, "I don't think you really like me very much, but we're married, and I still own the place here, and even if your name is Magnolia, why there's no reason why we shouldn't try and make a go of things. I suppose you can cook?"

And then Sally Barnaby stepped, figuratively, right out of that lovely black evening gown, and became herself.

"I haven't cooked since I tied up with the Colonel and became his daughter, and I'm not going to begin now! So there, flash guy!"

With that she left the room. She left a very silent room—a room filled with mingled emotions, most of them pretty outraged. Presently Middleton moved (he was the first to recover consciousness, so to speak) and put his hand on the lawyer's arm.

"Read the rest of it to Bill, will you? I—there's a mare down in the stables that I think needs some looking after."

He passed from the room through the open french windows leading on to the lawn. Bill, with the same guarded look on his face he'd worn at the wedding, folded his arms and settled down to listen to the rest of the will. Middleton, when he left, meant to go to the stables, but he stopped at the edge of the lawn and sat down on the damp grass. He knew if he went on to the stables his heart would break because all the horses there were so very soon going to belong to somebody else. The lawn—the land—would still be his—for a while, anyway. He wanted to try and figure some way of doing what Boots had called, "Something about it."

It was the first active effort along those lines he'd ever made, but, in his heart, he wasn't sorry. It had occurred to him when



he'd seen how "Colonel" Barnaby and his daughter had acted that living on the work of dead men wasn't perhaps quite in keeping with all the fine traditions he'd always thought of himself as being steeped in.

He sighed. He'd be glad when Sally and the Colonel and the lawyer had gone. It meant he could start life all over again. He had courage enough to want to.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

**A**CTUALLY he didn't begin life all over again until a week later. It took that time to straighten out the unholy mess Morton Middleton's last will and testament had left him in. Middleton's debts of honour, such as the fifty thousand he owed Topsy and the horse feed bills, were paid. The remaining horses were sold for what they'd bring to pay the grocers and butchers and tailors that flocked to Greenhill in droves. At the end of the week he was reasonably square with the world, but his credit was completely blooey. He couldn't have borrowed a dime from the Morris Plan with J. P. Morgan and the King of England endorsing his note. In cash he had ten dollars. He had Greenhill, with the interest on the mortgages paid for some time. He had two race-horses that were so old no one would buy them. He had a mongrelly stable terrier, and he had Bill.

Townsend had told Bill to get out while the getting was good, but Bill had merely knocked his knees together, gestured toward the broad acres of Greenhill, and said, "I'd like to, Towny, but I can't. Goldarn it, Chief! Dis is my *home*."

This, on Saturday night, after the last of the creditors had disappeared and they were sitting in the Greenhill kitchen. They had dined there—Towny had insisted on calling it that—and had washed the dishes and pots and pans and were now sipping an after-dinner brandy from great-bellied, rich-looking glasses. Presently the lights went out.

Townsend sighed, wearily.

"I sort of expected that," he said.

"Schweinhunds!" said Bill. "De utilities! De rotten schweinhunds!"

"Let's go into the dining-room and light the candles."

They did and then sat at the table, still with their glasses dignified before them.

"De gas is off, too, Towny. I didn't tell you before."

Townsend chuckled.

"You know, Bill," he said, "after all the guy who built this house in the first place didn't have gas or electric lights, yet he got along all right and was quite proud of it."

Bill didn't answer. The silence of the empty house—which was so very different from the warm silence of a full one—was beginning to get on his nerves.

"Is dere ghosts here, Towny?"

"Sure," said Middleton. "My great-uncle's."

"What's he do?"

"Comes to the front door and rings the bell."

"Oooh!"

"The electrician always said it was a short circuit, but I told him it couldn't be because a house like this rated a ghost and I insisted on having one. He didn't understand."

"No," said Bill.

The candles flickered. The mahogany all around them reflected the flicker in ghostly shadows. Bill twitched. Townsend, watching him, grinned. He could grin because the show was over now and he didn't have to pretend any more. The very worst had happened; anything that happened now would be better. It made him feel quite young. In fact he found himself hoping the door-bell would ring, even though he couldn't afford an ancestral ghost any more. The door-bell did ring. Bill let out an unearthly howl and bolted beneath the table.

"There he is, Bill," said Townsend.

No reply. Townsend got up to answer the bell.

"Chief! Chief! Where you goin'?"

"I'm going to see if I can touch him for money enough to pay the electric light bill."

Still grinning, Townsend went to the door and, with a great clanking of bolts, merely for Bill's benefit since it wasn't

even locked, flung it open and peered into the darkness broken by the glare of a car's headlamps.

"For the love of mike!" cried Topsy Martin. "How about some light? Or are you hiding?"

"No can do," said Townsend.

"Oh," said Topsy. "I get it." She turned toward two other people who were getting out of the car. "Here's Boots—she's sort of embarrassed at calling on you—and Popsy. We've got ideas."

"Hello—Chief." A warm little hand found his in the darkness and shook it firmly.

"Boots!"

"How are you, Chief?"

"Swell, Boots."

Humber came and shook hands with him then. He whispered, "Be glad to help you, if I can, Middleton."

"Not a chance," said Townsend aloud, "but thanks—I mean it. You're a good guy, Josh. But you see I couldn't pay you back now."

"Flags flying high, eh? Good. As Tops says, we have ideas."

He led them through the gloom of the hallway to the dining-room, yelling at Bill as they came to bring some things for his great-uncle's ghost to drink. When they got into the glow of candlelight he looked at Boots and was thoroughly and completely astonished. In fact he blinked. Topsy Martin was considered, by those who knew, to be one of the niftiest-looking ladies about town, both from the point of view of Topsy herself and from the point of view of the way she was turned out. Yet, standing there beside her, it seemed to Towny that Boots from both points of view looked even niftier. It seemed absolutely impossible to him that this exceedingly smart young lady could ever, even in another age, have appeared before sixty-odd thousand people in battered boots and breeches and a turtleneck sweater.

It seemed just as odd to Boots that Townsend Middleton

could be living all alone at Greenhill with Bill without even being able to afford electric light. Needless to say, neither of these two expressed these opinions, but suddenly each of them was conscious of a sense of strangeness toward the other. It wasn't reasonable and it didn't make sense, but there it was. Topsy, settling Humber into a chair at the table and pretending he was a very old man who had to be assisted at such an operation, got it.

"I've done a good job, don't you think, Towny?"

"She's been swell, Chief," said Boots. For an instant the sense of strangeness vanished. "*Look at me!*"

"He's been looking," said Topsy. "Plenty."

Boots blushed and was glad no one could see that she was blushing. She was almost grateful to the Electric Light Company for having shut down on the current. There was an embarrassing pause, then Townsend said, "You mustn't call me Chief now, Boots—there isn't much point to it. I've nothing left to be chief of."

"Yes you have," said Boots quickly. She supposed it was because she was Irish and sentimental, but she'd found sudden tears in her eyes. "You're—you're the master of Greenhill. That's being chief—of something."

"Oh, my God!" said Topsy. "Honest, Towny, I've tried like hell to get this steeped-in-Greenhill stuff out of her head. It's all that's wrong with her now. I give up. Popsy, you hear? I give up!"

"Never give up," said Humber, and added impressively, "while I'm alive!"

"You're just a dear old squirrel," said Topsy. "That's what you are!"

"I am not a squirrel!" said Humber. It was a silly remark because he loved having Topsy call him a squirrel when they were alone. In fact he had even, from time to time, asked her if he was not a squirrel, just for the joy of hearing her say he was. Immediately she took issue.

"But you *are*, Popsy; only the other day you . . ." She was

providentially interrupted by Bill coming clattering through the swinging door to the pantry, carrying, after a fashion, a huge silver platter loaded with bottles and glasses of all shapes and sizes.

"The gang's all here," muttered Bill through clenched teeth as he swung the tray to the table. "Hi, Bootsie! Hi, Topsy! Hi——!" he just caught himself in time. "Mr. Humber."

Bill was received enthusiastically, particularly so by Humber, who regarded him that instant as an absolute angel of mercy. He wouldn't have minded if Bill *had* slipped and called him Popsy. The tears fell out of Boots' eyes and were not replaced when she realized that Townsend Middleton still had somebody to wait on him and take care of him, even if it was only Bill.

Townsend Middleton, recovering from the embarrassment of the recent conversation, went to the tray and mixed high-balls. Scotch-and-sodas for Topsy and Humber, brandy-and-sodas for himself and Bill. Then, stricken, he remembered he'd forgotten Boots. Lousy, to do that—she was a damn pretty girl come to call on him and he was treating her like a kid who naturally wouldn't be asked if she wanted a drink. He unconsciously snapped his fingers, which gave him away, but he carried the thing off well enough. He said, "Boots, I knew what these people wanted and so just whipped it up. You, not being a confirmed drunk like the rest of them, might like something else. So I've waited—forgive, Lady?"

Boots forgave.

"I'd like some whisky and water—without ice."

He mixed it, feeling very strange, fixing a drink for Pop O'Connel's kid daughter. He felt even stranger when he reached across the table and handed it to her, because she didn't look the least bit like Pop O'Connel's kid daughter. She looked like a Broadway star—the sort of clean bright star guys hitch their chariots to, and so travel either way, way up or way, way down, depending on themselves. Their eyes held for several seconds as he gave her the glass, and he

noticed for the first time in his life that Pop O'Connel's daughter had eyes like velvety pansies. He wondered a little that he hadn't noticed it before.

"And now——" said Topsy. "If you're through getting a load of Boots, Towny—to business."

"Hungh?"

"I said we had ideas. That was why *we* came here. Boots came to see *you*."

"Get on with 'em," said Townsend. "I haven't any ideas at all."

"Well," said Topsy, making herself comfortable on the arm of Popsy's chair, "you've obviously got to go to work." Towny nodded. "Sorry as we all are, of course."

"I'm not sorry," said Townsend.

"The point is," Boots put in, "what event to schedule you for." She laughed. "You see you run as a maiden, Chief."

"*Please!*" said Bill. He didn't realize Boots merely meant in horse language that he was an untried performer—so far, a non-winner.

"I could start you in business of course," said Humber, "but with all due respect, Townsend, I think you'd be an awful nuisance in a business."

"De Chief is no nuisance," snapped Bill loyally. "He may be like Bootsie said, a good for nothin' bum, but he's no nuisance, get it?"

Before Humber could answer, Boots cried, "I never said that!"

"You thought it," said Bill. She kept silent and hung her head like a race-horse that's been caught stalling. Middleton reached out and patted her arm.

"Bill talks to himself a lot, you know, Boots. He's not quite all there upstairs. Forget it, kid."

"I did think it—once," said Boots. "I'm goddam sorry now I ever did."

"Here, here," said Humber. "This is supposed to be a conference." He smiled at Townsend. "You see, Topsy and I have

appointed ourselves a sort of receivership committee to try and conduct the affairs of a busted company so it might get to be solvent again." His smile broadened into a grin. "We've already decided what you're to be, and arranged for you to have a chance at being it. You tell him, Topsy, I don't know the exact word for it."

Topsy hesitated. She had complete faith in Middleton's ability to do the job they'd picked out, but she had grave doubts of being able to sell him on it. She knew from her vast experience with them that gentlemen were, at heart, shy creatures who, with few exceptions, ran from the public eye. Topsy figured to place Middleton right smack in the iris of the public eye and to keep him there. The silence began to get awkward. She suddenly took a big swig of her highball.

"You know more about race-horses and polo, probably, than any young man in this country."

"I couldn't turn pro," said Townsend.

"Nobody wants you to," put in Boots.

"Listen," said Humber, realizing that without his guidance the conference would turn into a cat fight again. "You've no objections to sports writers, have you? I mean if you could be one at a fancy price you would, wouldn't you?"

Middleton laughed.

"Me, *write*? I used to be able to sign my name—can't even do that any more."

"No, but you don't object to 'em—as people, I mean?"

"Lord, no! I have them here as guests all the time." Suddenly he looked sheepish. "I mean I used to."

"Adams of de *Tribune* an' Kelley of de *Times*? Pals!" said Bill. "Pals! Of course we don't object to 'em!"

"Well," said Topsy, "how about the men who do sports over the radio?"

"Never heard any. Always been there myself," said Townsend.

And right here Topsy sold out some of her best friends.

"You should," she said. "They smell. They don't know one



part of a horse from another. . . ." She caught Humber's eye and stopped. "They don't know a mallet from a ball, one part of a horse from another, they . . ."

Boots broke in.

"We've got it fixed for you to have a try-out as a sports commentator, Chief. Gee, it's a swell chance for you—with what you know and who you are—it's a cinch!"

Townsend Middleton's ideas on all people concerned with the air waves were vague and unflattering. Boots' reference to who he was alarmed him too.

"Oh, I couldn't," he said. "I mean—just cashing in on my name!"

"It isn't because of your name!" said Boots. "It's because of what you know, and incidentally trying to keep that swell name bright and shiny's fixed you and me fine, hasn't it! What'd your people ever give you except that name? They gave you a cat an' told you to hang on to it by the tail! You've done all you can about keeping that name bright."

Towny looked at her hard, amazed at her outburst.

"By the way," he said, "how've *you* made out since the crash?"

"I'm doing fine!" said Boots. "I'm being featured in Carrol's new musical." Her eyes lighted and she grew naïve again. "I find an awful lot of people know who I am—just like they do you, Mr. Middleton."

"For God's sake call me Townsend!"

He was thinking hard. A month ago he would have been outraged at Boots capitalizing on the Greenhill name—just as he would have been outraged at the very suggestion of *his* doing it. But he had noticed that Boots seemed to have a certain knack for seeing values in their proper light. After all, why shouldn't both of them capitalize on the name? They were all that was left of Greenhill, really, and they'd both tried in their own way to keep its banners high. Greenhill owed them something. Suddenly he held out his hand to her.

"Go to it!" he said. They shook. Then he turned to Topsy.

"I'll broadcast for you dressed in a jockey suit if you think it'll do any good!"

"At'y'ol'fight!" said Topsy. "Audition twelve o'clock to-morrow. We take you in with us to-night if you haven't got car fare."

"What about me?" said Bill. "I'm wit him, you know."

"You," said Humber, "if he pulls it off, cease being a No Man and become a Yes Man—if he pulls it off he'll need one."

"Yes," said Bill, practising.

Townsend looked about him—the quiet room, the eager faces of these oddly assorted good friends—the only ones of the scores he knew who had wanted to stand by him when trouble came. They all of them acted as though they'd just got a swell present, simply because he'd said he wouldn't be a damn fool any more and would go to work. In an odd way, he felt a little richer than he ever had before.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

TOWNSEND MIDDLETON'S audition, listened to by the "Programme Board" of the great broadcasting company, would, it is safe to say, never be forgotten by the programme board of the great broadcasting company so long as any of them lived. It had been arranged in detail by Topsy Martin, who had never had any experience in radio work; and it had been insisted on (which was much more important) by Joshua Humber. He had even gone so far as to say his railway might be exceedingly interested in sponsoring and paying handsomely for sporting broadcasts by Townsend Middleton, if the competitive bidding didn't jack the price of them too high. The way he put it to the broadcasting company's private lord almighty was, "After all, Jake, if the broadcast this man does is just good enough to interest, without being too good, people won't want to listen to him again and they'll use the railway to go to see the races and things in person."

Jake knew too much for his own good. Also he was too honest; he said: "Look here, Josh, I know what you're trying to do, but if the boy's that bad we can't possibly send what he's got to say to"—here he raised his arm in a terrifically expansive gesture—"millions and millions of people all over the world."

Humber smiled very gently.

"You can," he said, "if you're paid for it."

Jake grinned and got human.

"We do," he said. "God, how often we do! But, Josh, I know he's a friend of yours and—and—" He'd been going to say Topsy Martin, but didn't *quite* dare—"but why are you backing him? You're supposed to be a pretty tough hombre."

"I'm not backing him," said Humber. "I'm just under-

writing him. *I* think in Middleton you've got the greatest sports drawing card that's ever been offered to radio. He's been publicized all over the world—his horse actually won the Kentucky Derby this spring—good God, man, you can't beat it!"

"If he can talk," said Jake; and then, a shrewdness lighting his eyes, "Even if he *can't* talk—who'd know?"

"*He* would," said Popsy, "and he wouldn't eat it."

"That's the trouble with trying to do business with gentlemen!" said Jake. Then, half to himself, he added, "but he should be swell. Look, I won't get anybody to listen—any sponsors, I mean, except you, but we'll listen and if we figure we can do anything, I'll let it be noised around among the advertisers that we've got something." He sighed. "Funny, isn't it, me figuring on how to help you get Townsend Middleton a job!" He laughed and leaned across his large desk. "You know what's still funnier? Neither of us even *think* of giving him a piker job."

Humber lifted one of Topsy's idioms.

"As a piker," he said, "Towny Middleton would smell."

At precisely eleven, as per arrangement with Topsy, Middleton, dressed in a business suit, presented himself in the downstairs lobby of the great building that housed the broadcasting studios. With him was Bill. It being Townsend's first venture into the world of business, he thought he should dress as the sad, keen-faced brokers he bumped into at the Union Club when they came back from their offices in the late afternoon dressed. The two of them hunted Topsy. Finally, at the broadcasting company's information booth, they found her. It was eleven-thirty before they found her. This because (one) she was late; (two) they hadn't the faintest idea where to look for her because she hadn't said.

"Well, if it isn't the Commentator!" was Topsy's greeting. Bill as usual said, "Hi, Toots," and Townsend said, "We're all late, I guess. Will it—will it—spoil things?"

"You couldn't spoil this!" said Topsy. "Even if you tried. Hell, I've even got sound effects—you know, horses' hooves thundering? Jockeys groaning in agony after their spills? Bettors groaning in agony; cheers, howls, *and* bugles! I'm pretty damn proud of having bugles too. Thank your sister Topsy for seeing to things!"

With that, in sheer exuberance of spirits, she kissed him. Bill stood by solemnly shaking his head. All this made him a little nervous. Suddenly Topsy grabbed him by the arm. This made him still more nervous.

"By the way, Bill," she said, "what happened to Roses and Moonlight and her dear old dad? I couldn't ask the other night—everything too confused. I couldn't ask Towny now . . ." (This in spite of the fact that he was right with them.) "So you tell me."

"Dey turned out to be a coupla crooks!" said Bill. "Can you 'magine dat? He wasn't even her daddy!"

Topsy now laid a hand on Middleton's arm. The laugh died out of her face, the way sunshine dies under a really serious-minded thundercloud.

"Oh, Towny! God, I'm sorry!"

Towny said, "Oh, forget it. 'S part of another era."

"*Crooks!*" said Bill again. "Can you imagine *dat*?"

Topsy, who knew all about Bill, said: "Can *you*, Number Seven Six Five Seven Four Two?" Whereupon Bill, feeling at home again at recognizing his Sing Sing label, promptly gave her behind a rousing slap—to the delight and wonderment of the several dignified page boys surrounding them—and grinned.

"Let's go," said Topsy. She turned to a page boy. "Take us to Studio E."

Studio E turned out to be a not overly large room with beaverboardish-looking walls, a piano, several strange-looking boxes that looked as though they had been tossed in through the door and forgotten, a glass window giving into a control room, and three microphones. Middleton looked at the

microphones and shuddered. He had spoken through them before, but at those times he'd been hauled up to them in moments of excitement to say a few excited words about horses that had just won races. Conscious of his own importance, he'd been unconscious of the microphones. All three of these seemed to leer at him. They seemed like dark, impassive Ethiopian sentries and they sent chills down his spine. Also there was nobody in the room.

Presently a voice coming out of the walls said, "Mr. Middleton, will you step over to the centre mike and say a few words, please—just for volume?"

This was familiar! He stepped up to the centre microphone and without hesitation said just what he'd said the last time this had been asked of him. He said, "I'm so damn glad Mamby's won the Futurity I can hardly . . ." He stopped short. For a second he'd gone back into a world that didn't exist any more. When he stopped the engineer's voice came again through the walls. Topsy thought it sounded funny, Bill and Townsend didn't notice it.

"Just count, if you like, Mr. Middleton, from one to twenty."

The engineer had had his shirt on Black Mamba in the Derby. Middleton's being there, this way, gave him more creeps than the microphones and his voice coming out of the wall gave Middleton.

Slowly Townsend counted, one to twenty, one to twenty, one to twenty. His voice gradually settled down to a level the engineer on the other side of the glass panel of the control room could cope with. Two men came into the room, one pleasant-faced, brisk, executive; the other sombre as though his calling had got him down. This one began inspecting the boxes. The other came up to Middleton, hand outstretched.

"Glad to meet you, sir! Hope we can pull this off. My name's Larsen. Want to do a rehearsal? Hi, Topsy! Let's go."

Middleton grabbed at his sleeve as he went to one of the other microphones and began muttering absolutely unintel-

ligible things into it which were answered in kind by the voice that came through the walls.

"Hey," he said. "Nobody's told me what I do yet?"

"Oh," said Larsen, and laughed. He had a comfortable laugh. "Topsy's the horse race. She and the sound effects tell you what's happening, and you describe it." He laughed again, quite heartily. "It's *her* idea, not mine!" He turned to the sad-looking man who was still staring at the boxes on the floor. "Hi, Sound, try 'em out."

The sombre man opened a box and from it produced a variety of rattly gadgets. He then took a piece of paper from his pocket and looked wearily at it.

"It says bugles," he said sadly. "I can't do bugles—I didn't bring anything to make bugle noises with."

"Sound," said Larsen, "did you ever think of using a *bugle* to make bugle noises with?"

"Why, no," said Sound, "I don't think I ever did." And then pretending to laugh in self-justification: "You see it probably wouldn't sound like a bugle over the air." Suddenly he brightened. "Say," he said, "I can make *trumpet* noises—how about trumpet?"

Topsy nudged Larsen.

"We'll settle for trumpet noises."

Sound raised the lids of two other boxes. They were enormous phonographs, each with places for two records to play side by side.

"What's that?" asked Towny.

"Sound tracks—real sound tracks," said Sound proudly. "Horses running an' crowds yelling. We made 'em at the Kentucky Doyby this spring when that guy Middleton's horse got disqualified." He chuckled. "I always said Middleton was betting on the horse they gave the race to."

Townsend instinctively reached out and grabbed Bill by the shoulder just as he was starting his lunge. Larsen turned suddenly quite pale. He didn't like the idea of having police and people like that coming into an audition he was running, to

investigate a murder. Still holding Bill, Townsend said, "You didn't know when you said that, that I'm Middleton. If you knew anything at all about horse-racing you wouldn't have said it anyway, would you?"

Sound suffered sudden paralysis. He gaped. Middleton walked across the room and looked him square in the eyes.

"You wouldn't, would you?"

Sound recovered—partially.

"Oh, no sir! No, *sir!*"

Middleton turned to Larsen.

"Let's get on with this."

Sound, very nervous now, arranged his various noisemaking contraptions around the room. Topsy, standing beside Townsend, fluttered a sheaf of typewritten pages on which she had written an account of a horse-race that she was going to read to Towny so that he could repeat it in his own words.

"Ready, Sound?" From Larsen, who also had a copy of this script, "ready, Mr. Middleton? Topsy?"

"Sure," said Townsend.

"Oke," from Sound. "I guess so."

"Turn 'em over!"

"Turn 'em over," Topsy said because she'd played in pictures, and she thought it would impress people that she knew the technical jargon.

But instead of the absolute silence that usually comes at this stage of an audition, there came, through the walls again, of course, the engineer's voice.

"Sorry, Mr. Larsen, we're too late for a rehearsal. Your audition goes on in one minute and twenty-five seconds. Mr. Middleton, move a little nearer the mike, please. Miss Martin, those papers in your hand sound like thunder and lightning crackling; move them softly, please. Sorry, Larsen. Take the time—one minute left."

Then a terrific tenseness did invade the little room. Towny still hadn't the faintest idea what he was supposed to do. Sound had had no opportunity of synchronizing his gadgets



with what Middleton might be going to say, and was so frightened by his unfortunate crack of a few moments before that he was quite unreliable. Topsy was nervous as a witch for Townsend's sake.

Mr. Larsen began to count.

"Fifty seconds, forty seconds, thirty—twenty-five—fifteen—ten—five—four—three——"

"Hey, start with a bugle!" yelled Topsy.

"Trumpet," said Sound.

"Audition of Townsend Middleton, sports commentator." Larsen spoke into the microphone.

From among his traps Sound now produced, instead of the traditional "Boots and Saddles!" bugle call, what he considered a magnificent fanfare of trumpets. It actually was one hell of a fanfare, the sort of fanfare one might expect Gabriel to blow at sight of Mary Pickford or Jean Harlow. It gave Middleton chills and, by its sheer suddenness, frightened him.

"They're going to the post," Topsy read to him in an undertone. "First is Flying Fairy, black horse, looks fit, owned by Petey Bostwick; next is a bay, owned by Jock Whitney; next a roan owned by Colonel Jeffords, next is Black Mamba, owned by Townsend Middleton, next is Zephyr, owned by . . ."

She was drowned out by Sound who, doing his utmost to appease Townsend Middleton for his unfortunate lapse, produced from one of his boxes a terrific sound of cheering, and then looked up grinning, from his work. The cheering died down.

"But, Tops, darling, what do I say? Nobody's told me what to say."

"Say just what I've said, jackass!"

All of this, naturally, smack into the microphone.

"What's the use my saying it? You've just said it."

"I know, but say it in your own words!"

Topsy was a good trouper. Gradually she was getting pretty frantic. Her franticness was added to by the fact that she knew

Townsend wasn't suffering from stage fright, but, like Sound, simply hadn't caught on. She kicked herself mentally for not having properly seen to it that they were all there in ample time to rehearse not once but many times.

Townsend, with a sheepish look, repeated most of what Topsy had just said. He repeated it in a hollow, listless voice, pretty much mumbling into the mike. Far away, sitting in the vast pine-panelled "Board Room," Josh Humber listened and shuddered. So did Jake. The rest of the programme board were suffering from a case of bad twitchings of the lip that they didn't like suffering from in the presence of their chief and a customer. Back in Studio E, Mr. Larsen had turned his face to the wall. He got the picture and he was horribly sorry for Middleton, but, being used to smoothness and expertness in his auditions, he couldn't look at Middleton's puzzled face without laughing, so he turned away.

"They're at the post!" said Topsy.

"They're at the post," said Middleton. Then, realizing what was expected of him, "They all look very fit, their coats are glossy and shiny." He ran out of words, "Very glossy and shiny." Since Topsy gave him no cue and nothing seemed to happen, he added, "They look very fit. Very, very fit indeed."

At this point both Topsy and Mr. Larsen turned to Sound. Topsy's voice carried over Larsen's as she yelled, "Hey, you! They're at the post! They're ready to start!"

Sound nodded. No one in the studios had ever suspected he had a voice before, but in his over anxiety to make up to Mr. Middleton and the giant who was obviously his body-guard, he, in foxhound parlance, gave tongue.

"On your marks—get set—BANG!"

As he said bang he shot off a cannon; it was a small cannon, but it made a lot of noise. He followed this up, one eye on Middleton, with a special sound effect of horses running on (from the sound) Government-test asphalt.

"Oh, for God's sake," said Middleton. "What *is* this?"

He was thoroughly and completely bewildered. This wasn't

a horse-race he was supposed to be broadcasting or commentating or whatever they called it—it was a circus.

“It’s your chance!” Topsy hissed at him across the mike. “Commentate, damn you, Towny, commentate!”

“I can’t,” said Townsend. “That feller’s making too much noise.”

“Hell then, *I’ll* commentate!” Topsy glanced at him with complete scorn. “Since you’re such a stage-frightened stooge!”

Townsend looked at her aghast. Topsy was his friend. She’d arranged this. He didn’t mean to let her down. But the whole thing was so silly. Starting a horse-race with a gun—and “on your marks—get set—go!” It was beyond him. He stood for a full minute doing nothing but opening and closing his mouth; opening it to apologize to Topsy; closing it suddenly to keep from saying the annoyed things he wanted to say.

Sound, who in his own way was keen, noticed all this. He shot the works. The air—that is the air that went into the pine-panelled room of the programme board—was rent. It was rent with the sounds of fallen jockeys groaning in agony and the agony of bettors who were losing; it was rent with all the sound effects Topsy Martin had asked for and a few extra, and over this came the voice of Topsy herself reading the script that she and Boots had prepared the night before—the one horse-race script they thought Towny Middleton might be able to get away with.

As sound effect after sound effect, each one louder than the one before it, roared out through the splendidly accurate loud-speaker in the pine-panelled room, the programme board one by one gave themselves up to sheer, tummy-aching, howling laughter. Each sound effect was punctuated by Middleton’s violent protests. Topsy Martin’s reading of the script was constantly interspersed by cries from him of, “Tops—it wasn’t that way—you’re all wet! Good grief, whoever heard of such a horse-race!” and the amazing, Topsy-selected sound effects went on and on. Sometimes the horses seemed to run on asphalt, sometimes in mud, sometimes they sounded as though

they were swimming in surf and sometimes they sounded as though they were hungry. As has been said, Sound shot the works. But Topsy was indomitable.

"They're rounding the three-quarters mark—Black Mamba's moving up—she's fighting for her head—the jockey doesn't seem to want her to run—he's *holding her back!*"

"Oh, God, Topsy, Wee Willie was doing everything he could to get through!"

Topsy ignored him, but Towny wasn't going to have any libel like that go over the air (he thought it was going over the air). Sound had gone back to his records now of crowds cheering—the actual crowds actually cheering the race these two fools seemed to be fighting about. He thought it showed great tact on his part.

"Mamba, come *on!*"

Suddenly Middleton got mad. He got fighting mad the way he sometimes used to get playing polo. Topsy with her stagy ideas and Boots too, no doubt, with hers now, were putting that whole thing—that very messy business of Willie Saunders and his bat—in a wrong light. People were listening. All right, he'd tell 'em! Topsy said "is" instead of "was"—that the horse was coming through, instead of that she came through. . . . He could do that too. With a sweep of his arm he shoved Topsy from the microphone. The picture of that race was so clearly before his eyes he'd never forget it as long as he lived. He could tell *that* as it had happened.

He began to tell it, and when he began Sound knew instinctively what had happened. He dampened his cheering so that it made an obbligato. He quieted his hoof-beats.

"Black Mamba's at the half—she's running strong in third place—she's got the heart of a lioness—she'll come through when Willie asks her to. He's just holding her steady now, he hasn't *spoken* to her—when he speaks to her and yells 'Now, Mamby!' she'll cut loose. The three-quarters—Far Away's still three lengths ahead—Tony second, Mamba moves to go through the crowd—Wee Willie's told her—she moves up—she's coming fast . . ."

Sound *and* the engineer had almost forgotten their official duties; there was a deepness, a sincerity about this voice now that commanded attention. One of the men on the programme board who snickered because he thought he should snicker was severely stared at by the rest of the board and by Jake, who said: "Shut up, Goy, you're listening to something!"

Townsend Middleton told that Kentucky Derby as it was run. He told all of it—as the story had never been printed. He told it that way to justify Mamby and Wee Willie as both Topsy and Boots had been perfectly sure he would if he was made mad enough. He got so excited and interested in telling it that he was still talking long after he'd finished about the race and the engineer had cut the channel and Humber and Jake were on their way to Studio E. He didn't, in fact, know that the microphone had been disconnected until he felt Humber patting him on the arm and heard him say, "We win, Towny, I don't think I'm going to have to underwrite you."

This was as much Greek to Middleton as had been the horrible noises of Sound during the early part of the audition. Also he was still steamed up about that race that was nothing but history now. He motioned Humber aside.

"Get out," he said, "I'm tellin' 'em! I'm tellin' 'em what's happening!"

"By the way"—Jake's voice was very deep at times—so deep it could be startling. "By the way, Mr. Middleton, could you go to Chicago next week for the Careena Beauty Cream Company and tell 'em what's happening when the American Derby's run at Arlington Park?"

Townsend Middleton started, seemed to come down out of the clouds.

"Could I *what*?"

"Just what I said—for, say, a thousand dollars and expenses?"

Middleton came nearer to fainting than he had since the last time a polo pony that had rolled over him kicked him in the temple as it got up. He said he could.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

TOWNSEND MIDDLETON locked the front door of Greenhill, took the mongrelly stable terrier with him, and went to Chicago. Bill went along and Boots cut a rehearsal to come to the station and see him off. He was exceedingly nervous and unhappy and felt like a boy sent off to boarding school for the first time. But he was deeply touched at Boots being there. He tried to tell her so as they shook hands outside the doorway of his Pullman, but it was difficult because you somehow couldn't just say, "I'm really awfully touched at your coming to see me off," to a person who looked like the sort of person Boots looked like now. As a matter of fact every time he'd seen her since she'd left Greenhill, she'd sort of embarrassed him by her sudden and unsuspected feminineness.

It was so awkward, meeting such a very snappy young lady for the first time, and then having her turn out to be someone you'd seen bathed as a baby, and having her not seem to notice that any epoch-making change had taken place in herself. He said, "Aw, Boots—hell of a note all this, isn't it—thanks a million for coming to say good-bye!"

And the baby he had seen bathed answered, "You had to have someone from Greenhill to see you off first time you ran. I've never thought too much of you, Townsend, but so help me you're gonna run hell for leather an 'pull it off! So help me, Saint Patrick, you are!"

Townsend didn't know it, but this was the sort of thing she used to say to the Greenhill race-horses in the days when she was helping her father saddle them at the tracks—and the Greenhill horses had always run true. He reached out and took her hand, feeling more and more like a small boy being sent off to school. The hand, to his surprise, didn't go with the rest

of her appearance at all. It should have been velvety and soft. It was calloused and even as they shook he noticed the knuckles, enlarged and hardened from holding reins. It made him feel much funnier than if it had been the soft and velvety apparatus young ladies usually held out.

