Short stories from ***100 Selected Stories***, *by O Henry*

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1

The Gift of the Magi

ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing left to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the look-out for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric bell from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name 'Mr. James Dillingham Young.'

The 'Dillingham' had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid $30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to $20, the letters of 'Dillingham' looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called 'Jim' and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. To-morrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only $1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for

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seconds, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only $1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling – something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honour of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid succession of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out of the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: 'Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.' One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the 'Sofronie.'

'Will you buy my hair?' asked Della.

'I buy hair,' said Madame. 'Take your hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it.'

Down rippled the brown cascade.

'Twenty dollars,' said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

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'Give it to me quick,' said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hackneyed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation – as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value – the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends – a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, closely-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

'If Jim doesn't kill me,' she said to herself, 'before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do – oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?'

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove, hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: 'Please God, make him think I am still pretty.'

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two – and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

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Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a statue of the image of peril. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

'Jim, darling,' she cried, 'don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again – you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say "Merry Christmas!" Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice – what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you.'

'You've cut off your hair?' asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labour.

'Cut it off and sold it,' said Della. 'Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?'

Jim looked about the room curiously.

'You say your hair is gone?' he said with an air almost of idiocy.

'You needn't look for it,' said Della. 'It's sold, I tell you – sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered,' she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, 'but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?'

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year – what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

'Don't make no mistake, Dell,' he said, 'about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going awhile at first.'

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the soothing powers of the lord of the flat.

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For there lay The Combs – the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoiseshell, with jewelled rims – just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say, 'My hair grows so fast, Jim!'

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, 'Oh, oh!'

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

'Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.'

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

'Dell,' said he, 'let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em awhile. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on.'

The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days, let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

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II

A Cosmopolite in a Café

AT MIDNIGHT THE CAFÉ was crowded. By some chance the little table at which I sat had escaped the eye of hostesses, and even vacant chairs at it remained their sense with usual hospitality on the inflow of patrons.

And then a cosmopolite sat in one of them, and I was glad, for I held a theory that there dines no true citizen of the world but eats alone. We hear of them, and we see foreign hotels so much baggage, but we find travellers instead of cosmopolites.

I invoke your consideration of the scene – the marble-topped tables, the rouge of leather-upholstered wall seats, the gay company, the Indian dressed in dyed-state toilets, speaking in six exquisite visible shades of tone, accenting, opulence or art, the nebulous and bargain-loving groups, the music wisely catering to all with its table upon the composers; the mélange of talk and laughter – and, if you will, the Wiedenmeyer in the tall glass cruse that found as your lips as a ripe cherry rests on its branch or the husk of a toilet jay. I was told by a sculptor from Munich Claus that the scene was truly Parisian.

My cosmopolite was named R. Rockstone Cogden, and he told he heard from near summer at Coney Island. He is to establish a new 'attraction' there, he informed me, offering kingly diversion. And then his conversation rang along parallels of latitude and longitude. He took the globe, rested world in his hand, so to speak, familiarly, contemptuously, and it seemed no larger than the seed of a Maraschino cherry in a table-d'hôte grape fruit. He spoke disrespectfully of the equator, he skipped from continent to continent, he dotted the ocean, he mopped up the high seas with his napkin. With a wave of his hand he would speak of a single house in Hyderabad. Whiff! He would have you be this in Lapland. Zip! Here you rode the broncos with the Kanakas at Kaalakaiki. Presto! He dragged you through an Arkansas pecan swamp, he, you dry for a moment on the wharf plains of his Idaho ranch, then whirled you into the society of Victorian archdukes. Anon he would be calling you of a cold he acquired in a Chicago lake breeze and how old Leontius cured it in Borneo Apres with a hot infusion of the chocolate weed. You would have

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addressed the letter to 'E. Rushmore Coglan, Esq., the Earth, Solar System, the Universe,' and knew mailed it, feeling confident that it would be delivered to him.

I was sure that I had at last found the one true cosmopolite place. Adana, and I dreaded to his world-wide discovery fearful lest I should discover in it the local note of the mere globe-trotter. But his optimism never flattened or drooped; he was as impartial to cities, countries and continents as the winds or gravitation.

And so E. Rushmore Coglan perished of chic little plague I thought with glee of a great almost-cosmopolite who wrote for the whole world and dedicated himself to Earthly. In a poem he has to say that there is pride and misery between the cities of the earth, and that 'the votes that travel from there, they traffic up and there, but cling to their cities' home as a child to the mother's gown.' And whenever they walk 'by running streets unknown' they remember their native city 'more faithful, foolish, fond; misting her moss-breathed name their heart upon their head.' And my glee was restored because I had caught Mr. Kipling napping. Here I had found a man not made from dusty clay who had no narrow terms of birthplace or country, one who, if he bragged at all, would brag of his whole round globe against the Martians and the inhabitants of the Adana.

Expression on these subjects was precipitated from E. Rushmore Coglan by the third course at our table. While Coglan was describing to me the topography along the Siberian Railway the orchestra glided into a tarantelle. The concluding air was 'Dixie,' and as the exhilarating notes tumbled forth they were almost overpowered by a great clapping of hands from almost every table.

It is worth a paragraph to say that this remarkable scene can be witnessed every evening in numerous cafés in the City of New York. Tens of fewer have been consumed near theatres to reserve for it. Scores have conjectured hastily that all Southerners in town hie themselves to cafés at nightfall. This applause of the 'rebel' air in a Northern city does puzzle a little; but it is not inexplicable. The war with Spain, many years' generous rains and water-melon crops, a few long-shot winners at the New Orleans race-track, and the brilliant banquets given by the Indians and Kansas citizens who compose the North Carolina Society, have made the South rather a 'find' in Manhattan. Your manicure will lisp wildly that your left forefinger reminds her so much of a gentleman's in Richmond. Va. Oh, certainly; but many a lady has so much more — the way, you know.

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When 'Dixie' was being played a dark-haired young man sprang up from somewhere with a Mosby guerrilla yell and waved frantically his soft-brimmed hat. Then he scraped through the curtain, dropped into the vacant chair at our table and pulled our cigarettes.

The evening was at the period when reserve is thawed. One of us introduced three Witzburgers to the waiter, the dark-haired young man acknowledged his inclusion in the order by a smile and a nod. I hastened to ask him a question because I wanted to try out a theory I had.

'Would you mind telling me,' I began, 'whether you are from—'

The fire of E. Rathmore Coghlan banged the table and I was jarred into silence.

'Excuse me,' said he, 'but that's a question I never like to hear asked. What does it matter where a man is from? Is it fair to judge a man by his post-office address? Why, I've seen Kentuckians who hated whisky, Virginians who weren't descended from Pocahontas, Indianans who hadn't written a novel, Mexicans who didn't wear velvet trousers with silver dollars sewed along the seams, funny Englishmen, speculative Yankees, cold-blooded Statesmen, narrow-minded Westerners, and New Yorkers who were too busy to stop for an hour on the street to watch a one-armed grocer's clerk do up cranberries in paper bags. Let a man be a man and don't handicap him with the label of any section.'

'Pardon me,' I said, 'my curiosity was not altogether on this one. I know the South, and when the band plays "Dixie" I like to observe. I have fostered the belief that the man who applauds that air with special violence and ostensible sectional loyalty is invariably a native of either Encanto, N.J., or the district between Murray Hill Lyceum and the Harlem River, this city. I was about to put my opinion to the test by inquiring of this gentleman when you interrupted with your own—larger theory, I must confess.'

And now the dark-haired young man spoke to me, and it became evident that his mind also moved along his own set of grooves.

'I should like to be a periwinkle,' said he, mysteriously, 'on the top of a valley, and sing too-raloo-raloo.'

This was clearly too tiresome, so I turned again to Coghlan.

'I've been around the world twelve times,' said he. 'I know an Esquimau in Upernavik who speaks to Charlemagne for his medicine, and I saw a goat-herder in Uruguay who won a prize in a Battle Creek breakfast-food parade competition. I pay rent on a room in

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Cairo, Egypt, and another in Yokohama all the year round. I've got slippers waiting for me in a tea-house in Shanghai, and I don't have to tell 'em how to cook my eggs in Rio de Janeiro or Seattle. It's a mighty little old world. What's the use of bragging about living from the North, or the South, or the old manor-house in the dale, or Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, or Pike's Peak, or Pickle County, Va., or Hardpan,[3] Texas or any place? It'll be a better world when we quit being knee-deep about some unlikelihood town or the scene of overexplored joy because we happened to be born there.'

'You seem to be a genuine, cosmopolite,' I said admiringly. 'But it also means that you would decry patriotism.'

'A relic of the same age,' declared Coglan warmly. 'We are all brothers – Chinamen, Englishmen, Zulus, Portuguese, and the people in the head of the Kaw River. Some day all this gassy pride in one's city or state or section or country will be wiped out, and we'll all be citizens of the world, as we ought to be.'

'But while you are wandering in foreign lands,' I persisted, 'do not your thoughts revert to some spot – some dear old –'

'Pray a spot,' interrupted E. R. Coglan flippantly. 'The terrestrial globule, planetary hunk of matter, slightly flattened at the poles, and known as the Earth, is my abode. I've met a good many object-headed citizens of this country abroad. I've seen some from Chicago sit to a gondola in Venice on a moonlight night and harp about their drainage canal. I've seen a Southerner on being introduced to the King of England head that monarch, without batting his eyes, the information that his grandmother on his mother's side was related by marriage to the Perkinses, of Charleston. I know a New Yorker who was kidnapped for ransom by some Afghanistan bandits. His people sent over the money and he came back to Kabul with the agent. "Afghanistan?" the station said to him through an interpreter. "Well, not so slow, do you think?" "Oh, I don't know," says he, and he begins to tell them about a cab-driver at Sixth Avenue and Broadway. 'Those idiots don't suit me. I've got that down as anything that isn't 8,000 miles in diameter. Just put me down as E. Rathbone Coglan, citizen of the terrestrial sphere.'

My cosmopolite made a large salaam and left me, for he thought that he saw someone through the shutter and maybe wanted to know. So I was left with the world-his portmanteau, which was reduced to Winchester without further ability to voice his aspirations on porch, makeshift, upon the eccentric of a village.

I am reflecting upon my evident cosmopolite and wondering how the poor had managed to exist him. He was my discovery and

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I believed in him. How was it? 'The man that heard finer than they walks up and down, but sling us their chins' hair as a child to the mother's paps.'

Nine to E. Rudimens Coglan. With the whole world for his –

My meditations were interrupted by a tremendous noise and conflict in another part of the mill. I saw above the heads of the crowd patrons E. Rudimens Coglan and a stranger to me engaged in terrific bouts. They fought between the tables like Titans, and glasses crashed, and men sought their feet up and were knocked down, and a brunette screamed, and a blonde began to sing 'Tannhäuser.'

My cosmopolite was extolling the pride and reputation of the Hardy when the waiters closed in on both combatants with their famous flying wedge formation, and bore them outside, still resisting.

I called McCarthy, one of the French gropers, and asked him the cause of the conflict.

'The man with the red tie' (that was my cosmopolite), said he, 'got hot on account of things said about the bum sidewalks and water supply of the place he came from by the other guy.'

'Why,' said I, bewildered, 'that man is a citizen of the world – a cosmopolite, sir –'

'Originally from Mannerschlong, Maine, he said,' continued McCarthy, 'and he wouldn't stand for no knockin' the place.'

III

Between Rounds

THE MAY FOUND RECEIVE WAITING upon the private boarding-house of Mrs. Murphy. By reference to the almanac a large account of territory will be discovered upon which he can fall. Spring was in its heyday, with hay fever soon to follow. The parks were green with new leaves and tripes the Western and Southern mails. Flowers and summer-resort agents were blooming; the air and screens of Lenox were growing golden head-capers, fountains and pinochle were playing everywhere.

The windows of Mrs. Murphy's boarding-house were open. A group of boarders were seated on the high stoop upon record, the main like Germans porcelain.

In one of the second-floor front windows Mrs. McCarthy

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awaited her husband. Supper was cooling on the table. In time went into Mrs. McCauley.

At nine Mr. McCauley came. He carried his coat on his arm and his pipe in his mouth; and he apologized for disturbing the boarders on the steps as he selected spots of room between them on which to set his size 9, width Ee.

As he opened the door of his room he received a surprise. Instead of the usual stove-lid or potato-masher for him to dodge, came only words.

Mr. McCauley reckoned that the benign May moon had softened the breast of his spouse.

'I heard ye,' came the oral substance for kitchenware. 'Ye can apologize on cliff-cliff of the streets fat needs' yer unbeauty feet on the wills of their frocks, but ye'd walk on the neck of yer wife that bought of a clothes-line without so much as a "Kiss me fire," and I'm sure it's clear long from celebratin' am the crimely the pe and the victuals cold such as there's money to buy slave drinkin' up yer wages at Gallagher's every Saturday evenin', and that goo into here twice to-day for his.'

'Woman!' said Mr. McCauley, dashing his coat and hat upon a chair, 'the cries of ye is an hourir to me appetite. When ye run down policemen ye take the mortar from between the bricks of the foundations of society. 'Tis no more than municipic' the acrimony of a gentleman when ye ask the element of ignis blockin' the way for steppin' between sheets. Will ye bring the pig's face of ye out of the windy and pee to the feed?'

Mrs. McCauley arose heavily and went to the stove. There was something in her manner that warned Mr. McCauley. When the corners of her mouth went down suddenly like a barometer it usually foretold a fall of crockery and stoveware.

'Pig's face, is it?' said Mrs. McCauley, and hurled a stewpan full of bacon and cabbage at her lord.

Mr. McCauley was no novice at repartee. He knew what should follow the course. On the table was a roast sirloin of pork, garnished with chestnuts. He retorted with this, and drew the appropriate wrath of a bread pudding in an earthen dish. A knife of Swiss cheese accurately thrown by her husband struck Mrs. McCauley below one eye. When she replied with a well-aimed coffee-pot full of a hot, black, semi-fragrant liquid the battle, according to custom, should have ended.

But Mr. McCauley was no 90 cent table d'hôte. Let cheap Bohemians consider coffee the end of all they would. Let short cakes

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that *were* *per*. He was feeler still. Finger-bowls were not beyond the compass of his experience. They were not to be had in the Pension Murphy; but their equivalent was at hand. Triumphantly he sent the granite-ware wash-basin at the head of his matrimonial adversary. Mrs. McCaskey dodged its clang. She reached for a flat-iron, with which, as a sort of reprisal, she hoped to bring the gastronomical duel to a close. But a hand, nerving screams through-stairs caused both her and Mr. McCaskey to pause in a sort of involuntary semblance.

On the sidewalk at the corner of the house Policeman Cleary was scuffling with one not uncommon, keeping at the crash of household utensils.

'Tis Jerry McCaskey and his cannon at it again,' soliloquized the policeman. 'I wonder shall I go up and stop the row. I will not. Married folks they say and four pleasures they have. 'Twill not last long. Sure, they'll have to borrow more dishes to keep it up with.'

And just then came the loud scream below-stairs, heralding fear or dire calamity. 'Tis probably the rat,' said Policeman Cleary, and walked hastily in the other direction.

The boarders on the steps were flustered. Mr. Tommy, an inveterate solicitor by birth and an investigator by profession, went inside to enlighten the servants. He returned with the news that Mrs. Murphy's little boy Miles was lost. Following the messenger, out bounced Mrs. Murphy – two hundred pounds in tears and hysterics, clutching the air and howling as she sat for the loss of thirty pounds of freckled and mischief. Before, only her Mr. Tommy sat down at the side of Miss Purdy, milliner, and their heads came together in sympathy. The two old maids, Misses Welsh, who complained every day about the noise in the halls, inquired immediately if anybody had looked behind the clock.

Major Grigg, who sat by his fat wife on the top step, stood and buttoned his coat. 'The little one lost!' he exclaimed. 'I will scour the city.' His wife never allowed him out after dark. But now she said: 'Go, Ludovic!' in a fortune voice. 'Whoever can look upon that mother's grief without springing to her relief has a heart of stone.' 'Give me some thirty or – stay even, my love,' said the Major. 'Lost children sometimes stray far. I may need car-fares.'

Old man Denny, hall-room, fourth floor back, who sat on the lowest step, trying to read a paper by the street lamp, craned over a page or follow up the article about the carpenters' strike. Mrs. Murphy shrieked in the answer 'Oh, sir-r-Mike, f'r God's sake, where is the little kid or I'll

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'When'd ye see him last?' asked old man Denny, with one eye on the report of the Building Trades League.

'Oh,' replied Mrs. Murphy, 'twas yisterday, or maybe four hours ago! I dunno. But it's lost he is, me little boy Mike. He was playin' on the sidewalk only this mornin' – or was it Wednesday? I'm that busy with work 'tis hard to keep up with them. But I've looked the house over from top to cellar, and it's gone he is. Oh, for the love av Hiven –'

Silver, grim, colossal, the big city has ever stood against its revilers. They call it hard as iron, they say that on pulse of pity beats in its bosom; they compare its streets with lonely forests and deserts of love. But beneath the hard crust of the lobster is found a delectable and luscious food. Perhaps a different simile would have been wiser. Still, nobody should take offence. We would call no man a lobster without good and sufficient cause.

No calamity so touches the common heart of humanity as does the straying of a little child. Their feet are so uncertain and finding the ways are so steep and savage.

Major Griggs hurried down to the corner, and up the avenue into Billy's place. 'Gimme a rye-high,' he said to the bartender. 'Haven't seen a bow-legged, dirty-faced little devil of a six-year-old lost kid around here anywhere, have you?'

Mr. Toomey restored Miss Purdy's head on the steps. 'Think of that dear little babe,' said Miss Purdy, 'lost from his mother's side – perhaps already fallen beneath the iron hoofs of galloping steeds – oh, isn't it dreadful?'

'Ain't that right?' agreed Mr. Toomey, spooning her head. 'Say I start out and help look for me!'

'Perhaps,' said Miss Purdy, 'you should. But oh, Mr. Toomey, you are so clubbing – so outlaws – suppose in your enthusiasm some accident should befall you, then what –'

Old man Denny read on about the arbitration agreement, with one finger on the lines.

In five second floor front Mr. and Mrs. McCluskey rose to the window to recover their second wind. Mr. McCluskey was scraping tomato out of his vest with a excellent forefinger, and his lady was wiping an eye that the suit of the rosy pack had not benefited. They heard the outcry below, and closed their Lucite war of the window.

'Tis little Alfie is lost,' said Mrs. McCluskey in a troubled voice. 'the beautiful, little, trouble-making angel of a gossoon!'

'The bit of a bap scalpeen!' said Mr. McCluskey leaning out of

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the window. 'Why, now, that's bad enough, entirely. The children, they be different. If 'twas a woman I'd be willin', for they leave purses behind 'em when they go.'

Disregarding the threat, Mrs. McCaskey caught her husband's arm.

'Jawn,' she said sentimentally, 'Mistis Murphy's little lyte is lost. 'Tis a great day for losing little boys. Six years old he was. Jawn, 'tis the same age our little lyte would have been if we had had one the years ago.'

'We never did,' said Mr. McCaskey, fingering with the fact.

'But if we had, Jawn, think what sorrow would be in our hearts this night, with our little Finnie run away and gone in the city nowhere at all.'

'Ye talk foolishness,' said Mr. McCaskey. 'Tis Pat he would be named, after our old father in Casmire.'

'Ye lie!' said Mrs. McCaskey, without anger. 'Me brother was worth the dozen bog-trotting McCaskeys. After him would the lyte be named.' She leaned over the window-sill and looked down at the hurrying mad bands below.

'Jawn,' said Mrs. McCaskey softly, 'I'm sorry I was hasty wid ye.'

'Twas hasty puddin', as ye say,' said her husband, 'and hurry-up tootsie and gee-a-mouse-on-ye rather. 'Twas what yez would call a quick lunch, all right, and tell me so.'

Mrs. McCaskey slipped her arm inside her husband's and took his rough hand in hers.

'Listen at the mylts' of poor Mrs. Murphy,' she said. 'Tis an awful thing for a bit of a lyte to be lost in this great big city. If 'twas our little Finnie, Jawn, I'd be breakin' me heart.'

Awkwardly Mr. McCaskey withdrew his hand. But he laid it around the trembling shoulders of his wife.

'Tis foolishness, of course,' said he, roughly, 'but I'd be out up about myself, if our little – Pat was kidnapped or anything. But there never was any children for us. Sometimes I've been ugly and hard with ye, Judy. Forget it.'

They leaned together, and looked down at the heart-drama being enacted below.

Long they sat thus. Purple seeped along the sidewalk, crowding, questioning, filling the air with rumours and incomprehensible sadness. Mrs. Murphy ploughed back and forth in their midst, like a swift mountain down which plunged an audible current of name. 'Countess mama and wan'

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Loud voices and a renewed uproar were raised in front of the boarding-house.

'What's up now, Judy?' asked Mr. McCauley.

'Tis Missis Murphy's voice,' said Mrs. McCauley, bridling. 'She says she's after finding little Miss asleep behind the coil of old linoleum under the bed in her room.'

Mr. McCauley laughed loudly.

'That's your Fenian,' he sneered sardonically. 'Divil a bit would a Pat have done that trick if the bye we never had it stopped and wale, by the powers, call him Fenian, and see him hide-out under the bed like a *mainsy pup*.'

Mrs. McCauley arose heavily, and went toward the dish closet, with the corners of her mouth drawn down.

Policeman Clancy arose back around the corner as the crowd dispersed. Surprised, he returned on one toward the McCauley apartment where the scrub of irons and chinaware and the ring of kindred kitchen utensils seemed to look as before. Policeman Clancy took out his complete.

'By the deported statute!' he exclaimed, 'Jawn McCauley and his lady have been fighting' for an hour and a quarter by the watch. The colonie could give him forty pounds weight. Strength to his arm.'

Policeman Clancy strolled back around the corner.

Old man Dewey folded his paper and turned up the steps just as Mrs. Murphy was about to lock the door for the night.

10

The Skylight Room

FIRST MRS. PARKER would show you the double parlours. You would not dare to interrupt her description of their advantages and of the merits of the gentleman who had occupied them for eight years. Then you would manage to stammer forth the crudities that you were neither a doctor nor a dentist. Mrs. Parker's manner of receiving the information was such that you could never afterward entertain the same feeling toward your parents, who had neglected to train you up for one of the professions that fitted Mrs. Parker's parlours.

