BELL LILIAN

CAROLINA LEE

Lilian Bell

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Bell L.

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
CAPTAIN WINCHESTER LEE

Having been born in Paris, Carolina tried to make the best of it, but being a very ardent little American girl, she always felt that her foreign birth was something which must be lived down, so when people asked her where she was born, her reply was likely to be:

"Well, I was born in Paris, but I am named for an American State!"

Then if, in a bantering manner, her interlocutor said:

"Then, are you a Southerner, Carolina?" the child always replied:

"My father says we are Americans first and Southerners second!"

Colonel Yancey, himself from Savannah, upon hearing Carolina make this reply commented upon it with unusual breadth of mind for a Southern man, with:

"I wish more of my people felt as you do, little missy. Most of my kinfolk call themselves Southerners first and Americans second and are prouder of their State than of their country."

"I don't see how they can be," said the child with a puzzled frown between her great blue eyes. "It would be just as if I liked one hand better than my whole body!"

Whereat the colonel slapped his leg and roared in huge enjoyment, and went to Henry's to drink Carolina's health and to tell the Americans assembled there that he knew a little American girl that would be heard from some day.

All this took place in Paris, when General Ravenel Lee, Carolina's grandfather, was ambassador to France, and when her father, Captain Winchester Lee, was his first secretary.

Many brilliant personages surrounded the child and influenced her more or less, according to the fancy she took to them, for she was a magnetic personality herself, and accepted or rejected an influence according to some unknown inner guide.

Her mother was a woman of refinement and breeding, and to her the child owed much of her good taste and charmingly modest demeanour. But it was her father who captured her imagination.

One of her earliest recollections was of her father's voice and manner when she looked up from her novel and asked him why he did not spell his name Leigh as men in books spelled theirs.

She had not known her father very well, so she was totally unprepared for his reply. Although she had been but a little child, she could see his face and hear his voice as distinctly to-day as she did when he whirled around on the hearth-rug and looked down at her as she sat on a low stool with a book on her knees.

"Spell my name Leigh?" he had said, in a tone she never had heard him use before. "Child, you little know what blood flows in your veins, or you would thank God every night in your prayers that you inherit the name of Lee, spelled in its simplest way. Honest men, Carolina, pure women, heroes in every sense of the word; statesmen, warriors, brave, with the bravery which risks more than life itself, are your ancestors. They date back to the Crusaders, and down the long line are men of title in the old world, distinguished in ways you are too young to understand. Books, did you say? Your name appears in many a book, child, which records heroic deeds. On both your dear Northern mother's side and mine, you come of blood which is your proudest heritage. Were you poor and forced to earn your daily bread, you would still be rich in that which the world can never take away-good blood and a proud name. And remember this, too, little daughter, although your life has been spent in foreign

lands, I loved America so well that I gave you the name of my native State, and my dearest wish is to restore Guildford and to pass the remainder of my life there."

It was a long, long speech for a little girl to remember, but it burned itself into her memory and kindled her pride to such a degree that she could hardly wait to tell some one of her newly discovered treasure.

Fortunately her first auditor happened to be her governess, and fortunately, also, her father chanced to overhear her as she translated his remarks into shrill French. He immediately stopped her, and these words also were seared into her memory through poignant mortification.

"I was wrong to tell you that, little daughter. I see that you are too young to have understood it properly. I can only undo the mischief by reminding you never to boast of your old family to any one. If we Southerners have one fault more than another, it is our tendency to mention the antiquity of our families-as if that counted where breeding were absent. You will observe that your dear mother never mentions hers, though she is a De Clifford. Let others boast if they will. Speak you of their family and name and be silent concerning your own. It is sufficient to feed your pride in secret by the inward knowledge of who you are. Will you try to remember that, little daughter, and forgive me for putting notions into that head of yours?"

She flew into his arms, and in that moment was born the passionate love and understanding which ever afterward existed between them.

"Oh, father!" she cried. "Don't be sorry you told me! I am not too young. I will show you that I am not. I will never speak of it again, and only in my heart I will always be proud that I am Carolina Lee!"

In after years, Carolina dated her life-her most poignant happiness and her dearest anguish-from the moment when her father thus opened his heart to her and she found how intensely they were akin. He became her idol, and she worshipped him not only with the abandonment of youth, but with all the passion of her tempestuous nature. She set herself to be worthy of his love and companionship with such ardour that she unwittingly broke the first commandment every day of her life.

Her father realized it, perhaps because of his answering passion, for he often sighed as he looked at her. He knew, as did no one else, what an inheritance was hers. He felt in his own bosom all the ardour and passion and furious love of home which as yet his child only suspected in herself. As long as he could remain at her side he felt that he could control it in both, but his heart sometimes stood still at the thought of what could happen were Carolina left defenceless. How could the child battle with her own nature? He shook his head with his fine smile as he realized how more than competent she was to fight her own battles with an alien.

They saw a good deal of Colonel Yancey in those days. He had some business with the French government which kept him abroad or going back and forth, and because of his companionable qualities, his sympathy as well as his brilliance, Captain Lee discussed his most intimate plans with him.

Carolina always made it a point to be present when her father and Colonel Yancey smoked their cigars in the library after dinner, for there it was that conversations took place concerning the South and Guildford, of so breathless an interest that not one word would she willingly have missed.

She had a confused feeling concerning Colonel Yancey which she was too young to analyze. He was only a little past forty, and had won his title of colonel in the Spanish war. She knew that her father, like most Southern men, trusted Colonel Yancey, simply because he also was a Southern man, when he would have been cautious with a Northerner. He spoke freely of the most intimate plans and dearest hopes of his life, with all the hearty, generous, open freedom of a great nature. Yet the watchful child saw something in Colonel Yancey's eyes, especially when her father spoke of Guildford, and his passionate hope of the part it would play in Carolina's future, which reminded the little girl of the look in the gray cat's eyes when she pretended to fall asleep by the hole of a mouse.

This feeling was too intangible for her to realize at first, but as years passed by, and Colonel Yancey's business brought him to Paris every season while General Lee was ambassador, and when her father was transferred to the Court of St. James, even oftener, she grew better able to understand her childish fears.

One day in London, when Carolina was about fifteen, Colonel Yancey made his appearance, dressed in deep mourning. Carolina did not hear the explanation made of his loss, but she resented vaguely yet consciously the glances he cast at her during dinner, and when her father whispered to her that the colonel had lost his wife and no questions were to be asked, her lip curled and her delicate nostrils dilated. She listened with more than her usual attention to the conversation which followed, and in after years it often came to her mind, and never without giving her some help.

Colonel Yancey opened the conversation with an inexplicable remark.

"When I hear you talk, captain, I always feel sorry for you."

Carolina lifted her head with instant hauteur, but her father only smiled and knocked the ashes from his cigar.

"Yes, an enthusiast of my type is always to be pitied," he said, gently.

"Not entirely that," responded Colonel Yancey. "In some strong characters, their enthusiasms only indicate their weak points, but it is not so in your case. It is rather that you have idealized your homesickness."

"I am homesick," said Captain Lee, "for what I never had."

"Exactly. Now you left Guildford when you were a mere lad, so it is largely your father's opinion of the South-your father's love for the old place that you have inherited and made your own, just as, in Miss Carolina's case, it is wholly vicarious. Have you any idea of the deterioration your own little town of Enterprise has suffered?"

"I suppose you are right," said Captain Lee.

"I hope, then," said Colonel Yancey, slowly, "that you will never go back South to live, especially to Enterprise."

Carolina's sensitive face flushed, but she was too well bred to interrupt.

"You mean," said Captain Lee, with a keen glance at his friend, "that I would find the South a disappointment?"

"It would break your heart! It hurts me, tough as I am and little as I care compared to an enthusiast like yourself. It would wound you, but" – and here he turned his magnetic glance on the young girl-"for an idealist like missy here, it would be death itself!"

Captain Lee reached out and laid his hand, on his daughter's head.

"I am afraid so! I am afraid so!" he said, with a sigh.

"You understand me?" questioned Colonel Yancey. It was a pleasure, which Colonel Yancey seldom experienced, to converse with so comprehending a man as Captain Lee. He was accustomed to dazzling people by his own brilliancy, but he seldom dived into the depths of his penetrating mind for the edification of men, simply for the reason that the ordinary run of men seldom care to be edified. But in diplomatic circles, Colonel Yancey was a welcome guest. He possessed an instinct so keen that it amounted almost to intuition in his understanding of men, a business ability amounting almost to genius, and a philosophic turn of mind which permitted him to apply his knowledge with almost unerring judgment. As a promoter, he had served governments with marked ability, and had the reputation of having amassed fortunes for those of his friends who had followed his lead and advice.

All this Carolina knew and yet-

However, she had the good taste to listen further, without attempting to draw a hasty conclusion.

"The South," said Colonel Yancey, with a sigh of regret, "is like a beautiful woman asleep-no, not asleep, but standing in the glorious sunlight of God, with her eyes deliberately shut. Shut to opportunity! Shut to advancement! Shut to progress! Her ears are closed also. Closed to advice!

Closed to warning! Closed to truth! Her mind is locked. Locked against common sense! Locked against the bitter lesson taught by a jolly good licking. And the key which thus locks her mind is a key which no one but God Almighty could turn, and that is prejudice! Blind, bitter, unreasoning, stupid prejudice! That is why her case is hopeless! That is why fifty or a hundred years from now the South will still be ignorant, stagnant, and indigent!"

"But why? Why?" cried Carolina, carried quite out of herself by her excitement.

"I beg your pardon!" she added, flushing.

Colonel Yancey whirled upon her, delighted to have moved her so that she spoke without thinking.

"Why? My dear young lady-why? Because she spends half her days and all her evenings fighting over the lost battles of the Lost Cause. Because she still glories in her mistakes of judgment! Because, almost to a man, the South to-day believes in the days of '61!"

"Do they still talk about it?" asked Captain Lee.

"Talk about it?" cried Colonel Yancey. "Talk about it? They talk of little else! They dream about it! They absorb it in the food they eat and the air they breathe! Every anniversary which gives them the ghost of an excuse they get up on platforms and spout glorious nonsense, which is so out-of-date-so prehistoric that it would be laughable, if it were not pitiable-as pitiable as a beautiful woman would be who paraded herself on Fifth Avenue in hoop-skirts and a cashmere shawl. You lose sight of even great beauty if it is clad in garments so old-fashioned that they are ludicrous."