"I will, Bootsie," he said. "You're damn right, I'll pull it off."

He didn't even realize he'd called her Bootsie. He never had before. But she realized it and she knew what it meant. The train started. He climbed aboard. She stood waving until he'd gone out of sight. Then for the first time since her father had died she broke down and cried. It was utterly silly but Townsend Middleton was all the people she had left in the world, and he was going away, and she loved Topsy dearly and it was fun being in the show, but her people were going away.

That afternoon Carrol, after bawling her out for missing an hour of rehearsal, was amazed. He was amazed first because Boots O'Connel, apparently not even having heard the unkind things he'd told her, said, as soon as he'd stopped talking:—

"He called me Bootsie!"

And then she had sung the Irish (Gershwin Irish) songs he'd given her the way he'd scarcely dreamed they could be sung. As has been said, the grief and the lament of all the Irish for ever was in Boots O'Connel. This day she let fly with it. Carrol decided to feature her name in the show's billing and to get George Gershwin to whip up a nice lament about a dying race-horse for her to sing in his next show.

On the train Townsend Middleton, sharing a drawing-room with Larsen and Bill—who, delighted at having at least spending money again, was getting himself slowly, but loyally, corned—worried. He worried all that night and all the next day and he worried like anything when they went to the track at Arlington Park at two o'clock and he and Larsen and an engineer from the broadcasting company climbed up to the roof of the stands and he found there the huge binoculars

that magnify everything forty-two times set up in front of where he was supposed to talk from.

He laughed when he first saw them, they looked so utterly incongruous compared to his own field-glasses. Then he looked through them. He could see practically every grain of dust in the track—even at the far turns. He grinned at Larsen.

“Say,” he said, “this is one hell of a swell place to watch a race from.”

“Sure,” said Larsen, who had done this many, many times. “How about stepping up to that mike there and saying woof-woof-woof?”

“You gone nuts?” said Middleton.

“No,” said Larsen. “Saying woof-woof-woof’s easier than counting numbers, so we can get tuned to your voice level.” He chuckled. “You see you’re a pro now.” He began adjusting the microphone, moving it here and there to where he thought Middleton would feel most natural behind it. “Say, Middleton, does it make you feel funny doing this? I mean instead of being down there?”

He pointed toward the club-house lawn in front of the stands that was filling now with people. Middleton wished he hadn’t reminded him of that, but he grinned again.

“Sure,” he said, “wouldn’t it you?”

Larsen nodded. Middleton went on.

“But I still think this is a swell way to watch a horse-race.”

“Just go on feeling like that,” said Larsen, “and you’ll be rich!”

Then he could have bitten his tongue off, because, obviously it was so bald a remark. Middleton took it in the spirit in which it was meant.

“That’s all right with me,” he said, and then, because he still was very nervous and wanted someone—a friend—to lean on—

“You know, to tell you the truth, Larsen, I’d love to be rich—just once. I never have been, you know. If I was—I



mean if I could make enough money to afford it, I'd like to start a little racing stable."

"Well," said Larsen. "They never learn."

"Towny's always been a sucker," said Bill who, as usual, was standing right beside his Chief. Larsen turned to him.

"Is it all right," he said, "if I ask you just what the hell you're doing up here with us?"

"Okey dokey wit me," said Bill. "Go ahead an' ask. I'm de Commentator's Yes Man, that's what I'm doin' here. I'm here to see he gets a square deal, see?"

No one, least of all Bill, knew just what he meant by this. They skipped it. Presently the horses filed out for the first race. Townsend nudged Larsen and pointed to the binoculars.

"All right if I watch through these?"

His *naïveté* delighted the radio man. He'd done this so often he couldn't understand anybody wanting to watch a horse-race he didn't have to. Watching horse-races was sheer, utter drudgery to him.

"Go ahead," he said. Then he had a minor brainstorm. "I'll be busy testing the channel, so I can't watch. You tell me about it, eh?"

Townsend moved close to the glasses and was again fascinated by how incredibly near they brought the horses.

"By Golly!" he said. "This is the cats, Larsen. Say, there's Wee Willie Saunders up on Gringo. Bill, look at your card and see what weight he's carrying. Hundred and twelve? He's a bet, Bill, at that weight. If you've got any dough beat it down and put it on him for me, will you?"

"Okey dokey, Chief. I got a half-century."

Bill left. Larsen stared at Townsend, who was now completely absorbed in staring at the horses. The baronial way in which he'd ordered Bill to bet his money for him impressed him. He listened while Middleton told him what was happening at the post and was again astonished because Middleton seemed to know the horses from their general shapes and

colours and didn't look at his programme at all. Presently the race started.

"They're off!" Towny shouted. "Oooh! What a lousy start—they're bumping all over the place. Look at young Wee Willie—he's pulling 'way round to the right. Flying Fairy's running right through the others. She's going like a greyhound with Coucci trying like a madman to keep her clear. They're at the eighth now—simply thundering round that first turn! These damn glasses bring me so near they make me feel as if I was riding with 'em myself! They're . . ."

Larsen, sitting at his little box of switches, began to grin. He was looking at Townsend the way Diogenes would have looked at the honest man had he found him—as though he were a thing almost too precious to live. With a strange, almost reverent expression, he suddenly reached over and turned a switch. Then he sat back and listened as Middleton continued to describe the horse-race. When it was finished, he closed the switch. Middleton turned, face flushed with pleasure and punched him on the shoulder.

"Did you see Wee Willie come through? Bill and I cleaned up that time! Wow!"

"Fine," said Larsen. He grinned. "By the way, in case you don't know it, you've just done your first broadcast. So help me God, I had no business to do it, but it sounded so swell I turned you loose on the air!"

Townsend Middleton looked at him horrified. His face flushed crimson with embarrassment at the idea that thousands of people had been listening to what he'd thought was a private conversation. He felt the way people in earthquakes do when they wake up in hotel bedrooms and suddenly realize the hotel hasn't got walls any more. Then a light broke for him.

"Looky," he said. "Is *that* all I've got to do to be good at this stunt?"

"That and lay off the damns whenever you can. But you're not good, Towny, you're great."

“Well I’ll be damned!” said Townsend Middleton.

“Not ‘damned’,” said Larsen. “You’ll be ‘gol-darned.’ Please, for the sake of the Careena Beauty Cream Company and the great almighty broadcasting company, and for my sake, just be ‘gol-darned!’ ”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

TOWNSEND MIDDLETON'S broadcast of the American Derby at Arlington Park was sensational. His voice had a peculiar, intimate quality to it so that people listening to him didn't feel, as they so often do, that they were inferior outsiders being told by a hired expert what was happening. He somehow made them feel they were, perhaps, sitting in his box at the track as his guests and that he was telling them over his shoulder (as he had told his guests so many times in the past) just what was *really* happening. It was a bonanza to everyone except the postmen who delivered the letters of appreciation to the broadcasting company.

In Chicago he signed a contract for a sum that, compared to the income on twenty millions, was piffling, but that, for a man in his position, seemed staggering wealth. It was wealth, undeniable wealth. As Bill said, he could do anything he wanted with this money, which made it real money instead of the more or less wooden money they'd used in his past life.

From Chicago he went to Cleveland and did the Air Races; from there to St. Louis where he told everybody all about a prize fight that was taking place. He could, naturally, talk about these other sporting events as easily and fluently as he could about horse-racing. He had been trained from babyhood in sport and, of course, occupying the prominent position he had in the sporting world, he knew intimately everyone in that world who mattered. He became far more celebrated than he had ever been before and he got a kick out of it—a great kick—because now he was celebrated because of something he was doing and not just because he'd happened to be born Morton Middleton's nephew. And there were no creditors connected with this kind of celebratedness—just people who wanted to know what he thought about this and that

coming event and wanted his autograph and things like that. Now and then he thought about Sally—but she was so definitely part of something that existed no longer and he was having such fun working that these thoughts bothered him not at all.

Then in Los Angeles, where he was broadcasting a wrestling match, he got a telegram from Topsy. Like the telegram Bill had sent him in the long, long ago, it was brief and to the point. It said:

**BOOTS SHOW OPENING TO-MORROW NIGHT THINK  
YOU'D BETTER BE HERE IF SWELLED HEAD NOT  
TOO LARGE TO FIT IN PLANE NO LOVE TOPSY.**

Middleton opened it just as the current pachyderm champ was tossed into the press box, thus ceasing to be the current pachyderm champ. It gave him the most god-awful homesickness he'd ever known. Topsy's crack about his head got him too. He hadn't forgotten in the fun of his new success what she'd done for him, nor had he forgotten Boots. Boots had, in fact, been in his mind most of the time, but he'd been so busy meeting people and shaking hands with people and talking to people that he actually hadn't had time even to write to the only people in the world who really mattered to him. He jabbed his elbow in Bill's ribs.

"Go call the local broadcasting office an' tell 'em we want a 'plane to take us to New York starting at midnight. Tell 'em if I don't get there by to-morrow evening I'll never be able to talk again." He clutched his neck. "My throat," he said. "Got to see a specialist—that wrestler fell on me."

Townsend Middleton had forgotten the microphone was still in front of him. Larsen had not. He gave him one horrified look, then yelled to the ex-champ-pachyderm's seconds.

"Here!" he yelled. "Give me that wrestler!"

With that he picked up the wrestler and, displaying an amazing amount of skill for a non-athlete, threw him at Middleton. Being quite accustomed to being thrown here and

there on order, the wrestler made it easy for him—even helped him a little by springing. Larsen stepped to the microphone.

“Townsend Middleton’s hurt! Kyzbosky, wild at being thrown from the ring, is struggling with him! We’re trying to calm him down.”

At this point Townsend Middleton was struggling with Kyzbosky, whose involuntary onslaught had hurled both of them to the floor. Larsen picked up the mike and held it over them, so that the unearthly noises they made during the untangling operation were plainly audible on the air. Since Middleton now was, if not injured, at least damaged and didn’t at all enjoy having pachyderms on top of him, he struggled not only manfully but vociferously. When Kyzbosky finally regained his feet and began to apologize, Larsen threw his switch.

“Damn you to hell, Middleton!” he said. “What bit you?”

Townsend smiled at him, slightly shamefaced.

“I want to be home,” he said. “I want to be home tomorrow night and I’m three thousand miles away.”

“You’re supposed to be home next week to do the Belmont—what’s the matter with you?”

“I want a ’plane.”

He handed the telegram to Larsen, who snatched at it and read it. Larsen was a sentimentalist at heart. He gave Towny a sort of cow look and said, “Aw, shoot! What if you miss it?”

“You don’t get it,” said Towny. “It’s her first start. I’ve got to be there.”

“Do you know,” said Larsen, “sometimes you talk an awful funny language, Towny. Were you dropped when very young? I mean on a marble floor or anything?”

At this point they were leaving the stadium. They met Bill looking unhappy and slowly but brutally thrusting people out of his way since he was entering and everyone else departing. When he met them even the little pleasure he’d found in lifting people from his path left his face. He looked just plain sad.

"Sorry, Chief, you ain't so hot as I t'ought. Nuttin' doin' dey won't give you no 'plane."

But Bill was wrong, because when the three of them reached the entry hall of the stadium, the head of the local broadcasting station was standing by the door to intercept them. Middleton, who had had to lunch with him, recognized him at once and instantly clapped his hand to his throat.

"How bad is it?" The manager was all concern.

"Terrible!" Towny croaked. It was hard for him to croak, but he managed it.

"New York says there've been so many calls demanding you get a 'plane that by gosh you do get one. My car'll take you to United Airport now. You'll be in New York by to-morrow evening."

"Oh, swell!" said Townsend in his million-dollar voice. "That's awfully nice of you—really!" He nudged Bill. "We'll make the first act curtain, by God!"

The manager gave him a look.

"You'll make *what*?"

"The first act curtain," said Townsend calmly. "Thanks, Larsen—swell quick thinking—that wrestler throwing act of yours—I'll tell Boots and Topsy about it."

With the sort of bow he used once upon a time to give presidents of racing associations as they presented him with cups, he stepped out to the manager's car and into it. As he did so, the tug at his heart that had started with the arrival of Topsy's telegram became almost a real pain.

Boots—Greenhill—Boots' first start. He *had* to be there.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TOWNSEND MIDDLETON didn't get to New York in time for the opening curtain of "Sketchbook." High headwinds and the perversity of petrol engines held him back. But he sent a telegram and by heroic efforts on the part of his pilot and the taxi man who drove him to the theatre from the airport, did manage to arrive in time for the last act curtain. He got there just as Boots was finishing her last song, and fought his way backstage to a position in the wings. He was, here, entirely surrounded by pretty little girls with practically nothing on. He didn't see them at all.

He saw only Boots, standing alone in the soft glow of an amber spotlight. Behind her was what was supposed to be the ruins of an Irish castle—near Killarney, no doubt, for there were lakes in the background. On the ground at her feet lay a dead soldier (period of history unrecognizable) and the song she sang was one of those eerie, heart-tearing Irish laments. The sophisticated first-night audience that Townsend could see as a blur of white shirt fronts and sleek heads, sat hushed as she wailed in her clear sweet voice how her lover was gone from her away.

As he listened, Middleton forgot that the castle behind her looked, from his angle, awfully phoney. It was natural that he (as the producer also had) should think of it as ruined Greenhill and of the dead soldier as Pop O'Connel. It was even more natural that Boots should have suffered the same illusion. At any rate her eyes were starry in the light and looked, at the same time, misty with tears. When she finished, Middleton found his own eyes misty. He blinked in the dead silence—that still, tense silence that sometimes follows an outstanding performance when the audience have been for a little moment taken so far away into the hinterlands of dreams that it takes



a second or so for their souls to get back into their bodies. Then the crashing, thundering storm of applause broke and the Broadway astronomers sensed that a new star had flashed into their firmament.

Middleton met her as she came off. She looked dazed, bewildered, but when she saw him her eyes brightened with sheer undisguised joy.

"Oh, Townsend! You did get here!"

Then, without consciously realizing what he was doing, he took her in his arms and held her pressed close to him.

"Had to," he said. "Your first start, Baby. I'm the stable companion. *Had* to get here." Then it happened. He lifted her face from where it was buried on his shoulder and said, "You're the loveliest thing I've ever seen—I don't know—since that night you came out with Tops to see me I've—oh, hell!"

Then he kissed her, gently, reverently. She sighed, pressed his hand, smiled.

"Oh, but I've wanted to do that for *such* a long time!" she said. Then she shook herself like a puppy coming out of the water. "Come on back to my dressing-room. We'll talk. Towny, I've missed you so." She looked up at him as she led him by the hand through the maze of pretty little undressed girls and the men going "Mi-mi-mi-mi" and tapping their chests as though they thought they'd be noticed in the singing of the finale. "I've got Pete the Dalmatian there. I've listened to you every time you've talked. Topsy and Popsy and the Ashtons are coming back when show's over. We'll all go out and eat."

The dressing-room was a mass of flowers, Dalmatian and coloured maid. Townsend, who had been feeling a little foolish since his emotional outburst, grinned. He looked at Boots and the flowers and nodded towards the maid.

"We don't do so bad, you and I," he said, "in our own professions."

"I think," said Boots, "that I wowed them."

"You wowed them," said Middleton. He grinned more broadly. "You wowed me all right."

"You wowed me years ago," said Boots. "Only you naturally didn't know it."

The sense of strangeness he'd had when he'd been with Boots before he went away had all passed now. They looked at one another and spoke not like a young man and a young woman who had just kissed each other really quite impassionedly and for the first time. The feeling was much more that of married people re-united after a silly official separation.

"Boots, I guess I've loved you always. What are we going to do about it?"

She continued to stare at him, her eyes melting with affection, and said, "What about *Mrs.* Middleton?"

"I haven't seen or heard from her since she walked out. I'd almost forgotten about her."

The maid quickly withdrew behind a screen. Though neither of them had noticed her in some moments she was afraid they might and would stop. That, she thought, would be too bad.

"Sure, Townsend?" Boots almost shyly took his hand. "You see I know so much about you—I couldn't help it—growing up at your home. You're a giddy one. Always you were."

"You've grown up since you left home," said Townsend. "You don't even talk like a kid now."

"It's just because I am somebody now. Nobody treats me like a kid except you and," she laughed, "you don't, now."

"Oh, Boots, darling! I've missed you like hell!"

"You've grown up too, Townsend."

He nodded solemnly.

"I know," he said. "That's because I'm somebody now too. We're not both just—spongers."

Suddenly Boots laughed—merrily. She was exceedingly happy. In fact she was sitting spang on top of the world and

was still so young she didn't know what a slippery seat that was to occupy.

"Faith and I never thought to hear The Himself say that about himself!"

"The what?"

"Oh, Pop and I always called you The Himself. You were God Almighty to us." She paused. "You were to me, anyway. In Ireland that's the way it is."

Middleton liked and yet he didn't like hearing her talk so. It thrilled him and it embarrassed him simultaneously. He said, "You've never been in Ireland."

The call boy knocked on the door.

"Miss O'Connel—Miss O'Connel—on stage for the fynally, Miss O'Connel."

Valerie Boots O'Connel allowed herself an instant of flashing triumph.

"Chief," she said, "I'd love like the devil for you to take me there sometime—but don't ever try and tell that audience out there that I've never been to Ireland. They wouldn't believe you!"

With that she kissed her hand and whisked out of the room. Middleton blinked some and sat down in the only chair available, which was before the dressing mirror. In the mirror he saw the coloured maid and for the first time recognized her as Topsy's Lucy, borrowed for the occasion.

"Hello, Lucy," he said. "You caught yourself an earful, didn't you?"

"Yassuh, Mr. Middleton, I *did*!" She came out from behind the screen and planted herself Aunt Jemima fashion before him. "An' Ah'm glad to see you-all comin' to your senses, suh!"

"The Southern accent, Lucy, is distinctly painful to me. Talk New York accent. I want to know all about how Boots has been doing since she left—how Topsy got her the job—everything. You see, Lucy, I'm really awfully fond of her."

Lucy talked New York accent, which was natural to her,

and told him all about Boots' try-out and rehearsals and how she'd get up every morning at five and go down in Josh Humber's car to Belmont and gallop Black Mamba with the stable boys (Lucy didn't approve of this) and then come back and work with the show people. Middleton listened, all ears. When Lucy ended up with "An' by gosh she's got that horse so fit she'll win the Belmont!" he jumped out of his chair and threw his arms around her.

"Lucy! Boots is starting Mamba in the Belmont?"

"She sure is!"

"My gosh!"

"Miss Boots has her shirt on her too, Mr. Middleton." Lucy laughed the infectious high laugh of her race. "*Her* shirt an' Miss Topsy's shirt an' Mr. Humber's shirt!"

"I'm broadcasting that race, you know," said Middleton.

"You better broadcast that Mamby filly home in front then!" said Lucy. "If you want to be friends with Miss Boots!"

"Oh, I want to, all right," said Townsend. "By the way, Lucy, got a drink? I've come a long way to get here, you know."

"Yassuh!" said Lucy, immediately assuming her professional manner.

She mixed a highball from a sort of basket luncheon kit obviously loaned for the occasion by Humber. While she was so busied Middleton thought. He thought how very much had happened in the past few months. Then he thought, smugly, as men are apt to think when they're successful, how very much pleasanter it was to have things this way than the way they used to be. Then, just as Lucy handed him the highball, he stopped thinking anything on the green earth was pleasant; for without even bothering to knock, Colonel Barnaby stepped into the room.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

COLONEL BARNABY, obviously loaded to the gunwales, but nevertheless seeming more capable than usual of getting himself about without spilling himself on odd bits of furniture, entered, bowed, handed his hat and stick to Lucy, and addressed Middleton.

"We've missed you—Son!" he said. "Sally an' I've missed you like anything while you've been away at the wars."

"Don't call me Son, you bloody fourflusher!" said Townsend. He looked Barnaby squarely in the eyes. The Colonel started to wilt. Middleton said, "You and your daughter Magnolia are about the cheapest pair of swindlers who ever tried to swindle me. Get it? Get out!"

Then Colonel Barnaby stopped wilting. He'd remembered that Sally had told him his position was unassailable, and, having succeeded in remembering this, he took courage from the thought that he was able to remember anything, and forged on.

"My daughtah will be here in just a moment. She's been breathless foah news of you." Here Barnaby struck an attitude. "Son, why didn't you let us know you were comin'? We just heard by chance that you-all were hyah."

Through the now open door of the dressing-room came the strains of the finale of "Sketchbook." Middleton, since he'd been on his own, had learned enough to know that it would jigger the works nicely between him and Boots if she found the Barnaby outfit with him on this one night of her triumph—when he'd just told her he'd had no relationship with them. He gave the Colonel almost a Bill-glare.

"Get the hell out of here!" he said. "Pronto!"

Barnaby, completely wilted now, started to get out. But he got only as far as the door, because Sally happened at that

instant to be coming through it the other way. She saw Townsend and instantly jumped to him and threw her arms around him.

“Oh, but it’s good to have you back!”

Townsend Middleton tried desperately to get shed of her, but Sally was having none of it. He kicked her shins. She simply clung to him tighter. He swore at her. She murmured (very loudly) terrifically loving things. He cursed her. He tried a ju-jitsu hold that a Jap cook of his had once told him was infallible. It wasn’t. Sally Barnaby Middleton clung to her husband, and while she was still clinging to her husband Valerie Boots O’Connel, joyous in her heart at rejoining what she thought of as her future husband, stepped into the room.

It is an odd thing, but if a gentleman is struggling as hard as ever he can not to be kissed by a lady, he looks exactly the other way around. In fact, he looks worse. If there is an audience, he looks incredibly foolish. Townsend Middleton looked incredibly foolish at the instant Boots entered the room. He looked the other things too. Then he made the mistake of, for the first time in his life, forgetting the code he’d been brought up in. He yelled for help. He yelled, “Boots, Bill’s at the stage door—send him in here quick—I think I’m being blackmailed.”

Boots didn’t think so at all. She simply thought that Townsend Middleton was, after all, turning out to be just exactly the sort of man she would have expected him to turn out to be, and it came quite near to breaking her heart.

“Lucy,” she said, “bring my things to Miss Brice’s room. I’ll dress there.” Then her feelings, that she’d been taught to control so well during her weeks of rehearsing and the try-outs, got the better of her. All the love in the world—the broken-hearted love—spilled out of her eyes.

“You’re a liar, Townsend Middleton. So help me, Saint Patrick, I never thought *you’d* be that.”

Then she left. Lucy, quickly gathering unmentionables, an evening dress and a bottle of aromatic, followed her. Lucy,

like Topsy, had, in her own way, been around. She knew. Sally let go of Middleton. When she let go of him he wanted to hit her, but he didn't. He simply looked at her and said, "How much—do you want?"

Colonel Barnaby decided it was the moment to be suave.

"We're not unreasonable, you know, Son—after all, I mean after all . . ." He couldn't remember what else he'd been going to say, so he stopped.

"I'm your wife," said Sally. "And I want plenty."

"You're a crook," said Middleton, "and you get nothing!" Then he said a lot of other things—mostly about people who come bashing their way into other people's lives just when they're about to have a chance of being happy for the first time in their lives. Then Bill came in. As usual, he gave a quick, informal salute.

"Chief, what's up? Boots said you needed me but she didn't say it pretty. What's up, Chief?"

"Throw 'em out," said Townsend.

"Ah!" said Bill. The Barnaby contingent melted into the distance, each assisted by one of Bill's hands on the neck. He came back a moment later and found Middleton sitting at Boots' dressing-table, staring, apparently, at his own folded hands. "She bite you? Get it cauterized."

"She bit me," said Middleton. "But not that way."

"Oh," said Bill.

Then Middleton, for the first time in all the harrowing experiences they'd been through together, broke down. He told him about Boots and about how he felt about Boots and about what he'd told Boots and about Sally and her phoney father coming in and bashing his life up again. He told him he thought one female had a right to bash up a guy's life only once—not twice.

Bill agreed. When Townsend had quite finished, he said, "All finished, Chief?"

"Oh, God," said Townsend, "I'm finished all right!"

“Den I tink I’ll just go an’ visit one of my classmates. Want to come along?”

“Oh, sure,” said Middleton. “I’ve got no place to go. Who we going to visit?”

“Number Seven-six-five-seven-four-one. He was de class ahead of me. I just got a hunch he might know somethin’.”

Middleton got up. He got up punch-drunk. It seemed to him too awful to be believed that this sort of thing—this business of his old life catching him up—could happen to him after he’d started out and was making his own way in the world. At the door he stopped.

“You’re a good guy, Bill.”

“I know it,” said Bill. “Smart too. I got ideas.”

“They must be swell,” said Middleton.

“Dey are—I can fix dis Boots voysis Sally trouble like nuttin’! Okey dokey, Chief?”

Once again Middleton broke down. He was so completely broken-down now that he was able to smile.

“Okey dokey.”



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE Belmont was run three days after the opening of "Sketchbook." Townsend spent those days frantically trying to get in touch with Boots and not in any way succeeding. He tried to get Topsy to intercede for him, but she merely said, "She thinks you're a two-timer and so do I," and hung up. Bill was away doing research work with his classmate. Towny was miserable with that poignant misery that makes intelligent people awfully wary about falling in love.

Boots was, of course, just as miserable, but misery fitted her work swell. The more misery she got into that final song of hers in the show the more the audience ate it up. Boots had arrived at one of the most coveted places a girl can achieve—and she'd have tossed it out of the window like *that* if by doing so she could undo what had been done that opening night. Lucy the maid had told her what had actually happened, but Boots thought Middleton had bribed her.

She drove to Belmont Park the day of the race with Sybil Ashton and Topsy. She was heavy-hearted and didn't care much what happened about it. She knew Townsend Middleton would be there and she knew he'd try and speak to her and she knew, no matter how funny she felt when she saw him, that she'd have nothing to do with him. The O'Connels were rotten with pride—always had been.

Townsend Middleton drove to the track alone, determined to find Boots and have it out with her. When the saddling bell rang he turned over his microphone to Larsen and said, "Harry, tell 'em about the old trees in front of the turf and field club and about who's here and about how perfectly gawdam beautiful every last little thing in the world is. I'll be back in time."

Larsen gave him a worried look, picked up the mike and

began telling a great many people all about nothing. Like Middleton, he thought the Belmont track with its trees and tradition was beautiful. Like Middleton he'd been there too often to get any fun out of describing it. But it was their job—his and Middleton's—and he knew Middleton was in some sort of love jam, and he was glad to help him out. He'd been in love jams himself. But just by way of getting even with Towny for passing him the buck on the description of the track, he played up the fact of the new Broadway sensation running for the first time: the famous horse that had run in the Derby when owned by the famous broadcasting company's famous sporting commentator Townsend Middleton. The listeners—particularly the lady listeners—wriggled appreciatively. Then Larsen did a dirty. He said, "Even now Towny's on his way down to the paddock to watch his ex-horse saddled for her new owner. What a picture—dramatic——" and so forth. He laid it on thick.

Even then Middleton was about half-way to the paddock. He was just passing the jockey rooms when he met Bill. Bill seemed in a panic.

"Chief!" he yelled, almost knocking Middleton down with his punch of greeting. "Chief, I got it! De record! Look!"

He reached in his pocket and pulled out a slip of paper. On it was a complete account of the doings of one Sally Barnaby Middleton during the past two years—only she wasn't called Sally Barnaby Middleton in this report. She was called Sarah Skanger. There were finger-prints attached to the report, and it came from the Cincinnati police department. Among other doings was a year spent as a guest of the State of Ohio for having married several wealthy citizens without bothering to go through the formality of divorce. As Townsend read, Bill went on.

"I got 'em to take prints from Greenhill. Dey matched poifect wid dese. Hell, Towny, you don't even get a divorce. You gets an annulment. Swell work, eh?"

Townsend nodded. It wasn't a very pleasant thing to read

about a lady one had actually married. He nodded again. Then he said, "Thanks, Bill. Now come on with me and watch Mamby saddled."

They went on to the paddock, beautiful in its green turf and old trees that Larsen was telling the world about from the top of the stands. Presently they came to where the Belmont entries were slowly walking behind their stable ponies under the trees. There was a considerable crowd around Mamba, for she was a heavy favourite. They pushed their way through it to the inside of the circle where only the very select friends of the very select owners are allowed. Here were Topsy, looking terribly important, Sybil Ashton, looking at home, Elvira standing peacefully and comfortingly ahead of Black Mamba, Frayling looking worried, the wee apprentice boy Boots had hired to ride, and Boots herself. Boots was dressed in the extreme height of fashion as became a musical comedy star at the races, but she was doing the actual saddling of the filly herself—hauling on girths, patting her here and there, calling orders to the assisting stable boy, feeling the bit in Mamby's mouth. It was something to look at. Bill and Townsend stopped still and looked. Then Townsend went forward and, standing close beside her, spoke.

"Boots," he said. "Please, Boots, understand!"

She stared hard at the saddlecloth. Topsy saw she was trembling aspen-like. Then she turned.

"You don't belong here, Townsend, this is the saddling ring. Go away."

"Well, I love *dat!*" said Bill. "*He* don't belong here."

"He doesn't," said Boots. "Not now."

She hated saying it, but, silly child, thought she had to. The filly, as she gave a sudden and really too violent haul on her girths, kicked. The crowd fell back. Middleton stood perfectly still staring blindly like an ox that's been pole-axed. Then he turned.

"Come on, Bill, we've got a job to do here."

He put his arm through Bill's and, once again pushing

through the crowd, lots of whom had now recognized him and called him by name, headed for the track.

“We belong ’way ’way up on top of the grandstand, Bill.”

Bill didn’t say anything. This was beyond him.

“Moses weeping on the mountain top,” said Townsend.

“He never did!” said Bill, who had read his Bible in jail.

“I will,” said Townsend; “but I hope Mamby does it for her, anyway.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

“**T**HEY'RE off! They're bunched, they're at the sixteenth; Flying Fairy's ahead; Black Mamba, 'way over on the outside, running third. . . .”

This was an old story to Townsend now, this business of “they're off—they're at the sixteenth” and so on. He was telling it now as he always did; clearly, intimately; and if his voice, going out into all the thousands of rooms all over the world where people had met together to listen to him, sounded lacking in sparkle, the listeners thought it was because he must feel so strange at describing his ex-horse running in a race for somebody else. Larsen had given that angle a sweet build-up.

“They're at the far turn”—through those enormous binoculars Townsend could see the boy on Mamba crack her once with his whip. He talked on, but he was watching Mamba, naturally, much more than the others—even when, since she wasn't in the lead, he couldn't talk about her as much. “They're at the three-quarters. Black Mamba's moving up!”

The crowd far below him saw her starting her move. A great muttering sound came up from them, for she was the favourite and her winning meant a great deal to them. But Middleton, through his glasses, saw she wasn't responding for this boy the way she used to in the days when Wee Willie would scream into her little ears, “*Now, Mamby—run!*”

The horses rounded the last turn. Mamba on the outside, second now, with Flying Fairy just ahead of her. Mamba's jockey went to the whip, hard. “You damned fool jock!” said Middleton, forgetting the microphone. “Mamba's never had a whip laid to her like that in her life! You've lost it! You've lost it for Boots, you ass!”

All over the world people should have been horrified at hearing such strong talk penetrate their living-rooms. Oddly

enough, the only people who were horrified were those associated with the Careena Beauty Cream Company. The rest of the listeners ate it up. Here was romance—drama—laid right in their front parlours. Harry Larsen had done a very good build-up.

The race went on. Black Mamba ran because it was in her to run; but she'd been listening for that frantic shout flying to her on the wind and it hadn't come. To her this wasn't a race, after all—though she'd had all the feeling that it was, in the paddock, with Boots and Elvira there. To her it seemed to be turning out to be just an overly hard practice schooling; so she didn't bother to put the wings on her feet that she knew were there. The voice she knew hadn't asked for them. Instead some dopey guy had hit her with a whip. Ah, well! She should worry about showing Flying Fairy she could beat him—she knew he knew she could do that any day of the week and twice on Sundays. She ran pretty hard, though, to put the others in their places. They weren't really in her class. She finished a comfortable second.

Middleton swore. The voice of the crowd floated up to him. It was none too pleased, because it was perfectly obvious, to all of them who'd seen the filly run before, that she wasn't really trying. Its voice—for a crowd has a distinct voice, either friendly or otherwise—was not friendly. Its members had lost money they'd worked hard for on what should have been a sure thing. Middleton, with Bill muttering sympathetic things in his ear, started down to the track. He was supposed to introduce the winning jockey to the multitude, and, if possible, make the winning horse sneeze or whinny into the mike. He'd taught Bill to be a pretty good whinnyer. When he reached the little gate that led from the Turf and Field Club to the stewards' stand and thus to the track, he saw for the first time that the yellow placard had gone up on the board announcing the results—which meant that Mamba's jockey had claimed a foul. He turned around and caught Larsen's eye. Larsen was naturally carrying on on top of the

grandstand until the broadcasting time was up. Townsend pointed to the Result Board, and saw Larsen nod. Then one of the Pinkerton men who have been guarding Belmont this way and that way for years and years touched him on the shoulder.

"Mr. Middleton," he said, "the stewards want you in the judges' stand."

Townsend looked at him, puzzled.

"But, Steve," he said, "I've nothing to do with racing any more—you know that."

Steve had a great bull bellow of a voice.

