FRENCH ALLEN

THE BARRIER: A NOVEL

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Содержание

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To

C. E. S. and S. P. S

LIST OF CHARACTERS

IN THE ORDER OF THEIR MENTION

Stephen F. Ellis, promoter and political boss.
George Mather, a young business man.
Judith Blanchard, of the social set.
Mrs. Harmon, who has risen by her marriage.
Judge Abiel Harmon, advanced in years.
Colonel Blanchard, Judith's father.
Beth, his remaining daughter.
Mr. Price, the fashionable jeweller.
Mr. Fenno, head of one of the old families.
Mr. Pease, a banker.
Jim Wayne, of the social set.
Mr. Daggett, a supporter of Ellis.
Miss Jenks, Mather's stenographer.
Stock, a labor agitator.

THE BARRIER

CHAPTER I

The Statement of the Case

There is a certain circle so well-to-do that it is occupied chiefly in guarding its property and maintaining its exclusiveness. There is a city so small, politically, that it is buttoned in one man's pocket. The second of these is the direct consequence of the first. Leading families lead little except the cotillion, parvenus crowd in, and things are done at which no gentleman will soil his gloves.

In the course of time, such a community might develop a strong active class and a superb set of figureheads, if only the two sorts would let each other alone. But the one will envy and the other sneer; the one will long for ornament and the other will meddle. A desire to sparkle meets the desire to appear to do, or at times encounters the genuine longing to do. Dirty hands will wish to be clean; clean hands must have a little honest dirt.

The city of Stirling lies in New England; it is one among those which look to Boston for supplies and to New York for fashions. Its history goes back to colonial times: hence those

beautiful estates in the residential section and the air of pride in the scions of the old families. These said scions collect much rent and control much water-power, yet an inquirer imbued with the modern spirit might ask them to give an account of themselves. Their forefathers settled the country, fought in the Revolution, and helped to build the nation and the State, but now people whisper of degeneration. In the old city modern men have risen to power, control the franchises, manage the local government, and are large in the public eye.

Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that one man does this. Ellis the promoter, Stephen F. Ellis, has grown from nothing to everything, has consolidated businesses, mastered the city affairs, holds all the reins, pulls all the wires. The reform politicians have never harmed him. The fashionable people, according to their wont, for years have avoided publicity and let things go. The man among them who, in a generation, alone has ventured into the field of thoroughly modern enterprise, has failed signally, though most gallantly, and in the prime of his youth stands amid the ruins of a career. The very honour which was his inheritance brought him low.

He had been a contrast to Ellis in the openness of his methods and the rapidity of his success. To organise all the street-railways of his city, to force his personality upon the stockholders of three lines, and to weld the old clumsy systems into one efficient whole – that was George Mather's achievement. To be head and shoulders above all others of his years as the street-railway

president, yes, and as the man in whom the reform politicians built their best hopes – that was his pride, and his class was proud of him. But his strength was his weakness, for he used no trickery and he kept his word. Therefore by a business stroke undertaken against him in the face of an agreement, a method not so analogous to a stab in the back as to the adroit administering of poison in a loving-cup, Mather was upon a certain spring morning, at a certain stock-holders' meeting, by a small but neat majority voted out of office, and stood robbed of the best fruits of his labours.

Those who saw him that afternoon upon the golf-course marvelled as he played his match with the precision of a machine. Had the man no nerves? But though thus he proved – to others, not to himself – that he could bear misfortune without flinching, it was with unspeakable relief that at last he slipped away into an empty corner of the club-house, whence he could hear only the buzz of the Saturday crowd on the grounds outside. The tension of the last few hours relaxed suddenly, and now that he was freed from the gaze of others he gave way almost to despair.

The silver cup which he had won he tossed upon the table, and dropping his clubs upon the floor he threw himself into a chair. Beaten! To have stood so high in the little city, to fall so suddenly, and to lose so much! True, he had made money; he had gained the support of the rich men of his class, who had assured him that they would wait their chance to set him again in his place. But it was Ellis who had seized that place: when had Ellis ever

given up anything which he had gained? Yet it was not Mather's fall, nor the hurt to his pride, nor even the loss of the chance to carry out his plans, which shook him most, but the danger to still dearer hopes. And the young man, almost groaning, dropped his head upon his breast.

A girl entered the room suddenly, and stood startled at the sight of him, but she was not heard. She wished to withdraw, yet feared to rouse him, and his deep frown fascinated her. Staring downward, scowling with his thoughts, his face had at first expressed anger, but now showed pain. Judith, too, he was thinking – had she changed to him? When he hurried to her after this morning's meeting, so soon as he could free himself from his friends, already she had heard the news. She had not let him speak with her alone, but though she must have known his wish she kept her father in the room. If with her ambitions she felt disappointed in him, if she rejected him – well, he could bear even that! The girl who was watching saw his expression change to determination, and then suddenly he roused himself. No one should find him brooding. As he raised his eyes from the carpet she turned to escape, but he saw her and sprang to his feet.

"Judith!" She stopped; perceiving her desire he added: "Don't let me keep you."

Then she came to him directly. "I thought you were outdoors. Every one was congratulating you; the club has never seen such golf. It was splendid!"

He smiled, indifferent to the praise, and picking up the cup

from the table, looked at it carelessly. "Only for that."

"And Jim Wayne would give his head for it," she said.

Disdainfully, he shifted the cup into his palm, and with a single effort crushed it out of shape. "See," and he meant to personify himself, "it is only silver; it lacks strength."

"Ah," she answered, "don't be bitter. Come, forget the street-railroad, forget you ever were its president, forget everything except your friends."

"Judith," he returned with meaning, "can *you* forget what I have lost?"

She drew back, flushing. "George!"

"Oh," he cried, "I know I am rude! But to-day when I came to see you, you knew what had happened to me. If ever I needed comfort it was then, and you knew it. There was only one consolation that would help me, and you knew that, but you denied me. Judith, have I lost my chance with you?"

She flushed, as if conscience drove home a rebuke. "I did not mean to be unkind." But then she looked about uneasily, at the door at her back, and at the curtains which shut off the adjoining room. "I – I think I must go."

"No," he protested. "Let us have it out; no one is near. Give me my sentence, Judith. You know I've loved you for years. It was for you I built up the railroad; you are the impelling cause of all my work. This winter I thought I had pleased you. Is there any hope for me?"

He spoke without a tremor of the voice, but he clenched his

hands as he waited for her answer, and his eyes were eager. Before them she dropped her own. "Not now," she answered.

"Tell me," he asked almost gently, "why you have changed."

She stood silent, with her eyes still downcast, but her mouth grew harder.

"No, don't explain," he said quickly. "I understand. I understood when I left your house to-day. Judith, don't you know that I have learned to read you? This morning I was beaten, and you require of a man that he shall succeed."

Her eyes flashed up at him. "Well," she demanded, "and if I do? Can I be different from what I am?"

"We make ourselves," he replied.

Her defiance was brief, and she asked earnestly: "Why have you let me plague you so? Choose again, some softer woman."

"My choice is fixed," he answered simply.

"Then at least," she said, "we will remain friends?"

His face cleared, and he smiled. "So far as you permit."

"But without enthusiasm," she reproached him.

"Ah, Judith," he answered, "you know you don't require it."

"And we won't speak of this again?" she asked.

"Just these last words," he said. "Remember that this defeat is not the end of me; I shall yet give an account of myself." She saw how resolute were his eyes, but then his look again became gentle as he added: "And this, too. The world fascinates you. But Judith, it is very big, and strong, and merciless!"

Was it not a beaten man who spoke? She answered, "I do not

fear it," and studied him to find his meaning.

But with a steadiness which allowed no further show of feeling he replied: "If ever you do, then turn to me."

They finished without words of parting; she quitted him abruptly, he took up the caddy-bag and stuffed the ruined cup in among the clubs. Though she paused an instant at the door, there was nothing more to be said. Regretfully he watched her go: bright, fearless, and inquisitive as she was, where was her nature leading her? He knew her restless energy, and at the moment feared for her more than for himself.

As for her, he had pricked her deeply by his warning. The world would never be too much for her. Let it be however big and strong, she admired it, must learn about it! She would never cry for mercy. The thought did not cross her mind that he knew the world better than she, that although defeated he was more its master. At twenty-three one is confident.

And as for his charge that she thought less of him, she told herself that it was not his disaster that separated them. Rather it was the quality which the disaster had but emphasised in him – the self-confidence, real or counterfeit, with which he had always assumed that he could go his own way in making a home in which to take care of her. How he mistook her! She did not ask for safety from the world; it was the key to her whole character that she wished to be more than a mere comfort to a man. Should she ever accept a husband, she must be an active rather than a passive element in his strength, counselling, inspiring,

almost leading him. Between herself and Mather there was an unremitting conflict of will. She left the club-house, and went out upon the lawn with her cheeks a little redder than usual, her black eye brighter, her head held still more high.

Men came instantly about her – young men eager to please. But with her thoughts still busy, she measured them and found them lacking; they had never done anything – they had not yet arrived. The most masterly of them all she had left in the club-house, and he, after climbing to high place, had fallen. Was it possible that the only men of power were older still? Then she progressed to a still more searching question. Could this vapid and ambitionless assembly produce real men?

CHAPTER II

Which Enlarges the Stage

On the day which brought to Mather his two crushing defeats, the cause of them, Ellis, that type of modern success, openly embarked upon his latest and his strangest venture. Not satisfied with his achievements, and burning with the desire for recognition, he, whose power was complete in every part of the city save one, turned to that quarter where alone he had met indifference, and began his campaign against the citadel of fashion. The guests at the golf-club tea were somewhat startled when, at the side of their latest parvenue, whose bold beauty and free ways they had not yet learned to tolerate, they perceived the man whose characteristics – a short figure and large head, thinly bearded, with sharp features and keen eyes – were known to all students of contemporary caricature. Ellis was received with the coolness which his companion had foreseen.

"They won't like it, Stephen," she had said when he proposed the undertaking to her. "So soon after this morning, I mean; you know Mr. Mather is very popular."

"I'll take the risk," he answered.

"I don't see why you bother," she went on. "It's been easy enough for me, marrying the Judge, to go where I please – and

yet it's a continual struggle, after all. It isn't such fun as you'd think, from outside."

He scowled a partial acquiescence. Living near the social leaders, it had been an earlier hope that to be their neighbour would open to him their doors. He had built himself that imposing edifice upon the main street of fashion, so that where the simple Georgian mansion of the Waynes had stood the Gothic gorgeousness of a French château forced attention. But in spite of the money he lavished there, it had not taken Ellis long to discover that the widow Wayne, who was his neighbour still (having refused to part with the original homestead of the family), had more honour in her little clapboarded cottage than he in his granite pile. The widow's son, who nodded so carelessly to Ellis when they met, and yet was but a broker's clerk, had with his youth and grace a more valuable possession still – his name.

Sometimes Ellis felt it almost too exasperating to live among these people and be ignored by them, yet he gritted his teeth and stayed, thinking that perseverance must win in the end, and perceiving that from the midst of his enemies he might best plan his campaign. He spun his webs with unconquerable patience, studying the social news with the same keenness which he brought to the stock-market reports, and looking ahead to a possible combination which would give him the opportunity he desired. And now he believed that at last he actually saw his chance, and his hopes were rising.

"Maybe I'm a fool," he said, "but by Gad I'll at least have

one look inside, and see what others find there. I notice that you worked hard enough to get in, and now you work to stay. But, Lydia, if you want to keep these people to yourself – "

"The idea!" she cried. "You are welcome to them."

"Or if you think I shall hurt your position – " He paused for a second disclaimer, but none came; his directness had confused her, and he knew he had struck near the truth. "Anyhow," he finished, "you promised me this long ago, and I'll keep you to the bargain."

