Van Vorst Marie

Fairfax and His Pride: A Novel

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BOOK I
THE KINSMEN

CHAPTER I

One bitter day in January in the year 1880, when New York was a tranquil city, a young man stood at the South Ferry waiting for the up-town horse car. With a few other passengers he had just left the packet which had arrived in New York harbour that afternoon from New Orleans.

Antony Fairfax was an utter stranger to the North.

In his hand he carried a small hand-bag, and by his side on the snow rested his single valise. Before him waited a red and yellow tram-car drawn by lean horses, from whose backs the vapour rose on the frosty air. Muffled to his ears, the driver beat together his hands in their leather gloves; the conductor stamped his feet. The traveller climbed into the car, lifting his big bag after him.

The cold was even more terrible to him than to the conductor and driver. He had come from the South, where he had left the roses and magnolias in bloom, and the warmth of the country was in his blood. He dug his feet into the straw covering the floor of the car, buttoned his coat tight about his neck, pushed his hands deep in his pockets and sat wondering at the numbing cold.

This, then, was the North!

He watched with interest the few other passengers board the little car: two fruit vendors and after them were amiably lifted in great bunches of bananas. Antony asked himself the question whether this new country would be friendly to him, what would its spirit be toward him, he asked this question of the cold winter air the city suddenly took reality and formed for him out of his dreams. Would it be kind or cruel? The coming days would answer: meanwhile he could wait. Some places, like some people whom we meet, at once extend to us a hand; there are some that even seem to offer an embrace. Through the car blew a sudden icy blast and New York's welcome to Fairfax was keen as a blow. There was an actual physical affront in this wind that struck him in the face.

Suppose the elements were an indication of what the rest would be? But no – that was ridiculous! There would be certainly warm interiors behind the snow-fretted panes of the windows in the houses that lined the streets on either side. There would be warm and cordial hearts to welcome him somewhere. There would be understanding of heart, indulgence for youth. He would

find open doors for all his ambitions, spurs to his integrity and effort. He would know how to make use of these ways and means of progress. For years he had dreamed of the galleries of pictures and of the museum. It was from this wonderful city whose wideness had the intense outreach of the unknown that Fairfax had elected to step into the world.

New York was to be his threshold. There was no limit to what he intended to do in his special field of work. From his boyhood he had told himself that he would become great. He was too young to have discovered the traitors that hide in the brain and the emptiness of the deepest tears. He was a pioneer and had the faith of the pioneer. According to him everything was real, the beauty of form was enchanting, all hearts were true, and all roads led to fame. His short life focused now at this hour.

Life is a series of successive stages to which point of culmination a man brings all he has of the past and all his hopes. All along the road these blessed visions crowd, fulminate and form as it were torches, and these lights mark the road for the traveller. Now all Antony's life came to a point in this hour. He had longed to go to New York from the day when in New Orleans he had completed his first bust. He had moulded from the soft clay on the banks of the levees the head of a famous general, who had later become president. He was only twelve years old then, but his little work bore all the indications of genius.

He was an artist from the ends of the slender hands to the centre of the sensitive heart. The childlikeness, the beauty of his

nature revealed it in everything he did; and he was only twenty-two years old.

As he sat in the horse car, his heart full of hope, his brain teeming with the ideal, he was an interesting figure to watch, and a fine old gentleman on his way up town was struck by the brilliancy, the aspect of the fellow passenger. He studied the young fellow from behind his evening paper, but the old gentleman could not make up his mind what the young man was. Aside from the valise at his feet Antony had no other worldly goods, and aside from the twenty-five dollars in his pocket, he had no other money. There was nothing about him to suggest the artistic type: broad-shouldered, muscular, he seemed built for battles and feats of physical strength, but his face was thoughtful for one so young. His eyes were clear. "He looks," mused the gentleman, "like a man who has come home after a very successful journey. I suspect the young fellow is returning with something resembling the story books' bag of gold." He humorously fancied even that the treasure might be in the valise on the straw of the car at the traveller's feet.

The car tinkled slowly through the cold. After a long while, well above a street marked Fiftieth, its road appeared to lie in the country. There were vacant lots on either side; there were low-roofed, ramshackle shanties; there were stray goats here and there among the rocks. Antony said to the conductor in a pleasant, Southern voice: "You won't forget to let me off at 70th Street." He rose at the conductor's signal and the ringing of the

bell. The old gentleman, who was a canon of the Church, saw as the young man rose that he was lame, that he limped, that he wore a high, double-soled boot. As Fairfax went out he lifted his hat with a courteous "Good evening" to his only fellow passenger, for the others had one by one left the car to go to their different destinations. "Too bad," thought the canon to himself, "Lame, by Jove! With a smile like that a man can win the world."

CHAPTER II

The little figure in the corner of the pink sofa had read away the hours of the short winter afternoon curled up in a ball, her soft red dress, her soft red cheeks, her soft red lips vivid bits of colour in the lamplight. She had read through the twilight, until the lamps came to help her pretty eyes, and like a scholar of old over some problem she bent above her fairy tale. The volume was unwieldy, and she supported it on her knees. Close to her side a little boy of six watched the absorbed face, watched the lamp and the shadows of the lamp on the pink walls of the room; watched his mother as she sat sewing, but most devotedly of all he watched through his half-dreaming lids his sister as she read her story. His sister charmed him very much and terrified him not a little; she was so quick, so strong, so alive – she rushed him so. He loved his sister, she was his illustrated library of fairy tales and wonderful plays, she was his companion, his ruler, his dominator, and his best friend.

"Bella," he whispered at the second when she turned the page and he thought he might venture to interrupt, "Bella, *wouldn't* you read it to me?"

The absorbed child made an impatient gesture, bent her head lower and snuggled down into her feast. She shook her mane of hair.

"Gardiner," his mother noticed the appeal, "when will you

learn to read for yourself? You are a big boy."

"Oh, I'm not so vewy big," his tone was indolent, "I'm not so big as Bella. You said yesterday that you bought me five-year-old clothes."

In the distance, above the noise of the wind, came the tinkle of the car-bell. Gardiner silently wished, as he heard the not unmusical sound, that the eternal, ugly little cars, with the overworked horses, could be turned into fairy chariots and this one, as it came ringing and tinkling along, would stop at the front door and fetch… A loud ring at the front door made the little boy spring up.

His sister frowned and glanced up from her book. "It isn't father!" she flashed out at him. "He's got his key. You needn't look scared yet, Gardiner. It is a bundle or a beggar or something or other stupid. Don't disturb."

However, the three of them listened, and in another second the door of the sitting-room was opened by a servant and, behind the maid, on the bare wood floor of the stairs, there fell a heavy step and a light step, a light step and a heavy step. Bella never forgot the first time she heard those footfalls.

The lady at the table put her sewing down, and at that moment, behind the servant, a young man came in, a tall young man, holding out his hand and smiling a wonderful and beautiful smile.

"Aunt Caroline. I'm Antony Fairfax from New Orleans. I've just reached New York, and I came, of course, at once to you."

Not very much later, as they all stood about the table talking,

Bella uncurled and once upon her feet, astonishingly tall for twelve years old, stood by Fairfax's side, while Gardiner, an old-fashioned little figure in queer home-made clothes, flushed, delicate and timid, leaned on his mother. The older woman had stopped sewing. With her work in her lap she was looking at the seventh son of her beautiful sister of whom she had been gently, mildly envious all her life.

Bella said brusquely: "You've got an awfully light smile, Cousin Antony."

He laughed. "I suppose that comes from an awfully light heart, little cousin!"

"Bella," her mother frowned, "don't be personal. You will learn not to mind her, Antony; she is frightfully spoiled."

The little girl threw back her hair. "And you've got one light step, Cousin Antony, and one heavy step. No one ever came up our stairs like that before. How do you do it?"

The stranger's face clouded. He had been looking at her with keen delight, and he was caught up short at her words. He put out his deformed shoe.

"This is the heavy step."

Bella's cheeks had been flushed with excitement, but the dark red that rose at Fairfax's words made her look like a little Indian.

"Oh, I didn't know!" she stammered. "I didn't know."

Her cousin comforted her cheerfully. "That's all right. I don't mind. I fell from a cherry tree when I was a little chap and I've stumped about ever since."

His aunt's gentle voice, indifferent and soft, like Gardiner's murmured —

"Oh, don't listen to her, Antony, she's a spoiled, inconsiderate little girl."

But Bella had drawn nearer the stranger. She leaned on the table close to him and lifted her face in which her eyes shone like stars. She had wounded him, and it didn't seem to her generous little heart that she could quite let it go. And under her breath she whispered —

"But there's the *light* step, isn't there, Cousin Antony? And the smile – the awfully light smile?"

Fairfax laughed and leaned forward as though he would catch her, but she had escaped from under his hand like an elusive fairy, and when he next saw her she was back in her corner with her book on her knees and her dark hair covering her face.

CHAPTER III

He talked with his aunt for a long while. Her grace and dignity suggested his mother, but she was not so lovely as the other woman, whose memory was always thrilling to him. Fairfax ran eagerly on, on fire with his subject, finally stopping himself with a laugh.

"I reckon I'm boring you to death, Aunt Caroline."

"Oh, no," she breathed, "how can you say so? How proud she must be of you!"

Downstairs in the hall he had left his valise and his little hand satchel, with the snow melting on them. He came from a household whose hospitality was as large, as warm, as bright as the sun. He had made a stormy passage by the packet *Nore*. His head was beginning to whirl. From the sofa there was not a sign. Bella read ardently, her hand pressing a lock of her dark hair across her burning cheek. Gardiner, his eyes on his cousin, drank in, fascinated, the figure of the big, handsome young man.

"He's my relation," he said to himself. "He's one of our family. I know he can tell stories, and he's a traveller. He came in the fairy cars."

Mrs. Carew tapped her lip with her thimble. "So you will learn to model here," she murmured. "Now I wonder who would be the best man?"

And Fairfax responded quickly, "Cedersholm, auntie, he's the

only man."

"My husband," his aunt began to blush, "your uncle knows Mr. Cedersholm in the Century Club, but I hardly think…"

Antony threw up his bright head. "I have brought a letter from the President to Cedersholm and several of the little figures I have modelled."

"Ah, that will be better," and his aunt breathed with relief. Mrs. Carew's mention of her husband came to Antony like a sharp chill. Nothing that had been told him of the New York banker who had married his gentle aunt was calculated to inspire him with a sense of kinship. It was as though a window had been opened into the bright room. A slight noise at the door downstairs acted like a current of alarm upon the family. The colour left his aunt's cheeks, and little Gardiner exclaimed, "I hear father's key." The child came over to his mother's side. It seemed discourteous to Antony to suggest going just as his uncle arrived, so he waited a moment in the strange silence that fell over the group. In a few seconds Mr. Carew came in and his wife presented. "My dear, this is Antony Fairfax, my sister Bella's only child, you know. You remember Bella, Henry."

A wave of red, which must have been vigorous in order to sweep in and under the ruddy colour already in Carew's cheeks, testified that he did remember the beautiful Mrs. Fairfax.

"I remember her very well," he returned; "is she as handsome as ever? You have chosen a cold day to land in the North. I presume you came by boat? We have been two hours coming up

town. The cars are blocked by snow. It's ten degrees below zero to-night. I wish you would see that ashes are poured on the front steps, Caroline, at once."

The guest put out his hand. "I must be going. Good night, Aunt Caroline – good night, Gardiner. Good night, sir."

Fairfax marked the ineffectuality in his aunt's face. It was neither embarrassment nor shame, it was impotence. Her expression was not appealing, but inadequate, and the slender hand that she gave him melted in his like the snow. There was no grasp there, no stimulus to go on. He turned to the red figure of the huddled child in the sofa corner.

"Good night, little cousin."

Bella dropped her book and sprang up. "Good night," she cried; "why, you're not going, Cousin Antony?"

And as the older woman had done she extended her hand. It was only a small child's hand, but the essential was there. The same sex but with a different hand. It did not melt in Antony's; it lay, it clasped, lost in his big palm. He felt, nevertheless, the vital little grasp, its warmth and sweetness against his hand.

"Where are you going?"

Mr. Carew had passed out now that he had successfully eliminated from the mind of the guest any idea that hospitality was to be extended. Once more the little group were by themselves.

"There is the Buckingham Hotel," Mrs. Carew ventured. "It's an excellent hotel; we get croquettes from there when Gardiner's

appetite flags. The children have their hair cut there as well."

Tired as Fairfax was, rebuffed as he was, he could not but be cheered by the bright look of the little girl who stood between him and her mother. She nodded at her cousin.

"Why, the Buckingham is six dollars a day," she said. "I asked the barber when he cut Gardiner's hair."

Fairfax smiled. "I reckon that is a little steep, Bella."

"It's too far away, anyhow, Cousin Antony, it's a mile; twenty blocks is a New York mile. There are the Whitcombs." And the child turned to the less capable woman.

Her mother exclaimed: "Why, of course, of course, there are the Whitcombs! My dear Antony," said his aunt, "if you could only stay with them you would be doing a real charity. They are dear little old maids and self-supporting women. They sell their work in my women's exchange. They have a nice little house."

Bella interrupted. "A dear little red-brick house, Cousin Antony, two stories, on the next block."

She tucked her book under her arm as though it were a little trunk she was tucking away to get ready to journey with him.

"The Whitcombs would be perfectly enchanted, Antony," urged his aunt, "they want a lodger badly. It's Number 700, Madison Avenue."

"It looks like the house that Jack built," murmured Gardiner, dreamily; "they have just wepainted it bwight wed with yellow doors…"

Fairfax thanked them and went, his heavy and his light step

echoing on the hard stairway of his kinsmen's inhospitable house. Bella watched him from the head of the stairs, her book under her arm, and below, at the door, he shouldered his bag and went out into the whirling, whirling snow. It met him softly, like a caress, but it was very cold. Bella had said two blocks away to the left, and he started blindly.

This was his welcome from his own people.

His Southern home seemed a million miles away; but come what would, he would never return to it empty-handed as he had left it. He had been thrust from the door where he felt he had a right to enter. That threshold he would never darken again – never. A pile of unshovelled snow blocked his path. As he crossed the street to avoid it, he looked up at the big, fine house. From an upper window the shade was lifted, and in the square of yellow light stood the two children, the little boy's head just visible, and Bella, her dark hair blotting against the light, waved to him her friendly, cousinly little hand. He forged on through the snow to "The House that Jack built."

CHAPTER IV

He was the seventh son, and his mother was tired of child-bearing when Antony was born. The others, mediocre, fine fellows, left to their father's control, had turned out as well as children are likely to turn out when brought up by a man. One by one, during the interval of years before Antony came, one by one they had died, and when Mr. Fairfax himself passed away, he left his wife alone with Antony a baby in her arms. She then gave herself up to her grief and the contemplation of her beauty. Adored, spoiled, an indifferent house-keeper, Mrs. Fairfax was, nevertheless, what is known as a charming creature, and a sincere artist. She had her studio, her canvases, she wrote plays and songs, and nothing, with the exception perhaps of realities, for she knew nothing of them, nothing made less impression on her than did her only child, until one day she suddenly remembered Antony when it was too late.