Next you ascended one flight of stairs and looked at the second floor back at $28. Convinced by [illegible] second-floor manner that it

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was worth the $12 that Mr. Toomsberry always paid for it until he left to take charge of his brother's orange plantation in Florida near Palm Beach, where Mrs. McIntyre always spent the winters that had the double front room with private bath, you managed to hobble that you wanted something still cheaper.

If you survived Mrs. Parker's stairs, you were taken to look at Mr. Skidder's large hall-room on the third floor. Mr. Skidder's room was not vacant. He wore plaid and smoked cigarettes in it all day long. But every room-hunter was made to visit his room to admire the hardwood trim. After each visit, Mr. Skidder, from the fright caused by possible eviction, would pay something on his rent.

Then — oh, then — if you still stood on one foot with your last hand clutching the three rusty dollars in your pocket, and bravely proclaimed your littleness and culpable poverty, never-more would Mrs. Parker be cheated of yours. She would look kindly the word 'Clara,' she would shove you her back, and march downstairs. There Clara, the coloured maid, would escort you up the carpeted ladder that served for the fourth flight, and there yet the Skylight Room. It occupied 7 by 8 feet of floorspace at the middle of the hall. On each side of it was a dark lonely alcove or store-room.

In it was an iron cot, a washstand and a chair. A shelf was the dresser. Its four bare walls seemed to close in upon you like the sides of a coffin. Your head crept to your throne, you gasped, you looked up as from a well — and breathed once more. Through the glass of the little skylight you saw a square of blue infinity.

'Two dollars, sah,' Clara would say in her half-contemptuous, half-Tuskegeenial tones.

One day Miss Leeson came hunting for a room. She carried a typewriter made so as to be lugged around by a much larger lady. She was a cozy little girl, with eyes and hair that kept on growing after she had stopped and that always looked as if they were saying: 'Goodness me. Why didn't you keep up with me?'

Mrs. Parker showed her the double parlours. 'In this closet,' she said, 'one could keep a skeleton or somebody's cat or coal —'

'But I am neither a skeleton nor a shoplifter,' said Miss Leeson with a shiver.

Mrs. Parker gave her the incredulous, pitying, scanning, icy stare that she kept for those who failed to qualify as doctors or deaders, and led the way to the second floor back.

'Eight dollars?' said Miss Leeson. 'Dear me! I'm sure Henry if I

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do look green. I'm just a poor little working girl. Show me something higher and lower.'

Mr. Skidder jumped and pursued the floor with cigarette stubs as the cap on his chest.

'Excuse me, Mr. Skidder,' said Mrs. Parker, with her dentist's smile on his pale brow. 'I didn't know you were in. I asked the lady to have a look at your kaleyoquins.'

'They're not handy for anything,' said Miss Leeson, smiling in exactly the way the angels do.

After they had gone Mr. Skidder got very busy erasing the tall, black-haired heroine from his lower (unproduced) play and inserting a small, roguish one with heavy, bright hair and streetcar manners.

'Some Heidi'll jump at it,' said Mr. Skidder to himself, putting his feet up against the kaleyoquins and disappearing in a cloud of smoke like an awful confidence.

Presently the remote call of 'Clara!' sounded on the world the voice of Miss Leeson's purse. A dark goblin seized her, escorted a Stygian walkway, threw her into a work with a glimmer of light in its cap and accosted the menacing and cabalistic words 'Two dollars!'

'I'll take it!' sighed Miss Leeson, sinking down upon the squeaky iron bed.

Every day Miss Leeson went out to work. At night the hieroglyphic lower papers with handwriting on them and stuck copies with her typewriter. Sometimes she had to work at night, and then she would sit on the steps of the high stoop with the other roomers. Miss Leeson was not intended for a skylight room when the plans were drawn for her creation. She was gay-hearted and full of comic, whimsical theories. Once she let Mr. Skidder read to her three acts of his great (unpublished) comedy, 'It's No Kid or, The Heir of the Subway.'

There was rejoicing among the gentlemen roomers whenever Miss Leeson had time to sit on the steps for an hour or two. But Miss Longnecker, the tall blonde who taught in a public school and said 'Well, really!' to everything you said, sat on the top step and sniffed. And Mrs. Dunn, who shot in the morning clerk at Cassy every Sunday and worked in a department store, sat on the bottom step and sniffed. Miss Leeson sat on the middle step, and the men would quickly group around her.

Especially Mr. Skidder, who had one bar to his salad for the next part in a pathetic, romantic (unproduced) drama in real life. And

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especially Mr. Hoover, who was forty-five, fat, flushed and foolish. And especially very young Mr. Evans, who ran up a hollow cough to induce her to ask him to leave off cigarettes. The men voted her 'the funniest and jolliest ever,' but the misses on the top step and the lower step were implacable.

* * * * *

I pray you let the demon hate with Chorus smile to the footlights and drape an opprobrious veil upon the fortune of Mr. Hoover. Tune the pipes to the tragedy of yellow, the brass of bulk, the calamity of corpulence. Tried out, Falstaff might have rendered more romance to the ton than would have Romeo's dolorous ribs to the ounce. A lower carry sigh, but he more was pathetic. To the twain of Mourne are the fat men commended. In vain beats the fatalistic heart above a 52-inch belt. Avaunt, Heaved Hoover, forty-five, flush and foolish, eight carry off Helen herself; Hoover, forty-five, flush, foolish and fat, is meat for perdition. There was never a chance for you, Hoover.

At Mrs. Parker's romance ran three one summer's evening. Miss Lennox looked up into the firmament and cried with her little gay laugh:

'Why, there's Billy Jackson! I can see him from down here, too.'

All looked up – some to the windows of skyscrapers, some reaching above for an airship, Jackson-guided.

'It's that one,' explained Miss Lennox, pointing with a tiny finger. 'Not the big one that twinkles – the steady blue one next it. I can see it every night through my skylight. I named it Billy Jackson.'

'Well, really!' said Miss Longnecker. 'I didn't know you were an astronomer, Miss Lennox.'

'Oh, yes,' said the small sun-spots, 'I know as much as any of them about the ugly old stars they're going to wear next fall in Paris.'

'Well, really!' said Miss Longnecker. 'The one you refer to is Gamma, of the constellation Cassiopeia. It is nearly of the second magnitude, and its euclidian passage is –'

'Oh,' said the very young Mr. Evans, 'I think Billy Jackson is a much better name for it.

'Some here,' said Mr. Hoover, loudly accepting defiance to Miss Longnecker, 'I think Miss Lennox has just as much right to name stars as any of these old astronomers had.'

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'Well, really!' said Miss Longnecker.

'I wonder whether it's a shooting star,' remarked Miss Dora. 'I bet she ducks and a rabbit out of ten in the gallery at Casey Sunday.'

'He doesn't show up very well from down here,' said Miss Leeson. 'You ought to see him from my room. You know you can see every star in the daytime from the bottom of a well. At night my room is like the shaft of a coal-mine, and it makes Billy Jackson look like the big diamond pin that Night fastens her blouse with.'

There came a time after that when Miss Leeson brought no theatrical papers home to copy. And when she went in the morning, instead of working, she went from office to office and let her voice vary to the tune of cold refusals transmitted through insolent office boys. This went on.

There came an evening when she weakly climbed Mrs. Parker's steps at the hour when she always returned from her dinner at the restaurant. But she had had no dinner.

At the stopping-down the hall Mr. Flannery met her and seized his chance. He asked her to marry him, and his fortune howsoever shows him like an avalanche. She dodged, and caught the bannister. He tried for her hand, and she raised it and swore him softly to the fate. Step by step she went up, dragging herself by the railing. She passed Mr. Skidder's door as he was red-inking a mega direction for *Myrtle Delorme* (Miss Leeson) in his (unaccepted) comedy, to 'promenade across stage from L. to the side of the Count.' Up the carpeted ladder she crawled at last and opened the door of the skylight room.

She was too weak to light the lamp or to undress. She fell upon the bed, her fragile body scarcely bolstering the worn springs. And in that Erebus of a room she slowly raised her heavy eyelids, and smiled.

For Billy Jackson was shining down on her, calm and bright and constant through the skylight. There was no cloud about her. She was sunk in a pit of blackness, while her dear small square of pallid light fronting the star that she had so whimsically, and oh, so inflexibly, named. Miss Longnecker seem be right it was Cassiopeia, of the constellation Cassiopeia, and not Billy Jackson. And yet she could not let it be Cassiopeia.

As she lay on her back she cried twice to raise her arm. The third time she got two thin fingers to her lips and blew a kiss out of the black pit to Billy Jackson. Then was fell back limply.

'Good-bye, Billy,' she murmured faintly. 'You're millions of

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miles away and you won't even twinkle once. But you kept where I could see you most of the time up there when there wasn't anything else but darkness to look at, didn't you? . . . Millions of miles. . . . Good-bye, Billy Jackson.'

Clara, the coloured maid, found the door locked at ten this warm day, and they forced it open. Vinegar, and the slapping of wrists and wet brown feathers, proving of no avail, someone ran to 'phone for an ambulance.

In the time it backed up to the door with much gong-clanging, and the capable young medico, in his white linen coat, ready, active, confident, with his smooth face half debonair, half grim, shooed up the steps.

'Ambulance call to 49,' he said briefly. 'What's the trouble?'

'Oh yes, doctor,' sniffed Mrs. Parker, as though her trouble that there should be trouble in the house was the greater. 'I can't think what can be the matter with her. Nothing we could do would bring her to. It's a young woman, a Miss Elsie – yes, a Miss Elsie Lemon. Never before in my house –'

'What room?' cried the doctor in a terrible voice, to which Mrs. Parker was a stranger.

'The skylight room. It –'

Evidently the ambulance doctor was familiar with the location of skylight rooms. He was gone up the stairs, four at a time. Mrs. Parker followed slowly, as her dignity demanded.

On the first landing the man like coming back bearing the stretcher in his arms. He stopped and let loose the practised scalpel of his tongue. ran loudly. Gradually Mrs. Parker crumpled as a stiff garment that slips down from a nail. Her afterwards there convulsed crumples in her mind and body. Sometimes her curious comforts would ask her what the doctor said to her.

'Let that be,' she would answer. 'If I can get forgiveness for having heard it I will be satisfied.'

The ambulance physician strode with his burden through the pack of bounds that follow the curiosity chase, and even they fell back along the sidewalk disabed, for his face was that of one who bears his own dead.

They noticed that he did not lay down upon the bed prepared for it in the ambulance the form that he carried, and all that he said was 'Drive like h— I, Wilson,' to the driver.

That is all. Is it a story? In the next morning's paper I saw a little news item, and the last sentence of it may help you (as it helped me) to weld the bubbles together.

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It recounted the reception into Bellevue Hospital of a young woman who had been removed from No. 49 East – Street, suffering from debility induced by starvation. It concluded with these words:

'Dr. William Jackson, the ambulance physician who attended the case, says the patient will recover.'

II

A Service of Love

WHERE TRUE LOVE GIVES ART no service seems too hard.

That is our premise. This story shall draw a conclusion from it, and show by the same show that the premise is incorrect. That will be a new thing in logic, and a feat in story-telling somewhat older than the Great Wall of China.

Joe Larrabee came out of the post-oak flats of the Middle West painting with a gambler's fire pictured on his air he drew a picture of the town pump with a prominent citizen getting it hastily. This effort was framed and hung in the drug store window by the side of the car of corn with an unusual number of ears. At twenty he left for New York with a bowling machine and a capital all up somewhat above.

Dolly Carruthers did things in air scarcer so promisingly in a pine-tree village in the South that her relatives chipped in enough in her chip hat for her to go 'North' and 'Finish.' They could not see her f–, but that is one story.

Joe and Dolly met in an atelier where a number of art and music students had gathered to discuss chiaroscuro, Wagner, music, Rembrandt's works pictures, Waldteufel, wall-paper, Chopin, and Outing.

Joe and Dolly became entangled one of the other in each of the other's, as you please, and in a short time were married – for (see above), when one loves one's Art no service seems too hard.

Mr. and Mrs. Larrabee began housekeeping in a flat. It was a luminous flat – something like the A sharp way down in the left-hand end of the keyboard. And they were happy, for they had their Art and they had each other. And my advice to the rich young man would be – sell all you have, and give it to the poor – pardon for the digression – and live in a flat with your Art and your Dolly.

Fate decrees that all flats but their's is the only

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true happiness. If a home is happy it cannot fit you close – let the dresser collapse and become a billiard table, let the carpet turn on a roving machine, the sectional be a spare bedchamber, the wash-stand to sit upright pianos, let the four walls come together, if they will, so you and your Dulie are between. But if home be the other kind, let it be wide and long – come you at the Golden Gate, hang your hat on Hermann, your cape on Cape Horn, and go out by Lakeside.

Just one pointing in the class of the great Magician – you know his form. His feet are light, his lectures are light – his high-lights have brought him renown. Dulie was studying under Rosenrock – you know his repute as a disturber of the piano keys.

They were mighty happy as long as their money lasted. So is every – but I will not be cynical. Their skies were very clear and defined. Jee was an humorous capable very even of turning out pictures that old gentlemen with thin side-whiskers and thick pocket-books would wrestle one another in his studio for the privilege of buying. Dulie was to become familiar and then contemptuous with Music, as does when she saw the orchestra coat and boiled vanish she could have seen throw and lobster in a private dining-room and refuse to go on the stage.

But the last, in my opinion, was the home life in the flats for – the solemn, suitable chess after the day's work; the cozy dinners and feeds, light breakfasts; the interchange of ambitions – ambitions interwoven each with the other's or else inconsiderable – the mutual help and inspiration; and – overlook my ardencies – cuffed olives and cheese sandwiches at 11p.m.

But after each in Art flagged. It sometimes does, even if some substance doesn't fag it. Everything going out and nothing coming in, as the vulgarians say. Monty was looking to get Mr. Magician and Herr Rosenrock their prizes. When one loves one's Art no service seems too hard. So, Dulie said the same grim heroic humour as keep the chafing dish bubbling.

For two or three days she went out canvassing for pupils. One evening she came home elated.

'Jee, dear,' she said gleefully, 'I've a pupil. And, oh, the loveliest people! General – General A. B. Pinkney's daughter – on Seventy-first Street. Such a splendid house, Jee – you ought to see the front door! Byzantine I think you would call it. And inside! Oh, Jee, I never saw anything like it before.

'My pupil is his daughter Clementina. I dearly love her already. She's a delicate thing – drinks nothing in wine; and the sweetest,

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simplest manners! Only eighteen years old. I'm to give three lessons a week and, just think, Joe! $5 a lesson. I don't mind it a bit, for when I get two or three more pupils I can resume my lessons with Herr Rosenstock. Now, smooth out that wrinkle between your brows, dear, and let's have a nice supper.'

'That's all right for you, Dixie,' said Joe, attacking a can of peas with a carving knife and a hatchet. 'But how about me? Do you think I'm going to let you hustle for wages while I philosophize in the regions of high art? Not by the locust of Benvenuto Cellini! I guess I can still govern or lay cobblestones, and bring in a dollar or two.'

Delia came and hung about his neck.

'Joe, dear, you are silly. You must keep on at your studies. It is not as if I had quit my music and gone at work at something else. While I teach I learn. I am always with my music. And we can live as happily on fifteen dollars as $15 a week. You mustn't think of leaving Mr. Magister.'

'All right,' said Joe, reaching for the blue scalloped vegetable dish. 'But I have for you at for giving lessons. It isn't Art. Joe you're a scamp and a dear to do it.'

'When one loses one's Art on service seems very hard,' said Delia.

'Magister praised the sky in that sketch I made in the park,' said Joe. 'And Tubbs gave me permission to hang two of them in his window. I may sell one if the right kind of a moneyed idiot sees them.'

'You can you will,' said Delia serenely. 'And now let's be thankful for General Pinkney and this veal roast.'

During all of the next week the Larrabees had an early breakfast. Joe was enthusiastic about some morning-effect sketches he was doing in Central Park, and Delia packed him off breakfasted, exhilirated, praised, and kissed at seven o'clock. Art is an engaging mistress. It was most three seven o'clock when he returned in the evening.

At the end of the week Delia, wearily proud but haggard, triumphantly tossed three five-dollar bills on the 8 by 10 (inches) centre table of the 8 by 10 (feet) flat parlour.

'Somebody,' she said, a little wearily, 'Clementina who see. I'm afraid she doesn't practise enough, and I have to tell her the same things so often. And then she always drowns entirely in white, and that does get monotonous. But General Pinkney is the dearest old soul. I wish you could hear him, Joe. His cameo is somewhere

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when I sat with Clementina at the piano – he is a widower, you know – and wends there pulling his white goatee. "And how are the semiquavers and the demi-semiquavers progressing?" he always asks.

"I wish you could see the watercolor in that drawing-room, Jeff. And there Aeschines rug portières. And Clementina has such a funny little cough. I hope she is stronger than she looks. Oh, I really am getting attached to her, she is so gentle and high bred. General Pinkney's brother may soon Minister to Bolivia.'

And then Jeff, with the air of a Monte Cristo, drew forth a ten, a five, a two and a one – all legal tender notes – and laid them beside Della's earrings.

'Sold that water-colour of the cathedral to a man from Peoria,' he announced overwhelmingly.

'Don't joke with me,' said Della – 'not from Peoria!'

All the way. I wish you could see him, Della. For once with a swollen mortise and a quill toothpick. He saw the church in Trimble's window and thought it was a windmill at first. He was game, though, and bought it anyhow. He ordered another – an oil sketch of the Lackawanna freight depot – to take back with him. Made terms! Oh, I guess Art is still in it.'

'I'm so glad you've kept on,' said Della heartily. 'You've learned to win, dear. Thirty-three dollars! We never had so much at once before. We'll have oysters to-night.'

'And fillet mignon with champignons,' said Jeff. 'Where is the olive fork?'

On the next Saturday evening Jeff reached home first. He spread his $18 on the parlour table and waited what seemed to be a great deal of dark paint from his hands.

Half an hour later Della arrived, her right hand tied up in a shapeless bundle of wraps and bandages.

'How is this?' asked Jeff after the usual greetings.

Della laughed, her sad way joyously.

'Clementina,' she explained, 'insisted upon a Welsh rabbit after her lunch. She is such a queer girl. Welsh rabbits at five in the afternoon. The General was there. You should have seen him rave for the chafing dish, Jeff, just as if there wasn't a servant in the house. I know Clementina isn't in good health, she is so nervous. In stirring the rabbit she spilled a great lot of it, boiling hot, over my hand and wrist. It hurt awfully, Jeff. And the dear girl was so sorry! But General Pinkney! – Jeff, that old man simply went distracted. He rushed downstairs and sent somebody – they said the

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furnace man or somebody in the basement – one of a drug store for some oil and things to bind it up with. It doesn't hurt so much now.'

'What's this?' asked Joe, taking the hand tenderly and pulling up some white strands beneath the bandages.

'It's something soft,' said Dede, 'that had oil on it. Oh, Joe, did you tell another sketch?' She had seen the money on the table.

'Did I?' said Joe. 'Just ask the man from Peoria. He got his depot to-day, and he isn't sure but he thinks he wants another periscope and a view on the Hudson. What time this afternoon did you burn your hand, Dede?'

'Five o'clock, I think,' said Dede plaintively. 'The iron – I mean the rabbit came off the five dozen that time. You ought to have seen General Pinkney, Joe, when –'

'Sit down here a moment, Dede,' said Joe. He drew her to the couch, sat down beside her and put his arm across her shoulders.

'What have you been doing for the last two weeks, Dede?' he asked.

She looked it for a moment or two with an eye full of love and stubbornness, and unmurmured a phrase or two vaguely of General Pinkney; but at length down went her head and out came the truth and tears.

'I couldn't get any pupils,' she confessed. 'And I couldn't bear to have you give up your lessons; and I got a place ironing shirts in that big Twenty-fourth Street laundry. And I think I did very well to make up both General Pinkney and Clementina, don't you, Joe? And what a girl in the laundry set down a hot iron on my hand this afternoon I was all the way home rubbing up that nasty sheen the Welsh rabbit. You're not angry are you, Joe? And if I hadn't got the work you might've had your sketches to that man from Peoria.'

'He wasn't from Peoria,' said Joe slowly.

'Well, it doesn't matter where he was from. How clever you are, Joe – and – kiss me, Joe – and what made you sure suppose that I wasn't giving music lessons to Clementina?'

'I didn't,' said Joe, 'until to-night. And I wouldn't have then, only I met up this canoe waste and oil from the engine-room this afternoon for a girl upstairs who had her hand burned with a smoothing-iron. I've been doing the engine in that laundry for the last two weeks.'

'And then you didn't –'

'My purchaser from Peoria,' said Joe, 'and General Pinkney are

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both creations of the same art — but you wouldn't call it either painting or music.

And then they both laughed, and Joe began:

"When one loves such-a-one so-and-so occurs —"

But Della stopped him with her hand on his lips. "No," she said — "just "When one loves.""

VI

The Cutting-out of Maggie

Every Saturday night the Clover Leaf Social Club gave a hop in the hall of the Give and Take Athletic Association on the East Side. In order to attend one of these dances you must be a member of the Give and Take — or, if you belong to the division that starts off with the right foot in waltzing, you must work in Rheingold's paper-box factory. Still, any Clover Leaf was privileged to escort or be escorted by an outsider to a single dance. But mostly each Give and Take brought the paper-box girl that he affected; and few swamps could boast of having shaken a foot with the regular boys.

Maggie Toole, on account of her chill eye, broad mouth and left-handed style of footwork in the two-step, went to the dances with Anna McCarty and her 'fellow.' Anna and Maggie worked side by side in the factory, and went the greatest chums ever. So Anna always made Jimmy Burns visit her by Maggie's house every Saturday night so that her friend could go to the dance with them.

The Give and Take Athletic Association lived up to its name. The hall of the association in Orchard Street was lined out with muscle-making inventions. With the three dues that bulked up the members were wont to engage the police and their social and athletic organizations in joyous combat. Between these extra assets exceptions the Saturday night boys with the paper-box factory girls came to a rolling halloaboo and to an efficient stench. For constitution the tip went 'round, and if you were among the elect you opened up the dark back stairway you might see or hear and satisfying a little winter-weight affair to a finish as one happened inside the ropes.

On Saturdays Rheingold's paper-box factory closed at 1 p.m. On one such afternoon Anna and Maggie walked homeward together. At Maggie's door Anna said, as usual: "Be ready at seven, sharp, Mag, and Jimmy and me'll come by for you."

