

THOMAS DIXON

THE FALL OF A
NATION

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The Fall of a Nation / A Sequel to the Birth of a Nation:*

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The Fall of a Nation / A Sequel to the Birth of a Nation

TO THE READER

THIS novel is not a rehash of the idea of a foreign conquest of America based on the accidents of war. It is a study of the origin, meaning and destiny of American Democracy by one who believes that the time is ripe in this country for a revival of the principles on which our Republic was founded.

Thomas Dixon.

Los Angeles, California

PROLOGUE

OVER a bleak hillside in Scotland the sun is sinking in the sea. A group of humble men and women stand before the King's soldiers accused of disobedience to Royal command. They have been found guilty of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own conscience and not according to the ritual of the Church of England.

The sheriff appeals in vain that they yield and live. The grim prelate advances, reads the death warrant, and offers pardon if they renounce their faith. With quiet smiles they lift their heads and pray.

The King on his throne has failed. The King within the soul of man is rising to reign.

The martyrs are bound to a stake, the fagots piled high, the torch applied. Above the crackle and roar of flames over the hills by the western sea rises their song – the battle hymn of a coming republic of freemen.

The women they reserve for kindlier treatment, these gallant servants of the King. Beside old Margaret McLaughlin stands a beautiful girl of nineteen with wide eyes hungry for the joy of living. The poor father, faithful to the Church, has bought the life of his younger daughter for a hundred pounds in gold. He offers more for his first born. The older one they refuse to sell.

With generous chivalry the soldiers drive their stakes within

the tide line of the sea. Drowning they say is an easy death. Old Margaret sinks quickly beneath the waves. Life has been hard for her. There's a far-off eager look in the old eyes as they are lifted to the sky.

The young girl fights for life with the instinctive will to live that beats in every mother soul. The prelate watching smiles. He sees a convert to his forms and signals to the guard. The girl is loosed and dragged ashore. Bending over the prostrate figure on the sands he offers life for an oath.

"Your King commands it!" the minion urges.

The girl answers in gentle tones:

"I am Christ's child – I follow Him!"

The prelate frowns, rises and gives the sign to his executioners. The soldiers tie her again to the stake, and the red shadow of the flames on the bleak hill fall across the white young face and mingle with the scarlet of the setting sun.

Every dungeon groans throughout the realm with the madness of the King. The gentlest and the noblest are held as common felons. John Milton, brooding within his soul his immortal song, is gripped by prison bars. Roger Williams, his friend and fellow dreamer, sits by his side reading to the blind poet the principles of liberty proclaimed by their Dutch brethren across the channel.

From every dark port the ships lift their wings and sail westward. From the decks of one our Pilgrim Fathers land on Plymouth Rock and pray. Strange mixture of fine and common clay these ancestors of ours! They land first on their knees and

then on the aborigines. The pilgrim becomes the invader. And he wins every battle for the simplest possible reason. He carries a weapon superior to the one in the hand of the untutored Indian. The bow and arrow goes down before the death dealing bolt hurled by gunpowder.

The simple aboriginal had made no preparation against invasion. His wigwam is burned, his land and goods taken, his children slain.

On other ships come nobler men who lift high the light of a new civilization.

Roger Williams, exiled from England and driven from Massachusetts by the Pilgrims, lands on Narragansett Bay, and proclaims religious liberty as the first principle of human progress. William Penn in Pennsylvania and Roger Williams in Rhode Island at least atone for some of our early sins. The light they kindle on our shores streams across the sea to far-off king-ridden Germany whose men and women starve and freeze on snow-wrapped hills and mountains while crowned heads, aping the Court of the Grand Monarch of France, dance and drink in their palaces. As the snows melt an endless line of human misery pours along the banks of the Rhine to Rotterdam – with eyes fixed on the far-off new western world.

From the green hills of Ireland leaps another stream toward the western sea. An absentee landlord, wearing a coronet and loafing at the Court of Royalty, needs more money for his games. He decides to double his income by raising his rents. The

Marquis of Donegal promptly evicts all tenants who cannot pay. The lordly example is followed by his landowning neighbors and thirty thousand Irish immigrants flee to America in a single year.

But strangest sign of the ages, the children of the Inquisition themselves at last feel the thumbscrew, rack and torch and turn their frightened faces westward to the new free world! Lord Baltimore leads his Catholic exiles to the shores of the Chesapeake and builds in new-found wisdom a free state with religious liberty its cornerstone.

From a rose bower in the Royal gardens at Fontainebleau the blackest cloud of a bloody century rises to darken the skies of sunny France. A gayly dressed page places a cushion and footstool and prostrates himself as before approaching divinity. A courtier enters, examines the cushion, kneels, kisses the footstool and stands at attention. The Grand Monarch, Louis XIV, approaches leaning heavily on the arm of his bespangled attendant. The King is bent with the consciousness of a life of sin. His fat legs totter, and there is a haunted look in his feverish eyes. Remorse for a brutal career is gnawing at his fear-stricken soul. The white hand of Death is beckoning and he sees.

Madame de Maintenon, his evil genius, hovers in the background, a black-robed priest whispering in her willing ear.

The King is seated by his courtiers. He roughly commands that they call his mistress-wife and waves them aside with imperious gesture.

De Maintenon's keen eye catches the order, the priest

disappears and the harlot who rules a world approaches with cat-like tread, her face a study of quiet triumphant cunning. She protests her undying love and with pious eloquence points the way by which his gracious majesty may yet earn his heavenly crown. A million industrious Huguenots have unfortunately survived the massacre of St. Bartholomew. If the King would win eternal salvation he can by ordering their death or submission to the dishonor of denying their soul's faith in God. She presents the fatal document. The old roué with trembling hand signs the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. France is again deluged in blood and two hundred thousand of her noblest children driven into exile.

The sun of the new day rises on fields of flowers strewn with the bodies of dead mothers and babes. As the night falls, terror-stricken refugees creep across the dark sands of the beach, enter the little boats and push off from their beloved motherland for the long exile, their saddened faces turned westward.

The sea is wide but not so wide that the English King's hand cannot reach the throats of exiles and their children. By royal command Captain Preston orders his soldiers to shoot the people down in the streets of Boston on the night of March 5, 1770. Unarmed men shout defiance and the troops are withdrawn to hush the turmoil.

The frontiersmen of the wilderness of North Carolina are not so easily tamed. They seize their muskets and give the first armed resistance to the might of kings the New World has dared. The

Royal Governor defeats the rebels in the Battle of Alamance on May 16, 1771, and hangs six of their leaders. As young James Pough stands with his arms pinioned behind his back he turns to his executioners and shouts: "My blood will be seed sown on good ground!"

Our fathers in Boston hear the shout and when the King attempts to enforce his stamp act they board his ship and throw the cargo into the sea.

The Colonies are at war with the King. The big bell in Philadelphia is calling all to unite in common defense and Thomas Jefferson reads his immortal Declaration of Independence to the assembled leaders. His voice rings with a strange prophetic elation:

"We hold these truths to be self evident – that all men are created equal!"

The startled kings of the earth hear the new heresy in sullen wrath and join hands to crush the rebels. The German rulers hire to George III more than thirty thousand Teutonic soldiers with which to stamp out the threatening conflagration. The Hessians land on our shores and join hands with the scarlet ranks of the King of England.

To mock their shame a noble Prussian, trained in the school of Frederick the Great, offers his sword to Washington and becomes the Inspector General of our ragged half-starved army.

Steuben stands beside Lafayette and Rochambeau while Lord Cornwallis surrenders the British army at Yorktown.

Through ten years of defeat and anguish, of blood and suffering God leads the American Colonies at last into the sunlight of victory. George Washington, first president of the established union of free sovereign democratic States, delivers his inaugural address. A free nation rises from blood-red soil to haunt the dream of kings.

The rulers of earth are not slow to note the signs of the times. Democracy must be crushed. The handwriting on their palace walls is plain. He who runs may read. Imperialism challenges Democracy for a fight to the finish. The kings of Austria, Russia and Prussia meet in Paris and form the Holy Alliance. The purpose of their treaty is expressed in plain language. It has the ring of a bugle call to arms. They do not mince words:

“The high contracting parties, well convinced that the system of representative government is as incompatible with the monarchical system as the maxim of the sovereignty of the people is opposed to the principle of Divine Right, engage in the most solemn manner to employ all their means and unite all their efforts to put an end to the system of representative government wherever it is known to exist in the States of Europe and to prevent it from being introduced into those States where it is not known.”

Alexander I of Russia, Frederick William III of Prussia, and Francis I of Austria sign the solemn compact and fix their Royal seals. In due time the Bourbon King of France joins the Alliance against the rising Democracy. They would first crush the spirit of the French Revolution in Europe and halt the spirit of 1776

in America. They must re-establish the Crown over the revolting colonies of Central and South America and establish Russia's claim to Northwestern America.

James Monroe, president of the United States, answers this challenge with the doctrine of a free America ruled by her own people. The leader of world democracy does not mince words. His message rings also with the note of a bugle call to arms:

“The political system of the Allied Powers is essentially different from that of America. To the defense of our own, which has been achieved with the loss of so much blood and treasure, this whole nation is devoted and we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. It is impossible therefore that the Allied Powers should extend their political system to either Continent of North or South America without endangering our life.”

Imperial Europe has flung down the gantlet. American Democracy accepts the challenge and the fight is on to a finish.

The King of Prussia wins the first skirmish and strangles with iron hand the murmurs of the people of Germany for freedom. Karl Schurz, Franz Siegel, Jacobi and their fellow students crawl through the sewers, elude the Prussian soldiers, and reach our shores to swell the rank of militant Democracy. All Europe rings with the headsman's ax and from a thousand hilltops the ropes of hangmen swing in the stark heavens.

Those corpses of young men,
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets – those hearts
pierced by the gray lead,
Cold and motionless as they seem, live elsewhere with
unslaughtered vitality.

