SYLVIA ARDEN DECIDES

Title: Sylvia Arden Decides

Author: Margaret Rebecca Piper

Release Date: February 28, 2015 [eBook #48385]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SYLVIA ARDEN DECIDES ***

Produced by Al Haines.

SYLVIA ARDEN DECIDES

BY

MARGARET REBECCA PIPER

Sylvia Arden

AUTHOR OF

SYLVIA'S EXPERIMENT: THE CHEERFUL BOOK, (Trade Mark)
SYLVIA OF THE HILL TOP: THE SECOND CHEERFUL
BOOK, ETC. (Trade Mark)

FRONTISPIECE BY
HASKELL COFFIN

GROSSET & DUNLAP

PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

First Impression, September, 1917

CONTENTS

SYLVIA ARDEN DECIDES

CHAPTER I
OF FUTURES AND OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS

"I know what the trouble with Sylvia is," announced Suzanne, elevating herself on one elbow and leaning forward out of the hammock just enough to select and appropriate a plump bonbon from the box on the wicker stand near by.

"Well," encouraged Sylvia, "what *is* the trouble with me?"

At the moment as she stood leaning against the massive white pillar with a smile on her lips and in her dark eyes, the sunshine glinting warm, red-gold lights in her bronze hair, it seemed as if it would be hard indeed to find any trouble with her so completely was she a picture of radiant, joyous, care-free youth.

Suzanne demolished her bonbon, then proceeded to expatiate on her original proposition.

"The trouble with you," she averred oracularly from her cushions, "is that you are addicted to the vice of contentment."

"Well, why shouldn't she be?" demanded Barbara from the depths of the huge arm-chair which nearly swallowed her diminutive figure. "I'd like to know who has a better right? Hasn't Sylvia this minute got everything anybody in the world could want? If I had been born to live on a hill top, like Sylvia, I'd never leave it."

Suzanne sat up, brandishing a reproachful forefinger at the speaker.

"Barbie Day! I am shocked at you. What would your Aunt Josephine say? Sylvia, she must be packed off at once. She mustn't be allowed to stay even for the party. The flesh pots have gone to her head. Another day at Arden Hall will ruin her for the Cause." And, with a prophetic shake of her head, Suzanne helped herself to a "Turkish Delight" and relaxed among her cushions, the leaf green

color of which, contrasting with the pale pink of her gown, made her look rather like a rose, set in its calyx. Suzanne was extraordinarily pretty, much prettier, in fact, than was at all necessary for a young person of distinct literary bent and a pronounced–audibly pronounced–distaste for matrimony. Thus Nature, willfully prodigal, lavishes her gifts.

"Speak for yourself," retorted Barbara with unusual spirit. "If the flesh pots are ruining me they shall continue on their course of destruction without let or hindrance until Wednesday next. I was born poor, I have lived poor and I shall probably die poor, but I am not above participating in the unearned increment when I get a heavenly chance like this blessed week and if anybody says 'Votes for Women' to me in the next five days he or she is likely to be surprised. I am going to turn Lotus Eater for just this once. Don't disturb me." And by way of demonstration Barb tucked one small foot up under her, burrowed even deeper in the heart of the big chair and closed her eyes with a sigh of complete satisfaction.

In the meanwhile Sylvia had absentmindedly plucked a scarlet spray from the vine which was swaying in the September breeze just above her head and her eyes were thoughtful. Unwittingly, the others had stirred mental currents which lay always fairly near the surface with her, suggested problems which had been asserting themselves of late rather continuously. The generous-hearted little schoolgirl Sylvia who had wanted to gather all the lonely people in the world into her Christmas family, the puzzled Sylvia who even five years ago had been tormented by the baffling question why she had so much and others so little was still present in the Sylvia of almost two and twenty who considered herself quite grown up and sophisticated and possessed a college diploma.

"I don't know that I am so viciously contented as you seem to think, Suzanne," she said, "and I haven't the slightest intention of staying on my hill top, as you mean it, Barb. But I can't just come down off it and go tilting at windmills at random. I've got to know what my job is, and I don't at all, at present–can't even guess at it. All the rest of you girls had your futures neatly outlined and sub-topiced. Nearly every one in the class knew, when she graduated last June, just what she wanted to do or had to do next. Every one was going to teach or travel, or 'slum' or study, or come out or get married. But poor me!" Sylvia shrugged humorously, though her eyes were still thoughtful. "I haven't any startling gifts or urgent duties. I haven't the necessity of earning bread and butter, nor any special cause to follow. It is really hopeless to be so–" She groped for a word then settled on "unattached."

"There is more than one male who would be willing to remedy that defect, I'm thinking," chuckled Suzanne wickedly. "How about the person who disburses these delectable bonbons? Won't he do for a cause?"

"I am afraid not, the person being only Jack."

”Only Jack, whom the mammas all smile upon and the daughters don their fetchingest gowns and their artfullest graces for–quite the most eligible young man in the market. Sylvia, you are spoiled if Jack Amidon isn't good enough for you!”

”I didn't say he wasn't good enough for me.” Sylvia came over to the table to provide herself with one of Jack's bonbons before seating herself on the India stool beside the hammock facing out over the lawn. ”Jack is a dear, but I've known him nearly all my life, seems to me, and even to oblige you it would be hard to get up any romantic thrills over him.”

”Too bad!” murmured Suzanne, regretfully. ”He is so good looking. You two would look lovely prancing down the aisle together à la Lohengrin.”

”Suzanne!” Barb opened her eyes to expostulate. ”You are so dreadfully flippant. I don't believe anything is sacred to you.”

Suzanne laughed. ”Maybe not,” she admitted. Then she sat up abruptly to add, ”I forgot my Future. I have that shrined and canonized and burn incense to it every night. It is the only thing in the world or out of it I take seriously. I-am-going-to-write-plays.” She thumped a plump green cushion vigorously, allotting a single thump to each staccato syllable. ”I may not succeed this year or next year or in five years, but some day I shall arrive with both feet. You two shall come and sit in my first-nighter box and it will be *some* play!” She vaunted slangily, imparting a last emphatic punch upon the acquiescent cushion before she relinquished it.

”We'll be there,” promised Sylvia. ”I only wish I had convictions like that about my Future. Mine is just a nebular hypothesis at present. How about you, Barbie? Are you as certain about your Cause as Suzanne is about her Career?”

Barb uncurled herself to testify. ”Not a bit,” she sighed. ”You see, my Cause is a sort of inherited mantle, and I am never sure whether it fits or not, though I never have the slightest doubt as to the propriety of my attempting to wear it even if I have to take tucks in it.” Barbara's eyes crinkled around the corners in a way they had when she was very much in earnest. ”You know it has been understood all along that I was to be Aunt Jo's secretary and general right-hand man as soon as I graduated. That was what she educated me for. Of course I believe in suffrage and all that. When I hear Aunt Jo talk I just get thrills all up and down my spinal column and feel as strong as Samson making ready to topple over the pillars, as if I could do anything and everything to give women a chance. But when I get away from Aunt Jo I cool off disgracefully. That is what makes me think sometimes it isn't the real fire I have but a sort of surface heat generated by Aunt Jo's extraordinary personal magnetism and fearful and wonderful vocabulary. It worries me dreadfully sometimes.”

Barb's small, brown, child-like face puckered in perplexity and her blue

eyes blinked as if they beheld too much light.

"It needn't," commented Suzanne sagely. "I know you. By the time you have been flinging out the banner six weeks you will be white hot for the Cause, especially if you can somehow manage to martyrize yourself into the bargain. You would have made a perfect early Christian. I can see you smiling with glad Pollyannaism into the faces of the abashed lions."

"Oh, Suzanne!"

Barbara had spent many minutes all told during the past four years of her college life saying, "Oh, Suzanne!" in precisely that shocked, protesting, helpless tone. The two were the best of friends, but in code of conduct and mode of thought they were the meeting extremes.

"Aren't you going to prescribe for me now you have diagnosed my case?" Sylvia came to the rescue.

"I did prescribe, but you wouldn't swallow Mr. Jack Amidon, sugar-coated pill though he is. How about your tawny-maned, giant, ex-football-hero M.D.? He isn't so good looking as Jack but–"

"I think he is much nicer looking," Barb interposed surprisingly, then blushed and subsided.

"Oho!" laughed Suzanne. "Better keep your eye on our Barbie if you want to keep Doctor Philip Lorrimer on your waiting list, Sylvia. Such unprecedented enthusiasm! And she has beheld him but once at that. Oh, the witchery of that Commencement moon! I inadvertently nearly promised to marry Roger Minot myself in its specious glamour. I'll wager our demure Barbie flirted with your six-foot medicine man when you rashly left him on her hands on the outskirts of Paradise. 'Fess up, Barb. Didn't you flirt a teeny weeny little flirt in the moonshine?"

"No, I didn't," denied Barbara, flushed and indignant. "But I did like Doctor Lorrimer. He talked sense, and I was awfully interested in his work in the free clinic."

"Sense! Shop! By moonlight! Ye gods!" mocked Suzanne. "Never mind, Barbie. Your tactics were admirable. Listen to 'em. Keep on listening to 'em. It's what the sex likes. It gets 'em every time."

"But I don't want to get 'em," protested Barbara earnestly.

Whereupon Suzanne giggled and tossed her victim a silver sheathed bonbon by way of reconciliation. Then she returned to her charge upon Sylvia, who had sat silent during the last sally, meditatively playing with the spray of scarlet creeper in her lap.

"Sorry, Sylvia, belovedest. But I can't seem to think of a single suitable job for you except matrimony. You are eminently fitted for that."

Sylvia looked up with an expression half mirthful, half dissenting.

"Thanks. But at this juncture I don't happen to want to get married one bit more than you do, which to judge from your protestations and your treatment of poor Roger isn't much."

"Right you are. No such 'cribb'd, cabin'd and confined' business as matrimony for this child. What was the advice old Bacon cites as to when a man should marry? 'A young man not yet, an elder man, not at all.' Read woman for man and you have my sentiments in a nutshell."

"Oh, Suzanne!" Thus the refrain from the big chair. But Sylvia only laughed, knowing what Barbara seemed never to be able to learn, that Suzanne rarely meant more than a half or at best a quarter of what she said and thoroughly delighted in being iconoclastic, especially if the idols made considerable noise smashing, as she would have put it herself.

"Look at your neighbor, Mrs. Doctor Tom." Suzanne warmed her to her subject. "She used to write for all the best magazines and travel and live the broadest, freest, splendidest kind of life. How does she put in her time now? Eternally making rompers for Marjory, trying to keep Thomas Junior's face clean and his vocabulary expurgated, seeing that the dinner is warm and the cook's temper cool when Doctor Tom is late to meals, and so on and so on to the end of the chapter. Only there isn't any end to the chapter. It goes on forever like Tennyson's stupid brook. Bah! Excuse me!" And Suzanne's gesture betokened insuperable scorn for the ways of the wifely.

"But Mrs. Daly looks as if she enjoyed doing all those things, and I think it is lovely to have babies." There was a little wistful note in Barb's voice as she made the statement.

"H-mp! Maybe so. But I say it is a shame for anybody who could write the way she could to give it up. Don't you, Sylvia?"

"O dear!" groaned Sylvia. "Yes and no. Why do I always have to see both sides of things? Lois *is* happy. At least I think she is. You can't always tell about Lois, she is so cool and serene and deep. Anyway, the babies are lovely. But I can't help agreeing with you a little, Suzanne. It does seem a pity."

"Of course it is a pity. And there is your Felicia. She is another case in point. She gave up her work and a fortune to marry a man who lived just long enough to leave her with a big heartache to carry round inside her and two children to provide immediate bread and butter for. You can say what you like. I say it was too much of a price."

"O, but, Suzanne, Marianna and Donald are such dears!" pleaded Barb.

"Of course they are dears. They are adorable. But you can't deny they have kept her back. She is just beginning to be a real sculptor after all these years. And now she is beginning appears this Kinnard person to spoil it all."

Sylvia looked up a trifle startled.

"What do you mean, Suzanne? Mr. Kinnard isn't spoiling anything. He is helping. Felicia hasn't a bit of faith in herself. She never would have thought of entering into that mural relief competition if he hadn't made her. And I know her designs are going to be splendid. Mr. Kinnard says they are, and he knows."

Suzanne shrugged.

"I fear the Greeks bearing gifts. No man ever gave a woman something for nothing since time began. You'll see."

"What shall I see?"

"You might have seen the way he looked at your Felicia yesterday afternoon. You needn't stare. She is the loveliest thing imaginable; and, anyway, widows always marry again. They can't seem to help it. It is in the system."

"Oh, he looks at every woman. How can he help it with eyes like that? He is much more likely to be wooing Hope. He has been sketching her all summer and she makes lovely shy dryad eyes at him while he works. I don't see how he can resist her myself, she is so deliciously pretty."

"'A violet by a mossy stone.' Mr. Kinnard isn't looking for violets. You'll see, as I said before."

And in spite of her denial, Sylvia couldn't help wondering if there were any truth in Suzanne's implications. She had accepted Stephen Kinnard quite simply as Felicia had explained him, an old friend and fellow artist of Paris days. He had been in Greendale nearly all summer doing some sketches of Southern gardens for a magazine, and it had seemed perfectly natural to Sylvia that he should come often up the hill to see Mrs. Emory. They were both artists and had much in common beside their old friendship. That any factors deeper than those which appeared on the surface might be keeping Stephen Kinnard in Felicia's proximity had not until the moment occurred to Sylvia. For a moment it flashed across her mind how sadly Arden Hall would fare without Felicia who with the dear "wonder babies" had come to help Sylvia keep Christmas nearly six years ago and had remained in the old house ever since to its young owner's infinite content and well being.

"I never thought of Felicia's marrying again," she said after a moment of silence.

"Well, Stephen Kinnard has thought of it, if you haven't," pronounced Suzanne. "By the way, he said a rather nice thing about you yesterday. He said you had a genius for happiness."

Sylvia smiled a little as her gaze strayed past the white pillars, past the giant magnolia-tree lifting its shining leaves to the sun, past the pink and white glory of cosmos and the dial beyond, dedicating itself discreetly to none but sunny hours; beyond still farther to the clear turquoise space of sky visible behind it all.

"Being happy isn't much of an art when you can't help being it," she said,

her gaze and her thoughts coming back from their momentary journey.

"Oh, but he didn't mean just your being happy," put in Barb in her quick, serious way. "He meant your way of making other people happy. It's true. I noticed it often in college. But it is truer than ever here. Everybody in Arden Hall is happy. It is like Shakespeare's forest. It makes you feel different–not just only happy but better, being here."

"That is the house. It has been like that ever since I had my Christmas family here. Of course, it is realty mostly Felicia. She is the mainspring of it all. But we like to pretend there is something magic about the house itself. You don't know how I love every stick and brick of it. I have never had half enough of it. I have been in school so much, I've only snatched a few vacations on the wing, as it were, and even that only in the last few years since I captured Felicia. Ugh! Nobody knows how I hated those dreadful holidays in hotels after Aunt Nell died and I came to America. And nobody knows how I love this." Her expansive gesture made "this" include house and lawn and magnolia and pink and white bloom and sun dial and all the rest, perhaps even the turquoise stretch of sky. "I've never had my fill of homeness," she concluded.

"Funny!" mused Suzanne. "Now, I don't want to be at home at all. Norton is such a stuffy, snippy, gossipy, little town, and I loathe being officially the 'parson's daughter.' Sometimes it used to seem to me I'd rather throw myself in the river than go to another prayer meeting and hear Deacon Derby drone out minute instructions to the Lord as to how he should manage his business. And being home isn't so sweet and simple as it seems either. I adore my mother, but we don't see two things alike in the wide world. She likes the chairs stiff and straight against the walls, just in the same position year in, year out. I like 'em at casual experimental angles, different every day. That is typical of our two viewpoints. She likes things eternally straight and the same. I like 'em eternally on the bias and different. We can't either of us help it. We are made that way. And we're both more or less miserable, whether we give in or whether we don't. Mother and Dad are regular darlings, both of them, but I don't mean to stay at home with them a bit more than I can help. They don't need me. They are perfectly used to doing without me and are really much happier sans Suzanne. I just stir things up and they like to snuggle down in their nice comfortable ruts. I've got to live in New York. I'd smother in Norton, Pa."

"Roger doesn't seem to be smothering in Norton," Sylvia reminded her. "Jack stopped over to see him last week and he said Roger was stirring things up with a vengeance since he has been sitting among the city fathers."

"Oh, Roger!" Suzanne shrugged Roger away as entirely negligible. "Roger Minot would stir things up in a graveyard. He likes to live in a small town. I don't. The biggest city in the world isn't one bit too big for me. New York for

mine. Better change your mind, Sylvia, and come on, too. There will be plenty of room in my garret. More room than anything else probably. Aunt Sarah's legacy has its limits, more's the pity. But come on and share my crust."

"Maybe I will, temporarily. I've promised Jeanette Latham to visit her next winter and I'll include you and Barb in my rounds if invited."

"Jeanette Latham? Mrs. Francis VanDycke Latham? *The* Mrs. Latham who figures in 'Vanity Fair' and the Sunday supplement? The only Jack's sister? There will be some contrast between visiting her and visiting me. She inhabits a Duplex on the Drive, doesn't she? One of the utterly utter."

"That depends. Mr. Latham is awfully rich and old family, if that is what you mean, and Jeanette does like to be at the extreme of everything, but underneath all her dazzle and glitter she is really as simple and genuine as Jack is. I like her, and she is Jack's favorite sister."

"Which helps," murmured Suzanne. "See here, Sylvia, if you once get into that high society labyrinth you'll never get out."

"Oh, yes I shall–unless the Minotaur gets me. I just want a bit of Jeanette's kind of life to see what it is really like. In fact, I want to try all kinds."

Sylvia smiled as she spoke, but she meant her last assertion for all that. Hers was an eager, active, questing temperament. She was avid for life in its entirety, with a healthy zest for experience whose sword blades rather than poppy seeds appealed to her just now, as is natural with youth. The college world from which she had been recently emancipated, full and various and strenuous as it had often been, had never fully satisfied her free, quick, young spirit. She had always the memory of those early rich years in Paris with her aunt from which to draw comparison. She had once complained to Felicia that college was too much like the Lady of Shallott's tower whose occupants perceived life in a polished mirror instead of in direct contact. She was already frankly a little tired of "shadows," ready for the real thing, whatever that was.

"Maybe I am glad I don't have to do any one thing," she continued. "All through school you are so pushed and guarded and guided and instructed you don't have half a chance to be yourself. I'm thankful for a breathing space to find out who I really am."

"Why, Sylvia! How funny!" puzzled Barb. "Don't you know all about yourself?"

"No, do you?"

Barbara shook her head with a faint sigh.

"Maybe not. Or, if I do, I don't let myself look at the real Barb for fear–" She broke off and Suzanne intervened.

"Well, I know all there is to know about Suzanne Morrison. I have taken considerable pains to get acquainted, in fact. It is great to know precisely what

you want and that you are going to get it sooner or later." Thus the sublime arrogance of the young twenties.

"I wish I did!" said Sylvia quickly.

"Which?"

"Both," parried Sylvia.

But Barb, who was watching her, was aware of something in her friend's face which she could not quite fathom. Was it possible there was anything in the world Sylvia Arden wanted and could not have? It was a startling thought to Barb, who was accustomed to considering Sylvia as the Princess of all the Heart's Desires.

Just then the Japanese gong from within sent out its silver-tongued invitation. With the alacrity of the healthily hungry and heart-free the three friends rose, the conclave ended, consigning to temporary oblivion Causes, Careers and all Concomitant Problems.

CHAPTER II
REASONS AND WRAITHS

Mrs. Emory laid down her sewing on the porch table and rose to greet Stephen Kinnard, a tall, lean man with a rather angular but interesting face, with hair slightly graying on the temples, and remarkably beautiful eyes, slate-gray shot with tiny topaz colored flecks, eyes which as Sylvia said "looked" at women. They looked now, which was scarcely strange considering how beautiful Felicia Emory was at thirty-three.

"Will you have tea?" inquired Felicia.

"Thanks, no." He shook his head with a humorous gesture. "I've taken tea at the Oriole Inn–almost forcible feeding, in fact. It seems they are serving a new kind of sandwich to-day and Sylvia waylaid me and insisted on trying it on the dog so to speak. She and Suzanne and Barbara and Martha and Hope all stood by to watch the effect. I was never so nervous in my life. May I smoke to calm my spirit?"

Felicia nodded assent and sat down, resuming her sewing.

"I am glad to see you still survive," she said, as he lit his cigarette and dropped into a near-by chair.

"Oh, yes, I still survive. It was really an excellent sandwich in its way,

though I should hate to have to pass an examination on its contents. It was one of Sylvia's inventions it seems. Tell me, does she have the whole Hill on her hands? First it's a garden party at 'Hester house,' Sylvia at the helm; then it is the Byrd sisters who have to be petted or scolded or braced, or a patient of Doctor Tom's who needs attention, or his babies that have to be story-told to, or Marianna and Donald who have to have her assistance in a dramatic performance of Lord Ullin's Daughter. I heard her shouting 'I'll forgive your Highland Chief' yesterday while the kids eloped in the hammock, amidst high billows, I judge from the way the boat was rocking. To-day it is the Oriole Inn sandwich. She is a most remarkable young person, this Sylvia of yours, with a most insatiable energy."

"She is, indeed," agreed Felicia heartily. "The Hill can hardly get along without Sylvia. We all mope and get selfish and lazy, what she calls 'rutty' when she is away from it. I am so glad she is home for keeps now. The Hill is never quite the same without her."

"But she won't stay on it forever," warned Stephen Kinnard. "She is a live wire–that young lady. She isn't going to be content to settle down on even so lovely a hill as hers. Also she is more than likely to get married."

"I suppose so," sighed Felicia.

"What a lugubrious tone to vouchsafe to the holy state!" he teased.

"It isn't the holy state in itself. It is Sylvia. I hate to have her get grown up and married and settled down. I'd like to keep things just as they are for awhile. The dread of changes seems to grow on me as I get old."

Felicia smiled as she made the statement but there was genuine feeling behind it.

"Would you dread change for yourself?"

"For myself? I don't know. I wasn't thinking especially about myself."

"Do you ever?"

"Not oftener than is agreeable. I am getting to be a very placid, settled sort of person. That is the comfort of being in the thirties. You don't expect so much of life. Now, ten years ago if I had been thinking of submitting designs for a competition I should have been frightfully excited. Now, I think I would almost rather not win, which is fortunate considering how little chance there is of my doing so."

"There is all the chance in the world," objected Stephen. "You need a little of the virus of vanity instilled into you. Felicia, do you remember back there in Paris when old Regnier used to insist you had more talent than any man in his class?"

Felicia tranquilly snipped off her thread and admitted that she remembered.

"And do you remember how he raved when you told him you were going

to marry Syd?"

Felicia nodded. She remembered that, too; remembered also, though she did not say so, how she had smiled at the old master's ravings, sure that love would prove no hindrance to her art, sure that she and Sydney would work and achieve fame together. She had not dreaded changes in those days. She had welcomed them, taken risks blithely, unafraid. And there had been risks. Her aunt had raved also, to more purpose than the Master, and in a moment of rage had changed her will, cutting off from inheritance the willful girl who chose to reject the French count her judicious relative had selected for her and insisted on marrying instead a penniless artist. The loss of her inheritance had seemed to Felicia at the time a trifle light as air, quite as irrelevant indeed as the Master's gloomy prediction as to the eternal incompatibility of art and matrimony. All these things she had thrown into the scales with love in the opposite balance and love had weighed immeasurably heaviest.

There had followed a few years of idyllic happiness. Though with the coming of the babies the art she loved had been temporarily suspended; both she and her husband promised themselves eagerly that it was only a suspension, that she would go back to it again as soon as Marianna and Brother were just a little older. But before Marianna and Brother were much older Felicia was left alone with a "big heartache to carry round inside her and two children to provide immediate bread and butter for," as Suzanne had put it. And so the old dreams had been thrust out of sight, and the young woman whom the Master pronounced to have possessed more talent than twenty talented young men, fell to earning a living for herself and her little folk by painting place cards and Christmas greetings and calendars and such like small ilk. All this drifted in retrospect through Felicia Emory's mind as she bent over her sewing, and something in the droop of her mouth touched Stephen as he perceived it. Impulsively he threw away his cigarette and leaned forward letting his hand touch hers.

"Felicia, forgive me! I didn't mean to hurt you."

"You didn't. It just came back to me for a moment how fearfully young and happy and ignorant I was in those days. But with all the wisdom I've garnered since, if I had it to do over again, I suppose I should travel precisely the same road. Isn't it queer, Stephen? Don't you feel that way about the past, too?"

"No, my road was too devilish rough. I'd like it different."

Felicia looked up, surprised both at his words and the unusual passion in his voice.

"Do you suppose I have ever forgotten I didn't get what I wanted? Felicia, I loved you before Syd ever saw you."

"I know. I'm sorry. I was always sorry. You know that, Stephen."

"You needn't be. Loving you made a man of me, though it did make the

road rough. Things had come my way rather too easily up to that time. Syd was the better man. I always owned that."

"You were fine, Stephen. I've never forgotten how fine. And Sydney cared more for you than for any one else in the world–barring us." She smiled a little and her eyes strayed out to the magnolia tree beneath whose generous shade Marianna and Donald were laboriously engaged in the construction of a kite with much chatter and argument.

"Felicia."

"Yes?"

"Are you so afraid of change you wouldn't risk beginning over again–with me?"

Felicia's sewing dropped in her lap and her blue eyes opened wide with surprise and consternation as she looked up to meet his dark, eager eyes.

"Stephen!"

"Well? Is it so impossible to conceive? Haven't you guessed I was going to ask it sooner or later?"

"No. Oh, Stephen, I wish you hadn't."

"Why? I don't expect the same kind of love you gave Syd. You couldn't give it, of course. That is past. But you are too young to have life stop altogether for you–too young and too lovely. Other men will ask it if I don't, and I–well, I want to get in ahead." He laughed boyishly, but his eyes, which were grave enough, never left her face. "Is there any reason you couldn't say yes?" he asked.

"I am afraid there are many. One of them–rather two of them–are out under the tree at present."

His gaze followed her gesture.

"Are they really a reason? I love the kiddies and they like me. Surely it would be no injustice nor detriment to them. Why should it?"

"Not to them–rather to you–to any man I married. They are a very piece of me. They are me. If there ever came to be a decision between them and–well, call the man you–I should decide for them. Is that fair to you? Would you risk it?"

"Willingly. Why should there be any decision or division? What do you think I am? If I marry you I marry them too. I am crazy over children. I've always wanted them."

"Exactly," said Felicia quietly. "That would be part of the injustice to you. I don't want children. Marianna and Donald are enough."

"So they would be for me. Felicia, can't you understand, I want nothing except what you want–what will make you happy? Is there any other reason?"

"Yes, she is coming up the Hill now."

He turned quickly and saw Sylvia, with her friends on either side, just going

up the path which led to the door of the Byrd sisters preparatory to an afternoon call.

"What nonsense!" He turned back to Felicia to protest. "Sylvia would be the last to stand in the way of your happiness."

"Oh, I know that. But listen, Stephen. You accused me of not understanding a moment ago. Now it is you who do not understand. Do you know what Sylvia has been to me all these years? No, you couldn't possibly know. No man could. Six years ago I was weary almost unto death, and discouraged with a weight of hopelessness which was beginning to make even the children seem a burden. That Christmas was the blackest time of all the months since Sydney went. I tell you honestly it didn't seem as if I could go on with it all. I was too near the breaking point. And then straight out of the delightful good fairyland where she lives came Sylvia begging me to be her Christmas sister and bring the babies to round out her magic Christmas circle. I believe it was Sylvia's smile and Sylvia's pleading eyes that began to heal the hurt in me then and there. I have had lonely moments since, of course, and some black ones, too, but they have never been so bad since that Christmas. Do you wonder that next to my own children I care more for Sylvia and her happiness than for anything else in the world?"

Stephen shook his head soberly, trying his best to understand since she desired it.

"After the Christmas family scattered I came to be what Sylvia calls her homekeeper and that I have been for over five years now. You can see a little what it has meant to me to have a home like Arden Hall for the children to grow up in instead of a cramped city apartment with no outdoors except public parks to play in. It has made all the difference in the world to them and to me, body, mind and soul. I couldn't have been half a mother to them the way I was working and living. And all of this we owe to Sylvia."

"But you have rendered good measure. You have given her a home no less than she has given you one. It has been a fair exchange."

"I know. It has meant almost as much to Sylvia as it has to me. It has given us both what we wanted most. I don't pretend it hasn't been give and take. It has. But this one year is the one of all the six since I've known Sylvia that she needs me most. I wouldn't fail her now for anything."

"And they say women have no sex loyalty," muttered Stephen Kinnard. "See here, Felicia, do you realize you have as good as accepted me?"

"Accepted you! I have been refusing you with reasons for fifteen minutes." Felicia's serene voice was a bit ruffled and there was a flush in her cheeks.

"You've been giving reasons, I grant you, but not refusal. Look at me, Felicia. If there weren't any Marianna and Donald and Sylvia in the world wouldn't you say this minute, 'Stephen, I'll marry you just as soon as you can get the

license'? No quibble now. Honest."

Felicia laughed softly and her flush deepened.

"If there weren't any Marianna and Donald and Sylvia in the world I should be so desperately lonesome I should tell the first man that asked me I would marry him as soon as he could get the license, but seeing that there are Marianna and Donald and Sylvia, not only in the world but on this very Hill, I am not in the least lonesome and quite satisfied with my mothering-sistering job, thank you."

"Then it is really no?"

The mirth died out of her eyes at the gravity of his tone.

"Yes, Stephen. I am sorry, but it is really no. Aside from Sylvia and the children there would always be Sydney. You are too fine to be a second best, Stephen, dear. Do go and find somebody who is fresher and younger and less–tired than I am."

At her words there rose to both their minds a vision of Hope Williams' dainty, wild rose beauty and wistful "dryad" eyes. Stephen had been sketching her only that morning in the Oriole Inn garden and every line of her exquisite, fragile, flower-like face and lithe, graceful young body was in his head still. And Felicia had more than once surprised an unforgettable expression in Hope's eyes when the artist had come suddenly into the girl's presence. Hope was young, younger than Sylvia, and Stephen Kinnard was forty. But he was of the eternally young type of man, brimming over with that inexplicable, irresistible thing we call charm, and his years abroad had stamped him with a picturesque, foreign quality which was sure to appeal to the romantic fancy of youth. One ardent gaze from those strange, gold-flecked eyes of his had no doubt been enough to set many a maid dreaming ere this, and he had been kind to Hope, perhaps more than kind for all Felicia knew.

But already the vision of Hope had vanished from Stephen's mind. He saw only the mature grace and loveliness of the woman who had long ago been the one fixed star of his errant youth and to whom he now brought the homage of ripened manhood.

"I don't want anybody in the smallest particular different from yourself, sweet Lady Love. Don't worry though," as he saw her troubled eyes. "I am not going to pester you. I shall take myself off to-morrow but I shall come back and some day I shall surprise you in a lonely hour and you will say, 'Stephen, do hurry and get the license.'"

Seeing his whimsical, reassuring smile, Felicia smiled back, half relieved, and indeed not quite knowing how much of it all had been in earnest; glad, at all events, to have him slip back so easily into the familiar channels of friendliness.

And just then the girls, having finished their call, came gayly chattering up the walk, demanding of Stephen whether he had suffered any ill effects from the

experimental sandwich he had so manfully encountered. And amidst the general confusion of talk and laughter Stephen rose to take his departure, giving no hint of finality about his leave taking, except a slightly lengthened clasp of Felicia's hand and a steady gaze into her blue eyes. Consequently the girls, at least, were considerably surprised the next day to receive three boxes of sweet peas each with Stephen Kinnard's card, rose pink for Suzanne, shell pink for Barb, delicate lavendar for Sylvia. Sylvia's box also contained a charming little note thanking the girl for her summer's hospitality and regretting that the writer was called out of town without opportunity for formal farewells. For Felicia had come violets, but no word at all, not even a card.

"H-m-m," murmured the astute Suzanne, when the girls were alone, "Called out of town, indeed! Needn't tell me. Your Felicia didn't have such a becoming extra bloom yesterday for nothing. You are safe for the present, Sylvia. She evidently dismissed him."

Down the Hill, at the Oriole Inn, Hope and Martha Williams reigned in the absence of the young proprietor who since her grandmother's death had been traveling in Europe with the Armstrongs, her sister Constance and her husband, Sylvia's erstwhile gardener. And to the Oriole Inn also came flowers, dainty, half-open, pink rosebuds nestled in maidenhair fern. Came also a brotherly affectionate note of thanks and adieu from the artist.

"The sketches are bound to be a success," he wrote, "for you are the very spirit of Southern gardens, the veriest rose of them all." So he had put it, poet fashion, and Hope, with fluttering pink and white in her cheeks, ran off to enjoy her treasures in happy solitude, leaving her sister Martha stolidly measuring lengths for the new dining-room curtains. No one had ever sent roses to Martha in all her life. Nor had any one ever written poet lines about her or to her. She was not that kind, as she would herself have explained. But it was not that that brought a wry twist to her lips and a worried look to her eyes as she bent over her work.

"Why couldn't he a been a little meaner to her?" she demanded of the curtains. "'Twould have been a whole lot kinder than being kind."

In which theory she unconsciously paraphrased the words of a person she had never heard of, another perturbed guardian of another flower-like maid, the Lily Maid of Astolat. Of Launcelots and Elaines there are a plenty in this some-

what uneconomical world.

CHAPTER III
TWENTY-TWO

"Please, Felicia. Look at me. Am I all right?"

Mrs. Emory turned from her mirror before which she had been adjusting a last hairpin in her blond hair and smiled at the radiant vision which hovered on her threshold. But before she had time to render verdict the vision ceased to be stationary and became before her eyes a vivid, ecstatic flash and whirl of white chiffon and silver.

"Bless us, child!" laughed Felicia. "You are as bad as Marianna. How can I tell anything about you when you are spinning like a Dervish? You look as if you might float out the window any minute and join the moon sprites."

Sylvia laughed, too, and came to a halt, though one silver slipper paused tip toe as if it scorned prosaic levels and held itself ready for further airy revolutions.

"And leave my birthday party! Not much! The moon sprites shan't get me to-night. Honest, Felicia, I just can't keep still. I'm too alive."

The chiffons and silver began to shimmer and quiver again in testimony and Felicia smiled understandingly. But even as she smiled she felt a sharp little pang–the pang of chastened maturity for exuberant youth. A vagrant bit of verse flashed through her mind.

"Pity that ever the jubilant springs should fail at their flow
And that youth so utterly knowing it not should one day know."

Yes, that was the pity. Here was Sylvia Arden, glad, and young, and free, smiling into the future with fearless eyes, challenging experience. Must she too, one day know? At any rate, the hour of too much knowing was as yet afar off. At twenty-two Sylvia was still very close to the jubilant springs. But even as she reached this comforting conclusion Felicia saw the girl's eyes grow sober.

"Felicia, sometimes I think it's a dreadful thing to grow up. Life is so fearfully complex somehow. All sorts of questions jump out and 'Boo' at you from behind every tree."

"What kind of questions?"

"Oh, all kinds!" Sylvia dropped down on the low window seat, like a bird suddenly alighting, and clasped her hands around her knees in reckless disregard of her billowing chiffons. "I'm a little afflicted with socialism and that is a sad disease for a person who has as much money as I have. But that isn't all. I am so at sea about so many things, and there are so many strings pulling in all directions. Suzanne thinks New York is the only place in the world to really live in and she wants me to come and live with her and study or do something. She doesn't think it matters much what, so long as I breathe New York, and Barb is nearly as bad. They are both full of up-to-date notions and they think I'm just going to slip behind if I stay here and maybe I shall. I can see pretty easily how I could. Everybody here expects me to do the regular coming out performance, teas and dinners and balls and the rest, with maybe a little discreet charity work thrown in, and possibly a paper on art or ethics for the literary club. You know what Greendale is. The Gordons want me to go to Japan with them and Hilda wants me to join her in Berlin, or did before the war. Goodness knows where she is now. I haven't heard since July. And–well, there are other things."

Felicia quite understood that Jack Amidon might possibly be another string pulling the girl. It was no secret from the Hill, and certainly not from the wise-eyed "Big Sister," that that devoted, persistent and "magerful" young man had every intention of storming Sylvia's hill top and carrying off its princess if such a feat were humanly possible.

"And you don't want to do any of these things?"

Sylvia smiled dubiously.

"Oh, yes, a little of me wants to do all those things. But the most of me wants to stay right here at Arden Hall and do nothing particular. I'd like a kind of year o' grace I think. I don't seem to have any especial ambitions nor desires except to learn to live as broad and deep and quick as I can." She shifted her position slightly and looked out into the night where her beloved rose garden lay in magical moonlight and shadow and a faint sigh escaped her, born of the very beauty, poignant almost as pain, so quick was her response to it. Suddenly she turned back and her eyes smiled at Felicia.

"Life's funny, isn't it?" she said, springing up. "Felicia, what ever in the world should I do without you?" She eyed a little sternly the bunch of violets Felicia was wearing, a fresh bunch which had arrived that day. "Felicia, Mr. Kinnard isn't–you aren't–?"