"The hell you haven't!" he roared, so that only about a thousand people in the near neighbourhood could hear him. "You're still a member of the Jockey Club, an' you're the only man here at the track can decide the question of the foul. *You're* the man who, lookin' through them big glasses, seen every move of it! Come on in, sir!"

Middleton, very puzzled, went to the judges' stand. The judges' stand at Belmont is, as at most tracks, at the rail with a flight of steps perhaps some ten feet high leading to it. It is glass-enclosed on two sides. He nodded and shook hands with the stewards of the meeting and the judges. He'd known them all his life. They greeted him cordially. Presently the president of the association addressed him (quite formally, Townsend thought, considering they'd been cock-eyed lots of times together at Greenhill).

"Townsend," he said, "we're in a spot. Black Mamba's jockey maintains he was very roughly bumped and then crossed by Flying Fairy at the last turn. Our man stationed there can't say because both horses were 'way on the outside of the track. You could see." Here he looked around quickly, saw that no one was there except the other stewards and the two jockeys, and went on.

"You *could* see, Townsend. I know it's," he coughed, "an awful position to put you in considering—considering—Well, it's a hell of an imposition; but you've got to decide it. We can't—we honestly can't."

Townsend Middleton didn't think he'd ever forget how he felt in the few seconds following that request. All he had to do was to say, "Yes, he was crossed," and Boots would win the Belmont and all the bets he'd put on it; and he had proof now for Boots that would convince her like a shot that the monkey business in her dressing-room was blackmail. All he had to do was say that one little word. He felt Bill nudging him, turned his ear close to Bill's.

"Look," said Bill.

Townsend looked out through the glass part of the judges' stand. Men were crowding closer and closer. Men with angry unpleasant faces. There were mutterings now amongst them. All of them knew Middleton. All of them knew about the mess at the Derby. All of them knew, thanks to the friendly but ill-advised bull-voiced Pinkerton man, that the decision had been put up to him. Cries drifted in through the glass.

"What about it, Towny? Gonna gyp us again?"

"We know what horse *your* money was on!"

"Yeah, we know. God help you!"

Townsend Middleton, when he decided was, oddly enough, thinking only that what he was about to say would probably cost Boots every nickel she had in the world and put her so far from him that he'd have to give up even trying to see her again. He didn't think of that menacing crowd outside at all. He turned to the president of the association. He managed to smile. He smiled whimsically, which is a horrible way to smile, but he didn't know it.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there was no foul. Black Mamba was never touched by another horse through the whole race." Then, since the horrified silence that greeted this remark seemed to need filling: "She was waiting for Wee Willie to yell at her. Instead of that, she felt this poor kid hit her with his bat. Mamby doesn't like that. So far as I'm concerned, put up the red board."

A moment later the president, looking at the crowd and taking his courage in both hands, pressed a button. Across



from the judges' stand the yellow placard signifying protest came down and the red one making the result official went up in its place. A moment after this the judges' stand ceased to be glass-enclosed on two sides. It wasn't even glass-enclosed on one side. Hired binoculars shied through its windows arranged that. Cries of, "Get that guy Middleton, show the — what we think of that kind of a —" and such rent the air. The bull-voiced Pinkerton man went down in the first rush. One of the stewards who had been through the war said, "Say, I'm sorry as hell, Towny, we're going to have a fight about this—shouldn't have got you mixed up in it—hardly fair."

Bill, who had known from the start in his dumb way exactly what was going to happen, turned to Middleton and grinned. "I'm wit you, Chief!"

Then he stepped out on to the little balcony outside the stand, squared his shoulders, drew himself up to his full tremendous height and scowled.

"Come on, you bastards! I played full back on de Sing Sing football team for three years an' not witout reason. Come on! Try an' touch my friend!"

The crowd—at least that unruly portion of them who had bowled over the Pinkerton man and had flung their rented field-glasses through the windows of the judges' stand—came on. Bill went down fighting. He'd been cut by flying glass, he'd had enough body hits to knock Max Schmelling cold, but he went down fighting. On the other side of the fence that keeps the Turf and Field audience away from the "people" and vice versa, there were cheers and cries and women fainting. They had never seen such a business in their lives. Here and there a Turf and Fielder jumped the fence and mixed it up with the first person he could find, amongst those storming the judges' stand, who was willing to mix it up in hand-to-hand encounter. There were not too many.

On the little balcony, Middleton was standing over Bill, who had finally been temporarily removed from the world by a

well-hurled bottle. He was fighting. He'd done the right thing and he knew he'd done the right thing, and all these lice had wanted him to lie and he wouldn't lie—just so he could be popular and they'd win their rotten little bets. He was fighting now for himself and for Bill, who'd so often fought for him; and boy, he fought!

He was somewhat in the position of that old sportsman Horatius who held a bridge that couldn't accommodate too many people at one time. Each man that reached the top of the stairway he promptly socked in the jaw, and then the man went down the stairway. But, after a bit, they began coming two at a time; and then he began to bleed and his punches began losing their strength and the stewards, closeted behind him, began to worry about their skins—for they, being solons, were far too paunchy to join in this sort of melée. But Middleton, straddling Bill's body, still held his ground.

The riot was, as such things go, getting to be a pretty snappy riot, but the police hadn't yet had time to get there and put the quietus on it. Middleton still stood defending the now groaning remains of his own private gladiator. Then a bottle flew from somewhere quite far off in the crowd. It caught him on the side of the head and broke, cutting him so that blood spurted from his temple into his eyes. He shook his head, tried to get the blood away, couldn't do it.

"Oh, you swine!" he shouted. After that he began to collapse.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

**A**BOUT a minute before Townsend Middleton got bunged by the bottle, Valerie Boots O'Connel got back to the club-house lawn, having seen her horse unsaddled. Boots knew perfectly well the horse had lost fairly without interference. She'd half-suspected Mamba'd lose anyway, without Wee Willie's riding; and she hadn't been able to afford Wee Willie. She hadn't expected, when she returned to the club-house lawn, to see the man she hated and loved above all others standing at the top of a rickety stairway with such a look of righteous indignation and fury in his eye as she'd never even imagined. She was half-way across the lawn heading for the riot before the bottle bunged. She saw it.

"Oh, for the love of God!" she cried when she saw the blood spurt from his temple. "I'll settle this in short order!"

She turned and yelled at the interested Turf and Fielders who, so far, had been mostly noncombatants.

"You, Peter Ashton! What good's your squash and your court tennis if you're no good to fight! You, Jack Walters, with your golf, what's the good keepin' you fit?"

The already bewildered Turf and Fielders looked at her, even more bewildered. She went on, calling on all the gentlemen she knew by name, telling them what she thought of them for keeping themselves so damned fit and then making no use of their fitness when here was a time to use it. Finally she ended up with:

"I'll show you, ye petted spalpeens you!"

And with that Valerie Boots O'Connel, in spite of her fine dress and the fact that she was the newest and brightest star on Broadway, jumped the fence and waded into the riot.

Behind her came every last male member of the Turf and Field Club, but Boots had her own Irish way of fighting and

she saw that her man was down now and suffering. She took her (Humber's really) field-glasses and swung them by their strap. Each time she swung she cracked a head, and the owner of the head dropped like a steer before her. Each time she swung she shouted the most appalling mixture of combined American and Irish cusswords that Belmont Park had ever heard. She couldn't have done it all alone, but she'd rallied the gentlemen behind her, and she fought her way, losing bits of clothing as she went, to the top of the judges' stand. She reached there just as Middleton, entirely spent, went down in a muddled heap on top of Bill. She caught the man who'd delivered the K.O. punch to Middleton in her final crack with the field-glasses.

"Be hittin' my people, will you? You slatherin' spite!"

Then she kicked him in the face. And then, as the Turf and Fielders arrived and the police arrived, the riot was over and she found herself on her knees kissing Townsend Middleton over and over again, trying to bring him back to consciousness.

He came back to consciousness not so much because of Boots' laments as because his own private gladiator, who had fallen beneath him and was a very tough mug, came back to consciousness before him and got very disagreeable about being collapsed upon. He came back to realize a great noise of ambulance and police sirens.

"Where's the microphone?" he said. "Got to tell 'em about it—this is something."

Then he really woke up and realized what was going on. He moved off Bill. Boots' arms were still around him. He couldn't understand that, but he liked it. Bill got up.

"It takes me back to de old days," he said. "Before I got to be a gentleman, I mean."

Boots looked up at him. The expression on her face startled him so that he looked quickly away and batted his somewhat shaky knees together.

"It takes me back to the old days, too," said Boots.

Suddenly Bill, quite ignoring the excitement that was still going on around them, said, "Hey, Bootsie, I got proof Towny's okay—I mean dat business de other night."

"I don't need proof now," said Boots. "I saw this afternoon he was okay."

Middleton, still groggy, reached for her. He hadn't to reach awfully far.

"Boots——" The million-dollar voice was shaky. "Boots, will you for God's sake marry me?"

"Not till you get divorced," said Boots. "But I'll come back to Greenhill and live there with you." She laughed. "I couldn't go on to-night, anyway, I've got two lalapaloosa shiners."

Townsend didn't notice the black eyes she'd caught in the fight. He was looking far too deeply into her real shiners.

"You'll come back to Greenhill with me—now?"

Larsen had arrived with a hand microphone in time to catch this entire awakening scene. About a million people heard Valerie Boots O'Connel quite unconsciously say, "You're the only people I got, Townsend; try and stop me."

About a million listeners were pretty well satisfied by that. So was Townsend Middleton.



## A COUPLE OF QUICK ONES

*Being the true account of the actions  
and reactions of Martin Jones during  
the year nineteen hundred and twenty-  
eight (insofar as he can remember them)*





## BOOK ONE

### *January 1st:*

IT being the first day of the new year I should make a swell entry in this chronicle, but this being the first day after the last day of the old year I don't feel able to somehow. You know how it is—some things I don't want to talk about much, and the rest I'm not able to remember. Besides I just woke up and though I don't feel too well I have still got time to get up to the damn Wrights for tea and. He wants me to meet his daughter. I suppose it's because he has money and I need it. Don't see why father couldn't have worked a little harder before he died.

### *January 2nd:*

Had just enough at the Wrights to bring me back to normal and make me grateful. Gratitude is a bad emotion; it makes you do things. I asked the daughter to go to the hockey with me Friday which was awfully dumb as Eloise leaves for Palm Beach Saturday and I wanted to take her out to dinner and say good-bye and now I can't chuck the Wright because her old man told me to buy Reynolds B., and he wouldn't ask me up to meet his daughter and tell me Reynolds B. was going up if it wasn't. Not his daughter!

Strange tea party they had at one of those huge Fifth Avenue places they would love to have somebody call an *atelier*. A lot of celebrities in cutaways drinking champagne and talking about themselves till they swelled up and the tails of their coats seemed like roosters' feathers. Wonder why celebrities always get red in the face when they drink?

Mrs. Wright popped around like a hen that has fallen into a duck-pond of perfume. People stepped on my feet, footmen pushed me out of the way as they swept past with silver trays

of fizz, other people, following them to see where the trays were going, pushed me. They reminded me of the wave of stags that follows a lovely and sought after débutante round a ballroom.

Then Wright brought up his daughter. "Mr. Jones, this is Betty." I knew it was Betty anyway because she had a rope of marbles around her neck, nice white marbles. I wondered what it would hock for. Then Wright went on: "Are they taking care of you? Giving you enough to drink? Plenty here, you know, plenty here. See that man over there in the morning suit? That's Rothchild, the big racing man. I was afraid he wasn't going to be able to get here. Hello, Mr. Kelly. Mr. Kelly, this is Martin Jones, friend of my daughter's. You know, old Schuyler Jones's son."

"Is that so, Mr. Jones! I used to sell your father meat when he lived on Madison Avenue. Fine man—always liked it cut just so."

I looked at Kelly's clothes; he too had a marble in his tie.

"Father and his friends ate a lot of meat, I guess." Then I turned to Betty and found to my surprise she had turned her back. I pushed around in front of her and understood. She was biting her lip and her face was very red.

"Father has to ask him," she said. "He keeps so much money in the bank father's president of. I—I hate it. He always goes over and looks at the food and pokes it, then tells father what he should have paid for it. Let's go in the other room."

We tried, but it was too crowded, so Betty led me into her father's bedroom which was very wall-nut and dark, with big red sofas. This wasn't so bad! Betty rang a bell and a waiter who looked like a zebra with blue trousers brought me fizz. I looked at Betty.

She wasn't bad either, in some ways. I liked her eyes and nose and legs, but she had an eighteen-seventy curl hanging over one ear which made me feel she should have on panta-

lettes and they would have covered her legs and that seemed a shame.

We talked for a while and the zebra brought more fizz. I took two or three glasses this time and forgot about the curl. The other rooms with the feeding lions roaring seemed pleasantly elsewhere—I stretched myself and asked her to go to the hockey match.

Then Wright came in and I asked him if it was all right, and it was then that he told me about Reynolds B. We had some more fizz and a lot of people trooped in, led by Mrs. Wright who paused every moment or two in order to point out some rare piece that had been bought out of a cathedral or something. That woman stopped at nothing; she even led them all into old Wright's bathroom to show how his new shower worked. It was like a Cook's tour to Niagara Falls. I pictured to myself how Wright must feel of a morning, standing nervously under the gilded spout, shivering in all his pink plumpness at the thought that he could never be sure the door wouldn't pop open and a voice begin bawling through a megaphone:

"Ladies and gentlemen and honeymooners. You are now looking on the world's greatest cataract!" I decided I was getting tight and had better go away from there.

*January 3rd:*

Went downtown to-day to see the ghoul that handles what he flatteringly calls my estate. It's enough to keep me, of course, but if I didn't add considerably to it by an occasional investment God knows what I should do!

Wormed five thousand in bonds out of him, by asking him if he had a good time at the Silver Slipper last Monday night—I think he did.

To the brokerage house of Alton Williams and told him to buy me all the Reynolds B. I could persuade him to for five thousand as well as anything I might have in my account.

"Reynolds B.?" he said. "You're a damn fool, Martin!

That stock's in a highly speculative condition and you can't afford it. Why, it might drop ten points at any time."

"Yes," I answered; "it might, Alton, but it won't."

"How do you know?"

"Because I'm taking a girl to a hockey match Friday."

Alton looked at me as though he thought I was unwell, but he shot the order down anyway and asked me to lunch. These brokers are that way.

We went to the Stock Exchange Luncheon Club. It was pleasant there, with lots of healthy-looking brokers eating lobster and some wan ones who seemed liverish sopping up bowls of milk and crackers. They have a swell statue in the hall of a bull goring a bear who happens at the moment to be biting his throat (the bull's). You look at it and you can't tell what's going to happen. Neither can the brokers, but then they don't look at it. I suppose the uncertainty makes them feel bad.

Cream of tomato soup for lunch, which is always good at that club, a clam juice non-alcoholic cocktail, which is a form of Christian Science insult, breaded veal cutlet, and so to the lounge for demi tasse and cigars.

The lounge is really a better indication of market activity than the ticker. If it is full of pious-looking men who can't read French looking at French magazines, and florid fathers in blue shirts and gay vests reading *Time*, you know the market is quiet. If there is room to sit down and be comfortable you know it is busy downstairs on the "floor." If it is entirely empty you know there is something amusing going on uptown.

Back to Alton's office which is always too crowded, but I shouldn't mind that if the customers sitting about watching the ticker screen made money enough to buy themselves decent cigars. I asked Alton about it and he said most of the real business came in over the 'phone. I asked him why he had all these unprofitable, ill-smelling cloak-and-suiters lying about.

"Oh, well," he said, "in the old days why did a bartender

have the shelves over the bar lined solid with bottles when the only ones he used were underneath?"

I couldn't answer that one, but saw what he meant. His word picture so touched me, however, that I decided to romp back uptown and have a drink.

*January 4th:*

Reynolds B. went up ten points. I sent orchids and asked her to dinner before the hockey.

*January 5th, 6th and 7th:*

Were all stupid except for Wednesday night when I took Eloise out. I like Eloise.

She is one of those girls you think of at about five-ten in the afternoon when you haven't anything particular to do, get lonely and don't feel like extending yourself to be polite. I first met her through George Dewey. I think I traded him Helen for her, which pleased me since Helen was getting expensive and pleased Eloise because she knew Helen. It sounds involved, but it isn't. I'm sure it isn't, let's see:

I throw Helen over to George. She's pleased because she thinks she's cut under Eloise. Eloise is pleased because she thinks she's pushed out Helen. I'm pleased because Helen was getting expensive, and George is pleased, because the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence.

I knew it was perfectly simple all along.

We went to Louis' on Forty-ninth Street after dinner and had a couple of quick ones. Eloise wanted to be kissed, but I told her she should have let me know before and I wouldn't have taken her to an Italian restaurant for dinner—which of course put any ideas such as she had entirely out of the question.

She got sort of sore at me then and told me I wasn't so hot, that she'd been going out that night with Rutherford Brown who would have taken her to the theatre and dancing after and that she thought since she'd broken that date I might at

least be civil to her. I couldn't tell her that the real reason I didn't want to kiss her was because it was awfully warm at Louis' and we'd been having rum cocktails and if I did she'd undoubtedly get excited which would be a damn nuisance as I wanted to go to the movies.

We had some more rum cocktails and I didn't go to the movies. After all Eloise *was* going away on Saturday.

*January 8th:*

I should have held out for fifteen points on Reynolds B. I didn't get in till five, and since I have attained the dignified age of thirty I don't like getting in at five. Besides, I feel kept. She had her car come for me and take me home, and instead of going out to dinner we had it at her house; alone, except for the zebra, the butler, the second man and several assorted maids.

When I came in old Wright greeted me with open arms. I had on my new dress suit and gold-headed cane, and I thought for a moment he was going to kiss me.

Then Mrs. Wright arrived, done in red. Wright looked at her and said: "Well, mother. Got your new one on! Stunning, isn't it, Jones? Absolutely stunning!" It was, absolutely stunning; it made me think of a red barn full of cows.

"I say, Jones," Wright went on, "care for a little one before dinner? I never serve anything when my daughter's here alone. You know, she's coming out this year. Doesn't look well."

I allowed that I might, and we went into what he called the library—because it had low lights and velvet curtains, I suppose, and a few tiers of editiony books strung about the walls. I complimented him on the good taste of it, and his books, adding of course that I was a man who didn't read much.

He gave me an odd look, as though I had said something, then went over to one of the shelves. He must have pushed one of those secret panel-buttons that are the luxury of rich men,

for the shelf swung out from the wall, revealing a very pretty sight indeed.

In the closet behind it were ranged every type of bottle good spirit-merchants have ever been known to fill. I tried to remember where his hand had pressed to open it, in case an emergency should ever overtake me in that house.

Since he left the choice to me I suggested a brandy which I saw was really old. He winced a little, but dragged it forth and found two glasses from somewhere in the false book backs that lined the outside of the shelves.

"Little idea of my own, that. Pretty clever, what?"

"Yes," I answered, tactfully neglecting to add that he had probably conceived it between the ages of twelve and fourteen.

The brandy turned out to be better than I had dared hope it could be. Wright and I sat down.

"Jones," he said, "what line are you in?"

"Direct from John Alden," I answered, "and they tell me William the Conqueror, but I take little stock in that. Have you ever considered that this ancestry stuff is the bunk? All you need is one frail woman somewheres along the line and where is your genealogy?"

The brandy was evidently going to Wright's head. I don't believe he drank it often.

"Where is my genealogy? I haven't got one, but Mrs. Wright has ordered it and it should be here any day now—but you misunderstood me. I mean what game are you in?"

I thought for a moment. I had dropped squash as too violent, nobody was playing polo in January except indoors. It must be obvious I couldn't skate well enough even in the morning to play hockey. Then I remembered, the steel game, the shoe game, the plumbing game, ah! I started to tell him I had not yet come to the point where my hand had been calloused by the plough handle, then I reflected there might possibly be something stirring if I was tactful.

"Just looking about," I said. "Just looking about a bit."

"Ever think of the banking business?"

"Think of it," I answered; "I've thought of little else!"

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"I think it's just wonderful!" This was a subject I knew. "I think the men who run decent banks are wonderful. They tell you when you haven't any money, and never let on when you have, and lend it to you if you ask and if you overdraw they pay the cheques that come in and never say a word about it. You own a bank, don't you?"

Wright coughed. "I'm president of one, yes."

I thought the "yes" was unnecessary. It inferred that, well, he practically would own it if it wasn't so public. I decided to ask him a question.

"Is it a swell bank?"

"We regard it as a very high-class bank indeed."

"Good! I might open an account some time."

"Buy any of that Reynolds B. I told you to?"

"A few shares."

"My bank's depositors always buy Reynolds B."

I didn't realize he was opening the door of opportunity and made the mistake of saying:

"Good God, don't you sell anything else?" Then I caught myself. "I mean really? It hardly seems possible!"

Betty came in then, so we arose.

"As I was saying, Jones, stop in at the bank some time. I'd like to have a chat with you. Might be an opening there you'd like!"

He left after that, and I was alone with Betty, who said she wanted to eat.

We did, and very satisfactorily too except for the few moments devoted to saying good night to her father and mother.

To the hockey match at Madison Square Garden—so-called because it is on the side of the city opposite from Madison Square. On the way down in her car Betty was silent, as she had been throughout dinner. I kept having the feeling with her that she wanted to be out with some friend her



own age and that because of it she resented my being there. Another thing I felt was spoiling her evening was the fact that her male parent so openly approved of me. Enough to kill a man in any girl's eyes, though I think she was mildly thankful I didn't sell meat to her father.

When we passed into the huge arena she began seeing friends and then I felt she took a certain amount of pleasure in showing me off, not because of any great beauty I might boast, but because it made her out more of a woman to be with a man instead of something so young it has hardly made up its mind as to whether it sings in the front or back stalls of the choir.

The match was excellent and I was pleased to note a warm flush of pleasure spread over Betty's cheeks when the two opposing forwards lost interest in the puck and fell to clouting each other over the head with their sticks.

That is really the best part of hockey matches at the Garden. One goes there so often during the winter to see the fights that when actual man-to-man physical combat does take place, it goes far toward restoring one's illusions. Tex does what he can, but makes the mistake of working up his grudge atmosphere through process servers and law courts, which naturally results in the fighters getting mad at the attorneys and process servers instead of at each other.

Here in the hockey we see rank provincials out for gold and naught else. They like playing hockey, but they like winning. They are provincial enough to be sporting about it too. If they do happen to stage something that might be regarded as a little rougher than a "Boxing Contest" there is no committee to deprive them of their bread for frightening the anti-saloon league. They are set off the ice for two or three minutes, which is perfectly great as it gives them rest enough to go on and soak hell out of each other in the next period. Yes, I like hockey at the Garden.

Between quarters a great many strangely built women slid out on to the ice in bearskin and harlequin costumes to

perpetrate what the programme alleged as an "Ice Ballet." Betty was chatting in the next box with some kid friends, so I had opportunity to watch and was reminded of a story a man I played polo with last summer told me.

He was a Corinthian hockeyer, having played at St. Paul's and later at Yale and was now with some athletic club team. It seems he had arrived a little late for his match one evening and had gone into the basement to put on his long red drawers and shin-guards.

He strolled into a dressing-room and found it crowded but none the less tossed off his hat and began undressing. Around him were the usual naked backs, in fact all around him. Then he thought that either he was going mad or else his team-mates had taken to playing in white kid skate-boots.

"Hey, you sons of bitches!" he shouted at them. "What's this team coming to?"

Then he went away from there quickly, and that night the ice ballet was different somehow. They have an electric sign in the basement now.

The whistle for the next quarter blew and I was so wrapped up in the thought of what Joe's face must have looked like that I was laughing when Betty came back from her friends' box. She asked me at what, so I told her. Then she said:

"You know, Mr. Jones, I'm beginning to wonder if maybe you *are* human. Wouldn't it be funny if you were?"

"What," I asked her, "do you mean by that?"

"Only that ever since I first met you you've given such a fine impersonation of a stuffed shirt that I thought you must work in father's bank or something. You don't drink, really. You don't make love. You politely send orchids and get me all het up thinking what a nice evening I may have and then you shut up like a clam and talk abstractions. If you knew how I hated abstractions!"

She looked at me hard as she said that and I wondered if by chance she meant anything beyond her words. I sought to explain.

"You see," I began, "your father frightened me by saying he never served liquor when you were home alone and talked about your coming out and all that sort of thing and then . . ."

"And then what? If you knew how bored I am with the virtues of men who want to get something out of father!"

"If you knew," I answered, for I was getting angry, having bargained for being bored but not insulted, "how fed up I am on fathers who are careless enough to have female kids who think they are women, and . . ."

"And," she interrupted.

"And who are, though rather lovely in their way, female kids?"

She leaned over quite close to me and smiled. I could see that for the first moment that evening she was interested.

"And yet, who, though female kids, have perhaps something of the lure of women about them?"

I was outraged! What sort of rot was this lure-of-women stuff for her to be talking?

"Certainly not!" I answered. "Look, there's a game going on!"

She smiled again at me, but this time it was a smile of equality and friendliness rather than the salutation of a duellist.

"The game has been going on," she laughed softly, "ever since your first broadside."

I wondered what she meant, for the whistle had but just blown, then suddenly I thought I might manage to have rather an amusing evening.

After the hockey I asked her where she wanted to go, we having talked hardly at all since that short interchange, and suggested Montmartre because it was old and reliable, respectable or otherwise as the mood inclined one.

She was insulted. She said she knew a place, and I said I did too, but I certainly wouldn't think of taking her there. I told her we were either going to a nice respectable joint or we weren't going—but she came back with something to the effect that if I expected her to go out and wear down her pumps dancing when she was as dry as—

"Why, where do you think you are?" she said. "With Lawrence in Arabia or something?"

I weakened. After all, I should be worrying about the care of Wright's children if he didn't have sense enough to take care of them himself. Then, too, she *was* rather attractive. She had left off the curl to-night and so removed the thought of the pantalettes, giving me the opportunity to realize that in a year or so she might quite do.

I told her chauffeur to go to Fifteen East Fortieth.

I think Betty liked "Louis'." She sank back on the sofa when we got upstairs and Mr. Thomas, who always brought the drinks, had closed the door, and sighed.

I sighed too, not knowing what else to do.

"To think of me being here with you!"

This struck me as being unaccountably Henry C. Rowlandish.

"And me with you!" I muttered tenderly.

She looked up and laughed. "No," she said, "me with you. I thought I'd lie when you explained so carefully to Macawber just where this place was. I come here almost every night."

"You're a liar," I said, "and trying to show off, but I like you and think with a little schooling you may do." I kissed her. It was, on the whole, rather pleasant. "Why did you say you'd been here when you know I know you hadn't?"

"Because you've been so damn snooty all evening and I'd heard so many de-derogatory things about you that I thought you would be quite nice. Then father falls all over your neck and that starts to spoil things; then you act like an injured tom cat and I thought maybe if you didn't think I was quite so young you might snap your shirt-tails and get human—and you did."

"Louis' " is a nice place. I like "Louis'."

*January 9th:*

To the train to-day to see Eloise off. She looked a little coarse, I thought, or maybe it was because I wasn't quite my-

self. Takes me two days now to completely recover from bad hours. My apartment was a mess too, and that always makes me feel weak around the edges—like an egg that has been under-poached.

After the train, to the Club and ran into Tom Hale, who insisted I motor with him to Long Island for dinner and the week-end. It seemed an asinine thing to do, considering how comfortable Town was, but I agreed and at four we began starting his car.

Tom Hale was practically married to this car. He liked its smart curving lines, its flashiness and its great power, but to me it seemed like nothing so much as a contrary woman. It had potentialities of speed but it took all hell's fire to get it started; it made too much noise and was decidedly bumpy, but it was beautiful. He had paid something like ten thousand dollars for it and the upkeep was high.

At four-thirty the engine was prevailed upon to issue hoarse and disagreeable noises, and at five we were under way. We sailed up Park Avenue and would doubtless have gotten over the Queensborough Bridge ahead of the evening traffic had it not been that a thoughtful soul named Hennessey had built him a most comfortable saloon on Fifty-eighth between Third and the bridge.

Hennessey's is one of those places where you push a buzzer and an individual opens a slit to peer out at you. If he likes your looks and knows your name you are passed in. If he knows your name and doesn't like your looks you are passed in anyway and if he doesn't know your name but knows the friend's you've mentioned, you are also admitted.

At Hennessey's we ran into Jack Lawrence who was rolling about in what he said was the slough of despond, but it looked to me like beer. It seems he'd just finished a new play and was thoroughly spent. So spent in fact that he didn't have enough money to pay his bill and hadn't had since last night so he had just stayed there ordering a drink from time to time "so as not to outwear his welcome," as he put it.

I think his welcome, though perhaps not yet outworn, was becoming at least slightly tarnished for when I asked Dan how much was due, there came a gleam in his eye that reminded me of a Scot I once saw at St. Andrews who had flubbed his drive on a water hole and suddenly discovered that his ball was a floater.

Tom and I had a few quick ones, paid our score as well as Jack's, and started to work on him to come along with us. Tom began by pointing out the evils of drunkenness, holding me up as a shining example, but Jack was just sober enough to catch on.

"Evils of drunkenness p'sonified in Martin?" he managed to say. "Evils, hell! Martin lives damn comf'ble life. Lead me to it."

"Listen, Jack," Tom pleaded: "You're coming out to my place at Westbury for the week-end. You've got to snap out of it, see?"

"Don' wan' go Wes'b'ry—Les go Palm Beash 'stead."

"You're cock-eyed, Jack!" I put in my ha'penny worth: "How about your play? Don't you want to see about getting it produced?"

"Don' wan' my play produce' in Wes'b'ry—— Not 'nough people there. Wan' it produce' in New York. No real dough f'r Sam an' Lee, no play's."

Then, unconsciously, I fixed it. "Think of your mother!" I said for no reason other than that I'd had a few on the way to the garage. "Think of your mother. What would *she* think of you?"

Jack staggered half-way to his feet, gave me such a look as Hamlet cast on the skull and blustered:

"Martin's writ'n' a song. 'Think of my mother, what would she think of you!' 'as swell, Martin! Ought make lot of money. Think of my mother, what would—think of, think of, for God's sake, let's move on out of this joint—we've been here over an hour!"

Tom winked at me. "Our golden moment," he said, "You

don't know how cold and sobering the back of the Mercedes is in January."

Tom was wrong because I did know, having been forced to ride there once or twice, but we managed to keep Jack propped on his feet long enough to get him in—then we rolled for the island.

As we slid out of Queens Plaza on to the North Country Road I turned to look at Jack. I had been thinking as we crossed the bridge that he was probably one of our coming young men. His stories had been mostly successful; he had written a book that someone published, and now had done a play that would probably be produced because lousy plays are, and I couldn't imagine Jack writing anything except a lousy play. He was practically moribund on the floor of the tonneau. I observed for a moment his pale, high brow, his wavy hair, his clothes—everything about him bespoke the intelligentsia.

"Tom," I said, "don't ever become learned and intelligent. Your digestion would never stand it. Even Phospho Soda wouldn't pull you through."

*January 10th:*

Never prevail upon a drunken playwright to accompany you to the country. It is risky even to ask an ordinary one, for you never can tell when he's apt to become drunk. It isn't that people in the country don't drink—on the contrary, I don't think there's any nicer place for drinking provided you can dodge the horses.

Neither Jack Lawrence nor I had any clothes other than the ones we wore, so we had carefully pried from Tom Hale the dope that it was all to be very quiet, with no one there except family unless they'd asked someone to dinner which he didn't think was likely.

We had travelled pretty fast and stopped off several times on the way down to get warm. Tom had telephoned to say there'd be two extra for dinner and after a long time we

turned up a rutted country road, skidded on to a gravel drive and arrived.

Tom and I had some difficulty waking up Jack and getting his legs working properly, but as we'd had a few ourselves, it just struck us as funny. We began to laugh; and the more we thought about how funny Jack was the more we laughed until, finally, all three of us sat down on the stone steps in front of the house. Then Tom said: "I think it would be fun to sing a little, don't you?"

We thought so, and there ensued quite an argument as to what to sing—you know how those things are. Tom and I were perfectly sober, of course—but Jack, being the way he was, communicated a certain ebullience of feeling to us. We decided on a swell song about the King of England, which seemed to be the only musical composition of which we all knew the words.

I sang bass, Tom sang tenor, and Jack contributed something between an alto and a steamboat whistle, but it sounded fine, echoing over the snow. We wound up with a rousing cheer and fell silent.

"I suppose we should go in," I suggested.

"No, let's have another," said Tom.

We did, though the flask had suffered terribly on the way down. Jack wanted to sing some more so we began the same song over again. I think we did better this time, for as we finished I heard a dog down in the stable half a mile away begin to howl. Then a car drove up—a big car with two men on the box—who looked at us the way Josephine must have looked at Napoleon when she found out about that little business over in Egypt.

One of these boys in blue sprang lightly to the ground and opened the door of the car. Someone inside snapped on a light and I saw to my horror that it was positively teeming with Wrights!

"Must we?" I whispered to Tom.

"Yes," he said. "The old gent has a deal on; it needs



financing. Banks have money; Wright has banks; shut up!"

We all stood up quickly, that is all except Jack, who probably wanted to, which was something. Then Wright got out and looked at Tom who said the proper thing. Then he looked at me and I could think of nothing stronger than "Hello, skipper!" which served as well as anything else, because it seemed to stun him into sort of a trance. Then Mrs. Wright managed to get through the door, and after her came Betty who took one look at us and said: "Do they pay you for this, or do you by any chance belong here?"

They went into the house.

"Whew!" said Tom.

"Cordial, what!" from Jack.