As Colonel Yancey paused, Captain Lee said, with a quiet smile:

"And yet, Wayne, haven't I heard you breathe fire and brimstone against the 'damned Yankees,' and when they come South to invest their capital, don't you feel that they are legitimate prey?"

Colonel Yancey rose to his feet and strode around the room for a few moments before replying.

"Well, Savannah has had her fill of them, I think. Perhaps I do consider the most of them damned Yankees, but believe me, captain, in the first place, we Southerners fully believe that they deserve that title, and in the second place, we don't want them! No, nor their money either! Let them stay where they are wanted!"

"Ah-h!" breathed Winchester Lee. "Who now has been talking beautiful nonsense which he didn't in the least subscribe to?"

"There! There!" said Colonel Yancey. "It is a temptation to me to follow the dictates of my brain, but my heart, Winchester, is as unreconstructed as ever! After all, I am no better than the rest of them!"

"But why do they-do you all feel that way?" asked Captain Lee. "I assure you from my soul that I do not."

"I know you don't. But you have had strong meat to feed your brain upon during all these years. The rest of us have had nothing to feed our intelligence upon except the daily papers-and you know what they are. Our intellects are ingrowing, and have been for years.

"It is difficult for you to believe this, captain, and almost impossible for missy. But let me explain a bit further. For nearly forty years the South has been poor, with a poverty you cannot understand, nor even imagine. There has been no money to buy books-scarcely enough to buy food and clothes. The libraries are wholly inadequate. Consequently current fiction-that ephemeral mass of part-rubbish, part-trash, which many of us despise, but which, nevertheless, mirrors, with more or less fidelity, modern times, its business, politics, fashions, and trend of thought-is wholly unknown to the great mass of Southern people. The few who can afford it keep up, in a desultory sort of way, with the names of modern novelists and a book or two of each. But compared to the omnivorous reading of the Northern public, the South reads nothing. Therefore, in most private libraries to-day, you find the novels which were current before the war.

"Now take forty years out of a people's mind, and what do you find? You find a mental energy which must be utilized in some manner. Therefore, after a cursory knowledge of whatever of the

classics their grandfathers had collected, and which the fortunes of war spared, you find a community, like the Indians, forced to confine themselves to narratives handed down from mouth to mouth. It creates an appalling lack in their mental pabulum."

"Are they conscious of this?" asked Captain Lee. He had been following Colonel Yancey with the closeness of a man accustomed to learn of all who spoke. Carolina had hardly breathed.

"In a way-yes! In a manner-no! The comparative few who are able to travel see it when they return, but years of parental training have bred a blind loyalty to the mistakes of the South which paralyzes all outside knowledge. Even those who see, dare not express it. They know they would simply brand themselves as traitors."

Carolina opened her lips to speak, then closed them again. She had been trained as a child to have her opinions asked for before she ventured them. Her father, who always saw her with his inner eye, whether he was looking at her or not, said:

"You were going to say something, little daughter?"

"I was only going to ask Colonel Yancey if they would not welcome suggestions from one of themselves?"

"Welcome suggestions, missy? They would welcome them with a shotgun! Take myself, for instance. I have travelled. I am supposed to have learned something. I and my family have been Georgians ever since Georgia was a State. Yet when I notice things which my fellow citizens have become accustomed to, and suggest remedying them, what do I get? Abuse from the press! Abuse from the pulpit! Abuse from friends and enemies alike!"

"What did you say, colonel?" asked Captain Lee, smiling.

"Why, I noticed the shabbiness of my little city-and a well-to-do little city she is. Yet half the residences in town need paint. Southern people let their property run down so, not from poverty, but from shiftlessness. *You* know, captain! It is the Spanish word '*manana*' with them. The slats of a front blind break off. They stay off! Paint peels off the brickwork. It hangs there. A window-pane cracks. They paste paper over it. A board rots in the front porch. They leave it, or if they replace it, they don't paint it, and the new board hits you in the eye every time you look at it. They decide to put on an electric door-bell. In taking the old one off they leave the hole and never think of the wildness of painting the door over! They just leave the hall-mark of untidiness, of shiftlessness, over everything they own. And if you tell them of it? Well!"

"I see," said Captain Lee. "I have often wondered why Northerners always spoke of the South as such a shabby place. They must have meant what you have just described-a lack of attention to detail."

"You have noticed it yourself?" asked Colonel Yancey, eagerly.

"You must remember that I have not been south of Washington for thirty years."

"Ah, yes, I remember. You had the luck to be in the Civil War."

"I was in it only the last two years before the surrender. I enlisted when I was fourteen, was a captain at sixteen, and was wounded in my last engagement."

"And you've never been back since?"

"Never!"

Colonel Yancey leaned back and sighed.

"Never go, then!" he said. "Take my advice and never go. Remember your beautiful unspoiled South as you see her in your dreams!"

"The South is like a petted woman who openly declares that she would rather be lied to agreeably than be told the truth to, objectionably," said Captain Lee, with a regretful smile. Then he added, with a mischievous glance at Carolina, "Do the ladies still-er-gossip, Colonel Yancey?"

The colonel simply flung up his hands.

"Gossip? My God!"

It was Carolina who rebuked him. Her voice was grave, but her eyes flashed fire.

"Do Southern ladies gossip more than Parisian or London ladies?"

"Fairly hit, colonel!" said Captain Lee. "To answer that truthfully, you must admit that they do not, for nothing can equal the malice of Paris and London drawing-rooms."

"Quite right, captain. No, missy," he answered, "it is only because we expect so much more of Southern ladies that their gossip sounds more malicious by way of contrast."

Carolina smiled, well pleased by the brilliant tact with which he always extricated himself from a dilemma.

When Colonel Yancey had gone, Captain Lee put one arm around Carolina's shoulder, and with the other hand tilted the girl's flowerlike face up to his, with a remark which, if he had made it to his son, would have changed the whole current of the girl's life. He said:

"Ah, little daughter, the colonel is like all the rest of the Southerners. He can see the truth and can spout gloriously about her, but in a money transaction between himself and a Northern man, he would forget it all, and would consider it no more than honest to 'skin the damned Yankee,' to quote his own language."

And with that the subject was dropped.

The Lee household at that time consisted of Captain and Mrs. Lee, the two children, Sherman and Carolina, and the widow of a cousin of Captain Lee, Rhett Winchester, whom they called Cousin Lois.

Mrs. Winchester had abundant means of her own, which were all in the hands of the Lee family agents, and she was distinguished by her idolatry of Carolina. No temptation of travel, no wooing of elderly fortune hunters, had power to move her. All the love which in her early life had been given to her husband, relations, and friends, she now poured out on the child of her husband's cousin. She had been denied children of her own, which, perhaps, was just as well, as she would have ruined them with indulgence. Mrs. Winchester was a born aunt or grandmother. She took up the spoiling just where a mother's firmness ceased.

She cared very little for Sherman, who was three years older than Carolina, and who resembled his Northern mother as closely as Carolina modelled herself upon her father, except that Sherman was weak, whereas Mrs. Lee, as a De Clifford of England, inherited great strength of character as well as a calm judgment and a governable quality, which made her an admirable helpmeet for the fiery, if controlled, nature of her Southern husband.

Never was there a happiness so complete as Carolina's seemed to be. She grew from a beautiful child into a still more beautiful young girl. She absorbed her education without effort, learning languages from much travel and from hearing them constantly spoken, and breathing in the truest culture from her daily surroundings. How could an intelligent girl be ignorant of art and science and literature and diplomacy when she heard them discussed by some of the greatest minds of the day as commonly as most children hear continual conversations about the shortcomings of the servants? She did not realize that she was unusually equipped because it had been absorbed as unconsciously as the air she breathed, but other American girls who came into contact with her felt and resented it or admired it, according to their calibre.

In religion Carolina was outwardly orthodox and conventional, but many were the discussions she and her father held on the subject, in strict privacy, and many were the questions she put to him which he could not answer. He often ended these interrogations by gathering her up in his arms and saying: "My little girl will need a new religion, made especially for her, if she continues to trouble her head about things which no man knoweth!"

"But why don't they know, dearest? And why does the Bible contradict itself so? And how can God be a 'father' if he sends pain and sickness and death? Is He any worse than a real father would be? And why does He not answer prayers when He promises to? And when did the healing Jesus taught His disciples disappear? Did He only let them possess the power for a few years? Why are we commanded to be 'perfect' when God knows we can't be? And how can you believe in a God who punishes you and sends all manner of evil on you while calling Himself a God of Love?"

"Carolina! Carolina! You make my head swim with your heresies! I don't know, child! I don't know the answer to a single one of your questions. Such things do not trouble me. I believe in God, and that satisfies me."

"No, it doesn't, daddy!" cried the girl, astutely, "but you try to make yourself believe that it does."

"Then try to make yourself believe it, dear. It has done me very well for nearly forty years."

And as usual, such footless discussion ended in nothingness and a burst of human love which effectually put out of mind all gropings after Divine Love!

CHAPTER II
THE FIRST GRIEF

Then, with no illness to prepare her for so awful a blow, with nothing but a stopping of the heart-beats, Carolina's father fell into his last, long sleep, and before she could fairly realize her loss, her mother followed him.

Within six weeks, the girl found herself orphaned and mistress of the great Lee fortune, but utterly alone in the world, for her grandfather had died the year previous and Sherman had just married and gone back to America.

That Carolina felt her mother's loss no one could doubt, but the change in the young girl wrought by her father's death was something awful to behold. She had not dreamed that he could die. He was so young, so strong, so noble, so upright, such an honour to his country and to his race! Why should perfection cease to exist and the ignorant, wicked, and common live on? Carolina resisted the thought with tigerish fierceness, and openly blasphemed the God who created her.

"God my father?" she stormed at Cousin Lois, who listened with blanched face and trembling fear of further vengeance on the part of outraged Deity. "Why, would my own precious father send me a moment of such suffering as I have passed through ever since they took him away from me? He would have given his life to save me from one heart-pang, and you ask me to believe that God is a father, when He sends such awful anguish into this world?"