Felicia laughed.

"Your observations lack a certain finished coherence but I assure you I am not, nor is he–at least, not seriously."

"I'm so glad!" sighed Sylvia. "I know I'm a pig but I should simply hate

Stephen Kinnard if I thought he were going to carry you off, and I should hate to hate him he is so exceedingly nice. I wish he could have stayed for the party to-night. Oh me! We ought to be downstairs this blessed minute. *Am* I all right, Felicia? You never did tell me." And Sylvia whirled around to the mirror for a last critical survey. Felicia, whose eyes also sought the reflected figure in the glass, thought she had never seen the girl lovelier than she was to-night in all her shimmering bravery of white and silver. But there was always something more than mere prettiness about Sylvia, something which seemed to shine from within out. She was so exquisitely alive like the fire in the heart of an opal or a jet of pure flame.

"Aren't you coming, Syl?" Suzanne's voice called from the hall as she knocked and entered almost simultaneously, followed by Barbara.

"'The feast is set,
The guests are met.
May'st hear the merry din.'"

she chanted gayly, looking more impishly charming even than usual in her berufled corn yellow taffeta, which set off her sparkling brunette beauty to perfection. "Do come down quick and get the hand shaking over so we can begin to dance. It is a shame to waste a moment of that heavenly music. And here's Barb just dying to get to cracking the hearts of the Greendale swains. Look at her. Behold my handiwork. She even let me apply the faintest soupçon of Nature's sweet reënforcer. Madame Delphine's Parisian Bloom. Isn't she adorable? Barbie, my child, revolve for the ladies."

"Oh, Suzanne!" The roses in Barb's cheeks needed no further reënforcement at the moment. "Do please rub it off. It's dreadful. Does it show, Sylvia? She would do it."

"Nothing shows except that you're the cunningest mite I ever laid eyes on," approved Sylvia. "Felicia, do look at her. Doesn't she look precisely like one of Marianna's dolls? In that darling white baby dress and blue sash to match her eyes, would you ever suspect her of being a Summa cum Laude and a frightfully new woman?"

"You all look new enough when it comes to that," laughed Felicia. "You haven't a notion how young you really are. Now, shoo, every one of you. I'll follow as soon as I have rounded up Donald and Marianna."

It was a rather heterogeneous assembly which met at the Hall that night, as Sylvia's parties were apt to be. The guests ranged from "Grandpa McIntosh," getting to be rather an old gentleman these days but still hale and a little crusty as became a good Scotchman, down to little Mary Lane, the youngest, shyest mem-

ber of the "Hester house" family which continued to hold its hospitable doors open to those who needed a home "with some one to care" as Sylvia had stipulated from the beginning.

Marianna, still fairy-like, in spite of her eleven-year-old dignity, flitted happily among the guests feeling delightfully grown up and important, but Donald, younger and shyer, boyishly conscious of his hands and feet, slipped into unobtrusive corners save for the rare moments when he could squeeze into an empty space beside his mother.

Of course the Hill was all there, Miss Priscilla, and Miss Rosalie and Julietta feasted their eyes delightedly on Sylvia, telling every one who would listen what a very picture of her Aunt Eleanor Arden the child was, rapturously reminiscent of other days and other parties when they, too, like Arden Hall were younger than at present, and Doctor Tom and Lois were there also, rallying each other on being such old fogies that a party was an event and the new dances utterly beyond their ken.

"Hester house" was present too in full force, including Mrs. Lorrimer and all the family of girls who had the luck to be mothered by her skillful hands and warm heart. All kinds of girls they were, big and little, pretty and plain, stupid and clever, but all of the workaday world and all otherwise homeless, united by one common bond, a warm adoration for Sylvia through whom they felt themselves linked to the world of their rosiest dreams. Sylvia would no more have omitted them from her list of guests on this birthday celebration than she would have omitted the Byrds or Doctor Tom. To be of the Hill was open sesame to Sylvia's favor, and moreover these girls were every one of them her personal friends and she wanted them here for their own sakes.

Hope and Martha, too, had come up from the Oriole Inn, the former still a little inarticulate and somber but happily having lost the old-young, pinched look about the mouth and the bitterness about the eyes which had been hers that night in Sylvia's garden when she had charged the owner so sternly with possessing "Hundreds of roses when Hope hasn't even one;" a charge which Sylvia had never since been able to forget for long. It was to her a symbol of the mesh of inequality and injustice of the world in which she herself was caught and struggled. For Sylvia wanted to share her roses. She always had wanted to, as Martha had long since learned. Hope was even sweeter and lovelier at twenty than she had been at fifteen, still a little frail in appearance though perfectly well. This summer there was an added grace about her, a sort of suppressed joyousness, a glow which transformed her rather ethereal charm into an even more appealing human guise. During the sunny summer days past when Stephen Kinnard had been using her as the incarnation of gardens, Hope herself had bloomed from a shy bud of a rose into a half-blown flower, though perhaps only Martha's keen, devoted eyes saw

what had happened.

Professor Lane and his wife, Sylvia's original "Christmas Mother," were unfortunately unable to be present, though they sent warm greetings and hearty congratulations from the Western university to which the professor had recently been called. With them, too, was Elizabeth, also of the original famous family, who had come of late to be almost like a daughter in their childless home.

Gus Nichols was here, however, a slim, dark youth, extremely quiet, though not in the least awkward; unobtrusive, grave, giving the impression somehow of banked fires behind those solemn dark eyes of his, which followed Sylvia Arden wherever she passed. Though Gus was thoroughly American in dress and manner and articulation, the trail of his Italian ancestry was upon him. Even after all these years he looked "different," an odd contrast to the grim conservative old man, Angus McIntosh, whose adopted son and idol he was. Gus had been studying abroad for several years, had indeed just returned to America, ready to start his career on the concert stage. If this profession elected by the boy were at all a bitter pill for the old Scotchman to swallow he made no protest about it and had even furthered the lad's ambition. Mr. McIntosh was not one to indulge in half-way measures and Sylvia had long since driven home her point that if he was to transform Gus Nichols, office boy, into Augustus Nichols, his adopted son, he had no right to change the currents of the boy's being in the process. He quite understood that if Gus "had to play the music that was in him," he *had* to. That was the end of it. Angus McIntosh was enough of a predestinarian to perceive that. At any rate, Sylvia and her Christmas family had inoculated the fast hardening old man with a certain infusion of human tolerance and human understanding and he had all the reward for his kindness that he desired and more in the boy's usually silent but none the less deep gratitude and devotion.

Other friends there were of Greendale and the near-by city, assembled to do honor to the young mistress of Arden Hall who had at last come home to take her place among them no longer a half-fledged school girl, but a poised and very lovely young woman.

"I suppose you will be marrying her off next," observed Mr. McIntosh curtly, with bent brows, to Mrs. Emory who chanced to be standing near by as Sylvia sped past in Jack Amidon's arms.

"Not I," smiled Felicia. "I should be sorry to have her marry for a year or so yet. One is young such a very short time in this world at best. I should like to keep her just as she is for awhile if I could."

"You'll have some trouble doing it unless you muzzle that young man, I'm thinking." The speaker frowned thoughtfully at Jack Amidon's back. "I suppose that is what most people would call a suitable match, eh?" he wheeled on Felicia to ask.

"I suppose so," admitted Felicia.

"H-mp!" snorted her companion. "Most people are fools."

Whether fools or not there were plenty of people to note with interest, pleasure or alarm, according to their several viewpoints, when as the music ceased Sylvia stepped through the French window into the balcony beyond, followed by Jack Amidon. Perhaps more than one guest would have echoed Suzanne's verdict that Sylvia was spoiled indeed if Jack Amidon were not good enough for her; handsome, debonair, thoroughly charming as he was. Health, wealth, good looks and good old family on both sides. What more could be desired? Who but a canny old Scotchman would have "H-mped" in the face of such a very obviously appropriate combination? Yet Sylvia herself was still to be reckoned with; Sylvia who wore her heart on her sleeve as little now as in the old St. Anne days, Sylvia, who wanted to learn to live as broad and deep and quick as she could.

CHAPTER IV
THE WAYS OF A MAID

"You look mighty sweet and cool and moonshiny!"

Jack stooped to draw Sylvia's scarf about her bare shoulders with the protecting chivalrous touch which was characteristic of him. His ancestors had been cavaliers and none of them all knew better than he the art of little, tender, intimate, endearing ways which women–even new women–love. The ardently adoring expression in his eyes was also characteristic. Jack Amidon's eyes were accustomed to looking adoring. He could no more help making love to a pretty girl than he could have been rude to an ugly one. It was constitutional. To do him justice, however, this time the adoration came from rather deep. There had been girls and girls in his life but never but one Sylvia.

"Ah, but it's good to have you home for good and all." And he let his hands rest for a moment on her shoulders as he spoke and permitted the ardentness of his eyes to deepen.

But Sylvia slipped away from his hands and his too eloquent gaze. She turned to rest her hands on the railing and look down at the fountain which flashed and gurgled pleasantly below in the moonlight. Perhaps she knew that all the summer day playing had been leading up to this night, that a serious question was likely to "Boo" at her at any minute unless she could keep it at a

safe distance, which as Jack's eyes just now betrayed was not going to be so easy.

"I am not sure I *am* home–for good and all," she said, still with her eyes on the fountain. "I have to find something to do. Just being 'out' isn't going to satisfy me. I have to be in something or rather. I am looking for a Cause," she turned back to him with a smile to add.

Jack dropped on the railing by her side and bent his handsome head until it was very near the girl's.

"Won't I do–for a Cause?" he asked, unconsciously echoing Suzanne.

Sylvia smiled.

"Scarcely. I am afraid you are more like an effect."

"An effect!"

"You are a fearful example of what I don't want to be and what I am bound to be if I don't watch out."

"What?"

Sylvia paused for a word, then, "A derelict," she pronounced.

Jack's head went up quickly, his self-complacency shattered for the moment. Sylvia's word had stung.

"Do I honestly remind you of anything so–dilapidated, not to say rotten?" he asked.

Sylvia caught the hurt sound in his voice and looked up, taking in at a glance his wholesome, young vigor, his essential cleanness and fineness. Excellent things these in themselves as the girl knew, though she asked for more.

"No," she admitted. "It wasn't a good figure after all. You are more like a freshly rigged, beautifully appointed yacht, without a rudder or a pilot, going nowhere–anywhere."

Jack settled back on the railing with a shrug.

"Same old Sylvia! You always did hit straight from the shoulder. What do you want me to do? There is more money in the family now than is good for us. What's the infernal use of my scrapping and scrambling for more? I'm a nincompoop at the business anyway."

"Then for goodness' sake find one you aren't a nincompoop at," retorted Sylvia.

"Easier said than done, young woman."

"Oh, I know," relented his mentor. "I haven't any right to preach till I find my own job."

"You! Girls don't need a job. Their job is to look pretty and get married."

Sylvia frowned at that.

"Heretic! That's not twentieth-century lingo. You are positively mediæval. I shall set Barb on you."

Jack smiled.

"Barb knows it's true just as well as I do for all her theories. She would marry the right man in a minute if he turned up and forget the suffrage stuff. She's by all odds the most domestic of the three of you."

Sylvia looked thoughtful. She remembered Barb's opinion about the "loveliness" of having babies and wondered. For all his inconsequence Jack had a somewhat startling habit at times of getting beneath the surface of things. She suspected he had hit upon a truth now but would not give him the satisfaction of acknowledging the fact. Therefore she said nothing, and her silence gave her companion the opening he had been waiting for. He had not brought Sylvia out in the moonlight to talk "twentieth-century lingo."

"You didn't wear my orchids," he observed irrelevantly, at least irrelevantly to everything except his ardent eyes. From the beginning his eyes had been talking a language older than that of feminism.

"I didn't wear anybody's flowers. I had too many."

"And I am not different from just anybody?" There was a caressing, proprietary note in his voice. "Sylvia, sweetheart, you *know* I am."

Sylvia faced him and the issue then, aware that she could fend no longer.

"Of course you are different, Jack. I've known you so much longer than the rest, but–I am afraid you are not different in the way you want me to say it. Please, Jack, don't spoil what we have by asking too much." Impulsively she put out her hand and let it rest on his. "Can't we keep on being–just friends?" She pleaded after the immemorial fashion of woman.

"I'm afraid not. You see, I don't want to be just friends. I want a whole lot more as it happens. I know I'm not much good, but I could be with you at the helm. You could do anything with me. You always could. Oh, Sylvia, wouldn't you try it? Couldn't you?" He stooped and lifted her hand to his lips. "Sylvia, isn't there any hope?" he implored, all his boy's heart in his eyes.

Sylvia couldn't help being stirred deeply. When one is loved it is not so hard to believe one loves in return and the call of youth and life is strong. But for both their sakes she steadied herself knowing the time was not ripe for yielding, if, indeed, it ever would be. This was one of the things among others that she was at sea about. She was not yet sure she knew herself, as she had told her friends.

"I am afraid there isn't–much," she said gently, apropos of his word *hope*.

His hand clinched.

"Sylvia, is there any one else?"

She shook her head hastily, but her eyes fell beneath his penetrating gaze.

"It isn't–Sylvia, it isn't Phil?"

Sylvia's head went up and there was a flash in her brown eyes, a deeper flush on her cheeks.

"It is nobody. Jack, you haven't any right to ask that," she rebuked him

hotly.

"Sorry," he apologized. "Consider it unasked." "So it is old Phil," he thought.

"I don't want to marry anybody–not for a long, long time," Sylvia went on swiftly. "Anyway, I couldn't marry anybody who was just a boy. I've got to marry a *man*." In her confusion Sylvia hit hard again; harder perhaps than she really meant.

Jack rose and made one or two quick turns tip and down the balcony. Then he came to a halt before Sylvia.

"Maybe I deserve that," he said soberly. "No doubt I do. See here, Sylvia, if I can show you I am a man, will it help any?"

Sylvia hesitated. It would help a great deal and she knew it. And yet could she promise anything while she was still so uncertain of herself? Had she any right to hold out any hope?

"Sweetheart, wouldn't there be any chance for me?" he pleaded.

"I don't know," said Sylvia honestly. "I'm sorry, Jack. I'm all in a muddle myself. I do care a lot. How could I help it? You are always so dear and nice to me, and you are so twisted up with so many of the happiest times I've ever had I couldn't help caring. But it isn't enough at present, and I am not at all sure it ever could be enough of the right kind. We are awfully good playmates, but there is more ahead for both of us than play. At least I hope there is. Anyway, I don't want to belong to anybody but myself for awhile."

"I'll wait. I'll work like the devil. I'll do anything if you'll only say there is the slightest shadow of a chance."

Sylvia couldn't help smiling at the boyishness of his protestations, earnest as they were and touching in their unwonted humility. She shook her head.

"That is all there is–just a shadow of a chance. I'm sorry it isn't more. Truly I am. And don't–please, don't–hope too much," she begged.

"I'll hope all there is," he retorted grimly.

"Well, here you are! My word! Your partners are tearing their hair and rushing round like mad dogs. Pretty way for a hostess to behave, vanishing like the original Cheshire puss! Amidon, your life isn't worth a nickle if you go in there." Thus challenged a blond young medical student from the near-by University suddenly appearing in the window, blithely unconscious that he had interrupted anything more than a moonlight interlude.

"Then I'll stay out," announced Jack coolly as Sylvia rose with apologies and followed her captor.

Left alone, Jack lit a cigarette and strode to and fro in the little balcony thinking as hard as perhaps he had ever thought in his twenty-six rather heedless happy-go-lucky years. If ever a man takes square account of himself it is at the moment when he desires with all his heart and soul to win a woman. As young

men go, Jack Amidon was as clean and fine as most, considerably more so than might have been expected, in fact, considering his easy-going temperament and unlimited income. But being merely negatively decent was not enough to offer Sylvia Arden. Not even shrewd old Angus McIntosh knew that better than Jack himself.

"Man indeed!" he muttered in the course of his march. "I suppose if I had studied like sin and turned into a saw bones like old Phil she would have had some use for me." The thought of Phil Lorrimer sent his thoughts on a different tangent. For with that uncanny perceptive power which Sylvia herself granted him he knew far better than Sylvia knew that if it had been Phil instead of himself who had been besieging the Princess of the hill top that evening for the boon of her hand and heart a different answer might have been forthcoming. Phil, at least, fulfilled the initial requirement. He was a man, every inch of him. Jack vouchsafed him that just as he had admitted the other lad deserved Sylvia's favor even at his own expense back in the days of the Christmas family.

It was odd how history repeated itself. Just as in that old time, Sylvia had set himself a task to "mend his fences" as she had whimsically expressed it, so she was again bidding him gird on his armor if he would win her respect without which her love was an impossibility. As if it were yesterday Jack remembered that night among the snow-laden pines, out under the stars, when Sylvia had gravely and simply without any preaching, Sylvia fashion, turned him aside from paths already beginning to be dangerous to safer, cleaner ways. Come to think of it, it had always been Sylvia who had pointed him starward, Sylvia only who believed in him enough to swear him into knighthood. Now that they were no longer boy and girl it was the prize of her love which would send him into the fray. Already he had experienced his accolade.

"Poor old Lorry!" he thought. "Why didn't he cut his blooming operations and come down here and speak for himself to-night? Thank the Lord he didn't though or yours truly would be ditched and done for. I never had a show with Lorry in the foreground. Well, here's to the breach. Sylvia will never forgive me if I omit to dance with one of her precious orphans."

So it happened that a few moments later shy little Mary Lane watching the dancers with longing eyes from a corner caught her breath with astonishment and delight as Jack Amidon stood before her, his eyes smiling encouragement and friendliness, his lips begging the boon of a dance quite as earnestly as if she had been one of the belles of the ball. So it happened also that Sylvia, being whirled past the two, smiled happy gratitude at Jack over her partner's shoulder, and he knew that his careless kindness to her little guest had scored him a high mark in her favor.

"Jack is such a dear," thought Sylvia. "He is a real knight. I wonder if I am

all wrong to try to turn him into a plain workaday person. He is so thoroughly delightful as he is. When men get too much absorbed in their work you can't count on them for the little things, and, after all, the little things mean a whole lot."

Possibly this sage conclusion had some vague connection with the fact that a certain very much "absorbed in work" young doctor way off in a distant city had permitted Sylvia's birthday to come and almost go with no word or sign. If so certainly Sylvia would have been the last to admit the connection even to herself.

"Please, Miss Sylvia, there's some one downstairs in the hall asking for you," whispered a maid in Sylvia's ears as her partner brought her to a chair. "He didn't give any name."

Sylvia excused herself and slipped away wondering as to the identity of her late arriving guest. At the foot of the stairs was an extraordinarily tall, blond young man, with the bluest and friendliest of eyes and the biggest, most crushing hand grip in the world.

"Why, Phil!" gasped Sylvia. "I had no idea you could come." This as soon as she was able to regain her wits and the possession of her hands.

"Nor I. As a matter of fact, I couldn't. I just did," grinned Phil Lorrimer, cheerfully. "Here I am, B. and O. grime and all. May I come to the party just as I am without one plea?"

"You surely may. I'm so glad." And Sylvia's face corroborated her words.

"Here's a nosegay for you," and Phil's fingers fumbled with the string on the box he had deposited in a convenient chair while he had used both hands greeting Sylvia. In a moment a charming bouquet of cream yellow roses, shell pink at the heart, was disclosed.

"How lovely!" Sylvia buried her face in the nosegay. "I just have to wear them. Oh, dear, I haven't a pin."

"Here you are!" And the young doctor solemnly produced the needful article.

"Trust you!" laughed Sylvia. "There, aren't they perfect? Come on, quick. Let's not waste the music."

"Ditto my sentiments. Is this my dance?"

"It's Doctor Tom's, but he won't care. Hurry."

And in a moment the onlookers had something new to think of as Sylvia's white and silverness flashed back into the ballroom with a tall figure in plain traveling clothes by her side.

"Another country heard from," grunted Angus McIntosh as he watched the two swing into step.

Perhaps in the whole room there was no one who had more cause for a

sudden reaction of feeling than Jack Amidon, whose quick eye took in even at the length of the hall that Sylvia was at last wearing somebody's flowers. But it was with apparent nonchalance and entire good will that he came to offer Phil Lorrimer a cordial greeting a few moments later, though even as he chatted with the other young man it did not escape him that there was an added radiance to Sylvia's "moonshininess," as if she had tasted some magic draught of youth and joy during those few moments in which she had been out of the room. As has been observed, Jack Amidon was a rather unexpectedly perspicuous person at times.

CHAPTER V
SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON

"Oh, me! Just think! By to-morrow afternoon at this time we'll all be scattered to the four winds," sighed Barbara. "Don't you hate to have things get different?"

"Can't say I do. The differenter the better so far as I am concerned as I have hitherto remarked," put in Suzanne. "I hate staying still, physically, mentally, or morally. I'm ready for new pricks every minute. I feel like saying to life every morning 'Come on. Do your worst. I'm ready. Give me anything–everything–except stagnation.'"

"You don't look as if you were going to stagnate just this minute," laughed Sylvia, surveying her friend, who, indeed, from the tip of her impatiently tapping shoe to the crown of her rebellious blue-black, wavy hair, appeared sufficiently dynamic for any purpose.

"I don't intend to. That is why I am transferring my spiritual and bodily allegiance from Norton, Pa., to New York City. I'd rather live on a crust in that blessed city of enchantment than fare on nectar and ambrosia elsewhere. I wish you would change your mind and come along, Sylvia. I know you are going to be discontented here or even contented, which is worse. Arden Hall is a perfect dream of a place, and I've loved every minute of this week with you, but it would swamp me with its placidity if I settled down in it, and that's the truth."

"Oh, Suzanne!" Thus Barb, always sensitive to the possibility that some one's feelings might be going to be hurt.

"Don't mind her, Barb. I know what she means precisely, and it is all more or less true. Arden Hall is placid and remote. I have to find a way to link it some-

how with big moving things outside–below–or the very thing Suzanne threatens me with will happen."

"You'll find a way," prophesied Barb earnestly.

"Of course she'll find it," seconded Suzanne. "If there is anybody on this green earth capable of squeezing the traditional camel through the needle's eye it is the young person I see before me. Isn't it time our cavaliers arrived? I begin to pine for action already."

"Jack said he would be here at four sharp. We are going to take you to the most heavenly spot, right over the river with the whole Ridge for a background. Some day when you are being compressed to a wafer in the Subway in your precious old city you will remember it and be willing to give your second-most-becoming hat for a magic carpet to take you back."

"I shouldn't wonder," murmured Barb. "I believe Suzanne would rather hear the roar of the El than the wind in the pines though. She is the most urban person I ever knew."

Suzanne laughed at this arraignment.

"It isn't the music of the El, *per se* that I delight in. That's nearer like the thing it rhymes with. But it's a symbol. It means hurrying human beings, the rush and stir of things. I love crowds."

"And I detest them," groaned Barb. "I'm afraid of New York in spite of all its wonderfulness. It is so big and hard and impersonal. If it weren't for being with Aunt Jo I know it would scare me to bits to live there."

"You poor babe!" Sylvia smiled sympathetically at the speaker. "It is unthinkable that a little shrinking infant like you should be dedicated to a great screaming cause. You ought to live in a cozy cottage, in a friendly little village, where everybody knows everybody and grow pansies."

"And babies," added Suzanne, an addition which brought a quick flush to Barb's cheeks and made her put out her hand with a deprecating gesture. "You'll never be able to stand the pace. Better wire your Aunt Josephine you have decided to bury the mantle."

"For mercy's sake, what do you two think I am? I guess I don't have to be packed away in rose petals and pink cotton." There was a strain of indignation in Barb's voice. "I don't belong in the sheltered woman class, and I wouldn't stay in it if I did. How long do you suppose I'd have any peace in my cozy cottage, in my friendly little village, remembering all the other women who don't live in cozy friendly places but have to work in horrid, noisy, sweaty factories or worse? What pleasure would I get out of my pansies–and babies–so long as I knew there was a child in the world who wasn't free to chase butterflies in the sunshine? You two think I am just playing at this woman game. I'm not. Sylvia can act Lady Bountiful from the top of her Hill and you can write about woman, Suzanne, but

I'm going to fight for her, so there!"

"Bravo! I stand reproved and beg a thousand pardons. You're a trump, Barbie. You are right, too. Sylvia and I are likely to play with this thing called Feminism, but you'll fight for it to the last trench like the wee bit heroine you are. Oh, there's Mr. Amidon's car. There is Mr. Amidon and Dr. Lorrimer and–Sylvia, *who* is the third man?"

"If my eyes do not deceive me the third man is Roger Minot. Did you know he was imminent?"

"I did not. Moreover, I am extremely displeased with him for appearing," frowned Suzanne. "I told him distinctly I didn't want to see him again unless I sent for him."

"Well, you will have to look the other way then," observed Sylvia. "He is in plain sight."

So indeed it proved, for three minutes later, Roger Minot, a tall young man with hazel eyes and a firm chin, was shaking hands with the assembled group and explaining with considerable explicitness that he had happened to be in Baltimore on business and had also happened to call up Jack Amidon by telephone, who, in turn, had happened to be taking Sylvia and her guests on an excursion and had been kind enough to include himself in the invitation.

At all of which elaborate eloquence Suzanne had shrugged her displeasure and pointedly turned her back on the young barrister and devoted herself to the doctor. So much "happening" in the face of her expressed command deserved punishment and Suzanne was a firm disciplinarian where her lovers were concerned, especially the unfortunate Roger.

"Sylvia, you will have to sit with me to show me the way," ordered Jack in his usual "magerful" way, taking things into his own hands. "All aboard, everybody? Sure Madame Felicia won't go?" He turned to Sylvia to inquire.

"No, she said not. Felicia is not exceedingly devoted to picnics, and I suspect she has had more than enough of them this summer. Ready?" Sylvia turned back to her guests to ask and in a moment they were off down the hill.

The rich, vivid-hued Maryland fields and meadows lay indeed, "fair as the garden of the Lord" as the car sped out of Greendale beyond to the open country, along the smooth, hard, white pike. The afternoon shadows fell cool and long, and already there was a faint autumnal hint of crispness in the air and a mellow, misty gold to the sunshine. The mountains were outlined, palely blue, against the deeper azure of the cloudless September skies. Here and there a buzzard sailed and dipped above some wooded slope or a blue jay screamed and flashed out of an oak thicket.

Amidst the chatter of the rest Barbara fell silent and gave herself blissfully to the serene beauty of the outdoor world so utterly remote from that other world

of din and traffic, of strenuous toil and keen competition in which she was to merge her own existence on the morrow. She was profoundly grateful for this last opportunity to feel the benign presence of Nature in field and sky and mountain. Her quick eye took in every patch of purple aster bloom, every scarlet glory of sumach and warm bronze hue of oaks. Even the corn shocks spreading their brown skirts as if indulging in some quaint minuet stamped themselves upon her inner vision to be remembered long after. She did not wish to talk, scarcely even to think. She desired only to feel–to let the benediction of the jewel-tinted day possess her spirit.

Suzanne, less susceptible to the mood of tranquillity, was bubbling over with gayety, her attention centering chiefly on Phil Lorrimer sitting in the seat opposite her. She chose to ignore Roger Minot's steady hazel eyes. He need not think his coming made any difference to her. Whether he came or went was a matter of supreme indifference. He might just as well have stayed in his grim little, trim little, office in Norton, Pa., as to have pursued a will-o'-the-wisp to Arden Hall so far as Suzanne was concerned. Some women were made unhappy by men. Suzanne had a cousin to whom this had befallen and had long since determined none should have power to hurt her. She meant to guard well the citadel which was Suzanne Morrison. If there were any casualties in the attempt to scale the walls the responsibility would not be on her head. Let men look to themselves. Suzanne had small compassion. Though she thoroughly enjoyed the stimulus of the society of the other sex and dearly loved to clash swords with them she wished nothing at their hands. She meant to show the world that a woman could stand alone, strive and conquer alone, fail if need be, alone, sufficient unto herself unto the end. There should be no doll's house for her, no more confining limits than life itself, wide as ether and deep as the sea, for her abiding place.

On the driver's seat were Jack and Sylvia, the latter a little silent. Though she had made no protest against her companion's rather high-handed disposition of herself it had not wholly pleased Sylvia. For one thing, she thought it assumed too much on the basis of that half promise of last night. She did not desire that Phil or indeed any of the party should infer that she and Jack must necessarily pair off like a couple of Noah's ark animals; moreover she considered it extremely thoughtless, not to say selfish, of Jack to leave Phil to the society of a group of almost strangers when his time in Greendale was so limited; for Phil was taking the midnight train back to New York having allowed himself little more than twenty-four hours for a holiday.

"Too bad everybody has to go away," Jack was saying. "May I come over often and help cheer your lonely hours?" His voice was lowered and his head bent toward Sylvia in an intimate fashion.

"No." The negative was sufficiently decisive to make the driver send a sharp glance at his companion.

"Why not?"

"Several why nots. One is because you said last night you were going to work in earnest. You can't do that and keep flying out to Greendale every other day the way you have been doing all summer. Besides, I expect to be busy myself."

"You! May I ask what you are going to do that is so almighty important?"

"You may ask but I am not likely to inform you if you take that tone."

Jack whistled softly.

"Gee! Am I in as bad as all that?"

"As all what? Did I sound cross?" Sylvia smiled relentingly. "Well, maybe I was. I hate the lordly male attitude you assume at times. Your tone bristled with it just then."

"Did it?" he chuckled. "Sorry. Honest, I didn't mean to patronize your ladyship. So far from feeling lordly in your presence you usually make me feel infernally infinitesimal, not to say atomic. I have a fearful and wonderful respect for your serene high mightiness. I truly did want to know what you were going to do."

"I am going to get to work on my music for one thing. I've promised to practice with Gus. Then I am going to learn to cook."

"In the name of heaven why?"

"Because I want to, chiefly. Also I think everybody–male and female–ought to know how."

Jack groaned.

"Thence to dressmaking and millinery, I suppose?"

"Hardly. I haven't the slightest interest in sewing, though I could do it on a pinch I believe. I know I couldn't trim a hat–at least not one I would wear. But cooking is different. I believe I could get up quite a passion for it. Hilda used to. She claimed it was just as much an art to create a perfect salad as to write a sonnet."

"I'd vote for the salad personally. By the way, where is Hilda? Heard lately?"

"No, and I'm worried. One hears such horrid stories of what is happening over there. I don't know whether she and the Armstrongs can't get back or don't want to."

"Most likely the latter. Johnny Armstrong is darned likely to do what he wants. He is just the boy not to want to get back to safe and sane America. He is much more apt to be down in a trench or up in a 'plane by this time."

"I know. He's a wonder–one of the finest men I know. Just to think he was my gardener once! Wasn't it funny?"

"He got mighty good pay for that piece of masquerading. Constance is a shade too much on the grand duchess order for my taste but she suits him down to the ground. Only wish Isabel had drawn a man like John instead of the rotter she took a fancy to marry." For a moment Jack's serene brow looked thundery. "Queer world!" he muttered. "Sometimes I think we Amidons are doomed to go amuck one way or another. Jeanette's not much better off. Guess we're all sort of rudderless as you say, excepting Dad. He knows where he is going all right."

"You had better get on to his ship then," suggested Sylvia a little dryly.

"I am going to. You needn't think I didn't mean what I said last night. I did mean it, every word. If sticking to a job is going to mean getting what I want, I'll stick tighter than a stamp."

There was a ring of determination in his voice which startled Sylvia a little, it sounded so alarmingly conclusive.

"Jack! I didn't promise," she protested.

"Oh, I know. I'm not such a cad as to throw it up at you if even the sticking isn't enough. But if it's the one chance I'm too good a gambler not to take it–or to kick if I fail in the end." And Jack's lips came together with a firmness which avouched the sincerity of his statement.

Sylvia watching the landscape flit by looked thoughtful. It suddenly occurred to her that her companion had spoken the literal truth. Jack Amidon was first and last a good gambler, ready to play high stakes, to win or lose like a gentleman, without vainglory or bitterness. If she had said yes to his impassioned plea last night Sylvia could not help wondering if a little of the ardor of his love might not have abated in spite of himself. Wasn't it the chase itself he loved? If so, he was only his father's own son. Jackson Amidon, Senior, went on quietly bagging his millions, not because he cared a snap of his fingers for the money but because the exhilaration of achieving it in the face of obstacles was the breath of life to him. Like the biblical war horses he metaphorically trumpeted "Ha Ha!" in the battle hour. With father and son the game itself was the thing. The nature of the stake did not matter so much. With one it was Power, with the other Love, as it happened, but with both the zest lay, not in the end, but in the pursuit. Of course Sylvia did not reason all this out clearly, but vaguely she sensed the truth which the boy's words had revealed. Many months later the revelation recurred to her and she wondered if Jack, too, had understood himself as clearly as for a moment she had understood him. She thought it possible with his keen power of intuition, he had always understood. Perhaps he had.

So through the deepening autumnal twilight sped Youth with its visions and its questionings, Youth unproved, pressing forward toward some unknown mark in challenging mood, knowing little of the eternal mystery of Life and less

of that even more baffling mystery, the mystery of Self.

CHAPTER VI
OF MISSIONS, AND OMISSIONS

"H-mm!" Suzanne meditatively surveyed the depleted feast. "Thermos bottles! Silver spoons! Sophisticated salads! Is this your notion of roughing it, Mr. Jack Amidon? Of all Sybaritical picnics!"

"Same old bugs! Same old sticks in the lemonade!" retorted Jack, leaning forward to extract a leaf from Sylvia's cup with the prong of a salad fork. "The good old times aren't utterly gone."

"Oh, but think of the bacon bats of yesteryear!" mourned Suzanne. "The fingers I've burned! The clothes I've spoiled! The smudges wherewith I've smudged my nose! I begin to feel fatally reminiscent. Give me some more lemonade, I pine to drown my grief."

"And I pine to see the sunset from Lover's Leap." And Sylvia sprang up hastily, perceiving that the sun was already glinting flame and gold through the trees. "Come on everybody or it will be too late." The others rose to follow her lead. Phil fell into step beside Sylvia, leaving Jack to Barbara's society, as Suzanne and Roger had at last struck up a conversation, albeit a rather non-amicable one and strayed off together.

"Are you sure your name isn't Pease Blossom or Mustard Seed? I could swear you were a fairy. Are you really a Militant? Would you resist forcible feeding? Here, let me test you with a pickle."

But Barb only laughed and accepted the pickle.

"I'm nothing militant to-night. I'm at peace with the whole world."

"Even the menacing male?" teased Jack.

"The menacing male is a spoiled baby, biting off his own nose. Mr. Amidon, it would serve you right if I delivered a suffrage lecture here and now. I don't believe you know a thing about the movement," severely.

"Heaven forbid!" he ejaculated piously.

"You will sing a different tune before many years. You'll have it forcibly fed to you unless you take to it of your own accord as babies take to their thumbs."

"I believe I could bear to have even Suffrage rammed into me at your hands, Mademoiselle Mustard Seed, especially if you would make pansy eyes at me while

you did it," he added audaciously. "What are you going to do with those eyes of yours anyway? They are altogether too expressive to be wasted on a Cause."

Barb frowned.

"You wouldn't wear a last year's hat. Why do you use last century methods with women? They hate compliments."

"Do they? I wonder." And his wonder was genuine. He honestly reflected a moment. Sylvia did hate compliments he knew. But then he never offered her any. He never even flirted with Sylvia, though she was about the only pretty girl of his acquaintance of whom as much could be said. He had been perfectly willing to play the game à deux with this demurely charming, pansy-eyed, little suffragist however. But he was evidently not going to be permitted to have his will. Were Barbara Day and Sylvia and the sharp-tongued Suzanne really a new breed of womankind? Were his own sisters and the dozens of other girls of their kind with whom he had played and danced and flirted for the past five or six years really an older type, soon to be as extinct as the Dodo? Only for a moment, however, he wondered. Jack was not much given to serious thinking. He took life and the feminine sex on the whole rather as he found them. He was always genially ready to "play up" to both. He was now. It was rather agreeable he thought to watch Barb's eyes shine and the color surge in her cheeks, so he laid the match to the tow chiefly from an artistic impulse to see the flame.

"Tell me," he urged. "What is this thing you girls are up to? What is it you are going to New York to do?"

Barb shot him a shrewd rather indignant glance. Then she laughed.

"You don't really care, but, just to punish you, I'm going to tell you. You deserve it."

And then she did tell him, a little reservedly at first, but soon losing both her resentment and her shyness she forgot herself entirely and warmed to her loved theme, betraying something of the dream of her Aunt Josephine, of herself, of all women who think and feel and are forever disenchanted with any Pisgah heights they themselves might have the luck to attain, so long as the great weary horde of the "dispossessed" wait without the gates, scarcely even knowing in the apathy of their misery that there is a Promised Land. And her listener did not scoff even to himself at the revelation he was vouchsafed. He had the grace to recognize with suitable humility that he unworthy had been permitted a brief glimpse into a holy of holies. And irreverence was not one of Jack's failings, for all his habitual levity of mood.

In the meanwhile, not far ahead, Roger and Suzanne were quarreling hotly. At least Suzanne was quarreling. Roger never quarreled, which was perhaps one of his most glaring defects in Suzanne's eyes.

"I told you not to come and you came," was the burden of Suzanne's com-

plaint.