I said nothing, but hauled Jack up and walked through the door which one of old Hale's footmen was hopefully holding open.

The house was full of people—all sorts of people. Considering who the Hales were and knowing their friends, I couldn't understand it; felt as though I'd been asked to the opera on a Thursday night.

Then we sat down to dinner which would have been a pleasant event had not Jack spoiled it by having to leave the table after the roast beef. I knew how he felt, so didn't really have the heart to be angry with him—after all it showed he had nice instincts.

After coffee and liqueurs, of which old Hale had a splendid supply, to the library for sitting around, bridge and all that sort of thing. I was amused by the customers who obviously had been asked because Hale had to have Wright down and thought he might as well clean up the ragged edges of the community while he was at it.

You could see that all of them were enjoying tremendously just having been asked to the Hales' house and meeting the Hale friends, and that they thought everyone else there was frightfully swell just because they were there. Most of them

lived near by too, which aided in creating a general impression of mistaken identity.

I could picture to myself Mrs. Swinney who lived in a terrible atrocity just outside Jericho, bringing out the gold plate for Mrs. Dane whom she had asked to dine with her on Tuesday next; and I knew perfectly well that Mrs. Swinney had never had Mrs. Dane in her house before.

I overheard fat old Porter Brown telling the Lieutenant-Governor of the State how much the initiation fee at the River Club was and explaining, in his own way, how he had happened not to join Blowing Rock. The Lieutenant Governor, having reached his eminence through tact, answered, "Don't blame you, old chap," and I decided Blowing Rock must be rather nice.

I saw Wright, who sat in a big arm-chair blowing Corona rings at the ceiling, look at a spot where the plaster was badly cracked, and I knew he was thinking about his new shower-bath.

Then I saw Betty. She was sitting in front of the fire staring into the embers, and somehow or other she had managed to get into a position where the red glow from them turned her hair into a golden copper and made her look like something I thought I had forgotten about a long time ago.

I watched her for a long time while the others were being as politely nasty to each other as they dared, then something about the expression in her eyes made me go over and sit on the fire seat beside her. She looked up and smiled; I think she knew I understood.

"It's hell, isn't it!" I said.

She looked frightened for a second, like a dog who's been caught lying on a forbidden sofa. Then she laughed:

"Can't we go and sit somewhere else?"

I nodded and walked away. She followed me, in a moment, and as we started down the long hallway toward the billiard room I slipped my arm through hers and held her hand. It seemed the thing to do, somehow.

"Damn you!" she began and I saw she was half crying,

“you know, I—Oh, I’m so God awful sick of it! Always the same sort of people whenever I go anywhere with father. I was so happy when he told me we were coming down here for the week-end. I knew the Hales were nice and everything, and I thought for once we were going to leave the bank down in Wall Street where it belongs. Then we arrive and you and Tom and this Jack man are all sitting on the steps as tight as coots and I thought what a relief it was to be with gentlemen, and then I come inside and find I’m back in the menagerie again! I think it’s just rotten!”

I didn’t mean to give a damn, of course—but somehow I found myself being awfully sorry for her. How she got that way, I don’t know, unless maybe her undoubtedly respectable middle-class grand- or great-grandmother had slipped, but she was beginning to make me feel like a man who discovers a Derby winner in the shafts of a London cab. It was disturbing.

We went into the billiard room, sent the second man for a bottle of champagne and sat there holding hands. Then we sent for another bottle of champagne and drank that. Then we felt better and went back to the living-room and found it was after twelve and everybody had gone except Wright and old Hale, who were talking business. Betty went over and sat by her father and I listened to them for a while and was quite impressed with the amount Wright seemed to know. I’d always thought he was sort of an ass before, but he could remember more figures than I ever knew existed. Addison Sims wasn’t in it with him when he got started.

To bed then, and read Jack’s play which I found on my pillow. It may have been the fizz, or it may have been Betty, but it struck me as being so pleasant that I woke Jack up and told him I’d back the thing for him.

*January 10th:*

We beagled to-day. I had avoided beagling for years but I knew it would only be a question of time till old Hale got me. He goes in for that sort of thing, you know.

Beagling is a nice sport. It's nice for the hounds who have a swell time chasing cats and it's nice for the hares, providing them with just enough exercise to keep fit so they can have more hares. Hale says it's a worthy sport because it helps in the extermination of a pest. I think he must have meant me, for by the time I'd run three miles or so I was just as good as exterminated, but I kept on with them and tore my clothes in the woods and got mud in my face, which seemed to please my host. Then I made the terrible mistake of asking him if he wasn't afraid he might scare all the rabbits off his place. I like rabbits; they remind me of George Dewey.

Back to town after lunch and to a horrible tea at Estelle Oler's. Tom took me and I didn't feel right about it because I knew them and wasn't asked. From the way Mrs. Oler looked when she saw me come up the stairs I figured the reason they hadn't asked me was probably because they didn't want me.

*February 30th:*

Just got back from Palm Beach. Left my diary in New York, and so done in the eye for entries until to-day. Perhaps it's just as well, though several amusing things happened to me down there of which I should like to have had an official day-by-day record.

One of the things I like best about Palm Beach is watching people. It reminded me of that night the Hales gave the rough-neck dinner where everybody thought everybody else was "it" because they were there—then too Palm Beach is a little like a liner in the middle of the ocean. You can insult almost anybody you meet because you're practically certain never to see them again. You won't go where they live, and if they come where you do, you'll take damn good pains to stay in the underbrush till they get gone.

Eloise was there, of course, which wasn't so good as it was absolutely impossible to pass her off as a middle-westerner and she seemed to feel that my arrival was by way of being in the nature of a bonanza. For her, I suppose it was, but Eloise

is a nice girl and never wants you to sign anything. Was amused by a good one we got on Bradley.

It seems that one night when the play was pretty steep and the tables were practically groaning under the weight of thousands of dollars in gold, bullion, and specie and Bradley was moaning under the strain of extending twice as many thousands in credit, a young woman in black came and spilt tears all over his shirt-front.

Now Bradley doesn't like having his shirt-front softened by anyone but himself or the weather, and this was an exceedingly pretty woman whose new mourning was becoming.

She told him, between sobs, of having come to Palm Beach with a little money her husband had left her (being in the nature of a grubstake, I suppose, while she was prospecting) and of having played there night after night in the hope of being able to win enough to keep her and her child for a little while.

Bradley was touched. He didn't realize how touched, and he asked her how much she had lost.

Her husband wasn't such a bad guy, evidently, because she said she'd handed over eight thousand dollars in her three nights' play.

Bradley sighed—he thought of his mother and her mother and how awful it must be for a wife when a fine man dies. He paused and looked over the crowded tables.

The Bentleys were there—they'd lose a thousand or so; the Pratts and Wortley-Smiths, slightly tight; they were good for another thousand, and here was this poor woman fighting to keep control of herself.

They talked a moment more and Bradley had visions of newspaper items describing the finding of the body in his garden. He could just see it: A young woman . . . the body was clothed in a black dress, black hat, green stockings and purple underwear. She had evidently been gambling heavily and her losses had driven her to her desperate act. Bradley

knew she didn't have on green stockings and knew enough of women to be certain her underwear would be mauve, not purple; but the thought haunted him.

He looked again at the Wortley-Smiths, two tables away, and ordering a bottle of champagne sent to them as a sort of insurance, turned to this pathetic widow.

"Madam," he said, "big-hearted Bradley will help you." And with that he handed over eight thousand dollars.

It was sort of a shame, since he really was pretty white about it, that he found out later she'd only arrived in Palm Beach that afternoon; but I guess Bradley could stand it.

Then there was the night Rutherford Brown serenaded Eloise. He and a friend of his got frightfully stinko, hired the "Grove" orchestra, put them in two wheel chairs, put themselves in another and a case of fizz in a third. I think Eloise liked being serenaded, but I understand some of the other people in the Poinciana objected. I don't see why they had to do that. Of course Rutherford can't sing worth a damn, but it was a good orchestra.

From Palm Beach down the canals in a houseboat to Miami, which is getting more and more like the old grey mare. Then by 'plane to Key West and the rotten little steamer over to Havana, which smells just as bad at night as it did two years ago.

Havana in some ways is an oppressive place. I don't mind so much their habit of emptying the sewers into the streets at night, but nowadays every tourist boat stops there for at least a day and the competition is terrible.

The racing, however, was rather pleasant, though far from first class—still it paid me to go, and I could enjoy my vacation more knowing I was making money on it.

By United Fruit boat back to New York on the strength of a wire from Jack Lawrence saying his play was about to go into rehearsal and he'd need money. Before leaving though, I realized I'd need all I could lay my hands on in the way of

specie, and so to Sloppy Joe's place near the band-stand, and Joe gave me one for that afternoon which I soaked on the nose at ten to one.

*March 4th:*

Busy all week providing Jack with money and feeding various and sundry members of the cast. The play is called "Death" and is a comedy—which is perfectly all right according to Jack. I liked the girl who plays the lead. She is little and says "swissing" for "swishing" and always treats me as though she had been waiting the better part of her confessed twenty years for someone like me to come along.

The night of the first rehearsal I asked her out after work, and she came. We went to Barney's where it is sort of dark and we talked. To my amazement she wouldn't drink. I took her hand and looked into her eyes and asked her what life was like in Kalamazoo and would she rather have an ice-cream soda.

I almost fainted when I found she'd been educated in Switzerland and had gone on the stage because she thought people should do something in this world. I told her I did too, only I meant they ought to fox hunt and play polo and go to the races and all that sort of thing, and I didn't have sense enough to realize at the time that women who think the way she thought represent a real menace. They are like Dracula, you don't realize you are in their power until it's too late, and after they've made you start doing something in the world they give up all idea of doing anything in it themselves.

I had the car with me that night and asked her if she'd like to take a run down the Motor Parkway. She looked at me and squinted her big blue eyes.

"I will," she said, "if you'll tell me one thing. Are you a gentleman or do you go fox hunting so you can wear a high hat?"

"If you mean will I attack you, no. If you mean would I like to, naturally."

"All right," she said. "You wouldn't say so if you intended to."

But I think she was disappointed in the drive, because I have always found looping down the Parkway at night a fairly absorbing occupation and, particularly on the corners, one not permitting a great deal of philandering.

*March 6th:*

To what was probably the last *débutante* party of the year. The Nathans gave it for their horrible offspring Christine. She is tall and willowy and doesn't realize that her sire and dam just got into society by the last train. It was one of those parties.

I stopped off on my way up and collected Tom Hale and we went to Louis' for a while, so when I arrived I was in a slightly weakened condition. Imagine my horror at seeing lined up inside the door a complete set of footmen in blue knickerbockers, and with powdered hair. That was all right, because it was a big private house, but Nathan was either a bit close, or else had forgotten to buy them wigs. The house was hot. They had, though highly paid, perspired profusely, with the result that the powder had run, so to speak, and each of them looked as though he had been having a shampoo in a barber shop that had caught fire.

Was amused, on climbing the stairs to the check room, to have a very young man engage me in conversation. I don't like very young men and couldn't remember this one's name, but he knew mine and won his way to my heart by asking me if I'd like one, and knowing that it would be some time before anything could be hoped for from Nathan in the way of refreshment, I accepted with mild enthusiasm. We sat us down on the top step of the winding stair and I looked at this young person.

He was distinctly Flushing, and his shoes were probably the mangiest I have ever looked on, so when I noted that he wore a one-button shirt I knew he had been practising false economy by buying it because he had lost a stud.



"Mr. Jones, I'll tell you something funny."

"Fine," I encouraged him. "I should love to hear something funny."

"I wasn't asked to this party, but I got in anyhow!"

I decided he must live in Astoria. It seemed inconceivable to me, from what I'd seen of the people there, that there could be anyone in town who hadn't been asked.

"Yes," he went on, "I wasn't asked, but these private houses are easy. Now take Pierre's. Pierre's is hard to get into, don't you think?"

"It's much harder to get out of," I replied, "with your shirt."

"To crash a party there you've got to check your coat at Sherry's and walk down two blocks to Pierre's so they'll think you've been in before."

"Ever try walking in backwards?" I asked, but he was warming to his theme and didn't hear me.

"Now take the Ritz. The Ritz and the Colony Club parties had me stumped until I went to Princeton. Then I learned how to do it. I'd read the society news in the paper every day until I knew pretty much where everyone was, and I'd pick a man who was in Palm Beach or some place and was swell enough to be sure to be asked, like Nelson Page." He sighed, as at the mention of a lost loved one. "Nelson Page was away all last winter and every time I'd come to the man at the door who held the list of those invited, I'd just say Nelson Page and of course they let me in! That's the best way to do it, really."

"My boy," I said to him, accepting another drink, "I'm afraid you're just a piker. What you're doing has no future to it. Now in my day!

"There were two young men who couldn't have gotten themselves asked or let in anywhere if they'd gone up to the man at the door walking on their hands, but—they were great masters of strategy. They said to themselves: 'Here! This won't do; everybody else at school reads the papers, sees where

the party is that night and manages to crash it. We can't admit we're not as good as they are, what we must attempt is something really daring. We will attend a really exclusive subscription dance like the Colony.' You probably don't know what the Colony is. For you to try and crash that with your simple methods would be like a second-storey worker trying to rob a bank. It is the swellest, smallest dance in all New York.

"Realizing that audacity is, at times, the best method of approaching a delicate situation, they marched up to the door, said they'd left their tickets at home and, as is the way at those parties, were asked to write their names in the guest book before going in. You and your parasite friends would undoubtedly have written someone else's name, but these lads were men of foresight and courage. They wrote their own.

"Now, my lad, since the Colony list was, that year, the accepted standard of whom should be asked to all exclusive, and otherwise, *débutante* parties, and since their names were on it, these intrepid youths were invited to every party that season—and furthermore, because they'd been seen at every party, they were *invited* to the Colony the next year. Pretty nice, what?"

My little friend was staggered. "Who in hell were they?" he asked. "They must have been awfully swell to get away with it."

"They were swell," I told him. "One of their fathers drives a taxicab, and the other is the son of a man who works in a factory in Brooklyn."

My little friend got up and left. I think he was going to be ill.

Downstairs and to the ballroom where I was much delighted and amused to see Nathan running around trying to dodge various chippies who had been brought to the party by careless youths who knew their New York so little they didn't have sense enough to realize that a man with a wife like Mrs.

Nathan must necessarily have many intimate friends in other walks of life.

That was how Nathan got into society, in a way. He ran around with all these little wrens, who of course numbered among their friends the nicest men in town, and, through them, met the nicest men, who were nice to him because they were usually drunk when he met them or were afraid they had been the next time he saw them. But I don't think that was why Nathan ran around town.

I stood looking at the people for a while and then it was supper-time, so I followed the mad rush into the dining-room where there was already quite a crowd sitting at the tables with all the younger men giving dollar bills to the waiters and wondering why they wouldn't bring them private bottles of the champagne they were passing. I don't think they realized that the fizz, bad as it was, had cost Nathan at least eight dollars a quart; and I don't think they had been around town enough to realize that the standard tip to a really successful champagne waiter at our better parties is five.

I was wandering around in a lost sort of fashion when I heard someone yell my name, and there was Betty saving a seat for me. I went over.

"Did you do that because your father told you to, or do you want me to have supper with you?"

"Look at the sort of thing I've got with me! Of course I do. You at least won't get sick half-way through supper and either leave me or fall under the table."

"I won't," I said. "Not because I drink less but because I have more will power and am in training. How've you been?"

"Bored. Ever since we left the Hales' I've been bored to death."

I hadn't seen her since then and couldn't make out if she was trying to be nice to me or meant it.

"Been having any more tea parties in the *atelier*?"

"Three. One yachtsman, one diplomat, and one prince. They were all awful."

"Which was the worst?"

"The yachtsman wasn't so bad. He had money of his own. The diplomat needed an American wife and the prince needed one too. He wanted to be endowed."

I think I like Betty. I asked her to have tea with me the next day. It's impossible to talk at a brawl like the Nathans', and I like talking to Betty because she has the gift of making you feel you are both outcasts together which, although insulting in a man, is most delightful in a woman, or *débutante*. She said she'd love to go to tea and we chatted for a while about the fizz and the murals and wondered if Nathan had bought them because they were art or because the figures reminded him of Texas Guinan, then fell into a violent argument about a book somebody had just written. I hadn't read it and am pretty sure she hadn't either, but we both had a lot of fun talking about it.

Then one of the young men revived sufficiently to take her away from me and I looked over the party and, suddenly finding it rather deadly, was seized with an inspiration: I went home to bed.

*March 7th:*

Dreamt about Betty all night. I think it was the Nathans' supper. Horrible dreams they were too, about marrying her and being made to sit in a cage at Wright's bank all day shaking hands with people who'd sold meat to my father, and very bad meat too, which made it worse. Then every now and then, during a lull in the business, Mrs. Wright would come in followed by thousands of people and point me out as her daughter's new husband, and she wanted them to see how I worked.

It was too terrible, and when I woke up I decided to become a nun and then I realized that wouldn't be quite right and it would take too long to get to be a monk and besides I didn't have a bath robe that would look swell enough except the one I wore at Lido last year and I don't think the other monks

would approve of that exactly, so I said to myself: "The hair of the dog will cure the bite," and ordered a quart of champagne sent up from the bootlegger who had an apartment on the Fifth-Avenue side of my building and a fresh bottle of Phospho Soda from room service, which had kept it in stock since I moved into the building.

Just as I was beginning to recover, the bank telephoned and said there wasn't enough money in my account to cover a rather handsome cheque I gave Jack Lawrence for his beastly show, and would I please do something about it.

I was sure the bank was wrong but they have so many machines and things for counting money that I never dare argue with them.

Downtown and to the financial district where I touched Alton Williams for the required gold. He hated to part with it, but as my account is worth more to him than his peace of mind, bled a bit, but did so.

Took the gold back up to the bank and thanked them for 'phoning me, at the same time informing them that I thought they were a lot of stiffs, and I knew a much sweller bank that a friend of mine owned. From their answer to this cutting remark I gathered that they were not entirely pleased with the way I handled my affairs.

Later to tea with Betty who was what is probably called ravishing in the text books. She was in blue, with blue stockings and a blue hat. I have heard criticism of blue stockings from time to time, but think it must have come from people who wished they had been built on the same lovely foundations as Betty.

We talked about the party last night and she told me she thought I was a big Swede not to have stayed and taken her home as the little boys gave out. She said it had finally wound up with what was left of old Nathan trying to take her.

You know suddenly I found myself getting sore as hell. Betty riding home with old Nathan! I saw red. "What the hell do you mean, you nut! You trotting around with that! God,

I'll go up and knock daylight out of him! The idea of you in the back of a limou——"

She broke in and I knew I'd done it.

"I didn't go home with him, stupid, but you're awfully cute when you get mad like that about me."

"Damn!" I said.

"Don't get mad again. I don't even think you were a big Swede—now. Why did you get so mad?"

"I don't believe in young girls running around with . . ."

"Young girls?"

"Young Betties."

"How are they any different? Except Betties have money and unpleasant parents?"

I didn't like the way the conversation was going so began talking about hunting. This didn't work either because it seemed she just loved hunting. I tried cross-country racing and found it the same, then yachting and learned she'd sailed since she was a baby. I tell you it looked bad for yours truly.

Then we were reminded by the waiter that, though we'd been sitting there for nearly an hour, we had entirely neglected to order anything. When he had gone I turned to Betty and took her hand. She smiled and I knew it was all over but the shouting.

"Hell, Betty," I said, "I love you—ever since that night at the Hales'—that's why I went to Palm Beach—Damn you anyway!"

Betty laughed and took my other hand in hers. "In your obscure and drunken fashion, are you asking me to marry you, Martin?"

"You, darling, yes—but for God's sake, don't make me marry your family!"

#### *March 30th:*

Went down to Alton's office just before the engagement was announced and touched him for enough out of my account to squander on a pretty swell rock.

Before paying for same took it for a quick trip to MacAleenans to test out its hock value and finding that O.K. romped up to the Wrights to hand it over. I hoped it would act like margin in a stock broker's office and pay for itself many times. Tom Hale, of course, said I should insist on a settlement from the old man, who had asked me if I didn't want to go into his bank and learn the business. I told Wright that I'd let him off the settlement if he'd let me off the bank, because I thought that with he and I working together in other ways we could probably both make a good deal more in the long run. He seemed relieved, but I soon put a stop to that by telling him I was transferring my account to his institution. He asked me if I thought that was really quite fair to the people I'd been banking with, and I told him that in the light of my last conversation with them I not only thought it was fair but believed they might even give me a bonus.

He asked me if the account was a very active one, and I told him it was so damned active I only caught up with it about once every third month and he said "Awk!" but he was game about it—I guess he'd known a lot of hard knocks in his life.

Being engaged to Betty is pretty nice. We spent a weekend at Tom's, and we beagled and I liked it so I guess I'm pretty fond of her. Old Wright tried to get us both to go with him to White Sulphur, but I told him my business interests wouldn't let me get away.

"Tied up in the market, eh?" he said.

I tried to look wise and worried.

"If I were you, Martin," he came back, "I think I'd sell a little R.I. to-morrow. Directors' meeting to-day—ah, ah, well, you know."

So I sold a little R.I., and R.I. did even more than I'd dared hope it would. It did so much in fact that I found it in my heart to rather pity people who weren't marrying the daughters of pink, plump, downtown bankers.

Betty away from her family was wonderful—I began to

believe less and less in the virtue of her grand- or great-grandmother. She was thoroughbred, she was—or at least seven-eighths. We went up to Connecticut one day and hunted in the snow. Had a real run, too, over some pretty big walls where the horses slipped when they took off and skidded when they landed. Betty was in the first flight all the way and went at some of the fences so fast I began thinking of how awful it would be if anything happened to her.

There were a few bad moments when we got back to town that night for Jack Lawrence called us up and asked us to go to a party with him. We went and Elinor, you know, his little swissing star, was there, and she fell all over my neck and I thought Betty seemed a little hurt on the way home because of course I'd gotten tight and kissed the little fool and Betty'd seen it.

*April 15th:*

I knew something awful like this would happen! I knew it the night I told Jack I'd back his show. It happened at the opening. I took Betty and we went to a party on the stage afterwards. I got mixed up somehow with Elinor and a lot of people and some fizz and things and Betty told me she thought we'd better go home. I kicked and she ordered me home. I kicked more violently and she said she thought I was just marrying her for her money anyway, and that I wasn't good for anything that didn't directly concern the rapid conveyance of liquor to lips, and that I was sort of filthy anyway.

With that, she took off the rock and threw it at me, called up her father and some little boy she knew and told them both to come and take her home because I'd turned out to be a drunken libertine and she wasn't going to waste her time and her old man's money helping me drown myself in rot-gut. I drew a blank, after that, and woke up married—to Elinor. And knew I was about to be made to do things in this world. It was awful because we were at the Pickwick Arms in Greenwich and I'd forgotten my Phospho Soda.



## BOOK TWO

*April 16th:*

WHEN it was finally brought home to me by Elinor that we were man and wife, I demanded a wedding breakfast with champagne. She refused on the grounds that we'd had a wedding breakfast the night we were married. I told her quite simply that this didn't count because I'd undoubtedly lost it and couldn't remember it anyway. Then I turned over to get a good look at her.

When I'd returned from messing about in my clothes where I knew I had a flask of whisky hidden in an upstairs pocket for just such an emergency as this, I looked again. Elinor isn't bad at all!

She has bobbed hair, which is all right—rather large blue eyes that look at one and say, like a dog's: "For God's sake, I'm here and perfectly helpless, do something about it!"—a mouth that would do credit to a valentine, and skin that would probably seem to me like roses in the dawn if I'd ever seen roses in the dawn, but the only times I've ever been up and about then I couldn't see anything.

I watched her for a long time as she sat on the edge of the bed swinging her legs back and forth—she was looking at me and evidently waiting for me to say something. I couldn't—the things I wanted to say seemed to me all right to get off to the lead in Jack's show, but not at all the thing to say to one's wife. She might begin to suspect me or something. Then I suddenly began to remember things and thought about Betty, and I turned away and went into the bathroom to be alone.

I'm afraid I had grown to love Betty and, it being the first time I had ever loved anything except a half-bred police dog, it hurt. I kept seeing her when I looked out of the window, so I stopped looking. Then I thought I'd take a bath, and of

course the shower part of it reminded me of old Wright and I thought what a decent sort of a guy he was and, for no reason, of how Betty looked the day I first met her.

I wondered quite a lot what to do about it. If I kicked up a mess and tried to get the horrible business annulled, Betty wouldn't have any use for me anyway and I wouldn't think so damn much of myself. If I stuck the thing I never could have Betty. There was only one way out and that was suicide, but the only weapon that caught my eye was an old Gillette blade someone had thrown away because it was too dull to cut even a beard let alone a throat—so I discarded that avenue of escape.

I went back into the bedroom and asked her how and why it happened, and she said I'd seemed so alone and helpless and was really so fine that she thought she'd better marry me out-of-hand so I'd have someone to take care of me always, to drive me on to great things and to help me fight my vices. I didn't like the sound of it.

We went back to town and I made arrangements to get rid of the apartment, for I saw clearly that it would be impossible for me to keep ahead of the sheriff in any such luxury as East Sixty-fifth Street. I asked Elinor where she wanted to live.

"Oh," she said, "some place where you and I can be alone together and people won't be hanging around drinking all the time."

"We might," I said, "try Siberia."

"Don't talk like a fool, darling, I mean some place just outside New York."

"It costs money to live just outside New York. I have, as you know, five thousand dollars a year from my estate—you won't let me speculate or bet, so that blocks any other source of supply. Why not go to the south of France?"

"Oh, darling," she answered, "there's your work to be thought of."

"My work! What d'you mean, my work? I haven't got any work, thank God!"

"But you will have—that nice Mr. Williams who sent us the cocktail shaker for a wedding present will give you a job."

I told her I'd never been trained for any kind of work; that anything Alton gave me would be charity and that, though I might be an object of pity, I didn't intend to admit it.

"But there must be something," she went on, "something big you can do that will be your metier and help the people of the world—think, darling, think."

I did what I could along the line she suggested; then it came to me! "Have a drink," I yelled. "Celebrate! I have it. I'll be a bootlegger—with *my* connections, why it's . . ."

I stopped because I suddenly found that I was talking quite to myself, Elinor having left the room. I fussed around for a while and she came back. I think she'd been crying.

"Listen," I began, "I didn't mean to hurt you, Elinor. I was joking; but honestly, don't you see it's no use trying to change me all around? There's nothing the matter with me. Of course I drink, so does everybody else; but I've made money right along and I wouldn't be any good at a job. Don't you understand?"

She began to cry again and said I was her husband, and that all her friends told her she'd married a rake and a drunken bum and she just couldn't stand it.

I told her I didn't think I could either but I was sportsman enough to try it if she was and so we kissed and made up and decided to rent a house at Forest Hills and I'd go out and get a job. I struck at Wall Street because I said after all if I was going to work and reform and what not there wasn't any use going some place where if I got natural I'd make money since I wasn't allowed to get natural.

### *May 5th:*

I am a floor walker in Macy's. I don't like the work much, but it's fun riding on the escalators and sometimes I sneak off and do that.

I had a terrible time getting the job because I couldn't convince the manager, who is large and Jewish and unpleasant

and is one of those guys that expect women to keel right over backwards whenever he looks at them, that I was sufficiently serious-minded.

He asked me if I'd ever had any experience in a department store.

"Well," I said, not realizing quite what he meant and thinking he was just getting friendly, "nothing very amusing. There was a girl once in Lord and Taylor's when I was buying . . ."

His face lit up with delight. "Oh," he smiled; "you were a buyer in Lord and Taylor's, eh?"

"Sure," I answered; "I bought neckties there."

"What do you want to do here? Buy neckties?"

"Good God, no!" I answered. I'd seen a man once in a Macy necktie. "I want to be a floor walker."

"It's better to start that way," he said, "till you learn the spirit and meaning of our organization. Come back to-morrow at eight-thirty and you can spend a week in our school."

I thought eight-thirty was pretty early as I don't usually breakfast till then, but realizing this was a special occasion I thought it best not to intrude my private habits into the conversation.

"Care to go out for a bite of the old bean?" I asked, it being twelve.

He gave me a funny look. I wondered whether anyone had ever asked him out for lunch before. "You be here at eight-thirty!" he said, so realizing that if I was entering trade I must put up with the boorishness of its captains, I took my way off.

Got home to find Elinor much on the *qui vive* as to whether or not I'd been able to land anything. When I told her I was a floor walker at Macy's she jumped up and threw her arms around my neck.

"Let's have a drink," I said, "and celebrate!"

But that was as far as that idea ever got. "No, darling boy," she answered. "You mustn't start hitting the pace again now when you're just beginning to get successful—we'll go to the movies with the Powers."

We did. He sells bonds and is always talking about big men and institutions and his sales and this and that and he has a Chrysler which irritates me because he's one of those lads who believe in speedometers and he acts as if he made about twenty-five thousand a year whereas the day Elinor first met Mrs. Powers in the butcher shop they'd both walked about two blocks farther than the swell meatery so they could save a couple of cents a pound on the stuff they were buying.

Mrs. Powers is rather nice and she has the gift of making her husband think she thinks he's swell in the hope that somebody else will think so too, then maybe he'll make some real money some day.

After the movies we went back to our house, which is one of the ones Russell Sage thought would look like part of an English village and didn't, and we listened to Powers talk. I think he's probably a rotten salesman but he's a great talker.

And so, after quite a while, to bed.

*May 6th:*

To Macy's at eight-thirty. Felt as if I'd gotten up at six until I arrived, then felt as if I was late because the whole world seemed full of fat little girls walking about the building with strange quick steps. You can tell anyone who's ever worked in Macy's, anywhere in the world, by their walk. It is a cross between the gait of a waiter and a rabbit.

To school, as the manager called it, where all manner of strange pamphlets were handed me, which some seemed principally devoted to describing the different-coloured felt linings in the little compressed air carriers, the spirit of the organization and the spirit of the organization. I turned over to the back of mine hoping to find the school cheers and songs printed there, but without success—though I understand that at Wanamaker's all the boys and girls rally round the Rotunda and sing—of the glories of old John and young Roddy, I suppose.

After school to the cafeteria for what they called lunch, but

unable to eat because of an acute nausea brought on by the sight of so many fat girls stuffing fat cakes into their fat faces. It was not pretty, and so rather a relief to be told to wander about the building and get familiar with the place and people.

I didn't see any people I wanted to get familiar with, so amused myself for a while riding up and down the moving stairs. I couldn't help thinking what fun I'd have if I were Mr. Straus. I'd wait until some large lady in a hurry had been carried almost to the top of one, and then suddenly I'd reverse it and take her down to the bottom again.

I started laughing to myself about this, when a large lady who evidently was in a hurry came rushing up to me.

"Where can I get my daughter a smart hat? She's about eighteen."

I thought quickly—this was right in my line. "You might try Ferle-Heller," I suggested, "on Forty-sixth Street."

"Fool!" she answered, though I'd given her the best advice I knew, "where is the hat department in this store?"

"God knows," I answered. "It's a pretty big place and I haven't found it yet myself."

"I'll report you to the manager, for insolence."

I laughed, a villainous, mocking laugh. I should be walked all over by people! "Go ahead, madam," I answered, "and to make it a little more sporting I'll lay you ten to one he doesn't know I'm here and five to three he doesn't know where the hat department is either."

She left in a quick way and I shuddered to think what she was thinking. Then it dawned on me that that really wasn't the way to act because she'd undoubtedly vent her wrath on the next poor beggar of an employee she met, and he might get in trouble for it. As a penance I turned to my handbook and read over a few pages on the Macy Spirit.

I looked around for somebody to tell me what to do next and decided it would be a swell idea if they had a relief map of the whole store in the main aisle—a nice big map with flags and pins stuck in it to show the amusing places like the

Bathing Wear Department where they have a little beach and umbrellas and things that would make a fine place to go and rest up in the afternoons.

At five-thirty everyone rushed past me and I supposed it must be time to go home, so I got my hat out from under a counter where I'd hidden it in the morning (I was careful to wear an old one) and walked out the door.

To the Long Island station where I learned another new game. It is called "push in the corner." The guards keep the gates locked until they see that the pressure of the mob waiting to get downstairs to the train may break through at any second, then they open them with a clang and we all rush through and go tumbling down to the platform, each man and woman striving to be the first on the train. Then the guards lean over the railing and laugh like hell because the train was already filled before the first scrambler could get down and they knew it all along.

The game is to scout around and pretend not to be taking your train at all, but the one ahead of it—then when it is loaded to the bursting point and pulls out you wave good-bye to the motorman and stand on the platform till the train you really want pulls in. This game, once you understand it, is guaranteed to put you on board ahead of everyone except perhaps four or five hundred other people who also play it.

It's quite fun though, trying to guess just where the doorways will be when the train stops. Sometimes you're wrong and then you have to hurry and scurry around till you get a chance to slip into the car between the legs of a tall man who is more than apt to be a little put out about it if he discovers you.

Home to Elinor who had a hot supper awaiting her breadwinner, of cold roast beef, coffee, boiled potatoes, cheese and crackers; but she was so glad to see me and so interested in hearing about my first day at "the office," as she insisted on calling it, that I didn't mind a bit—besides I was hungry and my feet hurt.

After dinner to the living-room where four can sit at the same time if they know each other well, and Elinor brought me slippers and cigarettes and came and sat in my lap and put her arms around my neck and told me she loved me very much, and that she thought I was quite the most wonderful man in the world to have gone right out and gotten a job, and I agreed with her and began to think I was a pretty swell feller myself.