Now she, the maker of this promise to Ellis, was the wife of Judge Abiel Harmon, whose ancient family, high position, and fine character were everywhere honoured. Nevertheless, Ellis was able to regard her as his entering wedge, for they had been boy and girl together in the same little town. While yet in his teens he went to try his chances in the city; years afterward, when her ripe charms had captivated the old Judge, she found her fortune and followed. When she met Ellis again their social positions were widely different, but interest drew the two together, and though the Judge had no liking for Ellis, he did not inquire what Mrs. Harmon did with her leisure; therefore she maintained with the promoter an intimacy which to them both promised profit. To him the first advantage was this visit to the golf club, but while on inspection of the crowd he knew he could buy up any member of it at a fair valuation, they did not appear to like him the better for that, and their groups melted marvellously before him. As a relief, Mrs. Harmon took him

to the club-house, but the dreary promenade through its rooms, where her vocabulary was exhausted and her enthusiasm lapsed, became at last an evident failure. When she had said all that she could of the conveniences of the lower floor she led him to the stairs.

"If you care to go up," she suggested, "the bedrooms might interest you."

But she looked out on the lawn through the open door, and longed to be there. The chattering groups called to every instinct of her nature; she wished to get rid of this encumbrance – to hand him over to any one and take her pleasure as she was used. And Ellis, too, looked out through the doorway.

"Up-stairs is more likely to be stupid," he said bluntly. "Let's go outdoors again."

In Mrs. Harmon's relief, she did not notice the characteristic which he displayed in this answer. Ellis was a fighter; power was all very well, but the winning of it was better. Just now he was like Alexander before India – looking upon a domain which must be his, and eager for the struggle. These people, and they alone, could put the capstone to the pyramid of his successes, and could lend glamour, if not give glory, to that wholly material structure. He would force them to it! Watching society disport itself, he regarded it as his natural prey. That assemblage was characterised by a suavity which deceived him; as he viewed the throng it seemed all mildness, all amiability. He did not appreciate the power of resistance of the apparently soft people.

And yet he had learned that money was not the effective weapon he had once supposed it. The arrogance of possession was against him, and though he did not understand the subtle reasons for his exclusion, he was sure that something besides a golden key was needed to open those doors.

It was not in Ellis to remake himself, nor did he try to change his ways. As when he faced the difficulty of buying the city government, he merely studied human weaknesses. The former experience had taught him that men are easier bribed without money than with, and that there are some passions, some ambitions, which do not include financial ease. Moreover, he had formed his plan; it was time to make the attempt.

"Miss Judith Blanchard – she is here?" he asked.

Mrs. Harmon looked at him in surprise. Did he wish to meet a girl? So far she had conducted the enterprise, and since their entrance on the grounds had tried to help him by introductions to the older people. But the experiment had failed, and he had no intention of repeating it.

"Why, she is here," she answered in doubt.

"Then introduce me to her," he directed brusquely.

Oh, if he wished! Mrs. Harmon was not pleased to be so ordered; she was not at all satisfied with her day. It was very troublesome, this trying to introduce Ellis. The manner of Mrs. Watson had been more distant than ever, while as for Mrs. William Fenno, her behaviour had been arctic. Mrs. Harmon cared for no further snubs, but if Ellis wished to run the risk of

the meeting – well, Judith would fix him! Not pausing to watch the process, Mrs. Harmon presented Ellis to the young lady and escaped to her own enjoyments.

Ellis was where he had many times imagined himself, standing before Judith Blanchard, while the young men fell away on either side. He was meeting her glance, he was seeing for himself the "queenly form," the "regal head" (*vide* the social columns of the *Herald*), and he was experiencing at close hand the influence of her personality. It was magnetic even to him, for on hearing his name she turned quickly, looked him straight in the eye, and offered him her hand almost as a man would have done. When she spoke her voice had not the artificial tones of the women he had so far met; it had a genuine ring.

"So you are Mr. Ellis?"

"You know of me, then?" he asked.

"Every one has heard of you, even girls," she replied. Any one might have said this, but not with her look, not with that bright glance. She asked another question, which showed to those who listened her interest in the man. "You have settled the water-works affair?"

John Trask turned and strolled away; Will Mayne bowed to Miss Blanchard and silently betook himself elsewhere; Ripley Fenno mumbled a request to be excused, and left Miss Blanchard alone with her new acquaintance. Within five minutes, five times as many people were watching the pair curiously, but absorbed in a new interest, they did not notice.

"What do you know," he asked her, "about the water-works?"

But she pursued her own inquiries. "Or does the street-railway not take up your time? Or perhaps," she added boldly, "the court-house has no need of the services of its contractor."

Now the boldness of this last remark consisted in the reminder of a certain scandal, public-minded citizens (of whom the chief was Judge Harmon) claiming that there had been boodlery in the recent repairs of the court-house. It was more than hinted that Ellis had backed the contractors, and that he had shared the profits. His face changed, therefore, as she spoke, and she saw in his eyes a sudden gleam – of anger?

"Or," she asked quickly, "have I misread the papers, and you are not the contractor, after all?"

He was himself again, although looking – staring, almost – with deeper interest. At first he said no more than "I am not the contractor," but to himself he was crying: Success! He believed she had provoked him deliberately; he saw that she had studied his doings, for the court-house affair was almost a year old, the water-works deal occurred months ago, and the street-railway *coup* was of this very day.

"How much you know of matters!" he cried.

"I read the newspapers," she explained, "and with an object."

"An object?" he asked.

"I want to know what is going on," she explained. "I want to have to do with real things. I am interested in the doings of *men*, Mr. Ellis." And she made him a little bow, which he, still

staring, made no attempt to answer. Then she turned, and walked toward a more open space where people could not, as they were beginning to do, press around them. "Will you not come and see the grounds?" she asked. In great satisfaction he kept at her side.

So this was Judith Blanchard! He had not believed it, had laughed at himself for hoping it, but she was what he had imagined her. Months of study had gone to make up his opinion of her; he had read of her, heard of her, watched her. Quick, impetuous, somewhat impatient of conventions – that was Judith.

"Do you know," she asked suddenly, "that we have met before? In a street-car, not a fortnight ago, we rode facing each other for quite a while. I remember meeting your eye."

He had recalled it many times. "I hope I didn't look too much at you," he said. "You must be used to having people watch you."

"Oh, please don't compliment," she interrupted, "or you will spoil my idea of you. I imagine you a man who thinks to the point, and speaks so, too. Yes, people do watch me wherever I go; they give me flattery, and think I love it. But if you and I are to be friends – "

"Friends!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

"Are you not willing?"

"Willing!" he repeated. "Miss Blanchard, you offer what I had not dared to hope one person here would think of in connection with me. I – " He looked at her searchingly. "You are not teasing me?"

"I used a strong word," she said.

"Then you did not mean it?"

"Why," she endeavoured to explain, "I spoke hastily. I have few friends."

"Few friends? You?"

"Yes, I," she answered. "Among the men, I mean. Those of my age are so" – and she smiled – "so young! I am not posing, Mr. Ellis."

Nor was she. Her interest in the great world was genuine, even if ill-balanced. Ruled by it, she looked into men and discovered, not how much there was in them, but how little they had for her. The good, the amiable, the well-intentioned, had none of them enough backbone to suit her; it was power that she wished to find. Always among respectable people, she was often impatient at their mediocrity; always among young people, she was tired by their immaturity. This day she had for the first time questioned if older people of another class had not more for her; she had been repeating the question at the moment when Ellis was presented. And now, without pose, she scrutinised him with frank question: Was he one who could bring an interest into her life and let her see the workings of the world?

And he knew she was not posing. "It is sometimes troublesome to be friends with people," he said. "To be bound to them, to have considerations of them prevent free action – that is what friends mean in business."

"And you have few, as well?"

"I have dependents."

He spoke wisely, for the term struck her. Dependents! She had felt isolation, but it was that of the looker-on. There was something regal in this man's loneliness, for that he was lonely she divined.

"People need you," she said with approval. "They cannot get along without you. Oh!" she exclaimed, "I have sometimes thought what power is in the hands of such men as you. You can mould a whole community; you can set your mark on a city so that it will tell of you forever." Behind a steady face he concealed astonishment and question. "You can do so much good!" she finished.

"Much good – yes," he returned uncertainly. Such enthusiasm was new to him, especially when applied to what the opposition newspapers bluntly called "jobs." He perceived that where he saw only money in his enterprises, Judith saw great opportunities. "Yes, much good – if we can only do it. Where there is power there is also responsibility. How can a man know whether he is doing the right thing, especially" – and he smiled – "when all the newspapers say he is doing wrong?"

"A man must follow his conscience," she replied, so gravely that he was uncomfortable, for, thus innocently spoken, her words carried a sting. He tried to finish the subject, and by his usual method – by meeting it directly.

"A man works as he can," he said, "doing what seems best. He has to think of the present, but as you seem to know, he works for the future too. It is an interesting life and a busy one."

"Interesting?" she echoed. "Oh, it must be! Why should it not be all-sufficient? Why should you come here?" He stared at her again, and she asked: "What have we that can interest you?"

He answered with a simplicity that was almost great, an acknowledgment of his desires which was unparalleled in his career, but which meant that without hesitation he put himself in her hands, to betray if she wished, but perhaps to save. He waved his hand toward the groups behind him.

"I want to get in," he said.

"To get in?" She smiled, and he doubted. "To get in, when I sometimes wish to get out? In here it's so dull!"

"I don't care for that," he replied.

"Sit down, then," she directed. "Let us talk it over."

Seated on a bench, half-facing, each had a moment to consider. She did not take it; he did, for he was beginning to recover himself and to study her. Beauty and grace, with that direct glance and genuine voice, were her chief outward characteristics. Of her inward motives, most prominent appeared her desire for something new; more strong, perhaps, was her interest in matters beyond her sphere. This interest of hers was to him a gift of fortune; it might bring him anywhere. But to Judith this situation was new; therefore she enjoyed it. She paused no longer than to consider what she should ask him next, and then pursued the subject.

"How have you meant to go about it?" she inquired.

"Why," he hesitated, "my friends – "

"What friends?"

He acknowledged frankly: "I have but one – Mrs. Harmon."

"Oh, only Mrs. Harmon?"

Only! The tone and the word struck him. Was Mrs. Harmon, then, not fully in? His mind reached forward blankly: who else could help him?

"But you must know some of our men," she suggested.

"Business acquaintances, yes," he said. "Yet they take care that I shall remain a business acquaintance merely. No, I must reach the men through the women."

"And the women?" she asked. "How will you reach them? Mrs. Fenno, for instance, knows only one kind; she is iron against innovation. How will you get on her list, or Mrs. Watson's, or Mrs. Branderson's?"

He did not answer. She saw that he was biting on the problem, and that it did not please him. She made a positive statement.

"No. It is the men you must rely on."

And he, weighing the facts, believed her, though it went against his former notions. The women – this day he had first seen them at close quarters, and had felt them to be formidable creatures. The severe majesty of Mrs. Fenno – how could he impress it? And Mrs. Branderson had, beneath the good humour of her reception of him, the skill to chat easily, and then to turn her back without excuse. He bit his mustache – the women!

She was watching him with a half-smile. "Do you not agree?"

"But which men, then?" he inquired.

"Have you no influence over a single one?"

"There is young Mather," he said thoughtfully.

Her manner changed; she drew a little more within herself, and he noted the difference in her tone as she asked: "You have some connection with him?"

"None," he said. "But I can help him."

"How?"

"He is out of work," Ellis explained. "He will be fretting his heart out for something to do. I could offer him some position."

"Do!" she said. "He is right here. – George!" she called.

CHAPTER III

Sets the Ball to Rolling

No young man can bear to sit down idly under misfortune; but though the chief results of Mather's work were lost to him, and his great plans – his subway – swept away, and though his defeat rankled, he had not suspected personal feeling in Ellis's action. The promoter had merely stretched out his hand and taken, repudiating the pledges of those who spoke in his name.

Therefore, in spite of the little shock which Mather felt when he saw Ellis with Judith, he came forward and greeted politely. It was a chance, of course, to "get back"; it would have been easy to express surprise at the promoter's presence, and to ask how he liked the club now that he really was there. Mather felt the temptation, but there was too much behind his relations with Ellis for the younger man to be rude, and he presently found himself saying: "I don't suppose you play golf, Mr. Ellis?"