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But what was this? Instead of the customary humble and grateful thanks from the non-encored one there was to be perceived a high-raised head, a prideful dimpling at the corners of a broad mouth, and almost a sparkle in a dull brown eye.

'Thanks, Anna,' said Maggie; 'but you and Jimmy needn't bother to-night. I've a gentleman friend that's coming around to escort me to the hop.'

The comedy Anna pounced upon her friend, shook her, chided and lamented her. Maggie Toole crush a fellow! Pluto, dear, loyal, unattractive Maggie, as sweet as a clover, as unsought for a two-step as a moonlit bench in the little park. How was it? When did it happen? Who was it?

'You'll see to-night,' said Maggie, flushed with the wine of the first grapes she had gathered in Cupid's vineyard. 'He's world all right. He's even lighter than Jimmy, and an up-to-date dresser. I'll introduce him, Anna, just as soon as we get to the hall.'

Anna and Jimmy were among the first Clover Leafs to arrive that evening. Anna's eyes were brightly fixed upon the door of the hall to catch the first glimpse of her friend's 'catch.'

At 8.30 Miss Toole swept into the hall with her escort. Quickly her triumphant eye discovered her clown under the wing of her faithful Jimmy.

'Oh, gee!' cried Anna, 'Mag ain't made a hit — oh, no! Swell dilloes? Well, I guess! Style? Look at 'em.'

'Go as far as you like,' said Jimmy, with sandpaper in his voice. 'Cop him out if you want him, Three new guys always win out with the push. Even's mind me. He don't squeeze all the limes, I guess. Huh?'

'Shut up, Jimmy. You know what I mean. I'm glad for Mag, first fellow she ever had. Oh, here they come.'

Across the floor Maggie sailed like a coquettish yacht convoyed by a stately cruiser. And truly, her companion justified the encomiums of the faithful chum. He stood two inches taller than the average Clover and Tulip: his dark hair curled: his eyes and his teeth flashed whenever he bestowed his frequent smiles. The young men of the Clover Leaf Club paused not their feet at the graces of person as much as they did to its prowess, its achievements in hand-to-hand conflicts, and its preservation from the legal chaos that constantly menaced it. The member of the association who would bind a paper-hat maiden as his conquering chariot wheel to employ Sam Brotherell ate. They were not embittered honorable methods of warfare. The strolling blimps,

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the seat sinking to its bottom over the chair, the thrill of conscious exposition of the paper-eminence of the male in the contiguity of creature, even a wide display of bare legs as subduing and enchanting agents in the puerile contests of Cupid – these were the approved arms and ammunition of the Clover Leaf galleries. They viewed, then, the gentlemen and alluring poses of this visitor with their chins at a new angle.

'A friend of mine, Mr. Terry O'Sullivan,' was Maggie's formula of introduction. She had been around the room, protesting him to each new-arriving Clover Leaf. Always was the pretty scene, with the unique luminosity in her eyes that comes to a girl with her first suitor and a dance with his first caress.

'Maggie Toole's got a fellow at last,' was the word that went around among the paper-box girls. 'Pipe Mag's fever-seller' – thus the Give and Take expressed their indifferent contempt.

Usually at the weekly hops Maggie kept a spot on the wall warm with her back. She felt and showed no watch gratitude whenever a self-sacrificing partner invited her to dance that his pleasure was dampened and diminished. She had even grown used to noticing Anna juggle the reluctant Jimmy with her elbow as a signal for him to invite her chum to walk over his feet through a new step.

But on-night the pumpkin had turned to a coach and six. Terry O'Sullivan was a victorious Prince Charming, and Maggie Toole winged her first butterfly flight. And though our tropes of fairy-land be mixed with chaos of entomology they shall not spill one drop of nectarous from the rose-crowned nuptials of Maggie's one perfect night.

The girls besieged her for introductions to her 'fellow.' The Clover Leaf young men, after two years of blindness, suddenly perceived charms in Miss Toole. They flexed their compelling muscles before her and bespoke her for the dances.

Then she secretly but to Terry O'Sullivan the honours of the evening fell thick and fast. He shook his curly head and went coolly through the seven exercises for acquiring grace in your own room before an open window ten minutes each day. He showed him a few, he introduced manner and style and atmosphere, his words came trippingly upon his tongue, and – he waltzed twice in succession with the paper-box girl that Dempsey Donovan brought.

Dempsey was the leader of the association. He wore a dress suit, and could chin the bar twice with one hand. He was one of 'Big Mike' O'Sullivan's lieutenants, and was never troubled by trouble. His cop dared to arrest him. Whenever he broke a push-cart man's

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hand or sheet a member of the Heinrich B. Sweeney Dating and Literary Association on this occasion, an officer would drop around and say:

'The Cap'n'd like to see ye a few minutes round to the office while ye have time, Dempsey, me boy.'

Then there would be swanky gentlemen down with large gold fob chains and black cigars, and somebody would sell a lousy story, and then Dempsey would go back and work half an hour with the six-pound dumb-bells. Sir. doing a tight-rope act on a wire stretched across Niagara was a safe, turpitudinous performance compared with waltzing once with Dempsey Donovan's paper-law girl. At ten o'clock the jelly roasted face of 'Big Mike' O'Sullivan shone at the door for five minutes upon the scene. He always looked in for five minutes, smiled as the girls and hauled out and perfectos to the delighted boys.

Dempsey Donovan was at his chore instantly, sliding rapidly. 'Big Mike' looked carefully at the dancers, smiled, shook his head and departed.

The music stopped. The dancers scattered to the chairs along the walls. Terry O'Sullivan, with his encroaching bow, relinquished a pretty girl in blue to her partner and passed back to find Maggie. Dempsey intercepted him in the middle of the floor.

Some five distinct fog fleets must have bequeathed to us enmeshed nearly every one to turn and look in those — there was a weird feeling that two gladiators had met in the arena. Two or three files and Tubes with tight contoleroves drew nearer.

'One moment, Mr. O'Sullivan,' said Dempsey. 'I hope you're enjoying yourself. Where did you say you lived?'

The two gladiators were well matched. Dempsey had, perhaps, ten pounds of weight to give away. The O'Sullivan had breadth with quickness Dempsey had a glacial eye, a dauntless slit of a mouth, an indestructible jaw, a complexion like a belle's and the coolness of a champion. The visitor showed more fire in his contempt and flung scornful more his contoleroves nearer. They were cancelled by the law written when the cards were stolen. They were both too splendid, too mighty, too incomparable to divide pre-eminence. One only could survive.

'I live on Grand,' said O'Sullivan loudly; 'and no trouble to find me at home. Where do you live?'

Dempsey ignored the question.

'You say you're sister's O'Sullivan,' he went on. 'Well, "Big Mike" says he never saw you before.'

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'Lots of things he never saw,' said the favourite of the hogs.

'As a rule,' went on Dempsey, humbly sweet, 'O'Sullivans in this district know one another. They escorted one of our lady members home, and we want a chance to make good. If you've got a family tree let's see it. Are Identical O'Sullivan bride come on us it. Or do you want us to dig it out of you by the roots?'

'Suppose you mind your own business, suggested O'Sullivan blandly.

Dempsey's eyes brightened. He held up an inspired forefinger as though a brilliant idea had struck him.

'I've got it now,' he said cordially. 'It was just a Irish mistake. You ain't no O'Sullivan. You are a ring-tailed monkey. Excuse us for not recognizing you at first.'

O'Sullivan's eye flashed. He made a quick movement, but Andy Geoghan was ready and caught his arm.

Dempsey nodded to Andy and William McMahon, the secretary of the club, and walked rapidly toward a door at the rear of the hall. Two other members of the Give and Take Association quickly joined the little group. Terry O'Sullivan was now in the hands of the Board of Rules and Social Referees. They spoke to him briefly and softly, and conducted him out through the same door at the rear.

This movement on the part of the Clover Leaf members received a word of explanation. Back of the association hall was a smaller room owned by the club. In this room personal difficulties that arose on the ballroom floor were settled, man to man, with the weapons of nature, under the supervision of the Board. No lady could say that she had witnessed a fight at a Clover Leaf hop, in several years. Its gentlemen members guaranteed that.

So easily and smoothly had Dempsey and the Board done their preliminary work that many in the hall had not noticed the disturbing of the fascinating O'Sullivan's social triumph. Among those was Maggie. She looked about for her escort.

'Smoke up!' said Rose Cassidy. 'What's you mad? Dempsy Donovan picked a scrap with your Lizzie-boy, and they've walked out to the slaughter-room with him. How's my hair look done up this way, Mag?'

Maggie laid a hand on the bosom of her chenille-cloth waist.

'Goes an fight with Dempsey?' she said breathlessly. 'They've got to be stopped. Dempsey Donovan can't fight him. Why, he'll – he'll kill him!'

'Ah, what do you care?' said Rose. 'Don't some of 'em fight every hop?'

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But Maggie was off, darting her agile way through the mass of dancers. She burst through the rear door into the dark hall and then threw her solid shoulder against the door of the room of single combat. It gave way, and in the instant that she entered her eye caught the scene — the Ewart standing there with open watches Dempsey Donovan in his shirt-sleeves dancing, light-footed, with the wary grace of the modern pugilist, within easy reach of his adversary; Terry O'Sullivan standing with arm folded and a murderous look in his dark eyes. And without checking the speed of her entrance she leaped forward with a scream — leaped in time to catch and hang upon the arm of O'Sullivan that was suddenly uplifted, and to wrench from it the long, bright stiletto that he had drawn from his bosom.

The knife fell and rang upon the floor. Cold steel drawn in the rooms of the Gira and Tuba Associations! Such a thing had never happened before. Every one stood motionless for a moment. Andy Geoghan picked the stiletto with the toe of his shoe curiously, like an antiquarian who has come upon some ancient weapon unknown to his learning.

And then O'Sullivan hissed something unintelligible between his teeth. Dempsey and the Ewart exchanged looks. And then Dempsey looked to O'Sullivan, without anger to see leader of a stray dog, and nodded his head in the direction of the door.

'The back entry, Giuseppi,' he said briefly. 'Somebody'll pitch your hat down after you.'

Maggie walked up to Dempsey Donovan. There was a brilliant spot of red in her cheeks, down which slow tears were rumpling. But she looked him bravely in the eye.

'I know it, Dempsey,' she said, as her eyes grew dull even in their tears. 'I know he was a Guinea. His mother's Tony Spinelli. I learned in what they told me you and him was scrappin'. There Guinea things certain known. But you don't understand, Dempsey. I never had a fellow in my life. I got tired of crowdin' with Annie and Jimmy every night, so I hired it with him to call himself O'Sullivan, and brought him along. I knew there'd be trouble' doin' for him if he came as a Dago. I guess I'll resign from the club now.'

Dempsey turned to Andy Geoghan.

'Check that cheese slicer out of the window,' he said, 'and tell 'em inside that Mr. O'Sullivan has had a telephone message to go down to Tammany Hall.'

And then he turned back to Maggie.

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'Say, Mag,' he said, 'I'll see you home. And how about next Saturday night? Will you come to the hop with me if I call around for you?'

It was remarkable how quickly Maggie's eyes could change from dull to a shining brown.

'With you, Dempsey?' she announced. 'Say – call a duck swim?'

VI

The Cop and the Anthem

On his bench in Madison Square Soapy moved uneasily. When wild geese honk high of nights, and when women with their wearers' money begin to desert them for their fireboards, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his coming that they may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had come for him to repair himself into a state of Civic Virtue with the approach of winter, in order to secure his food and lodging at the Island. To accomplish this end he must engage in some sort of crime that would put him in jail for three months. The divine impulse came to him as he slept the night before on a pile of hot-air registers. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, with no work to do. Three months would restore him to his old-time vigour and enable him to assume a manly attitude toward the demands of his landlady.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had their choice of Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his annual arrangements for his annual trip to the Island. And now the time was near. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his legs, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the centre square. So the Island loomed large and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents.

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In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food according with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the pills of charity are unendurable. If one is to take you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which, though conducted by rules, does not annihilate entirely with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring bankruptcy, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest estimate of his ten dollars. His shoes were polished, his tie was correct and his new black, ready-made four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unexpected success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would wear an expression of combined intelligence and culture. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing—with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meal would leave him filled and happy for the hours he had to pass before reaching the Island.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him to the sidewalk and set him down facing the way he had come. Thus forcibly ejected, Soapy walked half a block before he could recover his composure and his presence of mind.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted Island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of earning free board must be thought of.

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At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running around the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

'Where's the man that done that?' inquired the officer excitedly.

'Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?' said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man halfway down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, track unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick but not greasy. Into this place Soapy took his accustomed stand and ordered roast chicken without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he intrusted the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

'Now, you keep and call a cop,' said Soapy. 'And then I'll keep a gentleman waiting.'

'No cop for yours,' said the waiter, with a voice like the tearing of a Manhattan cocktail. 'Hey, Con!'

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement was thrown plastered Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The hand seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented when he fancied himself a 'masher.' A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with upright interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanour leaned against a water-plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the role of the despicable and execrated 'masher.' The refined and elegant appearance of his

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victim and the contiguity of the conniptions top encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would conduct his whole quarters on the right little, right little bit.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's ready-made tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat on a little more and walked toward the young woman. He made eyes at her, was taken with sudden coughs and 'hems,' smiled, smirked and went through the impudent and contemptible Soapy of the 'mashes.' With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her disturbed attention upon the chewing-gum. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said:

'Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?'

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically in reach for his insular future. Already he imagined he could feel the cozy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and, scrutinizing with a hand, caught Soapy's coat-sleeve.

'Sure, kitty,' she said joyfully; 'if you'll blow me to a pail of suds. I'd love spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching.'

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak Soapy walked past the policeman, overcome with gloom. His senses deserted to Sweep.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest women, lowest, worst and liveliest. Women in furs and men in groups moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent restaurant he caught at the immediate straw of 'disorderly conduct.'

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his lusty voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise disturbed the within.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen:

'Tis some of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give to the Hereford College. Ninety hot to-night. We've instructions to have them be.'

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Discouraged, Soapy ceased his unavailing exertions. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an inexpressible Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

'My umbrella,' he said sternly.

'Eh, is it?' sneered Soapy, shifting hands at police leisure. 'Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one at the corner.'

The umbrella owner sheered off. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

'Of course,' said the umbrella man – 'that is – well, you know how these mistakes occur – I – if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me – I picked it up this morning in a restaurant – If you recognize it as yours, why – I hope you'll –'

'Of course it's mine,' said Soapy viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman bestowed on Soapy a full Moorish to an opera-cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street dedicated by custom to the users of transportation. He halted the umbrella wrathfully into an unoccupied space of the walk that was wide enough for a hansom. He scowled upon the men who were fortunate and comfortable. Because he wanted to kill into their charities, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues at the point where the glitter and tumult were but faint. He set his face down this street toward Madison Square, for the instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and mediæval and gabled. Through one stained-glass window a soft light glowed, which, no doubt, the organist lovingly evoked for the hymn, making sure of his money at the coming Sabbath recital. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet, simple old tunes, played and held him enthralled against the encroachments of the iron fence.

The moon was there, lustrous and serene; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves – for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And

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the anthem that the organist played connected Soapy so the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and rest and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An honourable and manly impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was comparatively young yet; he would regenerate his old vigorous ambitions; and pursue them without faltering. These solemn bells were again sounding hosts up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring down-town district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would —

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

"What are you doin' here?" asked the officer.

"Nothin'," said Soapy.

"Then come along," said the policeman.

"Three months on the Island," said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

THE

Memoirs of a Yellow Dog

I DON'T SUPPOSE it will knock any of you people off your perch to read a contribution from an animal. Mr. Kipling and a good many others have demonstrated the fact that animals can express themselves in intelligible English, and no carpenter goes to piano recitals without an animal story in it, except the old-style comedian that are still running pictures of Fatty and the Moon Faced Actress.

But you needn't look for any highbrow literature in my piece,

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such as Bruno, the bear, and Sanjoo, the snake, and Tamamoto, the tiger, edit in the jungle books. A yellow dog that's spent most of his life in a cheap New York flat, jumping in a minute on an old ostrich underskirt (the one she spilled port wine on at the Lady Longshoremen's banquet), mustn't be expected to perform any tricks with the act of ostrich.

I was born a yellow pup, don. Incubby, pedigree and weight unknown. The first thing I was conscious of, an old woman had me in a basket on Broadway and Twenty-third trying to sell me to a fat lady. Old Mother Hubbard was fumbling me to find the hand as a genuine Pomeranian-Himbleweston-Red-Irish-Cockie-Chien-Snake-Rogis dog permit. The fat lady shook a V second among the samples of grey grain facsimiles in her shopping-bag till the surprised it, and gave up. Since that moment I was a pet – a mamma's own wooney squidiams. Say, gentle reader, did you ever have a 200-pound woman, trembling a flavour of Camembert cheese and Peau d'Espagne pick you up and walk her nose all over you, repeating all the time in an Emma Eames tone of voice 'Oh, oh's mo mudiam, dwoddum, woodlum, snudlum, bimy-widy doodlum?'

Some a pedigreed yellow pup I grew up to be an anonymous yellow cur looking like a cross between an Angora cat and a box of lemons. But my mistress never twinkled. She thought that two primeval pups that Noah chased into the ark were but a collateral branch of my ancestors. It took two policemen to keep her from entering me at the Madison Square Garden for the Siberian bloodhound prize.

I'll tell you about that fuss. The house was the ordinary thing in New York, paved with Potsie marble in the entrance hall and cobblestones above the first floor. One flat was three ft. – well, two flights – climbs up. My mistress rented it unfurnished, and put in the regular things – 1909 antique upholstered parlour set, oil chromo of grandma in a Mother Hubbard, rubber plant and husband.

By Sirius! there was a biped I felt sorry for. He was a little man with sandy hair and whiskers a good deal like mine. Hen-pecked? – well, senators and Sunlanders and policemen all lost their hills to him. He wiped the dishes and listened to my mistress tell about the cheap, rugged things the lady with the squirrel-skin coat on the second floor hung out on her line to dry. And every evening while she was getting supper she made him take me out on the end of a string for a walk.

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If men know how women pass the time when they are alone they'd never marry. Lucy Lane Pinkey, pretty faintly, a little almond cream on the neck muscles, dishes unwashed, half an hour's talk with the iceman, reading a package of old letters, a couple of pickles and two bottles of malt extract, one hour pooling through a hole in the window shade into the air across the airshaft – that's about all there is to it. Twenty minutes before time for him to come home from work she straightens up the house, fixes her cut as it won't show, and puts out a bit of evening fat a ten-minute limit.

I led a dog's life in that flat. Mine all day I lay there in my corner watching the fat woman fill time. I slept sometimes and had pipe dreams about being out chasing cats into basements and growling at old ladies with black raincoats, as a dog was intended to do. Then she would pounce upon me with a bit of that dribbling poodle palaver and kiss me on the nose – but what could I do? A dog can't show shame.

I began to feel sorry for Pinkey, dog my cats if I didn't. We looked so much alike that people confused it when we went out on short the streets that Morgan's cab drives down, and took to climbing the piles of last December's snow on the streets where cheap people live.

One evening when we were thus promenading, and I was trying to look like a prize St. Bernard, and the old man was trying to look like he wouldn't; how murdered the first organ-grinder he heard play Mendelssohn's wedding-march, I looked up at him and said, in my way:

'What are you looking so sour about, you unborn trimmed lobster? She don't like you. You don't have an air on her lap and listen to talk that would make the book of a cocktail comedy seated like the maxims of Epictetus. You ought to be thankful you're not a dog. Brace up, Benedick, and bid the blues begone.'

The matrimonial mishap looked down at me with almost canine intelligence in his face.

'Why, doggie,' says he, 'good doggie. You almost look like you could speak. What is it, doggie – Cats?'

Cats! Could speak!

But, of course, he couldn't understand. Heavens were denied the speech of animals. The only common ground of communication upon which dogs and men can get together is in fiction.

In the flat across the hall from us lived a lady with a black-and-tan canine. Her husband among it and took it out every morning,

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but he always came home cheerful and whistling. One day I mashed acorn with the black-and-tan in the hall, and I struck him for an elucidation.

'See, here, Wiggle-and-Skip,' I says, 'you know that it ain't the nature of a real man to play dry-nurse to a dog in public. I never saw one laughed at a how-arrow yet that didn't look like he'd like to lick every other man that looked at him. But your boss comes in every day as perky and set up as an amateur prestidigitator doing the egg trick. How does he do it? Don't call me to him to it.'

'Him!' says the black-and-tan. 'Why, he uses Nature's Own Remedy. He gets spiffilicated. At first when we go out he's as shy as the man on the scooter who would rather play golf when they make 'em all jackpots. By the time we've been in eight saloons he don't care whether the thing on the end of his line is a dog or a catfish. I've lost two inches of my tail trying to alternate shoes swinging doors.'

The pointer I got from that sarsaparilla – worthless pinto crop – sat me to thinking.

One evening about six o'clock my mistress enlisted him to get busy and do the canine act for Lovey. I have concealed it until now, but that is what they called me. The black-and-tan was called 'Tuxedoes.' I wouldn't dare I know the bulge on him as far as you could chase a rabbit. Still 'Lovey' is something of a misnomer to-me on the call of one's self-respect.

At a quiet place on a side street I dislocated the line of my countenance in front of an attractive, refined saloon. I made a dead-shoot scramble for the doors, whining like a dog in the press despatches that lets the family know that little Alice is hugged while gathering lilies in the brook.

'Why, darn my eyes,' says the old man, with a grin 'dust my eyes if the saffron-coloured son of a saloon lemonade sin't asking me in to take a drink. Lemme see – how long's it been since I swiped dust leather by keeping one foot on the *Governor I believe I'll*–'

I knew I had him. Ring Scotches he took, sitting at a table. For an hour he kept the Campbells coming. I sat by his side napping for the waiter with my tail, and eating free lunch with an economy in her fits never equalled with her homemade much bought at a delicatessen store eight minutes before pupa comes home.

When the purchase of Scotland were all exhausted except the rye bread the old man unwound me from the table leg and played me outside like a fisherman plays a salmon. One there he took off my collar and shoved it into the seven.

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'Poor doggie,' says he, 'good doggie. She don't love you any more. 'S a darned shame. Good doggie, go away and get run over by a street car and be happy.'