"He sends it for your good, Carolina, dear," pleaded Cousin Lois.

"Oh, He does, does He? He thinks it will do me good to suffer? *Daddy* thought so, didn't he? Daddy *liked* to make me unhappy, didn't he? He didn't realize how blissful heavenly love could be, so he only loved me in a poor, blind, earthly fashion, which made every day a joy and every hour we spent together a song! Poor daddy! To be so ignorant of the real way to love his children!"

"Oh, Carolina!" moaned Mrs. Winchester.

"God hates me, Cousin Lois," said the girl, dropping her impassioned manner and speaking with bitter calmness.

"I have been recognizing it for some time. I have felt that He was jealous of my happiness. You know it says: 'For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.' He admits it Himself. So He took vengeance on me through His power and killed my parents just to show me that He could! But if He thinks that I am going to kneel down and thank Him for murder, and love Him for ruining my life-"

A steel blue light seemed to blaze from the girl's eyes as she thus raised her tiny hand and shook it at her Creator.

Cousin Lois burst into tears. Carolina viewed her without sympathy.

"I am so little," she said, suddenly. "It is a brave thing for God to pit His great strength against mine, isn't it? Listen to me, Cousin Lois, I am done with religion from now on. I will never say another prayer as long as I live. The worst has happened to me which could happen. Nothing more counts."

It was while she was in this terrible state of mind that Mrs. Winchester took charge of her.

Sherman and his wife came over for the funeral of their father, and before they could so arrange their affairs as to be able to leave for home, they were called upon to bury, instead of try to console, their mother.

Neither Carolina nor Mrs. Winchester liked Adelaide, Sherman's wife. She was selfish and ignorant, but, with true loyalty to their own, they never expressed themselves on the subject, even to each other. After the period of mourning was over, they accepted her invitation to visit her, and spent a month in New Work. Then, with no explanation whatever, Mrs. Winchester and Carolina went abroad and travelled-travelled now furiously, now in a desultory way; now stopping for one month or six; now hurrying away from a spot as if plague-stricken-all at Carolina's whim.

It was a strange life for an ardent young American to lead, but Noel St. Quentin and Kate Howard, who knew Carolina best, shook their heads, and fancied that the two travellers found in Mrs. Sherman Lee their incentive to remain away from America so long and so persistently.

Mrs. Winchester and Carolina were an oddly assorted pair, but their very dissimilarity made them congenial.

Mrs. Winchester was a woman who merited the attention she always received.

At first sight she did not invariably attract, being stout, asthmatic, vague of manner, and of middle age. She had her figure well in hand, however, large though she was. Her waist-line, she was fond of saying, had remained the same for twenty years, though the rest of her had outgrown all recollection of the trim young girl she doubtless had been. But it was her complexion of which she was most proud. It was still a blending of cream and roses, and her blush was famous.

"Carolina, child," she used to say, "don't let me be ridiculous, just because I am large. Promise me that you will never leave crumbs on my breast, even if they fall there and I can't see them. If you only knew how I suffered from not knowing where all of me is. Why, with my figure, it is just like the women we used to see in Russia with little tables on each hip and a tray around their necks. Don't laugh, child. It's dreadful, my dear."

"Well, but Cousin Lois, it wouldn't be so bad if you wouldn't pinch your waist in so. Just let that out and you will find yourself falling into place, so to speak."

"What!" cried Mrs. Winchester. "Lose the only-the only thing I have left to be proud of, except my complexion? Carolina, you are crazy. I'd rather never draw another comfortable breath than to add one inch to my waist-line. No, Carolina. Don't advise me. Just watch for the crumbs. For I will not be guilty of the inelegance of tucking a napkin under my chin if I ruin a dress at each meal."

Thus it will be seen that Mrs. Winchester was quite determined in spite of the gentlest manner of putting her ultimatum into words.

She carefully cultivated her asthma, as, without affording her too much discomfort, it was always an excuse to travel.

"Asthma is the most respectable disease I know of," she often said to Carolina. "Gout is more aristocratic, but so uncomfortable. Asthma is refined and thoroughly convenient, besides always forming a safe topic of conversation, especially with strangers."

"That makes it almost indispensable for persistent travellers like us, doesn't it?" said Carolina.

"Well, you may get tired of hearing about it, but with me it is always a test of a person's manners. When a stranger says to me 'How do you do, Mrs. Winchester?' I don't consider him polite if he makes that merely a form of salutation. I want him to stand still and listen while I answer his question and tell him just how I feel!"

She also had a slight cast in her eye, which added to this gentleness and likewise led the casual observer to suspect her of vagueness of purpose, but her intimates made no such mistake. The mere fact that one of her light gray eyes was not quite in line with the other rather added to her attractions, for if her features and manner had carried out the suggestions of her figure, she would have been a formidable addition to society instead of the charming one she really proved.

She habitually wore light mourning for the two excellent reasons she herself gave, although General Winchester had been dead these twelve years.

"In the first place," she always said, when Carolina tried to coax her to leave off her veil at least in warm weather, "mourning is so dignified, especially in the chaperoning of a young and charming girl. In the second place, age shows first of all in a woman's neck, try as she may to conceal it. In the third place, a large woman ought always to wear black if she knows what she is about, and as to my bonnet always being a trifle crooked, as you say it is, well, Carolina, little as I like to say it, I really think that is your fault. It would be so easy for you to keep your eye on it and give me a hint. I only ask these two things of you."

"I'll try, Cousin Lois," Carolina always hastened to say, "though really a crooked bonnet on you does not look as bad as it would on some women. If you can understand me, it really seems to become you-it looks so natural and so comfortable."

"Now, Carolina, that is only your dear way of trying to set me *à mon aise*! As if a crooked bonnet ever could look nice!"

Yet she cast a glance into the mirror as she spoke, and seeing that her bonnet was even then a point off the compass she forebore to change it. Such graceful yielding to flattery was in itself a charm. But the thing about Mrs. Winchester, which proved a never-failing source of amusement to the laughter-loving, was her amusing habit of miscalling words. She habitually interpolated into her sentences words beginning with the same letter as the term she had intended, as if her brain had been switched off before completing its thought and her tongue did the best it could, left without a guide.

"Carolina," she would say, "come and look up Zurich on the map for me; I can't see without my gloves."

In her hours of greatest depression this trait never failed to amuse Carolina, and when, on one occasion, Cousin Lois took the tissue-paper from around a new bonnet, folded the paper carefully and put it in the hat-box and threw the bonnet in the waste-basket, Carolina laughed herself into hysterics.

Carolina was genuinely fond of Cousin Lois, but it must be confessed that one great secret of her attractiveness for the girl was because much of Cousin Lois's early childhood had been spent at Guildford, when she had been a ward of General Lee's, and thus had met his nephew, Rhett Winchester, whom she afterward married.

Thus, while not related to their immediate family, Cousin Lois was inextricably mixed up with their history and knew all the traditions which Carolina so prized.

Although Mrs. Winchester deplored Carolina's persistence in so dwelling upon the past and brooding over her loss, nothing ever really interested this girl except to talk about her father or the golden days of Guildford.

She cared nothing for her wealth. She shifted the burden of investing it upon Sherman's shoulders, and refused even to read his reports upon its earnings.

Admirers failed to interest her for the reason that she was unable to believe that they sought her for herself alone. Her fortune had the effect upon her of keeping her modest concerning her own great beauty.

But grief and a rooted discontent with everything life has to offer will mar the rarest beauty and undermine the most robust health, and the change struck Colonel Yancey with such force when he met them in Rome that he became almost explosive to Mrs. Winchester.

"The girl is losing her beauty, madam!" he said. "Look at the healthful glow of your complexion and then look at her pale face! Her eyes used to dance! Her lips were all smiles! Her cheeks were like two roses! And what do I find now? A sneer on that perfect mouth! Coldness, cruelty, if you like, in those eyes! Why, madam, it is a sin for so beautiful a creature as Miss Carolina to destroy herself in this way. She might as well shoot herself and be done with it! What does she want?"

"She wants what she can never have, Colonel Yancey," said Mrs. Winchester, sadly. "Carolina wants her father to come back."

"We all want that, madam!" said the colonel, gravely. "I no less than the others. His loss never grows less."

When Cousin Lois repeated this conversation to Carolina, she laughed at what he said about her beauty, but flushed with gratitude at his praise of her father, and was so kind to the colonel for two days afterward that he proposed to her again and so fell from grace, as he persisted in doing with somewhat annoying regularity.

They travelled for another year, and Carolina grew no better. She seldom complained, but her lack of interest in everything, added to her restless love of change, preyed upon Mrs. Winchester.

They were in Bombay when this restlessness got beyond control.

"I am not happy!" she cried, passionately, "and knowing I ought to be is what makes me even more miserable!"

"What you need is a good dose of America," said Cousin Lois, decidedly. "You are homesick!"

"I believe I am!" she answered, with brightening eyes. "I am homesick, though, for something in America which I've never found there."

"You are homesick for South Carolina," said Cousin Lois, with timid daring.

At these words a look came into Carolina's eyes which half-frightened Mrs. Winchester, for Carolina had suddenly recalled her father's words.

"My dearest wish is to restore Guildford, and pass the remainder of my days in the old place."

Instantly her life-work spread itself out before her. Here was the solution to all her restlessness, the answer to all her questionings of Fate, the link which could bind her closer to her beloved father! If he could have spoken, she knew that he would have urged her to give her life, if need be, to the restoration of Guildford.

Her interest in existence returned with a gush. A new light gleamed in her eyes. A new smile wreathed her too scornful lips. Her face was irradiated by the first look of love which Cousin Lois had seen upon it since her father's death.

They began to pack in an hour.

CHAPTER III
THE DANGER OF WISHING

The Lees' dinner-table was round, and about it were gathered six people-Sherman and his wife, Carolina, Mrs. Winchester, Noel St. Quentin, and Kate Howard, Carolina's most intimate girl friend. It was the first time they had all met since the return of the travellers from India. Later they were going to hear Melba in "Faust," but there was no hurry. It was only nine o'clock.

