

BRAND WHITLOCK

THE TURN OF
THE BALANCE

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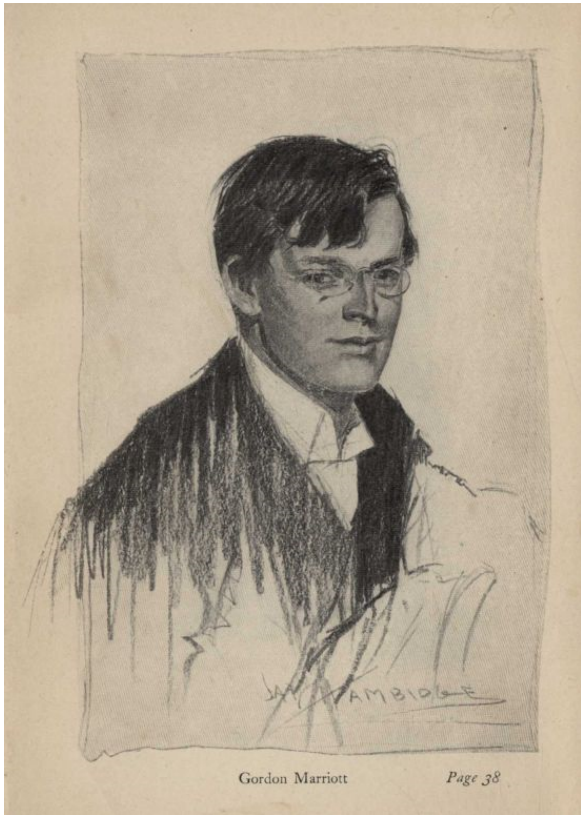
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Brand Whitlock

The Turn of the Balance



Gordon Marriott

TO THE MEMORY OF SAMUEL M. JONES

Died July 12, 1904

On the other hand, a boy was bound to defend them against anything that he thought slighting or insulting; and you did not have to verify the fact that anything had been said or done; you merely had to hear that it had. It once fell to my boy to avenge such a reported wrong from a boy who had not many friends in school, a timid creature whom the mere accusation frightened half out of his wits, and who wildly protested his innocence. He ran, and my boy followed with the other boys after him, till they overtook the culprit and brought him to bay against a high board fence; and there my boy struck him in his imploring face. He tried to feel like a righteous champion, but he felt like a brutal ruffian. He long had the sight of that terrified, weeping face, and with shame and sickness of heart he cowered before it. It was pretty nearly the last of his fighting; and though he came off victor, he felt that he would rather be beaten himself than do another such act of justice. In fact, it seems best to be very careful how we try to do justice in this world, and mostly to leave retribution of all kinds to God, who really knows about things; and content ourselves as much as possible with mercy, whose

mistakes are not so irreparable.

From "A BOY'S TOWN"

By WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

BOOK I

I

As Elizabeth Ward stood that morning before the wide hearth in the dining-room, she was glad that she still could find, in this first snow of the season, the simple wonder and delight of that childhood she had left not so very far behind. Her last glimpse of the world the night before had been of trees lashed by a cold rain, of arc-lamps with globes of fog, of wet asphalt pavements reflecting the lights of Claybourne Avenue. But now, everywhere, there was snow, heaped in exquisite drifts about the trees, and clinging in soft masses to the rough bark of their trunks. The iron fence about the great yard was half buried in it, the houses along the avenue seemed far away and strange in the white transfiguration, and the roofs lost their familiar outlines against the low gray sky that hung over them.

"Hurry, Gusta!" said Elizabeth. "This is splendid! I must go right out!"

The maid who was laying the breakfast smiled; "It was a regular blizzard, Miss Elizabeth."

"Was it?" Elizabeth lifted her skirt a little, and rested the toe of her slipper on the low brass fender. The wood was crackling cheerfully. "Has mama gone out?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Elizabeth, an hour ago."

"Of course," Elizabeth said, glancing at the little clock on the mantelpiece, ticking in its refined way. Its hands pointed to half-past ten. "I quite forgot the dinner." Her brow clouded. "What a bore!" she thought. Then she said aloud: "Didn't mama leave any word?"

"She said not to disturb you, Miss Elizabeth."

Gusta had served the breakfast, and now, surveying her work with an expression of pleasure, poured the coffee.

Beside Elizabeth's plate lay the mail and a morning newspaper. The newspaper had evidently been read at some earlier breakfast, and because it was rumpled Elizabeth pushed it aside. She read her letters while she ate her breakfast, and then, when she laid her napkin aside, she looked out of the windows again.

"I must go out for a long walk," she said, speaking as much to herself as to the maid, though not in the same eager tone she had found for her resolution a while before. "It must have snowed very hard. It wasn't snowing when I came home."

"It began at midnight, Miss Elizabeth," said Gusta, "and it snowed so hard I had an awful time getting here this morning. I could hardly find my way, it fell so thick and fast."

Elizabeth did not reply, and Gusta went on: "I stayed home last night—my brother just got back yesterday; I stayed to see him."

"Your brother?"

"Yes; Archie. He's been in the army. He got home yesterday

from the Phil'pines."

"How interesting!" said Elizabeth indifferently.

"Yes, he's been there three years; his time was out and he came home. Oh, you should see him, Miss Elizabeth. He looks so fine!"

"Does he look as fine as you, Gusta?"

Elizabeth smiled affectionately, and Gusta's fair German skin flushed to her yellow hair.

"Now, Miss Elizabeth," she said in an embarrassment that could not hide her pleasure, "Archie's really handsome—he put on his soldier clothes and let us see him. He's a fine soldier, Miss Elizabeth. He was the best shooter in his regiment; he has a medal. He said it was a sharp-shooter's medal."

"Oh, indeed!" said Elizabeth, her already slight interest flagging. "Then he must be a fine shot."

Though Elizabeth in a flash of imagination had the scene in Gusta's home the night before—the brother displaying himself in his uniform, his old German father and mother glowing with pride, the children gathered around in awe and wonder—she was really thinking of the snow, and speculating as to what new pleasure it would bring, and with this she rose from the table and went into the drawing-room. There she stood in the deep window a moment, and looked out. The Maceys' man, clearing the walk over the way, had paused in his labor to lean with a discouraged air on his wooden shovel. A man was trudging by, his coat collar turned up, his shoulders hunched disconsolately,

the snow clinging tenaciously to his feet as he plowed his way along. At the sight, Elizabeth shrugged her shoulders, gave a little sympathetic shiver, turned from her contemplation of the avenue that stretched away white and still, and went to the library. Here she got down a book and curled herself up on a divan near the fireplace. Far away she heard the tinkle of some solitary sleigh-bell.

When the maid came into the adjoining room a few moments later, Elizabeth said: "Gusta, please hand me that box of candy."

Elizabeth arranged herself in still greater comfort, put a bit of the chocolate in her mouth, and opened her book. "Gusta, you're a comfort," she said. "Catch me going out on a day like this!"

Mrs. Ward came home at noon, and when she learned that Elizabeth had spent the morning in the library, she took on an air of such superiority as was justified only in one who had not allowed even a blizzard to interfere with the serious duties of life. She had learned several new signals at the whist club and, as she told Elizabeth with a reproach for her neglect of the game, she had mastered at last Elwood's new system. But Elizabeth, when she had had her luncheon, returned to the library and her book. She stayed there an hour, then suddenly startled her mother by flinging the volume to the floor in disgust and running from the room and up the stairs. She came down presently dressed for the street.

"Don't be put long, dear; remember the dinner," Mrs. Ward called after her.

As she turned in between the high banks of snow piled along either side of the walk, Elizabeth felt the fine quality of the air that sparkled with a cold vitality, as pure as the snow that seemed to exhale it. She tossed her head as if to rid it of all the disordered fancies she had gathered in the unreal world of the romance with which she had spent the day. Then for the first time she realized how gigantic the storm had been. Long processions of men armed with shovels, happy in the temporary prosperity this chance for work had brought, had cleared the sidewalks. On the avenue the snow had been beaten into a hard yellow track by the horses and sleighs that coursed so gaily over it. The cross-town trolley-cars glided along between the windrows of the snow the big plow had whirled from the tracks. Little children, in bright caps and leggings, were playing in the yards, testing new sleds, tumbling about in the white drifts, flinging snowballs at one another, their laughter and screams harmonizing with the bells. Claybourne Avenue was alive; the solitary bell that Elizabeth had heard jingling in the still air that morning had been joined by countless strings of other bells, until now the air vibrated with their musical clamor. Great Russian sledges with scarlet plumes shaking at their high-curved dashboards swept by, and the cutters sped along in their impromptu races, the happy faces of their occupants ruddy in their furs, the bells on the excited horses chiming in the keen air. At the corner of Twenty-fifth Street, a park policeman, sitting his magnificent bay horse, reviewed the swiftly passing parade. The pedestrians along the sidewalk

shouted the racers on; as the cutters, side by side, rose and fell over the street-crossing a party of school-boys assailed them with a shower of snowballs.

Elizabeth knew many of the people in the passing sleighs; she knew all of those in the more imposing turnouts. She bowed to her acquaintances with a smile that came from the exhilaration of the sharp winter air, more than from any joy she had in the recognition. But from one of the cutters Gordon Marriott waved his whip at her, and she returned his salute with a little shake of her big muff. Her gray eyes sparkled and her cheeks against her furs were pink. Every one was nervously exalted by the snow-storm that afternoon, and Elizabeth, full of health and youthful spirit, tingled with the joy the snow seemed to have brought to the world.

II

His house was all illumined; the light streaming from its windows glistened on the polished crust of the frozen snow, and as Stephen Ward drove up that evening, he sighed, remembering the dinner. He sprang out, slammed the door of his brougham and dashed indoors, the wheels of his retreating carriage giving out again their frosty falsetto. The breath of cold air Ward inhaled as he ran into the house was grateful to him, and he would have liked more of it; it would have refreshed and calmed him after his hard day on the Board.

As he entered the wide hall, Elizabeth was just descending the stairs. She came fresh from her toilet, clothed in a dinner gown of white, her round arms bare to the elbow, her young throat just revealed, her dark hair done low on her neck, and the smile that lighted her gray eyes pleased Ward.

As she went for her father's kiss Elizabeth noted the cool outdoor atmosphere, and the odor of cigar smoke and Russia leather that always hung about his person.

"You are refreshing!" she said. "The frost clings to you."

He smiled as she helped him with his overcoat, and then he backed up to the great fire, and stood there shrugging his shoulders and rubbing his hands in the warmth. His face was fresh and ruddy, his white hair was ruffled, his stubbed mustache, which ordinarily gave an effect of saving his youth in his middle

years, seemed to bristle aggressively, and his eyes still burned from the excitement of the day.

"What have you been doing all day?" Elizabeth asked, standing before him, her hands on his shoulders. "Battling hard for life in the wheat pit?" Her eyes sparkled with good humor.

Ward took Elizabeth's face between his palms as he said jubilantly:

"No, but I've been making old Macey battle for his life—and I've won."

His gray eyes flashed with the sense of victory, he drew himself erect, tilted back on his heels. He did not often speak of his business affairs at home, and when he did, no one understood him. During the weeks indeed, in which the soft moist weather and constant rains had prevented the rise in the wheat market on which he had so confidently gambled, he had resolutely and unselfishly kept his fear and his suspense to himself, and now even though at last he could indulge his exultation, he drew a long, deep breath.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "The snow came just in the nick of time for me!"

"Well, you march right up-stairs and get your clothes on," said Elizabeth as she took her father by the arm, gathering up the train of her white gown, heavy with its sequins and gracefully impeding her progress, and led him to the stairs. She smiled up into his face as she did so, and, as he turned the corner of the wide staircase, he bent and kissed her again.

Though the guests whom Mrs. Ward had asked to her dinner that night all came in closed carriages, bundled in warm and elegant furs, and though they stepped from their own doors into their carriages and then alighted from them at the door of the Wards', they all, when they arrived, talked excitedly of the storm and adjured one another to confess that they had never known such cold. The women, who came down from the dressing-room in bare arms and bare shoulders, seemed to think less of the cold than the men, who were, doubtless, not so inured to exposure; but they were more excited over it and looked on the phenomenon in its romantic light, and began to celebrate the poetic aspects of the winter scene. But the men laughed at this.

"There isn't much poetry about it down town," said Dick Ward. "No poet would have called that snow beautiful if he'd seen it piled so high as to blockade the street-cars and interrupt business generally." He spoke with the young pride he was finding in himself as a business man, though it would have been hard to tell just what his business was.

"Oh, but Dick," said Miss Bonnell, her dark face lighting with a fine smile, "the poet wouldn't have thought of business!"

"No, I suppose not," admitted Dick with the contempt a business man should feel for a poet.

"He might have found a theme in the immense damage the storm has done—telegraph wires all down, trains all late, the whole country in the grip of the blizzard, and a cold wave sweeping down from Medicine Hat."

The slender young man who spoke was Gordon Marriott, and he made his observation in a way that was almost too serious to be conventional or even desirable in a society where seriousness was not encouraged. He looked dreamily into the fire, as if he had merely spoken a thought aloud rather than addressed any one; but the company standing about the fireplace, trying to make the talk last for the few moments before dinner was announced, looked up suddenly, and seemed to be puzzled by the expression on his smooth-shaven delicate face.

"Oh, a theme for an epic!" exclaimed Mrs. Modderwell, the wife of the rector. Her pale face was glowing with unusual color, and her great dark eyes were lighting with enthusiasm. As she spoke, she glanced at her husband, and seemed to shrink in her black gown.

"But we have no poet to do it," said Elizabeth.

"Oh, I say," interrupted Modderwell, speaking in the upper key he employed in addressing women, and then, quickly changing to the deep, almost gruff tone which, with his affected English accent, he used when he spoke to men, "our friend Marriott here could do it; he's dreamer enough for it—eh, Marriott?" He gave his words the effect of a joke, and Marriott smiled at them, while the rest laughed in their readiness to laugh at anything.

"No," said Marriott, "I couldn't do it, though I wish I could. Walt Whitman might have done it; he could have begun with the cattle on the plains, freezing, with their tails to the wind,

and catalogued everything on the way till he came to the stock quotations and—"

"The people sleighing on Claybourne Avenue," said Elizabeth, remembering her walk of the afternoon. "And he would have gone on tracing the more subtle and sinister effects—perhaps suggesting something tragic."

"Well, now, really, when I was in Canada, you know—" began Modderwell. Though he had been born in Canada and had lived most of his life there, he always referred to the experience as if it had been a mere visit; he wished every one to consider him an Englishman. And nearly every one did, except Marriott, who looked at Modderwell in his most innocent manner and began:

"Oh, you Canadians—"

But just then dinner was announced, and though Elizabeth smiled at Marriott with sympathy, she was glad to have him interrupted in his philosophizing, or poetizing, or whatever it was, to take her out to the dining-room, where the great round table, with its mound of scarlet roses and tiny glasses of sherry glowing ruddy in the soft light of the shaded candelabra, awaited them. And there they passed through the long courses, at first talking lightly, but excitedly, of the snow, mentioning the pleasure and the new sensations it would afford them; then of their acquaintances; of a new burlesque that had run for a year in a New York theater; then of a new romance in which a great many people were killed and imprisoned, though not in a disagreeable manner, and, in short, talked of a great many

unimportant things, but talked of them as if they were, in reality, of the utmost importance.

The butler had taken off the salad; they were waiting for the dessert. Suddenly from the direction of the kitchen came a piercing scream, evidently a woman's scream; all the swinging doors between the dining-room and the distant kitchen could not muffle it. Mrs. Modderwell started nervously, then, at a look from her husband, composed herself and hung her head with embarrassment. The others at the table started, though not so visibly, and then tried to appear as if they had not done so. Mrs. Ward looked up in alarm, first at Ward, who hastily gulped some wine, and then at Elizabeth. Wonder and curiosity were in all the faces about the board—wonder and curiosity that no sophistication could conceal. They waited; the time grew long; Mrs. Ward, who always suffered through her dinners, suffered more than ever now. Her guests tried bravely to sit as if nothing were wrong, but at last their little attempts at conversation failed, and they sat in painful silence. The moments passed; Ward and his wife exchanged glances; Elizabeth looked at her mother sympathetically. At last the door swung and the butler entered; the guests could not help glancing at him. But in his face there was a blank and tutored passivity that was admirable, almost heroic.

When the women were in the drawing-room, Mrs. Ward excused herself for a moment and went to the kitchen. She returned presently, and Elizabeth voiced the question the others

were too polite to ask.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Matter!" exclaimed Mrs. Ward. "Gusta's going, that's all." She said it with the feeling such a calamity merited.

"When?"

"Now."

"But the scream—what was it?"

"Well, word came about her father; he's been hurt, or killed, or something, in the railroad yards."

"Oh, how dreadful!" the women politely chorused.

"Yes, I should think so," said Mrs. Ward. "To be left like this without a moment's warning! And then that awful *contretemps* at dinner!" Mrs. Ward looked all the anguish and shame she felt.

"But Gusta couldn't help that," said Elizabeth.

"No," said Mrs. Ward, lapsing from her mood of exaggeration, "I know that, of course. The poor girl is quite broken up. I hope it is nothing really serious. And yet," she went on, her mind turning again to her own domestic misfortunes, "people of her class seem to have the most unerring faculty for calamity. They're always getting hurt, or sick, or dying, or something. The servants in my house suffer more bereavement in the course of a month than all the rest of my acquaintance in a lifetime."

And then the ladies took up the servant-girl problem, and canvassed it hopelessly until the men were heard entering the library.

III

While Mrs. Ward was discussing her maid with her guests, Gusta was hurrying homeward alone, the prey of fears, omens and forebodings. There was the shock of this sudden news from home, and her horror of what awaited her there; besides she had a strange feeling about leaving the Wards in this way. The night had grown bitterly cold. The frozen snow crunched with a whining noise under her heels as she passed swiftly along. In the light of the arc-lamps that swung at the street crossings, the trees along the curb cast their long shadows before her, falling obliquely across the sidewalk and stretching off into the yard; as she passed on, they wheeled, lost themselves in gloom, then appeared again, stretching the other way. The shadows confused and frightened her. She thought of Elizabeth and all her kindness; when would she see Elizabeth again? With this horrible thing at home all had changed; her mother would need her now. She thought of the hard work, with the children crying about, and the ugly kitchen, with none of the things there were at the Wards' to make the work easy. She would have to lug the water in from the cistern; the pump would be frozen, and the water would splash on her hands and make them red and raw and sore; they could never be white and soft like Elizabeth's. She would have to shovel the snow, and make paths, and split kindlings, and carry wood and coal, and make fires. And then the house would never be warm

like the Wards'; they would eat in the kitchen and sit there all day long. The storm, which had made no change at all at the Wards', would make it all so much harder at home. Her father would be sick a long time; and, of course, he would lose his job; the house would be gloomy and sad; it would be worse than the winter he had been on strike.

The keen wind that was blowing from the northwest stung Gusta's face; she felt the tears in her eyes, and when they ran on to her cheeks they froze at once and made her miserable. She shuddered with the cold, her fingers were numb, her feet seemed to be bare on the snow, her ears were burning. The wind blew against her forehead and seemed as if it would cut the top of her head off as with a cold blade. She tried to pull her little jacket about her; the jacket was one Elizabeth had given her, and she had always been proud of it and thought that it made her look like Elizabeth, but it could not keep her warm now. She ran a few steps, partly to get warm, partly to make swifter progress homeward, partly for no reason at all. She thought of her comfortable room at the Wards' and the little colored pictures Elizabeth had given her to hang about the walls. An hour before she had expected to go to that room and rest there,—and now she was going home to sickness and sorrow and ugly work. She gave a little sob and tried to brush away her tears, but they were frozen to her eye-lashes, and it gave her a sharp pain above her eyes when she put her hand up to her face.

Gusta had now reached the poorer quarter of the town, which

was not far from Claybourne Avenue, though hidden from it. The houses were huddled closely together, and their little window-panes were frosty against the light that shone through the holes in their shades. There were many saloons, as many as three on a corner; the ice was frozen about their entrances, but she could see the light behind the screens. They seemed to be warm—the only places in that neighborhood that were warm. She passed one of them just as the latch clicked and the door opened, and three young men came out, laughing loud, rough, brutal laughs. Gusta shrank to the edge of the sidewalk; when she got into the black shadow of the low frame building, she ran, and as she ran she could hear the young men laughing loudly behind her. She plunged on into the shadows that lay so thick and black ahead.

But as she drew near her home, all of Gusta's other thoughts were swallowed up in the thought of her father. She forgot how cold she was; her fingers were numb, but they no longer ached; a kind of physical insensibility stole through her, but she was more than ever alive mentally to the anguish that was on her. She thought of her father, and she remembered a thousand little things about him,—all his ways, all his sayings, little incidents of her childhood; and the tears blinded her, because now he probably would never speak to her again, never open his eyes to look on her again. She pictured him lying on his bed, broken and maimed, probably covered with blood, gasping his few last breaths. She broke into a little run, the clumsy trot of a woman, her skirts beating heavily and with dull noises against her legs,

her shoes crunching, crunching, on the frozen snow. At last she turned another corner, and entered a street that was even narrower and darker than the others. Its surface, though hidden by the snow, was billowy where the ash piles lay; there was no light, but the snow seemed to give a gray effect to the darkness. This was Bolt Street, in which Gusta's family, the Koerners, lived.

The thin crackled shade was down at the front window, but the light shone behind it. Gusta pushed open the front door and rushed in. She took in the front room at a glance, seeking the evidence of change; but all was unchanged, familiar—the strips of rag carpet on the floor, the cheap oak furniture upholstered in green and red plush, the rough, coarse-grained surface of the wood varnished highly; the photograph of herself in the white dress and veil she had worn to her first communion, the picture of Archie sent from the Presidio, the colored prints of Bismarck and the battle of Sedan—all were there. The room was just as it had always been, clean, orderly, unused—save that some trinkets Archie had brought from Manila were on the center-table beside the lamp, which, with its round globe painted with brown flowers, gave the room its light.

Gusta had taken all this in with a little shock of surprise, and in the same instant the children, Katie and little Jakie, sprang forth to meet her. They stood now, clutching at her skirts; they held up their little red, chapped faces, all dirty and streaked with tears; their lips quivered, and they began to whimper. But Gusta, with

her wild eyes staring above their little flaxen heads, pressed on in, and the children, hanging on to her and impeding her progress, began to cry peevishly.

