

**EDWARD
JOSEPH
O'BRIEN**

THE BEST SHORT STORIES
OF 1917, AND THE
YEARBOOK OF THE
AMERICAN SHORT STORY

Edward O'Brien

**The Best Short Stories of
1917, and the Yearbook of
the American Short Story**

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The Best Short Stories of 1917, and the Yearbook of the American
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The Best Short Stories of 1917, and the Yearbook of the American Short Story

TO

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

BY WAY OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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I shall be grateful to my readers for corrections, and particularly for suggestions leading to the wider usefulness of this annual volume. In particular, I shall welcome the receipt, from authors, editors, and publishers, of stories published during 1918 which have qualities of distinction, and yet are not printed in periodicals falling under my regular notice. It is also my intention during 1918 to review all volumes of short stories published during that year in the United States. All communications and volumes submitted for review in "The Best Short Stories of 1918" maybe addressed to me at *South Yarmouth, Massachusetts*. For such assistance, I shall make due and grateful acknowledgment in next year's annual.

If I have been guilty of any omissions in these acknowledgments, it is quite unintentional, and I trust that I shall be absolved for my good intentions.

E. J. O.

INTRODUCTION

A year ago, in the introduction to "The Best Short Stories of 1916," I pointed out that the American short story cannot be reduced to a literary formula, because the art in which it finds its concrete embodiment is a growing art. The critic, when he approaches American literature, cannot regard it as he can regard any foreign literature. Setting aside the question of whether our cosmopolitan population, with its widely different kinds of racial heritage, is at an advantage or a disadvantage because of its conflicting traditions, we must accept the variety in substance and attempt to find in it a new kind of national unity, hitherto unknown in the history of the world. The message voiced in President Wilson's words on several occasions during the past year is a true reflection of the message implicit in American literature. Various in substance, it finds its unity in the new freedom of democracy, and English and French, German and Slav, Italian and Scandinavian bring to the common melting-pot ideals which are fused in a national unity of democratic utterance.

It is inevitable, therefore, that in this stage of our national literary development, our newly conscious speech lacks the sophisticated technique of older literatures. But, perhaps because of this very limitation, it is much more alert to the variety and life of the human substance with which it deals. It does not take the whole of life for granted and it often reveals the fresh naïveté of childhood in its discovery of life. When its sophistication is complete, it is the sophistication of English rather than of American literature, and is derivative rather than original, for the most part, in its criticism of life. I would specifically except, however, from this criticism the work of three writers, at least, whose sophistication is the embodiment of a new American technique. Katharine Fullerton Gerould, Wilbur Daniel Steele, and H. G. Dwight have each attained a distinction in our contemporary literature which places them at the head of their craft.

During the past year there has been much pessimistic criticism of the American short story, some of it by Americans, and some by Europeans who are now residing in our midst. To the European mind, trained in a tradition where technique in story-writing is paramount, it is natural that the American short story should seem to reveal grave deficiencies. I am by no means disposed to minimize the weakness of American craftsmanship, but I feel that at the present stage of our literary development, discouragement will prove a very easy and fatal thing. The typical point of view of the European critic, when justified, is adequately reflected in an article by Mary M. Colum, which was published in the *Dial* last spring: "Those of us who take an interest in literary history will remember how particular literary forms at times seize hold of a country: in Elizabethan England, it was the verse drama; in the eighteenth century, it was the essay; in Scandinavia of a generation ago, it was the drama again. At present America is in the grip of the short story—so thoroughly in its grip indeed that, in addition to all the important writers, nearly all the literate population who are not writing movie scenarios are writing or are about to write short stories. One reason for this is the general belief that this highly sophisticated and subtle art is a means for making money in spare time, and so one finds everybody, from the man who solicits insurance to the barber who sells hair-tonics, engaged in writing, or in taking courses in the writing, of short stories. Judging from what appears in the magazines, one imagines that they get their efforts accepted. There is no doubt that the butcher, the baker, and the candle-stick maker are easily capable of producing the current short stories with the aids now afforded."

Now this is the heart of the matter with which criticism has to deal. It is regrettable that the American magazine editor is not more mindful of his high calling, but the tremendous advertising development of the American magazine has bound American literature in the chains of commercialism, and before a permanent literary criticism of the American short story can be established, we must fight to break these bonds. I conceive it to be my essential function to begin at the bottom and record the first signs of grace, rather than to limit myself to the top and write

critically about work which will endure with or without criticism. If American critics would devote their attention for ten years to this spade work, they might not win so much honor, but we should find the atmosphere clearer at the end of that period for the true exercise of literary criticism.

Nevertheless I contend that there is much fine work being accomplished at present, which is buried in the ruck of the interminable commonplace. I regard it as my duty to chronicle this work, and thus render it accessible for others to discuss.

Mrs. Colum continues: "Apart from the interesting experiments in free verse or polyphonic prose, the short story in America is at a low ebb. Magazine editors will probably say the blame rests with their readers. This may be so, but do people really read the long, dreary stories of from five to nine thousand words which the average American magazine editor publishes? Why a vivid people like the American should be so dusty and dull in their short stories is a lasting puzzle to the European, who knows that America has produced a large proportion of the great short stories of the world."

I deny that the American short story is at a low ebb, and I offer the present volume as a revelation of the best that is now being done in this field. I agree with Mrs. Colum that the best stories are only to be found after a laborious dusty search, but this is the proof rather than the refutation of my position.

Despite the touch of paradox, Mrs. Colum makes two admirable suggestions to remedy this condition of affairs. "A few magazine editors could do a great deal to raise the level of the American short story. They could at once eradicate two of the things that cause a part of the evil—the wordiness and the commercial standardization of the story. By declining short stories over three thousand words long, and by refusing to pay more than a hundred dollars for any short story, they could create a new standard and raise both the prestige of the short story and of their magazines. They would then get the imaginative writers, and not the exploiters of a commercial article."

I am not sure that the average American editor wishes to welcome the imaginative writer, but assuming this to be true, I would modify Mrs. Colum's suggestions and propose that, except in an unusual instance, the short story should be limited to five thousand words, and that the compensation for it should not exceed three hundred dollars.

To repeat what I have said in previous volumes of this series, for the benefit of the reader as yet unacquainted with my standards and principles of selection, I shall point out that I have set myself the task of disengaging the essential human qualities in our contemporary fiction which, when chronicled conscientiously by our literary artists, may fairly be called a criticism of life. I am not at all interested in formulas, and organized criticism at its best would be nothing more than dead criticism, as all dogmatic interpretation of life is always dead. What has interested me, to the exclusion of other things, is the fresh living current which flows through the best of our work, and the psychological and imaginative reality which our writers have conferred upon it.

No substance is of importance in fiction, unless it is organic substance, that is to say, substance in which the pulse of life is beating. Inorganic fiction has been our curse in the past, and bids fair to remain so, unless we exercise much greater artistic discrimination than we display at present.

During the past year I have sought to select from the stories published in American magazines those which have rendered life imaginatively in organic substance and artistic form. As the most adequate means to this end, I have taken each short story by itself, and examined it impartially. I have done my best to surrender myself to the writer's point of view, and granting his choice of material and personal interpretation of its value, have sought to test it by the double standard of substance and form. Substance is something achieved by the artist in every act of creation, rather than something already present, and accordingly a fact or group of facts in a story only obtain substantial embodiment when the artist's power of compelling imaginative persuasion transforms them into a living truth. The first test of a short story, therefore, in any qualitative analysis is to report upon how vitally compelling the writer makes his selected facts or incidents. This test may be known as the test of substance.

But a second test is necessary if a story is to take high rank above other stories. The true artist will seek to shape this living substance into the most beautiful and satisfying form, by skilful selection

and arrangement of his material, and by the most direct and appealing presentation of it in portrayal and characterization.

The short stories which I have examined in this study, as in previous years, have fallen naturally into four groups. The first group consists of those stories which fail, in my opinion, to survive either the test of substance or the test of form. These stories are listed in the year-book without comment or a qualifying asterisk. The second group consists of those stories which may fairly claim that they survive either the test of substance or the test of form. Each of these stories may claim to possess either distinction of technique alone, or more frequently, I am glad to say, a persuasive sense of life in them to which a reader responds with some part of his own experience. Stories included in this group are indicated in the year-book index by a single asterisk prefixed to the title. The third group, which is composed of stories of still greater distinction, includes such narratives as may lay convincing claim to a second reading, because each of them has survived both tests, the test of substance and the test of form. Stories included in this group are indicated in the year-book index by two asterisks prefixed to the title.

Finally, I have recorded the names of a small group of stories which possess, I believe, an even finer distinction—the distinction of uniting genuine substance and artistic form in a closely woven pattern with such sincerity that these stories may fairly claim a position in our literature. If all of these stories by American authors were republished, they would not occupy more space than six average novels. My selection of them does not imply the critical belief that they are great stories. It is simply to be taken as meaning that I have found the equivalent of six volumes worthy of republication among all the stories published during 1917. These stories are indicated in the year-book index by three asterisks prefixed to the title, and are listed in the special "Rolls of Honor." In compiling these lists, I have permitted no personal preference or prejudice to influence my judgment consciously for or against a story. To the titles of certain stories, however, in the American "Roll of Honor," an asterisk is prefixed, and this asterisk, I must confess, reveals in some measure a personal preference. It is from this final short list that the stories reprinted in this volume have been selected.

It has been a point of honor with me not to republish an English story, nor a translation from a foreign author. I have also made it a rule not to include more than one story by an individual author in the volume. The general and particular results of my study will be found explained and carefully detailed in the supplementary part of the volume.

The Yearbook for 1917 contains three new features. The Roll of Honor of American Short Stories includes a short biographical sketch of each author; a selection from the volumes of short stories published during the past year is reviewed at some length; and, in response to numerous requests, a list of American magazines publishing short stories, with their editorial addresses, has been compiled.

Wilbur Daniel Steele and Katharine Fullerton Gerould are still at the head of their craft. But during the past year the ten published stories by Maxwell Struthers Burt and Charles Caldwell Dobie seem to promise a future in our literature of equal importance to the later work of these writers. Sherwood Anderson and Waldo Frank emerge as writers with a great deal of importance to say, although they have not yet fully mastered the art of saying it. The three new short story writers who show most promise are Gertrude Nafe and Thomas Beer, whose first stories appeared in the *Century Magazine* during 1917, and Elizabeth Stead Taber, whose story, "The Scar," when it appeared in the *Seven Arts*, attracted much favorable comment. Edwina Stanton Babcock and Lee Foster Hartman have both published memorable stories, and "The Interval," which was Vincent O'Sullivan's sole contribution to an American periodical during 1917, compels us to wonder why an artist, for whom men of such widely different temperaments as Lionel Johnson, Remy de Gourmont, and Edward Garnett had high critical esteem, finds the American public so indifferent to his art.

Addison Lewis has published during the past year a series of stories in *Reedy's Mirror* which have more of O. Henry's magic than the thousand writers who have endeavored to imitate him to

the everlasting injury of American literature. Frederick Stuart Greene, in "The Bunker Mouse" and "Molly McGuire, Fourteen," shows marked literary development, and reinforces my belief that in him we have an important new story-teller. I suppose the best war story of the year is "The Flying Teuton," by Alice Brown, soon to be reprinted in book form.

I do not know whether it is an effect of the war or not, but during 1917, even more than during 1916, American magazines have been almost absolutely devoid of humor. Save for Irvin S. Cobb, on whom the mantle of Mark Twain has surely fallen, and for Seumas O'Brien, whom Mr. Dooley must envy, I have found American fiction to be sufficiently solemn and imperturbable.

I need not emphasize again the fine art of Fannie Hurst. Two years ago Mr. Howells stated more truly than I can the significance of her work. Comparing her with two other contemporaries, he wrote: "Miss Fannie Hurst shows the same artistic quality, the same instinct for reality, the same confident recognition of the superficial cheapness and commonness of the stuff she handles; but in her stories she also attests the right to be named with them for the gift of penetrating to the heart of life. No one with the love of the grotesque which is the American portion of the human tastes or passions, can fail of his joy in the play of the obvious traits and motives of her Hebrew comedy, but he will fail of something precious if he does not sound the depths of true and beautiful feeling which underlies the comedy."

A similar distinction marks Edna Ferber's story entitled "The Gay Old Dog."

Of the English short story writers who have published during the past year in American periodicals, Mr. Galsworthy has presented the most evenly distinguished work. Hardly second to his best are the six stories by J. D. Beresford and D. H. Lawrence, both well known realists of the younger generation. Stacy Aumonier has continued the promise of "The Friends" with three new stories written in the same key. Although the vein of his talent is a narrow one, it reveals pure gold. Good Housekeeping has published three war stories by an Englishwoman, I. A. R. Wylie, which I should have coveted for this book had they been by an American author. But perhaps the best English short story of the year in an American magazine was "The Coming of the Terror," by Arthur Machen, since republished in book form.

Elsewhere I have discussed at some length the more important volumes of short stories published during the year. "A Munster Twilight," by Daniel Corkery is alone sufficient to mark a notable literary year. And "The Echo of Voices," by Richard Curle is hardly second to it. Yet the year has seen the publication of at least three other books by English authors who are new to the reading public. Thomas Burke, Caradoc Evans, and Arthur Machen have added permanent contributions to English literature.

In "A Handbook on Story Writing," Dr. Blanche Colton Williams has written the first definitive textbook on the subject. Its many predecessors have either been content to deal with narrow branches in the same field, or have exploited quite frankly and shamelessly the commercial possibilities of story writing as a cheap trade. Dr. Williams's book will not be in all likelihood superseded for many years to come, and the effects of her work are already to be seen in the short stories of many established writers.

In the death of Edward Thomas, England has lost a rare artist who, in his particular field, was only rivalled by Richard Jefferies.

During the past year the Seven Arts and the Masses have ceased publication. The Craftsman, which ceased publication a year ago, has been succeeded by the Touchstone, which is already beginning to print many interesting stories; and to the list of magazines which publish short stories must now be welcomed the Bookman.

As it has been my happiness in past years to associate this annual with the names of Benjamin Rosenblatt and Richard Matthews Hallet, whose stories, "Zelig" and "Making Port," seemed to me respectively the best short stories of 1915 and 1916, so it is my pleasure and honor this year to dedicate the best that I have found in the American magazines as the fruit of my labors to Wilbur Daniel

Steele, who has contributed to American literature, preëminently in "Ching, Ching, Chinaman," and almost as finely in "White Hands" and "The Woman At Seven Brothers," three stories which take their place for finality, to the best of my belief, in the great English line.

Edward J. O'Brien.

South Yarmouth, Massachusetts,
December 23, 1917.

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1917

Note. The twenty stories which follow are arranged in the alphabetical order of their authors' names. This arrangement does not imply any precedence in merit of particular stories.

THE EXCURSION ¹

By EDWINA STANTON BABCOCK

From *The Pictorial Review*

Mrs. Tuttle arrived breathless, bearing a large gilt parrot-cage. She swept up the gangway of the *Fall of Rome* and was enthusiastically received. There were, however, concealed titterings and suppressed whispers. "My sakes! She's went and brought that bird."

"I won't believe it till I see it."

"There he sets in his gold coop."

Mrs. Turtle brought Romeo to the excursion with the same assurance that a woman of another stamp brings her Pekingese dog to a restaurant table. While the *Fall of Rome* sounded a warning whistle, and hawsers were loosed she adjusted her veil and took cognizance of fellow passengers.

In spite of wealth and "owning her own automobile," Mrs. Turtle's fetish was democratic popularity. She greeted one after another.

"How do, Mis' Bridge, and Mister, too! Who's keeping store while you're away?"

"Carrie Turpin! You here? Where's Si? Couldn't come? Now that's too bad!" After a long stare, "You're some fleshier, ain't you, Carrie?"

A large woman in a tan-colored linen duster came slowly down the deck, a camp-stool in either hand. Her portly advance was intercepted by Mrs. Tuttle.

"Mis' Tinneray! Same as ever!"

Mrs. Tinneray dropped the camp-stools and adjusted her smoked glasses; she gave a start and the two ladies embraced.

Mrs. Tuttle said that "it beat all," and Mrs. Tinneray said "she never!"

Mrs. Tuttle, emerged from the embrace, re-adjusting her hat with many-ringed fingers, inquiring, "How's the folks?"

Up lumbered Mr. Tinneray, a large man with a chuckle and pale eyes, who was introduced by the well-known formula, "Mis' Tuttle, Mr. Tinneray, Mr. Tinneray, Mis' Tuttle."

The Tinnerays said, "So you brought the bird along, hey?" Then, without warning, all conversation ceased. The *Fall of Rome*, steaming slowly away from the pier, whistled a sodden whistle, the flags flapped, every one realized that the excursion had really begun.

This excursion was one of the frank displays of human hopes, yearnings, and vanities, that sometimes take place on steamboats. Feathers had a hectic brilliancy that proved secret, dumb longings. Pendants known as "lavaleers" hung from necks otherwise innocent of the costly fopperies of Versailles. Old ladies clad in princess dresses with yachting caps worn rakishly on their grey hair, vied with other old ladies in automobile bonnets, who, with opera glasses, searched out the meaning of every passing buoy. Young girls carrying "mesh-bags," that subtle connotation of the feminine character, extracted tooth-picks from them or searched for bits of chewing gum among their over scented treasures.

As it was an excursion, the *Fall of Rome* carried a band and booths laden with many delicious superfluties such as pop-corn and the misleading compound known as "salt-water taffy." There were, besides, the blue and red pennants that always go on excursions, and the yellow and pink fly-flappers

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that always come home from them; also there were stacks of whistle-whips and slender canes with ivory heads with little holes pierced through. These canes were bought only by cynical young men whose new straw hats were fastened to their persons by thin black strings. Each young man, after purchasing an ivory-headed cane retired to privacy to squint through it undisturbed. Emerging from this privacy the young man would then confer with other young men. What these joyless young men saw when they squinted they never revealed. But among their elders they spread the strong impression that it was the Capital at Washington or Bunker Hill Monument.

Besides bottled soda and all soft drinks the *Fall of Rome* carried other stimuli in the shape of comic gentlemen—such beings, as, more or less depressed in their own proper environment, on excursions suddenly see themselves in their true light, irresistibly facetious. These funny gentlemen, mostly husbands, seated themselves near to large groups of indulgent women and kept up an exquisite banter directed at each other's personal defects, or upon the idiosyncrasies of any bachelor or spinster near. These funny gentlemen kept alluding to the excursion as the "Exertion." If the boat rolled a little they said, "Now, Mother, don't rock the boat."

"Here, girls, sit up close, we'll all go down together."

"Hold on to yer beau, Minnie. He'll fall overboard and where'll you git another?"

The peals of laughter at these sallies were unfailing. The crunch of peanuts was unfailing. The band, with a sort of plethoric indulgence, played slow waltzes in which the bass instruments frequently misapplied notes, but to the allure of which came youthful dancers lovely in proud awkward poses.

Mrs. Tuttle meanwhile was the social center, demonstrating that mysterious psychic force known as being the "life of the party." She advanced upon a tall sallow woman in mourning, challenging, "Now Mis' Mealer, why don't you just set and take a little comfort, it won't cost you nothing? Ain't that your girl over there by the coffee fountain? I should ha' known her by the reesemblance to you; she's rill refined lookin'."

Mrs. Mealer, a tall, sallow widow with carefully maintained mourning visage, admitted that this was so. Refinement, she averred, was in the family, but she hinted at some obscure ailment which, while it made Emma refined, kept her "mizzable."

"I brought her along," sighed Mrs. Mealer, "tain't as if neither of us could take much pleasure into it, both of us being so deep in black fer her Popper, but the styles is bound to do her good. Emma is such a great hand for style."

"Yuess?" replied Mrs. Tuttle blandly. This lady in blue was not nearly so interested in Emma as in keeping a circle of admirers hanging around her cerulean presence, but even slightly encouraged, Mrs. Mealer warmed to her topic.

"Style?" she repeated impressively, "style? Seems like Emma couldn't never have enough of it. Where she got it I don't know. I wasn't never much for dress, and give her Popper coat and pants, twuz all *he* wanted. But Emma—ef you want to make her happy tie a bow onto suthin'."

Mrs. Tuttle nodded with ostentatious understanding. Rising, she seized Romeo's cage and placed it more conspicuously near her. She was critically watched by the older women. They viewed the thing with mingled feelings, one or two going so far as to murmur darkly, "Her and her parrot!"

Still, the lady's elegance and the known fact that she owned and operated her own automobile cast a spell over most of her observers, and many faces, as Mrs. Tuttle proceeded to draw out her pet, were screwed into watchful and ingratiating benevolence.

Romeo, a blasé bird with the air of having bitter memories, affected for a long time not to hear his mistress's blandishments. After looking contemptuously into his seed-cup, he crept slowly around the sides of his cage, fixing a cynical eye upon all observers.

"How goes it, Romeo?" appealed Mrs. Tuttle. Making sounds supposed to be appreciated by birds, the lady put her feathered head down, suggesting, "Ah there, Romeo?"

"Rubberneck," returned Romeo sullenly. To show general scorn, the bird revolved on one claw round and round his swing; he looked dangerous, repeating, "Rubberneck."

At this an interested group gathered around Mrs. Tuttle, who, affable and indulgent, attempted by coaxings and flirtings of a fat bediamonded finger to show Romeo off, but the pampered bird saw further opportunity to offend.

"Rubberneck," screamed Romeo again. He ruffled up his neck feathers, repeating "Rubberneck, I'm cold as the deuce; what's the matter with Hannah; let 'em all go to grass."

Several of the youths with ivory-headed canes now forsook their contemplations to draw near, grinning, to the parrot-cage.

Stimulated by these youths, Romeo reeled off more ribald remarks, things that created a sudden chill among the passengers on the *Fall of Rome*. Mrs. Tinneray, looked upon as a leader, called up a shocked face and walked away; Mrs. Mealer after a faint "Excuse *me*," also abandoned the parrot-cage; and Mrs. Bean, a small stout woman with a brown false front, followed the large lady with blue spectacles and the tan linen duster. On some mysterious pretext of washing their hands, these two left the upper deck and sought the calm of the white and gold passenger saloon. Here they trod as in the very sanctities of luxury.

"These carpets is nice, ain't they?" remarked Mrs. Bean.

Then alluding to the scene they had just left: "Ain't it comical how she idolizes that there bird?"

Mrs. Tinneray sniffed. "And what she spends on him! 'Nitals on his seed-cup—and some says the cage itself is true gold."

Mrs. Bean, preparing to wash her hands, removed her black skirt and pinned a towel around her waist. "This here liquid soap is nice"—turning the faucets gingerly—"and don't the boat set good onto the water?" Then returning to the rich topic of Mrs. Tuttle and her pampered bird, "Where's she get all her money for her ottermobile and her gold cage?"

Mrs. Tinneray at an adjacent basin raised her head sharply, "You ain't heard about the Tuttle money? You don't know how Mabel Hutch that was, was hair to everything?"

Mrs. Bean confessed that she had not heard, but she made it evident that she thirsted for information. So the two ladies, exchanging remarks about sunburn and freckles, finished their hand-washing and proceeded to the dark-green plush seats of the saloon, where with appropriate looks of horror and incredulity Mrs. Bean listened to the story of the hairs to the Hutches' money.

"Mabel was the favorite; her Pa set great store by her. There was another sister—consumpted—she should have been a hair, but she died. Then the youngest one, Hetty, she married my second cousin Hen Cronney—well it seemed like they hadn't nothing but bad luck and her Pa and Mabel sort of took against Hetty."

Mrs. Bean, herself chewing calculatingly, handed Mrs. Tinneray a bit of sugared calamus-root.

"Is your cousin Hen dark-complexioned like your folks?" she asked scientifically.

Mrs. Tinneray, narrowing both eyes, considered. "More auburn-inclined, I should say—he ain't rill smart, Hen ain't, he gets took with spells now and then, but I never held *that* against him."

"Uh-huh!" agreed Mrs. Bean sympathetically.

"Well, then, Mabel Hutch and her Popper took against poor little Hetty. Old man Hutch he died and left everything to Mabel, and she never goes near her own sister!"

Mrs. Bean raised gray-cotton gloved hands signifying horror.

"St—st—st—!" she deplored. She searched in her reticule for more calamus-root. "He didn't leave her *nothing*?"

"No, ma'am! This one!" With a jerk of the head, Mrs. Tinneray indicated a dashing blue feather seen through a distant saloon window. "This one's got it all; hair to everything."

"And what did she do—married a traveling salesman and built a tony brick house. They never had no children, but when he was killed into a railway accident she trimmed up that parrot's cage with crape—and now,"—Mrs. Tinneray with increasing solemnity chewed her calamus-root—"now she's been and bought one of them ottermobiles and runs it herself like you'd run your sewin'-machine, just as *shameless*—"

Both of the ladies glared condemnation at the distant blue feather.

Mrs. Tinneray continued, "Hetty Cronney's worth a dozen of her. When I think of that there bird goin' on this excursion and Hetty Cronney stayin' home because she's too poor, I get *nesty*, Mrs. Bean, yes, I do!"

"Don't your cousin Hetty live over to Chadwick's Harbor," inquired Mrs. Bean, "and don't this boat-ride stop there to take on more folks?"

Mrs. Tinneray, acknowledging that these things were so, uncorked a small bottle of cologne and poured a little of it on a handkerchief embroidered in black forget-me-nots. She handed the bottle to Mrs. Bean who took three polite sniffs and closed her eyes. The two ladies sat silent for a moment. They experienced a detachment of luxurious abandon filled with the poetry of the steamboat saloon. Psychically they were affected as by ecclesiasticism. The perfume of the cologne and the throb of the engines swept them with a sense of esthetic reverie, the thrill of travel, and the atmosphere of elegance. Moreover, the story of the Hutch money and the Hutch hairs had in some undefined way affiliated the two. At last by tacit consent they rose, went out on deck and, holding their reticules tight, walked majestically up and down. When they passed Mrs. Turtle's blue feathers and the gold parrot-cage they smiled meaningly and looked at each other.

As the *Fall of Rome* approached Chadwick's Landing more intimate groups formed. The air was mild, the sun warm and inviting, and the water an obvious and understandable blue. Some serious-minded excursionists sat well forward on their camp-stools discussing deep topics over half-skinned bananas.

"Give me the Vote," a lady in a purple raincoat was saying, "Give me the Vote and I undertake to close up every rum-hole in God's World."

A mild-mannered youth with no chin, upon hearing this, edged away. He went to the stern, looking down for a long time upon the white path of foam left in the wake of the *Fall of Rome* and taking a harmonica from his waistcoat pocket began to play, "Darling, I Am Growing Old." This tune, played with emotional throbbings managed by spasmodic movements of the hands over the sides of the mouth, seemed to convey anything but age to Miss Mealer, the girl who was so refined. She also sat alone in the stern, also staring down at the white water. As the wailings of the harmonica ceased, she put up a thin hand and furtively controlled some waving strands of hair. Suddenly with scarlet face the mild-mannered youth moved up his camp-stool to her side.