Elinor is really very nice about the house. If only she didn't have such eccentric ideas about making your mark in the world and all that sort of thing I think we would stand a chance of being very happy together. Of course I miss some of the things and people I used to know and once in a while it hits me that Betty is gone for good, but most of the time Elinor is so loving that any man who wasn't utterly calloused couldn't help being fond of her and wanting to try and do what she wanted—all of which she knows perfectly well.

*May 15th:*

This floor-walker job isn't as easy as it sounds. The hours are bad for one thing and I'm on my feet all day for another, which is something I never thought of, for some reason, in connection with that particular position when I applied for it. Floor walkers had always looked so grand and imposing that I thought they certainly must lead a life at least relatively comfortable. Another thing I don't like about it is that the emolument that goes with being one is about the same amount per week that I used to blow per night in my palmier days; in other words twenty-eight dollars.

Had occasion to go down to the tin-ware department to-day and ran into the assistant buyer. He looked as if he had housemaid's knee. When I was introduced to him I learned he was a Russian prince, which of course accounted for it.

Later to the silk department for an hour and there learned that the man in charge was an Austrian count, so upon returning to my own particular bailiwick which is (I blush and



sometimes shudder to think) ladies' underwear, though I told Elinor it was hats, I sought out its head and asked if I could have an extra half-hour at lunch because my uncle the Earl of Musselman was in town and I had to see him before he left for the West.

Was the Head impressed? I think he was mildly offended that my "uncle" wasn't a marquis, for he said: "Have you a title, sir?"

I coughed, deprecatingly, and tried to look confused, and the Head, seeking to demonstrate that he was a sophisticated member of the community, said: "Ah, Jones, incognito, I see—well, well."

Then the cry I was beginning to hate came ringing down the aisle:

"Mister Jowens! MISTER JOWENS!"

I hurried over and a girl with bobbed hair, who looked like a tooth-brush, said:

"Syen, plez. SO sorry to TROble you when you were in CONference, Mister Jowens."

"It's quite all right, my dear," I answered; "mere matter of routine, but, I say, my name is Jones, Jones, not Jowens."

She half smirked—I felt that had we been alone she would have nudged me in the ribs, which I simply couldn't have stood, having been ticklish from birth. "All right, Mister Jowens." And she was away, like a homing pigeon, for her counter. I began wondering how their minds worked!

To-day, of course, marked my first official appearance on the floor. I was sure the people in the department were trying to make things as easy for me as they could, so I took their eccentricities in good part and tried to show them I really did appreciate the sincerity of their efforts, though I must say it riled me just a little to have these people feeling so damn superior to me. Even if they were superior, which I realized quite clearly, I couldn't get over the feeling that they shouldn't try to let me know it quite so plainly; but that, I suppose, is Life.

Elinor had a party this evening. Among those present were the Powers, the Davises, the McGuires and she asked Fred Stone but he couldn't come.

We played bridge, after a fashion, and Elinor insisted on trumping two of my tricks, but I didn't mind, so I suppose I'm beginning to love her much more than I thought I would when I found out we were married, and we weren't playing for money anyhow.

Powers got tight and told me about a company he'd just formed for the purpose of speculating in stocks—it looked to my untrained mind as though he might make some money out of it if he wasn't careful, since these days anybody that buys anything does, but you never can tell.

The McGuires deserve a better fate than that which has overtaken them—they were really nice people before they moved to Forest Hills! had a farm in Connecticut and raised dogs, nice dogs that won prizes in shows, and things like that, which I have always admired though never owned.

Something evidently happened to McGuire's business so he had to go to work and live twenty minutes from Times Square, with all that that means. It's funny how these community places try to hook you; first by pointing out how rural they are and in the same breath yelping about how fast you can get back to the city, once you get to them. It's inconsistent and I don't approve of it—like living on a house-boat: you get all the discomforts of a yacht and none of the advantages.

*June 1st:*

I used, at one time in my youth, to think underwear was one of those things women had but didn't mention. I was wrong—judging from the activity in my department at the store, it is one of those things that they mention and don't seem to have.

Have had much fun the last few days since I began to understand my new trade. Have studied types and purchases and am now so expert at telling what people want that when I

see a clothes-line with lingerie hanging on it I can give you a detailed description of who the various pieces belong to.

In all my two weeks' experience, though, I have not yet been able to work out two things—one is why do débutantes and kept-ladies wear almost identical step-ins and shirts, and the other is why a certain woman one of the sales girls told me about comes in to try on dresses with nothing under her gown but a pair of red corsets? But then I suppose if I knew these things I'd know as much as Mr. Straus and then I would be president of Macy's instead of he, and as I don't really want to be president of Macy's I'm not going to make any serious effort to find out about them.

It is odd though the way people want to buy things like crimson pyjamas, try them out for a while and bring them back, when they must realize that since we had such a hell of a time selling them in the first place we stand a swell chance of being able to palm them off on anyone after they've been worn for two or three days!

*About June 20th:*

Have been, of late, losing interest in my diary. It is hard to keep on making entries of one's doings on different days when all days are alike except Sunday, and when most of that is, of necessity, spent in trying to get enough sleep to make possible holding out till the next Sunday.

We went to a public beach the other day to swim and Elinor wore a new bathing suit that I didn't like much. The beach itself was crowded with the damnedest looking array of humanity with whom it has ever been my pleasure to associate, and the water was full of garbage. Sat on the beach after our swim and fell to thinking about garbage. I like all its component parts yet the sight of it nauseates me—decided to compare it to society and came to the conclusion the two were very much alike, i.e., I like Tom Hale and Jack Lawrence and Wright and Eloise and a couple of opera singers and a few dancers and three foreigners, yet when I see a bunch like that

all in one room together I always go into another if it can possibly be arranged. I don't think we'll go to a public beach again, although Elinor ran into some old companions of the stage who brought us back to their house for supper.

They talked shop and Elinor flourished and seemed happier than she has at any time of late, which worried me. I suppose I'd talk shop too, only it's so rarely you ever meet anyone else who's a floor walker in lingerie. Elinor kept trying to include me in the conversation and make me feel at home, but it didn't work because they were all having highballs and of course I wasn't, so I had a chance to see for the first time just how unpleasant I must have looked to people when I had had a few quick ones and they hadn't.

*June 25th:*

Had a very bad time to-day—one of the girls who'd been at dinner the other night came into the store to buy some pants and martingales and stuff for herself and saw me.

"Say, Jonesey!" she said as soon as she caught sight of me, "what the hell are you doing here? I thought you were a banker or something the way you tried to snoot us all last Sunday. So you're nothing but an indoor traffic cop after all, eh?"

I heard Mr. "Browen" who is in the aisle next to mine titter. The girl went on: "You don't look like a sap, why do you do it?"

"Do what?" I asked.

"Sell stockings instead of stocks, though they both go down occasionally." She laughed and I saw at once that she was one of those ghastly people who must have their little joke. Mr. Browen tittered again and I was glad she'd confined herself to stockings.

"One must live, I suppose," I answered lamely.

"Yeh, one must live, so must two—maybe if you loosened up once in a while when you're on a party like the other evening you might get in with somebody who could help you up in the world."

"Meaning what?"

"Go out with the boys and have a drink once in a while—that's the way you get to know people and knowing people keeps you out of jobs like this one you've got."

"Sure," I said, "so does going out with the boys—maybe!"

"Want to take me to lunch? I'd like to help you for Elinor's sake—we were pals in stock once out on the Coast."

We lunched. It was a little painful. That girl outlined to me the sort of man who was sure to succeed and when she finished I felt as if I'd been looking at an old picture of myself—also I felt like a hen that's been left out in the rain too long, but of course she couldn't know that Elinor was all for having me make a mark in the world and be a captain of industry if my feet held out.

"Say," she said as we were finishing our crullers and coffee at the Pennsylvania, "my name's Ida Belle. I'd like to see you again some time—what's your name, Jonesey?"

I told her I had been christened Martin.

"Martin Jones," she echoed; "that's funny, the guy I went round with all last winter knew a chap by that name very well. Funny, isn't it?"

"Who," I asked her, "was the guy you went round with?"

"He? Oh, just a chap I knew. Might of married him once too only he had to go away. He was a great fellow—made lots of money, dressed swell, knew everyone. He made his success just like I was telling you you could do it. He knew this prominent clubman Martin Jones awfully well—they had deals and things together."

"What was his name?"

"His name? Oh, his name was Bill Simmons."

I had known a Bill Simmons—not awfully well, but I knew him. He'd put my name on a couple of cheques just before he had to go away.

"Yes," I said, "I've heard of him. He went out with the boys all right."

"You could make a success like that too, Jonesey."

"No, Ida Belle," I answered, "I couldn't because I don't write well enough."

We were leaving the restaurant. "You ought to go out with the boys just the same though."

"Like Bill Simmons?"

"Yeh, like Bill Simmons. I'm gonna marry him when he comes back."

As I watched her swing off down the block I couldn't help wondering how many other successes she would marry in the five years from last December which is the earliest date Bill Simmons could get back, even counting good behaviour, and I decided not to go out with the girls either.

Upon returning home said nothing to Elinor about having lunched with Ida Belle, but while enjoying the "breadwinner's hour" in slippers with a wife on the lap, I chanced to remark:

"Darling, don't you think I might get ahead faster if I went out with the boys at Macy's once in a while and had a few drinks with them?" And she said, "Tired of me already, sweetheart?" So I let the matter rest at that and thought of how healthy I should feel after being on the wagon for so many months and how much better I should have felt if I hadn't been.

#### *July 6th:*

Tom Hale had us out at his place over the Fourth. When he called up to ask us I had a horrible thought that under the circumstances old Hale was going to clean up the ragged edges of the community again, but I forgot how well bred he was for when we arrived he treated me with the same amount of cordial disrespect he had in the old days. If he had suddenly been polite to me I think I should really have hated Elinor for it.

We arrived Friday evening, going down with Tom, who had stopped off for us. We had given him tea and I think he was a little uncomfortable, but he was quiet and tractable and didn't hurry out of our ghastly house too quickly.

A nice drive through the Island except for the traffic which is so bad now it threatens to kill off most of the people who own automobiles and so correct the situation.

It seemed funny to be skidding into the Hales' driveway absolutely stone cold sober. I don't suppose many of Tom's friends have done that—I wondered if he'd feel it was sacrilege against a time-honoured custom.

There were ten for dinner, mostly young married people I knew, and I noticed that most of the men seemed to have heard of Elinor and that they more or less clustered about her. Why is it that when the average respectable citizen meets an equally respectable actress he at once begins to feel like a boy who's been allowed to drive a locomotive at full speed?

I have sometimes thought the root of the whole thing could be laid at the door of Van Bibber, and that every man who chats for a moment with a Duse or Bernhardt for some inane reason immediately pictures himself strolling through the stage door of the Follies clad in opera hat and Inverness cape, while the rest of mankind gathers in the street outside and says: "There goes a Man-about-town."

I felt like telling them that since I had married an actress the nearest I'd come to the theatre was going to the movies in Forest Hills, but I didn't and when a young man named Boyle found himself next to me drinking a cocktail he at once began to talk theatre, referring to "The Profession," "troupers," "at liberty" and a lot of other tommy rot actors talk about when they're tight. Decided to send him a subscription to *The Billboard* for Christmas.

At dinner, found myself next to Boyle's wife who was pretty and talked with a certain assurance about polo and hunting and things that I'd begun to forget existed. I liked her because she opened up with:

"Are you riding 'Black Stocking' at the United Hunts again this year, Mr. Jones?"

I thought for just a second she was casting a dirty crack at my new and chosen profession, then remembered that I had

won a race on a white horse called Black Stocking. The name had slipped my mind because in my association with the brute I had always called him "You Lousy Bum" and sometimes much worse, for he was one of those horses that bolt with you and try to make it look as if it was your fault.

"No, I'm not," I answered; "I'm riding escalators this year."

"At the United Hunts?"

"No, at Macy's."

She gave me a look and began talking very fast to the man on her left. This left me with nothing whatever to do for a while but play with the rolls, which I don't mind as I never eat the damn things anyway and one can look preoccupied while thinking up something clever to say. Rolls are much better than knives and forks for that purpose, and since nobody eats them unless practically starved waiting for food, and since everybody plays with something in between courses I suppose with the help of forty thousand housewives all over the country, hostesses decided to put rolls in handy reach because they make no noise when played with on the table—and hardly any when they fall off as they sometimes do.

After looking over the girl on my left whom I didn't know, I finally knocked off my roll and was ready to begin the conversation:

"Rotten hot day, isn't it?"

She turned to me and smiled, a coy smile I thought.

"Yes, wasn't it."

"The Fourth of July always is, don't you think?"

"No, sometimes it rains."

"Sometimes—now we've covered all that, what's your name?"

"Valerie Kennedy—I live right near here. Do you?"

"Hardly."

"Where then?"

I didn't want to spoil her meal so decided to come about and try a new tack. I said, "Do you hunt? Everyone hunts



here." And she answered, "Yes, like an epicure, game in season."

I decided to be clever: "But they're always so busy when they're that way."

I think she realized we were both talking about foxes for she gave me a warm smile and said, "You know, Mr. Jones, sometimes I wish I was a fox—they lead such happy sheltered lives in a hunting country—fed all winter—let sleep all summer—chased about a bit in the spring and fall."

"You don't look like a fox," I said, "you look like a mocking bird."

"You look like a cat."

"Cats eat birds."

"Not this bird."

"Not this cat—Are you married?"

"Not me, beautiful—often a bridesmaid but never a mother. Where do you live, by the way?"

"I live in Forest Hills, I didn't mean to tell you; thought we might get along better if you went on thinking I was one of you."

"Weren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well then . . . ?"

"It's a matter of tense."

"I see." She looked down the table at Elinor who was chucking old Hale under the chin. "I'm sorry—a little—thought you rode awfully well last year. Does it hurt—not to be—any more?"

After all, even if I am now a Jowens I was a Jones, and we Joneses did have our pride. I bowed in the direction of Elinor and said, "There are compensations."

I was quite wrong. The Kennedy, not I, was the cat. She laughed. "When is it due? She doesn't look a bit in foal to me, really. I think she's quite wonderful."

I said, with a smile so as not to be thought rude, "Oh, shut up," and to my great astonishment she did.

After dinner we all pushed our chairs to the head of the table, where Hale sat looking longingly toward the backs of the women headed libraryward, and settled down to help him get a bun on.

You get a funny slant on things when you're not drinking and everybody else is. I'd never noticed before that old Hale's voice goes right smack up to the ceiling after five glasses of wine, that it stays there till the tenth when it begins falling and ends up the evening somewheres between the basement and the dungeon.

Tom's voice does the same thing which, I suppose, must be his inheritance.

I asked Hale how his beagles were and he at once launched into an account of every run he'd ever had with them and said he'd take us up to his room later and show us the hare he'd killed.

Tom told a couple of funny stories and Boyle sat and looked at me. I don't think I added much to the life and gaiety of the party.

To bed at a reasonable hour and was sorry I had to pass the billiard room on the way upstairs because I was unable to explain to Elinor why I wasn't in the most cheerful sort of humour and didn't feel like rubbing her back, but sleep finally hit me over the head and pushed from my mind the vast number of disturbing thoughts that crowded around shouting to be listened to.

Had strange dreams in the night about being on a huge white horse with the Kennedy girl chasing me all over the countryside. My pyjamas scratched on the saddle and it was all very real and the Kennedy kept yelling, "Tally ho! there he goes," and people joined her, and then I thought I was a fox trying to get away and Elinor jumped up from behind a bush with a gun, and just as I was about to go into an earth where I knew comfort and happiness were, she shot me and I woke up to find it was half-past three and I wasn't a fox at all.

After recovering from a certain mild astonishment upon

realizing I wasn't a fox I fell to thinking again about the last time I had been down at the Hales' and it seemed a long time ago.

I remembered how Betty had looked that evening sitting on the fire seat, with the soft light reflecting on her hair, and then for no reason I seemed to hear her say:

"Damn you . . . I'm so God awful sick of it," and I got up and went over to look out of the window. It was very quiet and the moon had come up and was shining over the rose garden and I thought how Betty and I had looked at it last March and thought how we would come and sit there when the roses came out, and how we had laughed at each other for being such silly people as to think about anything like that.

Then Elinor began to snore and the moon went under a cloud so I said, "Well, anyway thank God old Hale can't beagle me in July!" and went back to bed.

In the morning up early and to the stables where Tom had us inspecting horses till almost lunch. Elinor does not show up so well in a stable—not that she doesn't know perfectly well what's what, academically speaking, but she says things. For instance, when we were looking at a new steeplechaser that had just come in from England, Elinor, instead of complimenting Tom on the animal's conformation, had to say: "I think he's adorable. He looks *just* like Tom Mix's horse Tony," which remark, judging from Tom's face, seemed to make me an Elk. We went away from there shortly after this and on the way back to the house I caught Tom by the arm:

"Sorry, old man," I said. "Elinor didn't mean any harm by that; besides, it was funny."

"Fun's fun," he answered, "but let's not die laughing. I paid seven thousand dollars for that horse."

"You got stuck."

He said, "No, I didn't get stuck—he's a bargain."

"How old is he?"

"Eleven."

"He's not a bargain," I said. "He's a remnant and I'll bet you bought him at a rummage sale." We didn't speak again till we had got in the house and Tom had drink taken, which revived his good humour as I had known it would all along, though he did give Elinor a dirty look when I refused to join him.

In the afternoon to Fox's Point for swimming, and noted that all the garbage is kept out of the water there. It was very pleasant and I took a sun bath and was much amused upon heading for the beach to see a portly individual who was evidently someone of much importance stroll on to the sand minus the top of his swimming-suit and utterly unconscious of the fact.

I went up to him and said, "Sir, I think you've forgotten something," and he turned to me and said:

"My boy, I've undoubtedly forgotten more than you'll ever know." And as he was a very large man who must have had a very large shirt indeed I let him have his own way. He got as far as the edge of the water when his wife saw him and began to say things about absentmindedness and damn fools. I don't think I ever had the pleasure of listening to a woman with such a command of language so I decided they must be awfully nice people even if I didn't know who they were.

I don't like cold water, and I have found that practically all large expanses of water are cold even though the proprietors of the bits of white sand that surround them doctor their thermometers so as to lure you into renting their beastly bathing-suits that are always carefully fitted to someone half again your size. So knowing that this beach did not differ from any other in that respect, I began casting the eye about for an excuse to postpone if not remove the need for making myself miserable with the fish and found it in the very charming back of Valerie Kennedy, who looked to me like the sort of person who realizes that God made man to walk on land and it isn't right for him to be playing about in a lot of other elements.

I went over to her and said, "Hello."

"Oh," she answered, "it's you, is it? Wife here?"

"No, there." I pointed to a brown head bobbing about near the diving-float.

"Fine! We'll talk."

I said, "Let's; cold water bothers me."

"Like mine feverish myself, but my suit's pretty, don't you think?"

I did think so; if Elinor had worn one like it I should have raised perfect merry old hell when we got home, but with Valerie I found it in my heart to be quite charitable.

"It must be easy to swim in."

"It would be, only . . ."

"Only what?"

"Only I can't swim." She laughed, as at a joke, and I said, "I can, but I'm not going to show you the secret."

"'Fraid of the water?"

"No, not the water. Let's talk about something else. The last time I saw you you said something about wanting to be a fox and I had a nightmare and dreamt I was the fox and you were chasing me. Let's talk about something else."

"All right, let's talk about speak-easies."

I told her that wasn't any good because I was on the water wagon and talking about them would only depress me and then I'd begin to cry and she'd get wet and spoil her bathing-suit. She tried the theatre then, somewhat maliciously, so I told her I hadn't had money enough to go to the theatre since I'd been married and doubted if I ever would again.

"But I thought you were quite filthy with it, Martin? How come? Did you make a bad speculation? Or was it just marriage? I think you'd be more attractive with money. Why haven't you any?"

"For one reason, because I'm a floor walker at Macy's."

"Do Macy's, by any chance, know it?"

"Yes," I said. "I sometimes think they know everything. You should drop in some time. I work in underwear and they call me Mr. Jowens."

"My God!" she said. "You'll catch cold! Underwear?"

"Yes, of course," I answered, "ladies' underwear."

"You certainly must look too attractive for words. Do they sell tickets?" I began to think Valerie had, perhaps, over-lunched, then it came to me that she must have mistaken the idiom. "I work in the ladies' underwear department," I hastily reassured her. "I sell swell pants too."

"Does your wife know it?"

"She thinks I'm in hats. I thought she'd like that better."

"Oh, and do you like working in the ladies' underwear department?"

I told her I thought it would be better in winter when it wasn't quite so hot, and then I went on and told her all about life in the big store and when I was through telling her my life history and lay back in the sand to wait for a reply that would show me the sympathy I was sure as pretty a girl as she was would feel, she said:

"And are you going to get up to Saratoga for the racing next month? We've taken a house there for the season and I think I'm going to be awfully shy of boy friends. You know places like Saratoga and Bar Harbour and Newport are practically sterile except for week-ends. All the men who can get away to go to them are so old you're afraid their teeth will jump into their water-glasses every time you go out to a late supper with them."

I don't think she knew that talking about all those places I had known so well was probably the cruellest thing she could have done to me, but then, listening to my life history was probably painful to her so I guess we were even, but it was rather a relief when Tom and Elinor came splashing out of the water and joined us and gave me an excuse to take one quick dip before going in for another sun bath and climbing into the Mercedes to go home.

No one at the Hales' for tea and so we got through the dressing hour in reasonable time and in peace, except for Elinor exercising a little disguised curiosity on the subject of the

Kennedy, which I handled quite easily by telling her with fair truth that I thought the lady was a cat. Elinor agreed with me and got me to hook her martingale, which was too small and must have pinched her, and so downstairs for cocktails and dinner which turned out to be the usual quiet meal one grows used to at the Hale board with only some twenty-odd guests to stave off loneliness.

This night the guests were of an age with Tom's father and Elinor was mildly uncomfortable. They were rather a snappy collection as people go and the talk was all of polo and racing and six metres and things of that nature, and everybody treated Elinor perfectly naturally as though she might have been one of their daughters and I don't think Elinor quite realized they were paying her a compliment rather subtler than most in doing so.

The early part of the meal passed off in a delightfully dignified and pleasant manner with all the guests getting nicely mellow and Tom behaving himself unusually well, but as the salad came on we all became gradually aware that someone was trying to murder a pig outside the dining-room window.

Old Hale, I think, thought he had 'em, for he said to Tom:

"Thomas, go to the window and find out what that God damned racket is."

Thomas went and whoever was murdering the pig stopped and began tickling him, evidently, for the moaning noise ceased and a sort of idiotic laughter supplanted it.

"Who are you and what are you doing?" Tom demanded as sternly as he thought his father would want him to. A voice answered raucously.

"Y'know damn well who'am'n'y'aughta have sense 'nough t'know I'm singin' old school song."

"Go away," said Tom. "I don't know you and if I did I wouldn't want you anyway if you can't sing any better than that."

"Alri'; 'en you sing."

"No, I won't, I don't want to." The pig business began

again. Tom said, "I say, fella. We don't like that one. If you must sing, try something else."

By this time a complete silence had fallen over the venerable guests—it was so complete you could almost hear Lady Reddesdale's rat running around in a rage on Lady Reddesdale's dignified head. I had begun to have the faintest glimmering of an idea of whom the voice belonged to and I feared the worst. If it was the person I thought it was he only knew two songs, and he'd already sung one of them. I was right.

"Sorry y' don't like tha' one, Tom, but 'sall right; I got a whole rep't'oir' t' choose from. How 'bout singin' with me?"

"No," said Tom, "I don't want to sing with you."

"Aw, c'mon," said the voice pleadingly.

"Shut up!" said Tom in a hoarse whisper. "The Earl of Reddesdale's dining with us! The old man will have you juggled!"

"Hooray for him!" howled the voice. "Jus' show him there's no har' feelin' we'll sing 'The Bastard King of England.' "

It had happened—that was the other song Jack Lawrence knew, and I was perfectly certain that if he heard it at Hale's dinner the Earl would be taken with such violent nostalgia he would probably start at once for his homeland. I sneaked out of the room in a quick way and pulled the fire-alarm lever in the hall. The results were pleasant and startling. Bells began ringing all over the house. Butlers and whatnots galloped through the dining-room and for the first time in my life I had the real pleasure of hearing a native-born British nobleman cry, "Here, here! Carry on! We must be calm."

"What in God's name shall I do?" roared Hale, Sr., above the rumpus. "I've got a cellar full!"

"We must form a bucket brigade, I suppose."

"By God, no! We must get it out to the stable," said Hale, "and hide it before the department gets here."

Then the Earl got off the remark that quite raised him to immortality in my mind.

"Thirsty blighters, firemen, what?"



Jamison, the old butler, burst through the dining-room door and started for the hall at a canter, dragging a huge fire-extinguisher between his legs.

"Attaboy, Jorrocks!" Jack Lawrence yelled through the window and thereupon proceeded to fall into the room and, calmly rolling under the dining-room table, to go to sleep.

Had I been drinking I think I would have taken this as the signal for a swell party, but as I wasn't, my friend's shortcomings pained me and I fell to wondering whether it was better to let Jack lie there and sleep it off on the chance that no one had seen him come in or whether I should make the Herculean effort of getting him upstairs to bed.

Had he been just an ordinary drunk I think I should have ventured the latter course, but because he was a drunken playwright I decided to let sleeping dogs lie and hope nobody came back to finish the meal.

In about ten minutes everyone discovered that the fire alarm had gone off by mistake and the guests began trooping back to the trough to finish up the groceries. As I had, while they were out of the room, hastily wrapped Jack around a table leg I felt there was a sporting chance he would pass undiscovered until that meal had gone the way of others and in thinking this, thank God, I was right.

Was much surprised at the quietness of the evening after dinner which was spent in conversation and bridge, for it had such a decidedly auspicious beginning that I had begun to hope for great things from it in the way of entertainment; but I have found as I grow older that Society, after it reaches a certain point, acts as a form of mental paralysis and so, after a considerable interval during which I suffered from great boredom, to bed.

Sunday passed with no event to make it stand out from its fellows other than the fact that Jack Lawrence stayed sober throughout most of it. This was in part due to his not waking up until three and feeling so badly when he did that help had to be summoned to get him up at all.

We were sitting on the west veranda when he made his first appearance and were none too pleased with the sight. I know looking at him gave me such a sympathetic headache as I haven't had since marriage overtook me. Elinor, who hadn't seen him since she started reforming me, said, "Oh, Jack!" and rushing across the porch kissed him full on the lips.

I didn't like it. In the first place I couldn't for the life of me make out why anyone should want to kiss Jack Lawrence, and in the second place it didn't seem right to me for my wife to be running all over the lot osculating drunken playwrights. I bawled her out.

"Oh, darling," she said, "don't mind that—you know we of the theatre regard a kiss as nothing more than a handshake."

I said, "Yes, and I suppose you regard marriage as nothing more than a kiss!"

She said, "Oh, no, darling. One's fun and the other's legal."

I told her that so long as she bore my name and our marriage continued to be legal I would appreciate her having her fun with me and no one else and she answered, "But he's a friend of yours."

"So," I told her, "is the bearded lad who does the chores at Forest Hills, but you don't have to kiss him to keep his friendship."

"I think you're horrid to me. Why can't I kiss Jack if I want to?"

At this point Tom left us with a lame excuse about having to see a man about a dog or something and took Jack with him. Sumter had been fired on and I feared the worst.

We argued. That was wrong, but we did. We argued for about half an hour—then I began to get ugly. I said I was a normal, red-blooded man and I expected my wife to be my wife and no one else's, and she said she wasn't a Turk in a harem and didn't expect to be treated like one, and I told her if she was a Turk she probably couldn't get elected to a harem and couldn't stay in one if she did, and she said I was a brute, and I laughed a brutish laugh and she began to cry. I might

just as well not have started the argument in the first place because the whole thing ended up with me grovelling and making an utter ass of myself telling her how much I loved her. Then we had to go upstairs to kiss and make up her face, and I had to tell her all over again how sorry I was and she said she'd try not to kiss Jack again but he was so cute with his curls all messed and his eyes blinking at the sun. I thought he looked like a hedgehog but didn't say so.

Downstairs to dinner at eight with Elinor rather lovely in a new dress she'd made out of some old material. It was white and it set off her colouring remarkably well. She had been so sweet to me since I'd apologized to her that I was beginning to feel not at all sorry for myself. In fact, when I looked across the table at her and realized that this beautiful creature was Mrs. Jones, I felt I was quite a lad.

With the fish course came a long dissertation from Jack about the stage and its people. He talked for ten minutes, which nobody minded because we were all hungry and the food was really done after the manner. Then I decided it was time he stopped. I said, "Why don't you write a play sometime, Jack?"

He looked at me. I think he thought I surely had them again for he said, "Write a play? I have written a play. You backed it."

"My question still stands," I said. "That wasn't a play, it was a great mistake."

The situation was saved by old Hale, always accomplished at that sort of thing, bursting into a loud guffaw of laughter which spilled his wine all over Jack's trouser leg.

"Goddam shame, Lawrence! Goddam shame! Jamison, clean up Mr. Lawrence."

"Impossible," Tom said. "Been like that since he was born."

"Oh, you poor angel," from Elinor.

Jack held up his hand for silence. "It's nothing to me at all. I am quite above noticing that sort of thing. Besides the suit doesn't belong to me anyway."

"Not belong to you, Lawrence? Damn thing fits you like a glove. What—what—on whose suit have I spilled good wine? Very good too, if I must say so."

Jack smiled at him. It was the tired smile of a man who has deep understanding.

"I think the gentleman's name is Wetzel, though that may not be his real one. Still, he won't care. He's got lots of suits with wine spilled on them. I dare say he has more suits out having wine spilled on them than any other smart tailor in town. I like Wetzel—not one of these big grasping corporations." It goes without saying, since it was after eight, that Jack had by this time managed to achieve something of a binge—a talkative binge in fact.

"Yes," he went on, "it must be great to be a feller like Wetzel—to be sure that no matter what middle-class form of life happens to have been your lot, your clothes are dining at the smartest houses. There's a whole philosophy in that thought, Mr. Hale." Then, turning to me, "I might do a play about it."

"No," I said, "please don't—just tell us about it."

"Think of it!" He was warming to his theme and had both elbows on the table where they could hardly fail to knock something off. "Think of a Wetzel sitting down to his humble caviar and onions in the tiny pent-house apartment above his shop! What a picture—Wetzel—onions, stray bits of half-finished suits lying about among the potatoes and bits of little Wetzels there too. Big-hearted Wetzel! He throws his cat a bit of bone and lets his faithful setter nibble the remains of a Salmon Steak Leslie. The little Wetzels he feeds on pretzels.

"Everything about the man is English—the fine trimmed moustache, the clean-shaven Adam's apple. His clothes you know were cut in Savile Row, because his trousers reach half-way up his back, which, of course, means he can buy his galluses in the 'Boys' Department' and save God knows how much.

"Picture to yourself, Mr. Hale, this Pretzel, or Wetzel tuck-

ing his little family in bed. Children, wife, cat, dog and then and then . . ." Jack leaned still farther forward until we were all quite on edge, "and then . . . Mr. Hale, will you tell Jamison I'd like just a wee Scotch and White Rock? Thanks ever so much, and then Pretzel goes back to his pent-house kitchen and looks lovingly at the bits of twill and smells the rich meadowy scent of a new Harris tweed he is making up to lend to Mr. Holliday who hunts at Essex.

"He falls to pondering all the suits he has ever made and smiles a little as he thinks of his twenty cash customers—then he looks again at the cloth before him and he dreams of where his suits are at that moment.

"It is eight-thirty. Mr. Cosgrave, the racing man, will be just entering the Ritz, in that beautiful new dinner jacket. Suddenly Mr. Cosgrave has a queer sort of sinking spell come over him. Mr. Wetzel's spirit has somehow gotten into Mr. Wetzel's creation and there is barely room for both of them, though the suit *was* a little large. Mr. Cosgrave whirls about the Ritz like a lady with a mouse. Curtain.

"Next scene shows Mr. Cosgrave paying Mr. Wetzel for the dinner jacket. Rush curtain. Next scene shows Wetzel being revived from a fainting condition on the floor and promising his faithful wife and all the little pretzels never to eat so much mince pie again. What a play! What a theme! The Tailor Who Had a Soul! How different! Lon Chaney could take the title role. I . . ."

I said, "Let Lon Chaney write it and you play the title role."

"Good idea," Tom chipped in. "Only instead of having the leading man a smart tailor make him a plumber."

Old Hale coughed. You could hear a low whirring noise back in his brain and could tell a bon mot was coming. A bell rang off in the distance.

"Huh! Huh! Ahem! Mightn't it be more amusing to make the damn fella a bootlegger? Ha! Ha!" He gave a horrid sort of laugh and winked at Elinor. I really don't think he had the slightest idea what we were all talking about and to me, quite

sober, I must say it all did sound sort of confusing. I don't doubt for a moment if you analysed it you'd find it was utter rot. Jamison didn't seem interested in listening any further and went on about serving dinner so it must have been pretty dull, for Jamison, being a good butler, will listen to practically anything.

Funny lads, butlers; when you hire them you lay all sorts of stress on their honesty. If their last reference doesn't vouch for it you won't take them and yet if they really were honest you'd fire them out of the house so fast you couldn't see their legs work. I only heard of one honest one in my life; feller Father had for twenty years, and when he quit Father asked him if he wasn't satisfied with everything and the feller said yes and Father asked him if we didn't treat him right and the feller yessed again, then Father said:

"Well, for God's sake, Simmons, what *is* wrong? You've been with us twenty years and can be absolutely frank. Why are you leaving?"