Gusta saw her mother sitting in the kitchen. Two women of the neighborhood sat near her, dull, silent, stupid, their chins on their huge breasts, as if in melancholia. Though the room was stiflingly warm with the heat from the kitchen stove, the women kept their shawls over their heads, like peasants. Mrs. Koerner sat in a rocking-chair in the middle of her clean white kitchen floor. As she lifted her dry eyes and saw Gusta, her brows contracted under her thin, carefully-parted hair, and she lifted her brawny arms, bare to the elbows, and rocked backward, her feet swinging heavily off the floor.

"Where's father?" Gusta demanded, starting toward her mother.

Mrs. Koerner's lips opened and she drew a long breath, then exhaled it in a heavy sigh.

"Where is he?" Gusta demanded again. She spoke so fiercely that the children suddenly became silent, their pale blue eyes wide. One of the neighbors looked up, unwrapped her bare arms from her gingham apron and began to poke the kitchen fire. Mrs. Koerner suddenly bent forward, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, and began to cry, and to mumble in German. At this, the two neighbor women began to speak to each other in German. It always irritated Gusta to have her mother speak in German. She had learned the language in her infancy, but she

grew ashamed of it when she was sent to the public schools, and never spoke it when she could help it. And now in her resentment of the whole tragic situation, she flew into a rage. Her mother threw her apron over her face, and rocked back and forth.

"Aw, quit, ma!" cried Gusta; "quit, now, can't you?"

Mrs. Koerner took her apron from her face and looked at Gusta. Her expression was one of mute appealing pain. Gusta, softened, put her hand on her mother's head.

"Tell me, ma," she said softly, "where is he?"

Mrs. Koerner rocked again, back and forth, flinging up her arms and shaking her head from side to side. A fear seized Gusta.

"Where is he?" she demanded.

"He goes on der hospital," said one of the women. "He's bad hurt."

The word "hospital" seemed to have a profound and sinister meaning for Mrs. Koerner, and she began to wail aloud. Gusta feared to ask more. The children were still clinging to her. They hung to her skirts, tried to grasp her legs, almost toppling her over.

"Want our supper!" Jakie cried; "want our supper!"

"Gusta," said Katie, "did the pretty lady send me something good?"

Gusta still stood there; her cheeks were glowing red from their exposure to the wind that howled outside and rattled the loose sash in the window. But about her bluish lips the skin was white, her blue eyes were tired and frightened. She dropped a hand

to each of the children, her knees trembled, and she gave little lurches from side to side as she stood there, with the children tugging at her, in their fear and hunger.

"Where's Archie?" she asked.

"He's gone for his beer," said one of the neighbors, the one who had not spoken. As she spoke she revealed her loose teeth, standing wide apart in her gums. "Maybe he goes on der hospital yet."

Every time they spoke the word "hospital," Mrs. Koerner flung up her arms, and Gusta herself winced. But she saw that neither her mother nor these women who had come in to sit with her could tell her anything; to learn the details she would have to wait until Archie came. She had been drawing off her gloves as she stood there, and now she laid aside her hat and her jacket, and tied on one of her mother's aprons. Then silently she went to work, opened the stove door, shook the ashes down, threw in coal, and got out a skillet. The table spread with its red cloth stood against the window-sill, bearing cream pitcher and sugar bowl, and a cheap glass urn filled with metal spoons. She went to the pantry, brought out a crock of butter and put it on the table, then cut pieces of side-meat and put them in a skillet, where they began to swim about and sizzle in the sputtering grease. Then she set the coffee to boil, cut some bread, and, finding some cold potatoes left over from dinner, she set these on the table for the supper. It grew still, quiet, commonplace. Gusta bustled about, her mother sat there quietly, the neighbors looked on stolidly, the

children snuffled now and then. The tragedy seemed remote and unreal.

Gusta took a pail and whisked out of the kitchen door; the wind rushed in, icy cold; she was back in a moment, her golden hair blowing. She poured some of the water into a pan, and called the children to her. They stood as stolidly as the women sat, their hands rigid by their sides, their chins elevated, gasping now and then as Gusta washed their dirty faces with the rag she had wrung out in the icy water. The odor of frying pork was now filling the room, and the children's red, burnished faces were gleaming with smiles, and their blue eyes danced as they stood looking at the hot stove. When the pork was fried, Gusta, using her apron to protect her hand, seized the skillet from the stove, scraped the spluttering contents into a dish and set it on the table. Then the children climbed into chairs, side by side, clutching the edge of the table with their little fingers. Mrs. Koerner let Gusta draw up her rocking-chair, leaned over, resting her fat forearms on the table, holding her fork in her fist, and ate, using her elbow as a fulcrum.

When the meal was done, Mrs. Koerner began to rock again, the children stood about and watched Gusta pile the dishes on the table and cover them with the red cloth, and then, when she told them they must go to bed, they protested, crying that father had not come home yet. Their eyes were heavy and their flaxen heads were nodding, and Gusta dragged them into a room that opened off the kitchen, and out of the dark could be heard their

small voices, protesting sleepily that they were not sleepy.

After a while a quick, regular step was heard outside, some one stamped the snow from his boots, the door opened, and Archie entered. His face was drawn and flaming from the cold, and there was shrinking in his broad military shoulders; a shiver ran through his well-set-up figure; he wore no overcoat; he keenly felt the exposure to weather he was so unused to. He flung aside his gray felt soldier's hat—the same he had worn in the Philippines—strode across the room, bent over the stove and warmed his red fingers.

"It's a long hike over to the hospital this cold night," he said, turning to Gusta and smiling. His white teeth showed in his smile, and the skin of his face was red and parched. He flung a chair before the stove, sat down, hooked one heel on its rung, and taking some little slips of rice paper from his pocket, and a bag of tobacco, began rolling himself a cigarette. He rolled the cigarette swiftly and deftly, lighted it, and inhaled the smoke eagerly. Gusta, meanwhile, sat looking at him in a sort of suppressed impatience. Then, the smoke stealing from his mouth with each word he uttered, he said:

"Well, they've cut the old man's leg off."

Gusta and the neighbor women looked at Archie in silence. Mrs. Koerner seemed unable to grasp the full meaning of what he had said.

"*Was sagst du?*" she asked, leaning forward anxiously.

"*Sie haben sein Bein amputiert,*" replied Archie.

"*Sein Bein—was?*" inquired Mrs. Koerner.

"What the devil's 'cut off'?" asked Archie, turning to Gusta. She thought a moment.

"Why," she said, "let's see. *Abgeschnitten*, I guess."

"Je's," said Archie impatiently, "I wish she'd cut out the Dutch!"

Then he turned toward his mother and speaking loudly, as if she were deaf, as one always speaks who tries to make himself understood in a strange tongue:

"*Sie haben sein Bein abgeschnitten—die Doctoren im Hospital.*"

Mrs. Koerner stared at her son, and Archie and Gusta and the two women sat and stared at her, then suddenly Mrs. Koerner's expression became set, meaningless and blank, her eyes slowly closed and her body slid off the chair to the floor. Archie sprang toward her and tried to lift her. She was heavy even for his strong arms, and he straightened an instant, and shouted out commands:

"Open the door, you! Gusta, get some water!"

One of the women lumbered across the kitchen and flung wide the door, Gusta got a dipper of water and splashed it in her mother's face. The cold air rushing into the overheated kitchen and the cool water revived the prostrate woman; she opened her eyes and looked up, sick and appealing. Archie helped her to her chair and stood leaning over her. Gusta, too, bent above her, and the two women pressed close.

"Stand back!" shouted Archie peremptorily. "Give her some air, can't you?"

The two women slunk back—not without glances of reproach at Archie. He stood looking at his mother a moment, his hands resting on his hips. He was still smoking his cigarette, tilting back his head and squinting his eyes to escape the smoke. Gusta was fanning her mother.

"Do you feel better?" she asked solicitously.

"*Ja*," said Mrs. Koerner, but she began to shake her head.

"Oh, it's all right, ma," Archie assured her. "It's the best place for him. Why, they'll give him good care there. I was in the hospital a month already in Luzon."

The old woman was unconvinced and shook her head. Then Archie stepped close to her side.

"Poor old mother!" he said, and he touched her brow lightly, caressingly. She looked at him an instant, then turned her head against him and cried. The tears began to roll down Gusta's cheeks, and Archie squinted his eyes more and more.

"We'd better get her to bed," he said softly, and glanced at the two women with a look of dismissal. They still sat looking on at this effect of the disaster, not altogether curiously nor without sympathy, yet claiming all the sensation they could get out of the situation. When Archie and Gusta led Mrs. Koerner to her bed, the two women began talking rapidly to each other in German, criticizing Archie and the action of the authorities in taking Koerner to the hospital.

IV

Gusta cherished a hope of going back to the Wards', but as the days went by this hope declined. Mrs. Koerner was mentally prostrated and Gusta was needed now at home, and there she took up her duties, attending the children, getting the meals, caring for the house, filling her mother's place. After a few days she reluctantly decided to go back for her clothes. The weather had moderated, the snow still lay on the ground, but grimy, soft and disintegrating. The sky was gray and cold, the mean east wind was blowing in from the lake, and yet Gusta liked its cool touch on her face, and was glad to be out again after all those days she had been shut in the little home. It was good to feel herself among other people, to get back to normal life, and though Gusta did not analyze her sensations thus closely, or, for that matter, analyze them at all, she was all the more happy.

Before Nussbaum's saloon she saw the long beer wagon; its splendid Norman horses tossing their heads playfully, the stout driver in his leathern apron lugging in the kegs of beer. The sight pleased her; and when Nussbaum, in white shirt-sleeves and apron, stepped to the door for his breath of morning air, she smiled and nodded to him. His round ruddy face beamed pleasantly.

"Hello, Gustie," he called. "How are you this morning? How's your father?"

"Oh, he's better, thank you, Mr. Nussbaum," replied Gusta, and she hastened on. As she went, she heard the driver of the brewery wagon ask:

"Who's that?"

And Nussbaum replied:

"Reinhold Koerner's girl, what got hurt on the railroad the other day."

"She's a good-looker, hain't she?" said the driver.

And Gusta colored and felt proud and happier than before.

She was not long in reaching Claybourne Avenue, and it was good to see the big houses again, and the sleighs coursing by, and the carriages, and the drivers and footmen, some of whom she knew, sitting so stiffly in their liveries on the boxes. At sight of the familiar roof and chimneys of the Wards' house, her heart leaped; she felt now as if she were getting back home.

It was Gusta's notion that as soon as she had greeted her old friend Mollie, the cook, she would rush on into the dining-room; but no sooner was she in the kitchen than she felt a constraint, and sank down weakly on a chair. Molly was busy with luncheon; things were going on in the Ward household, going on just as well without her as with her, just as the car shops were going on without her father, the whistle blowing night and morning. It gave Gusta a little pang. This feeling was intensified when, a little later, a girl entered the kitchen, a thin girl, with black hair and blue eyes with long Irish lashes. She would have been called pretty by anybody but Gusta, and Gusta herself must have

allowed her prettiness in any moment less sharp than this. The new maid inspected Gusta coldly, but none of the glances from her eyes could hurt Gusta half as much as her presence there hurt her; and the hurt was so deep that she felt no personal resentment; she regarded the maid merely as a situation, an unconscious and irresponsible symbol of certain untoward events.

"Want to see Mrs. Ward?" the maid inquired.

"Yes, and Miss Elizabeth, too," said Gusta.

"Mrs. Ward's out and Miss Ward's busy just now."

Mollie, whose broad back was bent over her table, knew how the words hurt Gusta, and, without turning, she said:

"You go tell her Gusta's here, Nora; she'll want to see her."

"Oh, sure," said Nora, yielding to a superior. "I'll tell her."

Almost before Nora could return, Elizabeth stood in the swinging door, beaming her surprise and pleasure. And Gusta burst into tears.

"Why Gusta," exclaimed Elizabeth, "come right in here!"

She held the door, and Gusta, with a glance at Nora, went in. Seated by the window in the old familiar dining-room, with Elizabeth before her, Gusta glanced about, the pain came back, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"You mustn't cry, Gusta," said Elizabeth.

Gusta sat twisting her fingers together, in and out, while the tears fell. She could not speak for a moment, and then she looked up and tried to smile.

"You mustn't cry," Elizabeth repeated. "You aren't half so

pretty when you cry."

Gusta's wet lashes were winking rapidly, and she took out her handkerchief and wiped her face and her eyes, and Elizabeth looked at her intently.

"Poor child!" she said presently. "What a time you've had!"

"Oh, Miss Elizabeth!" said Gusta, the tears starting afresh at this expression of sympathy, "we've had a dreadful time!"

"And we've missed you awfully," said Elizabeth. "When are you coming back to us?"

Gusta looked up gratefully. "I don't know, Miss Elizabeth; I wish I did. But you see my mother is sick ever since father—"

"And how is your father? We saw in the newspaper how badly he had been hurt."

"Was it in the paper?" said Gusta eagerly, leaning forward a little.

"Yes, didn't you see it? It was just a little item; it gave few of the details, and it must have misspelled—" But Elizabeth stopped.

"I didn't see it," said Gusta. "He was hurt dreadfully, Miss Elizabeth; they cut his leg off at the hospital."

"Oh, Gusta! And he's there still, of course?"

"Yes, and we don't know how long he'll have to stay. Maybe he'll have to go under another operation."

"Oh, I hope not!" said Elizabeth. "Tell me how he was hurt."

"Well, Miss Elizabeth, we don't just know—not just exactly. He had knocked off work and left the shops and was coming across the yards—he always comes home that way, you know—but

it was dark, and the snow was all over everything, and the ice, and somehow he slipped and caught his foot in a frog, and just then a switch-engine came along and ran over his leg."

"Oh, horrible!" Elizabeth's brows contracted in pain.

"The ambulance took him right away to the Hospital. Ma felt awful bad 'cause they wouldn't let him be fetched home. She didn't want him taken to the hospital."

"But that was the best place for him, Gusta; the very best place in the world."

"That's what Archie says," said Gusta, "but ma doesn't like it; she can't get used to it, and she says—" Gusta hesitated,— "she says we can't afford to keep him there."

"But the railroad will pay for that, won't it?"

"Oh, do you think it will, Miss Elizabeth? It had ought to, hadn't it? He's worked there thirty-seven years."

"Why, surely it will," said Elizabeth. "I wouldn't worry about that a minute if I were you. You must make the best of it. And is there anything I can do for you, Gusta?"

"No, thank you, Miss Elizabeth. I just came around to see you,"—she looked up with a fond smile,— "and to get my clothes. Then I must go. I want to go see father before I go back home. I guess I'll pack my things now, and then Archie'll come for my trunk this afternoon."

"Oh, I'll have Barker haul it over; he can just as well as not. And, Gusta,"—Elizabeth rose on the impulse—"I'll drive you to the hospital. I was just going out. You wait here till I get my things."

Gusta's face flushed with pleasure; she poured out her thanks, and then she waited while Elizabeth rang for the carriage, and ran out to prepare for the street, just as she used to.

It was a fine thing for Gusta to ride with Elizabeth in her brougham. She had often imagined how it would be, sitting there in the exclusion of the brougham's upholstered interior, with the little clock, and the mirror and the bottle of salts before her, and the woven silk tube through which Elizabeth spoke to Barker when she wished to give him directions. The drive to the hospital was all too short for Gusta, even though Elizabeth prolonged it by another impulse which led her to drive out of their way to get some fruit and some flowers.

In the street before the hospital, and along the driveway that led to the suggestively wide side door, carriages were being slowly driven up and down, denoting that the social leaders who were patronesses of the hospital were now inside, patronizing the superintendent and the head nurse. Besides these there were the high, hooded phaetons of the fashionable physicians. It was the busy hour at the hospital. The nurses had done their morning work, made their entries on their charts, and were now standing in little groups about the hall, waiting for their "cases" to come back from the operating-rooms. There was the odor of anesthetics in the air, and the atmosphere of the place, professional and institutional though it was, was surcharged with a heavy human suspense—the suspense that hung over the silent, heavily breathing, anesthetized human forms that were stretched

on glass tables in the hot operating-rooms up-stairs, some of them doomed to die, others to live and prolong existence yet a while. The wide slow elevators were waiting at the top floor; at the doors of the operating-rooms stood the white-padded rubber-tired carts, the orderlies sitting on them swinging their legs off the floor, and gossiping about the world outside, where life did not hover, but throbbed on, intent, preoccupied. In private rooms, in vacant rooms, in the office down-stairs, men and women, the relatives of those on the glass tables above, waited with white, haggard, frightened faces.

As Elizabeth and Gusta entered the hospital they shuddered, and drew close to each other like sisters. Koerner was in the marine ward, and Gusta dreaded the place. On her previous visits there, the nurses had been sharp and severe with her, but this morning, when the nurses saw Elizabeth bearing her basket of fruit and her flowers—which she would not let Gusta carry, feeling that would rob her offering of the personal quality she wished it to assume—they ran forward, their starched, striped blue skirts rustling, and greeted her with smiles.

"Why, Miss Ward!" they cried.

"Good morning," said Elizabeth, "we've come to see Mr. Koerner."

"Oh, yes," said Koerner's nurse, a tall, spare young woman with a large nose, eye-glasses, and a flat chest. "He's so much better this morning." She said this with a patronizing glance aside at Gusta, who tried to smile; the nurse had not spoken so

pleasantly to her before.

The nurse led the girls into the ward, and they passed down between the rows of white cots. Some of the cots were empty, their white sheets folded severely, back, awaiting the return of their occupants from the rooms up-stairs. In the others men sprawled, with pallid, haggard faces, and watched the young women as they passed along, following them with large, brilliant, sick eyes. But Elizabeth and Gusta did not look at them; they kept their eyes before them. One bed had a white screen about it; candles glowed through the screen, silhouetting the bending forms of a priest, a doctor and a nurse.

Koerner was at the end of the ward. His great, gaunt, heavy figure was supine on the bed; the bandaged stump of his leg made a heavy bulk under the counterpane; his broad shoulders mashed down the pillow; his enormous hands, still showing in their cracks and crevices and around the cuticle of his broken nails the grime that all the antiseptic scrubblings of a hospital could not remove, lay outside the coverlid, idle for the first time in half a century. His white hair was combed, its ragged edges showing more obviously, and his gaunt cheeks were covered by a stubble of frosty beard. His blue eyes were unnaturally bright.

Elizabeth fell back a little that Gusta might greet him first, and the strong, lusty, healthy girl bent over her father and laid one hand on his.

"Well, pa, how're you feeling to-day?"

"Hullo, Gustie," said the old man, "you gom' again, huh? Vell,

der oldt man's pretty bad, I tel' you."

"Why, the nurse said you were better."

"Why, yes," said the nurse, stepping forward with a professional smile, "he's lots better this morning; he just won't admit it, that's all. But we know him here, we do!"

She said this playfully, with a lateral addition to her smile, and she bent over and passed her hand under the bed-clothes and touched his bandages here and there. Elizabeth and Gusta stood looking on.

"Isn't the pain any better?" asked the nurse, still smilingly, coaxingly.

"Naw," growled the old German, stubbornly refusing to smile. "I toldt you it was no besser, don't I?"

The nurse drew out her hand. The smile left her face and she stood looking down on him with a helpless expression that spread to the faces of Elizabeth and Gusta. Koerner turned his head uneasily on the pillow and groaned.

"What is it, pa?" asked Gusta.

"Der rheumatiz'."

"Where?"

"In my leg. In der same oldt blace. Ach!"

An expression of puzzled pain came to Gusta's face.

"Why," she said half-fearfully, "how can it—now?" She looked at the nurse. The nurse smiled again, this time with an air of superior knowledge.

"They often have those sensations," she said, laughing. "It's

quite natural." Then she bent over Koerner and said cheerily: "I'm going now, and leave you with your daughter and Miss Ward."

"Yes, pa," said Gusta, "Miss Elizabeth's here to see you."

She put into her tone all the appreciation of the honor she wished her father to feel. Elizabeth came forward, her gloved hands folded before her, and stood carefully away from the bed so that even her skirts should not touch it.

"How do you do, Mr. Koerner?" she said in her soft voice—so different from the voices of the nurse and Gusta.

Koerner turned and looked at her an instant, his mouth open, his tongue playing over his discolored teeth.

"Hullo," he said, "you gom' to see der oldt man, huh?"

Elizabeth smiled.

"Yes, I came to see how you were, and to know if there is anything I could do for you."

"*Ach*," he said, "I'm all right. Dot leg he hurts yust der same efery day. Kesterday der's somet'ing between der toes; dis time he's got der damned oldt rheumatiz', yust der same he used to ven he's on dere all right."

The old man then entered into a long description of his symptoms, and Elizabeth tried hard to smile and to sympathize. She succeeded in turning him from his subject presently, and then she said:

"Is there anything you want, Mr. Koerner? I'd be so glad to get you anything, you know."

"Vell, I like a schmoke already, but she won't let me. You

know my oldt pipe, Gusta? Vell, I lose him by der accident dot night. He's on der railroadt, I bet you."

"Oh, we'll get you another pipe, Mr. Koerner," said Elizabeth, laughing. "Isn't there anything else?"

"Naw," he said, "der railroadt gets me eferyt'ing. I work on dot roadt t'irty-seven year now a'ready. Dot man, dot—vat you call him?—dot glaim agent, he kum here kesterday, undt he say he get me eferyt'ing. He's a fine man, dot glaim agent. He laugh undt choke mit me; he saidt der roadt gif me chob flaggin' der grossing. All I yust do is to sign der baper—"

"Oh, Mr. Koerner," cried Elizabeth in alarm, and Gusta, at her expression, started forward, and Koerner himself became all attention, "you did not sign any paper, did you?"

The old man looked at her an instant, and then a soft shadowy smile touched his lips.

"Don't you vorry," he said; "der oldt man only got von leg, but he don't sign no damned oldt baper." He shook his head on the pillow sagely, and then added: "You bet!"

"That's splendid!" said Elizabeth. "You're very wise, Mr. Koerner." She paused and thought a moment, her brows knit. Then her expression cleared and she said:

"You must let me send a lawyer."

"Oh, der been blenty of lawyers," said Koerner.

"Yes," laughed Elizabeth, "there are plenty of lawyers, to be sure, but I mean—"

"Der been more as a dozen here already," he went on, "but

dey don't let 'em see me."

"I don't think a lawyer who would come to see you would be the kind you want, Mr. Koerner."

"Dot's all right. Der been plenty of time for der lawyers."

"Oh, pa," Gusta put in, "you must take Miss Elizabeth's advice. She knows best. She'll send you a good lawyer."

"Vell, ve see about dot," said Koerner.

"I presume, Mr. Koerner," said Elizabeth, "they wouldn't let a lawyer see you, but I'll bring one with me the next time I come—a very good one, one that I know well, and he'll advise you what to do; shall I?"

"Vell, ve see," said Koerner.