"I didn't come to see you. I didn't even know you were in Greendale until Jack told me. And when I knew, how could I resist a chance to see you, especially as it will be months before I can see you again? Be reasonable, Suzanne. Why are you so angry at me for coming?"

Suzanne shot him an exasperated and somewhat malicious glance. Unfortunately, Mr. Minot was a lawyer and not a clairvoyant and therefore was totally without means of knowing that the chief reason for Suzanne's anger was the fact that she had been so foolishly glad to see him. For every quickened beat of her pulse in his near presence poor Roger had to pay with a lash of her tongue. Angry, indeed, was Suzanne at Roger Minot for disobeying her royal mandates, but angrier still was she at Suzanne Morrison for being automatically glad of his nearness. Scant wonder the young lawyer had a very bad quarter of an hour as he mounted the pine-needled slope toward the sunset.

Phil and Sylvia had less to say than either of the other couples, strange to say, though it had seemed to both beforehand they would have volumes. The hush of the forest and the hour seemed to have cast a spell upon them, or was it an even more potent enchantment that held them fast bound in silence? They had seen so little of each other during this brief visit of Phil's. Last night had been too full and joyous and excited for much conversation, even had Sylvia's responsibilities as hostess left her much time for her latest arrived guest. Those few moments on the stairs had been practically–indeed, the only ones–they had enjoyed alone, and this morning Phil had given to his mother while Sylvia and her guests slept away the hours up at the Hall. Both had felt a little aggrieved and cheated at the way circumstances had curtailed the pleasure of their being together for the first time since the June Commencement at college. Yet now that the awaited moment had come at last neither seemed to have anything particular to do with it. It was strange, and both felt slightly embarrassed by the strangeness, suddenly grown shy, after all their years of friendship.

"Oh!" Sylvia uttered the exclamation as she stepped out upon the great ledge of rock from which she could see the sun's gold rim just dipping behind the crest of the topmost purple peak leaving a sea of tulip colors in its wake.

For a moment neither spoke again. A mood of complete serenity was upon them that forbade speech, a sense of nearness, each to the other, and to some high other Presence which might have been God or Nature or Love or a mystic commingling of all three. Were the three, indeed, a new Trinity, perfect and indivisible? There was a crackling among the bushes behind, the sound of voices. The others were near. The enchanted moment passed. Sylvia sighed, and, turning, met Phil's eyes and her own drooped before what she saw there. No word was spoken, nor needed, yet something unforgettable had been communicated.

Sylvia's heart was beating a little more quickly than usual and there was dew and star shine in her eyes as she smiled at Jack and Barbara, a shine which was lost on neither of the two new arrivals, though later it suited both to pretend they had never seen it. For the moment Barbara's only feeling was a quick compunction lest they had interrupted something which they had no right to share. As for her companion, sharp fear and half resentful jealousy went through him like keen-bladed knives. Had he lost just at the moment when he seemed to have gained something almost tangible? And then Suzanne and Roger reached the rock also, arriving rather dilatorily by another path, having arrived also apparently at a state of something faintly resembling truce, for Suzanne was wearing a spray of vivid scarlet berries which Roger had risked thorns and a possible broken neck to acquire. The risk had been worth it, it seemed, for Roger was looking happier than at any moment since Suzanne had first snubbed him several hours ago on Sylvia's piazza.

Barb, standing apart, watching the whole pageant from the outside, felt oddly cold and lonely all of a sudden. There seemed to be so much love in the world somehow and yet so little left over, as it were. And Sylvia and Suzanne–did they know? Did they even begin to know how precious love was? How one needed it in this great lonely world? She walked to the edge of the cliff and looked down at the river whose rapid current whirled fiercely, down below her. She remembered Sylvia's story of how the rock was named. There are so many Lover's Leaps in the world and their stories are all somewhat the same story. An Indian girl and her lover had been forbidden to marry because they belonged to hostile tribes and here they had gladly taken the consecrated leap together, hand in hand, into space and eternity, one in death as they could never have been in life.

What a strange thing love was! So Barb meditated. Was it something to be avoided as Suzanne insisted because it demanded too high toll? The others had seated themselves on the rock to watch the shifting panorama of color in the western skies, but Barb wandered off by herself, still pondering about that strange thing love. And the others scarcely noticed her going, which was in its way a symbol.

Suddenly a single sharp cry broke the silence of the dusk and then ceased. They all sprang to their feet in alarm, but it was Phil Lorrimer's quick eye that first discovered what had happened. Below them, and somewhat at the right of the outcropping ledge on which they stood, hung Barbara, clinging to a slender sapling whose trunk bent, it seemed almost to snapping beneath her slight weight. Sylvia saw, too, almost at the same instant.

"There she is!" Her finger pointed. "Oh, Phil!"

But Phil had not waited for his embassy. He was already speeding down

the steep bank on his way to the scene of the accident.

"Hold on," he called cheerfully. "I'm coming. Can I reach you from above?"

"No." Barb's voice sounded faraway but steady as Phil's own. "Don't try. It's all crumbly."

"Hang tight then. I'll be there in a minute."

In what appeared to be an endless stretch of time to everybody, but which was in reality an astonishingly brief interval, Phil's tall form appeared on the river bank precisely beneath the tiny figure suspended as it seemed in midair, but still clinging pluckily to the stout ash sapling which held her weight gallantly. The distance between Phil and the girl was perhaps ten feet, though it looked much more in the gulfing darkness to them both.

"All right. Let go. I'll catch you."

A shudder shook Barb's whole body. That slim, tough little ash-tree seemed all that kept her from the greedy swirl of the black river. Her hands were grooved and cut with clinging and her arms ached until it seemed as if she could not bear the pain, but for all that she felt as if the one thing she could not do was to release her hold and slip into the darkness. But there below loomed Phil Lorrimer's comforting size and strength and Barb's courage grew as she looked down into his uplifted face.

"Come on, Barbie, I'm right here." He had never called her anything but Miss Day before, not even Barbara. Barbie was Sylvia's name, as it had once been her mother's in the dear long ago. Somehow it seemed right and natural and sweet that Phil should use it now. Suddenly she became the trusting, obedient little girl Barbie again and without a quiver of dread and with a heart at peace and full of faith she let go her hold on the ash and went down, down, down into space–a surprisingly long journey it seemed, though she felt perfectly comfortable taking it. She had even time to notice that a star had come out and was smiling at her friendlily out of the dusk over a sycamore-tree. She knew somehow or rather that Phil would not fail her. Most people felt that about Phil Lorrimer. More than one of his patients had been willing and unafraid to go down the dark valley if he would stand by and help them on the way.

Certainly he did not fail Barbara. Though the shock of the impact of even her "fairy" figure made him sway and stagger a little, he caught her as deftly as he had been wont in his college days to catch a dazzling outfielder. In a second he had deposited her gently on the soft moss on the river bank. Whereupon Barb gave a quick breath of a sob then laughed a little rippling gurgle of a laugh, though there were tears in her eyes.

"D-don't mi-nd me," she begged. "I'm just being g-glad I let go."

"All safe!" Phil's big voice boomed out of the darkness to the relief of the anxious waiters above on the cliff. "All right, little lady? Seeing as you wouldn't

walk down, suppose we say you shan't walk up." And Barb was swept like a sudden victim to a bird of prey into his arms.

"Oh, don't," she begged. "Please put me down. I can walk perfectly well. I'm dreadfully heavy."

"So are thistledown and dewdrops," he laughed. "Please forget you are a feminist for once and succumb to the eternal masculine superiority of brawn and muscle."

And in spite of herself, Barb felt oddly content to let herself lie passive in his arms, so much so that she closed her eyes and said never a word. At the top of the ascent, which had been short though somewhat steep, Phil put down his burden, and the rest crowded around the two, full of excitement, anxiety and questions. But Phil exercised his doctor's prerogatives and ordered them to let Barb alone and make a speedy start for home. These orders were meekly obeyed, though they managed little by little to get the information of how the accident had occurred. It had been simple enough. The rock on which Barb had been standing had been "crumbly" as she had said, and before she had had time to realize what had happened she had slipped with the shelving stone and soil and had only by the greatest of good fortune managed to snatch at the ash in her descent and thus save herself from the disastrous fall into the turbulent rock-filled bed of the river. It had been obviously a sufficiently narrow escape to make them all rather silent and sober as they packed up the remains of the feast and made their way to the road just beyond the glade where the car waited.

"Want to have a try at the wheel, old man?" asked Jack, laying an affectionate hand on Phil's shoulder when they were ready to start. "She's a bird."

"Why, yes." Phil's frank face lit up with pleasure. "Sure you don't mind, Jackie Horner?"

"Not a bit. Glad to have a rest," acquiesced Jack cheerfully. "Pile in, Sylvia. Phil's waiting."

Sylvia's eyes flashed quick inquiry at Jack as he helped her into the seat beside the driver. He met her gaze imperturbably but she was not deceived by his noncommittal expression. Well she knew that the owner of the "bird" suffered the tortures of the damned when any hand beside his own was on the wheel. Well she knew also that he was deliberately giving Phil a chance to do more than run his car. It was so precisely like Jack, impulsively selfish one minute, impulsively generous the next. Through the white star-lit wonder of the night the car sped, while its occupants sat almost silent, wrapped in an incommunicable garment of dreams. Later, after they had taken leave of the girls, Jack and Roger went with Phil to the station at Baltimore. But Roger stayed in the car while Jack went to the train with Phil. Just as the train pulled in Jack stirred himself to say what was on his mind.

"Phil! Forgive the impertinence, old man, but I've got to know. If she has decided for you, I'll clear out. You're the better man–always were."

Phil Lorrimer drew a long breath and set his lips rather as he used to set them before a tackle in the field.

"You needn't clear out, so far as I am concerned. I haven't asked Sylvia to marry me. How can I? I've only just finished paying my college debts and she is worth something like a million. Is thy servant a fool?" he added a little bitterly.

"Yes," said Jack Amidon. "The biggest kind of fool. Do you suppose the money matters a hang to her?"

"Well, it matters to me," curtly. "Train's under way. 'By." And with a hasty but warm pressure of the hand which went out to meet his, Phil boarded the moving train, leaving Jack staring after.

"Confound the fellow!" he muttered. "Hanged if I know whether to be mad or glad he's such an idiot. How did he dare not ask Sylvia when her eyes looked like that? Gee! Perhaps he didn't see."

But Phil Lorrimer had seen, and all that night he stared sleeplessly out at the stars and the twinkling lights of villages and cities, love and pride battling within him. Once or twice he made up his mind feverishly to telegraph Sylvia the first thing in the morning. Then he would decide it would be better to write her a letter, tell her exactly how it all was and ask if she cared enough to wait for him until he had something worth while to offer her. And all the time he knew he would do nothing of the kind. He would fight on grimly by himself, and if in the meantime somebody else–Jack or another–slipped in ahead, well, that would mean she was not for him, if he knew Sylvia. And so on and so on and so on. But never in all his reasonings did it occur to him that the money was as nothing between him and Sylvia Arden, neither of advantage or disadvantage, simply a zero. Jack Amidon knew it and had generously endeavored to tell his rival. Sylvia knew it and her eyes had also tried to tell him that night in the sunset. But poor Phil, blind as the clearest sighted man sometimes becomes when a woman is involved, saw Sylvia's money as a huge, hateful, insurmountable, mountain peak behind which stood Sylvia herself, only to be reached by accumulating another pile of gold from which he could make the leap to her.

And in all that long wakeful night he never once thought of little Barbara Day. He was too used to saving people, one way or another, to think much about this latest exploit in the salvation line; and, besides, his mind was full of other things.

But Barbara dreamed of Phil and heard his deep voice calling out of the darkness, "Come on, Barbie. I'm right here." And all through her dreams the star over the sycamore-tree kept smiling at her friendlily but its smile was oddly

mixed up with Phil Lorrimer's.

CHAPTER VII
OCTOBER DEVELOPMENTS

A deeper bronze to the oaks and a more vivid scarlet to the sumach. A sharper tang to the air, mornings. Hilltops veiled in amethyst and golden haze on the meadows, afternoons. At sundown, ghost-like wraiths of mists rising up from the river valley. Now and then a clanging wedge of wild geese speeding southward through the night. October!

It must be admitted that in spite of Sylvia's "vicious contentedness" she did feel the Hall a little too peaceful and quiet after her friends had gone, and she settled back into the very life she had chosen for herself. The summer had been brimful of guests and gayeties, with people coming and going all the time and always some new delightful project or enthralling interest afoot, a true Forest of Arden atmosphere of sunshine and happiness and blithe irresponsibility.

Even the sharp and sudden thunder crash, heard from overseas in that fateful early August, the din of great nations rushing to arms, came only vaguely to Sylvia's happy Hill as to most of America. Slow to waken, the country had not at once sensed the significance of what was happening. Humane and peaceful itself, it had not taken in the hideous reality of a desolated and ravaged Belgium, the inspiriting vision of a risen and consecrated France beating the enemy back from Paris, of the fearful and relentless grip of the great dog of war upon the stricken nations. To Sylvia, as to others, it all seemed impossible, incredible, not to be apprehended in terms of actuality. These things just couldn't be, that was all. There must be some mistake somewhere. But there was no mistake. People kept coming in on every steamer with harrowing tales of well-substantiated horror. The things they had seen made the heart sick and the blood run cold. It was war indeed. However horrible, these things were possible, had happened.

Perhaps the first vital realization came to Sylvia as it came to nearly every one in this country through individual testimony of friends. Even in September, rumor reached her that John Armstrong's money had helped to establish and support a field hospital "somewhere in France," that his wife and her sister Hilda were regular Red Cross nurses. And in October had come a letter from Hilda herself, describing simply but with the fearful graphicness of the bare truth, the

horrors, the miracles, the splendid thrills, the supreme satisfaction of the work she and Constance had undertaken. John was driving a relief Ambulance near the battle line. Bertram was at the front somewhere. Bertram, it appeared, was the young Englishman to whom the writer had very recently become engaged after a romantically brief acquaintance. Of course it was horrible, Hilda admitted, having him there, but then she wouldn't want him not to want to be there.

All this Sylvia read with absorbed interest and straightway dispatched a generous check to John Armstrong. But giving money being altogether insufficient to express her abounding sympathy she also learned to knit, to Jack's huge delectation and much raillery, and resolutely set herself to making sponges and rather eccentric looking hose, though this process, too, scarcely satisfied her when she thought of what her friend was doing over in France. In fact, it satisfied her so little that she very speedily abandoned it entirely wherein she was rather like a good many other American women. "A thousand shall fall at thy right hand but it shall not come nigh thee" seemed to be America's motto in those days.

Perhaps the thing which came nearest, that autumn, to offering Sylvia an outlet for her restless energy was her music. She was an excellent accompanist and she and Gus Nichols spent much time together previous to his departure for the concert tour which was to begin early in November. And while Sylvia was intent on her own dreams and quandaries, weaving much she scarcely understood herself into the music, she had not the slightest perception that these hours she gave the young violinist meant anything more to him than to herself, an agreeable mutual expression in a loved art. "Music is Love in search of a word" and if the boy's violin struggled more than once to tell her what his lips would never have ventured on, Sylvia, with her mind on other things, did not hear.

Long enthusiastic letters came frequently from Suzanne, ensconced, according to schedule, in a dingy studio in the Square where one is not encumbered with needless luxuries like steam heat and bath tubs and electricity, where one steeps in "Atmosphere," and pays far more than he can afford for the privilege of living very uncomfortably but artistically. Her letters reeked of Bohemia, of "Polly's" and "Bruno's Garret," of the delicious glamour and picturesqueness of the inimitable Village, of the thrill and stimulus of the whole marvelous city of which the Village was a unique part.

Barb, too, wrote often, though with less abandon of rejoicement in her new way of life. It was all "interesting." Aunt Jo was "wonderful." The Metropolitan was "magnificent." People were "kind." But there was a faint panic-stricken note beneath it all, at first, which made Sylvia wonder if poor Barbara were a little submerged by the very seething whirlpool which was such supreme delight to Suzanne. It was as if both were on a "Merry-Go-Round," and Suzanne kept

clapping her hands and crying "Faster! Faster!" while Barb's timid "pansy" eyes begged in silence for a safer, less mad rate of revolution.

Aside from her aunt, of whom Barb could never say enough, the person most frequently mentioned in her letters was Philip Lorrimer. "Dr. Lorrimer is so good to me." "Dr. Lorrimer took me to a roof garden last night." "Phil and I rode over on the ferry to Staten Island to cool off last evening." "Phil just came in and sends greetings. He is going to take me to a Socialist meeting soon." "Aunt Jo likes Phil so much," and so forth.

And though Sylvia made no comment on this new development it gave her cause for reflection. Sylvia was more than ever "at sea" these days. That sunset moment on Lover's Leap had been an illuminating moment for her and she guessed it had been one for Phil also. Though she told herself later she must have been mistaken, she knew in her heart she had not been so. The look in Phil's eyes as they had met hers that moment was unmistakable, more eloquent than volumes of speech. She had felt the same thing vibrating in his voice when later he had bidden her "Good night" and "Good-by" and stepped into Jack's car, something which met a quick leap of response in herself. Sylvia was very woman and she knew what had happened, though she did not know whether the thing was going to be permanent or not.

All that next day and the next and for a week beyond she watched the mails, pretending to herself, feminine wise, that she was doing nothing of the sort. And, finally, when on the tenth day a brotherly, brief, impersonal, not to say casual, note came from New York in Phil's big sprawling hand, she felt as if a shower of icy water had been hurled at her. Not that she wanted Phil to ask her to marry him, not that she was at all sure she would have said yes if he had asked her. She was by no means certain it would not be Jack to whom she would surrender when the time came for surrender. At least so she told herself to save her pride. Certainly she was far from ready to marry any man that Fall, sincerely desirous as she was to belong to herself awhile as she had told Jack. Nevertheless Phil's very discretion angered and hurt her. Every now and then she was tortured by an agonizing fear that in the strange exhilaration of that moment in the forest she might have betrayed to him more than she had been in any degree willing to admit to herself. Consequently, Philip Lorrimer, M.D., got very few and very brief letters from Arden Hall those golden autumn days.

Neither is it strange that out of favor with his "Faraway Princess" Phil turned to sympathetic little Barbara in his few idle hours. Not that he took Barb into his confidence. Indeed there were no confidences to make. To no one in the world would he have admitted that Sylvia's apparent indifference hurt. Sylvia had the right to ignore him if she chose. The Queen could do no wrong. Nor was there anything to say about the rumors which reached him frequently that

Sylvia and Jack were often together, and that an engagement was obviously to be expected if not already secretly in existence. That, too, he had counted on as a possibility when he had told Jack there was no reason for him to "clear out." Phil Lorrimer was man enough to want the lady of his heart to be free in her choice. Had he been in Jack's position he would have entered the race and run, neck and neck, beside his rival and abided the end whatever it was. But he was handicapped, or so he believed, by his poverty, so he set his teeth and stood out of the way leaving Jack a clear road. If Jack could win–well, it meant Sylvia cared, that was all. Phil's philosophy was a very simple one.

In the meantime there was work. And Phil was the kind to be able to assuage nearly every mortal ill in work. In the strenuous demands of the day-time hours at the hospital he had little chance to brood over any personal woes and when night came on he took what consolation he could, man fashion, from another woman's obvious pleasure in his society, never once suspecting he was playing with edged tools any more than Barb herself did. Of the physiological action of the heart Phil Lorrimer knew a great deal but of the more subtle manifestations of that organ he knew astonishingly little.

Only Miss Josephine Murray kept her keen eyes wide open. "Babes in the wood!" she thought sometimes. "Heavens! What a fearful thing it is to be young!" And then seeing the soft flush on Barb's cheeks when she came in from an excursion with the young doctor, and the starry shine in her eyes, Miss Murray would add grimly to herself, "Fearful but divine! It's a million years since I had the gift of looking like that."

And sometimes she would ask her niece questions about young Dr. Lorrimer, and Barb would chatter on innocently about him, how he was an old, old friend of Sylvia's, so old, they were almost like brother and sister, though she and Suzanne used sometimes to think maybe Sylvia would marry him some time, but now everybody said it would be Jack Amidon. And once Barb had told the story of how she had slipped over the edge of the cliff and hung to the little ash-tree until Phil had called to her to let go and she had obeyed and gone down, down into space, not one tiny bit afraid for she had felt just as sure as sure that Phil Lorrimer would catch her just as he promised.

"He's the kind of person you just have to have faith in. You know he wouldn't fail you, no matter what happened," she had finished. And Aunt Jo had "H-med" meditatively and risen to switch on the electric light and sit down to her letters. But Barb had lingered before the gas log, watching its scintillating colors and lights and dreaming little vague pleasant dreams. Perhaps the Barb who didn't dare let herself look at the real Barb took a shy peep that night.

As for Jack Amidon, he was extraordinarily on his good behavior that autumn. His father was grimly pleased to find him prompt and assiduous at his

office desk, a rather unexpected departure from his career of the past two years when he had fulfilled the obligations of his nominal post chiefly by absent treatment. Possibly the sudden change of heart on the part of his rather erratic son reminded the old man of a similar abrupt right-about-face some six years ago when the same delinquent had announced himself blandly as being "on the water wagon" after a rather strenuous course of wild oat sowing. Perhaps, too, Jackson Amidon shrewdly suspected that now as then the impetus to the reform could be traced to a vigorous-willed, clear-eyed young lady who tolerated no weaklings among her retinue.

"The boy's taken a new turn," he thought. "He'll come out all right in the end. He's sound as a nut inside for all his vagaries. And if that little girl on the Hill can make him come to, it will be one of the best jobs she ever landed." And he added also to himself that if the day ever came when he should welcome Sylvia Arden as his third daughter there would be little left to wish for in the time he had left. And then his eyes had grown sober, for his own daughters, those of his own flesh and blood, had never been of much comfort to him, dearly as he loved them. Over in Europe, Isabel was already threatening stormily to get a divorce from the titled rascal she had insisted on marrying in spite of her father's judgment and protestations. And there was Jeanette, beautiful, willful Jeanette, whose frocks were the last cry from Paris and whose cars and horses and houses and entertainments were all the most daring and expensive America could produce! He, himself, had given her all the money her little hands could hold or spend and Francis Latham had gone on with the prodigious task but neither one of them had been able to give her happiness. That was all too evident. Perhaps if there had been children it would have been different. And at this point in his reflections the old man always broke off with a sigh, for he knew that the moment when Jack should bring Sylvia home for a bride could only yield precedence in satisfaction to that other hoped-for moment when he should see his grandson, Jackson Amidon, the third. Then, indeed, the curtain might go down when it pleased.

These dreams of Jackson Amidon's did not look so all improbable that October. Jack was distinctly "on the job" as he would have expressed it, doing his level best to make a man of himself, since that was what Sylvia demanded, and sunning himself happily in her favor during their mutual leisure hours. Very good comrades the two were. Youth turns to youth as a morning glory to the sun and the Goddess of Propinquity is a lady of much influence. Certainly it was not strange that people prophesied that an engagement would soon be announced. Possibly it was not strange either, that Jack and Sylvia themselves believed such

a dénouement entirely probable in course of time.

CHAPTER VIII
FIRE AND FROST

"Lois, aren't you ever going to write any more?" Sylvia on the rug before the fire with wee Marjory in her arms looked up over that young person's bobbing silver curls to ask the question.

Lois Daly sitting by the window to catch the last bit of daylight, ran her hand into a small stocking to investigate the number of casualties before she answered.

"Maybe. When the kiddies are grown up."

"But don't you mind not doing it now? Don't you want to do it dreadfully sometimes?"

"Not especially. In fact I don't believe I could write now if I tried. I've lost the knack as well as the impulse. You have no idea how much such things are a matter of mere habit." Lois' voice had an even flow suggesting cool, shady, translucent waters. Sometimes her friend's serenity irritated Sylvia. It did now.

"Well, I think that is all wrong," she announced decidedly. "You oughtn't to have let it go."

"Just how could I have helped it? You may recall I have been moderately busy these last few years. I haven't had much time to entertain literary angels."

"Oh, I know," acknowledged Sylvia penitently, curling one of Marjory's ringlets around her finger as she spoke. "You couldn't, of course, with the house and the babies and the little mother's death and everything. But couldn't you begin again now?"

"Why should I? Tom doesn't need an author in his household. He needs a housekeeper and a nurse and a seamstress and a wife." There was a faintly satirical twist to Lois' lips as she made the statement. "Of the four he needs the wife least, of course. He is too busy to enjoy my society. This hospital project is the last straw."

Sylvia looked thoughtful. Somehow there did seem to be something wrong somewhere. Doctor Tom too occupied to see anything of his beautiful, brilliant wife; she, in turn, too much immersed in household and maternal cares either to cultivate her own particular gift or pay much attention to the things her husband

was so vitally interested in! These two had started out so well. They were both so fine, so thoroughly devoted at heart to each other. What was the trouble? Was marriage always a compromise like this? Sylvia did not like to think so. Somewhere there must have been something which could have been done differently. Woman-like she was a bit inclined to blame the other woman. If only Lois had cared a little more for the things Doctor Tom cared for, the things which to Sylvia seemed so splendid, his profession, his tireless service to the community, his dreams for its progress and betterment! Lois rolled up the stockings she had just finished mending and rose.

"Do you mind staying a few minutes with Marjory, Sylvia? It is cook's night out and I have to see about supper."

Sylvia assented willingly and Lois departed. Even as the door closed behind her, Sylvia heard Doctor Tom's step in the hall and his cheerful voice as he greeted his wife.

"Got in earlier than I expected. Come on back and enjoy the twilight with me," she heard him inviting.

Lois' answer was inaudible but in a moment Doctor Tom entered the living-room alone.

"Hello, here's my best daughter and my star neighbor! Come on, Cherub, and let your old Dad toss you up to the moon."

Marjory leaped with a happy little crow out of Sylvia's arms and Sylvia rose to the higher level of a chair while she smiled at the baby's gurgling delight as her father tossed her "up to the moon." Presently the doctor seated himself before the fire with his small daughter still in his arms. As he settled back with a tired sigh Sylvia saw with sudden quick compunction that Doctor Tom looked old–too old for his years. Some of his characteristic buoyancy had gone out of him.

"How is the Curry baby?" she asked.

He shook his head sadly.

"Died early this morning," he said.

"Oh!" Sylvia's exclamation was pitiful. "Can I do anything?"

"Go down and see the mother. She is like a stone. Can't even cry. Maybe the baby's better off. The father is drunk half the time and there isn't any too much to eat. But if I could have had Jimmy in a decent hospital I could have saved him. Everything was against him down there, poor little chap!" And Tom Daly's big hand closed over little Marjory's dimpled one as if somehow to keep her safe from the grim enemy that had pursued Jimmy Curry, an enemy who had altogether too many allies down in the unsanitary tenement district where the baby had wearily breathed his little life in and out again in one short year. Then the doctor's fist came down with a resounding thump on the arm of the chair. "I

tell you, Sylvia, we have got to get that hospital and get it quick. We're wasting human life too fast at this rate."

"Will money help? You know I'm ready to give to the hospital any time–any amount you want."

Doctor Tom smiled his old wide-mouthed friendly grin.

"Naturally you are, Miss Christmas. I can always count on you every time. You would give your last red cent if anybody needed it. Thank Heaven you don't come into the bulk of your property till you are twenty-five. You would have made ducks and drakes of it before this if you had it all. I shall tell Gordon to keep his eye on the purse strings until you get a husband to do it for you. You have such dissipating tendencies. Don't wrinkle your nose like that. You shall give when the time is ripe. What I want just now is to wring some money out of the hides of some of these tough old Greendale sinners who keep their religion with their prayer books in the family pew and their brotherly love reduced systematically to lowest terms. The apology for a hospital we have is a disgrace and they know it or they will before I get through with 'em. There isn't even a children's ward. Little Allie Wendell died last week to the tune of Jake Casey's blasphemous D. T. music. Bah! It's rotten."

"Tom, I do wish you wouldn't shout so. I could hear you clear out in the kitchen." Thus Lois' silver cool voice from the doorway, contrasting oddly with her husband's vehement ejaculatoriness which still filled the little room. "Supper is ready. You'll stay, won't you, Sylvia? I will be with you as soon as I can get Marjory into Tessy's hands and see if Junior brushed his teeth. He is so bad these days. I can't trust him at all."

Sylvia had been about to refuse but Doctor Tom cut her short.

"Of course you will stay. You haven't been here for a dog's age. Besides, I want to talk to you about the hospital and ask what you think about–"

"Don't start to talk shop now," ordered Lois from the doorway, with small Marjory's head bobbing sleepily over her shoulder. "The omelet will go down."

"It sure will," promised the doctor. "I feel as if almost anything would go down in me this minute."

"That is the trouble with Tom," smiled Lois to Sylvia. "He doesn't know the difference between a sublimated soufflé and plain hash. It is all food to him. It is very discouraging."

Doctor Tom shook his head as the door closed upon his wife and daughter.

"If only she wouldn't fuss," he groaned. "Sylvia, I feel like a beast when I think what a lot this life we are leading takes out of her. If only she would take it a bit easier. She's such a confounded perfectionist every blessed thing she does has to be just right. That's why it uses up so much of her."

It was certainly a "just right" meal to which they sat down a few moments

later. Everything was cold which should have been cold, everything hot which should have been hot. The table linen was fine and dazzling white, the silver and glass resplendently bright and clean. The bowl of yellow chrysanthemums made a perfect centerpiece, under the pleasantly shaded glow of the suspended lamp. Lois herself was exquisite in a soft clinging gray gown which she had taken the time to slip into while she had been upstairs with the children. Not a fold was awry, not a hair out of place. Serene and low-voiced and deft-motioned, she served perfect tea in quaint gold-banded cups from a green-dragoned teapot.

But somehow Sylvia was critical in her judgment to-night. The very perfectness of it all jarred upon her. She couldn't help wondering if Lois were after all the consummate artist her husband acclaimed her. Life was made for happiness and was Lois Daly happy or was she making her big-hearted, splendid-souled husband happy? Had she even noticed the tired look in his eyes to-night, the droop to his shoulders? In her conscientious supervision of Junior's teeth and Marjory's bedtime did she think or care at all about the Tommy Currys and Allie Wendells of the world who mattered so gravely to her husband? The two loved each other devotedly, Sylvia knew, yet she could not help seeing how far apart they were after five years of wedded life. It gave one food for thought.

After supper Lois excused herself to do some household auditing.

"You and Tom are going to talk hospital anyway," she added to Sylvia, "and there is no use of my listening while it is all just an air-castle. If I had that on my mind on top of the price of potatoes and bacon I don't know what would happen."

"Stay and rest and we'll call hospital taboo," promised Doctor Tom. "Never mind the old accounts to-night."

But Lois shook her head, protesting if he ran his business the way he wanted her to run hers they would soon end in the poorhouse.

"Not that you run your business any too well, Tommy dear," she had added. "You are a scandalously poor bill collector. Aren't the Williamsons ever going to pay?"

"Steve Williamson's down with pneumonia. I can't press them now."

"Pneumonia on top of twins! They *are* unfortunate." And Lois left the room.

Sylvia dropped her eyes quickly. Intuitively she knew she didn't want to look at Doctor Tom just then. He made no comment upon his wife's parting speech but settled down in the big armchair with a tired grunt.

"Mind if I smoke?"

"Of course not."

"All right, here goes." He took one or two long comforting puffs at his pipe. "Let's side-track the hospital for the present. Might as well since it's only an air-castle, as Lois says. I'm a bit frazzled to-night. Can't seem to get the Curry baby off my chest. Suppose you play something instead. Nothing too classic–just

agreeable and anæsthetic."

Sylvia went to the piano and sat down. Her fingers drifted into a nocturne. Save for the soft music and the crackling of the logs on the hearth there was no sound in the room. Tom Daly sat staring into the leaping flames and smoked stolidly. It would have made an appropriate picture for a woman's magazine cover. The gracious, comfortable room, the tired man, basking in home peace and contentment after the labor and stress of the day; the young girl at the piano, with healing and sympathy, wordless but no less apparent in her finger tips. Only in a woman's magazine the musician would no doubt have been the man's wife. Life is sometimes oddly different from magazine covers.

It was nearly an hour before Lois returned to the living-room. She paused a moment on the threshold.

"Oh, so you aren't building hospitals after all? Forgive me for being such a bad hostess, Sylvia. Was that Brahms?"

Sylvia shook her head with a smile.

"I don't know what it was," she admitted. "Something I heard in my dreams maybe. Did I put you to sleep Doctor Tom?"

"No, just soothed the savage in me. I feel fairly pacific at the moment. Don't stop."

"Ah, but I must. Felicia will think I am lost." She rose as she spoke and Doctor Tom rose too. "Don't come," she protested. "It is too absurd when it's only such a step."

"It's a step I intend to take," he grinned. "If you must go, I'm at your service."

"I wish you wouldn't," objected Sylvia, but she let him wrap her long moss green cloak about her and in a moment they were out in the keen November air under the stars. Neither said anything until they were at the steps of the Hall. Then suddenly Doctor Tom spoke.

"Sylvia, how did you know I had the blue devils to-night?" he demanded.

"Did you?" parried Sylvia. There was something different about Doctor Tom to-night; a queer, tense something in his voice she wasn't used to.

"You know I did. You played to 'em–charmed 'em, as I said."

"I'm glad," said Sylvia. "Glad I charmed them, I mean. You need a rest, Doctor Tom. You are going a pace that would kill any man who wasn't as strong as an ox."

He laughed a little grimly.

"Well, Miss Nestor, any more sage advice to offer your grandfather? Just how am I going to shunt the world I happen to have on my shoulders at present?"

"Just drop it off. You could if you had to. Why don't you and Lois go on a vacation? Felicia and I will look after the babies."

"Thanks, Miss Christmas. That is like you and mighty kind, but do you see

Lois letting anybody–the angel Gabriel himself–look after the babies for her?"

"She might," dubiously.

"And again she mightn't. But, aside from Lois, I have too many life and death jobs on hand at present to quit. A doctor's no business to get nerves. He ought to leave that to his patients. Anyway, it isn't the work that is getting me just now, it is the damnable futility of it all. The Curry baby is a symbol. I'm pouring water in a sieve, Sylvia, and that's the devil's truth."

"It isn't. You aren't," denied Sylvia quickly. "You are doing miracles every day of your life and everybody knows it. Doctor Tom, I never heard you talk like that before. Don't. It makes me feel as if everything were tottering on its foundations."

"Sometimes I think they are with that infernal senseless war going on over there after all our peace prating. Sylvia, what's it all for? Where are we going? What's the use?"

"Everything's the use. Maybe we can't see behind all the agony and blundering but there must be something there even if we can't see it. Why, Doctor Tom, there must be." Sylvia's eyes were earnest, her face uplifted to the stars lit with the fine fires of youth's faith. Tom Daly shook himself like one coming out of a trance. He was suddenly ashamed that he, the strong man, had been outdistanced in courage by the slim girl before him.

"Right you are," he said heartily. "There *must* be. It's the only way to look at it. Thank you, Sylvia. I won't bleat again. If only–" But what was to have followed that sharp wrung "if only" Sylvia never knew for suddenly Tom Daly crushed both her hands in a vicelike grip and then turned and fled with a gruff "good night" down the path.

In his own yard close by he met his wife placidly draping a blanket over a rhododendron bush.

"I thought there might be a frost to-night," she observed, and her tone had all the clear crispness of frost in it as she spoke. Tom Daly was only human. It was scarcely strange that he could not help contrasting his wife's voice with that other eager, vibrant, younger, warmer voice he had just heard, passionately asserting faith in that something behind all the miseries and misunderstandings of things without which life were indeed scarcely to be endured.

There was a world war on. Little Jimmy Curry lay dead unnecessarily. Tom Daly's nerves and courage and endurance were strained all but to the breaking point. And his wife Lois thought there might be a frost. But long after Tom Daly had fallen into the heavy sleep of complete physical exhaustion Lois lay

wide-eyed and sleepless, staring into the darkness.

CHAPTER IX
THE MOTH AND THE STAR

The audience settled itself into place, rattling its programs, prepared idly to be either amused or bored as the opportunity presented itself, mildly curious as to the personality and talent of the young violinist "heard for the first time in this country."

"They say he used to be old man McIntosh's office boy. He certainly struck it soft. Old man's worth near a million they say and this darned Dago'll get it all I suppose. Some folks just naturally nab the luck." Thus a young reporter to his neighbor.

"I don't know about that. I can't imagine old McIntosh standing for this fiddling business. He's a husky old Puritan."

"Well, he did stand for it to the tune of quite a pretty price, I understand. The chap's had four years of Berlin and Dresden and the rest of it. Some mixture! Italian birth, American start, Scotch bringing up, German polish. Whew! Wonder what he's like with all that in him. Talk about your melting pots!"

"There's old McIntosh in the box now. No, the left. Ugly old snoozer, ain't he? But brains. Gee! He's shrewd as they make 'em. Hello! Who's the dame? Pretty easy to look at it, ain't she?"

"That's Miss Arden–lives on a high mucky muck hill out in Greendale. She's something to old McIntosh. Niece maybe. I forget."