"Carolina, if you could have the dearest wish of your heart, what would it be?" asked Noel St. Quentin.

"If I should tell, it might not come true," Carolina answered. "And I want it so much!"

"I never saw such a girl as Carolina in all my life," complained her sister-in-law. "Her mind is always made up. She keeps her ideas as orderly as an old maid's bureau-drawer. No odds and ends anywhere. You may ask her any sort of a question, and she has her answer ready. She knows just what box in her brain it is in. Just fancy having thought out what your wish would be, and having it at your tongue's end to tell at a dinner-party!"

Mrs. Lee leaned back and fanned herself with a fatigued air.

"You almost indicate that Carolina thinks," said St. Quentin.

"Oh, don't accuse me of such a crime in public!" cried the girl, laughing.

"Carolina seems to me the one person on earth whose every wish had been gratified before it could be uttered," said St. Quentin, who was in some occult way related to the Lees. "I would be interested to know just what her dream in life could be."

Carolina smiled at him gently.

"She-she's had Europe, Asia, and Africa a-all her life," cried Kate Howard, who always stuttered a little in the excitement of the moment. To Carolina this slight stutter was one of Kate's greatest fascinations. You found yourself expecting and rather looking forward to it. At least it spelled enthusiasm. "She's had masters in every known accomplishment. She-she can do all sorts of things. She can speak any language except Chinese, I do believe. She's pretty. She's rich in her own right-no waiting for dead men's shoes or trying to get along on an allowance-a-and what under the sun can she want-e-except a husband?"

"Perhaps, if she's good, she may even get that," said St. Quentin.

Again Carolina smiled. But her smile faded when her eyes met those of her sister-in-law, who viewed the girl with a thinly veiled dislike. The girl's eyes flashed. Then she spoke.

"I have wanted one thing so much that I am sure sometime I must achieve it," she said, slowly. "I want to be so poor that I shall be forced to earn my own living with no help from anybody!"

She was not looking at her brother as she spoke, or she would have seen him start so violently that he upset his champagne-glass, and that his face had turned white.

"What did I tell you?" murmured St. Quentin.

"Carol likes to be sensational," said Mrs. Lee. "No one would dislike to be poor more than she, and no one would find herself more utterly helpless and dependent, if such a calamity were to overtake her."

"I wouldn't call it a calamity," said Carolina, quietly.

"Yes, you would!" cried Kate.

"I am inclined to agree with Carol," said St. Quentin, deliberately, "and to disagree, if I may, with Cousin Adelaide. In my opinion, Carol could go out to-morrow with only enough money to pay her first week's board, and support herself."

"I hope she may never be obliged to try," said her brother, harshly. "Addie, if you intend to hear any of the music, we'd better be starting. It is a quarter to ten now."

Addie raised her shoulders in a slight shrug.

"When Carolina holds the centre of the stage, it is impossible to carry out one's own ideas of promptness," she said.

"Nasty old cat," whispered Kate to St. Quentin, as he stooped for her glove and handkerchief. "Thanks so much. I don't know how I managed it, but I held on to my fan."

Later in the Lees' box with Melba singing Marguerite, St. Quentin turned to Carolina again. She had swept the house with her glass as soon as the party were seated, and had noted but one old acquaintance whose face seemed to invite study. The girl's name was Rosemary Goddard, and among the discontented faces which thronged the boxes in the horseshoe, hers alone was peaceful. Nay, more. It was radiant. Carolina remembered her face-a cold, aristocratic mouth, disdainful eyes, haughty brows, and a nose which seemed to spurn friend and foe alike. What a transfiguration! How beautiful she had grown!

She was so occupied with the enigma Rosemary presented that St. Quentin was obliged to repeat his question.

"How would you go to work, Carol?"

The girl turned with a sigh. Sometimes it seemed to her that she never would become accustomed to talking at the opera. She almost envied a tall young man, who stood in the first balcony. His evening clothes were of a hopeless cut. His manner was that of a stranger in New York, but in his face, one of the finest she had ever seen, was such a passion for music that she watched him, even while she answered St. Quentin with a grace which hid her unwillingness to talk.

"For what I really would love to do," she said over her white shoulder, with her eyes on the strange young man, "you started me off a little too poor. I might have to borrow a hundred or two from you to begin with! I want to pioneer! I don't mean that I want to go into a wilderness and be a squatter. I want to reclaim some abandoned farm-make over some ugly house-make arid acres yield me money in my purse-money not given to me, left to me, nor found by me, but money that I, myself-Carolina Lee-have earned! Does that amuse you?"

"It interests me," said St. Quentin, quietly.

To be taken seriously was more than the girl expected. She was only telling him a half-truth, because she did not consider him privileged to hear the whole. She continued to test him.

"I never see an ugly house that I do not long to go at it, hammer and tongs, and make it pretty. Not expensive, you understand, – I've lived in Paris too long not to know how to get effects cheaply, – but attractive. Oh, Noel! The ugliness of rural America, when Nature has done so much!"

"You ought to have been a man," said St. Quentin.

"I would have been more of a success," said the girl, quickly. "I believe I could have started poor and become well-to-do."

"How you do emphasize beginning poor and how you never mention becoming rich! Don't millions appeal to you?"

"Not at all! nor do these common men, even though they did begin poor, who have acquired millions by speculation. They but make themselves and their sycophants ridiculous. No, I mean honest commerce-buying and selling real commodities at a fair profit-establishing new industries-developing situations-taking advantage of Nature's beginnings. Such thoughts as these are the only things in life which really thrill me."

"I understand you," said St. Quentin, "but I fear your wish will never come true. Years ago I held similar desires. All my plans fell through. I had too much money. And so have you. You'll have to go on being a millionairess, whether you will or no, and you'll marry another millionaire and eat and drink more than is good for you and lose your complexion and your waist line and end your life a dowager in black velvet and diamonds."

A messenger boy entered and handed a telegram to Sherman Lee, just as Melba rose from her straw pallet and led the glorious finale to "Faust."

Her brother leaned over and touched her arm.

"You may get your infernal wish sooner than you expected," he said, with a wry smile twisting his pale face.

Carolina turned to St. Quentin with indifference.

"Possibly I may yet keep my waist line," she said, as he laid her cloak on her shoulders.

On the way out she came face to face with the tall young man who had stood through the whole opera, in the balcony.

He gave back all her interest in him in the one look he cast upon her loveliness. A sudden light of incredulous surprise dilated her eyes and a swift blush stained her cheeks. She recognized, in some intangible, unknown way, that he possessed kindred traits with her father and with herself. He had the same look in his eyes-or rather back of them, as if his eyes were only a hint of what lay hid in his soul. He was of their temperament. He dreamed the same dreams. He was akin to her.

"I could have told him the truth," she whispered. "He would have understood that I meant Guildford all the time, and that the reason I want to be poor is so that I can show that I am willing to work, to carry out my father's dearest wish. Just to spend money on it is too sordid and too easy. I want it to be made hard for me, just to show them what I will do! He would have understood!"

But with one's best friends it is as well to be on the defensive, and not let them know our true aims, lest they take advantage of their friendship and treat our heart's dearest secrets with mockery.

CHAPTER IV
THE TURN OF THE WHEEL

A week later St. Quentin dropped in at Mrs. Lee's for a cup of tea. He would have preferred to have Carol brew it, for she had not only learned how in Russia, but had brought with her a brand of tea which, to St. Quentin's mind, was not to be ignored for mere conversation, and once drunk, was not to be forgotten. When Mrs. Lee was out, Carol dispensed this tea, but when Addie was in her own house, she was mistress of it in more ways than tea-drinking.

St. Quentin found several people there for whom he had little use, so he sat silent until they had gone and no one except Kate, Adelaide, and Carol were left.

Carol was wearing a pale blue velvet gown trimmed with sable and a picture hat with a long white ostrich plume which swept her shoulder. Both St. Quentin and Kate plied her with admiring comments until Addie could bear it no longer, and excused herself with unnatural abruptness.

"There are more ways than one of killing a cat," murmured St. Quentin, stooping for Kate's immense ermine muff, which she had dropped for the third time, "than by choking it to death with cream."

Kate laughed delightedly.

Carolina turned from the doorway.

"Don't go, either of you," she said. "I am only going for some tea. Noel, ring for some more hot water, will you?"

"I wonder how it would be," said Kate, dreamily, "to be born without any relations at all! Could one manage to be happy, do you think?"

"Carol couldn't. She is very fond of Sherman."

"I wouldn't be fond of any brother who had lost all his own fortune and mine and was millions in debt besides. One couldn't love a fool, you know."

"I know. But do you remember what Carol said about wanting to be poor?"

"Of course I remember!" said Kate, "but I d-didn't believe her then and I d-don't believe her now. Carol was s-simply lying-that's the answer to that!"

"Lying about what?" asked Carolina, reëntering, with a square box in her hand. The box was of old silver, heavily carved and set with turquoise.

"Lying about being g-glad Sherman has lost all your money. Of course you were lying, w-weren't you? No-nobody but a raving maniac could be glad to be p-poor."

"Then I am a raving maniac," said Carolina, pouring the delicately brewed tea carefully into the tall, slender glasses. "Lemon or rum, Kate?"

"W-which will I like best? I-I've had four cups already to-day."

"Then you'd better have rum. It makes you sleep when you have had too much tea."

"Lemon for me, please," said St. Quentin.

"I remembered that," said Carolina, smiling. "And three lumps."

"P-put in some m-more rum, Carol. I can't taste it."

"What a Philistine!" cried St. Quentin. "To insult such tea with rum."

"It's quite g-good," murmured Kate, with her glass to her lips. "When y-you have enough of it."

"So you really think I can't mean it when I tell you I am glad that Sherman has lost all our money?" said Carolina. "Of course I am sorry on Addie's account-she cares a great deal and is quite miserable over her future prospects. But she has ten thousand a year from her own estate, so she can still educate the children and get along in some degree of comfort. But as for me" – she leaned forward in her chair with the whimsical idea of testing their calibre kindling in her eyes-"if you will believe me and will not scoff, I will tell you what my plan is."

"Promise," said Kate, briefly.