They live in other young men, O kings!
They live in brothers, again ready to defy you!
They were purified by death – they were taught and exalted.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose,
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counseling,
cautioning.

Democracy hears these invisible councilors and sets her house
in order for the coming world crisis.

The old Federal Union of sovereign states has proven too frail
for the strain of the new era. A stronger Union must be laid
with new and deeper foundations. “Liberty and Union one and
inseparable now and forever” ceases to be merely the eloquent
prayer of a great statesman. It has become the first necessity of
the political system of Democracy. Abraham Lincoln realizes
this in his soul stirring cry from the great battlefield:

*“That Government of the people by the people and for the
people shall not perish from the earth!”*

From her baptism of blood and tears the New Nation, strong,
free, united, rises at last to face a hostile world, her house in

order, her loins girded for the conflict.

Imperial Europe hastens to test her mettle. A princeling is proclaimed emperor of Mexico in a palace in Vienna, Austria, and sails for our shores. His reign is brief.

A few short months and Maximilian stands beside an old Spanish wall in a Mexican village and bids farewell to his friends. He is allowed to embrace Miramon and Mejia. With imperial gesture he throws his gold to the soldiers and bids them fire straight at his heart. The three fall simultaneously and the smoke lifts once more on a Western nation ruled by the people.

Europe has not forgotten. She is busy for the moment setting her own house in order for the supreme conflict which her leaders foresee with the advance of the dangerous heresy of people claiming the right to govern themselves.

The Emperor of Germany sounds the keynote in an address to his magnificent army – The Divine Right of Kings was never so boldly proclaimed by any ruler of the world. He speaks the last word of Imperial Culture to Modern Democracy:

“We Hohenzollerns hold our crown from God alone. Who opposes me I shall crush to pieces!”

The American Republic is but a lusty youth of untried strength among the nations of earth. The real battle between the Crown and the People for the mastery of the world is yet to be fought. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty today as yesterday and forever.

CHAPTER I

THE liveried flunkey entered the stately library and bowed:
“You rang, sir?”

He scarcely breathed the words. In every tone spoke the old servile humility of the creature in the presence of his creator the King. He might have said, “Sire.” His voice, his straight-set eyes, his bowed body, did say it.

His master continued the conversation with the two men without lifting his head. He merely flung the order with studied carelessness:

“Lights, Otto – the table only.”

The servant bowed low, pressed the electric switch, and softly left the room, walking backward as before royalty.

The two men with Charles Waldron in his palatial house in New York passed the incident apparently without knowledge of its significance. An American-born boy of fourteen, seeing it twenty-five years ago, would have wondered where on earth the creature came from. Of one thing he would have been certain – this flunkey could not have been made in the United States of America. Within the past quarter of a century, however, the imported menial has become one of our institutions and he is the outward sign of a momentous change within the mind of the class who have ruled our society.

The crown-embossed electric lantern above the massive table

in the center of the room flooded the gold and scarlet cloth with light.

Waldron with a quick gesture of command spoke sharply:
“Be seated, gentlemen.”

The two men instinctively brought their heels together and took seats within the circle of light. The master of the house paused a moment in deep thought before the stately Louis XIV window looking out on the broad waters of the Hudson.

His yacht, a huge ocean greyhound whose nose had scented the channels of every harbor of the world, lay at anchor in the stream along the heights of upper Manhattan, her keen prow bent seaward by the swift tide.

The strong face of the master of men was flushed with an inward fire. His gray eyes glowed. His jaws suddenly came together with decision. He turned from the window as if to join the two at the table and paused in his tracks studying the face of Meyer, the tall angular fellow who was evidently impatient at the delay.

Waldron had suddenly made up his mind to trust this man with a most important mission. And yet he disliked him. He was the type that must be used, but held with an iron hand – the modern enthusiast with scientific knowledge.

The smaller man, Mora, was easy – the nose of a ferret, coarse black cropped beard and thick sensuous lips. He could be managed – yes. He could be trusted – yes.

The other – he studied again – the strongly marked angular

features, the large brilliant eyes, big nostrils and high forehead. He could be used for the first steps – it might be necessary to hang him later. All right, he would use him and then let him hang himself – suicide was common with his type.

Waldron smiled, quickly approached the table and took his seat. He nodded to Meyer and spoke suavely:

“Your invention has been perfected?”

The deep lines about the thinker’s mouth twitched. He suddenly thrust his hand in his pocket, drew out a box and placed it under the light.

“I have it with me.”

Mora bent close and Waldron watched keenly as Meyer opened the leathern case and exposed the new device which he had promised to perfect.

“Examine the mechanisms,” he said, passing it to Waldron. “It’s perfectly harmless at present. The clockwork inside is as delicate as a Swiss watch.”

The master of the house placed the smooth round surface to his ear, listened, laughed softly and passed it to Mora.

Meyer spoke with the certainty of positive knowledge, holding Waldron’s eye with a steady gaze.

“I guarantee to stop the trade of this money-grabbing nation with all belligerents. I’ll sink a ship from inside her hold as slick as that torpedo ten days ago got the *Lusitania*– ”

Waldron made no reply. His jaw merely closed tightly.

The throb of an automobile climbing the steep roadway from

the river drive struck the window. Waldron rose, listened a moment, walked to the casement and looked out.

A tall, distinguished-looking man with deep-cut lines in his strong face, who moved with military precision, opened the door of the tonneau without waiting for the chauffeur and leaped out.

The flunkey in the hall was evidently expecting his arrival. Villard whispered to the servant who closed the door quickly and led the way to the library.

The new guest was evidently nervous in spite of his well drilled manners. In his right hand he gripped an extra edition of a New York sensational evening paper.

Villard himself brushed the flunkey aside and rapped on the library door. Waldron opened and closed it instantly on his entrance. There was no mistaking the fact that the newcomer bore an important message. His deep, cold, blue eyes glowed with excitement and his hand visibly trembled. He drew his host to the window, opened the crumpled copy of the paper and pointed to its huge head lines:

CONGRESSMAN VASSAR OF NEW YORK
INTRODUCES BILL DEMANDING A GREAT NAVY
AND A MILLION TRAINED MEN FOR DEFENSE!

“This is a serious business” – Villard said curtly.

Waldron smiled:

“Serious – yes – unless we know how to meet the crisis. I happen to know – ”

“It can be defeated then?”

“It will be defeated,” was the quiet reply. “Many bills are introduced into our supreme law-making body, Villard – but few are passed. This is one that will die an early and easy death – ”

“You are sure?”

“As that I’m living. Come – sit down.” Waldron moved toward the table and Villard quickly followed.

Waldron handed the paper to Meyer without comment and quietly watched him explode with excitement. Mora, too, was swept from his feet for the moment.

“It means – sir?” Meyer gasped.

“That we will move a little more quickly – that is all,” Waldron answered.

The three men leaned close, each awaiting with evident deference the word of the master mind.

There was no mistaking the fact that one mind dominated the group. The high intellectual forehead of the man of millions marked him at once as a born leader and master of men. There was a consciousness of power in the poise of his big body and the slow movement of his piercing eyes that commanded attention and respect from his bitterest foe.

“Of course, gentlemen,” he began calmly, “if we had in this country an intelligent and capable government we would be up against a serious situation. We have no such government. The alleged Democracy under which we live is the most asinine contrivance ever devised by theorists and dreamers. It never makes an important move until too late and then will certainly do

the wrong thing in the moment of crisis. There is but one thing you can always depend on at every session of Congress. They will pass the bill dividing the Pork Barrel among the Congressional Districts. The average Congressman considers this his first duty – the rest is of but slight importance – ”

Villard laughed heartily. The two others joined feebly. They were not so sure of the situation. Their knowledge of Waldron’s power and the accuracy of his judgment was not so clear as the older man’s.

“Not only have we the most corrupt and incompetent government of all history,” Waldron went on, “but to add to its confusion and weakness we have lately thrust the duties of the ballot upon millions of hysterical women utterly unfitted for its responsibilities. It is an actual fact that the women now enfranchised in the Middle and Western states hold the balance of power – ”

Villard suddenly leaped to his feet.

“And they will vote solidly against every programme of preparation!”

Waldron nodded.

“How fortunate at this moment!” Villard went on enthusiastically, “that the women rule American men. I begin to see the reason for your confidence. You will enlist of course the eloquent young leader who addressed the mob in Union Square last week?”

“At once,” Waldron answered quickly. “Virginia Holland is

one of the feminine gods at the moment. It's amazing with what blind worship her disciples follow – ”

“She's a stunning young woman, sir!” Villard broke in gallantly. “By Jove, she stirred me. You can't neglect her – ”

“I shall cultivate her at once,” was the quiet answer. “In the meantime, Meyer” – Waldron paused and held the enthusiast's eye for an instant and went on rapidly – “we will forget the ships – ”

Meyer frowned in surprise but had no time to answer before he received the curt order in an undertone.

“Wait for me – I've more important work for you.” Waldron rose and drew Villard and Mora aside.

Without ceremony he placed five yellow-backed one hundred dollar bills in Villard's hands and a single one in Mora's.

“We hold a great Peace rally to launch the popular movement against this bill to establish militarism in the United States. The classes who cherish varied theories of peace will join us. The Honorable Plato Barker is at the moment the leader of the peace yodelers. He is a professional lecturer who loves the sound of his own voice. He knows you, Villard, and prizes your opinions on Peace – ”

Villard gave a dry little laugh.

“You will personally see the Honorable Plato and secure him as our principal speaker. And you, Mora, happen to know the Reverend A. Cuthbert Pike, D.D., President of the American Peace Union. His church maintains some missionaries in your

benighted native land. His office is at the Bible House. I want him to introduce the Honorable Plato Barker – ”

Mora smiled and bowed, and the two hurried to execute their orders. Villard's car was waiting. The master of the house took Meyer's arm, led him to the corner of the library and for half an hour gave explicit instructions in low tones.