"Well, sir," said Simmons, "and begging your pardon, sir, I'm sick of the sight of the whole damn bunch of you!"

Dessert was rather pleasant, Viennese pastries which I like and Elinor adores, so she was at once on the crest and be-devilled Tom about his car and Jack his writing and finally got old Hale talking about the police system of which he is an honorary commissioner.

It seems that Hale has been combatting what he calls vice in the department for years. His idea of combatting vice is you get arrested and the cop takes ten and lets you go and that should be stopped. My idea of combatting vice would be to fire the cop if he took over five but then I suppose Hale forgets that he has money and the cop hasn't—yet.

At any rate Hale told us that never, no, never since he came to the Island, had he bribed an officer of the law to let him off an arrest. I thought it was curious of him to have this point of view and yet hold the record from Westbury to the Queensborough Bridge, but said naught of it and the subject passed.

In due course it came time to return to the homestead, and though not liking the idea, yet having any gentleman's prejudice against the Long Island Railroad, I accepted an invitation to drive back with Jack in the car I found out he had purchased with some of the gold I gave him to feed his ham actors on while the show was dying on its feet.

We climbed in and I admired my taste, for it certainly was one of those cars. Great big thing with a huge engine and deep comfortable seats for a man and a girl up front with a sort of bustle on behind for a husband to ride in. "Jack," I said as we started, "where's the show now?"

"Salt Lake City. We haven't dared bring it back for another go at New York yet, because taking the leading lady out the opening night the way you did shot it full of holes. I think that's why it hasn't made any money. Leading lady's rotten and can't possibly get a new one."

"No," I said, "and if you keep it in Salt Lake City you won't. They don't grow leading ladies there. I'd try Reno if I were you. Dear old 'Death.' What a great show *that* was!"

"We don't call it 'Death' any more. Not realistic enough. Had to get something more appropriate."

"What do you call it, 'Suicide'?"

I'm not going to try that again! Jack got so mad he opened her up and hit sixty down the North Country Road. I knew he was a little tight and the Sunday traffic would be heavy as soon as we passed Little Neck. I held and on suffered.

Was more than delighted a moment later to hear a noise behind us which presaged trouble. Then a ghoul in a blue suit with brass buttons chugged alongside and nonchalantly waved us toward the ditch.

Jack was quite nonplussed, or as near nonplussed as a bird like him ever can be. He handed over a last year's licence and said, "Now look here, my good man, I shall have influence brought to play and you will be demoted in short shrift."

The cop said, "Demoted, eh? It's you will be havin' . . . Come here and let me smell the liquor on your breath!"

"Thirsty as all that?" said Elinor and the cop just looked. Then he looked again and seemed to feel better for a moment.

"Liquor on *my* breath? Do you know what happens to nasty policemen who tell lies about people they try to arrest? Do you?" Jack went on as the minion watched him with that rich disdain peculiar to minions. "Do you know that if you give me this summons it will cost you your rank? Commissioner Mrrrrrr" (Jack mumbled the name) "will have you off your little go-wheel by the middle of to-morrow."

I rather liked the cop. I suppose the fact that Elinor was in the front seat and I could see by the rakish angle of Jack's hat that he was making love to her may have had something to do with it. I liked him more a second later when he said:

"Say lissen, Mac, there's just one guy in this department Oim not afraid of, and that's this Commissioner Mrrrrrrr!" He had Jack's mumble down to the last echo. "He's the fake friend of every Democrat that ever got pinched in Nassau County. Commissioner Mrrrrrrr! Pig's ear, Oi say. So Oi just tink Oi'll be wroitin' out a little summons while you're recollectin' your self to him."

Jack said, "Aarf!" which was what I knew he would and I whistled at the copper to come to the back seat. He did.

"Skipper," I whispers to him, "I don't like him much either, but he's giving Mrs. Jones and myself a lift back to town and I'd just as soon there wasn't any fuss. We've been spending the week-end with the T. R. Hales."

The cop openly grinned at me. He had been, perhaps, a little gruff with Jack but now there was no mistaking his air of friendliness.

"T. R. Hale? Fer cryin' out loud, why didn't yer say so. Oi'll escort yer to the country line!"

He did and we went through the Sunday traffic as though it hadn't been there and shouldn't have been if it was. When we swung off the main road at the line I yelled good night at him and told him to stop in and have a drink sometime.

"Good night!" he yelled back, "and tell Mr. Hale, when you



see him, the champagne was a little flat last time Oi was out to his place."

As we swept on toward our little house, that was supposed to look English and didn't, I wondered. Corruption in a police department is a terrible thing, but, good God, think what life would be like without it!

*July 15th:*

Back to the store after the holiday and found it rather a restful place since most of our public was evidently quite as tired as I and therefore unable to go shopping. Those few who did stagger in were there because they wanted to buy something and meant to, not just because they wanted to buy something and thought they might a year or so later if they were able to save enough money.

In the later afternoon we were kept busy, though, by all the women who'd gone off with someone else's packages in the holiday rush. They were most amusing except for one little girl around seventeen who unflatteringly burst into tears when she saw me. I asked her what the trouble was and it seems she'd been going to a dance the night of the Fourth, and her best beau was going to take her and she'd had to give up going because she couldn't wear her evening dress since someone had gone off with her pink slip.

I still didn't see where I fitted in, but tried to comfort her and patted her on the back and said, "Poor, poor little one. So someone went off with the pink slip you'd bought here to wear under your dress." I was worried, the kid was sobbing so hard. "Why didn't you wear what the woman left in place of your package?"

She swung round on me like a tiger with her wet eyes blazing. "Fresh!" she said. "Here!" and with that she flung the box in my face. I was glad I wasn't her best beau if he had any chance of becoming married to her. Then when she had gone I opened the box and there came to me a great light of understanding. It was a big box yet it was quite full of one

grey flannel female union suit. I went home early, it was too much.

*July 17th:*

I have been thinking about Elinor a good deal in the last week. She is restless about the house, like a dog who lives nine stories up in an apartment house and has a master with an aversion to walking around the block. It worries me—not that I think Elinor wants to walk around the block for I can't imagine her wanting to walk anywhere, but she never wants to sit around any more. We have to go to the movies one night, to the Powers' the next and then to dinner in town which will break me if we keep at it.

Then there is something else. Last night I came home, tired as usual, Macy's having gotten their money out of me that day as every other, and I had been looking forward to my wife and bedroom slippers for the last four hours. I walked up the brick path and could see through the screen door that she was dancing. I wouldn't have thought twice about it had she been dancing with any one of a hundred people, but she wasn't. She was dancing there all by herself. As I came nearer I stopped to watch. Her head was thrown back and she was smiling, a lazy dreamy sort of smile and when the victrola record came to an end she bowed, right, left and front. A chill of fear grabbed my heart and I began to wonder what being home alone every evening from seven-thirty to twelve would be like.

Then she started the victrola again and I recognized the tune. It was the waltz from the second act of her old show of a year ago, and she was standing now on the bottom step of the stairway. She began to sing and I was rooted to the ground. The opening bars of the song floated to me:

“Oh, how I long for you,  
Want to belong to you,  
Glad to do wrong for you,  
My own man.”

It may have been because I was so tired, but it seemed to me like the most beautiful voice I had ever heard. I stood still as a statue, wrapt in its loveliness. For the first time since we'd moved in I noticed there were flowers along the brick path, and that the roses over the porch smelled good.

I watched her as she stood there swaying gently back and forth with the rhythm of the air. Then I heard a car stop behind me and turned to look. It was the collection man from the gas company. He got half-way out of his car and then he too stopped, listening. The people in the houses across the street came and leaned out of their casement windows. I saw the postman half up a front stoop standing with his whistle in his mouth, silent. The song swept on into its refrain:

“Now you are gone from me  
 Ever your eyes I see  
 Haunting my memory.  
 Wish I could die.”

The song stopped and it was as if it had been night and all the lights in the street had gone out. The postman waited, then blew his whistle—the people across the street went away from the windows as though they were sorry. The gas man got back in his car and rattled off. I walked up the steps and went into the house.

Elinor had gone upstairs and when I found her she was lying on the bed crying. I didn't say anything for a minute, just went over and put my arms around her and held her, then:

“Do you miss it so much, Lady?” And she began to cry again.

“The lights and the music and the thousands of people that you made laugh and cry and applaud?” Still she cried.

“I miss it awfully, Martin. Sometimes it just eats me.”

I nerved myself. “You can go back if you like, Lady. God knows I don't make enough to give you the things you ought to have, I—I'm sorry.”

“You can’t help it, Martin. You’re just dumb, but you’re awfully sweet to me and—and I married you and I couldn’t go back and face them all and admit I’d failed. You understand, don’t you, Martin?”

I didn’t understand, but she was, after all, a woman, and since nobody understands women I didn’t feel badly about not understanding, but I said, “Sure, Lady,” and went on comforting her and pretty soon she stopped crying and fell asleep and I sat there by her for a long time wondering why I’d never noticed the roses on the porch before and the little flowers beside the brick walk and I wondered if the tradespeople and the postman would ever walk on them by mistake and spoil them.

## BOOK THREE

*August 15th:*

A MONTH has passed during which I have found it absolutely impossible to carry on the daily record of events this chronicle set out to be. I have been afflicted with the same trouble I suffered with in July: that of the similarity of one day to another.

Elinor has not sung again since that evening. I am glad, because I think maybe she is happier. Have tried to make things nicer for her about the house and managed to borrow some money against my trust fund income, which will bring about one of those days of reckoning, but which made it possible for me to buy her a couple of dresses and take her to the theatre once a week anyway and blow her to a square meal every now and then that she hasn't had to make herself.

Elinor is a good cook; one of the best when she cooks, which is not too often, unfortunately, as the only Domestic Science I am up to is mixing drinks and that's sort of a thankless job when you aren't allowed to drink them.

I wonder if that has anything to do with the acute yearning look that used to haunt the eyes of most old bar tenders. They were always either that way or else fishy-eyed. They don't have that look any more. Take the bar-keep at the "Dizzy Club"—he never sympathizes with anyone except himself and he's like all modern bar-keeps: they lack sympathy. And these are just the days when their customers need sympathy what with the lousy liquor dished out and one thing and another.

I don't like Macy's any more. I once used to think Kingston, Jamaica, was the hottest place on earth, but I don't now. I'll match the ladies' lingerie department against Death Valley or Kingston any day in the week, and around three in the afternoon I'd bet on it against hell itself.

I think I could stand it better if it weren't for that horrible garment known as Hiking Knickers. It seems that Hiking Knickers, even in the summer, scratch the delicate skins of those sensitive females who go in for them. Hence they come to me and ask my advice as to what to wear under them.

I have always been diffident about discussing intimate things broadly in mixed company, and these women just torture me. I had my revenge one day though—I think it was on the seventh of August during the hot spell. I was tired and toward the end of the day a humid hussy in a red sweater and dirty white skirt came up to me and said:

"This is a fine store I don't think!"

I said, "You haven't any monopoly on that line of reasoning."

"Think yer smart, don't you, cutie?—talk English."

"I used to," I said, "but I'm getting over it. What's your trouble?"

"These," she said, and handed me a pair of crash trousers.

"Your husband's a big man, isn't he?"

Evidently I'd pulled the wrong words out of the dictionary for she launched into such a tirade as made me blush to the roots of my ears about how they were hers and she'd worn them hiking on Sunday and then gone to the beach and when she'd taken them off she'd found she was chafed quite raw. She didn't say she was chafed quite raw, in fact I have never before encountered a woman with such a literal mind. When she was through I involuntarily looked up to see if any of the automatic sprinkler outlets had melted.

This was one of the situations in which the Macy Employees' Guide Book isn't any more help than a Boy Scout Manual. I looked for Brown and thanked God he was out of earshot—then decided to take a chance. It might cost Macy's a customer, but I figured I'd be doing them a favour anyway so I martyred myself and handed over one of our well-known woollen combinations.

"Madam," I said, with all the dignity I had left and a little

I'd borrowed from Mr. Browen, "I am sorry about that most regrettable incident. Mr. Straus is sorry and if they knew about it I'm quite sure Mrs. Straus and all the little Strice would be sorry too. Take these, with the compliments of the store, and wear them."

"Aw, chees, that's elegant of you, cutie. You hadn't ought to do that maybe."

"No," I answered, "I certainly hadn't ought to, but I just can't help myself sometimes."

"Will I like 'em, do you think?"

"Madam," I said, "you try them out to-morrow under your pants and I'm quite certain you'll be wild about them."

I expect she was.

*August 20th:*

We almost lost the telephone to-day. I hadn't been home more than five minutes when a bird with eyeglasses and a hungry look rang the door bell and I asked him what he wanted and he said he wanted to see me.

I didn't want to see him, but he didn't seem to care about that at all and went right on with his little speech.

"Now, Mr. Jones, we've given you good service here and we feel that you ought to pay for it. In other words, we want money."

I said, "So do I." And he said, "Well, you know we can't go on giving you service unless you're willing to pay for it."

"Brother," I cried, "I'm more than willing, in fact you haven't any idea how much I'd like to, but I don't see it in the wood somehow."

"You've got to."

"But supposing I can't?"

"Then we cut off the 'phone."

"A sound principle," I said and gave him a rubber check that I knew perfectly well would snap right back at him unless I interviewed Alton Williams or somebody and put some money hastily in the bank.

It would have been all right if it hadn't been a cheque on a Forest Hills bank, because it would have taken the company a day to deposit it in town and it would have been two days before it got back to the bank and I got paid Friday so it would have been good by the time it arrived all fresh and gay from the clearing house. Someday I'm going to get Alton to establish a bank at Moose Factory, Ontario, and I'm going to open an account in it, and then I'll laugh huskily up my sleeve at these Shylocks.

Went back in the house and told Elinor and she said she had been just that day reading in the paper of a collection agency that sends around a car painted bright red with a huge sign "Bad Bill Collector" smeared all over it, and this car stops in front of your house with much horn blowing and ill-placed enthusiasm. Of course to anyone with a subtle mind the point is entirely lost for I have never yet seen a bill that wasn't bad. Particularly some of the ones these big corporations print. I suppose it comes from having all those machines for adding around their offices—they just can't help using them.

To-night the lights went out. I called the people on the 'phone and bawled them out properly for having such rotten service. I said to them all the things I'd liked to have said to the telephone man that afternoon and ended up with:

"Well, it certainly is a damn shame these utility companies can't give service."

The man at the other end of the wire made a noise like crying; it was the first chance he'd had to speak since I opened the conversation.

"Mr. Jones," he said, "you're a nice man and Mrs. Jones always gives me a drink when I come around to read the metre, but you must know we can't *give* service."

"Obviously not."

"Then why don't you pay us for it?"

I was wild. "'*Et tu, Brute?*'" I said, "after that line about me being such a nice man?"



"I know," he said, "it's too bad—if you want to send me a cheque I'll have them turned on again in the morning."

"You wouldn't," I told him, "if you tried to cash the cheque, but I'll make you a proposition."

"Yes?" In an instant I could tell from his voice he had changed from snivelling collector to clear-eyed executive. "Yes, bring up a couple of old oil lamps, the electric company must have some around for when they break down, and I'll give you not one drink but two."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, Mr. Jones. It wouldn't be right to the company."

"Don't worry, I won't go back to oil lighting permanently—come on—take a chance."

"No." I could almost see him stamp his foot.

"Oh, come on. I'll give you ten drinks and Mrs. Jones will give you one too."

He said, all right—how can I tell your house in the dark?"

"Just like that," I said, "and I'll bet you a dollar you can't find three lamps instead of two."

I turned to Elinor. "There!" I said, "that's settled. I'm going out to buy some cigarettes. If the gas man calls up about shutting that off too, ask him to dinner, then he won't dare." And I marched off down Owen Street with my head high and the world was my oyster—only it was a weak, sickly sort of oyster and, like most oysters, totally devoid of pearls. I thought of this and felt quite badly for a while. I think the heat had been playing tricks with my nerves for I suddenly decided it was perfectly all right about not having any pearls because I didn't have any swine either and there isn't much fun in having pearls unless you've got something to throw them before, and Elinor and I don't go out places any more where there are any swine, like the Ritz or Monte Martre or any of those places, so I guess it's probably all right, but my head hurt, it hurt a lot, so when I got to the drug store I fainted and the clerk behind the desk came out and looked at me and said:

"Gees, he's fainted." And the manager came and said,

"Gees," and then went behind the counter and brought me a large drink of whisky which he poured down my throat. I revived like a shot and everything was perfectly clear again and it being such a long time since I'd had anything to drink the whisky made me feel just fine.

"Good," said the apothecary. "One dollar please, only don't do it again because I won't give you any more."

I bought the cigarettes and as I was leaving the store I heard the clerk greet a customer and point to me, "Gees," he was saying, "dat guy fainted."

"That's nothin'," the customer, who had on a pink shirt and cauliflower ears, answered. "My mother-in-law fainted once too."

"She did?" said the clerk. "When?"

"When I married her brat—skid me a drink."

I think his mother-in-law must have been one of our better women.

*August 26th:*

Jack Lawrence has decided to visit us for two or three days which means he's been staying at the house nearly a week now. He's quite a guest. Says for you to make yourself perfectly at home and not mind him. Offers you your own Scotch and cigarettes and from his general attitude I wouldn't be surprised if he expected me to ask him if it was all right for me to take Elinor to the movies.

Introduced him to Powers last night. It was funny. They both wanted to talk so much, being such extraordinarily good talkers, that neither of them ever got really launched on a subject—they reminded me of two men I'd once seen drinking absinthe in St.-Jean de Luz.

Jack would start out with some long-winded story about literature and the theatre and then, when he came to the first breathing point, Powers, who had been sitting on the edge of his chair gritting his teeth and thinking about what to say when it got to be his turn, would come out with:

"Well, that's very true but take for instance the action of R . . . on the board to-day . . . etc. etc." Then he'd go on for perhaps two minutes when Jack would again crash through the line. Finally they both got so tight they couldn't have made sense anyhow, and they quieted down and Powers went to sleep, and Elinor and Sarah Powers and I had a nice game of three-handed bridge which netted Mrs. Powers her groceries for the next day. Elinor doesn't play good bridge . . . but then a girl as lovely as she is doesn't have to.

Powers seems to be really making some money for a change. I can't imagine he earns it so it must be his speculations. I asked him about it as he was sobering up a little prior to going home and he said:

"Jones, I have pap'r profits of ov'r a million dollars!"

"Take 'em," I said, "while the taking's good."

Then he had one of those flashes of clarity speculators sometimes get. His face suddenly went white as a sheet and he bent over close to my ear so the reek of my own liquor nauseated me.

"Jones, I can't take 'em. Sometimes I don't see how I can ever take 'em, but I started and I can't stop buying because if I do the stock'll drop and I'll be ruined." He began to laugh, a high cackling laugh. "And all my friends are in it and they can't stop, and all the brokers suspect there's something wrong but they can't stop because if any of us stop the stock'll go down, down, down, an' the brokers'll be selling their houses to pay for their losses, and my friends that used to buy bonds from me'll be wondering why they lost all their savings, an' some people'll shoot themselves an' some'll jump out of windows an' they'll scream as they drop an' I'll hear 'em screaming for ever an' ev'r an' hear 'em splash on the sidewalks an' I can't stop, I can't stop or it'll go down, down, DOWN!"

He rushed away from me and ran back to the living-room where he grabbed the bottle of Scotch and poured the remaining third down his throat. Then he came back and smiled and said good night to me as if nothing at all out of the way had occurred and asked us to come over to their house the next

evening for supper, and Sarah pretended she hadn't heard any of the fuss, but when I told her good-bye and said I was glad we'd gotten to be friends, I thought she looked away awfully quickly and seemed to hurry out after Powers.

Jack had mercifully gone sound asleep on the sofa so Elinor and I were able to go up to bed without the usual dissertation that always began spouting from him just when I got sleepy. When we had put out the light I said, "Lady, I want to thank you for something, for two things."

"No, really, Martin? I can't believe it."

"Yes, Elinor, and I mean it. I want to thank you for making me stop drinking so I don't act like Jack and I want to thank you for putting the kibosh on my speculating. I—I think you were right."

"Right? I think I was a damn fool. Arthur Powers speculates and his wife just bought a new dress at Thurns, only he isn't a piker like you were—he does it intelligently, in a big way."

"No," I said, "whatever else he is, he certainly isn't a piker." And as Elinor fell off to sleep I wondered at the strength of this man who for so long had carried such a God-awful amount of hell around locked up in his chest. It was horrible, of course, but I admired him in his error. He certainly wasn't a piker.

*August 27th:*

Much excitement to-day in the peaceful hamlet of the forest and the hill where there is neither tree nor grade of over ten per cent.

I had been unable throughout the day at the store to get from my mind the picture of my friend Powers, with the agony spilled all over his face—that the Scotch he'd poured into his stomach couldn't keep back any longer.

The memory of our talk had sort of gotten my goat, and I kept away from the windows and thought about widows and things.

Then I heard a newsboy hollering something about "wux-tras" and I wondered if it could be that, then someone came into the department with a paper under his arm and I saw the headline; it was a big black headline, bigger than they would have used for the death of a president fifteen years ago.

**"PANIC IN WALL STREET—LIVINGSTONE  
BREAKS POOL IN R. W. AS STOCKS TUMBLE—"**

I read and my eyes popped out of my head. Then it went on to say that R. W., being manipulated by a small group of operators, had risen from forty to a hundred and twenty in the past two months, that to-day the pool had broken and in the first sale after the opening it had dropped five points, ten in the next and then had come the landslide; down to ninety, seventy, forty and down again to close at twenty! Three old firms had failed, their resources shattered by the blow.

Browen came up and looked over my shoulder at the paper I'd borrowed. I heard him say: "Oh, God!" and when I turned to look at him he stood perfectly still and straight for a fraction of a second with his mouth working up and down, then quite simply, almost with dignity, he keeled over backward and lay stretched out on the floor.

I bent down over him and pulled off his collar.

I said, "Browen! Browen! Get up, old man—what's got you?" But he didn't get up, and when the Macy doctor came they took him off on a stretcher I saw his tongue was caught between his teeth and he was quite grey and I knew the way you do, sort of, that he'd never tell anyone what got him, but I knew, and I sort of hoped he had insurance because floor-walkers don't get a chance to save much, and Browen had little Browens somewheres up in the Bronx that used to come in and meet him on Saturday afternoons when it was sunshiny.

*August 30th:*

Everyone on our floor felt pretty bad all day and nobody that came in got very much attention from anyone, but I don't

imagine that will last long as everyone in the world thinks about themselves far too much to spend very long thinking about anyone else.

*September 1st:*

Jack Lawrence is still visiting us. The show is approaching its Waterloo again and is now playing the Subway Circuit, which means that Jack is with it almost every night. I think he likes staying with us, because he bought a commutation ticket. I suppose the only way I'll ever get rid of him is to close the house up or burn it down, but if I did the latter it would be just like him to come home with two tents—one for him and one for Elinor, and I could sleep outside to see that nobody disturbed anybody—meaning Jack.

They call dear old "Death" "It" now. That hasn't helped any though, and now that I've been on the wagon so long it certainly does irritate me to look back and realize the curse of drink. If Tom and I hadn't stopped at Hennessey's that day for a couple of quick ones on the way out to the Island, we wouldn't have picked up Jack just when he was trying to forget he'd written the horrible thing, and I wouldn't have elected myself to the post of angel, which has been anything but a paying proposition. I always used to laugh like hell when I'd heard that some friend of mine had backed a play and was papering the house every night, but you could lay a hare-and-hounds trail from here to 'Frisco with the tickets Jack's given away. I wouldn't wonder if in some of the smaller towns the thing played they had to give prizes to people to make them come and see it.

Funny part about it is Elinor still thinks it's a swell show and that if she hadn't left it the money would have just rolled in. I suppose that's only a perfectly normal female point of view, but I have an idea Jack's been trying to sell her on the idea of going back on the stage and taking the lead again. I hope he chokes.

*September 2nd:*

To-day was Elinor's birthday so was much put to it to think of a present for her. It was the first birthday she's had since I've known her, so I did feel that something really enduring should be the anniversary product. In the old days this sort of thing was perfectly simple for me to handle. I'd just call up this or that shop to send it around and charge to yours truly and there was an end to it. Now it's different, somehow.

I wanted to give her something really nice and had, so far as I could make out, exactly ten dollars that I'd managed to abduct from lunch money for the past four weeks. I roamed through the store when I arrived, being a few minutes early, and found that for ten dollars I could get a very creditable fake slave bracelet, which struck me as being too appropriate, a toy railway train, a beach umbrella and chair or a set of imitation toilet articles. This wouldn't do, but I had grown so accustomed during the past few months to regarding ten dollars as quite enough to see me through two weeks of personal expenditures in the city that I had perhaps forgotten the purchasing power of the dollar which, although it may be stretched into five conservative but nutritive lunches, is practically negligible as regards the acquiring of gifts.

At lunch time, or the noon recess as I sometimes call it, I shopped some more with further discouraging results. I was leaving the store in the afternoon, having resolved to buy her a life subscription to the *New Yorker*, which I knew she would enjoy, having been born in Paducah, Kentucky, and let it go at that, when an animal store across the street happened to catch my eye.

And so to the animal store and found that my ten dollars would purchase practically anything in stock save a Borzoi and a spayed skunk both of which they seemed to regard as very precious possessions, although I had no use for either; the one having sort of a Georgian look due to bad colouring and a wall eye and the other seeming to me to be utterly devoid of the realism that was his only claim to recognition.

I wandered past tiers of jabbering monkeys and gibbering red-sterned baboons to the rear of the store where I discovered a puppy. He was a little puppy and he was in a very big box and looked lonely as hell. I went over to the wire screen surrounding him and said: "Hello, mutt," and he did what he could about answering, and although I don't speak puppy much he gave me to understand that he thought this was a hell of a place to keep a dog and that I looked as if I might be able to provide something to eat, although thin, and would I please do something about it right away because he hadn't been away from his mother very long and was afraid he'd begin to whine pretty soon if somebody didn't pay some attention to him.

I yelled for the proprietor.

"How much," I said, "is the pup?"

"Twenty dollars."

I said, "You're a liar. Here's a nice, new, crisp, ten-dollar bill. If you want it, it can be yours."

He said, "Take the damn thing," and I did.

I don't think the other people on the train to Forest Hills enjoyed their trip much that evening because I had the puppy with me and he was ill as only puppies can be ill. It is a peculiar thing about little dogs that, although they are very small indeed, they can temporarily contain a most unproportionate amount of matter. I must ask Jack why this is—he could probably use it in a play or something.

Eventually I arrived at the destination and walked home with the new possession squirming around in my coat. I tried leading him behind me once on a string that came with him but this manœuvre at once collected such an hilarious crowd of townspeople and shouting urchins that I decided forthwith on concealment.

Upon arriving at the house I slammed open the door and shouted lustily for Elinor. She was not home so I took my charge to the kitchen and fed it milk. I had read somewhere that one buttered the paws of young animals when first



acquiring same, in order to make them feel at home. I tried this and it certainly worked. I've never felt quite so at home myself as that puppy did, only I don't think the sage who invented that particular system used bedspreads because within five minutes from the time I executed this gesture of hospitality I felt that should the dog warden happen to be passing our upstairs window and take a look at Elinor's bed he'd hold me up for a kennel licence. It seemed hardly possible that one dog could have as many feet unless his mother had had a yen for centipedes. I wouldn't have put it much past this particular dog's mother at that, for he reminded me greatly of a dog an actor friend of mine had in a show once. He claimed this dog was better than any thoroughbred dog he'd ever seen because he had some twenty or thirty different kinds of thoroughbred in his make-up whereas most of them had only one kind. I hoped Elinor felt that way.

Upon the arrival home of Elinor I was kissed soundly and with a completeness which startled me.

"Oh, darling! I took my old part in Jack's show this afternoon—just for the *matinée*, of course, but it was such fun!"

I didn't like this at all. In the first place, I resented her calling it Jack's show when all he'd done was conceive it and then pass it over to me to bring up, and in the second place it was what I knew would happen as soon as he came to spend his idea of a few days with us. I said nothing about the puppy.

Elinor, being fundamentally a very good wife, dimmed her enthusiasm long enough to heat up a can of beans, cut three slices of cold roast beef, mix two cocktails without ice and we went in to "Dinner." More and more in my house of late have I felt like the baby penguin at Jenny Lind's aquarium. The keeper passes through at noon and night, says in some mysterious bird language: "Nice Penguin, here I was," throws him a fish and goes on to the sea lion in the next tank. Not that I blame Elinor, because God knows I think she's wonderful to have stuck with me all through this rotten poverty business

when all she had to do was say the word and she could be drawing down as much in a week as I make in two months or more.

We ate for about three minutes in silence, then Jack said, "I say, Elinor, that was delicious." And for the first time I began to wonder a little about Jack. I knew it was terrible and I knew he knew it was terrible and although Jack's a nice feller and all that, the fact that he wears a Chesterfield in winter doesn't mean a thing because he probably has the worst manners of anybody I know except Jake Jackson, and I don't expect much of *him* in that line because he runs a bar in the lower East Side and if he was polite his customers would feel offended.

As the "meal" (to retire it with a brevet rank) was about ended, I said:

"By the way, Elinor, this is your birthday, isn't it?"

"I should say it is! Jack sent me the darlinest orchids for the show to-day! Sweet of you, Jack."

"I have a present for you."

"Oh, you angel!" She leaned across the table and kissed me—it hurt a little, it was so paid for. I felt like the penguin at the aquarium after he's done a particularly comical back-flip into the tank and gets thrown an extra special fish with a worm in it. "What have you bought for me?"

I said, "Wait," and they waited. They waited quite a while because the gift had managed, after an extraordinary feat of engineering, to get itself wedged between the stove and the hot-water heater, and I feared from the amount of noise I made removing it Elinor would think I'd bought her a foreign car of some sort. Finally I brought it forth by the tail and carrying it into the dining-room deposited it gently in Elinor's lap.

"Oooh!" she said. "It's alive!"

"By the grace of God and the fact that I went into the kitchen before the boiler began to work."

"Ha, ha," said Jack. "He might have been a hot dog." It suddenly came to me what was the matter with the plays Jack

wrote—the man had the mind of a child of fourteen—a backward child at that.

Elinor said, "Isn't he just too sweet, Jack?" and put him on the floor. Jack said, "Look at his legs—they don't work right."

"What do you think he is?" I asked, gradually getting a little sore, "a full grown Whippet?"

Jack studied the little tyke who was now busily working on one of the legs of the table. He studied him for a long time, then he said:

"He might be that—or he might be something else. It's hard to tell."

"He has a pedigree."

"So has Dr. Cook," said Jack, "but it's not convincing."

"I didn't buy him for his pedigree."

"I know you didn't, darling," Elinor said, "you bought him just for me, didn't you? And I think he's adorable. Mamma's little honeycums, are you hungry?"

I thought she was speaking to me and said, "Yes" which as usual turned out to be quite the wrong thing to say because Elinor muttered something about "damn fool," and Jack laughed and when he laughs I know I've said something that's made Elinor mad even if she doesn't let me know it herself, which she's more than apt to, being human and just a little fed up on what she calls "Slave wages."

"Why should you be hungry? Haven't I gotten your damned dinner for you and won't I clean the table and won't I wash the dishes?"

I sighed, but I still had spirit. I said: "No, probably not, but then maybe I can match Jack for it and maybe he'll lose so I won't have to do it to-night."

After dinner we all talked about the play and whether Elinor had lost any of her old stage presence through being married and I told her I was glad she'd had fun and she came and sat on my lap and cuddled the puppy and he fell asleep and then Jack fell asleep and so, Elinor and I, closer, I think, than we had been in a long time, to bed.

*September 6th:*

Labour Day passed off nicely but uneventfully and Tuesday the store seemed to take a deep breath and plunge into what they called the fall trade, though that, as it was still hotter than the inside of hell, was a misnomer. All it meant was that from then on we were supposed to sell twice as many things as we had in August. They passed word around amongst the hired help that all suggestions as to how business could be speeded up would be appreciated, and I sent in one that certainly should have proved a winner. I told them to run the "up" escalators faster and the "down" ones slower, but of course nobody paid any attention to it. They don't ask for suggestions because they need advice, they do it because they want you to feel you're all one big family, which has always seemed sort of Moslem to me.

*September 7th:*

Home late, because something happened to-day that made me feel sort of funny about a lot of things.

I was showing a customer an awfully swell stomacher just before lunch when I heard a voice behind me ask where the ladies' glove counter was. I turned around to answer and to my utter horror found myself staring smack into the eyes of Betty Wright!

I think for just a second my heart stopped beating. I stared at her and couldn't speak. Then, by instinct I suppose, I said the only thing possible under the circumstances:

"Three aisles over to the left."

"Meaning you don't want to speak to me, Martin?"

"Three—aisles—over——" I noticed for the first time that she was holding out her hand. I clutched it. "Betty! You, here!"

"Why not, Martin? Like the zoo, it's open to the public."

"But, but . . ."

"Tell me about yourself. I hear you're married. Do you like it here?"

All of a sudden I found I wanted to tell her all about everything—how I hated the damned daily grind of the thing and the being broke, and the sweaty women and the lunches and how tired I was, and how my feet hurt, but instead I looked the other way and didn't say anything. She patted my hand.

"I think I understand—I'm older now—Good-bye, Martin."