"No," Ellis answered. This was the first man who had greeted him freely that day, and yet the one who most might feel resentment. While his manner showed that he was about to speak again, Ellis looked the other over with a smile which concealed deliberation. It was not weakness that made Mather mild, in spite of Mrs. Harmon's belief, to which she clung the more because the

Judge rejected it. "I knew his father," her husband had told her. "They are bulldogs in that stock." Ellis took much the same view; once, at the beginning of his career, he had encountered Mather's father, and had found him a bulldog indeed. The son seemed the same in so many respects that Ellis wondered if he had thought quite long enough in seizing this morning's opportunity. He knew well that Mather would be stronger when next he entered the arena; besides, the reform politicians, those bees who buzzed continually and occasionally stung, had been after the young man, who, with the leisure to enter politics, might be formidable. Thus Ellis, hesitating, ran over the whole subject in his mind; and then, as he knew how to do, plunged at his object.

"Mr. Mather, I am sorry for what happened this morning."

"Fortune of war," returned the other.

The young man certainly had a right to be bitter if he chose, judging, at least, by the usual conduct of victims. Mather's peculiarity in this did not escape Ellis, who spoke again with some hope of forgiveness. "I trust that you and I may some day work together."

"I scarcely expect it," was the answer.

"Don't say that." Ellis was not sure what tone to adopt, but did his best. "This is not the place to speak of it, perhaps, but there is surely something I can do for you."

"Now that you have nothing to do, you know," said Judith.

Mather turned to her; he saw how she had put herself on Ellis's side; how her interest in this offer was due to Ellis, not to himself.

And the reminder of his defeat was most unwelcome.

"Since this morning," he said, "I have been offered three positions."

"Oh!" cried Judith. The involuntary note of surprise showed how she had underrated him, and Mather bit his lip.

Ellis spoke. "If you will take a position on the street-railroad – "

"Nothing subordinate there!" cut in Mather very positively.

"Then," said Ellis, "if you care to be the head of the water company – "

"Oh!" Judith exclaimed before Ellis had completed his offer. "Such an opportunity!"

Mather himself looked at Ellis in surprise. It was an opening which, coming from any other source, he would have accepted eagerly, as a task in which he could give free play to all his powers. Did Ellis really mean it? But the promoter, having swiftly asked himself the same question, was sure of his own wisdom. The place needed a man: here was one. Besides, Ellis would have given much to tie Mather to him.

"I mean it," he said positively.

"You must accept," added Judith.

It was too much for Mather to bear. His defeat by Ellis and his loss of Judith – both of these he could sustain as separate calamities. But when he saw her thus siding with his victor, Mather forgot himself, forgot that Ellis was not a man to defy lightly, and spoke the impolitic truth.

"I could not work with Mr. Ellis under any circumstances!"

"George!" cried Judith hotly.

Then there was silence as the men looked at each other. Had Judith been the woman that in her weaker moments she was pleased to think herself, she would have studied the two. But she was neither cool nor impartial; she had put her feelings on Ellis's side, and looked at Mather with indignation. She missed, therefore, the pose of his head and the fire of his eye. She missed as well the narrowing of Ellis's eyes, the forward stretch of his thin neck – snaky actions which expressed his perfect self-possession, and his threat. Neither of them spoke, but Judith did as she turned away.

"You are very rude," she said coldly. "Come, Mr. Ellis, let us walk again." Ellis followed her; Mather stood and watched them walk away.

"It was shameful of him," said Judith when she and Ellis were out of hearing.

"He is young," remarked the other. He was watching her now, as he had watched Mather, out of narrow eyes. Mather's words meant a declaration of interest in Judith, confirming gossip. She was supposed to have refused him, and yet she was biting her lip – would she be quite so moved if Mather had not the power to do it? Ellis promised himself that he would remember this.

"He will know better some day," he said. "But at least he is out of the question. Can you not suggest some one else?"

"There is Mr. Pease," she answered.

Pease and himself – oil and water! How little she knew! and he almost laughed. But he answered meditatively: "He is very – set."

"I see my father is coming for me," she said.

"Let me ask you this, then," he begged quickly. "May I come to see you – at your house?"

"I am afraid not – yet," she answered. She was not ungracious, and continued with much interest: "But Mr. Ellis, I shall be so anxious to hear how it all goes. I am sorry I cannot help you with the men, but the principle is [she thought of Mather] choose the weak ones, not the strong. Here is my father. Father, this is Mr. Ellis."

Colonel Blanchard was affable. "How de do?" he said breezily. "Fine day for the match, Mr. Ellis."

"A very fine day," answered Ellis, pleased by the way in which the Colonel looked at him; Blanchard seemed interested, like his daughter. But Judith thought that the conversation had best end there.

"The carriage has come?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the Colonel. "Beth is in it, waiting for us. You know she goes out to dinner." He begged Ellis to excuse them, and so carried his daughter away.

Ellis looked after them; these two, at least, had treated him well. The Colonel had stared with almost bourgeois interest, as if impressible by wealth and power. Ellis mused over the possibility of such a thing.

"The weak," he said, repeating Judith's words. "The weak, not

the strong."

Then Mrs. Harmon swooped down on him. "Here you are," she said petulantly. "Everybody's going. Let us go too."

CHAPTER IV

An Understanding

Mrs. Harmon was very petulant; indeed, her aspect in one of lower station would have been deemed sulky. Reviewing the afternoon, she was convinced that to have brought Ellis there was a great mistake. Why should she take up with him, anyway? He could give her nothing but – trinkets; the old acquaintance was not so close that she was bound to help him. It had been condescension on her part; she might as well stop it now; yes, she might as well.

Yet she thought with some uneasiness of those trinkets. To accept them had not bound her to him, had it? Their money value was nothing to him. She could break from him gradually – that would be simple enough – and she could make a beginning on the drive home, for silence could show her feelings.

Ellis understood her after one glance, which expressed not only his impatience with her instability, but also a sudden new repulsion. The afternoon had opened his eyes to what the finer women were. How could he have supposed that Mrs. Harmon was really in the inner circle? How she contrasted with Judith! She seemed so flat beside the girl; she was his own kind, while Judith was better. He wished that he might drop the woman and

pin his hopes to the girl.

But he could not spare Mrs. Harmon, and he had no fear that she would drop him, for he knew all her weaknesses. She was ambitious to a certain degree, but after that, lazy; she was fond of comfort, fond of – trinkets, with a healthy indifference to ways and means. In fact, although Ellis did not so phrase it, there was a barbaric strain in her, a yearning for flesh-pots and show, in which her husband's tastes and means did not permit her to indulge herself. Ellis knew that he could manage her.

"Lydia," he said, "I want to thank you for the afternoon. It must have been a great bother to you. I'm afraid I spoiled your fun."

She could but respond. "Oh, not much."

"Look here," he went on. "You know me, I think; we understand each other pretty well. These people," and he waved his hand to include the whole golf club, "are not to be too much for us. Do you mind my saying a few words about myself?"

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed with involuntary interest; for he seldom spoke his thoughts.

"That girl, Miss Blanchard," he said, "was very good to me."

"She was?" Mrs. Harmon could not subdue an accent of surprise, but hastened to explain. "I've sometimes found her haughty."

"I shan't forget you introduced me to her," said Ellis. "I mean to follow up my acquaintance there."

"No girl," suggested Mrs. Harmon, "has much influence. No

unmarried woman, I mean."

"But when Miss Blanchard marries she will have it then?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Harmon thoughtfully, and then very positively: "Yes, I think she would be a leader of the younger set."

"I am sure she would." Ellis nodded confidently. Judith had faults, notably rashness, but under wise guidance she could develop masterly qualities.

"But why – " began Mrs. Harmon in some perplexity. Then she caught sight of her companion's expression. "What! you don't mean to say that you – you would?"

"Why not?" asked Ellis. "Is it so very strange?"

"You are over forty!" cried Mrs. Harmon.

"Nothing to do with the case," he replied shortly.

"N-no," agreed Mrs. Harmon slowly. "No, I believe not – not with Judith." She looked at her companion with sudden respect. "I believe you've hit upon it! I didn't know you thought of anything of the kind."

"I need you, just the same," said Ellis. "You will help me?"

"Yes, yes," she replied. She felt a nervous inclination to giggle. "It's a big affair."

"All the more credit if you engineer it," he answered, and shrewdly, for she felt stimulated. If *she* could engineer it! Then she could plume herself in the face of Mrs. Fenno, and would always have a strong ally in Judith.

"Yes," she cried eagerly, "it will mean a great deal to – to everybody if it happens. Why, I could – "

But Ellis would not let her run on. "Do you know her well?" he interrupted.

"I will know her better soon," she stated.

"Not too quick," he warned, fearing that she might blunder. "You know yourself that she is not a girl to be hurried. Tell me, now, what men are there of her family?"

"Only her father."

"And what sort of man is he?"

Mrs. Harmon's vocabulary was not wide. "Why, spreading," she explained. "Jaunty, you know."

"And his circumstances?"

"He is well off," she answered. "Keeps a carriage and spends freely. There was money in the family, and his wife had some too. You know how those old fortunes grow."

Or disappear, thought Ellis; he had been investigating the Colonel's standing. "Miss Blanchard has no cousins?" he asked aloud. "No other men attached to her?"

"Attached in one sense," she replied, "but not connected."

"Much obliged," he said. "Now, Lydia, if we stand by each other – "

Mrs. Harmon had forgotten her earlier thoughts. "Of course!" she cried. "Oh, it will be so interesting!"

Ellis added the finishing touch, abruptly changing the subject. "You have been to Price's recently?"

Now Price was the fashionable jeweller, and few women were indifferent to his name. Mrs. Harmon, recollecting the cause of

her recent visit there, saw fit to be coy.

"Oh, yes," she said, turning her head away. "He keeps asking me to come."

"He's always picking up pretty things," said Ellis approvingly. "Did he have anything special this time?"

"Something of Orsini's," replied Mrs. Harmon, struggling to appear indifferent. For they had been lovely, those baroque pearls so gracefully set in dusky gold. Price had made her try the necklace on, and she had sighed before the glass. "I wish he wouldn't pester me so," she said irritably. "He knows I can't afford them."

"He knows you have taste," Ellis said warmly. "He calls it a great pleasure to show things to you."

"I know," she replied, mollified. "I think he means to flatter me. But, Stephen, it's getting late, and I must dress for the Fennos' ball this evening."

"Then," responded Ellis, "I will stop at Price's on my way down-town."

"Naughty! naughty!" she answered, but she radiated smiles.

Ellis, after he had left Mrs. Harmon at her door, went, as he had promised, to the establishment of the pushing Mr. Price, and asked for the proprietor.

"Got anything to show me?" Ellis demanded.

From his safe the jeweller brought out a leather case, and looked at Ellis impressively before opening it.

"Pretty small," commented Ellis.

"Ah, but – " replied the other, and opened the case. "Look – Orsini's make!"

"I don't know anything about that," Ellis said as he poked the jewels with his finger. "Look strange to me. The fashion, however?"

"The very latest," Price assured him. "Trust me, Mr. Ellis."

It was one secret of Ellis's success that he knew where to trust. He had ventured twice that day, with women at that, and the thought of it was to trouble him before he slept. But he could trust Price in matters of taste, and as to secrecy, the man was bound to him. Price had been in politics at the time when Ellis was getting "influence" in the city government; for the jeweller those days were past, but this store and certain blocks of stock were the result. Besides, he was adroit. Ellis gave the chains and pendants a final push with his finger.

"Send it, then," he said. "The usual place. By the way, how much? Whew! some things come dear, don't they? But send it, just the same, and at once. She's going out to some affair."

Thus it happened that Mrs. Harmon wore "the very latest" at her throat that night.

