

**CHAMBERS
ROBERT
WILLIAM**

AILSA PAIGE

Robert Chambers
Ailsa Paige

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Ailsa Paige: A Novel:

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Robert W. Chambers

Ailsa Paige: A Novel

TO THE CONQUERORS WHO WON IMMORTAL VICTORY

"Arm yourselves and be Valiant Men, and see that ye rise up in readiness against the Dawn, that ye may do Battle with These that are Assembled against us. . . .

"For it is better to die in Battle than live to behold the Calamities of our own People. . . ."

"Lord, we took not the Land into Possession by our own Swords; neither was it our own Hands that helped us; but Thy Hand was a Buckler; and Thy right Arm a Shield, and the Light of Thy Countenance hath conquered forever."

AND TO THE VANQUISHED WHO WON IMMORTALITY

"We are the fallen, who, with helpless faces
Low in the dust, in stiffening ruin lay,

Felt the hoofs beat, and heard the rattling traces
As o'er us drove the chariots of the fray.

"We are the fallen, who by ramparts gory,
Awaiting death, heard the far shouts begin,
And with our last glance glimpsed the victor's glory
For which we died, but dying might not win.

"We were but men. Always our eyes were holden,
We could not read the dark that walled us round,
Nor deem our futile plans with Thine enfolden—
We fought, not knowing God was on the ground.

"Aye, grant our ears to bear the foolish praising
Of men—old voices of our lost home-land,
Or else, the gateways of this dim world, raising,
Give us our swords again, and hold Thy hand."

—*W. H. WOODS.*

PREFACE

Among the fifty-eight regiments of Zouaves and the seven regiments of Lancers enlisted in the service of the United States between 1861 and 1865 it will be useless for the reader to look for any record of the 3d Zouaves or of the 8th Lancers. The red breeches and red fezzes of the Zouaves clothed many a dead man on Southern battle-fields; the scarlet swallow-tailed pennon of the Lancers fluttered from many a lance-tip beyond the Potomac; the histories of these sixty-five regiments are known. But no history of the 3d Zouaves or of the 8th Lancers has ever been written save in this narrative; and historians and veterans would seek in vain for any records of these two regiments—regiments which might have been, but never were.

CHAPTER I

The butler made an instinctive movement to detain him, but he flung him aside and entered the drawing-room, the servant recovering his equilibrium and following on a run. Light from great crystal chandeliers dazzled him for a moment; the butler again confronted him but hesitated under the wicked glare from his eyes. Then through the brilliant vista, the young fellow caught a glimpse of a dining-room, a table where silver and crystal glimmered, and a great gray man just lowering a glass of wine from his lips to gaze at him with quiet curiosity.

The next moment he traversed the carpeted interval between them and halted at the table's damask edge, gazing intently across at the solitary diner, who sat leaning back in an arm-chair, heavy right hand still resting on the stem of a claret glass, a cigar suspended between the fingers of his left hand.

"Are you Colonel Arran?"

"I am," replied the man at the table coolly. "Who the devil are you?"

"By God," replied the other with an insolent laugh, "that's what I came here to find out!"

The man at the table laid both hands on the edge of the cloth and partly rose from his chair, then fell back solidly, in silence, but his intent gaze never left the other's bloodless face.

"Send away your servants, Colonel Arran!" said the young

man in a voice now labouring under restraint. "We'll settle this matter now."

The other made as though to speak twice; then, with an effort, he motioned to the butler.

What he meant by the gesture perhaps he himself scarcely realised at the moment.

The butler instantly signalled to Pim, the servant behind Colonel Arran's chair, and started forward with a furtive glance at his master; and the young man turned disdainfully to confront him.

"Will you retire peaceably, sir?"

"No, but you will retire permanently if you touch me. Be very careful."

Colonel Arran leaned forward, hands still gripping the table's edge:

"Larraway!"

"Sir?"

"You may go."

The small gray eyes in the pock-pitted face stole toward young Berkley, then were cautiously lowered.

"Very well, sir," he said.

"Close the drawing-room doors. No—this way. Go out through the pantry. And take Pim with you."

"Very well, sir."

"And, Larraway!"

"Sir?"

"When I want you I'll ring. Until then I don't want anybody or anything. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is all."

"Thank you, sir."

The great mahogany folding doors slid smoothly together, closing out the brilliant drawing-room; the door of the butler's pantry clicked.

Colonel Arran slowly wheeled in his place and surveyed his unbidden guest:

"Well, sir," he said, "continue."

"I haven't yet begun."

"You are mistaken, Berkley; you have made a very significant beginning. I was told that you are this kind of a young man."

"I *am* this kind of a young man. What else have you been told?"

Colonel Arran inspected him through partly closed and heavy eyes; "I am further informed," he said, "that at twenty-four you have already managed to attain bankruptcy."

"Perfectly correct. What other items have you collected concerning me?"

"You can retrace your own peregrinations if you care to. I believe they follow a vicious circle bisecting the semi-fashionable world, and the—other. Shall we say that the expression, unenviable notoriety, summarises the reputation you have acquired?"

"Exactly," he said; "both kinds of vice, Colonel Arran—respectable and disreputable."

"Oh! And am I correct in concluding that, at this hour, you stand there a financially ruined man—at twenty-four years of age—"

"I do stand here; but I'm going to sit down."

He did so, dropped both elbows on the cloth, and balancing his chin on the knuckles of his clasped hands, examined the older man with insolent, unchanging gaze.

"Go on," he said coolly, "what else do you conclude me to be?"

"What else is there to say to you, Berkley? You have evidently seen my attorneys."

"I have; the fat shyster and the bow-legged one." He reached over, poured himself a glass of brandy from a decanter, then, with an unpleasant laugh, set it aside untasted.

"I beg your pardon. I've had a hard day of it. I'm not myself," he said with an insolent shrug of excuse. "At eleven o'clock this morning Illinois Central had fallen three more points, and I had no further interest in the market. Then one of your brokers—" He leaned farther forward on the table and stared brightly at the older man, showing an edge of even teeth, under the receding upper lip:

"How long have your people been watching me?"

"Long enough to give me what information I required."

"Then you really *have* had me watched?"

"I have chosen to keep in touch with your—career, Berkley."

Berkley's upper lip again twitched unpleasantly; but, when at length he spoke, he spoke more calmly than before and his mobile features were in pallid repose.

"One of your brokers—Cone—stopped me. I was too confused to understand what he wanted of me. I went with him to your attorneys—" Like lightning the snarl twitched his mouth again; he made as though to rise, and controlled himself in the act.

"Where are the originals of those letters?" he managed to say at last.

"In this house."

"Am I to have them?"

"I think so."

"So do I," said the young man with a ghastly smile. "I'm quite sure of it."

Colonel Arran regarded him in surprise.

"There is no occasion for violence in this house, Berkley."

"Where are the letters?"

"Have you any doubts concerning what my attorneys have told you?"

The originals are at your immediate disposal if you wish."

Then Berkley struck the table fiercely, and stood up, as claret splashed and trembling crystal rang.

"That's all I want of *you!*" he said. "Do you understand what you've done? You've killed the last shred of self-respect in me! Do you think I'd take anything at *your* hands? I never cared for

anybody in the world except my mother. If what your lawyers tell me is true—" His voice choked; he stood swaying a moment, face covered by his hands,

"Berkley!"

The young man's hands fell; he faced the other, who had risen to his heavy six-foot height, confronting him across the table.

"Berkley, whatever claim you have on me—and I'm ignoring the chance that you have none—"

"By God, I tell you I have none! I want none! What you have done to her you have done to me! What you and your conscience and your cruelty and your attorneys did to her twenty-four years ago, you have done this day to me! As surely as you outlawed her, so have you outlawed me to-day. That is what I now am, an outlaw!"

"It was insulted civilisation that punished, not I, Berkley—"

"It was you! You took your shrinking pound of flesh. I know your sort. Hell is full of them singing psalms!"

Colonel Arran sat silently stern a moment. Then the congested muscles, habituated to control, relaxed again. He said, under perfect self-command:

"You'd better know the truth. It is too late now to discuss whose fault it was that the trouble arose between your mother and me. We lived together only a few weeks. She was in love with her cousin; she didn't realise it until she'd married me. I have nothing more to say on that score; she tried to be faithful, I believe she was; but he was a scoundrel. And she ended by thinking me one.

"Even before I married her I was made painfully aware that our dispositions and temperaments were not entirely compatible. I think," he added grimly, "that in the letters read to you this afternoon she used the expression, 'ice and fire,' in referring to herself and me."

Berkley only looked at him.

"There is now nothing to be gained in reviewing that unhappy affair," continued the other. "Your mother's family are headlong, impulsive, fiery, unstable, emotional. There was a last shameful and degrading scene. I offered her a separation; but she was unwisely persuaded to sue for divorce."

Colonel Arran bent his head and touched his long gray moustache with bony fingers.

"The proceeding was farcical; the decree a fraud. I warned her; but she snapped her fingers at me and married her cousin the next day. . . . And then I did my duty by civilisation."

Still Berkley never stirred. The older man looked down at the wine-soiled cloth, traced the outline of the crimson stain with unsteady finger. Then, lifting his head:

"I had that infamous decree set aside," he said grimly. "It was a matter of duty and of conscience, and I did it without remorse. . . . They were on what they supposed to be a wedding trip. But I had warned her." He shrugged his massive shoulders. "If they were not over-particular they were probably happy. Then he broke his neck hunting—before you were born."

"Was he my father?"

"I am taking the chance that he was not."

"You had reason to believe—"

"I thought so. But—your mother remained silent. And her answer to my letters was to have you christened under the name you bear to-day, Philip Ormond Berkley. And then, to force matters, I made her status clear to her. Maybe—I don't know—but my punishment of her may have driven her to a hatred of me—a desperation that accepted everything—even *you!*"

Berkley lifted a countenance from which every vestige of colour had fled.

"Why did you tell me this?"

"Because I believe that there is every chance—that you may be legally entitled to my name. Since I have known who you are, I—I *have* had you watched. I have hesitated—a long while. My brokers have watched you for a year, now; my attorneys for much longer. To-day you stand in need of me, if ever you have stood in need of anybody. I take the chance that you have that claim on me; I offer to receive you, provide for you. That is all, Berkley. Now you know everything."

"Who else—knows?"

"Knows what?"

"Knows what you did to my mother?"

"Some people among the families immediately concerned," replied Colonel Arran coolly.

"Who are they?"

"Your mother's relatives, the Paiges, the Berkleys—my

family, the Arrans, the Lents—"

"What Lents?" interrupted the young man looking up sharply.

"They live in Brooklyn. There's a brother and a sister, orphans; and an uncle. Captain Josiah Lent."

"Oh. . . . Who else?"

"A Mrs. Craig who lives in Brooklyn. She was Celia Paige, your mother's maid of honour."

"Who else?"

"A sister-in-law of Mrs. Craig, formerly my ward. She is now a widow, a Mrs. Paige, living on London Terrace. She, however, has no knowledge of the matter in question; nor have the Lents, nor any one in the Craig family except Mrs. Craig."

"Who else?"

"Nobody."

"I see. . . . And, as I understand it, you are now stepping forward to offer me—on the chance of—of—"

"I offer you a place in this house as my son. I offer to deal with you as a father—accepting that belief and every responsibility, and every duty, and every sacrifice that such a belief entails,"

For a long time the young fellow stood there without stirring, pallid, his dark, expressionless eyes, fixed on space. And after a while he spoke.

"Colonel Arran, I had rather than all the happiness on earth, that you had left me the memory of my mother. You have chosen not to do so. And now, do you think I am likely to exchange what she and I really are, for anything more respectable that you

believe you can offer?

"How, under God, you could have punished her as you did—how you could have reconciled your conscience to the invocation of a brutal law which rehabilitated you at the expense of the woman who had been your wife—how you could have done this in the name of duty and of conscience, I can not comprehend.

"I do not believe that one drop of your blood runs in my veins."

He bent forward, laying his hands flat on the cloth, then gripping it fiercely in clenched fists:

"All I want of you is what was my mother's. I bear the name she gave me; it pleased her to bestow it; it is good enough for me to wear. If it be hers only, or if it was also my father's, I do not know; but that name, legitimate or otherwise, is not for exchange! I will keep it, Colonel Arran. I am what I am."

He hesitated, rigid, clenching and unclenching his hands—then drew a deep, agonised breath:

"I suppose you have meant to be just to me, I wish you might have dealt more mercifully with my mother. As for what you have done to me—well—if she was illegally my mother, I had rather be her illegitimate son than the son of any woman who ever lived within the law. Now may I have her letters?"

"Is that your decision, Berkley?"

"It is. I want only her letters from you—and any little keepsakes—relics—if there be any—"

"I offer to recognise you as my son."

"I decline—believing that you mean to be just—and perhaps

kind—God knows what you do mean by disinterring the dead for a son to look back upon—"

"Could I have offered you what I offer, otherwise?"

"Man! Man! *You* have nothing to offer *me*! Your silence was the only kindness you could have done me! You have killed something in me. I don't know what, yet—but I think it was the best part of me."

"Berkley, do you suppose that I have entered upon this matter lightly?"

Berkley laughed, showing his teeth. "No. It was your damned conscience; and I suppose you couldn't strangle it. I am sorry you couldn't. Sometimes a strangled conscience makes men kinder."

Colonel Arran rang. A dark flush had overspread his forehead; he turned to the butler.

"Bring me the despatch box which stands on: my study table."

Berkley, hands behind his back, was pacing the dining-room carpet.

"Would you accept a glass of wine?" asked Colonel Arran in a low voice.

Berkley wheeled on him with a terrible smile.

"Shall a man drink wine with the slayer of souls?" Then, pallid face horribly distorted, he stretched out a shaking arm. "Not that you ever could succeed in getting near enough to murder *hers*! But you've killed mine. I know now what died in me. It was that! . . . And I know now, as I stand here excommunicated by you from all who have been born within the law, that there is

not left alive in me one ideal, one noble impulse, one spiritual conviction. I am what your righteousness has made me—a man without hope; a man with nothing alive in him except the physical brute. . . . Better not arouse that."

"You do not know what you are saying, Berkley"—Colonel Arran choked; turned gray; then a spasm twitched his features and he grasped the arms of his chair, staring at Berkley with burning eyes.

Neither spoke again until Larraway entered, carrying an inlaid box.

"Thank you, Larraway. You need not wait."

"Thank *you*, sir."

When they were again alone Colonel Arran unlocked and opened the box, and, behind the raised lid, remained invisibly busy for some little time, apparently sorting and re-sorting the hidden contents. He was so very long about it that Berkley stirred at last in his chair; and at the same moment the older man seemed to arrive at an abrupt decision, for he closed the lid and laid two packages on the cloth between them.

"Are these mine?" asked Berkley.

"They are mine," corrected the other quietly, "but I choose to yield them to you."

"Thank you," said Berkley. There was a hint of ferocity in his voice. He took the letters, turned around to look for his hat, found it, and straightened up with a long, deep intake of breath.

"I think there is nothing more to be said between us, Colonel

Arran?"

"That lies with you."

Berkley passed a steady hand across his eyes. "Then, sir, there remain the ceremonies of my leave taking—" he stepped closer, level-eyed—"and my very bitter hatred."

There was a pause. Colonel Arran waited a moment, then struck the bell:

"Larraway, Mr. Berkley has decided to go."

"Yes, sir."

"You will accompany Mr. Berkley to the door."

"Yes, sir."

"And hand to Mr. Berkley the outer key of this house."

"Yes, sir."

"And in case Mr. Berkley ever again desires to enter this house, he is to be admitted, and his orders are to be obeyed by every servant in it."

"Yes, sir."

Colonel Arran rose trembling. He and Berkley looked at each other; then both bowed; and the butler ushered out the younger man.

"Pardon—the latch-key, sir."

Berkley took it, examined it, handed it back.

"Return it to Colonel Arran with Mr. Berkley's undying—compliments," he said, and went blindly out into the April night, but his senses were swimming as though he were drunk.

Behind him the door of the house of Arran clanged.

Larraway stood stealthily peering through the side-lights; then tiptoed toward the hallway and entered the dining-room with velvet tread.

"Port or brandy, sir?" he whispered at Colonel Arran's elbow. The Colonel shook his head.

"Nothing more. Take that box to my study."

Later, seated at his study table before the open box, he heard Larraway knock; and he quietly laid away the miniature of Berkley's mother which had been lying in his steady palm for hours.

"Well?"

"Pardon. Mr. Berkley's key, with Mr. Berkley's compliments, sir."

And he laid it upon the table by the box.

"Thank you. That will be all."

"Thank *you*, sir. Good night, sir."

"Good night."

The Colonel picked up the evening paper and opened it mechanically:

"By telegraph!" he read, "War inevitable. Postscript! Fort Sumter! It is now certain that the Government has decided to reinforce Major Andersen's command at all hazards—"

The lines in the *Evening Post* blurred under his eyes; he passed one broad, bony hand across them, straightened his shoulders, and, setting the unlighted cigar firmly between his teeth, composed himself to read. But after a few minutes he had

read enough. He dropped deeper into his arm-chair, groping for the miniature of Berkley's mother.

As for Berkley, he was at last alone with his letters and his keepsakes, in the lodgings which he inhabited—and now would inhabit no more. The letters lay still unopened before him on his writing table; he stood looking at the miniatures and photographs, all portraits of his mother, from girlhood onward.