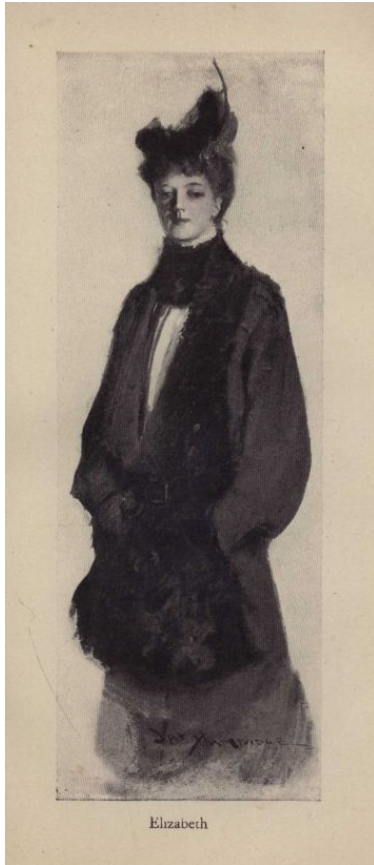
"Now, pa, you must let Miss Elizabeth bring a lawyer," and then she whispered to Elizabeth: "You bring one anyway, Miss Elizabeth. Don't mind what he says. He's always that way."

Elizabeth brought out her flowers and fruit then, and Koerner glanced at them without a word, or without a look of gratitude, and when she had arranged the flowers on his little table, she bade him good-by and took Gusta with her and went.

As they passed out, the white rubber-tired carts were being wheeled down the halls, the patients they bore still breathing profoundly under the anesthetics, from which it was hoped they would awaken in their clean, smooth beds. The young women hurried out, and Elizabeth drank in the cool wintry air eagerly.

"Oh, Gusta!" she said, "this air is delicious after that air in there! I shall have the taste of it for days."

"Miss Elizabeth, that place is sickening!"—and Elizabeth laughed at the solemn deliberation with which Gusta lengthened out the word.



Elizabeth

Elizabeth

V

"Come in, old man." Marriott glanced up at Dick Ward, who stood smiling in the doorway of his private office.

"Don't let me interrupt you, my boy," said Dick as he entered.

"Just a minute," said Marriott, "and then I'm with you." Dick dropped into the big leather chair, unbuttoned his tan overcoat, arranged its skirts, drew off his gloves, and took a silver cigarette-case from his pocket. Marriott, swinging about in his chair, asked his stenographer to repeat the last line, picked up the thread, went on:

"And these answering defendants further say that heretofore, to wit, on or about—"

Dick, leaning back in his chair, inhaling the smoke of his cigarette, looked at the girl who sat beside Marriott's desk, one leg crossed over the other, the tip of her patent-leather boot showing beneath her skirt, on her knee the pad on which she wrote in shorthand. The girl's eyelashes trembled presently and a flush showed in her cheeks, spreading to her white throat and neck. Dick did not take his eyes from her. When Marriott finished, the girl left the room hurriedly.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Marriott.

"Devilish fine-looking girl you've got there, old man!" said Dick, whose eyes had followed the stenographer.

"She's a good girl," said Marriott simply.

Dick glanced again at the girl. Through the open door he could see her seating herself at her machine. Then he recalled himself and turned to Marriott.

"Say, Bess was trying to get you by 'phone this morning."

"Is that so?" said Marriott in a disappointed tone. "I was in court all morning."

"Well, she said she'd give it up. She said that old man Koerner had left the hospital and gone home. He sent word to her that he wanted to see you."

"Oh, yes," said Marriott, "about that case of his. I must attend to that, but I've been so busy." He glanced at his disordered desk, with its hopeless litter of papers. "Let's see," he went on meditatively, "I guess"—he thought a moment, "I guess I might as well go out there this afternoon as any time. How far is it?"

"Oh, it's 'way out on Bolt Street."

"What car do I take?"

"Colorado Avenue, I think. I'll go 'long, if you want me."

"I'll be delighted," said Marriott. He thought a moment longer, then closed his desk, and said, "We'll go now."

When they got off the elevator twelve floors below, Dick said:

"I've got to have a drink before I start. Will you join me?"

"I just had luncheon a while ago," said Marriott; "I don't really—"

"I never got to bed till morning," said Dick. "I sat in a little game at the club last night, and I'm all in."

Marriott, amused by the youth's pride in his dissipation,

went with him to the café in the basement. Standing before the polished bar, with one foot on the brass rail, Dick said to the white-jacketed bartender:

"I want a high-ball; you know my brand, George. What's yours, Gordon?"

"Oh, I'll take the same." Marriott watched Dick pour a generous libation over the ice in the glass.

"Don't forget the imported soda," added Dick with an air of the utmost seriousness and importance, and the bartender, swiftly pulling the corks, said:

"I wouldn't forget you, Mr. Ward."

The car for which they waited in the drifting crowd at the corner was half an hour in getting them out to the neighborhood in which the Koerners lived. They stood on the rear platform all the way, because, as Dick said, he had to smoke, and as he consumed his cigarettes, he discoursed to Marriott of the things that filled his life—his card games and his drinking at the club, his constant attendance at theaters and cafés. His cheeks were fresh and rosy as a girl's, and smooth from the razor they did not need. Marriott, as he looked at him, saw a resemblance to Elizabeth, and this gave the boy an additional charm for him. He studied this resemblance, but he could not analyze it. Dick had neither his sister's features nor her complexion; and yet the resemblance was there, flitting, remote, revealing itself one instant to disappear the next, evading and eluding him. He could not account for it, yet its effect was to make his heart warm toward the boy, to make

him love him.

Marriott let Dick go on in his talk, but he scarcely heard what the boy said; it was the spirit that held him and charmed him, the spirit of youth launching with sublime courage into life, not yet aware of its significance or its purpose. He thought of the danger the boy was in and longed to help him. How was he to do this? Should he admonish him? No,—instantly he recognized the fact that he could not do this; he shrank from preaching; he could take no priggish or Pharisaical attitude; he had too much culture, too much imagination for that; besides, he reflected with a shade of guilt, he had just now encouraged Dick by drinking with him. He flung away his cigarette as if it symbolized the problem, and sighed when he thought that Dick, after all, would have to make his way alone and fight his own battles, that the soul can emerge into real life only through the pains and dangers that accompany all birth.

Marriott's knock at the Koerners' door produced the sensation visits make where they are infrequent, but he and Dick had to wait before the vague noises died away and the door opened to them. Mrs. Koerner led them through the parlor—which no occasion seemed ever to merit—to the kitchen at the other end of the house. The odor of carbolic acid which the two men had detected the moment they entered, grew stronger as they approached the kitchen, and there they beheld Koerner, the stump of his leg bundled in surgical bandages, resting on a pillow in a chair before him. His position constrained him not to move,

and he made no attempt to turn his head; but when the young men stood before him, he raised to them a bronzed and wrinkled face. His white hair was ruffled, and he wore a cross and dissatisfied expression; he held by its bowl the new meerschaum pipe Elizabeth had sent him, and waved its long stem at Marriott and Dick, as he waved it scepter-like in ruling his household.

"My name is Marriott, Mr. Koerner, and this is Mr. Ward, Miss Elizabeth's brother. She said you wished to see me."

"You gom', huh?" said Koerner, fixing Marriott with his little blue eyes.

"Yes, I'm here at last," said Marriott. "Did you think I was never going to get here?" He drew up a chair and sat down. Dick took another chair, but leaned back and glanced about the room, as if to testify to his capacity of mere spectator. Mrs. Koerner stood beside her husband and folded her arms. The two children, hidden in their mother's skirts, cautiously emerged, a bit at a time, as it were, until they stood staring with wide, curious blue eyes at Marriott.

"You bin a lawyer, yet, huh?" asked Koerner severely.

"Yes, I'm a lawyer. Miss Ward said you wished to see a lawyer."

"I've blenty lawyers already," said Koerner. "Der bin more as a dozen hier." He waved his pipe at the clock-shelf, where a little stack of professional cards told how many lawyers had solicited Koerner as a client. Marriott could have told the names of the lawyers without looking at their cards.

"Have you retained any of them?" asked Marriott.

"Huh?" asked Koerner, scowling.

"Did you hire any of them?"

"No, I tell 'em all to go to hell."

"That's where most of them are going," said Marriott.

But Koerner did not see the joke.

"How's your injury?" asked Marriott.

Koerner winced perceptibly at Marriott's mere glance at his amputated leg, and stretched the pipe-stem over it as if in protection.

"He's hurt like hell," he said.

"Why, hasn't the pain left yet?" asked Marriott in surprise.

"No, I got der rheumatiz' in dot foot," he pointed with his pipe-stem at the vacancy where the foot used to be.

"*That* foot!" exclaimed Marriott.

"Bess told us of that," Dick put in. "It gave her the willies."

"Well, I should think so," said Marriott.

Koerner looked from one to the other of the two young men.

"That's funny, Mr. Koerner," said Marriott, "that foot's cut off."

"I wish der tamn doctors cut off der rheumatiz' der same time! Dey cut off der foot all right, but dey leave der rheumatiz'." He turned the long stem of his pipe to his lips and puffed at it, and looked at the leg as if he were taking up a problem he was working on daily.

"Well, now, Mr. Koerner," said Marriott presently, "tell me

how it happened and I'll see if I can help you."

Koerner, just on the point of placing his pipe-stem between his long, loose, yellow teeth, stopped and looked intently at Marriott. Marriott saw at once from his expression that he had once more to contend with the suspicion the poor always feel when dealing with a lawyer.

"So you been Mr. Marriott, huh?" asked Koerner.

"Yes, I'm Marriott."

"Der lawyer?"

"Yes, the lawyer."

"You der one vot Miss Ward sent already, aind't it?"

"Yes, I'm the one." Marriott smiled, and then, thinking suddenly of an incontrovertible argument, he waved his hand at Dick. "This is her brother. She sent him to bring me here."

The old man looked at Dick, and then turned to Marriott again.

"How much you goin' charge me, huh?" His little hard blue eyes were almost closed.

"Oh, if I don't get any damages for you, I won't charge you anything."

The old man made him repeat this several times, and when at last he understood, he seemed relieved and pleased. And then he wished to know what the fee would be in the event of success.

"Oh," said Marriott, "how would one-fifth do?"

Koerner, when he grasped the idea of the percentage, was satisfied; the other lawyers who had come to see him had all

demanded a contingent fee of one-third or one-half. When the long bargaining was done and explained to Mrs. Koerner, who sat watchfully by trying to follow the conversation, and when Marriott had said that he would draw up a contract for them to sign and bring it when he came again, the old man was ready to go on with his story. But before he did so he paused with his immeasurable German patience to fill his pipe, and, when he had lighted it, he began.

"Vell, Mr. Marriott, ven I gom' on dis gountry, I go to vork for dot railroadt; I vork dere ever since—dot's t'irty-seven year now already." He paused and puffed, and slowly winked his eyes as he contemplated those thirty-seven years of toil. "I vork at first for t'irty tollar a month, den von day Mister Greene, dot's der suberintendent in dose tays, he call me in, undt he say, 'Koerner, you can read?' I say I read English some, undt he say, 'Vell, read dot,' undt he handt me a telegram. Vell I read him—it say dot Greene can raise der vages of his vatchman to forty tollar a month. Vell, I handt him der telegram back undt I say, 'I could read two t'ree more like dot, Mister Greene.' He laugh den undt he say, 'Vell, you read dot von twicet.' Vell, I got forty tollar a month den; undt in ten year dey raise me oncet again to forty-five. That's purty goodt, I t'ink." The old man paused in this retrospect of good fortune. "Vell," he went on, "I vork along, undt dey buildt der new shops, undt I vork like a dog getting dose t'ings moved, but after dey get all moved, he calls me in von tay, undt he say my vages would be reduced to forty tollar a month. Vell, I gan't

help dot—I haind't got no other chob. Den, vell, I vork along all right, but der town get bigger, an' der roadt got bigger, an' dere's so many men dere at night dey don't need me much longer. Undt Mr. Greene—he's lost his chob, too, undt Mr. Churchill—he's der new suberintendent—he's cut ever't'ing down, undt after he gom' eferbody vork longer undt get hell besides. He cut me down to vere I vas at der first blace—t'irty tollar a month. So!"

The old man turned out his palms; and his face wrinkled into a strange grimace that expressed his enforced submission to this fate. And he smoked on until Marriott roused him.

"Vell," he said, "dot night it snows, undt I start home again at five o'clock. It's dark undt the snow fly so I gan't hardly see der svitch lights. But I gom' across der tracks yust like I always do goming home—dot's the shortest way I gom', you know—undt I ben purty tired, undt my tanned old rheumatiz' he's raisin' hell for t'ree days because dot storm's comin'—vell, I gom' along beside dere segond track over dere, undt I see an engine, but he's goin' on dot main track, so I gets over—vell, de snow's fallin' undt I gan't see very well, undt somehow dot svitch-engine gom' over on der segond track, undt I chump to get away, but my foot he's caught in der frog—vell, I gan't move, but I bent vay over to one side—so"—the old man strained himself over the arm of his chair to illustrate—"undt der svitch-engine yust cut off my foot nice undt glean. Vell, dot's all der was aboutd it."

Marriott gave a little shudder; in a flash he had a vision of Koerner there in the wide switch-yard with its bewildering red

and green lights, the snow filling the air, the gloom of the winter twilight, his foot fast in the frog, bending far over to save his body, awaiting the switch-engine as it came stealing swiftly down on him.

"Did the engine whistle or ring its bell?"

"No," said the old man.

"And the frog—that was unblocked?"

Koerner leaned toward Marriott with a cunning smile.

"Dot's vere I got 'em, aind't it? Dot frog he's not blocked dere dot time; der law say dey block dose frog all der time, huh?"

"Yes, the frog must be blocked. But how did your foot get caught in the frog?"

"Vell, I shlipped, dot's it. I gan't see dot frog. You ask Charlie Drake; he's dere—he seen it."

"What does he do?" asked Marriott as he scribbled the name on an old envelope.

"He's a switchman in der yard; he tol' you all aboutt it; he seen it—he knows. He say to me, 'Reinhold, you get damage all right; dot frog haind't blocked dot time.'"

Just then the kitchen door opened and Gusta came in. When she saw Marriott and Ward, she stopped and leaned against the door; her face, ruddy from the cool air, suddenly turned a deeper red.

"Oh, Mr. Dick!" she said, and then she looked at Marriott, whom she had seen and served so often at the Wards'.

"How do you do, Gusta?" said Marriott, getting up and taking

her hand. She flushed deeper than ever as she came forward, and her blue eyes sparkled with pleasure. Dick, too, rose and took her hand.

"Hello, Gusta," he said, "how are you?"

"Oh, pretty well, Mr. Dick," she answered. She stood a moment, and then quietly began to unbutton her jacket and to draw the pins from her hat. Marriott, who had seen her so often at the Wards', concluded as she stood there before him that he had never realized how beautiful she was. She removed her wraps, then drew up a chair by her father and sat down, lifting her hands and smoothing the coils of her golden hair, touching them gently.

"You've come to talk over pa's case, haven't you, Mr. Marriott?"

"Yes," said Marriott.

"I'm glad of that," the girl said. "He has a good case, hasn't he?"

"I think so," said Marriott, and then he hastened to add the qualification that is always necessary in so unexact and whimsical a science as the law, "that is, it seems so now; I'll have to study it somewhat before I can give you a definite opinion."

"I think he ought to have big damages," said Gusta. "Why, just think! He's worked for that railroad all his life, and now to lose his foot!"

She looked at her father, her affection and sympathy showing in her expression. Marriott glanced at Dick, whose eyes were fixed on the girl. His lips were slightly parted; he gazed at her

boldly, his eyes following every curve of her figure. Her yellow hair was bright in the light, and the flush of her cheeks spread to her white neck. And Marriott, in the one moment he glanced at Dick, saw in his face another expression—an expression that displeased him; and as he recalled the resemblance to Elizabeth he thought he had noted, he impatiently put it away, and became angry with himself for ever imagining such a resemblance; he felt as if he had somehow done Elizabeth a wrong. All the while they were there Dick kept his bold gaze on Gusta, and presently Gusta seemed to feel it; the flush of her face and neck deepened, she grew ill at ease, and presently she rose and left the room.

When they were in the street Marriott said to Dick:

"I don't know about that poor old fellow's case—I'm afraid—"

"Gad!" said Dick. "Isn't Gusta a corker! I never saw a prettier girl."

"And you never noticed it before?" said Marriott.

"Why, I always knew she was good-looking, yes," said Dick; "but I never paid much attention to her when she worked for us. I suppose it was because she was a servant, don't you know? A man never notices the servants, someway."

VI

Ward had not been in the court-house for years, and, as he entered the building that morning, he hoped he might never be called there again if his mission were to be as sad as the one on which he then was bent. Eades had asked him to be there at ten o'clock; it was now within a quarter of the hour. With a layman's difficulty he found the criminal court, and as he glanced about the high-ceiled room, and saw that the boy had not yet been brought in, he felt the relief that comes from the postponement of an ordeal. With an effect of effacing himself, he shrank into one of the seats behind the bar, and as he waited his mind ran back over the events of the past four weeks. He calculated—yes, the flurry in the market had occurred on the day of the big snow-storm; and now, so soon, it had come to this! Ward marveled; he had always heard that the courts were slow, but this—this was quick work indeed! The court-room was almost empty. The judge's chair, cushioned in leather, was standing empty behind the high oaken desk. The two trial tables, across which day after day lawyers bandied the fate of human beings, were set with geometric exactness side by side, as if the janitors had fixed them with an eye to the impartiality of the law, resolved to give the next comers an even start. A clerk was writing in a big journal; the bailiff had taken a chair in the fading light of one of the tall southern windows, and in the leisure he could so

well afford in a life that was all leisure, was reading a newspaper. His spectacles failed to lend any glisten of interest to his eyes; he read impersonally, almost officially; all interest seemed to have died out of his life, and he could be stirred to physical, though never to mental activity, only by the judge himself, to whom he owed his sinecure. The life had long ago died out of this man, and he had a mild, passive interest in but one or two things, like the Civil War, and the judge's thirst, which he regularly slaked with drafts of ice-water.

Presently two or three young men entered briskly, importantly, and went at once unhesitatingly within the bar. They entered with an assertive air that marked them indubitably as young lawyers still conscious of the privileges so lately conferred. Then some of the loafers came in from the corridor and sidled into the benches behind the bar. Their conversation in low tones, and that of the young lawyers in the higher tones their official quality permitted them, filled the room with a busy interest. From time to time the loafers were joined by other loafers, and they all patiently waited for the sensation the criminal court could dependably provide.

It was not long before there was a scrape and shuffle of feet and a rattle of steel, and then a broad-shouldered man edged through the door. With his right hand he seized a Scotch cap from a head that bristled with a stubble of red hair. His left hand hung by his side, and when he had got into the court-room, Ward saw, that a white-haired man walked close beside him, his right

hand manacled to the left hand of the red-haired man. The red-haired man was Danner, the jailer. Behind him in sets of twos marched half a dozen other men, each set chained together. The rear of the little procession was brought up by Utter, a stalwart young man who was one of Danner's assistants.

The scrape of the feet that were so soon to shuffle into the penitentiary, and leave scarce an echo of their hopeless fall behind, roused every one in the court-room. Even the bailiff got to his rheumatic feet and hastily arranged a row of chairs in front of the trial tables. The prisoners sat down and tried to hide their manacles by dropping their hands between their chairs.

There were seven of these prisoners, the oldest the man whom Danner had conducted. He sat with his white head cast down, but his blue eyes roamed here and there, taking in the whole court-room. The other prisoners were young men, one of them a negro; and in the appearance of all there was some pathetic suggestion of a toilet. All of them had their hair combed carefully, except the negro, whose hair could give no perceptible evidence of the comb, unless it were the slight, almost invisible part that bisected his head. But he gave the same air of trying somehow to make the best appearance he was capable of on this eventful day.

Ward's eyes ran rapidly along the row, and rested on the brown-haired, well-formed head of the youngest of the group. He was scarcely more than a boy indeed, and he alone, of all the line, was well dressed. His linen was white, and he wore his well-fitting clothes with a certain vanity and air of style that even his

predicament could not divest him of. As Ward glanced at him, an expression of pain came to his face; the color left it for an instant, and then it grew redder than it had been before.

These prisoners were about to be sentenced for various felonies. Two of them, the old man with the white hair and the negro, had been tried, the one for pocket-picking, the other for burglary. The others were to change their pleas from not guilty to guilty and throw themselves on the mercy of the court. They sat there, whispering with one another, gazing about the room, and speculating on what fate awaited them, or, as they would have phrased it, what sentences they would draw. Like most prisoners they were what the laws define as "indigent," that is, so poor that they could not employ lawyers. The court in consequence had appointed counsel, and the young lawyers who now stood and joked about the fates that were presently to issue from the judge's chambers, were the counsel thus appointed. Now and then the prisoners looked at the lawyers, and some of them may have indulged speculations as to how that fate might have been changed—perhaps altogether avoided—had they been able to employ more capable attorneys. Those among them who had been induced by their young attorneys to plead guilty—under assurances that they would thus fare better than they would if they resisted the law by insisting on their rights under it—probably had not the imagination to divine that they might have fared otherwise at the hands of the law if these lawyers had not dreaded the trial as an ordeal almost as great to them as to their appointed

clients, or if they had not been so indigent themselves as to desire speedily to draw the fee the State would allow them for their services. Most of the prisoners, indeed, treated these young lawyers with a certain patience, if not forbearance, and now they relied on them for such mercy as the law might find in its heart to bestow. Most of them might have reflected, had they been given to the practice, that on former experiences they had found the breast of the law, as to this divine quality, withered and dry. They sat and glanced about, and now and then whispered, but for the most part they were still and dumb and hopeless. Meanwhile their lawyers discussed and compared them, declaring their faces to be hard and criminal; one of the young men thought a certain face showed particularly the marks of crime, and when his fellows discovered that he meant the face of Danner, they laughed aloud and had a good joke on the young man. The young man became very red, almost as red as Danner himself, whom, he begged, they would not tell of his mistake.

At that moment the door of the judge's chambers opened, and instant silence fell. McWhorter, the judge, appeared. He was a man of middle size, with black curly hair, smooth-shaven face, and black eyes that caught in the swiftest glance the row of prisoners, who now straightened and fixed their eyes on him. McWhorter advanced with a brisk step to the bench, mounted it, and nodding, said:

"You may open court, Mr. Bailiff."

The bailiff let his gavel fall on the marble slab, and then with

his head hanging, his eyes roving in a self-conscious, almost silly way, he said:

"Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye, this honorable court is now in session."