He was like his mother, but she was unconscious of the fact. She only knew him as a rowdy boy, fond of sports, an alarmingly rough fighter, the chief in the neighbourhood scuffles, a vigorous, out-of-door boy, at the head of a yelling, wild little band that made her nerves quiver. Coloured servants and his Mammy soothed Antony's ills and washed his bruises. With a feeling of shame he thrust aside his artistic inclinations, lest his comrades should call him a milksop, but he drew copiously in secret, when

he was kept in at school or housed with a cold. And from the distance at which she kept him, Antony worshipped his mother. He admired her hauteur, the proud cold loveliness. His sunny nature, incapable of morose or morbid brooding, felt no neglect. Late in spring they too had gone north to a water cure popular with Louisiana people, where a more vigorous growth of trees magnetized Antony, who climbed like a squirrel and tore his clothes to his heart's content. He had come in from a tramp and, scandalized by his rough and tumbled appearance as she caught a glimpse of him swinging along, Mrs. Fairfax summoned her little son. Rocking idly on the verandah she watched him obey her call, and there was so much buoyant life in his running step, such a boy's grace and brightness about him that he charmed her beauty-loving eyes.

"Go, wash your face and hands and bring your school books here. I do hope you have brought your books with you."

When he reappeared with the volumes of dog-eared school books, she fingered them gingerly, fell on his drawing portfolio and opened it.

"Who drew these for you, Tony?"

"Mother, no one. I did them. They are rotten."

Mrs. Fairfax exclaimed with excitement: "Why, they are quite extraordinary! You must study with some one."

Blushing, enraptured, Antony was tongue-tied, although a host of things rushed to his lips that now he might be permitted to speak to her he longed to tell everything that was on his heart.

Neither of them forgot that day. The wistaria was purple in the vines, and his mother, a shawl with trailing fringe over her shoulders, rocked indolent and charming in her chair. She had made her husband and her other sons her slaves, and she remembered now, with a sense of comfort, that she had another servitor.

"My shoe is unbuttoned" – she raised her small foot – "button it, Tony."

The boy fell on his knees, eager to offer his first service to the lovely woman, but his hands were awkward. He bungled and pinched the delicate skin. The mother cried out, leaned over and smartly boxed his ears.

"Stupid boy, go; send me Emmeline."

Poor Antony retired, and as Emmeline took his place he heard his mother murmur —

"Aren't the cherries ripe yet, Emmy? I'm dying to taste some cherries, they're so delicious in the North."

Emmeline had fastened the shoe and lagged away with southern negligence, leaving Antony's books as he had flung them on the porch, and though it was an effort to lean over, Mrs. Fairfax did so, picked up the drawing-book and studied it again.

"Talented little monkey," she mused, "he has my gift, my looks too, I think. How straight he walks! He has '*l'élégance d'un homme du monde*.'"

She called herself Creole and prided herself on her French and her languor.

She sat musing thus, the book on her knees, when half an hour later they carried him in to her. He had fallen from a rotten branch on the highest cherry tree in the grounds.

He struck on his hip.

All night she sat by his side. The surgeons had told her that he would be a cripple for life if he ever walked again. Toward morning he regained his senses and saw her sitting there. Mrs. Fairfax remembered Antony that day. She remembered him that day and that night, and his cry of "Oh, mother, I was getting the cherries for you!"

Before they built him his big, awkward boot, when he walked again at all, Antony went about on crutches, debarred from boyish games. In order to forget his fellows and the school-yard and "the street" he modelled in the soft delicious clay, making hosts of creatures, figures, heads and arms and hands, and brought them in damp from the clay of the levee. His own small room was a studio, peopled by his young art. No sooner, however, was he strong again and his big shoe built up, than his boy-self was built up as well, and Antony, lame, limping Antony, was out again with his mates. He never again could run as they did, but he contrived to fence and spar and box, and strangely enough, he grew tall and strong. One day he came into his little room from a ball game, for he was the pitcher of the nine, and found his mother handling his clayey creatures.

"Tony, when did you do these?"

"Oh, they are nothing. Leave them alone, mother. I meant to

fire them all out."

"But this is an excellent likeness of the General, Tony."

He threw down his baseball mask and gloves and began to gather up unceremoniously the little objects which had dried crisp and hard.

"Don't destroy them," his mother said; "I want every one of them. And you must stop being a rowdy and a ruffian, Antony – you are an artist."

He was smoothing between his palms one of the small figures.

"Professor Dufaucon could teach you something – not much, poor old gentleman, but something elementary. To-morrow, after school, you must go to take your first lesson."

Mrs. Fairfax took the boy herself, with the bust of the famous General in her hands, and afterwards sent the bust to Washington, to its subject himself, who was pleased to commend the portrait made of him by the little Southern boy from the clay of the New Orleans levee.

Professor Dufaucon taught him all he knew of art and something of what he knew of other things. In the small hall-room of the poor French drawing-master, Antony talked French, learned the elements of the study of beauty and listened to the sweet strains of the Professor's flute when he played, "J'ai perdu ma tourterelle…"

In everything that he modelled Antony tried to portray his mother's face. As she had been indifferent to him before, so ardently Mrs. Fairfax adored him now. She poured out her

tenderness on this crippled boy. He had been known to say to his Mammy that he was glad that he had fallen from the cherry tree because his mother had never kissed him before, and her tears and her love, he thought, were worth the price. She was as selfish with him in her affection as she had been in her indifference. She would not hear of college, and he learned what he could in New Orleans. But the day came when his mistress, art, put in a claim so seductive and so strong that it clouded everything else. Professor Dufaucon died, and in the same year Antony sent a statuette to the New York Academy of Design. It was accepted, and the wine of that praise went to his head.

Mrs. Fairfax, broken as no event in her life had been able to break her, saw Antony leave for the North to seek his fortune and his fame.

She owned her house in Charles Street, and lived on in it, and the little income that she had barely sufficed for her needs. She showed what race and what pride she had when she bade Antony good-bye, standing under the jasmine vine. She never wore any other dress than a loose morning robe of a white or a soft mauve material. Standing there, with a smile of serene beauty, she waved her handkerchief to him as she saw him go limping down the walk from the garden to the street and put of sight. True to her type then, she fainted dead away, and Emmeline and Mammy brought her to.

He thought of things in Miss Whitcomb's front room. There was nothing fairylike about the red-brick dwelling, although at

the corner of the New York Avenue these two stories seemed diminutive and out of place. He made with the timid maiden ladies his own timid arrangement. He was so poor and they were so poor that the transaction was timorous – Antony on his part was afraid that they might not take him in, they, on theirs, were terrified lest the lodger would not come in. When at length they left him alone, his first feeling was gratitude for a room of any kind that represented shelter from the Northern cold, but when he had divested himself of his coat, he realized that the little unheated room was as cold as the outside. A meagre bed, a meagre bureau and washstand, two unwelcoming chairs, these few inanimate objects were shut in with Antony, and unattractive as they were, they were appealing in their scant ugliness. Before the window slight white curtains hung, the same colour as the snow without. They hung like little shrouds. Around the windows of his Southern home the vine had laid its beauty, and the furnishings had been comfortable and tasteful. The homelessness of this interior, to the young man who had never passed a night from under his own roof, struck with a chill, and he thought of the sitting-room in the vast house of his kinsmen not a block away. His kinspeople had not even asked him to break bread. Dressed as he was, he lay down exhausted on his bed, and when a knock came and Miss Whitcomb's voice invited him to supper, Fairfax sprang up and answered as out of a dream.

CHAPTER V

His fortune of twenty-five dollars he divided into five equal packets. His weekly bill with the old ladies, to whom his aunt had begged Antony to go *in charity*, was to be six dollars. There would of course be extras, car-fare and so forth. With economy – it would last. Antony saw everything on the bright side; youth and talent can only imagine that the best will last for ever. Decidedly, before his money gave out he would have found some suitable employment.

With the summons for supper he flung on his coat, plunged downstairs and into the dining-room, and shone upon his hostesses over their tea and preserves. The new boarder chatted and planned and listened, jovial and kindly, his soul's good-fellowship and sweet temper shedding a radiance in the chill little room. Miss Eulalie Whitcomb was in the sixties, and she fell in love with Antony in a motherly way. Miss Mitty was fifteen years her junior, and she fell in love with Antony as a woman might. Fairfax never knew the poignant ache he caused in that heart, virginal only, cold only because of the prolonged winter of her maidenhood.

That night he heard his aunt's praises sung, and listened, going back with a pang to the picture the family group had made before his home-loving eyes.

Such a marvellous woman, Mr. Fairfax (she must call him

Antony if he was to live with them. Miss Mitty couldn't. She must. Well, Mr. Antony then), such a brilliant and executive woman. Mrs. Carew had founded the Women's Exchange for the work of indigent ladies, such a dignified, needed charity.

Miss Mitty knew a little old lady who made fifteen hundred dollars in rag dolls alone.

"Dear me," said Fairfax, "couldn't you pass me off for a niece, Miss Whitcomb? I can make clay figures that will beat rag dolls to bits."

Fifteen hundred dollars! He mused on his aunt's charity.

"And another," murmured Miss Eulalie, "another friend of ours made altogether ten thousand dollars in chicken pies."

"Ah," exclaimed the lodger, "that's even easier to believe. And does my uncle Carew make pies or dolls?"

"He is a pillar of the Church," said his hostess gravely, "a very distinguished gentleman, Mr. Antony. He bowed once to one of us in the street. Which of us was it, sister?"

Not Miss Mitty, at any rate, and she was inclined to think that Mr. Carew had made a mistake, whichever way it had been!

Their lodger listened with more interest when they spoke of the children. The little creatures went to school near the Whitcomb house. Gardiner was always ailing. Miss Mitty used to watch them from her window.

"Bella runs like a deer down the block, you never saw such nimble legs, and her skirts are *so* short! They *should* come down, Mr. Antony, and her hair is quite like a wild savage's."

Miss Eulalie had called Bella in once to mend a hole in her stocking "really too bad for school."

"She should have gone into the Women's Exchange," suggested her cousin, "and employed some one who was out of orders for chicken pies or dolls!"

That night, under the gas jet and its blue and ghastly light, Fairfax tried to write to his mother, began his letter and left it as he began. "My dearest Mother…" She had told him little of his kinspeople, the sisters had never been friends. Nevertheless, he quite understood that, whatever she might have thought of the eccentricities of his uncle, this welcome to her boy would cut her cruelly. She had fully expected him to be a guest at the Carews.

"My dearest Mother…" He began to draw idly on the page. A spray of jasmine uncurled its leaves beneath his hand. Across his shoulders he felt the coldness of the room where he sat. A few more hurried strokes and Fairfax had indicated on the page before him a child's head – an upturned face. As he rounded the chin, Antony saw that the sketch would be likely to charm him, and he was tired out and cold. He threw down his pen, dragged out his valise, opened it, took out his things and prepared for his first night's rest in the city of his unfriendly kinsmen.

CHAPTER VI

If it had been only spring, or any season less brutal than this winter, whose severity met him at times with a fresh rebuff and a fresh surprise – if it had been spring, Antony would have procrastinated, hung back, unaccustomed as he was to taking quick, decisive action, but the ugliness of the surroundings at Miss Whitcomb's and the bitter winter weather forced him to a decision. In the three following days he visited every one of the few studios that existed at that period in New York. What were his plans? What were his ideas? But, when he came face to face with the reality of the matter-of-fact question, he had no plans. Idealistic, impractical, untried and unschooled, he faced the fact that he had no plan or idea whatsoever of how to forge his life: he never had had any and his mother had given him no advice. He wanted to work at art, but how and where he did not know. Some of the studios could use models – Fairfax burned at the thought. He could not study as a pupil and live on air. No one wanted practical workmen.

The man he most wanted to see was Gunner Cedersholm. He had fallen in love with the works of the Swedish master as he had seen them in photograph and plaster cast at the exposition in New Orleans. He had read all the accounts in the papers he could find of the great Swede. When he learned that Gunner Cedersholm was in Europe and that he should not be able to see him until

spring, poor Antony longed to stow himself on a ship and follow the artist.

Meanwhile, the insignificant fact that an insignificant piece of modelling had been accepted by an inadvertent jury and placed in the New York Academy, began to appear to him ridiculous. He had not ventured to mention this to any one, and the fact that at his fingers' ends lay undoubted talent began to seem to him a useless thing as well. The only moment of balm he knew came to him one afternoon in the Metropolitan Museum. This museum was at that period sparsely dowered. Fairfax stood before a plaster figure of Rameses, and for the first time the young artist saw around him the effigies of an art long perfect, long retained and long dead.

Turning down through the Egyptian room, his overcoat on his arm, for, thank Heaven, the place was warmed, his beauty-loving eyes fell on the silent objects whose presence was meed and balm. He took in the nourishment of the food to his senses and the colour in his cheeks brightened, the blue deepened in his eyes. He was repeating the line: "Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time …" when two living objects caught his attention, in a room beyond devoted to a collection of shells. Before a low case stood the figure of a very little boy in a long awkward ulster and jockey cap, and by his side, in a conspicuously short crimson skirt and a rough coat, was a little girl. Her slender legs and her abundant hair that showered from beneath a crimson tam-o'-shanter recalled Miss Mitty's description of Bella; but Antony

knew her for herself when she turned.

"Cousin Antony!" She rushed at him. Childlike, the two made no reference to the lapse of time between his first visit and this second meeting. Gardiner took his hand and Antony thought the little boy clung to it, seized it with singular appealing force, as though he made a refuge of the strong clasp. Bella greeted him with her eager, brilliant look, then she rapidly glanced round the room, deserted save for themselves.

"Something perfectly fearful happened last week, Cousin Antony. Yes, Gardiner, I will tell. Anyhow, it's all over now, thank the stars." (He learned to hear her thank these silent heavenly guardians often.) "What do you think? Last week we came here, Gardiner and me, we come often. We play with the ancient Egyptians. I'm Cleopatra and Gardiner's' different things, and there's a guardian here that we specially like because he taught us things useful for school if you have a weak memory. This is how you remember the poets —

> Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Pope,
> Go upstairs and get some soap.

So you see we can't forget them like that. And Shakespeare's birth and death I never could remember till he taught me —

Fifteen hundred and sixty-four

> Shakespeare first was heard to roar.
> Sixteen hundred and sixteen

Billy Shakespeare last was seen.

When your memory's weak it's a great help, Cousin Antony. Then what do you think Gardiner did?"

Here Fairfax was more than ever sensible of the little boy's clinging hand. He looked down at the sensitive, flushed face, and the fascinated eyes of Gardiner were fixed on the vigorous, ardent little sister.

"Well," said Antony, cordially, "I reckon it's not anything very bad, little cousin."

He led them to a bench under the calm serene chaperonage of Rameses who kept sentinel over them.

"Bad," whispered Bella, "why it was the worst thing you can possibly imagine, Cousin Antony. He stole."

The child's voice dropped solemnly and the silence that fell in the museum was impressive, even though the situation was humorous. Gardiner, whom Antony had lifted on his knee, raised his head and looked his cousin mildly in the eyes.

"It was a shell," he said slowly, "a blue and bwown shell. Nobody was looking and I took it home."

He confessed calmly and without shame, and his sister said —

"The guardian was cleaning the cases. I think they trusted us, Cousin Antony, we were alone here, and it makes it much worse. When we got home Gardiner showed it to me, and we have had to wait a week to come back and restore it."

"I westored it," repeated the boy, "Bella made me."

With his diminutive hand he made a shell and discoursed regretfully —

"It was a perfectly lovely shell. It's over there in its place. Bella made me put it back again."

"The worst of it is," said the sister, "that he doesn't seem to care. He doesn't mind being a thief."

"Well," laughed Antony, "don't you trouble about it, Bella honey, you have been a policeman and a judge and a benefactor all in one, and you have brought the booty back. Come," said Fairfax, "there's the man that shuts us out and the shells in, and we must go." And they were all three at the park gate in the early twilight before the children asked him —

"Cousin Antony, where have you been all these days?"