"No, she isn't. Old man used to be bookkeeper for her father's firm. I remember. My dad knew 'em. Arden and Daly–big cotton concern. Arden died young. Daly lost his money in some railroad slump and croaked too. Son's a doctor–making the wires hum out in Greendale about a hospital or something. So that's Miss Arden. Engaged to young Amidon, isn't she?"

"I reckon. Shut up. There he comes. Gee! He's nothing but a kid."

It must be admitted that Gus, appearing on the program as Gustavus Niccolini, did look very much indeed like a "kid" as he came across the stage and made a shy, stiff little bow to the audience. Angus McIntosh fidgeted in his chair and cleared his throat irritably. "Fool to let him try," he thought. "How do I know whether he can play or not? What if he can't?" A cold perspiration stood out on

the old man's forehead. What if the boy made a failure of the thing? What if the audience smiled, hissed? Audiences did behave like that sometimes. Why hadn't he told the boy, short-off, long ago, he shouldn't try it? Thus he worked himself into a perfect passion of apprehension. But in the midst of his perturbation Sylvia's hand rested on his knee and Sylvia's eyes smiled reassurance.

"It's all right, Daddy McIntosh," she whispered. "Just you wait till they hear him."

In a moment they did hear him and the great hall was hushed to respectful silence. The audience had the grace to recognize a master touch when they heard it. Angus McIntosh was justified. The boy whom he had plucked out of a den of squalor and vice was an artist, and the grim old man who had had a hand in the creation had been something of an artist at the job himself. As for Sylvia, who was behind it all, she hardly breathed until the music ceased. She listened rapt while the voice of the violin sang and soared, now rapturous, now tender, now triumphant, now dying away like the note of a wild bird in the night. She had known before that Gus could play, but this–why this was a thing born of Heaven to which she listened reverently. Finally the last note came and quivered into silence. There was an instant's hush then the applause thundered. The boy lifted his head quietly, but with a certain grave pride, and his eyes sought the box where Angus McIntosh and Sylvia sat. Then suddenly his face was lit with a light which was not a smile but an enveloping radiance which seemed to say, "This is yours. I give it to you. I am glad it is worth giving." Then he bowed to the audience and the applause redoubled.

Angus McIntosh never knew much about the rest of that program. He knew it went on and the applause went on, that the boy went through the varied and difficult performance with ease and serenity and simplicity, but what he was playing the old man never knew. It might have been "Yankee Doodle" or the "Cam'el's are Coming" for all he heard. He only knew the thing was beautiful. All the remnants of still lingering prejudices floated off into some dim cavern where such limbo is stored or annihilated. There was a place in the world it seemed for sheer beauty. Maybe it had a spiritual essence all its own. Anyway, this music of the boy's seemed oddly connected in his mind with the psalms and other fine old religious poetry with which his mother had filled his mind long ago. He was humbly glad that he had had a share in letting loose this thing upon the world. He remembered always that it was Sylvia who had really opened the door. Beauty–Kindness–Happiness–Love–all these things had been slipping almost beyond his grasp that December nearly six years ago when Sylvia and her Christmas family had brought them back. It was Sylvia who had given the boy to him, Sylvia, who had given his music to the world by making himself who had been blind see.

The concert was over and Herr Bernsdorf, Gus' old music teacher, had rushed up to the box and was pumping Mr. McIntosh's hand up and down violently with inarticulate croonings and mutterings of delight and congratulation. "Haf I not told you that the boy was a genius? Haf I not said it hundertmal? I knew. I, who was his master, I knew. They haf done well by him over there, they haf done well. But somebody else, she haf done more? Is it you, mein Fraulein?" He turned his flashing little black eyes on Sylvia as he asked the question.

"I! Oh, no. I have done nothing," disclaimed Sylvia.

"No? Maybe it is another, in Berlin or Dresden or elsewhere. I know not. I only know the boy haf learned to play like that from luf. Luf haf taught him. Only luf learns to play like that. Ach! Do I not know?"

And then Gus himself stepped into the box, having gently but firmly slipped away from the crowd which would have waylaid him.

"Did you like it, Daddy McIntosh?" he asked playfully, and the old man coughed and sputtered and could not speak. But Gus was satisfied. Even as he grasped his sponsor's hand the boy's eyes went beyond to Sylvia, who had purposely stepped back. Though his lips said nothing, his eyes asked her too, "Did you like it, Sylvia?" and said again what they had proclaimed from the stage. "It is yours. I give it to you."

And a little shiver went over Sylvia as she read the boy's eyes, and suddenly she felt very sad and humble and a little ashamed because she had been so blind. She knew he was asking nothing, probably never would ask anything, but she also knew he was giving something very precious, something for which she had nothing to give in exchange. Mr. McIntosh, absorbed in his emotions, did not understand, but the old music teacher did.

"I haf said it," he thought triumphantly. "I haf had right. It was luf–luf and no other who have learned the boy to play like that. I haf heard it from his fingers and now I haf seen it in his eyes. And by and by he will play efen better, for luf will also learn him pain, and pain he is the great master. He it is who learn the masters themselves. Haf I not seen it?"

Only for a moment Gus had let his eyes betray him, so brief an interval indeed that Sylvia thought afterward she must have imagined it so naturally did she and the young man find themselves chatting over the details of the concert.

But later, after she was home in Greendale and curled comfortably in bed, that eloquent look from those dark eyes came back and would not let her sleep.

"Oh, dear," she thought. "Who would ever have thought it of Gus, of all people? I thought he was just wrapped up in his music. Why won't they stay friends? It is so discouraging and uncomfortable. There is no end to the trouble it makes when they begin to want to be lovers. Jack is likely to come any minute and tell me what a good boy he is and demand the plums out of the Christmas

pie. I don't want to marry any of them. I don't. I don't. So there."

But even as she snuggled down among the pillows she heard a wee distinct little voice inside her somewhere say something quite different.

"Oh, yes, you do," it said. "You want to marry Phil, by and by, way off in the future, a thousand years from now. Only he doesn't want to marry you, and that is what makes you so restless and discontented and horrid. That's why you've been flirting with Jack and–yes, Gus, too, in a demure, artistic sort of way, not thinking it would do any harm to anybody. And even Doctor Tom looked funny at you the other night. And–but then it is all Phil's fault–so you needn't worry."

And then Sylvia put her hands over her ears, for she didn't want to hear any more of that kind of talk.

"You are quite mistaken," she retorted to the disagreeable little voice. "I haven't been flirting with anybody. Jack and Gus are both good friends and I can't help being nice to them. And Doctor Tom is safe and married, so he doesn't count. But, anyway, I'll be careful after this and I don't want to marry anybody–not anybody."

And down in the near-by city the young violinist who had scored such a success that the papers were already writing up flattering notices about him sat in his room, furiously scribbling poetry, at least that is what he would probably have called it, poetry whose theme was mostly borrowed from another young lover, and had in it a lot about the "desire of the moth for the star" or some such rubbish. Gus was very young yet if he was a master violinist and Love was beginning to teach him other things than how to make his violin sing. But the poetry was not so good as his music and presently he pushed aside his scribblings in disgust and went and stood by the window looking out into the night.

It had been raining and the pavements glistened in the light reflected from the arc-lamps. And suddenly the twinkling lights called up to the boy the memory of a Christmas eve when he had followed Angus McIntosh into a brilliantly lighted room with a wonderful Christmas tree in the center, such a Christmas tree as he had never dreamed of in his wildest dreams. And then he forgot the tree and remembered Sylvia smiling kindly at him, saying, "Christmas Family, here are Mr. McIntosh and Gus Nichols. Isn't it nice they could get here to-night?"

He knew now that the desire of the moth for the star had been born then and there, only it wasn't even a desire, it was just a worship.

And in the Oriole Inn, at the foot of Sylvia's Hill, Hope Williams lay asleep with Stephen Kinnard's four weeks' old letter under her pillow, and a smile on her lips, for she was dreaming she was back in the garden with Stephen sketching her among the wistaria vines. But Stephen Kinnard was having a very amusing and profitable time sketching a wild, little beauty of a half breed on an Arizona desert these days and had all but forgotten such a person as Hope existed. But

never once in all his wanderings did he forget to mail a weekly letter to Felicia Emory, who had rejected him "with reasons."

So things go in this piquant world of ours. And there is much truth hidden for the wise in the depths of the "Grecian Urn."

CHAPTER X
THE CITY

By November Barbara had become so accustomed to the city that she no longer jumped at its noises or shrank physically from its crowds. She learned to ignore the thunder of the El and to regard the Subway as a necessary evil, the traffic policeman a very present help in time of trouble. She even learned to zigzag deftly, alone and unprotected, in and out among the automobiles, and to calculate on the chance that a Fifth Avenue Bus driver would probably prefer not to run her down, other things being equal.

But she never quite made friends with the big, strange city–the Step-Mother city–as some one has called it. Always it seemed to hold her at a distance, perfectly amicable and perfectly impersonal. It seemed to say to her "What are you to me? There are hundreds—yes, thousands, like you in my gigantic household. Can I be expected to care for you each as individuals? Watch the motes dancing in the sunshine. As the motes to you so you to me. Go look at the sands shining on the beach at Coney. As the grains to you so you to me. Let your eyes follow the ripples of my big river. As the ripples to you so you and all the rest of the human eddies which make up my great tide to me."

Yet there were moments when Barb felt as if she had almost surprised the city's secret, caught it unaware, as it were, and half ashamed, slipping into its holy of holies. Once coming over on the ferry from Jersey City she had scanned the great towers and buildings, set with twinkling lights as with many jewels, and beheld the huge bridges, across which an endless stream of traffic passed and repassed, like human life itself in its unending succession. And then she had seemed to see for a moment what the city really meant. Sordid, material, menacing, heartless as it was in many of its aspects did it not after all cherish a big vision? Were not those very towers and bridges the symbol of its restless aspiration?

Suddenly above it all had risen a pale lackadaisical looking moon, slipping

quietly from behind a smoke bank to look down at the seething tumultuous life of the great city. To Barb the moon had seemed almost to smile, a world-weary, somewhat cynical smile as one who should say "Go on. Keep it up. Burrow and build, crush and create, scream and scuffle. What will it matter a million years hence? You will have learned by then to be cold and calm like me."

But the bridges and towers had mocked the moon and defied it. "We are wood and stone and steel," they said. "We may crumble and fall but what we stand for will neither crumble nor fall. For we are the symbol of man, aspirant, conquering–a spirit which shall not grow cold or calm while there is anything in life to which to aspire, anything left to conquer. We are nothing. That we grant you, Moon. But the spirit of man is everything, yes, even God himself, God passioning, agonizing, ultimately victorious."

So the vision came to little Barb, and after that she was not afraid of the city. She had the clew as to what it was all about. It whirred and rumbled and rushed and screeched like its own busses but it had a method in its madness. Like the busses, it had a destination. It was going somewhere whether it knew it or not.

As for Barb's own little life, caught in the whirl of the city's, it was full and breathless and on the whole incredibly agreeable. She typed her Aunt's eloquent pro-suffrage pamphlets and articles and listened with rapt eyes and eager ears to her Aunt's glowing speeches and all the while in her busy brain the meaning of this, too, was gradually dawning. At first it had been like a confused, jumbled picture puzzle, but little by little she was able to put the pieces together into their proper places. She was beginning to see that though one talked a great deal about the woman question and listened to a great deal about the woman question, there was really, after all, no woman question, just the human question–the human questions.

How could every man and woman and child in America–in the world–be assured enough to eat and to wear, enough and not too much? How could each have leisure to play, also just enough, neither too much, nor too little? How was each to find his own work, neither too much nor too little, but the right work, the work he could do with all his heart, not for the payment, though that must be adequate, but for the zest of the doing itself, that special, personal service which every human being should be God endowed and man fitted to perform? Above all, how could every man, woman and child be sure of happiness? Since she had come to the city happiness had come to seem a very fundamental thing, perhaps because she herself was so happy, partly also because she was so sorry for the rest who were not happy. And so few of them seemed to be happy. They looked complacent, or smug, or well-fed, or blatantly successful, some of them, but almost none looked happy, and most of them, it seemed to Barb, looked downright

miserable, haunted and hunted, which was very sad.

Barb herself was happy, as has been said. In her ignorance and innocence she supposed her happiness had its roots in the fact that she was young and healthy and busy and useful and interested in her work. She had no idea that her happiness was at all bound up in the other fact that few days passed that she did not either see or talk over the telephone with a certain rather grave but very friendly young doctor from the near-by clinic, who was also interested in getting at the secret of the city, especially in trying to pluck out the heart of its physical miseries, fighting the seemingly futile battle with filth and disease and ignorance and vice and their sad consequences, attacking the Augean stables of the city with the energy of a Hercules, though there was no magic stream to turn to his aid except the magic stream of youth and courage and determination and faith, which was, after all, a fairly efficient substitute.

And if sometimes when there was a silence between the two young people and Barb's heart was almost overbrimming with a wistful, half-conscious joy in things as they were, she did not know that the grim set to Phil's mouth and the tired look in his eyes was due to the fact that his Faraway Princess was looking particularly far off just then and that he was all but oblivious of the presence of the contented little Beggar-Maid quite within hailing distance. So much for Fools' Paradises where Youth lives from preference and for Nature going quietly about her business in the background!

The city had its way with Suzanne, too, and though she loved it better than Barb, it treated her less genially. Suzanne worked hard and hopefully. The click of her typewriter resounded faithfully by night and day. But, somehow, her plays and stories did not sell. The arrival of the mails with the persistently returning long envelopes was a daily agony. She got to know all the hateful platitudinous variations of the printed slip "Does not necessarily imply lack of merit," "Not exactly suited to the needs of the magazine," and so on. How she detested the smug, smooth, complacency of those printed formulæ! How she hugged to her heart the occasional kindly, personal notes of the compassionate editors who salved the pain of rejection by a brief word or two of encouragement or advice. But, alas, these favors were as few as they were precious!

The plays fared no better. The managers smiled unctuously upon her prettiness when Suzanne bearded them in their dens. Some of them even patted her on the shoulder and told her her work was "promising," and advised her by all means to keep at it. But there was always some thoroughly excellent reason why they could not take the particular play or sketch she had to offer and she had eventually to retreat from the dens, one after the other, sore, indignant, but more doggedly determined than ever to storm the citadel.

In the meanwhile Aunt Sarah's little legacy dwindled until it became a mere

shadow of itself. It had never been very portly at the best of times, and living in the Village is deceptively expensive. By the first of December Suzanne moved, taking with her her "Factory re-built," which skipped a few letters for variety's sake now and then, but was, on the whole, very dependable. Certainly it could be depended upon to turn out manuscript which would return with automatic precision after the briefest allotment of days. Suzanne informed Barb about this time over the telephone that it was incomparably more picturesque to be living over a fruit vender's shop in the Alley than it was to inhabit a mere studio. It gave you loads of "copy." Miss Murray looked meditative when her niece reported this new viewpoint on Suzanne's part and suggested that that young lady be invited to take supper with them at an early date, to which Barbara joyfully acquiesced. She felt that she had seen too little of Suzanne of late. Suzanne accepted and Barb looked at her very critically and accused her of working herself to death and getting great dark circles under her eyes.

But Suzanne only shrugged and asserted that work agreed with her and sent up her plate for more salad, apologizing for her appetite on the score of having been so busy at lunch time she had forgotten to eat any.

"Oh, you genii!" laughed Barb reproachfully, but Miss Josephine Murray vouchsafed her guest a keen scrutiny which Suzanne perceiving, straightway rattled off a lot of voluble enthusiasm about the delights of the "Dutch Oven" and other Bohemian eating-places.

Later, Phil Lorrimer dropped in and took the girls to a show. He, too, looked rather hard at Suzanne later when they were having innocuous sandwiches and beer at a little German restaurant. Phil and Barb escorted Suzanne home to her alley but she would not let them come in, protesting that it was too late and she didn't want to ruin her reputation with Giovanni and Pepita downstairs, who were very proper people.

On the Bus Phil turned to Barb to ask a rather odd question.

"Roger Minot been in town lately?"

"I don't think so. Suzanne wouldn't let him see her if he did come. Why?"

"I just wondered. Suzanne is looking a little peaked, don't you think?"

"Dreadful," sighed Barb. "Suzanne is such a fiend for work. She owned up to forgetting to eat any luncheon to-day she was so interested in what she was doing. I'm afraid she forgets rather often."

"Shouldn't wonder," agreed Phil. He had seen more than one young man and young woman, too, for that matter, who had developed that convenient kind of memory about food in the city when pockets were empty. He shrewdly suspected that Suzanne was "up against it" in his own parlance. He had made a fair diagnosis of her case in the garish lights of the German restaurant. "Overwork, underfeeding, devilish desperation. Something sure to snap soon." Thus

he summed the matter up mentally, for he had not thought it necessary to alarm Barb about her friend's situation, since she was so obviously unsuspecting. He knew Suzanne would brook no help nor pity. "Proud as Lucifer, of course," he thought. But he made up his mind to keep his eye on Suzanne, as he put it.

To that end he made his way to the Village a few evenings later, found from Giovanni that Suzanne was out and discovered her, for himself shortly, sitting in a bench on the Square, looking pinched and blue about the lips. Phil Lorrimer was a very direct person and usually went straight for any goal he had in sight. He finally succeeded in wringing the truth out of Suzanne. She had not sold a story since she came to New York or "landed" a play. Her money was all but gone and she had been living on one meal a day for a week past.

"And the worst of it is, I'm a rotten failure. That's what I can't stand." And Suzanne had clenched her fist in her shabby little glove and set her white teeth together sharply. "I won't give up. I tell you I won't. I won't go home and I won't ask 'em for a cent. I won't let 'em say, 'I told you so.' I won't. I won't. Phil Lorrimer, if you dare to hint one word of what I've told you to-night to Rog–er–to my people, I'll borrow a stiletto of Giovanni and ram it clean through you. What did you ever make me tell you for, anyway? You hadn't any business to. I hate you!" And with an ejaculation somewhere between a snarl and a sob, Suzanne had turned and fled away from him into the night.

But it had not taken Phil's long legs many seconds to be up with her again.

"See here, Suzanne," he urged. "Don't take it like that. My knowing doesn't count. Doctors and priests are dumb as the grave. I won't peach, but do let me help you over the bad spot. I haven't much myself, as you know, but I'd be glad to ease you along a bit if you'll let me, man to man."

Suzanne smiled an April smile at him.

"Man to man, you are a darling, Phil Lorrimer. I'd let you help me if I'd let any one but I won't. My pride's all I have left, and I'm going to hang on to that like grim death. Don't you worry. I know what I can do and I'm going to do it."

"What?" Phil was somewhat dubious about the sudden flush on Suzanne's cheeks, the sparkle in her eyes.

She shook her head, mischief written in every line of her thin, pretty, piquant face.

"'Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till you applaud the deed,'"

she quoted gayly. "It is much better you shouldn't know. I'm not even going to tell Barb. She will only be informed that I am out of town with friends. My esteemed parents and dear Roger will hear the same. Your job is to sit tight and

know nothing. You won't be responsible. Your skirts–I mean your coat-tails—will be entirely clear."

"Suzanne, I've half a mind to telegraph your father this minute–or Roger. Maybe it would be better to summon Roger." He eyed her sternly.

Suzanne giggled wickedly.

"You will do nothing of the sort, dear Dumb as the Grave. I have your sacred oath not to peach."

"Let me off, Suzanne," he begged. "Honest, I'm worried about you. You look wild."

But Suzanne only laughed again, and assured him she was saner than the statue of Liberty.

"Let you off nothing, dear sir," she added for good measure. "But please don't fret. I assure you I am not going to do a thing either desperate or immoral. I'm going on a lark, that is all. You can't down Suzanne. Like Ivory Soap–it floats. Here we are at my alley. My fruit stand's just beyond. Shake hands like a good boy and wish me luck. Don't frown like that. It spoils your leonine beauty. Good night–and good-by." And, before he could speak, Suzanne had darted into her own doorway leaving Phil staring rather ruefully after her.

"Now what in time or eternity is she up to?" he pondered. "She isn't the kind to play the fool to any great extent. Got too much head and too little heart. I may as well let her gang her own gait. She's bound to anyway. Poor old Roger! She is certainly leading him a trail. Wouldn't he curse me for letting her make a getaway like this if he knew? Out of town with friends!" he muttered as he descended into the depths of the subway. "I'd like to see the friends. And if I were Rod Minot, I would too, or know the reason why."

Thus satisfactorily can one young man sum up the whole duty of another in a recreant courtship though remaining as helpless and inefficient as a new-born infant in the management of his own.

CHAPTER XI
MARGINS

"Hello, Jack! I had no idea you were home." Sylvia, rosy and blown from a spin behind Doctor Tom's frolicsome black mare, entered the living-room at Arden Hall, bringing with her a whiff of fresh outdoor air. She threw down her muff

and held out a welcoming hand to her guest who had been waiting her return.

"Bad penny, you know." Jack captured both hands instead of the one vouchsafed as he spoke. "Can't leave business very long, you see." His eyes twinkled mischievously as he looked down at Sylvia, making shameless bid for her favor. Sylvia laughed, but she withdrew her hands and shook her head at him.

"You are a dreadful fraud, Jack. You don't really care such a lot about the business all at once. You know you don't."

"Not a tinker's dam," he shrugged. "Whatever that may be."

"Then why–" began Sylvia and stopped.

"There is only one why, young lady, and you know it."

Sylvia frowned and jabbing out her hatpins a little irritably, tossed her black velvet toque on the table. She had already removed her coat and furs and stood, trim and tailored, in her simple blue serge dress; a simplicity which was exceedingly becoming and likewise extremely expensive as Jack's approving gaze, sweeping the lithe young curves of her figure, knew very well.

"I wish you wouldn't, Jack."

"Wouldn't what?" blandly.

"Wouldn't work–just because I want you to. It is so horribly like a bribe."

"It is a bribe."

"Then I don't like it. I told you I didn't promise anything."

"And I told you I didn't expect anything. You can't blame a fellow for putting all the eggs he can find into his basket."

"Put all the eggs you like into the basket, only don't blame me if they get smashed. Sometimes, Jack, I think you don't really want to marry me at all–you just want the fun of pursuing me."

"Maybe so," agreed Jack so amicably that Sylvia lifted her eyebrows at him. "I was brought up never to contradict a lady."

Sylvia laughed at that and sat down, running her hand over her hair, to brush back its turbulent ripple, a gesture Jack loved because it was so interwoven with his mental pictures of her.

"Let's not discuss ourselves," she added. "Tell me the news. Did you see Barb and Suzanne?"

"I saw Barb. Suzanne has fled the coop."

"What?"

"The report is she is out of town, traveling with friends. Barb looks worried and Phil looks wise but neither has much to say."

"Does Phil know where she is?"

"He says not, but he knows something, or I miss my guess. Not that the old oyster would open up his shell a fraction of an inch even to oblige yours truly. I pried like a good one but to no purpose. Talk about your professional secrecy!

Phil's got it down to the finish. The old chap is different somehow, older and solemn as a fish. Horrible example of what work will do to a fellow!" he grinned.

Sylvia stooped to pick up the tongs and stir the fire, which was smoldering a little sulkily on the hearth. Out of the tail of his eye Jack watched her.

"He and Barb seem to be remarkably good pals," he continued. "The Aunt orders him about like a member of the family. Don't wonder he obeys. That woman is a general. I wouldn't be surprised if she took the vote away from the men and gave it to the women any day, if she took the notion. Lucky she and Napoleon didn't hitch their wagons to the same star in the same generation. The star would have dragged Aunt Josephine and ditched the emperor, that's certain."

"Do stop talking nonsense, Jack, and tell me more about Suzanne."

Sylvia's voice had a faint edge of sharpness to it as if a little of the grim December wind outside had gotten into it.

"I don't know any more. I've told you all that is generally published. Even Norton, Pa., gropes in middle darkness. She didn't even write to Roger it seems. He is in bad. Had the temerity to propose to her again just after she had emerged with a bundle of manuscripts from a manager's office, which wasn't a tactful moment, I gather. She consigned him to the devil or some feminine equivalent thereof, apparently. Pa and Ma knows she's traveling. Had cards from Buffalo and Cleveland, I understand. Pa's excited and Ma's took to her bed. Looks as if they feared the worst."

"Jack!"

"Sorry. I was only joking, of course. Trust Suzanne to take care of herself. She is all right. Roger is having a fit or two though, and no wonder."

"Serves him right. Why didn't he go and marry her and not let her go off on a tangent like that?"

"Why, indeed?" murmured Jack. "It is so hanged easy to marry a girl when she won't have you! Give me the good old cave days. You could knock your bride down with a club if she objected. Then, when she came to, she would get up and grin at her noble master and string some red berries round her neck, or stick a ring in her nose, to enhance her charms, and everything would be entirely agreeable."

"Jack, you are perfectly horrid to-day. I wish you had stayed in New York. How is Jeanette?" Sylvia changed the subject severely.

"Going the pace, as usual. Good Lord, Sylvia, what do you suppose a woman wants to live the kind of life she's elected for? I like a good time myself. It's a family trait. But she goes as if all the devils of Hell were loose and after her. Maybe they are, after a fashion. See here, Sylvia, aren't you going up to see her soon?"

"After Christmas. Why?"

"Nothing especial. I thought a dose of you might be good for her, that is all."

And that was all the explanation that Sylvia extracted on that subject, though she guessed that there was more than Jack admitted behind his rather enigmatic remarks. Jack was incredibly clear-sighted about some things, and it was evident he saw cause to worry about his sister Jeanette, even to the extent of hurrying Sylvia to New York where he himself could not follow unless he turned back the page of the virtuous new leaf of his devotion to business. There was a puzzle behind it somewhere, Sylvia knew. She also knew she was going to be left to discover the exact nature of the puzzle for herself.

So December went its way. Suzanne continued mysteriously "traveling with friends." Barb and Phil kept hard at work in the city and managed to see a good deal of each other in their off hours. Sylvia and Phil had almost ceased to write to each other, though there was no open break in their friendship. It was rather that a wall, intangible but unsurmountable, had risen between them, as perhaps it had, for pride is a mightier barrier than a mountain peak sometimes. Gus went his quiet, successful way on his concert tour, refusing politely but conclusively to be made a lion of, keeping rather to himself in his leisure hours, living on his unspoken dreams and managing to get a great deal of pure happiness out of his star worship. To Sylvia's delight, and almost to Felicia's consternation, the latter's designs for a mural relief, which Stephen Kinnard had fairly bullied her into submitting in a competition, had been accepted and she was hard at work on the actual modeling these brief winter days, though she found time, Felicia fashion, to be an excellent "Home-keeper" and Mother along with the other task.

Early in November Lois Daly had rather astonishingly announced her intention of "doing some writing" as she put it rather vaguely. Lois was always reticent, especially about her literary work, and even her husband asked no questions, realizing it suited her better to be let alone to work out her purpose for herself. She was far too conscientious about her other duties to neglect any of them and it was consequently the long evenings when the children were in bed and the household affairs quiescent that she found most profitable for her new work. This arrangement was admirable in all but two respects. It made Lois' working day an almost impossibly long one and left her a little too weary for restful sleep when she did finally creep into bed. It also curtailed almost to a minimum the moments which she had to spare for her husband's society, which had been all too few even before the advent of this new era. Doctor Tom made no protest as to this. He was always over-sensitive to the sacrifice of her work which Lois had made for him and his, but he did beg her at times not to "bother" so much about the house and the children and himself.

But Lois always shook her head at his pleas and explained quietly that he

and the house and the children were her real job and she could not neglect them for the other. And if Tom Daly found it in his heart to wonder sometimes if his wife's "real job" did not include a little closer companionship with himself he never voiced his wondering. He was no "martyr," as he had once long ago protested to Sylvia.

But human relations are never static and while Lois shut herself in her den and wrote feverishly, night after night, her husband, being only human, easily drifted into the habit of finding elsewhere than at his own home the companionship and sympathy which even the strongest and most independent of men half-consciously crave. Arden Hall and Sylvia were close at hand and it was almost inevitable that he should find his way to the two rather often. Sylvia was intensely interested in all his schemes for the hospital and other altruistic visions which made up a very large part of his wide, busy career. Often they talked eagerly for hours, either with or without Felicia's presence. Oftener still Tom Daly would sit and smoke in contented silence while Sylvia played soft music or read aloud out of some magazine stories which let his mind rest instead of wrestle.

It was all the most natural, even inevitable development. The two were old friends. Tom Daly was thirty-eight and happily married. Sylvia Arden was twenty-two questing for experience innocently enough. There was no one to question or warn, or indeed, anything to question or warn against. Yet there sat Nature spinning away at her web all the time and Tom Daly and Sylvia were near to being caught in the mesh, without even knowing there was any mesh. And the danger for Tom Daly as it happened was considerably greater than for Sylvia just because he was a man. Man is the so-called reasoning sex, but, as has been more than once noted, sex is the one subject upon which he will not reason. And so things slipped easily and pleasantly along up to Christmas time.

It was Jack Amidon who involuntarily opened Sylvia's eyes by uttering an unusually sharp protest that she went nowhere any more, either with him or any one else, but just sat in the chimney corner and played Joan to Tom Daly's Darby. "And soon there'll be the deuce to pay whether you know it or not," he had added darkly.

Of course Sylvia had flared out in quick anger at his implications.

"What do you mean, Jack Amidon, by saying such horrid things?" she had stormed. "It is perfectly ridiculous. Doctor Tom is years and years older than I am. He is just like a brother."

Jack had seen the brother dodge worked before and said so somewhat caustically, whereupon Sylvia lost what little temper she had left, and having delivered a volley of violent wrath upon her guest's imprudent head, shot out of the room, leaving him to enjoy the hospitality of the Hall in solitude or beat a retreat as pleased him best.

Meanwhile, upstairs in her own room, Sylvia threw herself on the bed, and, first of all, woman fashion, relieved her feelings by indulging in a good old-fashioned "weep," her anger dissipating with her tears. Presently she sat up and began to take stock of the situation and herself, and found to her consternation that things as they actually were, were about as safe as a child with a box of matches in a haymow.

She was a perfectly clear-eyed and sophisticated young woman and when her attention was called, however brutally, to the fact that you cannot see a man, night after night, week after week, as she had been seeing Tom Daly, without there being at least the possibility of the "deuce to pay," as Jack had bluntly expressed it, she was willing to acknowledge the fact to herself at least. She carefully analyzed her own mental processes for the past few weeks and discovered to her surprise and some chagrin that she had been ruthlessly cutting out engagements in which Tom Daly did not figure, and eagerly making those in which he did figure, that she had deliberately plunged into everything that interested him, Red Cross work, the new hospital, the needs of some of his poorer patients; everything, in short, that he cared about heartily. She even had to admit to herself that she had been a little complacent and self righteous in her genuine interest and sympathy with these things because she resented Lois Daly's apathy in the matter and felt profoundly sorry for Doctor Tom. She discovered that it is not prudent in the world as it is lived to be too sorry for another woman's husband. That way danger lies, and a signboard to that effect is in order. Beyond this, however, Sylvia knew she had little for which to blame herself. She was not a deliberate coquette. She had acted in all simplicity and naturalness, but there had been a risk to the experiment for all that and she was a bit ashamed of her hitherto state of blindness.

Being a very honest young person, Sylvia sat down, as soon as she had threshed the whole matter out to the satisfaction of her clear, fair mind, and wrote a very artistically penitent note to Jack, retracting some of the unwarrantable things she had said in her wrath and admitting rather hazily that there was a faint possibility that he might have been in the right about certain matters, implying that she was magnanimously willing even to ignore his objectionable rightness if he so desired.

And her note crossed one from Jack, begging her to forgive his "darned impertinence" and adding that he had behaved like a jackass and a dog in the manger and Heaven knows how many other kinds of animals, but if she would be good enough to overlook his misdemeanors he would be eternally grateful.

And the next evening Sylvia appeared under Jack's escort at the Honeycutt ball, wearing a marvelous new gown and looking extraordinarily pretty after her temporary estrangement from Vanity Fair. And from that time on during all the

mad gayeties of Christmas week Jack was constantly in attendance, obviously the favored knight. Life is mostly made up of reactions. The pendulum having swung so far to the left, swings back an equal distance to the right. Sylvia was the kinder to Jack because of her deflection away from him in an entirely opposite direction. And he, with the wisdom born of considerable experience of the feminine sex in general, and Sylvia Arden in particular, made no comment though he perfectly understood what had happened, but sunned himself agreeably in his lady's rather uncertain grace and bided his time.

And the night of the Honeycutt ball for the first time in several weeks Tom Daly sat and smoked before his own fireside and not once did he think of the new hospital.

CHAPTER XII

"SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS"

"Phil? That you, my boy? Come up and take dinner with us to-night, won't you? I have a proposition to make to you."

Thus the smooth voice of Justin Huntley over the telephone. Justin Huntley was a famous nerve specialist, a classmate and lifelong friend of Phil Lorrimer's father, who had kept a friendly eye on the young man ever since he had come to the city.

Phil accepted the invitation, and later, as he left the Subway and strolled down Seventy-second Street toward the river, he speculated vaguely as to what the proposition might be likely to be. Doctor Huntley was quite capable of initiating any kind of a suggestion, from proposing a marriage to an heiress to the use of a new serum. Consequently Phil had little to go upon in his speculations.

It was an agreeable dinner. Dinner at the Huntleys' always was agreeable, moving by pleasant stages to a perfect end, gastronomically speaking. There were no other guests to-night and presently, Mrs. Huntley, a frail tired looking little lady who always seemed to be deprecating the weight of her silks and the brilliancy of her jewels, rose and left the two men together.

"Any curiosity about the proposition I baited my hook with to get you here to-night?" Dr. Huntley surveyed his guest a little quizzically as he launched the question.

"I didn't need any bait," said Phil. "But I admit the curiosity."

The older man leaned forward and deliberately lit his cigarette from a candle that stood close at hand.

"You don't smoke?" he remarked irrelevantly.

"No," admitted Phil. "At least, not often. Bad for the operating table."

"Bad! It's the devil. You have a deal of sense, young man. How would you like to be my partner?" The question was put as casually as if he were offering a fellow traveler, caught in the rain, a share of his umbrella, but his shrewd eyes took full account of the face of the young man. Phil flushed and his mouth opened slightly. It was a proposition to make any ambitious young man drop his jaw. Justin Huntley had one of the largest and most remunerative practices in the city. It was a dazzling prospect to open suddenly before the eyes of a small-salaried worker in a free clinic. It meant success, money–Sylvia, something to offer her, at last.

"Well?"

"It is a wonderful chance," said Phil steadily, "but I should like to think it over, if you don't mind."

"Eh?" It was Dr. Huntley's jaw that dropped this time. He had scarcely expected a young man in Phil Lorrimer's position to need to think over an offer such as he had just made. Most young men would have jumped at it quickly as a trout leaps at a shining fly lest the fascinating thing disappear from view before it could be apprehended. "What did you say?"

"I said I should have to think it over," repeated Phil. "Your kind of practice isn't the kind I am interested in, to speak frankly."

"Interested! Good Lord! Who expects to be interested in anything nowadays? A lot of damn women with nothing on earth the matter with them except fool notions, and having nothing on earth or in Heaven to occupy themselves with, dyspeptics, neurasthenics, hypochondriacs, dope fiends, gentlemen drunkards and worse! That is my kind of practice, boy. Pah! Interesting! Of course, they aren't interesting. They are fools. But they pay. Lord, how they pay! They wouldn't be sick if they didn't have so much money. You would open your eyes if you saw my books. But I've had 'most enough of 'em. I want somebody to take the brunt of their damn foolnesses off of me. That is what I want a partner for. Some day I'll be telling 'em what I really think of 'em and it wouldn't do–it wouldn't do. I've got to have an understudy. You've a close mouth and a good head and you'd like the money. Don't tell me you wouldn't like it," querulously. "Everybody wants money these days. The whole world's after it."

"Oh, I want it all right," said Phil Lorrimer honestly. "I happen to want it like the devil just at present. But I am not sure I want it–that bad. That is what I have to think over."

He took a hasty swallow of water from the glass beside his plate, then rose

and made a few quick, nervous turns, up and down the room. Finally he came to a halt opposite his host.

"I don't know whether I can make you understand, Dr. Huntley, but it is like this," he said. "I have a drop or so of missionary blood in me. My father is in China now. My mother would be, if she could stand the climate. My sister is teaching in a missionary school in Turkey. I chose the kind of work I am doing here in New York partly because it interested me, but I believe it was a little bit too because of the missionary strain. Anyway, it seems to me a worth-while job. But this thing you are offering me– Pardon me if I sound rude. I don't mean to disparage your work. It is fine–some of it, but well, the truth of it is, it doesn't look to me to measure up to what we are doing in the clinic and what some other doctors and surgeons are doing in other places. The finest man I know–doing the finest work I know–is in Greendale, a little place just outside Baltimore. He has always been a sort of standard for me–he and my father. If I went in with you, it would be not because my heart was in it, but because the money was in it, and wanted the money worse than I wanted to hang onto my dreams. That is about the whole story."

Justin Huntley smoked in silence during this, for Phil, rather long speech. Phil was not much given to eloquence.

"Well," he said. "Even so. Put it as baldly as that, if you like. It is up to you. A man can't afford to sentimentalize much in this day and generation. Let me remind you, the money is not to be despised. It buys a good deal."