The bailiff sat down as in relief, but immediately got up again when the judge said:

"Bring me the criminal docket, Mr. Bailiff."

The bailiff's bent figure tottered out of the court-room. The court-room was very still; the ticking of the clock on the wall could be heard. The judge swung his chair about and glanced out of the windows. Never once did he permit his eyes to rest on the prisoners.

There was silence and waiting, and after a while the bailiff came with the docket. The judge opened the book, put on a pair of gold glasses, and, after a time, reading slowly, said:

"The State *versus* Patrick Delaney."

The white-haired prisoner patiently held out two hands, marvelously tattooed, and Danner unlocked the handcuffs. At the same moment one of the young lawyers stood forth from the rest, and Lamborn, an assistant prosecutor, rose.

McWhorter was studying the docket. Presently he said:

"Stand up, Delaney."

Delaney rose, kept his eyes on the floor, clasped a hand about his red wrist. Then, for the first time, the judge looked at him.

"Delaney," he said, "have you anything to say why the sentence of this court should not be passed upon you?"

Delaney looked uneasily at the judge and then let his eyes fall.

"No, Judge, yer Honor," he said, "nothing but that I'm an innocent man. I didn't do it, yer Honor."

The remark did not seem to impress the judge, who turned toward the lawyer. This young man, with a venturesome air, stepped a little farther from the sheltering company of his associates and, with a face that was very white and lips that faltered, said in a confused, hurried way:

"Your Honor, we hope your Honor'll be as lenient as possible with this man; we hope your Honor will be as-lenient as possible." The youth's voice died away and he faded back, as it were, into the shelter of his companions. The judge did not seem to be more impressed with what the lawyer had said than he had with what the client had said, and twirling his glasses by their cord, he turned toward the assistant prosecutor.

Lamborn, with an affectation of great ease, with one hand in the pocket of his creased trousers, the other supporting a book of memoranda, advanced and said:

"May it please the Court, this man is an habitual criminal; he has already served a term in the penitentiary for this same offense, and we understand that he is wanted in New York State at this present time. We consider him a dangerous criminal, and the State feels that he should be severely punished."

McWhorter studied the ceiling of the court-room a moment, still swinging his eye-glasses by their cord, and then, fixing them on his nose, looked wisely down at Delaney. Presently he spoke:

"It is always an unpleasant duty to sentence a man to prison, no matter how much he may deserve punishment." McWhorter paused as if to let every one realize his pain in this exigency, and then went on: "But it is our duty, and we can not shirk it. A jury, Delaney, after a fair trial, has found you guilty of burglary. It appears from what the prosecutor says that this is not the first time you have been found guilty of this offense; the experience does not seem to have done you any good. You impress the Court as a man who has abandoned himself to a life of crime, and the Court feels that you should receive a sentence in this instance that will serve as a warning to you and to others. The sentence of the Court is—" McWhorter paused as if to balance the scales of justice with all nicety, and then he looked away. He did not know exactly how many years in prison would expiate Delaney's crime; there was, of course, no way for him to tell. He thought first of the number ten, then of the number five; then, as the saying is, he split the difference, inclined the fraction to the prisoner and said:

"The sentence of the Court is that you be confined in the penitentiary at hard labor for the period of seven years, no part of your sentence to be in solitary confinement, and that you pay the costs of this prosecution."

Delaney sat down without changing expression and held out his hands for the handcuffs. The steel clicked, and the scratch of the judge's pen could be heard as he entered the judgment in the docket.

These proceedings were repeated again and again.

McWhorter read the title of the case, Danner unshackled the prisoner, who stood up, gazing dumbly at the floor, his lawyer asked the Court to be lenient, Lamborn asked the Court to be severe, McWhorter twirled his gold glasses, looked out of the window, made his little speech, guessed, and pronounced sentence. The culprit sat down, held out his hands for the manacles, then the click of the steel and the scratch of the judicial pen. It grew monotonous.

But just before the last man was called to book, John Eades, the prosecutor, entered the court-room. At sight of him the young lawyers, the loafers on the benches, even the judge looked up.

Eades's tall figure had not yet lost the grace of youth, though it was giving the first evidence that he had reached that period of life when it would begin to gather weight. He was well dressed in the blue clothes of a business man, and he was young enough at thirty-five to belong to what may not too accurately be called the new school of lawyers, growing up in a day when the law is changing from a profession to a business, in distinction from the passing day of long coats of professional black, of a gravity that frequently concealed a certain profligacy, and, wherever it was successful, of native brilliancy that could ignore application. Eades's dark hair was carefully parted above his smooth brow; he had rather heavy eyebrows, a large nose, and thin, tightly-set lips that gave strength and firmness to a clean-shaven face. He whispered a word to his assistant, and then said:

"May it please the Court, when the case of the State *versus*

Henry C. Graves is reached, I should like to be heard."

"The Court was about to dispose of that case, Mr. Eades," said the judge, looking over his docket and fixing his glasses on his nose.

"Very well," said Eades, glancing at the group of young attorneys. "Mr. Metcalf, I believe, represents the defendant."

The young lawyer thus indicated emerged from the group that seemed to keep so closely together, and said:

"Yes, your Honor, we'd like to be heard also."

"Graves may stand up," said the judge, removing his glasses and tilting back in his chair as if to listen to long arguments.

Danner had been unlocking the handcuffs again, and the young man who had been so frequently remarked in the line rose. His youthful face flushed scarlet; he glanced about the courtroom, saw Ward, drew a heavy breath, and then fixed his eyes on the floor.

Eades looked at Metcalf, who stepped forward and began:

"In this case, your Honor, we desire to withdraw the plea of not guilty and substitute a plea of guilty. And I should like to say a few words for my client."

"Proceed," said McWhorter.

Metcalf, looking at his feet, took two or three steps forward, and then, lifting his head, suddenly began:

"Your Honor, this is the first time this young man has ever committed any crime. He is but twenty-three years old, and he has always borne a good reputation in this community. He is the

sole support of a widowed mother, and—yes, he is the sole support of a widowed mother. He—a—has been for three years employed in the firm of Stephen Ward and Company, and has always until—a—this unfortunate affair enjoyed the confidence and esteem of his employers. He stands here now charged in the indictment with embezzlement; he admits his guilt. He has, as I say, never done wrong before—and I believe that this will be a lesson to him which he will not forget. He desires to throw himself on the mercy of the Court, and I ask the Court—to—a—be as lenient as possible."

"Has the State anything to say?" asked the judge.

"May it please the Court," said Eades, speaking in his low, studied tone, "we acquiesce in all that counsel for defense has said. This young man, so far as the State knows, has never before committed a crime. And yet, he has had the advantages of a good home, of an excellent mother, and he had the best prospects in life that a young man could wish. He was, as counsel has said, employed by Mr. Ward—who is here—" Eades turned half-way around and indicated Ward, who rose and felt that the time had come when he should go forward. "He was one of Mr. Ward's trusted employees. Unfortunately, he began to speculate on the Board himself, and it seems, in the stir of the recent excitement in wheat, appropriated some nine hundred dollars of his employer's money. Mr. Ward is not disposed to ideal harshly or in any vengeful spirit with this young man; he has shown, indeed, the utmost forbearance. Nor is the State disposed to deal in any such spirit with him; he, and especially his mother, have my sympathy."

But we feel that the law must be vindicated and upheld, and while the State is disposed to leave with the Court the fixing of such punishment as may be appropriate, and has no thought of suggesting what the Court's duty shall be, still the State feels that the punishment should be substantial."

Eades finished and seated himself at the counsel table. The young lawyers looked at him, and, whispering among themselves, said that they considered the speech to have been very fitting and appropriate under the circumstances.

McWhorter deliberated a moment, and then, glancing toward the young man, suddenly saw Ward, and, thinking that if Ward would speak he would have more time to guess what punishment to give the boy, he said:

"Mr. Ward, do you care to be heard?"

Ward hesitated, changed color, and slowly advanced. He was not accustomed to speaking in public, and this was an ordeal for him. He came forward, halted, and then, clearing his throat, said:

"I don't know that I have anything much to say, only this—that this is a very painful experience to me. I"—he looked toward the youthful culprit—"I was always fond of Henry; he was a good boy, and we all liked him." The brown head seemed to sink between its shoulders. "Yes, we all liked him, and I don't know that anything ever surprised me so much as this thing did, or hurt me more. I didn't think it of him. I feel sorry for his mother, too. I—" Ward hesitated and looked down at the floor.

The situation suddenly became distressing to every one in the

court-room. And then, with new effort, Ward went on: "I didn't like to have him prosecuted, but we employ a great many men, many of them young men, and it seemed to be my duty. I don't know; I've had my doubts. It isn't the money—I don't care about that; I'd be willing, so far as I'm concerned, to have him go free now. I hope, Judge, that you'll be as easy on him, as merciful as possible. That's about all I can say."

Ward sat down in the nearest chair, and the judge, knitting his brows, glanced out of the window. Nearly every one glanced out of the window, save Graves, who stood rigid, his eyes staring at the floor. Presently McWhorter turned and said:

"Graves, have you anything to say why the sentence of this court should not be passed on you?"

The youth raised his head, looked into McWhorter's eyes, and said:

"No, sir."

McWhorter turned suddenly and looked away.

"The Court does not remember in all his career a more painful case than this," he began. "That a young man of your training and connections, of your advantages and prospects, should be standing here at the bar of justice, a self-confessed embezzler, is sad, inexpressibly sad. The Court realizes that you have done a manly thing in pleading guilty; it speaks well for you that you were unwilling to add perjury to your other crime. The Court will take that into consideration." McWhorter nodded decisively.

"The Court will also take into consideration your youth, and

the fact that this is your first offense. Your looks are in your favor. You are a young man who, by proper, sober, industrious application, might easily become a successful, honest, worthy citizen. Your employer speaks well of you, and shows great patience, great forbearance; he is ready to forgive you, and he even asks the Court to be merciful. The Court will take that fact into consideration as well."

Again McWhorter nodded decisively, and then, feeling that much was due to a man of Ward's position, went on:

"The Court wishes to say that you, Mr. Ward," he gave one of his nods in that gentleman's direction, "have acted the part of a good citizen in this affair. You have done your duty, as every citizen should, painful as it was. The Court congratulates you."

And then, having thought again of the painfulness of this duty, McWhorter went on to tell how painful his own duty was; but he said it would not do to allow sympathy to obscure judgment in such cases. He talked at length on this theme, still unable to end, because he did not know what sort of guess to make. And then he began to discuss the evils of speculation, and when he saw that the reporters were scribbling desperately to put down all he was saying, he extended his remarks and delivered a long homily on speculation in certain of its forms, characterizing it as one of the worst and most prevalent vices of the day. After he had said all he could think of on this topic, he spoke to Graves again, and explained to him the advantages of being in the penitentiary, how by his behavior he might shorten his sentence by several

months, and how much time he would have for reflection and for the formation of good resolutions. It seemed, indeed, before he had done, that it was almost a deprivation not to be able to go to a penitentiary. But finally he came to an end. Then he looked once more out of the window, once more twirled his eye-glasses on their cord, and then, turning about, came to the reserved climax of his long address.

"The sentence of the Court, Mr. Graves, is that you be confined in the penitentiary at hard labor for the term of one year, no part of said sentence to consist of solitary confinement, and that you pay the costs of this prosecution."

The boy sat down, held out his wrists for the handcuffs, the steel clicked, the pen scratched in the silence.

Danner got up, marshaled his prisoners, and they marched out. The eyes of every one in the court-room followed them, the eyes of Ward fixed on Graves. As he looked, he saw a woman sitting on the last one of the benches near the door. Her head was bowed on her hand, but as the procession passed she raised her face, all red and swollen with weeping, and, with a look of love and tenderness and despair, fixed her eyes on Graves. The boy did not look at her, but marched by, his head resolutely erect.

VII

Ward returned to his office and to his work, but all that day, in the excitement on the floor of the exchange, during luncheon at the club, at his desk, in his carriage going home at evening, he saw before him that row of heads—the white poll of old Delaney, the woolly pate of the negro, but, more than all, the brown head of Harry Graves. And when he entered his home at evening the sadness of his reflections was still in his face.

"What's the matter this evening?" asked Elizabeth. "Nerves?"

"Yes."

"Been on the wrong side to-day?"

"Yes, decidedly, I fear," said Ward.

"What do you mean?"

"I've sent a boy to the penitentiary." Ward felt a kind of relief, the first he had felt all that day, in dealing thus bluntly, thus brutally, with himself. Elizabeth knit her brows, and her eyes winked rapidly in the puzzled expression that came to them.

"You remember Harry Graves?" asked her father.

"Oh, that young man?"

"Yes, that young man. Well, I've sent him to the penitentiary."

"What is that you say, Stephen?" asked Mrs. Ward, coming just then into the room. She had heard his words, but she wished to hear them again.

"I just said I'd sent Harry Graves to the penitentiary."

"For how long?" asked Mrs. Ward, with a judicial desire for all the facts, usually unnecessary in her judgments.

"For one year."

"Why, how easily he got off!" said Mrs. Ward. "And do hurry now, Stephen. You're late."

Elizabeth saw the pain her mother had been so unconscious of in her father's face, and she gave Ward a little pat on the shoulder.

"You dear old goose," she said, "to feel that way about it. Of course, you didn't send him—it was John Eades. That's his business."

But Ward shook his head, unconvinced.

"Doubtless it will be a good thing for the young man," said Mrs. Ward. "He has only himself to blame, anyway."

But still Ward shook his head, and his wife looked at him with an expression that showed her desire to help him out of his gloomy mood.

"You know you could have done nothing else than what you did do," she said. "Criminals must be punished; there is no way out of it. You're morbid—you shouldn't feel so."

But once more Ward gave that unconvinced shake of the head, and sighed.

"See here," said Elizabeth, with the sternness her father liked to have her employ with him, "you stop this right away." She shook him by the shoulder. "You make me feel as if I had done something wrong myself; you'll have us all feeling that we belong to the criminal classes ourselves."

"I've succeeded in making myself feel like a dog," Ward replied.

VIII

The county jail was in commotion. In the street outside a patrol wagon was backed against the curb. The sleek coats of its bay horses were moist with mist; and as the horses stamped fretfully in the slush, the driver, muffled in his policeman's overcoat, spoke to them, begging them to be patient, and each time looked back with a clouded face toward the outer door of the jail. This door, innocent enough with its bright oak panels and ground glass, was open. Inside, beyond the vestibule, beyond another oaken door, stood Danner. He was in black, evidently his dress for such occasions. He wore new, squeaking shoes, and his red face showed the powder a barber had put on it half an hour before. On his desk lay his overcoat, umbrella, and a small valise. The door of the glass case on the wall, wherein were displayed all kinds of handcuffs, nippers, squeezers, come-alongs and leather strait-jackets, together with an impressive exhibit of monstrous steel keys, was open, and several of its brass hooks were empty. Danner, as he stood in the middle of the room, looked about as if to assure himself that he had forgotten nothing, and then went to the window, drew out a revolver, broke it at the breach, and carefully inspected its loads. That done, he snapped the revolver together and slipped it into the holster that was slung to a belt about his waist. He did not button the coat that concealed this weapon. Then he looked through the window, saw the patrol

wagon, took out his watch and shouted angrily:

"For God's sake, Hal, hurry up!"

Danner's impatient admonition seemed to be directed through the great barred door that opened off the other side of the office into the prison, and from within there came the prompt and propitiatory reply of the underling:

"All right, Jim, in a minute."

The open door, the evident preparation, the spirit of impending change, the welcome break in the monotony of the jail's diurnal routine, all were evidenced in the tumult that was going on beyond that huge gate of thick steel bars. The voice of the under-turnkey had risen above the din of other voices proceeding from the depths of hidden cells; there was a constant shuffle of feet on cement floors, the rattle of keys, the heavy tumbling of bolts, the clang and grating of steel as the shifting of a lever opened and closed simultaneously all the doors of an entire tier of cells. These noises seemed to excite the inmates, but presently above the discord arose human cries, a chorus of good-bys, followed in a moment by those messages that conventionally accompany all departures, though these were delivered in all the various shades of sarcasm and bitter irony.

"Good-by!"

"Remember us to the main screw!"

"Think of us when you get to the big house!"

Thus the voices called.

And then suddenly, one voice rose above the rest, a fine

barytone voice that would have been beautiful had not it taken on a tone of mockery as it sang:

"We're going home! We're going home!

No more to sin and sorrow."

Then other voices took up the lines they had heard at the Sunday services, and bawled the hymn in a horrible chorus. The sound infuriated Danner, and he rushed to the barred door and shouted:

"Shut up! Shut up!" and he poured out a volume of obscene oaths. From inside came yells, derisive in the safety of anonymity.

"You'll get nothing but bread and water for supper after that!" Danner shouted back. He began to unlock the door, but, glancing at the desk, changed his mind and turned and paced the floor.

But now the noise of the talking, the shuffle of feet on the concrete floors, came nearer. The door of the prison was unlocked; it swung back, and there marched forth, walking sidewise, with difficulty, because they were all chained together, thirteen men. Two of the thirteen, the first and last, were Gregg and Poole, under-turnkeys. Utter, Danner's first assistant, came last, carefully locking the door behind him.

"Line up here," said Danner angrily, "we haven't got all night!"

The men stood in a row, and Danner, leaning over his desk, began to check off their names. There was the white-haired Delaney, who had seven years for burglary; Johnson, a negro who had been given fifteen years for cutting with intent to kill;

Simmons, five years for grand larceny; Gunning, four years for housebreaking; Schypalski, a Pole, three years for arson; Graves, the employee of Ward, one year for embezzlement; McCarthy, and Hayes his partner, five years each for burglary and larceny; "Deacon" Samuel, an old thief, and "New York Willie," alias "The Kid," a pickpocket, who had each seven years for larceny from the person; and Brice, who had eight years for robbery. These men were to be taken to the penitentiary. Nearly all of them were guilty of the crimes of which they had been convicted.

The sheriff had detailed Danner to escort these prisoners to the penitentiary, as he sometimes did when he did not care to make the trip himself. Gregg would accompany Danner, while Poole would go only as far as the railway station. Danner was anxious to be off; these trips to the state capital were a great pleasure to him, and he had that nervous dread of missing the train which comes over most people as they are about to start away for a holiday. He was anxious to get away from the jail before anything happened to stay him; he was anxious to be on the moving train, for until then he could not feel himself safe from some sudden recall. He had been thinking all day of the black-eyed girl in a brothel not three blocks from the penitentiary, whom he expected to see that night after he had turned the prisoners over to the warden. He could scarcely keep his mind off her long enough to make his entries in the jail record and to see that he had all his mittimus in proper order.

The prisoners, standing there in a haggard row, wore the same

clothes they had had on when they appeared in court for sentence a few weeks before; the same clothes they had had on when arrested. None of them, of course, had any baggage. The little trinkets they had somehow accumulated while in jail they had distributed that afternoon among their friends who remained behind in the steel cages; all they had in the world they had on their backs. Most of them were dressed miserably. Gunning, indeed, who had been lying in jail since the previous June, wore a straw hat, which made him so absurd that the Kid laughed when he saw him, and said:

"That's a swell lid you've got on there, Gunny, my boy. I'm proud to fill in with your mob."

Gunning tried to smile, and his face, already white with the prison pallor, seemed to be made more ghastly by the mockery of mirth.

The Kid was well dressed, as well dressed as Graves, who still wore the good clothes he had always loved. Graves was white, too, but not as yet with the prison pallor. He tried to bear himself bravely; he did not wish to break down before his companions, all of whom had longer sentences to serve than he. He dreaded the ride through the familiar streets where a short time before he had walked in careless liberty, full of the joy and hope and ambition of youth. He knew that countless memories would stalk those streets, rising up unexpectedly at every corner, following him to the station with mows and jeers; he tried to bear himself bravely, and he did succeed in bearing himself grimly, but he

had an aching lump in his throat that would not let him speak. It had been there ever since that hour in the afternoon when his mother had squeezed her face between the bars of his cell to kiss him good-by again and again. The prison had been strangely still while she was there, and for a long time after she went even the Kid had been quiet and had forgotten his joshing and his ribaldry. Graves had tried to be brave for his mother's sake, and now he tried to be brave for appearances' sake. He envied Delaney and the negro, who took it all stolidly, and he might have envied the Kid, who took it all humorously, if it had not been for what the Kid had said to him that afternoon about his own mother. But now the Kid was cheerful again, and kept up the spirits of all of them. To Graves it was like some horrible dream; everything in the room—Danner, the turnkeys, the exhibit of jailer's instruments on the wall—was unreal to him—everything save the hat-band that hurt his temples, and the aching lump in his throat. His eyes began to smart, his vision was blurred; instinctively he started to lift his hand to draw his hat farther down on his forehead, but something jerked, and Schypalski moved suddenly; then he remembered the handcuffs. The Pole was dumb under it all, but Graves knew how Schypalski had felt that afternoon when the young wife whom he had married but six months before was there; he had wept and grown mad until he clawed at the bars that separated them, and then he had mutely pressed his face against them and kissed the young wife's lips, just as Graves's mother had kissed him. And then the young wife

would not leave, and Danner had to come and drag her away across the cement floor.

Johnson was stupefied; he had not known until that afternoon that he was to be taken away so soon, and his wife had not known; she was to bring the children on the next day to see him. For an hour Johnson had been on the point of saying something; his lips would move, and he would lift his eyes to Danner, but he seemed afraid to speak.

Meanwhile, Danner was making his entries and looking over his commitment papers. The Kid had begun to talk with Deacon Samuel. He and the Deacon had been working together and had been arrested for the same crime, but Danner had separated them in the jail so they could not converse, and they were together now for the first time since their arrest. The Kid bent his body forward and leaned out of the line to look down at the Deacon. The old thief was smooth-faced and wore gold-rimmed spectacles. When the Kid caught his mild, solemn eye, looking out benignly from behind his glasses, a smile spread over his face, and he said:

"Well, old pard, we're fixed for the next five-spot."

"Yes," said the Deacon.

"How was it pulled off for you?" asked the Kid.

"Oh, it was the same old thing over again," replied the Deacon. "They had us lagged before the trial, but they had to make a flash of some kind, so they put up twelve suckers and then they put a rapper up, and that settled it."

"There was nothing to it," said the Kid, in a tone that

acquiesced in all the Deacon had been saying. "It was that way with me. They were out chewing the rag for five minutes, then they comes in, hands the stiff to the old bloke in the rock, and he hands it to quills, who reads it to me, and then the old punk-hunter made his spiel."

"Did he?" said the Deacon, interested. "He didn't to me; he just slung it at me in a lump."