One by one he took them up, examined them—touched them to his lips, laid each away. The letters he also laid away unopened; he could not bear to read them now.

The French clock in his bedroom struck eight. He closed and locked his desk, stood looking at it blankly for a moment; then he squared his shoulders. An envelope lay open on the desk beside him.

"Oh—yes," he said aloud, but scarcely heard his own voice.

The envelope enclosed an invitation from one, Camilla Lent, to a theatre party for that evening, and a dance afterward.

He had a vague idea that he had accepted.

The play was "The Seven Sisters" at Laura, Keene's Theatre. The dance was somewhere—probably at Delmonico's. If he were going, it was time he was afoot.

His eyes wandered from one familiar object to another; he moved restlessly, and began to roam through the richly furnished rooms. But to Berkley nothing in the world seemed familiar any longer; and the strangeness of it, and the solitude were stupefying him.

When he became tired trying to think, he made the tour again in a stupid sort of way, then rang for his servant, Burgess, and started mechanically about his dressing.

Nothing any longer seemed real, not even pain.

He rang for Burgess again, but the fellow did not appear. So he dressed without aid. And at last he was ready; and went out, drunk with fatigue and the reaction from pain.

He did not afterward remember how he came to the theatre. Presently he found himself in a lower tier box, talking to a Mrs. Paige who, curiously, miraculously, resembled the girlish portraits of his mother—or he imagined so—until he noticed that her hair was yellow and her eyes blue. And he laughed crazily to himself, inwardly convulsed; and then his own voice sounded again, low, humorous, caressingly modulated; and he listened to it, amused that he was able to speak at all.

"And so you are the wonderful Ailsa Paige," he heard himself repeating. "Camilla wrote me that I must beware of my peace of mind the moment I first set eyes on you—"

"Camilla Lent is supremely silly, Mr. Berkley—"

"Camilla is a sibyl. This night my peace of mind departed for ever."

"May I offer you a little of mine?"

"I may ask more than that of you?"

"You mean a dance?"

"More than one."

"How many?"

"All of them. How many will you give me?"

"One. Please look at the stage. Isn't Laura Keene bewitching?"

"Your voice is."

"Such nonsense. Besides, I'd rather hear what Laura Keene is saying than listen to you."

"Do you mean it?"

"Incredible as it may sound, Mr. Berkley, I really do."

He dropped back in the box. Camilla laid her painted fan across his arm.

"Isn't Ailsa Paige the most enchanting creature you ever saw? I told you so! *Isn't* she?"

"Except one. I was looking at some pictures of her a half an hour ago."

"She must be very beautiful," sighed Camilla.

"She was."

"Oh. . . . Is she dead?"

"Murdered."

Camilla looked at the stage in horrified silence. Later she touched him again on the arm, timidly.

"Are you not well, Mr. Berkley?"

"Perfectly. Why?"

"You are so pale. Do look at Ailsa Paige. I am completely enamoured of her. Did you ever see such a lovely creature in all your life? And she is very young but very wise. She knows useful and charitable things—like nursing the sick, and dressing injuries, and her own hats. And she actually served a whole year

in the horrible city hospital! Wasn't it brave of her!"

Berkley swayed forward to look at Ailsa Paige. He began to be tormented again by the feverish idea that she resembled the girl pictures of his mother. Nor could he rid himself of the fantastic impression. In the growing unreality of it all, in the distorted outlines of a world gone topsy-turvy, amid the deadly blurr of things material and mental, Ailsa Paige's face alone remained strangely clear. And, scarcely knowing what he was saying, he leaned forward to her shoulder again.

"There was only one other like you," he said. Mrs. Paige turned slowly and looked at him, but the quiet rebuke in her eyes remained unuttered.

"Be more genuine with me," she said gently. "I am worth it, Mr. Berkley."

Then, suddenly there seemed to run a pale flash through his brain,

"Yes," he said in an altered voice, "you are worth it. . . . Don't drive me away from you just yet."

"Drive you away?" in soft concern. "I did not mean—"

"You will, some day. But don't do it to-night." Then the quick, feverish smile broke out.

"Do you need a servant? I'm out of a place. I can either cook, clean silver, open the door, wash sidewalks, or wait on the table; so you see I have every qualification."

Smilingly perplexed, she let her eyes rest on his pallid face for a moment, then turned toward the stage again.

The "Seven Sisters" pursued its spectacular course; Ione Burke, Polly Marshall, and Mrs. Vining were in the cast; tableau succeeded tableau; "I wish I were in Dixie," was sung, and the popular burlesque ended in the celebrated scene, "The Birth of the Butterfly in the Bower of Ferns," with the entire company kissing their finger-tips to a vociferous and satiated audience.

Then it was supper at Delmonico's, and a dance—and at last the waltz promised him by Ailsa Paige.

Through the fixed unreality of things he saw her clearly, standing, awaiting him, saw her sensitive face as she quietly laid her hand on his—saw it suddenly alter as the light contact startled both.

Flushed, she looked up at him like a hurt child, conscious yet only of the surprise.

Dazed, he stared back. Neither spoke; his arm encircled her; both seemed aware of that; then only of the swaying rhythm of the dance, and of joined hands, and her waist imprisoned. Only the fragrance of her hair seemed real to him; and the long lashes resting on curved cheeks, and the youth of her yielding to his embrace.

Neither spoke when it had ended. She turned aside and stood motionless a moment, resting against the stair rail as though to steady herself. Her small head was lowered.

He managed to say: "You will give me the next?"

"No."

"Then the next—"

"No," she said, not moving.

A young fellow came up eagerly, cocksure of her, but she shook her head—and shook her head to all—and Berkley remained standing beside her. And at last her reluctant head turned slowly, and, slowly, her gaze searched his.

"Shall we rest?" he said.

"Yes. I am—tired."

Her dainty avalanche of skirts filled the stairs as she settled there in silence; he at her feet, turned sideways so that he could look up into the brooding, absent eyes.

And over them again—over the small space just then allotted them in the world—was settling once more the intangible, indefinable spell awakened by their first light contact. Through its silence hurried their pulses; through its significance her dazed young eyes looked out into a haze where nothing stirred except a phantom heart, beating, beating the reveille. And the spell lay heavy on them both.

"I shall bear your image always. You know it."

She seemed scarcely to have heard him.

"There is no reason in what I say. I know it. Yet—I am destined never to forget you."

She made no sign.

"Ailsa Paige," he said mechanically.

And after a long while, slowly, she looked down at him where he sat at her feet, his dark eyes fixed on space.

CHAPTER II

All the morning she had been busy in the Craig's backyard garden, clipping, training, loosening the earth around lilac, honeysuckle, and Rose of Sharon. The little German florist on the corner had sent in two loads of richly fertilised soil and a barrel of forest mould. These she sweetened with lime, mixed in her small pan, and applied judiciously to the peach-tree by the grape-arbour, to the thickets of pearl-gray iris, to the beloved roses, prairie climber, Baltimore bell, and General Jacqueminot. A neighbour's cat, war-scarred and bold, traversing the fences in search of single combat, halted to watch her; an early bee, with no blossoms yet to rummage, passed and repassed, buzzing distractedly.

The Craig's next-door neighbour, Camilla Lent, came out on her back veranda and looked down with a sleepy nod of recognition and good-morning, stretching her pretty arms luxuriously in the sunshine.

"You look very sweet down there, Ailsa, in your pink gingham apron and garden gloves."

"And you look very sweet up there, Camilla, in your muslin frock and satin skin! And every time you yawn you resemble a plump, white magnolia bud opening just enough to show the pink inside!"

"It's mean to call me plump!" returned Camilla reproachfully.

"Anyway, anybody would yawn with the Captain keeping the entire household awake all night. I vow, I haven't slept one wink since that wretched news from Charleston. He thinks he's a battery of horse artillery now; that's the very latest development; and I shed tears and the chandeliers shed prisms every time he manoeuvres."

"The dear old thing," said Mrs. Paige, smiling as she moved among the shrubs. For a full minute her sensitive lips remained tenderly curved as she stood considering the agricultural problems before her. Then she settled down again, naively—like a child on its haunches—and continued to mix nourishment for the roses.

Camilla, lounging sideways on her own veranda window sill, rested her head against the frame, alternately blinking down at the pretty widow through sleepy eyes, and patting her lips to control the persistent yawns that tormented her.

"I had a horrid dream, too," she said, "about the 'Seven Sisters.' I was *Pluto* to your *Diavoline*, and Philip Berkley was a phantom that grinned at everybody and rattled the bones; and I waked in a dreadful fright to hear uncle's spurred boots overhead, and that horrid noisy old sabre of his banging the best furniture.

"Then this morning just before sunrise he came into my bedroom, hair and moustache on end, and in full uniform, and attempted to read the Declaration of Independence to me—or maybe it was the Constitution—I don't remember—but I began to cry, and that always sends him off."

Ailsa's quick laugh and the tenderness of her expression were her only comments upon the doings of Josiah Lent, lately captain, United States dragoons.

Camilla yawned again, rose, and, arranging her spreading white skirts, seated herself on her veranda steps in full sunshine.

"We did have a nice party, didn't we, Ailsa?" she said, leaning a little sideways so that she could see over the fence and down into the Craig's backyard garden.

"I had such a good time," responded Ailsa, looking up radiantly.

"So did I. Billy Cortlandt is the most divine dancer. Isn't Evelyn Estcourt pretty?"

"She is growing up to be very beautiful some day. Stephen paid her a great deal of attention. Did you notice it?"

"Really? I didn't notice it," replied Camilla without enthusiasm. "But," she added, "I *did* notice you and Phil Berkley on the stairs. It didn't take you long, did it?"

Ailsa's colour rose a trifle.

"We exchanged scarcely a dozen words," she observed sedately.

Camilla laughed.

"It didn't take you long," she repeated, "either of you. It was the swiftest case of fascination that I ever saw."

"You are absurd, Camilla."

"But *isn't* he perfectly fascinating? I think he is the most romantic-looking creature I ever saw. However," she added,

folding her slender hands in resignation, "there is nothing else to him. He's accustomed to being adored; there's no heart left in him. I think it's dead."

Mrs. Paige stood looking up at her, trowel hanging loosely in her gloved hand.

"Did anything—kill it?" she asked carelessly.

"I don't think it ever lived very long. Anyway there is something missing in the man; something blank in him. A girl's time is wasted in wondering what is going on behind those adorable eyes of his. Because there is nothing going on—it's all on the surface—the charm, the man's engaging ways and manners—all surface. . . . I thought I'd better tell you, Ailsa."

"There was no necessity," said Ailsa calmly. "We scarcely exchanged a dozen words."

As she spoke she became aware of a shape behind the veranda windows, a man's upright figure passing and repassing. And now, at the open window, it suddenly emerged into full sunlight, a spare, sinewy, active gentleman of fifty, hair and moustache thickly white, a deep seam furrowing his forehead from the left ear to the roots of the hair above the right temple.

The most engaging of smiles parted the young widow's lips.

"Good morning, Captain Lent," she cried gaily. "You have neglected me dreadfully of late."

The Captain came to a rigid salute.

"April eleventh, eighteen-sixty-one!" he said with clean-cut precision. "Good morning, Mrs. Paige! How does your garden

blow? Blow—blow ye wintry winds! Ahem! How have the roses wintered—the rose of yesterday?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir. I am afraid my sister's roses have not wintered very well. I'm really a little worried about them."

"I am worried about nothing in Heaven, on Earth, or in Hell," said the Captain briskly. "God's will is doing night and day, Mrs. Paige. Has your brother-in-law gone to business?"

"Oh, yes. He and Stephen went at eight this morning."

"Is your sister-in-law well. God bless her!" shouted the Captain.

"Uncle, you *mustn't* shout," remonstrated Camilla gently.

"I'm only exercising my voice,"—and to Ailsa:

"I neglect nothing, mental, physical, spiritual, that may be of the slightest advantage to my country in the hour when every respiration, every pulse beat, every waking thought shall belong to the Government which I again shall have the honour of serving."

He bowed stiffly from the waist, to Ailsa, to his niece, turned right about, and marched off into the house, his white moustache bristling, his hair on end.

"Oh, dear," sighed Camilla patiently, "isn't it disheartening?"

"He is a dear," said Ailsa. "I adore him."

"Yes—if he'd only sleep at night. I am very selfish I suppose to complain; he is so happy and so interested these days—only—I am wondering—if there ever *should* be a war—would it break his poor old heart if he couldn't go? They'll never let him, you

know."

Ailsa looked up, troubled:

"You mean—*because!*" she said in a low voice.

"Well *I* don't consider him anything more than delightfully eccentric."

"Neither do I. But all this is worrying me ill. His heart is so entirely wrapped up in it; he writes a letter to Washington every day, and nobody ever replies. Ailsa, it almost terrifies me to think what might happen—and he be left out!"

"Nothing will happen. The world is too civilised, dear."

"But the papers talk about nothing else! And uncle takes every paper in New York and Brooklyn, and he wants to have the editor of the *Herald* arrested, and he is very anxious to hang the entire staff of the *Daily News*. It's all well enough to stand there laughing, but I believe there'll be a war, and then my troubles will begin!"

Ailsa, down on her knees again, dabbled thoughtfully in the soil, exploring the masses of matted spider-wort for new shoots.

Camilla looked on, resignedly, her fingers playing with the loosened masses of her glossy black hair. Each was following in silence the idle drift of thought which led Camilla back to her birthday party.

"Twenty!" she said still more resignedly—"four years younger than you are, Ailsa Paige! Oh dear—and here I am, absolutely unmarried. That is not a very maidenly thought, I suppose, is it Ailsa?"

"You always were a romantic child," observed Ailsa, digging vigorously in the track of a vanishing May beetle. But when she disinterred him her heart failed her and she let him scramble away.

"There! He'll probably chew up everything," she said. "What a sentimental goose I am!"

"The first trace of real sentiment I ever saw you display," began Camilla reflectively, "was the night of my party."

Ailsa dug with energy. "*That* is absurd! And not even funny."

"You *were* sentimental!"

"I—well there is no use in answering you," concluded Ailsa.

"No, there isn't. I've seen women look at men, and men look back again—the way *he* did!"

"Dear, please don't say such things!"

"I'm going to say 'em," insisted Camilla with malicious satisfaction. "You've jeered at me because I'm tender-hearted about men. Now my chance has come!"

Ailsa began patiently: "There were scarcely a dozen words spoken—"

Camilla, delighted, shook her dark curls.

"You've said that before," she laughed. "Oh, you pretty minx!—you and your dozen words!"

Ailsa Paige arose in wrath and stretched out a warning arm among her leafless roses; but Camilla placed both hands on the fence top and leaned swiftly down from the veranda steps,

"Forgive me, dear," she said penitently. "I was only trying to

torment you. Kiss me and make up. I know you too well to believe that you could care for a man of that kind."

Ailsa's face was very serious, but she lifted herself on tiptoe and they exchanged an amicable salute across the fence.

After a moment she said: "What did you mean by 'a man of *that* kind'?"

Camilla's shrug was expressive. "There are stories about him."

Ailsa looked thoughtfully into space. "Well you won't say such things to me again, about any man—will you, dear?"

"You never minded them before. You used to laugh."

"But this time," said Ailsa Paige, "it is not the least bit funny.

We scarcely exchanged—"

She checked herself, flushing with annoyance. Camilla, leaning on the garden fence, had suddenly buried her face in both arms. In feminine plumpness, when young, there is usually something left of the schoolgirl giggler.

The pretty girl below remained disdainfully indifferent. She dug, she clipped, she explored, inhaling, with little thrills, the faint mounting odour of forest loam and sappy stems.

"I really must go back to New York and start my own garden," she said, not noticing Camilla's mischief. "London Terrace will be green in another week."

"How long do you stay with the Craigs, Ailsa?"

"Until the workmen finish painting my house and installing the new plumbing. Colonel Arran is good enough to look after it."

Camilla, her light head always ringing with gossip, watched

Ailsa curiously.

"It's odd," she observed, "that Colonel Arran and the Craigs never exchange civilities."

"Mrs. Craig doesn't like him," said Ailsa simply.

"You do, don't you?"

"Naturally. He was my guardian."

"My uncle likes him. To me he has a hard face."

"He has a sad face," said Ailsa Paige.

CHAPTER III

Ailsa and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Craig, had been unusually reticent over their embroidery that early afternoon, seated together in the front room, which was now flooded with sunshine—an attractive, intimate room, restful and pretty in spite of the unlovely Victorian walnut furniture.

Through a sunny passageway they could look into Ailsa's bedroom—formerly the children's nursery—where her maid sat sewing.

Outside the open windows, seen between breezy curtains, new buds already clothed the great twisted ropes of pendant wistaria with a silvery-green down.

The street was quiet under its leafless double row of trees, maple, ailanthus, and catalpa; the old man who trudged his rounds regularly every week was passing now with his muffled shout:

Any old hats

Old coats

Old boots!

Any old mats

Old suits,

Old flutes! Ca-ash!

And, leaning near to the sill, Ailsa saw him shuffling along, green-baize bag bulging, a pyramid of stove-pipe hats crammed down over his ears.

At intervals from somewhere in the neighbourhood sounded the pleasant bell of the scissors grinder, and the not unmusical call of "Glass put in!" But it was really very tranquil there in the sunshine of Fort Greene Place, stiller even for the fluted call of an oriole aloft in the silver maple in front of the stoop.