Phil's eyes were lowered. Well he knew, or thought he knew, what it could buy for him. Not Sylvia, of course, Sylvia could not be bought, but the right to go in and try to win her against Jack, against the world, yes, against even his own ideals. The last thought crowded in, an unbidden guest. Suddenly he loathed his father's friend, loathed his smug success, his cynical sureness that he himself could be bought. For it was buying, and Phil knew it. If he took this offer, he sold out, to the highest bidder, his own high ideals. Was it worth it? Was even Sylvia worth it? Had he the right to win her that way? Could he do it?

"Don't give your final answer to-night." Justin Huntley's bland voice interrupted the boy's reflections. "There is no hurry. Take a week. Two–three–if you like."

Phil pulled himself together.

"Thank you. I will, if you don't object–a few days, anyway. Please don't think I am ungrateful, or don't appreciate the compliment you have paid me–or rather the kindness, for, of course, I know I'm not experienced enough to be much of a partner at present. I–"

But Huntley waved the words aside.

"It's not kindness–nothing but selfishness. I happen to want you. Come on

in if you will. Anyway think it over. The madame is alone. Shall we go to her?"

Phil fancied there was an odd, wistful inquiry in Mrs. Huntley's pale eyes as she turned to meet the men as they entered the room. It was almost as if she were making some kind of plea. Whether she wanted him to accept or refuse her husband's offer was not at all clear to Phil. He made his adieus as early as he politely could on the score of a previous engagement and passed out into the night trying to adjust as best he could the confused bundle of thoughts and emotions he carried.

"Wonder if old Mephisto had any qualms," muttered Justin Huntley as the door had closed upon the tall young doctor.

"Did you speak, dear?" inquired his wife. "I didn't understand."

"No, I didn't say anything–worth repeating."

"How like Philip is to his father, isn't he?"

"Very like," somewhat dryly. "Did you say there was a girl?"

"A girl?" Mrs. Huntley always dealt in mild interrogatives as if to disclaim the responsibility of assertion. "Oh, yes. His mother told us he was devoted to Sylvia Arden–wasn't it? That lovely young girl we met once–in Baltimore, I think? She is a great heiress, isn't she?"

"H-mm. Maybe he will be back, after all," remarked her husband irrelevantly.

Phil's restlessness gave him no peace, and though the engagement had been fiction he decided to run around and see Barb a few moments before he turned in for the night. He had gotten in the habit of using Barb as an anæsthetic of late, though he had no idea he was doing it. To-night he found her alone, curled up like a sleepy kitten before the fire. She rose with a happy little exclamation of surprise as Phil came in.

For once the flood gates of his reserve were down for Phil. In five minutes he had poured out the whole story of his evening's experience, omitting nothing except the mention of Sylvia. In fact, he, hardly thought it necessary to mention Sylvia. She so fully possessed his own mind he had no conception that Barbara did not fully understand how inextricably Sylvia was woven in with the whole matter.

"But Phil," wondered Barb, "it isn't the kind of work you like, is it? I can't imagine you dealing with that kind of patients exclusively." Barb's eyes blinked and crinkled, Barb-like, as she made the statement.

"Nor I. I should be all too likely to tell 'em to go plum to thunder." He grinned a little as he made the admission.

"Then why? Phil, it can't be the money that appeals to you?" Barb's voice was startled, incredulous.

Phil had been on his feet, marching to and fro in the little room, as was his

custom when excited. But suddenly he dropped into a chair before the hearth.

"Listen, Barbie. Listen hard," he said. "Suppose a chap wanted to marry a girl and he didn't have any money, at least not as much as he thought he ought to have, not to look like a fool and a knave, asking for her, and then suppose that, right out of a clear sky, the chap saw a chance to make a big income, perfectly respectably, if not, well, we'll say exhilaratingly, wouldn't he just naturally grab at the chance?"

Phil was not looking at Barb. He was staring into the gas log with all his might, but in any case it didn't matter much. Wherever he looked Phil saw only Sylvia that night. Barb's cheeks were pink and her breath came a little more quickly than usual. She couldn't help wondering if Phil could hear the "Blop! Blop! Blop!" her heart was making. It seemed as if he must hear, it was such a queer, loud sound, but he did not appear to notice. He did not even turn toward her.

"He might grab, but I think he would put his hand down quick again as soon as he realized the girl wouldn't want him–that way. She wouldn't want to be bought at a price–like that." Barb managed to keep her voice steady in spite of the queer thing her heart was doing.

"Maybe not," said Phil. "Somehow I thought that is what you would say, Barbie. Thank you." And suddenly Phil was on his feet. "'Night, Barb. I've got to telephone a man before it gets any later."

And before Barb caught her breath he was gone. It did not matter any more now how her heart behaved, but somehow, oddly enough it stopped "blopping" and seemed suddenly to be very, very tired and heavy, as if it were going to sink straight down into her stomach which, of course, was no place for a heart to be located.

Yet it was all perfectly natural and like Phil not to have said anything more at the moment. He had to get the taint of barter off his hands before he came to her. "Suppose a chap wanted to marry a girl." "Suppose a chap wanted to marry a girl." The clock on the mantel seemed to be ticking out the words very distinctly. And suddenly Barb felt very happy and contented and curled up in her chair again like a kitten. Here her aunt found her a half hour later.

"Asleep, Kiddie?" she asked, and Barbara looked up with a shy, radiant little smile.

"No, just dreaming," she said.

CHAPTER XIII
INTO HAVEN

Christmas was over, and Sylvia had hardly breathed for a week so engrossed had she been in all kinds of festivities. Even now she was preparing to depart on the morrow for an even gayer round, on the long promised visit to Jeanette Latham, Jack's sister. Perhaps it was to keep the "Booing" questions at a distance that Sylvia chose to fly from one mad whirl to another that winter.

"I almost wish you weren't going to New York, just now, Sylvia. You look tired to death and your nerves are 'jumpy,' as Doctor Tom says."

Thus Felicia addressed Sylvia at breakfast the morning of the twenty-sixth, after the children had scampered off to the delights of yesterday's new harvest of toys.

"It is nothing but the day-after feeling," said Sylvia. "I've danced until morning for four nights running. I'll be all right as soon as I can get some sleep."

"I don't know," Felicia looked dubious. "If you were seventeen instead of twenty-two, I believe I should order you to stay at home."

"Isn't it lucky, I'm not?" smiled Sylvia. "Felicia, dear, you never did really boss me in all the years you might have done it. Are you going to begin now?"

"I am afraid it wouldn't be much use at this late date," sighed Felicia. "Sometimes I wonder why you aren't more spoiled than you are. Seriously, child, you have gotten a little of your shining splendor rubbed off. Anything the matter?"

"Nothing in the world, except maybe I wish I knew whether I were going to marry Jack or not. It is a little distracting not to know. You don't happen to possess any inside information on the subject, do you?" Sylvia's smile was whimsical but her eyes were tired. It was true. She had lost a little of her "shining splendor," as Felicia described it, in the past few weeks.

"I do not. But I should on the whole say you were not going to marry him. You have seen too much of him lately. You need to get away and get a perspective."

"Well, who wanted to order me to stay away from New York, just now?"

"I retract. Go ahead with my blessing. I hope you will meet a hundred young men and let Jack Amidon get put in his place."

"That is just it. What *is* his place?"

"Sylvia!" Felicia's tone was faintly exasperated. "You are no more in love with Jack Amidon than I am. Some day you will wake up and find it out."

"Will I? Sometimes, Felicia, I have a horrible suspicion I am just a taster–like tea tasters, you know. Only I like to go round tasting experience. I never thought I was a bit of a flirt until lately. But I'm just finding out there are ways and ways of flirting, having 'adventures in personality' as Suzanne calls it. Jack says my 'Damnable sympathetic ways' are vicious. Maybe they are. I think I must be a sort of chameleon–all things to all men, you know. I shouldn't wonder if I couldn't really love anybody–*grand style*."

"You goose! When the right man comes along you will know the difference."

"I wonder." And suddenly Sylvia remembered how she had felt that night on Lover's Leap, when she and Philip Lorrimer had been the only two individuals in a whole spacious, shining universe. It seemed now as if she had heard a kind of Hallelujah chorus, or was it that the silence had been a strange kind of music itself?

And then on the heels of this blinding sweet memory had come another, bringing with it a bitter taste, a memory of those long days after Phil had gone back to the city and she had watched the mails and pretended to ignore them.

And then she remembered Gus and Jack and Doctor Tom. Had they all been just understudies for somebody else she really wanted in her heart of hearts? How many other understudies would there be? And would she marry one of them sooner or later?

"Women are rather like cats, after all, aren't they, Felicia? They will pat their mice and keep putting their paws on them, even if they don't want to eat them."

Felicia laughed.

"What a traveler you are! Have you been half round the world since you spoke last? Shall we ask Tom and Lois over to dinner to-night? We haven't seen either of them for an age."

"Yes," said Sylvia. "You telephone, Felicia. I have to pack."

Sylvia had seen practically nothing of Doctor Tom for the past few weeks. Never once in that time had she been alone with him. Twice Doctor Tom had been over when she was in, which was not often during those full holiday evenings, and she had taken pains to be sure Felicia was present on those two occasions. Once he had called to her to come for a drive but she had had a genuine engagement with Jack to plead. She felt silly enough placing any sort of a barrier between herself and Doctor Tom but she was afraid for her own part it would be some time before she could meet him quite naturally again. Sometimes she

wished Jack had kept his "darned impertinence" to himself and other times she owned it was safer this way. Better that children should not play with matches at all, since matches did sometimes ignite. At any rate, she did not mean to see her neighbor alone again until after she got back from New York.

But Fate ruled otherwise. That very afternoon, after her breakfast table philosophizing, she had gone downtown to attend to a few last errands and the delicious, crisp frostiness of the day tempted her to walk instead of having the car out. She had hardly finished her tasks and started homeward when she heard Doctor Tom's familiar whistle, and, turning, saw him reigning in black Bess by the curb.

"Game for a spin?" he asked. "I have to go a few miles out in the country and was looking for company."

His tone was so natural that Sylvia herself lost her self-consciousness and was so thankful for the loss that she was very gay and talkative. If only he needn't find out that it had not been accidental that he had seen so little of herself of late all would be well.

"Seems to me you are turning into a regular society Miss after all," he teased. "Bet you've been cutting Red Cross and everything else since this dance mania set in."

"I am afraid I have. I've been an awful backslider in pretty much everything lately," she told him soberly.

He flashed one of his quick, shrewd glances at her.

"What's this, Miss Christmas? Your own special season here and you in the dumps without even a solitary star sparkle?"

"You are as bad as Felicia," said Sylvia a little crossly. "Do you all expect me to grin like a Cheshire cat every minute?"

He chuckled.

"Sylvia touchy! What next? Indigestion or bad conscience?"

"Neither–well, maybe a bit of the latter," admitted Sylvia. "Anyway, I am not at all pleased with myself lately. I'm getting to be a selfish pig, and that's the ungarnished truth."

"Indeed! I hadn't noticed it. The McGuires had a powerful good dinner yesterday and–"

"Do hush. It is nothing to send dinners to McGuire's. It doesn't cost me anything–not even much thought. You needn't try to smooth it over. I know. I haven't been thinking about a single soul in the world lately except Sylvia Arden. I set Jack to work and I've just diddled round myself doing next to nothing. I haven't even learned to cook as I said I was going to, and since Gus went I haven't practiced and–"

"And since three weeks ago Thursday you haven't even played me a psalm

tune," he jested.

Then suddenly he stared. For out of the corner of his eye he perceived that Sylvia was unmistakably blushing, blushing, of course, the more hotly because she was so furiously angry at herself for so doing.

"So it isn't my imagination. There has been some kind of fool talk somewhere. Confound me for an idiot! Poor kid! We'll settle that." So thought Tom Daly. Then aloud, "See here, Sylvia, may I say a little speech? You needn't look at me. I was a manger dog all right, a few weeks ago, without meaning to be. I had no business to be keeping the young chaps away from you. I didn't even see I was doing it. I was down and out for a while, and you, bless your kind heart, saw it and came to the rescue, like the Christmas girl you are. I shan't forget what you did for me. If you pulled me out of a rut–and you did–maybe we both came somewhere near being pulled into a bigger one. So far as I know, no man is ever old enough to be sure he's passed the fool limit, and maybe I was nearer the edge than I knew. Anyway, you were a trump as usual. The blame, if there is any, is mine. All right, little sister?" Then, at last, he turned to face Sylvia.

And suddenly and disconcertingly her eyes filled with tears. She was very tired and her nerves were unstrung by too much gayety and mental uneasiness.

"Of course it is all right. There never was anything much wrong, only–well, I thought I was beginning to plume myself and get complacent because I was the only one who patted you and smoothed your fur the right way and maybe I'd better stop before–Doctor Tom, I hate things to be as they are."

"Meaning?"

"Lots of things, but mostly why can't people–men and women–just be friends and not have anything else snarled up with it?"

"They can." Tom Daly's steady voice was like oil to the troubled waters of Sylvia's soul.

Nor did she guess that it cost him something of an effort to throw precisely the right amount of big-brotherness into his words. As he admitted, no man could safely boast that he had passed the fool limit, but he could and would be man enough himself to be sure no girl like Sylvia was going to be bothered by the folly.

"*We* can anyway," he smiled down at Sylvia to add in the old friendly way, a friendliness whose very familiarity was steadying.

She smiled back mistily.

"Of course we can. I'm a silly idiot to-day. Ghosts seem to walk even in the sunniest, most everyday places. Thank you, Doctor Tom. I don't know why I wept. My spirit isn't weepy. It was just my eyes. My spirit feels like singing 'Yankee Doodle' this minute."

"Let her go," he approved gayly, and directed the conversation through the

rest of the ride so skillfully to safe and sane and neutral matters that long before they reached the Hill Sylvia had lost the last vestige of self-consciousness, and was her old, merry, natural self, with a good many of the "star sparkles" back in their places.

This process was so salutary that later when Tom and Lois were at the Hall to dinner it hardly seemed possible to Sylvia that she had had any queer feelings at all about the matter and teased and joked with the doctor in precisely her old merry, audacious way, exactly as she had been accustomed to doing since she was a naughty little schoolgirl at St. Anne's. When they were walking home together in the starlight Lois turned to her husband with a curious question.

"Tom, don't you ever wish you had waited for Sylvia? She is so lovely and full of life. She is much more your kind than I am."

Tom Daly shook his head, and added with all honesty that there never had been but one girl he had wanted to marry and he had been lucky enough to get her. And Lois, suddenly lifting her face to his, gave him one of her rare love looks; a look which he would have crossed the very fires of Hell to gain.

As they entered the house she turned to him again.

"Tom, I am cold and indifferent and I don't always care about the things you care so much for but I do care–about you. I wish you would try to remember that, even when I hurt you. Do you mind kissing me?"

Tom Daly had not "minded." But it was not until they were upstairs in their own room that the whole of Lois' slow speech evolved. She turned from the mirror before which she had been letting down her long, ash blond hair.

"Tom," she said.

"Yes, Lois."

"Do you know I have been having a feeling for a long time that you and Sylvia were beginning to care for each other? It began that night she was here and played to you all the evening while I wrote out checks. I went out to cover the flowers and I saw you on her steps, with her hands in yours looking so exactly like lovers something just froze in me. I hate jealous women and I wouldn't say it or hardly think it, but that is why I have been holding you so far off. If you could love Sylvia, I didn't want to keep you. I wouldn't fight for anything–even love. But to-night I saw it had all been just my imagination. I have hurt myself and you just for nothing. I might have known Sylvia wasn't that kind. Oh, Tom!"

But even as he drew Lois into his arms Tom Daly knew that it is sometimes a woman's business to fight for love. Humbly he admitted that it had been Sylvia and not himself nor Lois who had saved the day. As honest a man as ever lived was Tom Daly, but neither then nor at any other time did he tell his wife how narrowly her fears had escaped realization. Nor did Sylvia Arden ever guess how slight an impetus would have set herself and the fine man she knew as neighbor

and brother drifting into perilous seas, instead of being as they now were, anchored safely in the haven of old friendship. That was Tom Daly's secret, and he was used to keeping secrets, even his own.

CHAPTER XIV
"AND HAVING EYES"

After the night when Phil Lorrimer played with opportunity a minute, then set it aside as not for his taking, things began to be different. Human relations have a way of shifting into new combinations of form and color like a kaleidoscope just when you think they have become as fixed as the stars in their courses.

That night brought a reaction with Phil. He was actuated by a fierce and relentless energy which only work could appease. Hence he came less often to Miss Josephine Murray's pleasant apartment, but kept burrowing deeper and deeper like a mole into the professional soil, working like a demon by day, and studying, reading, experimenting doggedly by night, trying his best to fill his mind so full that the thought of Sylvia could not find a cranny in which to creep and grow. But the less vacuum he left in his mind the bigger seemed the emptiness of his heart, or rather its fullness, for was it not full to overflowing with love for Sylvia? Like a mole, too, in his blindness, it did not occur to Phil that his stubborn silence might be hurting Sylvia. Still less in his humble unselfconsciousness did it occur to him that he might also be hurting Barbara Day. He had supposed always she understood. His love for Sylvia seemed as obvious and inevitable as rain and sun. It was incredible that any one should be unaware of it. So he would perhaps have reasoned, if it had seemed necessary to reason at all on the subject, which it did not.

And while Phil burrowed and blundered Barbara grew up. Her cheeks shed their soft childlike curves. Her eyes lost their dewy morning-glory look. They seemed not to wonder any more, but to know. The city had set its seal upon her, fed her youth to its strange gods. But the city was not all to blame. What had happened to Barb might have happened anywhere. The little drama in which she was playing out her part might have been staged in any other place quite as well. Nor was it at all an original drama. Its plot is curiously old though it has infinite variations.

It came to Barb that winter that, after all, happiness wasn't the essential

thing she had believed. One could, it seemed, go on eating and sleeping and walking and talking and typing and even laughing, just the same, even if one did feel a little like an empty goblet, turned bowl down, with all its sparkling contents spilled out. It was queer, but it was so.

Yet way down in the bottom of Barb's heart there still nestled a little winged creature called Hope, just as there had been in the bottom of Pandora's box. Maybe things were not as strange as they seemed. Maybe it was just that people were very busy about Christmas time. Possibly after New Year's it would be different again.

But before New Year's Barb discovered that things would never be different, and the way she found out was very simple.

On the second evening of her visit to Jeanette, Sylvia had run away from the stately "Duplex on the Drive" to take supper with Barb, and Miss Murray, for purposes of her own, had asked Doctor Lorrimer to join them also. He had been a little late in arriving and as the others had already gone into the dining-room Barb opened the door for him. He greeted her with the old friendly terrible grip which crushed Barb's ring into her finger and set the blood singing through her. He started to make a remark about the weather but his opinion of that commodity was never completed for suddenly from the room beyond Sylvia's laughter rippled out.

Did you ever happen to be engaged in decorous conversation with a man and suddenly see a change sweep over his face, and an arrested, listening, illuminated look take possession of it, just because somewhere in the distance he had heard a step, a voice, a laugh, belonging to somebody who was not yourself? That was what Barbara Day saw, and the little winged creature used her wings then and there and never came back. Barb heard the clock tick out as before, "Suppose a chap wants to marry a girl," but she knew now, once and for all, that the clock had never been talking about Barbie Day. It had always meant Sylvia Arden from the beginning.

But Barb's fathers had been fighting men and she herself was game to her little brown fingertips.

"Hurry!" she said gayly, just a shade *too* gayly, perhaps, only Phil did not notice. "Sylvia's here and soup's served." And as she pushed aside the curtains into the dining-room she announced with a gallant flourish, "Doctor Lorrimer, ladies."

But while Phil and Sylvia shook hands she did not look at them, busying herself instead with rearranging the scarlet carnations which stood in the center of the table, complaining to her aunt as she did so that the flowers looked "stiff" and "old-maidish" and needed a "touch."

It was Barb who was the blithest of them all that night at the little supper

party, bestowing to it the "touch" just as she had to the carnations. Sylvia and Phil were both slightly self-conscious and not very conversational. Miss Josephine Murray was somewhat silent too, watching the young people with eyes that saw all there was to see and understanding things at which she had been able only to guess hitherto.

That night after Sylvia and Phil had gone, Barb slipped quickly away to bed, a little afraid of what her aunt's keen gaze might have discovered, and longing, in any case, to be alone with the dark and the Thing she had been dodging all the evening, the Thing which sooner or later had to be faced and grappled with.

Later Miss Murray found her wide awake and stooped to kiss her with unwonted tenderness.

"Good night, Barbie. Anything I can do to–put you to sleep?"

Barb shook her head with a tired little smile. Then suddenly she sat up.

"If you don't mind, I think I'd like you to put your arms around me and hold me tight for a minute. Mother used to hold me that way when I felt–achey."

Miss Josephine's arms went around the girl, holding her very "tight" indeed for a few moments of silence.

"Do you feel very achey, Barbie?" she asked presently.

"Oh, no," lied Barb. "I just wanted to be petted a little weeny mite, that was all. I'm all right. Thank you, Aunt Jo. Don't bother. Do go to bed. I know you are tired."

That was the nearest the two ever came to speaking of the Thing but neither fell asleep until dawn, and when Barb awoke from her brief, heavy slumber she was entirely grown up.

Out in the crisp chill of the December night, after leaving Miss Murray and Barb, Phil and Sylvia had found their tongues. All the hurt and estrangement of the past months seemed magically to have shed itself, leaving only the old happy intimacy with perhaps a touch of something new and even more exhilarating about it.

As they walked along the river front they talked of many things, of Phil's work, of Jack's unprecedented diligence, of Gus Nichols' success on the road, of Felicia's designs, and Lois Daly's novel, of "Hester house" and Phil's mother, of Barb's services to the Cause, and Suzanne's mysterious journeyings; of everything indeed, it seemed, except the subject which was nearest the surface, their own selves.

When they reached the Lathams' apartment they were still as far from having said the really important things that trembled on their lips as they had been at the beginning. Sylvia knew perfectly well what she wanted to say but being a woman could not say it. Phil also knew perfectly well what he wanted to say but being a man set his lips and did not say it. It was only as Sylvia paused in the

doorway and held out her hand to Phil that the thing came near to getting said in spite of them both.

"Sylvia!" Phil's voice had a quick little catch in it very unlike his usual rather deliberate speech. "If I don't see much of you while you are here you will understand, won't you? It won't be because I don't want to but because I–don't dare." And his frank blue eyes implored her to understand and forgive.

"Are you sure–there is anything–to be afraid of?" Sylvia's words had jerked a little, too, and as she drew her hand away to press the bell her eyes expressed more even than her tongue had said.

"Sylvia!" Phil took a swift step nearer but before he could say any more a solemn liveried person had appeared in the doorway and stood at blinking attention while Sylvia shot one dazzling glance at the young doctor and vanished into the dim spaces of the hall, whence it seemed to Phil, though he could not be sure, she kissed her hand to him behind the liveried person's back, before she was lost in the elevator. Phil stared after her a moment in dazed silence then went out into the night.

The next day, when he came in from the clinic, he found a little note from Sylvia inviting him to take tea with her the following afternoon. "Of course it is all nonsense about your not seeing much of me while I am here," the note had added. "Phil, can't you understand there isn't anything to be afraid of?" The last was underscored. And then the writer subscribed herself conventionally his as ever.

Phil read the note hungrily several times and puzzled more than a little over its contents, which he perceived were open to more than one interpretation, especially the underscored portion. And then he had sat down and written an answer which he dispatched by special messenger. The answer expressed thanks and polite regret that the writer had a previous engagement.

Sylvia had run away into her own room to read the note and grew first a little rosy, then a little white as she read. Then she tore the missive into bits, and going to the window, deliberately let the fragments flutter away in the December blast outside.

"I might as well have proposed and done with it," she thought hotly. "Phil Lorrimer needn't worry. I won't endanger his precious peace of mind again while I'm here. Previous engagement, indeed! He's afraid of my money and he makes me tired."

As a matter of fact she did Phil injustice in one particular at least. The previous engagement had been perfectly authentic. The Washington Square Players were giving that afternoon a first performance of a play which had been translated from the Russian by a friend of Phil's and he had promised to be present and had long ago invited Barb to go with him. And Barb being fully determined

that Phil should never guess how things were had kept her engagement and succeeded in behaving so comradely and sisterly, which was precisely the way she had been behaving all along only more so, that her escort was allowed to continue in his state of innocence and ignorance as to things better left unknown, which was quite according to code.

But it was one of those odd coincidences that sometimes occur that Sylvia and Jeanette should have been whirling swiftly toward the park on their way home from the matinée just at the moment when Phil and Barb were transferring to the Subway at the Circle. Very much absorbed the latter appeared to be in each other's society, so much so that neither saw the limousine pass them, but Sylvia had not been so blind, and Jeanette also had taken in the scene.

"Wasn't that your little friend with Phil Lorrimer?" the latter had asked. "Somebody was telling me he goes everywhere with her. I shouldn't wonder if they were engaged, should you? They certainly looked devoted enough." So Jeanette had rattled on and never noticed that Sylvia had not answered.

That night Sylvia had gone to a big ball and worn a wonderful, sophisticated Paquin gown of sea green satin and pearls. She looked very young and lovely. The men flocked around her and she managed them all like a seasoned coquette and had three proposals during the course of the evening. Of course it was perfectly well known that she was an heiress as well as a beauty, so the proposers was not so romantically rash as might have been thought.

And from that time on Sylvia "went the pace" as madly as Jeanette herself, without pause or rest. After that one supper party Barb was never able to capture her friend again, her engagements piled up so fast and high. It looked as if Suzanne's prophecy about the "labyrinth" were being fulfilled. As for Phil, never once was he able to see her again. She was always out when he called or telephoned and always had previous engagements when he tried to get her for the theater or a concert. She was as invisible, so far as he was concerned, as if some fairy's wand had drawn a magic circle about her, a fact which made him burrow deeper than ever in his work and made him look a little older and grimmer than his twenty-five years warranted.

CHAPTER XV
THE CITY AND SYLVIA

Sylvia had supposed herself sufficiently grown up and wise and modern when she came to the city but she had not been there a week before she knew that she had been a veritable innocent, an infant in swaddling clothes, so to speak. Here was life, of a sort, with a vengeance.

In Jeanette's circle, Sylvia saw Mammon worship executed on so prodigious a scale and with such sacrificial ardor it fairly took her breath away. Everything was of the superlative degree. Sheer wealth, sheer elaboration, sheer success, sheer bigness, sheer speed, were all that counted it seemed. And in the mêlée the old-fashioned virtues, spiritual values, ideals, were somehow either dimmed beyond recognition or totally extinguished. Love showed itself chiefly in the guise of passion, often frankly illicit, and in lust frequently but thinly veiled. The motley throng of young-old men and old-young men who paid court to herself were obviously actuated by one of two motives or a combination of the two, the impulse of passion, or the impulse of avarice. Both points of view Sylvia loathed and thought degrading to herself as well as the men who held them. Nearly all of the group of more or less importunate suitors who thronged about her she frankly despised. The men she might have liked and respected did not come near her, much less enter the lists. No doubt they classed her with the other women with whom she appeared, women butterfly clad, butterfly souled, obviously unfit for the serious purposes of life. Sylvia did not wonder that the real men kept away. They showed their realness by so doing she thought.

Once, at a dinner, fate and her hostess allotted a different kind of companion, a grim looking person with very broad shoulders and very clear blue eyes, who let her severely alone during three courses and then when she was getting desperately bored by the over-assiduous attentions of the receding-chinned, narrow-browed scion of wealth who sat at her other elbow had suddenly turned to explode a question in her direction.

"What the devil do you see in all this?"

Sylvia had retorted that she didn't know what she saw but was trying to find out.

"When the pumpkin coach arrives I shall skip back home and think it over," she had added whimsically with a Sylvia smile.

Her neighbor had grunted a little at that and eyed her sharply from under his heavy brows.

"I thought as much," he said. "You don't belong."

"Don't I?" Sylvia had inquired dubiously. "Isn't my gown all right?" She was wearing a New York creation this time, of white tulle and gold tissue, a frock which Jeanette had pronounced a "dream," so her anxiety was not very deep-seated. "Or is it my hair? Ears are out just now, aren't they. They told me they were."

"Oh, you are protectively colored all right. It isn't that. Superficially you might be any one of this sea of ninnies that surround us. But, my dear young lady, your eyes betray you. You have a brain."

"Dear me!" sighed Sylvia, looking around her apprehensively. "Is it so bad as that? I hope nobody else suspects."

"No danger. They aren't looking for brains. Bodies content 'em. I hope you don't think this Punch and Judy show is the real New York? You are a stranger, I take it?"

"A pilgrim and a stranger. Where is the real New York?"

"Downtown, a good deal of it. Some of it is in the universities, especially in the night classes. Some of it is in the laboratories where they are fighting disease and achieving chemical miracles. Some of it is in the little back bedrooms where the chap from the up-state village has come down to peddle his dreams in the market place. The real New York–the real America–is made up of just two things–the dream and the deed. Those that make dreams their masters fail and go to pieces and that is a tragedy. Those that build without the vision will see the work of their hands filter to dust. And that's a worse tragedy. But those who can dream and transmute the dream to human gain, in tangible form–they are the real thing. These people here haven't the decency to dream nor the energy to do. They are the scum on the surface. They are punk–most of 'em. Rotten."

Sylvia had looked around her a little startled. The scene had looked brilliant and appealing to her a moment ago. Somehow now she saw it through this brutal stranger's eyes a "Punch and Judy show.". She shivered slightly. Suddenly she felt a bit like a little girl at a party, grown homesick, all at once, ready to be taken home quick. For she could not help believing her neighbor was right. Underneath the glamour and the beauty and the poise and the breeding around her there was a good deal that was more or less "rotten." She had seen it in men's eyes and heard it in their voices, yes, in the women's, too. She was filled with a great disgust and with some shame as well. For in her zest for experience had she not let her own shield get a little dented and tarnished? She turned back to her companion, her new knowledge in her eyes.

"Why did you tell me?" she reproached.

"Why, indeed? You knew it without my telling you. See here, girl, I'm going to Alaska myself to-morrow. I can't stand much of this sort of thing. I'd like to think you were going to pull out, too, before the taint gets you. I said your eyes betrayed you. They did. But it isn't only that you have brains. The brains are there but there is something else too. You have faith. You've lived in a decent sort of world where people are straight and kind and honest and simple. Better go back to it while there is still time."

Sylvia drew a long breath.

"Thank you," she said. "I believe I will."

Later Jeanette asked her what she had found to say to Archibald Grant.

"He's the Arctic Explorer Grant, you know. Quite the biggest toad in the puddle there, to-night."

"Was he?" Sylvia had looked thoughtful. "I didn't know who he was but we had rather an interesting talk. Jeanette, I've got to go home."

"Go home! Why, Sylvia, you haven't been here two weeks yet!"

"I know. But I'm incurably a home person. I've had a wonderful time but I want to see Arden Hall and Felicia and–"

"Jack?" teased Jack's sister languidly.

Sylvia flushed a little. At the moment it did seem as if she would be very glad, indeed, to see Jack. Jack was so clean and young and joyous and wholesome. He seemed to her to belong to a different world from that which his sister inhabited. But, after all, at Jeanette's insistence, Sylvia agreed to stay another week.

Jeanette herself was almost feverish in her gayety these days. It seemed, indeed, as if she could not stop if she tried, as if "all the devils of Hell were loose and after her" as Jack had said. She was a puzzle to Sylvia. That she was not happy was apparent, but she was always gay, talkative, full of quick laughter and brilliant plans for new pleasures, something fresh every hour. There were always many men in her wake. Usually they were men of brains, men "who did things," as the phrase goes, musicians, writers, artists and the like. Jeanette did not affect fools, as she had said curtly to Sylvia once. She had brains herself and used them. She was rather famous and rather feared for her somewhat satirical wit. Her husband was a quiet, scholarly aristocrat, who spent most of his time reading memoirs of somebody or other, or bringing out elegant "privately printed" monographs. In Jeanette's scheme of things he seemed scarcely to count at all, beyond the essential facts of having provided her with an extravagant income and an assured place in New York society. To do her justice, however, Jeanette was by no means dependent upon her husband for these things. She made her own circle wherever she went. She did not need either the Latham money or name to assure her leadership. She was a born queen. These factors were merely contributing circumstances.

Among Jeanette's varied and numerous retinue was one young man whom Sylvia found less easy than the others to place. This was an artist, Charlton Haynes by name, a newcomer in the city who had been for some time engaged in "doing" Jeanette's portrait. Wherever Jeanette was, the young portrait painter appeared to be also by some magic process. The two had little to say to each other in public but Sylvia had noticed more than once how the painter's rather gloomy face lit up when Jeanette approached, giving an effect much like a sudden

sunshine after a passing cloud. More than once, too, Sylvia had seen a flash of some quick, wordless communication pass between them. They spent long hours together mornings in the great ball-room where he worked in the north light. When Sylvia was with them, as she sometimes was, the artist was rather silent and absorbed in his work and Sylvia thought if he were always so quiet he must be rather dull company.

One morning she suffered an abrupt enlightenment as to the relations between her hostess and the artist. Jeanette had been detained and had asked Sylvia to go to the ballroom and explain to Mr. Haynes that she would be with him as soon as possible. As Sylvia opened the door he had turned with outstretched arms and an impulsive "Sweetheart, you are dreadfully late." And then his hands had fallen and a shamed, hang-dog, caught-in-the-act expression banished the eager look of expectant joy on his face as he met Sylvia's eyes and saw her quick flush.

He shrugged and tried to make the best of the situation by a hasty "Beg pardon, Miss Sylvia. I didn't see it was you."

"So I judged," said Sylvia and delivered her message gravely and departed. She wondered if this was what Jack had guessed and if that was why he had wanted her to go to Jeanette. Had he thought she could save her? Poor Jeanette! Could any one save her but herself?

Two hours later Jeanette came to Sylvia, writing letters in her own room at the little teakwood desk.

"Sylvia."

"Yes?" Sylvia had turned, wondering what Jeanette would say, wondering almost more what she herself was going to say.

"Charlton says he gave himself away awhile ago, did he?"

"Rather."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean you to know for fear it might bother you. Otherwise, of course, I don't mind your knowing. We have been in love for some time. There doesn't seem to be anything to do about it at present."

Jeanette's tone was impersonal. She might as easily have been discussing the relation between the moon and the tides as the relation between herself and Charlton Haynes. The facts existed. That was all apparently. At least all Jeanette cared to admit.

"Couldn't he go away?" asked Sylvia, equally matter of fact.

"He could, but it would make talk if he went before the portrait was done. Besides, I don't want him to go. He offered to. It is I who am keeping him. I hope you are not too much shocked, Sylvia."

"I'm not shocked at all, but I am sorry. Does Jack know?"

"Jack!" For the first time, Jeanette showed a quaver of emotion in her voice.

"Jack! Good gracious, no! Why should he? I wouldn't have Jack know for anything. What made you ask that?"

"Jack tried to warn me something about you before I came. He seemed to think you needed me."

And suddenly Jeanette's calm broke. She flung herself face down among the silken cushions of the couch. Sylvia came and knelt beside her putting both arms around her. In a moment Jeanette sat up, flushed but tearless. Sylvia slipped back upon the floor, her hands clasped around her knees, her eyes pitiful.

"I do need you. I need somebody. Sylvia, listen to me. It is a dreadful thing for a girl to marry if she isn't in love. Fate is sure to strike back at her sooner or later. That is what happened to me. I married Francis because I thought he could give me the things I wanted–the things I thought I wanted. And he has, but it isn't what I really wanted at all. I am just beginning to understand what I do want–what life might mean, if one deserved to have it mean anything. I hate this house and the servants and the hideous kind of existence we live–the kind I elected to live. It wasn't Francis' choice. It was mine. But I hate it all now. I'd like to leave it this minute. But I can't. I'm bound, hand and foot, by conventions and fears and selfishness. I couldn't live now without luxury, I've had it so long. I couldn't stand poverty or shame or sacrifice or honesty of any kind. I'm a sham. I love Charlton. But I shan't try to get a divorce and I shan't run off with him because I'm not big enough. I'm just big enough to squirm and suffer and hate myself for being such a pitiful little coward. I'm not even big enough to send him away. I'm not worth his wrecking his life and ideals for, but I don't tell him that. I tell him I love him and that is enough to keep him here like a lap dog. Pah! He isn't very big either or he would make me go with him or leave me outright."

"But, Jeanette, it is all such a tangle. If you really care, why don't you go to Francis and tell him the truth? Surely nothing can be so bad as going on like this."

"You don't know what you are talking about, Sylvia. I'd die before I would go to Francis and I'd die if he found out, but I'm going on risking everything until something happens. I don't know what."

And in the face of such reasoning or non-reasoning, Sylvia had no answer to make. She was beginning to hate the city heartily. It seemed to be weaving nothing but misery for everybody. Was there any happiness in it? Surely she herself had found none. She desired more than anything else in the world to run away from it all, to get back to Felicia and, yes, to Jack. They two seemed the

only refuge in a heaving sea of trouble.