She was gone in a second. Before I could say anything she was lost in the crowd. I took a few steps after her and then saw it wouldn't be any use anyway and all the rest of the day I felt like a man in a rowboat that's almost upset by the swell from a passing yacht.

When my train got to Forest Hills that evening, instead of going straight home I walked over to the edge of the town and into the wooded park. I thought maybe the air would sweep some of the memories out of my head, and it didn't seem right to me to go home to Elinor thinking, even in that way, about another woman; but the leaves on the trees were turning and that made me think of the autumn and the steeplechases I would have ridden this year if things had been different and then I thought about Tom Hale and his father, and wondered what my old man would have done in a case like mine and what he'd say to me if he was alive and I knew perfectly well he'd say, "Go home, you God damned fool, and eat your dinner." And so I did.

### *September 9th:*

I had just succeeded in recovering from the shock of meeting Betty, although it took me two days, when a second and more powerful upset to what I would have called my nervous system a year ago, occurred.

It was about ten in the morning when some bird from the business offices of the store came wandering into the department with what he said was a message for Mr. Jones. He asked me where Mr. Jones was and I told him. He said I was wanted on the telephone and would I please take the call from upstairs.

As people in Macy's from the hours of eight-thirty to five-

thirty are supposed to forget Mr. Bell ever tinkled unless some relative wants to tell you of a death in the family or the opposite, I was frightened. I knew that as recently as eight that morning Elinor was at the minimum, ten months from motherhood, so I walked after this messenger with my heart somewhere around my throat.

"Hello," when I finally reached the 'phone, "Mr. Jones? Mr. Wright's secretary speaking at the Hanoverian Bank. Mr. Wright wants to know if you could lunch with him to-morrow at the Bankers' Club."

I was so startled that I suppose my answer must have sounded a little silly. "I usually lunch at the Fountain Room in the Pennsylvania," I said, but the lady was not to be worsted so easily. She came back with:

"The Bankers' Club is very nice, Mr. Jones. I'm sure you'd like it."

"So am I," I answered, "but I'm only allowed forty minutes for lunch and the last time I went there it took them twenty to cook me a three-minute egg so I guess I'd better not."

"Oh, do come," she went on, trying to wheedle me; "Mr. Wright said he was especially anxious to see you. Would you rather go somewhere else?"

For some insane reason I said, "To Fraunce's Tavern. If you go upstairs to the art-gallery you can hear anybody coming because there isn't any carpet and the bottom step creaks." She laughed. "Listen, boy friend, it's the boss not me that's doing the lunching, don't try and get fresh!" There was a silence, then, "Besides, it isn't the bottom step—it's the sixth from the top."

I couldn't help laughing, for all my information about Fraunce's Tavern had been gleaned from Alton Williams in his unguarded moments after three when the market closed, and in his own words he was one of the only three men in the street who realized how indispensable to posterity an historic art-gallery can be. I thought how I could make him squirm if I ever saw him again to speak to.

"Wait a minute," I said, "I'll see if I can get my lunch hour stretched."

I did and having had a minute or two to think the matter over, decided that if old Wright was sportsman enough to ask me to lunch with him I ought to be a good enough egg to meet him half-way—besides I thought I might be able to unearth some clue as to what in God's name Betty meant by saying she understood because she was older. People don't ever understand because they're older. I'm older than I was a few years ago and don't understand half as much. I guess it's just one of those things.

On returning home decided to say nothing to Elinor about the appointment for the morrow, which was just as well because she didn't get in till "dinner," as I love to call it, was practically over. That is, I'd eaten two cans of peas and was still looking for the bacon, which is the only thing I know how to cook except hot toddies.

As usual, of late, she was full of the theatre. She'd been teeing with some of her old cronies and they had been in this show and that show together and were playing in a grand piece in three weeks and were rehearsing in what would undoubtedly be a perfect knock-out if the backer survived and the show lasted out the vicissitudes of a month on the road. I asked her where Jack was.

"Oh," she said, "he had to go to Boston with 'It.'"

"And for why?"

"They've decided to change it again. I think they're going to put it to music."

"But none of the people in it can sing, can they, Elinor?"

She seemed suddenly flustered for some odd reason. "No," she said. "None of the people in it can sing."

"Then why put it to music?"

"They think," she hesitated, "it would be better with music."

"I think so myself," I answered. "It certainly couldn't be any worse. Is my money still keeping it on its legs?"

"No, of course not! It's paid its way ever since it left Cincinnati."

"Then why did the stage manager send me a wire from Cleveland asking me to lend him the price of a ticket to New York?"

"Well, it's practically paid its way. It can get along without your precious money now all right!"

"Good!" I said. "So can I, evidently, but I find it hard."

And with that Elinor said, "Shut up." Which I did, except for asking her if the puppy'd been fed that day and upon her giving an evasive reply I forthwith went down to the cellar and separated same from the coal and did give it a feed, which from the way it acted, I gathered was the first it had had since I had attended to the rite the night before.

I don't understand how some people including wives can think of themselves before they think of their dogs and cats. If they're snappy dogs (I don't mean our Bonzo) the girl friends love to sport them at Pierre's *et al*—if they're or'nry mutt dogs (I'm afraid I do mean our Bonzo) they love having them welcome them home since they take the place of gleeful children and are so much easier to acquire, unless you do it by adoption and even that calls for bank references which nine out of every ten people you meet who are anybody would have a hell of a time furnishing.

I upbraided Elinor for not having taken sufficient care of her birthday present and she replied:

"Well, darling, if you gave me something that ought to be kept in a safe deposit box I'd keep it in a safe deposit box."

"Yes," I said, not mistaking the tone of her voice, "if I blew you to the safe deposit box, but since I really couldn't afford one this year it didn't seem right to me to give you a present you'd have to keep in one. In other words, I don't see why in God's name you can't be like other peoples' wives and be agreeable when you get in. Particularly," I added as an afterthought, "if you've been out popping around all day."

"I never pop around, as you call it."



"Well, buzz around then—getting in night after night about an hour after I come home from work."

"Why should I come home earlier? You're nothing but bad news when you get in."

"It's as bad for me as it is for you, Elinor. Can't you understand—and try and help me? I need you so damned much!"

"Understand? Why you can't make any money? No, I can't understand that. Other people's husbands seem to be able to. Why shouldn't you?"

"Please, Elinor. You don't know what it's like in the store—day after day, the same messy women and endless clothes and kicks and jabbering about this and that and the head of the department wanting to know why the sales aren't any larger than they are because he has a new girl friend that has a particular urge for sapphires. If you knew what it was like, honey, I *know* you'd understand."

"I understand one thing, Martin. I've been a good wife to you. I took you for a husband, not for any money you might have, though I did think you'd have something. I've been a good wife to you and I've been faithful. What more do you want?"

I crawled. So many evenings lately the bread-winners' hour had degenerated into a first-class cat fight that I'd had to.

"I'm sorry, darling. I know it's hard as hell for you not having a red dime to spend on yourself and trying to hold your head up among the really high-class people of your world." And I thought to myself what a relief it was that with fellers like Tom and George Dewey one didn't have to have a new Persian lamb coat in order to be received.

If I hadn't cared for Elinor I shouldn't have been so upset by her utterly nonsensical attitude, but she was my wife and from the time I'd been a very small young man I had revered an ideal which went under the heading of "wife." I knew it was ridiculous even then, and when I went to school and then college the gang used to kid hell out of me about it, but the idea stuck and in my own peculiar philosophy it mattered not

that my wife should have turned out to be more or less involuntary. Besides, Elinor was a singularly beautiful woman and in my years at the "Life" class I had come to have an epicurean taste. There were many reasons for my loving Elinor in addition to the fact that she'd become, through process of law and propinquity, my ideal. In primis and in toto: I thought I loved her.

As usual, the row subsided and we were able to send word to the Governor that we didn't need the militia by bed-time, and so upstairs with a peculiarly jumbled bunch of thoughts in my head. I loved Elinor and I wanted to love her so awfully much, and it seemed of late as if she actually would rather I didn't. It was too much for me, so after I'd rubbed her soundly to sleep I went downstairs and, pulling Bonzo off the portières, which seemed selfish at the time, took him to bed with me where he chewed my ear till exhaustion overcame the two of us.

*September 10th:*

To-day I sallied forth from Macy's at the noon hour and to the Bankers' Club to the secret envy of all who worked in the store, even unto some of the executives. I was a little afraid these high-up bozos might try and touch me for a loan, so polite were they in reminding me of my appointment as I happened to pass them in their wanderings around the store, which all seemed to centre on ladies' lingerie, just at the particular moment I was about to start out for this lunch. Of course, I realized that they regarded ladies' lingerie as a delightful place anyway, being executives, but the coincidence struck me none the less.

It *did* seem natural taking the subway to the hub of finance at noontime—so often had I done it in my palmier days when meeting Alton.

I saw old Wright as soon as the express elevator shot me out at the thirty-eighth floor. He was standing surrounded by Speyer and Company. I knew that by their cutaways; but why

they were lunching at the Bankers', unless the tip had gone round that old Wright would be there, I couldn't imagine.

Then Wright saw me hesitating in the big passage before the coat room.

"Hello, Jones!" he said. "Come on in, come on in! Mr. Blanchard, my friend Mr. Jones. Mr. Plunket, Mr. Rabelais, Mr. Jones—you know old Schuyler Jones's son."

"So glad!" from Messrs. Blanchard and Plunket and: "Schuyler Jones! Well, well!" from Rabelais, and I knew what was coming: "I used to sell bonds to your father! What do you think of that!"

Not being on intimate terms with him, I didn't want to say, but with a feeling of relief and gratitude that it had been bonds instead of meat, I did manage, "Can it be possible?" Which he, of course, thought I said because I wondered at a man looking so young who was old enough to have sold bonds to my father, since I didn't look so young these days myself.

"Well, well, Schuyler Jones's son. In the Street, Mr. Jones?"

"Not quite," I said. "Pretty near though. In another week my furniture'll be there anyway."

"Ah," from Rabelais. "You've taken space already?"

"No," I said. "I have an idea it's reserved for me."

Mr. Rabelais grew expansive—I think old Wright must have been steeling himself against the lunch with me. "Have you ever thought of becoming definitely identified down-town?"

"Well," I said, remembering my present financial condition and hoping the last cheque I'd kited wouldn't betray the negligence of the U.S. mail, "they haven't got my finger-prints yet."

"Ah," he said, "you are right, my boy, never let yourself be rushed into a sudden move."

"It's hard not to," I answered, having in mind the size of the boys who'd come to take the gas stove out before one Nicholas M. Troutwein had arisen to the idea that if he paid the instalments he could get enough free drinks at my house

to neglect his duty. Then I added, with the superciliousness of a man who works near enough to the Ritz to lunch there if he has the price, "Are you in the Street?"

"Oh, good God, yes!" he answered, looking at his morning coat as though it were a special patrolman's uniform. "I certainly am—and here to stay, too." I remembered vaguely seeing something in the papers about an issue they'd just brought out that didn't look as if it had gone across so well—I knew what he meant and admired his courage.

"Come, come, Jones. Must lunch. Can't be talking business all the time, you know! What have you been doing? Arranging for some refinancing, eh?"

Wright was like that. Meet him at his house and he was high hat, but it wasn't his nature. He knew as well as I did, if not better, that I didn't have a sou to pay my way across the Styx, yet he thinks up some damn nonsense to pull on the assembled multitude. Damn decent, I thought it was, but then old Wright always had been awfully decent to me, ever since the time he first asked me up to tea, which of course was the beginning of his troubles so far as I was concerned.

We went to a table a little bit removed from the crowd that was lunching there, though on the way to it I'd met, every few feet, some bird I'd given an order on the board to once or twice who would get up and say hello and this and that. It made me feel queer, because they none of them knew, except Wright, and I didn't think he knew, really.

Then we sat down, and Wright ordered. I realized the "Conference" was about to begin.

But it wasn't a conference. He said, "Look here, you God damned fool, I have an idea what happened and I don't think it was entirely your fault. May I be frank?"

Having worked in Macy's for many months, I said: "For God's sake do, it's your lunch," and he went on:

"I have a hunch that you were pretty fond of the kid and I have another hunch that in all your, shall we say, cloudy days, you'd never been told to do this or to do that. Right so far?"

"Sure," I answered. "You know you're right. Hasn't your friend Kelly ever told you how the old man let me run to the gutter because I seemed to have a preference for the gutter over Bovais?"

"My friend Kelly! Don't talk like a damn jackass, Martin, even if you and I are publicly at swords' points, whatever in God's name that may be, you certainly have perspicacity enough to know why he comes to my house!"

"Sure I have, but why do you let him?" I asked, forgetting for a moment my position in the scheme of things.

"I let him come to my house," said Wright, "because he sold such damn good meat to your father that he's been selling it ever since and now has an account at the bank that makes me green with envy every time I think about it."

We ate for a few minutes in silence, after that. Then Wright began again.

"Getting along all right down at the store?"

"They haven't fired me. How did you know I was there? Betty?"

"Yes. Look here, Martin, I used to think you were a pretty useless specimen of humanity when you were engaged to Betty. I think I was partly responsible for the way she acted that—at the end there."

"Oh, no," I said. "Those things happen. My fault for getting stinko. Shouldn't have gotten stinko with Betty around."

"No, of course not, but I've been keeping track of you as best I could since then and I've come to the conclusion you're the sort of man we need in the bank." He looked up at me. "There's an opening there for you, Martin. It might lead to something big after a while."

It was silly, I suppose, but all of a sudden it struck me there was something pathetic about Wright for all his millions and his bank and his *atelier* on the Avenue. It suddenly came to me that he really wanted me to work in his bank; why, I couldn't make out, but I knew I wouldn't do it and told him so.

"Why not, boy?" he said. "I've no one there to take an

interest in. I could pay you much better than Straus and I think you'd like it."

"Mr. Wright," I said, "I think in spite of your gold you're one of the whitest men I've ever met. You say, because I've been on the wagon for six months and held down a practically menial job with some success, that I'm the sort of man you need in the bank. You know perfectly well, too, that if I took you up on it I'd be the sort of man you wouldn't have under you if I paid you. What the hell do I know about banking?"

I looked up at him and to my astonishment saw he was staring out of the window at the bay and the narrows and yet not seeing them.

"No," he said, "I don't suppose you know anything about banking, neither does the best man I've got in there, but you both know something about life. You can be taught about banking, you've got to learn the other thing yourself. I learned it, then I began getting ahead. I'm sorry you won't let me help you."

I was uncomfortable, after that, though we talked of every subject in the world and he asked me all sorts of questions about Forest Hills and our house there and Elinor. I told him, rather frankly, the sort of life I lived now. I wanted him to tell Betty I wasn't quite so bad as she undoubtedly thought I was. Then he said:

"By the way, it's none of my business, but do you need any money? I'd be glad to . . ."

"Yes," I said, "of course I do, but borrowing it isn't going to do any good, it only means owing one more person." Somehow you couldn't resent a man like Wright. Then he almost knocked my eyebrows off with:

"If any of them start to sue you, send them ten dollars. I always used to do that and it keeps them quiet indefinitely."

"You!—used to send people ten dollars to keep them quiet?"

He laughed, and started looking over the harbour again.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I'll never forget the time when I first started selling bonds and had invited my one best customer to supper—Betty's mother had on a new dress I was buying for her on instalments and she looked like—like a million dollars. We were half-way through dinner and everything was going exceedingly smoothly when the doorbell rang and there were three men in blue overalls. They said they'd come for the stove and I told them I was quite satisfied with it and they could leave it. They pointed out to me then that they'd come for the stove and they meant to take it unless I gave them ten dollars. I told them the meat hadn't been cooked yet, but they said they wanted it anyway."

I looked at Wright hard. I'd always felt before that even in his pyjamas he'd look like a bank president, now I wondered. "What in God's name did you do about it?"

He smiled—it was a funny smile, but very human. "I didn't do anything about it—I didn't have ten dollars."

"Good Lord!" I said, "did they take the stove?"

"No. Betty's mother got the ten. She borrowed it from the customer."

"Did you lose him?"

"No, as a matter of fact he gave me my first job in the bank a year later."

I didn't say anything, I was thinking and had just about come to the conclusion that it's a very peculiar thing but big men are never little. Lunch was over then and we went our ways, but when we shook hands at the door of the Equitable Building I damn near cried. It had never occurred to me before that Wright was a friend of mine and all afternoon at the store, waiting on people and being bawled out and nursing my feet, I didn't mind it so much because I felt stronger. Wonder if there're many bank presidents like Wright?

*September 12th:*

Elinor has gone back on the stage. I don't blame her, after all I haven't worked out so well as a provider, but I do wish

she'd picked something else to go into besides that damned hoodoo play of Jack's.

I came home and she told me she had a contract for the lead again and the show had changed its name and gone into rehearsal as a musical play and it was a knockout. I knew that. It always had been a knockout.

"Darling," she said, when she had gotten over her first wild burst of enthusiasm, "I think it's too wonderful—just think—I won't be a burden to you any more!"

"But, Elinor," I said, "I'd rather work twice as hard and have you home. I hate to think of being without you every day. It, it'll be like being married to . . . it won't be like being married to you at all. You're not a burden. It's fun working for you—don't you see I don't want you to go away from me like that? It's like losing you."

"No, it's not like losing me—it's your best chance of keeping me. I can't stand it any more this way—no money, no clothes, nothing but housework and worrying about bills that we can't possibly pay, and people coming all day trying to get money. I'm through, Martin, that way."

"Fed the pup?"

"We-ell, yes."

"Fine! I'll go give him something to eat. He probably needs it." I couldn't bear to hear her talking this way. I knew what it meant and so did she, but she didn't care particularly and I did. I was glad I'd gotten Bonzo, though, even if he had turned out to be my dog. There was something nice about being perfectly certain he'd be there to jump up and get footmarks all over my trousers when I came home.

*September 13th:*

I have a hunch that all is not well with me at the store yet I can't exactly make out what it is. I met the head of the department to-day and he looked at me in a funny way and said:

"Can't you get better, Jones?"



I said, "What's wrong, Mr. Markham?"

"Lot of mistakes. Lot of mistakes." And he stalked off. I thought I heard him muttering under his breath something about dissatisfied customers, but wasn't sure enough to ask him.

Elinor home late, of course, due to rehearsing, but full of enthusiasm when she arrived and quite agreeable, which is unusual nowadays, though she has been a lot nicer to me since she went back to work. I think maybe getting away from the bill collectors that are infesting the place like the sixteen-year locust may have something to do with it.

*September 14th:*

Elinor got mad at Bonzo after we got home to-night. He'd chewed up a pair of her mules, but he didn't mean any harm by it. She hit him and we had quite a battle over it, which ended with Bonzo and me sleeping downstairs on the living-room sofa. I wish Elinor wouldn't get so mad about things—it almost seems as though she resents my being around.

*September 16th:*

I have been to hell and back. At eleven o'clock on the fifteenth, Markham came up to me and said:

"Jones, we've decided to let you go."

"You mean I'm fired?"

"Yes—just that."

"Why?"

"Incompetence. You never have been any good since you came with us. We've had several complaints from customers, too, about the casualness of your treatment of them."

And so, very simply, they had passed me out into the street. I don't suppose it occurred to them that I might be over my head in debt, or that I might not really know where my next meal was coming from. But I don't suppose they would have cared if it had.

I got my hat and coat and turned in my locker key, for

which the doorman gave me a quarter, and started for home. Then it occurred to me I couldn't go home and face Elinor. I could hear the things she'd say already, about drunken bums and libertines and this and that, all the time ripping my heart out because I loved her so much and had tried so hard to be the sort of person she wanted me to be.

I wandered down to the station and took the train, thinking I'd walk around by the woods. I felt pretty rotten. Then when I got to Forest Hills I felt so tired and miserable that I wanted to go home. Then I realized that what I wanted more than anything in the world was to have Elinor take my head in her lap and rub it and tell me she loved me. I almost ran when I turned into Owen Street.

I had a funny feeling when I started up the brick walk to the house, a hunch sort of, about something dreadful that was going to happen—then I noticed flowers along the border had been all crushed as though someone had been dragging something out to the sidewalk.

I opened the door and then I knew—there wasn't a stick of furniture in the living-room, not a curtain on the windows or a chair or a rug—nothing, only Bonzo sitting in the middle of the room whining that silly, heart-breaking puppy-whine.

My head swam for a moment. I couldn't understand why she'd done it—we'd been so happy there together. We'd fought, of course, but so does everybody. Then I saw an envelope on the mantel and went over and opened it.

"I'm sorry, Martin, to do it this way, but Jack and I had to have each other and I am fond of you and couldn't bear to think of the look in your eyes if I told you. I hope I haven't hurt you too much—we were happy together once, before you changed. We've both got to start over, that's all—Elinor."

I sat down on the floor and began to cry. Bonzo came over and crawled into my lap. I suppose he knew something was wrong and wanted to help, but I kept thinking of how she ought to be home and I half listened for her. I would have

given anything just to hear her swear at me again, but she didn't come, of course.

Then I began thinking about Jack Lawrence and about rubbing her back and I wondered if she'd be careful about not opening the window from the bottom where it would blow on her throat and then all the thousand and one little intimacies of our life together began dancing around in my head and I thought I was going crazy.

I went upstairs and all the things were gone from there too, except an old dress and the chewed-up slippers. Then I went into our bedroom, and I remembered the night I'd sat there beside her after she'd been unhappy about the stage and I shut my eyes and then I seemed to hear her voice as though it were coming from some place a long way off:

“Now you are gone from me  
Ever your eyes I see  
Haunting my memory . . .”

I went downstairs again with Bonzo pattering along behind me, but the sight of the living-room made me sick. It was all so much Elinor—even empty the way it was, she seemed to be there. I could see her coming into the room and could feel her arms around my neck and her breath on my cheek: “Darling—make your mark in the world—I love you.” Then I could see her as she was that day when she stood on the bottom step of the stairs and sang.

I went into the kitchen, thinking Bonzo would probably be hungry. I opened the ice box, she'd left that. It was too heavy. I suppose. Bonzo was still following me. I saw some grapes, she'd always loved grapes, and some chicken she'd cooked the night before. Then I saw a gallon can of alcohol on top of it. I took a drink and felt better. I took another, then I began to laugh and I took another and the whole thing suddenly struck me as such a God damned joke that I laughed and laughed and laughed.

Elinor! Hell!—been happy before I'd changed! She'd changed me, damn her! She'd moulded me and changed me and pulled me out of my old life by the roots, and then when she got me made she didn't like her work! I took some more of the alcohol and I don't remember much after that, except going out and Bonzo following me and then picking him up and walking on for hundreds of miles to a bar somewheres and having some more drinks, and a lot of people around and laughing and laughing and then everything went black and I was spinning around on top of the world and trying to hold on to keep from being thrown off and Elinor was swinging around too among the stars and it was cold, and I couldn't quite catch up with her.

They took me to Bellevue. When I came to I couldn't make out where I was at first—then I heard the nurse explaining to the doctor how Bonzo happened to be there too on the bed, I heard her quite clearly and it sounded awfully amusing:

“I know, Doctor, I couldn't help it, but the man was so funny. When they found him in the street he was hanging on to the little dog as if he was trying to keep it warm. He just wouldn't let go of it and they had to bring it along too. I've never seen one take on so—acted like the little dog was the only thing he had left in the world.”

## BOOK FOUR

*September 18th:*

OUT of the hospital to-day with Bonzo, and although they pronounced him to be in excellent health, they told me in no uncertain terms just what would happen to me if I continued drinking. Of course, my mother had told me exactly the same thing some fifteen years ago, and as I had disregarded it without too unpleasant results I couldn't really take to heart their undoubtedly sound advice.

When I stepped out into the street I noticed that the hospital part of the building and the morgue used the same entrance for reclamation purposes, and all of a sudden it dawned on me that although, in a sense, I'd died when Elinor waltzed off with Jack, in reality she'd died and I was just about back where I was before. I felt a little like an inexperienced surf bather who, on being rolled over and pounded by a big wave, suddenly finds the tide has left him up on the beach, where he had half wanted to be all along.

I turned around to look at Bonzo who was walking behind me as though he were afraid to follow yet much too scared not to. I had him on a bit of bandage the nurse had given me in lieu of leash. This wasn't so good. Here was Bonzo, a most faithful and self-respecting dog being made far more of a ridiculous business than even his mother thought he'd be, and God knows she must have expected the worst since she was the only living thing on earth who could so much as guess at his paternal lineage.

"Bonzo," I said, "this won't do. We must forthwith get you some tack."

I happened to put my hand in the pocket then and discovered to my horror that there was absolutely nothing there that could under any circumstances be regarded as currency.

I said, "Bonzo, I apologize—stick to me though and we'll see what's doing." We walked on and soon found ourselves in Fifth Avenue at Twenty-eighth Street.

This was too easy, we turned north and walked at a rapid pace toward the cheering comfort of Louis'.

After some fifteen blocks, due to the comments of the small crowd that was now following us and the fact that Bonzo really wasn't fit, I picked him up and we proceeded in a more dignified manner to Forty-ninth.

Louis greeted me like his long lost college chum! It touched me, it really did touch me.

"Mr. Jones," he cried when he'd answered the buzzer, "here you are and I thought you'd forgotten all about the three cases of champagne you bought from me last spring!"

"Louis!" I said, "this; after all the years I've known you!"

He looked troubled, for a second, then he welcomed me in with a genuineness that made me almost forget how I happened to be arriving there, penniless, destitute, and with a thoroughly bandaged dog strung from my wrist.

"He seems to like you," said Louis.

"Yes," I laughed, "he's quite attached to me, but now let us get to business."

"Yes, sir," he said. "What'll you have?"

"Credit?"

"We-ll, I don't . . ."

"Credit, Louis?" I started for the door.

"We-ll, I . . ."

"Credit, Louis? Remember I brought you Mr. Hale, Mr. Dewey, Mr. Northrup, Mr. . . ."

"Well, what'll you have, Mr. Jones?"

"Rum cocktail, Louis. What have you gotten your rep for anyway?"

I sat down in his main room and waited. It was two-thirty in the afternoon so I figured I'd have quite a wait, but I'd never called up Tom or any of my friends to borrow anything

from them and I didn't intend to now, so I picked a comfortable chair and sipped the pink thing Louis handed me.

"How's tricks, Mr. Jones?"

"Swell, Louis," I said as the rum began to find a permanent home. "Fine, how've you been?"

"Not kickin' any, glad the summer's over. Say, you know summer's a bad time with me in New York."

"Boys too hot to drink even?"

"No, but in the winter when all their wives are in town, I get so I know pretty much who's who. Take summer comes and the guy downstairs at the door catches the name and lets the people in and I never know whose wife's gonna be with whose husband! It's hell!"

"Louis," I said, basking for the first time in months under the sunshine of doing what I wanted to, "always assume the right woman is with the wrong man, then you'll flatter both of 'em, even if they're married. Seen Mr. Hale lately?"

"Yes, he was in last night late for a bottle of fizz. Say, you're married, ain't you? I almost forgot, you looked so natural sprawled all over the chair there."

"Yes," I said, "and no. It's hard to tell, but speaking confidentially and amongst friends, I don't think so."

"What?" said Louis, all his respectable citizen's wrath rising bubbling to the surface the way it did every election day when he caught a Republican trying to vote twice. "You don't know whether you're married or not? What's the idea, what's the ideeah, hunch?"

"The idea is . . . bring me another rum cocktail, Louis, and maybe I'll tell you, if you're very, very good."

Louis returned with one pronto and I started to tell him and then decided I could really render a much more efficient yarn if I had another rum cocktail so I sped him on his way again and when he returned practically panting, told him I hadn't been able to make up my mind yet.

"Mr. Jones, I can't go on givin' you credit, really, if you're

in such a bad way you can't tell me whether you're married or not . . . you know that."

"Louis," I said, deciding to come right out into the open as a hunted fox will sometimes do, trusting his speed to get him away from the baying pack at his heels, "Louis, I was married."

"Then you are, sir!" jubilantly extending a fist.

"No, Louis, I was but I don't think I am! Neither's Bonzo. Met Bonzo? He's nice dog, but much too young to be married, swell dog all same."

I sat for the better part of an hour and a half, drinking and waiting and drinking, which came frightfully hard after being all out of training the way I had for six months or so, and eventually the lads I'd hoped to see began dropping in, with Tom in the van, tongue out and panting. He romped in under forced draught, then he saw me and stopped dead in his tracks.

"Martin! You! Home again! By gosh, I'm glad to see you! Decide to step out for an evening away from the little wife for a change?"

"No, Tom, I'm back. Funny, isn't it?" I laughed, I couldn't help it, it struck me suddenly as so damned amusing.

Tom said: "I heard she'd gone back into the show."

"The Lord giveth," I said, "and the Lord taketh away. Blessed . . ."

"Can it, Martin!" he interrupted. "That's all right with the world and sounds fine, but it doesn't get across with me at all and I haven't had a drink since I left the Estate's office."

"All right, fella," I answered. "You're the only guy that knows, really. By the way, I haven't a red to my name. Can I come down and spend the night with you people at West-bury?"

"Jackass," said Tom. "I've been expecting you ever since El—she—kissed Lawrence on the porch the day after the Fourth. I had a hunch then, but listen, stupid, how are you?"

"Fine," I said. "Fine, Tom."

"I don't mean to seem obtuse, Martin, but where's Elinor?"



I began to cry, being partly drunk. "She left a week ago."

"Left?"

"Yes, I got a letter from her—found it when I got home. She and Jack had to have each other."

"What about you?"

"Didn' count."

"What?"

"No, she an' Jack had have each other." Gradually Louis was having his way with me. "She an' Jack, say! Jack's a son of a bitch, what?"

"You flatter him! Come on home with me—I've got a nice gee I can mount you on for the hunting and maybe we can dig up a race or two for you."

I couldn't make it out at first—I'd gotten so used to being at the corner of lingerie and hosiery at eight-thirty that the very idea of doing anything else seemed iniquitous to me. I didn't say anything.

Louis scurried about and brought Tom a drink and brought another one with it which I gathered was for me, so remembering what they told me at the hospital, I drank it quickly with my eyes shut. It worked. I began to feel almost the way I did two hundred years ago, before I met Betty and Elinor.

"Say, Tom!" I said. "Can I really come down with you?"

"Sure!"

"Listen, Tom," I began, laughing, "do you know I haven't even got a suit of pyjamas? You see before you a man, young in years, nakeder than the day he was born. My income's hocked for eight years in advance, my clothes are with uncle, and the Millstown Cup is with uncle! That's sort of funny, isn't it? Dignified Millstown Cup with uncle!"

Tom frowned. If he'd laughed I would have knocked him for a row of ten pins. All right, his frowning showed he still took me seriously. "Dignify' Millstow' Cup in with uncle. Nev'r happen before, nev'r happen 'gain. M'rably dictu!"

"Don't kid yourself, Martin. That cup disappeared once

for two years. Then it suddenly showed up again. I don't think you have a patent."

I sat there for a hell of a while, figuring this out when the buzzer rang and who should pop through the door but Cosgrave! "H'lo, h'lo!" I said.

"Good evening," he answered.

"H'lo!" I said again, by way of breaking the ice, knowing Cosgrave but slightly. "Have a drink?"

He said, "I have, but I'll have another." I knew he'd had one because he smelt like a Ford radiator in February, but we had one and things seemed very pleasant indeed to me. Then he had another and things seemed very pleasant to him since he'd already been primed for starting in cold weather.

After we'd all three of us sat in silence for five minutes, he said, "Mr. Hale, aren't you? Tom Hale's son?"

"Few doubt it," said Tom, a trifle flippantly, I thought. "Why?"

"Would you be interested in purchasing a rather high-class race-horse at a rather reasonable figure?"

"No," said Tom. "Have you got one?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it!" I gathered Tom was not exactly wild about Cosgrave, though he seemed an innocuously pleasant soul to me.

"I have a horse," he went on, "who is entered in the Jockey Club Gold Cup. I think she has a chance."

"Is she ill?"

"No!" Cosgrave was annoyed. "What d'you mean ill?"

"You said she had a chance—I thought you meant she might pull through."

"Mr.—Mr. . . ."

"Jones," I said.

"Would you be interested in a horse that had been entered and qualified for the Jockey Club Gold Cup, ten thousand dollars added?"

"I'd be interested in a gold cup even if I couldn't add."

"What will you give me for the mare?"

I was stunned.

"Have a drink," I said; "you'll feel better in just a little while."

We did and I think he felt better. We had another. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'll match you for her!"

"Fine," I said. "Heads I get her, tails I don't."

I could see him thinking. Then I noticed he was muttering to himself: "Heads you get her, tails I don't, heads I, tails you, heads, heads—" then aloud: "What the hell do you mean anyway? Heads you get her, tails I don't! What'll you give for her if you get her?"

I had a vision. I saw, for a second, the end of the rainbow. "I'll match you," I said, "everything I have in the world against the horse. Given time you could gather in quite a handsome sum."

"Done!" he cried, flipping a nickel into the air. "Call it!"

"Tails."

"Tails it is!"

From Tom, "You win, Martin, you win!"

"I knew I would," I told him. "What's the horrid thing's name? I'll sell her back to you for three thousand."

"No," said Cosgrave, "you won't. Her name is Lydia Pinkham, God help you! Where can my trainer get you?"

"He'll never get me," I said as Cosgrave shuffled out. "I'm not that kind of a guy."

And so it was that I came by Lydia Pinkham, God Help Me, and of course Tom and I had to drink her health time in, time out and then, once started on our way, had to stop at Hennessy's for a moment where we saw that swine Lawrence, who left immediately upon our entrance, for which I could hardly blame him. I felt for a second like taking a swing at him, but then noticing his condition I figured I might spoil Elinor's fun, so decided to let him run ahead into the ambush he undoubtedly called home.