I refused to leave. I leaped and frisked around the old man's legs happy as a pup at a rug.

'You old flat-headed woodchuck-chaser,' I said to him – 'you mean-hearted, rabbit-pulling, egg-stealing old beagle, can't you see that I don't want to leave you? Can't you see that we're both Pups in the Wood and the rabbits is the cruel uncle after you with the dish towel and cow-with the flea liniment and a pink bow to it on my tail. Why can't we run them all over and be pards for evermore?'

Maybe you'll say he didn't understand – maybe he didn't. But he kind of got a grip on the Hot Scotches, and stood still for a minute, thinking.

'Doggie,' says he finally, 'we don't live more than a dozen lives on this earth, and very few of us live to be more than 700. If I ever see that flea any more I'm a liar, and if you do you're flattery, and don't no flattery. I'm offering 60 to 1 that Wanamaker Hotwire can by the length of a dachshund.'

There was no string, but I frolicked along with my master to the Twenty-third Street ferry. And the cars on the ferry-boat refused to give checks that pretzeltails chaps had been given them.

On the Jersey side my master said to a stranger who wanted eating a carrot beer.

'Me and my doggie, we are bound for the Rocky Mountains.'

But what pleased me more was when my old man pulled both of my ears until I howled, and said

'You common, monkey-headed, rat-tailed, sulphur-colored son of a dove-cot, do you know what I'm going to call you?'

I thought of 'Lassy,' and I whined dolefully.

'I'm going to call you "Pete," ' says my master, and if I'd had five tails I couldn't have done enough wagging to do justice to the occasion.

IX

The Love-affairs of Mr. Salamander

THE BLUE LIGHT DRUG STORE is down-town, between the Bowery and Fifth Avenue, where the distance between the two streets is the shortest. The Blue Light does not consider that pharmacy is a thing

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of bile-a-lene, scent and ice-cream soda. If you ask it for a pain-killer it will not give you a bonbon.

The Blue Light means the latest-saving era of modern pharmacy. It succeeds to opium and percolates its own laudanum and paregoric. To this day pills are made behind its tall prescription desk — pills rolled out on its own pill-tile, divided with a spatula, rolled with the finger and thumb, dusted with calcined magnesia and delivered in little round, pasteboard pill-boxes. The store is on a corner about which sweeps of rugged-planned, ludicrous children play and become candidates for the cough-drops and vomiting syrups they visit the store inside.

Tony Schoonmaker was the night clerk of the Blue Light and the friend of his customers. Thus it is on the East Side, where the heart of pharmacy is not glad. There, as it should be, the druggist is a counsellor, a confessor, an adviser, an able and willing sub-deputy and minister whose listening is respected, whose occult wisdom is venerated and whose medicine is often poured, untasted, into the grave. Therefore Tony's comfortable, bespectacled mien and narrow, knowledge-bowed figure was well known in the vicinity of the Blue Light, and his advice and notice were much desired.

Tony roomed and breakfasted at Mrs. Riddle's, two squares away. Mrs. Riddle had a daughter named Rosy. The circumlocution has been in vain — you must have guessed it — Tony adored Rosy. She fascinated all his discipline, she was the compounded essence of all that was chemically pure and efficient — the dispensatory contained nothing equal to her. But Rosy was timid, and his hopes remained insoluble in the menstruum of his backwardness and fears. Behind his counter he was a superior being, mildly omniscient of special knowledge and words, amiable. In was a weak-kneed, pusillanimous customer-cowed nonentity, with ill-fitting clothes stained with chemicals and mottling of corrosive fluids and subsistence of compounds.

The fly in Tony's ointment (finite volumes, per tropos) was Chunk McGowan.

Mr. McGowan was also striving to catch the bright smiles tossed about by Rosy. But he was as one-fielder as Tony was he picked them off the fast. At the same time he was Tony's friend and customer, and often dropped in at the Blue Light Drug Store to have a bottle painted with iodine or get a cent rubber-plastered after a pleasant evening spent along the Bowery.

One afternoon McGowan drifted in in his silent, easy way, and

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sat, comely, smooth-faced, loud, indomitable, good-natured, upon a stool.

'Rory,' said Jud, when his friend had finished his mentor and his opposite, grinding grain beneath to a powder, 'get busy with your ear. It's drugs for me if you've got the line I need.'

Rory scanned the countenance of Mr. McGowan for the usual evidences of conflict, but found none.

'Take your coat off,' he ordered. 'I guess already that you have been stuck in the ribs with a knife. I have many times told you those Dagoes would do you up.'

Mr. McGowan smiled. 'Not them,' he said. 'Not any Dagoes. But you've located the diagnosis all right enough – it's under my coat, near the ribs. Say! Rory – Rory and me are goin' to run away and get married to-night.'

Rory's left forefinger was doubled over the edge of the counter, holding it steady. He gave it a mild rap with the pestle, but felt it not. Meanwhile Mr. McGowan's smile faded to a look of perplexed gloom.

'That is,' he continued, 'if the traps in the station until the time comes. We've been lyin' pipes for the gateway for two weeks. Can day the ways that with the same excuse' she says says. 'We've agreed on to-night, and Rory's stuck to the afternoons this class for two whole days. But it's time before get till the time, and I'm afraid she'll sound me up when it comes to the scratch.'

'You said you wanted drugs,' remarked Rory.

Mr. McGowan looked ill at ease and harassed – a condition opposed to the usual line of demeanour. He made a patent-medicine almanac into a roll and fitted it with unprofitable carefulness about his fingers.

'I wouldn't have this double hooking make a false start to-night for a million,' he said. 'I've got a Reiki fix up in Hankes all ready, with chrysanthemums on the table and a bottle ready to boil. And I've engaged a pulpit preacher to be ready at his house for us at 8.30. It's got to come off. And if Rory don't change her mind again' – Mr. McGowan coaxed a grey in his dexter.

'I don't see them yet,' said Rory shrewdly, 'what makes it that you talk of drugs, or what I can do about it.'

'Old man Riddle don't like me a little bit,' went on the unhappy suitor, bent upon marshalling his arguments. 'For a week he hasn't let Rory stop outside the door with me. If it wasn't for Reiki' a hearing they'd have bounced me long ago. I'm makin' $30 a week and she'll never agree flyin' the coop with Cheek McGowan.'

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'You will excuse me, Chunk,' said Izzy. 'I must make a prescription that is to be called for soon.'

'Izzy,' said McGowan, looking up suddenly, 'say, Izzy, ain't there a drug of some kind – some kind of powders that'll make a girl like you better if you give 'em to her?'

Izzy's lip beneath his cane curled with the scorn of superior enlightenment, but before he could answer, McGowan continued:

'Tim Lacy told me once that he got some Paris green and fed 'em to his girl in soda water. From the very first dose he was sea-high and everybody else looked like chicory corn to her. They was married in less than two weeks.'

Strong and simple was Chunk McGowan. A keener reader of men than Izzy was could have seen that his rough frame was strung upon fine wires. Like a great general who was about to invade the enemy's territory he was seeking to guard every point against possible failure.

'I thought,' went on Chunk hopefully, 'that if I had one of those powders to give Izzy when I met her at supper to-night it might brace her up and keep her from scooping on the proposition to skip. I guess she don't need a mule team to drag her away, for women are keener on coaching than they are on running here. If the stuff'll work just for a couple of hours it'll do the trick.'

'What is this foolishness of running away to be happening?' asked Izzy.

'Nine o'clock,' said Mr. McGowan, 'Skipper's at seven. At eight Izzy goes to bed with a headache. At nine old Perseverance has me through at his backyard, where there's a board off Riddle's fence, east door. I go under her window and help her down the fire-escape. We've got to make it early on the preacher's account. It's all dead easy if Izzy don't balk when the fun drops. Can you fix me one of them powders, Izzy?'

Izzy Schoenstein rubbed his nose slowly.

'Chunk,' said he, 'it is of drugs of that nature that pharmaceutists must have much carefulness. To you alone of my acquaintance would I entrust a powder like that. But for you I shall make it, and you shall see how it causes Izzy to think of you.'

Izzy went behind the prescription desk. There he crushed to a powder ten soluble tablets, each containing a quarter of a grain of morphia. To these he added a little sugar of milk to increase the bulk, and folded the mixture neatly in a white paper. Taken by an adult this powder would ensure several hours of heavy slumber without danger to the sleeper. This he handed to Chunk

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McGowan, telling him to administer it in a liquid, if possible, and received the hearty thanks of the backyard Lochinvar.

The subtlety of Roy's notion becomes apparent upon recital of his subsequent moves. He sent a messenger for Mr. Riddle and disclosed the plans of McGowan for eloping with Rosy. Mr. Riddle was a stout man, brick-dusty of complexion and sudden in action.

'Much obliged,' he said briefly to Roy. 'The boy Irish loafer! My next meal's just above Rosy's. I'll just go up above myself after supper and load the shot-gun and wait. If he comes in my backyard he'll go away in an ambulance instead of a bridal chaise.'

With Rosy laid in the clutches of Morpheus for a many-hours' deep slumber, and the bloodthirsty parents waiting, armed and forewarned, Roy felt that his rival was close, indeed, upon disconfiture.

All night in the Blue Light Room he waited at his duties for chance news of the tragedy, but none came.

At eight o'clock in the morning the day clerk arrived and Roy started hurriedly for Mrs. Riddle's to learn the outcome. And, lo! as he stepped out of the store who but Chunk McGowan sprang from a passing street-car and grasped his hand – Chunk McGowan with a sunset's smile and flushed with joy.

'Failed is off,' said Chunk with Elysium in his grin. 'Rosy hit the fire-escape on time as I counted and we was under the wire at the Brentwood at 9.38 ¼. She's up at the flat – she cooked eggs this mornin' in a blue kimono – Lord! I how lucky I am! You must pass up some day, Roy, and feed with us. I've got a job down near the bridge, and that's where I'm heading for now.'

'The – the powder?' stammered Roy.

'Oh, that stuff you gave me!' said Chunk broadening his grin 'well, it was this way. I sat down at the supper table last night at Riddle's, and I looked at Rosy, and I says to myself, "Chunk, if you get the girl get her on the square – don't try any house-pooch with a thoroughbred like her." And I keeps the paper you give me in my pocket. And then my knees falls on another party present, who, I says to myself, is fellin' he a proper affection toward his future' son-in-law, so I vamishes my chance and dumps that powder in old man Riddle's coffee – see?'

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moment immovable. For this odour belonged to Miss Leslie; it was her own, and hers only.

The odour brought her vividly, almost tangibly before him. The world of finance dwindled suddenly to a speck. And she was in the next room — twenty steps away.

'By George, I'll do it now,' said Maxwell, half aloud. 'I'll ask her now. I wonder I didn't do it long ago.'

He dashed into the inner office with the beam of a short cut to roost. He plunged upon the desk of the stenographer.

She looked up at him with a smile. A soft pink crept over her cheek, and her eyes were kind and frank. Maxwell leaned one elbow on her desk. He still clutched fluttering papers with both hands and the pen was above his ear.

'Miss Leslie,' he began hurriedly, 'I have but a moment to spare. I want to say something in that moment. Will you be my wife? I haven't had time to make love to you in the ordinary way, but I really do love you. Talk quick, please — there fellows are clubbing the trolley out of Union Pacific.'

'Oh, what are you talking about?' exclaimed the young lady. She rose to her feet and gazed upon him, round-eyed.

'Don't you understand?' said Maxwell concisely. 'I want you to marry me. I love you, Miss Leslie. I wanted to tell you, and I snatched a minute when things had slackened up a bit. They're calling me for the 'phone now. Tell 'em to wait a minute, Pitcher. Won't you, Miss Leslie?'

The stenographer stood very quietly. At first she vacated stenographic room with unseeing, dark eyes turned from her wondering eyes; and then she smiled mistily through them, and one of her arms slid tenderly about the broker's neck.

'I know now,' she said softly. 'It's that old business that has driven everything else out of your head for the time. I was frightened at first. Don't you remember, Harvey? We were married last evening at eight o'clock in the Little Church Around the Corner.'

XVI

The Furnished Room

RESTLESS, SHIFTING, FUGACIOUS as is the impression that it gives of itself, in a certain way half of the population of the metropolitan district of the lower West Side

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Homeless, they have a hundred homes. They flit from furnished room to furnished room, transients for ever – transients in abode, transients in heart and mind. They sing 'Home Sweet Home' in ragtime; they carry their home at people in a handbag; their view is enriched about a picture line, a rubber plant in their fig tree.

Hence the homes of this district, having had a thousand dwellers, should have a thousand tales to tell, mostly dull ones, no doubt; but it would be strange if there could not be found a ghost or two in the midst of all these vagrant phases.

One evening after dark a young man prowled among these crumbling red mansions, ringing their bells. At the twelfth he rested his lean hand-baggage upon the step and wiped the dust from his hat-band and forehead. The hall sounded faint and far away in some remote, hollow depths.

To the door of this, the twelfth house whose bell he had rung, came a housekeeper who made him think of an unwholesome, self-fed worm that had eaten its way to a hollow shell and now sought to fill the vacancy with edible lodgers.

He asked if there was a room to let.

'Come in,' said the housekeeper. Her voice came from her throat but throat seemed lined with fur. 'I have the third floor back, vacant since a week back. Should you wish to look at it?'

The young man followed her up the stairs. A faint light from no particular source mitigated the shadows of the halls. They trod noiselessly upon a stair carpet that its own mother would have forsworn. It seemed to have become reptilian, to have degenerated to that rank. Useless as to both kitchen or spreading moss that grew in patches to the staircase and was viscid under the foot like organic matter. At each turn of the stairs were vacant niches in the wall. Perhaps plants had once been set within them. If so they had died in their frail and relaxed pot. It may be that remains of the mould stood there, but it was not difficult to conceive that rats and dirt had dragged them forth to the darkness and thence to the unholy depths of some fantastical pit below.

'This is the room,' said the housekeeper, from her furry throat. 'It's a nice room. It ain't taken, vacant. I had some most elegant people in it last summer – no trouble at all, and paid in advance to the minute. The water's at the end of the hall. Sprowls and Mooney kept it three months. They done a vaudeville sketch. Miss Vivora Sprowls – you may have heard of her – Oh, that was just the stage name – right there over the dresser is where the marriage certificate hung, framed. The gas is here, and you are

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there is plenty of decent rooms. It's a room everybody likes. It never stays idle long.'

'Do you have many theatrical people rooming here?' asked the young man.

'They comes and goes. A good proportion of my lodgers is connected with the theatres. Yes, sir, this is the theatrical district. Actor people never stays long anywhere. I gets my share. Yes, they comes and they goes.'

He engaged the room, paying for a week in advance. He was tired, he said, and would take possession at once. He counted out the money. The room had been made ready, the maid, room of towels and water. As the housekeeper moved away to get for the thousandth time, the question that he carried at the end of his tongue.

'A young girl – Miss Vashner – Miss Elaine Vashner – do you remember such a one among your lodgers? She would be singing on the stage, most likely. A fair girl, of medium height and slender, with reddish gold hair and a dark mole near her left eyebrow.'

'No, I don't remember the name. These stage people has names they changes as often as their rooms. They comes and they goes. No, I don't call that name to mind.'

No. Always no. Five months of desolate interrogation and the inevitable negative. So much time spent by day in questioning managers, agents, schools and choruses; by night among the audiences of theatres from all-star casts down to music-halls so low that he dreaded to find what he never hoped for. He who had loved her best had tried to find her. He was sure that since her disappearance from home this great water-girl city held her somewhere, but it was like a monstrous quicksand, shifting its particles constantly, with no foundation. Its upper ground of to-day buried to-morrow in ooze and slime.

The furnished room received its latest guest with a first glow of pseudo-hospitality, a lambent, haggard, perfunctory welcome like the spurious smile of a dowager. The sophistical sunlight came in reflected gleams from the decayed furniture, the ragged brocade upholstery of a couch and two chairs, a footside sheep-pier glass between the two windows, from one or two gilt picture frames and a horn bracket in a corner.

The guest sat down, lean upon a chair, while the room, confused in speech as though it were an apartment in Babel, tried to discourse to him of its divers tenantry.

A polychromatic rug like some brilliant-flowered, rectangular,

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cupidal idiot lay surrounded by a billowy sea of soiled muslin. Upon the gay-papered wall were three pictures that pursue the homeless poor from house to house – The Huguenot Lovers, The First Quarrel, The Wedding Breakfast, Psyche at the Fountain. The mantel's chrome arrays outlaw was ingloriously veiled behind some pale drapery dotted ruthlessly after the fashion of the dress-goods buffet. Upon it was some decadent flowers cast aside by the nymph's successor when a lucky sail had borne them to a fresh port – a trifling wen or two, pictures of mourners, a medicine bottle, some torn cards out of a deck.

One by one, as the characters of a cryptograph become explicit, the little signs left by the fumbled room's procession of guests developed a significance. The threadbare space in the rug in front of the dresser told that lovely woman had marched in the throng. Tiny finger-prints on the wall spoke of little prisoners crying to find their way to sun and air. A splintered stain, saying like the shrieks of a burning hotel, witnessed where a hatchet glass or bottle had splintered with its contents against the wall. Across the pier glass had been sprawled with a diamond in staggering letters the name 'Maria.' It seemed that the succession of dwellers in the furnished room had vented its fury – perhaps tempted beyond forbearance by its garish coldness – and wrecked upon it their pent-up hate. The furniture was chipped and battered; the couch, disgraced by bursting springs, seemed a horrible monster that had been slain during the throes of some grotesque convulsion. Some wore patent upheaval had thrown a great slice from the marble mantel. Each plank in the floor owned its particular rent and stain as from a separate and individual agony. It seemed incredible that all this malice and injury had been wrought upon the room by those who had called it for a time their home; and yet it may have been the charred home instinct surviving blindly, the remorseful rage to leave habitable goals that had goaded their souls. A hint that in our own we can sweep and adorn and cherish.

The young artist in the chair allowed these thoughts to flit, will-o'-the-wisp through his mind, while there drifted into the room furnished sounds and furnished scenes. He heard in one room a droning and incoherent chant, laughter, in others the monologues of a world, the rattling of dice, a lullaby, and one crying dully; above him a banjo tinkled with spirit. Down hurried unnumbered the shouted orders moved intermittently, as on, goaded relentlessly upon a hard fence. And he knocked the hands of the hours – a desk sewer rather than a watch – a cold, waxy chloroform in from

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underground vaults mingled with the reeking exhalations of linoleum and mildewed and rotten woodwork.

Then, suddenly, as he stood there, the room was filled with the strong, sweet odour of mignonette. It came as upon a tingly ballet of wind with such sureness and fragrance and emphasis that it almost seemed a living visitant. And the man cried aloud, "What, then?" as if he had been called, and sprang up and faced about. The rich odour clung to him and wrapped him about. He reached out his arms for it, all his senses for the time confused and commingled. How could one be contemporaneously called by an odour? Surely it must have been a sound. But, was it not the sound that had touched, that had aroused him?

"She has been in this room," he cried, and he sprang as wont from it's token, for he knew he would recognize the smallest thing that had belonged to her or that she had touched. This enveloping scent of mignonette, the odour that she had loved and made her own — whence came it?

The room had been but cursorily set in order. Scattered upon the flimsy dresser scarf were half a dozen hairpins — those discreet, indistinguishable friends of womankind, flotsam of gender, infinitesimal of detail and commonplace of form. These he ignored, conscious of their triumphant lack of identity. Beneath the drawers of the dresser he came upon a discarded, tiny, ragged handkerchief. He pressed it to his face. It was racy and luscious with fulsomeness; he hurled it on the floor. In another drawer he found odd 'scarves, a theatre programme, a pawnbroker's card, two lost marshmallows, a book on the divination of dreams. In the last was a woman's black satin hair-bow, which behind him, poised between fear and fire. But the black satin hair-bow also is fingerless; it demands, temperament, sensuous ornament, and tells no tales.

And then he crowned the room like a hound on the trail, skimming the walls, considering the corners of the bulging matting on his hands and knees, ransacking closets and orbits, the crevices and hangings, the dressing cabinet in the corner, for a visible clue whereby to perceive that she was there beside, around, against, within, about him, clinging to him, wooing him, calling him so poignantly through the floor across that area his greater area between consciousness of the call. Once again he answered loudly, "Yes, dear!" and waited, wild-eyed, to gain an accuracy, for he could not yet discern from and relative and love was concentrated even in the odour of mignonette. Oh, God! whence that odour, and since when have odours had a voice to call? Then he grasped.

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He burrowed in crevices and corners, and found corks and cigarettes. These he pocketed in passive contempt. But once he found in a fold of the mantling a half-smoked cigar, and this he ground beneath his heel with a groan and triumphant curb. He sifted that room from end to end. He found dreary and ignoble wealth of memorials of many a peripatetic tenant; but of her whom he sought, and who may have lodged there, and whose spirit seemed to hover there, he found no trace.

And then he thought of the housekeeper.

He ran from the humbled room downstairs and to a door that showed a crack of light. She came out to his knock. He straightened his countenance as best he could.

'Will you tell me, madam,' he besought her, 'who occupied the room I have before I came?'

'Yes, sir. I was told you again. Twas Sprowls and Mooney, as I said. Miss B'rana Sprowls & was in the theatres, but Missis Mooney she was. My house is well known for respectability. The marriage certificate hung, framed, on a wall over—'

'What kind of a lady was Miss Sprowls—in looks, I mean?'

'Why, black-haired, sir, short and stout, with a comical face. They left a week ago Tuesday.'

'And before they occupied it?'

'Why, there was a single gentleman accustomed with that dazzling business. He left owing me a week. Before him was Minnie Crowder and her two children, that stayed four months, and back of them was old Mr. Doyle, whose sons paid for him. He kept the room six months. That goes back a year, sir, and further I do not remember.'

He thanked her and crept back to his room. The room was dead. The essence that had vivified it was gone. The perfumes of mignonettes had departed. In its place was the old, stale odour of mouldy human furniture, of atmosphere in storage.

The sobbing of his hope drained his faith. He sat staring at the pillow, singing gaslight. Soon he walked to the bed and began to tear the sheets into strips. With the blade of his knife he drove them tightly into every crevice around windows and door. When all was snug and tear he turned out the light turned the gas full on again and laid himself gratefully upon the bed.

* * * * *

It was Mrs. McCool's night to go with the can for beer. So she fastened it and sat with Mrs. Purdy to one of those subterranean

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corners where housekeepers forgather and the worm doth seldom.