CHAPTER V

Various Points of View

The Blanchards' equipage was a perfect expression of quiet respectability, for the carriage was sober in colour, was drawn by a strong and glossy horse, and was driven by a coachman wearing a modest livery and a discontented countenance. As it drove away from the golf club the carriage held the three members of the family, in front the younger daughter, Beth, and on the rear seat the others: Judith erect and cheerful, the Colonel cheerful also, but lounging in his corner with the air of one who took the world without care. Blanchard was fifty-eight, military as to voice and hair, for his tones were sonorous and his white whiskers fierce. Yet these outward signs by no means indicated his nature, and his manner, though bluff, appertained less to military life than to the game of poker. Not that the Colonel played cards; moreover, he drank merely in moderation, swore simply to maintain his character, betrayed only by the tint of the left side of his mustache that he liked a good cigar, and was extravagant in neither dress nor table. He kept his carriage, of course, liked the best wines at home and at the club, and in a small way was a collector of curios. Yet the Blanchards, but for the brilliance of Judith, were quiet people; he was proud to be

a quiet man.

Dullness is often the penalty of indolence; the Colonel was lazy and he had small wit. Perceiving that Judith came away from the tea stimulated and even excited, he rallied her about her new acquaintance. "An interesting man, hey?" he asked for the third time.

"Yes," answered Judith absently. "Father, what is there against Mr. Ellis?"

"Only that he is a pusher. He jars." Blanchard aimed to be tolerant.

"Isn't there more?" asked little Beth.

The Colonel, as always, turned his eyes on her with pleasure. She was dark and quiet and sweet, yet her brown eyes revealed a power of examining questions for their moral aspects. "Nothing much," he said indulgently. "You don't know business, Beth. He's beaten his opponents always, and the beaten always squeal, but I doubt if he's as black as he's painted."

"I'm glad to hear you stand up for him, father," said Judith.

"He'll be looking for a wife among us," went on the Colonel with vast shrewdness and considerable delicacy. "How would he suit you, Judith?"

"Oh, father!" Beth protested. But Judith, with fire in her eyes, answered: "He's at least a man. You can't say that of every one."

Her answer made him turn toward her with a soberer thought and a new interest. His manner changed from the natural to the pompous as he set forth his views. "Money is almost the best

thing one can have."

"Father, dear!" protested Beth again.

"I mean," he explained, again softening his manner, "from a father's standpoint. If I could see you two girls married with plenty of money, I could die happy." But evidently the Colonel was in the best of health, so that his words lacked impressiveness. It was one of the misfortunes of their family life that Judith was able to perceive the incongruity between her father's Delphic utterances and his actual feelings, and that the Colonel knew she found him out.

"I wasn't thinking of Mr. Ellis's money," she said at this point.

"I was," retorted the Colonel. As he was struggling with a real thought, his tones became a little less sonorous and more genuine. "In sickness riches give everything. In health there are enough troubles without money cares. I mean it, Judith."

She took his hand and caressed it. "Forgive me, father!"

"My dear – my dear!" he responded cordially.

So this, the type of their little jars, the sole disturbers of family peace, passed as usual, rapidly and completely, and Ellis was spoken of no more. Beth, with customary adroitness, came in to shift the subject, and when the three descended at their door none of them shared the coachman's air of gloom.

He, however, detained the Colonel while the girls went up the steps. "Beg pardon, sir, but could you give me a little of my wages?"

"James," returned his master with his most military air, "why

will you choose such inconvenient times? Here is all I have with me." He gave some money. "Twenty dollars."

"Yessir," replied the man, not overmuch relieved. "And the rest of it, sir? There's a hundred more owing."

"Not to-day," returned the Colonel with vexation. But he was an optimist. Though at the bottom of the steps he muttered to himself something about "discharge," by the time he reached the top he was absorbed in cheerful contemplation of the vast resources which, should Judith ever chance to marry Ellis, would be at her disposal.

Five minds were, that evening, dominated by the occurrences of the afternoon. One was the Colonel's, still entertaining a dream which should properly be repugnant to one of his station. This he recognised, but he reminded himself that as a parent his daughter's good should be his care. Another mind was Mather's, disturbed by the jealousy and dread which the manliest of lovers cannot master. And one was Mrs. Harmon's; she, like Ellis, had learned much that afternoon, and meant in future to apply her knowledge.

As that evening she went to the Fennos' ball Mrs. Harmon recalled the snubs of the afternoon, and saw how insecure her footing was among these people. Sometimes she had wondered if it were worth while, this struggle to be "in"; the life was dull, lacking all natural excitements; there was no friendship possible with any of the blue-bloods. Yet she hated to knuckle to them; if she could engineer this match between Judith and Ellis, then – !

And Mrs. Harmon, with the hope of coming triumph, felt fully equal to meeting Mrs. Fenno on her own ground. Mrs. Harmon wore Ellis's jewels on her breast, she had his brain to back her, she believed she knew Judith's weaknesses, and she saw before her a bright future.

Judith Blanchard made at that ball a searching review of her world, dominated as she still was by the thoughts which Ellis aroused. For he, the strongest personality in the city, had done more than to excite her curiosity: with his deference to her opinion and his appeal for her help he had succeeded – as Mather never – in wakening her sympathy. Questioning why fashion should reject him, stirred to a new comparison of reality with sham, she looked keenly about her at the ball. She was in one of the inner sanctuaries, where society bowed down and worshiped itself. Judith sniffed the incense, listened to the chants, and weighed the words of officiating priests and priestesses. She found everything to delight the eye, except the idols; everything to charm the senses, except sense.

In the ball-room there was dancing, pagan rites to what purpose? This usually unrhythmic swaying, skipping, sliding, seemed a profitless way to pass the hours when workers were in bed. Girls more or less innocent danced with men more or less *roué*; this procedure, indefinitely continued, gave occasion for jealousies among the girls and selfish scheming among the men. In other rooms the older people played cards, intent at bridge or whist upon their stakes. Near the buffet thronged bachelors old

or young, with not a few married men, busied in acquiring an agreeable exhilaration. Their occupation was no worse than the passionate gambling of the old women. And the house in which all this went on was beautifully classic in design and furnishings. Beside that quiet elegance, how vacant was the chatter! As Judith thought thus, slowly the spirit of revolt came to her.

The master of the house approached her; he was leonine, massive, somewhat lame from rheumatism. She saw him, as he came, speaking among his guests; his smile was cynical. It lighted upon her father, and the Colonel, his character somehow exposed by that smile, seemed shallow. It turned to the men at the sideboard, and their interests seemed less than the froth in their glasses. The smile turned on Judith, and she felt called to give an account of herself.

But he merely asked her: "Where is Beth?"

"Gone with Miss Pease to a meeting of the Charity Board," Judith answered.

Mr. Fenno grunted, looking at her sidewise. "Better employed than we!"

Then he rambled away, neither knowing nor caring what encouragement he had given to her mood. He missed Beth, for his rheumatism was sharp, the company inane, and Beth was almost the only person who could make him contented with himself. But Judith felt the reflection of his cynicism and was stirred still deeper. What was there to interest her here?

Among all the women Mrs. Harmon alone was in disaccord.

No dressmaker could conceal her natural style; the eye and carriage of the Judge's wife were bolder than those of the women about her. A free humour attracted some of the men; the women avoided her, the more delicate from instinct, the stronger with a frank dislike. This antipathy Judith had often felt and expressed, yet to-night she reviewed and rejected it. Mrs. Harmon belonged to the class of the rising Americans; in that class Judith felt interest, questioning if its vigour and freshness should not outweigh external faults. She went to Mrs. Harmon and began to talk with her.

She tried to find, within the exterior, the solid qualities of the middle class. But thought and purpose seemed lacking; in Mrs. Harmon the vulgarity lay deeper than the surface. She was frivolous; she liked the sparkle and the show, the wine, the dancing, and the gaiety. Promising herself an intimacy with Judith, she talked willingly, but it was only upon the subject of Ellis that she became interesting.

She told Judith much about him. He had always been persevering and ambitious; he had left his town as a boy because even then he found it too little. Ellis had begun small; now he was big. Some day, said Mrs Harmon significantly, people would recognise him.

Why not, thought Judith as she looked about her, admit Ellis here? What was an aristocracy for but to reward success? How could it remain sound but by the infusion of new blood? Ellis had proved his quality by the things he had done; he had beaten

Mather; yet these halls which to Mather were open were closed to Ellis. It was unfair to refuse to recognise him! What were the abilities of these men here, compared with his?

Thus Judith, tolerant in her broad Americanism, admiring the forces which to-day are accomplishing such marvellous results, thought of her world. At the same time Ellis also was thinking of it. His was the fifth mind moved by that afternoon's occurrence, but moved the most deeply of them all. On leaving Judith first, like a man smitten by a slender blade he had spoken, acted, thought as before. Then the inward bleeding began, and the pain. He had gone away from her thinking of her as something to be won, but no more distant, no less a commodity, than a public franchise or a seat in the legislature. Thus he had discussed her with Mrs. Harmon, but before night his thought of the girl had changed. Her refinement was new to him; he recalled her in imagination and dwelt on her features and her voice. Yet, equally with her delicacy, her spirit charmed him with its frankness and its admiration of great things. There was a subtle flattery in her interest in him; he had never thought of himself as she did; he saw himself magnified in her eyes, which seemed to refine the baseness from his employments and purposes. She gave him a new idea of himself, and held before him vague new aims.

He had entertained some of his henchmen that evening at his table, had tasted while they ate, sipped while they drank, listened while they spoke of politics. He sat at the head of the table, like the Sphinx after which he was familiarly called, indifferent to

their uncouthness and their little thoughts; then at the end he suddenly called them into executive session, asked a few keen questions, gave some brief directions, and dismissed them. Thus he had always ruled them, from outside, commanding respect by his decision, almost awe by his silence. Though his purposes were not clear, the men went to obey him, having learned to support him blindly, for he never failed. Such was Ellis among his subordinates, the "old man" of whom they never asked questions, with whom they never attempted familiarity. They praised him as they went, proud of their connection with him. But he put out the lights as soon as the men were gone, and sat at the window, looking at Fenno's house.

There was the temporary focus of social life; he saw the lights; had he opened his window he might have heard the music. Carriages drove up, people entered the house, and on the curtains of the ball-room he saw moving shadows. In that house were what he wanted – recognition, a new life, Judith. But she was guarded by the powers of a whole order, was infinitely remote.

His talk with Judith had doubled his determination to enter the upper world, and yet changed his regard for it. It became Judith's world, seeming to-night like a house which she inhabited, more precious by her presence. And because she was so much finer than he had imagined the women of her class, her sphere looked farther away, and his determination to enter it was tempered by the fear of failure.

As he took the first step in his new venture, he had been

half ashamed of his desire to "better himself," quite unable to justify himself by appeal to the natural American wish to obtain the highest indorsement of his community. So long as there had been anything left for him to win, he had turned instinctively toward it. Now he suddenly realised that he faced his greatest fight. He had often said that he liked fighting; he had struggled for many years with all the power of nerve and mind. To-night his brain seemed weary, bruised and scarred as a body might be. Watching the house where Judith was, contemplating her image, a softness came over Ellis, new to him; resolution became a wish, and then turned to yearning. It was with difficulty that he roused himself, surprise mingling with his contempt of the unrecognised sensation. He was in for it now, he told himself almost roughly; the game was worth the candle, and he would see it through.

CHAPTER VI

Introducing an Eccentric

Mr. Peveril Pease had finished his week's work, and feeling no obligation to attend the golf club tea, went home and settled himself in his snuggery among his books. When his feet were once in slippers, his velvet jacket was on, and he held a well-marked volume in his hand, he felt he had more true comfort than all the golf clubs in the world could give. So thorough was his satisfaction that rather than read he gave himself up to the enjoyment of his well-being. Gazing about the room, Mr. Pease permitted himself a brief retrospection of his career.

Few men in the town could with so much right compliment themselves. He had begun life with nothing but ancestral debts and encumbered property, and now he was nearly as rich as Ellis, who had started with the traditional dollar in his pocket. Pease's credit was firm as a rock; the stock of his bank was quoted – no, it was hoarded. The widow, the orphan, the struggling clerks who had their money in Pease's hands could sleep at ease, and the respect in which he was held by the business men of the city – but he wasn't thinking of that.