He saw the children to their own door, and on the way little Gardiner complained that his shoes were tight, so his cousin carried him, and nearly carried Bella, who, linking her arm firmly in his, walked close to him, and, unobserved by Antony, with sympathetic gallantry, copied his limp all the way home.

Their companionship had been of the most perfect. He learned where they roller skated, and which were the cracks to avoid in the pavement, and which were the treasure lots. He saw where, in dreary excavations, where plantain and goatweed grew, Bella found stores of quartz and flints, and where she herded the mangy goat when the Irish ragpickers were out ragpicking.

Under his burden of Gardiner Antony's heart had, nevertheless, grown light, and before they had reached the house

he had murmured to them, in his rich singing voice, Spartacus' address to the gladiators, and where it says: "Oh, Rome, Rome, thou hast been a tender nurse to me; thou hast given to the humble shepherd boy muscles of iron and a heart of steel," – where these eloquent words occurred he was obliged to stand still on Madison Avenue, with the little boy in his arms, to give the lines their full impressiveness.

Once deposited on the steps, where Fairfax looked to see rise the effigies of the ashes his uncle had ordered scattered, Gardiner seemed hardly able to crawl.

Trevelyan encouraged him: "Brace up, Gardiner, be a man."

And the child had mildly responded that "his bones were tired." His sister supported him maternally and helped him up, nodding to Antony that she would look after her little brother, and Antony heard the boy say —

"Six and six are twelve, Bella, and you're both, and I'm only one of them. How can you expect…?"

Antony expected by this time nothing.

And when that night the eager Miss Whitcomb handed him a letter from his aunt, with the heading 780, Madison Avenue, in gold, he eagerly tore it open.

"My dear Antony," the letter ran, "the children should have drawing lessons, Gardiner especially draws constantly; I think he has talent. Will you come and teach them three times a week? I don't know about remuneration for such things, except as the school bills indicate. Shall we say twenty dollars a term – and I

am not clear as to what a 'term' is! In music lessons, for instance – " (She had evidently made some calculations and scratched it out, and here the price was dropped for ever and ever.)

To an unpractical woman such a drop is always soothing, and to a sensitive pauper probably no less so. The letter ended with the suggestion to Antony that he meet them in their own pew on Sunday morning at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, and that he return with them for dinner.

CHAPTER VII

He succeeded in keeping from the kind and curious interest of the little ladies the state of his mind and his pocket, and his intentions. It had not been easy, for when their courteous hints brought no satisfaction, Miss Eulalie and Miss Mitty asked Fairfax out boldly what he "was going to do"? Miss Mitty, on whom the task of doing up the hall room had fallen, dreamed over the sketches she found (in his valise). Spellbound, she held in her hand a small head of a dryad, and modestly covered up with her handkerchief a tiny figure whose sweet nudity had startled her. Antony parried questions. He had come to seek Fortune. So far it rolled before him with the very devil in its tantalizing wheel, but he did not say this to Miss Whitcomb. Miss Eulalie suggested to him that his uncle "could make a place for him in the bank," but Fairfax's short reply cooled her enthusiasm, and both ladies took their cue. In the first week he had exhausted his own projects and faced the horrible thought of disaster.

His nature was not one to harbour anything but sweetness, and the next day, Sunday, when the sunlight poured upon New York, he thought of the little cousins and decided to accept his aunt's invitation. The sky was cloudless and under its hard blue the city looked colder and whiter than ever. It was a sky which in New Orleans would have made the birds sing. The steeples sang, one slender tower rocking as its early ringing bells sang out its Sunday

music on the next corner of the street, and Antony listened as he dressed, and recognized the melody. He found it beautiful and sang in his young voice as he shaved and tied his cravat, and made himself impeccable for the Presbyterian Church. His own people were High Church Episcopalians, and from the tone and music of these bells he believed that they rang in an Episcopal building. There was no melancholy in the honied tone of the chime, and it gave him a glow that went with him happily throughout the dreary day.

He found himself between the children in the deep dark pew, where the back of the seat was especially contrived to seize the sinner in a sensitive point, and it clutched Antony and made him think of all the crimes that he had ever committed. Fortunately it met Bella and Gardiner at their heads. Antony's position between the children was not without danger. He was to serve as a quieter for Bella's nerves, spirits and perpetual motion, and to guard against Gardiner's somnolence. He remained deaf to Bella's clear whispers, and settled Gardiner comfortably and propped him up. Finally the little boy fell securely against the cousinly arm. At the end of the pew, Mr. and Mrs. Carew were absorbed, she in her emotional interest in the pastor, a brilliant Irishman who thundered for an hour, and Mr. Carew in his own importance and his position. Antony remembered Miss Mitty and that his uncle was a pillar of the Church, and he watched the pillar support in grave pomposity his part of the edifice.

But neither time nor place nor things eternal nor things present

affected the little girl at Antony's side. Sunk in the deep pew, unobserved and sheltered by Antony's figure, she lived what she called her "Sunday pew life," lived it as ardently as she did everything. After a short interval in which she pored over the open hymnbook, she whispered to him —

"Cousin Antony, I have learned the whole hymn, ten verses in five minutes. Hear me."

He tried to ignore her, but he was obliged to hear her as with great feeling and in a soft droning undertone she murmured the hymn through.

"'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.' Isn't it perfectly beautiful, Cousin Antony?"

This done, she took off her yellow kid gloves carefully, finger by finger, and blew them out into a shapely little hand like Zephyr's, to the dangerous amusement of a child in the next pew. Antony confiscated the gloves. By squeezing up her eyes and making a lorgnon of her pretty bare hand, Bella scrutinized the solemn preacher. Antony severely refused her pencils and paper and remained deaf to her soft questions, and, thrown on her own resources, Bella extracted her father's huge Bible from the rack and, to Fairfax's relief, with much turning of the leaves she finally found a favourite chapter in Revelation and settled down and immersed herself in the Apocalypse. She read with fervour, her bonnet back on her rebellious hair, her legs crossed in defiance of every rule of polite demeanour. Something of the sermon's eloquent, passionate savagery was heard by Fairfax, and at the

close, as the preacher rose to his climax, Bella heard too. At the text, "There shall be no more night there, neither candle nor light of the sun," she shut her book.

"He is preaching from my chapter, Cousin Antony," she whispered; "isn't it perfectly beautiful?"

Fairfax learned to wait for this phrase of hers, a ready approval of sensuous and lovely and poetic things. He learned to wait for it as one does for a word of praise from a sympathetic companion. Gardiner woke up and yawned, and Fairfax got him on his feet; his tumbled blonde head reached just to the hymnbook rail. He was a pretty picture with his flushed soft cheeks, red as roses, and his sleepy eyes wide. So they stood for the solemn benediction, "The love of God … go with you … always."

CHAPTER VIII

He decided not to be the one to shut doors against himself. If life as it went on chose with backward fling to close portals behind him of its own accord, he at least would not assist fate, and with both hands, generously, as his heart was generous, Fairfax threw all gates wide. Therefore with no *arrière pensée* or any rankling thought, he went on the appointed afternoon to teach his little cousins the rudiments of drawing.

The weather continued brutal, grew more severe rather, and smartly whipped him up the avenue and hurled him into the house. He arrived covered with snow, white as Santa Claus, and he heard by the voices at the stair head that he was welcome. The three were alone, the upper floor had been assigned to the drawing party. It was a big room full of forgotten things, tons of books that people had ceased to want to read, the linen chest, a capital hiding-place where a soft hand beneath the lid might prevent a second Mistletoe Bough tragedy. There were old trunks stored there, boxes which could not travel any more, one of which had been on a wedding journey and still contained, amongst less poetic objects, mother's wedding slippers. There was a dear disorder in the big room whose windows overlooked Madison and Fifth Avenues, and the distant, black wintry trees of Central Park. A child on either side of him, Fairfax surveyed his workshop, and he thought to himself, "I could model here, if

I only had some clay."

Bella had already installed herself. Their tables and their boards and a prodigal outlay of pencils and paper were in themselves inspiring.

"There is no chair high enough for Gardiner," Bella said, "but we can build him one up out of books."

"I'd wather sit on Cousin Antony's lap," said the little boy; "built-up books shake me off so, Bella."

Both children wore blue gingham play aprons. Fairfax told them they looked like real workmen in a real studio, with which idea they were much delighted.

"Gardiner looks like a charity child," said his sister, "in that apron, and his hair's too long. It ought to be cut, but I gave my solemn word of honour that I wouldn't cut it again."

"Why don't you go to your famous Buckingham barber?" asked the cousin.

"It's too far for Gardiner to walk," she returned, "and we have lost our last ten cents. Besides, it's thirty-five cents to get a hair-cut."

Fairfax had placed the boy before his drawing board, and confiscated a long piece of kitchen bread, telling Bella that less than a whole loaf was enough for an eraser, extracted the rubber from Gardiner's mouth, and sat down by the little boy's side.

"There's not much money in this house, Cousin Antony," Bella informed him when the séance opened. "Please let me use the soft pencils, will you? They slide like delicious velvet."

Fairfax made an equal division of the implements, avoiding a scene, and made Bella a straight line across the page.

"Draw a line under it."

"But any one can draw a straight line," said Bella, scornfully, "and I don't think they are very pretty."

"Don't you?" he answered; "the horizon is pretty, don't you think? And the horizon is a straight line."

"Yes, it is," said Gardiner, "the howizon is where the street cars fall over into the sunset."

"Gardiner's only six," said Bella, apologetically, "you mustn't expect much of him, Cousin Antony."

She curled over the table and bent her head and broke her pencils one by one, and Fairfax guided Gardiner's hand and watched the little girl. She was lightly and finely made. From under her short red skirt the pretty leg in its woollen stocking swung to and fro. There was a hole in the stocking heel, visible above the tiny, tiny slipper. Through the crude dark collar of the gingham apron came her dark head and its wild torrent of curling hair, wonderful hair, tangled and unkempt, curling roundly at the ends, and beneath the locks the curve of her cheek was like ivory. She was a Southern beauty – her little red mouth twisted awry over her drawing.

"I thought dwawing was making pictures, Cousin Antony; if I'd have known it was *lines*, I wouldn't have taken," said his youngest cousin.

"You have to begin with those things, old man. I'll wipe your

hands off on my handkerchief."

"Please do," said the little boy; "my hands leak awful easy."

His sister laughed softly, and said to herself in an undertone —

"I've drawn my lines long – long – ago, and now I'm making…"

"Don't make anything, Bella, until I tell you to," commanded her teacher, and glanced over her page where she had covered the paper with her big formless handwriting, "Dramatiss personi, first act."

"Why, I had a lovely idea for a play, Cousin Antony, and I thought I'd just jot it down. We're the company, Gardiner and I, and we give plays here every now and then. You can play too, if you like, and say 'Spartacus.' Ah, say it now."

Trevelyan felt the appealing little hand of the boy stealing into his.

"Do, please," he urged; "I don't want ever to draw again, never, never."

"Hush," said his sister severely, "you mustn't say that, Gardiner; Cousin Antony is our drawing master."

Gardiner's sensitive face flushed. "I thought he was only my cousin," said the child, and continued timidly, "I'll dwaw a howizon now and then if you want me to, but I'd wather not."

They left their tables. Fairfax said, "I'm no good at teaching, Bella." He stretched his arms. "I reckon you're not much good at learning either. Gardiner's too young and you're not an artist."

"Say about the 'timid shepherd boy,' Cousin Antony."

He had taken his coat off in the furnace-heated room and stood in his snowy shirt sleeves, glad to be released from the unwelcome task of teaching restless children. He loved the ring and the thrill of the words and declaimed the lines enthusiastically.

"You look like a gladiator, Cousin Antony," Bella cried; "you must have a perfectly splendid muscle."

He bared his right arm, carried away by his recitation and the picture evoked. The children admired the sinews and the swelling biceps. Gardiner touched it with his little fingers; the muscular firm arm, ending in the vigorous wrist, held their fascinated gaze. The sculptor himself looked up it with pardonable approval.

"Feel mine," said Gardiner, crimson with the exertion of lifting his tiny arm to the position of his cousin's.

"Immense, Gardiner!" Fairfax complimented, "immense."

"Feel mine," cried Bella, and the sculptor touched between his fingers the fine little member.

"Great, little cousin!"

"I'll be the gladiator's wife and applaud him from the Coliseum and throw flowers on him."

Fairfax lingered with them another hour, laughing at his simplicity in finding them such companions. With compunction, he endeavoured to take up his lesson again with Bella, unwilling and recalcitrant. She drew a few half-hearted circles, a page of wobbly lines, and at the suspicion of tears Fairfax desisted, surprised to find how the idea of tears from her touched him.

Then in the window between them, he watched as the children told him they always did, for "mother's car to come home."

"She is sharping," exclaimed Gardiner, slowly; "she has to sharp very hard, my mother does. She comes back in the cars, only she never comes," he finished with patient fatality.

"Silly," exclaimed his sister, "she always comes at dinner-time. And we bet on the cars, Cousin Antony. Now let's say it will be the seventy-first. We have to put it far away off," she explained, "'cause we're beginning early."

Fairfax left them, touched by their patience in watching for the mother bird. He promised to return soon, soon, to go on with his wonderful tales. As he went downstairs Bella called after him.

"But you didn't say *which* car you bet on, Cousin Antony."

And Fairfax called back in his Southern drawl: "I reckon she'll come in a pumpkin chariot." And he heard their delighted giggles as he limped downstairs.

CHAPTER IX

He avoided his uncle, Mr. Carew, and made up his mind that if the master of the house were brusque to him, he would not return, were the threshold worn never so dear by little feet. Bella had the loveliest little feet a fellow connoisseur of plastic beauty could wish to see, could wish to watch twinkle in run-down slippers, in scuffled boots – in boots where a button or two was always lacking – and once when she kicked off her strap slipper at a lesson Fairfax saw, through a hole in the stocking, one small perfect toe – a toe of Greek marble perfection, a most charming, snowy, rosy bit of flesh, and he imagined how adorable the little foot must be.

To an audience, composed of a dreamy boy and an ardent, enthusiastic little girl, Fairfax confessed his talent, spoke of his hopes, of his art, even hinted at genius, and one day fetched his treasures, his bits of moistened clay, to show the children.

"Oh, they are perfectly *beautiful*, Cousin Antony. Wouldn't you do Gardiner's head for mother?"

On this day, with his overcoat and hat, Fairfax had laid by a paper parcel. It was stormy, and around the upper windows the snow blew and the winds cried. Propped up by pillows, Gardiner, in his red flannel dressing-gown, nestled in the corner of the sofa. Antony regarded Bella, red as a cardinal bird in her homely dress; he had seen her wear no other dress and would have regretted

the change.

"Oh, I'll do Gardiner one of these days, but I reckon I'll make another study to-day."

"Me?" Bella shook back her mane.

Her cousin considered her with an impersonal eye, whose expression she did not understand to be the artist's gauge and measure.

"Bella," he said shortly, "I'm going to make a cast of your foot."

She was sitting on the sofa and drew her feet under her.

"Only just my foot, Cousin Antony, not all of me?"

"Come now," said the sculptor, "it won't take long. It's heaps of sport."

He unrolled the paper parcel he had brought, unfolding a mass of snowy, delectable looking powder.

"Ask old Ann to fetch us a couple of basins, deep ones, some water and a little oil and salt."