'I rented out my third floor back, this morning,' said Mrs. Purdy, waves a fine circle of foam. 'A young man took it. He went up to look over better ago.

'Now, did ye, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am!' said Mrs. McCool, with intense admiration. 'You do be a wonder for rentin' rooms of that kind. And did ye tell him, then?' she concluded in a hushed whisper, laden with mystery.

'Rooms,' said Mrs. Purdy, in her former voice, 'are furnished for to rent. I did not tell him, Mrs. McCool.'

' 'Tis right ye are, ma'am; 'tis by renting rooms we hope t'live. Ye have the rale sense for business, ma'am. There be many people will neglect the rentin' of a room if they be could a suicide has been after doin' in the bed of it.'

'As you say, we has our living to be making,' remarked Mrs. Purdy.

'Tis, ma'am; 'tis sure. 'Tis just one week ago this day I helped ye lay out the third floor back. A pooery ship of a colleen she was to be killin' herself said she got a room little less the bad, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am.'

'She'd a-been called handsome, as you say,' said Mrs. Purdy, sweeping her critical, 'but for them marks the had a-gnawin' by her left eyebrow. Do fill up your glass again, Mrs. McCool.'

XVI

The Brief Debut of Tildy

IF YOU DO NOT KNOW Bogle's Chop House and Family Restaurant it is your loss. But if you are one of the fortunate ones who dine expensively you should be interested to know how the other half consumes provisions. And if you belong to the half to whose unlined cheeks are things of romance, you should know Bogle's, for there you get your money's worth – in quantity, at least.

Bogle's is situated in that highway of bon-gastric, that boulevard of Brown-Jones-and-Robinson, Eighth Avenue. There are two rows of tables in the room, six in each row. On each table is a castor-stand, containing vessels of condiments and sauces. From the pepper cruet you may shake a cloud of scorching cayenne; and melancholy, like volcanic dust. From the salt cruet you may

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'A very sad case,' says he, laying the points of his manicured fingers together. 'An utterly incorrigible girl. I am Special Terrestrial Officer the Reverend Jones. The case was assigned to me. The girl murdered her fiancé and committed suicide. She had no defence. My report to the court relates the facts in detail, all of which are substantiated by reliable witnesses. The wages of sin is death. Praise the Lord.'

The court officer opened the door and stepped out.

'Poor girl,' said Special Terrestrial Officer the Reverend Jones, with a tear in his eye. 'It was one of the saddest cases that I ever met with. Of course she was—'

'Discharged,' said the court officer. 'Come here, Jonesy. Nice thing you knew you'll be switched to the pot-pie squad. How would you like to be on the missionary force in the Fetich Isle Islands—hey? Now, you quit making them fake reports, or you'll be transferred—see? The guilty party you've got to look for in this case is a red-haired, southern, untidy cuss, sitting by the window reading, in his stocking feet, while his children play in the streets. Get a move on you.'

Now, wasn't that a silly dream?

XXXII

The Last Leaf

In a little district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called 'places.' These 'places' make strange angles and curves. One street crosses itself a time or two. An artist once discovered a valuable possibility in this street. Suppose a collector with a bill for paints, paper and canvas should, in traversing this route, suddenly meet himself coming back, without a cent having been paid on account!

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a 'colony.'

At the top of a squatty, three-story brick Sue and Johnsy had their studio. 'Johnsy' was familiar for Joanna. One was from Maine, the other from California. They had met at the table d'hôte of an Eighth Street 'Delmonico's,' and found their common

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set, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint smoke curdled.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy finger. Over on the East Side this savage smote boldly, striking his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown 'places.'

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California life might not be worth his while; but Johnsy he regarded as worthy of his mettle. And Johnsy lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, gray eyebrow.

'She has one chance in – let us say, ten,' he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. 'And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-up on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopoeia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?'

'She – she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day,' said Sue.

'Paint? – bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice – a man, for instance?'

'A man?' said Sue, with a jew's-harp twang in her voice. 'Is a man worth – but, no, doctor, there is nothing of the kind.'

'Well, it is the weakness, then,' said the doctor. 'I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten.'

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing-board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to

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illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must paint their way to Art by painting pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to paint their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant knickerbocker riding trousers and a monocle on the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting – counting backward.

'Twelve,' she said, and a little later, 'eleven'; and then 'ten,' and 'nine'; and then 'eight' and 'seven,' almost together.

Sue looked solicitously out the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the root, climbed half-way up the brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

'What is it, dear?' asked Sue.

'Six,' said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. 'They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head ache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now.'

'Dear what, dear? Tell your Sudie.'

'Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?'

'Oh, I never heard of such nonsense,' complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. 'What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were – let's see exactly what he said – he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street-cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self.'

'You needn't get any more wine,' said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. 'There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go too.'

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'Johnsy, dear,' said Sue, bending over her, 'will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out of the window until I am done working? I must hand them drawings in by to-morrow. I need the light or I would draw the shade down.'

'Couldn't you draw in the other room?' asked Johnsy coldly.

'I'd rather be here by you,' said Sue. 'Besides, I don't want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves.'

'Tell me as soon as you have finished,' said Johnsy, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as a fallen statue, 'because I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves.'

'Try to sleep,' said Sue. 'I must call Behrman up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to move till I come back.'

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses head crowning above the body of a satyr along the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Muse's robe. He had always planned to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in anyone, and who regarded himself as especial watchdog for the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimly-lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy's fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such idiotic imaginings.

'Vass!' he cried. 'Is dere people in de world mit der foolishness to die because leafs dey drop off from a confounded vine? I haf not heard of such a thing. No, I will not bose as a model for your fool hermit-dunderhead. Vy do you allow dot silly business to come in der prain of her? Ach, dot poor little Miss Yohnsy.'

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'She is very ill and weak,' said Sue, 'and the fever has left her mind morbid and full of strange fancies. Very well, Mr. Behrman, if you do not care to pose for me, you needn't. But I think you are a horrid old — old fault-finder.'

'Yah, you just like a woman!' yelled Behrman. 'Who said I vill not pose? Go on. I come mit you. For half an hour I haf been trying to say dot I am ready to pose. Gott! dis is not any place in which one so good as Miss Yohnsy shall be sick. Some day I vill baint a masterpiece, and we shall all go away. Gott! yes.'

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill and motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit-miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep she came running the found Johnsy with dull, wide-open eyes staring at the drawn green shade.

'Pull it up! I want to see,' she ordered, in a whisper.

Wearily Sue obeyed.

But, lo! after the beating rain and fierce perse of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last on the vine. Still dark green near its stem, but with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from a branch some twenty feet above the ground.

'It is the last one,' said Johnsy. 'I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall to-day, and I shall die at the same time.'

'Dear, dear!' said Sue, leaning her worn face down to the pillow; 'think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?'

But Johnsy did not answer. The lonesomest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious, far journey. The fancy seemed to possess her more strongly as one by one the ties that bound her to friendship and to earth were loosed.

The day were away, and even through the twilight they could see the lone ivy leaf clinging to its stem against the wall. And then, with the coming of the night the north wind was again loosed, while the rain still beat against the windows and pattered down from the low Dutch eaves.

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When it was light enough Johnsy, the unselfish, commanded that the shade be raised.

The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

'I've been a bad girl, Sudie,' said Johnsy. 'Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk with a little port in it, and — no, bring me a hand-mirror first, and then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you cook.'

An hour later she said —

'Sudie, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples.'

The doctor came in the afternoon, and Sue had an excuse to go into the hallway as he left.

'Even chances,' said the doctor, taking Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. 'With good nursing you'll win. And now I must see another case I have downstairs. Behrman, his name is — some kind of an artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man, and the attack is severe. There is no hope for him but he must be taken to the hospital to-day to be made more comfortable.'

The next day the doctor said to Sue: 'She's out of danger. You've won. Nutrition and care now — that's all.'

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

'I have something to tell you, white rabbit,' she said. 'Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia today in hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him on the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and — look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece — he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell.'

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Presently Thomas moved restlessly in his seat, and thoughtfully hit an elevation or two on his knees and elbows.

'Say, Annie,' said he confidentially, 'maybe it's one of the last dreams of the house, but I've a kind of a recollection of riding in an automobile with a swell guy that took me to a house full of lights and sure lights. His feet was on elevation and hot air, and then Michael was down the front steps. If it was that *dat's* why was I so sore?'

'Then up, you fool,' said Annie.

'If I could find that flossy guy's house,' said Thomas, in conclusion, 'I'd go up there some day and punch his coat for him.'

XVII

The Poet and the Peasant

THE OTHER DAY a poet friend of mine, who has lived in close communication with nature all his life, wrote a poem and took it to an editor.

It was a living pastoral, full of the genuine breath of the fields, the song of birds, and the pleasant clatter of trickling streams.

When the poet called again to see about it, with hopes of a beefsteak dinner in his heart, it was handed back to him with the comment:

'Too artificial.'

Several of us met over spaghetti and Dutchess County claret, and smothered indignation with the slippery farinha.

And there we dug a pit for the editor. With us was Conant, a well-endowed writer of fiction – a man who had tried on asphalt all his life, and who had never learned upon bucolic matters except with emotions of disgust from the windows of express trains.

Conant wrote a poem and called it 'The Doe and the Brook.' It was a fine specimen of the kind of work you would expect from a poet who had stepped with Amaryllis only so far as the florist's windows, and whose sole ornithological discussion had been carried on with a waiter. Conant signed this poem, and we sent it to the same editor.

But this has very little to do with the story.

Just as the editor was reading the first line of the poem, on the next morning, a being resembling all the West Shore ferryboat, and taped slowly up Forty-second Street.

The boarder was a young man with light blue eyes, a hanging

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lip, and hair the exact colour of the little orphan's (afterward discovered to be the owl's daughter) in one of Mr. Blaney's plays. His trousers were corduroy, his coat short-sleeved, with buttons in the middle of his back. One booting was outside the corduroys. You looked expectantly, though in vain, at his arrow hat for cowhides, its shape interpreting the suspicion that it had been purged from a former equine possessor. In his hand was a valise – description of it is an impossible task; a Bowery man would not have carried his lunch and law books in his office in it. And above one ear, in his hair, was a wisp of hay – the cowboy's letter of credit, his badge of honourable discharge, the last clinging touch of the Garden of Eden lingering to discuss the goldfinch term.

Knowingly, unfeelingly, the city crowds passed him by. They saw the new stranger stand in the gutter and stretch his neck at the tall buildings. At this they roared in scorn, and even as fools at him. So had fools done to others. A few glanced at the antique valise to see what Canary 'attraction' or brand of chewing-gum he might be there shouting from his monopoly. But for the most part he was ignored. Even the sparrows looked bored when he scampered his chirps down out of the way of cabs and street-cars.

At Eighth Avenue stood Thomas Blaney,' with his dyed moustache and shiny, good-natured eyes. Blaney was too good an artist not to be pained at the sight of an actor overdoing his part. He edged up to the countryman, who had stopped to open his mouth at a jewellery store window, and shook his head.

'Too thick, pal,' he said critically – 'too thick by a couple of inches I don't know what your lay is; but you've got the properties on too thick. That hay, now – why, they don't even allow that on Procter's eleven o'clock any more.'

'I don't understand you, mister,' said the green man. 'I'm not lookin' for any eleven. I've just run down from Ulster County to look at the cows, feelin' that the hayin't came with. Quiet here it's a whopper. I thought Poughkeepsie was some punkins; but this here town is five times as big.'

'Oh, well,' said Thomas Blaney,' raising his eyebrows, 'I didn't mean to been in. You don't have to call. I thought you ought to tone down a little, so I tried to put you wise. With you success at your graft, whatever it is. Come and have a drink, anyhow.'

'I wouldn't mind having a glass of lager beer,' acknowledged the other.

They went to a café frequented by men with smooth faces and shiny eyes, and sat at their drinks.

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'I'm glad I come across you, mister,' said Hayfacks. 'How'd you like to play a game or two of seven-up? I've got the boards.'

He fished them out of Nicky's valise – a new, inimitable deck, greasy with bacon suppers and grimy with the toil of countless.

'Banco Harry' laughed loud and briefly.

'Not for me, sport,' he said firmly. 'I don't go against that make-up of yours for a cent. But I will say you've overdone it. The Rocks haven't dressed like that since '79. I doubt if you could work Brooklyn for a lay-winding watch with that lay-out.'

'Oh, you needn't think I ain't got the money,' boasted Hayfacks. He drew forth a tightly rolled mass of bills as large as a sausage, and laid it on the table.

'Got that for my share of grandmother's farm,' he announced. 'There's $950 in that roll. Thought I'd come into the city and look around for a likely business to go into.'

'Banco Harry' took up the roll of money and looked at it with shrewd cupidity in his smiling eyes.

'Too much money,' he said critically. 'Ten you'll never do it in those clothes. You want to get light tan shoes and a black suit and a narrow hat with a coloured band, and talk a good deal about Pico-fixing and freight differentials, and drink sherry for breakfast in order to work off phony stuff like that.'

'What's his line?' asked two or three shifty-eyed men of 'Banco Harry' after Hayfacks had gathered up his segregated money and departed.

'The queer, I guess,' said Harry. 'Or else he's one of Jerome's men. Or some guy with a new grafe. He's too much keyseed. Maybe that bis – I wonder now – oh no, it couldn't been been real money.'

Hayfacks wandered on. Thirst probably assailed him again, for he found into a dark groggery on a side-street and bought beer. Several strangers followed facing open ons end of the bar. At first sight of him their eyes brightened; but when his bashfulness and exaggerated rusticity became apparent their expressions changed to wary suspicion.

Hayfacks swung his entire person into the bar.

'Keep them nickels for me, mister,' he said, chewing on the end of a virulent claybank cigar. 'I'll be back after I smack around a spell. And keep your eye on it, for there's $950 inside of it, though maybe you wouldn't think to to look at me.'

Somewhere outside a phonograph struck up a band piece, and Hayfacks was off for it, his coon-tail bowness flapping in the middle of his back.

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'Divvy? Mike,' said the man hanging upon the bar, winking openly at one another.

'Honest, now,' said the bartender, sliding the value to one side. 'You don't think I'd fall to him, do you? Anybody can see he ain't no jay. One of McAdoo's come-on squad, I guess. He's a shine if he made himself up. There ain't no parts of the country now where they draw flat that they can't rural free delivery to Providence, Rhode Island. If he's got nine-fifty in that value it's a ninety-eight-cent Waterbury that's wrapped at ten minutes an arm.'

When Haylocks had exhausted the resources of Mr. Edison to amuse he returned for his relics. And then down Broadway he galloped, calling the sights with his super blue eyes. But still and continuous Broadway rejected him with mere glances and sardonic smiles. He was the victim of the 'gags' that the city never eschews. He was so flagrantly impossible, so slow-witted, so exaggerated beyond the most fruitful products of the barnyard, the hayfield and the vaudeville stage, that he excited only weariness and suspicion. And the wisp of hay in his hair was so genuine, so fresh and redolent of the meadows, so demonstrably rural, that even a shell-game man would have put up his pass and folded his table at the sight of it.

Haylocks seated himself upon a flight of stone steps, and once more exhumed his roll of yellow-backs from the valise. The straw cap, a twenty, he stocked off and beckoned to a newsboy.

'Sonny,' said he, 'run somewhere and get this changed for me. I'm mighty nigh out of chicken feed; I guess you'll get a ticket if you'll hurry up.'

A heart-hole appeared through the dirt on the enemy's face.

'Aw, watcher t'ink! G'wan and get yer fifty bill changed yerself. Dey ain't no fives clothes yer got on. G'wan wit' yer stage money.'

On a scanner lounged a hunt-eyed scanner for a gambling-house. He saw Hayloeks, and his expression suddenly grew cold and virtuous.

'Mister,' said the rural one. 'I've heard of places in this here town where a fellow could have a good game of old sledge or pug a end at least. I got fifty bill in this valise, and I come down from old Ulster co' see the sights. Know where a fellow could get action on down 39 or 310? I'm goin' to have some sport, and then maybe I'll buy out a business of some kind.

The scanner looked pained, and investigated a white speck on his left forefinger nail.

'Choose it, old man,' he counselled reproachfully. 'The Central

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Office must be baghouse to send you out looking like such a gillie. You couldn't get within two blocks of a sidewalk cop quite in that Tony Pastor group. The reason Mr. Sunny from Death Valley has got you beat a crosstown block in the way of illustrious scenery and mechanical accessories. Let it be skiddoo for yours. Nay, I know of no gilded halls where one may but a patrol wagon on the run.'

Rebuffed again by the green city that is so swift to detect artificialities, Maybirche sat upon the kerb and presented his daughter to hold a conference.

'It's my clothes,' said he; 'dressed if it ain't. They think I'm a hayseed and won't have nothin' to do with me. Nobody never made fun of this here in Ulster County. I guess if you must folks to notice you in New York you must dress up like they do.'

So Maybirche went shopping in the bazaars where men spoke through their noses and rubbed their hands and set the caps from accidentally over the bulge in his inside pocket where expanded a red wallet of open with an even number of notes. And extravagant hearing parasols and bonnets streamed to his head on Broadway within the lights of Long Acre.

At nine o'clock in the evening two descended to the sidewalk where Ulster County would have forsworn. Bright was more his shoes; his hat the latest block. His light grey trousers were deeply creased; a gay blue silk handkerchief flopped from the breast pocket of his elegant English walking-coat. His collar might have graced a laundry window; his blond hair was crimped close; the edge of his cane was gone.

For an instant he stood, resplendent, while the leisurely air of a boulevardier concocting in his mind the route for his evening pleasures, and then he turned down the gay, bright street with the easy and graceful mien of a millionaire.

But in the instant that he had passed the vilest and lowest eyes in the city had enveloped him in their field of vision. A stout man with grey eyes picked two of his friends with a flit of his eyebrows from the row of loungers in front of the hotel.

'The juiciest jay I've seen in six months,' said the man with grey eyes. 'Come along.'

At the half-past eleven when a man galloped into the West Forty-seventh Street police-station with the story of his wrongs.

'Nine hundred and fifty dollars,' he gasped, 'all my share of grandmother's farm.'

The desk sergeant wrote [illegible] into the name Julius Rollicospus,

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of Locust Valley Farm, Ulster County, and then began to take descriptions of the strong-arm gentlemen.

When Conant went to see the editor about the fate of his poem, he was received over the head of the office boy into the inner office that is decorated with the caricatures by Rollin and J. G. Brown.

'When I read the first line of "The Dew and the Brook," ' said the editor, 'I knew it to be the work of one whose life has been burst to burst with nature. The finished art of the line did not blind me to their fact. To see a conventional formal composition, it was as if a wild, free child of the woods and fields were to don the garb of fashion and walk down Broadway. Beneath this apparel the man would show.'

'Thanks,' said Conant. 'I suppose the cheque will be mixed on Thursday, as usual.'

The moral of this story has somehow gotten mixed. You can take your choice of 'Stay on the Farm' or 'Don't-write-Poetry.'

XLVII

The Thing's the Play

BEING ACQUAINTED WITH a newspaper reporter who had a couple of free passes, I got to see the performance a few nights ago at one of the popular vaudeville houses.

One of the numbers was a violin solo by a scrubby-looking man not much past forty, but with very gray, thick hair. Now being afflicted with a mere ear music, I let the hymns of nations drift past my mind while I regarded the man.

'There was a story about that chap a month or two ago,' said the reporter. 'They gave me the assignment; it was to run a column and was to be on the extremely light and joking order. The old man seems to like that funny work I give us local happenings. Oh yes, I'm working on a farce-comedy now. Well, I went down to the house and got all the details, but I certainly fell down on that job. I went back and turned in a scenic write-up of as neat little funeral imaginable. Why? Oh, I couldn't manage to get hold of it with any funny bogies, somehow. Maybe you could make a mirth-provoking play out of it for a curtain-raiser. I'll give you the details.'

After the performance my friend, the reporter, motioned to me the fact over the Whirlwhatzer.

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rushing, preliminary strains of a violin. The big, manly, bewitching notes of the noblest. The dove may peck upon one's sleeve without its injury, but whosoever wears his breast upon his trespassing goes it one far from the neck.

The music and the musician called her, and at her side humour and the old love held her back.

'Forgive me,' he pleaded.

'Twenty years is a long time to remain away from the one you say you love,' she declared, with a pugilistic touch.

'How could I tell?' he haggled. 'I will conceal nothing from you. That night when he left I followed him. I was mad with jealousy. On a dark street I struck him down. He did not die. I remained him. He had had struck a stone. I did not intend to kill him. I am mad with love and jealousy. I did more by and am no malefactor take him away. Although you married him, Helen –'

'Who are you?' cried the woman, with wide-open eyes, snatching her hand away.

'Don't you remember me, Helen – the one who has always loved you the best? I am John Dulcety. If you can forgive –'

But she was gone. Laughing, trembling, hurrying. Flying up the stairs toward the music and him who had forgotten, but who had known her for his in each of his two reincarnations, and to she climbed up the sobbed, cried and sang: 'Frank! Frank! Frank!'

There, marvels that juggling with years as though they were billiard balls, and my friend, the reporter, couldn't see anything funny in it.

XLIX

A Ramble in Aphasia

My wife and I started on this morning to precisely one hundred women. She left her second cup of tea to follow me to the front door. There she plucked from my lapel the invisible strand of lint (the universal sex of women to preclude ownership) and took me into one of my mild. I had no child. Most cause for him of parting – the hard like of domesticity flavoured with Young Hyson. There was no fear of the contemporaneous, of twenty spicing for relative esteem. With the deft touch of long malpractice, she dabbed every my vest-set scarf-pin, and then, as I closed the door, I heard her morning slippers pattering back to her sewing.

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When I [illegible] I had no thought or premonition of what was to occur. The attack came suddenly.

For many weeks I had been toiling, almost night and day, on a financial editorial law case that I won triumphantly but a few days previously. In fact, I had been digging away at the law almost without cessation for many years. Once or twice good Doctor Volney, my friend and physician, had warned me.

'If you don't slacken up, Bellford,' he said, 'you'll go suddenly to pieces. Either your nerves or your brain will give way. Tell me, does a week pass in which you do not read in the papers of a case of aphasia – of some man lost, wandering senseless, with his pass and his identity blotted out – and all from that little brain-clot made by overwork or worry?'

'I always thought,' said I, 'that the clot in those instances was really to be found on the inside of the newspaper reporters.'