He was a shy bird even though there were no imported sparrows to drive this lovely native from the trees of a sleepy city; and he sat very still in the top branches, clad in his gorgeous livery of orange and black, and scarcely stirred save to slant his head and peer doubtfully at last year's cocoons, which clung to the bark like shreds of frosted cotton.

Very far away, from somewhere in the harbour, a deep sound jarred the silence. Ailsa raised her head, needle suspended, listened for a moment, then resumed her embroidery with an unconscious sigh.

Her sister-in-law glanced sideways at her.

"I was thinking of Major Anderson, Celia," she said absently.

"So was I, dear. And of those who must answer for his gove'nment's madness,—God fo'give them."

There was no more said about the Major or his government. After a few moments Ailsa leaned back dreamily, her gaze wandering around the sunny walls of the room. In Ailsa Paige's eyes there was always a gentle caress for homely things. Just

now they caressed the pictures of "Night" and "Morning," hanging there in their round gilt frames; the window boxes where hyacinths blossomed; the English ivy festooned to frame the window beside her sister-in-law's writing-desk; the melancholy engraving over the fireplace—"The Motherless Bairn"—a commonplace picture which harrowed her, but which nobody thought of discarding in a day when even the commonplace was uncommon.

She smiled in amused reminiscence of the secret tears she had wept over absurd things—of the funerals held for birds found dead—of the "Three Grains of Corn" poem which, when a child, elicited from her howls of anguish.

Little golden flashes of recollection lighted the idle path as her thoughts wandered along hazy ways which led back to her own nursery days; and she rested there, in memory, dreaming through the stillness of the afternoon.

She missed the rattle and noise of New York. It was a little too tranquil in Fort Greene Place; yet, when she listened intently, through the city's old-fashioned hush, very far away the voices of the great seaport were always audible—a ceaseless harmony of river whistles, ferry-boats signalling on the East River, ferry-boats on the North River, perhaps some mellow, resonant blast from the bay, where an ocean liner was heading for the Narrows. Always the street's stillness held that singing murmur, vibrant with deep undertones from dock and river and the outer sea.

Strange spicy odours, too, sometimes floated inland from

the sugar wharves, miles away under the Heights, to mingle with the scent of lilac and iris in quiet, sunny backyards where whitewashed fences reflected the mid-day glare, and cats dozed in strategical positions on grape trellis and tin roofs of extensions, prepared for war or peace, as are all cats always, at all times.

"Celia!"

Celia Craig looked up tranquilly.

"Has anybody darned Paige's stockings?"

"No, she hasn't, Honey-bell. Paige and Marye must keep their stockings da'ned. I never could do anything fo' myse'f, and I won't have my daughters brought up he'pless."

Ailsa glanced humorously across at her sister-in-law.

"You sweet thing," she said, "you can do anything, and you know it!"

"But I don't like to do anything any mo' than I did befo' I had to," laughed Celia Craig; and suddenly checked her mirth, listening with her pretty close-set ears.

"That is the do'-bell," she remarked, "and I am not dressed."

"It's almost too early for anybody to call," said Ailsa tranquilly.

But she was wrong, and when, a moment later, the servant came to announce Mr. Berkley, Ailsa regarded her sister-in-law in pink consternation.

"I did *not* ask him," she said. "We scarcely exchanged a dozen words. He merely said he'd like to call—on you—and now he's done it, Celia!"

Mrs. Craig calmly instructed the servant to say that they were

at home, and the servant withdrew.

"Do you approve his coming—this way—without anybody inviting him?" asked Ailsa uneasily.

"Of co'se, Honey-bell. He is a Berkley. He should have paid his respects to us long ago."

"It was for him to mention the relationship when I met him. He did not speak of it, Celia."

"No, it was fo' you to speak of it first," said Celia Craig gently.

"But you did not know that."

"Why?"

"There are reasons, Honey-bud."

"What reasons?"

"They are not yo' business, dear," said her sister-in-law quietly.

Ailsa had already risen to examine herself in the mirror. Now she looked back over her shoulder and down into Celia's pretty eyes—eyes as unspoiled as her own.

In Celia Craig remained that gracious and confident faith in kinship which her Northern marriage had neither extinguished nor chilled. The young man who waited below was a Berkley, a kinsman. Name and quality were keys to her hospitality. There was also another key which this man possessed, and it fitted a little locked compartment in Celia Craig's heart. But Ailsa had no knowledge of this. And now Mrs. Craig was considering the advisability of telling her—not all, perhaps,—but something of how matters stood between the House of Craig and the House of

Berkley. But not how matters stood with the House of Arran.

"Honey-bud," she said, "you must be ve'y polite to this young man."

"I expect to be. Only I don't quite understand why he came so unceremoniously—"

"It would have been ruder to neglect us, little Puritan! I want to see Connie Berkley's boy. I'm glad he came."

Celia Craig, once Celia Marye Ormond Paige, stood watching her taller sister-in-law twisting up her hair and winding the thick braid around the crown of her head *a la coronal*. Little wonder that these two were so often mistaken for own sisters—the matron not quite as tall as the young widow, but as slender, and fair, and cast in the same girlish mould.

Both inherited from their Ormond ancestry slightly arched and dainty noses and brows, delicate hands and feet, and the same splendid dull-gold hair—features apparently characteristic of the line, all the women of which had been toasts of a hundred years ago, before Harry Lee hunted men and the Shadow of the Swamp Fox flitted through the cypress to a great king's undoing.

Ailsa laid a pink bow against her hair and glanced at her sister-in-law for approval.

"I declare. Honey-bud, you are all rose colour to-day," said Celia Craig, smiling; and, on impulse, unpinned the pink-and-white cameo from her own throat and fastened it to Ailsa's breast.

"I reckon I'll slip on a gay gown myse'f," she added mischievously. "I certainly am becoming ve'y tired of leaving the

field to my sister-in-law, and my schoolgirl daughters."

"Does anybody ever look at us after you come into a room?" asked Ailsa, laughing; and, turning impulsively, she pressed Celia's pretty hands flat together and kissed them. "You darling," she said. An unaccountable sense of expectancy—almost of exhilaration was taking possession of her. She looked into the mirror and stood content with what she saw reflected there.

"How much of a relation is he, Celia?" balancing the rosy bow with a little cluster of pink hyacinth on the other side.

Celia Craig, forefinger crooked across her lips, considered aloud.

"*His* mother was bo'n Constance Berkley; *her* mother was bo'n Betty Ormond; *her* mother was bo'n Felicity Paige; *her* mother—"

"Oh please! I don't care to know any more!" protested Ailsa, drawing her sister-in-law before the mirror; and, standing behind her, rested her soft, round chin on her shoulder, regarding the two reflected faces.

"That," observed the pretty Southern matron, "is conside'd ve'y bad luck. When I was a young girl I once peeped into the glass over my ole mammy's shoulder, and she said I'd sho'ly be punished befo' the year was done."

"And were you?"

"I don't exactly remember," said Mrs. Craig demurely, "but I think I first met my husband the ve'y next day."

They both laughed softly, looking at each other in the mirror. So, in her gown of rosy muslin, bouffant and billowy, a pink

flower in her hair, and Celia's pink-and-white cameo at her whiter throat Ailsa Paige descended the carpeted stairs and came into the mellow dimness of the front parlour, where there was much rosewood, and a French carpet, and glinting prisms on the chandeliers,—and a young man, standing, dark against a bar of sunshine in which golden motes swam.

"How do you do," she said, offering her narrow hand, and: "Mrs. Craig is dressing to receive you. . . . It is warm for April, I think. How amiable of you to come all the way over from New York. Mr. Craig and his son Stephen are at business, my cousins, Paige and Marye, are at school. Won't you sit down?"

She had backed away a little distance from him, looking at him under brows bent slightly inward, and thinking that she had made no mistake in her memory of this man. Certainly his features were altogether too regular, his head and body too perfectly moulded into that dark and graceful symmetry which she had hitherto vaguely associated with things purely and mythologically Olympian.

Upright against the doorway, she suddenly recollected with a blush that she was staring like a schoolgirl, and sat down. And he drew up a chair before her and seated himself; and then under the billowy rose crinoline she set her pretty feet close together, folded her hands, and looked at him with a smiling composure which she no longer really felt.

"The weather," she repeated, "is unusually warm. Do you think that Major Anderson will hold out at Sumter? Do you think

the fleet is going to relieve him? Dear me," she sighed, "where will it all end, Mr. Berkley?"

"In war," he said, also smiling; but neither of them believed it, or, at the moment, cared. There were other matters impending—since their first encounter.

"I have thought about you a good deal since Camilla's theatre party," he said pleasantly.

"Have you?" She scarcely knew what else to say—and regretted saying anything.

"Indeed I have. I dare not believe you have wasted as much as one thought on the man you danced with once—and refused ever after."

She felt, suddenly, a sense of uneasiness in being near him.

"Of course I have remembered you, Mr. Berkley," she said with composure. "Few men dance as well. It has been an agreeable memory to me."

"But you would not dance with me again."

"I—there were—you seemed perfectly contented to sit out—the rest—with me."

He considered the carpet attentively. Then looking up with quick, engaging smile:

"I want to ask you something. May I?"

She did not answer. As it had been from the first time she had ever seen him, so it was now with her; a confused sense of the necessity for caution in dealing with a man who had inspired in her such an unaccountable inclination to listen to what he chose

to say.

"What is it you wish to ask?" she inquired pleasantly.

"It is this: are you *really* surprised that I came? Are you, in your heart?"

"Did I appear to be very much agitated? Or my heart, either, Mr. Berkley?" she asked with a careless laugh, conscious now of her quickening pulses. Outwardly calm, inwardly Irresolute, she faced him with a quiet smile of confidence.

"Then you were not surprised that I came?" he insisted.

"You did not wait to be asked. That surprised me a little."

"I did wait. But you didn't ask me."

"That seems to have made no difference to you," she retorted, laughing.

"It made this difference. I seized upon the only excuse I had and came to pay my respects as a kinsman. Do you know that I am a relation?"

"That is a very pretty compliment to us all, I think."

"It is you who are kind in accepting me."

"As a relative, I am very glad to—"

"I came," he said, "to see *you*. And you know it."

"But you *couldn't* do that, uninvited! I had not asked you."

"But—it's done," he said.

She sat very still, considering him. Within her, subtle currents seemed to be contending once more, disturbing her equanimity. She said, sweetly:

"I am not as offended as I ought to be. But I do not see why

you should disregard convention with me."

"I didn't mean it that way," he said, leaning forward. "I couldn't stand not seeing you. That was all. Convention is a pitiful thing—sometimes—" He hesitated, then fell to studying the carpet.

She looked at him, silent in her uncertainty. His expression was grave, almost absent-minded. And again her troubled eyes rested on the disturbing symmetry of feature and figure in all the unconscious grace of repose; and in his immobility there seemed something even of nobility about him which she had not before noticed.

She stole another glance at him. He remained very still, leaning forward, apparently quite oblivious of her. Then he came to himself with a quick smile, which she recognised as characteristic of all that disturbed her about this man—a smile in which there was humour, a little malice and self-sufficiency and—many, many things she did not try to analyse.

"Don't you really want an unreliable servant?" he asked.

His perverse humour perplexed her, but she smiled.

"Don't you remember that I once asked you if you needed an able-bodied man?" he insisted.

She nodded.

"Well, I'm that man."

She assented, smiling conventionally, not at all understanding. He laughed, too, thoroughly enjoying something.

"It isn't really very funny," he said, "Ask your brother-in-law.

I had an interview with him before I came here. And I think there's a chance that he may give me a desk and a small salary in his office."

"How absurd!" she said.

"It is rather absurd. I'm so absolutely useless. It's only because of the relationship that Mr. Craig is doing this."

She said uneasily: "You are not really serious, are you?"

"Grimly serious."

"About a—a desk and a salary—in my brother-in-law's office?"

"Unless you'll hire me as a useful man. Otherwise, I hope for a big desk and a small salary. I went to Mr. Craig this morning, and the minute I saw him I knew he was fine enough to be your brother-in-law. And I said, 'I am Philip Ormond Berkley; how do you do!' And he said, 'How do you do!' And I said, 'I'm a relation,' and he said, 'I believe so.' And I said, 'I was educated at Harvard and in Leipsic; I am full of useless accomplishments, harmless erudition, and insolvent amiability, and I am otherwise perfectly worthless. Can you give me a position?'"

"And he said: 'What else is the matter?' And I said, 'The stock market.' And that is how it remains, I am to call on him tomorrow."

She said in consternation: "Forgive me. I did not think you meant it. I did not know that you were—were—"

"Ruined!" he nodded laughingly. "I am, practically. I have a little left—badly invested—which I'm trying to get at. Otherwise

matters are gay enough."

She said wonderingly: "Had this happened when—I saw you that first time?"

"It had just happened. I looked the part, didn't I?"

"No. *How* could you be so—interesting and—and be—what you were—knowing this all the while?"

"I went to that party absolutely stunned. I saw you in a corner of the box—I had just been hearing about you—and—I don't know now what I said to you. Afterward"—he glanced at her—"the world was spinning, Mrs. Paige. You only remained real—" His face altered subtly. "And when I touched you—"

"I gave you a waltz, I believe," she said, striving to speak naturally; but her pulses had begun to stir again; the same inexplicable sense of exhilaration and insecurity was creeping over her.

With a movement partly nervous she turned toward the door, but there sounded no rustle of her sister's skirts from the stairs, and her reluctant eyes slowly reverted to him, then fell in silence, out of which she presently strove to extract them both with some casual commonplace.

He said in a low voice, almost to himself:

"I want you to think well of me."

She gathered all her composure, steadied her senses to choose a reply, and made a blunder:

"Do you really care what I think?" she asked lightly, and bit her lip too late.

"Do you believe I care about anything else in the world—now?"

She went on bravely, blindly:

"And do *you* expect me to believe in—in such an exaggerated and romantic expression to a staid and matter-of-fact widow whom you never saw more than once in your life?"

"You *do* believe it."

Confused, scarcely knowing what she was saying, she still attempted to make light of his words, holding her own against herself for the moment, making even some headway. And all the while she was aware of mounting emotion—a swift inexplicable charm falling over them both.

He had become silent again, and she was saying she knew not what—fortifying her common-sense with gay inconsequences, when he looked up straight into her eyes.

"I have distressed you. I should not have spoken as I did."

"No, you should not—"

"Have I offended you?"

"I—don't know."

Matters were running too swiftly for her; she strove to remain cool, collected, but confusion was steadily threatening her, and neither resentment nor indifference appeared as allies.

"Mrs. Paige, can you account for—that night? The moment I touched you—"

She half rose, sank back into her seat, her startled eyes meeting his.

"I—don't know what you mean."

"Yes—you know."

Flushed, voices unsteady, they no longer recognised themselves.

"You have never seen me but once," she said. "You cannot believe—"

"I have not known a moment's peace since I first saw you."

She caught her breath. "It is your business worries that torment you—"

"It is desire to be near you."

"I don't think you had better say such a thing—"

"I know I had better not. But it is said, and it is true. I'm not trying to explain it to you or to myself. It's just true. There has not been one moment, since I saw you, which has been free from memory of you—"

"Please—"

"I scarcely know what I am saying—but it's true!" He checked himself. "I'm losing my head now, which isn't like me!" He choked and stood up; she could not move; every nerve in her had become tense with emotions so bewildering that mind and body remained fettered.

He was walking to and fro, silent and white under his self-control. She, seated, gazed at him as though stunned, but every pulse was riotously unsteady.

"I suppose you think me crazy," he said hoarsely, "but I've not known a moment's peace of mind since that night—not one! I

couldn't keep away any longer. I can't even hold my tongue now, though I suppose it's ruining me every time I move it. It's a crazy thing to come here and say what I'm saying."

He went over and sat down again, and bent his dark gaze on the floor. Then:

"Can you forgive what I have done to you?"

She tried to answer, and only made a sign of faint assent. She no longer comprehended herself or the emotions menacing her. A curious tranquillity quieted her at moments—intervals in which she seemed to sit apart watching the development of another woman, listening to her own speech, patient with her own silences. There was a droop to her shoulders now; his own were sagging as he leaned slightly forward in his chair, arms resting on his knees, while around them the magic ebbed, eddied, ebbed; and lassitude succeeded tension; and she stirred, looked up at him with eyes that seemed dazed at first, then widened slowly into waking; and he saw in them the first clear dawn of alarm. Suddenly she flushed and sprang to her feet, the bright colour surging to her hair.

"Don't!" he said. "Don't reason! There will be nothing left of me if you do—or of, these moments. You will hate them—and me, if you reason. Don't think—until we see each other again!"

She dropped her eyes slowly, and slowly shook her head.

"You ask too much," she said. "You should not have said that." All the glamour was fading. Her senses were seeking their balance after the incredible storm that had whirled them into

chaos.

Fear stirred sharply, then consternation—flashes of panic pierced her with darts of shame, as though she had been in physical contact with this man.

All her outraged soul leaped to arms, quivering now under the reaction; the man's mere presence was becoming unendurable; the room stifled her. She turned, scarce knowing what she was doing; and at the same moment her sister-in-law entered.

Berkley, already on his feet, turned short: and when she offered him a hand as slim and white as Ailsa's, he glanced inquiringly at the latter, not at all certain who this charming woman might be.