When after toilsome journeys up and down the stairs of the four-storied house, the things had been fetched, Fairfax mixed his plaster, eagerly watched by the children. Perched on the edge of the divan, Bella brooded over the foaming, marvellous concoction, into whose milky bubbles she saw art fall like a star – a genius blossom like a flower. She gazed at Antony's hands as they plunged in and came out dripping; gazed as though she expected him to bring forth some peerless image his touch had called to life. His shirt sleeves rolled up over his fine arms, his

close high-cropped and sunny hair warm upon his brow, his eyes sparkling, he bent an impassioned face over the milky plaster.

"Now," Fairfax said, "hurry along, Bella, I'm ready!"

She responded quietly. "I'm here. It's like a snow pie, Cousin Antony."

"Take off your shoe and stocking."

"Cousin Antony!"

A painful flush of red, the drawing under her more closely of the little legs, showed how far she had been from comprehending.

"Casts are taken from life, Bella," informed her cousin practically, "you'll see. I'm going to make a model from life, then watch what happens. I reckon you're not afraid, honey?"

Gardiner kicked his foot out from under the rugs. "Do mine."

With the first timidity Antony had seen her display, Bella divested herself of her shoe and drew off her dark stocking, and held him out the little naked foot, a charming, graceful concession to art.

"It's clean," she said simply.

He took it in his big hand and it lay like a pearl and coral thing in his palm. Bella did not hear his murmured artistic ecstasies. Fairfax deftly oiled the foot, kneeling before it as at a shrine of beauty. He placed it in one of the basins and poured the plaster slowly over it, sternly bidding her to control her giggles and her "ouches" as it could not harm.

"Keep perfectly still. Do not budge till the plaster sets."

"Oh, it's setting already," she told him, "*hard*! You won't break

off my foot, Cousin Antony?"

"Nonsense."

Whilst the cast set he recited for them "St. Agnes's Eve," a great favourite with the children, beyond their comprehension, but their hearts nevertheless stirred to the melody. As Fairfax leant down to break the model Bella helped him bravely.

"*Now*, might I put on my stocking, Cousin Antony?"

He had been pouring the warm plaster into the mould and had forgotten her, and was reproached.

The twilight gathered and made friends with the storm as they waited for the cast to harden. Old Ann came in and lighted the gas above the group on the old divan.

"Be the hivenly powers! Mr. Fairfax, ye've here a power of a dirt."

Fairfax, who had taken a fancy to the patient old creature, who had' known his mother and was really more a slave to the children than his own black Mammy, bore the scolding peacefully.

"Ye're the childest of the three, sor."

Antony caught her arm. "Wait and see, old Ann," and he kneeled before the cooled plaster and broke his model, released his work and held up the cast.

"For the love of hiven, Mr. Antony, it's Miss Bella's foot ye've got, sor."

She stared as at a miracle, then at her little lady as though she expected to see a missing member. Bella danced around it, pleaded for it, claimed it. Gardiner was allowed to feel how cold

it was, and Fairfax took it home in his overcoat pocket, anxious to get safely away with it before his uncle came and smashed it, as he had the feeling that Mr. Carew would some day smash everything for him. That night when she undressed Bella regarded with favour the foot that had been considered worthy of a cast and extracted sacredly a bit of plaster which she found between the toes, and Antony Fairfax limped home to the House that Jack Built, his heavy step lighter for the fairy foot, the snow-white, perfect little foot he carried triumphantly in his pocket.

CHAPTER X

He was too sincerely an artist not to make pictures of all he saw, and, being sincere, he made his lines true, and then outlined the sketch, softening, moulding, moulding… His aunt's gentle inefficiency (she was kind to him, affectionate, and called him "her dear boy") was to Fairfax only charming, feminine softness, and he grew fond of Mrs. Carew, indulgent to her faults, listened half convinced to her arguments, admired her in her multitudinous toilettes, in all of which she was original, found her lovely and graceful. Her eyes were deer-like – not those of a startled fawn, but like a doe's who stands gazing at a perfect park, whose bosks she takes to be real forests. Mrs. Carew knew absolutely nothing of life. Fairfax at twenty-three, knew less of it, and he could not criticize her vision. He saw his uncle through Bella's eyes, but he never passed the master of the house in the halls, taking good care to escape him. It was not easy to associate fear with Bella; her father had not impressed her free mind with this sentiment.

"Father," she told Antony, "is the most important man in New York City, the cook said so. He might be President, but he doesn't want to; he likes his own work best. Father's work is making money, and he quite understands how hard such a thing is. That is why there is so little in the house, Cousin Antony. Even the cook hadn't a cent when I asked her to lend me a penny. We used

to have five cents a week, but now mother has to be so careful that we're hard up. It's awful when there are treats on, Cousin Antony, because you see, you ought to do your share. That is why Gardiner and I always stick around together and say we don't like children… No," she said firmly, "I really *couldn't* take five cents, Cousin Antony; thank you ever so much. We're bound in honour not to; we promised never to take from a stranger; yes, I know you're not a stranger, and I forget to whom we promised, but I really couldn't, Cousin Antony."

Mrs. Carew could, however. One day, on her way to the magic car, as it waited with its lean horses and jingle-jangle to take the lady "sharping," that day she borrowed two dollars from Fairfax, who, being a pauper, had always money in his pocket; having in reality nowhere else to keep it – and having none to keep elsewhere. The two dollar bill went to join ghostly company with the drawing lessons money, and fluttered away to the country of unpaid bills, of forgotten obligations, of benefits forgot, and it is to be wondered if souls are ever at peace there.

"Father," said Bella, "is the 'soul of honour.' When Ann comes to rub Gardiner's feet at night (they are so often tired, Cousin Antony), she told me about father's character. She's awfully Irish, you wouldn't understand her. Father goes to 'board meetings' (I don't know what they are, but they're very important) and they call him 'your honour,' and Ann says it's all because of his soul. *He never breaks his word*, and when the bills come in…"

The drawing lessons went bravely and wearily on day after

day. Because his aunt wished it, Fairfax guided Gardiner's inert fingers across the page and almost tied Bella to her chair. On drawing days he lunched with the household, and honestly earned his food. Half fed, keen with a healthy appetite, he ate gratefully. They had been pausing at the end of a half-hour's torture when Bella took up her monologue on her father's character.

"When the bills come in he shuts himself in the library. I hear him walk up and down; then he comes out with his face white, and once, long past dinner-time, when mother didn't come in, he said to me, 'Where in heaven's name is your mother? What can she find left in the shops to buy?' just that, he asked me that, Cousin Antony. I felt awfully sorry. I was just going to ask him for five cents, but I hadn't the heart."

That she had heart for her father, this child of twelve, and at so tender an age could see and comprehend, could pity, struck Fairfax, and on his part he began to see many things, but being a man and chivalrous, he pitied the woman as well.

"My aunt is out of her element," he decided; "she cannot be in love with her husband; no woman who loved anything on earth could gad about as she does," and he wondered, and the deer in the park gazing at an artificial wilderness became more and more of a symbol of her.

Regarding the man they called "his honour" Fairfax had not made up his mind.

Gardiner developed scarlet fever and lay, so Mrs. Carew assured Antony, "at the door of death," and Bella had been sent

away to the country. Mr. Carew lived at the Club, and Antony made daily visits and did countless errands for his aunt. One day, toward the end of the little boy's convalescence, Fairfax came in late and heard the sound of a sweet voice singing. He entered the drawing-room quietly and the song went on. Mrs. Carew had a lovely voice, one of those natural born voices, heart-touching, appealing; one of those voices that cause an ache and go to the very marrow, that make the eyes fill. As though she knew Antony was there, and liked the entertainment, she sang him song after song, closing with "Oh, wert thou in the cold blast," then let her hands rest on the keys. Fairfax went over to the piano.

"Why didn't you tell me you sang like this, Aunt Caroline?" The emotion her songs had kindled remained in his voice.

"Oh, I never sing, my dear boy, your uncle doesn't like music."

"Damn," said the young man sharply; "I beg your pardon. You've got the family talent; your voice is divine."

She was touched but shook her head. "I might have sung possibly, if your uncle had ever cared for it. He'll be back to-morrow and I thought I'd just run these things over."

As she rose and left the piano he observed how young she was, how graceful in her trailing dress. The forced housing of these weeks of Gardiner's illness had quieted the restless spirit. Mrs. Carew was womanly to him, feminine for the first time since his arrival. It was at the end of his tongue to say, "Why did you ever marry that man?" He thought with keen dislike of the husband whose appearance would close the piano, silence the charming

voice, and drive his aunt to find occupation in the shops and in charities. He became too chivalrous.

"Flow gently, sweet Afton," as sung by her, echoed thence afterwards in his mind all his life. The melody was stored in the chambers of his memory, and whenever, in later years, he tried not to recall 700 Madison Avenue, and the inhospitable home, maddeningly and plaintively these tunes would come: "Roll on, silver moon," that too. How that moon rolled and hung in the pale sky of remembrance, whose colour and hue is more enchanting than ever were Italian skies!

Mrs. Carew had an audience composed of two people. Little Gardiner, up and dressed in his flannel gown, and the big cousin fathering him with a protecting arm, both in the sofa corner. Mrs. Carew's mellow voice on those winter afternoons before Bella returned, before Mr. Carew came back from the Club, flowed and quavered and echoed sweetly through the room. In the twilight, before the gas came, with old-fashioned stars set in the candelabra, the touching pathos of the ballads spoke to the romantic Fairfax … spoke to his twenty-three years and spoke dangerously. He became more and more chivalrous and considered his aunt a misunderstood and unloved woman. Long, long afterwards, a chord, a note, was sufficient to bring before him the square drawing-room with its columns, furnish with an agglomeration of gaudy, rich, fantastic things expressive of her uncertain taste. He saw again the long dark piano and the silhouette of the woman behind it, graceful, shadowy, and felt

the pressure against his arm of little Gardiner, as they two sat sympathetically lifted to an emotional pitch, stirred as only the music of a woman's voice in love-songs can stir a man's heart.

Bella came back and there was an end of the concerts. A charm to keep Bella silent had not yet been found, unless that charm were a book. "She could not read when mother sang," she said, "and more than that, it made her cry." And when Mr. Carew's latchkey scratched in the door, Bella flew upstairs to the top story, Antony and Gardiner followed more slowly; Mrs. Carew shut her piano, and took the cars again to forget her restlessness in the purchase of silks and dry goods and house decorations, and was far from guessing the emotion she had aroused in the breast of her nephew – "Flow gently, sweet Afton." Nothing flowed gently in Fairfax's impetuous breast. Nothing flowed gently on the tide of events that drifted past slowly, leaving him unsuccessful, without any opening into fame.

CHAPTER XI

Cedersholm returned to New York and Fairfax presented himself again at the studio, getting as far as the workroom of the great Swede who had started in life the son of a tinsmith in Copenhagen. The smell of the clay, the sight of the figures swathed in damp cloths, the shaded light, struck Fairfax deliciously as he waited for an audience with Cedersholm. Fairfax drew his breath deep as though he were once again in his element. Cedersholm was out, and with no other encouragement than the sight of the interior of the four walls, Antony was turned away. His mother had added to his fast melting funds by a birthday gift, and Fairfax was nearly at the end of this.

Walking up from Cedersholm's to his uncle's house, a tramp of three miles, he limped into the children's room, on his usually bright face the first shadow they had seen. Bella was already seated at her table. Her six weeks in the country had sent her back, longer, slimmer, her skirt let down at the hem an inch, and some pretence to order in her hair. The dark mass of her hair was lifted back, held by a round comb; Bella was much transformed.

"Hello, honey," cried her cousin, "what have you been changing into?"

"What do you think of my back comb, Cousin Antony? It's the fourth. I've broken three. All cheap, luckily, not the best quality."

Bella took the comb from her hair and handed it to Antony,

and, unprisoned, her locks fell triumphantly around her face.

"I like you better that way, little cousin," said Fairfax, "and," continued the drawing master, "you've a wonderful new pair of shoes, Bella!"

The little leg was encased in a light blue silk stocking, and the perfect little foot, whose rosy curves and lines Fairfax knew, was housed in a new blue kid shoe with shining white buttons, entirely out of keeping with the dear old red dress which, to Fairfax, seemed part of Bella Carew.

"Dancing school," she said briefly; "mother promised us we might go ages ago, long before you came, Cousin Antony."

"About ten years ago, I fink," said Gardiner helpfully.

"Nonsense," corrected his sister sharply, "but long enough ago for *these* to grow too small." She held up her pretty foot. "We got as far as the shoes and stockings (real silk, Cousin Antony, feel). Aren't they perfectly *beautiful*? We didn't *dare*, because of the bills, get the dress, you know, so I guess mother's been waiting for better times. But just as soon as I came back from the country and they let out the hem and bought the comb, I said to Gardiner, 'There, my dancing shoes will be too small.'" She leant down and pinched the toes. "They *do* squeeze." She crinkled up her eyes and pursed up the little red mouth. "They pinch awfully, but I'm going to wear them to drawing lessons, if I can't to dancing lessons. See," she smoothed out her drawing board and pointed to her queer lines, "I have drawn some old things for you, a couple of squares and a triangle."

Fairfax listened, amused; the problems of his life were vital, she could not distract him. He took the rubber, erasing her careless work, sat down by her and began to give her real instruction. Little Gardiner, excused from all study, amused himself after his own fashion in a corner of the sofa, and after a few moments of silence, Fairfax's pupil whispered to him in a low tone —

"I can't draw anything, Cousin Antony, when you've got that look on."

Fairfax continued his work.

"It's no use, you've got the heavy look like the heavy step. Are you angry with me?"

Not her words, but her voice made her cousin stop his drawing. In it was a hint of the tears she hated to shed. Bella leant her elbow on the table, rested her head in her hand and searched Fairfax's face with her eloquent eyes. They were not like her mother's, doe-like and patient; Bella's were dark eyes, superb and shadowy. They held something of the Spanish mystery, caught from the strain that ran through the Carew family from the Middle Ages, when the Carez were nobles in Andalusia.

"I am angry with myself, Bella; I am a fool."

"Oh no, you're *not*," she breathed devotedly, "you're a genius."

The tension of Fairfax's heart relaxed. The highest praise that any woman could have found, this child, in her naïveté, gave him.

"Why don't you make some figures and sell them, Cousin Antony? Are you worried about money troubles?" She had heard

these terms often.

"Yes," he said shortly, "just that."

He had gone on to sketch a head on the drawing-board, touching it absently, and over his shoulder Bella murmured —

"Cousin Antony, it's just like me. You just draw wonderfully."

He deepened the shadows in the hair and rounded the ear, held it some way off and looked at it.

"I wish I had some clay," he murmured.

He had brought the cast of the foot back to show it to his aunt when an occasion should offer. It stood now in the little cabinet where Bella and Gardiner kept their treasures.

"I went to see Mr. Cedersholm to-day," Fairfax continued, for lack of other confidant taking the dark-eyed child; "now, if Cedersholm would only take me up, and give me the chance to work under him, I'd soon show him."

Bella agreed warmly. "Yes, indeed, you soon would."

CHAPTER XII

The odours of strange meats and sauces were wafted throughout the house. Little troublesome feet pattered up and down the dingy back stairs, and whenever Bella and Gardiner were laid hold upon they were banished. They were inoculated with excitement and their nostrils pricked with the delicious smells of flowers and smilax and feast meats.

Mr. Carew annually gave a banquet to some twenty New Yorkers, who he was so generous as to think were nearly as great as himself. The household was not constructed or run on a hospitable basis and nothing was in tune for entertaining. Sympathetic Bella, thrilling with liveliest interest, assisted at the preparations, and to her bright cheeks and eyes her mother bewailed —

"Only *twenty* glasses, Bella, of the fine engraved deer and pheasant pattern, and we shall be twenty-four."