No, this little house was his thought, and this room, and that array of books. He had been thirteen years of age when

his grandfather died, and within the month he had refused the trustees his permission to sell a foot of the real estate. Judge Harmon never tired of telling of the visit of the boy, swelling with rage and resolution. "Cynthia may be willing, but grandfather never would sell, and I won't have it!" he had declared, and so strong was the lad's feeling that the trustees, divided in opinion, had yielded to him, backing the debts of the estate with their own credit. At eighteen he was practically their adviser and his own trustee; at twenty he had redeemed the homestead with his earnings; at twenty-five he had sold a single lot of the down-town property for what the entire estate would not have brought twelve years before. So much for determination and a long head.

Fifteen years more had passed, and still his life had not made him hard nor calculating. When he left his office he left his business; he went "home," to the house in which he was born. The little shingled building, so quaint, had been in the family for six generations; a Percival Pease founded it, a Pembroke Pease finished it, a Peveril Pease owned it now. It had never been rebuilt; the wainscot was still the same, the floors sagged, the stairs were queer, the ceilings low. It corresponded the least in the world with his riches and his great interests. But Pease had the heart of a boy and the affections of a woman. The house was his paradise, the room his bower, the books his especial delight. All his spare time he spent among them, giving himself to "mental improvement."

Many people thought him odd; some called him "poor Mr.

Pease," with such pity as is given to the struggling artist or the ambitious novelist, for Pease had never been even to the high-school, and it seemed foolish for him to try to cultivate his mind. They did not consider that the grace of humility was not denied him, with just a touch of that saving quality, humour. He knew himself fairly well, he guarded himself successfully, only one person really knew his heart, and for the opinion of the rest he had a smile. Let them laugh or pity, they had nothing so fine as he, they were not so happy as he, and his kind of a fool was not the worst.

And so we must acknowledge that he was thoroughly complacent. None of Judith Blanchard's discontent stirred him, none of Mather's anger at the world, and none of Ellis's desire to advance. This little room gave him all that he wanted: intellectual improvement, the feeling of progress, mental satisfaction. Pease went beyond cherishing an ideal of happiness; he believed that he was happy, and that no one could take his happiness from him.

And thinking so at this minute, his eye rested fondly on a motto on the wall.

It was from Goethe; it was lettered in old German characters, framed in passe-partout, and hung above the mantel. Pease had dug it out of "Faust"; it embodied so completely his notion of existence that he resolved to keep it before him always. No mere translation could do it justice; "Gray, dear friend, is all theory, and green the golden tree of life" – that was too tame. No; the sonorous German could best express it:

"Grau, theurer Freund, ist aller Theorie,
Und Gruen des Lebens goldner Baum."

Pease whispered the words to himself. Gray indeed were the lives of all others; he alone dwelt beneath life's green tree and ate its golden fruit. This house, this room, these books – ah, Paradise!

There came a knock at the door. "Peveril?"

"Yes, Cynthia."

"Don't forget, little Miss Blanchard is coming to dinner."

"No, Cynthia."

She was not requesting him to "dress." He always did. She was not asking him to be on time; he always was. Being on the safe side of the door, however, his cousin meant to remind him of her hardihood in inviting to his table some one young and pretty.

Not, Miss Cynthia sighed, that it would make any difference to him. When her visitor arrived a little early, and sat chatting in the parlour, Miss Pease reflected that Peveril, upstairs, was dressing no more carefully for this charming girl than he would have done for old Mrs. Brown. Charming – but he knew nothing of the real, the true, the living best!

Thus we may briefly record that Miss Cynthia Pease, who was the one person that understood her cousin, was not wholly in sympathy with his pursuits. Not that she would have acknowledged it to him, nor to anyone else, not even to "little

Miss Blanchard," Judith's sister Beth, who was questioning her in a spirit of fun.

"I'm so afraid of dining with your cousin!" Beth exclaimed.

"No, you're not!" contradicted Miss Cynthia grimly.

"If I should make some slip in statement, or spot the table-cloth! He is so accurate, they all say."

"You may depend on him to be polite under all circumstances," responded Miss Cynthia, glaring.

"But I should know what he would think," persisted the young lady.

Miss Cynthia advanced to fury, scarcely repressed. "No, you wouldn't!" she denied emphatically. "I won't have you laugh at him."

"Why, you laugh at him yourself," said Beth. "You know you do."

"And if I do?" retorted Miss Pease. "Let me tell you he's the dearest, kindest man that ever – "

"Why, Miss Cynthia," cried the other, "don't I know?"

"Nobody knows," was the response.

Now all grades of opposition, from caustic irony to smothered denunciation, were habitual in Miss Pease's manner, but as she said "Nobody knows," lo! there were tears in her voice, if not in her eyes.

"Miss Cynthia!" cried Beth.

Miss Pease was gaunt and grewsome, so that her manner fitted her perfectly, but now as she sat winking her eyes and twisting

her face she became pathetic. The girl rose quickly and came to her side.

"Have I hurt you?" she inquired anxiously.

"No, child, no," answered Miss Pease, recovering herself. "You didn't know what a sentimental old fool I am, did you? There, sit down again. You see," (she hesitated before committing herself further) "I was thinking, just before you came, of what Peveril has been to me. Your talk roused me again."

"He has done a great deal for you?" asked Beth with sympathy.

"Everything in the world!" answered Miss Cynthia warmly, not having resumed her manner. "Since our grandfather died Peveril has been my protector, though he is two years younger. You know we were very poor at first."

"Very poor?"

"We had nothing but debts," stated Miss Cynthia. "We lived in boarding-houses for seven years before Peveril could buy the homestead and get the strangers out of it. It was a proud day when he brought me here, and told me this was mine to live in until the end of my life. And yet for two years more I went daily to my work – I was in Benjamin's great dry-goods store, my dear – until when they asked me to be the head of the linen department Peveril said I should work no more, and insisted on my staying at home."

"I never heard of that," cried Beth. "That you were ever in Benjamin's!"

"And a very good saleswoman I was," said Miss Cynthia. "But after that the money began to come in to us, and Peveril sold the land where the Security Building now is. I have not done a piece of work since then, except for Peveril or for charity. I am a rich woman, my dear."

"But you do so much for charity!" exclaimed Beth with enthusiasm.

When it came to praise, Miss Pease became grim at once. "I've got to keep busy with something," she snapped.

"But tell me more," begged Beth.

"There is nothing more," declared Miss Cynthia. "And now I hear him coming, five minutes before the hour, just as he always does. Don't be afraid of him; he has the softest heart in the world, as you ought to discover, since you had the skill to find mine."

Beth had only the time to squeeze her friend's hand as the two stood up together. She had discovered Miss Pease's heart; it was an unconscious specialty of Beth's to find the weak points in the armour of forbidding persons, and she had on her list of friends more of the lonely and unknown than had many a worker in organised charity. She was, in fact, a worker in her own special field, the well-to-do, bringing them the sympathy and affection which they needed as much as do the poor. She had neither shrewdness nor experience; what she did was quite unconscious, but her value was unique. Mr. William Fenno, who had no love for his wife's pleasures and whose daughters took after their mother, loved to have the girl with him. Judge Harmon, not quite

at home by his own gas-log, felt more comfortable if Beth were spending the evening with him – for she made no pretense of coming to see his wife. Quite unconsciously, a similar bond had been growing up between Beth and Miss Pease, and took open recognition on that day when Miss Cynthia, allowing her eyes to be pleased by the girl's freshness, blurted her feeling and said: "I like you. You are so unlike your sister."

But now Mr. Pease entered the room, and stood bowing while his cousin repeated the formula: "Peveril, here is Miss Elizabeth Blanchard. Beth, you remember my cousin, Mr. Peveril Pease?"

Beth thought he was "funny," meaning he was peculiar. He was short and rotund, he was immaculate and formal. His eyes met hers soberly, as if he had little of his cousin's wit, however much less savage. Talk opened with the golf club tea, and before the subject was exhausted he led the conversation dexterously to the weather. Dinner was announced while the beauty of the spring was yet under discussion, and at table, for a while, Beth was still repeating to herself that he was a "funny" little man.

Curiously, Pease was in an entirely new situation. Never had he been so placed that he must give an hour's undivided attention to a girl. He had never learned that girls have individuality; he avoided them as a rule, and at dinners there was always one at his left hand to relieve the other at his right, so that he never spoke to either of them long. Besides, not being regarded as a marrying man, Pease was invariably given the "sticks" to entertain. Girls had been to him, therefore, undeveloped creatures, displaying

similar characteristics, being usually unacquainted with serious topics, and (quite as usually) devoid of personal attractions. Beth Blanchard, however, was something different. Without dwelling on her charms, it is enough to say that she was pretty; and without entering upon her mental acquirements, let us believe that she knew what was going on. She was quite used, moreover, to the society of older persons, and could meet Pease on many grounds, although it happened that the subject chosen was Europe.

"You have been there?" asked Pease quickly when Germany was mentioned.

"We spent some time there," Beth replied.

"Of course you have seen Weimar, then," Pease assumed. He happened to be right.

"Oh, yes," she answered, quite as if Weimar were still a focus of travel. "We spent a month there; mamma was quite ill. You know" – and here she addressed Miss Cynthia – "that she died over there, and then we came home."

Mr. Pease, in conjunction with his cousin, murmured his condolences, and Miss Blanchard, not to make the evening doleful, turned again to speak of Weimar.

"We lived quite near to Goethe's house," she said.

Then she beheld Mr. Pease glow with admiration. "You are very fortunate," he cried. "The inspiration must have been great."

"I am no writer, Mr. Pease," returned Beth.

"But," he explained, "it must have permanently bettered and improved you."

"Do you think I needed it?" she flashed.

Miss Cynthia, at her end of the table, was biting her lip. Pease, not perceiving that he was being rallied, fell to apologising. "Oh, no," he gasped. "I meant – "

She spared him. "I was not serious," she laughed. "You must pardon me." It was no new matter with her to relieve the embarrassed. Then she led him once more to the topic.

"You like Weimar, Mr. Pease?"

"Oh, I only like Goethe, you know, and Schiller. I've never been from America."

"And yet you read German?"

"Not very well. You see, I – "

And then he spoke of himself. Miss Cynthia sat amazed. Here was Peveril, who was always silent regarding his hobby, speaking from his heart. Beth coaxed a little; he hung back a bit, but he yielded. It was as if a miser were giving up his gold, yet the gold came. For all that she had invited Beth there, wishing to stir her cousin from his rut, Miss Cynthia presently became enraged. Peveril was telling more than he had ever told her. This chit of a girl, what charm had she?

But Pease himself, as he told the unaccustomed tale in halting sentences, felt comfort. It had been a long time repressed within him; he had seldom touched on it with Cynthia, and though he had not known it, the loneliness of it had been wearing on him all these years. It was sympathy that now brought it out, that quality in Beth which could pierce the armour of such a cynic as

Miss Cynthia, or warm so cold a heart as William Fenno's. Pease yielded to it as frost to the sun. So he told of himself and his studies, and the impulse of all these years he confessed at the last.

"You see," he said, flushing painfully, "it's poetry that I love."

And he sat, the man of business, with his fair skin pink as a girl's. Then, lest she should mistake, he explained.

"You mustn't think," he said eagerly, "that I really suppose I understand. I know I lose much – I – I'm not very deep, you know. There are so many subtle things and such beautiful ones that pass me by. Only, you see [more hesitation], I got such pleasure from the English poets that I – tried the German. With a dictionary, you know, and a grammar. And all this is so much to me that I – I don't care for anything else. Can you understand?"

Then he was swept by doubt and fear. Would she laugh? Not she! Beth made him understand she appreciated his feelings, and presently Miss Cynthia found herself listening to a discussion of Shakespeare. Her lip curled – how foolish of Peveril! What real interest could Beth take in his ideas?