"If Sherman can manage it, I want," said Carolina, slowly, but with an odd gleam in her eye, "to buy an abandoned farm in New England and raise chickens."

In spite of her promise, Kate looked at the beautiful face and figure of the girl in blue velvet and sables who said this, and burst into a shriek of laughter, which St. Quentin, after a moment's decorous struggle, joined.

"I know," said Carolina, leaning back, still with that curious look in her eyes. "I know it sounds absurd. I know you are thinking of me out feeding chickens in these clothes. But oh, if you only knew how tired I am of-of everything that my life has held hitherto. If you only knew how unhappy I am! If you only knew how I want a farm with pigs and chickens and cows and horses. If you only knew how I long to plant things and see them grow. But above everything else in the world, if you only knew how I want a dark blue print dress! I saw a country girl in one once when I was a child in England, and I've never been really happy since."

She joined in the burst of laughter which followed.

"But do things grow on farms in New England?" asked Kate. "And isn't that just why so many are abandoned?"

"I suppose so," answered Carolina, "but those are the only ones which are cheap, and chickens don't need a rich soil. All you've got to do is to-"

"I'd go South," interrupted Kate, "or to California, where the c-climate would help some. I've read in the papers how farmers suffer when their crops fail. I-I'd hate to think of you suffering if your turnips didn't sprout properly, Carol!"

"Laugh if you want to, but I'll get my farm in some way."

"How about the old Lee estate in South Carolina?" asked St. Quentin.

For the first time in his life St. Quentin was actually conscious that Carolina was mocking him. The thought was startling. Why should she dissemble? Carolina's face fell, and a trace of bitterness crept into her voice. This seemed so natural that he forgot his curious suspicion.

"I suppose that went, too. I haven't questioned Sherman, but he told me everything was gone. That, although the house was burned during the war, and only the land itself remained, is the only thing I regret about our loss. I did love Guildford."

"But you never saw it!" exclaimed Kate.

Carolina's eye flashed with enthusiasm.

"I know that! Nevertheless, I love it as I love no spot on earth to-day."

There was a little pause, full of awkwardness for the two who had accidentally brought Carolina's loss home to her. To Carolina it brought home a sense of real guilt. If she had believed that Guildford was lost she would have screamed aloud and gone mad before their very eyes. She was almost afraid to juggle with the truth even to protect her sacred enthusiasm from their profane eyes.

It was St. Quentin who spoke first.

"I can understand wanting a farm or country estate in England," he began. "I myself enjoy the thought of thatched roofs and cattle standing knee-deep in waving, grassy meadows; of tired farm horses; of mugs of ale and thick slices of bread and the sweat of honest toil-"

"On another person's brow!" interrupted Carolina. "You want your farm finished. I want to make mine. I want to see it grow. I almost believe when it was complete, that I would want to leave it."

"You'd want to leave it long before that," cried Kate.

"Oh, can't you understand my idea?" cried Carolina, with sudden passion. "I want to get back to Nature and sit in the lap of my mother earth!"

St. Quentin nodded his head.

"I do understand," he said, "and *apropos* of your idea, I have a piece of news for you."

Carolina looked at him distrustfully.

"You will take that look back when you hear," he said, with a trifle of reproach in his tone. "I know you expect no help from any of us-discouragements, rather-but I have only to-day heard of business which calls me to Maine, and as I expect to be obliged to wait there a fortnight, I will devote that time to looking up a farm for your purpose."

"You will?" cried Carolina, in a faint voice. Her deception was already tripping her up.

Kate looked at him with undisguised amazement, mingled with a little reluctant contempt.

St. Quentin's eyes dilated when he saw the flash of personal interest in Carolina's demeanour. Her eyes and voice and manner all underwent a subtle but delightful change. For the first time, although he was distantly related to her family and had known her since childhood, she seemed to approach him of her own accord. Hitherto her fine sense of pride had kept her individuality inviolate. She was not a girl to permit familiarity even from an intimate. She seemed to hold aloof even from Kate's verbal impertinences, but this was largely due to the fact that Kate's own nature was such that she never attempted to break down the barriers in deeds. There was always a dignified reserve between them-a respect for each other's privacy, which was the foundation for their friendship. One of the greatest proofs of this was that neither had ever thought of suggesting that they spend the night together, with the result that they had never exchanged indiscreet secrets.

Of the relations in which St. Quentin stood to the two; neither had given any particular thought until that moment. Kate surprised the look in St. Quentin's eyes and the response in Carolina's attitude. Carolina had never appeared to her friend "so nearly human," as she expressed it to herself, as at that moment. It gave her two distinct shocks of surprise. One, that Carolina was, for the first time in her life, really interested in something, and therefore she was honest in wishing to be poor and left free to pursue her idea. The other, and a far more disquieting one, was the fact that St. Quentin's glance at Carolina had brought a distinct pang to Kate's heart.

She regarded both emotions with dismay. They threatened an upheaval in her life.

She dropped her muff, and, as St. Quentin did not even see it, she stooped hastily for it herself, murmuring:

"That let's me down hard!" But with characteristic energy she wasted no time in repining nor even in analyzing her emotions. She was not yet sure whether she was experiencing wounded vanity or the first pangs of a love-affair. She was extraordinarily healthy-minded and instinctively loyal.

It was this latter feeling which prompted her to leave herself out of the matter, for the present, at least, and to be sure wherein lay her friend's happiness before she proceeded further.

As she and St. Quentin left the house together, they met Sherman Lee just coming up the steps, looking pale and anxious.

"Is Carol at home?" he inquired, eagerly, and before they could reply, added, "and alone?"

"Yes, she is," answered Kate, "and if you hurry, you will be in time to get a cup of tea."

He thanked them and ran hastily up the steps.

"How I admire a woman's tact," said St. Quentin, giving her a grateful glance.

"How do you mean?" asked Kate to gain time, though the quick colour flew to her face.

"My man's first idea would have been to ask Sherman what the matter was-he was plainly distraught-"

"And to offer to help him!" said Kate.

"Perhaps. But your woman's quickness leaped ahead of my blundering intentions with the instinctive knowledge that any cognizance of his manner, no matter how friendly, would be unwelcome. Therefore you sent him away with the comforting assurance in his mind that we had noticed nothing amiss. Thus, in an instant, you saved the feelings and kept intact the *amour propre* of two men."

"That's what women are for!" said Kate, bluntly.

CHAPTER V
BROTHER AND SISTER

Carolina had left the drawing-room before Sherman sought her there, but on receipt of a message from him that he wished to see her immediately in the library, she once more descended the stairs to wait for him.

An anxious look swept over her face as she passed the door of his room, for she heard Addie's voice raised in shrill accents, and to hear it thus was growing to be an every-day affair. She knew her brother's sensitive, yet proud and gentle nature, and she knew how difficult his wife's loud reproaches were to endure.

Suddenly the door opened and his rapid footsteps were heard running down the stairs and hurrying to the library. She rose to meet him with her anxiety to make up to him for his wife's conduct written in her face. He saw the look and misunderstood it.

"Don't look at me like that, Carol!" he cried, raising his hands as if to ward off a blow. "If you, too, feel the loss of the money as Addie does and you reproach me, I shall go mad."

"Sherman!" cried his sister. "Don't insult me by the suggestion of my reproaching you! Haven't you lost all your money as well as mine? And would you have done either if you could have helped it?"

Her brother turned uneasily.

"You don't know how it came about?" he asked.

Carolina shook her head.

"Ah," he breathed, "then I must wait until you have heard before I dare trust such generous statements." He hesitated, then burst out. "But at least you shall know the truth. We are absolute beggars, you and I, and Cousin Lois, and wholly dependent upon Adelaide's bounty until I can pull myself together."

Carolina recoiled as if he had struck her. A sudden sickening fear clutched her heart. Sherman said "everything." Did he include Guildford? She could not clear her eyes and voice sufficiently to mention that beloved name. Sherman went on, not heeding her silence.

"I know what you mean, but it's the truth. She acknowledges it as well as I. Her money is intact, and she will keep it so. She cannot spare any of it to start me again. I must trust in strangers."

"Why strangers?" asked Carolina. "Have you no friends?"

"Friends!" sneered her brother. "What do friends do for a man when he is down? Give him good advice, offer to lend him a few hundreds for living expenses, but trust him to make a second success after one failure? Never! Not even St. Quentin, one of the best fellows who ever lived, would do that!"

"I think you do Noel an injustice," said Carolina, quietly. "He has offered to help me!"

Sherman looked quizzically at his sister and laughed a little.

"Has he, indeed?" he said, with a lift of his eyebrows.

Carolina noticed his manner with a slight inward start of surprise. What could he be thinking of? She had known Noel all her life, and not once had the idea Sherman's tone suggested entered her mind. Noel St. Quentin? She dismissed the thought with impatience. Sherman did not know what he was talking about.

"I have not yet told you," he broke out suddenly, "how the money was lost. Have you no idea? You ought to know. You warned me against the man, but I refused to believe you."

Carolina leaned forward and her eyes blazed.

"Not Colonel Yancey?" she half-whispered.

Her brother nodded.

"Tell me," she said, with white lips.

"There is very little to tell. The whole thing was an elaborate lie-a swindle from one end to the other. I don't believe there ever was any oil on the lands he sold us. He swore there was, and bought outright the man I sent down to Texas to investigate. I could put him in jail, I suppose, but what good would that do me? Yancey says he has used all the money in speculation and lost it, so even to prosecute him would not get a penny back. Now he has disappeared-Algiers, I believe they say. It makes no difference where. He was so plausible, and his enthusiasm was so contagious, we kept handing over the money like born fools. I wonder that he did not laugh in our faces. But he deceived well. He planned from the ground up, and was ready with letters and witnesses of all sorts whenever we began to show signs of weakening. I can see it all now with fatal clearness. But then he had me thoroughly blinded by his own artful proceedings. He has wrecked two others besides myself. The other three men in the syndicate suspected him and sold out to Brainard and me. We continued to believe in him and he has ruined us."

Carolina listened in silence, dreading, yet waiting, for the next blow.