Before showing Meyer to the door another roll of bills was duly delivered for defraying the expenses of his important work. The enthusiast brought his heels together with a sharp click, saluted and hurried down the broad stairs. He declined the offer of an automobile. He didn't like millionaires. He only used them.

Waldron watched him go with a curious smile, drew on his gloves and called for his hat and cane.

The flunkey who hovered near obeyed the order with quick servility and stood watching his master go by the broad porte-cochère, wondering why the order had not been given him for the car.

Waldron signaled his night chauffeur, and the big limousine darted to the stoop. As the driver leaned out to receive his orders, Waldron spoke in low tones:

“To Miss Virginia Holland's on Stuyvesant Square – ”

The driver nodded and closed the door of the limousine. He had been there before.

CHAPTER II

VIRGINIA HOLLAND, at her desk preparing an address on the Modern Feminist Movement, dropped her pencil and raised her head with a look of startled surprise at the cry of a newsboy in the street below. The whole block seemed to vibrate with his uncanny yell:

“Wuxtra! Wuxtra!”

A sense of impending calamity caught her heart for a moment. It was a morbid fancy, of course, and yet the cry of the boy kept ringing a personal warning.

Work impossible, she opened her door, called and asked her brother Billy to get a copy of the paper.

Before he returned her anxiety had increased to the point of pain. She rapidly descended the stairs and waited at the door.

Billy entered reading the headlines announcing Vassar's new programme of military preparation. Virginia flushed and gazed at the announcement with increasing excitement. The name of John Vassar had caused a flush before the announcement of his bill had made an impression. Her handsome Congressman neighbor, though they had never formally met, had for some months past been a disturbing factor in a life of hitherto serene indifference to men. That he should have antagonized in this bill her well known position as the uncompromising advocate of peace and of universal disarmament was a shock. His proposal

to arm the American Democracy came as a slap in her face. She felt it a personal affront.

Of course she had no right to such feeling. John Vassar was nothing to her! She had only seen him pass her window three times during the year. And yet the longer she gazed at the announcement the more furious she became. At least he might have consulted her as the leading public-spirited woman in his district on this measure of such transcendent importance. He had not done so, for a simple reason. He knew that she opposed militarism as the first article of her life faith. Her hand closed on the paper in a grip of resentment. She made up her mind instantly to force his hand on the suffrage issue. She would show him that she had some power in his District.

Her mood of absorbed anger was suddenly broken by Billy's joyous cry:

"Hurrah for John Vassar, sis. Me for West Point! Will you make him appoint me?"

She turned in sudden rage and boxed her young brother's ears, smiled at his surprise, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. She boxed his ears for crying hurrah for Vassar. She kissed him for the compliment of her supposed power over the coming statesman.

To hide her confusion she began at once a heated argument over the infamies of a military régime. The quarrel broke the peaceful scene of a game of checkers between the father and mother in the sitting-room, and brought the older people into the

hall:

“In heaven’s name, Virginia!” her father exclaimed. “What is the matter?”

“Read it” – she answered angrily, thrusting the paper into his hand.

The Grand Army veteran read with sparkling eyes.

“Good!” he shouted.

“That’s what I say, father!” Billy echoed.

“It’s absurd,” Virginia protested. “War on this country is impossible. It’s unthinkable – ”

The old soldier suddenly seized her hand.

“Impossible, is it? Come with me a minute, Miss!”

He drew her into the library followed by Billy – the mother striving gently to keep the peace.

Holland led his eloquent daughter to the rack above the center bookcase and took from its place his army musket.

“That’s what they said, my girl, in ’61. Here’s the answer. That’s what your grandmother said to your grandfather. That’s why we’ve bungled every war we ever fought and paid for it in rivers of blood!”

The family row started anew – the father and boy for preparation against war, the daughter and mother for peace – peace at any price.

The quarrel was at its height when Waldron’s car arrived.

Old Peter, the stately negro butler of the ancient régime, closed the folding doors to drown the din before ushering the

distinguished guest into the parlor. Waldron was a prime favorite of Peter's. The millionaire had slipped him a twenty-dollar gold piece on a former occasion and no argument of friend or foe could shake his firm conviction that Charles Waldron was a gentleman of the old school. Besides, Peter was consumed with family pride in Virginia's hold on so distinguished a leader of the big world.

The old butler bowed his stateliest at the door of the parlor with the slightest hesitation on his exit as if the memory of the twenty-dollar gold piece lingered in spite of his resolution to hold himself above the influence of filthy lucre.

"I tell Miss Virginia, right away, sah – yassah!"

Waldron seated himself with confidence. Virginia Holland lingered a few minutes merely to show the great man that she was not consumed with pride at his attentions. That she appreciated the compliment of his admiration she would not have denied even to John Vassar. Waldron had made the largest single contribution to the Woman's Movement it had received in America. She had gotten the credit of winning the great man's favor and opening his purse strings.

That the millionaire was interested in her charming personality she had not doubted from the first. He left no room for doubt in the eagerness with which he openly sought her favor.

And yet it had never occurred to her to think of him as a real lover. There was something so blunt and material in his personality that it forbade a romance. She could imagine him

asking a woman to marry him. But in the wildest leap of her fancy she had not been able to conceive of his making love. In her strictly modern business woman's mind she was simply using her influence over the great man for all it was worth in a perfectly legitimate way and always for the advancement of the Cause.

She greeted him with a gracious smile and he bowed over her hand after the fashion of the European courtier in a way that half amused her and half pleased her vanity.

He held a copy of the evening paper.

"You have read it?"

Virginia nodded.

Waldron went straight to the point in his cold, impersonal but impressive way.

"You are the most eloquent leader of American women, Miss Holland. Your voice commands the widest hearing. You stand for peace and universal brotherhood. Will you preside at a mass meeting tomorrow night to protest against this infamous bill?"

Virginia Holland had given her consent mentally until he used the word "infamous." Somehow it didn't fit John Vassar's character and instinctively she resented it.

She blushed for an instant at her silly inconsistency. But a moment ago she had herself denounced the young statesman with unmeasured violence. In the next moment she was resenting an attack on him.

Waldron watched her hesitation with surprise and renewed his plea with more warmth than he had ever displayed.

Virginia extended her hand in a quick business-like way.

“Of course I’ll preside. We are fighting for the same great end.”

Waldron made no effort to press his victory. He rose at once to go, and bowed low over her hand.

“Au revoir – tomorrow night,” he said in low tones.

Virginia watched him go with a mingled feeling of triumph and fear. There was something about the man that puzzled and annoyed her – something unconvincing in his apparent frankness. And yet the truth about his big life purpose never for a moment entered her imagination.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Meyer reached the quarter of the East Side where eager crowds surge through a little crooked thoroughfare leading from the old Armory on Essex Street he encountered unexpected difficulties.

He ran into a section of John Vassar's congressional district saturated with the young leader's ideals of a new Americanism. He was coldly received.

Benda, the Italian fruit-dealer on the corner, Meyer had marked finally as his opening wedge in the little clannish community. The Italian was the most popular man on the street, his store the meeting-place of the wives and children for three blocks.

Meyer entered the store and to his surprise found it deserted. The sounds of laughter in the little suite of living-room and kitchen behind the store told of festivities in progress. He waited impatiently for the proprietor to return.

Benda was presiding at a function too important to be interrupted by thoughts of trade. With Angela, his wife, and the neighbors, he was celebrating the fifth birthday of their only boy, Tommaso, Jr. The kids from far and near were bringing their little presents and Pasquale, his best friend, who was returning to Italy by the next steamer, had generously given his monkey and hand-organ. Benda himself had escorted Pasquale into the room

and had just sprung the big surprise on the assembled party.

Pasquale was putting the monkey through his tricks amid screams of laughter when Meyer's dark face clouded the door leading from the store.

He beckoned angrily to Benda.

"May I see you a minute?"

Benda sprang to meet the unexpected apparition in his doorway while Angela led Pasquale and the children into the street for a grand concert. Meyer's tense face had not passed without her swift glance.

She left the children dancing and entered the store from the front. Meyer had just offered Benda good wages for his services in the cause and the Italian was tempted and puzzled.

Angela suddenly confronted Meyer. His suave explanation that the alliance which he had invited Benda to join was a benevolent order for self-protection was not convincing.

The wife swung her husband suddenly aside and stepped between the two. She fairly threw her words into Meyer's face.

"You go now! My man stick to his beesness. He mak good mon. We got our little home."

Meyer attempted to argue. Benda tried to edge in a word. It was useless. Angela's shrill voice rose in an endless chorus of protest.

Benda threw up his hands in surrender and re-entered the store. Meyer angrily turned on his heel and crossed the street to see Schultz, the delicatessen man on the opposite corner.

Schultz proved impossible from the first. His jovial face was wreathed in smiles but his voice was firm in its deep mumbling undertone.

“No – mein frient – no more drill for me – I fight no more except for the flag dot give me mein freedom and mein home!”

The two men held each other’s gaze in a moment of dramatic tension. The menace in Meyer’s voice was unmistakable as he answered:

“I’ll see you again!”

CHAPTER IV

JOHN VASSAR'S triumphant return to his home on Stuyvesant Square, after the introduction of his sensational bill in Congress, was beset with domestic complications. Congratulations from his father, nieces, and Wanda had scarcely been received before the trouble began.

"But you must hear Miss Holland!" Zonia pleaded.

John Vassar shook his head.

"Not tonight, dear – "

"I'd set my heart on introducing you. Ah, Uncy dear – please! She's the most eloquent orator in America – "

"That's why I hate her and all her tribe – "

A rosy cheek pressed close to his.

"Not all her tribe – "

"My Zonia – no – but I could wring her neck for leading a chick of your years into her fool movement – "

"But she didn't lead me, Uncy dear, I just saw it all in a flash while she was speaking – my duty to my sex and the world – "

"Duty to your sex! What do you know about duty to your sex? – you infant barely out of short dresses! Your hair ought to be still in braids. And it was all my fault. I let you out of the nursery too soon – "

He paused and looked at her wistfully.