"Did Snaggles plant the slum?"

"Naw," said the Deacon, "the poke was cold and the thimble was a phoney."

"Je's," exclaimed the Kid. "I never got wise! Well, then there was no chance for him to spring us."

"No."

"It's tough to fall for a dead one," mused the Kid.

The other prisoners had been respectfully silent while these two thieves compared notes, but their conversation annoyed Danner. He could not understand what they were saying, and this angered him, and besides, their talking interfered with his entries, for he was excessively stupid.

"They gave me a young mouthpiece," the Kid was beginning, when Danner raised his head and said:

"Now you fellows cut that out, do you hear? I want to get my work done and start."

"I beg your pardon, papa," said the Kid; "we're anxious to start, too. Did you engage a lower berth for me?"

The line of miserable men laughed, not with mirth so much

as for the sake of any diversion, and at the laugh Danner's face and neck colored a deeper red. The Kid saw this change in color and went on:

"Please don't laugh, gentlemen; you're disturbing the main screw." And then, lifting his eyebrows, he leaned forward a little and said: "Can't I help you, papa?"

Danner paid no attention, but he was rapidly growing angry.

"I'd be glad to sling your ink for you, papa," the Kid went on, "and anyway you'd better splice yourself in the middle of the line before we start, or you might get lost. You know you're not used to traveling or to the ways of the world—"

"Cheese it, Kid," said the Deacon warningly. But the spirit of devilry which he had never been able to resist, and indeed had never tried very hard to resist, was upon the Kid, and he went on:

"Deac, pipe the preacher clothes! And the brand new kicks, and the mush! They must have put him on the nut for ten ninety-eight."

"He'll soak you with a sap if you don't cheese it," said the Deacon.

"Oh, no, a nice old pappy guy like him wouldn't, would you?" the Kid persisted. "He knows I'm speaking for his good. I want him to chain himself to us so's he won't get lost; if he'd get away and fall off the rattler, he'd never catch us again."

"Well, I could catch you all right," said Danner, stopping and looking up.

"Why, my dear boy," said the Kid, "you couldn't track an

elephant through the snow."

The line laughed again, even the under-turnkeys could not repress their smiles. But Danner made a great effort that showed in the changing hues of scarlet that swept over his face, and he choked down his anger. He put on his overcoat and picked up his satchel, and said:

"Come on, now."

Utter unlocked the outer doors, and the line of men filed out.

"Good-by, Bud," the Kid called to Utter. "If you ever get down to the dump, look me up."

The others bade Utter good-by, for they all liked him, and as the line shuffled down the stone steps the men eagerly inhaled the fresh air they had not breathed for weeks, save for the few minutes consumed in going over to the court-house and back, and a thrill of gladness momentarily ran through the line. Then the Kid called out:

"Hold on, Danner!"

He halted suddenly, and so jerked the whole line to an abrupt standstill. "I've left my mackintosh in my room!"

"If you don't shut up, I'll smash your jaw!"

The Kid's laugh rang out in the air.

"Yes, that'd be just about your size!" he said.

Danner turned quickly toward the Kid, but just at that instant a dark fluttering form flew out of the misty gloom and enveloped Schypalski; it was his wife, who had been waiting all the afternoon outside the jail. She clung to the Pole, who was as

surprised as any of them, and she wept and kissed him in her Slavonic fashion,—wept and kissed as only the Slavs can weep and kiss. Then Danner, when he realized what had occurred, seized her and flung her aside.

"You damn bitch!" he said. "I'll show you!"

"That's right, Danner," said the Kid. "You've got some one your size now! Soak her again."

Danner whirled, his anger loose now, and struck the Kid savagely in the face. The line thrilled through its entire length; wild, vague hopes of freedom suddenly blazed within the breasts of these men, and they tugged at the chains that bound them. Utter, watching from the door, ran down the walk, and Danner drew his revolver.

"Get into that wagon!" he shouted, and then he hurled after them another mouthful of the oaths he always had ready. The little sensation ended, the hope fell dead, and the prisoners moved doggedly on. In a second the Kid had recovered himself, and then, speaking thickly, for the blood in his mouth, he said in a low voice:

"Danner, you coward, I'll serve you out for that, if I get the chair for it!"

It was all still there in the gloom and the misty rain, save for the shuffle of the feet, the occasional click of a handcuff chain, and presently the sobbing of the Polish woman rising from the wet ground. Danner hustled his line along, and a moment later they were clambering up the steps of the patrol wagon.

"Well, for God's sake!" exclaimed the driver, "I thought you'd never get here! Did you want to keep these horses standing out all night in the wet?"

The men took their seats inside, those at the far end having to hold their hands across the wagon because they were chained together, and the wagon jolted and lurched as the driver started his team and went bowling away for the station. The Pole was weeping.

"The poor devil!" said the pickpocket. "That's a pretty little broad he has. Can't you fellows do something for him? Give him a cigarette—or—a chew—or—something." Their resources of comfort were so few that the Kid could think of nothing more likely.

Just behind the patrol wagon came a handsome brougham, whose progress for an instant through the street which saw so few equipages of its rank had been stayed by the patrol wagon, moving heavily about before it started. The occupants of the brougham had seen the line come out of the jail, had seen it halt, had seen Danner fling the Polish woman aside and strike the pickpocket in the face; they had seen the men hustled into the patrol wagon, and now, as it followed after, Elizabeth Ward heard a voice call impudently:

"All aboard for the stir!"

IX

The patrol wagon bowled rapidly onward, and the brougham followed rapidly behind. The early darkness of the winter afternoon was enveloping the world, and in the damp and heavy air the roar of the city was intensified. The patrol wagon turned into Franklin Street and disappeared in the confusion of vehicles. The street was crowded; enormous trucks clung obstinately to the car tracks and only wrenched themselves away when the clamor of the gongs became desperate, their drivers swearing at the motormen, flinging angry glances at them. The trolley-cars swept by, filled with shop-girls, clerks, working-men, business men hanging to straps, reading evening papers in the brilliant electric lights; men clung to the broad rear platforms; at every crossing others attached themselves to these dark masses of humanity, swarming like insects. The sidewalks were crowded, and, as far as one could see, umbrellas balanced in the glistening mist.

The brougham of the Wards succeeded presently in crossing Franklin Street.

"They were taking them to the penitentiary!" said Elizabeth, speaking for the first time.

"I presume they were," said her mother.

"Harry Graves was among them," Elizabeth went on, staring widely before her, her tone low and level.

Mrs. Ward turned her head.

"I saw his face—it stood out among the rest. I can never forget it!"

She sat with her gloved hands in her lap. Her mother did not speak, but she looked at her.

"And that man—that big, brutal man, throwing that woman down, and then striking that man in the face!"

Mrs. Ward, not liking to encourage her daughter's mood, did not speak.

"Oh, it makes me sick!"

Elizabeth stretched forth her hand, drew a cut-glass bottle from its case beside the little carriage clock and mirror, and, sinking back in her cushioned corner, inhaled the stimulating odor of the salts. Then her mother stiffened and said:

"I don't know what Barker means, driving us down this way where we have to endure such sights. You must control yourself, dear, and not allow disagreeable things to get on your nerves."

"But think of that poor boy, and the man who was struck, and that woman!"

"Probably they can not feel as keenly as—"

"And think of all those men! Oh, their faces! Their faces! I can never forget them!"

Elizabeth continued to inhale the salts, her mind deeply intent on the scene she had just witnessed. They were drawing near to Claybourne Avenue now, and Mrs. Ward's spirits visibly improved at the sight of its handsome lamp posts and the carriages flashing by, their rubber tires rolling softly on the wet

asphalt.

"Well," she exclaimed, settling back on the cushions, "this is better! I don't know what Barker was thinking of! He's very stupid at times!"

The carriage joined the procession of other equipages of its kind. They had left the street at the end of which could be seen the court-house and the jail. The jail was blazing now with light, its iron bars showing black across its illumined windows. And beyond the jail, as if kept at bay by it, a huddle of low buildings stretched crazily along Mosher's Lane, a squalid street that preserved in irony the name of one of the city's earliest, richest and most respectable citizens, long since deceased. The Lane twinkled with the bright lights of saloons, the dim lights of pawnshops, the red lights of brothels—the slums, dark, foul, full of disease and want and crime. Along the streets passed and repassed shadowy, fugitive forms, negroes, Jews, men, and women, and children, ragged, unkempt, pinched by cold and hunger. But above all this, above the turmoil of Franklin Street and the reeking life of the slums behind it, above the brilliantly lighted jail, stood the court-house, gray in the dusk, its four corners shouldering out the sky, its low dome calmly poised above the town.

X

"And how is your dear mother?" Miss Masters turned to Eades and wrought her wry face into a smile. Her black eyes, which she seemed able to make sparkle at will, were fixed on him; her black-gloved hands were crossed primly in her lap, as she sat erect on the stiff chair Elizabeth Ward had given her.

"She's pretty well, thanks," said Eades. He had always disliked Miss Masters, but he disliked her more than ever this Sunday afternoon in April when he found her at the Wards'. It was a very inauspicious beginning of his spring vacation, to which, after his hard work of the winter term, he had looked forward with sentiments as tender as the spring itself, just beginning to show in the sprightly green that dotted the maple trees along Claybourne Avenue.

"And your sister?"

"She is very well, too."

"Dear me!" the ugly little woman ran on, speaking with the affectation she had cultivated for years enough to make it natural at last to her. "It has been so long since I've seen either of them! I told mama to-day that I didn't go to see even my old friends any more. Of course," she added, lowering her already low tone to a level of hushed deprecation, "we never go to see any of the new-comers; and lately there are so many, one hardly knows the old town. Still, I feel that we of the old families understand each

other and are sufficient unto ourselves, as it were, even if we allow years to elapse without seeing each other—don't you, dear?" She turned briskly toward Elizabeth.

Eades had hoped to find Elizabeth alone, and he felt it to be peculiarly annoying that Miss Masters, whose exclusiveness kept her from visiting even her friends of the older families, should have chosen for her exception this particular Sunday afternoon out of all the other Sunday afternoons at her command. He had found it impossible to talk with Elizabeth in the way he had expected to talk to her, and he was so out of sorts that he could not talk to Miss Masters, though that maiden aristocrat of advancing years, strangely stimulated by his presence, seemed efficient enough to do all the talking herself.

Elizabeth was trying to find a position that would give her comfort, without denoting any lapse from the dignity of posture due a family that had been known in that city for nearly fifty years. But repose was impossible to her that afternoon, and she nervously kept her hands in motion, now grasping the back of her chair, now knitting them in her lap, now raising one to her brow; once she was on the point of clasping her knee, but this impulse frightened her so that she quickly pressed her belt down, drew a deep breath, resolutely sat erect, crossed her hands unnaturally in her lap, and smiled courageously at her visitors. Eades noted how firm her hands were, and how white; they were indicative of strength and character. She held her head a little to one side, keeping up her pale smile of interest for Miss Masters, and Eades

thought that he should always think of her as she sat thus, in her soft blue dress, her eyes winking rapidly, her dark hair parting of its own accord.

"And how do you like your new work, Mr. Eades?" Miss Masters was asking him, and then, without waiting for a reply, she went on: "Do you know, I believe I have not seen you since your election to congratulate you. But we've been keeping watch; we have seen what the papers said."

She smiled suggestively, and Eades inclined his head to acknowledge her tribute.

"I think we are to be congratulated on having you in that position. I think it is very encouraging to find some of our *best* people in public office."

There was a tribute surely in the emphasis she placed on the adjective, and Eades inclined his head again.

"I really think it was noble in you to accept. It must be very disagreeable to be brought in contact with—you know!" She smiled and nodded as if she could not speak the word. "And you have been so brave and courageous through it all—you are surely to be admired!"

Eades felt suddenly that Miss Masters was not so bad after all; he relished this appreciation, which he took as an evidence of the opinion prevailing in the best circles. He recalled a conversation he had lately had with Elizabeth on this very subject, and, with a sudden impulse to convict her, he said:

"I'm afraid Miss Ward will hardly agree with you."

Miss Masters turned to Elizabeth with an expression of incredulity and surprise.

"Oh, I am sure—" she began.

"I believe she considers me harsh and cruel," Eades went on, smiling, but looking intently at Elizabeth.

"Oh, Mr. Eades is mistaken," she said; "I'm sure I agree with all the nice things that are said of him."

She detested the weakness of her quick retreat; and she detested more the immediate conviction that it came from a certain fear of Eades. She was beginning to feel a kind of mastery in his mere presence, so that when she was near him she felt powerless to oppose him. The arguments she always had ready for others, or for him—when he was gone—seemed invariably to fail her when he was near; she had even gone to the length of preparing them in advance for him, but when he came, when she saw him, she could not even state them, and when she tried, they seemed so weak and puerile and ineffectual as to deserve nothing more serious than the tolerant smile with which he received and disposed of them. And now, as this weakness came over her, she felt a fear, not for any of her principles, which, after all, were but half-formed and superficial, but a fear for herself, for her own being, and she was suddenly grateful for Miss Masters's presence. Still, Eades and Miss Masters seemed to be waiting, and she must say something.

"It's only this," she said. "Not long ago I saw officers taking some prisoners to the penitentiary. I can never forget the faces

of those men."

Over her sensitive countenance there swept the memory of a pain, and she had the effect of sinking in her straight chair. But Eades was gazing steadily at her, a smile on his strong face, and Miss Masters was saying:

"But, dear me! The penitentiary is the place for such people, isn't it, Mr. Eades?"

"I think so," said Eades. His eyes were still fixed on Elizabeth, and she looked away, groping in her mind for some other subject. Just then the hall bell rang.

Elizabeth was glad, for it was Marriott, and as she took his hand and said simply, "Ah, Gordon," the light faded from Eades's face.

Marriott's entrance dissolved the situation of a moment before. He brought into the drawing-room, dimming now in the fading light, a new atmosphere, something of the air of the spring. Miss Masters greeted him with a manner divided between a certain distance, because Marriott had not been born in that city, and a certain necessary approach to his mere deserts as a man. Marriott did not notice this, but dropped on to the divan. Elizabeth had taken a more comfortable chair. Marriott, plainly, was not in the formal Sunday mood, just as he was not in the formal Sunday dress. He had taken in Eades's frock-coat and white waistcoat at a glance, and then looked down at his own dusty boots.

"I've been hard at work to-day, Elizabeth," he said, turning to

her with a smile.

"Working! You must remember the Sabbath day to keep it—"

"The law wasn't made for lawyers, was it, John?" He appealed suddenly to Eades, whose conventionality he always liked to shock, and Elizabeth smiled, and Eades became very dignified.

"I've been out to see our old friends, the Koerners," Marriott went on.

"Oh, tell me about them!" said Elizabeth, leaning forward with eager interest. "How is Gusta?"

"Gusta's well, and prettier than ever. Jove! What a beauty that girl is!"

"Isn't she pretty?" said Elizabeth. "She was a delight in the house for that very reason. And how is poor old Mr. Koerner—and all of them?"

"Well," said Marriott, "Koerner's amputated leg is all knotted up with rheumatism."

Miss Masters's dark face was pinched in a scowl.

"And Archie's in jail."

"In jail!" Elizabeth dropped back in her chair.

"Yes, in jail."

"Why! What for?"

"Well, he seems to belong to a gang that was arrested day before yesterday for something or other."

"There, Mr. Eades," said Elizabeth suddenly, "there now, you must let Archie Koerner go."

"Oh, I'll not let John get a chance at him," said Marriott. "He's

charged with a misdemeanor only—he'll go to the workhouse, if he goes anywhere."

"And you'll defend him?"

"Oh, I suppose so," said Marriott wearily. "You've given me a whole family of clients, Elizabeth. I went out to see the old man about his case—I think we'll try it early this term."

"These Koerners are a family in whom I've been interested," Elizabeth suddenly thought to explain to Miss Masters, and then she told them of Gusta, of old Koerner's accident, and of Archie's career as a soldier.

"They've had a hard winter of it," said Marriott "The old man, of course, can't work, and Archie, by his experience as a soldier, seems to have been totally unfitted for everything—except shooting—and shooting is against the law."

Now that the conversation had taken this turn, Miss Masters moved to go. She bade Marriott farewell coldly, and Eades warmly, and Elizabeth went with her into the hall. Eades realized that all hope of a tête-à-tête with Elizabeth had departed, and he and Marriott not long afterward left to walk down town together. The sun was warm for the first time in months, and the hope of the spring had brought the people out of doors. Claybourne Avenue was crowded with carriages in which families solemnly enjoyed their Sunday afternoon drives, as they had enjoyed their stupefying dinners of roast beef four hours before. Electric automobiles purred past, and now and then a huge touring car, its driver in his goggles resembling some demon, plunged savagely

along, its horn honking hoarsely at every street crossing. The sidewalks were thronged with pedestrians, young men whose lives had no other diversion than to parade in their best clothes or stand on dusty down-town corners, smoke cigars and watch the girls that tilted past.

"That Miss Masters is a fool," said Marriott, when they had got away from the house.

"Yes, she is," Eades assented. "She was boring Miss Ward to death."

"Poor Elizabeth!" said Marriott with a little laugh. "She is so patient, and people do afflict her so."

Eades did not like the way in which Marriott could speak of Elizabeth, any more than he liked to hear Elizabeth address Marriott as Gordon.

"I see the *Courier* gave you a fine send-off this morning," Marriott went on. "What a record you made! Not a single acquittal the whole term!"

Eades made no reply. He was wondering if Elizabeth had seen the *Courier's* editorial. In the morning he thought he would send her a bunch of violets, and Tuesday—

"Your course is most popular," Marriott went on. And Eades looked at him; he could not always understand Marriott, and he did not like to have him speak of his course as if he had deliberately chosen it as a mere matter of policy.

"It's the right course," he said significantly.

"Oh, I suppose so," Marriott replied. "Still—I really can't

congratulate you when I think of those poor devils—"

"I haven't a bit of sympathy for them," said Eades coldly. This, he thought, was where Elizabeth got those strange, improper notions. Marriott should not be permitted—

Just then, in an automobile tearing by, they saw Dick Ward, and Eades suddenly recalled a scene he had witnessed in the club the day before.

"That young fellow's going an awful gait," he said suddenly.

"Who, Dick?"

"Yes, I saw him in the club yesterday—"

"I know," said Marriott. "It's a shame. He's a nice little chap."

"Can't you do something for him? He seems to like you."

"What can I do?"

"Well, can't you—speak to him?"

"I never could preach," said Marriott.

"Well," said Eades helplessly, "it's too bad."

"Yes," said Marriott; "it would break their hearts—Ward's and Elizabeth's."

XI

The Koerners, indeed, as Marriott said, had had a hard winter. The old man, sustained at first by a foolish optimism, had expected that his injury would be compensated immediately by heavy damages from the railroad he had served so long. Marriott had begun suit, and then the law began the slow and wearisome unfolding of its interminable delays. Weeks and months went by and nothing was done. Koerner sent for Marriott, and Marriott explained—the attorneys for the railroad company had filed a demurrer, the docket was full, the case would not be reached for a long time. Koerner could not understand; finally, he began to doubt Marriott; some of his neighbors, with the suspicion natural to the poor, hinted that Marriott might have been influenced by the company. Koerner's leg, too, gave him incessant pain. All winter long he was confined to the house, and the family grew tired of his monotonous complainings. To add to this, Koerner was now constantly dunned by the surgeon and by the authorities of the hospital; the railroad refused to pay these bills because Koerner had brought suit; the bills, to a frugal German like Koerner, were enormous, appalling.

The Koerners, a year before, had bought the house in which they lived, borrowing the money from a building and loan association. The agent of the association, who had been so kind and obliging before the mortgage was signed, was now sharp and

severe; he had lately told Koerner that unless he met the next instalment of interest he would set the family out in the street.

Koerner had saved some money from his wages, small as they were; but this was going fast. During the winter Mrs. Koerner, though still depressed and ill, had begun to do washings; the water, splashing over her legs from the tubs in the cold woodshed day after day, had given her rheumatism. Gusta helped, of course, but with all they could do it was hard to keep things going. Gusta tried to be cheerful, but this was the hardest work of all; she often thought of the pleasant home of the Wards, and wished she were back there. She would have gone back, indeed, and given her father her wages, but there was much to do at home—the children to look after, the house to keep, the meals to get, the washings to do, and her father's leg to dress. Several times she consulted Marriott about the legal entanglements into which the family was being drawn; Marriott was wearied with the complications—the damage suit, the mortgage, the threatened actions for the doctor's bills. The law seemed to be snarling the Koerners in every one of its meshes, and the family was settling under a Teutonic melancholia.

Just at this time the law touched the family at another point—Archie was arrested. For a while he had sought work, but his experience in the army had unfitted him for every normal calling; he had acquired a taste for excitement and adventure, and no peaceful pursuit could content him. He would not return to the army because he had too keen a memory of the indignities

heaped on a common soldier by officers who had been trained from youth to an utter disregard of all human relations save those that were unreal and artificial. He had learned but one thing in the army, and that was to shoot, and he could shoot well. Somehow he had secured a revolver, a large one, thirty-eight caliber, and with this he was constantly practising.

Because Archie would not work, Koerner became angry with him; he was constantly remonstrating with him and urging him to get something to do. Archie took all his father's reproaches with his usual good nature, but as the winter wore slowly on and the shadow of poverty deepened in the home, the old man became more and more depressed, his treatment of his son became more and more bitter. Finally Archie stayed away from home to escape scolding. He spent his evenings in Nussbaum's saloon, where, because he had been a soldier in the Philippines and was attractive and good looking, he was a great favorite and presently a leader of the young men who spent their evenings there. These young men were workers in a machine shop; they had a baseball club called the "Vikings," and in summer played games in the parks on Sundays. In the winter they spent their evenings in the saloon, the only social center accessible to them; here, besides playing pool, they drank beer, talked loudly, laughed coarsely, sang, and now and then fought, very much like Vikings indeed.

Later, roaming down town to Market Place, Archie made other acquaintances, and these young men were even more like Vikings. They were known as the Market Place gang, and they

made their headquarters in Billy Deno's saloon, though they were well known in all the little saloons around the four sides of the Market. They were known, too, at the police station, which stood grimly overlooking Market Place, for they had committed many petty raids, and most of them had served terms in the workhouse. One by one they were being sent to the penitentiary, a distinction they seemed to prize, or which their fellows seemed to prize in them when they got back. The gang had certain virtues,—it stuck together; if a member was in trouble, the other members were all willing to do anything to help him out. Usually this willingness took the form of appearing in police court and swearing to an alibi, but they had done this service so often that the police-court habitués and officials smiled whenever they appeared. Their testimonies never convinced the judge; but they were imperturbable and ever ready to commit perjury in the cause.