He asked himself the same question, with a sudden start, for Beth laughed merrily. What had he said that was laughable? She held up a finger. "Mr. Pease, I am going to accuse you of something. Will you promise to tell me the truth?"

This, he dimly felt, was a species of banter. "I promise," he said uncomfortably.

"Then, sir, do you memorise?"

"Why, yes," he confessed.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed. "Miss Cynthia, are you not ashamed of him? I know nobody that memorises now, Mr. Pease, except you and – me!"

He was relieved, and they fell to speaking eagerly. For the next few minutes Miss Cynthia felt the outrage of hearing poetry quoted at her table. Wordsworth, Scott, Burns, and then – for Pease was truly patriotic – Lanier and Longfellow. And so they came to discuss the meaning of a passage, and took up the subject of "Life." Next, "Happiness." At all this sentiment Miss Cynthia ground her teeth.

Beth was of the opinion that environment makes happiness. Pease maintained that we make our own environment. "Impossible!" said Beth, thinking of Mr. Fenno and the Judge.

"Easily done!" declared Pease, thinking of himself.

Then they spoke of "Ideals of Conduct" – Which of them make most for Happiness? By little and little they came to the point where Pease felt impelled to open his breast again. He spoke of his motto, quoting it clumsily with his self-taught accent, so that a smile almost came to her lips. She drew from him that he believed he knew the gray of life, and the green.

"But, Mr. Pease," Beth objected, "how can you say you know so much of life when you live so much alone?"

"We are late – we are late!" cried Miss Cynthia suddenly. "We shall miss our engagement if we sit so long here."

And so the two ladies presently went away, refusing all escort. Standing at the open door, Pease watched them with a strange

regret. The thought of returning to his books was astonishingly unwelcome; they seemed to be but leather, ink, and paper. He looked up at the heavens. Something was stinging in his veins: what a lovely world! For the first time he recognised the beauty of the moon.

His thoughts were interrupted by a footstep, and there stood Mather. "Mr. Pease," said he, "this is an unusual hour for business. But the kind offer which you made me to-day – " He hesitated.

"The position had only possibilities," answered Pease. "You would be your own master, because I should leave everything to you, but it would be like beginning at the bottom again. I knew you would refuse me."

"You mistake," returned Mather with energy. "I like the chance, and will build up your venture for you. I am ready to take your instructions to-night, and go to work Monday morning."

"Come inside," said Mr. Pease.

CHAPTER VII

Chebasset

At the conference between Mather and Pease various matters were discussed which are not to the direct purpose of this story. Such were, for instance, the electrical and mechanical devices by which a metal was to be produced from its ore, either in sheets, pure, or plated on iron. Pease had bought the patent; the plan commended itself to Mather immediately; there was "good money" in it. But before anything else could be done a plant must be secured, a work which Pease expected would take much time. He watched to see how Mather would propose to go about it.

"We must have a good water-supply for the vats," mused Mather. "A harbour-front will be needed for the coal and ore; that means a suburban location, which calls again for railroad facilities."

"Of course there is no mill ready-made?"

"There is! The old Dye Company's plant at Chebasset."

"Impossible!" answered Pease at once.

"Because rich people have summer places thereabouts, and wouldn't like a mill as neighbour?"

"Those rich people are our friends," reminded Pease.

"Mr. Pease," said Mather positively, "I know all the mills of

this neighbourhood. There is no other suitable. To use this plant will save us a year's time, as well as great expense. The buildings are in good condition; the vats are large. The harbour is deep; all we need is to enlarge the wharf and put in new engines. What more could one ask?"

"Nothing," admitted Pease.

"Then why not buy? Colonel Blanchard has been trying to sell these ten years; he lost much money there. The price is so low that Fenno or Branderson could easily have protected themselves."

Pease still hesitated.

"One thing more," said Mather. "I have visited in Chebasset, for short periods; I know the place fairly well. The mill is in the remotest corner of the town, and the dirtiest; there are poor houses there, wretched sanitation, and a saloon on mill property. It's a good place gone to seed. I'd like to clean it out."

Mr. Pease thought he saw a way. "Let this settle it. If the Colonel is willing to sell, there will be no reason why we should not buy."

"I may go ahead on that understanding?"

"You may."

Mather rose. "The Colonel will be willing to sell. If you put this in my hands, and will not appear, I can get the place cheap. People are ready to see me start on another fool's errand at any time."

"Go ahead, then; you know how much I am willing to spend. Attend to everything and spare me the details. But," added Pease

kindly, "I am sorry to see you quite so bitter. Your friends will yet put you back in Ellis's place."

"When he has a clear majority of fifty votes in our small issue of stock? Ah, let me go my own way, Mr. Pease. I see here a chance to do a good thing; I need a wrestle with business. After I have been a month at this you will find me a different man."

They parted, each with a little envy of the other. Mather envied Pease his accomplishments, the work that stood in his name; Pease coveted the other's youth. But each was glad that they were working together. Pease found that the purchase was accomplished within a fortnight, and that men were soon at work on alterations in the mills. Those were matters in which he did not concern himself; the scheme was bound to succeed; he had little money in it (as money went with him), and he was interested to see what Mather would make of the business. Trouble in the form of criticism was bound to come.

When it came the ladies took an active hand in it. Mrs. Fenno complained that the sky-line of her view would be broken by the new chimney; Mrs. Branderson had no relish for the aspect of the projected coal-wharf. Young people believed that the river would be spoiled for canoeing, and all agreed that the village would be no longer bearable, with the families of fifty imported workmen to make it noisy and dirty. Moreover, if the villagers themselves should give up their old occupations of fishing, clam-digging, and market-gardening, for the steadier work in the mill, then where would the cottagers look for their lobsters, their stews, and their

fresh vegetables? But the plan was put through. The chimney went up, the wharf was enlarged, coal and ore barges appeared in the little harbour, and in a surprisingly short time the old Dye Company's mill was ready for work. Pease saw his returns promised a year before he had expected, but George Mather was no longer popular. Mrs. Fenno frowned at him, Mrs. Branderson scolded, and though their husbands laughed at the young man and said he had been clever, many people clamoured, and among them Judith Blanchard.

This move of Mather's had taken her by surprise; at a step he had gained a new position. No offers from the rich men moved him to sell; he replied that he meant to carry out his plans. So a whole section of the town was put in order for the families of the new workmen. Judith, hearing of all this, complained to Mather when she met him.

"And yet," he responded, "the mill is a mile from the nearest estate; the whole town lies between. As for what clearing up I've done, I value picturesqueness, Judith, but the place is now ten times healthier. And we are putting in smoke-consumers."

"Yet from most of our houses we can see your chimney."

"Judith, for that one eyesore which I put up I will remove ten from the town."

"But who asked you to do it? You never lived here; you have no love for the place."

"I have lived," he replied, "in other New England towns, equally degenerate."

"I am not speaking of the townspeople," she said. "I mean the summer residents."

"Wasn't it your father's matter to think of them?"

Judith had felt the discussion to be going against her. Therefore she answered with some warmth: "That is another question entirely!"

"I beg your pardon, Judith," he said. "But mayn't I describe my plans?"

"No," she answered; "I don't think it is necessary."

"Very well," he returned, and made no attempt to say more. Hurt, he fell into a mood of dogged endurance. "Very well," he repeated, and let the matter drop. Then Judith's interest was roused too late; he might really have had something to say. She knew that dirt was unhealthy; she remembered that in Chebasset drunkards on the street were more plentiful than in Stirling. Yet her generosity did not quite extend to recalling her words – partly because of natural pride, partly because she knew his interest in her and would not encourage it, partly again because she still resented his words to Ellis in her presence. And so the breach between them remained.

Yet he had already impressed her, by his manly readiness to begin life again, and by his steadiness under her fire. Confidence was, to Judith, almost a virtue. And the idea of reform always appealed to her: had the place been really so bad?

One by one the households had been moving down to Chebasset, and Beth had already opened the Blanchard cottage.

On the evening after Judith had spoken with Mather she asked if Beth had noticed the changes in Chebasset.

"George's? At his mill?" asked Beth. "I think it's much improved. Those horrid tumble-down shanties are gone, and there are new houses there now – shingled and stained they are to be – with new fences."

"Father," asked Judith, "why didn't you do that?"

"My dear child," was his response, "how could I afford it?" The Colonel was always nervous when the subject of the new mill was broached, and quitted it as soon as possible. But Judith pursued him.

"I asked George if he had not treated us unfairly – the property owners, I mean. He seemed to think that was your affair."

Beth was up in arms at once. "For that chimney? He laid the blame on papa?"

The Colonel wiped his flowing mustache, and looked at Judith; Beth's outraged cry did not interest him so much as his elder daughter's stand. "What did you say to him?" he asked.

"I said that was another question."

"So it is," agreed the Colonel. "Entirely different." He looked at Beth to see if she were satisfied; she rose and came behind his chair, where she began smoothing his hair.

"Poor papa," she purred.

Blanchard swelled his chest. "Thank you, Beth," he said, but his thoughts went back to Judith. People took different stands on this matter; he was anxious to have Judith on his side. Fenno

had told the Colonel that he, Fenno, ought to have been informed of the proposed sale; Branderson, less bluntly, had intimated the same. It was possible that Judith might take a similar view.

"I had others beside myself to consider," he said. "Dear papa!" murmured Beth. But Judith took it differently.

"I don't want to profit by the sale," she stated.

The Colonel offered no explanation. At the time of the sale he had not been thinking of his daughters, but of certain pressing creditors. So the money had been welcome and was already partly gone. He answered with grim knowledge of a hidden meaning.

"I'll take care you shall not profit by the transaction, Judith. But I am sorry that the mill is sold. I hate a disturbance."

"Don't you be sorry, papa!" exhorted Beth. But Judith delivered a shot which hit her parent between wind and water. It was one of those impromptus which come too quickly to be checked.

"Perhaps Mr. Fenno would have given more."

"Judith!" shouted her father, bouncing in his chair.

"I beg your pardon, papa," she said humbly.

When Judith was humble she was charming; the Colonel accepted her kiss and pardoned her. As for herself, she felt her spirit lightened, as by an electric discharge, and began to look at the whole question of Mather's mill more temperately. Why should she grudge him his success? It was so much less than Ellis's. When next she met Mather she was gracious to him, and

was ready to hear a full account of all his plans, if only he would open the subject. He avoided it.

Then the Blanchards moved to Chebasset, and Judith saw the mill and chimney with her own eyes. People had stopped scolding about them; she found them not so bad as had been reported, and the chimney, though certainly tall, gave off but the slightest film of smoke. So thorough were Mather's improvements that they forced Judith's admiration. When she first went to the grocer's and, after making her purchases, inquired of the changes in the town, she heard a torrent of praise of Mather.

"It's a bad place he's cleaned out," the grocer said, coming very close and speaking confidentially. "Many young fellows were led wrong there, but the biggest saloon's gone now, and some of the worst men have left the town, and a man can feel that his own children have a chance of growing up decent. It's two boys I have, Miss Blanchard, that I was worrying about till Mr. Mather came."

"I am glad things are so much better," Judith said.

"They'll be better yet," the grocer responded. "Gross, the other saloon-keeper, has got to look after himself now. Mr. Mather had him in court only the other day – look, there they are now."

On the sidewalk outside stood a large man, gross as was his name; across the street Mather was unconcernedly walking. The saloon-keeper raised a fist and shouted at Mather, who paused and looked over at him inquiringly.

"I'll be even with you!" shouted Gross again.

"Wait a bit," answered Mather cheerfully, "I'll come over." He crossed the street and stepped directly to the saloon-keeper. "You'll be even with me for what, Mr. Gross?"

"For that fine," answered the other. "I'll have you in court yet, see if I don't."

"You'll have me in court," rejoined Mather, "when you catch me selling whisky to minors, not before, Mr. Gross. And while we're on this subject I may as well say that I've just sworn out a second warrant against you."

The saloon-keeper backed away from the very cool young man. "What yer goin' ter do?" he asked.

"I'm going to see," Mather answered, "that you observe the liquor laws. And when your license comes before the selectmen for renewal, I shall be at the hearing."