Dr. Volney shook his head.

'The thinner veins,' he said, 'You need a change or a cure. Court-room, office and home – those for the only route you travel. For recreation you – read law books. Better take morning drives.'

'On Thursday nights,' I said defensively, 'my wife and I play cribbage. On Sundays she reads to me the weekly letter from her mother. That law books are not a recreation remains yet to be established.'

That morning as I walked I was thinking of Doctor Volney's words. I was feeling as well as I usually did – possibly in better spirits than usual.

I awoke with stiff and cramped muscles from having slept long on the incommodious seat of a day coach. I leaned my head against the seat and tried to think. After a long time I said to myself: 'I must have a name of some sort.' I searched my pockets. Not a card; not a letter; not a paper or monogram could I find. But I found in my coat pocket nearly $3,000 in bills of large denomination. 'I must be someone, of course,' I repeated to myself, and began again to consider.

The car was well crowded with men, among whom I told myself, there must have been some commercial tourist, for they intermingled freely, and seemed in the best good-humour and spirits. One of these – a stout, spectacled gentleman enveloped in a decided odour of cigarettes and stout – took the vacant half of my seat with a friendly nod, and unfolded a newspaper. In the intervals between his periods of mopping, we [illegible] on travellers still, on current

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affairs. I found myself able to sustain the conversation on such subjects with credit, at least to my memory. By and by my companion said:

'You are one of us, of course, that lot of men the West sends to this clime. I'm glad they held the convention in New York. I've never been East before. My name's R. P. Bolder – Bolder & Son, of Hickory Grove, Missouri.'

Though unprepared, I rose to the emergency, as man will when put to it. Now must I build a christening, and be at once babe, parson and parent. My answer came to the rescue of my alcove brain. The insistent odour of drugs from my companion supplied one idea; a glance at his newspaper, vibrant my eye over a conspicuous advertisement, assisted me further.

'My name,' said I glibly, 'is Edward Fieldhammer. I am a druggist, and my home is in Cosmopolis, Kansas.'

'I knew you were a druggist,' said my fellow-traveller affably. 'I saw the callous spot on your right forefinger where the handle of the pestle rubs. Of course, you are a delegate to our National Convention.'

'Are all them men druggists?' I asked wonderingly.

'They are. They are some through from the West. And they're your old-time druggists, too – most of your parson tables-and-granite pharmacopoeists that use the machines instead of a prescription desk. We percolate our own paregoric and roll our own pills, and we ain't above handling a few garden seeds in the spring, and carrying a stock of confectionery and shoes. I tell you, Hamphinker, I've got an idea to spring on this convention – new idea in what they want. Now, you know the shelf hordes of tastes contio and Rochelle salt Asc. et Pot. Tart. and Sod. et Pot. Tart. – one's poison, you know, and the other's laxative. It's easy to substitute one label for the other. Where do druggists mostly keep 'em? Why, as far apart as possible, on different shelves. That's wrong. I say keep 'em side by side so when you want one you can always compare it with the other and avoid mistakes. Do you catch the idea?'

'It seems to me a very good one,' I said.

'All right! When I spring it on the convention you back it up. We'll make some of those Kansas orange-phosphate-and-soap-cream professors that think they're the only lozenges in the market look like hypodermic tablets.'

'If I can be of any aid,' I said, yawning, 'the two hordes of – er –'

'Tartrate of antimony and potash, and corrosive of soda and potash.'

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'Shall henceforth sit side by side,' I concluded firmly.

'Now, there's another thing,' said Mr. Bolder. 'For an emulsion in manipulating a pill mass which do you prefer – the magnesia carbonate or the galvanized glycerine salts?'

'The – er – magnesia,' I said. It was easier to say than the other word.

Mr. Bolder glanced at me discreetly through his spectacles.

'Glass are the glycerides,' said he. 'Magnesia cakes.'

'Here's another case of these fake aphasia cases,' he said, presently, handing me his newspaper, and laying his finger upon an article. 'I don't believe in 'em. I put nine out of ten of 'em down as frauds. A man gets sick of his business and his folks and wants to have a good time. He skips out somewhere, and when they find him he pretends he have lost his memory – don't know his own name, and won't even recognize the strawberry mark on his wife's left shoulder. Aphasia! Tut! Why can't they say it home and forget?'

I took the paper and read, after the pungent headlines, the following:

'Hamilton, June 12. – Elwyn C. Bellhad, a prominent lawyer, is mysteriously missing from his home since three days ago, and all efforts to locate his latest haunt to-day by Mrs. Bellhad in a well-known citizen of the highest standing, and has enjoyed a large and lucrative law practice. He is married and owns a fine home and the most extensive private library in the town. On the day of his disappearance, he drew quite a large sum of money from his bank. He was not be found when was late after he left the bank. Mrs. Bellhad was a man of regularly quiet and domestic habits, and pursued in that his happiness in his home and profession. If any clue to all efforts to his strange disappearance is may be found in the fact that his name remains to had been deeply attached in an important law case in connection with the Q. T. and L. Railroad Company. It is feared that overwork may have affected his mind. Every effort is being made to discover the whereabouts of the missing man.'

'It seems to me you are not altogether unequipped Mr. Bolder,' I said, after I had read the despatch. 'This has the sound, to me of a genuine case. Why should this man, prosperous, happily married and respected, choose suddenly to abandon everything? I know that these lapses of memory do occur, and that men do find themselves adrift without a cause, a history or a home.'

'Oh, gammon and pulpit' said Mr. Bolder. 'It's facts they're after. There's not much edification nowadays. Men leave about aphasia, and they use it for an excuse. Ten women are wise, ten

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When it's all over they look you in the eye, as scientific as you please, and say: "He hypnotised me."'

Thus Mr. Bolster diverted, but did not aid me with his comments and philosophy.

We arrived in New York about ten at night. I rode in a cab to an hotel, and I wrote my name 'Edward Fieldhammer' in the register. As I did so I felt pervade me a splendid, wild, intoxicating buoyancy – a sense of unlimited freedom, of newly realised possibilities. I was just born into the world. The *old* letters – whatever they had been – were stricken from my hands and feet. The letters lay before me a clear wood rock as an infant canvas, and I could never again be equipped with a man's learning and experience.

I thought the hotel clerk looked at me five seconds too long. I had no baggage.

'The Druggists' Convention,' I said. 'My trunk has somehow failed to arrive.' I drew out a roll of money.

'Ah!' said he, showing an unfavourable tooth, 'we have quite a number of the Western delegates stopping here.' He struck a bell for the boy.

I endeavoured to give colour to my ruse.

'There is an important movement on foot among us Westerners,' I said. 'In regard to a recommendation at the convention that the bottles containing the tartrate of antimony and potash, and the tartrate of sodium and potash, be kept in a contiguous position on the shelf.'

'Gentleman to three-fourteen,' said the clerk loudly. I was relieved now to my room.

The next day I bought a trunk and clothing, and began at last the life of Edward Fieldhammer. I did not tax my brain with endeavours to solve problems of the past.

It was a piquant and sparkling cup that the great hotel city held up to my lips. I drank of it gratefully. That kept of Methuselah belong to him who is able to hold them. You must be older than the city's guest to be victim.

The following five days were as gold and silver. Edward Fieldhammer, just counting back to his birth by hours only, knew the new joy of having come upon an diverting a world full-fledged and unrestrained. I was entranced at the magic carpets provided in theatres and roof-gardens, that transported one into strange and delightful lands full of frolicsome music, pretty girls and grotesques. Avidly extravagant parodies upon humankind. I went here and there as my own dear will bridled by no limits of space.

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time or temperament. I dined in weird cabarets, at suicidal tables d'hôte to the sound of Hungarian music and the wild shouts of successful artists and sculptors. Or, again, where the night life quivered in the electric glare like a kinetoscopic picture, and the millinery of the world, and its jewels, and the cars where they adorn, and the men who make all three possible are met for good cheer and the spectacular effect. And among all these scenes then I have mentioned I learned one thing that I never knew before. And that is that the key to liberty is not in the hands of Liberace, but Convention holds it. Society has a toll-gate at which you must pay, or you may not enter the land of Freedom. In all the glitter, the seeming disorder, the parade, the chatter, I saw this law, unobtrusive, yet like iron, prevail. Therefore, in Manhattan you must obey three unwritten laws, and then you will be free of the town. If you decline to be bound by them, you get no dentities.

Sometimes, as my friend urged me, I would seek the wooly, softly murmuring palm-courts, redolent with high-born life and delicate entrechat, in which to dine. Again I would go down to the waterways to steamers packed with vociferous, bedecked, unchecked, love-making clerks and shop-girls to their crude pleasures on the island shores. And there was always Broadway – glittering, opulent, ugly, varying, desirable Broadway – growing upon one like an opium habit.

One afternoon as I entered my hotel a mirror man with a big nose and a black moustache blocked my way to the corridor. When I would have passed around him, he greeted me with offensive familiarity.

'Hello, Bellford!' he cried loudly. 'When the divvil are you doing in New York? Didn't know anything could drag you away from that old book den of yours, Is M'en. S. along or is this a little business me alone, eh?'

'You have made a mistake, sir,' I said coldly, releasing my hand from his grasp. 'My name is Fieldhammer. You will excuse me.'

The man dropped to one side, apparently nonplussed. As I walked to the clerk's desk I heard him call to a bell-boy and say something about telegraph blanks.

'You will give me my bill,' I said to the clerk, 'and have my baggage brought down in half an hour. I do not care to remain where I am accosted by confidence men.'

I moved that afternoon to another hotel, a sedate, old-fashioned one on lower Fifth downtown.

There was a restaurant a little way off Broadway where one

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could be served almost above in a tropic array of screaming hues. Quiet and luxury and a perfect service made it an ideal place in which to take luncheon or refreshment. Once afternoon I was there picking my way to a table among the ferns when I felt my sleeve caught.

'Mr. Bellford!' exclaimed an exceedingly sweet voice.

I turned quickly to see a lady seated there – a lady of about sixty, with exceedingly handsome eyes, who looked at me as though I had been her very dear friend.

'You were about to pass me,' she said accusingly. 'Don't tell me you did not know me. Why should we not shake hands – at least once in fifteen years?'

I shook hands with her at once. I took a chair opposite her at the table. I summoned with my eyebrows a hovering waiter. The lady was philandering with an orange ice. I ordered a *cabus de menthe*. Her hair was reddish bronze. You could not look at it because you could not look away from her eyes. For you were conscious of it as you are conscious of sunset while you look into the profundities of a wood at twilight.

'Are you sure you know me?' I asked.

'No,' she said, smiling, 'I was never sure of that.'

'What would you think,' I said, a little anxiously, 'if I were to tell you that my name is Edward Pinkhammer, from Cosmopolis, Kansas.'

'What would I think?' she repeated, with a cozy glance. 'Why, that you had not brought Mrs. Bellford to New York with you, of course. I do wish you had. I would have liked to see Marian.' Her voice lowered slightly – 'You haven't changed much, Elwyn.'

I felt her wonderful eyes sweeping mine and my face more closely.

'Yes, you have,' she amended, and there was a soft, exultant note in her happy voice; 'I see it now. You haven't forgotten. You haven't forgotten for a year or a day or an hour. I told you you never could.'

I poked my straw anxiously at the *cabus de menthe*.

'Yet now I beg your pardon,' I said, a little uneasy at her gaze. 'But that is just the trouble. I have forgotten. I've forgotten everything.'

She frowned my denial. She laughed deliciously at something she summed to see in my face.

'I've heard of you at times,' she went on. 'You're quite a big lawyer out West – Denver, isn't it, or Los Angeles? Marian never

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be very proud of you. You know, I suppose, that I married six months after you did. You may have seen it in the papers. The fortune alone cost two thousand dollars.'

She had maintained fifteen years. Fifteen years is a long time.

'Would it be too late,' I asked somewhat timorously, 'to offer you congratulations?'

'Not if you dare do it,' she answered, with such fine incapidity that I was silent, and began to create patterns on the cloth with my thumb-nail.

'Tell me one thing,' she said, leaning forward an inch or two eagerly – 'a thing I have wanted to know for many years – just from a woman's curiosity, of course – how you ever dared sleep that night in a room – a white room – a white room wet with rain and dew?'

I took a sip of *vino de mesa*.

'It would be useless, I suppose,' I said, with a sigh, 'for me to repeat that I have no recollection at all about these things. My memory is completely at fault. I need not say how much I regret it.'

The lady raised her arms upon the table, and again her eyes distracted my words and were revolving by their own centre alone in my soul. She laughed softly, with a strange quality in the sound – it was a laugh of happiness, yes, and of sorrow, – and of misery. I tried to look away from her.

'You lie, Edwyn Bellford,' she breathed tenderly. 'Oh, I know you lie!'

I gazed dully into the fire.

'My name is Edward Fieldstonner,' I said. 'I come with the delegates to the Druggists' National Convention. There is a movement on foot for arranging a new pantitle for the trades of carmen of matrimony and coroners of poteen, in which, very likely, you would take little interest.'

A shining tandem stopped before the entrance. The lady rose. I took her hand, and bowed.

'I am deeply sorry,' I said to her, 'that I cannot remember. I would explain, but fear you would not understand. You will use crumole Fieldstonner, and I really cannot at all conceive of the – the roses and other things.'

'Good-bye, Mr. Bellford,' she said, with her happy, sorrowful smile, as she stepped into her carriage.

I consulted the theatre that night. When I returned to my hotel, a quiet man in dark clothes still seemed interested in rubbing his

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finger-nails with a silk handkerchief, appeared, amicably, at my side.

'Mr. Pinkhammer,' he said casually, giving the bulk of his attention to his forefinger, 'may I request you to step aside with me for a little conversation? There is a room here.'

'Certainly,' I answered.

He conducted me into a small, private parlour. A lady and a gentleman were there. The lady, I surmised, would have been unusually good-looking had her features not been clouded by an expression of keen worry and fatigue. She was of a style of figure and possessed colouring and features that were agreeable to my fancy. She was in a travelling-dress; she fixed upon me an earnest look of extreme anxiety, and pressed an unsteady hand to her bosom. I think she would have started forward, but the gentleman arrested her movement with an authoritative motion of his head. He then came, himself, to meet me. He was a man of forty, a little grey about the temples, and with a strong, thoughtful face.

'Bellford, old man,' he said cordially, 'I'm glad to see you again. Of course we know everything is all right. I warned you, you know, that you were overlooking it. Now, you'll go back with us, and be yourself again in an hour.'

I smiled feverishly.

'I have been "Bellfordized" so often,' I said, 'that it has lost its edge. Still, in the end, it may prove wearisome. Would you be willing to sit to entertain the hypothesis that my name is Edmund Pinkhammer, and that I never saw you before in my life?'

Before the man could reply a wailing cry came from the woman. She sprang past his detaining arm. 'Henry!' she sobbed, and cast herself upon me, and clung tight. 'Henry,' she cried again, 'don't break my heart. I am your wife – all my name once – just once! I could not you dead rather than this way.'

I unwound her arms respectfully, but firmly.

'Madam,' I said severely, 'pardon me if I suggest that you accept a reconciliation too precipitately. It is a pity,' I went on, with an inward laugh, as the thought occurred to me, 'that this Bellford and I could not be kept side by side upon the same shelf like curiosities of authors and autonyms for purposes of identification. In order to understand the allusion,' I concluded nicely, 'it may be necessary for you to keep an eye on the proceedings of the Druggists' National Convention.'

The lady turned to her companion, and grasped his arm.

'What is it, Doctor Vickery? Oh, what is it?' she cried.

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He led her to the door.

'Go to your room for awhile,' I heard him say. 'I will remain and talk with him. His mind? Ah, I think not – only a portion of the brain. Yes, I am sure he will recover. Go to your room and leave me with him.'

The lady disappeared. The man in dark clothes who went outside, still manipulating himself in a thoughtful way. I think he waited in the hall.

'I would like to talk with you a while, Mr. Pinkhammer, if I may,' said the gentleman who remained.

'Very well, if you care to,' I replied, 'and will excuse me if I take it comfortably; I am rather tired.' I stretched myself upon a couch by a window and lit a cigar. He drew a chair near by.

'Let us speak in the polar,' he said soothingly. 'Your name is not Pinkhammer.'

'I know that as well as you do,' I said coolly. 'But a man must have a name of some sort. I can assure you that I do not unreasonably admire the name of Pinkhammer. But when one chooses one's self, suddenly she flies nowhere do not seem to suggest themselves. But suppose it had been Schoninghausen or Scroggins? I think I did very well with Pinkhammer.'

'Your name,' said the other man seriously, 'is Elwyn C. Bellford. You are one of the first lawyers in Denver. You are suffering from an attack of epilepsia, which has caused you to forget your identity. The cause of it was over-application to your profession, and, perhaps, a life too bare of natural recreation and pleasures. The lady who has just left the room is your wife.'

'She is what I would call a fine-looking woman,' I said, after a judicial pause. 'I particularly admire the shade of brown in her hair.'

'She is a wife to be proud of. Since your disappearance, scarcely two weeks ago, she has scarcely closed her eyes. We learned that you were in New York through a telegram sent by Isidore Newman, a travelling man from Denver. He said that he had met you in an hotel here, and that you did not recognize him.'

'I think I remember the occasion,' I said. 'The fellow called me "Bellford." If I am not mistaken. But don't you think it about time, now, for you to introduce yourself?'

'I am Reuben Volney – Doctor Volney. I have been your close friend for twenty years, and your physician for fifteen. I room with Mrs. Bellford as much as we got the telegram. Try, Elwyn, old man – try to remember.'

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'What's the use to try!' I asked, with a little frown. 'You say you are a physician. Is aphasia curable? When a man loses his memory, does it return slowly, or suddenly?'

'Sometimes gradually and imperfectly; sometimes as suddenly as it went.'

'Will you undertake the treatment of my case, Doctor Volney?' I asked.

'Old friend,' said he, 'I'll do everything in my power, and will have done everything that science can do to cure you.'

'Very well,' said I. 'Then you will consider that I am your patient. Everything is in confidence now – professional confidence.'

'Of course,' said Doctor Volney.

I got up from the couch. Someone had set a vase of white roses on the centre table – a cluster of white roses freshly sprinkled and fragrant. I threw them far out of the window, and then I laid myself upon the couch again.

'It will be best, Bobby,' I said, 'to have this cure happen suddenly. I'm rather tired of it all, anyway. You may go now and bring Marian in. But, oh, Doc,' I said, with a sigh, as I kicked him on the shin – 'good old Doc – it was glorious!'

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A Municipal Report

The cities are full of pride,
  Challenging each to each –
This from her mountainside,
  That from her burthened beach.

R. KIPLING.

Fancy a novel about Chicago or Buffalo, let us say, or Nashville, Tennessee! There are just three big cities in the United States that are 'story cities' – New York, of course, New Orleans, and, best of the lot, San Francisco. – FRANK NORRIS.

EAST IS EAST, and West is San Francisco, according to Californians. Californians are a race of people; they are not merely inhabitants of a State. They are the Southerners of the West. Now, Chicagoans are no less loyal to their city; but when you ask them why, they stammer and speak of lake fish and the new Odd Fellows Building. But Californians go into detail.

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Of course they have, in the climate, an argument that is good for half an hour while you are thinking of your cool bills and heavy underwear. But as soon as they come to calculate your alleged fat conviction, resident counts upon theirs, and they picture the city of the Golden Gate as the Capital of the New World. So far, as a matter of opinion, no refutation is necessary. But, that contains all (from Adam and Eve downward), it is a rash one who will lay his finger on the map and say: "In that crown there can be no romance – what could happen here?" Yet, it is a bold and a rash deed to challenge in one sentence history, romance, and Rand and McNally.

NASHVILLE. – A city, port of delivery, and the capital of the State of Tennessee. It is on the Cumberland River and on the C. & St. L. and the L. & N. railroads. The city is regarded as the most important educational centre in the South.

I cropped off the rain in a pan. Having searched the thesaurus in vain for adjectives, I wrote, as a substitution, his age in comparison in the form of a recipe.

Take of London fog 30 parts; malaria 14 parts; gas bombs 20 parts; drawbacks, gathered in a brickyard in summer, 25 parts; odour of honeysuckle 15 parts. Mix.

The mixture will give you an approximate conception of a Nashville drizzle. It is not so fragrant as a moth-ball nor so thick as pea-soup; but 'tis enough – 'twill serve.

I went to an hotel in a taxicab. It required strong self-suppression for me to keep from climbing to the top of it and giving an imitation of Sidney Carton. The vehicle was driven by brawn of a bygone era and driven by something dark and emancipated.

I was sleepy and tired, so when I got to the hotel I hurriedly paid it the fifty cents it demanded (with appreciative lagniappe, I assure you). I knew its habits and I did not want to hear it prate about its old 'master' or anything that happened 'befo' de war.'

The hotel was one of the kind described as 'renovated.' They smear $20,000 worth of new marble pillars, tiling, electric lights and brass cuspidors in the lobby, and a new L. & N. time table and a lithograph of Loolum Mountain in each one of the green rooms above. The management was without reproach, the accommodation full of ungodly Southern courtesy, the service as slow as the progress of a snail and as good-humoured as Rip Van Winkle. The food was worth travelling a thousand miles for. There is an

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other hotel in the world where you can get such chicken livers as Southern.

At dinner I asked a negro waiter if there was anything doing in town. He pondered gravely for a minute, and then replied: 'Well, boss, I don't really reckon there's anything at all doin' after sundown.'

Sundown had been accomplished; it had been drowned in the drizzle long before. So that spectacle was denied me. But I went forth upon the streets in the drizzle to see what might be there.

It is built on undulating grounds, and the streets are lighted by electricity at a cost of $51,479 per annum.

At 1 left the hotel there was a race riot. Down upon me charged a company of firemen, or Arabs, or Zulus, armed with – no, I saw with relief that they were not rifles, but whips. And I saw dimly a caravan of black, clumsy vehicles; and as the rumbling shouts, 'Eyes you anywhere in the town, boss, fah fifty cents,' I composed that I was merely a 'lure' instead of a victim.

I walked through long streets all leading uphill. I wondered how those streets ever came down again. Perhaps they didn't until they were 'graded.' On a few of the 'main streets' I saw lights in stores here and there, saw street-cars go by conveying merely laughter. Either next year, saw people pass engaged in the act of conversation, and heard a burst of semi-lively laughter coming from a soda-water and ice-cream parlour. The streets other than 'main' seemed to have settled upon their barren houses consecrated to peace and domesticity. In many of those lights those behind discreetly drawn window shades; in a few pianos chilled ordinarily and irreproachable music. These was, indeed, little 'doing.' I wished I had come before sundown. So I returned to my hotel.