When Archie was out of money he could not buy cartridges for his revolver, and he discovered by chance one afternoon, when he had drifted into a little shooting gallery, that the proprietor was glad to give him cartridges in return for an exhibition with the revolver, for the exhibition drew a crowd, and the boozy sailors who lounged along the Market in the evening were fascinated by Archie's skill and forthwith emulated it. It was in this way that Archie met the members of the Market Place gang, and finding them stronger, braver, more enterprising spirits than the Vikings, he became one of them, spent his days and nights with them,

and visited Nussbaum's no more. He became the fast friend of Spud Healy, the leader of the gang, and in this way he came to be arrested.

Besides Archie and Spud Healy, Red McGuire, Butch Corrigan, John Connor and Mike Nailor were arrested. A Market Place grocer had missed a box of dried herrings, reported it to the police, and the police, of course, had arrested on suspicion such of the gang as they could find.

Archie's arrest was a blow to Koerner. He viewed the matter from the German standpoint, just as he viewed everything, even after his thirty-seven years in America. It was a blow to his German reverence for law, a reverence which his own discouraging experience of American law could not impair, and it was a blow to his German conception of parental authority; he denounced Archie, declaring that he would do nothing for him even if he could.

Gusta, in the great love she had for Archie, felt an instant desire to go to him, but when she mentioned this, her father turned on her so fiercely that she did not dare mention it again. On Monday morning, when her work was done, Gusta, dressing herself in the clothes she had not often had occasion to wear during the winter, stole out of the house and went down town,—a disobedience in which she was abetted by her mother. Half an hour later Gusta was standing bewildered in the main entrance of the Market Place Police Station. The wide hall was vacant, the old and faded signs on the walls, bearing in English and in

German instructions for police-court witnesses, could not aid her. From all over the building she heard noises of various activities,—the hum of the police court, the sound of voices, from some near-by room a laugh. She went on and presently found an open door, and within she saw several officers in uniform, with handsome badges on their breasts and stars on the velvet collars of their coats. As she hesitated before this door, a policeman noticed her, and his coarse face lighted up with a suggestive expression as he studied the curves of her figure. He planted himself directly in front of her, his big figure blocking the way.

"I'd like to speak to my brother, if I can," said Gusta. "He's arrested."

She colored and her eyes fell. The policeman's eyes gleamed.

"What's his name, Miss?" he asked.

"Archie Koerner."

"What's he in fer?"

"I can't tell you, sir."

The policeman looked at her boldly, and then he took her round arm in his big hand and turned her toward the open door.

"Inspector," he said, "this girl wants to see her brother. What's his name?" he asked again, turning to Gusta.

"Koerner, sir," said Gusta, speaking to the scowling inspector, "Archie Koerner."

Inspector McFee, an old officer who had been on the police force for twenty-five years, eyed her suspiciously. His short hair was dappled with gray, and his mustache was clipped squarely

and severely on a level with his upper lip. Gusta had even greater fear of him than she had of the policeman, who now released his hold of her arm. Instinctively she drew away from him.

"Archie Koerner, eh?" said the inspector in a gruff voice.

At the name, a huge man, swart and hairy, in civilian's dress, standing by one of the big windows, turned suddenly and glowered at Gusta from under thick black eyebrows. His hair, black and coarse and closely clipped, bristled almost low enough on his narrow forehead to meet his heavy brows. He had a flat nose, and beneath, half encircling his broad, deep mouth, was a black mustache, stubbed and not much larger than his eyebrows. His jaw was square and heavy. A gleam showed in his small black eyes and gave a curiously sinister aspect to his black visage.

"What's that about Koerner?" he said, coming forward aggressively. Gusta shrank from him. She felt herself in the midst of powerful, angry foes.

"You say he's your brother?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, sir."

"What do you want of him?"

"Oh, I just want to see him, sir," Gusta said. "I just want to talk to him a minute—that's all, sir."

Her blue eyes were swimming with tears.

"Hold on a minute," said the man of the dark visage. He went up to the inspector, whispered to him a moment. The inspector listened, finally nodded, then took up a tube that hung by his desk and blew into it. Far away a whistle shrilled.

"Let this girl see Koerner," he said, speaking into the tube, "in Kouka's presence." Then, dropping the tube, he said to Gusta:

"Go down-stairs—you can see him."

The policeman took her by the arm again, and led her down the hall and down the stairs to the turnkey's room. The turnkey unlocked a heavy door and tugged it open; inside, in a little square vestibule, Gusta saw a dim gas-jet burning. The turnkey called:

"Koerner!"

Then he turned to Gusta and said:

"This way."

She went timidly into the vestibule and found herself facing a heavy door, crossed with iron bars. On the other side of the bars was the face of Archie.

"Hello, Gusta," he said.

She had lifted her skirts a little; the floor seemed to her unclean. The odor of disinfectants, which, strong as it was, could not overpower the other odors it was intended to annihilate, came strongly to her. Through the bars she had a glimpse of high whitewashed walls, pierced near the top with narrow windows dirty beyond all hope. On the other side was a row of cells, their barred doors now swinging open. Along the wall miserable figures were stretched on a bench. Far back, where the prison grew dark as night, other figures slouched, and she saw strange, haggard faces peering curiously at her out of the gloom.

"Hello, Gusta," Archie said.

She felt that she should take his hand, but she disliked to thrust

it through the bars. Still she did so. In slipping her hand through to take Archie's hand it touched the iron, which was cold and soft as if with some foul grease.

"Oh, Archie," she said, "what has happened?"

"Search me," he said, "I don't know what I'm here for. Ask Detective Kouka there. He run me in."

Gusta turned. The black-visaged man was standing beside her. Archie glared at the detective in open hatred, and Kouka sneered but controlled himself, and looked away as if, after all, he were far above such things.

Then they were silent, for Gusta could not speak.

"How did you hear of the pinch?" asked Archie presently.

"Mrs. Schopfle was in—she told us," replied Gusta.

"What did the old man say?"

"Oh, Archie! He's awful mad!"

Archie hung his head and meditatively fitted the toe of his boot into one of the squares made by the crossed bars at the bottom of the door.

"Say, Gusta," he said, "you tell him I'm in wrong; will you? Honest to God, I am!"

He raised his face suddenly and held it close to the bars.

"I will, Archie," she said.

"And how's ma?"

"Oh, she's pretty well." Gusta could not say the things she wished; she felt the presence of Kouka.

"Say, Gusta," said Archie, "see Mr. Marriott; tell him to come

down here; I want him to take my case. I'll work and pay him when I get out. Say, Gusta," he went on, "tell him to come down this afternoon. My God, I've got to get out of here! Will you? You know where his office is?"

"I'll find it," said Gusta.

"It's in the Wayne Building."

Gusta tried to look at Archie; she tried to keep her eyes on his face, on his tumbled yellow hair, on his broad shoulders, broader still because his coat and waistcoat were off, and his white throat was revealed by his open shirt. But she found it hard, because her eyes were constantly challenged by the sights beyond—the cell doors, the men sleeping off their liquor, the restless figures that haunted the shadows, the white faces peering out of the gloom. The smell that came from within was beginning to sicken her.

"Oh, Archie," she said, "it must be awful in there!"

Archie became suddenly enraged

"Awful?" he said. "It's hell! This place ain't fit for a dog to stay in. Why, Gusta, it's alive—it's crawlin'! That's what it is! I didn't sleep a wink last night! Not a wink! Say, Gusta," he grasped the bars, pressed his face against them, "see Mr. Marriott and tell him to get me out of here. Will you? See him, will you?"

"I will, Archie," she said. "Ill go right away."

She was eager now to leave, for she had already turned sick with loathing.

"And say, Gusta," Archie said, "get me some cigarettes and send 'em down by Marriott."

"All right," she said. She was backing away.

"Good-by," he called. The turnkey was locking the door on him.

Outside, Gusta leaned a moment against the wall of the building, breathing in the outdoor air; presently she went on, but it was long before she could cleanse her mouth of the taste or her nostrils of the odor of the foul air of that prison in which her brother was locked.

XII

Gusta hurried out of the alley as fast as she could go; she wished to get away from the police station, and to forget the faces of those men in prison. It was now nine o'clock and the activity of the Market was waning; the few gardener's wagons that lingered with the remnants of their loads were but a suggestion of the hundreds of wagons that had packed the square before the dawn. Under the shed, a block long, a constable was offering at public vendue the household goods of some widow who had been evicted; the torn and rusty mattresses, broken chairs and an old bed were going for scarcely enough to pay the costs; a little, blue-bearded man, who had forced the sale, stood by sharply watching, ready to bid the things in himself if the dealers in second-hand furniture should not offer enough. Gusta hurried on, past butcher-shops, past small saloons, and she hurried faster because every one—the policemen, the second-hand dealers, the drivers of the market-wagons, the butchers in their blood-stained smock frocks—turned to look at her. It was three blocks to the Wayne Building, rearing its fifteen stories aloft from the roaring tide of business at its feet, and Gusta was glad to lose herself in the crowds that swarmed along the street.

The waiting-room of Marriott's office was filled; the door which was lettered with his name was closed, and Gusta had to wait. She joined the group that sat silent in the chairs along the

walls, and watched the girl with the yellow hair at the typewriter. The girl's white fingers twinkled over the keys; the little bell tinkled and the girl snatched back the carriage of the machine with a swift grating sound; she wrote furiously, and Gusta was fascinated. She wished she might be a typewriter; it must be so much easier to sit here in this pleasant, sunlit office, high above the cares and turmoil of the world, and write on that beautiful machine; so much easier than to toil in a poor, unhappy home with a mother ill, a father maimed and racked by pains so that he was always morose and cross, a brother in jail, and always work—the thankless task of washing at a tub, of getting meals when there was little food to get them with. Gusta thought she might master the machine, but no—her heart sank—she could not spell nor understand all the long words the lawyers used, so that was hopeless.

After a while the door marked "Mr. Marriott" opened, and a man stepped out, a well-dressed man, with an air of prosperousness; he glanced at the yellow-haired typewriter as he passed out of the office. Marriott was standing in his door, looking at the line of waiting clients; his face was worn and tired. He seemed to hesitate an instant, then he nodded to one of the waiting women, and she rose and entered the private office. Just as Marriott was closing the door, he saw Gusta and smiled, and Gusta was cheered; it was the first friendly smile she had seen that day.

She had to wait two hours. The men did not detain

Marriott long, but the women remained in his private office an interminable time, and whenever he opened his door to dismiss one of them, he took out his watch and looked at it. At last, however, when all had gone, he said:

"Well, Gusta, what can I do for you?" He dropped into his chair, swung round to face her, rested one elbow on the top of the desk and leaned his head in his hand.

"I came to see about Archie."

Marriott felt the deadly ennui that came over him at the thought of these petty criminal cases. The crimes were so small, so stupid, and so squalid, they had nothing to excuse them, not even the picturesque quality of adventure that by some sophistry might extenuate crimes of a more enterprising and dangerous class. They were so hopeless, too, and Marriott could hardly keep a straight face while he defended the perpetrators, and yet he allowed himself to be drawn into them; he found himself constantly pleading for some poor devil who had neither money to pay him nor the decency to thank him. Sometimes he wondered why he did it, and whenever he wondered he decided that he would never take another such case. Then the telephone would ring, and before he knew it he would be in police court making another poor devil's cause his own, while more important litigation must wait—for the petty criminals were always in urgent need; the law would not stay for them nor abide their convenience; with them it was imperative, implacable, insistent, as if to dress the balance for its delay and complaisance

with its larger criminals. Marriott often thought it over, and he had thought enough to recognize in these poor law-breakers a certain essential innocence; they were so sublimely foolish, so illogical, they made such lavish sacrifice of all that was best in their natures; they lived so hardly, so desperately; they paid such tremendous prices and got so little; they were so unobservant, they learned nothing by experience. And yet with one another they were so kind, so considerate, so loyal, that it seemed hard to realize that they could be so unkind and so disloyal to the rest of mankind. In his instinctive love of human nature, their very hopelessness and helplessness appealed to him.

"Mr. Marriott, do you think he is guilty?" Gusta was asking.

"Guilty?" said Marriott, automatically repeating the word.

"Guilty? What difference does that make?"

"Oh, Mr. Marriott!" the girl exclaimed, her blue eyes widening. "Surely, it makes all the difference in the world!"

"To you?"

"Why—yes—shouldn't it?"

"No, it shouldn't, Gusta, and what's more, it doesn't. And it doesn't to me, either. You don't want him sent to prison even if he is guilty, do you?"

"N—no," Gusta hesitated as she assented to the heresy.

"No, of course you don't. Because, Gusta, we know him—we know he's all right, don't we, no matter what he has done? Just as we know that we ourselves are all right when we do bad things—isn't that it?"

The girl was sitting with her yellow head bent; she was trying to think.

"But father would say—"

"Oh, yes," Marriott laughed, "father would say and grandfather would say, too—that's just the trouble. Father got his notions from the Old World, but we—Gusta, we know more than father or grandfather in this country."

Marriott enjoyed the discomfiture that Gusta plainly showed in her inability to understand in the least what he was saying. He felt a little mean about it, for he recognized that he was speaking for his own benefit rather than for hers; he had wished Elizabeth might be there to hear him.

"I don't know much about it, Mr. Marriott," Gusta said presently, "but when will you go to see him?"

"Oh, I'll try to get down this afternoon."

"All right. He told me to ask you please to bring him some cigarettes. Of course," she was going on in an apologetic tone, but Marriott cut her short:

"Oh, he wants cigarettes? Well, I'll take them to him."

Then they talked the futilities which were all such a case could inspire, and Marriott, looking at his watch, made Gusta feel that she should go. But the world wore a new aspect for her when she left Marriott's office. The spring sun was warm now, and she felt that she had the right to glory in it. The crowds in the streets seemed human and near, not far away and strange as they had been before; she felt that she had somehow been restored to her

own rights in life. She had not understood Marriott's philosophy in the least, but she went away with the memory of his face and the memory of his smile; she could not realize her thoughts; it was a feeling more than anything else, but she knew that here was one man, at least, who believed in her brother, and it seemed that he was determined to believe in him no matter what the brother did; and he believed in her, too, and this was everything—this made the whole world glad, just as the sun made the whole world glad that morning.

But Gusta's heart sank at the thought of going home; there was nothing there now but discord and toil. The excitement, the change of the morning, the little interview with Marriott, had served to divert her, and now the thought of returning to that dull and wearisome routine was more than ever distasteful. It was nearly noon, and she would be expected, but she did not like to lose these impressions, and she did not like to leave this warm sunshine, these busy, moving streets, this contact with active life, and so she wandered on out Claybourne Avenue. There was slowly taking form within her a notion of eking out her pleasure by going to see Elizabeth Ward, but she did not let the thought wholly take form; rather she let it lie dormant under her other thoughts. She walked along in the sunlight and looked at the automobiles that went trumpeting by, at the carriages rolling home with their aristocratic mistresses lolling on their cushions. Gusta found a pleasure in recognizing many of these women; she had opened the Wards' big front door to them, she had served

them with tea, or at dinner; she had heard their subdued laughter; she had covertly inspected their toilets; some of them had glanced for an instant into her eyes and thanked her for some little service. And then she could recall things she had heard them say, bits of gossip, or scandal, some of which gave her pleasure, others feelings of hatred and disgust. A rosy young matron drove by in a phaeton, with her pretty children piled about her feet, and the sight pleased Gusta. She smiled and hurried on with quickened step.

At last she saw the familiar house, and then to her joy she saw Elizabeth on the veranda, leaning against one of the pillars, evidently taking the air, enjoying the sun and the spring. Elizabeth saw Gusta, too, and her eyes brightened.

"Why, Gusta!" she said. "Is that you?"

Gusta stood on the steps and looked up at Elizabeth. Her face was rosy with embarrassment and pleasure. Elizabeth perched on the rail of the veranda and examined the vine of Virginia roses that had not yet begun to put forth.

"And how are you getting along?" she said. "How are they all at home?"

Gusta told her of her father and of her mother and of the children.

Elizabeth tried to talk to her; she was fond of her, but there seemed to be nothing to talk about. She knew, too, how Gusta adored her, and she felt that she must always retain this adoration, and constantly prove her kindness to Gusta. But the conversation

was nothing but a series of questions she extorted from herself by a continued effort that quickly wearied her, especially as Gusta's replies were delivered so promptly and so laconically that she could not think of other questions fast enough. At last she said:

"And how's Archie?"

And then instantly she remembered that Archie was in prison. Her heart smote her for her thoughtlessness. Gusta's head was hanging.

"I've just been to see him," she said.

"I wished to hear of him, Gusta," Elizabeth said, trying by her tone to destroy the quality of her first question. "I spoke to Mr. Marriott about him—I'm sure he'll get him off."

Gusta made no reply, and Elizabeth saw that her tears were falling.



Elizabeth saw that her tears were falling *Page 105*

Elizabeth saw that her tears were falling

"Come, Gusta," she said sympathetically, "you mustn't feel bad."

The girl suddenly looked at her, her eyes full of tears.

"Oh, Miss Elizabeth," she said, "if you could only know! To

see him down there—in that place! Such a thing never happened to us before!"

"But I'm sure it'll all come out right in the end—I'm sure of that. There must have been some mistake. Tell me all about it."

And then Gusta told her the whole story.

"You don't know how it feels, Miss Elizabeth," she said when she had done, "to have your own brother—such a thing couldn't happen to you—here." Gusta glanced about her, taking in at a glance, as it were, the large house, and all its luxury and refinement and riches, as if these things were insurmountable barriers to such misfortune and disgrace.

Elizabeth saw the glance, and some way, suddenly, the light and warmth went out of the spring day for her. The two girls looked at each other a moment, then they looked away, and there was silence. Elizabeth's brows were contracted; in her eyes there was a look of pain.

When Gusta had gone Elizabeth went indoors, but her heart was heavy. She tried to throw off the feeling, but could not. She told herself that it was her imagination, always half morbid, but this did not satisfy her. She was silent at the luncheon-table until her mother said:

"Elizabeth, what in the world ails you?"

"Oh; nothing."

"I know something does," insisted Mrs. Ward.

Elizabeth, with her head inclined, was outlining with the prong of a fork the pattern on the salad bowl.

"Gusta has been here, telling me her troubles."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Mrs. Ward.

"You know her brother has been arrested."

"What for?"

"Stealing."

"Indeed! Well! I do wish she'd keep away! I'm sure I don't know what we've done that we should have such things brought into our house!"

"But it's too bad," said Elizabeth. "The young man—"

"Yes, the young man! If he'd go to work and earn an honest living, he wouldn't be arrested for stealing!"

"I was just thinking—" Elizabeth finished the pattern on the salad bowl and inclined her head on the other side, as if she had really designed the pattern and were studying the effect of her finished work,— "that if Dick—"

"Why, Elizabeth!" Mrs. Ward cried. "How can you say such a thing?"

Elizabeth smiled, and the smile irritated her mother.

"I'm sure it's entirely different!" Mrs. Ward went on. "Dick does not belong to that class at all!"

XIII

The truth was that Elizabeth had been worried for days about Dick. A few evenings before, Ward, who took counsel of his daughter rather than of his wife in such affairs, had told her of his concern about his son.

"I don't know what to do with the boy," he had said. "He seems to have no interest in anything; he tired of school, and he tired of college; and now he is of age and—doing nothing."

She remembered how he had sat there, puffing at his cigar as if that could assist him to some conclusion.

"I tried him in the office for a while, you know, but he did not seem to take it seriously—of course, it wasn't really serious; the work went on as well without him as with him. I guess he knew that."

Elizabeth sat and thought, but the problem which her father had put to her immediately overpowered her; there seemed to be no solution at all—she could not even arrange its terms in her mind, and she was silent, yet her silence was charged with sympathy.

"I've talked to him, but that does no good. I've pleaded with him, but that does no good. I tried giving him unlimited money, then I put him on an allowance, then I cut him off altogether—it was just the same."

Ward smoked a moment in silence.

"I've thought of every known profession. He says he doesn't want to be a lawyer or a doctor; he has no taste for mechanics, and he seems to have no interest in business. I've thought of sending him abroad, or out West, but he doesn't want to do that."

And again the silence and the smoking and the pain.

"He's out to-night—where, I don't know. I don't want to know—I'm afraid to know!"

There was something wild, appealing and pathetic in this cry wrung from a father's heart. Elizabeth had looked up quickly, her own heart aching with pity. She recalled how he had said:

"Your mother—she doesn't understand; I don't know that I want her to; she idolizes the boy; she thinks he can't do wrong."

And then Elizabeth had slipped her arm about his neck, and, leaning over, had placed her cheek against his; her tears had come, and she had felt that his tears had come; he had patted her hand. They had sat thus for a long while.

"Poor boy!" Ward had said again. "He's only making trouble for himself. I'd like to help him, but somehow, Bess, I can't get next to him; when I try to talk to him, when I try to be confidential and all that—something comes between us, and I can't say it right. I can't talk to him as I could to any other man. I don't know why it is; I sometimes think that it's all my fault, that I haven't reared him right, that I haven't done my duty by him, and yet, God knows, I've tried!"

"Oh, papa," she had replied protestingly, "you mustn't blame yourself—you've done everything."

"He's really a good boy," Ward had gone on irrelevantly, ignoring himself in his large, unselfish thought for his son. "He's kind and generous, and he means well enough—and—and—I think he likes me."

This had touched her to the quick, and she had wept softly, stroking her father's cheek.

"Can't you—couldn't you—" he began. "Do you think you could talk to him, Bess?"

"I'll try," she said, and just then her brother had come into the room, rosy and happy and unsuspecting, and their confidences were at an end.

Ward did not realize, of course, that in asking Elizabeth to speak to Dick he was laying a heavy burden on her. She had promised her father in a kind of pity for him, a pity which sprang from her great love; but as she thought it over, wondering what she was to say, the ordeal grew greater and greater—greater than any she had ever had to encounter. For several days she was spared the necessity of redeeming her promise, for Dick was so little at home, and fortunately, as Elizabeth felt, when he was there the circumstances were not propitious. Then she kept putting it off, and putting it off; and the days went by. Her father had not recurred to the subject; having once opened his heart, he seemed suddenly to have closed it, even against her. His attitude was such that she felt she could not talk the matter over with him; if she could she might have asked him to give her back her promise. She could not talk it over with her mother,

and she longed to talk it over with some one. One evening she had an impulse to tell Marriott about it. She knew that he could sympathize with her, and, what was more, she knew that he could sympathize with Dick, whereas she could not sympathize with Dick at all. Though she laughed, and sang, and read, and talked, and drove, and lived her customary life, the subject was always in her thoughts. Finally she discovered that she was adopting little subterfuges in order to evade it, and she became disgusted with herself. She had morbid fears that her character would give way under the strain. At night she lay awake waiting, as she knew her father must be waiting, for the ratchet of Dick's key in the night-latch.