"Mrs. Craig," said Ailsa.

"I don't believe it," he said. "You haven't grown-up children!"

"Don't you really believe it, Mr. Berkley? Or is it just the flattering Irish in you that natters us poor women to our destruction?"

He had sense and wit enough to pay her a quick and really graceful compliment; to which she responded, still laughing:

"Oh, it is the Ormond in you! I am truly ve'y glad you came. You are Constance Berkley's son—Connie Berkley! The sweetest girl that ever lived."

There was a silence. Then Mrs. Craig said gently:

"I was her maid of honour, Mr. Berkley."

Ailsa raised her eyes to his altered face, startled at the change in it. He looked at her absently, then his gaze reverted to Ailsa

Paige.

"I loved her dearly," said Mrs. Craig, dropping a light, impulsive hand on his. "I want her son to know it."

Her eyes were soft and compassionate; her hand still lingered lightly on his, and she let it rest so.

"Mrs. Craig," he said, "*you* are the most real person I have known in many years among the phantoms. I thought your sister-in-law was. But you are still more real."

"Am I?" she laid her other hand over his, considering him earnestly. Ailsa looking on, astonished, noticed a singular radiance on his face—the pale transfiguration from some quick inward illumination.

Then Celia Craig's voice sounded almost caressingly:

"I think you should have come to see us long ago." A pause. "You are as welcome in this house as your mother would be if she were living. I love and honour her memory."

"I have honoured little else in the world," he said. They looked at one another for a moment; then her quick smile broke out. "I have an album. There are some Paiges, Ormonds, and Berkleys in it—"

Ailsa came forward slowly.

"Shall I look for it, Celia?"

"No, Honey-bell." She turned lightly and went into the back parlour, smiling mysteriously to herself, her vast, pale-blue crinoline rustling against the furniture.

"My sister-in-law," said Ailsa, after an interval of silent

constraint, "is very Southern. Any sort of kinship means a great deal to her. I, of course, am Northern, and regard such matters as unimportant."

"It is very gracious of Mrs. Craig to remember it," he said. "I know nothing finer than confidence in one's own kin."

She flushed angrily. "I have not that confidence—in kinsman."

For a moment their eyes met. Hers were hard as purple steel.

"Is that final?"

"Yes."

The muscles in his cheeks grew tense, then into his eyes came that reckless glimmer which in the beginning she had distrusted—a gay, irresponsible radiance which seemed to mock at all things worthy.

He said: "No, it is not final. I shall come back to you."

She answered him in an even, passionless voice:

"A moment ago I was uncertain; now I know you. You are what they say you are. I never wish to see you again."

Celia Craig came back with the album. Berkley sprang to relieve her of the big book and a box full of silhouettes, miniatures, and daguerreotypes. They placed the family depository upon the table and then bent over it together.

Ailsa remained standing by the window, looking steadily at nothing, a burning sensation in both cheeks.

At intervals, through the intensity of her silence, she heard Celia's fresh, sweet laughter, and Berkley's humorous and

engaging voice. She glanced sideways at the back of his dark curly head where it bent beside Celia's over the album. What an insolently reckless head it was! She thought that she had never before seen the back of any man's head so significant of character—or the want of it. And the same quality—or the lack of it—now seemed to her to pervade his supple body, his well-set shoulders, his voice, every movement, every feature—something everywhere about him that warned and troubled.

Suddenly the blood burnt her cheeks with a perfectly incomprehensible desire to see his face again. She heard her sister-in-law saying:

"We Paiges and Berkleys are kin to the Ormonds and the Earls of Ossory. The Estcourts, the Paiges, the Craigs, the Lents, the Berkleys, intermarried a hundred years ago. . . . My grandmother knew yours, but the North is very strange in such matters. . . . Why did you never before come?"

He said: "It's one of those things a man is always expecting to do, and is always astonished that he hasn't done. Am I unpardonable?"

"I did not mean it in that way."

He turned his dark, comely head and looked at her as they bent together above the album.

"I know you didn't. My answer was not frank. The reason I never came to you before was that—I did not know I would be welcomed."

Their voices dropped. Ailsa standing by the window, watching

the orioles in the maple, could no longer distinguish what they were saying.

He said: "You were bridesmaid to my mother. You are the Celia Paige of her letters."

"She is always Connie Berkley to me. I loved no woman better. I love her still."

"I found that out yesterday. That is why I dared come. I found, among the English letters, one from you to her, written—*after*."

"I wrote her again and again. She never replied. Thank God, she knew I loved her to the last."

He rested on the tabletop and stood leaning over and looking down.

"Dear Mr. Berkley," she murmured gently.

He straightened himself, passed a hesitating hand across his forehead, ruffling the short curly hair. Then his preoccupied gaze wandered. Ailsa turned toward him at the same moment, and instantly a flicker of malice transformed the nobility of his set features:

"It seems," he said, "that you and I are irrevocably related in all kinds of delightful ways, Mrs. Paige. Your sister-in-law very charmingly admits it, graciously overlooks and pardons my many delinquencies, and has asked me to come again. Will you ask me, too?"

Ailsa merely looked at him.

Mrs. Craig said, laughing: "I knew you were all Ormond and entirely Irish as soon as I came in the do'—befo' I became aware

of your racial fluency. I speak fo' my husband and myse'f when I say, please remember that our do' is ve'y wide open to our own kin—and that you are of them—"

"Oh, I'm all sorts of things beside—" He paused for a second—"Cousin Celia," he added so lightly that the grace with which he said it covered the impudence, and she laughed in semi-critical approval and turned to Ailsa, whose smile in response was chilly—chillier still when Berkley did what few men have done convincingly since powdered hair and knee-breeches became unfashionable—bent to salute Celia Craig's fingertips. Then he turned to her and took his leave of her in a conventional manner entirely worthy of the name his mother bore,—and her mother before her, and many a handsome man and many a beautiful woman back to times when a great duke stood unjustly attainted, and the Ormonds served their king with steel sword and golden ewer; and served him faithfully and well.

Camilla Lent called a little later. Ailsa was in the backyard garden, a trowel in her hand, industriously loosening the earth around the prairie roses.

"Camilla," she said, looking up from where she was kneeling among the shrubs, "what was it you said this morning about Mr. Berkley being some unpleasant kind of man?"

"How funny," laughed Camilla. "You asked me that twice before."

"Did I? I forgot," said Mrs. Paige with a shrug; and, bending over again, became exceedingly busy with her trowel until the

fire in her cheeks had cooled.

"Every woman that ever saw him becomes infatuated with Phil Berkley," said Camilla cheerfully. "I was. You will be. And the worst of it is he's simply not worth it."

"I—thought not."

"Why did you think not?"

"I don't know why."

"He *can* be fascinating," said Camilla reflectively, "but he doesn't always trouble himself to be."

"Doesn't he?" said Ailsa with a strange sense of relief.

Camilla hesitated, lowered her voice.

"They say he is fast," she whispered. Ailsa, on her knees, turned and looked up.

"Whatever that means," added Camilla, shuddering. "But all the same, every girl who sees him begins to adore him immediately until her parents make her stop."

"How silly," said Ailsa in a leisurely level voice. But her heart was beating furiously, and she turned to her roses with a blind energy that threatened them root and runner.

"How did you happen to think of him at all?" continued Camilla mischievously.

"He called on—Mrs. Craig this afternoon."

"I didn't know she knew him."

"They are related—distantly—I believe—"

"Oh," exclaimed Camilla. "I'm terribly sorry I spoke that way about him, dear—"

"I don't care what you say about him," returned Ailsa Paige fiercely, emptying some grains of sand out of one of her gloves; resolutely emptying her mind, too, of Philip Berkley.

"Dear," she added gaily to Camilla, "come in and we'll have tea and gossip, English fashion. And I'll tell you about my new duties at the Home for Destitute Children—every morning from ten to twelve, my dear, in their horrid old infirmary—the poor little darlings!—and I would be there all day if I wasn't a selfish, indolent, pleasure-loving creature without an ounce of womanly feeling—Yes I am! I must be, to go about to galleries and dances and Philharmonics when there are motherless children in that infirmary, as sick for lack of love as for the hundred and one ailments distressing their tender little bodies."

But over their tea and marmalade and toast she became less communicative; and once or twice the conversation betrayed an unexpected tendency to drift toward Berkley.

"I haven't the slightest curiosity concerning him, dear," said Ailsa, attempting corroboration in a yawn—which indiscretion she was unable to accomplish.

"Well," remarked Camilla, "the chances are that you've seen the last of him if you showed it too plainly. Men don't come back when a girl doesn't wish them to. Do they?"

After Camilla had gone, Ailsa roamed about the parlours, apparently renewing her acquaintance with the familiar decorations. Sometimes she stood at windows, looking thoughtfully into the empty street; sometimes she sat in corners,

critically surveying empty space.

Yes, the chances were that he would scarcely care to come back. A man of that kind did not belong in her sister-in-law's house, anyway, nor in her own—a man who could appeal to a woman for a favourable opinion of himself, asking her to suspend her reason, stifle logic, stultify her own intelligence, and trust to a sentimental impulse that he deserved the toleration and consideration which he asked for. . . . It was certainly well for her that he should not return. . . . It would be better for her to lay the entire matter before her sister-in-law—that was what she would do immediately!

She sprang to her feet and ran lightly up-stairs; but, fast as she fled, thought outran her slender flying feet, and she came at last very leisurely into Celia's room, a subdued, demure opportunist, apparently with nothing on her mind and conscience,

"If I may have the carriage at ten, Celia, I'll begin on the Destitute Children to-morrow. . . . Poor babies! . . . If they only had once a week as wholesome food as is wasted in this city every day by Irish servants . . . which reminds me—I suppose you will have to invite your new kinsman to dine with you."

"There is loads of time for that, Honey-bud," said her sister-in-law, glancing up absently from the note she was writing.

"I was merely wondering whether it was necessary at all," observed Ailsa Paige, without interest.

But Celia had begun to write again. "I'll ask him," she said in her softly preoccupied voice, "Saturday, I think."

"Oh, but I'm invited to the Cortlandt's," began Ailsa, and caught her under lip in her teeth. Then she turned and walked noiselessly into her bedroom, and sat down on the bed and looked at the wall.

CHAPTER IV

It was almost mid-April; and still the silvery-green tassels on the wistaria showed no hint of the blue petals folded within; but the maples' leafless symmetry was already veined with fire. Faint perfume from Long Island woodlands, wandering puffs of wind from salt meadows freshened the city streets; St. Felix Street boasted a lilac bush in leaf; Oxford Street was gay with hyacinths and a winter-battered butterfly; and in Fort Greene Place the grassy door-yards were exquisite with crocus bloom. Peace, good-will, and spring on earth; but in men's souls a silence as of winter.

To Northland folk the unclosing buds of April brought no awakening; lethargy fettered all, arresting vigour, sapping desire. An immense inertia chained progress in its tracks, while overhead the gray storm-wrack fled away,—misty, monstrous, gale-driven before the coming hurricane.

Still, for the Northland, there remained now little of the keener suspense since those first fiery outbursts in the South; but all through the winter the dull pain throbbed in silence as star after star dropped from the old galaxy and fell flashing into the new.

And it was a time of apathy, acquiescence, stupefied incredulity; a time of dull faith in destiny, duller resignation.

The printed news was read day after day by a people who understood nothing, neither the cautious arming nor the bold

disarming, nor the silent fall of fortified places, nor the swift dismantling of tall ships—nor did they comprehend the ceaseless tremors of a land slowly crumbling under the subtle pressure—nor that at last the vast disintegration of the matrix would disclose the forming crystal of another nation cradled there, glittering, naming under the splendour of the Southern skies.

A palsied Old Year had gone out. The mindless old man—he who had been President—went with it. A New Year had come in, and on its infant heels shambled a tall, gaunt shape that seated itself by the White House windows and looked out into the murk of things with eyes that no man understood.

And now the soft sun of April spun a spell upon the Northland folk; for they had eyes but they saw not; ears had they, but they heard not; neither spoke they through the mouth.

To them only one figure seemed real, looming above the vast and motionless mirage where a continent stood watching the parapets of a sea-girt fort off Charleston.

But the nation looked too long; the mirage closed in; fort, sea, the flag itself, became unreal; the lone figure on the parapet turned to a phantom. God's will was doing. Who dared doubt?

"There seems to be no doubt in the South," observed Ailsa Paige to her brother-in-law one fragrant evening after dinner where, in the dusk, the family had gathered on the stoop after the custom of a simpler era.

Along the dim street long lines of front stoops blossomed with the light spring gowns of women and young girls, pale, dainty

clusters in the dusk set with darker figures, where sparks from cigars glowed and waned in the darkness.

Windows were open, here and there a gas jet in a globe flickered inside a room, but the street was dusky and tranquil as a country lane, and unilluminated save where at far intervals lamp-posts stood in a circle of pale light, around which a few moths hovered.

"The rebels," repeated Ailsa, "appear to have no doubts, honest or otherwise. They've sent seven thousand troops to the Charleston fortifications—the paper says."

Stephen Craig heard his cousin speak but made no response. He was smoking openly and in sight of his entire family the cigar which had, heretofore, been consumed surreptitiously. His mother sat close to his shoulder, rallying him like a tormenting schoolgirl, and, at intervals, turning to look back at her husband who stood on the steps beside her, a little amused, a little proud, a little inclined to be critical of this tall son of his who yesterday had been a boy.

The younger daughters of the house, Paige and Marye, strolled past, bareheaded, arms linked, in company with Camilla and Jimmy Lent.

"O dad!" called out Paige softly, "Jim says that Major Anderson is to be reinforced at once. There was a bulletin this evening."

"I am very glad to hear it, sweetheart," said her father, smiling through his eye-glasses.

Stephen bent forward across his mother's shoulder. "Is that true, father?"

"Camilla's brother has probably been reading the *Tribune's* evening bulletin. The *Herald* bulletin says that the Cabinet has ordered the evacuation of Fort Sumter; the *Times* says Major Anderson is to be reinforced; the *World* says that he abandoned the fort last night; and they all say he has been summoned to surrender. Take your choice, Steve," he added wearily. "There is only one wire working from the South, and the rebels control that."

"Are you tired, Curt?" asked his wife, looking around and up at him.

He seated himself and readjusted his eye-glasses.

"No, dear—only of this nightmare we are living in"—he stopped abruptly. Politics had been avoided between them. There was a short silence; he felt his wife's hand touch his in the darkness—sign of a tender respect for his perplexity, but not for his political views.

"Forgive me, dear, for using the word 'rebel,'" he said, smiling and straightening his shoulders. "Where have you and Ailsa been to-day? Did you go to New York?"

"Yes. We saw the Academy, and, oh, Curt! there are some very striking landscapes—two by Gifford; and the cutest portrait of a girl by Wiyam Hunt. And your friend Bierstadt has a Western scene—all fireworks! and, dear, Eastman Johnson was there—and Kensett sent such a cunning little landscape. We lunched at

Taylor's." She lowered her voice to a whisper. "Ailsa did look too cute fo' words. I declare she is the most engaging little minx. Eve'y man sta'ed at her. I *wish* she would marry again and be happy. *She* doesn't know what a happy love affair can be—poor baby."

"Do you?" asked her husband.

"Are you beginning to co't me again, Curt?"

"Have I ever ceased?—you little Rebel!"

"No," she said under her breath.

"By the way, Celia," he said smiling, "that young man—cousin of yours—Berkley, turned up promptly to-day. I gave him a room in the office."

"That was certainly ve'y frien'ly of you, Curt!" she responded warmly. "You *will* be patient with him, won't you?"

"I've had to be already. I gave him a commission to collect some rents and he came back fifty dollars short, calmly explaining that one of our lodgers looked poor and he hated to ask for the rent."

"O Curt—the boy is ve'y sweet and wa'm-hearted. Were you cross with him?"

"Not very. I imparted a few plain truths—very pleasantly, Celia. He knew better; there's a sort of an impish streak in him—also an inclination for the pleasant by-ways of life. . . . He had better let drink alone, too, if he expects to remain in my office. I told him that."

"Does he—the foolish baby!"

"Oh, probably not very much. I don't know; he's likable, but—he hasn't inspired me with any overwhelming respect and confidence. His record is not exactly savoury. But he's your protege, and I'll stand him as long as you can."

"Thank you, Curt. We must be gentle to him. I shall ask him to dinner and we can give a May dance perhaps—something informal and pretty—What is the matter, Curt?"

"Nothing, dear. . . . Only I wouldn't plan anything just yet—I mean for the present—not for a few days, anyway—"

He shrugged, removed his glasses, polished them on his handkerchief, and sat holding them, his short-sighted eyes lost in reverie.

His wife endured it to the limit of patience:

"Curt," she began in a lower voice, "you and I gen'ally avoid certain matters, dear—but—ev'rything is sure to come right in the end—isn't it? The No'th is going to be sensible."

"In the—end," he admitted quietly. And between them the ocean sprang into view again.

"I wonder—" She stopped, and an inexplicable uneasiness stirred in her breast. She looked around at her son, her left hand fell protectingly upon his shoulder, her right, groping, touched her husband's sleeve.

"I am—well cared for—in the world," she sighed happily to herself. "It shall not come nigh me."