"He could be the most charming man in the world when he wanted to," Sherman continued. "I will admit that I felt his spell, but all the time there was something in his face which I distrusted. First I thought it was his shifty eyes, and then, as if he had read my thoughts, he would meet my glance with perfect candour and frankness and the craft would go to his lips, and when I looked again for it, I would be disarmed by the sincerity of his smile, so I was left to fall back on my Doctor Fell dislike of him, which always attacked me most strongly when I was not in his magnetic presence."

Sherman looked at his sister expectantly. He noticed for the first time how pale she was. Her own recollections of Colonel Yancey, his ceaseless pursuit of her, his intimacy with her father in Paris, her fear that he knew of the Lees' great wish to restore Guildford were all gathering themselves together into a horrible certainty. She was obliged to listen with an effort to her brother's next words.

"I've always thought that he tried to make love to you, Carol. Did he?"

"I believe there was something of the sort suggested," answered his sister, carelessly. She did not choose to admit that Colonel Yancey had proposed to her regularly ever since his wife died, and that he had pursued her with letters as far as India itself.

A silence fell between them. It struck Sherman Lee as most extraordinary that his sister should evince no more curiosity or even interest in the loss of her fortune than she had hitherto expressed. He felt that possibly she was only holding herself in check.

"You said a moment ago," she began so suddenly and in such a different tone that her brother nerved himself for the explosion he felt sure was at hand, "that we were both-you and I-dependent upon Addie. Just what did you mean?"

"Simply that neither of us has a dollar of ready money."

"That is all very well for you," pursued Carolina, in a low voice, "but for me to be Adelaide's guest for even a day would be intolerable. I shall sell my jewels and accept Kate Howard's invitation to spend a few weeks with her until I find something to do. I made Cousin Lois go to Boston to see her niece. I feel that I ought to tell you how glad-how more than glad I am that the money is gone. I never wanted it! I never liked it! But Cousin Lois! What will she do? Oh, Sherman! If only I had been a man, too!"

"If only you had been a man instead of me," he cried, "you never would have lost it. I always made money when I took your advice. I always lost it when I went against you."

Carolina's face glowed. She felt equal now to putting the question.

"What has become of Guildford?" she asked, in a low tone.

"Guildford?" he repeated, to gain time.

At the mere mention of that beloved name Carolina's face was aflame. Her great blue eyes flashed and she seemed illumined from within. Her brother stared at her with astonishment and a growing uneasiness.

"Yes, Guildford!" she whispered. "Oh, Sherman! I have been so afraid to ask. Tell me, is that lost, too?"

The man's eyes fell before her accusing gaze.

"Not-not entirely," he stammered. "I-I raised money on it-I forget just how much-I will investigate-I had no idea you cared-it is deserted-the house burned, you know-"

He broke off, as he realized his sister's gathering anger.

"Stop!" she said. "I have not uttered one complaint because you lost our money, nor would I complain at the loss of Guildford. You could not know how I cared for the place, because no one knew it. I never even told Cousin Lois. But don't, if you love me, belittle the place or try to excuse your having mortgaged it because it had no value in your eyes! I know the house is gone, but the ground is there, and we Lees have owned it since we bought it from the Indians. That same ground that the Cherokees used to tread with moccasined feet has been in our family ever since they owned it, and the dream of my life has been to restore the house and to live there-to marry from Guildford and to give my children recollections that you and I were denied, and of which nothing can take the place. Oh, Sherman, doesn't it fairly break your heart to think that we are the only generation that Guildford skipped? Father remembered it and loved it beyond words to express."

"And you are like him," said her brother, gloomily. "I am like my mother. She never cared for Guildford, and refused to let father restore it. It was she who urged him into diplomacy-"

"Where he distinguished himself," cried Carolina, loyally.

"Yes, where he distinguished himself, as all the Lees have done except me!" he said, bitterly.

"It's your name!" cried Carolina, passionately. "What could you expect with those two names pulling you in opposite directions! Why did they ever name you, a Southern man, Sherman?"

"Father named you, and mother named me," answered her brother. "I have heard them say that it was all planned before either of us was born. Then, too, you must remember that-well, that I am not as enthusiastic over the traditions of the Lee family as you are. I think that my leanings are all toward the de Cliffords, if anything."

"It's only fair," said Carolina, with justice, "that you should be like mother and love her family best. Only-only I am glad my name is Carolina!"

Her brother bent down and kissed her flushed face.

"And I am glad, too, little sister, for you are a veritable Lee, and one to be proud of."

Carolina felt herself grow warm in every fibre of her being over the first compliment which had ever reached her heart.

Sherman was still holding her hand, and she pressed his fingers gratefully.

"I will look up the papers to-morrow, and let you know the moment I discover anything. I can easily guess what your plan is, but-without money?"

Carolina laughed strangely.

"Thank you, brother. And in the meantime I shall go to stay with Kate."

Again the slight lift to Sherman's eyebrows.

"You will doubtless be happier there," he said, quietly.

CHAPTER VI
THE STRANGER

But when Carolina was comfortably established in the suite of rooms which Kate had joyfully placed at her disposal, she found that she could neither fix her attention on the new decorations of which Kate was so inordinately proud, nor could she wrench her mind from the subject of Guildford.

She had been so stunned by the knowledge, not that the estate was mortgaged, but that it had been parted with so lightly, with little thought and less regret, that she had not been able, nor had she wished to express to Sherman her intense feeling in the matter. The more she thought, the more she believed that some turn of the wheel would bring Guildford back. If it were only mortgaged and not sold, she felt that her yearning was so strong she even dared to think of assuming the indebtedness and taking years, if need be, to free the place and restore the home of her fathers.

Her intimacy with her father had steeped her in the traditions of Guildford. The mere fact of their having lived abroad seemed to have accentuated in Captain Lee's mind his love for his native State, and no historian knew better the history of South Carolina than did this little expatriated American girl, Carolina Lee. By the hour these two would pace the long drawing-rooms and discuss this and that famous act or chivalric deed, Carolina's inflammable patriotism readily bursting into an ardent flame from a spark from her father's scintillant descriptions. She fluently translated everything into French for her governess, and to this day, Mademoiselle Beaupré thinks that every large city in the Union is situated in South Carolina, that the President lives in Charleston, and that Fort Sumter protects everything in America except the Pacific Coast.

Carolina knew and named over all the great names in the State's history. She could roll them out in her pretty little half-foreign English, – the Rutledges, the Pinckneys, the Gadsdens, the Heywards, the Allstons, the Hugers, the Legares, the Lowndes, the Guerards, the Moultries, the Manigaults, the Dessesseurs, the Rhetts, the Mazycks, the Barnwells, the Elliotts, the Harlestons, the Pringles, the Landgravesmiths, the Calhouns, the Ravenels, – she knew them all. The Lees were related to many of them. She knew the deeds of Marion's men as well as most men know of battles in which they have fought. She knew of the treaties with the Indians, those which were broken and those which were kept. She had been told of some of the great families which even boasted Indian blood, and were proud to admit that in their veins flowed the blood of men who once were chiefs of tribes of savage red men. She found this difficult to believe from a purely physical prejudice, but her father had assured her that it was true.

In vain she tried to interest herself in Kate's plans for her amusement. In vain she attempted to fix her attention on the white and silver decorations of her boudoir, all done in scenes from "Lohengrin." Instead she found herself dreaming of the ruins of an old home; of the chimneys, perhaps, being partially left; of a double avenue of live-oaks, which led from the gate to the door and circled the house on all sides; of fallow fields, grown up in rank shrubbery; of palmetto and magnolia trees, interspersed with neglected bushes of crêpe myrtle, opopinax, sweet olives, and azaleas; of the mocking-birds, the nonpareils, and bluebirds making the air tremulous with sound; of broken hedges of Cherokee roses twisting in and out of the embrace of the honeysuckle and yellow jessamine. Beyond, she could picture to herself how the pine-trees, left to themselves for forty years, had grown into great forests of impenetrable gloom, and she longed for their perfumed breath with a great and mighty longing. She felt, rather than knew, how the cedar hedges had grown out of all their symmetry, and how raggedly they rose against the sky-line. She knew where the ground fell away on one side into the marshes which hid the river-the river, salt as the ocean, and with the tide of the great Atlantic to give it dignity above its inland fellows. She knew of the deer, the bear even, which furnished hunters with an opportunity to test their nerve in the wildness beyond, and of the wild turkeys, quail, terrapin,

and oysters to be found so near that one might also say they grew on the place. In her imagination the rows upon rows of negro cabins were rebuilt and whitewashed anew. The smoke even curled lazily from the chimneys of the great house, as she dreamed it. Dogs lay upon the wide verandas; songs and laughter resounded from among the trimmed shrubbery, and once more the great estate of Guildford was owned and lived upon by the Lees.

Filled so full of these ideas that she could think of nothing else, she sprang to her feet and decided to see Sherman without losing another day. She would put ruthless questions to him and see if any power under Heaven could bring Guildford within her eager grasp. What a life work would lie before her, if it could be accomplished! Europe, with all its history and glamour, faded into a thin and hazy memory before the living, vital enthusiasm which filled her heart almost to the point of bursting.

It was, indeed, the intense longing of her ardent soul for a home. All her life had been spent in a country not her own, upon which her eager love could not expend itself. It was as if she had been called upon to love a stepmother, while her own mother, divorced, yet beloved, lived and yearned for her in a foreign land.

It was four o'clock on a crisp January day when Carolina found herself in the throng on Fifth Avenue. It was the first pleasant day after a week of wretched weather, and the whole world seemed to have welcomed it.

Carolina was all in gray, with a gray chinchilla muff. Her colour glowed, her eyes flashed, as she walked along with her chin tilted upward so that many who saw her carried in their minds for the rest of the day the recollection of the girl who had formed so attractive a picture.

Suddenly and directly in front of her, Carolina saw a young woman, arm in arm with a tall man, whose broad-brimmed, soft felt hat, added to a certain nameless quality in his clothes and type of face, proclaimed him to be a Southerner. They were laughing and chatting with the blitheness of two children, frankly staring at the panorama of Fifth Avenue on a bright day. If the whim seized them to stop and gaze into shop windows, they did it with the same disregard of appearances which induced them to link arms and not to notice the attention they attracted. No one could possibly mistake them for anything but what they were-bride and groom.