CHAPTER XVI
AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED

It seemed as if Sylvia's cup of disenchantment were destined to brim over before the city was done with her. She tried to view Jeanette's affair with the portrait painter with an open mind and tolerant attitude. She saw that there was no real evil in it as yet–probably never would be for Jeanette was likely to "play safe" having much at stake. But somehow it all disheartened the younger girl. She thought she could have forgiven both the transgressors more easily if they had dared a little more, or cared a little more for each other and less for themselves. If they had eloped she would have been shocked and troubled but she would have understood their conduct. It was the amazing bad taste and effrontery of carrying on so half-hearted a liaison in Francis Latham's own house and under his very eyes which was to Sylvia the least excusable phase of the matter. Deceit of any sort was obnoxious to her straightforward soul. She herself could never have kept on living a daily lie such as Jeanette was living. Something would have snapped. And somehow Sylvia found herself seeing things all around her blacker, no doubt, than they were, because of her too much recently acquired knowledge, and often she remembered the explorer's terse verdict that these people were "punk." It was all very disillusioning and made one sick at heart.

But Sylvia had other cause to feel that happiness was eluding her these days in early January. The wound to her pride that Phil Lorrimer had dealt, though seared over, was by no means healed. She tried to be perfectly fair and sane, to admit that if Jeanette's supposition were correct, Barb would doubtless make Phil a better wife than she herself would have done, to acknowledge that it was entirely natural and appropriate that Phil and Barb should have learned to care for each other during the intimate months past when she herself had deliberately neglected Phil. Even so, Phil need not have looked at her as he had that night on Jeanette's doorstep. He needn't have let her all but propose to him. That was the deepest rankling thorn of all. She had almost offered herself to him on Jeanette's threshold. If he had really cared as his eyes had said wouldn't he have understood what she was trying to tell him that the money was nothing at all, that it didn't matter in the least, that there was, indeed, nothing to be afraid of, as she had

twice taken the pains to reassure him?

If he had really cared would he not have found means to see her during her weeks with Jeanette in spite of her mantle of invisibility? It was all too evident that he didn't care, that it was Barb who could give him what he wanted, or rather let him give everything as his pride demanded. Sylvia knew perfectly well that she had wanted Phil Lorrimer to ask her to marry him, knew too, that she had meant to say yes if he did ask her, but she also knew that though her pride was offended, her heart was far from being broken. Indeed, love in its entirety, in its heights and depths, its glory and its mortal agony, its madness and its abiding joy, she had scarcely as yet conceived.

She was still questing experience, tasting life, and even the bitter flavor of this last new-gained knowledge was interesting because bitterness was new to Sylvia Arden. Youth drinks its gall and wormwood with almost as supreme satisfaction as it does its nectar and ambrosia.

Not that Sylvia understood all this or consciously analyzed her mental processes. She did nothing of the sort. She only knew she had been hurt, and found it a rather fascinating game to hide the hurt from herself and the rest of the world.

Perhaps her zest for the hiding game made her play a little more recklessly with the men who dogged her footsteps than was entirely wise or kind. Certainly it made her eyes a little starrier, her cheeks a little deeper carmine, her laugh a little more tantalizing. Men saw and smiled and said the little Maryland "Deb" was a queen, a beauty, and a wit as well as an heiress, an unbelievably lucky combination.

"Knows how to hold her own too," they agreed. "She'll lead you on to the limit and then when you think you have her–she isn't there. Got the elusive game to perfection, wherever she learned it."

But the last night of her stay in the city Sylvia came near playing her game an inch too far. There had been a theater party and supper afterward at the Astor and when at last they started for home she chanced to get separated from Jeanette who, supposing her guest was with her husband, had gone on in another car.

"Why!" exclaimed Sylvia, from the curbing. "I do believe they have all deserted me. There goes Jeanette, and Francis went with the Homers."

"Well, here am I!" challenged Porter Robinson, at her elbow. Porter Robinson was the most daring and insistent of all the swarmers about the most popular new rose. "Whither thou goest I will go! Here, Cabby," and his uplifted finger summoned a taxicab in which he and Sylvia were in a moment ensconced.

It was a wonderful night. Brilliant stars studded the heavens and the trees in the park were laden with a fleecy burden of new-fallen snow. The little girl still in Sylvia who loved snow storms and had too little of them in Maryland cried out in ecstasy at the sight.

"Oh-h! Couldn't we drive in there a little and see it? It's so lovely after the lights and the crowd–like a different world!"

Naturally Porter Robinson had no objections to driving at midnight in a closed cab through the park with the prettiest, liveliest, most piquant girl he had met in many a season.

But a half hour later Sylvia flashed into the library at the Lathams with wrath and shame in her heart and ran square into Jack standing with his back to the fireplace.

"Ugh! I hate men," she greeted him stormily.

"You do! What's up? Where is Jeanette? You look like a Valkyr or an avenging fury."

"I don't know where Jeanette is. Porter Robinson brought me home."

"Oh," comprehended Jack. "So that is the rumpus. Didn't Porter behave like a perfect gentleman?"

"He did not." Sylvia threw off her cloak with a wrathful gesture, leaving her slim, rounded young loveliness, clad in the white tulle and gold "dream," suddenly revealed to Jack's eyes. "He tried to kiss me, if you must know."

"And what did you expect at this time of night when you had shed your lawful chaperones?" inquired Jack blandly. "Especially after you had been flirting like the mischief with him all the evening!"

Sylvia slipped into a chair and stared up at Jack. "How did you know?" she asked with astonished meekness.

Jack laughed.

"Didn't. I just guessed. So you did flirt with him like the mischief?"

"I–shouldn't wonder," admitted Sylvia with a grimace. "He's a beast, but then maybe I was a little to blame. I suppose I shouldn't have asked him to take me riding in the park at this time of night."

"Possibly not," agreed Jack.

"You wouldn't have taken advantage of a situation like that, Jack. You know you wouldn't."

"H-m-m?" interrogated Jack dubiously. "That so? If you looked one half as pretty in the cab as you do this minute, I'm morally or immorally certain I should not only have tried to kiss you but have succeeded."

"Jack!"

"Like this!" And suddenly, to Sylvia's utter surprise, he had stooped and kissed her full on one crimson, excited cheek. "Game's up, sweetheart. My turn. You've had your fling, and I guess from all Jeanette writes it has been a pretty lively one. Honest Injun, Sylvia, aren't you sick of it all, ready to try it out on a different line with me? No, don't speak just yet. I'm not quite through. I promised I would get busy and show you I could hold down a man's job if necessary. Well,

I've done it. I'm not boasting, but you can ask Dad if I haven't made good and kept my promise to the letter. That is all on that subject. Secondly, I don't pretend to be a saint, but thanks to you and the Christmas Family setting me straight some years ago I'm a fairly decent specimen as men go. I believe I'd show up moderately well by comparison with the Porter Robinsons and the rest. That is all of that. Thirdly, I love you. There isn't any other girl, never has been, and, so far as I can see, never will be. Now–did you mind very much having me kiss you?"

Sylvia's eyes were demurely downcast, her cheeks flushed, but a quiver of a smile appeared around the corners of her mouth.

"Not much. I rather think I–I liked it–a little," she admitted.

That was enough for Jack, and five minutes later when Jeanette came in she found him on the arm of Sylvia's chair, her tulle and gold rather crushed and mussed but with her eyes looking very starry.

He sprang up with alacrity as his sister entered and went to give her a brotherly kiss.

"'Lo, Jeannie. Sylvia and I have just got engaged. Hope you don't mind?"

Jeanette shot a straight, questioning, dubious look at Sylvia then remarked she was delighted, of course, and if they would excuse her she would go to bed as she was very tired. Sylvia had vaguely realized at the moment that Jeanette was white, but it was not until the next day that she understood. Charlton Haynes had left suddenly for California on the midnight train and he and Jeanette had apparently parted for all time. Of what lay behind Sylvia could not even surmise and Jeanette kept her own counsel. At any rate, Sylvia was able to perceive that under the circumstances the other woman had little enthusiasm left over for the love affairs of even her sole and beloved brother.

And that next afternoon Sylvia and Jack went South together, and the Minotaur did not get Sylvia after all. But whether she had not stepped blithely into a deeper labyrinth than the one she had evaded was another question.

CHAPTER XVII
BARB DIAGNOSES

The evening that culminated in Sylvia's engagement to Jack, Phil had spent with Barbara. Barb had discovered that it was neither impossible nor very difficult to

slip back into the beaten way of friendship with the young doctor, especially as he himself had never left that safe and sane path and had no faintest conception of the mad little, sad little detour the girl had accomplished beneath his very eyes. Barb was a very wise and brave little lady and having realized that she had been reaching for the moon withdrew her hand and made the most she could out of every day sunbeams. Phil never guessed that his occasional visits to Miss Murray's apartment were rather bittersweet occasions to Barb, nor did he notice that she was quieter, graver, not quite so responsive as he had hitherto found her. As a matter of fact, Phil wasn't seeing much of anything these days except his own stolidly endured misery. It had been bad enough to know Sylvia was in Greendale where he couldn't see her at all, but to know she was within easy reach and yet farther from him to all intents and purposes than if an ocean or a desert separated them was incomparably worse.

He hated Jeanette Latham's kind of life, hated to have Sylvia's fresh radiance tarnished by its contact, hated to think of her, night after night, in the society, even in the arms of the Porter Robinsons of Jeanette's circle, jealous of it all because it kept Sylvia from him, hurt that she would give up none of her gayeties for his sake, blindly conscious that he had offended her, though only half guessing how and to what extent.

One night he had been at the opera, way up in the upper tiers, as was his custom, and between the acts he had wandered about in the galleries and seen Sylvia in a box below, surrounded by a swarm of devoted male attendants, and he had watched her with mingled gloom and avidity. She was so lovely in her chiffons and furs and her exquisite youthfulness and grace, her face uplifted, her hair shining in the light like burnished copper, her lips parted with laughter. She seemed so eminently a part of the picture to fit into the brilliant scene as a diamond sparkles appropriately in its hoop of gold that Phil's heart sank heavier than ever. Well, it only proved he had been right. What had he to offer Sylvia in exchange for all this? She belonged to it and it to her, as a bird belongs to the air.

Perhaps it was the intensity of his gaze that had made Sylvia look up. At any rate she raised her eyes and met his, staring hungrily down at her. The exciting, haunting music of Tristan and Isolde had stirred strange deeps in Sylvia, begotten an élan of flesh and soul which flared like a pure flame in her eyes at the moment. The man at her side, Porter Robinson, as it happened, saw the look and followed her gaze with curiosity to see what had lit the flame. But in all that sea of faces he had no means of distinguishing the one which stood out for the girl as if it had been the one face in the world. In a second she had turned away and lowered her eyes.

"What was it?" asked her companion. "Did you see a vision?"

"Maybe," said Sylvia. "Hush! The music is beginning."

All the rest of the evening she half hoped Phil would seek her out in the box but he had not come. And the next night had been the one when she had discovered Porter Robinson was a beast and an hour later had found herself rather unexpectedly engaged to Jack Amidon.

As for Phil, his will tugged at its moorings that night. He, too, had been moved by the music, and even more by the challenge of Sylvia's eyes. He had telephoned her the next day to try to make an engagement with her for the evening but Sylvia was submerged with engagements, had a tea, a dinner, a theater party, and so forth, already on hand, and her voice over the telephone was as cool and remote as a mountain stream. She even forgot to tell him she was leaving the city the next day. Sylvia's pride in its way matched Phil's own.

And so instead of spending the evening with Sylvia, Phil had dropped in to see Barbara, which is where this chapter really began.

He was certainly anything but good company that night. He sat somberly looking into the fire, answering Barb's casual chatter with brief absent-minded monosyllables. Barb, watching out of the corner of her eye, and with the sure intuition that love teaches, guessed the source of his gloom. She forgot all about her own hurt in sorrow for his and longed with all the mother in her to comfort him. Suddenly the silence which had fallen became intolerable, the weight of the unspoken thing too heavy to be endured another minute. So out of a clear sky Barb dropped a bomb.

"Phil, why don't you ask Sylvia to marry you?"

Phil jumped and stared and frowned.

"Reason's sufficiently obvious I should say. The gown and the furs and the pearls she had on last night probably cost more than my year's income."

"What of it? Gowns and furs and pearls aren't important. There are things that Sylvia cares much more about."

"What?"

"You," was on the tip of Barb's tongue, but she did not say it. After all, that was for Sylvia to say. She had no means of knowing how Sylvia felt except that vivid memory of the way the other girl's eyes had looked that night on Lover's Leap.

"Happiness, for one thing," she substituted. "Phil Lorrimer, don't you know Sylvia Arden well enough to know the things that money buys are not the real things–the things she cares for. She is willing to play with them while she is waiting. Who wouldn't? I would myself, if I had the chance. But Sylvia never mixes things up. She knows what counts and what doesn't count as well as anybody I know. If you think her having money and your not having it makes the slightest difference to her, you're even stupider than I gave you credit for." Barb had warmed to her subject and did not care if the lash of her tongue did

sting a little. She rather thought Phil Lorrimer needed a sting or two. She had forgotten for the moment she had ever been in love with this young man herself. She remembered only she was a woman speaking for her sex in plain round terms.

"You mean Sylvia wants me to ask her to marry her?"

Barb made an impatient gesture.

"I don't know anything about that. That is between you two. What I do know, and what I am trying to tell you, is that the modern woman despises a man just as much for not wanting to ask her to marry him because she has money as she does for wanting to ask her to marry him because she has it. That kind of idea is ancient and exploded and idiotic and disgusting."

Phil threw out his hand in half humorous, half serious protest.

"My word! What an avalanche! So you think it is thoroughly contemptible in me to care whether the woman I marry has a million dollars or not when I haven't a red cent?"

"I do," asserted Barb stoutly. "The money isn't any of your affair, any more than the kind of knife you use on the operating table is hers, or the color of your hair or eyes, for that matter. It just hasn't anything to do with it."

"What is my affair? What is the male end of the bargain, according to the latest approved feministic standards?"

"It's the male end of the bargain, if you choose to put it that way, to give a woman love and respect and comradeship, a clean, strong, healthy body and mind and soul, to be the kind of man she would like the father of her children to be. I believe that is about all. Read Beatrice Forbes-Robinson Hale's chapter on the 'New Man' and you'll understand why Sylvia's money has nothing to do with the case and why your pride is stupid and conceited and old-fashioned, a relic of the time when man expected to be the sole provider and expected his wife to be the chief parasite of the family, when he gloried in his high and mighty superiority and expected her to be meekly grateful and appreciative of said superiority. Now, do you understand?"

"A little," said Phil Lorrimer slowly. "Thank you, Barb. Maybe I have been an idiot, as you say. It takes you to clear away the rubbish in a fellow's mind. Jack tried to tell me the same thing and, well, I guess Sylvia tried, too, only she didn't put it as violently visibly as you have, and I threw the words back in her face like the donkey I am. Barb, do you believe there is any chance she'll forgive me?" he begged anxiously.

"I don't know how much she has to forgive," retorted Barb shortly. "But you had better be about it before her forgiveness is all she has left to give. You can't expect a girl like Sylvia to sit down and wait for a man to get his eyes open like a Maltese kitten. I suppose you know Jack is hot on the trail, and no doubt there are plenty of others here in New York."

"Lord! Don't I know it?" Phil got to his feet. "You needn't rub it in, Barb. I'm scared enough on that score already and jealous as the old one. I'd have liked to drop asphyxiating gas on the moon-faced calf I saw with her last night at the opera, looking as if he owned her. Gee! I've got to get out and let the air circulate through my brains a little. I feel as if I had a hot box up there." He gave his tawny head a thump. "Honest, Barb, I'm much obliged to you for your efficiently brutal treatment. You are some doctor, all right."

And in his genuine gratitude Phil started to seize both Barb's small hands in his, but she backed away, fearful perhaps lest he see more than she wanted, now that his eyes were unsealed in other respects. In a moment he was gone and Barb walked deliberately over to the mirror and surveyed her flushed face and big, excited eyes.

"They say a critic is a man who can't write. I begin to think a reformer–at least, a woman reformer–is a woman who can't have what she wants. Maybe I can get the sacred fire after all. Wonder if Aunt Jo got it–my way."

Barb laughed a little tremulously and then picked up a volume of Ellen Key and sat down to read as hard as she could.

Her brain was very clear that night it seemed. She felt as if she could have written a book about woman herself.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE CAUSE AND THE CAREER

For two weeks after that Barb saw nothing of Phil, a fact for which she was exceedingly grateful. The news of Sylvia's engagement had come up from Greendale, and Barb had no wish to see the look which she knew would be in Phil's blue eyes, if he too, had heard, as no doubt he had. Neither had she any desire to say "I told you so," though it was her right. Her warning, though late, had been justified. No one could expect Sylvia Arden to sit down and wait "for a man to get his eyes open like a Maltese kitten." Sylvia had not waited, and Phil's eyes were open at least twenty-four hours too late.

The next time Phil and Barb met was at a public meeting. Miss Murray had been scheduled to speak but at the last moment had succumbed to laryngitis, and Barbara, dismayed and protesting, had been haled into the breach.

It was the first time Barb had ever spoken in public, though she had more

than once sat on platforms with her aunt, striving to look dignified and impressive and generally worthy of the "mantle." She was desperately frightened now and when she finally rose to face the audience, which was made up mostly of women of the working-class, her knees shook and her throat felt as if she were trying to swallow the whole Sahara Desert. The upturned faces paralyzed her forces. She wished an earthquake would come and dispose of the audience and bury herself in eternal oblivion. And then suddenly behind those weary-eyed, apathetic faces in the foreground, she saw Phil Lorrimer's friendly, encouraging eyes and some tension within her snapped. She began to talk slowly at first, and then more swiftly, borne along on the current of her own surging thought and emotion. She never knew afterward quite what she said. She seemed to have talked more about happiness than about enfranchisement. Perhaps the women who listened were more interested in happiness than they were in the vote anyway. At all events, they listened respectfully, even eagerly, as Barbara Day painted for them her crystal clear vision of a world where women were to be neither drudges nor toys, but honored co-workers, laboring in joyous self-expression, side by side with men, a world where motherhood should be respected and supported by the nation, where education should be open not to the favored few but to the many, a world where war and brutality and slavery, of soul and body, and all blood guiltiness should be impossible, a world enlightened, free, strong, glad. And this millennium, the women of America were to help to bring about, *must* help if they were to save themselves and their sisters–so Barbara Day told them. "We have to work together. Whatever we are, the one thing we cannot be is indifferent–you and I–we must be awake–wide awake."

And with that Barb had slipped shyly back into her seat amid the applause which greeted her little speech, terribly frightened again now it was all over and wondering if it had not been intolerably presumptuous in her to have spoken at all, much less present so portentous a plea.

There were other speeches but Barb scarcely heard them. She fell into a revery, in which she carried the vision she had shared with these women on and on until it became almost as the new Jerusalem in its transcendent splendor.

And in her vision she seemed to see why it had been given her to desire and to have no fruition of desire, to know the flare of happiness and to know happiness gone out like a wind blown candle, to understand what it was to be acquainted with heartache and loneliness. For all these things would teach her how other women yearned and suffered and were denied. If she herself had found her heart's desire in a good man's protecting love, in the warm glow of her own hearth fires, with her own children in her arms, would she have desired so poignantly to help these others to find life more abundant? By the measure of what she had lost, had she not gained?

"Happiness left us content with happiness but sorrow bids us rise up and seek something divine," says some one, and Barbara Day had come to understand this with many other things. As the old music teacher had said: "Love is the great Master."

The hint of the "Something divine" was still in Barb's eyes when she took Phil's outstretched hand in the doorway where he waited. He had meant to congratulate her on her speech but somehow the words evaporated before the look on her face as she lifted it to him. He saw she had been in some far, high place where he could not follow and the spell was still upon her.

"How did you know I was here?" she asked presently, as they made their way to the Subway together in silence.

"Your aunt sent me word. I am tremendously grateful. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Barb, you made me understand a whole lot of things."

She flashed him a quick, startled glance. She did not wish him to understand too much. But she need not have feared. Phil was as blind as ever so far as she was concerned.

"You are a wonder, Barbie. I'm a little scared of you all at once. I am afraid I haven't been quite appreciating what an angel I was entertaining–or rather letting entertain me."

"Don't. If you mean that silly speech, you needn't talk. I feel as humble as–that puddle," groping for a simile she happened to let her gaze fall upon a pool which a recent shower had left in the gutter.

Phil smiled.

"There's a star reflected in the puddle," he said gently, then dropped the subject as she obviously desired.

As they stood in the crowded Subway later there was little chance for conversation, but Barb noticed that Phil looked worn and tired, almost haggard. Her heart was very tender for him. It didn't matter how much she was hurt. Barb sensed intuitively that women were meant to be hurt. But that Phil should suffer was all but intolerable. She almost hated Sylvia who had brought that look to his eyes. Alas! What a jumble things were! How changed everything was since that happy September week with Sylvia at Arden Hall! She remembered how Suzanne had rallied Sylvia on her fitness for matrimony and charged herself in jest with having designs on Phil Lorrimer. Funny Suzanne! Poor Suzanne! What was she doing?

It happened at the moment Suzanne was sitting by the fire in Miss Murray's apartment, doing absolutely nothing for the first time in many strenuous weeks. There Barbara and Phil found her a few moments later, to their unbounded astonishment.

"Well, aren't you going to greet the returning prodigal?" asked Suzanne,

getting up.

Whereupon Barb recovered sufficiently to throw her arms around her friend with a series of little rapturous, inarticulate, affectionate gurgles such as women occasionally indulge in.

When she had finished it was Phil's turn, and though his greeting was more decorous, it was no less hearty.

"Where have I been? I know that is what you are bursting to ask. Sit down all and let me tell you. Dearly beloved, I have been on the road. No, not selling petticoats like the immortal Emma, but in the chorus of 'The Prettiest Princess,' and it's been worth a fortune to me."

"In the chorus! Oh, Suzanne! What did your father and mother say?"

"They haven't said anything up to present speaking, for the very good reason that they don't know what I've been up to. I told them I was traveling. I was. Gee! How I've traveled! I also told them I had been visiting Aunt Selina in Salt Lake City. I did visit Aunt Selina. I spent a week with her while the 'Prettiest Princess' and her retinue delighted the enthusiastic Mormon gentlemen. For Heaven's sake, don't stare so, Barb! I assure you both my virtue and my looks are unimpaired. You can see the latter for yourself."

Suzanne whirled round to the mirror as if to assure herself that her statement was true. Certainly the others could see for themselves that Suzanne had never looked prettier in her life.

Little by little the story came out, delivered with much glee and gusto by the irrepressible Suzanne. That night Phil had found her in the Square she had come to the end of her resources and knew something had to be done at once if she were going to avoid an ignominious return to Norton, Pa., or the sacrifice of her pride to ask for an advance of money. A manager had refused her latest play that day but even as he had done so he had offered her a place in the third company of the musical comedy he was just starting on the road. Suzanne had asked for a night to consider and she had been considering when Phil had interrupted her meditations. In his society, too, she had decided to take the offer. The next day she had become a member of the third company and the next was "on the road."

"Why did you come home? Show bust?"

"Indeed, no. The 'Prettiest Princess' goes on as cheerfully as may be lacking its most charming first row right chorus girl."

"Fired?" still further inquired Phil.

"Nope. Resigned. Came into a fortune and flew back to the Great White Way instanter."

"What kind of a fortune? Anybody died?"

"Thank goodness no. On the contrary. An editor came to life. I've sold a series of stories to the Ultra Urban, two hundred plunks per. 'Melissa on the

Road' is the general title, Melissa being, of course, Suzanne, thinly disguised. I thought I might as well make copy out of myself and I did. I've given things so close to the way they really were that every one will swear they are fiction of the most romancy order."

"Are they coming out under your own name?" Barb found breath to ask.

"No. I thought they might begin to appear before I had a chance to explain things, so it seemed better to break the shock, as it were. They are anonymous, which will make them more spicy."

"Good for you!" chuckled Phil. "I'll bet they are spicy all right."

"But the best isn't told. I've written a play–a real play that is going to make the managers sit up on their haunches and beg prettily. And I've got a Star in my crown–I mean in my circle of friends–who wants to play the lead. What do you think of that? Let Broadway stop, look, and listen. Suzanne is coming, Hurray! Hurray!" she chanted. "I'll cause more of a sensation than my predecessor at the bath. Now, tell me the news."

CHAPTER XIX

OH, SUZANNE!

It was not until Phil had gone and Barb and Suzanne were reduced to the intimate kimono and pigtail state that Barb got the full force of the stream of Suzanne's confidences.

"When I think what a fool I was only just last September I could weep, if only it weren't so killingly funny." Suzanne sat up in bed to announce. "I thought because I had a pretty knack of juggling words and a little mother wit I could just walk right in and conquer the literary and dramatic world as easy as anything. The trouble with college is it gives you an over-dose of fine spun theories about life and doesn't teach you a thing about being up against the real article. Maybe it couldn't. I guess we all have to knock that lesson out of the bed rock itself with a chisel or a pick axe. I've tried both ways. I don't know all there is to know yet by a long shot but I know a whole heap more than I did, which is something to be thankful for." And the speaker thumped the pillow with her doubled fist rather as she had thumped Sylvia's hammock cushions the preceding September.

Barb, listening, sighed a little as she wondered if this knowledge of life were as desirable as Suzanne seemed to think. It left one a little tired, she thought, this

knowing things.

"I don't know whether you ever guessed," Suzanne rattled on, "how near I was to the end of my rope last November. Phil knew, but he kept my secret, like the good dear he is. By the way, what is the matter with Phil? He looks awfully seedy and sober. Don't know but you do, too, come to think of it. City got on your nerves?"

Suzanne's keen eyes sought her friend's face with an intentness that made the latter turn under pretense of switching off the light.

"Nothing the matter with me," she said cheerfully. "With Phil, of course, it is Sylvia."

"H'm, I suppose so. He certainly looked as jolly as a tombstone when we were talking about her engagement a while ago. Well, why didn't he go in and get her himself? He could have last September easily enough. Anybody could have seen that with half an eye. Gets me why he didn't clinch it that night at Lover's Leap."

Barb made no reply. Even with Suzanne she could not discuss Phil's mischance, especially as Suzanne would be sure to say it served him right. Barb was very pitiful for Phil. She did not want to hear anybody say sharp things about him.

"Go on about yourself," she suggested, getting into bed. "Do you mean you were really hard up, last November?"

"Hard up!" chuckled Suzanne. "My dear, I was not merely badly bent. I was broke. That night I was up here to supper I was as hungry as a wolf. I hadn't been eating much of anything for days."

"Oh, Suzanne! And you never told me!"

"Naturally not. I had made my own bed and I intended to lie on it even if it was a bit rocky. Of course they would have sent me money from home, or Sylvia or any of you would have lent me some. But I wouldn't ask anybody. I set myself to work out my own salvation and I meant to finish up the job."

"You are a wonder, Suzanne! But wasn't the show work dreadful?"

"Not so dreadful as you might think. You have to work like everything, and there is a good deal naturally that you have to shut your eyes and ears to, but it was Life with a capital letter, which was what I was looking for. Heaven knows I got it! Sometimes more than I bargained for." There was a catch in Suzanne's voice which made Barb come a little nearer and put out her hand until it touched her friend's.

"Barbie!" Suzanne's voice was lowered.

"Yes."

"Did you ever think goodness was a sort of relative thing? That some girls are good just negatively because they never have any temptation or opportunity

to be anything else?"

"Yes," said Barbara again.

"You don't know what you are really like inside until you suddenly come up against the sharp edges of things. Do you remember when Sylvia said she wanted to get acquainted with herself and I said I knew all about myself. Well, I didn't, that's all. I found out."

"Suzanne!" Barb's voice had a motherly croon to it.

"Don't be scared. I'm all right. I did get scorched a little, and I know fire now when I see it. Who do you suppose came to my rescue when I was singeing?" And Suzanne mentioned the name of a "Star" all America knows and loves–a Star of the first magnitude.

"There was a big snow storm and we were blocked for a day this side of Kansas City. Her company happened to be on the same train ours was. I dug her Chow out of a snow bank for her and we got acquainted. I guess she saw where I was drifting. Anyway, she pulled me back just in season. Never mind who the man was. He doesn't count any more. He never counted very much. I was just dizzy with life. It all frothed and bubbled and sparkled like champagne, and I was a little drunk with it all maybe. She made me see things. She'd been there. She knew."

Barb nestled closer, but did not speak. Did she not understand? Had life not frothed and bubbled and sparkled for her, too? Did she not know how nearly anything could happen when you felt like that? Especially if the man cared or pretended to care. It had been at once her own safety and torture that in her case the man had not cared.

"I saw her again at Denver," continued Suzanne, "and she told me the kind of a play she wanted. And Barb, just like a flash of lightning it came so quick, I knew I was going to try to write a play for her and I did. And she's seen it and she likes it and she wants me to take it to —-. He's her manager–just as soon as I can and tell him she liked it. And I'm going to, to-morrow. Oh, Barbie! If he should like it. But he won't. I mustn't think he's going to. I'd die if I were sure, I'd be so happy."

And to-morrow Suzanne had taken the play to the great manager and had sent in the Star's card bearing the magic caption, "Introducing Miss Morrison." The caption had worked like a charm, swung open doors and fore-shortened delays. It was an incredibly brief space of time before Suzanne found herself in the most inner of all the offices with a pair of shrewd kindly eyes fixed inquiringly upon her.

The manager had glanced over her manuscript with a swift apprising gaze, then glanced over Suzanne in something of the same manner.

"I'll read this, this afternoon," he promised. "I have the greatest confidence

in the judgment of that lady," with a nod at the card which lay among the litter on his desk. "If she says this is good, I have no doubt it is. At any rate, we will hope for the best. Lord knows we are looking for something good. I'll telephone you to-morrow if you will leave me your number and address. By the way–" he frowned a little. "Haven't I seen you before somewhere, Miss Morrison?"

Suzanne twinkled.

"I've brought you three plays–all impossible," she said.

"Indeed! Let us hope this one–" he glanced at the manuscript–"will be at least–probable."

"It is more than that," said Suzanne. "It is a dead sure thing. Read it. You will see." And with that parting shot Suzanne withdrew, leaving the manager grinning at her effrontery.

But the next day when the great manager sought to communicate with Suzanne over the telephone, Suzanne, white and silent, was packing to take the next train for Norton, Pa.

A telegram had been sent to Salt Lake City in her aunt's care and followed her back to New York. The telegram had said: "Mother very sick. Come home at once."

"It is Mr. —-" said Miss Murray from the telephone. "Will you speak to him, Suzanne?"

"No," said Suzanne curtly. "Tell him I'm out of town. Tell him anything. I don't care."

Thus did the Nemesis of Suzanne's joyous tilting with the universe overtake her. At the moment when victory seemed well within her hands life had struck back. Like the star of the seer's vision, the star of her ambition fell burning into the waters.

"*And the name of the star is called wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood and many died of the waters because they were made bitter.*"

At the station in Norton, Roger Minot waited with his car to meet Suzanne–a crushed anguished Suzanne, her pertness and her prettiness equally in eclipse. She could only put out her hand to him with a little moan and gasp "Mother?"

"She is holding her own. There is hope–at least a little," he told her. "When did you start?"

"From New York?"

"From Salt Lake City?"

"I haven't been in Salt Lake City for days. I got to New York yesterday. I didn't know. I didn't know. Oh, Roger, it's dreadful! I've been so selfish–so everything that is horrid."

Roger Minot looked straight ahead of him and said nothing. Perhaps he knew it was for the good of Suzanne's soul to taste the whole acrid cup of her

remorse.

But as they neared the parsonage his heart was smitten with pity. Suzanne looked so wan and grief-stricken and subdued, so utterly unlike the Suzanne he knew, all sparkles and ripples and laughter, like a little shallow stream running along through sunshine. The hand which was not busy at the wheel closed over Suzanne's.

"Don't give up, little girl. Maybe it will come out right, after all. Anyway, remember I'm right here if you need me."

Suzanne uttered a sound which was a little bit like a sob. When, indeed, had Roger not been right there when she needed him? though she had treated him as the very dust beneath her feet. Dear Roger! And with an impulse of penitent tenderness she gave back the pressure of his hand.

And then in a moment they were at home, where the chairs still stood stiff and angular against the wall, though up there in a quiet room above the hand that had put them in their places lay very still and white. Suzanne's mother was very sick indeed. It was she, after all, and not her willful little daughter that had pulled the family out of its comfortable rut and cast a sad spell of differentness upon the household. Suzanne had stayed away but sickness had come in and another darker guest waited outside the door, his shadow already on the threshold. Poor Suzanne! The waters were made bitter, indeed, at the falling of her star.

CHAPTER XX
SYLVIA AND LIFE

In the meanwhile Sylvia, home at Arden Hall again, slipped back very easily and naturally into the old ways and almost as easily and naturally into the new one of being engaged.

"It is really quite a comfortable state," she told Felicia. "You don't have to wonder about every new man you meet when you are all satisfactorily accounted for and checked off yourself. You can even enjoy flirting more," she added wickedly with a Sylvia twinkle, "since everybody knows you don't mean anything by it. Anyway, I'm so used to having Jack around that it isn't much different being engaged to him from not being engaged to him. I am afraid I am a hopelessly unromantic person, Felicia. I always supposed when people got engaged it was a fearsome, sublimated sort of experience like being on top of

an Alp or something of the sort. But I don't feel any different from what I did before, except for the comfortable settled feeling I have already mentioned. And I'm not going to get married for a long time. I am going to make the most of the privileges and immunities of my present blissful state."

But as was perhaps natural Jack did not share his fiancée's leisurely attitude. In fact the two came more than once near to quarreling on the subject of the date of their marriage. But Sylvia's will was stronger and Sylvia would not be married for another year. That was a flat and unequivocable dictum and Jack had to put up with it as best he could. He dared not hurry his perverse lady love for it must be confessed he sometimes experienced doubts whether he had won her at all, so slight seemed the bond between them. The very tranquillizing effect of the engagement upon Sylvia was disturbing to Jack. That she could take so placidly what was the biggest thing in the universe to him was alarming and a little exasperating. Sometimes he would accuse her of not caring for him at all and then she would still further disconcert him by looking very directly and questioningly at him as if she, too, had some doubts on the subject.

Sylvia knew she had floated into the engagement from the crest of one wave of emotion to another. Her estrangement from Phil Lorrimer, her disillusionment about Jeanette's married life, the panic-stricken horror and shame with which her own affair with Porter Robinson had filled her, her generally overwrought, hysterical, nervous condition had all contributed to throw her into Jack's arms that night. He had seemed an oasis on a desert, a spar to the drowning. She had awakened soon enough to the realization that it was by no means a grand passion, a life and death affair, this placid, even affection she felt for Jack. She loved him sufficiently. She knew she could be fairly happy with him and make him happy, perhaps could even let her affection deepen into something approaching a great love in due time. They were ideal comrades already, and Sylvia had a theory that comradeship was a better basis than stormy passion for happy wedlock. Yet perhaps down in her heart there was a fear that something was lacking in it all, something that kept her stubbornly insistent on postponing the wedding for a year. Impulsively she had yielded the first redoubt. She intended to be sure of herself before she surrendered the fortress for good and all. She meant to do it in the end without reservation, for better for worse. There should be no shilly-shallying like Jeanette's in her life. That she was determined upon.

Part of the steadying effect of her engagement expressed itself in a sincere desire to stop the unsatisfactory flitting from flower to flower process, sipping honey here and there, into which she had drifted during the restless winter months past. She had had enough tasting of experience and honestly sought serious employment for her energies.

Luckily there was always plenty to occupy her on the Hill. More and more

the Byrd sisters came to depend on her, especially as Julietta was now away getting acquainted with her grandson, Gloria's boy, recently arrived upon this planet. The girls at "Hester house," and Hope and Martha, also came in for a generous share of her attention. The old buoyant, radiant Sylvia seemed to have come back to them, ready to cheer and comfort and command at need. Never was her genius for happiness more in demand or more in evidence than it was that February. It seemed as if everything had been awry and sad and bad while she had been away in the city and that now she was home it must all just naturally straighten itself out.

She took up her music again with rigorous hours of practice. She fulfilled her long made threat of learning to cook, much to Aunt Mandy's pride and delight in her role as chief professor of the culinary arts. She went in, seriously, this time, into Red Cross work, organizing a unit which she kept sternly to its task of rolling bandages and all the rest of the necessary if rather prosaic labor. She also got under way a class in first aid instruction under the tuition of a young doctor whom Tom Daly had recommended, too busy himself to take on any new duties.

Doctor Tom and Sylvia saw a great deal of each other off and on but always in the comfortable, wholesome, brother and sister relation which their November interlude had interrupted but not destroyed. Sylvia was often at the cottage playing with the babies whom she adored and kept out of Lois' way as often as possible so that the latter might have time for the typing of her book which was almost ready for the publisher's hands. Marianna and Donald, too, came in for a large share of Sylvia's time. For them she spun rare tales old and new and rendered Kim and the Water Babies, the Immortal Alice and other beloved favorites of the realms of gold until she knew them nearly by heart. With the children Sylvia was happiest of all. Living in their world she almost forgot her own, which in spite of her boasted contentment did not wholly satisfy her. She had learned that the busier she was, the better life seemed, leaving fewer crannies and nooks for doubts and wonders to seep in.