Stephen was saying to Ailsa:

"There's a piece of up-town property that came into the office

to-day which seems to me significant of the future. It would be a good investment for you, Cousin Ailsa. Some day Fifth Avenue will be built up solidly with brown-stone mansions as far as the Central Park. It is all going to be wonderfully attractive when they finish it."

Ailsa mused for a moment. Then:

"I walked down this street to Fort Greene this afternoon," she began, "and the little rocky park was so sweet and fragrant with dogwood and Forsythia and new buds everywhere. And I looked out over the rivers and the bay and over the two cities and, Steve, somehow—I don't know why—I found my eyes filling with tears. I don't know why, Steve—"

"Feminine sentiment," observed her cousin, smoking.

Mrs. Craig's fingers became restless on her husband's sleeve; she spoke at moments in soft, wistful tones, watching her younger daughters and their friends grouped under the trees in the dusk. And all the time, whatever it was that had brought a new unease into her breast was still there, latent. She had no name to give it, no reason, no excuse; it was too shadowy to bear analysis, too impalpable to be defined, yet it remained there; she was perfectly conscious of it, as she held her husband's sleeve the tighter.

"Curt, is business so plaguey poor because of all these politics?"

"My business is not very flourishing. Many men feel the uncertainty; not everybody, dear."

"When this—*matter*—is settled, everything will be easier for

you, won't it? You look so white and tired, dear."

Stephen overheard her.

"The *matter*, as you call it, won't be settled without a row, mother—if you mean the rebellion."

"Such a wise boy with his new cigar," she smiled through a sudden resurgence of uneasiness.

The boy said calmly: "Mother, you don't understand; and all the rest of the South is like you."

"Does anybody understand, Steve?" asked his father, slightly ironical.

"Some people understand there's going to be a big fight," said the boy.

"Oh. Do you?"

"Yes," he said, with the conviction of youth. "And I'm wondering who's going to be in it."

"The militia, of course," observed Ailsa scornfully. "Camilla is forever sewing buttons on Jimmy's dress uniform. He wears them off dancing."

Mr. Craig said, unsmiling: "We are not a military nation, Steve; we are not only non-military but we are unmilitary—if you know what that means."

"We once managed to catch Cornwallis," suggested his son, still proudly smoking.

"I wonder how we did it?" mused his father.

"They were another race—those catchers of Cornwallis—those fellows in, blue-and-buff and powdered hair."

"You and Celia are their grandchildren," observed Ailsa, "and you are a West Point graduate."

Her brother-in-law looked at her with a strange sort of humour in his handsome, near-sighted eyes:

"Yes, too blind to serve the country that educated me. And now it's too late; the desire is gone; I have no inclination to fight, Ailsa. Drums always annoyed me. I don't particularly like a gun. I don't care for a fuss. I don't wish to be a soldier."

Ailsa said: "I rather like the noise of drums. I think I'd like—war."

"Molly Pitcher! Molly Pitcher! Of what are you babbling," whispered Celia, laughing down the flashes of pain that ran through her heart. "Wars are ended in our Western World. Didn't you know it, grandchild of Vikings? There are to be no more Lake Champlains, only debates—*n'est ce pas*, Curt?—very grand debates between gentlemen of the South and gentlemen of the North in Congress assembled—"

"*Two* congresses assembled," said Ailsa calmly, "and the debates will be at long range—"

"By magnetic telegraph if you wish, Honey-bell," conceded Celia hastily. "Oh, we must *not* begin disputin' about matters that nobody can possibly he'p. It will all come right; you know it will, don't you, Curt?"

"Yes, I know it, somehow."

Silence, fragrance, and darkness, through which rang the distant laugh of a young girl. And, very, very far away sounds

arose in the city, dull, indistinct, lost for moments at a time, then audible again, and always the same sounds, the same monotony, and distant persistence.

"I do believe they're calling an extra," said Ailsa, lifting her head to listen.

Celia listened, too.

"Children shouting at play," she said.

"They *are* calling an extra, Celia!"

"No, little Cassandra, it's only boys skylarking."

For a while they remained listening and silent. The voices still persisted, but they sounded so distant that the light laughter from their neighbour's stoop drowned the echoes.

Later, Jimmy Lent drifted into the family circle.

"They say that there's an extra out about Fort Sumter," he said.

"Do you think he's given up, Mr. Craig?"

"If there's an extra out the fort is probably safe enough, Jim," said the elder man carelessly. He rose and went toward the group of girls and youths under the trees.

"Come, children," he said to his two daughters; and was patient amid indignant protests which preceded the youthful interchange of reluctant good-nights.

When he returned to the stoop Ailsa had gone indoors with her cousin. His wife rose to greet him as though he had been away on a long journey, and then, passing her arms around her schoolgirl daughters, and nodding a mischievous dismissal to Jimmy Lent, walked slowly into the house. Bolts were shot, keys

turned; from the lighted front parlour came the notes of the sweet-toned square piano, and Ailsa's voice:

—"Dear are her charms to me,
Dearest her constancy,
Aileen aroon—"

"Never mind any more of that silly song!" exclaimed Celia, imprisoning Ailsa's arms from behind.

"Youth must with time decay,
Aileen aroon,
Beauty must fade away,
Aileen aroon—"

"Don't, dear! please—"
But Ailsa sang on obstinately:

"Castles are sacked in war,
Chieftains are scattered far,
Truth is a fixed star,
Aileen aroon."

And, glancing back over her shoulder, caught her breath quickly.

"Celia! What *is* the matter, dear?"

"Nothing. I don't like such songs—just now—"

"What songs?"

"I don't know, Ailsa; songs about war and castles. Little things plague me. . . . There's been altogether too much talk about war—it gets into ev'ything, somehow. I can't seem to he'p it, somehow—"

"Why, Celia! *You* are not worrying?"

"Not fo' myse'f, Honey-bud. Somehow, to-night—I don't know—and Curt seemed a little anxious."

She laughed with an effort; her natural gaiety returned to buoy her above this indefinable undercurrent of unrest.

Paige and Marye came in from the glass extension where their father was pacing to and fro, smoking his bedtime cigar, and their mother began her invariable running comment concerning the day's events, rallying her children, tenderly tormenting them with their shortcomings—undarned stockings, lessons imperfectly learned, little household tasks neglected—she was always aware of and ready at bedtime to point out every sin of omission.

"As fo' you, Paige, you are certainly a ve'y rare kind of Honey-bird, and I reckon Mr. Ba'num will sho'ly catch you some day fo' his museum. Who ever heard of a shif'less Yankee girl except you and Marye?"

"O mother, how *can* we mend *everything* we tear? It's heartless to ask us!"

"You don't have to try to mend *_ev'y_thing*. Fo' example, there's Jimmy Lent's heart—"

A quick outbreak of laughter swept them—all except Paige, who flushed furiously over her first school-girl affair.

"That poor Jimmy child came to me about it," continued their mother, "and asked me if I would let you be engaged to him; and I said, 'Certainly, if Paige wants to be, Jimmy. I was engaged myse'f fo' times befo' I was fo'teen—'"

Another gale of laughter drowned her words, and she sat there dimpled, mischievous, naively looking around, yet in her careful soul shrewdly pursuing her wise policy of airing all sentimental matters in the family circle—letting in fresh air and sunshine on what so often takes root and flourishes rather morbidly at sixteen.

"It's perfectly absurd," observed Ailsa, "at your age, Paige—"

"Mother was married at sixteen! Weren't you, dearest?"

"I certainly was; but *I* am a bad rebel and *you* are good little Yankees; and good little Yankees wait till they're twenty odd befo' they do anything ve'y ridiculous."

"We expect to wait," said Paige, with a dignified glance at her sister.

"You've four years to wait, then," laughed Marye.

"What's the use of being courted if you have to wait four years?"

"And you've three years to wait, silly," retorted Paige. "But I don't care; I'd rather wait. It isn't very long, now. Ailsa, why don't you marry again?"

Ailsa's lip curled her comment upon the suggestion. She sat under the crystal chandelier reading a Southern newspaper which had been sent recently to Celia. Presently her agreeable voice sounded in appreciative recitation of what she was reading.

"Hath not the morning dawned with added light?
And shall not evening call another star
Out of the infinite regions of the night
To mark this day in Heaven? At last we are
A nation among nations; and the world
Shall soon behold in many a distant port
Another flag unfurled!"

"Listen, Celia," she said, "this is really beautiful:
A tint of pink fire touched Mrs. Craig's cheeks, but she said
nothing. And Ailsa went on, breathing out the opening beauty of
Timrod's "Ethnogenesis":

"Now come what may, whose favour need we court?
And, under God, whose thunder need we fear?"

She stopped short, considering the printed page. Then,
doubtfully:

"And what if, mad with wrongs themselves have wrought,
In their own treachery caught,
By their own fears made bold,
And leagued with him of old
Who long since, in the limits of the North,
Set up his evil throne, and warred with God—
What if, both mad and blinded in their rage
Our foes should fling us down the mortal gauge,

And with a hostile horde profane our sod!"

The girl reddened, sat breathing a little faster, eyes on the page; then:

"Nor would we shun the battleground!
... The winds in our defence
Shall seem to blow; to us the hills shall lend
Their firmness and their calm,
And in our stiffened sinews we shall blend
The strength of pine and palm!
Call up the clashing elements around
And test the right and wrong!
On one side creeds that dare to preach
What Christ and Paul refused to teach—"

"Oh!" she broke off with a sharp intake of breath; "Do they believe such things of us in the South, Celia?"

The pink fire deepened in Celia Craig's cheeks; her lips unclosed, tightened, as though a quick retort had been quickly reconsidered. She meditated. Then: "Honey-bell," she said tranquilly, "if we are bitter, try to remember that we are a nation in pain."

"*A nation!*"

"Dear, we have always been that—only the No'th has just found it out. Charleston is telling her now. God give that our cannon need not repeat it."

"But, Celia, the cannon *can't*! The same flag belongs to us both."

"Not when it flies over Sumter, Honey-bird." There came a subtle ringing sound in Celia Craig's voice; she leaned forward, taking the newspaper from Ailsa's idle fingers:

"Try to be fair," she said in unsteady tones. "God knows I am not trying to teach you secession, but suppose the guns on Governor's Island were suddenly swung round and pointed at this street? Would you care ve'y much what flag happened to be flying over Castle William? Listen to another warning from this stainless poet of the South." She opened the newspaper feverishly, glanced quickly down the columns, and holding it high under the chandelier, read in a hushed but distinct voice, picking out a verse here and there at random:

"Calm as that second summer which precedes
The first fall of the snow,
In the broad sunlight of heroic deeds
A city bides her foe.

"As yet, behind high ramparts stem and proud
Where bolted thunders sleep,
Dark Sumter like a battlemented cloud
Towers o'er the solemn deep.

"But still along the dim Atlantic's line
The only hostile smoke

Creeps like a harmless mist above the brine
From some frail floating oak.

"And still through streets re-echoing with trade
Walk grave and thoughtful men
Whose hands may one day wield the patriot's blade
As lightly as the pen.

"And maidens, with such eyes as would grow dim
Over a wounded hound
Seem each one to have caught the strength of him
Whose sword-knot she hath hound.

"Thus, girt without and garrisoned at home,
Day patient following day,
Old Charleston looks from roof and spire and dome
Across her tranquil bay.

"Shall the spring dawn, and she, still clad in steel,
And with an unscathed brow,
Watch o'er a sea unvexed by hostile keel
As fair and free as now?

"We know not. In the Temples of the Fates
God has inscribed her doom;
And, all untroubled in her faith she waits
Her triumph or her tomb!"

The hushed charm of their mother's voice fascinated the

children. Troubled, uncertain, Ailsa rose, took a few irresolute steps toward the extension where her brother-in-law still paced to and fro in the darkness, the tip of his cigar aglow. Then she turned suddenly.

"*Can't* you understand, Ailsa?" asked her sister-in-law wistfully.

"Celia—dearest," she stammered, "I simply can't understand. . . . I thought the nation was greater than all—"

"The State is greater, dear. Good men will realise that when they see a sovereign people standing all alone for human truth and justice—standing with book and sword under God's favour, as sturdily as ever Israel stood in battle fo' the right!—I don't mean to be disloyal to my husband in saying this befo' my children. But you ask me, and I must tell the truth if I answer at all."

Slender, upright, transfigured with a flushed and girlish beauty wholly strange to them, she moved restlessly back and forth across the room, a slim, lovely, militant figure all aglow with inspiration, all aquiver with emotion too long and loyally suppressed.

Paige and Marye, astonished, watched her without a word. Ailsa stood with one hand resting on the mantel, a trifle pale but also silent, her startled eyes following this new incarnation wearing the familiar shape of Celia Craig.

"Ailsa!"

"Yes, dear."

"Can you think evil of a people who po' out their hearts in

prayer and praise? Do traitors importune fo' blessings?"

She turned nervously to the piano and struck a ringing chord, another—and dropped to the chair, head bowed on her slim childish neck. Presently there stole through the silence a tremulous voice intoning the "Libera Nos," with its strange refrain:

"*A furore Normanorum Libera nos, O Domme!*" Then, head raised, the gas-light flashing on her dull-gold hair, her voice poured forth all that was swelling and swelling up in her bruised and stifled heart:

"God of our fathers! King of Kings!
Lord of the earth and sea!
With hearts repentant and sincere
We turn in need to thee."

She saw neither her children nor her husband nor Ailsa now, where they gathered silently beside her. And she sang on:

"In the name of God! Amen!
Stand for our Southern rights;
On our side. Southern men,
The God of Battles fights!
Fling the invader far—
Hurl back his work of woe—
His voice is the voice of a brother,
But his hands are the hands of a foe.
By the blood which cries to Heaven.

Crimson upon our sod
Stand, Southrons, fight and conquer
In the Name of the Living God!"

Like receding battle echoes the chords, clashing distantly, died away.

If she heard her husband turn, enter the hallway, and unbolt the door, she made no sign. Ailsa, beside her, stooped and passed one arm around her.

"You—are not crying, are you, Celia, darling?" she whispered.

Her sister-in-law, lashes wet, rose with decision.

"I think that I have made a goose of myse'f to-night. Marye, will you say to your father that it is after eleven o'clock, and that I am waiting to be well scolded and sent to bed?"

"Father went out a few moments ago," said Paige in an awed voice.

"I heard him unbolt the front door."

Ailsa turned and walked swiftly out into the hallway; the front door swung wide; Mr. Craig stood on the steps wearing his hat. He looked around as she touched his arm.

"Oh, is it you, Ailsa?" There was a moment's indecision. Through it, once more, far away in the city The Voices became audible again, distant, vague, incessant.

"I thought—if it is actually an extra—" he began carelessly and hesitated; and she said:

"Let me go with you. Wait. I'll speak to Celia."

"Say to her that I'll be gone only a moment."

When Ailsa returned she slipped her arm through his and they descended the steps and walked toward Fulton Avenue. The Voices were still distant; a few people, passing swiftly through the dusk, preceded them. Far down the vista of the lighted avenue dark figures crossed and recrossed the street, silhouetted against the gas-lights; some were running. A man called out something as they passed him. Suddenly, right ahead in the darkness, they encountered people gathered before the boarded fence of a vacant lot, a silent crowd shouldering, pushing, surging back and forth, swarming far out along the dimly lighted avenue.

"There's a bulletin posted there," whispered Ailsa. "Could you lift me in your arms?"

Her brother-in-law stooped, clasped her knees, and lifted her high up above the sea of heads. Kerosene torches flickered beyond, flanking a poster on which was printed in big black letters:

"WASHINGTON, April 13, 1861, 6 A.M. "At half-past four o'clock this morning fire was opened on Fort Sumter by the rebel batteries in the harbour. Major Anderson is replying with his barbette guns."

"8 A.M.

"A private despatch to the N. Y. Herald says that the batteries on Mount Pleasant have opened on Sumter. Major Anderson has brought into action two tiers of guns trained on Fort Moultrie

and the Iron Battery."

"3 P.M.

"The fire at this hour is very heavy. Nineteen batteries are bombarding Sumter. The fort replies briskly. The excitement in Charleston is intense."

"LATER.

"Heavy rain storm. Firing resumed this evening. The mortar batteries throw a shell into the fort every twenty minutes. The fort replies at intervals."

"LATEST.

"The fort is still replying. Major Anderson has signalled the fleet outside."

All this she read aloud, one hand resting on Craig's shoulder as he held her aloft above the throng. Men crowding around and striving to see, paused, with up-turned faces, listening to the emotionless young voice. There was no shouting, no sound save the trample and shuffle of feet; scarcely a voice raised, scarcely an exclamation.

As Craig lowered her to the pavement, a man making his way out said to them:

"Well, I guess that ends it."

Somebody replied quietly: "I guess that *begins* it."

Farther down the avenue toward the City Hall where the new marble court house was being built, a red glare quivered incessantly against the darkness; distant hoarse rumours penetrated the night air, accented every moment by the sharper

clamour of voices calling the *Herald's* extras.

"Curt?"

"Yes, dear."

"If he surrenders—"

"It makes no difference what he does now, child."

"I know it. . . . They've dishonoured the flag. This is war, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Will it be a long war?"

"I think not."

"Who will go?"

"I don't know. . . . Soldiers."

"I didn't suppose we had enough. Where are we going to get more?"

"The people—" he said absently—"everybody, I suppose. How do I know, child?"

"Just ordinary people?"