"They're talkin' about closing up the rum-holes." He indicated the group dominated by the lady in the purple raincoat. "They don't know what they're talking about. Some rum-holes is real refined and tasty, some of them have got gramophones you can hear for nothin'."

"Is that so?" responded the refined Miss Mealer. She smoothed her gloves. She opened her "mesh" bag and took out an intensely perfumed handkerchief. The mild-mannered youth put his harmonica in his pocket and warmed to the topic.

"Many's the time I've set into a saloon listening to that Lady that sings high up—higher than any piano can go. I've set and listened till I didn't know where I was settin'—of course I had to buy a drink, you understand, or I couldn't 'a' set."

"And they call that *vice*," remarked Miss Mealer with languid criticism.

The mild-mannered youth looked at her gratefully. The light of reason and philosophy seemed to him to shine in her eyes.

"You've got a piano to your house," he said boldly, "can you—ahem—play classic pieces, can you play—ahem—'Asleep on the Deep'?"

In another group where substantial sandwiches were being eaten, the main theme was religion and psychic phenomena with a strong leaning toward death-bed experiences.

"And then, my sister's mother-in-law, she set up, and she says, 'Where am I?' she says, like she was in a store or somethin', and she told how she seen all white before her eyes and all like gentlemen in high silk hats walkin' around."

There were sighs of comprehension, gasps of dolorous interest.

"The same with my Christopher!"

"Just like my aunt's step-sister afore she went!"

Mrs. Tuttle did not favor the grave character of these symposia.

With the assured manner peculiar to her, she swept into such circles bearing a round box of candy, upon which was tied a large bow of satin ribbon of a convivial shade of heliotrope. Opening this box she handed it about, commanding, "Help yourself."

At first it was considered refined to refuse. One or two excursionists, awed by the superfluity of heliotrope ribbon, said feebly, "Don't rob yourself."

But Mrs. Tuttle met this restraint with practised raillery. "What you all afraid of? It ain't poisoned! I got more where this come from." She turned to the younger people. "Come one, come all! It's French-mixed."

Meanwhile Mrs. Bean and Mrs. Tinneray, still aloof and enigmatic, paced the deck. Mrs. Tuttle, blue feathers streaming, teetered on her high heels in their direction. Again she proffered the box. One of the cynical youths with the ivory-headed canes was following her, demanding that the parrot be fed a caramel. Once more the sky-blue figure bent over the ornate cage; then little Mrs. Bean looked at Mrs. Tinneray with a gesture of utter repudiation.

"Ain't she *terrible*?"

As the steamboat approached the wharf and the dwarf pines and yellow sand-banks of Chadwick's Landing, a whispered consultation between these two ladies resulted in one desperate attempt to probe the heart of Mabel Hutch that was. Drawing camp-stools up near the vicinity of the parrot's cage, they began with what might to a suspicious nature have seemed rather pointed speculation, to wonder who might or might not be at the wharf when the *Fall of Rome* got in.

Once more the bottle of cologne was produced and handkerchiefs genteelly dampened. Mrs. Bean, taking off her green glasses, polished them and held them up to the light, explaining, "This here sea air makes 'em all of a muck."

Suddenly she leaned over to Mrs. Tuttle with an air of sympathetic interest.

"I suppose—er—your sister Hetty'll be comin' on board when we get to Chadwick's Landing—her and her husband?"

Mrs. Tuttle fidgeted. She covered Romeo's cage with a curious arrangement like an altar-cloth on which gay embroidered parrakeets of all colors were supposed to give Romeo, when lonely, a feeling of congenial companionship.

Mrs. Bean, thus evaded, screwed up her eyes tight, then opened them wide at Mrs. Tinneray, who sat rigid, her gaze riveted upon far-off horizons, humming between long sighs a favorite hymn. Finally, however, the last-named lady leaned past Mrs. Bean and touched Mrs. Turtle's silken knee, volunteering,

"Your sister Hetty likes the water, I know. You remember them days, Mis' Tuttle, when we all went bathin' together down to old Chadwick's Harbor, afore they built the new wharf?"

Mrs. Tinneray continued reminiscently.

"You remember them old dresses we wore—no classy bathin'-suits then—but my—the mornings used to smell good! That path to the shore was all wild roses and we used to find blueberries in them woods. Us girls was always teasin' Hetty, her bathin'-dress was white muslin and when it was wet it stuck to her all over, she showed through—my, how we'd laugh, but yet for all," concluded Mrs. Tinneray sentimentally, "she looked lovely—just like a little wet angel."

Mrs. Tuttle carefully smoothed her blue mitts, observing nervously, "Funny how Mis' Tinneray could remember so far back."

"Is Hetty your sister by rights," suavely inquired Mrs. Bean, "or ony by your Pa's second marriage, as it were?"

The owner of the overestimated parrot roused herself.

"By rights," she admitted indifferently, "I don't see much of her—she married beneath her."

The tip of Mrs. Tinneray's nose, either from cologne inhalings or sunburn, grew suddenly scarlet. However she still regarded the far-off horizons and repeated the last stanza of her hymn, which stanza, sung with much quavering and sighing was a statement to the effect that Mrs. Tinneray would "cling to the old rugged cross." Suddenly, however, she remarked to the surrounding Summer air,

"Hen Cronney is my second cousin on the mother's side. Some thought he was pretty smart until troubles come and his wife was done out of her rights."

The shaft, carefully aimed, went straight into Mrs. Turtle's blue bosom and stuck there. Her eyes, not overintelligent, turned once in her complacent face, then with an air of grandiose detachment, she occupied herself with the ends of her sky-blue automobile veil.

"I'll have to fix this different," she remarked unconcernedly, "or else my waves'll come out. Well, I presume we'll soon be there. I better go down-stairs and primp up some." The high heels clattered away. Mrs. Bean fixed a long look of horror on Mrs. Tinneray, who silently turned her eyes up to heaven!

As the *Fall of Rome* churned its way up to the sunny wharf of Chadwick's Landing, the groups already on the excursion bristled with excitement. Children were prepared to meet indulgent grandparents, lovers their sweethearts, and married couples old school friends they had not seen for years. From time to time these admonished their offspring.

"Hypatia Smith, you're draggin' your pink sash, leave Mommer fix it. There now, don't you dare to set down so Grammer can see you lookin' good."

"Lionel Jones, you throw that old pop-corn overboard. Do you want to eat it after you've had it on the floor?"

"Does your stomach hurt you, dear? Well, here don't cry Mommer'll give you another cruller."

With much shouting of jocular advice from the male passengers the *Fall of Rome* was warped into Chadwick's Landing and the waiting groups came aboard. As they streamed on, bearing bundles and boxes and all the impedimenta of excursions, those already on board congregated on the after-deck to distinguish familiar faces. A few persons had come down to the landing merely to look upon the embarkation.

These, not going themselves on the excursion, maintained an air of benevolent superiority that could not conceal vivid curiosity. Among them, eagerly scanning the faces on deck was a very small thin woman clad in a gingham dress, on her head a battered straw hat of accentuated by-gone mode, and an empty provision-basket swinging on her arm. Mrs. Tinneray peering down on her through smoked glasses, suddenly started violently. "My sakes," she ejaculated, "my sakes," then as the dramatic significance of the thing gripped her, "My—my—my, ain't that *terrible*?"

Solemnly, with prunella portentousness, Mrs. Tinneray stole back of the other passengers leaning over the rail up to Mrs. Bean, who turned to her animatedly, exclaiming,

"They've got a new schoolhouse. I can just see the cupola—there's some changes since I was here. They tell me there's a flag sidewalk in front of the Methodist church and that young Baxter the express agent has growed a mustache, and's got married."

Mrs. Tinneray did not answer. She laid a compelling hand on Mrs. Bean's shoulder and turned her so that she looked straight at the small group of home-stayers down on the wharf. She pointed a sepulchral finger,

"That there, in the brown with the basket, is Hetty Cronney, own sister to Mis' Josiah Tuttle."

Mrs. Bean clutched her reticule and leaned over the rail, gasping with interest.

"Ye don't say—that's her? My! My! My!"

In solemn silence the two regarded the little brown woman so unconscious of their gaze. By the piteous wizened face screwed up in the sunlight, by the faded hair, nut-cracker jaws, and hollow eyes they utterly condemned Mrs. Tuttle, who, blue feathers floating, was also absorbed in watching the stream of embarking excursionists.

Mrs. Tinneray, after a whispered consultation with Mrs. Bean went up and nudged her; without ceremony she pointed,

"Your sister's down there on the wharf," she announced flatly, "come on over where we are and you can see her."

Frivolous Mrs. Tuttle turned and encountered a pair of eyes steely in their determination. Re-adjusting the gold cage more comfortably on its camp-stool and murmuring a blessing on the hooked-beak occupant, the azure lady tripped off in the wake of her flat-heeled friend.

Meanwhile Mr. Tinneray, standing well aft, was calling cheerfully down to the little figure on the wharf.

"Next Summer you must git your nerve up and come along. Excursions is all the rage nowadays. My wife's took in four a'ready."

But little Mrs. Cronney did not answer. Shading her eyes from the sun glare, she was establishing recognizance with her cerulean relative who, waving a careless blue-mitted hand, called down in girlish greeting,

"Heigho, Hetty, how's Cronney? Why ain't you to the excursion?"

The little woman on the wharf was seen to wince slightly. She shifted her brown basket to the other arm, ignoring the second question.

"Oh, Cronney's good—ony he's low-spirited—seems as tho he couldn't get no work."

"Same old crooked stick, hey?" Mrs. Tuttle called down facetiously.

Mrs. Bean and Mrs. Tinneray stole horrified glances at each other. One planted a cotton-gloved hand over an opening mouth. But little Mrs. Cronney, standing alone on the pier was equal to the occasion. She shook out a small and spotless handkerchief, blowing her nose with elegant deliberation before she replied,

"Well—I don't know as he needs to work *all* the time; Cronney is *peculiar*, you know, he's one of them that is high-toned and nifty about money—he ain't like *some*, clutching onto every penny!"

By degrees, other excursionists, leaning over the railing, began to catch at something spicy in the situation of these two sisters brought face to face. At Mrs. Cronney's sally, one of the funny men guffawed his approval. Groups of excursionists explained to each other that that lady down there, her on the wharf, in the brown, was own sister to Mrs. Josiah Tuttle!

The whistle of the *Fall of Rome* now sounded for all aboard. It was a dramatic moment, the possibilities of which suddenly gripped Mrs. Tinneray. She clasped her hands in effortless agony. This lady, as she afterward related to Mrs. Bean, felt mean! She could see in her mind's eye, she said, how it all looked to Hetty Cronney, the *Fall of Rome* with its opulent leisurely class of excursionists steaming away from her lonely little figure on the wharf; while Mabel Tuttle, selfish devourer of the Hutches' substance and hair to everything, would still be handing aroun' her boxes of French-mixed and talking baby talk to that there bird!

At the moment, Mrs. Tinneray's mind, dwelling upon the golden cage and its over-estimated occupant, became a mere boiling of savage desires. Suddenly the line of grim resolution hardened on her face. This look, one that the Tinneray children invariably connected with the switch hanging behind the kitchen door, Mr. Tinneray also knew well. Seeing it now, he hastened to his wife.

"What's the matter, Mother, seasick? Here I'll git you a lemon."

Mrs. Tinneray, jaw set, eyes rolling, was able to intimate that she needed no lemon, but she drew her husband mysteriously aside. She fixed him with a foreboding glare, she said it was a wonder the Lord didn't sink the boat! Then she rapidly sketched the tragedy—Mrs. Tuttle serene and pampered on the deck, and Hetty Cronney desolate on the wharf! She pronounced verdict.

"It's *terrible*—that's what it is!"

Mr. Tinneray with great sagacity said he'd like to show Mabel Tuttle her place—then he nudged his wife and chuckled admiringly,

"But yet for all, Hetty's got her tongue in her head yet—say, ain't she the little stinger?"

Sotto voce Mr. Tinneray related to his spouse how Mabel Tuttle was bragging about her brick house and her shower-bath and her automobile and her hired girl, and how she'd druv herself and that there bird down to Boston and back.

"Hetty, she just stands there, just as easy, and hollers back that Cronney has bought a gramophone and how they sets by it day and night listening, and how it's son and daughter to 'em. Then she calls up to Mabel Tuttle, 'I should think you'd be afraid of meddlin' with them ottermobiles, *your* time of life.'"

Mr. Tinneray choked over his own rendition of this audacity, but his wife sniffed hopelessly.

"*They* ain't got no gramophone—*her*, with that face and hat?—Cronney don't make nothing; they two could *live* on what that Blue Silk Quilt feeds that stinkin' parrot."

But Mr. Tinneray chuckled again, he seemed to be possessed with the humor of some delightful secret. Looking carefully around him and seeing every one absorbed in other things he leaned closer to his wife.

"She's liable to lose that bird," he whispered. "Them young fellers with the canes—they're full of their devilment—well, they wanted I shouldn't say nothing and I ain't sayin' nothing—only—"

Fat Mr. Tinneray, pale eyes rolling in merriment, pointed to the camp-stool where once the parrot's cage had rested and where now no parrot-cage was to be seen.

"As fur as I can see," he nudged his wife again, "that bird's liable to get left ashore."

For a moment Mrs. Tinneray received this news stolidly, then a look of comprehension flashed over her face. "What you talkin' about, Henry?" she demanded. "Say, ain't you never got grown up? Where's Manda Bean?"

Having located Mrs. Bean, the two ladies indulged in a rapid whispered conversation. Upon certain revelations made by Mrs. Bean, Mrs. Tinneray turned and laid commands upon her husband.

"Look here," she said, "that what you told me is true—them young fellers—" she fixed Mr. Tinneray with blue-glassed significant eyes, adding *sotto voce*, "*You keep Mabel Tuttle busy.*"

Fat Mr. Tinneray, chuckling anew, withdrew to the after-rail where the azure lady still stood, chained as it were in a sort of stupor induced by the incisive thrusts of the forlorn little woman on the wharf. He joined in the conversation.

"So yer got a gramophone, hey," he called down kindly—"Say, that's nice, ain't it?—that's company fer you and Cronney." He appealed to Mrs. Tuttle in her supposed part of interested relative. "Keeps 'em from gettin' lonesome and all," he explained.

That lady looking a pointed unbelief, could not, with the other excursionists watching, but follow his lead.

"Why—er—ye-ess, that's rill nice," she agreed, with all the patronage of the wealthy relative.

Little Mrs. Cronney's eyes glittered. The steamboat hands had begun lifting the hawsers from the wharf piles and her time was short. She was not going to be pitied by the opulent persons on the excursion. Getting as it were into her stride, she took a bolder line of imagery.

"And the telephone," looking up at Mr. Tinneray. "I got friends in Quahawg Junction and Russell Center—we're talkin' sometimes till nine o'clock at night. I can pick up jelly receipts and dress-patterns just so easy."

But Mrs. Tuttle now looked open incredulity. She turned to such excursionists as stood by and registered emphatic denial. "Uh-huh?" she called down in apparent acceptance of these lurid statements, at the same time remarking baldly to Mr. Tinneray, who had placed himself at her side,

"*She* ain't got no telephone!"

At this moment something seemed to occur to little Mrs. Cronney. As she gave a parting defiant scrutiny to her opulent sister her black eyes snapped in hollow reminiscence and she called out,

"Say—how's your parrot? How's your beau—Ro-me-o?"

At this, understood to be a parting shot, the crowd strung along the rail of the *Fall of Rome* burst into an appreciative titter. Mrs. Tuttle, reddening, made no answer, but Mr. Tinneray, standing by and knowing what he knew, seized this opportunity to call down vociferously,

"Oh—he's good, Romeo is. But your sister's had him to the excursion and he's got just a little seasick comin' over. Mis' Tuttle, yer sister, is going to leave him with you, till she can come and take him home, by land, ye know, in her ottermobile—she's coming to get you too, fer a visit, ye know."

There was an effect almost as of panic on the *Fall of Rome*. Not only did the big whistle for "all aboard" blow, but some one's new hat went overboard and while every one crowded to one side to see it rescued, it was not discovered that Romeo's cage had disappeared! In the confusion of a band of desperadoes composed of the entire group of cynical young men with ivory-headed canes, seized upon an object covered with something like an altar-cloth and ran down the gangplank with it.

Going in a body to little Mrs. Cronney, these young men deposited a glittering burden, the gold parrot-cage with the green bird sitting within, in her surprised and gratified embrace. Like flashes these agile young men jumped back upon the deck of the *Fall of Rome* just before the space between wharf and deck became too wide to jump. Meanwhile on the upper deck, before the petrified Mrs. Tuttle could open her mouth, Mr. Tinneray shouted instructions,

"Your sister wants you should keep him," he roared, "till she comes over to see you in her ottermobile—to—fetch—him—and—git—you—for—a—visit!"

Suddenly the entire crowd of excursionists on the after-deck of the *Fall of Rome* gave a rousing cheer. The gratified young men with the ivory-headed canes suddenly saw themselves of the age of chivalry and burst into ragtime rapture; the excursion, a mass of waving flags and hats and automobile veils, made enthusiastic adieu to one faded little figure on the wharf, who proud and happy gently waved back a gleaming parrot's cage!

It was Mr. Tinneray, dexterous in all such matters, that caught at a drooping cerulean form as it toppled over.

"I know'd she'd faint," the pale-eyed gentleman chuckled. He manfully held his burden until Mrs. Tinneray and Mrs. Bean relieved him. These ladies, practised in all smelling-bottle and cologne soothings, supplied also verbal comfort.

"Them young fellows," they explained to Mrs. Tuttle, "is full of their devilment and you can't never tell what they'll do next. But ain't it *lucky*, Mis' Tuttle, that it's your own sister has charge of that bird?"

When at last a pale and interesting lady in blue appeared feebly on deck, wiping away recurrent tears, she was received with the most perfect sympathy tempered with congratulations. There may have been a few winks and one or two nods of understanding which she did not see, but Mrs. Tuttle herself was petted and soothed like a queen of the realm, only, to her mind was brought a something of obligation—the eternal obligation of those who greatly possess—for every excursionist said,

"My, yes! No need to worry—your sister will take care of that bird like he was one of her own, and then you can go over in yer ottermobile to git him—and when you fetch him you can take her home with yer—fer a visit."

ONNIE ²

By THOMAS BEER

From *The Century Magazine*

Mrs. Rawling ordered Sanford to take a bath, and with the clear vision of seven years Sanford noted that no distinct place for this process had been recommended. So he retired to a sun-warmed tub of rain-water behind the stables, and sat comfortably armpit deep therein, whirring a rattle lately worn by a snake, and presented to him by one of the Varian tribe, sons of his father's foreman. Soaking happily, Sanford admired his mother's garden, spread up along the slope toward the thick cedar forest, and thought of the mountain strawberries ripening in this hot Pennsylvania June. His infant brother Peter yelled viciously in the big gray-stone house, and the great sawmill snarled half a mile away, while he waited patiently for the soapless water to remove all plantain stains from his brown legs, the cause of this immersion.

A shadow came between him and the sun, and Sanford abandoned the rattles to behold a monstrous female, unknown, white-skinned, moving on majestic feet to his seclusion. He sat deeper in the tub, but she seemed unabashed, and stood with a red hand on each hip, a grin rippling the length of her mouth.

"Herself says you'll be comin' to herself now, if it's you that's Master San," she said.

Sanford speculated. He knew that all things have an office in this world, and tried to locate this preposterous, lofty creature while she beamed upon him.

"I'm San. Are you the new cook?" he asked.

"I am the same," she admitted.

"Are you a *good* cook?" he continued. "Aggie wasn't. She drank."

"God be above us all! And whatever did herself do with a cook that drank in this place?"

"I don't know. Aggie got married. Cooks *do*," said Sanford, much entertained by this person. Her deep voice was soft, emerging from the largest, reddest mouth he had ever seen. The size of her feet made him dubious as to her humanity. "Anyhow," he went on, "tell mother I'm not clean yet. What's your name?"

"Onnie," said the new cook. "An' would this be the garden?"

"Silly, what did you think?"

"I'm a stranger in this place, Master San, an' I know not which is why nor forever after."

Sanford's brain refused this statement entirely, and he blinked.

"I guess you're Irish," he meditated.

"I am. Do you be gettin' out of your tub now, an' Onnie'll dry you," she offered.

"I can't," he said firmly; "you're a lady."

"A lady? Blessed Mary save us from sin! A lady? Myself? I'm no such thing in this world at all; I'm just Onnie Killelia."

She appeared quite horrified, and Sanford was astonished. She seemed to be a woman, for all her height and the extent of her hands.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"As I am a Christian woman," said Onnie. "I never was a lady, nor could I ever be such a thing."

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"Well," said Sanford, "I don't know, but I suppose you can dry me."

He climbed out of his tub, and this novel being paid kind attention to his directions. He began to like her, especially as her hair was of a singular, silky blackness, suggesting dark mulberries, delightful to the touch. He allowed her to kiss him and to carry him, clothed, back to the house on her shoulders, which were as hard as a cedar trunk, but covered with green cloth sprinkled with purple dots.

"And herself's in the libr'y drinkin' tea," said his vehicle, depositing him on the veranda. "An' what might that be you'd be holdin'?"

"Just a rattle off a snake."

She examined the six-tiered, smoky rattle with a positive light in her dull, black eyes and crossed herself.

"A queer country, where they do be bellin' the snakes! I heard the like in the gover'nment school before I did come over the west water, but I misbelieved the same. God's ways is strange, as the priests will be sayin'."

"You can have it," said Sanford, and ran off to inquire of his mother the difference between women and ladies.

Rawling, riding slowly, came up the driveway from the single lane of his village, and found the gigantic girl sitting on the steps so absorbed in this sinister toy that she jumped with a little yelp when he dismounted.

"What have you there?" he asked, using his most engaging smile.

"'Tis a snake's bell, your Honor, which Master San did be givin' me. 'Tis welcome indeed, as I lost off my holy medal, bein' sick, forever on the steamship crossin' the west water."

"But—can you use a rattle for a holy medal?" said Rawling.

"The gifts of children are the blessin's of Mary's self," Onnie maintained. She squatted on the gravel and hunted for one of the big hair-pins her jump had loosened, then used it to pierce the topmost shell. Rawling leaned against his saddle, watching the huge hands, and Pat Sheehan, the old coachman, chuckled, coming up for the tired horse.

"You'll be from the West," he said, "where they string sea-shells."

"I am, an' you'll be from Dublin, by the sound of your speakin'. So was my father, who is now drowned forever, and with his wooden leg," she added mournfully, finding a cord in some recess of her pocket, entangled there with a rosary and a cluster of small fishhooks. She patted the odd scapular into the cleft of her bosom and smiled at Rawling. "Them in the kitchen are tellin' me you'll be ownin' this whole country an' sixty miles of it, all the trees an' hills. You'll be no less than a President's son, then, your Honor."

Pat led the horse off hastily, and Rawling explained that his lineage was not so interesting. The girl had arrived the night before, sent on by an Oil City agency, and Mrs. Rawling had accepted the Amazon as manna-fall. The lumber valley was ten miles above a tiny railroad station, and servants had to be tempted with triple wages, were transient, or married an employee before a month could pass. The valley women regarded Rawling as their patron, heir of his father, and as temporary aid gave feudal service on demand; but for the six months of his family's residence each year house servants must be kept at any price. He talked of his domain, and the Irish girl nodded, the rattles whirring when she breathed, muffled in her breast, as if a snake were crawling somewhere near.

"When my father came here," he said, "there wasn't any railroad, and there were still Indians in the woods."

"Red Indians? Would they all be dead now? My brother Hyacinth is fair departed his mind readin' of red Indians. Him is my twin."

"How many of you are there?"

"Twelve, your Honor," said Onnie, "an' me the first to go off, bein' that I'm not so pretty a man would be marryin' me that day or this. An' if herself is content, I am pleased entirely."

"You're a good cook," said Rawling, honestly. "How old are you?"

He had been puzzling about this; she was so wonderfully ugly that age was difficult to conjecture. But she startled him.

"I'll be sixteen next Easter-time, your Honor."

"That's very young to leave home," he sympathized.

"Who'd be doin' the like of me any hurt? I'd trample the face off his head," she laughed.

"I think you could. And now what do you think of my big son?"

The amazing Onnie gurgled like a child, clasping her hands.

"Sure, Mary herself bore the like among the Jew men, an' no one since that day, or will forever. An' I must go to my cookin', or Master San will have no dinner fit for him."

Rawling looked after her pink flannel petticoat, greatly touched and pleased by this eulogy. Mrs. Rawling strolled out of the hall and laughed at the narrative.

"She's appalling to look at, and she frightens the other girls, but she's clean and teachable. If she likes San, she may not marry one of the men—for a while."

"He'd be a bold man. She's as big as Jim Varian. If we run short of hands, I'll send her up to a cutting. Where's San?"

"In the kitchen. He likes her. Heavens! if she'll only stay, Bob!"

Onnie stayed, and Mrs. Rawling was gratified by humble obedience and excellent cookery. Sanford was gratified by her address, strange to him. He was the property of his father's lumbermen, and their wives called him everything from "heart's love" to "little cabbage," as their origin might dictate; but no one had ever called him "Master San." He was San to the whole valley, the first-born of the owner who gave their children schools and stereopticon lectures in the union chapel, as his father had before him. He went where he pleased, safe except from blind nature and the unfriendly edges of whirling saws. Men fished him out of the dammed river, where logs floated, waiting conversion into merchantable planking, and the Varian boys, big, tawny youngsters, were his body-guard. These perplexed Onnie Killelia in her first days at Rawling's Hope.

"The agent's lads are whistlin' for Master San," she reported to Mrs. Rawling. "Shall I be findin' him?"

"The agent's lads? Do you mean the Varian boys?"

"Them's them. Wouldn't Jim Varian be his honor's agent? Don't he be payin' the tenantry an' sayin' where is the trees to be felled? I forbid them to come in, as Miss Margot—which is a queer name!—is asleep sound, an' Master Pete."

"Jim Varian came here with his honor's father, and taught his honor to shoot and swim, also his honor's brother Peter, in New York, where we live in winter. Yes, I suppose you'd call Jim Varian his honor's agent. The boys take care of Master San almost as well as you do."

Onnie sniffed, balancing from heel to heel.

"Fine care! An' Bill Varian lettin' him go romping by the poison-ivy, which God lets grow in this place like weeds in a widow's garden. An' his honor, they do be sayin', sends Bill to a fine school, and will the others after him, and to a college like Dublin has after. An' they callin' himself San like he was their brother!"