"Mother, give me one in a paper and I'll take it down town and match it."

Her mother laughed. "Match it, why they were made by hand years ago, and are worth ten dollars apiece."

"Oh, dear," breathed the little girl, and multiplied: "Two hundred dollars for twenty. *Mother!*"

The child stole silently out from the glistening array. Ten dollars apiece. And she and Gardiner at their last nursery tea-

party… Through the door, as she slipped away, she looked back at her mother, standing thoughtful over the rows of crystal. In the great mahogany cage which, like a small dark château, surmounted the pedestal of carved wood, the blackbird Jetty huddled on his perch. He was a superb specimen, black as jet, whence his name, a free woodland spirit, with a yellow bill like a crocus flower, and piercing eyes. Bella passed under the cage and called up to him, "Sing, Jetty, sing."

> Piped a blackbird from a beechwood spray,
> "Little maid, slow wandering this way,
> What's your name?" said he.
>
> Little Bell had wandered through the glade,
> She looked up between the beechwood's shade,
> "Little Bell," said she…

The child crooned to the bird her schoolroom poem. In return, Jetty sang a short, brilliant little roulade, his one trained tune, which Bella had vainly tried to pick out on the piano. She never heard half so sweet a song from any bird.

"Jetty is my *favourite* singer," she had said to Antony. But as she lingered now under his cage in order to lengthen out the time, which, because of her aching conscience, was hanging heavy, Jetty blinked down at her as she stood with her hands behind her back, her face uplifted; he peered at her like a weird familiar spirit. "Listen, Jetty. Gardiner and I took those perfectly

beautiful, expensive glasses for our tea party. He smashed all three of them. There was a glass for Gardiner, a glass for me and one for the uninvited guest – no, I mean the unexpected guest. Gardiner sat down on the glasses where I had put them out to wash them. He would have been awfully cut only he had father's overcoat on (one of father's old coats, we got it out of the camphor chest)." She ceased, for Jetty, in the midst of the confession, hopped down to take a valetudinarian peck at his yellow seeds.

"Now," murmured Bella, "the question is, *shall* I tell mother on an exciting day like this when she is worried and nervous, and, if I do tell her, wouldn't it be carrying tales on poor little Gardiner?"

Jetty, by his food cup, disheartened and discouraged and apparently in a profound melancholy, depressed Bella; she left him, turned and fled.

Bella picked a forbidden way up the freshly oiled stairs and joined her little brother. There she listened to tales, danced on tiptoe to peer through the stair rails, and hung with Gardiner over the balustrade and watched and listened. The children flew to the window to see the cabs and carriages drive up, fascinated by the clicking of the doors, finding magic in the awning and the carpeting that stretched down the stoop to the curb; found music in the voices below in the hallway as the guests arrived. Bella could hardly eat the flat and unpalatable supper prepared for her on the tray, and, finally, she seized her little brother.

"Come, let's go down and see the party, Gardiner."

She dragged him after her, half-reluctant and wholly timid. On the middle of the stairway she paused. The house below was transformed, hot and perfumed with flowers, the very atmosphere was strange. Along the balustrade, their hands touched smilax garlands. The blaze of light dazzled them, the sweet odours, the gaiety and the spirit of cheer and life and good-fellowship came up on fragrant wings. The little brother and sister stood entranced. The sound of laughter and men's agreeable voices came soaring in, the gaiety of guests at a feast, and, over all rose a sound most heavenly, a low, thrilling, thrilling sound.

Jetty was singing.

The children knew the blackbird's idyl well, but it was different this night. They heard the first notes rise softly, half stifled in his throat, where Jetty caressed his tune, soothed it, crooned with it, and then, preluded by a burst all his own of a few adorable silver notes, the trained melody came forth.

"Oh, *Gardiner*," breathed the little girl, "hear Jetty. Isn't it perfectly beautiful?"

They stepped softly on downstairs, hand in hand, into the lower rooms, over to the dining-room where the thick red curtains hung before the doorway. Gardiner wore his play apron and his worsted bed slippers. Bella – neither the little brother nor the old nurse had observed that Bella had made herself a toilette. The dark hair carefully brushed and combed, was tied back with a crimson ribbon, and below her short dress shone out her

dancing school blue stockings and her tight blue shoes. Peering through the curtains, the children could see the dinner company to their hearts' content. Bella viewed the great New Yorkers, murmuring under her breath the names and wondering to whom they belonged. Judge Noah Davis, famous for the breaking of the Tweed ring – him, Bella knew, he was a frequent caller. There was a prelate of the Church and there was some one whom Bella wanted especially to see – Cedersholm, Mr. Cedersholm – which could he be? Which might he be? Little Gardiner's hand was hot in hers. He whispered beseechingly —

"Come, Bella, come, I'm afwaid."

"Hear Jetty, Gardiner, be quiet."

And the bird's voice nearly drowned the murmur and the clamour of the dining-room. Mr. Carew, resplendent in evening clothes, displayed upon his shirt front the badge of the Spanish Society (a golden medal hung by a silken band). It was formed and founded by the banker and he was proud of his creation.

"Who would ever suppose that father didn't like company? Whoever would think that you could be afraid of father!"

Suave, eloquent, Carew beamed upon his guests, and his little daughter admired him extravagantly. His hair and beard were beautiful. Touching the medal on his breast, Carew said —

"Carez is the old name, Cedersholm."

Cedersholm! Bella stared and listened.

"Yes, Carez, Andalusian, I believe, to be turned later in England into Carew; and the bas-relief is an excellent bit of

sculpturing."

Mr. Carew undid the medal and handed it to the guest on his right.

"Here, Cedersholm, what do you think of the bas-relief?"

Cedersholm, already famous in New York, faced Bella Carew and she saw him plainly. This was the sculptor who could give Cousin Antony his start, "his fair chance." He did not look a great man, as Bella thought geniuses should look; not one of the guests looked as great and beautiful as Cousin Antony. Why didn't they have him to the dinner, she wondered loyally. Hasn't he got money enough? Perhaps because he was lame.

Jetty was lame. He had broken his leg in the bars once upon a time. How he sang! From his throat poured one ecstatic roulade after another, one cascade after another of liquid delicious sweetness. Fields, woods, copses, and dells; sunlight, moonlight, seas and streams, all, all were in Jetty's passion of song.

Gardiner had left his sister's side and stood under the bird-cage gazing up with an enraptured face. He made a pretty, quaint figure in the deserted room, in his gingham apron and his untidy blonde hair.

Bella heard some one say, "What wonderful singing, Mrs. Carew." And she looked at her mother for the first time. The lady was all in white with a bit of old black point crossed at her breast and a red camellia fastened there. Her soft fine hair was unpretentiously drawn away neatly, and her doe-like eyes rested amiably on her guests. She seemed to enjoy her unwonted

entertainment.

Still Bella clung to her hiding-place, fascinated by the subdued noise of the service, the clinking of the glasses, listening intelligently to a clever raconteur when he told his anecdote, and clapping her hand on her mouth to keep from joining aloud in the praise that followed, and the bead of excitement mounted to her head like the wine that filled the glasses, the engraved deer and pheasant glasses, three of which had been massacred upstairs. The dinner had nearly reached its end when the children slipped down, and the scraping of chairs and a lull made Bella realize where she was, and when she escaped she found that Gardiner had made his little journey upstairs without her guardianship. Bella's mind was working rapidly, for her heart was on fire with a scheme. In her bright dress she leaned close to the dark wainscoting of the stairway and heard Jetty sing. How he sang! *That* was music!

"Why do people sing when there are birds!" Bella thought. Low and sweet, high and fine, the running of little country brooks, unattainable as a weather vane in the sun.

Bella was at a pitch of sensitive emotion and she felt her heart swell and her eyes fill. She would have wept ignominiously, but instead shot upstairs, a red bird herself, and rushed to the cabinet where her childish treasures were stored away.

CHAPTER XIII

The sculptor Cedersholm had come from Sweden himself a poor boy. He had worked his way into recognition and fame, but his experience in life had embittered rather than softened him. He early discovered that there is nothing but example that we can learn from the poor or take from the poor, and he avoided everything that did not add to his fame and everything that did not bring in immediate aids. It was only during the late years that he had made his name known in New York. He had been working in Rome, and during the past three years his expositions had made him enormously talked of. He would not have dined at the Carews' without a reason. Henry Carew was something of a figure in the Century Club. His pretence to dilettantism was not small. But Cedersholm had not foreseen what a wretched dinner he would be called on to eat. Cooked by a woman hired in for the day, half cold and wholly poor, Mr. Carew's banquet was far from being the magnificent feast it seemed in Bella's eyes. Somewhat cheered by his cigar and liqueur, Cedersholm found a seat in a small reception room out of earshot of his host and hostess, and, in company with Canon Prynne of Albany, managed to pass an agreeable half hour.

The Canon agreed with the Swede – he had never heard a bird sing so divinely.

"I told Mrs. Carew she should throw a scarf over the cage. The

blackbird will sing his heart out."

The sculptor took up his conversation with his friend where he had left it in the dining-room. He had been speaking of a recent commission given him by the city for an important piece of work to be done for Central Park.

"You know, Canon, we have succeeded in bringing to the port of New York the Abydos Sphinx – a marvellous, gigantic creature. It is to be placed in Central Park, in the Mall."

This, Canon Prynne had heard. "The base pedestal and fixtures are to be yours, Cedersholm?"

The sculptor nodded. "Yes, and manual labour such as this is tremendous. If I were in France, now, or in Italy, I could find chaps to help me. As it is, I work alone." After a pause, he said, "However, I like the sole responsibility."

"Now, I am not sure," returned his companion, "whether it is well to like too sole a responsibility. As far as *I* am concerned, no sooner do I think myself important than I discover half a dozen persons in my environment to whom I am doing a wrong, if I do not invite them to share my glory."

There was no one in the small room to which the gentlemen had withdrawn, and their chat was suddenly interrupted by a small, clear voice asking, "Is this Mr. Cedersholm?" Neither guest had seen steal into the room and slip from the shadow to where they sat, a little girl, slender, overgrown, in a ridiculously short dress, ridiculous shoes and stockings, her arms full of treasures, her dark hair falling around her glowing cheeks, in

terror of being caught and banished and punished; but ardent and determined, she had nevertheless braved her father's displeasure. Bella fixed her eyes on the sculptor and said rapidly —

"Excuse me for coming to father's party, but I am in a great hurry. I want to speak to you about my Cousin Antony. He is a great genius," she informed earnestly, "a sculptor, just like you, only he can't get any work. If he had a chance he'd make *perfectly beautiful* things."

The other gentleman put out his hand and drew the child to him. Unused to fatherly caress, Bella held back, but was soon drawn within the Canon's arm. She held out her treasures: "He did these," and she presented to Cedersholm the white cast of her own foot.

"Cousin Antony explained that it is only a cast, and that anybody could do it, but it *is* awfully natural, isn't it? only so deadly white."

She held out a sheet of paper Fairfax had left at the last lesson. It bore a sketch of Bella's head and several decorative studies. Cedersholm regarded the cast and the paper.

"Who is Cousin Antony, my child?" asked the Canon.

"Mother's sister's son, from New Orleans – Antony Fairfax."

Cedersholm exclaimed, "Fairfax; but yes, I have a letter from a Mr. Fairfax. It came while I was in France."

The drawing and the cast in Cedersholm's possession seemed to have found their home. Bella felt all was well for Cousin Antony.

"Oh, listen!" she exclaimed, eagerly, "listen to our blackbird. Isn't it perfectly beautiful?"

"Divine indeed," replied the clergyman. "Are you Carew's little daughter?"

"Bella Carew. And I must go now, sir. Arabella is my real name."

She slipped from under the detaining arm. "Nobody knows I'm up. I'll lend you those," she offered her treasures to Cedersholm, "but I am very fond of the foot."

It lay in Cedersholm's hand without filling it. He said kindly —

"I quite understand that. Will you tell your Cousin Antony that I shall be glad to see him?"

"Oh, thank you," she nodded. "And he'll be *very* glad to see you."

Cedersholm, smiling, put the cast and the bit of paper back in her hands.

"I won't rob you of these, Miss Bella. Your cousin shall make me others."

As the little girl ran quickly out it seemed to the guests as if the blackbird's song went with her, for in a little while Jetty stopped singing.

"What a quaint, old-fashioned little creature," Cedersholm mused.

"Charming," murmured Canon Prynne, "perfectly charming. Now, my dear Cedersholm, there's your fellow for the Central

Park pedestal."

CHAPTER XIV

The month was nearly at its end, and his money with it. Some time since, he had given up riding in the cars, and walked everywhere. This exercise was the one thing that tired him, because of his unequal stride. Nevertheless, he strode, and though it seemed impossible that a chap like himself could come to want, he finally reached his last "picayune," and at the same time owed the week's board and washing. The excitement of his new life thus far had stimulated him, but the time came when this stimulus was dead, and as he went up the steps of his uncle's house to be greeted on the stoop by a beggar woman, huddling by her basket under her old shawl, the sculptor looked sadly down at her greasy palm which she hopefully extended. Then, with a brilliant smile, he exclaimed —

"I wonder, old lady, *just* how poor you are?"

"Wurra," replied the woman, "if the wurrld was for sale for a cint, I couldn't buy it."

Beneath his breath he murmured, "Nor could I," and thought of his watch. Curiously enough, it had not occurred to him that he might pawn his father's watch.

He now looked forward with pleasure to the tri-weekly drawing lessons, for the friendly fires of his little cousins' hearts warmed his own. But on this afternoon they failed to meet him in the hall or to cry to him over the stairs or rush upon him

like catapults from unexpected corners. As he went through the silent house its unusual quiet struck him forcibly, and he thought: "*What* a tomb it would be without the children!"

No one responded to his "Hello you," and at the entrance of the common play and study room Fairfax paused, to see Bella and Gardiner in their play aprons, their backs to the door, motionless before the table, one dark head and one light one bent over an object apparently demanding tender, reverent care.

At Fairfax's "Hello *you* all!" they turned, and the big cousin never forgot it as long as he lived – never forgot the Bella that turned, that called out in what the French call "a torn voice" —*une voix dechirée*. Afterwards it struck him that she called him "Antony" *tout court*, like a grown person as she rushed to him. He never forgot how the little thing flung herself at him, threw herself against his breast. For an answer to her appeal with a quick comprehension of grief, Antony bent and took her hand.

"Cousin Antony, Cousin Antony – "

"Why, Bella, Bella, little cousin, what's the matter?"

And above the sobs that he felt tremble through him, he asked of Gardiner – who, young as he was, stifled his tears back and gulped his own grief like a man —

"What's the row, old chap?"

But Bella told him passionately. "Jetty, *Jetty's dead*!"

Soothed by her cousin's hand on her head, she calmed, buried her face in the cool handkerchief with which he wiped her tears. In the circle of his arms Bella stood, tearful, sobbing, nothing but

a child, and yet she appealed to Fairfax in her tears as she had not done before, and her abandon went to the core of his being and smote a bell which from thenceforth rang like her name – "Bella" – and he used to think that it was from that moment… Well, her tears at any rate stirred him as never did any tears in the world.

She wiped her eyes. "Jetty died last night; he sang himself to death. You should have heard him sing! This morning when they came to give him water and feed him, Jetty was dead."

Gardiner pointed to the table. "See, we've made him a coffin. We're going to his funewal now."

A discarded cigar box lined with cotton was the only coffin the children had found for the wild wood creature whose life had gone out in song.

"We don't know where to buwy him, Cousin Antony."