"Just ordinary people," he responded quietly. A few minutes later as they entered their own street he said:

"I suppose I had better tell my wife about this to-night. I don't know—it will be in the morning papers; but I think I had better break it to her to-night."

"She will have to know—sometime—of course—"

Halting at the foot of the stoop he turned and peered through his glasses at his sister-in-law.

"I don't want Stephen to start any nonsense about going."

"Going where?" she asked innocently.

He hesitated: "I don't want to hear any talk from him about enlisting. That is what I mean. Your influence counts with him more deeply than you know. Remember that."

"Steve—*enlist!*" she repeated blankly.

She could not yet comprehend what all this had to do with people she personally knew—with her own kin.

"He must not enlist, of course," she said curtly. "There are plenty of soldiers—there will be plenty, of course. I—"

Something silenced her, something within her sealed her lips. She stood in silence while Craig fitted his night-key, then entered the house with him. Gas burned low in the hall globes; when he turned it off a fainter light from above guided them.

"Celia, is that you?" she called gently,

"Hush; go to bed, Honey-bell. Everybody is asleep. How pale you are, Curt—dearest—dearest—"

The rear room was Ailsa's; she walked into it and dropped down on the bed in the darkness. The door between the rooms closed: she sat perfectly still, her eyes were wide open, staring in front of her.

Queer little luminous shapes danced through obscurity like the names from the kerosene torches around the bulletin; her ears still vibrated with the hoarse alarm of the voices; through her brain sounded her brother-in-law's words about Steve, repeated incessantly, stupidly.

Presently she began to undress by sense of touch. The gas in

the bathroom was lighted; she completed her ablutions, turned it off, and felt her way back to the bed.

Lying there she became aware of sounds from the front room. Celia was still awake; she distinguished her voice in quick, frightened exclamation; then the low murmur continued for a while, then silence fell.

She raised herself on one elbow; the crack of light under the door was gone; there was no sound, no movement in the house except the measured tick of the hall clock outside, tic-toc!—tic-toc!—tic-toc!

And she had been lying there a long, long while, eyes open, before she realised that the rhythm of the hall clock was but a repetition of a name which did not concern her in any manner:

"Berk-ley!—Berk-ley!—Berk-ley!"

How it had crept into her consciousness she could not understand; she lay still, listening, but the tic-toc seemed to fit the syllables of his name; and when, annoyed, she made a half disdainful mental attempt to substitute other syllables, it proved too much of an effort, and back into its sober, swinging rhythm slipped the old clock's tic-toe, in wearisome, meaningless repetition:

"Berk-ley!—Berk-ley!—Berk-ley!"

She was awakened by a rapping at her door and her cousin's imperative voice:

"I want to talk to you; are you in bed?"

She drew the coverlet to her chin and called out:

"Come in, Steve!"

He came, tremendously excited, clutching the *Herald* in one hand.

"I've had enough of this rebel newspaper!" he said fiercely. "I don't want it in the house again, ever. Father says that the marine news makes it worth taking, but—"

"What on earth are you trying to say, Steve?"

"I'm trying to tell you that we're at war! War, Ailsa! Do you understand? Father and I've had a fight already—"

"What?"

"They're still firing on Sumter, I tell you, and if the fort doesn't hold out do you think I'm going to sit around the house like a pussy cat? Do you think I'm going to business every day as though nothing was happening to the country I'm living in? I tell you now—you and mother and father—that I'm not built that way—"

Ailsa rose in bed, snatched the paper from his grasp, and leaning on one arm gazed down at the flaring head-lines:

THE WAR BEGUN

Very Exciting News from Charleston
Bombardment of Fort Sumter Commenced
Terrible Fire from the Secessionists' Batteries
Brilliant Defence of Maj. Anderson
Reckless Bravery of the Confederate States Troops.

And, scanning it to the end, cried out:

"He hasn't hauled down his flag! What are you so excited about?"

"I—I'm excited, of course! He can't possibly hold out with only eighty men and nothing to feed them on. Something's got to be done!" he added, walking up and down the room. "I've made fun of the militia—like everybody else—but Jimmy Lent is getting ready, and I'm doing nothing! Do you hear what I'm saying, Ailsa?"

She looked up from the newspaper, sitting there cross-legged under the coverlet.

"I hear you, Steve. I don't know what you mean by 'something's got to be done.' Major Anderson is doing what he can—bless him!"

"That's all right, but the thing isn't going to stop there."

"Stop where?"

"At Sumter. They'll begin firing on Fortress Monroe and Pensacola—I—how do you know they're not already thinking about bombarding Washington? Virginia is going out of the Union; the entire South is out, or going. Yesterday, I didn't suppose there was any use in trying to get them back again. Father did, but I didn't. I think it's got to be done, now. And the question is, Ailsa, whose going to do it?"

But she was fiercely absorbed again in the news, leaning close over the paper, tumbled dull-gold hair falling around her bare

shoulders, breath coming faster and more irregularly as she read the incredible story and strove to comprehend its cataclysmic significance.

"If others are going, I am," repeated her cousin sullenly.

"Going where, Steve?—Oh—"

She dropped the paper and looked up, startled; and he looked back at her, defiant, without a flicker in those characteristic family eyes of his, clear as azure, steady to punishment given or taken—good eyes for a boy to inherit. And he inherited them from his rebel mother.

"Father can't keep me home if other people go," he said.

"Wait until other people go." She reached out and laid a hand on his arm.

"Things are happening too fast, Steve, too fast for everybody to quite understand just yet. Everybody will do what is the thing to do; the family will do what it ought to. . . . Has your mother seen this?"

"Yes. Neither she nor father have dared speak about it before us—" He made a gesture of quick despair, walked to the window and back.

"It's a terrible thing, Ailsa, to have mother feel as she does."

"How could she feel otherwise?"

"I've done my best to explain to her—"

"O Steve! *You!*—when it's a matter between her soul and God!"

He said, reddening: "It's a matter of common-sense—I don't

mean to insult mother—but—good Lord, a nation is a nation, but a state is only a state! I—hang it all—what's the use of trying to explain what is born in one—"

"The contrary was born in your mother, Steve. Don't ever talk to her this way. And—go out, please, I wish to dress."

He went away, saying over his shoulders: "I only wanted to tell you that I'm not inclined to sit sucking my thumb if other men go, and you can say so to father, who has forbidden me to mention the subject to him again until I have his permission."

But he went away to business that morning with his father, as usual; and when evening came the two men returned, anxious, dead tired, having passed most of the day standing in the dense throngs that choked every street around the bulletin boards of the newspaper offices.

Ailsa had not been out during the day, nor had Mrs. Craig, except for an hour's drive in the family coupe around the district where preliminary surveys for the new Prospect Park were being pushed.

They had driven for almost an hour in utter silence. Her sister-in-law's hand lay clasped in hers, but both looked from the carriage windows without speaking, and the return from the drive found them strangely weary and inclined for the quiet of their own rooms. But Celia Craig could not close her eyes even to feign sleep to herself.

When husband and son returned at evening, she asked nothing of the news from them, but her upturned face lingered a second

or two longer as her husband kissed her, and she clung a little to Stephen, who was inclined to be brief with her.

Dinner was a miserable failure in that family, which usually had much to compare, much to impart, much badinage and laughter to distribute. But the men were weary and uncommunicative; Estcourt Craig went to his club after dinner; Stephen, now possessing a latch-key, disappeared shortly afterward.

Paige and Marye did embroidery and gossiped together under the big crystal chandelier while their mother read aloud to them from "Great Expectations," which was running serially in *Harper's Weekly*. Later she read in her prayer-book; later still, fully dressed, she lay across the bed in the alcove staring at the darkness and listening for the sound of her husband's latch-key in the front door,

When it sounded, she sprang up and hastily dried her eyes.

"The children and Ailsa are all abed, Curt. How late you are! It was not very wise of you to go out—being so tired—" She was hovering near him as though to help his weariness with her small offices; she took his hat, stood looking at him, then stepped nearer, laying both hands on his shoulders, and her face against his.

"I am—already tired of the—war," she sighed. "Is it ended yet, Curt?"

"There is no more news from Sumter."

"You will—love me—best—anyway. Curt—won't you?"

"Do you doubt it?"

She only drew a deep, frightened breath. For within her heart she felt the weight of the new apprehension—the clairvoyant premonition of a rival that she must prepare to encounter—a rival that menaced her peace of mind—a shape, shadowy as yet, but terrible, slowly becoming frightfully denned—a Thing that might one day wean this man from her—husband, and son, too—both perhaps—.

"Curt," she faltered, "it will all come right in the end. Say it. I am afraid."

"It will come out all right," he said gently. They kissed, and she turned to the mirror and silently began preparing for the night.

With the calm notes of church bells floating out across the city, and an April breeze blowing her lace curtains, Ailsa awoke. Overhead she heard the trample of Stephen's feet as he moved leisurely about his bedroom. Outside her windows in the backyard, early sunshine slanted across shrub and grass and white-washed fence; the Sunday quiet was absolute, save for the church bells.

She lay there listening and thinking; the church bells ceased; and after a while, lying there, she began to realise that the silence was unnatural—became conscious of something ominous in the intense quiet outside—a far-spread stillness which was more than the hush of Sabbath.

Whether or not the household was still abed she did not know; no sound came from Celia's room; nor were Marye and Paige

stirring on the floor above when she rose and stole out barefooted to the landing, holding a thin silk chamber robe around her. She paused, listening; the tic-toc of the hall clock accented the silence; the door that led from Celia's chamber into the hall stood wide open, and there was nobody in sight. Something drew her to the alcove window, which was raised; through the lace curtains she saw the staff of the family flag set in its iron socket at right angles to the facade—saw the silken folds stirring lazily in the sunshine, tiptoed to the window and peered out.

As far as her eyes could see, east and west, the street was one rustling mass of flags.

For a second her heart almost hurt her with its thrilling leap; she caught her breath; the hard tension in her throat was choking her; she dropped to her knees by the sill, drew a corner of the flag to her, and laid her cheek against it.

Her eyes unclosed and she gazed out upon the world of flags; then, upright, she opened her fingers, and the crinkled edges of the flag, released, floated leisurely out once more into the April sunshine.

When she had dressed she found the family in the dining-room—her sister-in-law, serene but pale, seated behind the coffee urn, Mr. Craig and Stephen reading the Sunday newspapers, Paige and Marye whispering together over their oatmeal and cream.

She kissed Celia, dropped the old-fashioned, half-forgotten curtsey to the others, and stood hesitating a moment, one hand resting on Celia's shoulder.

"Is the fort holding out?" she asked.

Stephen looked up angrily, made as though to speak, but a deep flush settled to the roots of his hair and he remained silent.

"Fort Sumter has surrendered," said her brother-in-law quietly.

Celia whispered: "Take your seat now, Honey-bell; your breakfast is getting cold."

At church that Sunday the Northern clergy prayed in a dazed sort of way for the Union and for the President; some addressed the Most High as "The God of Battles." The sun shone brightly; new leaves were startling on every tree in every Northern city; acres of starry banners drooped above thousands of departing congregations, and formed whispering canopies overhead.

Vespers were solemn; April dusk fell over a million roofs and spires; twinkling gas jets were lighted in street lamps; city, town, and hamlet drew their curtains and bowed their heads in darkness. A dreadful silence fell over the North—a stillness that breeds epochs and the makers of them.

But the first gray pallor of the dawn awoke a nation for the first time certain of its entity, roaring its comprehension of it from the Lakes to the Potomac, from sea to sea; and the red sun rose over twenty States in solid battle line thundering their loyalty to a Union undivided,

And on that day rang out the first loud call to arms; and the first battalion of the Northland, seventy-five thousand strong, formed ranks, cheering their insulted flag.

Then, southward, another flag shot up above the horizon. The world already knew it as The Stars and Bars. And, beside it, from its pointed lance, whipped and snapped and fretted another flag—square, red, crossed by a blue saltier edged with white on which glittered thirteen stars.

It was the battle flag of the Confederacy flashing the answer to the Northern cheer.

CHAPTER V

"Burgess!"

"Sir?"

Berkley sat up in bed and viewed his environment with disgust.

"These new lodgings would make a fair kennel, wouldn't they, Burgess?—if a man isn't too particular about his dog."

The servant entered with a nasty smirk. "Yes, sir; I seen a rat last night."

"He's not the only one, is he, Burgess," yawned Berkley. "Oh, hell! I've got to dress. Did you paint that bathtub? I guess you did, the place reeks like a paint shop. Anyway, it kills less desirable aromas. Where's the water?"

He swung his symmetrical body to the bed's edge, dropped lightly to the carpet, unloosed his night robe, and stretched himself.

"Was I very drunk, Burgess?"

"No, sir; you just went to sleep. You haven't got no headache, have you?"

"No—but it was only corn whisky. I didn't remember what I did with it. Is there any left?"

"Not much, sir."

The servant, ugly to the verge of deformity, and wearing invariably the abominable smirk that disgusted others but

amused Berkley, went about his duties.

Berkley blinked at him reflectively, then bathed, dressed, and sat down to a bowl of chocolate and a bit of bread.

"What the devil was all that row this morning, Burgess?"

"War, sir. The President has called for seventy-five thousand men. Here it is, sir." And he laid a morning paper beside the cup of chocolate, which Berkley studied between sips, commenting occasionally aloud:

"Heavens, Burgess, why, we're a race of patriots! Now who on earth could have suspected that. . . . Why, we seem to be heroes, too! What do you think of that, Burgess? You're a hero; I'm a hero; everybody north of Charleston is an embattled citizen or a hero! Isn't it funny that nobody realised all this before?" . . . He turned the paper leisurely sipping his chocolate. . . . "*Of* course—the 'dear old flag'! That's the cheese, isn't it, Burgess? Been insulted, hasn't it? And we're all going to Charleston to punch that wicked Beauregard in the nose. . . . Burgess, you and I are neglecting our duty as heroes; there's much shouting to be done yet, much yelling in the streets, much arguing to be done, many, many cocktails to be firmly and uncompromisingly swallowed. Are you prepared to face the serious consequences of being a hero?"

"Yes, sir," said Burgess.

"You merit well of the republic! The country needs you. Here's half a dollar. Do your duty unflinchingly—at the nearest bar!"

Burgess took the coin with a smirk.

"Mr. Berkley, the landlady sent word that times is hard."

"Bless her soul! They *are* hard, Burgess. Inform her of my sentiments," said Berkley cordially. "Now, my hat and cane, if you please. We're a wonderful people, Burgess; we'll beat our walking-sticks into bayonets if Mr. Beauregard insists on saying boo to us too many times in succession. . . . And, Burgess?"

"Sir?"

"Now that you have waked up this morning to find yourself a hero, I think you'd better find yourself another and more spectacular master. My heroism, for the future, is to be more or less inconspicuous; in fact, I begin the campaign by inserting my own studs and cleaning my own clothes, and keeping out of gaol; and the sooner I go where that kind of glory calls me the sooner my name will be emblazoned in the bright lexicon of youth where there's no such word as 'jail.'",

"Sir?"

"In simpler and more archaic phrase, I can't afford you, Burgess, unless I pilfer for a living."

"I don't eat much, sir."

"No, you don't *eat* much."

"I could quit drinking, sir."

"*That* is really touching, Burgess. This alcohol pickled integument of yours covers a trusting heart. But it won't do. Heroics in a hall bedroom cut no coupons, my poor friend. Our paths to glory and the grave part just outside the door-sill

yonder."

"*She* said I could stay, sir."

"Which *she*?"

"The landlady. I'm to fetch coal and run errants and wait on table. But you'll get the best cuts, sir. And after hours I can see to your clothes and linen and boots and hats, and do your errants same like the usual."

"Now this is nearly as pathetic as our best fiction," said Berkley; "ruined master, faithful man—*won't* leave—starves slowly at his master's feet—tootle music very sneaky—'transformation! Burgess in heaven, blinking, puzzled, stretching one wing, reflectively scratching his halo with right hind foot. Angel chorus. Burgess appears to enjoy it and lights one of my best cigars—"

"Sir?" said Burgess, very red.

Berkley swung around, levelled his walking-stick, and indicated the pit of his servant's stomach:

"Your face is talking now; wait till *that* begins to yell. It will take more than I'm earning to fill it."

He stood a moment, smiling, curious. Then:

"You've been as faithless a valet as any servant who ever watered wine, lost a gimcrack, or hooked a weed. Studs, neckcloths, bootjacks, silk socks, pins, underwear—all magically and eventually faded from my wardrobe, wafted to those silent bournes of swag that valets wot of. What in hell do you want to stay *here* for now, you amusing wastrel?"

"Yes, sir. I'd prefer to stay with you."

"But there'll be no more pleasant pickings, my poor and faithless steward! If you should convert anything more to your own bank account I'll be obliged to stroll about naked."

"Yes, sir," muttered Burgess; "I brought back some things last night—them socks, shirt-pins and studs, and the fob. . . . Yes, sir; I fetched 'em back, I did—" A sudden and curious gleam of pride crossed the smirk for an instant;—"I guess my gentleman ain't agoing to *look* no worse than the next Fifth Avenue swell he meets—even if he ain't et no devilled kidneys for breakfast and he don't dine on no canvas-back at Delmonico's. No, sir."