Of course there was plenty of gayety both in Greendale and in the near-by city, but she steadily refused to go in for an excess of this kind of thing, though here, too, she and Jack came near to dissension. It must be admitted Jack was scarcely so assiduous a devotee of business now that he felt his assiduity no longer essential to the winning of his liege lady. He was ready now to enjoy the fruits of his labor and have a thoroughly frivolous holiday with Sylvia as mistress of the revels. But just as he wanted to cut loose Sylvia wanted to go sedately. He complained that he saw infinitely less of her now he was engaged to her than he had when he was not, and resented somewhat sharply the thousand and one claims and duties which Sylvia acknowledged. Yet the two never really quarreled. Jack was too sunny-tempered and Sylvia too tactful, and on the whole

they were very happy together, Sylvia, oddly enough, happier than Jack.

Meanwhile the war went on overseas and men began to shake their heads and prophesy that we would be in it soon. But that was still nineteen hundred and fifteen and we kept out. About this time came a letter from Hilda, the first in many months. The chief item told simply and with scarcely any comment was that Bertram had been killed early in October. "I can hardly realize it or feel it," wrote Hilda. "It is getting to be an old story over here. Women see their lovers and their sons and their husbands go and they don't come back, or if they do, they come maimed and crippled, only the shadow of the men that went forth. In the meanwhile we try to heal as many as we can, though it is discouraging to heal them and send them back to be killed outright perhaps next time."

The letter and its sad news had haunted Sylvia for a long time. What a strange romance Hilda's had been–so brief it must almost have seemed a dream! She had known Bertram only a few weeks in August. By the first of September they had become engaged. A week later he had gone to the front. In October he had been overtaken by death. And that was the end. What a waste there was to it all!

Half consciously all that month Sylvia expected to hear that Barb and Phil were engaged. She had long since made up her mind that that particular consummation was natural, even desirable. She, herself, was far too sane a person to spend many moments prying among ashes to see if any sparks remained. Nor would she permit herself to regret that which had perhaps never been more than moonshine and dream stuff. She was able to persuade herself quite easily that since she was able to be so placidly happy without Phil she had never needed him overmuch. That miracle moment on Lover's Leap and that other music intoxicated moment in December came to seem to her mere magic casements through which she had looked for the briefest interval of time into another world, essentially unreal, fantastic, a sort of mirage of the soul. And mirages were not in Sylvia's line, so she did not often let herself remember those irrevocable moments.

Once in her desultory reading she came across a little poem called "Remembrance," one stanza of which particularly haunted her.

Not unto the forest–not unto the forest, O my lover!
Take me from the silence of the forest!
I will love you by the light and the beat of drums at night
And echoing of laughter in my ears,
But here in the forest
I am still, remembering a forgotten, useless thing,

And my eyelids are locked down for fear of tears–
There is memory in the forest.

She had gone to a dance with Jack that night and every now and then the music had taken words.

I will love you by the light and the beat of drums at night
And echoing of laughter in my ears.

But, afterward, in her own room, she had sat a long time by the window looking out into the white night where snows lay on her rose bushes. And perhaps she remembered a "forgotten useless thing" and her eyelids, too, were "locked down for fear of tears." And a new fear awakened in Sylvia's heart that night, a fear of Love. She, too, needed to be delivered from the memory of the forest.

CHAPTER XXI
A CHAPTER OF REVELATIONS

February passed and March came in, rough and blustering, with "noise of wind and of many waters" blowing its silver trumpets to life long dormant under winter snows. There came a few warm days and the crocuses began to run gay little races through the grass in Sylvia's garden and the jocund company of daffodils appeared. One morning a bluebird flashed out in the magnolia and the cardinals called "Pretty! Pretty! Pretty!" ecstatically all day long.

But then came frost and the frivolous crocuses in their parti-colored gowns lay flat and desolate like little dead dreams. The daffodils blackened and their stalks snapped, brittle as icicles. The bluebird disappeared, nobody knew where, and the cardinal's joy was muted. And it was all a symbol of life as it was in the world that spring of nineteen hundred and fifteen. Men had dreamed of peace and good will, of strong nations hailing each other with a "God speed" across the waters, a world of quickened life and promise and progress. And suddenly, out of a clear sky, as it seemed, had come blackening, devastating war. Men who

had smiled like friendly gods snarled and hissed and rolled each other in the dust like brute beasts. Hymns of hate replaced the song of the morning stars, and the Prince of Peace was again crucified.

And still America looked on, dismayed, awed, shaking herself like a great dog, but not yet ready to leap at the throat of the enemy of democracy, not yet ready to believe such an enemy could really live and move and have his mighty being in this day and generation of enlightenment. Not yet was Beowulf dedicated to Heorot's cause, not yet did he fully realize the hatefulness of Grendel, who bore God's wrath. Aloof from it all, America's great pulse beat on almost steadily. Men and women loved and sinned and suffered and bartered and sacrificed as they had been doing from the beginning, more or less unmindful of the whirlwind sowing not so far off, with only an ocean between it and themselves. And what is an ocean nowadays?

In the stuffy little town of Norton, Pa., Suzanne took a deep draught of life that March; a deeper draught, indeed, than New York, or for that matter all the cities of America could have held to her lips. Day by day, as she sat by her mother's bed, she learned lessons no college could have taught her. Suzanne's spirit had been "stabb'd broad awake." She saw the Suzanne of the past, blind, arrogant, selfish, deeming herself wise and self-sufficient, yet really knowing neither life nor herself. Here in the quiet room where the angels of life and death wrestled she saw things very clearly and was made humble.

But it was willed that she be spared the last drops of the cup of sorrow and remorse. In those early March days her mother drifted back slowly from the Hinterland. It was almost as if Suzanne's need and Suzanne's prayer and Suzanne's love had brought her back. Little by little, as the mother grew better, she and her daughter came into the grace of mutual understanding and sympathy and forgiveness, knowing at last the whole story of Suzanne's light-hearted vagabondage. Mrs. Morrison was able to smile and sigh over "Melissa on the Road," the first installment of which appeared in the April issue of the magazine whose editor had "come to life" in season to recognize a live human document when it came into his hands.

As for the play, Suzanne received a letter in March from the great manager informing her he had kept in touch with her affairs through Miss Murray, congratulating her on her mother's recovery and begging for an interview at her earliest convenience. His confidence in the Star's judgment had, it seemed, been justified. The play was as good as Suzanne had promised, so he admitted.

Accordingly, one day, when her mother was able to spare her, Suzanne went up to New York to sign contracts and discuss royalties with a glibness which scarcely betrayed her recent complete inexperience of such pleasing commodities. The play was to be tried out in early September and if it was successful

would be given a chance on Broadway later.

"Of course, that is on the knees of the gods," the manager had warned. "You can't tell what the public will do. The public is a spoiled child. The thing may go. It may not. The whole thing's a devilish lottery, you understand."

Oh, yes, Suzanne understood. All life was pretty much of a devilish lottery she thought, but that made it more rather than less interesting. Long ago she had taken for her motto, "Believe and venture, as for pledges the gods give none." It was enough for her at the time that the play was to be given a trial. More would have slain her with joy she thought.

Of course she ran straight to Barb with this bucketful of delightful certainties and enchanting possibilities. And Barb was as happy as Suzanne over it all. She was an artist at rejoicing with those that rejoice as well as mourning with those that mourned. Sometimes she seemed to herself to be nothing at all but an agglomeration of sympathies for the rest of the world. Her own selfhood seemed drowned in the sea of humanity. She was not unhappy. Indeed she was quietly, humbly content. To some women to love itself is the main thing. In such the waters of affection returning back to their springs, fill them indeed full of refreshment. There was no bitterness in Barb. Gladly and freely she had broken her alabaster box of precious ointment not counting the cost, nor deeming the performance any sort of waste, rather a privilege.

As for the Cause, her dedication to it held no more scruples. Suzanne had been right in her prophecy. She was "white hot" in her faith, in her mission, the whiter-hot, perhaps, because she had managed to get "martyrized" along the way.

In March Lois Daly's book was accepted by the publishers, with hearty congratulations on her return to the field of literature after her sojourn elsewhere. The terms of her contract were generous and Lois smiled, well pleased. She took the letter at once to her husband, and when he had expressed his delight and pride in her success she had explained why she had done the thing.

"I didn't want to write a bit, Tom," she said. "I dreaded to go into it again. Of course when I once got in it I loved it just as I always have. It is exhilarating–soul-possessing. But I was happy without it, perfectly happy. I don't know whether you understand that, Tom. I was afraid sometimes it worried you that I had given it up. It needn't have. You and the home and the children were enough to fill every need."

"Then why did you do it?" He surveyed her, puzzled. It occurred to him as no doubt it occurs to many wise men at times how little he knew his wife. Do men ever really know their wives? Tom Daly thought of that little episode with Sylvia and wondered if it had had anything to do with sending Lois back to her writing.

"Why? Because I wanted to make some money–quite a lot of money–and that was the only way I knew of doing it–my only wage earning asset," she smiled.

But Tom still looked bewildered. Just why should Lois have suddenly acquired her zeal for money? She had never been luxurious in her tastes, turning always preferably to simplicity of living, as those of the aristocracy of brains usually do. Therefore he awaited enlightenment. It was twilight and they were sitting together in the dusk, but he could see her eyes shining with a sort of wistful tenderness as they lifted themselves to his.

"You don't ask why I wanted the money? Is it because you know that I wanted it to give to you?" She pushed the publisher's letter across the table to him. "It is yours, dear,–my gift to the hospital. I haven't been able to show I cared for what you were working for. Perhaps I haven't really cared, though I think I have learned a little about it this winter, while I've been working myself. I've had a little light–a crack of it, anyway." She smiled at him in the grayness. "But I've always cared for you, Tom, even when maybe I haven't shown it, and I want to give this–piece of me to your hospital because I do love you and your big vision. Will you take it? It isn't much, but it comes straight from my heart."

"Not much!" cried Tom Daly. "Lois, it is everything."

And in a moment his arms were around her and there was nothing else in all the world but they two, mystically one in the fullness of their love each for the other.

So Spring brought with it quickened life and love to Tom Daly and Lois as it had done to Suzanne Morrison and her mother.

Spring, too, brought back Gus Nichols from his concert tour, a little thinner and tired looking as if the fire of his music had burned rather deep but with a new poise and dignity and manhood, along with his old boyish charm.

Mr. McIntosh was as happy as a child with a new toy at having the boy back, or rather as a child with an old toy, beloved and rediscovered. It was pleasant to see the two together, old man and lad, so different racially and temperamentally, yet so bound together by the ties of affection.

"Best job you ever did in your life, Sylvia Arden," Mr. McIntosh had observed one Sunday when he and Gus were taking dinner at the Hall. "Best job you ever did, when you persuaded me to adopt the boy. I can see you now, impertinent little witch that you were, sitting up and giving me advice like a grandmother. But it was good advice. I grant you that. You knew what you were talking about and talked to some purpose. See here, Sylvia–" The old man lowered his voice a little, though the others–Gus and Felicia and Doctor Daly–were engaged in conversation and could not hear, "do you think there is anything the matter with the lad? He doesn't look just happy to me. You don't think there can be a girl or any nonsense like that?"

Romance had always seemed more or less nonsense to Angus McIntosh, probably would unto the end, though years and affection had somewhat tempered his aversion for sentiment.

Sylvia looked up a little startled, remembering suddenly what she had almost forgotten–that unspoken thing she had read in the boy's eyes that night after his first concert. Gus, too, looked up at the moment, and as their gaze met Sylvia saw that the boy's had the fire and dew of a Galahad in them, the look of one who sees the Grail afar off. Her own eyes fell. She could not bear that shining, reverent look. It blinded her, shook her, quickened her, filled her with humility and compassion and envy. She perceived that Gus had found this thing which she herself seemed forever seeking with vain quest. In giving he had gained, in losing he had found.

"Well?" challenged Angus McIntosh at her side.

Sylvia shook her head.

"No, Gus looks to me–very happy," she said.

"I'm glad you think so." The old man's tone was relieved, as if a burden had been lifted from his mind. He had the greatest respect for Sylvia's judgment and understanding. "Glad you think so. He seems all right, but I wasn't sure. Thought I'd see what you thought, that's all."

Later Sylvia played accompaniments for her guest's violin. And if his eyes had not already conveyed the truth to her, his violin would have done so. Sylvia could hardly keep the tears out of her eyes as she played. Not that the music was sad. It was jubilant, at times almost triumphant. It throbbed and welled and exulted. It disdained pity as a crowned monarch might have disclaimed it. It proclaimed itself inviolate, consecrate, perfected. "I rejoice! I conquer! I love!" it sang.

As Sylvia rose from the piano she almost feared to meet the gaze of the listeners. She thought they must all have heard the message of the violin as she had heard it. But no one seemed to have done so. They had felt the power and the beauty of the thing, but its soul had been concealed from them all except Sylvia herself.

And then Sylvia saw that Jack was in the room. He had come in while they had been playing and stood silent, waiting until the violin ceased. She went to him, her eyes still full of the music, and noticed that he was a little white and very grave, with something of his boyishness stricken out of him.

"I didn't know you were back from New York," she said, though that wasn't at all what she seemed to care about saying. The ordinary, conventional words rise to our lips when the real things hide unsaid.

"Let's get out of here a moment," he whispered, under cover of greeting, "I've something to tell you."

Sylvia stepped out into the hall and he followed.

"Sylvia, there's been an accident. Phil's hurt–dying, maybe."

He put out his arm quickly, for Sylvia swayed toward him with eyes that told him what perhaps he had known in his heart all the time.

CHAPTER XXII
UNTO THE FOREST

Sylvia did not faint. Indeed it seemed to her as if she had never in all her life been so quick in every fiber as she was at the moment she heard Jack's voice saying those fearful illuminating words, "Phil–dying, they think." It was as if a great clean wave swept over her leaving her purged of misunderstanding and doubt and weakness and compromise. With one blinding flash of light she saw clear. She drew away from Jack's arms.

"Tell me about it. No, I am all right. Tell me."

There was little to tell. A crowded street, a heedless chauffeur, a toddling Italian baby escaped from its mother's fruit stand. These were the details. There was nothing unusual about them. Such accidents happen daily in great cities. One scarcely hears of them they are so frequent of occurrence. The wonder is there are not more of them when human life teems so thick and is held so cheap. But, unfortunately, clear-witted, quick-moving, strong-limbed young ex-football heroes are not always at hand as in this case. The baby was happily unhurt, but Phil Lorrimer lay in the hospital at the point of death.

Instead of keeping a luncheon engagement with his friend, Jack Amidon had been called upon to take charge of a grave situation. Finally, there being nothing left to do, he had come back to Greendale to tell Mrs. Lorrimer–Mrs. Lorrimer and Sylvia.

"I thought it would be better to tell his mother myself," he said to Sylvia. "Telegrams knock you out so. She is a wonder, though. Not a whimper. She's going up on the five o'clock from Baltimore. I'm taking her in, in the car."

"I am going, too," said Sylvia.

For a moment the two stared at each other, then Jack understood and acquiesced.

"All right. That is for you to say," he responded quietly. "Go and get ready. I'll tell the rest."

Even in her distress, Sylvia smiled wanly at Jack. It was so like him to understand, to spare her, to see at a flash the helpful, kindly thing to do. Jack was always so "dear." She tried to express her gratitude but he cut her short by stooping to kiss her, not on the lips as usual, but on the forehead.

"Don't bother about me, sweetheart. I don't count," and he strode away from her toward the living-room where he had promised to "tell the rest."

Sylvia ran up the stairs to her own room, dazed and dry-eyed, with a strange lightness about her, as if she had suddenly shed her body and become all spirit. In a few moments Felicia joined her, quiet, helpful, unquestioning. There was never any need of explaining things to Felicia. She did not ask why Sylvia, engaged to one man, should be rushing with anguish-stricken eyes to the sick-bed of another. Perhaps she understood that better than she had understood the engagement in the first place.

It was a strange journey–first, the swift almost silent automobile ride to the city; Jack's stern, white face as he kissed her good-by so unlike the sunny lover she was used to, whom she had loved "by the light and beat of drums," a look so different it had haunted her all the way to New York; beside her the quiet countenance and grief-filled eyes of Phil's mother. Feeling scarcely worthy to dwell in the sanctuary of her own grief, Sylvia's heart went out to the older woman in her silent agony. Perhaps never in her life before had the girl realized what it meant to be a mother–how mothers gave and gave and gave, and suffered and suffered and suffered, and loved and loved and loved, unto the end. What was going on in the mind and heart of the other woman she could only conjecture. Dimly she perceived that the mother loved the son for the baby he had been, the boy and youth he had been, the man he was, the man he was to be–all in one. How could she bear it? Sylvia wondered.

Then the vision widened. How could all those women over in Europe bear it? To give up their sons–the very fruit of their bodies, those for whom they had undergone the agonies of death! It was horrible. Phil was only one, and he had offered life for life. That was natural. But those other strong young men, over there–they were giving life for more death. That was the unthinkable, hideous part of it. The sorrows of all the world seemed pressing down upon her, crystallized, made real by her own poignant, personal grief. Phil became the mangled young life of the world.

Suddenly Sylvia felt she could bear it no longer alone. She put out her hand and let it rest upon the hand of Phil's mother. Mrs. Lorrimer turned with a faint little smile.

"Pray, Sylvia, pray," she said softly. "Try to help me say 'Thy will be done.' I am trying to say it. But it is hard–so very hard."

"I can't," Sylvia's young voice flung back, hard, almost fierce, in its hurt. "I

can only keep saying, 'Don't take him. Don't take him. I can't bear it.'"

But Mrs. Lorrimer shook her head and pressed the girl's hand.

"We can bear anything, Sylvia–anything. We are never asked to bear too much."

"I am," cried Sylvia passionately. "I can't bear his dying–without knowing. He must know."

"He will know, dear."

Sylvia took comfort from the quiet assurance. She believed Mrs. Lorrimer meant she felt sure that Phil was still living, would live. She did not know the mother meant that her son might already be where there could be no misunderstanding, no longer any seeing as through a glass darkly, but face to face with infinite realities. Alice Lorrimer was not young like Sylvia. She knew from sad experience how many paths of human life lead straight to the Garden of Gethsemane.'

Presently Sylvia spoke again.

"Mrs. Lorrimer, how do you suppose I could have been so blind–not to know–I cared–this way?" Sylvia's phrases came out in quick, uneven gasps, as if every word hurt. "I didn't know–I never knew until Jack told me just now–about Phil. I didn't know," she moaned.

"Maybe Phil was blind too, dear. I think he was. He put an unreal thing ahead of a real one, I am afraid, just because he cared so much. You needn't look surprised, child. Mothers know so much more than any one ever tells them. Of course I don't know what happened in New York, but I have always suspected my boy hurt you, and it was the hurt which made you shut your eyes so tight."

"It was something like that," admitted Sylvia. "It is so horribly easy to get all muddled and twisted up in life."

"It is," agreed Mrs. Lorrimer. "Sometimes it takes a great grief to remove the bandages from our eyes."

"I know. When Jack told me–first everything went black and then it was all white and shining. I felt as if I had never really seen clear in all my life before, except maybe just once, last September out in the woods at sunset. I think Phil and I both knew then. Oh, Mrs. Lorrimer, why didn't he speak? What difference could my money possibly make? Money and love haven't anything to do with each other. They are in different kingdoms like animal, vegetable, mineral, only there must be a fourth kingdom–the love kingdom." Sylvia's eyes smiled a little, like stars through mist.

"Men do not always understand, little daughter. Perhaps they never understand quite. You must not blame Philip too much."

"Blame! Oh, I don't. The blame was mine. I shouldn't have rushed like a mad thing into the fire to save my pride. I wasn't true to love or Phil or myself

or Jack. Maybe I was untruest of all to Jack. He will never tell me, but I know I have hurt him dreadfully. Sometimes I think women are the cruellest things in the world. We don't mean to be but we are."

"I am afraid we are sometimes."

"I didn't mean to be cruel. I've always wanted to be kind. Maybe that is the trouble. I've been too kind. I let myself believe I loved Jack because it pleased me to make him happy. And I haven't made him happy. That is the worst of it. I believe he has been miserable all along because he knew I was giving him counterfeit gold instead of the real thing. It was only I who did not know, and even I suspected, sometimes. That was why I wanted to keep so dreadfully busy all the time, so I wouldn't have time to think. Mother Lorrimer," in sudden contrition, "you are so tired and I have chattered and chattered until I almost feel better because I've talked. As if I mattered–beside you."

Mrs. Lorrimer pressed the girl's hand again.

"Nothing matters very much just now," she said, "except God."

"But God is so far off."

"Oh, no, He isn't, Sylvia.

"'Closer is He than breathing
And nearer than hands and feet.'

Haven't you ever felt how near He is?"

"Yes," said Sylvia, remembering again that night when she and Phil and the "shadowy third" had been so close to each other that there had not been a breath between them. And then she fell silent, led at last unto the forest where she had not dared to go for many months. And in the forest Sylvia sought God.

It seemed an endless time before they reached the great station in New York but at last they did arrive. There was no one to meet them. It was a very different arrival from the one Sylvia remembered in December. Jeanette had been there then to greet her and Barb and Phil. She had been breathless, exhilarated with happiness. She remembered how almost intoxicated with sheer delight of living she had felt when Phil had helped her into the limousine and recalled also what a queer, deserted, almost lonely feeling she had experienced, immediately after, when she leaned out of the car to wave good-by to Barb and Phil on the curb.

The thought of Barb brought a new current of reflection. For all she knew it was Barb and not herself who had the right to be with Phil now. How did she know but he might have learned to care for Barb in all those months? Wasn't it probable, natural, that he should have done so? Why should she expect him to keep on caring for her while she had given herself to Jack? A panic seized her. All the way to the hospital even Phil's desperate illness, which she had never

seemed able to sense, loomed less important than this new specter which had arisen. What if Barb should be there with him? What if they should say "Who is this young person? The woman he loves is there already with him. There is no room for another."

But when they reached the hospital no such questions were raised. Mrs. Lorrimer swept everything aside with her quiet dignity. "I am his mother," she had said. "And this is Miss Arden," quite as if the authorities knew and understood why Miss Arden must be admitted. Perhaps they did understand. The doctor who challenged them shot a quick questioning look at Sylvia and bowed acquiescence. Possibly Sylvia's eyes were the password. The doctor was used to reading human faces. He had admitted many another white-cheeked, tortured-eyed young woman into the chamber of the Shadow ere this. He was gravely sympathetic. He did not expect the young man in there to live twenty-four hours. It would be a miracle, he thought, if he got well.

And so the mother and the girl who loved Philip Lorrimer sat beside him all that still night though he did not know them. Sylvia lived a thousand lives and died a thousand deaths before the gray dawn came to the quiet room. And who knows what new agonies the mother who bore the lad suffered during those long silent hours? To Sylvia at least, there was something beautiful even in the unspeakable anguish of it all. Even in death Phil would be hers and she his. Love had crowned her as it had crowned Gus. She no longer envied the young musician his Grail ecstasy. She, too, had been anointed.

Sylvia never knew whether she consciously prayed that night. It was rather that she talked with God and He in His beneficence let her share some of His eternal secrets.

And underneath it all she was crying out to Phil, "Don't die. Don't die. Don't die. I love you. I love you. Come back. Come back." And she did not seem to be saying it to the inert form on the high, narrow bed. That was not Phil at all. Phil was all strength and energy and vitality. That was a mere husk of something–what, she did not care. It had nothing to do with Phil or with herself. She was sending out her cry, not from her body to his, but from her spirit to his, wherever the latter was faring. She knew that wherever he was he would hear and almost she knew he would come back.

The strange part of it was he did come back, as if Sylvia's voice had arrested him and brought him back from those far fields to which he had been journeying. Perhaps not so strange, after all. The wisest men of all the ages have not been able to mark the metes and bounds of the power of love. At any rate, whether Sylvia's call had anything to do with it or not, Phil Lorrimer came back. The miracle was achieved.

It was early morning when Phil opened his eyes, blue as ever, though dark-

circled and heavy, and the first thing he saw was Sylvia, who had just turned from the window where she had been watching the dawn come up over the city with strange unearthly light and shadow. Something of the same light was on Phil's face as he recognized Sylvia. With one swift light step she was beside him, her face bent over his, her heart in her eyes.

"Sylvia." The voice was faint as if the speaker had come back from other worlds, but distinct, wondering, happy.

"Phil!" And as he felt Sylvia's kiss on his cheek, Phil closed his eyes again as if there were now no other bliss to attain in this world or the next.

CHAPTER XXIII
AFTERMATH

Three weeks later and April had surprised even the city and taken it by storm. Buds were beginning to burst in the trees in the park, hyacinths rainbowed here and there, the fountains were released from their winter bondage. The river took on a bluer hue to match the sky, or was it at the hint of the bird who arrived just before Easter giving advance notice of the latest colors in Nature's fashion house, bearing samples on his own back?

In Miss Josephine Murray's little apartment Suzanne and Barb and Sylvia were assembled, one blue and gold afternoon, with tongues flying fast as of old.

"When is Phil going to be able to be moved?" Suzanne was demanding of Sylvia. "And where is he going to move to?"

"Next week, we hope. And he is coming to Arden Hall."

"Bless us! how modern!" teased Suzanne.

Sylvia flushed and shook her head.

"It isn't so specially modern. It is just natural. The doctors say he has to get out of the city. His mother thinks she has to get back to the girls, and she also thinks there is no doctor in the world equal to Doctor Tom and wants him to set his eye on Phil. Of course, he can't go to 'Hester house.' That would be too absurd and he'd hate it anyway–with all those sympathetic females in attendance. There is always plenty of room at the Hall, and it is lovely there in April. So he's coming," she concluded.

"Reasons as plenty as blackberries," jeered Suzanne. "Perfectly well explained. What do you happen to be doing with your fiancé in the meantime?"

Sylvia looked up at that, meeting Suzanne's eyes squarely.

"I haven't any," she announced quietly. "Jack has known for three weeks I wasn't going to marry him. In fact, he suggested it himself."

"More and more modern," approved Suzanne. "It is indeed well to be off with the old love before you are on with the new. When are you going to announce your next engagement?"

"Maybe never," said Sylvia so soberly that Suzanne relented and obligingly turned the fire on herself.

"Speaking of being off with the old love, it seems to be the one thing I can't manage. Roger and I have decided we miss quarreling so much when we are separated that it's simpler and more agreeable to get married and quarrel in peace."

At which last Suzannesque paradox Sylvia and Barb laughed and proffered congratulations.

"Better offer Roger condolences instead," advised Suzanne. "I shall lead him a life."

"Is he coming to New York to live?" inquired Barb, remembering her friend's urban preferences.

"He is not. He is having far too much fun stirring things up in Norton, Pa. We are going in for politics. I think I shall let him run for mayor. There will be a lovely row, for all the crocks are afraid of him now, and it isn't a circumstance to what they'll be if they suspect he wants to raise that particular tempest in their cozy, grafty teapot." Suzanne chuckled, scenting battle afar off. A "scrap" was as the elixir of life to her. "I don't want to live in New York, anyway," she continued. "I couldn't bear to be very far off from mother, and it's much more distinguished to draw my royalties and breath on some sacred Parnassian Hill in Norton, Pa. Likewise it is less expensive. I shall come up often, however, if only to see that they do not murder my precious play. Vengeance is mine if they touch one hair–that is, one line–of its blessed substance. Remember my prophecy, sweet friends? I-did-write-a-play." And, lacking a cushion, Suzanne thumped the tea table with her fist until the cups rattled ominously.

"You did," agreed Sylvia. "And here is Barbie here, an ornament to the Cause. Wait until you see her marching in the parade next fall! Wait till you know what she did to the legislators when she bearded them at Albany! She is so modest she will hide her light under a bushel, but I'm all the time hearing things about her. Phil says she's a wonderful speechifier. To the victor–in her own colors!" And Sylvia dropped the yellow jonquils she was wearing in her friend's lap and bent over her to press a butterfly kiss on her forehead.

Sylvia and Barb had come very close to each other during the latter's recent stay in the city. Phil Lorrimer's accident had been a fiery ordeal for Barbara as

well as Sylvia, and Sylvia, guessing this, felt very tender toward the other girl. Never once did they reach the point of putting things into words. But words were not essential to mutual understanding. Barb and Sylvia knew all there was to know, each about the other, without communication on the subject and their love was the stronger for knowing. Perhaps the closest Barbara ever came to a confession was when she said to Sylvia once that she didn't believe there was a single woman who was a really inspired worker in the Cause who hadn't a hurt of her own somewhere underneath to make her pitiful of scars other women carried. "I guess maybe they are even thankful for their hurts when they have healed a little," she had added with Barb-like naïveté. "It makes them understand so much more. You've got to understand to care."

And Sylvia had understood and cared so much for Barbara's hurt that she would not offer her the last spear thrust–the word of spoken compassion. And, after all, Sylvia could hardly help seeing that Barb scarcely needed compassion. She, too, had her Grail fire to follow and it took her to high places.

"Oh, Barb is some little wonder!" Suzanne had agreed. "Isn't it funny how much we've all been through since September and yet we aren't any of us so cock-sure about things as we were then? I was the worst–the most Sophomoric of the three–and maybe I've come the worst croppers just because I had to have the cock-sureness forcibly if not painlessly extracted. Anyway, I don't want to go back and be the Suzanne of September, nineteen hundred and fourteen again. What about the rest of you? Would you like old Time to turn back in his flight?"

"No," said Sylvia and Barb in emphatic chorus. Then they all laughed and grew sober.

"It is a vote," declared Suzanne.

When Sylvia got back to her hotel she found a message from Jeanette Latham inviting her to dinner. A little reluctantly she telephoned acceptance. She was not very anxious to see Jeanette, not only because she had rather distasteful memories of her recent visit but because she dreaded meeting any of Jack's people just now. It seemed to her they must dislike and despise her for her treatment of Jack. Not that she blamed them for that. No one could judge her more harshly than she judged herself on that score.

Arrived at the great house on the drive, Sylvia was informed that Mrs. Latham was in her own room and begged that Miss Arden would come up. The two kissed and then drew back each surveying the other woman fashion, out of the tail of her eye.

Jeanette was a little pale, Sylvia thought, but somehow prettier than she had been in December, her rich brunette glow softened and subdued a little. She was wearing an exquisite rose-colored robe above which her lovely full throat gleamed white and her eyes looked darker and more brilliant than ever.

"Sylvia, it is good to see you," she murmured. "Take off your wraps. We are going to have dinner up here if you don't mind. Francis is dining out. We can have a cozy gossip all to ourselves."

As the dainty little dinner was being served the two talked about everything in general and nothing in particular, taking pains to avoid anything that could possibly interest either. It was only after the meal was cleared away and the maid banished that they came to the really important things.

"Sylvia, I know you think I am going to be disagreeable about Jack. I'm not. I'm glad. No, don't speak yet. I want to tell you why I am glad. I knew you didn't care for Jack, at least not enough. You sort of half way cared just as I did for Francis. You thought it would be suitable and agreeable and easy and please everybody all round especially Jack. And you thought that the rest would come in time, didn't you?"

Sylvia nodded in shamed silence.

"On the whole, your reasons for getting engaged were quite as creditable as mine for getting engaged to Francis, certainly more so than Isabel's for getting engaged to her miserable count. But, even so, they weren't good enough. There is only one reason for getting engaged to a man, anyway, only one for marrying him, and that is just plain old-fashioned love. I found that out in a very expensive course of lessons. You didn't love Jack. I knew it that night. I had just sent Charlton away and I knew the real thing–what it was. I care more for Jack than almost anybody in the world and I didn't want him to be unhappy any more than you did, but he is going to be more unhappy now than if you had said no last December."

Sylvia winced at that.

"I know it, Jeanette. I am as sorry about that as you can possibly be."

"I know. I didn't mean to reproach you. I just wanted to tell you I know it was better this way, hard as it is for Jack. He'll get over it now. At least, I hope he will, but if you had married him he wouldn't have gotten over it. He would have been like Francis. Francis knows I don't care. At least he knows I didn't use to care. It has hurt him pretty badly sometimes, I'm afraid. Maybe now he'll understand. I'm not so bad as I might have been. I–Sylvia, do you know why I sent Charlton away?"

Sylvia shook her head.

"I had just found out–something–about myself. I am not much good but I couldn't go on with that kind of thing when I knew– Sylvia, please understand. It is harder to say than I thought."

And suddenly Sylvia did understand, and came and put her arms around the other woman with real joy and affection.

"If it will only be a boy," sighed Jeanette. "It is dreadful to be a woman in

this world, and Dad would like it so, and so would Francis."

When she returned to the hotel again there was a letter from Jack waiting for Sylvia, the second only since she had come to New York. The first had been in response to her telegram announcing that Phil was surely out of danger. It had been a very brief letter, expressing his relief and pleasure at the good news of Phil's recovery. "And Sylvia, Belovedest," it had added, "don't forget I meant just what I said that day. Don't bother about me. I don't count. Nothing counts except your being happy. I believe I have always known it was Phil you really cared for. Anyway, I know it now. You have always been an angel of goodness to me and I am grateful. It has been just Jack and Jill going up the hill. Jack fell down and broke his crown all right, but there is no reason in the world why Jill should come tumbling after. And in order to prevent such a disaster the best thing Jack can say is good-by."

Sylvia had written back a long, affectionate and remorseful letter blaming herself wholly and severely and accepting his proffered release from their engagement. She had not heard from him again until now. Consequently she tore open the letter with some trepidation.

"Dear Sylvia,"–So it ran–

"I am sailing to-morrow to join the American Ambulance Field Service in France. It isn't a new notion. It has been in the back of my brain a long time. I should have gone in December if you had refused me then. I am not much good at anything but driving a car. I stuck to the business because you wanted me to but my heart wasn't in it. Dad understands, and is perfectly willing I should go. Don't misunderstand me, please, sweetheart. I am not doing this for gallery play or to work on your feelings. And I'm not going to talk any tommyrot about my life being spoiled and wanting to throw it away. I don't want to throw it away. I want to find it if I can over there. It seems to me France ought to drive whip and spur into any chap and make a man of him. Anyway, I'm going to have a try at it. Of course there is a little danger–not much. You must not worry. Danger agrees with me, and I'm a lucky chap in everything but love. Best wishes to old Phil. Remember that means in *everything*.

"I would have come to say good-by in person, but it took a little more nerve than I have just now. It was easier for both of us for me to make a quiet getaway. Wish me luck, Sylvia.

"**Yours, as always,** "JACK."

Sylvia read the letter, dazed, troubled but by no means surprised. It was like Jack to do the gallant, generous, splendid, impulsive thing. As she finished she made a rapid calculation. "I sail to-morrow." That must mean to-day. He was already gone. Somewhere out beyond the harbor his ship was plowing its way toward France. The tears came into her eyes. Jack was very dear to her. Why, oh why had she driven him to this unnecessary danger, this fearful carnage field overseas? And yet was he not right? Would he not find something worth the risk in the stern realities of that glorious and tragic country he went to aid? That he had not gone into it lightly she saw. He had counted the possible cost as any man who was not a fool must count it. But he had not gone in bravado or in bitterness. He had taken pains to show her that. He had gone simply, in quiet earnest to prove himself, not to throw away his life recklessly but to find it as he said. Dear Jack! No wonder Sylvia's eyes were wet as she folded his letter and put it back in its envelope.

CHAPTER XXIV
HIGH TIDE

For weeks after his injury Phil Lorrimer had been too sick to care very much about anything except the agreeable fact that his mother and Sylvia hovered over him like seraphim as he assured them later. It had mattered very little to him where he was nor how he got there so long as Sylvia was there too. It might be Heaven for all he knew. For a while it had seemed quite probable it was Heaven, for he remembered quite distinctly that Sylvia had kissed him and she had never done that on earth he was quite certain.

But presently his mind had cleared and things had been explained. He heard how he had been hurt and how his mother had come at once. Neither of these things seemed hard to grasp. But why was Sylvia here? Sylvia was engaged to Jack. Why was she here spending long hours by his bedside? Sylvia was always kind. It must have been sheer kindness that brought her he concluded. But somehow there appeared to be more than kindness in Sylvia's eyes, though after that heavenly dream she had not kissed him again.

It was not until he was almost able to travel that Sylvia told him that she and Jack were no longer engaged, that they had decided it had all been a mistake and that Jack had gone to France. Phil took the news in silence and sobriety. He had

very little to say on that subject or any other for the rest of the day. And Sylvia, suddenly self-conscious, had kept away from the hospital on the next day. But on the next, the day before the cavalcade was to start for Greendale, she came. Phil was sitting by the window looking somewhat like his old self though gaunt and lean as a wintered wolf.

"You weren't here yesterday," he accused sternly.

"No. What a spoiled invalid you are getting to be! You don't expect to see me every day, do you? Those carnations need fresh water. I'll get some." Sylvia turned, flowers in hand, but Phil had waxed suddenly, unexpectedly imperious.

"Put 'em down," he ordered so stentoriously that Sylvia obeyed without really intending to.

"Come here," he still further ordered. Sylvia did not come nearer but she did stand perfectly still looking at him.

"I missed you like the devil yesterday," he observed.

"You flatter me," said Sylvia.

He ignored her irony.

"I say, are you really not engaged any more?"

Sylvia admitted that she really was not.

"Why did you end it?"

"I told you. We decided that it was a mistake."

"When?"

"A few weeks ago."

"Precisely when?"