As a volunteer nurse-maid Onnie was quite miraculous to her mistress. Apparently she could follow Sanford by scent, for his bare soles left no traces in the wild grass, and he moved rapidly, appearing at home exactly when his stomach suggested. He was forbidden only the slate ledges beyond the log basin, where rattlesnakes took the sun, and the trackless farther reaches of the valley, bewildering to a small boy, with intricate brooks and fallen cedar or the profitable yellow pine. Onnie, crying out on her saints, retrieved him from the turn-table-pit of the narrow-gauge logging-road, and pursued his fair head up the blue-stone crags behind the house, her vast feet causing avalanches among the garden beds. She withdrew him with railings from the enchanting society of louse-infested Polish children, and danced hysterically on the shore of the valley-wide, log-stippled pool when the Varians took him to swim. She bore him off to bed, lowering at the actual nurse. She filled his bath, she cut

his toe-nails. She sang him to sleep with "Drolien" and the heart-shattering lament for Gerald. She prayed all night outside his door when he had a brief fever. When trouble was coming, she said the "snake's bells" told her, talking loudly; and petty incidents confirmed her so far that, after she found the child's room ablaze from one of Rawling's cigarettes, they did not argue, and grew to share half-way her superstition.

Women were scarce in the valley, and the well-fed, well-paid men needed wives; and, as time went on, Honora Killelia was sought in marriage by tall Scots and Swedes, who sat dumbly passionate on the back veranda, where she mended Sanford's clothes. Even hawk-nosed Jim Varian, nearing sixty, made cautious proposals, using Bill as messenger, when Sanford was nine.

"God spare us from purgatory!" she shouted. "Me to sew for the eight of you? Even in the fine house his honor did be givin' the agent I could not stand the noise of it. An' who'd be mendin' Master San's clothes? Be out of this kitchen, Bill Varian!"

Rawling, suffocated with laughter, reeled out of the pantry and fled to his pretty wife.

"She thinks San's her own kid!" he gasped.

"She's perfectly priceless. I wish she'd be as careful of Margot and Pete. I wish we could lure her to New York. She's worth twenty city servants."

"Her theory is that if she stays here there's some one to see that Pat Sheehan doesn't neglect—what does she call San's pony?" Rawling asked.

"The little horse. Yes, she told me she'd trample the face off Pat if Shely came to harm. She keeps the house like silver, too; and it's heavenly to find the curtains put up when we get here. Heavens! listen!"

They were in Rawling's bedroom, and Onnie came up the curved stairs. Even in list house-slippers she moved like an elephant, and Sanford had called her, so the speed of her approach shook the square upper hall, and the door jarred a little way open with the impact of her feet.

"Onnie, I'm not sleepy. Sing Gerald," he commanded.

"I will do that same if you'll be lyin' down still, Master San. Now, this is what Conia sang when she found her son all dead forever in the sands of the west water."

By the sound Onnie sat near the bed crooning steadily, her soft contralto filling both stories of the happy house. Rawling went across the hall to see, and stood in the boy's door. He loved Sanford as imaginative men can who are still young, and the ugly girl's idolatry seemed natural. Yet this was very charming, the simple room, the drowsy, slender child, curled in his sheets, surrounded with song.

"Thank you, Onnie," said Sanford. "I suppose she loved him a lot. It's a nice song. Goo' night."

As Onnie passed her master, he saw the stupid eyes full of tears.

"Now, why'll he be thankin' me," she muttered—"me that 'u'd die an' stay in hell forever for him? Now I must go mend up the fish-bag your Honor's brother's wife was for sendin' him an' which no decent fish would be dyin' in."

"Aren't you going to take Jim Varian?" asked Rawling.

"I wouldn't be marryin' with Roosyvelt himself, that's President, an' has his house built all of gold! Who'd be seein' he gets his meals, an' no servants in the sufferin' land worth the curse of a heretic? Not the agent, nor fifty of him," Onnie proclaimed, and marched away.

Sanford never came to scorn his slave or treat her as a servant. He was proud of Onnie. She did not embarrass him by her all-embracing attentions, although he weaned her of some of them as he grew into a wood-ranging, silent boy, studious, and somewhat shy outside the feudal valley. The Varian boys were sent, as each reached thirteen, to Lawrenceville, and testified their gratitude to the patron by diligent careers. They were Sanford's summer companions, with occasional visits from his cousin Denis, whose mother disapproved of the valley and Onnie.

"I really don't see how Sanford can let the poor creature fondle him," she said. "Denny tells me she simply wails outside San's door if he comes home wet or has a bruise. It's rather ludicrous, now that San's fourteen. She writes to him at Saint Andrew's."

"I told her Saint Andrew's wasn't far from Boston, and she offered to get her cousin Dermot—he's a bellhop at the Touraine—to valet him. Imagine San with a valet at Saint Andrew's!" Rawling laughed.

"But San isn't spoiled," Peter observed, "and he's the idol of the valley, Bob, even more than you are. Varian, McComas, Jansen—the whole gang and their cubs. They'd slaughter any one who touched San."

"I don't see how you stand the place," said Mrs. Peter. "Even if the men are respectful, they're so familiar. And anything could happen there. Denny tells me you have Poles and Russians—all sorts of dreadful people."

Her horror tinkled prettily in the Chinese drawing-room, but Rawling sighed.

"We can't get the old sort—Scotch, Swedes, the *good* Irish. We get any old thing. Varian swears like a trooper, but he has to fire them right and left all summer through. We've a couple of hundred who are there to stay, some of them born there; but God help San when he takes it over!"

Sanford learned to row at Saint Andrew's, and came home in June with new, flat bands of muscle in his chest, and Onnie worshiped with loud Celtic exclamations, and bade small Pete grow up like Master San. And Sanford grew two inches before he came home for the next summer, reverting to bare feet, corduroys, and woolen shirts as usual. Onnie eyed him dazedly when he strode into her kitchen for sandwiches against an afternoon's fishing.

"O Master San, you're all grown up sudden!"

"Just five foot eight, Onnie. Ling Varian's five foot nine; so's Cousin Den."

"But don't you be goin' round the cuttin' camps up valley, neither. You're too young to be hearin' the awful way these news hands do talk. It's a sin to hear how they curse an' swear."

"The wumman's right," said Cameron, the smith, who was courting her while he mended the kitchen range. "They're foul as an Edinburgh fishwife—the new men. Go no place wi'out a Varian, two Varians, or one of my lads."

"Good Lord! I'm not a kid, Ian!"

"Ye're no' a mon, neither. An' ye're the owner's first," said Cameron grimly.

Rawling nodded when Sanford told him this.

"Jim carries an automatic in his belt, and we've had stabbings. Keep your temper if they get fresh. We're in hot water constantly, San. Look about the trails for whisky-caches. These rotten stevedores who come floating in bother the girls and bully the kids. You're fifteen, and I count on you to help keep the property decent. The boys will tell you the things they hear. Use the Varians; Ling and Reuben are clever. I pay high enough wages for this riffraff. I'll pay anything for good hands; and we get dirt!"

Sanford enjoyed being a detective, and kept the Varians busy. Bill, acting as assistant doctor of the five hundred, gave him advice on the subject of cocaine symptoms and alcoholic eyes. Onnie raved when he trotted in one night with Ling and Reuben at heel, their clothes rank with the evil whiskey they had poured from kegs hidden in a cavern near the valley-mouth.

"You'll be killed forever with some Polack beast! O Master San, it's not you that's the polis. 'Tis not fit for him, your Honor. Some Irish pig will be shootin' him, or a sufferin' Bohemyun."

"But it's the property, Onnie," the boy faltered. "Here's his honor worked to death, and Uncle Jim. I've got to do something. They sell good whisky at the store, and just smell me."

But Onnie wept, and Rawling, for sheer pity, sent her out of the dining-room.

"She—she scares me!" Sanford said. "It's not natural, Dad, d' you think?"

He was sitting on his bed, newly bathed and pensive, reviewing the day.

"Why not? She's alone here, and you're the only thing she's fond of. Stop telling her about things or she'll get sick with worry."

"She's fond of Margot and Pete, but she's just idiotic about me. She did scare me!"

Rawling looked at his son and wondered if the boy knew how attractive were his dark, blue eyes and his plain, grave face. The younger children were beautiful; but Sanford, reared more in the forest, had the forest depth in his gaze and an animal litness in his hard young body.

"She's like a dog," Sanford reflected. "Only she's a woman. It's sort of—"

"Pathetic?"

"I suppose that's the word. But I *do* love the poor old thing. Her letters are rich. She tells me about all the new babies and who's courting who and how the horses are. It *is* pathetic."

He thought of Onnie often the next winter, and especially when she wrote a lyric of thanksgiving after the family had come to Rawling's Hope in April, saying that all would be well and trouble would cease. But his father wrote differently:

"You know there is a strike in the West Virginia mines, and it has sent a mass of ruffians out looking for work. We need all the people we can get, but they are a pestiferous outfit. I am opening up a camp in Bear Run, and our orders are enormous already, but I hate littering the valley with these swine. They are as insolent and dirty as Turks. Pete says the village smells, and has taken to the woods. Onnie says the new Irish are black scum of Limerick, and Jim Varian's language isn't printable. The old men are complaining, and altogether I feel like Louis XVI in 1789. About every day I have to send for the sheriff and have some thug arrested. A blackguard from Oil City has opened a dive just outside the property, on the road to the station, and Cameron tells me all sorts of dope is for sale in the hoarding-houses. We have cocaine-inhalers, opium-smokers, and all the other vices."

After this outburst Sanford was not surprised when he heard from Onnie that his father now wore a revolver, and that the overseers of the sawmill did the same.

On the first of June Rawling posted signs at the edge of his valley and at the railroad stations nearest, saying that he needed no more labor. The tide of applicants ceased, but Mrs. Rawling was nervous. Pete declared his intention of running away, and riding home in the late afternoon, Margot was stopped by a drunken, babbling man, who seized her pony's bridle, with unknown words. She galloped free, but next day Rawling sent his wife and children to the seaside and sat waiting Sanford's coming to cheer his desolate house, the new revolver cold on his groin.

Sanford came home a day earlier than he had planned, and drove in a borrowed cart from the station, furious when an old cottage blazed in the rainy night, just below the white posts marking his heritage, and shrill women screamed invitation at the horse's hoof-beats. He felt the valley smirched, and his father's worn face angered him when they met.

"I almost wish you'd not come, Sonny. We're in rotten shape for a hard summer. Go to bed, dear, and get warm."

"Got a six-shooter for me?"

"You? Who'd touch you? Some one would kill him. I let Bill have a gun, and some other steady heads. You must keep your temper. You always have. Ling Varian got into a splendid row with some hog who called Uncle Jim—the usual name. Ling did him up. Ah, here's Onnie. Onnie, here's—"

The cook rushed down the stairs, a fearful and notable bed-gown covering her night-dress, and the rattles chattering loudly.

"God's kind to us. See the chest of him! Master San! Master San!"

"Good Lord, Onnie. I wasn't dead, you know! Don't *kill* a fellow!"

For the first time her embrace was an embarrassment; her mouth on his cheek made him flush. She loved him so desperately, this poor stupid woman, and he could only be fond of her, give her a sort of tolerant affection. Honesty reddened his face.

"Come on and find me a hard-boiled egg, there's a—"

"A hard-boiled egg? Listen to that, your Honor! An' it's near the middle of the night! No, I'll not be findin' hard-boiled eggs for you—oh, he's laughin' at me! Now you come into the dinin'-room, an' I'll be hottin' some milk for you, for you're wet as any drowned little cat. An' the mare's fine, an' I've the fishin'-sticks all dusted, an' your new bathin'-tub's to your bath-room, though ill fate follow

that English pig Percival that put it in, for he dug holes with his heels! An' would you be wantin' a roast-beef sandwidge?"

"She's nearly wild," said Rawling as the pantry door slammed. "You must be careful, San, and not get into any rows. She'd have a fit. What is it?"

"What do you do when you can't—care about a person as much as they care about you?"

"Put up with it patiently." Rawling shrugged. "What else *can* you do?"

"I'm sixteen. She keeps on as if I were six. S-suppose she fell in love with me? She's not old—very old."

"It's another sort of thing, Sonny. Don't worry," said Rawling, gravely, and broke off the subject lest the boy should fret.

Late next afternoon Sanford rode down a trail from deep forest, lounging in the saddle, and flicking brush aside with a long dog-whip. There was a rain-storm gathering, and the hot air swayed no leaf. A rabbit, sluggish and impertinent, hopped across his path and wandered up the side trail toward Varian's cottage. Sanford halted the mare and whistled. His father needed cheering, and Ling Varian, if obtainable, would make a third at dinner. His intimate hurtled down the tunnel of mountain ash directly and assented.

"Wait till I go back and tell Reuben, though. I'm cooking this week. Wish Onnie 'd marry dad. Make her, can't you? Hi, Reu! I'm eating at the house. The beef's on, and dad wants fried onions. Why won't she have dad? *You're* grown up."

He trotted beside the mare noiselessly, chewing a birch spray, a hand on his friend's knee.

"She says she won't get married. I expect she'll stay here as long as she lives."

"I suppose so, but I wish she'd marry dad," said Ling. "All this trouble's wearing him out, and he won't have a hired girl if we could catch one. There's a pile of trouble, San. He has rows every day. Had a hell of a row with Percival yesterday."

"Who's this Percival? Onnie was cursing him out last night," Sanford recollected.

"He's an awful big hog who's pulling logs at the runway. Used to be a plumber in Australia. Swears like a sailor. He's a—what d' you call 'em? You know, a London mucker?"

"Cockney?"

"Yes, that's it. He put in your new bath-tub, and Onnie jumped him for going round the house looking at things. Dad's getting ready to fire him. He's the worst hand in the place. I'll point him out to you."

The sawmill whistle blew as the trail joined open road, and they passed men, their shirts sweat-stained, nodding or waving to the boys as they spread off to their houses and the swimming-place at the river bridge.

A group gathered daily behind the engine-yard to play horseshoe quoits, and Sanford pulled the mare to a walk on the fringes of this half-circle as old friends hailed him and shy lads with hair already sun-bleached wriggled out of the crowd to shake hands, Camerons, Jansens, Nattiers, Keenans, sons of the faithful. Bill Varian strolled up, his medical case under an arm.

"I'm eating with you. The boss asked me. He feels better already. Come in and speak to dad. He's hurt because *he's* not seen you, and you stopped to see Ian at the forge. Hi, Dad!" he called over the felt hats of the ring, "here's San."

"Fetch him in, then," cried the foreman.

Bill and Ling led the nervous mare through the group of pipe-smoking, friendly lumbermen, and Varian hugged his fosterling's son.

"Stop an' watch," he whispered. "They'll like seein' you, San. Onnie's been tellin' the women you've growed a yard."

Sanford settled to the monotony of the endless sport, saluting known brown faces and answering yelps of pleasure from the small boys who squatted against the high fence behind the stake.

"That's Percival," said Ling, as a man swaggered out to the pitching-mark.

"Six foot three," Bill said, "and strong as an ox. Drinks all the time. Think he dopes, too."

Sanford looked at the fellow with a swift dislike for his vacant, heavy face and his greasy, saffron hair. His bare arms were tattooed boldly and in many colors, distorted with ropes of muscle. He seemed a little drunk, and the green clouds cast a copper shade into his lashless eyes.

"Can't pitch for beans," said Ling as the first shoe went wide. When the second fell beside it, the crowd laughed.

"Now," said Ian Cameron, "he'll be mad wi' vainglory. He's a camstearlie ring' it an' a claverin' fu'."

"Ho! larf ahead!" snapped the giant. "'Ow's a man to 'eave a bloody thing at a bloody stike?"

The experts chuckled, and he ruffled about the ring, truculent, sneering, pausing before Varian, with a glance at Sanford.

"Give me something with some balance. Hi can show yer. Look!"

"I'm looking," said the foreman; "an' I ain't deaf, neither."

"'Ere's wot you blighters carn't 'eave. Learned it in Auckland, where there's *real* men." He fumbled in his shirt, and the mare snorted as the eight-inch blade flashed out of its handle under her nose. "See? That's the lidy! Now watch! There's a knot-'ole up the palings there."

The crowd fixed a stare on the green, solid barrier, and the knife soared a full twenty yards, but missed the knot-hole and rattled down. There was flat derision in the following laughter, and Percival dug his heel in the sod.

"Larf ahead! Hany one else try 'er?"

"Oh, shut up!" said some one across the ring. "We're pitchin' shoes."

Percival slouched off after his knife, and the frieze of small boys scattered except a lint-haired Cameron who was nursing a stray cat busily, cross-legged against the green boarding.

"Yon's Robert Sanford Cameron," said the smith. "He can say half his catechism."

"Good kid," said Sanford. "I never could get any—"

Percival had wandered back and stood a yard off, glaring at Bill as the largest object near.

"Think I can't, wot?"

"I'm not interested, and you're spoiling the game," said Bill, who feared nothing alive except germs, and could afford to disregard most of these. Sanford's fingers tightened on his whip.

"Ho!" coughed the cockney. "See! You—there!"

Robert Cameron looked up at the shout. The blade shot between the child's head and the kitten and hummed gently, quivering in the wood.

"Hi could 'a' cut 'is throat," said Percival so complacently that Sanford boiled.

"You scared him stiff," he choked. "You hog! Don't—"

"'Ello, 'oo's the young dook?"

"Look out," said a voice. "That's San, the—"

"Ho! 'Im with the Hirish gal to 'elp 'im tike 'is bloody barth nights? 'Oo's *he*? She's a—"

A second later Sanford knew that he had struck the man over the face with his whip, cutting the phrase. The mare plunged and the whole crowd congested about the bellowing cockney as Bill held Cameron back, and huge Jansen planted a hand on Rawling's chest.

"No worry," he said genially. "Yim an' us, Boss, our job."

Varian had wedged his hawk face close to the cockney's, now purple blotched with wrath, and Rawling waited.

"Come to the office an' get your pay. You hear? Then you clear out. If you ain't off the property in an hour you'll be dead. You hear?"

"He ought to," muttered Ling, leading the mare away. "Dad hasn't yelled that loud since that Dutchman dropped the kid in the—hello, it's raining!"

"Come on home, Sonny," said Rawling, "and tell us all about it. I didn't see the start."

But Sanford was still boiling, and the owner had recourse to his godson. Ling told the story, unabridged, as they mounted toward the house.

"Onnie'll hear of it," sighed Rawling. "Look, there she is by the kitchen, and that's Jennie Cameron loping 'cross lots. Never mind, San. You did the best you could; don't bother. Swine are swine."

The rain was cooling Sanford's head, and he laughed awkwardly.

"Sorry I lost my temper."

"I'm not. Jennie's telling Onnie. Hear?"

The smith's long-legged daughter was gesticulating at the kitchen trellis, and Onnie's feet began a sort of war-dance in the wet grass as Rawling approached.

"Where is this sufferin' pig, could your honor be tellin' me? God be above us all! With my name in his black, ugly mouth! I *knew* there'd be trouble; the snake's bells did be sayin' so since the storm was comin'. An' him three times the bigness of Master San! Where'd he be now?"

"Jim gave him an hour to be off the property, Onnie."

"God's mercy he had no knife in his hand, then, even with the men by an' Master San on his horse. Blessed Mary! I will go wait an' have speech with this Englishman on the road."

"You'll go get dinner, Onnie Killelia," said Rawling. "Master San is tired, Bill and Ling are coming—and look there!"

The faithful were marching Percival down the road to the valley-mouth in the green dusk. He walked between Jansen and Bill, a dozen men behind, and a flying scud of boys before.

"An' Robbie's not hurt," said Miss Cameron, "an' San ain't, neither; so don't you worry, Onnie. It's all right."

Onnie laughed.

"I'd like well to have seen the whip fly, your Honor. The arm of him! Will he be wantin' waffles to his dinner? Heyah! more trouble yet!" The rattles had whirred, and she shook her head. "A forest fire likely now? Or a child bein' born dead?"

"Father says she's fëy," Jennie observed as the big woman lumbered off.

"You mean she has second sight? Perhaps. Here's a dollar for Robbie, and tell Ian he's lucky."

Bill raced up as the rain began to fall heavily in the windless gray of six o'clock. He reported the cockney gone and the men loud in admiration of Sanford; so dinner was cheerful enough, although Sanford felt limp after his first attack of killing rage. Onnie's name on this animal's tongue had maddened him, the reaction made him drowsy; but Ling's winter at Lawrenceville and Bill's in New York needed hearing. Rawling left the three at the hall fireplace while he read a new novel in the library. The rain increased, and the fall became a continuous throbbing so steady that he hardly heard the telephone ring close to his chair; but old Varian's voice came clear along the wire.

"Is that you, Bob? Now, listen. One of them girls at that place down the station road was just talkin' to me. She's scared. She rung me up an' Cameron. That dam' Englishman's gone out o' there bile drunk, swearin' he'll cut San's heart out, the pup! He's gone off wavin' his knife. Now, he knows the house, an' he ain't afraid of nothin'—when he's drunk. He might get that far an' try breakin' in. You lock up—"

"Lock up? What with?" asked Rawling. "There's not a lock in the place. Father never had them put in, and I haven't."

"Well, don't worry none. Ian's got out a dozen men or so with lights an' guns, an' Bill's got his. You keep Bill an' Ling to sleep down-stairs. Ian's got the men round the house by this. The hog'll make noise enough to wake the dead."

"Nice, isn't it, Uncle Jim, having this whelp out gunning for San! I'll keep the boys. Good-night," he said hastily as a shadow on the rug engulfed his feet. The rattles spoke behind him.

"There's a big trouble sittin' on my soul," said Onnie. "Your Honor knows there's nothing makes mortal flesh so wild mad as a whipping, an' this dog does know the way of the house. Do you keep the agent's lads to-night in this place with guns to hand. The snake's bells keep ringin'."

"My God! Onnie, you're making me believe in your rattles! Listen. Percival's gone out of that den down the road, swearin' he'll kill San. He's drunk, and Cameron's got men out."

"That 'u'd be the why of the lanterns I was seein' down by the forge. But it's black as the bowels of purgatory, your Honor, an' him a strong, wicked devil, cruel an' angry. God destroy him! If he'd tread on a poison snake! No night could be so black as his heart."

"Steady, Onnie!"

"I'm speakin' soft. Himself's not able to hear," she said, her eyes half shut. She rocked slowly on the amazing feet. "Give me a pistol, your Honor. I'll be for sleepin' outside his door this night."

"You'll go to bed and keep your door open. If you hear a sound, yell like perdition. Send Bill in here. Say I want him. That's all. There's no danger, Onnie; but I'm taking no chances."

"We'll take no chances, your Honor."

She turned away quietly, and Rawling shivered at this cool fury. The rattles made his spine itch, and suddenly his valley seemed like a place of demons. The lanterns circling on the lawn seemed like frail glow-worms, incredibly useless, and he leaned on the window-pane listening with fever to the rain.

"All right," said Bill when he had heard. "'Phone the sheriff. The man's dangerous, sir. I doctored a cut he had the other day, and he tells me he can see at night. That's a lie, of course, but he's light on his feet, and he's a devil. I've seen some rotten curs in the hospitals, but he's worse."

"Really, Billy, you sound as fierce as Onnie. She wanted a gun."

The handsome young man bit a lip, and his great body shook.

"This is San," he said, "and the men would kill any one who touched you, and they'd burn any one who touched San. Sorry if I'm rude."

"We mustn't lose our heads." Rawling talked against his fear. "The man's drunk. He'll never get near here, and he's got four miles to come in a cold rain. But—"

"May I sleep in San's room?"

"Then he'll know. I don't want him to, or Ling, either; they're imaginative kids. This is a vile mess, Billy."

"Hush! Then I'll sleep outside his door. I *will*, sir!"

"All right, old man. Thanks. Ling can sleep in Pete's room. Now I'll 'phone Mackintosh."

But the sheriff did not answer, and his deputy was ill. Rawling shrugged, but when Varian telephoned that there were thirty men searching, he felt more comfortable.

"You're using the wires a lot, Dad," said Sanford, roaming in. "Anything wrong? Where's Ling to sleep?"

"In Pete's room. Good-night, Godson. No, nothing wrong."

But Sanford was back presently, his eyes wide.

"I say, Onnie's asleep front of my door and I can't get over her. What's got into the girl?"

"She's worried. Her snake's bells are going, and she thinks the house'll burn down. Let her be. Sleep with me, and keep my feet warm, Sonny."

"Sure," yawned Sanford. "'Night, Billy."

"Well," said Bill, "that settles that, sir. She'd hear anything, or I will, and you're a light sleeper. Suppose we lock up as much as we can and play some checkers?"

They locked the doors, and toward midnight Cameron rapped at the library window, his rubber coat glistening.

"Not a print of the wastrel loon, sir; but the lads will bide out the night. They've whusky an' biscuits an' keep moving."

"I'll come out myself," Rawling began, but the smith grunted.

"Ye're no stirrin' oot yer hoos, Robert Rawling! Ye're daft! Gin you met this ganglin' assassinator, wha'd be for maister? San's no to lack a father. Gae to yer bit bed!"

"Gosh!" said Bill, shutting the window, "*he's* in earnest. He forgot to try to talk English even. I feel better. The hog's fallen into a hole and gone to sleep. Let's go up."

"I suppose if I tell Onnie San's with me, she'll just change to my door," Rawling considered; "but I'll try. Poor girl, she's faithful as a dog!"

They mounted softly and beheld her, huddled in a blanket, mountainous, curled outside Sanford's closed door, just opposite the head of the stairs. Rawling stooped over the heap and spoke to the tangle of blue-shadowed hair.

"Onnie Killelia, go to bed."

"Leave me be, your Honor. I'm—"

Sleep cut the protest. The rattles sounded feebly, and Rawling stood up.

"Just like a dog," whispered Bill, stealing off to a guest-room. "I'll leave my door open." He patted the revolver in his jacket and grinned affectionately. "Good-night, Boss."

Rawling touched the switch inside his own door, and the big globe set in the hall ceiling blinked out. They had decided that, supposing the cockney got so far, a lightless house would perplex his feet, and he would be the noisier. Rawling could reach this button from his bed, and silently undressed in the blackness, laying the automatic on the bedside table, reassured by all these circling folk, Onnie, stalwart Bill, and the loyal men out in the rain. Here slept Sanford, breathing happily, so lost that he only sighed when his father crept in beside him, and did not rouse when Rawling thrust an arm under his warm weight to bring him closer, safe in the perilous night.

The guest-room bed creaked beneath Bill's two hundred pounds of muscle, and Ling snored in Peter's room. Rawling's nerves eased on the mattress, and hypnotic rain began to deaden him, against his will. He saw Percival sodden in some ditch, his knife forgotten in brandy's slumbers. No shout came from the hillside. His mind edged toward vacancy, bore back when the boy murmured once, then he gained a mid-state where sensation was not, a mist.

He sat up, tearing the blankets back, because some one moved in the house, and the rain could be heard more loudly, as if a new window were open. He swung his legs free. Some one breathed heavily in the hall. Rawling clutched his revolver, and the cold of it stung. This might be Onnie, any one; but he put his finger on the switch.