In November, 1864, the Confederate General Hood advanced against Nashville, where he met up a Northern force under General Thomas. The latter [illegible] and defeated the Confederates in a further conflict.

All my life I have heard of, admired, and witnessed the fine sentimentality of the South in its peaceful conflicts in the tobacco-chewing regions. But in my hotel a surprise awaited me. There were twelve knights, sere, imposing, capacious brass cuspidors in the great lobby, tall enough to be called urns, and so voluminously that the crack pitcher of any baseball team should

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have been able to throw a ball into one of them at five paces distant. But, although a terrible battle had raged and was still raging, the enemy had not suffered. Bright, new, imposing, capacious, untouched, they stood. But shades of Jefferson Davis! the tile floor – the beautiful tile floor! I could not avoid thinking of the battle of Nashville, and trying to draw, as in my foolish habit, some deductions about hereditary marksmanship.

Here I first met Major (by misplaced courtesy) Wentworth Caswell. I knew him for a type the moment my eyes shifted from the sight of him. A rat has no geographical habitat. My old friend, A. Tennyson, said, as he so well said almost everything:

> 'Purples, noses, and the blabbing lip,
> And noses like the fruitful autumn, when'

Let us regard the word 'British' as interchangeable at 50. A rat is a rat.

This man was hunting thirst the brutal hobby like a starved dog that had forgotten where he had buried a bone. He had a face of great acreage, red, pulpy, and with a kind of sloppy nativeness like that of Buddha. He possessed one single charm – he was very smoothly shaven. The mark of the beast is not indelible upon a man until he goes about with a stubble. I think that if he had one small bit escape that *day* I would have repulsed his advances, and the criminal calendar of the world would have been spared the addition of one murder.

I happened to be standing within five feet of a cuspidor when Major Caswell opened fire upon it. I had been observant enough to perceive that the attacking force was using Gatlings instead of squirrel rifles; so I side-stepped so promptly that the major seized the opportunity to apologize to a non-combatant. He had the blabbing lip. In four minutes he had become my friend and had dragged me to the bar.

I desire to interpolate here that I am a Southerner. Sir! I am not one by profession or trade. I endorse the wing 'er, the slouch hat, the Prince Albert, the number of letter of course destroyed by Sherman, and play cribbage. When the orchestra plays Dixie I do not cheer. I slide a little lower on the leather-cushioned seat and, well, order another Whitehorse and wish that Longstreet had – but what's the use?

Major Caswell bought the bar with his fee, and the first gun at Fort Sumter re-echoed. When he first saw the bar was at Appomattox

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I began to hope. But then he began on family trees, and demonstrated that Adam was only a third cousin of a collateral branch of the Caswell family. Genealogy disposed of, he took up, as my dentist, his private family matters. He spoke of his wife, traced her descent back to Eve, and profanely denied any possible rumour that she may have had relations in the land of Nod.

By this time I began to suspect that he was trying to obscure by means the fact that he had ordered the drinks, on the chance that I would be bewildered into paying for them. But when they were down he crushed a silver dollar loudly upon the bar. Then, of course, another serving was obligatory. And when I had paid for that I took leave of him unsociably, for I wanted no more of him. But before I had obtained my release he had proved loudly of an heirloom that his wife received, and showed a bundle of silver spoons.

When I got my key at the desk the clerk said to me courteously: 'If that man Caswell has annoyed you, and if you would like to make a complaint, we will have him ejected. He is a nuisance, a loafer, and without any known means of support, although he seems to have some money since the time. But we don't mind as he plies to hit upon any means of throwing him out legally.'

'Why, no,' said I, after some reflection; 'I don't see any way clear to making a complaint. But I would like to place myself on record as entering that I do not care for his company. Your town,' I continued, 'seems to be a quiet one. What manner of entertainment, edification, or excitement have you to offer to the stranger within your gates?'

'Well, sir,' said the clerk, 'there will be a show here next Thursday. Is it — I'll look it up and have the announcement sent up to your room with the ice water. Good night.'

After I went up to my room I looked out of the window. It was only about ten o'clock, but I looked upon a silent town. The principle one boasted, sprinkled with dim lights, as far apart as currants in a cake sold at the Ladies' Exchange.

'A quiet place,' I said to myself, as my first shoe struck the ceiling of the occupant of the room beneath mine. 'Nothing of the life here that gives colour and variety to the cities in the East and West. Just a good, ordinary, humdrum business town.'

Nashville occupies a foremost place among the manufacturing centres of the country. It is the fifth boot and shoe centre in the United States, the largest trade and jobbing manufacturing city in the South, and does an enormous wholesale dry goods, grocery and drug business.

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I must tell you how I came to be in Nashville, and assure you the digression brings as much relief to me as it does to you. I was travelling elsewhere on my own business, but I had a commission from a Northern literary magazine to map over there and establish a personal connection between the publication and one of its contributors, Azalea Adair.

Adair (there was no clue to the personality except the handwriting) had sent in some essays (how art!) and poems that had made the editors swear appreciatively over their one o'clock luncheon. So they had commissioned me to stand up and Adair and extract by contract his or her output at ten cents a word before some other publisher offered her ten or twenty.

At nine o'clock the next morning, after my chicken livers at Jacob's (try them if you can find that hotel), I ventured out into the streets, which were still on the unlimited scale. At the first corner I came upon Uncle Cæsar. He was a stalwart negro, older than the pyramids, with gray wool and a face that reminded me of Hector, and a second afterwards of the late King Cetewayo. He owns the most considerable coon that I ever had ever or expect to see. It reached to his ankles and had once been a Confederate gray in colour. But rain and sun and age had so variegated it that Joseph's coat, beside it, would have failed to a pale monochrome. I must linger while that coon fur is has to do with the story – the story that is so long in coming, because you can hardly expect anything to happen in Nashville.

Once it must have been the military coon of an officer. The rags of it had vanished, but all woven in front it had been frogged and vizzied magnificently. But now the frogs and vizzis were gone to their stand had been patiently stitched (I ascertained by some surviving "black mammy") new frogs made of cunningly twisted common hempen twine. This token was frayed and dishevelled. It must have been added as the coon or a substitute for vanished splendours, with ominous but painstaking devotion, for it followed faithfully the curves of the long-missing frogs. And, to complete the comedy and pathos of the garment, all its buttons were gone save one. The second button from the top alone remained. The coon was fastened by other twine strings tied through the buttonholes and other holes rudely pierced in the opposite side. There was never such a weird garment so fascinatingly bedecked and of so many mottled hues. The bone button was the size of a half-dollar, made of yellow bone and sewed on with cornerwise.

This negro stood by a cabbage old chat Hiram himself might

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have enough a back line with it after he left the ark with the two animals blocked in it. As I approached he threw open the door, drew out a leather duster, waved it, without using it, and said in deep, rumbling tones:

'Step right in, sir; ain't a speck of dust in it – jus' back from a funeral, sah.'

I inferred that on such gala occasions carriages were given an extra cleaning. I looked up and down the street and perceived that there was little choice among the exhibits for hire that lined the kerb. I looked in my memorandum book for the address of Andrew Adair.

'I want to go to 861 Jessamine Street,' I said, and was about to step into the hack. But the instant the thick, long, gorilla-like arm of the old negro barred me. Out his nostrils and scrutinizing from a look of sudden suspicion and enmity flashed for a moment. Then, with quickly returning conviction, he asked blandishingly:

'What are you going there for, boss?'

'What is that to you?' I asked a little sharply.

'Nothin', sah, jus' nothin'. Only it's a lonesome kind of part of town and few folks ever has business out there. Step right in. The seat is clean – jus' got back from a funeral, sah.'

A mile and a half it must have been to our journey's end. I could hear nothing but the fearful rattle of the ancient hack over the uneven brick paving. I could smell nothing but the dilute, now further flavoured with coal smoke and something like a mixture of rye and chocolate blossoms. All I could see through the screaming windows were rare rows of dim houses.

The city has an area of 10 square miles; 184 miles of streets, of which 117 miles are paved; a system of waterworks that cost $2,500,000, and 77 miles of mains.

Eight-sixty-one Jessamine Street was a decayed mansion. Thirty yards back from the street it stood, outcropped in a splendid grove of trees and encircled shrubbery. A row of box bushes overflowed and almost hid the paling fence from sight; the gate was kept closed by a rope cross-tied to the gate-post and the first paling of the gate. But when you got inside you saw that all was a shell, a shadow, a ghost of former grandeur and excellence. Due to the street, I have not yet got inside.

When the hack had ceased from rattling and the weary quadrupeds came to a rest I hurried up like the fifty cents with an

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additional quarter, feeling a glow of conscious generosity as I did so. He refused it.

'It's two dollars, suh,' he said.

'How's that?' I asked. 'I plainly heard you call out at the hotel "Fifty cents to any part of the town."'

'It's two dollars, suh,' he repeated obdurately. 'It's a long ways from the hotel.'

'It is within the city limits and well within them,' I argued. 'Don't think that you have picked up a greenhorn Yankee. Do you see those hills over there?' I went on, pointing toward the east. (I could not see them, myself, for the darkness); 'well, I was born and raised on their other side. You old fool nigger, can't you tell people from other people when you see one?'

The grim face of King Cetewayo softened. 'Is you from the South, suh?' it asked. 'Is you from those of yours theah we fit?' 'Sure to yours.'

'Then the charge is fifty cents,' I suggested kindly.

His former expression, a mingling of rapidity and hostility, returned, remained ten minutes, and vanished.

'Boss,' he said. 'Fifty cents is right; but I made two dollars, suh. I'm obliged to have two dollars. I ain't *demandin'* it now, suh, after I knows where you's from; I'm jus' *askin'* when I has to have two dollars to-night, and business is mighty po'.'

Power and confidence smiled upon his ivory features. He had been luckier than he had hoped. Instead of having picked up a greenhorn, ignorant of rates, he had come upon an inheritance.

'You confounded old rascal,' I said, resuming down into my position, 'you ought to be tarred over to the police.'

For the first time I saw him smile. His heart, its heavy HE KNEW.

I gave him two one-dollar bills. As I handed them over I noticed that one of them had even perhaps eleven. Its upper right-hand corner was missing, and it had been torn through in the middle, but joined again. A strip of blue tissue-paper, pasted over the split, preserved its negotiability.

Enough of the African bandit for the present. I left him happy. Went the rope and opened the creaky gate.

The house, as I said, was a shell. A paint-brush had not touched it in many years. I could not see why a strong wind should not have bundled it over like a house of cards until I looked again at the trees that hugged it close — the trees that are the bonds of Nature, and still down their protecting branches crossed in agelong, warm and stormy embrace.

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Azalea Adair, fifty years old, white-haired, a descendant of the cavaliers, as thin and frail as the house she lived in, robed in the cheapest and cleanest dress I ever saw, with an air as simple as a queen's, received me.

The reception-room seemed a cold square, because there was nothing in it except some rows of books, an unpainted, white-pine bookshelves, a cracked, marble-top table, a rag rug, a hair-cloth sofa and two or three chairs. Yes, there was a picture on the wall, a colored crayon drawing of a cheap of peonies. I looked around for the portrait of Andrew Jackson and the pine-cone hanging basket, but they were not there.

Azalea Adair and I had conversation, a little of which will be repeated to you. She was a product of the old South, gently reared in the cloistered life. Her learning was not broad, but was deep and of splendid originality in its somewhat narrow scope. She had been educated at home, and her knowledge of the world was derived from inference and by inspiration. Of such is the precious, small group of exquisite souls. While she talked to me, I kept brushing my fingers, trying, unconsciously, to rid them guiltily of the almost dust from the half-calf backs of Lamb, Chaucer, Hawker, Marcus Aurelius, Mandeville and Hood. She was exquisite, she was a valuable discovery. Nearly everybody nowadays knows too much — oh, so much too much — of real life.

I could perceive clearly that Azalea Adair was very poor. A home and a dress she had, not much else, I fancied. So, divided between my duty to the magazine and my loyalty to the poor and exquisite who fought Thunter in the valley of the Cumberland, I glanced at her robe, which was like a harpsichord's, and found that I could not speak of contracts. In the presence of the Nine Muses and the Three Graces was hesitated to lower the cupic to two cents. There would have to be another colloquy after I had explained my commercialism. But I spoke of my mission, and about o'clock of the next afternoon was set for the discussion of the business proposition.

'Your work,' I said, as I began to make ready to depart (which is the time for smooth generalities), 'seems to be a quiet, exalted place. At home now, I should say, where five things are of the ordinary ever happen.'

In earlier an executive made in secret and before were with the White and Lords, and in flowing wells have a daily capacity of more than 2,000 barrels.

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Azalea Adair seemed to reflect.

'I have never thought of it that way,' she said, with a kind of sincere humility that seemed to belong to her. 'Isn't it the still, quiet places that things do happen? I fancy that when God began to create the earth on the first Monday morning one could have heard our race's windows and heard the drop of seed splashing here. He moved to His built up the everlasting hills. What did the noisiest project in the world – I mean the building of the tower of Babel – result in finally? A page and a half of Esperanto in the *North American Review*.'

'Of course,' said I pleasedoloomily, 'human nature is the same everywhere; but there is more colour – or – more drama and movement and – or – romance in some existences to others.'

'On the surface,' said Azalea Adair. 'I have travelled many times around the world in a golden airship waived on two wings – print and dreams. I have seen (in one of my imaginary tours) the Sultan of Turkey love-acting with his own hands one of his wives who had uncovered her face in public. I have seen a man in Nashville cut up his shoes before his wife was going out with her face covered – with rice powder. In Sun Francisco's Chinatown I saw the slave girl Sing Yee dipped slowly, inch by inch, in boiling almond oil to make her accept the world power one her American lover again. She gave in when the boiling oil had reached three inches above her knee. At a cuckoo party in East Nashville the other night I saw Kitty Morgan cut dead by seven of her schoolmates and lifelong friends because she had married a horse painter. The boiling oil was sizzling as high as her knees; but I wish you could have seen the fine little smile that she exacted from table to table. Oh yes, it is a humdrum town. Just a few miles of cathedrals, homes and steel and towers and harbour yards.'

Someone knocked hollowly at the back of the house. Azalea Adair breathed a soft apology and went in investigate the sound. She came back in three minutes with heightened eyes, a faint flush on her cheeks, and one pearl lifted from her shoulders.

'You must have a cup of tea before you go,' she said, 'and a sugar cake.'

She reached and shook a little brass bell. In shuffled a small negro girl eleven twelve, bare-foot, but very tidy, glowering at me with thumb in mouth and bulging eyes.

Azalea Adair opened a tiny, worn purse and drew out a dollar bill, a dollar bill with the upper right-hand corner missing, torn in

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two pieces and pasted together again with a strip of blue checkpaper. It was one of the bills I had given the pictorial negro – there was no doubt of it.

'Go up to Mr. Baker's store on the corner, Inky,' she said, handing the girl the dollar bill, 'and get a quarter of a pound of tea – the kind he always sends me – and ten cents worth of sugar cubes. Now, hurry. The supply of tea in the house happens to be exhausted,' she explained to me.

Inky left by the back way. Before the scraps of her hand, have first had shed away on the bath punch, a wild shriek – I was sure it was here – filled the hollow house. Then the deep, groff coats of an angry man's voice mingled with the girl's further squeals and unintelligible words.

Aunt Adair rose without surprise or emotion and disappeared. For two minutes I heard the bourse rumble of the man's voice, then something like an oath and a light scuffle, and she returned calmly to her chair.

'This is a strange house,' she said, 'and I have a account for part of it. I am sorry to have so ruptured my invitation to tea. It was impossible to get the kind I always use at the store. Perhaps to-morrow Mr. Baker will be able to supply me.'

I was sure that Inky had not had time to leave the house. I inquired concerning street-car lines and took my leave. After I was well on my way I remembered that I had not learned Aunt Adair's name. But to-morrow would do.

That same day I started in on the course of inquiry that this committal day forced upon me. I was in the town only two days, but in that time I managed to be shamelessly by telegraph, and to be an accomplice – after the fact, if that is the correct legal term – to a murder.

As I entered the corner mansion my hand the Africa coachman of the polychromatic, scrapped coat asked me, waving open the dungeony door of his peripatetic sarcophagus, filled his feather duster and began his round: 'Keep right in, boss. Carriage is down – pa' got back from a funeral. Fifty cents to my –'

And then he knew me and grinned broadly. 'Scuse me, boss; you is de gen'l'man what did use with me the evenin'. Thank you kindly, sah.'

'I am going out to fill again to-morrow afternoon at three,' said I, 'and if you will be here, I'll let you drive me. So you know Miss Adair?' I concluded, thinking of my dollar bill.

'I belonged to her father, Judge Addis, sah,' he replied.

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'I judge that she is pretty poor,' I said. 'She hasn't much money to speak of, has she?'

For an instant I looked again at the fierce countenance of King Caraways, and then he changed back to an emasculate old negro back-driver.

'She ain't gwine to starve, suh,' he said slowly. 'She has cash'ers, suh; she has reso'ces.'

'I shall pay you fifty cents for the ride,' said I.

'Dat is puffickly correct, suh,' he answered humbly. 'I jus' *had* to have dat two dollahs dis mawnin, boss.'

I was at the hotel and fled by electricity. I wired the magazine: 'A Attic inside 800 for eight cents a word.'

The answer that came back was: 'Give it to her quick, you duffer.'

Just before dinner 'Major' Wentworth Caswell bore down upon me with the greetings of a long-lost friend. I have some few men whom I have so instantaneously hated, and of whom it was so difficult to be rid. I was standing at the bar when he boarded me, therefore I could not wave the white ribbon in his face. I would have paid gladly for the drinks, hoping thereby to escape another, but he was one of those despicable, roaring, advertising bibbers who must have brass bands and fireworks wound upon every case that they wave in their follies.

With an air of producing millions he drew two one-dollar bills from a pocket and dashed one of them upon the bar. I looked once more at the dollar bill with the upper right-hand corner missing, torn through the middle, and pasted with a strip of blue tissue-paper. It was my dollar bill again, it confidently bore no other.

I went up to my room. The drinks and the necessity of a literary, emotionless Easterner were had cards me tired and listless. I remember that just before I went to bed I mentally disposed of the mysterious dollar bill (which might have formed the clue to a tremendously fine detective story of San Francisco) by saying to myself sleepily: 'Sweet as if a lot of people have been stuck in the Uncle-Driver's Trust. Pays dividends promptly, too. Wonder if —' Then I fell asleep.

King Caraways was at his post the next day, and smiled my bonus over the counter to me. He was to wait and ramble me back again when I was ready.

Arabel Adair looked paler and thinner and frailer than she had looked on the day before. After she had signed the contract at eight cents per word she grew still paler and began to slip out of her chair.

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Without much trouble I managed to get her up on the mouldering horsehair sofa and then I ran out to the sidewalk and yelled to the coffee-coloured Pluto to bring a doctor. With a wisdom that I had not suspected in him, he abandoned his team and struck off up the street afoot, realising the value of speed. In ten minutes he returned with a grave, grey-haired and capable man of medicine. In a few words (words much less than eight cents each) I explained to him my presence in the hitherto house of mystery. He bowed with acutely understanding, and turned to the old negro.

'Uncle Caesar,' he said calmly, 'run up to my house and ask Miss Lucy to give you a cream pitcher full of fresh milk and half a cupful of port wine. And hurry back. Don't drive – run. I want you to get back some time this week.'

It occurred to me then Dr. Morrison also felt a distrust of the speaking powers of the landlyman's needs. After Uncle Caesar had gone, lumberingly, but swiftly, up the street, the doctor looked me over with great politeness and so much careful calculation until he had decided that I might do.

'It is only a case of insufficient nutrition,' he said. 'In other words, the result of poverty, pride, and starvation. Mrs. Caswell has many devoted friends who would be glad to aid her, but she will accept nothing except from that old negro, Uncle Caesar, who was once owned by her family.'

'Mrs. Caswell!' said I, in surprise. And then I looked at the counter and saw that she had signed it 'Azalea Adair Caswell.'

'I thought she was Miss Adair,' I said.

'Married to a drunkard, worthless lowfer, sir,' said the doctor. 'It is said that he robs her even of the small sums that her old servant contributes toward her support.'

When the milk and wine had been brought, the doctor even revived Azalea Adair. She sat up and talked of the beauty of the summer leaves that were then in season, and their height of colour. She referred lightly to her fainting mission as the outcome of an old palpitation of the heart. Lucy fanned her as she lay on the sofa. The doctor was then elsewhere, and I followed him to the door. I told him that it was within my power and inclination to make a reasonable advance of money to Azalea Adair on future contributions to the magazine, and he seemed pleased.

'By the way,' he said, 'perhaps you would like to know that you have had royalty for a customer. Old Caesar's grandfather was a king in Congo. Caesar himself has royal ways, as you may have observed.'

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As the doctor was moving off I heard Uncle Cæsar's voice huskily 'Did he git both of dem two dollars from you, Mist' Zeke?'

'Yes, Cæsar,' I heard Aaron Adair answer weakly. And then I went in and concluded business negotiations with our contributor. I assumed the responsibility of advancing fifty dollars, putting it as a necessary formality to binding our bargain. And then Uncle Cæsar drove me back to the hotel.

Here ends all the story so far as I can vouch as a witness. The rest must be only hearsay statements of facts.

As above six o'clock I went out for a stroll. Uncle Cæsar was at the corner. He threw open the door of his carriage, flourished his dexter and began his deposition formula: 'Step right in, sah. Ebby comer to anywhere in the city – hack's publickly clean, sah – jus' got back from a funeral –'

And then he recognized me. I think his eyesight was getting bad. His reaching voice on a few more failed shades of volume, the entire carriage were mine. Frayed and ragged, the last remaining button – that bottom of yellow brass – was gone. A motley decorative of things was Uncle Cæsar.

About two hours later I saw an excited crowd twinging the front of a drug store. In a corner where nothing happens this was unusual, so I edged my way inside. On an overpowered couch of empty boxes and chairs was stretched the mortal corporeality of Major Wentworth Caswell. A doctor was mixing him for the heavenward ingredient. His decision was that he was conglomerate by his absence.