Berkley sat down on the bed's edge and laughed until he could scarcely see the man, who observed him in patient annoyance. And every time Berkley looked at him he went into another fit of uncontrollable laughter, as he realised the one delightful weakness in this thorough-paced rogue—pride in the lustre cast upon himself by the immaculate appearance of a fashionable master. But after reflection, it did not astonish him too much; the besetting weakness of rogues is vanity in one form or another. This happened to be an unusual form.

"Burgess," he said, "I don't care how you go to hell. Go with me if you like or go it alone."

"Thank you, sir."

"You're welcome," replied Berkley gravely, and, tucking his cane up under one arm, he went out to business, drawing on a pair of lemon-coloured kid gloves.

Later he searched his pockets for the cigar he had denied himself the evening before. It was not there. In fact, at that moment, Burgess, in the boarding-house backyard, was promenading up and down, leering at the Swedish scullion, and enjoying the last expensive cigar that his master was likely to purchase in many a day.

The street, and avenue were seething with people; people stood at their windows looking out at the news-boys who swarmed everywhere, shouting endless extras; people were gathering on corners, in squares, along park railings, under porticos of hotels, and every one of them had a newspaper and was reading.

In front of the St. Nicholas Hotel a lank and shabby man had mounted a cracker box, and was evidently making a speech, but Berkley could distinguish nothing he said because of the wild cheering.

Everywhere, threading the throng, hurried boys and men selling miniature flags, red-white-and-blue rosettes, and tricoloured cockades; and everybody was purchasing the national colours—the passing crowd had already become bright with badges; the Union colours floated in streamers from the throats or sleeves of pretty girls, glinted in the lapels of dignified old gentlemen, decorated the hats of the stage-drivers and the blinders of their horses.

"Certainly," said Berkley, buying a badge and pinning it in his button-hole. "Being a hero, I require the trade-mark. Kindly

permit that I offer a suggestion—" a number of people waiting to buy badges; were now listening to him—"those gentlemen gathered there in front of the New York Hotel seem to be without these marks which distinguish heroes from citizens. No doubt they'll be delighted to avail themselves of your offered cockades."

A quick laugh broke out from those around, but there was an undertone of menace in it, because the undecorated gentlemen in front of the New York Hotel were probably Southerners, and Secessionists in principles; that hostelry being the rendezvous in New York of everything Southern.

So, having bestowed his mischievous advice, Berkley strolled on down Broadway, his destination being the offices of Craig and Son, City and Country Real Estate, where he had a desk to himself, a client or two in prospect, and considerable leisure to study the street, gas, and sewer maps of New York City.

Tiring of this distraction, he was always at liberty to twiddle his thumbs, twirl his pencil, yawn, blink, and look out of the window at the City Park across the way, where excited citizens maintained a steady yelling monotone before the neighbouring newspaper offices all day long.

He was also free to reflect upon his own personal shortcomings, a speculation perhaps less damaging than the recent one he had indulged in; and he thought about it sometimes; and sometimes about Ailsa Paige, whom he had not again seen since the unaccountable madness had driven him to trample and destroy the first real inclination he had ever had for a woman.

This inclination he occasionally found leisure to analyse, but, not understanding it, never got very far, except that, superficially, it had been more or less physical. From the moment he saw her he was conscious that she was different; insensibly the exquisitely volatile charm of her enveloped him, and he betrayed it, awaking her, first, to uneasy self-consciousness; then uneasy consciousness of him; then, imperceptibly, through distrust, alarm, and a thousand inexplicable psychological emotions, to a wistful interest that faintly responded to his. Ah! that response!—strange, childish, ignorant, restless—but still a response; and from obscure shallows unsuspected, uncomprehended—shallows that had never before warned her with the echo of an evanescent ripple.

For him to have reflected, reasoned, halted himself, had been useless from the beginning. The sister-in-law of this girl knew who and what he was and had been. There was no hope for him. To let himself drift; to evoke in her, sometimes by hazard, at times with intent, the delicate response—faint echo—pale shadow of the virile emotions she evoked in him, that, too, was useless. He knew it, yet curious to try, intent on developing communication through those exquisite and impalpable lines that threaded the mystery from him to her—from her to him.

And then, when the mystery all about them was aquiver, and her vague eyes met his through the magic, acquiescent under a sorcery for which she had no name—then, when all things occult breathed silence—then he had said too much!

It was perhaps as well that he had said it then as later—as well perhaps that, losing self-control, defeat had moved his tongue to boast, had fixed the empty eye and stamped the smile he wore with a confidence dead in him for ever.

He had said that he would come back. He knew that he would not.

It was the pitiful defiance of a boaster hopelessly hurt.

He no longer desired to see her again. Never again would he risk enduring what she had evoked in him, whatever it was of good or of evil, of the spiritual or the impure—he did not know he was aware only of what his eyes had beheld and his heart had begun to desire.

On his way back from the office that evening he met Camilla Lent and her uncle, the Captain, and would have passed with an amiable salute, but the girl evinced a decided desire to speak. So he turned and joined them.

"How do you do, Camilla? How are you, Captain Lent? This re-conversion of the nation's ploughshares and pruning hooks is a noisy affair, isn't it?"

"April 18th, 1861!" replied the Captain quickly. "What you hear, sir, is the attrition consequent upon the grinding together of certain millstones belonging to the gods."

"I have no doubt of it, Captain Lent; they'll probably make meal of us all. Are you offering your services, sir."

Camilla said quickly, and with gayest confidence: "Uncle has been looking about casually. There are so many regiments

forming, so many recruiting stations that we—we haven't decided—have we, uncle?" And she gave Berkley a wistful, harrowing glance that enlightened him.

He said gravely: "I suppose the average age of these volunteers will be about eighteen. And if the militia go, too, it will be comforting for a defenceless city to know she has men of your experience to count on, Captain Lent."

"I am going to the front," observed the Captain.

"There may be much to be done in New York, sir."

"Then let the police do it," said Captain Lent calmly. "The Union must and shall be preserved. If any man attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him upon the spot. Et cetera, sir, et cetera."

"Certainly. But it's a question of niggers, too, I believe."

"No, sir. It is *not* a question of niggers. It is a question of who's at the wheel, Union or State. I myself never had any doubts any more than I ever doubted the Unitarian faith! So it is no question for me, sir. What bothers me is to pick out the regiment most likely to be sent first."

"We've walked our legs off," said Camilla, aside, "and we've been in all kinds of frightful places where men are drilling and smoking and swearing and yelling; and I was dreadfully afraid a gun would go off or somebody would be impudent to uncle. The dear old thing," she whispered, "he is perfectly sure they want him and that he has only to choose a regiment and offer his sword. Oh, dear! I'm beginning to be terribly unhappy—I'm

afraid they won't let him go and I'm deadly afraid they might! And I'm sure that Jim means to go. Oh, dear! Have you seen Ailsa Paige lately?"

"No. . . . I hope she is quite well."

"You are not very enthusiastic."

"I have every reason to be. She is a very winsome girl."

"She's a dear. . . . She has spoken of you several times."

"That is most amiable of her, and of you to say so."

"Oh, very," laughed Camilla, tossing her pretty head, "but it evidently does not interest you very much. In fact—" she glanced sidewise—"it is understood that no woman ever interests you for more than forty-eight consecutive hours."

"Pure slander, Camilla. *You* do."

"Oh—not in the way I mean."

"Well, but you don't expect me to be interested in Mrs. Paige—in the way *you* mean do you?"

"Why not?" she asked mischievously.

"Because, to begin properly, Mrs. Paige is not likely ever to become interested in me."

"I am heartily glad of it," retorted Camilla. "You'd forget her in a week,"

"That's more than forty-eight hours," he said, laughing. "You're flattering me now."

"Anyway," said Camilla, "I don't see why everybody that knows her isn't mad about Ailsa Paige. She has *such* high principles, such ideals, such wonderful aspirations—" She

clasped her hands sentimentally: "At times, Phil, she seems too ethereal, scarcely of earth—and yet I breakfasted with her and she ate twice as much as I did. *How* does she keep that glorious figure!"

Plumpness was the bane and terror of Camilla's life. Her smooth, suave white skin was glossy and tight; distracting curves, entrancing contours characterised her now; but her full red lips fairly trembled as she gazed at her parents' portraits in her bedroom, for they had both been of a florid texture and full habit; and she had now long refused sugar and the comforts of sweetmeats dear to the palate of her age and sex. And mostly was this self-denial practised for the sake of a young and unobservant friend, one Stephen Craig, who had so far evinced no unusual inclination for her, or for anything except cigars and masculine society of his own age and condition.

She managed to get Philip Berkley to talk about Stephen, which ingenuity soothed her. But Philip was becoming bored, and he presently escaped to retrace his steps up Broadway, up Fifth Avenue, and then west to the exceedingly modest lodgings whither fate and misfortune had wafted him.

On the way he passed Colonel Arran's big double house with a sullen and sidelong scowl, and continued onward with a shrug. But he smiled no more to himself.

Burgess was in the room, cross-legged on the floor, ironing out his master's best coat.

"What the devil are you about," said Philip ungraciously. "Get

up.

I need what floor I've got to stand on."

Burgess obediently laid the board and the coat on a trunk and continued ironing; and Philip scowled at him askance.

"Why don't you enlist?" he said. "Every car-driver, stage-driver, hackman, and racing-tout can become major-generals if they yell loud enough."

Burgess continued ironing, then stole a glance at his master.

"Are you thinking of enlisting, sir?"

"No; I can't pass the examination for lung power. By the way," he added, laughing, "I overlooked the impudence of your question, too. But now is your time, Burgess. If I wanted you I'd have to put up with your insolence, I suppose."

"But you don't want me, sir."

"Which restrains you," said Philip, laughing. "Oh, go on, my friend. Don't say 'sir' to me; it's a badge of servitude pasted onto the vernacular. Say 'Hi!' if you like."

"Sir?"

"Hell! I say don't behave like a servant to me."

"I *am* a servant, sir."

"You're not mine."

"Yes, sir, I am. Will you wear this coat this evening, sir?"

"God knows," said the young fellow, sitting down and gazing about at the melancholy poverty of the place. . . . "Is there any of that corn whisky?"

"No, sir."

"Damn it, you said there was this morning!"

"No, sir, I didn't."

The man lied placidly; the master looked at him, then laughed.

"Poor old Burgess," he said aloud as though to himself; "there wasn't a skinful in that bottle. Well, I can't get drunk, I can't lie here and count from six to midnight and keep my sanity, I can't smoke—you rascal, where's my cigar? And I certainly can't go out anywhere because I haven't any money."

"You might take the air on the avenue, sir. Your clothes are in order."

"Poor Burgess! That was your amusement, wasn't it?—to see me go out discreetly perfumed, in fine linen and purple, brave as the best of them in club and hall, in ballroom and supper room, and in every lesser hell from Crystal Palace cinders to Canal.

"Poor Burgess! Even the seventy-five pretty waitresses at the Gaities would turn up their seventy-five retrousse noses at a man with pockets as empty as mine."

"Your clothes are fashionable. So is your figger, sir."

"That settles it?" protested the young fellow, weak with laughter. "Burgess, *don't* go! Don't *ever* go! I do need you. Oh I *do* want you, Burgess. Because there never will be anybody exactly like you, and I've only one life in which to observe you, study you, and mentally digest you. You *won't* go, will you?"

"No sir," said Burgess with dignity.

CHAPTER VI

There was incipient demoralisation already in the offices of Craig & Son. Young gentlemen perched on high benches still searched city maps and explored high-way and by-way with compass and pencil-point, but their ears were alert to every shout from the streets, and their interest remained centred in the newspaper bulletins across the way, where excited crowds clamoured for details not forthcoming.

All day, just outside the glass doors of the office, Broadway streamed with people; and here, where the human counter currents running north and south encountered amid the racket of omnibuses, carts, carriages, and drays, a vast overflow spread turbulently, eddying out around the recruiting stations and newspaper offices which faced the City Park.

Sidewalks swarmed, the park was packed solid. Overhead flags flew from every flag pole, over every portal, across every alley and street and square—big nags, little flags, flags of silk, of cotton, of linen, of bunting, all waving wide in the spring sunshine, or hanging like great drenched flowers in the winnowing April rain.

And it was very hard for the young gentlemen in the offices of Craig & Son to keep their minds on their business.

Berkley had a small room to himself, a chair, a desk, a city map suspended against the wall, and no clients. Such occasional

commissions as Craig & Son were able to give him constituted his sole source of income.

He also had every variety of time on his hands—leisure to walk to the window and walk back again, and then walk all around the room—leisure to go out and solicit business in a city where already business was on the edge of chaos and still sliding—leisure to sit for hours in his chair and reflect upon anything he chose—leisure to be hungry and satisfy the inclination with philosophy. He was perfectly at liberty to choose any subject and think about it. But he spent most of his time in trying to prevent himself from thinking.

However, from his window, the street views now were usually interesting; he was an unconvinced spectator of the mob which started for the *Daily News* office, hissing, cat-calling, yelling: "Show your colours!" "Run up your colours!" He saw the mob visit the *Journal of Commerce*, and then turn on the *Herald*, yelling insult and bellowing threats which promptly inspired that journal to execute a political flip-flap that set the entire city smiling.

Stephen, who had conceived a younger man's furtive admiration for Berkley and his rumoured misdemeanours, often came into his room when opportunity offered. That morning he chanced in for a moment and found Berkley at the window chewing the end of a pencil, perhaps in lieu of the cigar he could no longer afford.

"These are spectacular times," observed the latter, with

a gesture toward the street below. "Observe yonder ladylike warrior in brand-new regimentals. Apparently, Stephen, he's a votary of Mars and pants for carnage; but in reality he continues to remain the sartorial artist whose pants are more politely emitted. He emitted these—" patting his trousers with a ruler. "On what goose has this my tailor fed that he hath grown so sightly!"

They stood watching the crowds, once brightened only by the red shirts of firemen or the blue and brass of a policeman, but now varied with weird uniforms, or parts of uniforms, constructed on every known and unknown pattern, military and unmilitary, foreign and domestic. The immortal army at Coventry was not more variegated.

"There's a new poster across the street," said Stephen. He indicated a big advertisement decorated with a flying eagle.

DOWN WITH SECESSION!

The Government Appeals to the New York Fire Department for One Regiment of Zouaves!

Companies will select their own officers. The roll is at Engine House 138, West Broadway.

ELSWORTH, COL: ZOUAVES

"That's a good, regiment to enlist in, isn't it?" said the boy restlessly.

"Cavalry for me," replied Berkley, unsmiling; "they can run faster."

"I'm serious," said Stephen. "If I had a chance—" He turned on Berkley: "Why don't you, enlist? There's nothing to stop you, is there?"

"Nothing except constitutional timidity."

"Then why don't you?"

Berkley laughed. "Well, for one thing, I'm not sure how I'd behave in battle. I might be intelligent enough to run; I might be ass enough to fight. The enemy would have to take its chances."

The boy laughed, too, turned to the window, and suddenly caught Berkley by the arm:

"Look! There's something going on down by the Astor House!"

"A Massachusetts regiment of embattled farmers arrived in this hamlet last night. I believe they are to pass by here on their way to Washington," remarked Berkley, opening the window and leaning out.

Already dense crowds of people were pushing, fighting, forcing their way past the windows, driven before double lines of police; already distant volleys of cheers sounded; the throb of

drums became audible; the cheering sounded shriller, nearer.

Past the windows, through Broadway, hordes of ragged street arabs came running, scattered into night before another heavy escort of police. And now the on-coming drums could be heard more distinctly; and now two dusty officers marched into view, a colonel of Massachusetts infantry attended by a quartermaster of New York militia.

Behind them tramped the regimental band of the 6th Massachusetts, instruments slung; behind these, filling the street from gutter to gutter, surged the sweating drummers, deafening every ear with their racket; then followed the field and staff, then the Yankee regiment, wave on wave of bayonets choking the thoroughfare far as the eye could see, until there seemed no end to their coming, and the cheering had become an unbroken howl.

Stephen turned to Berkley: "A fellow can't see too much of this kind of thing and stand it very long. Those soldiers are no older than I am!"

Berkley's ironical reply was drowned in a renewed uproar as the Massachusetts soldiers wheeled and began to file into the Astor House, and the New York militia of the escort swung past hurrahing for the first Northern troops to leave for the front.

That day Berkley lunched in imagination only, seriously inclined to exchange his present board and lodgings for a dish of glory and a cot in barracks.

That evening, too, after a boarding-house banquet, and after Burgess had done his offices, he took the air instead of other and

more expensive distraction; and tired of it thoroughly, and of the solitary silver coin remaining in his pocket.

From his clubs he had already resigned; other and less innocent haunts of his were no longer possible; some desirable people still retained him on their lists, and their houses were probably open to him, but the social instinct was sick; he had no desire to go; no desire even to cross the river for a penny and look again on Ailsa Paige. So he had, as usual, the evening on his hands, nothing in his pockets, and a very weary heart, under a last year's evening coat. And his lodgings were becoming a horror to him; the landlady's cat had already killed two enormous rats in the hallway; also cabbage had been cooked in the kitchen that day. Which left him no other choice than to go out again and take more air.

Before midnight he had no longer any coin in his pockets, and he was not drunk yet. The situation seemed hopeless, and he found a policeman and inquired politely for the nearest recruiting station; but when he got there the station was closed, and his kicks on the door brought nobody but a prowling Bowery b'hoj, sullenly in quest of single combat. So Berkley, being at leisure, accommodated him, picked him up, propped him limply against a doorway, resumed his own hat and coat, and walked thoughtfully and unsteadily homeward, where he slept like an infant in spite of rats, cabbage, and a swollen lip.