Having reached her brother's house, Carolina paused for a moment in an unpremeditated rush of interest in the young couple. Something in the man's appearance stirred some vague memory, but even as she searched in her mind for the clue, she saw an expression of abject terror spread over the young bride's face, and pulling her husband madly after her by the arm to which she still clung, she darted across the walk and into a waiting cab. Her husband, after a hasty glance in the direction she had indicated, plunged after her, and the wise cabby, scenting haste, if not danger, without waiting for orders, lashed his horse, the cab lurched forward and was quickly swallowed up in the line of moving vehicles.

This had necessarily created a small commotion in the avenue, and a tall man who had also been walking south behind Carolina and who would soon have met the young couple face to face, chanced to raise his head at the crack of the cabman's whip, and thus caught a glimpse of the bride's face out of the window of the cab.

Instantly, with an exclamation, he looked wildly for another cab. None was at hand, but Sherman Lee's dog-cart stood at the curb, and Carolina had paused on the lowest step of the house and was looking at him. There was desperate anxiety in his face.

"May I use your carriage, madam? I promise not to injure the horse!"

It was the strange young man who had stood in the balcony all during the opera of "Faust."

Carolina never knew why she did it, but something told her that this young man's cause was just. In spite of the pleading beauty of the young couple, she arrayed herself instinctively on their pursuer's side.

"Yes, yes!" she cried. "Follow them!"

He sprang in, and the groom loosed the horse's head and climbed nimbly to his place. A moment more and the dog-cart was lost to view.

Most of the good which is done in this world is the result of impulse, yet so false is our training, that the first thing we do after having been betrayed into a perfectly natural action is to regret it.

The moment Carolina came to herself and realized what she had done, a great uneasiness took possession of her. She had no excuse to offer even to herself. She felt that she had done an immeasurably foolish thing and that she deserved to take the consequences, no matter what they might be. If the stranger injured Sherman's favourite horse, that would be bad enough, but the worst result was the mortification her rash act had left in her own mind. It is hard for the most humble-minded to admit that one has been a fool, and to the proud it is well-nigh impossible.

But Carolina admitted it with secret viciousness, directed, let it be said, entirely against herself. In her innermost heart she realized that she had yielded, without even the decent struggle prompted by self-respect, to the compelling influence of a strong personality. This unknown man had wrested her consent from her by a power she never had felt before.

At first she decided that it was her duty to tell her brother at once what she had done. Then she realized that, in that case, they must both wait some little time before the dog-cart could possibly be expected to return, and Sherman would no doubt exhaust himself in an anxiety which, if the horse returned in safety, could be avoided. She therefore compromised on a bold expedient.

"Sherman," she said, when she found her brother, "I saw the dog-cart at the door; were you going out?"

"I was, but since I came in, I have decided differently. Ring, that's a good girl, and tell Powell to see that the horse is well exercised and put him up."

"I saw Marie in the hall. I'll just send her with the message to Powell," said Carolina. "There is no doubt in my mind," she murmured, as she went out, "that the horse will be well exercised."

She sent word by Marie that when Powell returned he was to be told to see to the condition of the horse himself by Miss Carol's express orders, and then to report to Miss Carol herself privately.

But these precautions were taken in vain, for not ten minutes had elapsed before Sherman was summoned to the drawing-room, there to meet the stranger, who introduced himself, told a most manly and straightforward story, and, having produced an excellent impression of sincerity on his host, left with profuse apologies.

Sherman returned to his sister with a quizzical smile on his face.

"Carol," he said, "what have you been doing?"

Carolina's reply was prompt and to the point.

"I own to being reckless, of trying to conceal my recklessness, under a mistaken sense that I was clever enough to cover my tracks. I vainly endeavoured to spare you an hour's anxiety, and I feel that I am a fool for my pains."

Her brother laughed.

"The man is unmistakably a gentleman. He is in deep trouble over a young woman, not his sister, who has run away, presumably with a man. He tried to trace them and failed."

"Failed?"

"Failed. If she is his wife, may God help her when he catches her, for there was danger in that man's eye. But his pride forbade him to give me more than the bare facts necessary to explain his extraordinary action in surprising you into lending him my horse."

"Was that the way he put it?" asked Carolina.

"It was."

"He is a gentleman!"

She waited a moment, hesitated, and then said:

"Did he say anything else, anything about-"

"About the woman in the case? Not a word about anything more than I have told you. He seemed to take it for granted, however, that you were my wife."

"And didn't you deny it?" demanded Carolina, with such spirit that she surprised herself. She felt her cheeks grow hot.

"He didn't give me time."

"And you let him go, still thinking it?"

"I didn't let him do anything. He mastered the situation, and carried it off with such ease that I almost felt grateful to him for borrowing the dogcart."

Carolina opened her lips to say something, then changed her mind.

"It is of no importance," she said lightly. But there was an odd sinking at her heart which belied her words. She had never believed in love at first sight, yet she had watched this stranger at a distance all one evening, and at their first meeting in the throng leaving the opera, she had not been mistaken in the look of-well, of welcome, she had felt. Their second meeting had been equally striking, and Carolina calmly said to herself that she would meet this man again, and the third time it would be even more strange. She was so sure of this that she would not allow her mind to be disturbed by the two blundering conclusions Sherman had forced-one that the man was in pursuit of a runaway wife or love and the other that she was the wife of the master of the horse. She was so sure of her own premises that she overlooked the possibility that the stranger might have put the supposition tentatively to Sherman and had been misled by her brother's lack of denial.

In fact, Carolina at this time was a very self-centred young woman. It was so of necessity. She had never been taught self-denial, nor permitted to be unselfish. Her father and mother, in yielding to every whim, had quite overlooked the fact that the pretty child's character needed discipline, so that Carolina was selfish without knowing it. Quite unconsciously she placed her own wishes before those of any other, and regarded the carrying of her point as the proper end to strive for. No one had ever taught her differently. Cousin Lois had pampered her even more than her parents had done, and when she became dissatisfied with life, offered, as a remedy, change of scene.

Now the girl possessed an inherently unselfish nature, and for this reason-that she never had been called upon to sacrifice her own will-she was not happy. Although she possessed much that young girls envied in wealth and the freedom to travel, the two things which would have made her happiest, a permanent home and some one-father or mother or lover-upon whom to lavish her heart's best love, were lacking. Not being of an analytical turn of mind, she had never realized her lack, until suddenly she had been given a glimpse of both, and then both had been snatched away.

Opposition always made the girl more spirited. Guildford lost was more to be desired than Guildford idle and only waiting for her to reclaim and restore it. This dominant stranger interested in another woman-Carolina lifted her chin. It was her way.

Her brother saw it and smiled. It was a pretty trick she had inherited from the Lees. It was a gage of battle. It betokened unusual interest. It meant that their blood was fired and their pride roused. He mistook the cause, that was all. He was so engrossed in his own thoughts and so pleased by his efforts to gain something which his sister actually desired, that he had forgotten the episode of the strange visitor. So that when he said:

"So that is the way you feel, is it?" Carolina started violently and blushed. She was diplomatic enough to make no reply, so that Sherman's next remark saved her from further embarrassment.

"Do you really care for Guildford so much?"

"How do you know I am thinking of Guildford?" asked Carolina, quickly. "I have not spoken of it."

"Ah," said her brother, lifting his hand, "I can read your thoughts. I notice that you only have that look on your face when you are thinking of something you love. But I wouldn't waste such a blush on a measure of cold earth, even if they are your ancestral acres."

"My ancestral acres!" repeated Carolina, softly. "How beautiful that sounds! Oh, Sherman, tell me if we can save them!"

Sherman hesitated a moment and knit his brow. Then he lifted his head and looked Carolina in the eyes.

"I will do what I can," he said. "You may be sure of that."

Carolina had all a strong woman's belief in the power of a man to do anything he chose. His words were not particularly reassuring, but his manner, as she afterwards thought it over, was vaguely comforting.

It was the more comforting, because, deep down in her heart, she intended to supplement his efforts, weak or strong, and win victory even from defeat.

Guildford?

She *would* have it!

CHAPTER VII
MORTAL MIND

Therefore, when the blow fell and Sherman had written her a letter, not daring to see her, telling her as gently as he could, but with an air of finality which there was no mistaking, that the mortgage on Guildford had been bought and foreclosed by Colonel Yancey, and therefore, in his opinion, it was lost to the Lees for ever, Carolina realized for the first time how tenacious had been her hold on the hope of possessing it. In an instant, with her woman's instinct, she saw what it had taken years for Sherman to discover. Colonel Yancey had, as Carolina found, learned that it was Captain Lee's and Carolina's dearest wish to restore Guildford. The two men had talked intimately. Both were Southern, although Colonel Yancey was a Georgian, but with the confidence in each other's integrity, which is typical of most Southern men, and which has led to the ruin of many an honest man, Captain Lee confided his hopes to Colonel Yancey, who profited by them to secure Guildford for himself, and thus gain a hold over Carolina.

It was so easy to do this, in the most ordinary business manner, with Sherman both unsuspicious of him and his sister's love for the place, that at times Colonel Yancey almost had the grace to be ashamed of himself.

Carolina saw the whole vile plot, and the shock and disappointment put her fairly beside herself. She was so sure that she had got at the root of the matter that she at once disbelieved that part of Sherman's story which said that Colonel Yancey was a fugitive from justice. If he had cheated this syndicate, he had done it in such a manner that it left no illegal entanglements, and she was sure that he was free to return to this country whenever he chose. If not, her whole theory fell to the ground, for she knew that Colonel Yancey would not dare to offer her a reputation which the law had power to smirch.

It never was Carolina's way to wax confidential, but one day Kate surprised her in a particularly desperate mood. Carolina was in her habit, waiting for her horse to be brought around, and when Kate entered, she was walking up and down the peaceful blue and silver boudoir like an outraged lioness.