"Straight hover—hover the way it was," said a thick, puzzled voice. "There, that one! 'Is bloody barth!"

The rattles whirred as if their first owner lived. Rawling pressed the switch.

"Your Honor!" Onnie screamed. "Your Honor! Master San! Be lockin' the door inside, Master San! Out of this, you! You!"

Rawling's foot caught in the doorway of the bright hall, and he stumbled, the light dazzling on the cockney's wet bulk hurling itself toward the great woman where she stood, her arms flung cruciform, guarding the empty room. The bodies met with a fearful jar as Rawling staggered up, and there came a crisp explosion before he could raise his hand. Bill's naked shoulder cannoned into him, charging, and Bill's revolver clinked against his own. Rawling reeled to the stair-head, aiming as Bill caught at the man's shirt; but the cockney fell backward, crumpling down, his face purple, his teeth displayed.

"In the head!" said Bill, and bent to look, pushing the plastered curls from a temple. The beast whimpered and died; the knife rattled on the planks.

"Dad," cried Sanford, "what on—"

"Stay where you are!" Rawling gasped, sick of this ugliness, dizzy with the stench of powder and brandy. Death had never seemed so vile. He looked away to the guardian where she knelt at her post, her hands clasped on the breast of her coarse white robe as if she prayed, the hair hiding her face.

"I'll get a blanket," Bill said, rising. "There come the men! That you, Ian?"

The smith and a crowd of pale faces crashed up the stairs.

"God forgie us! We let him by—the garden, sir. Alec thought he—"

"Gosh, Onnie!" said Bill, "excuse *me!* I'll get some clothes on. Here, Ian—"

"Onnie," said Sanford, in the doorway—"Onnie, what's the matter?"

As if to show him this, her hands, unclasping, fell from the dead bosom, and a streak of heart's blood widened from the knife-wound like the ribbon of some very noble order.

A CUP OF TEA ³

By MAXWELL STRUTHERS BURT

From *Scribner's Magazine*

Young Burnaby was late. He was always late. One associated him with lateness and certain eager, impossible excuses—he was always coming from somewhere to somewhere, and his "train was delayed," or his huge space-devouring motor "had broken down." You imagined him, enveloped in dust and dusk, his face disguised beyond human semblance, tearing up and down the highways of the world; or else in the corridor of a train, biting his nails with poorly concealed impatience. As a matter of fact, when you saw him, he was beyond average correctly attired, and his manner was suppressed, as if to conceal the keenness that glowed behind his dark eyes and kept the color mounting and receding in his sunburnt cheeks. All of which, except the keenness, was a strange thing in a man who spent half his life shooting big game and exploring. But then, one imagined that Burnaby on the trail and Burnaby in a town were two entirely different persons. He liked his life with a thrust to it, and in a great city there are so many thrusts that, it is to be supposed, one of Burnaby's temperament hardly has hours enough in a day to appreciate all of them and at the same time keep appointments.

On this February night, at all events, he was extremely late, even beyond his custom, and Mrs. Malcolm, having waited as long as she possibly could, sighed amusedly and told her man to announce dinner. There were only three others besides herself in the drawing-room, Masters—Sir John Masters, the English financier—and his wife, and Mrs. Selden, dark, a little silent, with a flushed, finely cut face and a slightly sorrow-stricken mouth. And already these people had reached the point where talk is interesting. People did in Mrs. Malcolm's house. One went there with anticipation, and came away with the delightful, a little vague, exhilaration that follows an evening where the perfection of the material background—lights, food, wine, flowers—has been almost forgotten in the thrill of contact with real persons, a rare enough circumstance in a period when the dullest people entertain the most. In the presence of Mrs. Malcolm even the very great forgot the suspicions that grow with success and became themselves, and, having come once, came again vividly, overlooking other people who really had more right to their attentions than had she.

This was the case with Sir John Masters. And he was a very great man indeed, not only as the world goes but in himself: a short, heavy man, with a long, heavy head crowned with vibrant, still entirely dark hair and pointed by a black, carefully kept beard, above which arose—"arose" is the word, for Sir John's face was architectural—a splendid, slightly curved nose—a buccaneering nose; a nose that, willy-nilly, would have made its possessor famous. One suspected, far back in the yeoman strain, a hurried, possibly furtive marriage with gypsy or Jew; a sudden blossoming into lyricism on the part of a soil-stained Masters. Certainly from somewhere Sir John had inherited an imagination which was not insular. Dangerous men, these Sir Johns, with their hooked noses and their lyric eyes!

Mrs. Malcolm described him as fascinating. There was about him that sense of secret power that only politicians, usually meretriciously, and diplomats, and, above all, great bankers as a rule possess; yet he seldom talked of his own life, or the mission that had brought him to New York; instead, in his sonorous, slightly Hebraic voice, he drew other people on to talk about themselves, or else, to artists and writers and their sort, discovered an amazing, discouraging knowledge of the trades

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by which they earned their living. "One feels," said Mrs. Malcolm, "that one is eyeing a sensitive python. He uncoils beautifully."

They were seated at the round, candle-lit table, the rest of the room in partial shadow, Sir John looking like a lost Rembrandt, and his blonde wife, with her soft English face, like a rose-and-gray portrait by Reynolds, when Burnaby strode in upon them . . . strode in upon them, and then, as if remembering the repression he believed in, hesitated, and finally advanced quietly toward Mrs. Malcolm. One could smell the snowy February night still about him.

"I'm so sorry," he said. "I—"

"You broke down, I suppose," said Mrs. Malcolm, "or the noon train from Washington was late for the first time in six years. What do you do in Washington, anyway? Moon about the Smithsonian?"

"No," said Burnaby, as he sank into a chair and unfolded his napkin. "Y'see—well, that is—I ran across a fellow—an Englishman—who knew a chap I met last summer up on the Francis River—I didn't exactly meet him, that is, I ran into him, and it wasn't the Francis River really, it was the Upper Liara, a branch that comes in from the northwest. Strange, wasn't it?—this fellow, this Englishman, got to talking about tea, and that reminded me of the whole thing." He paused on the last word and, with a peculiar habit that is much his own, stared across the table at Lady Masters, but over and through her, as if that pretty pink-and-white woman had entirely disappeared,—and the warm shadows behind her,—and in her place were no one could guess what vistas of tumbling rivers and barren tundras.

"Tea!" ejaculated Mrs. Malcolm.

Burnaby came back to the flower-scented circle of light.

"Yes," he said soberly, "tea. Exactly."

Mrs. Malcolm's delicate eyebrows rose to a point. "What," she asked, in the tones of delighted motherhood overlaid with a slight exasperation which she habitually used toward Burnaby, "has tea got to do with a man you met on the Upper Liara last summer and a man you met this afternoon? Why tea?"

"A lot," said Burnaby cryptically, and proceeded to apply himself to his salad, for he had refused the courses his lateness had made him miss. "Y'see," he said, after a moment's reflection, "it was this way—and it's worth telling, for it's queer. I ran into this Terhune this afternoon at a club—a big, blond Englishman who's been in the army, but now he's out making money. Owns a tea house in London. Terhune & Terhune—perhaps you know them?" He turned to Sir John.

"Yes, very well. I imagine this is Arthur Terhune."

"That's the man. Well, his being in tea and that sort of thing got me to telling him about an adventure I had last summer, and, the first crack out of the box, he said he remembered the other chap perfectly—had known him fairly well at one time. Odd, wasn't it, when you come to think of it? A big, blond, freshly bathed Englishman in a club, and that other man away up there!"

"And the other man? Is he in the tea business too?" asked Mrs. Selden. She was interested by now, leaning across the table, her dark eyes catching light from the candles. It was something—to interest Mrs. Selden.

"No," said Burnaby abruptly. "No. He's in no business at all, except going to perdition. Y'see, he's a squaw-man—a big, black squaw-man, with a nose like a Norman king's. The sort of person you imagine in evening clothes in the Carleton lounge. He might have been anything but what he is."

"I wonder," said Sir John, "why we do that sort of thing so much more than other nations? Our very best, too. It's odd."

"It was odd enough the way it happened to me, anyhow," said Burnaby. "I'd been knocking around up there all summer, just an Indian and myself—around what they call Fort Francis and the Pelly Lakes, and toward the end of August we came down the Liara in a canoe. We were headed for Lower Post on the Francis, and it was all very lovely until, one day, we ran into a rapid, a devil of a thing, and my Indian got drowned."

"How dreadful!" murmured Lady Masters.

"It was," agreed Burnaby; "but it might have been worse—for me, that is. It couldn't have been much worse for the poor devil of an Indian, could it? But I had a pretty fair idea of the country, and had only about fifty miles to walk, and a little waterproof box of grub turned up out of the wreck, so I wasn't in any danger of starving. It was lonely, though—it's lonely enough country, anyhow, and of course I couldn't help thinking about that Indian and the way big rapids roar. I couldn't sleep when night came—saw black rocks sticking up out of white water like the fangs of a mad dog. I was pretty near the horrors, I guess. So you can imagine I wasn't sorry when, about four o'clock of the next afternoon, I came back to the river again and a teepee standing up all by itself on a little pine-crowned bluff. In front of the teepee was an old squaw—she wasn't very old, really, but you know how Indians get—boiling something over a fire in a big pot. 'How!' I said, and she grunted. 'If you'll lend me part of your fire, I'll make some tea,' I continued. 'And if you're good, I'll give you some when it's done.' Tea was one of the things cached in the little box that had been saved. She moved the pot to one side, so I judged she understood, and I trotted down to the river for water and set to work. As you can guess, I was pretty anxious for any kind of conversation by then, so after a while I said brightly: 'All alone?' She grunted again and pointed over her shoulder to the teepee. 'Well, seeing you're so interested,' said I, 'and that the tea's done, we'll all go inside and ask your man to a party—if you'll dig up two tin cups. I've got one of my own.' She raised the flap of the teepee and I followed her. I could see she wasn't a person who wasted words. Inside a little fire was smouldering, and seated with his back to us was a big, broad-shouldered buck, with a dark blanket wrapped around him. 'Your good wife,' I began cheerily—I was getting pretty darned sick of silence—'has allowed me to make some tea over your fire. Have some? I'm shipwrecked from a canoe and on my way to Lower Post. If you don't understand what I say, it doesn't make the slightest difference, but for God's sake grunt—just once, to show you're interested.' He grunted. 'Thanks!' I said, and poured the tea into the three tin cups. The squaw handed one to her buck. Then I sat down.

"There was nothing to be heard but the gurgling of the river outside and the rather noisy breathing we three made as we drank; and then—very clearly, just as if we'd been sitting in an English drawing-room—in the silence a voice said: 'By Jove, that's the first decent cup of tea I've had in ten years!' Yes, just that! 'By Jove, that's the first decent cup of tea I've had in ten years!' I looked at the buck, but he hadn't moved, and then I looked at the squaw, and she was still squatting and sipping her tea, and then I said, very quietly, for I knew my nerves were still ragged, 'Did any one speak?' and the buck turned slowly and looked me up and down, and I saw the nose I was talking about—the nose like a Norman king's. I was rattled, I admit; I forgot my manners. 'You're English!' I gasped out; and the buck said very sweetly: 'That's none of your damned business.'"

Burnaby paused and looked about the circle of attentive faces. "That's all. But it's enough, isn't it? To come out of nothing, going nowheres, and run into a dirty Indian who says: 'By Jove, that's the first decent cup of tea I've had in ten years!' And then along comes this Terhune and says that he knows the man."

Mrs. Malcolm raised her chin from the hand that had been supporting it. "I don't blame you," she said, "for being late."

"And this man," interrupted Sir John's sonorous voice, "this squaw-man, did he tell you anything about himself?"

Burnaby shook his head. "Not likely," he answered. "I tried to draw him out, but he wasn't drawable. Finally he said: 'If you'll shut your damned mouth I'll give you two dirty blankets to sleep on. If you won't, I'll kick you out of here.' The next morning I pulled out, leaving him crouched over the little teepee fire nursing his knees. But I hadn't gone twenty yards when he came to the flap and called out after me: 'I say!' I turned about sullenly. His dirty face had a queer, cracked smile on it. 'Look here! Do you—where did you get that tea from, anyway? I—there's a lot of skins I've got; I don't suppose you'd care to trade, would you?' I took the tea out of the air-tight box and put it on the

ground. Then I set off down river. Henderson, the factor at Lower Post, told me a little about him: his name—it wasn't assumed, it seems; and that he'd been in the country about fifteen years, going from bad to worse. He was certainly at 'worse' when I saw him." Burnaby paused and stared across the table again with his curious, far-away look. "Beastly, isn't it?" he said, as if to himself. "Cold up there now, too! The snow must be deep." He came back to the present. "And I suppose, you know," he said, smiling deprecatingly at Mrs. Selden, "he's just as fond of flowers and lights and things as we are."

Mrs. Selden shivered.

"Fonder!" said Sir John. "Probably fonder. That sort is. It's the poets of the world who can't write poetry who go to smash that way. They ought to take a term at business, and"—he reflected—"the business men, of course, at poetry." He regarded Burnaby with his inscrutable eyes, in the depths of which danced little flecks of light.

"What did you say this man's name was?" asked Lady Masters, in her soft voice. She had an extraordinary way of advancing, with a timid rush, as it were, into the foreground, and then receding again, melting back into the shadows. She rarely ever spoke without a sensation of astonishment making itself felt. "She is like a mist," thought Mrs. Malcolm.

"Bewsher," said Burnaby—"Geoffrey Boisselier Bewsher. Quite a name, isn't it? He was in the cavalry. His family are rather swells in an old-fashioned way. He is the fifth son—or seventh, or whatever it is—of a baronet and, Terhune says, was very much in evidence about London twenty-odd years ago. Terhune used to see him in clubs, and every now and then dining out. Although he himself, of course, was a much younger man. Very handsome he was, too, Terhune said, and a favorite. And then one day he just disappeared—got out—no one knows exactly why. Terhune doesn't. Lost his money, or a woman, or something like that. The usual thing, I suppose. I—You didn't hurt yourself, did you?"...

He had paused abruptly and was looking across the table; for there had been a little tinkle and a crash of breaking glass, and now a pool of champagne was forming beside Lady Masters's plate, and finding its way in a thin thread of gold along the cloth. There was a moment's silence, and then she advanced again out of the shadows with her curious soft rush. "How clumsy I am!" she murmured. "My arm—My bracelet! I—I'm so sorry!" She looked swiftly about her, and then at Burnaby. "Oh, no! I'm not cut, thanks!" Her eyes held a pained embarrassment. He caught the look, and her eyelids flickered and fell before his gaze, and then, as the footman repaired the damage, she sank back once more into the half-light beyond the radiance of the candles. "How shy she is!" thought Burnaby. "So many of these English women are. She's an important woman in her own right, too." He studied her furtively.

Into the soft silence came Sir John's carefully modulated voice. "Barbara and I," he explained, "will feel this very much. We both knew Bewsher." His eyes became somber. "This is very distressing," he said abruptly.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Burnaby, and raised his head like an alert hound.

"How odd it all is!" said Mrs. Malcolm. But she was wondering why men are so queer with their wives—resent so much the slightest social clumsiness on their part, while in other women—provided the offense is not too great—it merely amuses them. Even the guarded manners of Sir John had been disturbed. For a moment he had been very angry with the shadow that bore his name; one could tell by the swift glance he had cast in her direction. After all, upsetting a glass of champagne was a very natural sequel to a story such as Burnaby had told, a story about a former acquaintance—perhaps friend.

Sir John thoughtfully helped himself to a spoonful of his dessert before he looked up; when he did so he laid down his spoon and sat back in his chair with the manner of a man who has made a sudden decision. "No," he said, and an unexpected little smile hovered about his lips, "it isn't so odd. Bewsher was rather a figure of a man twenty years ago. Shall I tell you his history?"

To Mrs. Malcolm, watching with alert, humorous eyes, there came a curious impression, faint but distinct, like wind touching her hair; as if, that is, a door into the room had opened and shut. She leaned forward, supporting her chin in her hand.

"Of course," she said.

Sir John twisted between his fingers the stem of his champagne-glass and studied thoughtfully the motes of at the heart of the amber wine. "You see," he began thoughtfully, "it's such a difficult story to tell—difficult because it took twenty-five—and, now that Mr. Burnaby has furnished the sequel, forty-five years—to live; and difficult because it is largely a matter of psychology. I can only give you the high lights, as it were. You must fill in the rest for yourselves. You must imagine, that is, Bewsher and this other fellow—this Morton. I can't give you his real name—it is too important; you would know it. No, it isn't obviously dramatic. And yet—" his voice suddenly became vibrant—"such things compose, as a matter of fact, the real drama of the world. It—" he looked about the table swiftly and leaned forward, and then, as if interrupting himself, "but what *was* obviously dramatic," he said—and the little dancing sparks in the depths of his eyes were peculiarly noticeable—"was the way I, of all people, heard it. Yes. You see, I heard it at a dinner party like this, in London; and Morton—the man himself—told the story." He paused, and with half-closed eyes studied the effect of his announcement.

"You mean—?" asked Burnaby.

"Exactly." Sir John spoke with a certain cool eagerness. "He sat up before all those people and told the inner secrets of his life; and of them all I was the only one who suspected the truth. Of course, he was comparatively safe, none of them knew him well except myself, but think of it! The bravado—the audacity! Rather magnificent, wasn't it?" He sank back once more in his chair.

Mrs. Malcolm agreed. "Yes," she said. "Magnificent and insulting."

Sir John smiled. "My dear lady," he asked, "doesn't life consist largely of insults from the strong to the weak?"

"And were all these people so weak, then?"

"No, in their own way they were fairly important, I suppose, but compared to Morton they were weak—very weak—Ah, yes! I like this custom of smoking at table. Thanks!" He selected a cigarette deliberately, and stooped toward the proffered match. The flame illumined the swarthy curve of his beard and the heavy lines of his dark face. "You see," he began, straightening up in his chair, "the whole thing—that part of it, and the part I'm to tell—is really, if you choose, an allegory of strength, of strength and weakness. On the one side Morton—there's strength, sheer, undiluted power, the thing that runs the world; and on the other Bewsher, the ordinary man, with all his mixed-up ideas of right and wrong and the impossible, confused thing he calls a 'code'—Bewsher, and later on the girl. She too is part of the allegory. She represents—what shall I say? A composite portrait of the ordinary young woman? Religion, I suppose. Worldly religion. The religion of most of my good friends in England. A vague but none the less passionate belief in a heaven populated by ladies and gentlemen who dine out with a God who resembles royalty. And coupled with this religion the girl had, of course, as have most of her class, a very distinct sense of her own importance in the world; not that exactly—personally she was over-modest; a sense rather of her importance as a unit of an important family, and a deep-rooted conviction of the fundamental necessity of unimportant things: parties, and class-worship, and the whole jumbled-up order as it is. The usual young woman, that is, if you lay aside her unusual beauty. And, you see, people like Bewsher and the girl haven't much chance against a man like Morton, have they? Do you remember the girl, my dear?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"Yes," murmured Lady Masters.

"Well, then," continued Sir John, "you must imagine this Morton, an ugly little boy of twelve, going up on a scholarship to a great public school—a rather bitter little boy, without any particular prospects ahead of him except those his scholarship held out; and back of him a poor, stunted life, with a mother in it—a sad dehumanized creature, I gathered, who subsisted on the bounty of a niggardly

brother. And this, you can understand, was the first thing that made Morton hate virtue devoid of strength. His mother, he told me, was the best woman he had ever known. The world had beaten her unmercifully. His earliest recollection was hearing her cry at night.... And there, at the school, he had his first glimpse of the great world that up to then he had only dimly suspected. Dramatic enough in itself, isn't it?—if you can visualize the little dark chap. A common enough drama, too, the Lord knows. We people on top are bequeathing misery to our posterity when we let the Mortons of the world hate the rich. And head and shoulders above the other boys of his age at the school was Bewsher; not that materially, of course, there weren't others more important; Bewsher's family was old and rich as such families go, but he was very much a younger son, and his people lived mostly in the country; yet even then there was something about him—a manner, an adeptness in sports, an unsought popularity, that picked him out; the beginnings of that Norman nose that Mr. Burnaby has mentioned. And here"—Sir John paused and puffed thoughtfully at his cigarette—"is the first high light.

"To begin with, of course, Morton hated Bewsher and all he represented, hated him in a way that only a boy of his nature can; and then, one day—I don't know exactly when it could have been, probably a year or two after he had gone up to school—he began to see quite clearly what this hate meant; began to see that for such as he to hate the Bewshers of the world was the sheerest folly—a luxury far beyond his means. Quaint, wasn't it? In a boy of his age! You can imagine him working it out at night, in his narrow dormitory bed, when the other boys were asleep. You see, he realized, dimly at first, clearly at last, that through Bewsher and his kind lay the hope of Morton and his kind. Nice little boys think the same thing, only they are trained not to admit it. That was the first big moment of Morton's life, and with the determination characteristic of him he set out to accomplish what he had decided. In England we make our future through our friends, in this country you make it through your enemies. But it wasn't easy for Morton; such tasks never are. He had a good many insults to swallow. In the end, however, from being tolerated he came to be indispensable, and from being indispensable eventually to be liked. He had planned his campaign with care. Carefulness, recklessly carried out, has been, I think, the guiding rule of his life. He had modelled himself on Bewsher; he walked like Bewsher; tried to think like Bewsher—that is, in the less important things of life—and, with the divination that marks his type of man, the little money he had, the little money that as a schoolboy he could borrow, he had spent with precision on clothes and other things that brought him personal distinction; in what people call necessities he starved himself. By the time he was ready to leave school you could hardly have told him from the man he had set out to follow: he was equally well-mannered; equally at his ease; if anything, more conscious of prerogative than Bewsher. He had come to spend most of his holidays at Bewsher's great old house in Gloucestershire. That, too, was an illumination. It showed him what money was made for—the sunny quiet of the place, the wheels of a spacious living that ran so smoothly, the long gardens, the inevitableness of it all. Some day, he told himself, he would have just such a house. He has. It is his mistress. The world has not allowed him much of the poetry that, as you must already see, the man has in him; he takes it out on his place.

"It was in Morton's last year at Oxford, just before his graduation, that the second great moment of his life occurred. He had done well at his college, not a poor college either; and all the while, you must remember, he was borrowing money and running up bills. But this didn't bother him. He was perfectly assured in his own mind concerning his future. He had counted costs. In that May, Bewsher, who from school had gone to Sandhurst, came up on a visit with two or three other fledgling officers, and they had a dinner in Morton's rooms. It turned into rather a 'rag,' as those things do, and it was there, across a flower-strewn, wine-stained table, that Morton had his second revelation. He wasn't drunk—he never got drunk; the others were. The thing came in upon him slowly, warmingly, like the breeze that stirred the curtains. He felt himself, as never before, a man. You can see him sitting back in his chair, in the smoke and the noise and the foolish singing, cool, his eyes a little closed. He knew now that he had passed the level of these men; yes, even the shining mark Bewsher had set. He

had gone on, while they had stood still. To him, he suddenly realized, and to such as he, belonged the heritage of the years, not to these men who thought they held it. These old gray buildings stretching away into the May dusk, the history of a thousand years, were his. These sprawled young aristocrats before him—they, whether they eventually came to know it or not, they, and Bewsher with them—would one day do his bidding: come when he beckoned, go when he sent. It was a big thought, wasn't it, for a man of twenty-two?" Sir John paused and puffed at his cigarette.

"That was the second high light," he continued, "and the third did not come until fifteen years later. Bewsher went into the Indian army—his family had ideas of service—and Morton into a banking-house in London. And there, as deliberately as he had taken them up, he laid aside for the time being all the social perquisites which he had with so much pains acquired. Do you know—he told me that for fifteen years not once had he dined out, except when he thought his ambitions would be furthered by so doing, and then, as one turns on a tap, he turned on the charm he now knew himself to possess. It is not astonishing, is it, when you come to think of it, that eventually he became rich and famous? Most people are unwilling to sacrifice their youth to their future. He wasn't. But it wasn't a happy time. He hated it. He paid off his debts, however, and at the end of the fifteen years found himself a big man in a small way, with every prospect of becoming a big man in a big way. Then, of course—such men do—he began to look about him. He wanted wider horizons, he wanted luxury, he wanted a wife; and he wanted them as a starved man wants food. He experienced comparatively little difficulty in getting started. Some of his school and university friends remembered him, and there was a whisper about that he was a man that bore watching. But afterward he stuck. The inner citadel of London is by no means as assailable as the outer fortifications lead one to suppose.

"They say a man never has a desire but there's an angel or a devil to write it down. Morton had hardly made his discovery when Bewsher turned up from India, transferred to a crack cavalry regiment; a sunburnt, cordial Bewsher, devilishly determined to enjoy the fulness of his prime. On his skirts, as he had done once before, Morton penetrated farther and farther into the esoteric heart of society. I'm not sure just how Bewsher felt toward Morton at the time; he liked him, I think; at all events, he had the habit of him. As for Morton, he liked Bewsher as much as he dared; he never permitted himself to like any one too much.

"I don't know how it is with you, but I have noticed again and again that intimate friends are prone to fall in love with the same woman: perhaps it is because they have so many tastes in common; perhaps it is jealousy—I don't know. Anyhow, that is what happened to these two, Morton first, then Bewsher; and it is characteristic that the former mentioned it to no one, while the latter was confidential and expansive. Such men do not deserve women, and yet they are often the very men women fall most in love with. At first the girl had been attracted to Morton, it seems; he intrigued her—no doubt the sense of power about him; but the handsomer man, when he entered the running, speedily drew ahead. You can imagine the effect of this upon her earlier suitor. It was the first rebuff that for a long time had occurred to him in his ordered plan of life. He resented it and turned it over in his mind, and eventually, as it always does to men of his kind, his opportunity came. You see, unlike Bewsher and his class, all his days had been an exercise in the recognition and appreciation of chances. He isolated the inevitable fly in the ointment, and in this particular ointment the fly happened to be Bewsher's lack of money and the education the girl had received. She was poor in the way that only the daughter of a great house can be. To Morton, once he was aware of the fly, and once he had combined the knowledge of it with what these two people most lacked, it was a simple thing. They lacked, as you have already guessed, courage and directness. On Morton's side was all the dunder-headism of an aristocracy, all its romanticism, all its gross materialism, all its confusion of ideals. But you mustn't think that he, Morton, was cold or objective in all this: far from it; he was desperately in love with the girl himself, and he was playing his game like a man in a corner—all his wits about him, but fever in his heart.