On Gross's face appeared blotches of white. "We'll see!" he blustered.

"We'll see," agreed Mather, and turned away.

The grocer spoke in Judith's ear. "That's the stuff! That's what, Miss Blanchard!" Waiting till Mather was gone, Judith left the shop and went home very thoughtful. So George was working, on however small a scale, for reform and progress. She could not fail to see that for his coming the whole town had a brisker, brighter look. Chebasset streets had been dull, sleepy, unpainted. Now fences were repaired, houses were freshened, and the townspeople looked better dressed, because the men were earning more money at the mill, or the women were gaining

livings by boarding and lodging the new-comers. The town was changed, and Mather was the cause.

Then she learned more of him. He was domesticating himself there, kept a cat-boat, and had even bought a cottage. Beth pointed out the little house, a good example of provincial architecture.

"You didn't tell us you were going to buy," Judith reproached him when he came to call.

"Oh," he answered indirectly, "I fell in love with the place, and the family mahogany fits in there exactly. Did you notice my roses?"

Then he spoke of gardening, and gave Judith no chance to tell him what she thought about his work. Had he done so, she might even have let him know that she had overheard his talk with Gross, and that his action pleased her. But he avoided the subject; his call was brief, and after he had gone he did not return for a number of days. Chebasset was not lively that summer; Judith grew lonesome, and more than once thought of Mather. His conduct piqued and puzzled her. Now was his chance, as he ought to know. What had become of the lover who used to bring to her his hopes and fears?

As for that lover, he had less time at his disposal than Judith supposed. All day he was at the mill, or else went to Stirling on necessary business; at night he was very tired. Yet though he knew he was leaving Judith to her own devices, he did it deliberately. Until she was tired of freedom, until she had

satisfied her interest in the great world, she would come to no man's call. Perhaps his conclusion was wise, perhaps it was not, for while at a distance he watched Judith and weighed his chances, Ellis was doing the same.

To the outsider, Mather's path seemed clear; he lived in the same town with Judith, might see her every day, and, worst of all, was prospering. "I'll touch him up," said Ellis grimly to himself. "He'll buy a house, will he?" And from that time he kept well informed of Mather's business acts, watching for a chance to trip him. Ellis knew all the ways of those three great forces: politics, capital, and labour; he could pull so many wires that he counted on acting unobserved.

Minor annoyances met Mather in his business, traceable to no particular source. There was evident discrimination in railroad rates, and yet so small was the increase that proof was difficult. Freight was mislaid and mishandled; it was frequently very vexing. But the real attempt to cripple the new business came toward the middle of the summer, when Ellis, weary of the weak attempts of his subordinates at annoyance, took a hand himself, and looked for some vital flaw in the safeguards of the Electrolytic Company. He believed he found it, and various legal notices came to Mather, all of which remained unanswered. Finally an important official came in person to the office. He introduced himself as Mr. Daggett of the harbour commission.

"I have written you several times," he complained.

"So you have," answered Mather. "Miss Jenks, may Mr.

Daggett and I have the office to ourselves for a while? I take it," he added, when the door closed behind the stenographer, "that we are going to be rude to each other. Have a cigar?"

"Thanks," said Daggett, "but I don't see why ye didn't answer."

"I was too busy. Besides, I wanted to get you down here, so as to settle the matter once for all. Will you state the matter plainly; your letters were vague? That is the wharf out there."

Mr. Daggett viewed it through the window. "Yes, it's surely a long wharf. Twenty feet beyond the harbour line. Ye'll have to take it down."

"Or else?" demanded Mather.

"Show a permit."

"Come, there's one other choice."

"Pay a fine," grinned Daggett. "We've set a pretty large sum. The board's irritated, ye see, because ye've paid so little attention to us."

"The board never fails to answer letters, does it?" inquired Mather.

"What do you mean?"

"You're too busy, I suppose. And you don't appear to remember seeing me before, Mr. Daggett."

"Have I?" asked the commissioner.

"You don't recollect that I wrote about this matter two months ago? I had to go to the office to get an answer. You were deep in affairs, Mr. Daggett. I found you and two others playing cards."

"Was I?" asked Daggett.

"When was this harbour line established, anyway? Wasn't it about two weeks ago?"

"Certainly," Mr. Daggett answered. "That has nothing to do with it. But what did we tell you at the office – I can't remember your coming."

"I wasn't there long enough to make much impression," said Mather. "One of your friends told me that all fools knew there was no harbour line here, and I didn't need your permission."

"Hm!" remarked Daggett doubtfully. Then he brightened. "Did we give you that in writing?"

"I didn't ask you for it. You seemed so anxious to go on with your game that I didn't trouble you further."

"Then you have no permission," stated Daggett. "And now that there is a harbour line, what will you do about it?"

"I learned all I wanted of you," said Mather. He had not yet risen from his desk, but now he did so, and going over to his safe, he threw it open. "I asked nothing further because, there being no harbour line, a permit wouldn't have been worth the paper it was written on. I wrote to the Secretary of the Navy." Mather drew a document from a drawer of the safe. "Do you care to see his answer?"

"Whew!" whistled Daggett. "Well, I suppose I might as well."

Mather gave him the paper. "You will see that I have permission to build ten feet farther if I want to, and fifteen broader. I may also build another wharf if I wish, lower down. Are you satisfied?" He touched the bell. "You may come in now,

Miss Jenks. Thank you for taking it so easily, Mr. Daggett. I won't keep you from your game any longer. Good-day."

– "And before I left the office he was hard at work again, Mr. Ellis," reported Daggett. "Save me, but he's taken pretty good care of himself, and that's a fact."

Ellis had no comments to make; he did his growling to himself. Seeing nothing further to do, he left Mather alone.

Thus time passed by till that midsummer day when Ellis took the trolley to Chebasset and, once there, strolled among its streets. He viewed the mill from a distance and gritted his teeth at the sight. Mather was well ensconced; it seemed altogether too likely that he might win a wife, among his other successes. Then the promoter left the town and climbed above it on the winding road, viewing the estates of the summer residents as one by one he passed their gates. Should he enter at the Judge's?

A light step sounded on the road as he hesitated at the gate. Someone spoke his name, and there stood Judith Blanchard.

"Here, and in business hours?" she asked.

"My day's work was done," he answered. "Besides, it was not all pleasure that brought me."

Judith's eyes brightened. "Tell me," she suggested.

"Why should I tell you?" he asked bluntly. But the brusqueness only pleased her; he was a man of secrets.

"No reason at all," she answered.

"And yet," he said, "your advice would be valuable, if you will not tell."

"I! I tell?" she asked. "You do not know me."

"Then," he said, "I came to look at land here."

"To look at land here?" she repeated, questioning. "Can you buy here?"

"There is land," he said. "The price would be doubled if it were known I am after it. I have the refusal of it, through agents."

"Where does it lie?" she asked.

"Farther up the road."

"You must not be seen going to it," she declared. "People would take alarm – " She stopped, embarrassed.

"I do not mind," he said, and yet she felt his bitterness. "I am not considered a good neighbour."

"It is wrong of people," she declared earnestly.

"I should not be welcome on any one of these piazzas," he said, indicating the villas beyond them. "The Judge doesn't like me – your own father has no use for me."

"Will you come and try?" she cried. "I should like to see if my father will be rude to my guest."

"You are very kind," he said, "but do you consider – ?"

"I have invited you," she interrupted. "Will you come?"

"With pleasure," he answered. They went up the hill together.

CHAPTER VIII

The Progress of Acquaintance

Judith, before she met Ellis for this second time, had been bored. Chebasset was so dull that it was dreary; in the country-houses were given little teas, slow whist-parties, or stupid luncheons. Of the young people of her age some had married, others had gone into business, and the self-content of the first of these was not to be disturbed, nor the fatigue of the others to be increased, for the sake of giving Judith a good time. She became a little impatient with her surroundings, therefore, and as the sizzling summer brought physical discomfort, she was inclined to lay the blame where it could scarcely with justice be said to belong. Yet while her acquaintances were not responsible for the heat, Judith, with her abundant energies unused, was right in feeling that society was sunk in sloth, and that instead of giving itself to petty diversions it had better do something worth while. She was discontented with herself, her idleness, her uselessness; she felt that she would rather face even the heat of the city, and be doing, than stay longer on her piazza and keep cool. Therefore she had sought the dusty road as a sort of penance, and meeting Ellis, had been reminded of what he stood for: the world of working men and women.

She had thought of him many times since their first meeting, making his achievements a standard to which only Pease and Fenno approximated, and of which Mather fell far short. She had continued to read of Ellis in the newspapers, to watch his slow course of uninterrupted success, and had come to accept the popular idea of his irresistible genius. Feeling this natural admiration of his immense energy and skill, in her heart she made little of the two obstacles which were said to lie in his path. For it was claimed, first, that some day the street-railway would prove too much for him, bringing him as it did in contact with the organised mass of labourers, and with the public which Mather had accustomed to an excellent standard of service. Could Ellis always maintain the present delicate balance between dividends, wages, and efficiency? Again it was said that some day he would come in conflict with Judith's own class, which, when it chose to exert its power, would rise and hurl him down. Judith put no belief in either of these prophesies, considering Ellis able to avoid all difficulties, her caste too flabby to oppose him. So she thought of him as destined always to conquer; he would win his way even among the elect, and might become a friend of hers. For she could help him; they were alike in their loneliness, and their outlook upon life was the same. Therefore when she met him she welcomed him.

A fillip to the wheel of her fate was given as she and Ellis went up the hill. They met Miss Fenno coming down. Now Miss Fenno was the extreme type of the society-bred person,

knowing nothing but the one thing. Her interests were so small that they included less than the proverbial four-hundred people; her prejudices were so large that they formed a sort of Chinese wall to exclude any real humanity of soul. And all she did at this juncture was to gaze very superciliously at Ellis, and then to give the coldest of nods to Judith as she passed.

"The Fenno manner," grumbled Ellis to himself.

But Judith flamed with resentment. She brought Ellis up to her own piazza, a few minutes later, with that in her bearing which her father recognised as her panoply of war: quietness, erectness, something of hauteur. The Colonel rose hastily.

"I have brought Mr. Ellis," she said.

"Glad to see him!" exclaimed the Colonel as if he had been spurred. "Mr. Ellis is a stranger in Chebasset."

Ellis had the wisdom to attempt no manner. "I come here seldom," he responded. "You are very kind to welcome me, Colonel."

He wondered if the use of the title were proper in the upper circle, and if he should have answered differently. Moments such as this made the game seem scarcely worth the candle; the nerve and fiber used up were more than a day of business would require. But his qualities asserted themselves. Here he was where he most wanted to be; he meant to win the right to come again.

"What do you think of our view?" the Colonel asked, leading his guest to the edge of the piazza. The hill fell away steeply, the town lay below, and scattered on the farther hillsides were

the villas of the well-to-do. The Colonel began pointing out the residences. "Alfred Fenno over there – Alfred, not William, you know; richer than his brother, but not so prominent. And down there is Branderson; he overlooks the river, but he also sees the new chimney, which we miss." The Colonel added, "A good deal of money he has spent there."

"I should think so," agreed Ellis.

"The Dents are over there," Blanchard proceeded. "Rather pretentious the house is, in my opinion, like – " his voice faded away; he had had in mind Ellis's own house in the city. " – Er, gingerbready, don't you think?"

"The elms don't let me see it very well," Ellis was glad to answer. For what was gingerbready? Sticky?

"But much money in it," said the Colonel. "Dent has made a good thing of his mills."

"Very good thing," murmured Ellis. He was interested to hear these comments of an insider.

"Kingston's place is over there," continued the Colonel. "Now, I like, do you know, Mr. Ellis, what Kingston has done with that house. Small, but a gem, sir – a gem! Money has not been spared – and there's lots of money there!" quoth the Colonel, wagging his head.

Ellis began to perceive the monotony of these descriptions. Money, riches; riches, money. And there was an unction to each utterance which might betray the inner man. Judith perceived this also.