"I tried," Bella murmured, touching the blackbird's breast with gentle fingers, "I tried to write him a poem, an epitaph; but I cried so I couldn't."

She held Antony's handkerchief to her tear-stained cheek.

"May I keep your handkerchief for just this afternoon? It smells so delicious. You could make a cast of him, couldn't you? – like the death-mask of great men in father's books?"

Fairfax dissuaded them from the funeral, at which Gardiner was to say, "Now I lay me," and Fairfax had been elected to read the Lord's Prayer. He rolled the bird up in another handkerchief (he appeared to be rich in them) and put it reverently in his overcoat pocket, promising faithfully to see that Jetty should

be buried in Miss Whitcomb's back yard, under the snow, and, moreover, to mark the place with a stick, so that the children could find it when spring came.

Then Bella, tear-stained but resigned, suggested that they should play "going to Siberia."

"I *can't* work to-day, Cousin Antony! Don't make me. It would seem like sewing on Sunday."

Without comment, Fairfax accepted the feminine inconsistency, and himself entered, with what spirit he might, into the children's game. "Going to Siberia" laid siege to all the rooms in the upper story. It was a mad rush on Fairfax's part, little Gardiner held in his arms, pursued by Bella as a wolf. It was a tear over beds and chairs, around tables, – a wild, screaming, excited journey, ending at last in the farthest room in the middle of the children's bed, where, one after another, they were thrown by the big cousin. The game was enriched by Fairfax's description of Russia and the steppes and the plains. But on this day Bella insisted that Gardiner, draped in a hearthrug, be the wolf, and that Fairfax carry her "because her heart ached." And if Gardiner's growls and baying failed to give the usual zest to the sport, the carrying by Fairfax of Bella was a new emotion! The twining round his neck of soft arms, the confusion of dark hair against his face, the flower-like breath on his cheeks, Bella's excitement of sighs and cries and giggles gave the game, for one player at least, fresh charm. Chased by Ann back into the studio, the play-mates fell on the sofa, worn out and happy; but, in the

momentary calm, a little cousin on either side of him, the poor young man felt the cruel return of his own miseries and his own crisis.

"Misther Fairfax," said the Irish woman, "did the childhren give ye the letter what come to-day? I thawt Miss Bella'd not mind it, what wid funnerals and tearin' like a mad thing over the house!" (Ann's reproof was for Fairfax.) "Yez'll be the using up of little Gardiner, sir, the both of ye. The letther's forbye the clock. I putt it there m'self."

Fairfax, to whom no news could be but welcome, limped over to the mantel, where, by the clock, he perceived a letter addressed to him on big paper in a small, distinguished hand. He tore it open, Ann lit the gas, and he read —

> Dear Mr. Fairfax,
>
> "I have not answered your letter because I was so unfortunate as to have lost your address. Learning last night that you are a nephew of Mr. Carew, and sure of a response if I send this to his care, I write to ask that you will come in to see me to-day at three o'clock.
>
> *"Yours sincerely,*
>
> *"Gunner Cedersholm."*

Fairfax gave an exclamation that was almost a cry, and looked at the clock. It was past four!

"When did this letter come?" His nerves were on end, his cheeks pale.

Bella sat forward on the sofa. "Why, Mother gave it me to give

to you when you should come to-day, Cousin Antony."

In the strain to his patience, Fairfax was sharp. He bit his lip, snatched up his coat and hat.

"You should have given it me at once." His blue eyes flashed. "You don't know what you may have done. This may ruin my career! I've missed my appointment with Cedersholm. It's too late now."

He couldn't trust himself further, and, before Bella could regain countenance, he was gone.

Cut to the heart with remorse, crimson with astonishment, but more deeply wounded in her pride, the child sat immovable on the sofa.

"Bella," whispered her little brother, "I don't like Cousin Antony, do you?"

She looked at her brother, touched by Gardiner's chivalry.

"I fink he's a mean man, Bella."

"He's dreadful," she cried, incensed; "he's just too horrid for anything. Anyhow, it was me made Cedersholm write that letter for him, and he didn't *even* say he was obliged."

She ran to the window to watch Antony go, as he always did, on the other side of the road, in order that the children might see him. She hoped for a reconcilement, or a soothing wave of his hand; but Antony did not pass, the window was icy cold, and she turned, discomfited. At her foot – for as Antony had snatched up his coat he had wantonly desecrated a last resting-place – at her foot lay the blackbird. With a murmured word Bella lifted Jetty

in both hands to her cheek, and on the cold breast and toneless throat the tears fell – Bella's first real tears.

CHAPTER XV

Fairfax went into the studio of the first sculptor in the United States with set determination to find work. Cedersholm was cool and absorbed, occupied and preoccupied, overburdened with orders, all of which meant money and fame, but required time. Fairfax was an hour and a half late, and, in spite of the refusal of the manservant, came limping in, and found the master taking a glass of hot milk and a biscuit. Cedersholm reposed on a divan in the corner of a vast studio giving on a less magnificent workroom. The studio was in semi-darkness, and a table near the sofa bore a lamp whose light lit the sculptor's face. To Fairfax, Cedersholm was a lion and wore a mane. In reality, he was a small, insignificant man who might have been a banker. The Southerner introduced himself, and when he was seated by the sculptor's side, began to expose his projects, to dream aloud. He could have talked for ever, but the sum of what he said was that he wanted to enter Cedersholm's studio.

"The old Italians took subordinates, sir," he pleaded.

"There are classes at Cooper Union," Cedersholm began.

But Fairfax, his clear eyes on the artist, said, "But I want to work under a genius."

The other, complimented, pushed his milk aside and wiped his lips.

"Well, of course, there *is* plenty of hard work to be done right

here in this studio." He spoke cautiously and in a measured tone. "I have workmen with me, but no artists."

Fairfax patiently waited. He was as verdant as the young jasmine leaves, as inexperienced and guileless as a child.

"I had not thought of taking such an assistant as you represent, Mr. Fairfax." The older man fixed him with clever eyes. "A man must have no end of courage in him, no end of patience, no end of humility, to do what you *say* you want to do."

The young man bowed his head. "Courage, patience, and humility are the attributes of genius, sir."

"Yes," admitted Cedersholm, "they are, but ordinary talent will do very well in my workshop, and it is all that I need in a subordinate."

Fairfax smiled lightly. "I think I may say I am a good worker, Mr. Cedersholm. Any hod-carrier may say that without vanity, and if you turn me out, I'll take a mason's place at two dollars a day."

Cedersholm smiled. "You don't look like a mason," he said hesitatingly, "though you do appear muscular. What would be your suggestion with regard to our relations?"

(Fairfax's eager heart was saying, "Oh, teach me, Master, all you know; let me come and play with the clay, finger it, handle it; set me loose in that big, cool, silent room beyond there; let me wander where I can see the shadow of that cast and the white draped figure from where I sit.")

"You are a fairly good draftsman?" Cedersholm asked. "Have

you any taste for decoration and applied design?"

"I think I have."

The Master rose. "Come to-morrow morning at ten and I'll give you something to do. I have just accepted a contract for interior decoration, a new house on Fifth Avenue. I might possibly make you useful there."

Fairfax walked home on air. He walked from Ninth Street, where the studio was, to his boarding-house, in the cold, still winter night – a long tramp. In spite of his limp he swung along, his coat open, his hat on the back of his head, his cheeks bright, his lips smiling. As he passed under the gas lamps they shone like Oriental stars. He no longer shivered at the cold and, warm with faith and confidence, his heart could have melted a storm. He fairly floated up Madison Avenue, and by his side the spirits of his ideals kept him company. Oh, he would do beautiful things for New York city. He would become great here. He would garland the metropolis with laurel, leave statues on its places, that should bear his name. At ten o'clock on the following day, he was to begin his apprenticeship, and he would soon show his power to Cedersholm. He felt that power now in him like wine, like nectar, and in his veins the spirit of creation, the impulse to art, rose like a draught. His aunt should be proud of him, his uncle should cease to despise him, and the children – they would not understand – but they would be glad.

When he reached his boarding-house, Miss Eulalie opened the door and cried out at the sight of his face —

"Oh, Mr. Antony; you've had good news, sir."

He put both hands on the thin shoulders, he kissed her roundly on both cheeks. The cold fresh air was on his cool fresh lips, and the kiss was as chaste as an Alpine breeze.

He cried: "*Good* news; well, I reckon I have! The great Mr. Cedersholm has given me a place in his studio."

He laughed aloud as she hung up his coat. Miss Eulalie's glasses were pushed up on her forehead – she might have been his grandmother.

"The Lord be praised!" she breathed. "I have been praying for you night and day."

"I shall go to Cedersholm to-morrow. I have not spoken about terms, but that will be all right, and if you ladies will be so good as to wait until Saturday – "

Of course they would wait. If it had not been that their means were so cruelly limited, they would never have spoken. Didn't he think?.. He knew! he thought they were the best, dearest friends a young fortune hunter could have. Wait, wait till they could see his name in the papers – Antony Fairfax, the rising sculptor! Wait until they could go with him to the unveiling of his work in Central Park!

Supper was already on the table, and Antony talked to them both until they *could* hardly wait for the wonders!

"When you're great you'll not forget us, Mr. Antony?"

"Forget them – !"

Over the cold mutton and the potato salad, Fairfax held out a

hand to each, and the little old ladies each laid a fluttering hand in his. But it was at Miss Eulalie he looked, and the remembrance of his happy kiss on this first day of his good fortune, made her more maternal than she had ever hoped to be in her life.

There was a note for him on the table upstairs, a note in a big envelope with the business stamp of Mr. Carew's bank in the corner. It was addressed to him in red ink. He didn't know the handwriting, but guessed, and laughed, and drew the letter out.

> "Dear Cousin Antony,
>
> "I feel perfectly dreadful. How *could* I do such a selfish thing? I hope you will forgive me and come again. I drew two whole pages of parlel lines after you went away, some are nearly strait. I did it for punishment. You forgot the blackbird.
>
> "Your little Bella."

What a cad he had been! He had forgotten the dead bird and been a brute to the little living cousin. As the remembrance of how she had flown to him in her tears came to him, a softer look crossed his face, fell like a veil over his eyes that had been dazzled by the visions of his art. He smiled at the childish signature, "*Your little Bella.*" "Honey child!" he murmured, and as he fell asleep that night the figure of the little cousin mourning for her blackbird moved before him down the halls of fame.

CHAPTER XVI

Before Fairfax became dead to the world he wrote his mother a letter that made her cry, reading it on her veranda in the gentle sunlight. Her son wrote her only good news, and when the truth was too black he disguised it. But after his interview with Cedersholm, with these first good tidings he had to send, he broke forth into ecstasy, and his mother, as she read, saw her boy successful by one turn of the wheel. Mrs. Fairfax laughed and cried over the letter.

"Emmy, Master Tony's doing wonders, wonders! He is working under a great genius in the North, but it is easy to see that Tony is the spirit of the studio. He is at work from nine in the morning till dark, poor honey boy! and he is making all the drawings and designs and sketches for a millionaire's palace on Fifth Avenue."

"Fo' de Lawd, Mis' Bella."

"Think of it, we shall soon see his name in the papers – heaven knows where he'll stop. How proud I am of my darling, darling boy."

And she dreamed over the pages of Antony's closely-written letter, seeing his youth and his talent burn there like flame. She sent him – selling her watch and her drop earrings to do so – a hundred dollars, all she could get for her jewels. And the sum of money came like manna into his famished state. His mother's

gift gave him courage to rise early and to work late, and the silver sang in his waistcoat pockets again, and he paid his little ladies, thanking them graciously for their patience; he sent his aunt a bunch of flowers, bought an image of the Virgin for old Ann, a box of colours for Gardiner, and a book for Bella.

Then Antony, passing over the threshold of the workshop, was swallowed up by art.

And he paid for his salt!

How valuable he was to Cedersholm those days he discovered some ten years later. Perched on his high stool at the drawing-table, his materials before him, he drew in freehand what his ideas suggested. The third day he went with Cedersholm to the palace of Rudolph Field on Fifth Avenue to inspect the rooms to be decorated. Fairfax went into the "Castle of the Chinking Guineas" (as he called it in writing to his mother), as buoyantly as though he had not a leaking boot on one foot and a bill for a cheap suit of clothes in his pocket. He mentally ranged his visions on the frieze he was to consider, and as he thought, his own stature seemed to rise gigantic in the vast salon. He was alone with Cedersholm. The Fields were in Europe, not to return until the palace had been made beautiful.

Cedersholm planned out his scheme rather vaguely, discoursing on a commonplace theme, indicating ceilings and walls, and Fairfax heard him through his own meditations. He impulsively caught the Master's arm, and himself pointing, "Just there," he said, "why not…" And when he had finished,

Cedersholm accepted, but without warmth.

"Perfectly. You have caught my suggestions, Mr. Fairfax," and poor Antony shut his lips over his next flight.

In the same week Cedersholm left for Florida, and Fairfax, in the deserted studio, sketched and modelled *à sa faim*, as the French say, as old Professor Dufaucon used to say, and as the English say, less materially, "to his soul's content." February went by in this fashion, and Fairfax was only conscious of it when the day came round that he must pay his board and had nothing to do it with. Cedersholm was to return in a few days, and he would surely be reimbursed – to what extent he had no notion. His excitement rose high as he took an inventory of his work, of his essays and drawings and bas-reliefs, his projects for the ceiling of the music room. At one time his labour seemed of the best quality, and then again so poor, so abortive, that the young fellow had more than half a mind to destroy the lot before the return of the Master. During the last week he had a comrade, a great, soft-eyed, curly-locked Italian, who didn't speak a word of English, who arrived gentle as an ox to put himself under the yoke of labour. Antony, thanks to his keenness and his gift for languages, and his knowledge of French, made out something of what he was and from where. He had been born in Carrara and was a worker in marble in his own land, and had come to work on the fountain for the music room in the Field palace.

"The fountain!" Fairfax tumbled over his sketches and showed one to his brown-eyed friend, who told him rapidly that it was

"divinely beautiful," and asked to see the clay model.

None had been made.

The same night, Fairfax wrote to Cedersholm that he had begun a model of the fountain, and in the following days was up to his ears and eyes in clay.

The block of marble arrived from Italy, and Fairfax superintended its difficult entry by derrick through the studio window. He restrained "Benvenuto Cellini," as he called his comrade, from cutting into the marble, and the Italian used to come and sit idle, for he had no work to do, and waited Cedersholm's orders. He used to come and sit and stare at his block of marble and sing pleasantly —

"Aria pura
Cielo azuro
Mia Maddelena,"

and jealously watch Fairfax who *could* work. Fairfax could and did, in a long blouse made for him by Miss Mitty, after his directions. With a twenty-five cent book of phrases, Fairfax in no time mastered enough Italian to talk with his companion, and his own baritone was sweet enough to blend with Benvenuto Cellini's "Mia Maddelena," and other songs of the same character, and he exulted in the companionship of the young man, and talked at him and over him, and dreamed aloud to him, and Benvenuto, who had only the dimmest idea of what the frenzy meant – not so dim, possibly, for he knew it was the ravings of art – supplied the

"bellisimos" and "grandiosos," and felt the spirit of the moment, and was young with Fairfax, if not as much of a soul or a talent.

The model for the fountain was completed before Cedersholm's return. After a month's rest under the palms of Florida, the sculptor lounged into the studio, much as he might have strolled up a Paris boulevard and ordered a liqueur at a round table before some favourite *café*. Cedersholm had hot milk and biscuits in a corner instead, and Fairfax drew off the wet covering from his clay. Cedersholm enjoyed his light repast, considering the model which nearly filled the corner of the room. He fitted in an eyeglass, and in a distinguished manner regarded the modelling. Fairfax, who had been cold with excitement, felt his blood run tepid in his veins.