"There was the situation, an old one—a girl who dare not marry a poor man, and a poor man cracking his brains to know where to get money from. I dare say Bewsher never questioned the rightness of it all—he was too much in love with the girl, his own training had been too similar. And Morton, hovering on the outskirts, talked—to weak people the most fatal doctrine in the world—the doctrine of power, the doctrine that each man and woman can have just what they want if they will only get out and seek it. That's true for the big people; for the small it usually spells death. They falter on methods. They are too afraid of unimportant details. His insistence had its results even more speedily than he had hoped. Before long the girl, too, was urging Bewsher on to effort. It isn't the first time goodness has sent weakness to the devil. Meanwhile the instigator dropped from his one-time position of tentative lover to that of adviser in particular. It was just the position that at the time he most desired.

"Things came to a head on a warm night in April. Bewsher dropped in upon Morton in his chambers. Very handsome he looked, too, I dare say, in his evening clothes, with an opera-coat thrown back from his shoulders. I remember well myself his grand air, with a touch of cavalry swagger about it. I've no doubt he leaned against the chimney-piece and tapped his leg with his stick. And the upshot of it was that he wanted money.

"Oh, no! not a loan. It wasn't as bad as that. He had enough to screw along with himself; although he was frightfully in debt. He wanted a big sum. An income. To make money, that was. He didn't want to go into business if he could help it; hadn't any ability that way; hated it. But perhaps Morton could put him in the way of something? He didn't mind chances."

"Do you see?" Sir John leaned forward. "And he never realized the vulgarity of it—that product of five centuries, that English gentleman. Never realized the vulgarity of demanding of life something for nothing; of asking from a man as a free gift what that man had sweated for and starved for all his life; yes, literally, all his life. It was an illumination, as Morton said, upon that pitiful thing we call 'class.' He demanded all this as his right, too; demanded power, the one precious possession. Well, the other man had his code as well, and the first paragraph in it was that a man shall get only what he works for. Can you imagine him, the little ugly man, sitting at his table and thinking all this? And suddenly he got to his feet. 'Yes,' he said, 'I'll make you a rich man.' But he didn't say he would keep him one. That was the third high light—the little man standing where all through the ages had stood men like him, the secret movers of the world, while before them, supplicating, had passed the beauty and the pride of their times. In the end they all beg at the feet of power—the kings and the fighting men. And yet, although this was the great, hidden triumph of his life, and, moreover, beyond his hopes a realization of the game he had been playing—for it put Bewsher, you see, utterly in his power—Morton said at the moment it made him a little sick. It was too crude; Bewsher's request too unashamed; it made suddenly too cheap, since men could ask for it so lightly, all the stakes for which he, Morton, had sacrificed the slow minutes and hours of his life. And then, of course, there was this as well: Bewsher had been to Morton an ideal, and ideals can't die, even the memory of them, without some pain."

Mrs. Malcolm, watching with lips a little parted, said to herself: "He has uncoiled too much."

"Yes"—Sir John reached out his hand and, picking up a long-stemmed rose from the table, began idly to twist it in his fingers. "And that was the end. From then on the matter was simple. It was like a duel between a trained swordsman and a novice; only it wasn't really a duel at all, for one of the antagonists was unaware that he was fighting. I suppose that most people would call it unfair. I have wondered. And yet Bewsher, in a polo game, or in the game of social life, would not have hesitated to use all the skill and craft he knew. But, you say, he would not have played against beginners. Well, he had asked himself into this game; he had not been invited. And so, all through that spring and into the summer and autumn the three-cornered contest went on, and into the winter and on to the spring beyond. Unwittingly, the girl was playing more surely than ever into Morton's hand. The increasing number of Bewsher's platitudes about wealth, about keeping up tradition, about

religion, showed that. He even talked vaguely about giving up the army and going into business. 'It must have its fascinations, you know,' he remarked lightly. In the eyes of both of them Morton had become sort of fairy godfather—a mysterious, wonderful gnome at whose beck gold leaped from the mountainside. It was just the illusion he wished to create. In the final analysis the figure of the gnome is the most beloved figure in the rotten class to which we belong.

"And then, just as spontaneously as it had come, Bewsher's money began to melt away—slowly at first; faster afterward until, finally, he was back again to his original income. This was a time of stress, of hurried consultations, of sympathy on the part of Morton, of some rather ugly funk on the part of Bewsher; and Morton realized that in the eyes of the girl he was rapidly becoming once more the dominant figure. It didn't do him much good"—Sir John broke the stem of the rose between his fingers.

"Soon there was an end to it all. There came, finally, a very unpleasant evening. This too was in April; April a year after Bewsher's visit to Morton's chambers, only this time the scene was laid in an office. Bewsher had put a check on the desk. 'Here,' he said, 'that will tide me over until I can get on my feet,' and his voice was curiously thick; and Morton, looking down, had seen that the signature wasn't genuine—a clumsy business done by a clumsy man—and, despite all his training, from what he said, a little cold shiver had run up and down his back. This had gone farther than he had planned. But he made no remark, simply pocketed the check, and the next day settled out of his own pockets Bewsher's sorry affairs; put him back, that is, where he had started, with a small income mortgaged beyond hope. Then he sent a note to the girl requesting an interview on urgent business. She saw him that night in her drawing-room. She was very lovely. Morton was all friendly sympathy. It wasn't altogether unreal, either. I think, from what he told me, he was genuinely touched. But he felt, you know—the urge, the goad, of his own career. His kind do. Ultimately they are not their own masters. He showed the girl the check—not at first, you understand, but delicately, after preliminary discussion; reluctantly upon repeated urging. 'What was he to do? What would she advise? Bewsher was safe, of course; he had seen to that; but the whole unintelligible, shocking aspect of the thing!' He tore the check up and threw it in the fire. He was not unaware that the girl's eyes admired him. It was a warm night. He said good-by and walked home along the deserted street. He remembered, he told me, how sweet the trees smelled. He was not happy. You see, Bewsher had been the nearest approach to a friend he had ever had.

"That practically finished the sordid business. What the girl said to Bewsher Morton never knew; he trusted to her conventionalized religion and her family pride to break Bewsher's heart, and to Bewsher's sentimentality to eliminate him forever from the scene. In both surmises he was correct; he was only not aware that at the same time the girl had broken her own heart. He found that out afterward. And Bewsher eliminated himself more thoroughly than necessary. I suppose the shame of the thing was to him like a blow to a thoroughbred, instead of an incentive, as it would have been to a man of coarser fibre. He went from bad to worse, resigned from his regiment, finally disappeared. Personally, I had hoped that he had begun again somewhere on the outskirts of the world. But he isn't that sort. There's not much of the Norman king to him except his nose. The girl married Morton. He gave her no time to recover from her gratitude. He felt very happy, he told me, the day of his wedding, very elated. It was one of those rare occasions when he felt that the world was a good place. Another high light, you see. And it was no mean thing, if you consider it, for a man such as he to marry the daughter of a peer, and at the same time to love her. He was not a gentleman, you understand, he could never be that—it was the one secret thing that always hurt him—no amount of brains, no amount of courage could make him what he wasn't; he never lied to himself as most men do; so he had acquired a habit of secretly triumphing over those who possessed the gift. The other thing that hurt him was when, a few months later, he discovered that his wife still loved Bewsher and always would. And that"—Sir John picked up the broken rose again—"is, I suppose, the end of the story."

There was a moment's silence and then Burnaby lifted his pointed chin. "By George!" he said, "it *is* interesting to know how things really happen, isn't it? But I think—you have, haven't you, left out the real point. Do you—would you mind telling just why you imagine Morton did this thing? Told his secret before all those people? It wasn't like him, was it?"

Sir John slowly lighted another cigarette, and then he turned to Burnaby and smiled. "Yes," he said, "it was extremely like him. Still, it's very clever of you, very clever. Can't you guess? It isn't so very difficult."

"No," said Burnaby, "I can't guess at all."

"Well, then, listen." And to Mrs. Malcolm it seemed as if Sir John had grown larger, had merged in the shadows about him; at least he gave that impression, for he sat up very straight and threw back his shoulders. For a moment he hesitated, then he began, "You must go back to the dinner I was describing," he said—"the dinner in London. I too was intrigued as you are, and when it was over I followed Morton out and walked with him toward his club. And, like you, I asked the question. I think that he had known all along that I suspected; at all events, it is characteristic of the man that he did not try to bluff me. He walked on for a little while in silence, and then he laughed abruptly. 'Yes,' he said, 'I'll tell you. Yes. Just this. What there is to be got, I've got; what work can win I've won; but back of it all there's something else, and back even of that there's a careless god who gives his gifts where they are least deserved. That's one reason why I talked as I did to-night. To all of us—the men like me—there comes in the end a time when we realize that what a man can do we can do, but that love, the touch of other people's minds, these two things are the gifts of the careless god. And it irritates us, I suppose, irritates us! We want them in a way that the ordinary man who has them cannot understand. We want them as damned souls in hell want water. And sometimes the strain's too much. It was to-night. To touch other minds, even for a moment, even if they hate you while you are doing it, that's the thing! To lay yourself, just once, bare to the gaze of ordinary people! With the hope, perhaps, that even then they may still find in you something to admire or love. Self-revelation! Every man confesses sometime. It happened that I chose a dinner party. Do you understand?'" It was almost as if Sir John himself had asked the question.

"And then"—he was speaking in his usual calm tones again—"there happened a curious thing, a very curious thing, for Morton stopped and turned toward me and began to laugh. I thought he would never stop. It was rather uncanny, under the street lamp there, this usually rather quiet man. 'And that,' he said at length, 'that's only half the story. The cream of it is this: the way I myself felt, sitting there among all those soft, easily lived people. That's the cream of it. To flout them, to sting them, to laugh at them, to know you had more courage than all of them put together, you who were once so afraid of them! To feel that—even if they knew it was about yourself you were talking—that even then they were afraid of you, and would to-morrow ask you back again to their houses. That's power! That's worth doing! After all, you can keep your love and your sympathy and your gentlemen; it's only to men like me, men who've sweated and come up, that moments arise such as I've had to-night.' And then, 'It's rather a pity,' he said, after a pause, 'that of them all you alone knew of whom I was talking. Rather a pity, isn't it?'" Sir John hesitated and looked about the table. "It was unusual, wasn't it?" he said at length gently. "Have I been too dramatic?"

In the little silence that followed, Mrs. Malcolm leaned forward, her eyes starry. "I would rather," she said, "talk to Bewsher in his teepee than talk to Morton with all his money."

Sir John looked at her and smiled—his charming smile. "Oh, no, you wouldn't," he said. "Oh, no! We say those things, but we don't mean them. If you sat next to Morton at dinner you'd like him; but as for Bewsher you'd despise him, as all right-minded women despise a failure. Oh, no; you'd prefer Morton."

"Perhaps you're right," sighed Mrs. Malcolm; "pirates are fascinating, I suppose." She arose to her feet. Out of the shadows Lady Masters advanced to meet her. "She *is* like a mist," thought Mrs. Malcolm. "Exactly like a rather faint mist."

Burnaby leaned over and lit a cigarette at one of the candles. "And, of course," he said quietly, without raising his head, "the curious thing is that this fellow Morton, despite all his talk of power, in the end is merely a ghost of Bewsher, after all, isn't he?"

Sir John turned and looked at the bowed sleek head with a puzzled expression. "A ghost!" he murmured. "I don't think I quite understand."

"It's very simple," said Burnaby, and raised his head. "Despite all Morton has done, in the things worth while, in the things he wants the most, he can at best be only a shadow of the shadow Bewsher has left—a shadow of a man to the woman who loves Bewsher, a shadow of a friend to the men who liked Bewsher, a shadow of a gentleman to the gentlemen about him. A ghost, in other words. It's the inevitable end of all selfishness. I think Bewsher has rather the best of it, don't you?"

"I—I had never thought of it in quite that light," said Sir John, and followed Mrs. Malcolm.

They went into the drawing-room beyond—across a hallway, and up a half-flight of stairs, and through glass doors. "Play for us!" said Mrs. Malcolm, and Burnaby, that remarkable young man, sat down to the piano and for perhaps an hour made the chords sob to a strange music, mostly his own.

"That's Bewsher!" he said when he was through, and had sat back on his stool, and was sipping a long-neglected cordial.

"Br-r-r-!" shivered Mrs. Selden from her place by the fire. "How unpleasant you are!"

Sir John looked troubled. "I hope," he said, "my story hasn't depressed you too much. Burnaby's was really worse, you know. Well, I must be going." He turned to Mrs. Malcolm. "You are one of the few women who can make me sit up late."

He bade each in turn good-night in his suave, charming, slightly Hebraic manner. To Burnaby he said: "Thank you for the music. Improvisation is perhaps the happiest of gifts."

But Burnaby for once was awkward. He was watching Sir John's face with the curious, intent look of a forest animal that so often possessed his long, dark eyes. Suddenly he remembered himself. "Oh, yes," he said hastily, "I beg your pardon. Thanks, very much."

"Good-night!" Sir John and Lady Masters passed through the glass doors.

Burnaby paused a moment where he had shaken hands, and then, with the long stride characteristic of him, went to the window and, drawing aside the curtain, peered into the darkness beyond. He stood listening until the purr of a great motor rose and died on the snow-muffled air. "He's gone!" he said, and turned back into the room. He spread his arms out and dropped them to his sides. "Swastika!" he said. "And God keep us from the evil eye!"

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Malcolm.

"Sir John," said Burnaby. "He has 'a bad heart.'"

"Stop talking your Indian talk and tell us what you mean."

Burnaby balanced himself on the hearth. "Am I to understand you don't know?" he asked. "Well, Morton's Masters, and 'the girl's' Lady Masters, and Bewsher—well, he's just a squaw-man."

"I don't believe it!" said Mrs. Malcolm. "He wouldn't dare."

"Wouldn't dare?" Burnaby laughed shortly. "My dear Minna, he'd dare anything if it gave him a sense of power."

"But why—why did he choose us? We're not so important as all that?"

"Because—well, Bewsher's name came up. Because, well, you heard what he said—self-revelation—men who had sweated. Because—" suddenly Burnaby took a step forward and his jaw shot out—"because that shadow of his, that wife of his, broke a champagne-glass when I said Geoffrey Boisselier Bewsher; broke her champagne-glass and, I've no doubt, cried out loud in her heart. Power can't buy love—no; but power can stamp to death anything that won't love it. That's Masters. I can tell a timber-wolf far off. Can you see him now in his motor? He'll have turned the lights out, and she—his wife—will be looking out of the window at the snow. All you can see of him would be his nose and his beard and the glow of his cigar—except his smile. You could see that when the car passed a corner lamp, couldn't you?"

"I don't believe it yet," said Mrs. Malcolm. "It's too preposterous."

LONELY PLACES ⁴

By FRANCIS BUZZELL

From *The Pictorial Review*

She was not quite forty years old, but so aged was she in appearance that another twenty-five years would not find her perceptibly older. And to the people of Almont she was still Abbie Snover, or "that Snover girl." Age in Almont is not reckoned in years, but by marriage, and by children, and grandchildren.

Nearly all the young men of Abbie's generation had gone to the City, returning only in after years, with the intention of staying a week or two weeks, and leaving at the end of a day, or two days. So Abbie never married.

It had never occurred to Abbie to leave Almont because all the young men had gone away. She had been born in the big house at the foot of Tillson Street; she had never lived anywhere else; she had never slept anywhere but in the black walnut bed in the South bedroom.

At the age of twenty-five, Abbie inherited the big house, and with it hired-man Chris. He was part of her inheritance. Her memory of him, like her memory of the big house, went back as far as her memory of herself.

Every Winter evening, between seven and eight o'clock, Abbie lighted the glass-handled lamp, placed it on the marble-topped table in the parlor window, and sat down beside it. The faint light of this lamp, gleaming through the snow-hung, shelving evergreens, was the only sign that the big house was there, and occupied. When the wind blew from the West she could occasionally hear a burst of laughter from the boys and girls sliding down Giddings's Hill; the song of some young farmer driving home. She thought of the Spring, when the snow would disappear, and the honeysuckle would flower, and the wrens would again occupy the old teapots hung in the vines of the dining-room porch.

The things that made the people of Almont interesting to each other and drew them together meant nothing to Abbie Snover. When she had become too old to be asked in marriage by any one, she had stopped going to dances and to sleigh-rides, and no one had asked her why. Then she had left the choir.

Except when she went to do her marketing, Abbie was never seen on the streets.

For fifteen years after Amos Snover died, Abbie and Old Chris lived alone in the big house. Every Saturday morning, as her mother had done before her, Abbie went to the grocery store, to the butcher shop, and to "Newberry's." She always walked along the East side of Main Street, Old Chris, with the market-basket, following about three feet behind her. And every Saturday night Old Chris went down-town to sit in the back of Pot Lippincott's store and visit with Owen Frazer, who drove in from the sixty acres he farmed as a "renter" at Mile Corners. Once every week Abbie made a batch of cookies, cutting the thin-rolled dough into the shape of leaves with an old tin cutter that had been her mother's. She stored the cookies in the shiny tin pail that stood on the shelf in the clothes-press of the downstairs bedroom, because that was where her mother had always kept them, to be handy and yet out of reach of the hired help. And when Jennie Sanders's children came to her door on their way home from school she gave them two cookies each, because her mother had always given her two.

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Once every three months "the Jersey girls," dressed in black broadcloth, with black, fluted ruffles around their necks, and black-flowered bonnets covering their scanty hair, turned the corner at Chase's Lane, walked three blocks to the foot of Tilson Street, and rang Abbie Snover's door-bell.

As Old Chris grew older and less able, Abbie was compelled to close off first one room and then another; but Old Chris still occupied the back chamber near the upstairs woodroom, and Abbie still slept in the South bedroom.

Early one October afternoon, Jim East, Almont's express agent and keeper of the general store, drove his hooded delivery cart up to the front steps of the big house. He trembled with excitement as he climbed down from the seat.

"Abbie Snover! Ab—bie!" he called. "I got somethin' for you! A package all the way from China! Just you come an' look!"

Jim East lifted the package out of the delivery cart, carried it up the steps, and set it down at Abbie's feet.

"Just you look, Abbie! That there crate's made of little fishin' poles, an' what's inside's all wrapped up in Chinee mats!"

Old Chris came around from the back of the house. Jim East grabbed his arm and pointed at the bamboo crate:

"Just you put your nose down, Chris, an' smell. Ain't that foreign?"

Abbie brought her scissors. Carefully she removed the red and yellow labels.

"There's American writin' on 'em, too," Jim East hastened to explain, "'cause otherwise how'd I know who it was *for*, hey?"

Abbie carried the labels into the parlor and looked for a safe place for them. She saw the picture-album and put them in it. Then she hurried back to the porch. Old Chris opened one end of the crate.

"It's a plant," Jim East whispered; "a Chinee plant."

"It's a dwarf orange-tree," Old Chris announced. "See, it says so on that there card."

Abbie carried the little orange-tree into the parlor. Who could have sent it to her? There was no one she knew, away off there in China!

"You be careful of that bamboo and the wrappings," she warned Old Chris. "I'll make something decorative-like out of them."

Abbie waited until Jim East drove away in his delivery cart. Then she sat down at the table in the parlor and opened the album. She found her name on one of the labels—Abbie Snover, Almont, Michigan, U. S. A. It seemed queer to her that her name had come all the way from China. On the card that said that the plant was a dwarf orange-tree she found the name—Thomas J. Thorington. Thomas? Tom? Tom Thorington! Why, the last she had heard of Tom had been fifteen years back. He had gone out West. She had received a picture of him in a uniform, with a gun on his shoulder. She dimly recollected that he had been a guard at some penitentiary. How long ago it seemed! He must have become a missionary or something, to be away off in China. And he had remembered her! She sat for a long time looking at the labels. She wondered if the queer Chinese letters spelled Abbie Snover, Almont, Michigan. She opened the album again and hunted until she found the picture of Tom Thorington in his guard's uniform. Then she placed the labels next to the picture, closed the album, and carefully fastened the adjustable clasp.

Under Abbie's constant attention, the little orange-tree thrived. A tiny green orange appeared. Day by day she watched it grow, looking forward to the time when it would become large and yellow. The days grew shorter and colder, but she did not mind; every week the orange grew larger. After the first snow, she moved the tree into the down-stairs bedroom. She placed it on a little stand in the South window. The inside blinds, which she had always kept as her mother liked them best—the lower blinds closed, the top blinds opened a little to let in the morning light—she now threw wide open so that the tree would get all of the sun. And she kept a fire in the small sheet-iron stove, for fear that the old, drafty wood furnace might not send up a steady enough heat through the register.

When the nights became severe, she crept down the narrow, winding stairs, and through the cold, bare halls, to put an extra chunk of hardwood into the stove. Every morning she swept and dusted the room; the ashes and wood dirt around the stove gave her something extra to do near the orange-tree. She removed the red and white coverlet from the bed, and put in its place the fancy patch-quilt with the green birds and the yellow flowers, to make the room look brighter.

"Abbie Snover loves that orange-tree more'n anything in the world," Old Chris cautioned the children when they came after cookies, "an' don't you dare touch it, even with your little finger."

The growing orange was as wonderful to the children as it was to Abbie. Instead of taking the cookies and hurrying home, they stood in front of the tree, their eyes round and big. And one day, when Abbie went to the clothes-press to get the cookie-pail, Bruce Sanders snipped the orange from the tree.

The children were unnaturally still when Abbie came out of the clothes-press. They did not rush forward to get the cookies. Abbie looked quickly at the tree; the pail of cookies dropped from her hands. She grabbed the two children nearest and shook them until their heads bumped together. Then she drove them all in front of her to the door and down the path to the gate, which she slammed shut behind them.

Once outside the gate the children ran, yelling: "Ab-bie Sno-ver, na—aa—ah! Ab-bie Sno-ver, na—aa—ah!"

Abbie, her hands trembling, her eyes hot, went back into the house. That was what came of letting them take fruit from the trees and vines in the yard; of giving them cookies every time they rang her door-bell. Well, there would be no more cookies, and Old Chris should be told never to let them come into the yard again.

That evening, when the metallic hiccough of the well pump on the kitchen porch told her that Old Chris was drawing up fresh water for the night, Abbie went out into the kitchen to make sure that he placed one end of the prop under the knob of the kitchen door and the other end against the leg of the kitchen table.

"It'll freeze afore mornin'," said Old Chris.

"Yes," Abbie answered.

But she did not get up in the night to put an extra chunk of wood in the stove of the downstairs bedroom.

"Ab-bie Sno-ver, na—aa—ah! Ab-bie Sno-ver, na—aa—ah!"

Old Chris stopped shoveling snow to shake his fist at the yelling children.

"Your Mas'll fix you, if you don't stop that screechin'!"

And they answered: "Ab-bie Sno-ver, an' old Chris! Ab-bie Sno-ver, an' old Chris!"

Every day they yelled the two names as they passed the big house. They yelled them on their way to and from school, and on their way to Giddings's Hill to slide. The older boys took it up, and yelled it when they saw Abbie and Old Chris on Main Street Saturday mornings. And finally they rimed it into a couplet,

"Ab-bie Sno-ver, an' Old Chris—
We saw Chris an' Ab-bie kiss!"

It was too much. Abbie went to Hugh Perry's mother.

Mrs. Perry defended her young son. "He couldn't have done it," she told Abbie. "He ain't that kind of a boy, and you can just tell that Old Chris I said so. I guess it must be true, the way you're fussin' round!"

Mrs. Perry slammed the door in Abbie's face. Then she whipped her young son, and hated Abbie and Old Chris because they were responsible for it.

"That Abbie Snover came to my house," Mrs. Perry told Mrs. Rowles, "an' said my Hugh had been a-couplin' her name with Old Chris's in a nasty way. An' I told her—"

"The idea! the idea!" Mrs. Rowles interrupted.

"An' I told her it must be so, an' I guess it is," Mrs. Perry concluded.

Mrs. Rowles called upon Pastor Lucus's wife.

"Abbie Snover an' Old Chris was seen kissin'."

"It's scandalous," Mrs. Lucas told the pastor. "The town shouldn't put up with it a minute longer. That's what comes of Abbie Snover not coming to church since her Ma died."

On Saturday mornings when Abbie went down-town followed by Old Chris, the women eyed her coldly, and the faces of the men took on quizzical, humorous expressions. Abbie could not help but notice it; she was disturbed. The time for "the Jersey girls" to call came around. Every afternoon Abbie sat in the window and watched for them to turn the corner at Chase's Lane. She brought out the polished apples which she kept in the clothes-press all ready for some one, but "the Jersey girls" did not come.

"You haven't heard of anybody being sick at the Jersey house, have you, Chris?"

"Um? Nope!"

"Haven't seen Josie or Em Jersey anywhere lately?"

"Seen 'em at the post-office night afore last."

"H'mp!"

Abbie pushed the kettle to the front of the kitchen stove, poked up the fire, and put in fresh sticks of wood. When the water boiled she poured it into a blue-lacquered pail with yellow bands around the rim, carried it up the steep back stairs, and got out fresh stockings.

An hour later Old Chris saw her climbing up Tillson street. He scratched his head and frowned.

Abbie turned the corner at Chase's Lane. The snow, driven by the wind, blinded her. She almost bumped into Viny Freeman.

"My, Viny! What you doing out on such a day?"

Viny Freeman passed her without answering.

"Seems she didn't see me," Abbie muttered. "What can she be doing away down here on such a day? Must be something special to bring her out of her lonely old house with her lame side. My! I almost bumped that hand she's always holding up her pain with. My!"

Abbie turned into the Jersey gate and climbed the icy steps, hanging onto the railing with both hands. She saw Em Jersey rise from her chair in the parlor and go into the back sitting-room. Abbie pulled the bell-knob and waited. No one answered. She pulled it again. No answer. She rapped on the door with her knuckles. Big Mary, the Jersey hired girl, opened the door part way.

"They ain't to home."

"Ain't to home?" exclaimed Abbie. "My land! Didn't I just see Em Jersey through the parlor window?"

"No'm, you never did. They ain't to home."

"Well, I never! And their Ma and mine was cousins! They ain't sick or nothing? Well!"

The snow melted; the streets ran with water and then froze. Old Chris no longer came into the parlor in the evening to sit, his hands clasped over his thin stomach, his bald head bent until his chin rested upon the starched neckband of his shirt.

They ate in silence the meals which Abbie prepared: Old Chris at one end of the long table, and Abbie at the other end.

In silence they went about their accustomed tasks.

Abbie, tired with a new weariness, sat in her chair beside the marble-topped table. The village was talking about her; she knew it; she felt it all around her. Well, let them talk!

But one day Almont sent a committee to her. It was composed of one man and three women. Abbie saw them when they turned in at her gate—Pastor Lucus Lorina Inman, Antha Ewell, and Aunt Alphie Newberry.

Abbie walked to the center of the parlor and stood there, her hands clenched, her face set. The door-bell rang; for a moment her body swayed. Then she went into the bay window and drew the blinds aside. Antha Ewell saw her and jerked Pastor Lucus's arm. Pastor Lucus turned and caught sight of Abbie; he thought that she had not heard the bell, so he tapped the door panel with his fingers and nodded his head at her invitingly, as if to say:

"See, we're waiting for you to let us in." Abbie's expression did not change. Pastor Lucus tapped at the door again, this time hesitantly, and still she looked at them with unseeing eyes. He tapped a third time, then turned and looked at the three women. Aunt Alphie Newberry tugged, at his arm, and the committee of four turned about without looking at Abbie, and walked down the steps.