"The night I knew you were hurt." Sylvia faced him steadily now. If he wanted facts he should have them.

"Was that why you broke it off?"

"I didn't break it off. Jack did."

"You mean he didn't like your coming here to me?"

"No. It wasn't that. He just knew–well, he knew I couldn't marry him. Jack is a dear. He always sees things without being told."

"And I don't see things until they are rammed into my darn fool eyes. Is that it?"

Sylvia acknowledged that that seemed to be a fair statement of the case.

"You tried to show me a thing or two last winter?"

"Yes."

"And when I wouldn't look, you cut me good and proper as I deserved and got engaged to Jack?"

Sylvia nodded.

"Sylvia!"

"Well?"

"Barb opened my eyes as to what an idiot I'd been about the money business. She did it one night, too late though. I rushed out to see you the next day, first minute I had, and Jeanette told me you were engaged to Jack and had gone home. That cooked my goose, all right."

"Well, the silly fowl ought to have been cooked." There was a faint twinkle in Sylvia's eyes.

"Granted," agreed Phil heartily. "See here, Sylvia, I've a whole lot of things to say to you but a man in a bath robe doesn't cut a very impressive figure saying the things I've got to say and–"

"Don't say them then. I insist on being impressed. Besides, it is time you went back to bed. I'm going, anyway."

"Sylvia!"

Sylvia paused in the doorway.

"Did you kiss me that night or did I dream it?"

"The idea!" But Sylvia's cheeks were less ambiguous in their answer than her lips as she fled into the corridor.

"Bless her!" grunted Phil. "Just wait until I get on my feet. I wouldn't care if she were Miss Midas herself, I'd run off with her. I wish she'd kiss me again."

But it was May now and Sylvia had not kissed him again. Though she took very good care of her guest that particular attention did not seem to be included in the list. Up to this time, too, Phil had not been sufficiently "on his feet" either to run off with his hostess or even to have the presumption to ask her to marry him.

May in Maryland! Is there anything lovelier the world over? Roses in the gardens, wistaria dripping purple trails from the balconies, waxen, fragrant magnolia bloom! Red bud and dogwood on the hills! Green fire everywhere!

In Sylvia's garden Phil Lorrimer lay stretched at ease in a canopied hammock watching a pair of red birds carry on a lively courtship in the magnolia tree. He was getting on famously it was declared. Certainly he felt too much energy to be willing to stay recumbent much longer. He was beginning to be restless. It was a wonder he had not begun before. It was not so long ago that if any one had told him he would stay contentedly for nearly two months away from his beloved clinic he would have thought them mad and no doubt told them so. But sickness is a powerful leveller and Phil had other things on his mind beside medicine and surgery these May days.

"Enter egg nogg," announced Sylvia suddenly arriving, Hebe like, with a tray and a tall glass of foaming yellow deliciousness.

Phil sat up.

"Gee! What business has a great hulking idiot like me to loaf around and let an angel like you wait on him hand and foot?"

"Angels aren't conspicuous for their hands and feet. They are all wings like that mosquito there. Don't let him bite. He'll disfigure your beauty. And don't stop to concoct highfaluting speeches. Your business is to drink."

"All right I will, if you'll sit down too." He patted the hammock beside him and Sylvia accepted the invitation.

When he had disposed of the egg nogg he set the empty glass on the tray on the grass where Sylvia had deposited it. Then he turned to look at his companion. Sylvia was well worth looking at these days. Her old rose bloom and "moonshininess" were back again. She had returned close to the "jubilant springs" from which she had journeyed afar during the troublous winter past, though perhaps the little girl Sylvia had disappeared forever in the course of her devious wayfaring. At any rate, the new womanliness was very becoming.

"Is this a good time to propose?" demanded Phil so suddenly that Sylvia blushed like a schoolgirl and drooped her head, but her lips twitched roguishly as she averred that it was as good a time as any.

"Very well. Remember I'm scared to death. I never proposed to a girl before in my life and I'm never going to do it again. One, two, three! Sylvia, will you marry me?"

Sylvia lifted her head then and her eyes met Phil's straight and brave with the fine surrender of a proud woman.

"Yes," she said quietly.

"Thank the Lord!" Phil mopped his perspiring brow. "If you don't mind kissing me again I'd feel a little more as if it were real. I've lived a dreadfully long time on that heavenly kiss. I'd like an earth one, please."

An hour later they were still in the hammock as blissful and mutually self-absorbed as the redbirds.

"Sylvia, do you realize that I haven't any money, thanks to this heavenly-infernal smash up of mine, that even my job is knocked galley westward by all this business? If I weren't too jolly happy to think at all I should think I was an idiot and an ass if nothing worse to ask a girl to marry me under the circumstances."

"Don't think," said Sylvia. "What is the use? You will get caught up quick enough when you are well again. Don't talk about money. It leaves a bad taste in your mouth."

"All right, I won't. But, Sylvia, there is another thing." Phil's eyes strayed over the beautiful May sweet garden, on to the great red brick house whose open doors suggested hospitality and affluence and home happiness on a bountiful scale. "Have you thought you will have to give this up and come and live in a little airtight compartment in New York?"

For a moment Sylvia was startled out of her new content. Her eyes, too, followed Phil's. Never had Arden Hall seemed so dear, so infinitely desirable as

now in the ripe hour of her happiness. Somehow she had never thought of that particular complication though it was obvious enough. To lose the Hall now that she had just come into the very heart of it, or to have it again for brief holidays only, snatched "on the wing" as she had said once before! A redbird flashed like a flame before her in the sunshine. The redbirds would soon be nesting. Mechanically the thought crossed her mind. Nesting! That was it. She, too, would be nesting in the heart of the man she loved. She looked back to Phil who was watching her with troubled eyes.

"I shan't care, if I have you," she said.

And it was true, would always be true for Sylvia Arden. She had been like the empty marshes, waiting for the tide to come in. The tide had come, full flood, sweeping every inlet and lagoon. There were no vacant places in her whole being. Love filled it all. Nothing mattered any more except this big, strange, beautiful, engulfing thing which had come to her and taken possession. Felicia's prophecy had come true. Sylvia had found the real thing at last, and knew the difference between it and the specious substitute with which she had striven to be content.

CHAPTER XXV
WARP AND WOOF

Early in June, Sylvia and her little circle were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Angus McIntosh. He had gone to the office as usual but had come in early in the afternoon, and in the dusk Gus had found him sitting in the big chair beneath his mother's picture looking as serene as if he had just fallen asleep. It seemed there had been for quite a while past the probability that the very thing which had happened would happen. This Gus had known and had been in a measure prepared, though we are never fully armed against such loss. When our dear ones leave us there is always a sad surprise about it. We can never quite believe they can really go, however we think our minds are fortified.

Silent in his grief as in his love, Gus went quietly about the grave duties which his foster-father's death imposed upon him, but no one could have seen the lad and not known he was suffering acutely. To Sylvia alone he seemed able to voice the grief that possessed him and to her he turned with natural impulse to seek solace from one who knew what the dead man had meant to the lonely boy. Sylvia gave him all the comfort and friending she could in his hour of need. She

felt very pitiful for him not only because of this sorrow but because she knew he had another scarcely healed hurt, though this new grief had driven it into the background.

When the old man's will was read many were surprised to learn that aside from some bequests to servants and old friends and a small annuity to "my beloved son, Augustus Nichols," the bulk of Angus McIntosh's hard earned and considerable property was left to Thomas Daly in trusteeship to found a hospital for Greendale. When people tried to commiserate Gus on his rather meager sharings he had rejected their condolences. It appeared he had for some time known of the disposition Angus McIntosh had made of his estate. It had, indeed, been by the lad's own wish that he was not burdened by the management and responsibility of a great property.

"What would I want with all that money?" he asked Sylvia. "I should have hated it. I don't want money. I've never wanted it. I've had more than my share already in my musical training. Thanks to his generosity, my violin will bring me all the income I can stand. I couldn't tend to a big property and keep on playing. I've got to play. It is all I'm fit for. He understood. We talked it over so often. And he didn't want to fritter away his money in little driblets in small charities. He wanted to leave it in a lump sum where it would really do some good. The hospital seemed to be the best. His mother died because she didn't have proper medical care. It always hurt him to think about it. He wants a room named after her. Oh, he knew exactly what he was doing. I wish people would stop sympathizing with me. I don't want their sympathy."

So surprisingly it came about that Tom Daly's castle in the air suddenly appeared convertible to brick and mortar. And the beauty of having it so minutely and perfectly planned in advance was that there need not be the slightest delay in getting the substance of things hoped for under way. Thanks to Doctor Tom's unflagging effort other bequests to the hospital were already forthcoming, including Lois Daly's gift of love, but the big unhampered lump sum provided by Angus McIntosh's will made it possible to carry out the doctor's dreams on a scale which he had hardly dared hope to contemplate hitherto.

One day Phil Lorrimer, up in New York, had a letter from Tom Daly. The latter had for some time been considering the advisability, even the necessity, of taking to himself a professional partner. His hands had been already full before the hospital project had matured. Now they were overflowing. All of which was preliminary to asking the younger man if he would consider moving to Greendale to become Tom Daly's associate.

Phil's breath came hard as he read. It was of all things the one he would have liked best if he had chosen. Tom Daly had long been a boyish idol of his, and since the boy had attained his own manhood he had seen even more clearly

the bigness of the other man's vision, the scope of the service he was rendering Greendale. Nothing could have pleased or flattered the young doctor more than that Tom Daly should consider him worthy of the proffered post.

Moreover, Phil's sickness had taken heavy toll even of his abundant young vitality. It would be a year at least before he would be perfectly strong again, and he had been warned since he had been back that it was extremely doubtful whether he would be able to stand the city work and city life. Here was his release in dignified, desirable form.

There were other considerations, too. It was no small inducement that he could be near his mother in Greendale. He had realized more than ever of late how hard it was for her to have her loved ones so scattered. His father was in China, his sister in Constantinople, he himself might just as well be at the uttermost parts of the earth for all she saw of him under normal conditions. And his going to Greendale would put an end to that source of regret and anxiety.

But, chief of all naturally, was the knowledge that the arrangement would bring joy to Sylvia. In spite of her sincere willingness to go anywhere with him he knew it was hard for her to leave the beloved home of her heart. And now there would be no need of such a sacrifice. The cottage and the Hall were but a stone throw apart, an admirable proximity so far as the professional partnership was concerned.

So Phil wired, "Accept gladly, if Sylvia approves," and had hardly sent the message before an enthusiastic letter arrived from Sylvia imploring him to say yes to Doctor Tom's proposition if it were not in any way contrary to his wishes and ambitions.

"Of course it is just too heavenly to think of our living at Arden Hall," she had written, "but, Phil, don't let any thought of me influence your decision. Whatever you want, I want. You know I'd be happy going to sea in a sieve with you if you elected to be a sieve pilot. But, oh Phil, I can't help hoping you will want to come to Greendale."

All of which made Sylvia's approval fairly evident.

Soon after this Phil went to call on the Huntleys, who had been kindness itself to him and to his mother during the latter's stay in the city. The doctor was not at home but Mrs. Huntley was delighted to see him and hovered over him with tea and sandwiches and cakes as a fond female bird hovers over its offspring with juicy worms.

When Phil came to revealing his future plans he did so a little warily remembering how he had refused Justin Huntley's generous offer. But Mrs. Huntley seemed genuinely pleased.

"How lovely for you! Now you can marry that sweet girl and everything will be quite all right, will it not?"

Phil explained that everything would have been quite all right in any case since the "sweet girl" had been willing to come to him if he had not been able to come to her.

"Quite as it should be," Mrs. Huntley had declared approvingly. "But I am glad it has come out as it has just the same. Do you know, Philip, I've always been a little glad you didn't take Justin's offer, dearly as I should have loved to have you with us."

Phil hesitated to speak, not being quite certain of his hostess' course of reasoning. But she soon enlightened him.

"It isn't the kind of work for a young man," she went on. "It is too disillusioning. Don't you think so? It might have made you a little–just a little–cynical, you know. Mightn't it? It is hard to keep your faith in human nature when you have a practice like Justin's." She paused a moment then continued with unusual affirmatives. "Justin was a country practitioner in a little town once. He took his father's place. Wonderful old man–Justin's father! As much of a priest as a doctor Justin used to say. He lived among kind, simple, hard-working people and they loved him like a father. You should have seen them flocking in from the farms and mountains to his funeral. There was a kind of personal relation you don't get in cities."

"No," agreed Phil. "Anyway, you don't get it in Dr. Huntley's kind of practice. I get some few chunks of personality at the clinic."

"Sometimes I've wished Justin had stayed in the country and followed his father's steps. But I suppose it had to be this way. Justin wasn't satisfied until he had worked his way to the top, though sometimes one wonders what the top really is," she sighed. "But, anyway, I am glad your father's son is going to have a different outlook. Justin will be glad, too. He liked your refusal, though it disappointed him. He understood."

"He has been very good to me, and you, too," said Phil, warmly. "I hope you don't think I don't appreciate his kindness and was ungrateful. It was a big thing to offer a young man. But I couldn't take it. I had to hold tight for my kind of a job. And, thanks to luck and Doctor Daly, I have it."

Watching the fine, earnest, young face, with its clear, honest, blue eyes, and that firm, strong chin, Mrs. Huntley thought Phil Lorrimer owed his opportunity chiefly to his own intrinsic worth, clear head, and fine ideals, which was true. But perhaps almost more was he beholden to a big-souled missionary out in China who had set him a standard of manhood to follow and a gentle, low-voiced woman who lived at the foot of Sylvia's Hill and had a gift for mothering.

July brought Stephen Kinnard back to Greendale after much wandering, from Alaska to Mexico, from Mexico to Quebec, and finally to Maryland. He had written charming desultory letters from time to time to Felicia and had been

especially rejoiced over her having won the competition as he had prophesied. But never in any of the letters had he pressed again the question he had asked in September. Among other arts Stephen Kinnard possessed the art of long patience and the power of biding his time.

Occasionally jolly, friendly, brotherly epistles had come for Hope, too. At first Hope had blushed delightfully over them and read and reread them until she fairly knew them by heart. But as the letters came less frequently she gradually ceased to watch for them. Youth needs something more substantial than a chimera to feed upon. Moreover, in June, a young architect had come to Greendale to build Doctor Tom's hospital, a rather clever young man with some Beaux Arts letters after his name and a good eye for a pretty girl. Passing up the Hill and down it as he did frequently in his interviews with the Doctor, he had occasion to go by the Oriole Inn and it took him remarkably little time to discover that it was agreeable to drop in afternoons for a cup of tea in the quaint dining-room or out under the trees which the orioles still haunted. Perhaps not the least of the charms of the place was the presence of the fair-haired, slender lily of a girl who hovered about with a pleasing anxiety that he be well served and often took the task of ministration upon herself in her zeal.

Out of the corner of her eye Martha watched this too, even as she had watched Hope and Stephen the previous summer. It had for some time been evident to Martha's astute vision that so long as Hope remained unclaimed there would always be honey seekers about her sweet rose. Much as she dreaded to have Hope marry she thought she would prefer the sad certainty of such a contingency to the eternal worrying lest Hope be somehow hurt and her white flower-likeness be made to droop in the dust. The young architect apparently meant business. By July he was spending most of his free hours in Hope's society. Martha had almost settled down to acquiesce in the idea of Hope's surrender when she heard that Stephen Kinnard was back in Greendale, news which brought the anxious pucker back to her forehead.

But she need not have worried. Hope was pleased to see Stephen as a younger sister might have been glad to welcome back a long absent brother. She had all but forgotten she had ever had any dreams about him. The real love which was daily more engrossing made the pale little phantom love so insignificant as to be scarcely a thing to be recalled. It had been love and not the lover that Hope had hungered for from the first.

As for Stephen himself, Hope had never dwelt except upon the outer margins of his consciousness. He had admired her as the artist in him always paid tribute to beauty wherever he found it. He had a fatal gift of kindness always and gave careless largess easily to lovely women whenever they had the luck to cross his path. That Hope had invested him, even temporarily, with the glamour of her

sweet, shy, little dreams he had no manner of idea. He had, from the beginning, paid homage to a higher court.

Shrewdly perceiving that the chief obstacle to his suit was Sylvia, Stephen did not blunder into a premature insistence. Sylvia's wedding was set for early September. He could afford to wait a little, though he took pains to make himself very useful and desirable in little ways to the household on the Hill while he waited.

During the summer Sylvia had a few brief letters from Jack. He was well, intensely thrilled by the experience he was undergoing, rejoicing endlessly, apparently, in his luck at having at last found a genuine task which he could pursue with all the zest of play. Physical courage had always been an inherent characteristic with him. Danger agreed with him as he had said to Sylvia. In deeds of daring he had always delighted, simply, with no fuss about it. Jack was never spectacular. It was merely that being a good gambler he liked hazards. This game of life and death made an excellent substitute for the game of love in which he had gallantly lost. In fact it seemed he found even greater satisfaction in it. At any rate, he was in it, as he had been in love, with all his might and main and with all his heart.

Sylvia's engagement, expected as it had been, had appeared to disturb little less than the surface of his exultant, new found joy of service. Perhaps the larger issues swallowed up his private grief even as they had swallowed Hilda Jensen's. Certainly he had little time for thought or brooding. Life crowded thick around him. He was in the same unit with John Armstrong and that in itself was a satisfaction, for the two had long been staunch friends. Hilda, also, he saw occasionally as she was working in the hospital at Neuilly, not far from the front.

It was Hilda who wrote in August that Jack had been wounded and was in the hospital in her care. The injury, though painful, was not serious and Jack made light of it as well he might, for he had been "cité" for "distinguished service under fire" and won the Croix de Guerre.

"The men all say he has a charmed life," wrote Hilda. "The Poilus are quite superstitious about him. He goes anywhere, everywhere with his car, in the most unheard of, impossible places with the utmost disregard of it and himself. John says he never saw anything like him. He keeps them all, French and American alike, in an uproar of mirth, too. Even in the hospital it is the same. He tells his funniest stories and makes his absurdest jokes and has everybody in a good humor without trying. He is the sunniest fellow I ever knew. You can't down him. You needn't worry about him as far as you are concerned, Sylvia. I don't mean he doesn't care. He does care tremendously. He deserves the Croix de Guerre, in love, too. He has been under fire. You can see that. But what I mean

is, he is so thoroughly wholesome and happy-hearted he will come out all right. He can't help it. John says it is making a man of him over here, and I believe it is true, though I think you started that process.

"But, oh, Sylvia, it is dreadful! If ever it ends I shall fly back to safe, peaceful, happy America and try to forget all the agonies I've seen and lived over here. We all hope America will manage to keep out of war, but it seems as if she could not long do so with safety and honor. It is hard to forget the *Lusitania*, and for us it is almost harder to forget Belgium. Americans at home will never fully understand Belgium. For us it has been stamped with red hot irons upon our minds and memories. We cannot forget."

As Sylvia eagerly read this letter she couldn't help hoping that somehow or other this terrible experience Hilda and Jack were going through together might, in time, bring them still nearer. Women are incorrigible matchmakers where their old lovers are concerned, and Jack and Hilda had long been good friends. They were both too essentially sane and too young to let their lives be wrecked by the hapless experiences with which they had started out. If only they might find consolation and happiness in each other Sylvia thought she would have nothing left to wish for.

And so summer days came and went, with their joys and their sorrows, their dreams and their despairs, their losses and their gains, woven all into the common web of life. And finally again came September.

CHAPTER XXVI
THE END AND THE BEGINNING

Cloudless September afternoon! The same blue space of sky beyond the shining-leaved magnolia; the same pink and white riot of cosmos; the same dial dedicating itself to none but sunny hours! And again Barb and Suzanne and Sylvia on the porch at Arden Hall. Externally everything was much as it had been a twelve month ago. But the year had brought its changes and left its traces as years will. As the shell's growth is marked by its increasing number of circles so spiritual development stamps its impress upon human faces and even more on human souls. Barb and Suzanne and Sylvia were less unchanged than the outer world. All three had grown in the grace of wisdom, each according to her way and measure.

Barb was still quiet and humble of heart, but the year had given her the poise which comes from increasing self dependence and even more from depths and widths of experience. Barbara was learning to base life broad on the roots of things and faced the world serenely content if a little gravely, going the "softlier all her days for the dream's sake" as so many women do.

Suzanne was, on the surface, the least changed. She still flashed out conversational audacities and delighted in "taking a shot at the idols" as she put it. But underneath the jewel-like hardness and brilliance of the exterior there was a difference. Her theories of life were not so polished and compact and perfected. She had undergone more than one seismic upheaval of emotion during the year and her "cock-sureness" was shattered if not annihilated. But the greatest difference lay in her deepened power of human sympathy and understanding. The success of "Melissa on the Road" had not been mere accident but a logical outgrowth of its author's surer insight into life, and the play was an even more certain indication that Suzanne in finding herself had found something universal at the same time.

As for Sylvia–but let Sylvia speak for herself. Suzanne, lolling as before in Sylvia's hammock, again pronounced judgment.

"I never knew a person for whom the whole universe seemed to be working the way it does for you, Sylvia Arden. Now, if I had wanted to live in a certain place Roger would have been called to Kamchatka or Kalamazoo or some other God forgotten spot. But just because you had your heart set on living at Arden Hall the fates come galloping up to present Phil a choice professional opening on a charger."

"Do you know whether a charger is a horse or a platter?" laughed Sylvia. "I should never know from your phrasing."

"It is both, of course. Don't criticize my diction. Diction is my business. And don't crab. Honest, Sylvia, don't you think your luck is altogether out of proportion to your deserts?"

"'In the course of justice which of us should see salvation?'" quoted Sylvia. "Oh, I know, Suzanne. It is almost too good to be true that Phil can find the right kind of work in Greendale and we can live here at Arden Hall. But you are mistaken about my having set my heart on living here. I love it better than any place on earth but I would have gone anywhere with Phil. Even the Hall wanes in comparison with him." And Sylvia blushed charmingly as she made the admission.

"Of course you think so. Quite the proper sentiment to express twenty-four hours before your wedding. May the Lord give me grace to feel the same next December when I follow your lead to the altar. But, Sylvia, you don't really know what you are talking about. I can't imagine you in a little apartment. You're

too–spacious."

Sylvia smiled.

"Oh, I believe I could have adjusted my spaciousness if necessary. But I'm rather glad I don't have to. I'd rather–spread."

"You *will* spread, too," put in Barb. "You and Phil will have a wonderful opportunity to really live here, more than you could ever have done in the city."

"I hope so." Sylvia's eyes were thoughtful as she looked out across the lawn, past the magnolia to the blue sky, just as she had a year ago. She looked as if she saw visions. Perhaps she did. The "home trust" which she and Felicia had formed years ago was still an integral part of her scheme of things. She meant her home to be a home in the truest sense, not just a house beneath whose roof she could shelter herself and her loved ones. She wanted her doors to stand open wide to the world–especially the lonely people. "The lonely people" were always very close to Sylvia's heart perhaps because her own lonely girlhood had given her the clew to the yearning that nearly all the world knows at times.

"You are going to keep on being viciously contented," accused Suzanne.

"I hope so," said Sylvia again. "I feel that way at present, anyway. I am afraid I'll never do anything very big, Suzanne. You and Barb are going to leave me way behind, I know. I haven't any special ambition except to be happy myself and to make other people within my range happy, too."

"You are a genius at that. Remember what Mr. Kinnard said. Don't let Suzanne tease you, Sylvia. You have the secret of living. If all the people in the world wanted to be happy themselves and tried to see that other people near them were happy, why–"

"The millennium would have come," finished Suzanne. "You are blooming sentimentalists both of you, though I don't deny there is a little solid sense behind your sentiment. Anyway, I have a sneaking notion I shall have a sort of satisfaction knowing that down here on your Hill things are going to be a little more the way they ought to be than is customary in this cranky old world."

"Why, Suzanne! That is just what I was thinking," cried Barb. "I see so much sin and sordidness and misery and things so snarled and twisted that it seems as if they never would smooth out. I'm going to see even more this year if I go in for the probation work. And it is wonderful to me to be able to think that it is all clean and sweet and happy and kind in Sylvia's world. It is kindness somehow that is important. If we would all be kind the way Christ taught us there wouldn't be any war and hate and competition and oppression. We'd all be just brothers and sisters."

"Maybe that is what we are growing into," said Sylvia soberly. "Thank you, Barb. I like that–what you said just now. Remember, if you want to send anybody down to my–*our* garden– It is Phil's, too–we shall be glad to take her–or him–in.

We want to help."

"We want to help." That is the keynote of the new democracy. And Barb and Suzanne and Sylvia, each in her own way, had enlisted in the shining army which is none other than the army of love.

And indoors, while the three girls were thus philosophizing about the universe at large, Felicia and Stephen had suddenly concentrated upon themselves.

"Felicia," Stephen was saying, "I have waited very patiently. Haven't you a different answer for me this time? I am not going to pretend I shall go away broken-hearted if it is no. My heart is a little too old to break, but if you could make it yes it will make all the difference in the world. Couldn't you say it, dear? Sylvia won't need you after to-morrow. And you know the kiddies won't be the losers. We'll see to that. Those reasons of yours aren't operative any more, you know."

"But there is still Sydney," she reminded him gravely, her face averted.

"There is," he admitted. "Ah, but, Felicia, you can't live all your days on a memory–even so vital a one. I don't expect to take Syd's place. I don't even want to. But, Felicia, look at me. Haven't I somewhere a place all my own in your heart?"

And then Felicia lifted her eyes, still forget-me-not blue like Marianna's.

"Yes, Stephen, I believe you have–a big place. If you want me as I am, the best of me gone, the rest is all yours."

Night and stillness of night on Arden Hall and Sylvia's garden! Suddenly out of the darkness Sylvia stole down the broad staircase, candle in hand, like a vestal virgin, in her white silk robe, her dark hair unbound, lying loose upon her shoulders.

On the wall, near the foot of the stairs hung two portraits; one, of a dark-eyed young man, the other a lovely young girl, looking out with wistful, wondering gaze upon the world.

Straight to the portraits went Sylvia, holding her candle high. For a moment she stood there with uplifted face and rapt gaze, trying to speak to these two, to bespeak their blessing this night on the daughter who was to follow in their footsteps to-morrow in giving herself in marriage to the mate she loved.

"If only you were here," she sighed. "I do want you so, Father! Mother! Please try to know and be glad I am so happy. Please be glad. I want you to be glad."

In the flickering light of the uplifted candle it seemed to Sylvia as if her father's dark eyes smiled down into hers as if he understood and was glad as she desired.

"The truest and the kindest," she whispered. "That was what Doctor Tom said, and I know you must have been. Phil is like that, too, Father. I'm glad you know. Good night."

Then she turned to the fair girl whom it had always been a little hard to think of as a mother, she was so tiny and sweet and girlish herself and her eyes looked so incredibly young and innocent.

"Little Mother!" crooned Sylvia. "Little, little Mother! I wonder if you were afraid at all. Did you ever feel like running away even from him? This marrying is such a big, solemn business. Didn't you feel a teeny little bit scared about it all? It isn't that you are afraid of him. It is rather yourself you don't trust, as if you weren't quite tall enough to reach up to marriage. Marriage is so high, so dreadfully high. But it is all right, isn't it, little Mother? You just have to trust love, don't you? Good night, little Mother. Please love me up there where you are."

This rite over, Sylvia turned to go back upstairs. But the moonlight fell in bright patines across the floor from the latticed windows, beside the front door, and Sylvia had never been able to resist moonlight. Hastily she set down her candle and snatched up a black velvet cloak from the rack and throwing it about her shoulders, covering her thin silken draperies, she unbolted the rear door which led out into the garden and ran down the steps into the enchanted world outside.

Even as she reached the path she uttered a half startled exclamation. A tall form was pacing up and down under the willow-trees, silhouetted against the whiteness of the garden space. She did not retreat however but stood motionless as a statue with the moonlight full upon her. In a moment the silhouetted figure turned and came swiftly toward her.

"Sylvia!"

"Phil!"

For a second she was swept into Phil's arms, his kiss on her lips. Then they stood apart, looking at each other as if all at once they had discovered some new, sacred thing which all their love up to now had not taught them.

"Phil, I'm glad–glad it is you," breathed Sylvia. "Glad I'm going to be yours."

"Forever and ever, amen," said Phil Lorrimer, as solemnly as if he were pronouncing his own wedding service.

The actual ceremony took place the next day in the gray stone Gothic church where Sylvia's father and mother had been made man and wife. But to Sylvia, and perhaps to Phil, too, it always seemed as if the real wedding had been the night before in the white moonlight of Sylvia's own garden. There it was at least that Sylvia lost forever her fear of not being able to reach up to marriage however high it was. Love, she knew, would show her the way.

THE END

* * * * * * * *

NEW CHRONICLES OF REBECCA, By Kate Douglas Wiggin.

Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

Additional episodes in the girlhood of this delightful heroine that carry Rebecca through various stages to her eighteenth birthday.

REBECCA MARY, By Annie Hamilton Donnell.

Illustrated by Elizabeth Shippen Green.

This author possesses the rare gift of portraying all the grotesque little joys and sorrows and scruples of this very small girl with a pathos that is peculiarly genuine and appealing.

EMMY LOU: Her Book and Heart, By George Madden Martin.

Illustrated by Charles Louis Hinton.

Emmy Lou is irresistibly lovable, because she is so absolutely real. She is just a bewitchingly innocent, hugable little maid. The book is wonderfully human.

* * * * *

KATHLEEN NORRIS' STORIES

May be had wherever books are sold. Ask for Grosset & Dunlap's list.

MOTHER. Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

This book has a fairy-story touch, counterbalanced by the sturdy reality of struggle, sacrifice, and resulting peace and power of a mother's experiences.

SATURDAY'S CHILD.

Frontispiece by F. Graham Cootes.

Out on the Pacific coast a normal girl, obscure and lovely, makes a quest for happiness. She passes through three stages–poverty, wealth and service–and works out a creditable salvation.

THE RICH MRS. BURGOYNE.

Illustrated by Lucius H. Hitchcock.

The story of a sensible woman who keeps within her means, refuses to be swamped by social engagements, lives a normal human life of varied interests, and has her own romance.

THE STORY OF JULIA PAGE.

Frontispiece by Allan Gilbert.

How Julia Page, reared in rather unpromising surroundings, lifted herself through sheer determination to a higher plane of life.

THE HEART OF RACHAEL.

Frontispiece by Charles E. Chambers.

Rachael is called upon to solve many problems, and in working out these, there is shown the beauty and strength of soul of one of fiction's most appealing characters.

* * * * *

BOOTH TARKINGTON'S NOVELS

May be had wherever books are sold. Ask for Grosset & Dunlap's list

SEVENTEEN.

Illustrated by Arthur William Brown.

No one but the creator of Penrod could have portrayed the immortal young people of this story. Its humor is irresistible and reminiscent of the time when the reader was Seventeen.

PENROD.

Illustrated by Gordon Grant.

This is a picture of a boy's heart, full of the lovable, humorous, tragic things which are locked secrets to most older folks. It is a finished, exquisite work.

PENROD AND SAM.

Illustrated by Worth Brehm.

Like "Penrod" and "Seventeen," this book contains some remarkable phases of real boyhood and some of the best stories of juvenile prankishness that have ever been written.

THE TURMOIL.

Illustrated by C. E. Chambers.

Bibbs Sheridan is a dreamy, imaginative youth, who revolts against his father's plans for him to be a servitor of big business. The love of a fine girl turns Bibb's life from failure to success.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM INDIANA.

Frontispiece.

A story of love and politics,–more especially a picture of a country editor's life in Indiana, but the charm of the book lies in the love interest.

THE FLIRT.

Illustrated by Clarence F. Underwood.

The "Flirt," the younger of two sisters, breaks one girl's engagement, drives one man to suicide, causes the murder of another, leads another to lose his fortune, and in the end marries a stupid and unpromising suitor, leaving the really worthy one to marry her sister.

* * * * *

K. LeMoyne, famous surgeon, drops out of the world that has known him, and goes to live in a little town where beautiful Sidney Page lives. She is in training to become a nurse. The joys and troubles of their young love are told with that keen and sympathetic appreciation which has made the author famous.

THE MAN IN LOWER TEN.

Illustrated by Howard Chandler Christy.

An absorbing detective story woven around the mysterious death of the "Man in Lower Ten." The strongest elements of Mrs. Rinehart's success are found in this book.

WHEN A MAN MARRIES.

Illustrated by Harrison Fisher and Mayo Bunker.

A young artist, whose wife had recently divorced him, finds that his aunt is soon to visit him. The aunt, who contributes to the family income and who has never seen the wife, knows nothing of the domestic upheaval. How the young man met the situation is humorously and most entertainingly told.

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE.

Illus. by Lester Ralph.

The summer occupants of "Sunnyside" find the dead body of Arnold Armstrong, the son of the owner, on the circular stair-case. Following the murder a bank failure is announced. Around these two events is woven a plot of absorbing interest.

THE STREET OF SEVEN STARS.

Illustrated (Photo Play Edition.)

Harmony Wells, studying in Vienna to be a great violinist, suddenly realizes that her money is almost gone. She meets a young ambitious doctor who offers her chivalry and sympathy, and together with world-worn Dr. Anna and Jimmie, the waif, they share their love and slender means.

* * * * *

STORIES OF RARE CHARM BY GENE STRATTON-PORTER

May be had wherever books are sold. Ask for Grosset & Dunlap's list.

MICHAEL O'HALLORAN.

Illustrated by Frances Rogers.

Michael is a quick-witted little Irish newsboy, living in Northern Indiana. He adopts a deserted little girl, a cripple. He also assumes the responsibility of leading the entire rural community upward and onward.

LADDIE.

Illustrated by Herman Pfeifer.

This is a bright, cheery tale with the scenes laid in Indiana. The story is told by Little Sister, the youngest member of a large family, but it is concerned not so much with childish doings as with the love affairs of older members of the family. Chief among them is that of Laddie and the Princess, an English girl who has come to live in the neighborhood and about whose family there hangs a mystery.

THE HARVESTER.

Illustrated by W. L. Jacobs.

"The Harvester," is a man of the woods and fields, and if the book had nothing in it but the splendid figure of this man it would be notable. But when the Girl comes to his "Medicine Woods," there begins a romance of the rarest idyllic quality.

FRECKLES.

Illustrated.

Freckles is a nameless waif when the tale opens, but the way in which he takes hold of life; the nature friendships he forms in the great Limberlost Swamp; the manner in which everyone who meets him succumbs to the charm of his engaging personality; and his love-story with "The Angel" are full of real sentiment.

A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST.

Illustrated.

The story of a girl of the Michigan woods; a buoyant, loveable type of the self-reliant American. Her philosophy is one of love and kindness towards all things; her hope is never dimmed. And by the sheer beauty of her soul, and the purity of her vision, she wins from barren and unpromising surroundings those rewards of high courage.

AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW.

Illustrations in colors.

The scene of this charming love story is laid in Central Indiana, The story is one of devoted friendship, and tender self-sacrificing love. The novel is brimful of the most beautiful word painting of nature, and its pathos and tender sentiment will endear it to all.

THE SONG OF THE CARDINAL.

Profusely illustrated.

A love ideal of the Cardinal bird and his mate, told with delicacy and humor.

* * * * *

THE NOVELS OF CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

JEWEL: A Chapter in Her Life.

Illustrated by Maude and Genevieve Cowles.

A story breathing the doctrine of love and patience as exemplified in the life of a child. Jewel will never grow old because of the immortality of her love.

JEWEL'S STORY BOOK.

Illustrated by Albert Schmitt.

A sequel to "Jewel," in which the same characteristics of love and cheerful-

ness touch and uplift the reader.

THE INNER FLAME.

Frontispiece in color.

A young mining engineer, whose chief ambition is to become an artist, but who has no friends with whom to realize his hopes, has a way opened to him to try his powers, and, of course, he is successful.

THE RIGHT PRINCESS

At a fashionable Long Island resort, a stately English woman employs a forcible New England housekeeper to serve in her interesting home. Many humorous situations result. A delightful love affair runs through it all.

THE OPENED SHUTTERS.

Illustrated with Scenes from the Photo Play.

A beautiful woman, at discord with life, is brought to realize, by her new friends, that she may open the shutters of her soul to the blessed sunlight of joy by casting aside self love.

THE RIGHT TRACK.

Frontispiece in color by Greene Blumenschien.

A story of a young girl who marries for money so that she can enjoy things intellectual. Neglect of her husband and of her two step-children makes an unhappy home till a friend brings a new philosophy of happiness into the household.

CLEVER BETSY. Illustrated by Rose O'Neill.

The "Clever Betsy" was a boat–named for the unyielding spinster whom the captain hoped to marry. Through the two Betsy's a delightful group of people are introduced.

* * * * *

A Word from Project Gutenberg

We will update this book if we find any errors.

This book can be found under: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/48385

The Full Project Gutenberg License

Section 1. General Terms of Use & Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate ac-

cess to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at https://www.gutenberg.org . If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this ebook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Guten-

berg™ web site (https://www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and The Project Gutenberg Trademark LLC, the owner of the

Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3. below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES – Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND – If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS,' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PUR-

POSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY – You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at https://www.pglaf.org .

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is in Fairbanks, Alaska, with the mailing address: PO Box 750175, Fairbanks, AK 99775, but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation meth-

ods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

https://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.