"It's no use, Kate!" she cried, when her friend began to remonstrate. "I have come to the end of my rope. You don't know the truth because I have been afraid to tell you. You couldn't have understood if I had told you. Even if I should sit down now and spend a whole day trying to explain why I adored Guildford and why I am so upset over its loss, at the end of the time you would only shake your head and say, 'Poor Carolina,' without in the least understanding me. No one ever did understand about Guildford except dear Daddy, and since he died, I've been afraid to let even God know how much I wanted it, because I knew if He did, He would take it away from me! He takes everything away from me that I love! That is His way of showing His vaunted kindness. He is indeed a God of vengeance! He punishes His children as no earthly father would be mean enough to do. Oh, I won't hush! But the end has come, Kate, to even God's power to hurt me. I have nothing left for Him to take. Let Him be satisfied with His revenge. I wouldn't care if He took my life now, so He is practically powerless! He has reached His limit!"

"Oh, Carolina!" almost screamed Kate. "Do be careful how you blaspheme! Goodness knows I am not religious, but I am a member of the Church and I am not wicked!"

"You have never suffered, Kate, or you could bear, not only to hear, but to say worse things than I am saying. If you only knew how much worse my thoughts are!"

"But you will be punished for them, Carolina! I-I don't like to preach, but God always sends afflictions to those who defy Him!"

"I wouldn't care if He killed me!" cried Carolina, furiously. "I have nothing left to live for. I hope I shall never come back alive from this ride!"

When she had rushed from the room, leaving that terrible wish in Kate's memory, Kate shivered with apprehensions.

"Something awful will happen to Carolina!" she muttered. "I never knew it to fail!" But her eyes filled with tears. "What if I had to bear what she has!" she thought. "Loss of father, mother, home, and fortune! Poor girl! Poor girl!"

She had intended to go out, but some inner voice told her to wait. Carolina's dreadful mood and reckless words haunted her. She went restlessly from room to room, and anxiously listened for sounds of her return. And so keenly was she expecting a misfortune that when the telephone-bell rang sharply, it calmed her at once.

"It has happened!" she said to herself, as she flew to answer.

The message was that Carolina had been thrown from her horse and dragged. They were bringing her home.

"I knew it!" said Kate. "She was in too awful a mood to wear spurs with Astra. I ought to have made her take them off."

Carolina was still unconscious when they brought her in. Kate caught a glimpse of her still, white face as they carried her up-stairs. She waited with feverish impatience for the doctor's verdict, with her mind full of Carolina's awful words. "I knew it!" she kept whispering to herself through a rain of tears. "God always gets even with people who dare Him to do His worst!"

It seemed hours before Doctor Colfax finally came out, with his refined face full of pain.

"Is she dead?" whispered Kate, catching at his arm. He shook his head.

"Disfigured?" continued Kate, with growing anxiety.

"Worse!" said the doctor. "She has broken her hip badly. Even if she recovers, she will be lamed for life!"

Kate covered her mouth to repress a scream.

Beautiful Carolina lamed for life!

"Crutches?" whispered Kate.

"I am afraid so!" said the doctor, with a deep sigh. "I am going to have a consultation. We will do everything we can to preserve her health-and her beauty, poor child!"

Kate turned away in a passion of tears, well knowing that to Carolina's proud spirit dependence would be far worse than death.

Bad news travels on the wings of the wind, and before the day was over Carolina's accident was on everybody's tongue.

Her sister-in-law was indignant, in a sense outraged by Carolina's behaviour. She blamed her first of all for existing in her radiant youth and beauty and so far outshining her own modest charms. She blamed her secondly for permitting Sherman to lose her money and thus make it Addie's duty to offer her a home. She blamed her thirdly, and most bitterly of all, for injuring herself so hopelessly that she could never marry, thus placing herself upon Addie to support for life. Was ever a more unkind fate invented? Addie's temper, never of the best, burst all bounds as this situation became plain to her, and she expressed herself fluently to Sherman, who felt himself included in her misfortunes as part author of them.

It was an unhappy time for all concerned, for Carolina's bitter denunciations of her fate and her grief over her dependence could hardly be checked even in the presence of Kate and her family, whose hospitality and friendship, so generously offered, put the girl under at least civilized bonds of restraint. There were times, however, when she was alone, that she relapsed into such a savage state that she tore her hair and bit her own tender flesh.

The sight of such rebellion reduced even Kate's mutinous nature to peace and quiet by contrast, and Kate was developed into a gentle friend of Christian sentiments by Carolina's great need.

The conversations they held with each other were long and intimate. Kate tried to put faith in the series of doctors who succeeded each other like chapters in a book, but the sufferer's clear eyes

saw not only through Kate's kind intentions, but through the great surgeon's hopeless hopes, and from the first she knew the worst. Knew that her bright youth was for ever gone; that her usefulness was ended; that never again could she expect even to ornament a social function, crippled as she was and disfigured by ungainly crutches. Her one hope was to die. Thus she made no effort to recover, and her strength, instead of aiding her, gradually faded away until her accident, though not at first of a fatal nature, began to be looked on as her death-blow.

At this juncture, Addie, struck with remorse, came and offered Carolina a home, but Carolina shook her head.

"Thank you, Addie, but when I move from here it will be to rest for ever. I want to die here with Kate. She loves me!"

It was a bitter thrust, and Addie felt it to the verge of tears. Indeed, she was so moved by pity for the frail shadow that Carolina had become, that she forgave the girl for having been so beautiful and began to be fond of her, as one is fond of a crippled child, who had been obnoxious in health.

Trouble develops people.

Mrs. Winchester was detained in Boston by the dangerous illness of the niece she had gone to visit, and although greatly fretting at being kept away from Carolina, was fairly obliged to stay.

Carolina felt that she was welcome at the Howards, for not only Kate's mother but her father often came to sit with her and cheer her and to urge upon her how glad they were to be able to help her when she needed help.

Carolina was grateful, the more so because she felt that she had not long to live. She had been in bed several months, and while the surgeons said the broken bones had knit, yet it was agony for her to move. She almost fainted with pain when they were obliged to lift her from one position to another.

Kate spent hours in trying to interest her in the life around her. She felt frightened when she discovered the depth of Carolina's listlessness. Her weakness took a stubborn form.

"I am only one of the crowd now, Kate dear," she said one day after a long argument from her friend. "There is no use in wasting so much energy over me. Go and forget me and enjoy yourself. I used to be of the exclusive few who got their own ways always. Now I belong to the great mob of malcontents-the anarchists of the social world. I shall not want to blow up kings and presidents, but I would like to throw a bomb at every happy face I see."

Her voice trailed off to a weak whisper.

"Y-you wouldn't need many bombs, then," said Kate, "for I never s-see any really happy faces. Did you ever in all your life-either at balls abroad or the opera here, see a perfectly happy face?"

Carolina shook her head and closed her eyes wearily.

Suddenly she opened them again.

"Yes," she said, "I have seen one-the night of 'Faust.' It was Rosemary Goddard!"

Kate gave a little scream.

"Well, I'd rather follow you to the grave you seem so bent on f-falling into," she stammered, "than to get happiness from such a source. My dear, Rosemary Goddard is a C-Christian Scientist!"

Kate's tone indicated that Rosemary had contracted a loathsome disease.

Carolina fixed her eyes on Kate. She was not of a contrary disposition, yet the difference between Kate Howard's tone and Rosemary Goddard's face made her stop to think.

"I should like to talk to Rosemary," she said at last. To her surprise and consternation, Kate burst into tears.

"If you g-go and turn into one of those n-nasty things," she sobbed, "it will end everything. I'd rather you died!"

"Then never mind," said Carolina, wearily. "I don't want to vex anybody. Perhaps I shall die."

Kate jumped up. The momentary colour faded from Carolina's face and the strength from her voice. Kate recognized the change.

"I'll go and f-fetch her," she said, with her old-time change of front. "She may do you good."

When she came back with Rosemary, she saw what Carolina had seen in Rosemary's face-an illumination which no one could understand. It transfigured her.

Kate left the two girls together, and walked the floor in tempestuous anger all during Rosemary's stay in the house. Something in Carolina's eyes as they first met Rosemary's told Kate that the poison was already at work, and that Carolina was ripe for the hated new religion.

CHAPTER VIII
MAN'S EXTREMITY

Rosemary approached the bed wherein lay the wreck of the girl she had often, when in the grasp of mortal mind, envied. A great wave of sympathy, not pity, swept over her, as she noted the weary eyes and the lines of dissatisfaction and despair around Carolina's mouth. With an impulse of love, she knelt at the bedside and took Carolina's little thin hand in both of hers.

"Oh, my dear Carol," she said, "I am so glad to see you. I heard of your accident while I was in California. I only got back yesterday."

"Would you have come to see me if I had not sent for you?" asked Carolina, childishly.

"I was coming to-day. Mother suggested it, and I was only too happy to put off everything of less importance and come at once."

"Your mother!" said Carolina, involuntarily. Then, as she saw Rosemary's face flush, she hastened to cover her awkward exclamation. "I did not know your mother knew me well enough to-to care!"

"Mother is very much changed since you knew her," said Rosemary, gently. "She has been healed."

Carolina did not know the nature of Mrs. Goddard's infirmity, so she forbore to ask of what. She only knew, as all the smart world knew, that Mrs. Goddard did something dreadful, and did it to excess. It was whispered that it was a case of drugs, but there were those, less kind, who hinted at a more vulgar excess, either of which would explain the dreadful scenes Mrs. Goddard had occasioned in public. Her intimates asserted that a terrible malady was at the bottom of her habits, whatever they were. At any rate, a somewhat scandalous mystery hung over Mrs. Goddard's name, although she had been at the forefront of every mad scene of pleasure the fashionable world could invent to kill time.

"You are changed, too," said Carolina, wonderingly, more and more surprised to see Rosemary Goddard-of all girls! – kneeling at her bedside, holding her hand in a warm grasp, pressing it now and then to emphasize an affection she felt shy of expressing, and talking in a gentle, altogether unknown tone of voice. In Carolina's uncompromising vocabulary she had privately stigmatized Rosemary as a snob, and rather ridiculed her exaggeration of aristocracy. But the coldness, the tired expression, the aloofness, were all gone. The weary eyes shone. The bored eyebrows were lowered. The curved lips smiled. The withdrawn hands were reached out to help. The whole attitude was radiant of sympathy and love.

Rosemary could not forbear to smile at Carolina's unconscious scrutiny.

"What has done it?" asked Carolina, abruptly.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.