A few minutes later Abbie heard the door between the parlor and dining-room open. Old Chris came in. For a moment or two neither spoke. Old Chris fingered his cap.

"Abbie, I lived here forty-two years. I was here when you was born. I carried you around in my arms a little bit of thing an' made you laugh."

Abbie did not turn away from the window.

"I know what they came for," Old Chris continued. "Your Ma—your Ma, she'd never thought I'd have to go away from here."

Abbie could not answer him.

"I don't know who'll keep the furnace a-goin' when I'm gone, nor fill the up-stairs woodroom." Still no answer.

"I'm old now—I'll go to Owen Frazer's farm—down to Mile Corners. He'll have some work I can do."

Old Chris stroked his baggy cheeks with trembling hands. Abbie still looked out of the window.

"I'm a-goin' down to the post-office now," said Old Chris, as he turned and went to the door. "Be there anything you want?"

Abbie shook her head; she could not find words. As Old Chris went down the hall she heard him mumble, "I don't know what she'll do when I'm gone."

That night Abbie sat in the parlor window longer than usual. It was a white night; wet snow had been falling heavily all day. Some time between eight and nine o'clock she arose from her chair and went into the long, narrow dining-room. The pat-pat of her slippers aroused Old Chris from his nodding over the *Farm Herald*. Finding that the hot air was not coming up strong through the register over which he sat, the old man slowly pushed his wool-socked feet into felt-lined overshoes and tramped down into the cellar, picking up the kitchen lamp as he went. Abbie followed as far as the kitchen. The pungent dry-wood smell that came up the stairs when Old Chris swung open the door of the wood cellar made her sniff. She heard the sounds as he loaded the wheelbarrow with the sticks of quartered hardwood; the noise of the wheel bumping over the loose boards as he pushed his load into the furnace-room. She went back into the parlor and stood over the register. Hollow sounds came up through the pipe as Old Chris leveled the ashes in the fire-box and threw in the fresh sticks.

When Old Chris came up from the cellar and went out onto the porch to draw up fresh water for the night, Abbie went back into the kitchen.

"It's snowin' hard out," said Old Chris.

"Yes," Abbie answered.

She led the way back into the dining-room. Old Chris placed the kitchen lamp on the stand under the fruit picture and waited. For a few moments they stood in the blast of hot air rising from the register. Then Abbie took up the larger of the two lamps. Through the bare, high-ceilinged rooms she went, opening and closing the heavy doors; on through the cold, empty hall, up the stairs, into

the South bedroom. While she was closing the blinds she heard Old Chris stumble up the back stairs and into the chamber he had occupied ever since she could remember.

The night after Old Chris had gone, Abbie took the brass dinner-bell from the pantry shelf and set it on the chair beside her bed. Over the back of the chair she placed her heavy, rabbit-lined coat; it would be handy if any one disturbed her. Once or twice when she heard sounds, she put out her hand and touched the bell; but the sounds did not recur. The next night she tried sleeping in the down-stairs bedroom. The blue-and-gray carpet, the blue fixings on the bureau and commode, the blue bands around the wash-bowl and pitcher—all faded and old-looking—reminded her of her mother and father, and would not let her sleep. On the wall in front of her was a picture in a black frame of a rowboat filled with people. It was called "From Shore to Shore." Trying not to see it, her eyes were caught by a black-and-white print in a gilt frame, called "The First Steps." How she had loved the picture when she was a little girl; her mother had explained it to her many times—the bird teaching its little ones to fly; the big, shaggy dog encouraging its waddling puppies; the mother coaxing her baby to walk alone.

At midnight Abbie got out of bed, picked up the dinner-bell by the clapper, and went back up-stairs to the South bedroom.

The tall, bare walls of the big house, the high ceilings with their centerpieces of plaster fruits and flowers, the cold whiteness, closed her in. Having no one to talk to, she talked to herself: "It's snowin' hard out—why! that was what Old Chris said the night before he went away." She began to be troubled by a queer, detached feeling; she knew that she had mislaid something, but just what she could not remember. Forebodings came to her, distressing, disquieting. There would never be any one for her to speak to—never! The big house grew terrible; the rooms echoed her steps. She would have given everything for a little house of two or three small, low-ceilinged rooms close to the sidewalk on a street where people passed up and down.

A night came when Abbie forgot that Old Chris had gone away. She had been sitting in her chair beside the marble-topped table, staring out into the night. All day the wind had blown; snow was piled high around the porch. Her thoughts had got back to her childhood. Somehow they had centered around the old grandfather who, years before, had sat in the same window. She saw him in his chair; heard his raspy old voice, "I married Jane sixty-eight an' a half years ago, an' a half year in a man's life is something, I'll bet you. An' I buried her thirty years ago, an' that's a long time, too. We never tore each other's shirts. Jane wanted to live a quiet life. She wanted one child, an' she was tenacious 'bout that. She never wanted any more, an' she had three, an' one of 'em was your Ma. She never wanted to be seen out with a baby in her arms, Jane didn't. I made her get bundled up once or twice, an' I hitched up the horse an' took her ridin' in my phaeton that cost two hundred dollars.—You'll be in your dotage some day, Abbie. I've been in my dotage for years now.—Oh, I altered my life to fit Jane's. I expected I had a wife to go out and see the neighbors with. By gosh! we never went across the street—I'll take on goodness some day, Abbie. By goll! that's all I'm good for to take on now.—Oh, it beat all what a boy I was. I and Mother broke our first team of oxen. When you get children, Abbie, let them raise themselves up. They'll do better at it than a poor father or mother can. I had the finest horses and the best phaeton for miles around, but you never saw a girl a-ridin' by the side of me.—Some men can't work alone, Abbie. They got to have the women around or they quit. Don't you get that kind of a man, Abbie.—Oh, she was renowned was my old mare, Kit. You never got to the end of her. She lived to be more'n thirty year, an' she raised fourteen colts. She was a darned good little thing she was. I got her for a big black mare that weighed fourteen hundred pound, an' I made 'em give me ten dollars, too, an' I got her colt with her—"

Abbie suddenly realized that she was shivering; that her feet were cold; that it was long after nine o'clock. Old Chris must have fallen asleep in his chair. She went to the dining-room door and opened it; the dining-room was dark. Why?—why, of course! Old Chris had been gone for more

than three weeks. She took hold of the door to steady herself; her hands shook. How could she have forgotten? Was she going crazy? Would the loneliness come to that?

Abbie went to bed. All night she lay awake, thinking. The thoughts came of themselves. What the town had to say didn't matter after all; the town had paid her no attention for years; it was paying her no attention now. Why, then, should she live without any one to speak to? "I'll go and get Old Chris, that's what I'll do. I won't live here alone any longer." And with this decision she went to sleep.

In the morning when Abbie opened the kitchen door and stepped out onto the porch, frost lay thick upon the well pump.

She drew her shawl close around her and took hold of the pump-handle with her mittened hands. When she had filled the pail she went back into the kitchen. The sound of the wind made her shiver. To walk all the way to Mile Corners on such a day required green tea, so Abbie drank three cupfuls. Then, as on the day when she went out to call upon "the Jersey girls," she carried hot water up-stairs and got out fresh stockings.

About nine o'clock three women of Pastor Lucus's church, standing on the front steps of Aunt Alphie Newberry's house, saw Abbie struggling through a drift.

"Why, there's Abbie Snover," said Jennie Chipman.

"She's turnin' down the road to Mile Corners," added Judie Wing.

Aunt Alphie Newberry opened the door to the three women:

"Whatever's the matter to be bringin' you callin' so early?"

"Ain't you heard yet?"

"We come to tell you."

"My! my! my! What can have happened?" Aunt Alphie exclaimed.

"Old Chris died last night—"

"Just after bein' middlin' sick for a day an'—"

"An' they say," Judie Wing interrupted, "that it was 'cause Abbie Snover turned him out."

Abbie reached the end of the town sidewalk. Lifting her skirts high, she waded through the deep snow to the rough-rutted track left by the farmers' sleighs. Every little while she had to step off the road into the deep snow to let a bob-sled loaded high with hay or straw pass on its way into town. Some of the farmers recognized her; they spoke to her with kindly voices, but she made no answer. Walking was hard; Owen Frazer's farm was over the hill; there was a steep climb ahead of her. And besides, Owen Frazer's house was no place for Old Chris. No one knew anything about Owen Frazer and that woman of his; they hadn't been born in Almont. How could she have let Old Chris go down there, anyway?

"Whoa up! Hey! Better climb in, Abbie, an' ride with me. This ain't no day for walkin'. Get up here on the seat. I'll come down an' help you."

Abbie looked up at Undertaker Hopkins. In the box of his funeral wagon was a black coffin with a sprinkling of snow on its top. Abbie shook her head, but did not speak.

"Guess I shouldn't have asked you," Undertaker Hopkins apologized. "Sorry! Get along as fast as you can, Abbie. It's gettin' mighty, all-fired cold. It'll be a little sheltered when you get over the hill."

Undertaker Hopkins drove on. Abbie tried to keep her feet in the fresh track made by the runners. She reached the top of the hill. Owen Frazer's red barn stood up above the snow. Undertaker Hopkins and his funeral wagon had disappeared.

"He must have turned down the Mill Road," Abbie muttered.

She reached the gate in front of the low, one-story farmhouse. A shepherd dog barked as she went up the path. She rapped at the front door. A woman appeared at the window and pointed to the side of the house. Abbie's face expressed surprise and resentment. She backed down the steps and made her way to the back door. The woman, Owen Frazer's wife, let her into the kitchen.

"Owen! Here be Abbie Snover!"

Owen Frazer came in from the front of the house.

"Good day! Didn't expect you here. Pretty cold out, ain't it? Have a chair."

Abbie did not realize how numb the cold had made her body until she tried to sit down.

"Maggie, give her a cup of that hot tea," Owen Frazer continued. "She's been almost froze, an' I guess she'll have a cup of tea. Hey! Miss Snover?"

"I want to talk to Old Chris."

"Talk to Old Chris! Talk to Old Chris, you want to?"

Owen Frazer looked at his wife. Abbie Snover didn't know, yet she had walked all the way to Mile Corners in the cold. He couldn't understand it.

"What'd you come for, anyhow, Abbie Snover?"

"Now, Owen, you wait!" Owen Frazer's wife turned to Abbie:

"Got lonesome, did you, all by yourself in that big barn of a house?"

"I want to talk to Old Chris," Abbie repeated.

"Was you so fond of him, then?"

Abbie made no answer. Owen Frazer went over to the sink and looked out of the window at the bed-tick smoldering on the rubbish heap. Owen Frazer's wife pushed open the door of the sitting-room, then stood back and turned to Abbie:

"You may be fine old family, Abbie Snover, but we're better. You turned Old Chris out, an' now you want to talk to him. All right, talk to him if you want to. He's in the parlor. Go on in now. Talk to him if you want to—go on in!"

The animosity in Mrs. Frazer's voice shook Abbie; she was disturbed; doubt came to her for the first time. As she went through the sitting-room, fear slowed her steps. Perhaps they had turned Old Chris away from her and she would have to go back alone, to live alone, for all the remaining years of her life, in that big house.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS ⁵

By IRVIN S. COBB

From *The Saturday Evening Post*

When Judge Priest, on this particular morning, came puffing into his chambers at the courthouse, looking, with his broad beam and in his costume of flappy, loose white ducks, a good deal like an old-fashioned full-rigger with all sails set, his black shadow, Jeff Poindexter, had already finished the job of putting the quarters to rights for the day. The cedar water bucket had been properly replenished; the jagged flange of a fifteen-cent chunk of ice protruded above the rim of the bucket; and alongside, on the appointed nail, hung the gourd dipper that the master always used. The floor had been swept, except, of course, in the corners and underneath things; there were evidences, in streaky scrolls of fine grit particles upon various flat surfaces, that a dusting brush had been more or less sparingly employed. A spray of trumpet flowers, plucked from the vine that grew outside the window, had been draped over the framed steel engraving of President Davis and his Cabinet upon the wall; and on the top of the big square desk in the middle of the room, where a small section of cleared green-blotter space formed an oasis in a dry and arid desert of cluttered law journals and dusty documents, the morning's mail rested in a little heap.

Having placed his old cotton umbrella in a corner, having removed his coat and hung it upon a peg behind the hall door, and having seen to it that a palm-leaf fan was in arm's reach should he require it, the Judge, in his billowy white shirt, sat down at his desk and gave his attention to his letters. There was an invitation from the Hylan B. Gracey Camp of Confederate Veterans of Eddyburg, asking him to deliver the chief oration at the annual reunion, to be held at Mineral Springs on the twelfth day of the following month; an official notice from the clerk of the Court of Appeals concerning the affirmation of a judgment that had been handed down by Judge Priest at the preceding term of his own court; a bill for five pounds of a special brand of smoking tobacco; a notice of a lodge meeting—altogether quite a sizable batch of mail.

At the bottom of the pile he came upon a long envelope addressed to him by his title, instead of by his name, and bearing on its upper right-hand corner several foreign-looking stamps; they were British stamps, he saw, on closer examination.

To the best of his recollection it had been a good long time since Judge Priest had had a communication by post from overseas. He adjusted his steel-bowed spectacles, ripped the wrapper with care and shook out the contents. There appeared to be several inclosures; in fact, there were several—a sheaf of printed forms, a document with seals attached, and a letter that covered two sheets of paper with typewritten lines. To the letter the recipient gave consideration first. Before he reached the end of the opening paragraph he uttered a profound grunt of surprise; his reading of the rest was frequently punctuated by small exclamations, his face meantime puckering up in interested lines. At the conclusion, when he came to the signature, he indulged himself in a soft low whistle. He read the letter all through again, and after that he examined the forms and the document which had accompanied it.

Chuckling under his breath, he wriggled himself free from the snug embrace of his chair arms and waddled out of his own office and down the long bare empty hall to the office of Sheriff Giles

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Birdsong. Within, that competent functionary, Deputy Sheriff Breck Quarles, sat at ease in his shirt sleeves, engaged, with the smaller blade of his pocketknife, in performing upon his finger nails an operation that combined the fine deftness of the manicure with the less delicate art of the farrier. At the sight of the Judge in the open doorway he hastily withdrew from a tabletop, where they rested, a pair of long thin legs, and rose.

"Mornin', Breck," said Judge Priest to the other's salutation. "No, thank you, son. I won't come in; but I've got a little job for you. I wisht, ef you ain't too busy, that you'd step down the street and see ef you can't find Peep O'Day fur me and fetch him back here with you. It won't take you long, will it?"

"No, suh—not very." Mr. Quarles reached for his hat and snuggled his shoulder holster back inside his unbuttoned waistcoat. "He'll most likely be down round Gafford's stable. Whut's Old Peep been doin', Judge—gettin' himself in contempt of court or somethin'?" He grinned, asking the question with the air of one making a little joke.

"No," vouchsafed the Judge; "he ain't done nothin'. But he's about to have somethin' of a highly onusual nature done to him. You jest tell him I'm wishful to see him right away—that'll be sufficient, I reckon."

Without making further explanation, Judge Priest returned to his chambers and for the third time read the letter from foreign parts. Court was not in session, and the hour was early and the weather was hot; nobody interrupted him. Perhaps fifteen minutes passed. Mr. Quarles poked his head in at the door.

"I found him, suh," the deputy stated. "He's outside here in the hall."

"Much obliged to you, son," said Judge Priest. "Send him on in, will you, please?"

The head was withdrawn; its owner lingered out of sight of His Honor, but within earshot. It was hard to figure the presiding judge of the First Judicial District of the State of Kentucky as having business with Peep O'Day; and, though Mr. Quarles was no eavesdropper, still he felt a pardonable curiosity in whatsoever might transpire. As he feigned an absorbed interest in a tax notice, which was pasted on a blackboard just outside the office door, there entered the presence of the Judge a man who seemingly was but a few years younger than the Judge himself—a man who looked to be somewhere between sixty-five and seventy. There is a look that you may have seen in the eyes of ownerless but well-intentioned dogs—dogs that, expecting kicks as their daily portion, are humbly grateful for kind words and stray bones; dogs that are fairly yearning to be adopted by somebody—by anybody—being prepared to give to such a benefactor a most faithful doglike devotion in return.

This look, which is fairly common among masterless and homeless dogs, is rare among humans; still, once in a while you do find it there too. The man who now timidly shuffled himself across the threshold of Judge Priest's office had such a look out of his eyes. He had a long simple face, partly inclosed in gray whiskers. Four dollars would have been a sufficient price to pay for the garments he stood in, including the wrecked hat he held in his hands and the broken, misshaped shoes on his feet. A purchaser who gave more than four dollars for the whole in its present state of decrepitude would have been but a poor hand at bargaining.

The man who wore this outfit coughed in an embarrassed fashion and halted, fumbling his ruinous hat in his hands.

"Howdy do?" said Judge Priest heartily. "Come in!"

The other diffidently advanced himself a yard or two.

"Excuse me, suh," he said apologetically; "but this here Breck Quarles he come after me and he said ez how you wanted to see me. 'Twas him ez brung me here, suh."

Faintly underlying the drawl of the speaker was just a suspicion—a mere trace, as you might say—of a labial softness that belongs solely and exclusively to the children, and in a diminishing degree to the grandchildren, of native-born sons and daughters of a certain small green isle in the sea. It was not so much a suggestion of a brogue as it was the suggestion of the ghost of a brogue; a brogue

almost extinguished, almost obliterated, and yet persisting through the generations—South of Ireland struggling beneath south of Mason and Dixon's Line.

"Yes," said the Judge; "that's right. I do want to see you." The tone was one that he might employ in addressing a bashful child. "Set down there and make yourself at home."

The newcomer obeyed to the extent of perching himself on the extreme forward edge of a chair. His feet shuffled uneasily where they were drawn up against the cross rung of the chair.

The Judge reared well back, studying his visitor over the tops of his glasses with rather a quizzical look. In one hand he balanced the large envelope which had come to him that morning.

"Seems to me I heared somewheres, years back, that your regular Christian name was Paul—is that right?" he asked.

"Shorely is, suh," assented the ragged man, surprised and plainly grateful that one holding a supremely high position in the community should vouchsafe to remember a fact relating to so inconsequent an atom as himself. "But I ain't heared it fur so long I come mighty nigh furgittin' it sometimes, myself. You see, Judge Priest, when I wasn't nothin' but jest a shaver folks started in to callin' me Peep—on account of my last name bein O'Day, I reckon. They been callin' me so ever since. Fust off, 'twas Little Peep, and then jest plain Peep; and now it's got to be Old Peep. But my real entitled name is Paul, jest like you said, Judge—Paul Felix O'Day."

"Uh-huh! And wasn't your father's name Philip and your mother's name Katherine Dwyer O'Day?"

"To the best of my recollection that's partly so, too, suh. They both of 'em up and died when I was a baby, long before I could remember anything a-tall. But they always told me my paw's name was Phil, or Philip. Only my maw's name wasn't Kath—Kath—wasn't whut you jest now called it, Judge. It was plain Kate."

"Kate or Katherine—it makes no great difference," explained Judge Priest. "I reckon the record is straight this fur. And now think hard and see ef you kin ever remember hearin' of an uncle named Daniel O'Day—your father's brother."

The answer was a shake of the tousled head.

"I don't know nothin' about my people. I only jest know they come over frum some place with a funny name in the Old Country before I was born. The onliest kin I ever had over here was that there no-'count triflin' nephew of mine—Perce Dwyer—him that uster hang round this town. I reckon you call him to mind, Judge?"

The old Judge nodded before continuing:

"All the same, I reckon there ain't no manner of doubt but whut you had an uncle of the name of Daniel. All the evidences would seem to p'int that way. Accordin' to the proofs, this here Uncle Daniel of yours lived in a little town called Kilmare, in Ireland." He glanced at one of the papers that lay on his desktop; then added in a casual tone: "Tell me, Peep, whut are you doin' now fur a livin'?"

The object of this examination grinned a faint grin of extenuation.

"Well, suh, I'm knockin' about, doin' the best I kin—which ain't much. I help out round Gafford's liver' stable, and Pete Gafford he lets me sleep in a little room behind the feed room, and his wife she gives me my vittles. Oncet in a while I git a chancet to do odd jobs fur folks round town—cuttin' weeds and splittin' stove wood and packin' in coal, and sech ez that."

"Not much money in it, is there?"

"No, suh; not much. Folks is more prone to offer me old clothes than they are to pay me in cash. Still, I manage to git along. I don't live very fancy; but, then, I don't starve, and that's more'n some kin say."

"Peep, whut was the most money you ever had in your life—at one time?"

Peep scratched with a freckled hand at his thatch of faded whitish hair to stimulate recollection.

"I reckon not more'n six bits at any one time, suh. Seems like I've sorter got the knack of livin' without money."

"Well, Peep, sech bein' the case, whut would you say ef I was to tell you that you're a rich man?"

The answer came slowly:

"I reckon, suh, ef it didn't sound disrespectful, I'd say you was prankin' with me—makin' fun of me, suh."

Judge Priest bent forward in his chair.

"I'm not prankin' with you. It's my pleasant duty to inform you that at this moment you are the rightful owner of eight thousand pounds."

"Pounds of whut, Judge?" The tone expressed a heavy incredulity.

"Why, pounds in money."

Outside, in the hall, with one ear held conveniently near the crack in the door, Deputy Sheriff Quarles gave a violent start; and then, at once, was torn between a desire to stay and hear more and an urge to hurry forth and spread the unbelievable tidings. After the briefest of struggles the latter inclination won; this news was too marvelously good to keep; surely a harbinger and a herald were needed to spread it broadcast.

Mr. Quarles tiptoed rapidly down the hall. When he reached the sidewalk the volunteer bearer of a miraculous tale fairly ran. As for the man who sat facing the Judge, he merely stared in a dull bewilderment.

"Judge," he said at length, "eight thousand pounds of money oughter make a powerful big pile, oughten it?"

"It wouldn't weigh quite that much ef you put it on the scales," explained His Honor painstakingly. "I mean pounds sterlin'—English money. Near ez I kin figger offhand, it comes in our money to somewheres between thirty-five and forty thousand dollars—nearer forty than thirty-five. And it's yours, Peep—every red cent of it."

"Excuse me, suh, and not meanin' to contradict you, or nothin' like that; but I reckon there must be some mistake. Why, Judge, I don't scursely know anybody that's ez wealthy ez all that, let alone anybody that'd give me sech a lot of money."

"Listen, Peep: This here letter I'm holdin' in my hand came to me by to-day's mail—jest a little spell ago. It's frum Ireland—from the town of Kilmare, where your people came frum. It was sent to me by a firm of barristers in that town—lawyers we'd call 'em. In this letter they ask me to find you and to tell you what's happened. It seems, from whut they write, that your uncle, by name Daniel O'Day, died not very long ago without issue—that is to say, without leavin' any children of his own, and without makin' any will.

"It appears he had eight thousand pounds saved up. Ever since he died those lawyers and some other folks over there in Ireland have been tryin' to find out who that money should go to. They learnt in some way that your father and your mother settled in this town a mighty long time ago, and that they died here and left one son, which is you. All the rest of the family over there in Ireland have already died out, it seems; that natchelly makes you the next of kin and the heir at law, which means that all your uncle's money comes direct to you.

"So, Peep, you're a wealthy man in your own name. That's the news I had to tell you. Allow me to congratulate you on your good fortune."

The beneficiary rose to his feet, seeming not to see the hand the old Judge had extended across the desktop toward him. On his face, of a sudden, was a queer, eager look. It was as though he foresaw the coming true of long-cherished and heretofore unattainable visions.

"Have you got it here, suh?"

He glanced about him as though expecting to see a bulky bundle. Judge Priest smiled.

"Oh, no; they didn't send it along with the letter—that wouldn't be regular. There's quite a lot of things to be done fust. There'll be some proofs to be got up and sworn to before a man called a British consul; and likely there'll be a lot of papers that you'll have to sign; and then all the papers

and the proofs and things will be sent across the ocean. And, after some fees are paid out over there—why, then you'll git your inheritance."

The rapt look faded from the strained face, leaving it downcast. "I'm afeared, then, I won't be able to claim that there money," he said forlornly.

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know how to sign my own name. Raised the way I was, I never got no book learnin'. I can't neither read nor write."

Compassion shadowed the Judge's chubby face; and compassion was in his voice as he made answer:

"You don't need to worry about that part of it. You can make your mark— just a cross mark on the paper, with witnesses present—like this."

He took up a pen, dipped it in the inkwell and illustrated his meaning.

"Yes, suh; I'm glad it kin be done thataway. I always wisht I knowed how to read big print and spell my own name out. I ast a feller oncet to write my name out fur me in plain letters on a piece of paper. I was aimin' to learn to copy it off; but I showed it to one of the hands at the liver' stable and he busted out laughin'. And then I come to find out this here feller had tricked me fur to make game of me. He hadn't wrote my name out a-tall— he'd wrote some dirty words instid. So after that I give up tryin' to educate myself. That was several years back and I ain't tried sence. Now I reckon I'm too old learn.... I wonder, suh—I wonder ef it'll be very long before that there money gits here and I begin to have the spendin' of it?"

"Makin' plans already?"

"Yes, suh," O'Day answered truthfully; "I am." He was silent for a moment, his eyes on the floor; then timidly he advanced the thought that had come to him. "I reckon, suh, it wouldn't be no more'n fair and proper ef I divided my money with you to pay you back fur all this trouble, you're fixin' to take on my account. Would—would half of it be enough? The other half oughter last me fur what uses I'll make of it."

"I know you mean well and I'm much obliged to you fur your offer," stated Judge Priest, smiling a little; "but it wouldn't be fittin' or proper fur me to tech a cent of your money. There'll be some court dues and some lawyers' fees, and sech, to pay over there in Ireland; but after that's settled up everything comes direct to you. It's goin' to be a pleasure to me to help you arrange these here details that you don't understand—a pleasure and not a burden."

He considered the figure before him.

"Now here's another thing, Peep; I judge it's hardly fittin' fur a man of substance to go on livin' the way you've had to live durin' your life. Ef you don't mind my offerin' you a little advice I would suggest that you go right down to Felsburg Brothers when you leave here and git yourself fitted out with some suitable clothin'. And you'd better go to Max Biederman's, too, and order a better pair of shoes fur yourself than them you've got on. Tell 'em I sent you and that I guarantee the payment of your bills. Though I reckon that'll hardly be necessary—when the news of your good luck gits noised round I misdoubt whether there's any firm in our entire city that wouldn't be glad to have you on their books fur a stiddy customer.

"And, also, ef I was you I'd arrange to git me regular board and lodgin's somewheres round town. You see, Peep, comin' into a property entails consider'ble many responsibilities right from the start."