At last wobbled up the Hales' driveway and the old man

learned of the change in my condition from Tom, who, always tactful, said, "She jumped ship, Pa. Martin's alone again so I asked him down for the night."

Hale was more cordial than I'd ever seen him. "Why didn't you ask the God damned fool down for a month?" He growled, "Ought to be thankful but probably hasn't sense enough to. Try and cheer him up." Then he turned to me, "Have a drink? Give him a drink, Tom." Tom started for the pantry, "Bring me one too."

"I was going to anyway."

"You might not have, never can tell about you, Tom. Not reliable."

I laughed. It certainly was nice to be back. I thought it was particularly nice when Jamison staggered in a moment later with bottles and glasses and things.

We settled down and between the three of us managed to slaughter a quart of Bourbon by the time dinner was announced. Hale grew more and more cordial and actually went out of his way to insult me once or twice, so I decided I really might spend some time there.

#### *September 19th:*

This morning Tom and I up early and to Belmont Park to look over Lydia Pinkham. I don't think he enjoyed it much, because we broke a spring on his car driving to her stable, which was Number 34, or in other words as far from the main part of the track as it was possible to get, over the worst road in the world.

We climbed out and after shouting around for a while, unearthed a gentleman in a grey derby who said he was Lydia Pinkham's trainer.

"Why does Mr. Cosgrave keep his horses way over here?" Tom asked.

The trainer gave him a dirty look. "Are you Mr. Jones?"

"God forbid!"

"Then what business is it of yours, sir, if I may ask?" and

with that he led us down a long line of box stalls some filled, some empty, to the very last one in the row. He undid a complicated system of bolts and then, with the same air of expectant mysteriousness Théodore would use when serving his best patron a tomato surprise, he threw open the door.

Before us was one of the best-looking race-horses I've ever seen in my life. She was almost better looking than Man-o'-War! I raved over her, told the trainer I'd never seen anything that could touch her and began counting myself a clever lad indeed. He said:

"I'm glad you like her, Mr. Jones. She's Mr. Cosgrave's best. Now let's go look at Lydia Pinkham."

It was indeed a tomato surprise.

I was not a little upset by this sudden return to earth so when we stopped at Lydia's stall and the trainer began his elaborate rigamarole with the bolts again, I said, "Don't. I already know what it's going to be like."

He gave the door a tug and it swung open. I was wrong for I had not known. The mare was covered with clothing. A blue and yellow hood was over her head, a sort of buckler round her neck and her legs were bandaged from hoof to hock.

"Is she going somewheres or has she been in a bad accident?"

"An accident," said Tom, peeping under the blanket at a pair of gawky quarters. "It happened at birth."

"She's a bit delicate, sir, and her big race is day after to-morrow. She's had a tough break, this horse, Mr. Jones."

"So have I," I answered. "Does she eat much?"

"Oh, yes, sir, but her food don't nourish her good."

"So she eats more than any other horse and is still hungry?"

"Yes, sir, that's it." He smiled.

Tom said, "Oh, what a bright boy you turned out to be." Then, to the trainer, "Will she die if you strip her?"

"No, sir."

"Don't," I said. "I've stood all I can for one day. You know the horse, and I don't want to. I'll send my colours over to-night. See you Saturday at the track."

Tom and I took off, he in such high good humour he didn't seem to mind the broken spring and I acutely unhappy. It was bad enough to lose a wife, but then within a week to acquire a bottomless pit in training at seven berries a day! That was too much!

Tom quieted down after a while, and when we got back to his place we went down to the stables and schooled his hunters and one dreadful black beast that he persuaded me to ride over his paddock fence.

It was one of those horses that turn around and look at you when you mount and if you happen to be looking the other way, try and bite you, and if you're not, they just sneer. I wasn't, but I got up so quickly all he managed was the toe of my shoe, which seemed to make him even more sour on the world.

"Cordial brute," I said. "What's his name?"

"Aunt Martha. He's father's favourite. The old man said if you got along with him you could ride him in the West Hills Plate."

That was decent of Hale—he knew I liked steeplechasing better than anything in the world and I was perfectly certain he was just doing it to take my mind off Elinor. I said, "Fine," then as the horse let out at a passing groom with his foreleg, "I'll try not to hurt him."

Aunt Martha was certainly an extraordinary animal. I put him at the paddock fence, an impressive thing about four feet eight, and he sailed over it. Much encouraged I next tackled a low sheep hurdle and to my astonishment found myself flying through the air without anything whatever to sit on since the horse had remained on the take-off side.

"Sorry," Tom yelled, "I meant to tell you. He doesn't like sheep hurdles."

I had already gathered that, but was so relieved that Aunt Martha hadn't run around the wings and tried to bite me again, that I made no comment, but climbed over the fence and into the saddle. I gave him quite a school then over all the

timber fences I could see that looked as if they might appeal to him and there was that in the power of his stride and the way he fought to be let loose that almost made up for his idiosyncrasies. I liked him.

*September 20th:*

At the Hale board last night, the subject of my "stable" occupied most of the meal. It started by one of the inevitable guests getting off something to the effect that it was too bad the Gold Cup only had three starters and Lydia Pinkham. He referred to her as a doubtful starter.

I knew he didn't mean this as a gibe, but hastily informed him that she would be there with bells on when the time came.

"I should not be surprised if she literally was," he said; "I owned her as a two-year-old and nothing she could do would surprise me. Don't see why Cosgrave keeps her."

I said, "I understand she's not exactly the favourite tomorrow."

"As a matter of fact the Jockey Club ought to ban horses like that from the track. Think of the hundreds of ignorant people who go to the races and bet on them because they're thirty to one when there isn't a possibility of their winning."

I said, "I hate to think of them. Let's think of all the people that don't."

Hale said, "Didn't Tom tell me you owned that mare, Martin?"

I looked sheepish—the man I'd been talking to looked horrified. I saw he was a gentleman though, because he drained the highball beside him at one swallow which showed he realized he'd said something.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," he began when he came up for air, "I didn't know—I—of course the mare may have come round all right since Cosgrave disposed of her. Tendons sometimes heal and the break wasn't so very bad."

Tom said he'd known a man with a broken neck who'd gotten over it and this turfman added, reassuringly, "Oh, well

you know, she's broken a lot of things, but never her neck of course. I shouldn't have sold her to Cosgrave if she hadn't been reasonably sound."

"No," his wife put in at this point, "you wouldn't if she'd had a broken neck. You're careful that way, aren't you, Jimmy?"

"I believe his trainer did raise some objection—said something about her being a weaver or some such nonsense."

"He said she'd had a tough break," said Tom.

"The last time I saw her in our stable," Mrs. Jimmy went on, "she was in a sling with all sorts of queer attachments hung on her and had a hose of cold water tied to her leg."

"My dear, my dear," her husband began, but Hale interrupted:

"She'll probably miss all that when she goes to the post and maybe run like hell to get back to it. You never can tell, put five or ten up on her for me, Martin."

Hale leaned over and whispered in my ear, "It's not that I think that God damned horse could win a donkey race, but I don't like Jimmy Masterson. Don't you dare put up anything for me."

*September 21st:*

To-day the day of the Gold Cup. I woke up and called Tom Elinor because I was sleeping in the spare bed in his room and hadn't gotten quite used to being perpetually unwed, and one bump of humanity under the bedclothes resembles another; particularly when you're half asleep.

To the Turf and Field Club for lunch, which I enjoyed because Elinor and I had never been there together so there were no memories to get in under my skin and grab at my heart the way there were at Tom's place.

As we turned in through the iron gates by the club house and walked under the old trees, after we'd parked the car, and saw all the men in grey soft hats and the women in their new fall get-ups, I felt as though I'd been away somewhere on a



long journey. Then when we came to the white tables under Bowman's best Biltmore Beach umbrellas and the odour of God's green grass, Worth's Dans la Nuit and Uncle Sam's whisky all blended together into the smell that spells race meets and polo matches, I knew I'd come home again and never should have left.

"Tom," I said, "let's celebrate."

"Done!"

We had a quick one straight and chased it with the melted ice-water in our glasses, then it turned out we were lunching with a party. It was very pleasant, everybody so cheerful and prosperous looking you'd never guess how much money they owed. I knew most of the people there too and they all seemed glad to see me and wanted to know where I'd been just as if they hadn't known perfectly well all along.

Then I noticed that there was a vacant chair beside my place at the table. I was idly wondering what I'd draw when I saw Valerie Kennedy swinging across the lawn. She was in a grey suit and looked like home and mother to me. I said to myself:

"This is going to be a swell lunch!" Then she came over to the table.

"Oh, hello," she said when she saw me. "I see there's been a jail break. Which one of you shot the other?"

Valerie was damn pretty! I hadn't really noticed her that day at Fox's Point. I laughed, "Neither; she bolted out of the course."

"Sorry?"

"Yes, I——"

The Kennedy looked at me for a long time, then, "Do we celebrate?"

I told Tom to produce, which he did without delay. I suppose I should have felt badly about sponging liquor as well as lodging off him, but then having me around gave him an excuse to drink himself into a London fog every night which he certainly wouldn't have been able to do alone, so I guess it was all right.

When it dawned on me that the chair at my right had been saved for her, I said to Valerie, "Tom knew I felt pretty bad when it happened. I have an idea that you, being an attractive female, are supposed to be the hair of the dog."

She gave me a look and I saw at once she took it as a doubtful compliment.

"Why?"

"Cures the bite!" and I laughed lustily at my little joke.

She said, "You know I think you're a little tight this day."

I laughed again, softly and appealingly, I thought.

"Stop giggling."

"I'm not giggling," I said as the last drink got into operation, "I'm laughing at a joke. I know a secret."

"Oh, tell me more, I love secrets."

I said, "Hssssh." Then we both laughed again.

"I know a horse that's going to run in the Gold Cup and a lot of people will bet on her because the jockey's shirt is baby blue with pink stars on it and it's a two-mile race."

"What's so funny about that?"

"The horse can only run a mile and a quarter, then she has to stop and have a truck come out and get her."

"How do you happen to be so much on the inside? Did you dope her to keep her from winning?"

Even if I hadn't been sort of tight I don't think I could have controlled myself after that remark. "My God, woman! That horse is so weak she sleeps in her hat and coat. You should see her jus' b'fore she works out. She has a blanket that reaches from her ankles to her crest and pulls over her head."

Valerie had been hastily consulting her programme. "Why, Martin, it's your own horse!"

I sighed, "Yes, I know it is and it makes me feel like Barney Google."

"Oh," she said, "Spark Plug!"

"Yes, darling, yes, only he runs with his blanket on; my poor old horse has to go forth practically naked before a

suspicious world. Have you ever seen a spinster in a track suit?"

"Lord, no, Martin!"

"Then you've no idea what Lydia Pinkham looks like in her running clothes."

"I blush," said Valerie. "Do you think it's all right for me to stay?"

"You never can tell, she might get a yen."

"For runnin' wild?"

"No. Lydia Pinkham, God help me, doesn't like running anywhere. In fact, I thought of starting her in the fourth race so she'd be well under way before hers began, but the stewards objected."

"Kidding aside, am I to bet on her?"

"Lord, no. Let's talk of something nicer. Have you learned how to swim yet?"

She hadn't, but having it in mind to spite Tom I told her I'd forgotten what little I knew about it earlier in the year because I hadn't been able to keep my head above water. Then we talked of this and that and the hunting and gradually got around to point-to-point and the West Hills meeting and she said she'd heard a horse called Aunt Martha was expected to win it and that seemed to me like a good moment to suggest having another drink and repairing to the track since the second race would be starting by the time we arrived.

We wandered across the broad lawns and into the stands where I found to my astonishment that old Hale had blown Tom to a box in the front row—one of the ones Joe Widener had had small but active flowers put in front of in the interests of racing.

Of course the next box to ours *would* belong to old man Wright, who was probably the last bird in the world I wanted to see as I knew perfectly well I was sort of tight and rather liked the idea of his picturing me as Macy's original white-haired boy. *Sic transit gloria!*

The second race turned out to be a relatively uninteresting

steepchase highly touted as the "American Grand National" with one C. Smoot (coloured) remaining on board long enough to win for the blue and gold of the Clarks.

After the cheering had subsided I squinted one eye to the right and my worst fears were realized. Not only were Wright and Mrs. Wright in the box, but with them was the financial agent of the French Government (who always made me feel like a piker when I said I was broke), the attaché from Warsaw and my old friend Kelly.

I was wondering how friendly Wright would expect me to be with him under the circumstances when he suddenly caught sight of me crouching behind a large lady whose husband had this and that to do with the racing. He made signals which even I couldn't misinterpret. They consisted of a simple semaphore that read:

"If you haven't got it I have—want to see you after next race."

This was illustrated by a hip-to-mouth movement followed by a backward gesture of the thumb. For a moment I wished I'd not drink taken, for I was badly puzzled, having understood the first part of his message so well, when he began straddling an imaginary horse and going to the bat for a hard-fought finish. I decided it must be Esperanto, which I don't understand, but having gathered he wanted me to met him after the next race, yelled: "Where?"

His answer was lost in the murmur of some thousands of other people trying to convey the same meaning to some thousands of other people. I yelled "Where?" again, and he immediately started playing an imaginary stringed instrument. "Whereabouts?" I yelled still louder and he started shaking his hips till all the twenty-dollar directors' goldpieces he'd collected in his pockets rattled and Mrs. Wright turned to him and said coyly, for all her nine hundred pounds, "Now you stop that, H. Y. Just because you won on that last race is no reason to be hula hulaing in the grandstand."

Hula hula! I had it! He meant the place under the stands

where they have White Rock and such and where one of the waiters once brought me a highball ready mixed in a bottle by mistake.

Valerie, who had been watching this little byplay with rare interest, said, "Who's your athletic friend with all the wife?"

"Shh," I said. "Bank president."

"Can I come too? Sounds thirsty; looks like an oasis."

"Not on your life. This is a man's conference."

She said, "Oh, bring him back when he feels better and can keep still," and being very well brought up, she turned to talk to the man in front of her.

I followed Wright down to the designated place and he said, "Hello, Martin. How d'you happen to be here? Get a break?"

"Yes," I said, "I got a break." And then, after he'd poured us both a drink from one of the swellest quart flasks I've ever seen, I spilled the works to him. When I'd finished he didn't say anything for a second or two, just poured another drink for each of us, and then:

"Anything else?"

"No," I said, "not much else, except I'd gotten fond as hell of her, and have acquired a race-horse that isn't, and an exceedingly worthless pup."

"Dog, eh?"

"No, mutt."

"No kids, eh?"

"Ha, ha," I said. "I should be making a dumbness of me, as my old customers in Macy's would say when they looked at two-forty underwear."

"And now she's gone and you're back doing business at the old stand!"

"Yes, hot dogs, popcorn, assorted liquors and all. By the way, you've been nice to me—I think I ought to tell you something. I'll probably be going through bankruptcy in a week or so."

He looked like he had that day at lunch, only this time it was

the jockey board instead of the harbour he was staring at. "So she cleaned you."

I said: "Yes, she cleaned me."

"I thought you'd let her. I would have too—would a thousand help you out any?"

I gulped. "White as hell—what time is it?"

"Three forty-four."

I swallowed the rest of my drink. "I'll tell you—in just eight minutes." Then I rushed away toward the paddock where they were getting the horses ready for the Jockey Club race.

I found the trainer in no time at all. Like the old song about "Father's in the pig-sty," I knew him by his hat and I clutched his coat sleeve.

"Is there a chance on God's green earth for my horse to win?"

"Mr. Jones," he answered, "you know the mare can't possibly win. What's the use of talking like that?"

"Good! I never saw a trainer yet that was right!" And I watched them cinching her up. It was discouraging. I had in my life been mixed up with many race-horses, mostly jumpers of course, but I had never seen one so utterly disinterested in what was going on around her. Her head drooped, she shifted from one leg to another as though they both hurt and when the strapper went to pull on the girth she heaved a long sigh as much as to say, "Well, good God, if you haven't better sense than to make a fool of me I can't help making a fool of you."

Then "Boots and Saddles" blew and I saw them toss a mite of a jock into the saddle. I walked away because it made me feel sort of ill. I went up under the grandstand and back into the enclosure, then they came into the track on their way to the post and for some reason or other the mare had begun prancing, because she was thoroughbred, I suppose, and I saw my colours in the sunshine and I thought about the first time I'd worn them myself in the Maryland Hunt Cup, and I realized I was tight but I couldn't do anything about it, and there

were my colours going out on that lousy horse, and even she was trying to look like something, and I thought about Elinor and Betty and then I began to cry and I knew I was tight but I just didn't give a damn.

I watched them all the way to the start and then I couldn't stand it any more. I rushed in to the betting place and found Joe.

"What're the odds on Lydia Pinkham?"

"Twenty to . . . Hello, Mr. Jones, what do you want to bet on that dog for?"

I looked him as firmly in the eye as I could, but I had trouble because I saw four eyes and couldn't make out which pair to look into.

"What are the odds on Lydia Pink'm, Joe?"

"Aw, I'll give you thirty, Mr. Jones!"

I fished a card out of my pocket and scribbled on it. "\$1,000, to win—Lydia Pinkham, fourth race," and signing it, handed it in. Joe whistled, but nodded his head and I heard him mutter to his henchman: "Quick! Lay off with Morty and Eddy. Something might—happen."

"No, Joe," I said, "I don't think anything'll happen—it's just that I'm a goddamn sight more of a fool than I thought I was."

"Aw, hell," he came back, "something might happen so you'd get a break!" Joe almost sounded as if he hoped it would; funny! He didn't know what a hell of a time I was going to have paying him.

I didn't go up in the box to watch the race, but stood down near the rail and when they started I knew exactly how it would come out. They were all even at the first turn, then Lydia Pinkham began dropping back. I could tell from watching the fence that she was still moving, but it didn't seem possible because the others were going so fast. Then the third horse did something to itself and broke down and that left Lydia safe for "show" money if she could stand up that long without her sling. I doubted it.

As they came toward the last turn the race was close. It was a big race, ten thousand dollars added for the winner, which meant a stake for the boy that rode him and the two jocks were fighting like hell for the pole.

At the turn they were neck and neck and the boy on the outside, thinking he had enough room, pulled in, they bumped and the other lad swung out with his elbow, shoving him off. Then they came up the stretch stride for stride with the crowd on its feet roaring and pleading and so they flashed under the wire.

I looked back up the track and saw my horse, twenty lengths behind, tail up, nostrils dilated—finished. Suddenly it occurred to me that although she was worse than a joke it was really rather decent of her to keep on running when she must know as well as anyone else the utter futility of it. Then I saw her eye, fixed straight ahead, and I knew she just happened to be that kind of a horse. I turned away and started walking toward the stand feeling suddenly sort of sick.

I'd almost reached the box when I saw the yellow sign that meant "foul" go up opposite the judges' stand and thought how tough it would seem to the people who'd bet on the horse that was disqualified. I wondered if I dared touch Wright for another drink.

Then I heard some people back of me clapping, and, turning, saw Lydia Pinkham trotting back up the track. As she came nearer the clapping grew louder; I thought I must be very tight. Then Tom came and spun me around and said, "Look!" and I did and there was her number up on the board and he said: "Come on, you lousy bastard and lead your horse in. She's won the Jockey Club Gold Cup!" And I think I would have fainted if I hadn't remembered Joe probably would, and I followed Tom out on to the track and I caught hold of her bridle and we started for the paddock, and she could hardly walk she was so lame and I realized she'd won me God knows how much money and I looked at her and she



was trembling and then the trainer came up to me smiling all over and said:

"Fine, sir! Fine! We can patch her up and sell her for a big price now!"

And I turned to him and stopped weeping long enough to say, "Oh, you go to hell, Simmons, she's pensioned and you're not," and then we were surrounded by a lot of people I didn't know and then I saw Betty, who came pushing through the crowd and grabbed my hand for a second and said: "I'm so glad she won, Martin—father told me. I—I . . ." then she was gone and after we'd put the horse away I looked all over for Betty and couldn't find her anywhere, and I told Tom I thought it was a lousy world and he said:

"Honestly, Martin, you're the worst goddamned fool I've ever known, and I believe you've been in love all along!" And I wondered a little and believed maybe I had, but whether with Elinor or Betty I couldn't make out, so had a drink and decided it must be with Lydia Pinkham. It was a soothing thought!

*September 23rd:*

Woke up at noon to-day and, due to my activities of the night before, my mouth tasted like the inside of a motorman's glove, so I went to sleep for another hour.

Woke up again at two or thereabouts and found Tom sympathetic and weak. I told him we had two expeditions to carry out before dusk, so he summoned Jamison, who brought breakfast with an air of outraged decency and we walked down to the garage for the Mercedes. Then we drove to Forest Hills and I began paying people. I didn't mind a few urchins slipping into the conference but when I caught the butcher coming in twice I called the whole meeting off and told them to establish a Rotary Club or something for the stabilization of trade and we drove away.

Then to Queens Plaza where I went into the Brewster-Rolls place and bought back my old car. It was nice to be

driving it again and I rather congratulated myself on being a clever lad because I had had it stored almost a year and bought it back for two hundred less than I'd put it in to them for.

We started back for Westbury and I remembered I hadn't stopped at the post office in Forest Hills, so thither we hied en échelon, and there I found a letter from some totally unheard-of barrister who informed me I was about to receive a Sonora divorce.

"What," I asked Tom, "is Sonora?"

"It's one of those damn victrola places—Fiftieth and Fifth, I think."

That's the sort of a bird Tom is. Violently informed on every subject in the world except the one you happen to want to know about. I told him I thought he was a boob, so he said to ask a cop and we did with results that were exceedingly unsatisfactory.

I told Tom it was no trifling matter since sometimes these funny divorces resulted in all sorts of alimony and whatnot, and we'd better romp into town and put it up to the bozo that handled the estate that now belonged to the tradespeople of Forest Hills.

Tom saw the point and so we turned our two cars about and swung for the city, and Wall Street, where he made his offices.

Had we not stopped at Hennessey's for just one quick one on the way I tell you we would have made an impressive picture swinging down First Avenue in the Mercedes and the Rolls, cut-outs on, horns blowing and all in all presenting a sight to make any cop jump for joy.

After many windings in and out we found ourselves in front of Winkleman's office. We parked and went upstairs. He received me sort of grudgingly. So much so that I felt had I been anyone else he would have been in conference from then till I left, but father, during his lifetime, had frightened Winkleman so often by telling him he'd "ha'nt" him if this and that didn't happen, that he received me.

"Are you alone?" I asked, and he said "Yes."

"Swell," I said. "You and I will talk."

"I have nothing to talk to you about, Mr. Martin."

Funny; old Winkleman always felt he'd earned his executor's fee when he remembered to call me Mr. Martin. "You'd be surprised," I told him. "I'm getting divorced."

Winkleman had been, to say the least, well trained. "Where do you wish to get divorced, Mr. Martin?"

"I don't," I said, "but it's happening anyway."

Winkleman was startled for just a moment. "You mean your wife is divorcing you?"

"Good God, Winkleman, whose else wife would be? Let her get it, that's what you're here for, only don't let her get anything else."

Winkleman was of solid stock. He winced, then he recovered and seemed to be holding on his one-yard line. "Don't let her get anything else?" he murmured.

"No, I like my watch and my cigarette case and the other things are in hock anyway—that is, everything except the alimony."

"Ah, I see, and where are the proceedings apt to take place?"

I told him I had a hunch they were already taking place in Mexico.

"Yes, but where?"

"Sonora."

"Ow," he said. "That's a dirty place! I went there on my honeymoon, by mistake. Bought a ticket for a different spot altogether, but due to the language and one thing and another, there I was. I don't think Mrs. Winkleman cared much for it."

From having known Winkleman for years, I could easily understand Mrs. Winkleman not caring much for any place on her honeymoon if he happened to be there too, but didn't point this out because I was anxious to have his mind give its best to the divorce problem.

"Sonora," I said, "is one of those places."

"Yes," he said, "don't I know it, Mr. Martin?"

Disregarding his by-play, I went on. "It's one of those places where you write a letter saying Mrs. Jones is Mrs. Jones and I don't think I want her to be Mrs. Jones any longer, and they write back to you and say Mrs. Jones is not Mrs. Jones and you say yes, goddammit, she is, that's the trouble, and they say no she isn't and that means you're divorced."

I could see Winkleman was stumped. That's what comes of having one's father pick executors. I think it would be a far better stunt to let the heirs do it. I would have picked George Dewey, had it been left to me, because George, who studied law at Harvard, would have known all about Sonora and Yucatan and all those joints.

We talked for a considerable time after this and when I'd thoroughly explained the situation I don't think he understood it any better than he had in the beginning, but he swore by the graves of my ancestors that I should have the right sort of divorce and not be done in the eye, so we headed back to Westbury and I was more comfortable in mind than I had been in some time, though it did seem strange that Elinor should actually have done what she had.

*October 1st:*

Messing about Long Island diligently until last night when Tom and I were asked to a dinner at Pierre's that his aunt was giving for her *débutante* daughter. The daughter was very wet but Tom said we'd be taken to the theatre and there'd probably be fizz and he was sort of bored with the country anyway so we went.

Of course we started in his car which, due to a sudden attack of temperament just before we hit the bridge, brought us to Pierre's some half-hour after the hostess had hoped dinner would begin. They hadn't waited so we followed Charles into the long side room and after apologizing, sat down and began to eat as rapidly as possible to catch up, although this is some-

times a mistake, because if drink has been taken it is apt to bring nausea, which is a thing no hostess appreciates in her guests however welcome they may be at her table.

When I came up for air after the soup I found the others were only one dish ahead so began to look about. On my right was a young lady I'd seen once or twice the winter before, but had never cared much for because she was English and criticized everything in America and continued to live here anyway, which has always seemed to me just a little worse than talking with a French accent because you once got tight in the Ritz Bar in Paris with a lot of expatriates. I looked quickly the other way.

There was something vaguely familiar about the back of the neck of the girl on my left. Before she turned from the man she was talking to I decided it was a swell neck and had something I thought was quite bright all ready to say when she did turn and of course, it was Betty, so naturally it never came out; instead I was very gauche and said:

"I think you have a swell neck. I was just noticing it, and— and thank you for telling me you were glad my horse won last Saturday."

It was lucky I'd started off this way because of course she'd known I was coming all along from the place card and so undoubtedly would have had me at a terrible disadvantage if I hadn't thrown her off her balance. As it was, she laughed.

"I am glad she won. You looked as if it meant a great deal to you."

"It did. It meant a great deal to a lot of people."

"Were many betting on her? I didn't think they would, you know."

"Yes," I told her, "only most of them didn't know it."

"You don't make sense, Martin. Elucidate——"

So I told her as plainly and unromantically as possible of the battle of Long Island and how I'd reformed and gone bankrupt and then by the grace of heaven and Lydia Pinkham managed to get on my feet again.

She said, "It reads like a fairy story."

"Nice of you to put it that way," I interrupted.

She went on, "And you were the bewitched prince turned into a jackass."

"You flatter me, I didn't know you'd ever thought I was a prince, but I'm myself again now."

"I've noticed that."

"You mean . . . ?"

"Nothing," she answered. "As they said of Daniel Webster, it's jes sumpin' about de breath."

I said, "Damn!" and after that we got along much better, so much so in fact that by the time dessert came she was insulting me freely just the way she used to instead of with the polite formality she had evidently been storing up while Tom and I were crawling around under the hood of the Mercedes.

When we started for the theatre I kicked Tom and told him to see to it that his aunt put me within shouting distance of Betty, but he said he didn't dare and what did I want for a nickel anyhow? I didn't understand what he meant by this, but then it was so infrequently one understood what Tom meant by anything in the evening that I didn't bother my head about it much.

The show was pretty awful, so I looked at Betty most of the time and hoped she'd go out to smoke after the first act, but she didn't so I looked at her for another hour and wondered to myself that a man of my intelligence could ever have made such a damned fool of himself as I had, then at the end of the second act I saw she was going out.

I slid up the other aisle and met her by the door.

"Smoking?" I asked her.

"Do I look that warm, beautiful? I'm not."

"I think you make lousy jokes," I told her, "but in spite of that I wanted to ask you if you were contemplating anything in the nature of an expedition when this horrible play finally wears itself out?"

"Night club?"

"Something of the kind."

"I think they're poisonous. You can't possibly dance in them without practically having all your corns taken off."

"I don't want to dance."

"Why the yen to go out then? Haven't you any home?"

"No," I said, "I haven't any home except perhaps Louis'. We might go there!"

Then of course the curtain bell rang and she had to go back to her seat. As the footlights came on I could see her turn her head in my direction and I thought I saw her nod, but figured it was probably just the reflection.

So another hour passed and I thought about the last time we'd been to the theatre and how messy life in general was and when the final curtain came down I said good night to Tom's aunt and was waiting in the foyer for him thinking to sell him on the idea of going on a really royal bender, which wouldn't have been hard, but Tom didn't show up.

I waited there for quite a few minutes while people pushed me around, then I heard someone say:

"Good evening, Mr. Jones, sir."

Instinctively I put my hand in my pocket, thinking a tip would be in order shortly, since someone had called me sir, and turning around saw Macawber. "Miss Betty's in the car, sir. I think she wants to speak to you."

I followed him out under the theatre lights and up the street to where the Wright limousine was snooting the world in general at the kerb. He opened the door and Betty said, "Get in, stupid," and I did and to my astonishment Macawber hopped back of the wheel and drove off without waiting for Tom or anyone else. I wondered vaguely where we were going, but didn't say anything because I'd discovered during the past year that I made much more of a success of life when I let things go on naturally and didn't try to force them.

I sat there, watching the traffic fly past, sort of hesitating to speak for fear the car might blow up and I'd find myself back in Forest Hills fighting with the gas man. I guess I must have

looked odd, because Betty said: "Was it really so bad, Martin? I'm sorry I was mean to you to-night, but then you see I had to be."

"I can't believe it!" I said. "You and I really going to Louis' again."

She laughed. "You would say that. What's the matter, haven't you been there since this afternoon?"

I took her hand. I took it pretty firmly because I thought she might try and pull it away. "Betty, you know what I mean!"

"Of course I do, Martin. I think I've known all along, when you were in the store and living in Forest Hills and making the beds."

"I'm sorry I was such a bum—that night, Betty. I am a bum, but do you know I'm much happier being a bum with Tom and George and all of you than I was the other way?"

We didn't say anything then for a long time and I hardly noticed that we seemed to be taking an awfully long while to get to Louis' and then Betty said, "We're not going to Louis', Martin; do you mind?"

I turned around and saw to my amazement we were on the North Country road, just going down the Roslyn Hill by the clock tower.

Betty said, "I'm cold."

"We've got to go back, child. I've no right to take you way the hell out here at this time of night. I—I'm a questionable . . ."

"For a drunk stupid, you have the most amazing ideals you'd like to live up to."

"I wouldn't like to. I'd hate to. Where are we going?"

"Your favourite speak-easy. We're almost there now."

I suppose I was awfully dumb, but I couldn't get it at all till I saw we were swinging up the Hales' driveway. Then I thought I understood.

"Did Tom . . ."

"Yes," she said, "he asked me a week ago after the race and



I told him I'd let him know to-night, and I didn't intend to come but you got looking at me like a sheep there at dinner and then later at the theatre and—and you're such a *damned* fool, Martin, I . . .”

She was in my arms then and she was crying, saying something about, “So long away,” so when we stopped at the door and I'd helped her out I told her there were some roses there in a garden that had seemed to need her very much on a hot night last July when I'd dreamt I was a fox and someone had shot me, and she said she understood and I said I thought we'd better go look at them.

*November 1st:*

To the brokerage of Alton Williams and I told him to buy me a thousand shares of Corn Products at the market.

“Don't do it!” he said. “That stock might drop ten points at any time now.”

“Yes,” I answered, “it might, Alton, but it won't!”

“How in God's name do you know it won't?”

“Because I've got a date with a girl at the Municipal Building this afternoon.”

He gave me a keen look. “What's her name?”

I said, “Lydia Pinkham.”

“Strange name,” he said, and I realized that of course I'd said the wrong thing but there wasn't any use explaining it to Alton because he wouldn't understand anyway.

---

# ERIC HATCH

## As Humorist

Though Eric Hatch is sometimes compared to P. G. Wodehouse, Hatch's humor is really of a somewhat different quality. In the first place Hatch is as American as Wodehouse is British. His is the humor of the Long Island cocktail party, of the raised eyebrow, bright, detached, whimsical. It is partly a humor of incident: what happens in a Hatch story is in itself outlandish, ridiculous, incredible. This is not always true of Wodehouse.



Two qualities, however, are common to both writers—pathos and nonchalance. The hero of "Five Days" is pathetic, as Wodehouse's nit-wits are pathetic, indeed as all really funny people are pathetic. Hatch's people are also nonchalant, with the divine, absurd nonchalance that once apotheosized the Murad. In the works of Hatch, one steals a yacht or goes AWOL from an insane asylum with the same casualness with which in a Wodehouse story one engineers the abduction of a pig or opens a new nightclub.

Both writers have a certain feeling for *grandeur dechue*, for quality, for doing things well, even against odds. Thus we are told by a friend of Hatch's that "if he has a horse, it is a thoroughbred horse, and, if he has a car, it is a Rolls Royce; the horse may have three legs, and the Rolls is usually of ancient vintage, but the quality is there." *A propos*, Hatch informed his publishers not long ago that he had traded in his 21-year-old Rolls for "a bran' new one that's only 11 years old" and was driving it slowly to break it in.

---