"And I promised your father's spirit the day you came to us

here that I'd guard you as my own – you and little Marya. I haven't done my duty. I've been too busy with big things to realize that I was neglecting the biggest thing in the world. You've slipped away from me, dear – and I'm heartsick over it. Maybe I'll be in time for Marya – you're lost at eighteen – ”

“Marya's joined our Club too – ”

“A babe of twelve?”

“She's going to be Miss Holland's page in the suffrage Pageant – ”

John Vassar groaned, laid both hands on the girl's shoulders and rose abruptly.

“Now, Zonia, it's got to stop here and now. I'm not going to allow this brazen Amazon – ”

His niece broke into a fit of laughter.

“Brazen Amazon?”

“That's what I said. This brazen Amazon is my enemy – ”

The girl lifted her finger laughingly.

“But you're not afraid of her? John Vassar, a descendant of old Yan Vasa in whose veins ran the royal blood of Poland – ten years in Congress from this big East Side district – the idol of the people – chairman of the National House Committee on Military Affairs” – she paused and her voice dropped to the tensest pride – “my candidate for governor of New York – you positively won't go to the meeting in Union Square tonight?” she added quietly.

“Positively – ”

“Then, Uncy dear, I'll have to deliver the message – ”

She drew a crumpled note from her bosom and handed it to him without a word.

He broke the seal and read with set lips:

Hon. John Vassar, M. C.,
16 Stuyvesant Square,
New York.

Dear Sir: Our committee in charge of the canvass of your congressional district in the campaign for woman's suffrage have tried in vain to obtain an expression of your views. We are making a house to house canvass of every voter in New York. You have thus far side-stepped us.

You are a man of too much power in the State and nation to overlook in such a fight. The Congressional Directory informs us that you are barely thirty-six years old. You have already served ten years in Washington with distinction and have won your spurs as a national leader. A great future awaits you unless you incur the united opposition of the coming woman voter.

I warn you that we are going to sweep the Empire State. Your majority is large and has increased at each election. It is not large enough if we mark you for defeat. I have sincerely hoped that we might win you for our cause.

I ask for a declaration of your position. You must be for us or against us. There can be no longer a middle course.

I should deeply regret the necessity of your defeat if you force the issue. Your niece has quite won my heart and her passionate enthusiasm for her distinguished uncle has led me to delay this important message until the introduction of

your bill for militarism has forced it.

Sincerely,

Virginia Holland,

Pres't National Campaign Committee.

John Vassar read the letter a second time, touched the tips of his mustache thoughtfully and fixed his eyes on Zonia.

“And my little sweetheart will join the enemy in this campaign!”

A tear trembled on the dark lashes.

“Ah, Uncy darling, how could you think such a thing!”

“You bring this challenge – ”

“I only want to vote – to – elect – you – governor – ”

The voice broke in a sob, as he bent and kissed the smooth young brow.

She clung to him tenderly.

“Uncy dear, just for my sake, because I love you so – because you’re my hero – won’t you do something for me – Just because I ask it?”

“Maybe – ”

“Go to Union Square with me then – ”

He shook his head emphatically.

“Against my principles, dear – ”

“It’s not against your principles to make me happy?”

He took her cheeks between his hands.

“Seeing that I’ve raised you from a chick – I don’t think there ought to be much doubt about how I stand on the woman question as far as it affects two little specimens of the tribe – do you?”

“All right then,” she cried gayly, “you love Marya and me. We are women. You can’t refuse us a little old thing like a ballot if we want it – can you?”

She paused and kissed him again.

“So now, Uncy, you’re going to hear Miss Holland speak just to make me happy – aren’t you?”

He smiled and surrendered.

“To make you happy – yes – ”

He couldn’t say more. The arms were too tight about his neck.

He drew them gently down.

“This is what I dread in politics, dear – when the women go in to win. We’ve graft enough now. When the boys run up against this sort of thing – God help us! – and God save the country if you should happen to make a mistake in what you ask for! Well, you’ve won this fight – come on, let’s get up front and hear the argument. I hate to stand on the edge and wonder what the hen is saying when she crows – ”

Zonia handed his hat and cane and, radiant with smiles, opened the door.

“I suppose we’ll let Marya stay with Grandpa?” he asked.

“They’ve been gone half an hour!”

“Oh – ”

“I had no trouble with Grandpa at all. He agreed to sit on the platform with me – ”

“Indeed!”

“But I don’t think he really understood what the meeting was about – ”

“Just to please his grandchick, however, the old traitor agreed to preside at my funeral – eh?”

“He won’t if you say not – shall I tell him to keep off? Marya will be awfully disappointed if we make them get down – ”

“No – let him stay. Maybe he can placate the enemy. They can hold him as hostage for my good behavior.”

The hand on his arm pressed tighter.

“It’s so sweet of you, Uncy!”

“At what hour does this paragon of all the virtues, male and female, harangue the mob?”

“You mean Miss Holland?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, they’ll all be there tonight. Miss Holland is the principal speaker for the Federated Women’s Clubs of America – she’s the president, you know – ”

“No – I didn’t know – ”

“She won’t speak until 9:30. We can hear the others first. There’ll be some big guns among the men too – the Honorable Plato Barker and the Reverend A. Cuthbert Pike, the president of the American Peace Union – and Waldron, the multi-millionaire, he presides at Miss Holland’s stand – ”

“Indeed – ”

“Yes – they say he’s in love with her but she doesn’t care a rap for him or any other man – ”

John Vassar had ceased to hear Zonia’s chatter. The name of Charles Waldron had started a train of ugly thought. Of all the leaders of opinion in America this man was his pet aversion. He loathed his personality. He hated his newspaper with a fury which words could not express. It stood squarely for every tendency of degenerate materialism in our life, a worship of money and power first and last against all sentiment and all the hopes and aspirations of the masses. He posed as the Pecksniffian leader of Reform and the reform he advocated always meant the lash for the man who toils. His hatreds were implacable, too, and he used the power of his money with unscrupulous brutality. He had lately extended the chain of banks which he owned in New York until they covered the leading cities of every state in the Union. His newspaper, the *Evening Courier*, was waging an unceasing campaign for the establishment of an American aristocracy of wealth and culture.

Vassar was cudgeling his brain over the mystery of this man’s sudden enthusiasm for woman suffrage and the Cause of Universal Peace. It was a sinister sign of the times. He rarely advocated a losing cause. That this cold-blooded materialist could believe in the dream of human emancipation through the influence of women was preposterous.

Zonia might be right, of course, in saying that he had

become infatuated with the young Amazon leader of the Federated Women's Clubs. And yet that would hardly account for his presence as the presiding genius of a grand rally for suffrage. There were too many factions represented in such a demonstration for his personal interest in one woman to explain his activity in bringing those people together. His paper had, in fact, led the appeal to co-ordinate Demagogery, Labor, Peace Propaganda, Socialism, and Feminism in one monster mass meeting.

The longer Vassar puzzled over it, the more impenetrable became Waldron's motive. His leadership in the movement was uncanny. What did it mean?

CHAPTER V

IT was barely seven when they reached Union Square. It was already packed by a dense crowd of good-natured cheering men and women. Seventy-five thousand was a conservative estimate. The air was electric with contagious enthusiasm.

“We’ll hear the apostle of peace first,” Vassar said to Zonia, pushing his way slowly through the crowd toward a platform with three-foot letters covering its four sides:

PEACE! PEACE! PEACE! PEACE!

The Reverend A. Cuthbert Pike, president of the Peace Union of America, was delivering the opening address as the chairman of his meeting. He was a funny-looking little man of slight features, bald and decorated with a set of aggressive side whiskers. His manner was quick and nervous, electric in its nervousness, his voice in striking contrast to the jerky pugnacity of his body. The tones were soft and dreaming, as if he were trying to subdue the tendency of the flesh to fight for what he believed to be right.

He leaned far over the rail of the platform and breathed his words over the crowd:

“Two great powers contend for the mastery of the world, my

friends,” he was saying. “The spirit of Christ and the spirit of Napoleon. The one would overcome evil with good. The other would hurl evil against evil. One stands for love, humility, self-sacrifice. The other stands for the hate, pride and avarice of the militarism of today – ”

Vassar lost the next sentence. His mind had leaped the seas and stood with brooding wonder over the miracle of self-sacrifice of a thousand blood-drenched trenches and battlefields where millions of stout-hearted men were now laying their lives on the altar of their country – an offering of simple love. They had left the selfish pursuit of pleasure and wealth and individual aggrandizement and merged their souls and bodies into the wider life of humanity – the hopes and aspirations of a race. Was all this hate and pride and avarice? Bah! The little fidgety preacher was surely crazy; the thing called war was too big and terrible and soul-searching for that. Such theories were too small. They could not account for the signs of the times.

The preacher was talking again. He caught the quiver of hate in his utterance of the name of the great German philosopher.

“In Nietzsche’s words we have the supreme utterance of the modern anti-Christ in his blasphemous rendition of the Beatitudes. Hear him:

“ ‘Ye have heard how in olden times it was said, Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth; but I say to you, Blessed are the valiant, for they shall make the earth their throne – ”

“Militarism, my friends, is the incarnate soul of blasphemy! It

is confined to no country. It is a world curse. The mightiest task of the times in which we live is to cast out this devil from the body of civilization. We demand votes for women because we believe they will help us in the grim battle we are fighting with the powers of Death and Hell – ”

Vassar turned with a sigh and pressed toward the next platform. The Honorable Plato Barker, silver-tongued orator of the plains, was soaring above the heads of his enraptured listeners. His benevolent bald head glistened in the sputtering rays of the arc light. He was supremely happy once more. He had resigned the cares of office to ride a new hobby and bask in the smiles of cheering thousands. He had ridden Free Silver to death and grown tired of Prohibition. He had groomed a new steed. His latest hobby was Peace. He too was demanding votes for women because they would save the world from the curse of war.