The erstwhile Major had been found dead on a dark street and brought by curious and assembled citizens to the drug store. The last human being had been engaged in terrific battle – the details showed that. Loafer and ingredient though he had been, he had been also a warrior. But he had lost. His hands were yet clenched so tightly that his fingers would not be opened. Then gentle citizens who had become him stood above and searched their vocabularies to find some good words, if it were possible, to speak of him. One kind-looking man said, after much thought: 'When "Cas" was about so'high he was one of the best spellers in school.'

While I stood there the fingers of the right hand of 'the man that was,' which hung down the side of a white pine box, relaxed, and dropped something at my feet. I stooped it with one hurt quickly, and a little later on I picked it up and pocketed it. I reasoned that in his last struggle the hand must have seized that object unwittingly and held it in a death grip.

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At the hotel that night the main topic of conversation, with the possible exceptions of politics and prohibition, was the demise of Major Carroll. I heard one man say to a group of listeners:

'In my opinion, gentlemen, Carroll was murdered by some of them no-account niggers for his money. He had fifty dollars the afternoon which he showed to several gentlemen in the hotel. When he was found the money was not on his person.'

I left the city the next morning at nine, and as the train was crossing the bridge over the Cumberland River I took out of my pocket a pellicle, horn, oversize bonsai the size of a fifty-cent piece, with frayed ends of canvas tubes hanging from it, and cast it out of the window into the slow, muddy waters below.

I wonder what's doing in Buffalo?

II

Compliments of the Season

THERE ARE NO MORE Christmas stories to write. Holly is exhausted; and stockpots issue the cant buns, as manufactured by clever young Journalists who have married early and have no engagingly optimistic view of life. Therefore, for contemptible diversion, we are reduced to very questionable matters – facts and philosophy. We will begin with – whichever you choose to call it.

Children are gentlemanly little animals with which we have to cope under a bewildering variety of conditions. Especially when childish sorrows overwhelm them are we put to our wits' end. We subvert our paltry store of consolations; and they bear down, sobbing, in sleep. Then we grovel in the dust of a million years, and ask God why. Then we call out of the rat-trap. As for the children, no one understands them except old maids, bunchbacks, and shepherd dogs.

Now come the facts in the case of the Rag-Doll, the Twenty-sixth, and the Twenty-fifth of December.

On the tenth of that month the Child of the Millionaire lost her rag-doll. There were many servants in the Millionaire's palace on the Embarcadero, and troops ransacked the house and grounds, but without finding the lost treasure. The Child was a girl of five, and one of those perverse little beasts that often wound the sensibilities of wealthy parents by flying their affections upon some vulgar,

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'P-pardon, lady,' he said, 'but couldn't leave without exchangin' comp'ments sheason with lady th' house. "Gainst princ'ples gen'leman do sho.'

And then he began the ancient salutation that was a tradition in the House when men wore lace ruffles and powder.

'The blessings of another year –'

Fuzzy's memory failed him. The Lady prompted:

'– Be upon this hearth.'

'– The guest –' stammered Fuzzy.

'– And upon her who –' continued the Lady, with a leading smile.

'Oh, cut it out,' said Fuzzy ill-manneredly. 'I can't remember. Drink hearty.'

Fuzzy had shot his arrow. They drank. The Lady smiled again the smile of her caste. James enveloped Fuzzy and re-conducted him toward the front door. The harp music still softly drifted through the house.

Outside, Black Riley breathed on his cold hands and hugged the gate.

'I wonder,' said the Lady to herself, musing 'who – but there were so many who came. I wonder whether memory is a curse or a blessing to them after they have fallen so low.'

Fuzzy and his escort were nearly at the door The Lady called: 'James!'

James stalked back obsequiously, leaving Fuzzy waiting unsteadily, with his brief spark of the divine fire gone.

Outside, Black Riley stamped his cold feet and got a firmer grip on his section of gas-pipe.

'You will conduct this gentleman,' said the Lady, 'downstairs. Then tell Louis to get out the Mercedes and take him to whatever place he wishes to go.'

LII

Proof of the Pudding

SPRING WINKED a vitreous optic at Editor Westbrook, of the *Minerva Magazine*, and deflected him from his course. He had lunched in his favourite corner of a Broadway hotel, and was returning to his office when his feet became entangled in the lure of the vernal coquette. Which is by way of saying that he turned eastward in

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Twenty-sixth Street, safely herded the spring freshet of vehicles in Fifth Avenue, and meandered along the walls of budding Madison Square.

The instant air and the settings of the little park almost formed a pennant; the colour motif was green – the prevailing shade of the emotion of sun and vegetation.

The yellow grass between the walls was the colour of verdigris, a poisonous green, reminiscent of the hearts of derelict humans that had breathed upon the soil during the summer and autumn. The bursting tree-buds looked strangely fecundant to those who had botanized among the garnishings of the fish course of a forty-cent dinner. The sky above was of that pale aquamarine that that hell-moon poets rhyme with 'true' and 'blue' and 'you.' The one natural and frank colour visible was the ostensible green of the newly painted benches – a shade between the colour of a pickled cucumber and that of a two year's five-inch crocodile's intestine. But, at the city-bred eye of Editor Westbrook, the landscape appeared a masterpiece.

And now, whether you are of those who rush in, or of the gentle contingent that flees to cover, you must follow in a brief invasion of the editor's mind.

Editor Westbrook's spirit was contented and serene. The April number of the *Minerva* had sold its entire edition before the tenth day of the month – a newsdealer in Kankirk had written that he would have sold fifty copies more if he had had 'em. The owners of the magazine had raised his (the editor's) salary; he had just installed in his house a jewel of a recently imported maid who was afraid of policemen; and the morning papers had published in full a speech he had made at a publishers' banquet. Also there were echoing in his mind the jubilant notes of a splendid song that his charming young wife had sung to him before he left his uptown apartment that morning. She was taking enthusiastic interest in her music of late, practising early and diligently. When he had complimented her on the improvement in her voice she had fairly hugged him for joy at his praise. He felt, too, the benign, moist caress of the trained nurse, Spring, tripping softly among the wands of the benevolescent rips.

While Editor Westbrook was sauntering between rows of park benches (already filling with vagrants and the guardians of loafers' childhood) he felt his sleeve grasped and held. Suppressing that he was about to be panhandled, he uttered a mild and unprofitable fuss, and saw that his captor was Reuw – Shackleford Dowx,

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dingy, almost ragged, the genteel serenity visible to him through the deeper lines of the shabby.

While the editor is pulling himself out of his surprise, a flash-light biography of Dawe is offered.

He was a fictions writer, and one of Westbrook's old acquaintances. At one time they might have called each other old friends. Dawe had some money in those days, and lived in a decent apartment-house near Westbrook's. The two families often went to theatres and dinners together. Mrs. Dawe and Mrs. Westbrook became 'dearest' friends. Then one day a little episode of the newspaper, just as serious itself, impoverished Dawe's capital, and he moved to the Gramercy Park neighbourhood, where one, for a few groats per week, may sit upon one's trunk under eight-branched chandeliers and opposite Carrara marble mantels and watch the mice play upon the floor. Dawe thought to live by writing fiction. Now and then he sold a story. He introduced many to Westbrook. The latter printed one or two of them, the rest were returned. Westbrook sent a candid and conscientious personal letter with each rejected manuscript, pointing out in detail his reasons for considering it unavailable. Editor Westbrook had his own clear conception of what constituted good fiction. So had Dawe. Mrs. Dawe was mainly concerned about the consistency of the penny dishes of food that she managed to scrape together. One day Dawe had been sporting to her about the excellence of certain French writers. At dinner they sat down to a dish that a hungry schoolboy could have encompassed at a gulp. Dawe consumed.

'It's Maupassant hash,' said Mrs. Dawe. 'It may not be art, but I do wish you would do a five course Modern Cracked aerial with an Ella Wheeler Wilcox sweet for dessert. I'm hungry.'

As far as this from success was Shuckleford Dawe when he plucked Editor Westbrook's sleeve in Madison Square. That was the first time the editor had seen Dawe in several months.

'Why, Hank, is this you?' said Westbrook somewhat reluctantly, for the force of this pleasant second to watch upon the editor's changed appearance.

'Sit down for a minute,' said Dawe, tugging at his sleeve. 'This is my office. I can't come to yours, looking as I do. Oh, sit down — you won't be disgraced. Those half-plucked birds on the other benches will take you for a swell porch-climber. They won't know you are only an editor.'

'Sandra, Hawk!' said Editor Westbrook, sinking ruminously

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upon the virulent green bench. He always yielded gracefully when he did yield.

Dawe snapped at the cigar as a kingfisher darts at a sunfish, or a girl picks at a chocolate cream.

'I have just –' began the editor.

'Oh, I know, don't finish,' said Dawe. 'Give me a match. I've just two minutes to spare. How did you manage to get past my office-boy and invade my sanctum? There he goes now, throwing his club at a dog that couldn't read the "Keep off the Grass" signs.'

'How goes the writing?' asked the editor.

'Look at me,' said Dawe, 'for your answer. Now don't put on that embarrassed, friendly-but-honest look and tell me why I don't get a job as a wine agent or a cab-driver. I'm in the fight to a finish. I know I can write good fiction and I'll force you fellows to admit it yet. I'll insist you change the spelling of "repeat" to "c-h-a-r-g-e-d" before I'm done with you.'

Editor Westbrook gazed through his nose-glasses with a sweetly sorrowful, conscious, sympathetic, sceptical expression – the copyrighted expression of the editor beleaguered by the unavailable contributor.

'Have you read the last story I sent you – "The Alarum of the Soul"?' asked Dawe.

'Carefully. I bestowed over that story, Shack, really I did. It had some good points. I was writing you a letter to send with it when it came back on you. I regret –'

'Never mind the regrets,' said Dawe grimly. 'There's neither salve nor ointment in 'em for my nerves. What I want to know is why. Come, now, out with the good points first.'

'The story,' said Westbrook deliberately, after a suppressed sigh, 'is written around an almost original plot. Characterisation – the best you have done. Construction – almost as good, except for a few weak joints which might be strengthened by a few changes and touches. It was a good story, except –'

'I can write English, can't I?' interrupted Dawe.

'I have always said you,' said the editor, 'that you had a style.'

'Then the trouble is the –'

'Same old thing,' said Editor Westbrook. 'You work up to your climax like an artist. And then you send yourself into a photographer. I don't know what form of obstinate autohosse possesses you, Shack, but that is what you do with everything that you write. No, I will retract the unpleasantness with the photographer. Now

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and then photography, to spite of its impossible perspective, manages to record a fleeting glimpse of truth. But you spoil every denouement by those fine, fresh, obliterating strokes of your brush that I have so often complained of. If you would rise to the literary pinnacle of your dramatic scenes, and paint them in the high colours that are required, the postman would have fewer bulky, self-addressed envelopes at your door.'

'Oh, fiddles and footlights!' cried Dora derisively. 'You've got that old scratch dream kick at your heart, yet. When the man with the black moustache kidnaps golden-haired Bessie you are bound to have the mother kneel and raise her hands to the spotlight and say: "May high heaven witness that I will rest neither night nor day till the heartless villain that has stolen our child feels the weight of a mother's vengeance!" '

Editor Westbrook conceded a smile of impervious complacency.

'I think,' said he, 'that in real life the woman would express herself in those words or to very similar ones.'

'Not in a six hundred nights' run anywhere but on the stage,' said Dora hotly. 'I'll tell you what she'd say in real life. She'd say, "What Bessie has gone by a streetcar now! Good Lord! It's one trouble after another! Get my other hat, I must hurry around to the police-station. Why wasn't somebody looking after her, I'd like to know? For God's sake, get out of my way or I'll never get ready. Not that hat – the brown one with the velvet bows. Bessie must have been crazy she's usually shy of strangers. Is that too much powder? Lordy! How I'm upset!"

'That's the way she'd talk,' continued Dora. 'People in real life don't fly into heroics and blank verse at emotional crises. They simply can't do it. If they talk at all on such occasions they draw from the most vocabulary that they use every day, and muddle up their words and ideas a little more, that's all.'

'Shucks,' said Editor Westbrook impatiently, 'did you ever pick up the mangled and lifeless form of a child from under the fender of a street-car, and carry it in your arms and lay it down before the distracted mother? Did you ever do that and listen to the words of grief and despair as they flowed spontaneously from her lips?'

'I never did,' said Dora. 'Did you?'

'Well, no,' said Editor Westbrook, with a slight frown. 'But I can well imagine what she would say.'

'So can I,' said Dora.

And now the fitting time had come for Editor Westbrook to play the crank and silence his opinionated contributor. It was not for us

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unarrived fictionist to discuss words to be uttered by the heroes and heroines of the *Atlantean Magazine*, contrary to the theories of the editor thereof.

'My dear Slack,' said he, 'if I know anything of life I know that every sudden, deep and tragic emotion in the human heart calls forth an apposite, concordant, conformable, and proportionate expression of feeling! How much of this inevitable accord between expression and feeling should be attributed to nature, and how much to the influence of art, it would be difficult to say. The sublimely terrible roar of the lioness that has been deprived of her cubs is dramatically as far above the customary whine and growl as the tingly and transcendent utterances of Love are above that kind of his senile vaporings. But it is also true that all men and women have what may be called a subconscious dramatic sense that is awakened by a sufficiently deep and powerful emotion – a sense unconsciously acquired from literature and the stage that prompts them to express those emotions in language befitting their importance and histrionic value.'

'And in the name of seven mental nubile-blankets of fugitivism, where did the stage and literature get the start?' asked Dove.

'From life,' answered the editor triumphantly.

The story-writer rose from the bench and gesticulated eloquently but dumbly. He was beggared for words with which to formulate eloquently his dissent.

On a bench near by a thirsty loafer opened his red eyes and perceived that his natural support was also to a down-trodden brother.

'Touch like me, Jack,' he called hoarsely to Dove. 'Wot's he comin' a noise like a pussy wants for entrance, gentlemen, doin' across to the Square to cut red tape?'

Editor Westbrook looked at his watch with an affected show of leisure.

'Tell me,' said Dove, with suppliant entreaty, 'what especial feature in "The Abscess of the Soul" caused you to discard it?'

'When Gabriel Mooney,' said Westbrook, 'goes to his telephone and is told that his favorite has been shot by a burglar, he says – I do not recall the exact words but –'

'I do,' said Dove. 'He says "Damn Connolly, she always runs too old!" (And then to his friends) "Say, Tommy, does a thirty-two bullet make a big hole? It's kind of hard luck, ain't it? Could you get me a drink from the sideboard, Tommy? No; straight, nothing on the side." '

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'And again,' continued the editor, without pausing for expostulation, 'when Berenice opens the letter from her husband informing her that he has fled with the manicure girl, her words are – let me see –'

'She says,' interposed the author: '"Well, what do you think of that?"'

'Absurdly inappropriate words,' said Westbrook, 'promoting an anti-climax – plunging the story into hopeless bathos. Worse yet, they mirror life falsely. No human being ever uttered banal colloquialisms when confronted by sudden tragedy.'

'Wrong,' said Dawe, closing his eyebrows into doggedly. 'I say no man or woman ever spoke high-falutin talk when they go up against a real climax. They talk naturally, and a little worse.'

The editor rose from the bench with his air of intelligence and subtle information.

'Say, Westbrook,' said Dawe, pinning him by the lapel, 'would you have accepted "The Alarums of the Gods" if you had believed that the actions and words of the characters were true to life in the parts of the story that we discussed?'

'It is very likely that I would, if I believed that way,' said the editor. 'But I have explained to you that I do not.'

'If I could prove to you that I am right?'

'Too many, Slavin, but I'm afraid I haven't time to argue any further just now.'

'I don't want to argue,' said Dawe. 'I want to demonstrate to you from life itself that my view is the correct one.'

'How could you do that?' asked Westbrook, in a surprised tone.

'Listen,' said the writer seriously. 'I have thought of a way. It is important to me that my theory of non-to-life fiction be recognized as correct by the magazines. I've fought for it for three years, and I'm down to my last dollar, with two months' rent due.'

'I have applied the opposite of your theory,' said the editor, 'in selecting the fiction for the *Minerva Magazine*. The circulation has gone up from ninety thousand to –'

'Four hundred thousand,' said Dawe. 'Wherever it should have been boosted to a million.'

'You said something on me just now about denouncing your pet theory.'

'I still. If you'll give me about half an hour of your time I'll prove to you that I am right. I'll prove it by London.'

'Your wife!' exclaimed Westbrook. 'How?'

'Well, not exactly by her, but by her habit,' said Dawe. 'Now, you

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know how devoted and loving Louise has always been. She thinks I'm the only genuine proposition on the market that bears the old dentist's signature. She's been faithful and more faithful than ever, since I've been cast for the neglected genius part.'

'Indeed, she is a charming and admirable life companion,' agreed the editor. 'I remember when inseparable friends she and Mrs. Westbrook once were. We are both lucky dogs, Dave, to have such wives. You must bring Mrs. Dove up some evening soon, and we'll have one of those informal chafing-dish suppers that we used to enjoy so much.'

'Done,' said Dove. 'When I get another shirt. And now I'll tell you my scheme. When I was about to leave home after breakfast – if you can call an all-day meal breakfast – Louise told me she was going to visit her aunt in Eighty-ninth Street. She said she would return home at three o'clock. She is always on time to a minute. It is now –'

Dove glanced toward the editor's watch pocket.

'Twenty-seven minutes to three,' said Westbrook, scanning his timepiece.

'We have just enough time,' said Dove. 'We will go to my flat at once. I will write a note, explaining it to her and leave it on the table where she will see it as she enters the door. You and I will be in the dining-room concealed by the portieres. In that note I'll say that I have fled from her for ever with an affinity who understands the needs of my artistic soul as she never did. When she reads it we will observe her actions and hear her words. Then we will know which theory is the correct one – yours or mine.'

'Oh, sweet!' exclaimed the editor, shaking his head. 'That would be inexcusably cruel. I could not consent to have Mrs. Dove's feelings played upon in such a manner.'

'Brace up,' said the writer. 'I guess I think as much of her as you do. It's for her benefit as well as mine. I've got to get a motive for my stories in some way. It won't hurt Louise. She's healthy and sound. Her heart goes as strong as a ninety-eight-cent watch. It'll last for only a minute, and then I'll step out and explain to her. You really owe it to me to give me the chance, Westbrook.'

Editor Westbrook at length yielded, though but half willingly. And in the half of him that consented lurked the vivisectionist that is in all of us.

Let him who has not used the scalpel cast the first stone in his place. Pity 'tis that there are not enough rabbits and guinea-pigs to go around.

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The two superintendents of Apt. 19 left the Square and headed eastward and then to the south until they arrived in the Gramercy neighborhood. Within its high, iron railings the little park had put on its annual coat of vernal green, and was admiring itself in its fountain mirror. Outside the railings the hollow square of crumbling houses, shells of a bygone gentry, leaned as if in ghostly gossip over the forgotten doings of the vanished quality. *Ci-devant gloria mundi.*

A block or two south of the Park, Drew entered the editor again eastward, then, after covering a short distance, into a lofty but narrow flathouse bordered with a floridly over-decorated facade. To the fifth story they rolled, and Drew, panting, pushed his latch-key into the door of one of the front flats.

When the door opened Editor Westbrook saw, with feelings of pity, how wearily and outgrayly the rooms were furnished.

'Get a chair, if you can find one,' said Drew, 'while I hunt up pen and ink. Hello, what's this? Here's a card from Louise. She must have left it there when she went out this morning.'

He picked up an envelope that lay on the centre-table and took it open. He began to read the letter that he drew out of it, and once having begun it stood he to read it through to the end. These are the words that Editor Westbrook heard:

DEAR SHACKLEFORD, –

'By the time you get this I will be about a hundred miles away and still a-going. I've got a place in the chorus of the Occidental Opera Co., and we start on the road to-day at twelve o'clock. I didn't want to starve to death, and so I decided to retain my own living. I'm not coming back. Mrs. Westbrook is going with me. She said she was tired of living with a combination phonograph, iceberg and dictionary, and she's now packing back, either. We've been practising the songs and dances the two months on the quiet. I hope you will be successful, and get along all right. Good-bye.

'LOUISE.'

Drew dropped the letter, covered his face with his trembling hands, and cried out in a deep, vibrating voice

'*My God, only look! How glad we ought to thank! Show us it's false, from Thy Heaven's fairest gifts, faith and love, hasten the lasting hymeneal of brothers and friends!*'

Editor Westbrook's glasses fell to the floor. The fingers of one hand fumbled with a button on his coat as he blurted between his pale lips

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'Say, Shad, ain't that a leaf of a oak? Wouldn't that knock you off your perch, Shad? Ain't it leaf, sure, Shad — ain't it?'

III

Post One at Romey's

ONLY ON THE LOWER East Side of New York do the Houses of Capulet and Montague survive. There they do not fight by the book of aristocrats. If you lose him your drunk or no upholder of your opposing house you have work on not for your card. On Broadway you may drag your man along a dozen blocks by his nose, and he will only have for the watch; but in the Ghetto of the East Side Tybalts and Mercutios you must observe the niceties of deportment; no the wink of an eyelash and no inch of elbow-room at the bar when its patrons include four of your house and his.

So, when Eddie McManus, known to the Capulets as Cork McManus, drifted into Dutch Mike's for a suds of beer, and came upon a bunch of Montagues making merry with the suds, he began to observe the strictest parliamentary rules. Courtesy forbade his leaving the saloon with his thirst unslaked; caution warned him to a place at the bar where the mirror supplied the equivalent of the enemy's movements that his indifferent gaze seemed to disdain; experience adequated to him that the finger of trouble would be busy moving the clattering stains at Dutch Mike's that night. Close by his side drew Erich Clancy, his Mercutio, companion of his perambulations. There they stood, four of the Mulberry Hill Gang and two of the Dry Dock Gang minding their P's and Q's so solicitously that Dutch Mike kept one eye on his customers and the other on an open space beneath his bar to which it was his custom to wink safety whenever the ominous politeness of the rival associations congealed into the shapes of bullets and cold steel.

But we have not to do with the wars of the Mulberry Hills and the Dry Docks. We meet at Romey's, where, on the most blighted *dead* branch of the tree of life, a Irish pale orchid shall bloom.

Overstrained etiquette at last gave way. It is not known who first overstepped the bounds of punctilio; but the consequences were immediate. Buck Maloney, of the Mulberry Hills, with a Derby-like anthem, got [illegible] which got wrong wound from his

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