Next day, however, matters were less cheerful. He had expected to realise a little money out of his last salable trinket

—a diamond he had once taken for a debt. But it seemed that the stone couldn't pass muster, and he bestowed it upon Burgess, breakfasted on coffee and sour bread, and sauntered downtown quite undisturbed in the brilliant April sunshine.

However, the prospect of a small commission from Craig & Son buoyed up his natural cheerfulness. All the way downtown he nourished his cane; he hummed lively tunes in his office as he studied his maps and carefully read the real estate reports in the daily papers; and then he wrote another of the letters which he never mailed, strolled out to Stephen's desk for a little gossip, reported himself to Mr. Craig, and finally sallied forth to execute that gentleman's behest upon an upper Fifth Avenue squatter who had declined to vacate property recently dedicated to blasting, the Irish, and general excavation.

In a few moments he found himself involved in the usual crowd. The 8th Massachusetts regiment was passing in the wake of the 6th, its sister regiment of the day before, and the enthusiasm and noise were tremendous.

However, he extricated himself and went about his business; found the squatter, argued with the squatter, gracefully dodged a brick from the wife of the squatter, laid a laughing complaint before the proper authorities, and then banqueted in imagination. What a luncheon he had! He was becoming a Lucullus at mental feasts.

Later, his business affairs and his luncheon terminated, attempting to enter Broadway at Grand Street, he got into a

crowd so rough and ungovernable that he couldn't get out of it—an unreasonable, obstinate, struggling mass of men, women, and children so hysterical that the wild demonstrations of the day previous, and of the morning, seemed as nothing compared to this dense, far-spread riot.

Broadway from Fourth to Cortlandt Streets was one tossing mass of flags overhead; one mad surge of humanity below. Through it battalions of almost exhausted police relieved each other in attempting to keep the roadway clear for the passing of the New York 7th on its way to Washington.

Driven, crushed, hurled back by the played-out police, the crowds had sagged back into the cross streets. But even here the police charged them repeatedly, and the bewildered people turned struggling to escape, stumbled, swayed, became panic-stricken and lost their heads.

A Broadway stage, stranded in Canal Street, was besieged as a refuge. Toward it Berkley had been borne in spite of his efforts to extricate himself, incidentally losing his hat in the confusion. At the same moment he heard a quiet, unterrified voice pronounce his name, caught a glimpse of Ailsa Paige swept past on the human wave, set his shoulders, stemmed the rush from behind, and into the momentary eddy created, Ailsa was tossed, undismayed, laughing, and pinned flat against the forward wheel of the stalled stage.

"Climb up!" he said. "Place your right foot on the hub!—now the left on the tire!—now step on my shoulder!"

There came a brutal rush from behind; he braced his back to it; she set one foot on the hub, the other on the tire, stepped to his shoulder, swung herself aloft, and crept up over the roof of the stage. Here he joined her, offering an arm to steady her as the stage shook under the impact of the reeling masses below.

"How did you get into this mob?" he asked.

"I was caught," she said calmly, steadying herself by the arm he offered and glancing down at the peril below. "Celia and I were shopping in Grand Street at Lord and Taylor's, and I thought I'd step out of the shop for a moment to see if the 7th was coming, and I ventured too far—I simply could not get back. . . . And—thank you for helping me." She had entirely recovered her serenity; she released his arm and now stood cautiously balanced behind the driver's empty seat, looking curiously out over the turbulent sea of people, where already hundreds of newsboys were racing hither and thither shouting an afternoon extra, which seemed to excite everybody within hearing to frenzy.

"Can you hear what they are shouting?" she inquired. "It seems to make people very angry."

"They say that the 6th Massachusetts, which passed through here yesterday, was attacked by a mob in Baltimore."

"*Our* soldiers!" she said, incredulous. Then, clenching her small hands: "If I were Colonel Lefferts of the 7th I'd march my men through Baltimore to-morrow!"

"I believe they expect to go through," he said, amused. "That is what they are for."

The rising uproar around was affecting her; the vivid colour in her lips and cheeks deepened. Berkley looked at her, at the cockade with its fluttering red-white-and-blue ribbons on her breast, at the clear, fearless eyes now brilliant with excitement and indignation.

"Have you thought of enlisting?" she asked abruptly, without glancing at him.

"Yes," he said, "I've ventured that far. It's perfectly safe to think about it. You have no idea, Mrs. Paige, what warlike sentiments I cautiously entertain in my office chair."

She turned nervously, with a sunny glint of gold hair and fluttering ribbons:

"Are you *never* perfectly serious, Mr. Berkley? Even at such a moment as this?"

"Always," he insisted. "I was only philosophising upon these scenes of inexpensive patriotism which fill even the most urbane and peaceful among us full of truculence. . . . I recently saw my tailor wearing a sword, attired in the made-to-measure panoply of battle."

"Did that strike you as humorous?"

"No, indeed; it fitted; I am only afraid he may find a soldier's grave before I can settle our sartorial accounts."

There was a levity to his pleasantries which sounded discordant to her amid the solemnly thrilling circumstances impending. For the flower of the city's soldiery was going forth to battle—a thousand gay, thoughtless young fellows summoned

from ledger, office, and counting-house; and all about her a million of their neighbours had gathered to see them go.

"Applause makes patriots. Why should I enlist when merely by cheering others I can stand here and create heroes in battalions?"

"I think," she said, "that there was once another scoffer who remained to pray."

As he did not answer, she sent a swift side glance at him, found him tranquilly surveying the crowd below where, at the corner of Canal and Broadway, half a dozen Zouaves, clothed in their characteristic and brilliant uniforms and wearing hairy knapsacks trussed up behind, were being vociferously acclaimed by the people as they passed, bayonets fixed.

"More heroes," he observed, "made immortal while you wait."

And now Ailsa became aware of a steady, sustained sound audible above the tumult around them; a sound like surf washing on a distant reef.

"Do you hear that? It's like the roar of the sea," she said. "I believe they're coming; I think I caught a strain of military music a moment ago!"

They rose on tiptoe, straining their ears; even the skylarking gamins who had occupied the stage top behind them, and the driver, who had reappeared, drunk, and resumed his reins and seat, stood up to listen.

Above the noise of the cheering, rolling steadily toward them over the human ocean, came the deadened throbbing of drums. A far, thin strain of military music rose, was lost, rose again; the

double thudding of the drums sounded nearer; the tempest of cheers became terrific. Through it, at intervals, they could catch the clear marching music of the 7th as two platoons of police, sixty strong, arrived, forcing their way into view, followed by a full company of Zouaves.

Then pandemonium broke loose as the matchless regiment swung into sight. The polished instruments of the musicians flashed in the sun; over the slanting drums the drumsticks rose and fell, but in the thundering cheers not a sound could be heard from brass or parchment.

Field and staff passed headed by the colonel; behind jolted two howitzers; behind them glittered the sabre-bayonets of the engineers; then, filling the roadway from sidewalk to sidewalk the perfect ranks of the infantry swept by under burnished bayonets.

They wore their familiar gray and black uniforms, forage caps, and blue overcoats, and carried knapsacks with heavy blankets rolled on top. And New York went mad.

What the Household troops are to England the 7th is to America. In its ranks it carries the best that New York has to offer. The polished metal gorgets of its officers reflect a past unstained; its pedigree stretches to the cannon smoke fringing the Revolution.

To America the 7th was always The Guard; and now, in the lurid obscurity of national disaster, where all things traditional were crashing down, where doubt, distrust, the agony of indecision turned government to ridicule and law to anarchy,

there was no doubt, no indecision in The Guard. Above the terrible clamour of political confusion rolled the drums of the 7th steadily beating the assembly; out of the dust of catastrophe emerged its disciplined gray columns. Doubters no longer doubted, uncertainty became conviction; in a situation without a precedent, the precedent was established; the *corps d'elite* of all state soldiery was answering the national summons; and once more the associated states of North America understood that they were first of all a nation indivisible.

Down from window and balcony and roof, sifting among the bayonets, fluttered an unbroken shower of tokens—gloves, flowers, handkerchiefs, tricoloured bunches of ribbon; and here and there a bracelet or some gem-set chain fell flashing through the sun.

Ailsa Craig, like thousands of her sisters, tore the red-white-and-blue rosette from her breast and flung it down among the bayonets with a tremulous little cheer.

Everywhere the crowd was breaking into the street; citizens marched with their hands on the shoulders of the soldiers; old gentlemen toddled along beside strapping sons; brothers passed arms around brothers; here and there a mother hung to the chevroned sleeve of son or husband who was striving to see ahead through blurring eyes; here and there some fair young girl, badged with the national colours, stretched out her arms from the crowd and laid her hands to the lips of her passing lover.

The last shining files of bayonets had passed; the city swarmed

like an ant-hill.

Berkley's voice was in her ears, cool, good-humoured:

"Perhaps we had better try to find Mrs. Craig. I saw Stephen in the crowd, and he saw us, so I do not think your sister-in-law will be worried."

She nodded, suffered him to aid her in the descent to the sidewalk, then drew a deep, unsteady breath and gazed around as though awaking from a dream.

"It certainly was an impressive sight," he said. "The Government may thank me for a number of heroes. I'm really quite hoarse."

She made no comment.

"Even a thousand well-fed brokers in uniform are bound to be impressive," he meditated aloud.

Her face flushed; she walked on ignoring his flippancy, ignoring everything concerning him until, crossing the street, she became aware that he wore no hat.

"Did you lose it?" she asked curtly,

"I don't know what happened to that hysterical hat, Mrs. Paige. Probably it went war mad and followed the soldiers to the ferry. You can never count on hats. They're flighty."

"You will have to buy another," she said, smiling.

"Oh, no," he said carelessly, "what is the use. It will only follow the next regiment out of town. Shall we cross?"

"Mr. Berkley, do you propose to go about town with me, hatless?"

"You have an exceedingly beautiful one. Nobody will look at me."

"Please be sensible!"

"I am. I'll take you to Lord and Taylor's, deliver you to your sister-in-law, and then slink home—"

"But I don't wish to go there with a hatless man! I can't understand—"

"Well, I'll have to tell you if you drive me to it," he said, looking at her very calmly, but a flush mounted to his cheekbones; "I have no money—with me."

"Why didn't you say so? How absurd not to borrow it from me—"

Something in his face checked her; then he laughed.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't know how poor I am," he said. "It doesn't worry me, so it certainly will not worry you. I can't afford a hat for a few days—and I'll leave you here if you wish. Why do you look so shocked? Oh, well—then we'll stop at Genin's. They know me there."

They stopped at Genin's and he bought a hat and charged it, giving his addresses in a low voice; but she heard it.

"Is it becoming?" he asked airily, examining the effect in a glass.

"Am I the bully boy with the eye of glass, Mrs. Paige?"

"You are, indeed," she said, laughing. "Shall we find Celia?"

But they could not find her sister-in-law in the shop, which was now refilling with excited people.

"*Celia non est*," he observed cheerfully. "The office is closed by this time. May I see you safely to Brooklyn?"

She turned to the ferry stage which was now drawing up at the curb; he assisted her to mount, then entered himself, humming under his breath:

"To Brooklyn! To Brooklyn!

So be it. Amen.

Clippity, Cloppity, back again!"

On the stony way to the ferry he chatted cheerfully, irresponsibly, but he soon became convinced that the girl beside him was not listening, so he talked at random to amuse himself, amiably accepting her pre-occupation.

"How those broker warriors did step out, in spite of Illinois Central and a sadly sagging list! At the morning board Pacific Mail fell $3\frac{1}{2}$, New York Central $\frac{1}{4}$, Hudson River $\frac{1}{4}$, Harlem preferred $\frac{1}{2}$, Illinois Central $\frac{3}{4}$ I don't care. . . . *You* won't care, but the last quotations were Tennessee 6's, 41, A 41 $\frac{1}{2}$ There's absolutely nothing doing in money or exchange. The bankers are asking 107 $\frac{1}{2}$ but sell nothing. On call you can borrow money at four and five per cent—" he glanced sideways at her, ironically, satisfied that she paid no heed—" *you* might, but I can't, Ailsa. I can't borrow anything from anybody at any per cent whatever. I know; I've tried. Meanwhile, few and tottering are my stocks, also they continue downward on their hellward way.

"Margins wiped, out in war,

Profits are scattered far,
I'll to the nearest bar,
Ailsa oroon!"

he hummed to himself, walking-stick under his chin, his new hat not absolutely straight on his well-shaped head.

A ferry-boat lay in the slip; they walked forward and stood in the crowd by the bow chains. The flag new over Castle William; late sunshine turned river and bay to a harbour in fairyland, where, through the golden haze, far away between forests of pennant-dressed masts, a warship lay all aglitter, the sun striking fire from her guns and bright work, and setting every red bar of her flag ablaze.

"The *Pocahontas*, sloop of war from Charleston bar," said a man in the crowd. "She came in this morning at high water. She got to Sumter too late."

"Yes. Powhatan had already knocked the head off John Smith," observed Berkley thoughtfully. "They did these things better in colonial days."

Several people began to discuss the inaction of the fleet off Charleston bar during the bombardment; the navy was freely denounced and defended, and Berkley, pleased that he had started a row, listened complacently, inserting a word here and there calculated to incite several prominent citizens to fisticuffs. And the ferry-boat started with everybody getting madder.

But when fisticuffs appeared imminent in mid-stream, out of

somewhat tardy consideration for Ailsa he set free the dove of peace.

"Perhaps," he remarked pleasantly, "the fleet *couldn't* cross the bar. I've heard of such things."

And as nobody had thought of that, hostilities were averted.

Paddle-wheels churning, the rotund boat swung into the Brooklyn dock. Her gunwales rubbed and squeaked along the straining piles green with sea slime; deck chains clinked, cog-wheels clattered, the stifling smell of dock water gave place to the fresher odour of the streets.

"I would like to walk uptown," said Ailsa Paige. "I really don't care to sit still in a car for two miles. You need not come any farther—unless you care to."

He said airily: "A country ramble with a pretty girl is always agreeable to me. I'll come if you'll let me."

She looked up at him, perplexed, undecided.

"Are you making fun of Brooklyn, or of me?"

"Of neither. May I come?"

"If you care to," she said.

They walked on together up Fulton Street, following the stream of returning sight-seers and business men, passing recruiting stations where red-legged infantry of the 14th city regiment stood in groups reading the extras just issued by the *Eagle* and *Brooklyn Times* concerning the bloody riot in Baltimore and the attack on the 6th Massachusetts. Everywhere, too, soldiers of the 13th, 38th, and 70th regiments of city

infantry, in blue state uniforms, were marching about briskly, full of the business of recruiting and of their departure, which was scheduled for the twenty-third of April.

Already the complexion of the Brooklyn civic sidewalk crowds was everywhere brightened by military uniforms, cavalymen of the troop of dragoons attached to the 8th New York, jaunty lancers from the troop of lancers attached to the 69th New York, riflemen in green epaulettes and facings, zouaves in red, blue, and brown uniforms came hurrying down the stony street to Fulton Ferry on their return from witnessing a parade of the 14th Brooklyn at Fort Greene. And every figure in uniform thrilled the girl with suppressed excitement and pride.

Berkley, eyeing them askance, began blandly:

"Citizens of martial minds,
Uniforms of wondrous kinds,
Wonderful the sights we see—
Ailsa, you'll agree with me."

"*Are* you utterly without human feeling?" she demanded. "Because, if you are, there isn't the slightest use of my pretending to be civil to you any longer."

"Have you been pretending?"

"I suppose you think me destitute of humour," she said, "but there is nothing humorous about patriotism and self-sacrifice to me, and nothing very admirable about those who mock it."

Her cheeks were deeply flushed; she looked straight ahead of

her as she walked beside him.

Yet, even now the swift little flash of anger revealed an inner glimpse to her of her unaltered desire to know this man; of her interest in him—of something about him that attracted her but defied analysis—or had defied it until, pursuing it too far one day, she had halted suddenly and backed away.

Then, curiously, reflectively, little by little, she retraced her steps. And curiosity urged her to investigate in detail the Four Fears—fear of the known in another, fear of the unknown in another, fear of the known in one's self, fear of the unknown in one's self. *That* halted her again, for she knew now that it was something within herself that threatened her. But it was his nearness to her that evoked it.

For she saw, now that her real inclination was to be with him, that she had liked him from the first, had found him agreeable—pleasant past belief—and that, although there seemed to be no reason for her liking, no excuse, nothing to explain her half-fearful pleasure in his presence, and her desire for it, she did desire it. And for the first time since her widowhood she felt that she had been living her life out along lines that lay closer to solitude than to the happy freedom of which she had reluctantly dreamed locked in the manacles of a loveless marriage.

For her marriage had been one of romantic pity, born of the ignorance of her immaturity; and she was very young when she became the wife of Warfield Paige—Celia's brother—a gentle, sweet-tempered invalid, dreamy, romantic, and pitifully

confident of life, the days of which were already numbered.

Of the spiritual passions she knew a little—of the passion of pity, of consent, of self-sacrifice, of response to spiritual need. But neither in her early immaturity nor in later adolescence had she ever before entertained even the most innocent inclination for a man. Man's attractions, physical and personal, had left only the lightest of surface impressions—until the advent of this man.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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