"Yes, suh," assented the legatee obediently. "I'll do jest ez you say, Judge Priest, about the clothes and the shoes, and all that; but—but, ef you don't mind, I'd like to go on livin' at Gafford's. Pete Gafford's been mighty good to me—him and his wife both; and I wouldn't like fur 'em to think I was gittin' stuck up jest because I've had this here streak of luck come to me. Mebbe, seein' ez how things has changed with me, they'd be willin' to take me in fur a table boarder at their house; but I

shorely would hate to give up livin' in that there little room behind the feed room at the liver' stable. I don't know ez I could ever find any place that would seem ez homelike to me ez whut it is."

"Suit yourself about that," said Judge Priest heartily. "I don't know but whut you've got the proper notion about it after all."

"Yes, suh. Them Gaffords have been purty nigh the only real true friends I ever had that I could count on." He hesitated a moment. "I reckon—I reckon, suh, it'll be a right smart while, won't it, before that money gits here frum all the way acrost the ocean?"

"Why, yes; I imagine it will. Was you figurin' on investin' a little of it now?"

"Yes, suh; I was."

"About how much did you think of spendin' fur a beginnin'?"

O'Day squinted his eyes, his lips moving in silent calculation.

"Well, suh," he said at length, "I could use ez much ez a silver dollar. But, of course, sence—"

"That sounds kind of moderate to me," broke in Judge Priest. He shoved a pudgy hand into a pocket of his white trousers. "I reckon this detail kin be arranged. Here, Peep"—he extended his hand—"here's your dollar." Then, as the other drew back, stammering a refusal, he hastily added: "No, no, no; go ahead and take it—it's yours. I'm jest advancin' it to you out of whut'll be comin' to you shortly.

"I'll tell you whut: Until sech time ez you are in position to draw on your own funds you jest drap in here to see me when you're in need of cash, and I'll try to let you have whut you require—in reason. I'll keep a proper reckonin' of whut you git and you kin pay me back ez soon ez your inheritance is put into your hands.

"One thing more," he added as the heir, having thanked him, was making his grateful adieu at the threshold: "Now that you're wealthy, or about to be so, I kind of imagine quite a passel of fellers will suddenly discover themselves strangely and affectionately drawn toward you. You're liable to find out you've always had more true and devoted friends in this community than whut you ever imagined to be the case before.

"Now friendship is a mighty fine thing, takin' it by and large; but it kin be overdone. It's barely possible that some of this here new crop of your well-wishers and admirers will be makin' little business propositions to you—desirin' to have you go partners with 'em in business, or to sell you desirable pieces of real estate; or even to let you loan 'em various sums of money. I wouldn't be surprised but whut a number of sech chances will be comin' your way durin' the next few days, and frum then on. Ef sech should be the case I would suggest to you that, before committin' yourself to anybody or anything, you tell 'em that I'm sort of actin' as your unofficial adviser in money matters, and that they should come to me and outline their little schemes in person. Do you git my general drift?"

"Yes, suh," said Peep. "I won't furgit; and thank you ag'in, Judge, specially fur lettin' me have this dollar ahead of time."

He shambled out with the coin in his hand; and on his face was again the look of one who sees before him the immediate fulfillment of a delectable dream.

With lines of sympathy and amusement crosshatched at the outer corners of his eyelids, Judge Priest, rising and stepping to his door, watched the retreating figure of the town's newest and strangest capitalist disappear down the wide front steps of the courthouse.

Presently he went back to his chair and sat down, tugging at his short chin beard.

"I wonder now," said he, meditatively addressing the emptiness of the room, "I wonder whut a man sixty-odd-year old is goin' to do with the fust whole dollar he ever had in his life!"

It was characteristic of our circuit judge that he should have voiced his curiosity aloud. Talking to himself when he was alone was one of his habits. Also, it was characteristic of him that he had refrained from betraying his inquisitiveness to his late caller. Similar motives of delicacy had kept him from following the other man to watch the sequence.

However, at secondhand, the details very shortly reached him. They were brought by no less a person than Deputy Sheriff Quarles, who, some twenty minutes or possibly half an hour later, obtruded himself upon Judge Priest's presence.

"Judge," began Mr. Quarles, "you'd never in the world guess whut Old Peep O'Day done with the first piece of money he got his hands on out of that there forty thousand pounds of silver dollars he's come into from his uncle's estate."

The old man slanted a keen glance in Mr. Quarles' direction.

"Tell me, son," he asked softly, "how did you come to hear the glad tidin's so promptly?"

"Me?" said Mr. Quarles innocently. "Why, Judge Priest, the word is all over this part of town by this time. Why, I reckon twenty-five or fifty people must 'a' been watchin' Old Peep to see how he was goin' to act when he come out of this courthouse."

"Well, well, well!" murmured the Judge blandly. "Good news travels almost ez fast sometimes ez whut bad news does—don't it, now? Well, son, I give up the riddle. Tell me jest whut our elderly friend did do with the first installment of his inheritance."

"Well, suh, he turned south here at the gate and went down the street, a-lookin' neither to the right nor the left. He looked to me like a man in a trance, almost. He keeps right on through Legal Row till he comes to Franklin Street, and then he goes up Franklin to B. Weil & Son's confectionery store; and there he turns in. I happened to be followin' 'long behind him, with a few others—with several others, in fact—and we-all sort of slowed up in passin' and looked in at the door; and that's how I come to be in a position to see what happened.

"Old Peep, he marches in jest like I'm tellin' it to you, suh; and Mr. B. Weil comes to wait on him, and he starts in buyin'. He buys hisself a five-cent bag of gumdrops; and a five-cent bag of jelly beans; and a ten-cent bag of mixed candies—kisses and candy mottoes, and sech ez them, you know; and a sack of fresh-roasted peanuts—a big sack, it was, fifteen-cent size; and two prize boxes; and some gingersnaps—ten cents' worth; and a cocoanut; and half a dozen red bananas; and half a dozen more of the plain yaller ones. Altogether I figger he spent a even dollar; in fact, I seen him hand Mr. Weil a dollar, and I didn't see him gittin' no change back out of it.

"Then he comes on out of the store, with all these things stuck in his pockets and stacked up in his arms till he looks sort of like some new kind of a summertime Santy Klaws; and he sets down on a goods box at the edge of the pavement, with his feet in the gutter, and starts in eatin' all them things.

"First, he takes a bite off a yaller banana and then off a red banana, and then a mouthful of peanuts; and then maybe some mixed candies—not sayin' a word to nobody, but jest natchelly eatin' his fool head off. A young chap that's clerkin' in Bagby's grocery, next door, steps up to him and speaks to him, meanin', I suppose, to ast him is it true he's wealthy. And Old Peep, he says to him, 'Please don't come botherin' me now, sonny—I'm busy ketchin' up,' he says; and keeps right on a-munchin' and a-chewin' like all possessed.

"That ain't all of it, neither, Judge—not by a long shot it ain't! Purty soon Old Peep looks round him at the little crowd that's gathered. He didn't seem to pay no heed to the grown-up people standin' there; but he sees a couple of boys about ten years old in the crowd, and he beckons to them to come to him, and he makes room fur them alongside him on the box and divides up his knick-knacks with them.

"When I left there to come on back here he had no less'n six kids squatted round him, includin' one little nigger boy; and between 'em all they'd jest finished up the last of the bananas and peanuts and the candy and the gingersnaps, and was fixin' to take turns drinkin' the milk out of the cocoanut. I s'pose they've got it all cracked out of the shell and et up by now—the cocoanut, I mean. Judge, you oughter stepped down into Franklin Street and taken a look at the picture whilst there was still time. You never seen sech a funny sight in all your days, I'll bet!"

"I reckon 'twould be too late to be startin' now," said Judge Priest. "I'm right sorry I missed it.... Busy ketchin' up, huh? Yes; I reckon he is.... Tell me, son, whut did you make out of the way Peep O'Day acted?"

"Why, suh," stated Mr. Quarles, "to my mind, Judge, there ain't no manner of doubt but whut prosperity has went to his head and turned it. He acted to me like a plum' distracted idiot. A grown man with forty thousand pounds of solid money settin' on the side of a gutter eatin' jimcracks with a passel of dirty little boys! Kin you figure it out any other way, Judge—except that his mind is gone?"

"I don't set myself up to be a specialist in mental disorders, son," said Judge Priest softly; "but, sence you ask me the question, I should say, speakin' offhand, that it looks to me more ez ef the heart was the organ that was mainly affected. And possibly"—he added this last with a dry little smile—"and possibly, by now, the stomach also."

Whether or not Mr. Quarles was correct in his psychopathic diagnosis, he certainly had been right when he told Judge Priest that the word was already all over the business district. It had spread fast and was still spreading; it spread to beat the wireless, traveling as it did by that mouth-to-ear method of communication which is so amazingly swift and generally so tremendously incorrect. Persons who could not credit the tale at all, nevertheless lost no time in giving to it a yet wider circulation; so that, as though borne on the wind, it moved in every direction, like ripples on a pond; and with each time of retelling the size of the legacy grew.

The *Daily Evening News*, appearing on the streets at five P. M., confirmed the tale; though by its account the fortune was reduced to a sum far below the gorgeously exaggerated estimates of most of the earlier narrators. Between breakfast and supper-time Peep O'Day's position in the common estimation of his fellow citizens underwent a radical and revolutionary change. He ceased—automatically, as it were—to be a town character; he became, by universal consent, a town notable, whose every act and every word would thereafter be subjected to close scrutiny and closer analysis.

The next morning the nation at large had opportunity to know of the great good fortune that had befallen Paul Felix O'Day, for the story had been wired to the city papers by the local correspondents of the same; and the press associations had picked up a stickful of the story and sped it broadcast over leased wires. Many who until that day had never heard of the fortunate man, or, indeed, of the place where he lived, at once manifested a concern in his well-being.

Certain firms of investment brokers in New York and Chicago promptly added a new name to what vulgarly they called their "sucker" lists. Dealers in mining stocks, in oil stocks, in all kinds of attractive stocks showed interest; in circular form samples of the most optimistic and alluring literature the world has ever known were consigned to the post, addressed to Mr. P. F. O'Day, such-and-such a town, such-and-such a state, care of general delivery.

Various lonesome ladies in various lonesome places lost no time in sitting themselves down and inditing congratulatory letters; object matrimony. Some of these were single ladies; others had been widowed, either by death or request. Various other persons of both sexes, residing here, there, and elsewhere in our country, suddenly remembered that they, too, were descended from the O'Days of Ireland, and wrote on forthwith to claim proud and fond relationship with the particular O'Day who had come into money.

It was a remarkable circumstance, which speedily developed, that one man should have so many distant cousins scattered over the Union, and a thing equally noteworthy that practically all these kinspeople, through no fault of their own, should at the present moment be in such straitened circumstances and in such dire need of temporary assistance of a financial nature. Ticker and printer's ink, operating in conjunction, certainly did their work mighty well; even so, several days were to elapse before the news reached one who, of all those who read it, had most cause to feel a profound personal sensation in the intelligence.

This delay, however, was nowise to be blamed upon the tardiness of the newspapers; it was occasioned by the fact that the person referred to was for the moment well out of contact with the active currents of world affairs, he being confined in a workhouse at Evansville, Indiana.

As soon as he had rallied from the shock this individual set about making plans to put himself in direct touch with the inheritor. He had ample time in which to frame and shape his campaign, inasmuch as there remained for him yet to serve nearly eight long and painfully tedious weeks of a three-months' vagrancy sentence. Unlike most of those now manifesting their interest, he did not write a letter; but he dreamed dreams that made him forget the annoyances of a ball and chain fast on his ankle and piles of stubborn stones to be cracked up into fine bits with a heavy hammer.

We are getting ahead of our narrative, though—days ahead of it. The chronological sequence of events properly dates from the morning following the morning when Peep O'Day, having been abruptly translated from the masses of the penniless to the classes of the wealthy, had forthwith embarked upon the gastronomic orgy so graphically detailed by Deputy Sheriff Quarles.

On that next day more eyes probably than had been trained in Peep O'Day's direction in all the unremarked and unremarkable days of his life put together were focused upon him. Persons who theretofore had regarded his existence—if indeed they gave it a thought—as one of the utterly trivial and inconsequential incidents of the cosmic scheme, were moved to speak to him, to clasp his hand, and, in numerous instances, to express a hearty satisfaction over his altered circumstances. To all these, whether they were moved by mere neighborly good will, or perchance were inspired by impulses of selfishness, the old man exhibited a mien of aloofness and embarrassment.

This diffidence or this suspicion—or this whatever it was—protected him from those who might entertain covetous and ulterior designs upon his inheritance even better than though he had been brusque and rude; while those who sought to question him regarding his plans for the future drew from him only mumbled and evasive replies, which left them as deeply in the dark as they had been before. Altogether, in his intercourse with adults he appeared shy and very ill at ease.

It was noted, though, that early in the forenoon he attached to him perhaps half a dozen urchins, of whom the oldest could scarcely have been more than twelve or thirteen years of age; and that these youngsters remained his companions throughout the day. Likewise the events of that day were such as to confirm a majority of the observers in practically the same belief that had been voiced of Mr. Quarles—namely, that whatever scanty brains Peep O'Day might have ever had were now completely addled by the stroke of luck that had befallen him.

In fairness to all—to O'Day and to the town critics who sat in judgment upon his behavior—it should be stated that his conduct at the very outset was not entirely devoid of evidences of sanity. With his troupe of ragged juveniles trailing behind him, he first visited Felsburg Brothers' Emporium to exchange his old and disreputable costume for a wardrobe that, in accordance with Judge Priest's recommendation, he had ordered on the afternoon previous, and which had since been undergoing certain necessary alterations.

With his meager frame incased in new black woolens, and wearing, as an incongruous added touch, the most brilliant of neckties, a necktie of the shade of a pomegranate blossom, he presently issued from Felsburg Brothers' and entered M. Biederman's shoe store, two doors below. Here Mr. Biederman fitted him with shoes, and in addition noted down a further order, which the purchaser did not give until after he had conferred earnestly with the members of his youthful entourage.

Those watching this scene from a distance saw—and perhaps marveled at the sight—that already, between these small boys, on the one part, and this old man, on the other, a perfect understanding appeared to have been established.

After leaving Biederman's, and tagged by his small escorts, O'Day went straight to the courthouse and, upon knocking at the door, was admitted to Judge Priest's private chambers, the boys meantime waiting outside in the hall. When he came forth he showed them something he held in his hand and told them something; whereupon all of them burst into excited and joyous whoops.

It was at that point that O'Day, by the common verdict of most grown-up onlookers, began to betray the vagaries of a disordered intellect. Not that his reason had not been under suspicion already, as a result of his freakish excess in the matter of B. Weil & Son's wares on the preceding day; but the relapse that now followed, as nearly everybody agreed, was even more pronounced, even more symptomatic than the earlier attack of aberration.

In brief, this was what happened: To begin with, Mr. Virgil Overall, who dealt in lands and houses and sold insurance of all the commoner varieties on the side, had stalked O'Day to this point and was lying in wait for him as he came out of the courthouse into the Public Square, being anxious to describe to him some especially desirable bargains, in both improved and unimproved realty; also, Mr. Overall was prepared to book him for life, accident and health policies on the spot.

So pleased was Mr. Overall at having distanced his professional rivals in the hunt that he dribbled at the mouth. But the warmth of his disappointment and indignation dried up the salivary founts instantly when the prospective patron declined to listen to him at all and, breaking free from Mr. Overall's detaining clasp, hurried on into Legal Row, with his small convoys trotting along ahead and alongside him.

At the door of the Blue Goose Saloon and Short Order Restaurant its proprietor, by name Link Iserman, was lurking, as it were, in ambush. He hailed the approaching O'Day most cordially; he inquired in a warm voice regarding O'Day's health; and then, with a rare burst of generosity, he invited, nay urged, O'Day to step inside and have something on the house—wines, ales, liquors or cigars; it was all one to Mr. Iserman. The other merely shook his head and, without a word of thanks for the offer, passed on as though bent upon a important mission.

Mark how the proofs were accumulating: The man had disdained the company of men of approximately his own age or thereabout; he had refused an opportunity to partake of refreshment suitable to his years; and now he stepped into the Bon Ton toy store and bought for cash—most inconceivable of acquisitions!—a little wagon that was painted bright red and bore on its sides in curlicued letters, the name Comet.

His next stop was made at Bishop & Bryan's grocery, where, with the aid of his youthful compatriots, he first discriminatingly selected, and then purchased on credit, and finally loaded into the wagon, such purchases as a dozen bottles of soda pop, assorted flavors; cheese, crackers—soda and animal; sponge cakes with weather-proof pink icing on them; fruits of the season; cove oysters; a bottle of pepper sauce; and a quantity of the extra large sized bright green cucumber pickles known to the trade as the Fancy Jumbo Brand, Prime Selected.

Presently the astounding spectacle was presented of two small boys, with string bridles on their arms, drawing the wagon through our town and out of it into the country, with Peep O'Day in the rôle of teamster walking alongside the laden wagon. He was holding the lines in his hands and shouting orders at his team, who showed a colty inclination to shy at objects, to kick up their heels without provocation, and at intervals to try to run away. Eight or ten small boys—for by now the troupe had grown in number and in volume of noise—trailed along, keeping step with their elderly patron and advising him shrilly regarding the management of his refractory span.

As it turned out, the destination of this preposterous procession was Bradshaw's Grove, where the entire party spent the day picnicking in the woods and, as reported by several reliable witnesses, playing games. It was not so strange that holidaying boys should play games; the amazing feature of the performance was that Peep O'Day, a man old enough to be grandfather to any of them, played with them, being by turns an Indian chief, a robber baron, and the driver of a stagecoach attacked by Wild Western desperadoes.

When he returned to town at dusk, drawing his little red wagon behind him, his new suit was rumpled into many wrinkles and marked by dust and grass stains; his flame-colored tie was twisted under one ear; his new straw hat was mashed quite out of shape; and in his eyes was a light that sundry citizens, on meeting him, could only interpret for a spark struck from inner fires of madness.

Days that came after this, on through the midsummer, were, with variations, but repetitions of the day I have just described. Each morning Peep O'Day would go to either the courthouse or Judge Priest's home to turn over to the Judge the unopened mail which had been delivered to him at Gafford's stables; then he would secure from the Judge a loan of money against his inheritance. Generally the amount of his daily borrowing was a dollar; rarely was it so much as two dollars; and only once was it more than two dollars.

By nightfall the sum would have been expended upon perfectly useless and absolutely childish devices. It might be that he would buy toy pistols and paper caps for himself and his following of urchins; or that his whim would lead him to expend all the money in tin flutes. In one case the group he so incongruously headed would be for that one day a gang of make-believe banditti; in another, they would constitute themselves a fife-and-drum corps—with barreltops for the drums—and would march through the streets, where scandalized adults stood in their tracks to watch them go by, they all the while making weird sounds, which with them passed for music.

Or again, the available cash resources would be invested in provender; and then there would be an outing in the woods. Under Peep O'Day's captaincy his chosen band of youngsters picked dewberries; they went swimming together in Guthrie's Gravel Pit, out by the old Fair Grounds, where his spare naked shanks contrasted strongly with their plump freckled legs as all of them splashed through the shallows, making for deep water. Under his leadership they stole watermelons from Mr. Dick Bell's patch, afterward eating their spoils in thickets of grapevines along the banks of Perkins' Creek.

It was felt that mental befuddlement and mortal folly could reach no greater heights—or no lower depths—than on a certain hour of a certain day, along toward the end of August, when O'Day came forth from his quarters in Gafford's stables, wearing a pair of boots that M. Biederman's establishment had turned out to his order and his measure—not such boots as a sensible man might be expected to wear, but boots that were exaggerated and monstrous counterfeits of the red-topped, scroll-fronted, brass-toed, stub-heeled, squeaky-soled bootees that small boys of an earlier generation possessed.

Very proudly and seemingly unconscious of, or, at least, oblivious to, the derisive remarks that the appearance of these new belongings drew from many persons, the owner went clumping about in them, with the rumply legs of his trousers tucked down in them, and ballooning up and out over the tops in folds which overlapped from his knee joints halfway down his attenuated calves.

As Deputy Sheriff Quarles said, the combination was a sight fit to make a horse laugh. It may be that small boys have a lesser sense of humor than horses have, for certainly the boys who were the old man's invariable shadows did not laugh at him, or at his boots either. Between the whiskered senior and his small comrades there existed a freemasonry that made them all sense a thing beyond the ken of most of their elders. Perhaps this was because the elders, being blind in their superior wisdom, saw neither this thing nor the communion that flourished. They saw only the farcical joke. But His Honor, Judge Priest, to cite a conspicuous exception, seemed not to see the lamentable comedy of it.

Indeed, it seemed to some almost as if Judge Priest were aiding and abetting the befogged O'Day in his demented enterprises, his peculiar excursions and his weird purchases. If he did not actually encourage him in these constant exhibitions of witlessness, certainly there were no evidences available to show that he sought to dissuade O'Day from his strange course.

At the end of a fortnight one citizen, in whom patience had ceased to be a virtue and to whose nature long-continued silence on any public topic was intolerable, felt it his duty to speak to the Judge upon the subject. This gentleman—his name was S. P. Escott—held, with many, that, for the good name of the community, steps should be taken to abate the infantile, futile activities of the besotted legatee.

Afterward Mr. Escott, giving a partial account of the conversation with Judge Priest to certain of his friends, showed unfeigned annoyance at the outcome.

"I claim that old man's not fittin' to be runnin' a court any longer," he stated bitterly. "He's too old and peevis—that's what ails him! For one, I'm certainly not never goin' to vote fur him again. Why, it's gettin' to be ez much ez a man's life is worth to stop that there spiteful old crank in the street and put a civil question to him—that's whut's the matter!"

"What happened S. P.?" inquired some one.

"Why, here's what happened!" exclaimed the aggrieved Mr. Escott. "I hadn't any more than started in to tell him the whole town was talkin' about the way that daffy Old Peep O'Day was carryin' on, and that somethin' had oughter be done about it, and didn't he think it was beholdin' on him ez circuit judge to do somethin' right away, sech ez havin' O'Day tuck up and tried fur a lunatic, and that I fur one was ready and willin' to testify to the crazy things I'd seen done with my own eyes—when he cut in on me and jest ez good ez told me to my own face that ef I'd quit tendin' to other people's business I'd mebbe have more business of my own to tend to.

"Think of that, gentlemen! A circuit judge bemeanin' a citizen and a taxpayer"—he checked himself slightly—"anyhow, a citizen, thataway! It shows he can't be rational his ownself. Personally I claim Old Priest is failin' mentally—he must be! And ef anybody kin be found to run against him at the next election you gentlemen jest watch and see who gits my vote!"

Having uttered this threat with deep and significant emphasis Mr. Escott, still muttering, turned and entered the front gate of his boarding house. It was not exactly his boarding house; his wife ran it. But Mr. Escott lived there and voted from there.

But the apogee of Peep O'Day's carnival of weird vagaries of deportment came at the end of two months—two months in which each day the man furnished cumulative and piled-up material for derisive and jocular comment on the part of a very considerable proportion of his fellow townsmen.

Three occurrences of a widely dissimilar nature, yet all closely interrelated to the main issue, marked the climax of the man's new rôle in his new career. The first of these was the arrival of his legacy; the second was a one-ring circus; and the third and last was a nephew.

In the form of sundry bills of exchange the estate left by the late Daniel O'Day, of the town of Kilmare, in the island of Ireland, was on a certain afternoon delivered over into Judge Priest's hands, and by him, in turn, handed to the rightful owner, after which sundry indebtednesses, representing the total of the old Judge's day-to-day cash advances to O'Day, were liquidated.

The ceremony of deducting this sum took place at the Planters' Bank, whither the two had journeyed in company from the courthouse. Having, with the aid of the paying teller, instructed O'Day in the technical details requisite to the drawing of personal checks, Judge Priest went home and had his bag packed, and left for Reelfoot Lake to spend a week fishing. As a consequence he missed the remaining two events, following immediately thereafter.

The circus was no great shakes of a circus; no grand, glittering, gorgeous, glorious pageant of education and entertainment, traveling on its own special trains; no vast tented city of world's wonders and world's champions, heralded for weeks and weeks in advance of its coming by dead walls emblazoned with the finest examples of the lithographer's art, and by half-page advertisements in the *Daily Evening News*. On the contrary, it was a shabby little wagon show, which, coming overland on short notice, rolled into town under horse power, and set up its ragged and dusty canvases on the vacant lot across from Yeiser's drug store.

Compared with the street parade of any of its great and famous rivals, the street parade of this circus was a meager and disappointing thing. Why, there was only one elephant, a dwarfish and debilitated-looking creature, worn mangy and slick on its various angles, like the cover of an old-fashioned haircloth trunk; and obviously most of the closed cages were weather-beaten stake wagons in disguise. Nevertheless, there was a sizable turnout of people for the afternoon performance. After all, a circus was a circus.

Moreover, this particular circus was marked at the afternoon performance by happenings of a nature most decidedly unusual. At one o'clock the doors were opened; at one-ten the eyes of the

proprietor were made glad and his heart was uplifted within him by the sight of a strange procession, drawing nearer and nearer across the scuffed turf of the Common, and heading in the direction of the red ticket wagon.

At the head of the procession marched Peep O'Day—only, of course, the proprietor didn't know it was Peep O'Day—a queer figure in his rumpled black clothes and his red-topped brass-toed boots, and with one hand holding fast to the string of a captive toy balloon. Behind him, in an uneven jostling formation, followed many small boys and some small girls. A census of the ranks would have developed that here were included practically all the juvenile white population who otherwise, through a lack of funds, would have been denied the opportunity to patronize this circus or, in fact, any circus.

Each member of the joyous company was likewise the bearer of a toy balloon—red, yellow, blue, green, or purple, as the case might be. Over the line of heads the taut rubbery globes rode on their tethers, nodding and twisting like so many big iridescent bubbles; and half a block away, at the edge of the lot, a balloon vender, whose entire stock had been disposed of in one splendid transaction, now stood, empty-handed but full-pocketed, marveling at the stroke of luck that enabled him to take an afternoon off and rest his voice.

Out of a seemingly bottomless exchequer Peep O'Day bought tickets of admission for all. But this was only the beginning. Once inside the tent he procured accommodations in the reserved-seat section for himself and those who accompanied him. From such superior points of vantage the whole crew of them witnessed the performance, from the thrilling grand entry, with spangled ladies and gentlemen riding two by two on broad-backed steeds, to the tumbling bout introducing the full strength of the company, which came at the end.