In the many different ways she imagined herself approaching the subject with Dick, in the many different conversations she planned, she always found herself facing an impenetrable barrier—she did not know with what she was to reproach him, with what wrong she was to charge him. She conceived of the whole affair, as the Anglo-Saxon mind feels it must always deal with wrong, in the forensic form—indictment, trial, judgment, execution. But after all, what had Dick done? As she saw him coming and going through the house, at the table, or elsewhere, he was still the same Dick—and this perplexed her; for, looking at him through the medium of her talk with her father, Dick seemed to be something else than her brother; he seemed to have changed into something bad. Thus his misdeeds magnified themselves to her mind, and she thought of them instead of him, of the sin

instead of the sinner.

That night Dick did not come at all. In the morning when her father appeared, Elizabeth saw that he was haggard and old. As he walked heavily toward his waiting carriage, her love and pity for him received a sudden impetus.

Dick did not return until the next evening, and the following morning he came down just as his father was leaving the house. If Ward heard his son's step on the stairs, he did not turn, but went on out, got into his brougham, and sank back wearily on its cushions. It happened that Elizabeth came into the hall at that moment; she saw her father, and she saw her brother coming down the stairs, dressed faultlessly in new clothes and smoking a cigarette. As Elizabeth saw him, so easy and unconcerned, her anger suddenly blazed out, her eyes flashed, and she took one quick step toward him. His fresh, ruddy face wore a smile, but as she confronted him and held out one arm in dramatic rigidity and pointed toward her father, Dick halted and his smile faded.

"Look at him!" Elizabeth said, pointing to her father. "Look at him! Do you know what you're doing?"

"Why, Bess"—Dick began, surprised.

"You're breaking his heart, that's what you're doing!"

She stood there, her eyes menacing, her face flushed, her arm extended. The carriage was rolling down the drive and her father had gone, but Elizabeth still had the vision of his bent frame as he got into his carriage.

"Did you see him?" she went on. "Did you see how he's aging,

how much whiter his hair has grown in the last few weeks, how his figure has bent? You're killing him, that's what you're doing, killing him inch by inch. Why can't you do it quick, all at once, and be done with it? That would be kinder, more merciful!"

Her lip curled in sarcasm. Dick stood by the newel-post, his face white, his lips open as if to speak.

"You spend your days in idleness and your nights in dissipation. You won't work. You won't do anything. You are disgracing your family and your name. Can't you see it, or won't you?"

"Why, Bess," Dick began, "what's the—"

She looked at him a moment; he was like her mother, so good-natured, so slow to anger. His attitude, his expression, infuriated her; words seemed to have no effect, and in her fury she felt that she must make him see, that she must force him to realize what he was doing—force him to acknowledge his fault—force him to be good.

"Of course, you'd just stand there!" she said. "Why don't you say something? You know what you're doing—you know it better than I. I should think you'd be ashamed to look a sister in the face!"

Dick had seen Elizabeth angry before, but never quite like this. Slowly within him his own anger was mounting. What right, he thought, had she to take him thus to task—him, a man? He drew himself up, his face suddenly lost its pallor and a flush of scarlet mottled it. Strangely, in that same instant, Elizabeth's face

became very white.

"Look here," he said, speaking in a heavy voice, "I don't want any more of this from you!"

For an instant there was something menacing in his manner, and then he walked away and left her.

Elizabeth stood a moment, trembling violently. He had gone into the dining-room; he was talking with his mother in low tones. Elizabeth went up the stairs to her room and closed the door, and then a great wave of moral sickness swept over her. She sat down, trying to compose herself, trying to still her nerves. The whole swift scene with her brother flashed before her in all its squalor. Had she acted well or rightly? Was her anger what is called a righteous indignation? She was sure that she had acted for the best, for her father in the first place, and for Dick more than all, but it was suddenly revealed to her that she had failed; she had not touched his heart at all; she had expended all her force, and it was utterly lost; she had failed—failed. This word repeated itself in her brain. She tried to think, but her brain was in turmoil; she could think but one thing—she had failed. She bent her head and wept.

XIV

Archie Koerner and Spud Healy and the others of the gang lay in prison for a week; each morning they were taken with other prisoners to the bull-pen, and there they would stand—for an hour, two hours, three hours—and look through the heavy wire screen at officers, lawyers, court attachés, witnesses and prosecutors who passed and repassed, peering at them as at caged animals, some curiously, some in hatred and revenge, some with fear, now and then one with pity. The session would end, they would be taken downstairs again—the police were not yet ready. But finally, one Saturday morning, they were taken into the court-room and arraigned. Bostwick, the judge, heard a part of the evidence; it was nearly noon, and court never sat on Saturday afternoons. Bostwick and the prosecutor both were very anxious to get away for their half-holiday. The session had been long and trying, the morning was sultry, a summer day had fallen unexpectedly in the midst of the spring. Bostwick was uncomfortable in his heavy clothes. He hurried the hearing and sent them all to the workhouse for thirty days, and fined them the costs. Marriott had realized the hopelessness of the case from the first; even he was glad the hearing was over, glad to have Archie off his mind.

The little trial was but a trivial incident in the life of the city; Bostwick and the prosecutor, to whom it was but a part of the day's work, forgot it in the zest of ordering a luncheon; the police

forgot it, excepting Kouka, who boasted to the reporters and felt important for a day. Frisby, a little lawyer with a catarrhal voice, thought of it long enough to be thankful that he had demanded his fee in advance from the mother of the boy he had defended—it took her last cent and made her go hungry over Sunday. Back on the Flats, in the shadow of the beautiful spire of St. Francis, there were cries, Gaelic lamentations, keening, counting of beads and prayers to the Virgin. The reporters made paragraphs for their newspapers, writing in the flippant spirit with which they had been taught to treat the daily tragedies of the police court. Some people scanned the paragraphs, and life passed by on the other side; the crowds of the city surged and swayed, and Sunday dawned with the church-bells ringing peacefully.

The Koerner family had the news that evening from Jerry Crowley, the policeman who had recently been assigned to that beat, his predecessor, Miller, having been suspended for drunkenness. Crowley had had a hard time of it ever since he came on the beat. The vicinity was German and he was Irish, and race hatred pursued him daily with sneers, and jibes, and insults, now and then with stones and clods. The children took their cue from the gang at Nussbaum's; the gang made his life miserable. Yet Crowley was a kindly Irishman, with many a jest and joke, and a pleasant word for every one. Almost anybody he arrested could get Crowley to let him go by begging hard enough. On the warm evenings Koerner would sit on the stoop, and Crowley, coming by, would stop for a dish of gossip.

"Oh, come now, Mr. Koerner," he said that Saturday night, after he had crudely told the old German of his son's fate, "I wouldn't take it that hard; shure an' maybe it's good 'twill be doin' the lad an' him needin' it the way he does."

Officer Crowley was interrupted in his comforting by a racket at the corner—the warm, soft nights were bringing the gang out, and he went away to wage his hopeless battle with it. When he returned, old man Koerner had gone indoors.

Gusta shared all her father's humiliation and all her mother's grief at Archie's imprisonment. She felt that she should visit her brother in prison, but it was a whole week before she could get away, and then on a brilliant Sunday afternoon she went to the workhouse. The hideous prison buildings were surrounded by a high fence, ugly in its dull red paint; the office and the adjoining quarters where the superintendent lived had a grass plot in which some truckling trusty had made flower-beds to please the superintendent's wife. In the office an old clerk, in a long black coat, received Gusta solemnly. He was sitting, from the habit of many years, on the high stool at the desk where he worked; ordinarily he crouched over his books in the fear that political changes would take his job from him; now a Sunday paper, which the superintendent and his family had read and discarded, replaced the sad records, but he bent over this none the less timidly. After a long while an ill-natured guard, whose face had grown particularly sinister and vicious in the business, ordered Gusta to follow him, and led her back into the building.

Reluctantly he unlocked doors and locked them behind her, and Gusta grew alarmed. Once, waiting for him to unlock what proved to be a final door, he waited while a line of women, fourteen or fifteen of them, in uniform of striped gingham, went clattering up a spiral iron stairway; two or three of the women were negroes. They had been down to the services some Christian people had been holding for the inmates, preaching to them that if they believed on Jesus they would find release, and peace, and happiness. These people, of course, did not mean release from the workhouse, and the peace and happiness, it seemed, could not come until the inmates died. So long as they lived, their only prospect seemed to be unpaid work by day, bread and molasses to eat, and a cell to sleep in at night, with iron bars locking them in and armed men to watch them. However, the inmates enjoyed the services because they were allowed to sing.

After the women disappeared, Gusta stood fearfully before a barred door and looked down into a cell-house. The walls were three stories high, and sheer from the floor upward, with narrow windows at the top. Inside this shell of brick the cells were banked tier on tier, with dizzy galleries along each tier. Though Gusta could see no one, she could hear a multitude of low voices, like the humming of a bee-hive—the prisoners, locked two in each little cell, were permitted to talk during this hour. The place was clean, but had, of course, the institutional odor. The guard called another guard, and between them they unlocked several locks and threw several levers; finally a cell-

door opened—and Gusta saw Archie come forth. He wore a soiled ill-fitting suit of gray flannel with wide horizontal stripes, and his hair had been clipped close to his head. The sight so confused and appalled Gusta that she could not speak, and the guard, standing suspiciously by her side to hear all that was said, made it impossible for her to talk. The feeling was worse than that she had had at the police station when an iron door had thus similarly separated her from her brother.

Archie came close and took hold of the bars with both his hands and peered at her; he asked her a few questions about things at home, and charged her with a few unimportant messages and errands. But she could only stand there with the tears streaming down her face. Presently the guard ordered Archie back to his cell, and he went away, turning back wistfully and repeating his messages in a kind of desperate wish to connect himself with the world.

When Gusta got outside again, she determined that she would not go home, for there the long shadow of the prison lay. She did not know where to go or what to do, but while she was trying to decide she heard from afar the music of a band—surely there would be distraction. So she walked in the direction of the music. About the workhouse, as about all prisons, were the ramshackles of squalid poverty and worse; but little Flint Street, along which she took her way, began to pick up, and she passed cottages, painted and prim, where workmen lived, and the people she saw, and their many children playing in the street, were well dressed

and happy. It seemed strange to Gusta that any one should be happy then. When suddenly she came into Eastend Avenue, she knew at last where she was and whence the music came; she remembered that Miami Park was not far away. The avenue was crowded with vehicles, not the stylish kind she had been accustomed to on Claybourne Avenue, but buggies from livery-stables, in which men drove to the road-houses up the river, surreys with whole families crowded in them, now and then some grocer's or butcher's delivery wagon furnished with seats and filled with women and children. The long yellow trolley-cars that went sliding by with incessant clangor of gongs were loaded; the only signs of the aristocracy Gusta once had known were the occasional automobiles, bound, like the Sunday afternoon buggy-riders, up the smooth white river road.

Eastend Avenue ran through the park, and just before it reached that playground of the people it was lined with all kinds of amusement pavilions, little vaudeville shows, merry-go-rounds, tintype studios, shooting galleries, pop-corn and lemonade stands, public dance halls where men and girls were whirling in the waltz. On one side was a beer-garden. All these places were going noisily, with men shouting out the attractions inside, hand-organs and drums making a wild, barbaric din, and in the beer-garden a German band braying out its meretricious tunes. But at the beginning of the park a dead-line was invisibly drawn—beyond that the city would not allow the catch-penny amusements to go. On one side of the avenue the park sloped

down to the river, on the other it stretched into a deep grove. The glass roof of a botanical house gleamed in the sun, and beyond, hidden among the trees, were the zoölogical gardens, where a deer park, a bear-pit, a monkey house, and a yard in which foxes skulked and racoons slept, strove with their mild-mannered exhibits for the beginnings of a menagerie. And everywhere were people strolling along the walks, lounging under the trees, hundreds of them, thousands of them, dressed evidently in their best clothes, seeking relief from the constant toil that kept their lives on a monotonous level.

Gusta stood a while and gazed on the river. On the farther shore its green banks rose high and rolled away with the imagination into woods and fields and farms. Here and there little cat-boats moved swiftly along, their sails white in the sun; some couples were out in rowboats. But as Gusta looked she suddenly became self-conscious; she saw that, of all the hundreds, she was the only one alone. Girls moved about, or stood and talked and giggled in groups, and every girl seemed to have some fellow with her. Gusta felt strange and out of place, and a little bitterness rose in her heart. The band swelled into a livelier, more strident strain, and Gusta resented this sudden burst of joyousness. She turned to go away, but just then she saw that a young man had stopped and was looking at her. He was a well-built young fellow, as strong as Archie; he had dark hair and a small mustache curled upward at the corners in a foreign way. His cheeks were ruddy; he carried a light cane and smoked a cigar. When he saw that

Gusta had noticed him he smiled and Gusta blushed. Then he came up to her and took off his hat.

"Are you taking a walk?" he asked.

"I was going home," Gusta replied. She wondered how she could get away without hurting the young man's feelings, for he seemed to be pleasant, harmless and well meaning.

"It's a fine day," he said. "There's lots o' people out."

"Yes," said Gusta.

"Where 'bouts do you live?"

"On Bolt Street."

"Oh, I live out that way myself!" said the young man. "It's quite a ways from here. Been out to see some friends?"

"Yes." Gusta hesitated. "I had an errand to do out this way."

"Don't you want to go in the park and see the zoo? There's lots of funny animals back there." The young man pointed with his little cane down one of the gravel walks that wound among the trees. Gusta looked, and saw the people—young couples, women with children, and groups of young men, sauntering that way. Then she looked at the street-cars, loaded heavily, with passengers clinging to the running-boards; she was tempted to go, but it was growing late.

"No, thanks," she said, "I must be going home now."

"Are you going to walk or take the car?" asked the young man.

"I'll walk, I guess," she said; and then, lest he think she had no car fare, she added: "the cars are so crowded."

She started then, and was surprised when the young man

naturally walked along by her side, swinging his cane and talking idly to her. At first she was at a loss whether to let him walk with her or not; she had a natural fear, a modesty, the feminine instinct, but she did not know just how to dismiss him. She kept her face averted and her eyes downcast; but finally, when her fears had subsided a little, she glanced at him occasionally; she saw that he was good-looking, and she considered him very well dressed. He had a gold watch chain, and when she asked him what time it was he promptly drew out a watch. Their conversation, from being at the first quite general, soon became personal, and before they had gone far Gusta learned that the young man's name was Charlie Peltzer, that he was a plumber, and that sometimes he made as much as twenty dollars a week. By the time they parted at the corner near Gusta's home they felt very well acquainted and had agreed to meet again.

After that they met frequently. In the evening after supper Gusta would steal out, Peltzer would be waiting for her at the corner, and they would stroll under the trees that were rapidly filling with leaves. Once, passing Policeman Crowley, Gusta saw him looking at them narrowly. There was a little triangular park not far from Gusta's home, and there the two would sit all the evening. The moon was full, the nights were soft and mild and warm. On Sundays they went to the park where they had met, and now and then they danced in the public pavilion. But Gusta never danced with any of the other men there, nor did Peltzer dance with any of the other girls; they

danced always together, looking into each other's eyes. Now she could endure the monotony and the drudgery at home, the children's peevishness, her mother's melancholy, her father's querulousness. Even Archie's predicament lost its horror and its sadness for her. She had not yet, however, told Peltzer, and she felt ashamed of Archie, as if, in creating the possibility of compromising her, he had done her a wrong. She went about in a dream, thinking of Peltzer all the time, and of the wonderful thing that had brought all this happiness into her life.

Gusta had not, however, as yet allowed Peltzer to go home with her; he went within half a block of the house, and there, in the shadow, they took their long farewell. But Peltzer was growing more masterful; each night he insisted on going a little nearer, and at last one night he clung to her, bending over her, looking into her blue eyes, his lips almost on hers, and before they were aware they were at her door. Gusta was aroused by Crowley's voice. Crowley was there with her father, telling him again the one incident in all his official career that had distinguished him for a place in the columns of the newspapers. He was just at the climax of the thrilling incident, and they heard his voice ring out:

"An' I kept right on toowards him, an' him shootin' at me breasht four toimes—"

He had got up, in the excitement he so often evoked in living over that dramatic moment again, to illustrate the action, and he saw Gusta and Charlie. Peltzer stopped, withdrew his arm

hurriedly from Gusta's waist, and then Crowley, forgetting his story, called out:

"Oh-ho, me foine bucko!"

Then Koerner saw Gusta, and, forgetting for a moment, tried to rise to his feet, then dropped back again.

"Who's dot feller mit you, huh? Who's dot now?" he demanded.

"Aw, tut, tut, man," said Crowley. "Shure an' the girl manes no harm at all—an' the laad, he's a likely wan. Shure now, Mистер Koerner, don't ye be haard on them—they're that young now! An' 'tis the spring, do ye moind—and it's well I can see the phite flower on the thorn tra in me ould home these days!"

Gusta's heart and Peltzer's heart warmed to Crowley, but old Koerner said:

"In mit you!"

And she slipped hurriedly indoors.

But nothing could harm her now, for the world had changed.

XV

Archie Koerner served his thirty days in the workhouse, then, because he was in debt to the State for the costs and had no money with which to pay the debt, he was kept in prison ten days longer, although it was against the constitution of that State to imprison a man for debt. Forty days had seemed a short time to Bostwick when he pronounced sentence; had he chosen, he might have given Archie a sentence, in fine and imprisonment, that would have kept him in the workhouse for two years; he frequently did this with thieves. These forty days, too, had been brief to Marriott, and to Eades, and they had been brief to Elizabeth, who had found new happiness in the fact that Mr. Amos Hunter had given Dick a position in the banking department of his Title and Trust Company. These forty days, in fact, had passed swiftly for nearly every one in the city, because they were spring days, filled with warm sunshine by day, and soft and musical showers by night. The trees were pluming themselves in new green, the birds were singing, and people were happy in their release from winter; they were busied about new clothes, with riding and driving, with plans for summer vacations and schemes for the future; they were all imbued with the spirit of hope the spring had brought to the world again. To Gusta, too, in her love, these days had passed swiftly, like a hazy, golden dream.

But to Archie these forty days had not been forty days at all,

but a time of infinite duration. He counted each day as it dragged by; he counted it when he came from his bunk in the morning; he counted it every hour during the long day's work over the hideous bricks he could find no joy in making; he counted it again at evening, and the last thing before he fell asleep. It seemed that forty days would never roll around.

They did pass finally, and a morning came when he could leave the comrades of his misery. He felt some regret in doing this; many of them had been kind to him, and friendships had been developed by means of whispers and signs, but more by the silent influence of a common suffering. He had quarreled and almost fought with some of them, for the imprisonment had developed the beast that was in them, and had made many of them morose, ugly, suspicious, dangerous, filling them with a kind of moral insanity. But he forgot all these enmities in the joy of his release, and he bade his friends good-by and wished them luck. In the superintendent's office they gave him back his clothes, and he went out again into the world.

It was strange to be at liberty again. His first unconscious impulse was to take up his life where he had left it off, but he did not know how to do this. For behind him stretched an unknown time, a blank, a break in his existence, which refused to adjust itself to the rest of his life; it bore no relation to that existence which was himself, his being, and yet it was there. The world that knew no such blank or break had gone on meanwhile and left him behind, and he could not catch up now. He was like a

man who had been unconscious and had awakened with a blurred conception of things; it was as if he had come out of a profound anæsthesia, to find that he had been irrevocably maimed by some unnecessary operation in surgery.

Archie did not, of course, realize all this clearly; had he been able to do so, he might have avoided some of the consequences. But he had a troubled sense of change, and he was to learn it and realize it fully only by a slow, torturing process, a bit at a time. He had the first sensation of this change in the peculiar gleam that came into the eye of a policeman he passed in Market Place, and he felt it, too, when, half fearfully, he presented himself at the back door of his home. His father's fury had long since abated, but he showed that he could not look on Archie as he once had done, and Gusta showed it, too. Bostwick may have thought he had sentenced Archie to forty days in prison, but he had really sentenced him to a lifetime in prison; for the influences of those forty days could never leave Archie now; the shadows of that prison were ever lengthening, and they were for evermore to creep with him wherever he went, keeping him always within their shades. He was thereafter to be but an umbra at the feast of life.

Archie could not think of the whole matter very clearly; of the theft of which he had been convicted he scarcely thought at all. The change that came in the world's attitude toward him did not seem to be concerned with that act; it was never mentioned or even suggested to him at home or elsewhere. The thing that

marked him was not the fact that he had been a thief, but that he had been a prisoner. When he did think of the theft, he told himself that he had paid for that; the score had been wiped out; the world had taken its revenge on him. This revenge was expressed by the smile that lit up the face of the grocer whose herrings had been stolen; it had been shown in the satisfaction of the prosecutor when the judge announced his finding; it had been expressed by the harshness of the superintendent and the guards at the workhouse; it was shown even by the glance of that policeman he met in the Market. The world had wreaked its vengeance on him, and Archie felt that it should be satisfied now.

There was but one place now where the atmosphere lacked the element of suspicion and distrust, but one place where he was not made to feel the barrier that separated him from other men, and that was with the gang. The gang welcomed him with a frank heartiness; they showed almost the same eagerness and pleasure in him that they showed in welcoming Spud and the others. There was balm in their welcome; they asked no questions, they drew no distinctions; to them he was the same old Archie, only grown nearer because now he could unite with them in experience—they all had those same gaps in their lives.

That afternoon they celebrated with cans of beer in the shade of a lumber pile, and that night the gang went down the line. Having some money, they were welcome in all the little saloons, and the girls in short dresses, who stood about the bars rolling cigarettes constantly, were glad to see them. And Archie found

that no questions were asked here, that no distinctions were made even when respected, if not respectable, men appeared, even when the prosecutor of the police court came along with a companion, and spent a portion of the salary these people contributed so heavily to pay, even when the detectives came and received the tribute money. And it dawned on Archie that here was a little quarter of the world where he was wanted, where he was made to feel at home, where that gap in his life made no difference. It was a small quarter, covering scarcely more than a dozen blocks. It was filled with miserable buildings, painted garishly and blazing with light; there was ever the music of pianos and orchestras, and in the saloons that were half theaters, bands blared out rapid tunes. And here was swarming life; here, in the midst of death. But it was an important quarter of the town; in rents and dividends and fines it contributed largely of the money it made at such risk and sacrifice of body and of soul, to all that was accounted good and great in the city. It helped to pay the salaries of the mayor and the judges and the prosecutors and the clerks and the detectives and the policemen; some of its money went to support in idleness and luxury many dainty and exclusive women in Claybourne Avenue, to build enormous churches, to pay for stained-glass windows with pictures of Christ and the Magdalene, pictures that in soft artistic hues lent a gentle religious and satisfying melancholy to the ladies and gentlemen who sat in their pews on Sundays; it even helped to send missionaries to far countries like Japan and China and

India and Africa, in order that the heathen who lived there might receive the light of the Cross.