Vassar listened to the man whom he had once cheered and followed with growing wonder and weariness. With pompous pose and high-sounding phrase he inveighed against arms and armament. In the next breath he denounced his old opponent for the attempt to abolish armaments by an international organization to enforce peace through a central police power. He demanded that America should stand alone in her purity and her unselfish glory. He believed in America for the Americans. But he would not fight to maintain it – nor would he permit an entangling alliance with any nation which might make safe the doctrine without a fight. We would neither fight nor permit

anyone else to fight for us. He demanded that we should not arm ourselves for defense and in the next breath declared that he was not in favor at present of dismantling the forts we now possessed or of disbanding the army. He denounced all arms and all wars and yet favored being half armed and half ready for an inadequate defense. He asked that we stand absolutely alone in the world and half armed maintain the guardianship of the Western Hemisphere against the serried millions of veteran soldiers of armed Europe. He demanded that we uphold international law and order and yet ridiculed any organization for that purpose.

Each empty platitude the crowd cheered. Each preposterous demand for the impossible they cheered again with redoubled power.

His last proposition was evidently his favorite. He dropped his voice to low persuasive tones:

“Even suppose the unthinkable thing should happen. Suppose that some misguided nation in an hour of madness should send a hundred thousand soldiers across three thousand miles of sea and attempt to invade this country – what then? This country, mark you, peopled by a nation of vastly superior numbers, equal intelligence, mechanical genius and political organization – ”

He paused and thundered:

“What would happen?

“Those hundred thousand invading soldiers would never see their old homes again – ”

Tremendous cheers rent the air.

“And what’s more, dear friends, they would never desire to see their homes again. We would march out to meet them with smiles and flowers. We would bid them welcome to our shores. We would give to them the freedom of our city and greet them as brethren!”

Again the cheers leaped from the throats of thousands.

To John Vassar with the bitter memories of the might of kings that yet shadowed the world the scene was sickening in its utter fatuity. He mopped the perspiration from his forehead and hurried on.

He passed the platform on which Jane Hale stood repeating in monotonous reiteration the plea for peace which she vainly spoke into the ears of Europe on her tour during the war. The speakers’ stand was draped in red and behind Miss Hale’s solid figure the young statesman recognized the familiar faces of the Socialist leaders of the East Side.

How vain this Socialist symbol of the common red blood that pulses from every human breast! How pitifully tragic their failure in the hour when the war summoned the world to the national colors. The red flag faded from the sky. It was all talk – all wind – all fustian – all bombast – all theory. Men don’t die for academic theories. Men die for what they believe. And yet these American Socialists were as busy with their parrot talk as if nothing had happened in the world since that fatal day in July, 1914, when old things passed away and all things became new.

Vassar pressed past the crowd around the Socialist stand and saw beyond the platform from which the woman leader of the new Anti-Enlistment League was haranguing the mob. She too was a suffragette for peace purposes – an aggressive fat female of decisively militant aspect. Her words were pacific in their import. Her manner and spirit spoke battle in every accent and gesture. She was determined to have peace if she had to kill every man, woman and child opposed to it.

She waved the pledge of the League above her head and recited its form in rasping, challenging, aggravating notes.

“I, being over eighteen years of age, hereby pledge myself against enlistment as a volunteer for any military or naval service in an international war, and against giving my approval to such enlistment on the part of others.”

She paused and shouted:

“The Anti-Enlistment League does not stand for puny non-resistance! We appeal to the militancy of the spirit – ”

John Vassar looked at his watch.

“We’ve yet time to hear brother Debs. I like his kind. You always know where to find him.”

“No-no – Uncy,” Zonia urged, “we must hurry to our stand – ”
“*Our* stand, eh?”

“Yes – you mustn’t miss a word Miss Holland says. She doesn’t speak long – but every word counts – ”

“She has one loyal follower anyhow,” Vassar smiled.

“I’m going to win her for you, Uncy dear – ”

“Oh, that’s the scheme?”

“Yes – ”

“I don’t think it can be done, little sweetheart. I never could like a hen that crows – ”

Zonia waved her arm toward the big platform of the Woman’s Federated Clubs.

“There they are now!” she cried – “Marya and Grandpa – they’re sitting on the steps – ”

“So I see – “ Vassar laughed.

Old Andrew Vassar was beaming his good-natured approval on the throng that surged about the stand, his arm encircling his little granddaughter with loving touch.

The younger man watched him a moment with a tender smile. His father was supremely happy in the great crowd of strong, healthy, free men and women. He knew nothing of the meaning of the meeting. He never bothered his head about it. The thing was a part of the life of America and it was good. He was seventy years old now – lame from an old wound received in Poland – but had a fine strong face beaming generous thoughts to all men. He had landed on our shores thirty years ago broken, bruised and ruined. He had dared to lift his voice in Poland for one of the simplest rights of his people. A brutal soldier at the order of their imperial master had sacked his home, murdered his wife and daughter before his eyes, robbed him of all and at last left him in the street, bleeding to death with a baby boy of five clinging to his body. His older son had smuggled him aboard a ship bound

for New York. He had prospered from the day of his landing. A tailor by trade he had proven his worth from the first. For ten years he had been head cutter for a wholesale clothing house and received an annual salary of ten thousand dollars. Ten years ago the might of kings had gripped the son he left behind. His goods too were forfeited, his life snuffed out and his children orphaned. Big free America had received them now, and the old man's strong arm circled them. The little terror-stricken boy, who had clung to him the day the soldiers left him in the street for dead, was the Honorable John Vassar, the coming man of a mighty nation of freemen.

Old Andrew Vassar made no effort to grasp the current of our social or political life. It was all good. He went to all the political meetings, Democratic, Republican, Socialist, Woman's Suffrage. He liked to test his freedom and laugh to find it true.

He caught John's eye, waved his arm enthusiastically and lifted Marya high above the heads of the crowd that she might throw him a kiss.

Zonia answered with a little cry of love and they quickly pressed through the throng to a position directly in front of the speaker's stand.

Waldron had just risen to make his opening address. His automobile had brought him quickly from another important engagement with a committee of Western bankers who had met in the stately library of his palatial home on the heights of upper Manhattan.

There was no mistaking the poise of the man, his dignity and conscious reserve power. Vassar studied him for the first time at close range with increasing dislike and suspicion.

He faced the crowd with a look of quiet mastery. A man of medium height, massive bull neck, high forehead, straight intellectual eyebrows and piercing steel gray eyes. There was no mistaking the fact that he was a born leader of men.

A high collar covered the massive neck well up to the ears, concealing the lines of brutality which lay beneath; and a pair of glasses attached to a black silk cord and gracefully adjusted, gave to his strong features a touch of intellectuality on which his vanity evidently fed.

A curious little smile played about the corners of his eyes and thin lips as if he knew a good joke that couldn't be told to a crowd. The smile brought a frown to John Vassar's sensitive face. He instinctively hated a man with that kind of smile. He couldn't tell why. The smile was not a pose. There was something genuine behind it. A crowd would like him for it. But the man who looked beneath the surface for its real meaning felt intuitively that it sprang from a deep, genuine and boundless contempt for humanity.

The sound of his voice confirmed this impression. He spoke with a cold, measured deliberation that provoked and held an audience. His words were clean cut and fell with metallic precision like the click of a telegraph key.

"I have the honor, tonight, ladies and gentlemen," he began

slowly, “of introducing to you the real leader of the women of America – ”

A cheer swept the crowd and Zonia stood on tiptoe trying to catch a glimpse of her heroine.

“She’s hiding behind the others – “ she pressed her uncle’s arm – “but you’ll see her in a minute, Uncy!”

“Doubtless!” Vassar laughed. “She’s too wise an actress to stumble on the stage before her cue – ”

Waldron’s metallic voice was clicking on.

“Before I present her, allow me as a spokesman of this great meeting to give you in a few words my reasons for demanding votes for women. The supreme purpose of my life is to do my part in ushering into the world the reign of universal peace. The greatest issue ever presented to the American people is now demanding an answer. Shall this nation follow the lead of blood-soaked Europe and arm to the teeth? Or shall we remain the one people of this earth who stand for peace and good will to all?

“The militarists tell us that man is a fighting animal; that human nature cannot be changed; that nations have always fought and will continue to fight to the end of time; that war sooner or later will come and that we must prepare for it.

“I say give woman the ballot and she will find a way to prevent war!

“The alarmist tells us that armaments are our only sure guarantee of peace. It’s a lie. And that lie is now being shot to pieces in Europe before our eyes. Armaments provoke war. In

the fierce light of this hell-lit conflagration even the blind should see that armaments have never yet guaranteed peace.

“Europe in torment calls to us today. O, great Republic of the West, beware! Armaments are not guarantees of peace. They are not insurance. Make your new world different from the old. Beware of guns. Down with the machinery of slaughter. Trust in reason. Have faith in your fellow men. Build your life on love not hate. Proclaim the coming of the Lord – the Prince of Peace – ”

Vassar glanced quickly over the sea of uplifted faces and wondered why they did not applaud. Barker’s crowd had gone wild over weak platitudes poorly expressing similar ideas. The words of this man were eloquent. The silence was uncanny. Why didn’t they applaud?

He turned his head aside and listened intently. It was the metallic click of Waldron’s cold penetrating voice that killed applause. There was something in it that froze the blood in the veins of an enthusiast – and yet held every listener in a spell.

“Your alarmists,” he went on deliberately, “are busy now with a new scare. When this war is over they tell us we must fight the victors, for they will move to conquer us. Let us nail another lie. This war will leave Europe exhausted and helpless for a generation. We will be the strongest nation in the world – our strength intact, our resources boundless.