They munched fresh-roasted peanuts and balls of sugar-coated popcorn, slightly rancid, until they munched no longer with zest but merely mechanically. They drank pink lemonade to an extent that threatened absolute depletion of the fluid contents of both barrels in the refreshment stand out in the menagerie tent. They whooped their unbridled approval when the wild Indian chief, after shooting down a stuffed coon with a bow and arrow from somewhere up near the top of the center pole while balancing himself jauntily erect upon the haunches of a coursing white charger, suddenly flung off his feathered headdress, his wig and his fringed leather garments, and revealed himself in pink fleshings as the principal bareback rider.

They screamed in a chorus of delight when the funny old clown, who had been forcibly deprived of three tin flutes in rapid succession, now produced yet a fourth from the seemingly inexhaustible depths of his baggy white pants—a flute with a string and a bent pin attached to it—and, secretly affixing the pin in the tail of the cross ringmaster's coat, was thereafter enabled to toot sharp shrill blasts at frequent intervals, much to the chagrin of the ringmaster, who seemed utterly unable to discover the whereabouts of the instrument dangling behind him.

But no one among them whooped louder or laughed longer than their elderly and bewhiskered friend, who sat among them, paying the bills. As his guests they stayed for the concert; and, following this, they patronized the side show in a body. They had been almost the first upon the scene; assuredly they were the last of the audience to quit it.

Indeed, before they trailed their confrère away from the spot the sun was nearly down; and at scores of supper tables all over town the tale of poor old Peep O'Day's latest exhibition of freakishness was being retailed, with elaborations, to interested auditors. Estimates of the sum probably expended by him in this crowning extravagance ranged well up into the hundreds of dollars.

As for the object of these speculations, he was destined not to eat any supper at all that night. Something happened that so upset him as to make him forget the meal altogether. It began to happen when he reached the modest home of P. Gafford, adjoining the Gafford stables, on Locust Street, and found sitting on the lower-most step of the porch a young man of untidy and unshaven aspect, who hailed him affectionately as Uncle Paul, and who showed deep annoyance and acute distress upon being rebuffed with chill words.

It is possible that the strain of serving a three-months' sentence, on the technical charge of vagrancy, in a workhouse somewhere in Indiana, had affected the young man's nerves. His ankle bones still ached where the ball and chain had been hitched; on his palms the blisters induced by the uncongenial use of a sledge hammer on a rock pile had hardly as yet turned to calluses. So it is only fair to presume that his nervous system felt the stress of his recent confining experiences also.

Almost tearfully he pleaded with Peep O'Day to remember the ties of blood that bound them; repeatedly he pointed out that he was the only known kinsman of the other in all the world, and, therefore, had more reason than any other living being to expect kindness and generosity at his uncle's hands. He spoke socialistically of the advisability of an equal division; failing to make any impression here he mentioned the subject of a loan—at first hopefully, but finally despairingly.

When he was done Peep O'Day, in a perfectly colorless and unsympathetic voice, bade him good-by—not good-night but good-by! And, going inside the house, he closed the door behind him, leaving his newly returned relative outside and quite alone.

At this the young man uttered violent language; but, since there was nobody present to hear him, it is likely he found small satisfaction in his profanity, rich though it may have been in metaphor and variety. So presently he betook himself off, going straight to the office in Legal Row of H. B. Sublette, Attorney-at-law.

From the circumstance that he found Mr. Sublette in, though it was long past that gentleman's office hours, and, moreover, found Mr. Sublette waiting in an expectant and attentive attitude, it might have been adduced by one skilled in the trick of putting two and two together that the pair of them had reached a prior understanding sometime during the day; and that the visit of the young man to the Gafford home and his speeches there had all been parts of a scheme planned out at a prior conference.

Be this as it may, so soon as Mr. Sublette had heard his caller's version of the meeting upon the porch he lost no time in taking certain legal steps. That very night, on behalf of his client, denominated in the documents as Percival Dwyer, Esquire, he prepared a petition addressed to the circuit judge of the district, setting forth that, inasmuch as Paul Felix O'Day had by divers acts shown himself to be of unsound mind, now, therefore, came his nephew and next of kin praying that a committee or curator be appointed to take over the estate of the said Paul Felix O'Day, and administer the same in accordance with the orders of the court until such time as the said Paul Felix O'Day should recover his reason, or should pass from this life, and so forth and so on; not to mention whereases in great number and aforesaid abounding throughout the text in the utmost profusion.

On the following morning the papers were filed with Circuit Clerk Milam. That vigilant barrister, Mr. Sublette, brought them in person to the courthouse before nine o'clock, he having the interests of his client at heart and perhaps also visions of a large contingent fee in his mind. No retainer had been paid. The state of Mr. Dwyer's finances—or, rather, the absence of any finances—had precluded the performance of that customary detail; but to Mr. Sublette's experienced mind the prospects of future increment seemed large.

Accordingly he was all for prompt action. Formally he said he wished to go on record as demanding for his principal a speedy hearing of the issue, with a view to preventing the defendant named in the pleadings from dissipating any more of the estate lately bequeathed to him and now fully in his possession—or words to that effect.

Mr. Milam felt justified in getting into communication with Judge Priest over the long-distance 'phone; and the Judge, cutting short his vacation and leaving uncaught vast numbers of bass and perch in Reelfoot Lake, came home, arriving late that night.

Next morning, having issued divers orders in connection with the impending litigation, he sent a messenger to find Peep O'Day and to direct O'Day to come to the courthouse for a personal interview.

Shortly thereafter a scene that had occurred some two months earlier, with his Honor's private chamber for a setting, was substantially duplicated: there was the same cast of two, the same stage

properties, the same atmosphere of untidy tidiness. And, as before, the dialogue was in Judge Priest's hands. He led and his fellow character followed his leads.

"Peep," he was saying, "you understand, don't you, that this here fragrant nephew of yours that's turned up from nowheres in particular is fixin' to git ready to try to prove that you are feeble-minded? And, on top of that, that he's goin' to ask that a committee be app'inted fur you—in other words, that somebody or other shall be named by the court, meanin' me, to take charge of your property and control the spendin' of it frum now on?"

"Yes, suh," stated O'Day. "Pete Gafford he set down with me and made hit all clear to me, yestiddy evenin', after they'd done served the papers on me."

"All right, then. Now I'm goin' to fix the hearin' fur to-morrow mornin' at ten. The other side is askin' fur a quick decision; and I rather figger they're entitled to it. Is that agreeable to you?"

"Whutever you say, Judge."

"Well, have you retained a lawyer to represent your interests in court? That's the main question that I sent fur you to ast you."

"Do I need a lawyer, Judge?"

"Well, there have been times when I regarded lawyers ez bein' superfluous," stated Judge Priest dryly. "Still, in most cases litigants do have 'em round when the case is bein' heard."

"I don't know ez I need any lawyer to he'p me say whut I've got to say," said O'Day. "Judge, you ain't never ast me no questions about the way I've been carryin' on sence I come into this here money; but I reckon mebbe this is ez good a time ez any to tell you jest why I've been actin' the way I've done. You see, suh—"

"Hold on!" broke in Judge Priest. "Up to now, ez my friend, it would 'a' been perfectly proper fur you to give me your confidences ef you were minded so to do; but now I reckon you'd better not. You see, I'm the judge that's got to decide whether you are a responsible person—whether you're mentally capable of handlin' your own financial affairs, or whether you ain't. So you'd better wait and make your statement in your own behalf to me whilst I'm settin' on the bench. I'll see that you git an opportunity to do so and I'll listen to it; and I'll give it all the consideration it's deservin' of."

"And, on second thought, p'raps it would only be a waste of time and money fur you to go hirin' a lawyer specially to represent you. Under the law it's my duty, in sech a case ez this here one is, to app'int a member of the bar to serve durin' the proceedin's ez your guardian *ad litem*."

"You don't need to be startled," he added, as O'Day flinched at the sound in his ears of these strange and fearsome words. "A guardian *ad litem* is simply a lawyer that tends to your affairs till the case is settled one way or the other. Ef you had a dozen lawyers I'd have to app'int him jest the same. So you don't need to worry about that part of it."

"That's all. You kin go now ef you want to. Only, ef I was you, I wouldn't draw out any more money from the bank 'twixt now and the time when I make my decision."

All things considered, it was an unusual assemblage that Judge Priest regarded over the top rims of his glasses as he sat facing it in his broad armchair, with the flat top of the bench intervening between him and the gathering. Not often, even in the case of exciting murder trials, had the old courtroom held a larger crowd; certainly never had it held so many boys. Boys, and boys exclusively, filled the back rows of benches downstairs. More boys packed the narrow shelf-like balcony that spanned the chamber across its far end—mainly small boys, barefooted, sunburned, freckle-faced, shock-headed boys. And, for boys, they were strangely silent and strangely attentive.

The petitioner sat with his counsel, Mr. Sublette. The petitioner had been newly shaved, and from some mysterious source had been equipped with a neat wardrobe. Plainly he was endeavoring to wear a look of virtue, which was a difficult undertaking, as you would understand had you known the petitioner.

The defending party to the action was seated across the room, touching elbows with old Colonel Farrell, dean of the local bar and its most florid orator.

"The court will designate Col. Horatio Farrell as guardian *ad litem* for the defendant during these proceedings," Judge Priest had stated a few minutes earlier, using the formal and grammatical language he reserved exclusively for his courtroom.

At once old Colonel Farrell had hitched his chair up alongside O'Day; had asked him several questions in a tone inaudible to those about them; had listened to the whispered answers of O'Day; and then had nodded his huge curly white dome of a head, as though amply satisfied with the responses.

Let us skip the preliminaries. True, they seemed to interest the audience; here, though, they would be tedious reading. Likewise, in touching upon the opening and outlining address of Attorney-at-Law Sublette let us, for the sake of time and space, be very much briefer than Mr. Sublette was. For our present purposes, I deem it sufficient to say that in all his professional career Mr. Sublette was never more eloquent, never more forceful never more vehement in his allegations, and never more convinced—as he himself stated, not once but repeatedly—of his ability to prove the facts he alleged by competent and unbiased testimony. These facts, he pointed out, were common knowledge in the community; nevertheless, he stood prepared to buttress them with the evidence of reputable witnesses, given under oath.

Mr. Sublette, having unwound at length, now wound up. He sat down, perspiring freely and through the perspiration radiating confidence in his contentions, confidence in the result, and, most of all, unbounded confidence in Mr. Sublette.

Now Colonel Farrell was standing up to address the court. Under the cloak of a theatrical presence and a large orotund manner, and behind a Ciceronian command of sonorous language, the colonel carried concealed a shrewd old brain. It was as though a skilled marksman lurked in ambush amid a tangle of luxuriant foliage. In this particular instance, moreover, it is barely possible that the colonel was acting on a cue, privily conveyed to him before the court opened.

"May it please Your Honor," he began, "I have just conferred with the defendant here; and, acting in the capacity of his guardian *ad litem*, I have advised him to waive an opening address by counsel. Indeed, the defendant has no counsel. Furthermore, the defendant, also acting upon my advice, will present no witnesses in his own behalf. But, with Your Honor's permission, the defendant will now make a personal statement; and thereafter he will rest content, leaving the final arbitrament of the issue to Your Honor's discretion."

"I object!" exclaimed Mr. Sublette briskly.

"On what ground does the learned counsel object?" inquired Judge Priest.

"On the grounds that, since the mental competence of this man is concerned—since it is our contention that he is patently and plainly a victim of senility, an individual prematurely in his dotage—any utterances by him will be of no value whatsoever in aiding the conscience and intelligence of the court to arrive at a fair and just conclusion regarding the defendant's mental condition."

Mr. Sublette excelled in the use of big words; there was no doubt about that.

"The objection is overruled," said Judge Priest. He nodded in the direction of O'Day and Colonel Farrell. "The court will hear the defendant. He is not to be interrupted while making his statement. The defendant may proceed."

Without further urging, O'Day stood up, a tall, slab-sided rack of a man, with his long arms dangling at his sides, half facing Judge Priest and half facing his nephew and his nephew's lawyer. Without hesitation he began to speak. And this was what he said:

"There's mebbe some here ez knows about how I was raised and fetched up. My paw and my maw died when I was jest only a baby; so I was brung up out here at the old county porehouse ez a pauper. I can't remember the time when I didn't have to work for my board and keep, and work hard. While other boys was goin' to school and playin' hooky, and goin' in washin' in the creek, and playin' games, and all sech ez that, I had to work. I never done no playin' round in my whole life—not till here jest recently, anyway.

"But I always craved to play round some. I didn't never say nothin' about it to nobody after I growed up, 'cause I figgered it out they wouldn't understand and mebbe'd laugh at me; but all these years, ever sence I left that there porehouse, I've had a hankerin' here inside of me"—he lifted one hand and touched his breast—"I've had a hankerin' to be a boy and to do all the things a boy does; to do the things I was chiseled out of doin' whilst I was of a suitable age to be doin' 'em. I call to mind that I uster dream in my sleep about doin' 'em; but the dream never come true—not till jest here lately. It didn't have no chancet to come true—not till then.

"So, when this money come to me so sudden and unbeknownstlike I said to myself that I was goin' to make that there dream come true; and I started out fur to do it. And I done it! And I reckon that's the cause of my bein' here to-day, accused of bein' feeble-minded. But, even so, I don't regret it none. Ef it was all to do over ag'in, I'd do it jest the very same way.

"Why, I never knowed whut it was, till here two months or so ago, to have my fill of bananas and candy and gingersnaps, and all sech knickknacks ez them. All my life I've been cravin' secretly to own a pair of red-topped boots with brass toes on 'em, like I used to see other boys wearin' in the wintertime when I was out yonder at that porehouse wearin' an old pair of somebody else's cast-off shoes—mebbe a man's shoes, with rags wropped round my feet to keep the snow frum comin' through the cracks in 'em, and to keep 'em from slippin' right spang off my feet. I got three toes frostbit oncet durin' a cold spell, wearin' them kind of shoes. But here the other week I found myself able to buy me some red-top boots with brass toes on 'em. So I had 'em made to order and I'm wearin' 'em now. I wear 'em reg'lar even ef it is summertime. I take a heap of pleasure out of 'em. And, also, all my life long I've been wantin' to go to a circus. But not till three days ago I didn't never git no chancet to go to one.

"That gentleman yonder—Mister Sublette—he 'lowed jest now that I was leadin' a lot of little boys in this here town into bad habits. He said that I was learnin' 'em nobody knowed whut devilment. And he spoke of my havin' egged 'em on to steal watermelons frum Mister Bell's watermelon patch out here three miles frum town, on the Marshallville gravel road. You-all heard whut he jest now said about that.

"I don't mean no offense and I beg his pardon fur contradictin' him right out before everybody here in the big courthouse; but, mister, you're wrong. I don't lead these here boys astray that I've been runnin' round with. They're mighty nice clean boys, all of 'em. Some of 'em are mighty near ez pore ez whut I uster be; but there ain't no real harm in any of 'em. We git along together fine—me and them. And, without no preachin', nor nothin' like that, I've done my best these weeks we've been frolickin' and projectin' round together to keep 'em frum growin' up to do mean things. I use chawin' tobacco myself; but I've told 'em, I don't know how many times, that ef they chaw it'll stunt 'em in their growth. And I've got several of 'em that was smokin' cigarettes on the sly to promise me they'd quit. So I don't figger ez I've done them boys any real harm by goin' round with 'em. And I believe ef you was to ast 'em they'd all tell you the same, suh.

"Now about them watermelons: Sence this gentleman has brung them watermelons up, I'm goin' to tell you-all the truth about that too."

He cast a quick, furtive look, almost a guilty look, over his shoulder toward the rear of the courtroom before he went on:

"Them watermelons wasn't really stole at all. I seen Mister Dick Bell beforehand and arranged with him to pay him in full fur whutever damage mout be done. But, you see, I knowed watermelons tasted sweeter to a boy ef he thought he'd hooked 'em out of a patch; so I never let on to my little pardners yonder that I'd the same ez paid Mister Bell in advance fur the melons we snuck out of his patch and et in the woods. They've all been thinkin' up till now that we really hooked them watermelons. But ef that was wrong I'm sorry fur it.

"Mister Sublette, you jest now said that I was fritterin' away my property on vain foolishment. Them was the words you used—'fritterin' and 'vain foolishment.' Mebbe you're right, suh, about the

fritterin' part; but ef spendin' money in a certain way gives a man ez much pleasure ez it's give me these last two months, and ef the money is his'n by rights, I figger it can't be so very foolish; though it may 'pear so to some.

"Excusin' these here clothes I've got on and these here boots, which ain't paid fur yet, but is charged up to me on Felsburg Brothers' books and Mister M. Biederman's books, I didn't spend only a dollar a day, or mebbe two dollars, and once three dollars in a single day out of whut was comin' to me. The Judge here, he let me have that out of his own pocket; and I paid him back. And that was all I did spend till here three days ago when that there circus come to town. I reckon I did spend a right smart then.

"My money had come from the old country only the day before; so I went to the bank and they writ out one of them pieces of paper which is called a check, and I signed it—with my mark; and they give me the money I wanted—an even two hundred dollars. And part of that there money I used to pay fur circus tickets fur all the little boys and little girls I could find in this town that couldn't 'a' got to the circus no other way. Some of 'em are settin' back there behind you-all now—some of the boys, I mean; I don't see none of the little girls.

"There was several of 'em told me at the time they hadn't never seen a circus—not in their whole lives. Fur that matter, I hadn't, neither; but I didn't want no pore child in this town to grow up to be ez old ez I am without havin' been to at least one circus. So I taken 'em all in and paid all the bills; and when night come there wasn't but 'bout nine dollars left out of the whole two hundred that I'd started out with in the mornin'. But I don't begrege spendin' it. It looked to me like it was money well invested. They all seemed to enjoy it; and I know I done so.

"There may be bigger circuses'n whut that one was; but I don't see how a circus could 'a' been any better than this here one I'm tellin' about, ef it was ten times ez big. I don't regret the investment and I don't aim to lie about it now. Mister Sublette, I'd do the same thing over ag'in ef the chance should come, lawsuit or no lawsuit. Ef you should win this here case mebbe I wouldn't have no second chance.

"Ef some gentleman is app'inted ez a committee to handle my money it's likely he wouldn't look at the thing the same way I do; and it's likely he wouldn't let me have so much money all in one lump to spend takin' a passel of little shavers that ain't no kin to me to the circus and to the side show, besides lettin' 'em stay fur the grand concert or after show, and all. But I done it once; and I've got it to remember about and think about in my own mind ez long ez I live.

"I'm 'bout finished now. There's jest one thing more I'd like to say, and that is this: Mister Sublette he said a minute ago that I was in my second childhood. Meanin' no offense, suh, but you was wrong there too. The way I look at it, a man can't be in his second childhood without he's had his first childhood; and I was cheated plum' out of mine. I'm more'n sixty years old, ez near ez I kin figger; but I'm tryin' to be a boy before it's too late."

He paused a moment and looked round him.

"The way I look at it, Judge Priest, suh, and you-all, every man that grows up, no matter how old he may git to be, is entitled to 'a' been a boy oncet in his lifetime. I—I reckon that's all."

He sat down and dropped his eyes upon the floor, as though ashamed that his temerity should have carried him so far. There was a strange little hush filling the courtroom. It was Judge Priest who broke it.

"The court," he said, "has by the words just spoken by this man been sufficiently advised as to the sanity of the man himself. The court cares to hear nothing more from either side on this subject. The petition is dismissed."

Very probably these last words may have been as so much Greek to the juvenile members of the audience; possibly, though, they were made aware of the meaning of them by the look upon the face of Nephew Percival Dwyer and the look upon the face of Nephew Percival Dwyer's attorney. At any rate, His Honor hardly had uttered the last syllable of his decision before, from the rear of

the courtroom and from the gallery above, there arose a shrill, vehement, sincere sound of yelling—exultant, triumphant, and deafening. It continued for upward of a minute before the small disturbers remembered where they were and reduced themselves to a state of comparative quiet.

For reasons best known to himself, Judge Priest, who ordinarily stickled for order and decorum in his courtroom, made no effort to quell the outburst or to have it quelled—not even when a considerable number of the adults present joined in it, having first cleared their throats of a slight huskiness that had come upon them, severally and generally.

Presently the Judge rapped for quiet—and got it. It was apparent that he had more to say; and all there hearkened to hear what it might be.

"I have just this to add," quoth His Honor: "It is the official judgment of this court that the late defendant, being entirely sane, is competent to manage his own affairs after his preferences.

"And it is the private opinion of this court that not only is the late defendant sane but that he is the sanest man in this entire jurisdiction. Mister Clerk, this court stands adjourned."

Coming down the three short steps from the raised platform of the bench, Judge Priest beckoned to Sheriff Giles Birdsong, who, at the tail of the departing crowd, was shepherding its last exuberant members through the doorway.

"Giles," said Judge Priest in an undertone, when the worthy sheriff had drawn near, "the circuit clerk tells me there's an indictment for malicious mischief ag'in this here Perce Dwyer knockin' round amongst the records somewheres—an indictment the grand jury returned several sessions back, but which was never pressed, owin' to the sudden departure from our midst of the person in question.

"I wonder ef it would be too much trouble fur you to sort of drap a hint in the ear of the young man or his lawyer that the said indictment is apt to be revived, and that the said Dwyer is liable to be tuck into custody by you and lodged in the county jail sometime during the ensuin' forty-eight hours—without he should see his way clear durin' the meantime to get clean out of this city, county and state! Would it?"

"Trouble? No, suh! It won't be no trouble to me," said Mr. Birdsong promptly. "Why, it'll be more of a pleasure, Judge."

And so it was.

Except for one small added and purely incidental circumstance, our narrative is ended. That same afternoon Judge Priest sat on the front porch of his old white house out on Clay Street, waiting for Jeff Poindexter to summon him to supper. Peep O'Day opened the front gate and came up the graveled walk between the twin rows of silver-leaf poplars. The Judge, rising to greet his visitor, met him at the top step.

"Come in," bade the Judge heartily, "and set down a spell and rest your face and hands."

"No, suh; much obliged, but I ain't got only a minute to stay," said O'Day. "I jest come out here, suh, to thank you fur whut you done to-day on my account in the big courthouse, and—and to make you a little kind of a present."

"It's all right to thank me," said Judge Priest; "but I couldn't accept any reward fur renderin' a decision in accordance with the plain facts."

"'Tain't no gift of money, or nothin' like that," O'Day hastened to explain. "Really, suh, it don't amount to nothin' at all, scursely. But a little while ago I happened to be in Mr. B. Weil & Son's store, doin' a little tradin', and I run acrost a new kind of knickknack, which it seemed like to me it was about the best thing I ever tasted in my whole life. So, on the chancet, suh, that you might have a sweet tooth, too, I taken the liberty of bringin' you a sack of 'em and—and—and here they are, suh; three flavors—strawberry, lemon and vanilly."

Suddenly overcome with confusion, he dislodged a large-sized paper bag from his side coat pocket and thrust it into Judge Priest's hands; then, backing away, he turned and clumped down the graveled path in great and embarrassed haste.

Judge Priest opened the bag and peered down into it.

It contained a sticky sugary dozen of flattened confections, each molded round a short length of wooden splinter. These sirupy articles, which have since come into quite general use, are known, I believe, as all-day suckers.

When Judge Priest looked up again, Peep O'Day was outside the gate, clumping down the uneven sidewalk of Clay Street with long strides of his booted legs. Half a dozen small boys, who, it was evident, had remained hidden during the ceremony of presentation, now mysteriously appeared and were accompanying the departing donor, half trotting to keep up with him.

LAUGHTER ⁶

By CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE

From *Harper's Magazine*

As Suvaroff neared his lodgings, he began to wonder whether the Italian who had the room next him would continue to grind out tunes all night upon his accordion. The thought made Suvaroff shudder. What in Heaven's name possessed people to grind out tunes, Suvaroff found himself inquiring, unless one earned one's living that way? Certainly this weather-beaten Italian was no musician; he smelled too strongly of fish for any one to mistake his occupation. He tortured melody from choice, blandly, for the pure enjoyment of the thing. With Suvaroff it was different; if he did not play, he did not eat.

Suvaroff's head had ached all day. The café where he scraped his violin from early afternoon until midnight had never seemed so stuffy, so tawdry, so impossible! All day he had sat and played and played, while people ate and chattered and danced. No, that did not describe what people did; they gorged and shrieked and gyrated like decapitated fowls, accomplishing everything with a furious energy, primitive, abandoned, disgusting. He wondered if he would ever again see people eat quietly and simply, like normal human beings.

If only the Italian would go away, or decide to sleep, or die! Yes, Suvaroff would have been glad to have found his neighbor quite dead—anything to still that terrible accordion, which had been pumping out tunes for over a week at all hours of the day and night! The music did not have the virtue of an attempt at gaiety; instead it droned out prolonged wails, melancholy and indescribably discordant.

The night was damp, a typical San Francisco midsummer night. A drizzling fog had swept in from the ocean and fell refreshingly on the gray city. But the keenness of the air irritated Suvaroff's headache instead of soothing it; he felt the wind upon his temples as one feels the cool cut of a knife. In short, everything irritated Suvaroff—his profession, the café where he fiddled, the strident streets of the city, the evening mist, the Hôtel des Alpes Maritimes, where he lodged, and the Italian fisherman and his doleful accordion.

Turning off Kearny Street into Broadway, he had half a notion not to go home, but his dissatisfaction was so inclusive that home seemed, at once, quite as good and as hopeless a place to go as any other. So he pushed open the door of his lodging-house and stamped rather heavily up-stairs.

Although midnight, the first sound which greeted Suvaroff was the wheezing of the Italian's accordion.

"Now," muttered Suvaroff, "I shall suffer in silence no longer. Nobody in this city, much less in these wretched lodgings, has an ear for anything but the clink of money and the shrill laughter of women. If fifty men were to file saws in front of the entrance of any one of these rooms, there would be not the slightest concern. Every one would go on sleeping as if they had nothing more weighty on their conscience than the theft of a kiss from a pretty girl."

He tossed his hat on the bed and made for the Italian's door. He did not wait to knock, but broke in noisily. The accordion stopped with a prolonged wail; its owner rose, visibly frightened.

"Ah!" cried the Italian, "it is you! I am glad of that. See, I have not left the house for three days."

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There was a genial simplicity about the man; Suvaroff felt overcome with confusion. "What is the matter? Are you ill?" he stammered, closing the door.

"No. I am afraid to go out. There is somebody waiting for me. Tell me, did you see a cripple standing on the corner, near Bollo's Wine Shop, as you came in?"

Suvaroff reflected. "Well, not a cripple, exactly. But I saw a hunchback with—with—"

"Yes! yes!" cried the other, excitedly. "A hunchback with a handsome face! That is he! I am afraid of him. For three days he has sat there, waiting!"

"For you? How absurd! Why should any one do such a ridiculous thing?"

The Italian slipped his hands from the accordion and laid it aside. "Nobody but one who is mad would do it, but he is mad. There is no doubt about that!"

Suvaroff began to feel irritated. "What are you talking about? Have you lost your senses? If he is waiting for you, why do you not go out and send him away? Go out and pay him what you owe him."

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