"And your sketches, Fairfax?" asked the Master, and held out his hand.

Fairfax carried him over a goodly pile from the table. Cedersholm turned them over for a long time, and finally held one out, and said —

"This seems to be in the scale of the measurements of the library ceiling?"

Fairfax's voice sounded childish to himself as he responded —

"I think it's correct, sir, to working scale."

"It might do with a few alterations," said Cedersholm. "If you care to try it, Fairfax, it might do. I will order the scaffolding placed to-morrow, and you can sketch it in, in charcoal. It can always come out, you know. You might begin the day after to-

morrow."

The Master rose leisurely and looked about him. "Jove," he murmured, "it's good to be back again to the lares and penates."

Fairfax left the Master among the lares and penates, left him amongst the treasures of his own first youth, the first-fruits of his ardent young labour, and he went out, not conscious of how he quivered until he was on his way up-town. What an ass he was! No doubt the stuff was rubbish! What could he hope to attain without study and long apprenticeship? Why, he was nothing more than a boy. Cedersholm had been decent not to laugh in his face – Cedersholm's had been at once the kindest and the cruelest criticism. He called himself a thousand times a fool. He had no talent, he was marked for failure. He would sweep the streets, however, and lay bricks, before he went back to his mother in New Orleans unsuccessful. His letters home, his excitement and enthusiasm, how ridiculous they seemed, how fatuous his boastings before the old ladies and little Bella!

Fairfax passed his boarding-house and walked on, and as he walked he recalled what Cedersholm had said the day he engaged him: "Courage, patience, humility." These words had cooled his anger as nothing else could have done, and laid their salutary touch on his flushed face.

"These qualities are the attributes of genius. Mediocrity is incapable of possessing them." He would have them *all*, every one, every one! Courage, he was full of it. Patience he didn't know by sight. Humility he had despised – the poor fellow did

not know that its hand touched him as he strode.

"I ought to be thankful that he didn't kick me out," he thought. "I daresay he was laughing in his sleeve at my abortions!"

Then he remembered his design for the ceiling, and at the Carews' doorstep he paused. Cedersholm had told him to draw it on the Field ceiling. This meant that he had another chance.

"It's perfectly ripping of the old boy," he thought, enthusiastically, as he rang the door-bell. "I'll begin to-morrow."

Bella opened the door to him.

CHAPTER XVII

The following year – in January – lying on his back on the scaffolding, Fairfax drew in his designs for the millionaire's ceiling, freely, boldly, convincingly, and it is doubtful if the eye of the proprietor – he was a fat, practical, easy-going millionaire, who had made money out of hog's lard – it is doubtful that Mr. Field's eyes, when gazing upward, saw the things that Fairfax thought he drew.

Fairfax whistled softly and drew and drew, and his cramped position was painful to his left leg and thigh. Benvenuto Cellini came below and sang up at him —

"Cielo azuro,
Giornata splendida
Ah, Maddelena,"

and told him in Italian about his own affairs, and Fairfax half heard and less than half understood. Cedersholm came once, bade him draw on, always comforting one of them at least, with the assurance that the work could be taken out.

During the following weeks, Fairfax never went back to the studio, and one day he swung himself down when Cedersholm came in, and said —

"I'm a little short of money, sir."

Cedersholm put his hand in his pocket and gave Antony a bill with the air of a man to whom money is as disagreeable and dangerous as a contagious disease. The bill was for fifty dollars, and seemed a great deal to Antony; then a great deal too little, and, in comparison with his debts, it seemed nothing at all. Cedersholm had followed up his payment with an invitation to Antony to come to Ninth Street the following day.

"I am sketching out my idea for the pedestal in Central Park. Would you care to see it? It might interest you as a student."

The ceiling in Rudolph Field's house is not all the work of Antony Fairfax. Half-way across the ceiling he stopped. It is easy enough to see where the painting is carried on by another hand. He finished the bas-reliefs at the end of March, and the fine frieze running round the little music-room. Mr. Field liked music little and had his room in proportion.

Antony stood with Cedersholm in the studio where he had made his scheme for the fountain and his first sketches. Cedersholm's design for the base of the pedestal, designed to support the winged victory, was placed against the wall. It was admirable, harmonious, noble.

Fairfax had seen Cedersholm work. The sculptor wore no apron, no blouse. He dressed with his usual fastidiousness; his eyeglass adjusted, he worked as neatly as a little old lady at her knitting, but his work had not the quality of wool.

"What do you think of it, Fairfax?"

Fairfax started from his meditation. "It's immense," he

murmured.

"You think it does not express what is intended?" Cedersholm's clever eyes were directed at Fairfax. "What's the matter with it?"

Without reply, the young man took up a sheet of paper and a piece of charcoal and drew steadily for a few seconds and held out the sheet.

"Something like this … under the four corners … wouldn't it give an idea … of life? The Sphinx is winged. Doesn't it seem as if its body should rest on life?"

If Cedersholm had in mind to say, "You have quite caught my suggestion," he controlled this remark, covered his mouth with his hand, and considered – he considered for a day or two. He then went to Washington to talk with the architects of the new State Museum. And Fairfax once more found the four walls of the quiet studio shutting him in … found himself inhabiting with the friendly silence and with the long days as spring began to come.

He finished the modelling of his four curious, original creatures, beasts intended to be the supports of the Sphinx. He finished his work in Easter week, and wrote to Cedersholm begging for his directions and authority to have them cast in bronze.

CHAPTER XVIII

The four beasts were of heroic size. They came out of the moulds like creatures of a prehistoric age. Benvenuto Cellini, who was to have met his friend Antony at the foundry on the day Fairfax's first plaster cast was carried down, failed to put in an appearance, and Fairfax had the lonely joy, the melancholy, lonely joy, of assisting at the birth of one of his big creatures. All four of them were ultimately cast, but they were to remain in the foundry until Cedersholm's return.

His plans for the future took dignity, and importance, from the fact of his success, and he reviewed with joy the hard labour of the winter, for which in all he had been paid one hundred dollars. He was in need of everything new, from shoes up. He was a great dandy, or would have liked to have afforded to be. As for a spring overcoat – well, he couldn't bear to read the tempting advertisements, and even Gardiner's microscopic coat, chosen by Bella, caused his big cousin a twinge of envy. Bella's new outfit was complete, a deeper colour glowed on the robin-red dress she wore, and Fairfax felt shabby between them as he limped along into the Park under the budding trees, a child's hand on either arm.

"Cousin Antony, why are there such *de*licious smells to-day?"

Bella sniffed them. The spring was at work under the turf, the grass was as fragrant as a bouquet.

"Breathe it in, Cousin Antony! It makes you wish to do *heaps* of things you oughtn't to!"

On the pond the little craft of the school children flew about like butterflies, the sun on the miniature sails.

"What kind of things does the grass cutter, shearing off a few miserable dandelions, make you want to do, Bella? You should smell the jasmine and the oleanders of New Orleans. These are nothing but weeds."

"How can you say so?" she exclaimed; "besides, most of the things I want to do are wicked, anyhow."

"Jove!" exclaimed Fairfax. "That *is* a confession."

She corrected. "You ought not to say 'Jove' like that, Cousin Antony. You can cut it and make it sound like 'Jovah,' it sounds just like it."

"What wicked things do you want to do, Bella?"

She pointed to the merry-go-rounds, where the giraffes, elephants, and horses raced madly round to the plaintive tune of "Annie Laurie," ground out by a hurdy-gurdy.

"I'd *love* to go on."

Fairfax put his hand in his pocket, but she pulled it back.

"No, Cousin Antony, please. It's not the money that keeps me back, though I haven't any. It's Sunday, you know."

"Oh," her cousin accepted dismally.

And Bella indicated a small boy carrying a tray of sweets who had advanced towards the three with a hopeful grin.

"I'd perfectly *love* to have some of those *lossingers*, but mother

says 'street candy isn't pure.' Besides, it's Sunday."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Fairfax. "Do you mean to say that out here in God's free air you are going to preach me a sermon?"

He beckoned the boy.

"Oh," cried Gardiner, "can't we *choose*, Cousin Antony?"

The little cousins bent above the tray and slowly and passionately selected, and their absorption in the essence of wintergreen, sassafras, and peppermint showed him how much this pleasure meant to these rich children. Their pockets full, they linked their arms in his again.

"I have never had such fun in all my life as I do with you, Cousin Antony," Bella told him.

"Then come along," he suggested, recklessly. "You must ride once on the merry-go-round." And before the little Puritans realized the extent of their impiety, Fairfax had lifted Bella on a horse and Gardiner on an elephant, paid their fare and started them away. He watched Bella, her hat caught by its elastic, fallen off her head on the first round, her cheeks flushed and her eyes like stars, and bravely her straight little arm stretched out to catch the ring. There was triumph in her cry, "Oh, Cousin *Antony*, Cousin Antony, I've won the ring!"

Such flash and sparkle as there was about her, with her teeth like grains of corn and her eyes dancing as she nodded and smiled at him! Poor little Gardiner! Antony paid for him again and patted him on the back. There was a pathos about the mild, sweet little face and in the timid, ineffectual arm, too short and

too weak to snap the iron ring on to his sword. Bella rode till "Annie Laurie" changed to "Way down upon de Swanee river," and Fairfax's heart beat for Louisiana, and he had come to the end of his nickels. He lifted the children down.

Bella now wound both arms firmly in her cousin's, and clung to him.

"Think of it, I never rode before, never! All the children on the block have, though. Isn't it perfectly delightful, Cousin Antony? I *wish* your legs weren't so long."

"Cousin Antony," asked little Gardiner, "couldn't we go over to the animals and see the seals fall off and dwown themselves?"

They saw the lion in his lair and the "tiger, tiger burning bright," and the shining, slippery seals, and they made an absorbed group at the nettings where Antony discoursed about the animals as he discoursed about art, and Spartacus talked to them about the wild beast show in Cæsar's arena. His audience shivered at his side.

They walked up the big driveway, and Fairfax saw for the first time the Mall, and observed that the earth was turned up round a square some twelve feet by twelve. He half heard the children at his side; his eyes were fastened on the excavation for the pedestal of the Sphinx; the stone base would soon be raised there, and then his beasts would be poised.

"Let's walk over to the Mall, children."

Along the walk the small goat carriages were drawn up with their teams; little landaus, fairy-like for small folk to drive in.

Fairfax stood before the cavity in the earth and the scaffolding left by the workmen. He was conscious of his little friends at length by the dragging on his arms of their too affectionate weight. "Cousin Antony."

Fairfax waved to the vacant spot. "Oh, Egypt, Egypt," he began, in his "recitation voice," a voice that promised treats at home, but that palled in the sunny open, with goat rides in the fore-ground.

> "Out of the soft, smooth coral of thy sands,
> Out of thy Nilus tide, out of thy heart,
> Such dreams have come, such mighty splendours – "

"Bella, do you see that harmonious square?"

"Yes," she answered casually, with a lack lustre. "And do you see the *goats*?"

"Goats, Bella! I see a pedestal some ten feet high, and on it at its four corners, before they poise the Sphinx – what do you think I see, Bella?"

"… Cousin Antony, that boy there has the *sweetest goats*. They're *almost* clean! Too dear for anything! With such cunning noses!"

He dropped his arm and put his hand on the little girl's shoulder and turned her round.

"I'm disappointed in you for the first time, honey," he said.

"Oh, Cousin *Antony*."

"Little cousin, this is where my creatures, my beautiful bronze

creatures, are to be eternally set – there, there before your eyes." He pointed to the blue May air.

"Cousin Antony," said Gardiner's slow voice, "the only thing I'm not too tired to do is to wide in a goat carwage."

Fairfax lifted the little boy in his arms. "If I lift you, Gardiner, like this, high in my arms, you could just about see the top of the pedestal. Wait till it's unveiled, my hearties! Wait – wait!"

He put Gardiner down with a laugh and a happy sigh, and then he saw the goats.

"Do you want a ride, children?"

"*Did* they!"

He ran his hands through the pockets that had been wantonly emptied.

"Not a picayune, honey. Your poor old cousin is dead broke."

"Then," said Bella, practically, "let's go right away from here, Cousin Antony. I can't bear to look at those goats another minute. It hurts."

Fairfax regarded her thoughtfully. "Bella the Desirous," he murmured. "What are you going to be when you grow up, little cousin?"

They started slowly away from temptation, away from the vision of the pedestal and the shadowy creatures, and the apparition of the Sphinx seemed to brood over them as they went, and nothing but a Sphinx's wisdom could have answered the question Fairfax put: "What are you going to be when you grow up, little Bella?"

Fairfax soon carried the little boy, and Bella in a whisper said —

"He is almost too small for our parties, Cousin Antony."

"Not a bit," said the limping cousin, stoically. "We couldn't get on without him, could we, old chap?"

But the old chap didn't answer, for he had fallen asleep as soon as his head touched his cousin's shoulder.

When Fairfax left them at their door, he was surprised at Bella's melancholy. She held out to him the sticky remnant of the roll of lozenges.

"Please take it. I shouldn't be allowed to eat it."

"But what on earth's the matter?" he asked.

"Never mind," she said heroically, "you don't have to bear it. You're Episcopalian; but *I've got to tell*!" She sighed heavily. "I don't care; it was worth it!"

As the door clicked behind the children, Fairfax laughed.

"What a little trump she is! She thinks the game is worth the candle!"

CHAPTER XIX

That miserable foot of his gave him pain. The unusual strain of standing long at his work, the tramps he took to save car-fare, wearied him, and he was finally laid up for ten days. No one missed him, apparently, and the long, painful hours dragged, and he saw no one but his little landladies. His mother, as if she knew, sent him extra money and wonderful letters breathing pride in him and confidence in his success. When he was finally up and setting forth again to the studio, a visitor was announced. Fairfax thought of Benvenuto – (he would have been welcome) – he thought of Bella, and not of his Aunt Caroline.

"My dear boy, why didn't you let us know you had been ill?"

There is something exquisite to a man in the presence of a woman in his sick-room, be she lovely or homely, old or young.

"This is awfully, awfully good of you, Auntie. I've had a mighty bad time with this foot of mine."

Mrs. Carew in her street dress, ready for an all-day's shopping, came airily in and laid her hand on her nephew's shoulder. Fairfax thought he saw a look of Bella, a look of his mother. He eagerly leaned forward and kissed his visitor.

"It's mighty good of you, Auntie."

"No, my dear boy, it isn't! I really didn't know you were ill. We would have sent you things from the Buckingham. Our own cook is so poor."

She couldn't sit down, she had just run in on her way to shop. She had something to say to him…

"What's wrong, Aunt Caroline?"

His aunt took a seat beside him on the bed. Her dove-like eyes wandered about his room, bare save for the drawings on the walls and on a chair in the corner, a cast covered by a wet cloth. Mrs. Carew's hands clasped over her silk bead purse hanging empty between the rings.

"I have come to ask a great favour of you, Antony."

He repeated, in astonishment, "Of *me*– why, Auntie, anything that I can do…"

Mrs. Carew's slender figure undulated, the sculptor thought. She made him think of a swan – of a lily. Her pale, ineffectual features had an old-fashioned loveliness. He put his hand over his aunt's. He murmured devotedly —

"You must let me do anything there is to do."

"I am in debt, Tony," she murmured, tremulously. "Your uncle gives me *so* little money – it's impossible to run the establishment."

He exclaimed hotly, "It's a *shame*, Aunt Caroline."

"Henry thinks we spend a great deal of money, but I like to dress the children well."