"Let us have tea," she said, and going where the tea-table stood, she rang for the maid. But the Colonel continued:

"And William Fenno is over there – a fine house, Mr. Ellis; pure Georgian, a hundred years old if it's a day. A very old family, and a very old family fortune. The West India trade did it, before our shipping declined."

"Long ago," murmured Ellis. He knew very little of those old days. The present and the immediate future concerned him, and as for the causes of industrial changes, he was one himself.

"Come," insisted Judith, "come and sit down, and let us leave off talking of people's possessions."

"Judith! My dear!" remonstrated the Colonel. But the maid was bringing out the steaming kettle, and he took his seat by the table. "My daughter," he said to Ellis, half playfully, "does not concern herself with things which you and I must consider."

Judith raised her eyebrows. "Do you take sugar, Mr. Ellis?" she asked.

"Sugar, if you please," he answered. He was divided in his interest as he sat there, for he had taken from the chair, and now held in his hand, the newspaper which the Colonel had been reading as they arrived. Ellis saw pencillings beside the stock-exchange reports, but though he wished to read them he did not dare, and so laid the paper aside to watch Judith make the tea. This was new to him. Mrs. Harmon had never taken the trouble to offer him tea, though the gaudy outfit stood always in her parlour. He knew that the "proper thing" was his at last, in this detail, but

how to take the cup, how hold it, drink from it? Confound the schoolboy feeling!

"It was hot in the city to-day?" asked the Colonel.

"Uncomfortable," answered Ellis. "You are fortunate, Miss Blanchard, not to have to go to the city every day, as some girls do."

"I'm not so sure," she responded. "It's dull here, doing nothing. I sometimes wish I were a stenographer."

"Judith!" exclaimed her father.

"To earn your own living?" asked Ellis.

"I should not be afraid to try," she replied.

"You'd make a good stenographer, I do believe," he exclaimed.

"Thank you," she answered.

His enthusiasm mounted. "I have a situation open!" he cried.

"You wouldn't find her spelling perfect," commented the Colonel grimly. He laughed with immense enjoyment at his joke, and at the moment Beth Blanchard came out of the house and joined them.

Ellis did not see her at first; he was watching the Colonel, and divined that no great barrier separated him from the aristocrat; there had been in Blanchard's manner nothing that expressed repulsion – nothing like Fenno's coolness, for instance, or the constant scrutiny which was so uncomfortable. Blanchard had seemed willing to fill up his idle hours by speech with any one; he was a new specimen, therefore, and Ellis was studying him,

when of a sudden he heard Judith speak his name, and looked up to meet the gaze of a pair of quiet eyes. With a little start he scrambled to his feet.

"My sister," Judith was saying.

He bowed and endeavoured to speak, but he felt that the beginning was wrong. Beth was in turn dissecting him; she was something entirely different from Judith, more thoughtful, less headstrong. The idea that here was an adverse influence came into his mind, as he stammered that he was pleased to meet her.

"Thank you, Mr. Ellis," she answered. Judith noticed that Beth on her part expressed no pleasure. The little sister had individuality, with a persistence in her own opinion which sometimes contrasted strongly with her usual softness. But the incident was brief, for Beth's eye lighted as she saw a visitor at the corner of the piazza, hesitating with hat in hand.

"Mr. Pease!" she exclaimed.

The little conventionalities of this new welcome also passed. Mr. Pease had met Mr. Ellis; he was delighted to find the family at home; the others were equally pleased that he had come. But when the pause came it was awkward, for Judith and Ellis were clearly uncongenial with Beth and Pease; it required the Colonel's intervention to prevent a hopeless attempt at general conversation. He drew Ellis away; Judith followed, and Beth sat down to serve Pease with tea.

Then the Colonel himself withdrew, on pretext of the need to catch the mail. He went into the library to write, and Judith

turned to Ellis.

"Can we go from here to see the land you spoke of?"

"The old Welton place," he said. "Do you know the way?"

"Certainly," answered Judith. They excused themselves to the others.

As they prepared to go, the Colonel looked at them from his desk; then turned his eyes on Beth and Pease. A thrill of wonder, then a sense of exultation seized him. Attractive girls they both were, and the men were the two richest in the city.

Judith conducted Ellis through shrubbery and across fields, up the hillside to a spot where little trees were growing in an old cellar, while charred timbers lying half buried spoke of the catastrophe which had destroyed the house. "I remember the fire," Judith said. "I was a child then, but I stood at the window in the night, mother holding me, and watched the house burn down. Mr. Welton would neither build again nor sell. But the place is on the market now?"

"He's to marry again, I understand," answered Ellis. They both accepted the fact as explaining any and all departures from previous lines of conduct.

"Would you build on this spot?" she asked him.

"What would you advise?" he returned. She swept the situation with her gaze.

"There are sites higher up, or lower down," she said. "Lower is too low. Higher – you might see the chimney."

Ellis noted with satisfaction the prejudice against Mather's

landmark, but he passed the remark by. "Don't you like," he said, "a house placed at the highest possible point? It is so striking."

"Couldn't it be too much so?" she inquired.

He turned his sharp look on her, willing to take a lesson and at the same time make it evident that he welcomed the instruction. "That is a new idea," he said. "It explains why that chimney, for instance, is unpleasant."

"It is so tall and – stupid," explained Judith; "and you never can get rid of it."

"I understand," he said. "Then perhaps this is the best place to build. I could get it roofed in before winter, easily, and have the whole thing ready by next summer. Stables where the barn stands, I suppose. My architect could get out the plans in a fortnight."

"The same architect," queried Judith, "that built your city house?" There was that in her voice which seized Ellis's attention.

"You don't like his work?" he demanded.

"Why," she hesitated, caught, "I – you wouldn't put a city house here, would you?"

"I like the kind," he said. "Stone, you know; turrets, carvings, imps, and that sort of thing. All hand-work, but they get them out quickly. Kind of a tall house. Wouldn't that do here?"

"No, no, Mr. Ellis," she answered quickly, almost shuddering at his description. "Think how out of place – here. On a hill a low house, but a long one if you need it, is proper."

"Oh," he said slowly, thinking. "Seems reasonable. But tall is

the kind Smithson always builds."

"I know," answered Judith. Smithson was responsible for a good deal, in the city.

Again Ellis searched her face. "You don't care for my city house?"

She had to tell the truth. "For my taste," she acknowledged, "it's a little – ornate."

"That's ornamental?" he asked. "But that's what I like about it. Don't the rest of my neighbours care for it any more than you do?"

"Some do not," she admitted.

"I guess that most of you don't, then," he decided. "Well, well, how a fellow makes mistakes! One of those quiet buildings with columns, now, such as I tore down, I suppose would have been just the thing?"

"Yes," she said. "But Mr. Ellis, you mustn't think – "

He smiled. "Never mind, Miss Blanchard. You would say something nice, I'm sure, but the mischief's done; the building's there, ain't it?"

"I wish – " she began.

"And really I'm obliged to you," he went on. "Because I might have built a house here just like the other. Now we'll have it right – if I decide to build here at all."

"Then you've not made up your mind?"

"Almost," he said. "The bargain's all but closed. Only it seems so useless, for a bachelor." He looked at her a moment. "Give

me your advice," he begged. "Sometimes I think I'm doing the foolish thing."

"Why, Mr. Ellis, what can I – and it's not my affair."

"Make it your affair!" he urged. "This is very important to me. I don't want to sicken these people by crowding in; you saw what Miss Fenno thought of me this afternoon. But if there is any chance for me – what do you say?"

It was the mention of Miss Fenno that did it. She sprang up in Judith's consciousness, clothed in her armour of correctness – proper, prim, and stupid. And in Judith was roused wrath against this type of her life, against her class and its narrowness. She obeyed her impulse, and turned a quickening glance on him.

"Would you turn back now?" she asked.

"That is enough!" he cried, with sudden vehemence.

For a while they stood and said no more. Judith saw that he looked around him on the level space where his house was to stand; then he cast his glance down toward those estates which he would overlook. His eye almost flashed – was there more of the hawk or the eagle in his gaze? Judith thought it was the eagle; she knew she had stirred him anew to the struggle, and was exhilarated. Unmarked at the moment, she had taken a step important to them both. She had swayed him to an important decision, and had become in a sense an adviser.

Yet aside from that, she had stimulated him strangely. Her enthusiasm was communicable – not through its loftiness, for from that he shrank with mistrust, but through its energy

and daring. She drew him in spite of her ignorance and misconceptions: dangerous as these might be to him if she should come to learn the truth about his practices, he thought that in her love of action lay an offset to them, while her restlessness and curiosity were two strong motives in his favour. She was fearless, even bold, and that high spirit of hers had more charm for him than all her beauty. He did not see, and it was long before he understood, that something entirely new in him had been roused by contact with her; the most that he felt was that he was satisfied as never before, that she had strengthened his impulse to work and to achieve, and that with her to help him he would be irresistible. Yes, he had chosen well!

CHAPTER IX

New Ideas

A parting shot in conversation sometimes rankles like the Parthian's arrow. So it had been with Pease. Beth had said to him: "How can you think you know life, when you live so much alone?" – words to that effect. He had had no chance to defend himself to her, and in consequence had been defending himself to himself ever since. Truly a serious mind is a heavy burden.

Finally he had come down to Chebasset to get the matter off his mind; at least, such was his real purpose. He coloured it with the intention of "looking in at the mill," and gave Mather a few words at the office. Mather had been working at his desk, as Mr. Daggett, the Harbour Commissioner, had found and left him. Orders, Mather said, were piling in too fast.

Pease smiled. "Enlarge, then."

"Delay in profits," warned Mather. "No dividend this quarter."

"Go ahead just the same," said Pease. "I hoped for this."

Mather began writing. "Come, leave work," invited Pease. "I'm going up to the Blanchards'. Come with me."

"I'm ordering coal and material," said Mather. "We have plenty of ore, but the new work must begin soon."

Pease struck his hand upon the desk. "Do you mean,"

he demanded, "that you are writing about the enlargements already?"

"Plans were made long ago," answered Mather.

"What do you do for exercise?" cried Pease. "How do you keep well? I'll not be responsible, mind, for your breakdown when it comes."

But he made no impression and went away alone, climbed the hill, and found the Blanchards on their piazza. Ellis was more than he had bargained for, and the Colonel had never been exactly to Pease's taste, but they departed, leaving him alone with Beth. She presently noticed the signs that he was endeavouring to bring the conversation to a particular subject, as one becomes aware of a heavy vessel trying to get under way. So she gave him the chance to speak.

"Miss Blanchard," he said, when he found that he might forge ahead, "you said something the other day – other evening – against which I must defend myself. That I live much alone."

She remembered at once, flashed back in her mind to that whole conversation, and was ready to tease him. Tease him she did as he began his explanation; she refused to be persuaded that he did not live alone. He might enumerate dinners, might point to his pursuits, might speak of the hundred people of all classes with whom he came in close daily contact: she would not acknowledge that she had been wrong.

"You are your mind," she declared, "and your mind is aloof."

He would have grieved, but that he felt again, dimly as before,

that she was rallying him. And he was pleased that she did not fear him, nor call him Sir – that title which causes such a painful feeling of seniority. She gave him a feeling of confidence, of youthfulness, which had not been his even in boyhood. He had been "Old Pease" then; he was "Old Pease" to many people still. The respect in which young and old held him was a natural, if very formal atmosphere. This defiance of Beth's came upon him like a fresh breeze, bringing younger life. He threw off his earnestness at last and laughed with her at himself.

"Upon my word!" thought the Colonel, on whose ears such laughter had a new sound. He looked out of the window; Pease was actually merry. "Second childhood," grinned the Colonel, as he returned to his writing.

Beth discovered that Pease was no fossil, and began to enjoy herself less at his expense but more for other reasons. He could never lose the flavour of originality, for his odd manner's sake. Even as he sat and laughed he was upright and precise, though the twinkle was genuine and the noise was hearty. Then she rose from the tea-table, and they went to the piazza's edge together. There they discovered Judith returning with Ellis.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.