“Besides, we have the men and the means for arming them instantly if we are threatened. We have equipped and supplied armies of millions for England, France and Russia. What we have

done for them we can surely do for ourselves. Our factories are now producing more military supplies for Europe than we could use for our defense. Our navy is more efficient than ever before in history. Our chief ports are defended by great guns that make them impregnable. Our army is small, but I repeat the Honorable Plato Barker's axiom as a truth unassailable – 'We can raise an army of a million men between the suns!' yes and five million more within a week if they are needed – ”

John Vassar ground his teeth and set his firm jaw to prevent an outburst of mad protest. As chairman of the House Committee of Military Affairs he knew that every statement in this subtle demagogue's appeal was but half truth, and for that reason the most dangerous lie. The navy *was* more efficient than ever before – so was every navy in the world. Our navy was still utterly inadequate to defend us against any first-class combination of Europe or any single power of the rank of Germany. Our coast guns were good, but a hostile navy triumphant at sea would never come in range of them. They would land at their leisure at any one of a hundred undefended harbors and take our forts from the rear. We could manufacture ammunition – but to no purpose, because we have few guns for field artillery and not enough trained artillerymen to man them if we had the guns. It takes years to train the masters of war machinery. A million men could be raised between the suns, but they would be mowed down by fields of hidden artillery beyond the range of our gunners before we could get in sight.

There was no escape from the deep conviction that the cold-blooded thinker who was smiling into the face of this crowd knew these facts with a knowledge even clearer than his own.

What was the sinister motive back of that frozen smile?

Again and again Vassar asked himself the question. He was still puzzling over the mystery of Waldron's motive when a ringing cheer burst from the crowd and Zonia pressed his arm.

"There she is, Uncy – there she is!"

Waldron was leading to the rail a blushing girl.

"No, no – sweetheart – that's someone else – can't be the Amazon – "

"Of course, you silly – she's not an Amazon – she's my heroine. Isn't she a darling? Now honestly?"

Vassar was too dumfounded to make reply.

Waldron was introducing her, the same cold smile on his thin lips, the same metallic click of his voice.

"Permit me, ladies and gentlemen, to present to you tonight a new force in the world – a real leader of modern women, our Joan of Arc, the President of the Federated Clubs, Miss Virginia Holland!"

Again the crowd burst into applause.

The little head bowed with the slightest inclination and a smile of pure sunlight illumined an exquisite face. The Amazon he had hated stood before him a gentle creature of delicate yet strongly molded features, her high smooth forehead crowned with a tangled mass of auburn blonde hair.

Vassar laughed at the sheer absurdity of it all. Such a woman couldn't be the leader of the brazen mob of clamoring females he had grown to hate. It was too preposterous for words. She was speaking now. He didn't know what she was saying. No matter. It was her personality that held him in a spell. Her voice was the most startling contrast to Waldron's – soft and clear as the round notes of a flute. Its volume was not great and yet the quality was penetrating. It found the ear of the farthest listener in the wide circle of the crowd and at the same time the depths of his inmost being.

There was no resisting her personal appeal.

Before she had spoken two sentences Vassar was ready to agree to any proposition she might make. She seemed so sweet and sane and reasonable. Her appeal was to both the head and the heart of her hearers.

The young statesman mopped his brow in a vague panic. If this was the leader who had marked him for defeat the situation was serious. If she and her kind should make a personal canvass of the voters of his district, he would have to rise early and go to bed late if he ever expected to see the Capitol at Washington again.

And yet it was not the fear of defeat that really disturbed him. It was the confusion into which her personality had thrown all his preconceived ideas. Great God! If this sort of woman had gotten into the movement where would it end? How could she be denied? He laughed again at his preconceived ideas of the leader

of Amazons and the sweet reasonableness of this gentle, brilliant, exquisite girl on whose words the crowd hung breathless.

He was stunned. It was impossible for the moment to adjust his thinking to the situation. He was missing all her speech. For the life of him he couldn't recall a sentence. He pulled himself up with a frown and listened.

"I am not sure, dear friends, that we can prevent war," she was saying, "but I am sure that we will try. And I am absolutely sure that the clothing of women with the sovereign power of the ballot will introduce into the councils that decide peace or war a new element in human history. Man alone has failed to keep the peace. Surely if we help we can do no worse. I have an abiding faith that we can do better – "

She paused and a look of enraptured emotion illumined her face as she slowly continued:

"If a city were besieged and soldiers were defending its strong places, and a breach had been made in the embattlements, the men within would close that breach with the first thing at hand. They would not spare even the priceless marble figure on which an artist had spent years of loving toil – unless the defending soldier were the artist who created the masterpiece! He could not hurl this treasure into the breach to be crushed into a shapeless mass. He would find another way or die in the effort.

"Man is woman's masterpiece. For twenty-five years she broods and watches and works with loving care to fashion this immortal being. Give to her the decisive voice in war and she

will find a better way to fill the breach. She will not hurl her masterpiece into this hell. Man has failed to find a better way. May not we who love most and suffer most at least have the chance to try?"

The sweet penetrating voice died softly away and she had taken her seat before the crowd realized that she had stopped.

A moment's dead silence and then cheer after cheer swept the throng.

An excited man lifted high his hand and shouted:

"We'll give you the chance. Yes – yes!"

Zonia's grip tightened suddenly on John Vassar's arm.

"You'll let me introduce you, Uncy?"

Vassar laughed excitedly.

"Will I? Be quick, girl – before she gets away!"

CHAPTER VI

“Aren’t you glad you came?” Zonia asked eagerly.

“Hurry! Don’t let her get away with Waldron – ”

The girl darted from his side and pushed rapidly to the platform. The crowd had encircled Virginia and a hundred people were trying to grasp her hand at the same time. There was no help for it. He must wait. At least he was glad the jam made it equally impossible for Waldron to reach her. He saw him wave his hand to her over their heads, bow and leave the platform for his waiting car.

Vassar was glad to be rid of his presence. That frozen smile poisoned the air. He could breathe deeply now.

It was fully fifteen minutes before he caught the signal Zonia waved from the steps.

His niece was radiant with joy as she proudly introduced them.

“Uncle John, this is my heroine, Miss Holland, and you’ve got to shake hands and be good friends now – ”

“I trust we shall!” Vassar cried laughingly.

Virginia smiled seriously.

“It depends on you, Mr. Congressman,” she responded quietly. “You know I’ve tried to be friendly for some time, but you have been elusive. I had to threaten you with death even to bring about an introduction – ”

He lifted his hand in protest.

“Don’t – please! It’s unkind now that I know you. I’ve had such a silly idea of your personality. I repent in sackcloth and ashes – ”

“Really?”

“Honestly,” he went on eagerly. “You know I had an idea that all suffragettes were ugly, disappointed, soured women whose lives had been beggared by the faults of sinful men – ”

“Or Amazons – Uncy!” Zonia broke in with a laugh. “He called you an Amazon, Miss Holland!”

Virginia blushed and broke into a musical laugh.

John Vassar shook his head menacingly at his niece.

“That’ll do for you now, Miss!”

“Did you call me an Amazon?” Virginia asked still smiling.

“Before I saw you, yes – ”

“And now?”

“Now, I’ve a new grudge against Waldron for using first an expression on which I could improve – ”

“What’s that?” she asked, puzzled.

“He called you ‘our Joan of Arc’ – ”

“And you could improve on that?”

“Yes – you’re Joan of Arc without the cold touch of sainthood. You’re warm and real and human and still the leader – ”

She lifted a pair of serious eyes quickly to his and saw that he was in dead earnest. There was no fencing or banter. He meant it. A little smile of triumph played about the corners of her mouth. She held his gaze in silence and then spoke slowly.

“We’re going to be friends?”

“If you’ll let me – ”

Her eyes still held his steadily.

“There are conditions, of course – ”

“All right.”

“You wish to know them?”

“At once – ”

“My! My! You can come to the point – can’t you?” She laughed.

“My political life may depend on it, you know?” he replied lightly.

“Why not walk home with me – ”

“With pleasure!” he broke in.

“And we’ll have a chat in the library. I’m free to confess, Mr. Congressman, that we would like very much to come to an understanding with you.”

“And I’m going to confess, Miss Holland, that I’m very much ashamed of myself that I haven’t made an effort to understand you.”

“Well, you know what the old preacher down South always shouted in the revivals?”

“No – what?”

“As long as the lamp holds out to burn the vilest sinner may return!”

“Good. We’ll hope that my repentance is not too late – ”

“My only fear is, to tell you the truth – that it’s a little too sudden – ”

“But it’s genuine!” he cried. “You’ll have to admit that!”

He looked in vain for his father and Marya.

“Zonia may go with us?” he asked.

“Indeed she can! Everybody has tried his hand to draw out our young statesman and she succeeds. She’s my little mascot!”

Virginia pressed her arm around the girl and she blushed with pride.

“Come; it’s only a short walk to Stuyvesant Square – we spend most of our time now at our country place at Babylon, but we’re in for this week’s rallies.”

Vassar looked for Zonia and discovered her in deep converse with a smiling blond youth of fourteen, the sparkle of whose eyes made no secret of their interest.

“My infant brother Billy – “ Virginia explained.

“Indeed!”

“They’re old friends.”

“Evidently!” he laughed.

“Come,” Virginia said in quick business-like tones, “the kids will follow. I want you to meet my father and mother before they’re off to bed. In spite of modern progress they are the most pig-headed and persistent pair of fossils with whom I have to contend – ”

“I’ve often seen your father at the soldiers’ reunions – the youngest and finest looking man of the Old Guard, I’ve always thought.”

“He is – isn’t he?” she said thoughtfully.

"I wonder that the daughter of a soldier should take seriously all this talk about universal peace – "

"Perhaps that's the reason – "

"Nonsense!"

"Seriously. I've listened by the hour to his stories of the war. When I was very young I saw only the glamour and the romance and the glory and then as I grew older I began to think of the blackened chimneys of Southern homes and feel the misery and the desolation of it all. And we began to quarrel about war."

"Your father was in Sherman's army, I believe?"