Her nephew recalled Bella's wardrobe. Mrs. Carew, as though she confessed a readily-forgiven fault, whispered —

"I am so fond of bric-à-brac, Antony."

He could not help smiling.

"Down in Maiden Lane last week I bought a beautiful lamp for the front hall. I intended paying for it by instalments; but I've not been able to save enough – the men are waiting at the house. I *can't* tell your uncle, I really *can't*. He would turn me out of doors."

Over Fairfax's mind flashed the picture of the "Soul of honour" confronted by a debt to a Jew ironmonger. His aunt's daily pilgrimage began to assume a picturesqueness and complexity that were puzzling.

"Carew's a brute," he said, shortly. "I can't see why you married him."

Mrs. Carew, absorbed in the picture of the men waiting in the front hall and the iron lamp waiting as well, did not reply.

"How much do you need, Auntie?"

"Only fifty dollars, my dear boy. I can give it back next week when Henry pays me my allowance."

He exclaimed: "I am lucky to have it to help you out, Auntie. I've got it right here."

The sense of security transformed Mrs. Carew. She laughed gently, put her hand on her nephew's shoulder again, exclaiming —

"How *fortunate*! Tony, how *glad* I am I thought of you!"

He gave her all of his mother's gift but ten dollars, and as she bestowed it carefully away she murmured —

"It *is* a superb lamp, and a *great* bargain. You shall see it lit to-night."

"I'm afraid not to-night, Aunt Caroline. I'm off to see Cedersholm now, and I shan't be up to much, I reckon, when I get back."

His visitor rose, and Fairfax discovered that he did not wish to detain her as he had thought to do before she had mentioned her errand. She seemed to have entirely escaped him. She was as intangible as air, as unreal.

As he opened the door for her, considering her, he said —

"Bella looks very much like my mother, doesn't she, Aunt Caroline?"

Mrs. Carew thought that Bella resembled her father.

As Fairfax took his car to go down to Ninth Street, he said to himself —

"If *this* is the first sentimental history on which I am to embark, it lacks romance from the start."

CHAPTER XX

At the studio he was informed by Cedersholm's man, Charley, that his master was absent on a long voyage.

"He has left me a letter, Charley, a note?"

"Posted it, no doubt, sir."

Charley asked Mr. Fairfax if he had been ill. Charley was thoroughly sympathetic with the Southerner, but he was as well an excellent servant, notwithstanding that he served a master whom he did not understand.

"I should like to get my traps in the studio, Charley."

"Yes, Mr. Fairfax." But Charley did not ask him in.

"I'll come back again to-morrow… I'll find a note at home."

"Sure to, Mr. Fairfax."

"Benvenuto been around?"

The Italian had sailed home to Italy on the last week's steamer. Fairfax, too troubled and dazed to pursue the matter further, did not comprehend how strange it all was. The doors of the studio were henceforth shut against him, and Charley obeyed the mysterious orders given him. There reigned profound mystery at the foundry. The young man was sensible of a reticence among the men, who lacked Charley's kindliness. Every one waited for Cedersholm's orders.

The *Beasts* were cast.

"Look out how you treat those moulds," he fiercely ordered

the men. "Those colossi belong to me. What's the damage for casting them?"

At the man's response, Fairfax winced and thrust his hands into his empty pockets.

Under his breath he said: "Damn Cedersholm for a cold-blooded brute! My youth and my courage have gone into these weeks here."

As he left the foundry he repeated his injunction about the care of the moulds, and his personal tenderness for the bronze creatures was so keen that he did not appreciate the significant fact that he was treated with scant respect. He stepped in at the Field palace on the way up-town, and a man in an official cap at the door asked him for his card of admission.

"Card of admission? Why, I'm one of the decorators here… I reckon you're new, my boy. I only quit working a fortnight ago."

He was nervous and pale; his clothes were shabby.

"Sorry," returned the man, "my orders are strict from Mr. Cedersholm himself. *Nobody* comes in without his card."

The sculptor ground his heel on the cruel stones.

He had been shut away by his concentrated work in Cedersholm's studio from outside interests. He had no friends in New York but the children. No friend but his aunt, who had borrowed of him nearly all he possessed, no sympathizers but the little old ladies, no consolations but his visions. In the May evenings, now warm, he sat on a bench in Central Park, listlessly watching the wind in the young trees and the voices of happy

children on their way to the lake with their boats. He began to have a proper conception of his own single-handed struggle. He began to know what it is, without protection or home or any capital, to grapple with life first-hand.

"Why, *art is the longest way in the world*," he thought. "It's the rudest and steepest, and to climb it successfully needs colossal *genius*, as well as the other things, and it needs money."

He went slowly back to his lodging and his hall room. Along the wall his array of boots, all in bad condition – his unequal boots and his deformity struck him and his failure. A mist rose before his eyes. Over by the mirror he had pinned the sketch he liked the best.

On Sunday afternoon, in his desire to see the children, he forgot his distaste of meeting the master of the house, and rang the bell at an hour when Carew was likely to be at home. He had, too, for the first time, a wish to see the man who had made a success of his own life. Whatever his home and family were —*Carew* was a success. Fairfax often noted his uncle's name mentioned at directors' meetings and functions where his presence indicated that the banker was an authority on finance. Ever since Mrs. Carew had borrowed money of him, Fairfax had been inclined to think better of his uncle. As the door opened before him now he heard singing, and though the music was a hymn, it rolled out so roundly, so fully, so whole-heartedly, that he knew his uncle must be out.

The three were alone at the piano, and the young man's face

brightened at the sight of the children. On either side of their mother Bella and Gardiner were singing with delight the little boy's favorite hymn.

> "No parting yonder,
> All light and song,
> The while I ponder
> And say 'how long
> Shall time me sunder
> From that glad throng?'"

Curious how syllables and tones and inflections can contain and hold our feelings, and how their memory makes a winding-sheet.

Fairfax came in quietly, and the singers finished their hymn. Then the children fell upon him and, as Gardiner said, "Cousin Antony *always did*," he "gobbled them up."

"You might have *told* us you were ill," Bella reproved him. "When I heard I made some wine jelly for you, but it wobbled away, and Gardiner drank it."

"It wasn't *weal* wine," said the little boy, "or *weal* jelly…"

Fairfax glanced toward his aunt, unconsciously looking to her for comfort on this trying day.

Mrs. Carew was truly embarrassed at the sight of her creditor, but she continued to play lightly among the hymns, and gave him up to the children. But Fairfax was too desperate to be set aside. If there was any comfort anywhere he was going to have it. He

said to his aunt in a voice deepened by feeling —

"Aunt Caroline, I'm a little down on my luck."

The lady turned her doe-like eyes on her nephew. "My dear Tony…"

He clenched his vigorous hands to keep down his emotion.

"Yes. Cedersholm has turned his back on me, as far as I can see."

With a short laugh he threw off his intense mood, thoroughly ashamed of his weakness.

"*Our* branch of the family, Aunt Caroline, are unlucky all round, I reckon."

There was one thought uppermost in his aunt's mind. *She had no money with which to pay her debt to him.* When there weren't lamps to buy there were rugs and figures of *biscuit* Venuses bending over *biscuit* streams. She had confessed her vice; she "adored bric-à-brac." The jumble in her mind made her eyes more vague than ever.

"Will you go back South?" she wondered.

He started, spread out his empty hands. "Go back to mother like this? Auntie!"

As ineffectual as she had been on the night of his arrival, so now Mrs. Carew sat ineffectual before his crisis. She breathed, "My poor boy!" and her fingers strayed amongst the keys and found the melody of the song he loved so much.

The young traveller at her side was too much of a man, even in his state of despair, to have expected a woman to lift his burden.

If she did, he did not think of the money she owed him. What he wanted was a soothing touch to be laid on his heart, and the song in which, not six weeks before, he had nearly loved his aunt, did what she did not.

The children had gone upstairs. Mrs. Carew sang through the first verse of the song. As far as she was concerned nothing could have been a greater relief. The sympathy she did not know how to give, the debt she had never discharged, the affection she had for Antony, and her own self-pity, Mrs. Carew threw into her voice, and it shook its tremulo through him.

He breathed devotedly: "Thank you, *dear*," and raised one of his aunt's hands to his lips.

Mr. Carew had let himself in with his latchkey, and was within a few feet of them as his wife finished her song.

CHAPTER XXI

Neither Antony nor Mrs. Carew had the presence of mind to stir. Mrs. Fairfax said of her brother-in-law that he was a "vain creature whose pomposity stood in place of dignity." Carew, at all events, came upon a scene which he had never supposed would confront his eyes. Before him in his own drawing-room, a whipper-snapper from the South was kissing his wife's hands. To Carew the South was the heart of sedition, bad morals, lackadaisical indolence. What the South could not do for him in arousing his distaste, the word "artist" completed. He said to his wife —

"Is *this* the way you pass your Sabbath afternoons, Mrs. Carew?"

And before she could murmur, "My *dear* Henry – " he turned on Fairfax.

"Can't *you* find anything better to do in New York, sir?" He could not finish.

Fairfax rose. "Don't say anything you will regret, sir. I kissed my aunt's hand as I would have kissed my mother's. Not that I need to make excuse."

Mr. Carew's idea of his own importance, of the importance of everything that belonged to him, was colossal, and it would have taken more than this spectacle, unpleasant as it was, to make him fancy his wife harboured a sentiment for her jackanapes

of a nephew. If the tableau he had had time to observe on his way across the dining-room floor had aroused his jealousy, that sentiment was less strong that was his anger and his dislike. Young Fairfax had been a thorn in his side for several weeks.

"You are wise to make no excuses," he said coldly. "I could not understand your sentiments. I have my own ideas of how a young man should employ his time and carve out his existence. Your romantic ideas are as unsympathetic to me as was this exhibition."

Mrs. Carew, who had never been so terrified in her life, thought she should faint, but had presence of mind sufficient to realize that unconsciousness would be prejudicial to her, and by bending over the keys she kept her balance.

She murmured, "My dear, you are very hard on Antony."

Carew paid no attention to her. "Your career, sir, your manner of life, are no affair of mine. I am concerned in you as you fetch your point of view" (Carew was celebrated for his extempore speaking), "your customs and your morals into my house."

"Believe me," said Mrs. Fairfax's son, in a choked voice, "I shall take them out of it for ever."

Carew bowed. "You are at liberty to do so, Fairfax. You have not asked my advice nor my opinions. You have ingratiated yourself with my friends, to my regret and theirs."

Antony exclaimed violently, "Now, what do you mean by *that*, sir?"

"I am in no way obliged to explain myself to you, Fairfax."

"But you are!" fairly shouted the young man. "With whom have I ingratiated myself to your regret?"

"I speak of Cedersholm, the sculptor."

"Well, what does *he* say of me?" pursued the poor young man.

"It seems you have had the liberty of his workshop for months – "

"Yes," – Antony calmed his voice by great effort, – "I have, and I have slaved in it like a nigger – like a slave in the sugar-cane. What of that?"

The fact of the matter was that Cedersholm in the Century Club had spoken to Carew lightly of Fairfax, and slightingly. He had given the young sculptor scant praise, and had wounded and cut Carew's pride in a possession even so remote as an undesirable nephew by marriage. He could not remember what Cedersholm had really said, but it had been unfortunate.

"I don't know what Cedersholm has said to you," cried Antony Fairfax, "nor do I care. He has sapped my life's blood. He has taken the talent of me for three long months. He is keeping my drawings and my designs, and, by God – "

"Stop!" said Mr. Carew, sharply. "How *dare* you use such language in my house, before my wife?"

Antony laughed shortly. He fixed his ardent blue eyes on the older man, and as he did so the sense of his own youth came to him. He was twenty years this man's junior. Youth was his, if he was poor and unlucky. The desire to say to the banker, "If I should tell you what I thought of *you* as a husband and a father,"

he checked, and instead cried hotly —

"God's here, at all events, sir, and perhaps my way of calling on Him is as good as another."

He extended his hand. It did not tremble. "Good-bye, Aunt Caroline."

Hers, cold as ice, just touched his. "*Henry*," she gasped, "he's Arabella's son."

Again the scarlet Antony had seen, touched the banker's face. Fairfax limped out of the room. His clothes were so shabby (as he had said a few moments before, he had worked in them like a nigger), that, warm as it was, he wore his overcoat to cover his suit. The coat lay in the hall. Bella and Gardiner had been busy during his visit on their own affairs. They had broken open their bank. Bella's keen ears had heard Antony's remark to her mother about being down on his luck, and her tender heart had recognized the heavy note in his voice. The children's bank had been their greatest treasure for a year or two. It represented all the "serious" money, as Bella called it, that had ever been given them. The children had been so long breaking it open that they had not heard the scene below in the drawing-room.

As Fairfax lifted his coat quickly it jingled. He got into it, thrust his hands in the pockets. They were full of coin. His sorrow, anger and horror were so keen that he was guilty of the unkindest act of his life.

"What's this!" he cried, and emptied out his pockets on the floor. The precious coins fell and rolled on every side. Bella and

her little brother, who had hid on the stairs in order to watch the effect of their surprise, saw the disaster, and heard the beloved cousin's voice in anger. The little girl flew down.

"Cousin *Antony*, how *could* you? It was for *you*! Gardiner and I broke our bank for you. There were ten dollars there and fifty-nine cents."

There was nothing gracious in Fairfax's face as it bent on the excited child.

"Pick up your money," he said harshly, his hand on the door. "Good-bye."

"Oh," cried the child, "I didn't know you were proud like *that*. I didn't know."

"Proud," he breathed deeply. "I'd rather starve in the gutter than touch a penny in this house."

He saw the flaming cheeks and averted eyes, and was conscious of Gardiner's little steps running down the stairs, and he heard Bella call "Cousin *Antony*," in a heart-rent voice, as he opened the door, banged it furiously, and strode out into the street.

BOOK II
THE OPEN DOOR

CHAPTER I

He had slept all night in a strained position between a barrel of tallow candles and a bag of potatoes. In spite of the hardness of the potatoes on which he lay and the odour of the candles, he lost consciousness for a part of the night, and when he awoke, bruised and weary, he found the car stationary. As he listened he could not hear a sound, and crawling out from between the sacks in the car, he saw the dim light of early dawn through a crack in the door. Pushing open the sliding door he discovered that the car had stopped on a siding in an immense railroad-yard and that he was the only soul in sight. He climbed out stiffly. On all sides of him ran innumerable lines of gleaming rails. The signal house up high was alight and the green and yellow and white signal lamps at the switches shone bright as stars. Further on he could see the engine-house, where in lines, their cow-catchers at the threshold, a row of engines waited, sombre, inert horses of iron and steel, superb in their repose. Fairfax reckoned that it must be nearly four-thirty, and as he stood, heard a switch click, saw a light change from green to red, and with a rattle and commotion

a train rolled in – along and away. On the other side of the tracks in front of him were barrack-like workshops, and over the closed station ran a name in black letters, but it did not inform Fairfax as to his whereabouts except that he was at "West Junction." He made his way across the tracks towards the workshops, every inch of him sore from his cramped ride.

He always thought that on that day he was as mentally unhinged as a healthy young man can be. Unbalanced by hunger, despair and rage, his kindly face was drawn and bore the pallor of death. He was dirty and unshaven, his heavy boot weighed on his foot like lead. Without any special direction he limped across the tracks and once, as he stopped to look up and down the rails on which the daylight was beginning to glimmer, in his eyes was the morbidness of despair. A signalman from his box could see him over the yards, and Fairfax reflected that if he lingered he might be arrested, and he limped away.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.