While in the workhouse Archie had occupied the same cell with a man called Joseph Mason, which was not his name. The prison was crowded, and it was necessary for the prisoners to double up. The cells were narrow and had two bunks, one above and the other below—there was as much room as there is in a section of a sleeping-car. In these cells the men slept and ate and lived, spending all the time they did not pass at labor in the brick-yard. During those forty days Archie became well acquainted with Mason; they sat on their little stools all day Sunday and talked, and when they climbed into their bunks at night they whispered. They shared with each other their surreptitious matches and tobacco—all they had.

This man Mason was nearly fifty years old. His close-cropped hair and his close-shaven beard gave his head and cheeks and lips a uniform color of dark blue; his lips were thin and compressed from a habit of taciturnity, his eyes were small, bright and alert; at any sound he would turn quickly and glance behind him. He had spent twenty years in prison—ten years in Dannemora, five in Columbus, three in Allegheny and two in Joliet. This, however, did not include the time he had been shut up in police stations, calaboses, county jails and workhouses. In the present instance he had been arrested for pocket-picking, and had agreed to plead guilty if the offense were reduced to petit larceny; the authorities had accepted his proposal, and he had been sentenced to six

months in the workhouse. He had served four and a half months of his sentence when Archie went into the workhouse.

The only time when Mason showed any marked sense of humor was when he told Archie of his having confessed to pocket-picking. The truth was that he was totally innocent of this crime, and if the police had been wise they would have known this. Mason was a Johnny Yegg, that is, an itinerant safe-blower. As a yegg man, of course, he never had picked a pocket, and could not have done so had he wished, for he did not know how; and if he had known how, still he would not have done so, for the yeggs held such crimes as picking pockets in contempt. All of the terms he had served in states' prisons had been for blowing safes, and all of the safes had been in rural post-offices. The technical charge was burglary, though he was not a burglar, either, in the sense of entering dwellings by night; this was a class of thieving left to prowlers. The preceding fall, however, a safe had been blown in a country post-office near the city, and Mason knew that the United States inspectors would suspect him if they found him, and while he had been innocent of that particular crime, he knew that this would make no difference to the inspectors; they would willingly "job" him, as he expressed it, justifying the act to any one who might question it—they would not need to justify it to themselves—by arguing that if he had not blown that particular safe he had blown others, so that the balance would be dressed in the end. Consequently, when the police arrested him for pocket-picking, he hailed it as a stroke of good fortune and looked on

the workhouse as an asylum. He had been a model prisoner, and had given the authorities no trouble. He did this partly because he was a philosophical fellow, patient and uncomplaining, partly because he did not wish to attract attention to himself. His picture and his measurements, taken according to the Bertillon system, were in every police station in the land.

Mason told Archie many interesting stories of his life, of cooking over a fire in the woods, riding on freight trains, of hang-outs in sand-houses, and so on, and he told circumstantially of numerous crimes, though never did he identify himself as concerned in any of them excepting those of which he had been convicted, and in these he did not give the names of his accomplices. Before their companionship ended he had taught Archie the distinctions between yegg men and peter men and gay cats, guns of various kinds, prowlers, and sure-thing men, and the other unidentified horde of criminals who belong to none of these classes.

He had taught Archie also many little tricks whereby a convict's lot may be lightened—as, for instance, how to split with a pin one match into four matches, how to pass little things from one cell to another by a "trolley" or piece of string, how to lie on a board, and so on. But, above all, he had set Archie the example of a patient man who took things as they came, without question or complaint.

Archie missed Mason. He could see him sitting in the gloom of their little cell, upright and almost never moving, talking in a

low tone, his lips, which had a streak of tobacco always on them, moving slowly, shutting tightly after each sentence, until he had swallowed, then deliberately he would go on. Mason's view of life interested Archie, who, up to that time, had never thought at all, had never made any distinctions, and so had no view of life at all. Many of Mason's views were striking in their insight, many were childish in their lack of it; they were curiously straightforward at times, at others astonishingly oblique. He had a great hatred of sham and pretense, and he considered all so-called respectable people as hypocrites. He had about the same contempt for them that he had for the guns, who were sneaks, he said, afraid to take chances. He had a high admiration for boldness and courage, and a great love of adventure, and he thought that all these qualities were best exemplified in yegg men. For the courts he had no respect at all; his contempt was so deep-rooted that he never once considered the possibility of their doing justice, and spoke as if it were axiomatic that they could not do justice if they tried. He had the same contempt for the church, although he seemed to know much about the life of Jesus and had respect for His teachings. He called the people who came to pray and sing on Sundays "mission stiffs"; he treated them respectfully enough, but he told Archie that those prisoners who took an interest in the services did so that they might secure favors and perhaps pardons. He had known many convicts to secure their liberty in that way, and while he gave them credit for cleverness and was not disposed to blame them, still he did not respect them. Such convicts he

called "false alarms."

There were one or two judges before whom he had been tried that he admired and thought to be good men. He did not blame them for the sentences they had given him, but explained to Archie that they had to do this as an incident of their business, and he spoke as if they might have shared his own regret in the cruel necessity. Of all prosecutors, however, he had a hatred; especially of Eades, of whom he seemed to have heard much. He told Archie that as a result of Eades's severity the thieves some day would "rip" the town.

He looked on his own occupation and spoke of it as any man might look on his own occupation; it simply happened that that was his business. He seemed to consider it as honest as, or at least no more dishonest than, any other business. He had certain standards, and these he maintained. On the whole, however, he concluded that his business hardly paid, though it had its compensations in its adventure and in its free life.

XVI

Archie was loitering along Market Place, not sure of what he would do that evening, but ready for any sensation chance might offer. Men were brushing through the flapping green doors of the small saloons, talking loudly, and swearing, many of them already drunk. Pianos were going, and above all the din he heard the grating of a phonograph grinding out the song some minstrel once had sung to a banjo; the banjo notes were realistic, but the voice of the singer floated above the babel of voices like the mere ghost of a voice, inhuman and not alive, as perhaps the singer might not then have been alive. Archie, wondering where the gang was, suddenly met Mason. The sight gave him real pleasure.

"Hello, Joe!" he cried as he seized Mason's hand.

Mason smiled faintly, but Archie's joy made him happy.

"Je's," said Archie, "I'm glad to see you—it makes me feel better. When 'd you get out?"

"This morning," Mason replied. "Which way?"

"Oh, anywhere," said Archie. "Where you goin'?"

"Up to Gibbs's. Want to go 'long?"

Archie's heart gave a little start; to go to Danny Gibbs's under Mason's patronage would be a distinction. The evening opened all at once with sparkling possibilities.

"An old friend o' mine's there," Mason explained as they walked along up Kentucky Street. "He's just got out of a shooting

scrape; he croaked that fellow Benny Moon. Remember?"

Gibbs's place was scarcely more than a block away; it displayed no sign; a three-story building of brick, a side door, and a plate-glass window in front; a curtain hiding half the window, a light above—that was all.

Mason entered with an assurance that impressed Archie, who had never before felt the need of assurance in entering a saloon. He looked about; it was like any other saloon, a long bar and a heavy mirror that reflected the glasses and the bottles of green and yellow liqueurs arranged before it. At one table sat a tattered wreck of a man, his head bowed on his forearms crossed on the table, fast asleep—one of the many broken lives that found with Danny Gibbs a refuge. Over the mirror behind the bar hung an opium pipe, long since disused, serving as a relic now, the dreams with which it had once relieved the squalor and remorse of a wasted life long since broken.

At Mason's step, however, there was a stir in the room behind the bar-room, and a woman entered. She walked heavily, as if her years and her flesh were burdensome; her face was heavy, tired and expressionless. She was plainly making for the bar, as if to keep alive the pretense of a saloon, but when she saw Mason she stopped, her face lighted up, becoming all at once matronly and pleasant, and she smiled as she came forward, holding out a hand.

"Why, Joe," she said, "is that you? When did you get out?"

"This morning," he said. "Where's Dan?"

"He's back here; come in," and she turned and led the way.

Mason followed, drawing Archie behind him, and they entered the room behind the bar-room. The atmosphere changed—the room was light, it was lived in, and the four men seated at a round bare table gave to the place its proper character. Three of the men had small tumblers filled with whisky before them, the fourth had none; he sat tilted back in his chair, his stiff hat pulled down over his eyes, his hands sunk in the pockets of his trousers; his fat thighs flattened on the edge of his chair. He was dressed in modest gray, and might have been taken for a commonplace business man. He lifted his blue eyes quickly and glanced at the intruders; his face was round and cleanly shaved, save for a little blond mustache that curled at the corners of his mouth. His hair, of the same color as his mustache, glistened slightly at the temples, where it was touched by gray. This man had no whisky glass before him—he did not drink, but he sat there with an air of presiding over this little session, plainly vested with some authority—sat, indeed, as became Danny Gibbs, the most prominent figure in the under world.

Gibbs's place was only ostensibly a saloon; in reality it was a clearing-house for thieves, where accounts were settled with men who had been robbed under circumstances that made it advisable for them to keep the matter secret, and where balances were adjusted with the police. All the thieves of the higher class—those who traveled on railway trains and steamboats, fleecing men in games of cards, those of that class who were well-dressed,

well-informed, pleasant-mannered, apparently respectable, who passed everywhere for men of affairs, and stole enormous sums by means of a knowledge of human nature that was almost miraculous—were friends of Gibbs. He negotiated for them; he helped them when they were in trouble; when they were in the city they lived at his house—sometimes they lived on him. The two upper floors of his establishment, fitted like a hotel, held many strange and mysterious guests. Gibbs maintained the same relation with the guns, the big-mitt men, and sneak-thieves, and he bore the same relation to the yegg men and to the prowlers. By some marvelous tact he kept apart all these classes, so different, so antipathetic, so jealous and suspicious of one another, and when they happened to meet he kept them on terms. There never were loud words or trouble at Gibbs's. To all these classes of professional criminals he was a kind of father, an ever-ready friend who never forgot or deserted them. When they were in jail he sent lawyers to them, he provided them with delicacies, he paid their fines. Sometimes he obtained pardons and commutations for them, for he was naturally influential in politics and maintained relations with Ralph Keller, the boss of the city, that were as close as those he maintained with the police. He could provide votes for primaries, and he could do other things. The police never molested him, though now and then they threatened to, and then he was forced to increase the tribute money, already enormous. A part of his understanding with the police, a clause in the *modus vivendi*, was that certain

friends of Gibbs's were to be harbored in the city on condition that they committed no crimes while there; now and then when a crime was committed in the city, it would be made the excuse by the police for further extortion. The detectives came and went as freely at Gibbs's as the guns, the yeggs, the prowlers, the sure-thing men, the gamblers and bunco men.

"Ah, Joe," said Gibbs, glancing at Mason.

"Dan," said Mason, as he took a chair beside Gibbs. They had spoken in low, quiet tones, yet somehow the simplicity of their greeting suggested a friendship that antedated all things of the present, stretching back into other days, recalling ties that had been formed at times and under circumstances that were lost in the past and forgotten by every one, even the police. However well the other three might have known Gibbs, they delicately implied that their relation could not be so close as that of Joe Mason, and they were silent for an instant, as if they would pay a tribute to it. But the silence held, losing all at once its deference to the friendship of Gibbs and Mason, and taking on a quality of constraint, cold and repellent, plainly due to Archie's presence. Archie felt this instantly, and Mason felt it, for he knew the ways of his kind, and, turning to Gibbs, he said:

"A friend of mine; met him in the boob." And then he said: "Mr. Gibbs, let me introduce Mr. Koerner."

Gibbs looked at Archie keenly and gave him his hand. Then Mason introduced Archie to the three other men—Jackson, Mandell and Keenan. Gibbs, meanwhile, turned to his wife, who

had taken a chair against the wall and folded her arms.

"Get Joe and his friend something to drink, Kate," he commanded. The woman rose wearily, asked them what they wished to drink, and went into the bar-room for the whisky glasses.

The little company had accepted Archie tentatively on Mason's assurance, but they resumed their conversation guardedly and without spontaneity. Mason, however, gave it a start again when he turned to Jackson and said:

"Well, Curly, I read about your trouble. I was glad you wasn't ditched. I thought for a while there that you was the fall guy, all right."

Jackson laughed without mirth and flicked the ash from his cigarette.

"Yes, Joe, I come through."

"He sprung you down there, too!" said Mason with more surprise than Archie had ever known him to show. "I figured you'd waive, anyhow."

"Well, I wanted a show-down, d'ye see?" said Jackson. "I knew they couldn't hold me on the square."

"Didn't they know anything?"

"Who, them chuck coppers?" Jackson sneered. "Not a thing; they guessed a whole lot, and when I got out they asked if I'd object to be mugged." Jackson was showing his perfect teeth in a smile that attracted Archie. "They'd treated me so well, I was ready to oblige them—d'ye see?—and I let 'em—so they took my

Bertillon. I didn't think one more would hurt much."

Jackson looked down at the table and smiled introspectively. The smile won Archie completely. He was looking at Jackson with admiration in his eyes, and Jackson, suddenly noticing him, conveyed to Archie subtly a sense of his own pleasure in the boy's admiration.

"Well, I tell you, Curly," Mason was going on. "You done right—that fink got just what was comin' to him. You showed the nerve, too. I couldn't 'ave waited half that long. But I didn't think you'd stand a show with Bostwick. I knowed you'd get off in front of a jury, but I had my misdoubts about that fellow Eades. God! he's a cold proposition! But in front of Bostwick—" Mason slowly and incredulously shook his head, then ended by swallowing his little glassful of whisky suddenly.

"Well, you see, Joe," Jackson began, speaking in a high, shrill voice, as if it were necessary to convince Mason, "there was nothin' to it. There was no chance for the bulls to job me on this thing," and he went on to explain, as if he had to vindicate his exercise of judgment in a delicate situation, seeming to forget how completely the outcome had justified it.

Archie had scarcely noticed Keenan and Mandell; once he had wrested his eyes from Gibbs, he had not taken them from Jackson. He had been puzzled at first, but now, in a flash, he recognized in Jackson the man who had shot Moon.

"You see, Joe," Mandell suddenly spoke up—his voice was a rumbling bass in harmony with his heavy jaws—"it was a clear

case of self-defense. The shamming-pusher starts out to clean up down the line, he unsloughs up there by Connie's place on Caldwell, and musses a wingy, and then he goes across the street and bashes a dinge; he goes along that way, bucklin' into everybody he meets, until he meets Curly, who was standing down there by Sailor Goin's drum chinnin' Steve Noonan—he goes up to them and begins. Curly mopes off; he dogs him down to Cliff Decker's corner, catches up and gives Curly a clout in the gash—"

Mason was listening intently, leaning forward, his keen eyes fixed on Mandell's. He was glad, at last, to have the story from one he could trust to give the details correctly; theretofore he had had nothing but the accounts in the newspapers, and he had no more confidence in the newspapers than he had in the courts or the churches, or any other institution of the world above him. Archie listened, too, finding a new fascination in the tale, though he had had it already from one of the gang, Pat Whalen, who had been fortunate enough to see the tragedy, and had had the distinction of testifying in the case. Whalen had seen Moon, a bartender with pugilistic ambitions, make an unprovoked assault on Jackson, follow him to the corner, and knock him down; he had seen Jackson stagger to his feet, draw his revolver and back away. He had told Archie how deathly white Jackson's face had gone as he backed, backed, a whole block, a crowd following, and Moon coming after, cursing and swearing, taunting Jackson, daring him to shoot, telling him he was "four-flushing with that

smoke-wagon," warning him to make a good job when he did shoot, for he intended to make him eat his gun. He had told how marvelously cool Jackson was; he had said in a low voice, "I don't want to shoot you—I just want you to let me alone." And Whalen had described how Moon had flung off his coat, how bystanders had tried to restrain him, how he had rushed on, how Jackson had gone into the vacant lot by old Jim Peppers's shanty, coming out on the other side, until he was met by Eva Clason, who tried to open a gate and let Jackson into the brothel she called home. Whalen had given Archie a sense of the ironical fate that that day had led Eva's piano player to nail up the gate so that the chickens she had bought could not get out of the yard. The gate would not open and Moon was on him again; and Jackson backed and backed, clear around to the sidewalk on Caldwell Street, and then, when he had completed the circuit, Moon had sprung at him. Then the revolver had cracked, the crowd closed in, and there lay Moon on the sidewalk, dead—and Jackson looking down at him. Then the cries for air, the patrol wagon, and the police.

As Mandell told the story now, Archie kept his eyes on Jackson. At the point where he had said, "I don't want to shoot you," Jackson's eyes grew moist with tears; he blinked and knocked the ashes from his cigarette with the nail of his little finger, sprinkling them on the floor. When Mandell had done, Mason looked up at Jackson.

"Well, Curly," he said, "you had the right nerve."

"Nerve!" said Mandell. "I guess so!"

"Nerve!" repeated Keenan. "He had enough for a whole mob!"

"Ach!" said Jackson, twisting away from them on his chair.

"I'd 'a let him have it when he first bashed me," said Keenan.

"Yes!" cried Jackson suddenly, rising and catching his chair by the back. "Yes—and been settled for it! I didn't want to do it; I didn't want to get into trouble. You always was that way, Jimmy."

Archie looked at Curly Jackson as he stood with an arm outstretched toward Keenan; his figure was tall and straight and slender, and as he noted the short brown curls that gave him his name, the tanned cheeks, the attitude in which he held himself, something confused Archie, some thought he could not catch—some idea that evaded him, coming near till he was just on the point of grasping it, then eluding him, like a name one tries desperately to recall.

"I didn't have my finger on the trigger," Jackson went on, speaking in his high, shrill, excited voice. "I held it on the trigger-guard all the time."

And then suddenly it came to Archie—that bronzed skin, that set of the shoulders, that trimness, that alertness, that coolness, Jackson could have got nowhere but in the army. He had been a soldier—what was more, he had been a regular. And Archie felt something like devotion for him.

"Sit down, Curly," said Gibbs, and Jackson sank into his chair. A minute later Jackson turned to Mason and said quietly:

"You see, Joe, I don't like to talk about it—nor to think of it. I didn't want to kill him, God knows. I don't see anything in it to

get swelled about and be the wise guy."

XVII

Curly Jackson sat for a moment idly making little circles on the polished surface of the table with the moist bottom of his glass; then abruptly he rose and left the room. The others followed him with their eyes. Archie was deeply interested. He longed to talk to Jackson, longed to show him how he admired him, but he was timid in this company, and felt that it became him best to remain quiet. But Jackson's conduct in the tragedy had fired Archie's imagination, and Jackson was as much the hero in his eyes as he was in the eyes of his companions. And then Archie thought of his own skill with the carbine and the revolver, and he wished he could display it to these men; perhaps in that way he could attract their notice and gain their approval.

"He doesn't want to talk about it," said Mason when Jackson had disappeared.

"No," said Gibbs. "Let him alone."

Jackson was gone but a few minutes, and then he returned and quietly took his seat at the table. They talked of other things then, but Archie could understand little they said, for they spoke in a language that was almost wholly unintelligible to him. But he sat and listened with a bewildering sense of mystery that made their conversation all the more fascinating. What they said conveyed to him a sense of a wild, rough, dangerous life that was full of adventure and a kind of low romance, and Archie felt that he

would like to know these men better; if possible, to be one of them, and at the thought his heart beat faster, as at the sudden possibility of a new achievement.

As they talked voices were heard in the bar-room outside, and presently a huge man stood in the door-way. He was fully six feet in height, and blond. His face was red, and he was dressed in dark gray clothes, a blue polka-dotted cravat giving his attire its one touch of color. He reminded Archie of some one, and he tried to think who that person was.

"Oh, Dan," the man in the doorway said, "come here a minute."

Gibbs went into the bar-room.

"Who's that?" asked Mandell.

"He's a swell, all right," said Keenan.

The three, Mandell, Keenan and Jackson, looked at Mason as if he could tell. But Archie suddenly remembered.

"He looks like an army officer," he said, speaking his thought aloud.

"What do you know about army officers, young fellow?" demanded Jackson. The others turned, and Archie blushed. But he did not propose to have Jackson put him down.

"Well," he said with spirit, "I know something—I was in the regular army three years."

"What regiment?" Jackson fixed Archie with his blue eyes, and there seemed to be just a trace of concern in their keen, searching glance.

"The twelfth cavalry," said Archie. "I served in the Philippines."

"Oh!" said Jackson, as if relieved, and he released Archie from his look. Archie felt relieved, too, and went on:

"He looks just like a colonel in the English army I saw at Malta. Our transport stopped there."

"It's Lon McDougall," said Mason when Archie had finished. "He's a big-mitt man."

The others turned away with an effect of lost interest and something like a sneer.

"I suppose there's a lot o' those guns out there," said Keenan.

"A mob come in this afternoon," said Mason; "they're working eastward out of Chicago with the rag."

"Well, let's make a get-away," said Keenan, unable to conceal a yegg man's natural contempt of the guns.

They all got up, Archie with them, and went out. In the bar-room five men were standing; they were all men of slight figure, dressed well and becomingly, and with a certain alert, sharp manner. They cast quick, shifty glances at the men who came out of the back room, but there was no recognition between them. These men, as Mason had said, were all pickpockets; they had come to town that afternoon, and naturally repaired at once to Gibbs's. They had come in advance of a circus that was to be in the city two days later, and were happy in the hope of being able to work under protection. They knew Cleary as a chief of police with whom an arrangement could be made, and McDougall, who

had come in to work on circus day himself, had kindly agreed to secure them this protection. At that moment, indeed, McDougall was whispering with Gibbs at the end of the bar; they were discussing the "fixing" of Cleary.

The pickpockets had been talking rather excitedly. They were glad at the prospect of the circus, and, in common with the rest of humanity, they were glad that spring had come, partly from a natural human love of this time of joy and hope, partly because the spring was the beginning of the busy season. They could do more in summer, when people were stirring about, just as the yegg men could do more in winter, when the nights were long and windows were closed and people kept indoors. But at the appearance of Mason and his friends, one of the pickpockets gave the thieves' cough, and they were silent. McDougall glanced about, then resumed his low talk with Gibbs.

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