"Yes – he ran away from his Western home at fourteen and joined the colors. Think of it! At eighteen he was mustered out in Washington a veteran of twenty-six pitched battles. He's only sixty-odd today with every power alert except a slight deafness – and by the way – " she paused and smiled – "I should tell you that his hobby just now is the immigration question. Don't mind anything silly he may say, will you?"

"Certainly not!" Vassar agreed. "I too am fighting against the invasion of this country by a foreign army – "

"Yours a dream – my father's grievance quite real you must admit."

"Seeing that a Pole is his Congressman neighbor – " Vassar admitted good-humoredly. "It must get on the nerves of the old boys who can't see our point of view. The man or woman born in free America inherits it all as a matter of course. He rarely thinks of his priceless birthright. To my old father every day of

life is a Fourth of July! To me it is the same. A frail half-starved little orphan clinging to his hand thirty-one years ago, I stood on the deck of a steamer and saw this wonderful Promised Land. You are American by the accident of birth. You had no choice. We are American because we willed to come. We love this land because it's worth loving. We know why we love it. We lifted up our eyes from a far country – amid tears and ashes and ruins – and saw the light of liberty shining here across the seas. We came and you received us with open arms. You set no hired spies to watch us. You made our homes and our firesides holy ground. We kiss the soil beneath our feet. It is *our* country – our flag, our nation, our people as it can't be yours who do not realize its full meaning – can't you see?"

"Yes," she answered softly. "And I never thought of it in that way before."

She glanced at the tall, straight, intense figure with new interest. They walked in silence for a block and he touched her arm with a movement of instinctive chivalrous protection as they crossed Second Avenue.

She broke into a laugh in spite of an effort at self-control when they had reached the sidewalk.

He blushed and looked puzzled.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked in hurt surprise.

"Oh, nothing –"

"You couldn't have laughed at the little confession I just made to you –"

She laid her hand on his arm in gentle quick protest.

“You know I could not. It was too sincere. It was from the depths of your inmost heart. And I see you and all your people who have come to our shores in the past generation through new eyes after this revelation you have given me – no, I was laughing at something miles removed – ”

Again she paused and laughed.

“Tell me” – he pleaded.

“Come in first – we can’t stand here on the sidewalk like two spooning children – this is our house – ”

CHAPTER VII

WITH light step Virginia mounted the low stone stoop, fumbled for her keys, unlocked the massive door and ushered John Vassar into the dimly lighted hall.

“Come right into the sitting-room in the rear and meet my father and mother,” she cried, placing her little turban hat on the rack beside his, man-fashion.

Vassar smiled at the assumption of equal rights the act implied. She caught the smile and answered with a toss of her pretty head as he followed her through the hall.

The older folks were bending over a table deeply absorbed in a game of checkers. The picture caught Vassar’s fancy and held him in the doorway, a pleasant smile lighting his dark strong face.

“Mother,” Virginia began softly, “it’s time for children to quit their games. I want you to meet Mr. John Vassar whom I’m trying to dragoon into our cause – ”

The prim aristocratic little woman rose with dignity and extended her hand in a gesture that spoke the inheritance of gentle breeding. She was a native of Columbia, South Carolina. Her stock joke of self-pity was the fact that she had married a Sherman Bummer who had helped to burn her native city. She excused him always with the apology that he was so young he was really not responsible for the bad company in which she found him. As a matter of fact he had driven a gang of drunken

marauders from their house and defended them single handed through a night of terror until order had been restored. It was ten years later before he succeeded in persuading the fair young rebel to surrender.

“Delighted to meet you, I’m sure,” Mrs. Holland said quietly. “You must be a Southerner, with that tall dark look of distinction – ”

Vassar bowed low over her hand.

“I wish I were, madam – if the fact would win your approval – ”

“To look like a Southerner is enough to win Mother on sight,” Virginia laughed.

The father extended his hand in a cordial greeting without rising.

“Excuse me, young man, for not getting up,” he said. “I’m lame with the gout. You’re a suffragette?”

Vassar looked at Virginia, smiled and promptly answered.

“I’ll have to confess that I’m not – ”

Holland extended his hand again.

“Shake once more! Thank God for the sight of a sane man again. I thought they’d all died. We never see them here any more – ”

Virginia lifted her finger and her father took the outstretched arm and drew it around his neck.

“I have to put up with the nincompoops for Virginia’s sake. But I’m going to explode some day and say things. I can feel it

coming on me – ”

He stopped abruptly and leaned forward, releasing Virginia’s arm.

“Young man, I can talk to you – you’re not a suffragette – you’re a real man. Between the women, the Jews and the foreigners this country is not only going to the dogs – it’s gone – hell bent and hell bound. It’s no use talking any more. I’ve given up and gone to playing checkers – ”

“We may save it yet, sir,” Vassar interrupted cheerfully.

“Save it? Great Scott, man, have you been down Broadway lately? Look at the signs – Katzmeyers, Einsteins, Epsteins, Abrahams, Isaacs and Jacobs! It would rest your eyes to find a Fogarty or a Casey. By the eternal, an Irishman now seems like a Son of the American Revolution! The Congressman from this district, sir, is a damned Pole from Posen!”

Virginia burst into a fit of laughter.

“What’s the matter, Miss Troublemaker?” Holland growled.

“You didn’t get the name, father dear – this is Mr. John Vassar, the damned Pole Congressman to whom you have so graciously referred – ”

Holland frowned, searched his daughter’s face for the joke, and looked at Vassar helplessly.

“It’s not so!” he snorted. “I never saw a finer specimen of American manhood in my life, strong-limbed, clean-cut, clear-eyed, every inch a man and not a suffragette. It’s not so. You’re putting up a job on me, Virginia – ”

John Vassar smiled and bowed.

“For the high compliment you pay me, Mr. Holland, I forgive the hard words. I understand how the old boys feel who fought to make this country what it is today. And I love you for it. I don’t mind what you *say*— I know where to find your kind when the hour of trial comes — ”

“You are Congressman Vassar?” the old man gasped.

“Guilty!”

The mother joined in the laugh at his expense.

Holland extended his hand again and grasped Vassar’s.

“I have no friends in this house, sir! We make up. I apologize to Poland for your sake. If they’ve got any more like you, let ’em come on. But mind you — ” he lifted his finger in protest — “I stand by every word I said about the other fellows — every word!”

“I understand!” Vassar responded cheerfully.

“That will do now, Frank,” Mrs. Holland softly murmured.

“And you come in to see me again, young man — I want to talk to you some time when there are no women around. You’re in Congress. By Geeminy, I want to know why we’ve got no army while twenty million trained soldiers are fighting for the mastery of the world across the water. Just count me in on the fight, will you? By the eternal, I’d like to meet the traitor who’ll try to block your bill — ”

“I’ve important business with Mr. Vassar,” Virginia broke in. “Excuse us now, children — ”

“That’s the way a suffragette talks to her old daddy, Vassar

– “Holland cried. “I warn you against their wives. Don’t let her bamboozle you. I’m lame, but I’m going to vote against ’em, if I have to crawl to the polls election day – so help me God!”

Mrs. Holland beamed her good night with a gentle inclination of her silver-crowned head.

“He barks very loudly, Mr. Vassar,” she called, “but he never bites – ”

Virginia led her guest upstairs into the quiet library in the front of the house.

Zonia and Billy were chattering in the parlor.

She pointed to a heavy armchair and sat down opposite, the oak table between them.

“Now, Mr. Congressman, what is it – peace or war?”

There was a ring of subtle defiance in her tones that both angered and charmed her opponent. He had met many beautiful women before. For the first time he had met one who commanded both his intellect and his consciousness of sex. The sensation was painful. He resented it. His ideals of life asked of women submission, tenderness, trust. Here sat before him the most charming, the most fascinatingly feminine woman he had ever met who refused to accept his opinions and had evidently determined to bend his mind and will to hers. To think of yielding was the height of absurdity. And yet he must meet her as his intellectual equal. He could meet her on no other ground. Her whole being said, “Come, let’s reason together.” He had no desire to reason. He only wished to tell her the truth about the

impression she had made on him. He smiled to recall it. He had a perfectly foolish – an almost resistless – impulse to leap on the speaker's stand, take her in his arms, kiss her and whisper:

“Dear little mate, this is silly – come away. I've something worth while to tell you – something big, something wonderful, something as old as eternity but always new – ”

He waked from his reverie with a start to find his antagonist holding him with a determined gaze that put sentiment to flight.

“Peace or war?” she firmly repeated.

“If I am to choose,” he fenced, “I assure you it will be peace – ”

He paused and studied her expression of serious concentration. In spite of every effort to fix his mind in politics he persisted in the silliest old-fashioned admiration of her wistful, appealing beauty. Confound it. She had no right to use such a power for the propaganda of crackbrained theories! He felt the foundations of the moral world tremble at the shock of this resistless, elemental force. The man who desires a woman will sell principle, country, right, God, for his desire. Was he going to be trapped by this ancient snare? Such a woman might play with a victim as a cat a mouse until her purpose was accomplished. Sex attraction is the one force that defies all logic and scoffs at reason. The government of a democracy was a difficult task under present conditions. What would it become when the decision on which the mightiest issues hung could be decided by the smile of a woman's lips or the dimple in her cheek?

He felt the pull of this fascination with a sense of inward panic.

What the devil was she laughing at a while ago as they crossed the street? He had forgotten it for the moment, and she hadn't explained. He would fence a little for time before meeting the issue. He touched the tip of his mustache thoughtfully.

"Anyhow, suppose we shake hands before we begin the fight. It's one of the rules of the game you know – "

She leaned across the table with a puzzled expression.

"Shake hands?"

"Yes – spiritually, so to speak. I'd like to get on as friendly footing as possible to appeal to your mercy if I'm defeated. Would you mind telling me at what you were laughing when we crossed Second Avenue?"

An exquisite smile illumined her face and a twinkle of mischief played about the corners of her mouth.

"Shall I be perfectly frank?" she asked.

"Please – "

"I laughed at the silly contradiction of allowing you to touch my arm in token of your superior strength as you drew about me the sheltering protection of chivalry. There were no plunging horses near – not even a pushcart in sight. The nearest street-car was five blocks away. Why did you think that I needed help in walking ten yards?"

He held her gaze steadily. She was charming – there was no doubt about it. He had to bite his lips to keep back a foolish compliment that might anger her. How should he bear himself toward such a woman? Her whole being breathed tenderness and

femininity, yet there was a dangerous challenge of intellect about her that upset him.

“Why did you think I needed help?” she softly repeated.

“To tell you the truth,” he answered gravely, “I didn’t think at all. The act was instinctive – the inheritance of centuries – ”

“Exactly! Centuries of man’s patronage, of man’s tyranny, of his boasted superiority. As long as woman submits to be treated as a doll, a weakling, an incompetent, the supposed superior being must try to do the proper thing in an emergency – ”

“You resented it?” he broke in.

“No. I, too, am suffering from the inheritance of centuries – of dependence and of the hypocrisy inbred by generations of chivalry. It was at my own sneaking joy in your protection that I laughed – ”

Vassar moved uneasily, drew his straight brows low and looked at her through their veil for an instant. He was making a desperate effort to keep his brain clear. It would be ridiculous to surrender to such a charming little siren at the first encounter.

“Well, sir,” she cried briskly, “now that we’ve shaken hands the first round is on. Shall I lead?”

Vassar bowed.

“By all means – ladies first!”

“Why do you refuse to give me the ballot?”

“I never knew until tonight that women like you wished it. If I had – ”

“You would have agreed?”

“My dear Miss Holland, I not only would have agreed but I would have gone out after it and brought it to you. And all against my better judgment. If women are allowed to vote, there must be a law against your kind entering politics – ”

“Yes?”

“Decidedly.”

“And may I ask why?” she demanded.

He smiled and hesitated.

“If you ever get into Congress – I can see the finish of that aggregation as a deliberative body. You would be a majority from the moment you entered the Chamber – ”

“Please, Mr. Vassar – ” she protested. “We have no time for chaff – ”

He rose abruptly from the depths of the armchair, seized a light one, moved it nearer to the corner of the table, sat down and bent close to his charming opponent.

“I’m not chaffing,” he began eagerly. “I’m in earnest. Your personality has upset all my preconceived ideas of the leaders of this woman’s movement. I am more than ever alarmed at its sinister significance. You take my judgment by storm because you’re charming. You stop the process of reasoning by merely lifting your eyes to mine. Such a power cannot be used to further the ends of justice or perfect the organization of society. The power you wield defies all law – ”

Virginia laughed in spite of an effort at self-control.

“Are you making love to me, Mr. Vassar?” she cried.

He blushed and stammered.

“Well – not – deliberately – ”

“Unconsciously?”

He mopped the perspiration from his brow in confusion.

“Perhaps.”

Virginia rose, and her lips closed firmly.

“I think our interview had better end. We are wasting each other’s time – ”

“Please, Miss Holland,” he begged with deep humility, “forgive me. I was never more sincere in my life. I should have been more careful. But there’s something about your frank manner that disarmed me. You seemed so charmingly friendly. I forget that we are enemies – forgive me – ”

“There’s nothing to forgive. You are the type of man who cannot understand my position – and for that reason cannot meet me as an intellectual equal. I resent it – ”

“But I’m not the type of man who cannot understand. I will meet you as an intellectual equal. I’ll do more. I concede your superiority. You have baffled and defeated me at every turn tonight – I go puzzled and humiliated. I refuse to accept such a defeat. You cannot dismiss me in this absurd fashion. I’ll camp on your doorstep until we have this thing out.”

“You’ll not call without an appointment, I hope?”

“Oh, yes, I will. I’m going to cultivate your father. I’ll accept his invitation. I’ll make your house my happy home until we at least come to an intelligent understanding of our differences – ”

“Tomorrow then?” she said. “I’m tired tonight. Tomorrow at eleven o’clock – ”

Vassar smiled at the business-like hour.

“I’ve an important engagement at eleven that will keep me an hour. It’s Flag Day at my schools – the kiddies expect me – ”

“Flag Day?”

“A little device of mine to teach our boys and girls to love their country – won’t you join us tomorrow at the old Tenth Armory and inspect my forces?”

Virginia hesitated.

“All right, I will. I’ll ask Mr. Waldron to pick me up there at noon.”

“I’ll expect you at eleven.”

He pressed her hand with a new sense of uneasiness, defeat and anger which Waldron’s name had aroused.

CHAPTER VIII

JOHN VASSAR'S sleep had been fitful and unsatisfying. Through hours of half-conscious brooding and dreaming he had seen the face of Virginia Holland. He had thus far found no time for social frivolities. The air of America was just the tonic needed to transform the tragic inheritance of the Old World into a passion for work that had practically ruled women out of the scheme of things.

He had dreamed of a home of his own in the dim future – yes – when the work of his career, the work he had planned for his country should have been done. This had been his life, the breath he breathed, his inspiration and religion – to lead an American renaissance of patriotism. America had never had a national spirit. His ambition was to fire the soul of thoughtless millions into a conscious love of country which would insure her glorious destiny.

A woman's smile had upset this dream. Through the night he had tried in vain to throw off the obsession. At daylight he had fallen into a sleep of sheer exhaustion. It was nine o'clock before he was roused by a gentle knock on his door.

Marya's voice was calling somewhere out of space.

"Uncle John – breakfast is waiting – may I come in?"

"All right – dearie – break right in!" he groaned.

"And I've a letter for you – a special letter – "

The sleeper was awake now, alert, eager —

“A special letter?”

“A big black man brought it just now. He’s waiting in the hall — says Miss Holland would like an answer.”

Vassar seized the letter and read with a broad grin. The handwriting was absurdly delicate. The idea that a suffragette could have written it was ridiculous!

My dear Mr. Vassar:

I’m heartily ashamed of myself for losing my temper last night. Please call for me at ten o’clock. I wish a little heart-to-heart talk before we go to your Flag Festival. Please answer by the bearer.

Virginia Holland.

Vassar drew Marya into his arms and kissed her rapturously.

“You’re an angel — you’ve brought me a message from the skies. Run now and tell the big black man — Miss Holland’s butler — to thank her for me and say that I’ll be there promptly at ten. Run, darling! Run!”

The child refused to stir without another kiss which she repeated on both his cheeks. She stopped at the door and waved another.

“Hurry, Uncle John — please — we’re all starved.”

“Down in five minutes!” he cried.

The weariness of the night’s fitful sleep was gone. The world was suddenly filled with light and music.

“What the devil’s come over me!” he muttered, astonished at

the persistent grin his mirror reflected. “At this rate I can see my finish – I’ll be the secretary of the Suffragette Campaign Committee before the week’s over – bah!”

Old Peter, the black butler, ushered him into the parlor with a stately bow.

“Miss Virginia be right down, sah. She say she des finishin’ her breakfus’ – yassah!”

Vassar seated himself with a sense of triumph. She must have written that note in bed. He flattered himself someone else had not slept well. He hoped not.

Her greeting was gracious, but strictly business-like – he thought a little too business-like to be entirely convincing.

She motioned him to resume his seat and drew one for herself close beside. She sat down in a quiet determined manner that forbade sentimental reflections and began without preliminaries.

“We lost track of our subject last night, Mr. Vassar, in an absurd personal discussion. I’ve asked you to come back this morning to make a determined effort to win you for our cause – ”

She paused, leaned forward and smiled persuasively.

“We need you. Your influence over the foreign-born population in New York would be enormous. I see by this morning’s paper an enthusiastic account of your work among the children. You are leading a renaissance of American patriotism. Good! So am I – a renaissance of the principles of the Declaration of Independence. *‘We hold these truths to be self-evident:* that all men are created equal! that they are endowed by

their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure those rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.’ Come now, I appeal to your sense of justice. What right have you to govern me without my consent? Am I not created your equal?”

Her eloquence was all but resistless. The word of surrender was on his lips, when the voice of an honest manhood spoke within.

“You’re not convinced. The magnetism of a woman’s sex is calling. You’re a poltroon to surrender your principles to such a force. In her soul a true woman would despise you for it.”

She saw his hesitation and leaned closer, holding him with her luminous eyes.

“Come now, in your heart of hearts you know that I am your equal?”

Something in the tones of her voice broke the spell – just a trace of the platform intonation and the faintest suggestion of the politician. The voice within again spoke. There was another reason why he should be true to his sense of right. He owed it to this woman who had moved him so profoundly. He must be true to the noblest and best that was in him.

He met her gaze in silence for a moment and spoke with quiet emphasis.

“If I followed my personal inclinations, Miss Holland, I would agree to anything you ask. You’re too downright, too honest and

earnest to wish or value such a shallow victory – am I not right?”

The faintest tinge of red colored Virginia’s cheeks.

“Of course,” she answered slowly, “I wish the help of the best that’s in you or nothing – ”

“Good! I felt that instinctively. I could fence and hedge and trim with the ordinary politician. With all respect to your pretensions, you’re not a politician at all. You’re just a charming, beautiful woman entering a field for which God never endowed you either physically, temperamentally or morally – ”

Virginia frowned and lifted her head with a little gesture of contempt.

“I must be honest. I must play the game squarely with you! I’m sorely tempted to cheat. But there’s too much at stake. You ask if you are not my equal? I answer promptly and honestly. I know that you are more – you are my superior. For this reason I would save you from the ballot. It is not a question of right, it is a question of hard and difficult duty. The ballot is not a right or a privilege. It is a solemn and dangerous duty. The ballot is force – physical force. It is a modern substitute for the bayonet – a device which has been used to prevent much civil strife. And yet man never votes away his right to a revolution. The Declaration of Independence embodies this fact – *‘Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it*

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