WHATEVER GODS...

MAURICE SAMUEL



DUFFIELD AND COMPANY

WHATEVER GODS

WHATEVER GODS

BY

MAURICE SAMUEL

Author of "The Outsider"



NEW YORK

DUFFIELD AND COMPANY

MCMXXIII

Copyright, 1923, by
DUFFIELD & COMPANY

All rights reserved

Printed in U. S. A.

PART I

WHATEVER GODS

CHAPTER I

Mr. Winner, well-known to most people who wear shoes, had made it a habit to talk business at the dinner table. He did not believe that a man had the right to keep business problems and business worries to himself. A business is a part of the family which it supports and on what grounds could the head of the family, who was merely the acting manager, monopolize information concerning common property?

This was how he put it by way of preface to almost every business talk. The youngest Winner, Eric, aged thirteen, looked at the preface irreverently and suspected that his dad had found a magniloquent excuse for bringing his troubles out of the office. He was aware, in an uncertain way, of a human weakness, peculiar to adults, for making a virtue out of next to nothing; but as he was allowed his share in the family discussions, and enjoyed them in a general way, he kept his larger human views to himself.

The particular point at issue was an adver-

tising campaign. Mr. Winner—as most New Yorkers who wear shoes can attest—had sixteen stores in greater New York, but the greatest part of his business was wholesale, distributed through every State in the Union. Summer was coming, a summer out of the ordinary run of summers because it followed on the leanest winter the Winner shoe had ever weathered. "We have to make this summer pay for last winter," Mr. Winner announced in a fighting letter to his sixteen store managers. "We must do our bit to rebuild the business of the country. For the honor of our firm. We must do it now. We must do it decisively."

This was, in fact, the letter he read forth at the dinner table. He was rather proud of it, for he was his own advertising expert. In reading it forth, he paused at every moral point, and raised his eyes sternly to his audience, as if he suspected his own family of an insufficiency of conviction.

"I think it's a pretty good letter," he confessed, when he had reached the reiterated climax—"*For the honor of our firm.*" "You've got to make your salesmen feel there's something in business besides commissions and bonuses. Forget about the money. They're in a great game. Makes me feel enthusiastic myself."

His gaze rested awhile on Arthur, who sat

with his back to the window, so that the expression on his face could not easily be discerned. Mr. Winner gave Arthur the benefit of the doubt and looked at Richard and Elma, who, sitting opposite Arthur, were helplessly exposed.

Richard nodded. His face showed approbation, touched with respectful thoughtfulness.

"Corking letter, dad," he said, frowning slightly to show how intently he had listened. "You've got the right force in it." Then he paused a moment, to let his praise soak in. "Still that phrase 'do our bit' is slightly out of date, don't you think?"

Mr. Winner nodded quickly.

"Yes, it's getting rather late for that stuff now. That's the last time I'm going to use it. But there's still some kick in the phrase. They've been using it pretty freely in the bonus campaign. I guess it's pretty nearly played out, though."

There was a silence of several seconds. Mr. Winner was waiting, perhaps, for a few words from Arthur, but Arthur was looking at his older brother, and though the expression on his face was not discernible, nobody liked it. Their instinct was right, for though there was no expression on his face, he was at that moment fortifying in his heart a considerable contempt for Richard.

"Well, that letter's finished," went on Mr. Winner, and pulled a sheaf of papers from his breast pocket. "There's two things I've been troubled with today. You know those new beach sandals we're bringing out for the summer. Clever little things. I've got no name for 'em yet. There's three of them. I want to get a neat, snappy name to each one of 'em. Something that hits at once—gets the idea across. See? I've done nothing yet. What do you say, folks?"

The last sentence was genial, a large-hearted invitation to the whole table. Mr. Winner, lean, swarthy, bald-headed, moved his chair back to let the maid get at the plate, and smiled fiercely at his wife. Elma, who was plump, like her mother, pursed her lips.

"The Winner Sandal," she suggested.

"No good," said her father. "Means nothing. Want something direct."

"Life-boat sandal," from Eric.

"That isn't bad," said his mother. "It brings in the sea."

"Clumsy," said Mr. Winner. "No snap to it. What do you say, Arthur?"

Arthur shook his head and made no reply. Mr. Winner should have known it was absurd to ask Arthur. He probably did know, and only

meant his question as a subtle and bitter reproach; but Elma was more direct.

"No good asking Arthur, dad," she flashed out. "His mind's too lofty for this vulgar sport."

"No, no, cut that out, Elma," said Mr. Winner. "What do you think, Richard? It's your turn."

"Foam Sandal," said Richard, gravely.

"Strike one!" said his father quickly, and made a note. "Foam Sandal. Pretty good, Richard. The Foam Sandal." He nodded many times.

Richard continued to look grave, and only Arthur, who concentrated his tense gaze on his brother, opposite, saw the faint ruffle that disturbed his dignified repose. Richard had the gift of imparting importance to the sheerest triviality. He could not say "I use Colgate's toothpaste" without adding a kind of dignity to himself and the dentifrice. But that, thought Arthur, was of a piece with all of Richard. Richard did everything with *éclat*. He could hang his coat on a restaurant peg as one resolves with quiet firmness a bitter moral issue. And that at twenty-seven! "That man will be President at forty!" prophesied Arthur to himself.

"More suggestions, more suggestions," said Mr. Winner impatiently. He rose and walked hurriedly up and down the room, tugging fiercely at his left moustache, and stopping at moments to balance himself on his toes.

"I want something," he said, and stopped to bite his lips.

"Life-buoy Sandal," said Eric again.

"No, no. You're keeping too much to the water. Keep more to the land."

"Life-Guard Sandal," said Eric again.

"Not bad, not bad." He made a note, and nodded rapidly, a habit of his.

"Crest Sandal," said Elma.

"Good. Pretty good. Crest of wave. Crest of Quality. Pretty good. Let's have some more."

A certain enthusiasm descended on the family, with the cold exception of Arthur who, still with his back to the window, hid his coolness in unbroken silence.

"Wave Sandal."

"Too much like a flag." Laughter.

"Little Captain Webb Sandal."

"Good stuff," said Mr. Winner to the last. "Keep it up, Richard."

"Fairy Sandal."

"Dolly Sandal. For little girls, you know."

"Atlantic Sandal."

"Tropic Sandal."

Then followed a string of geographic suggestions.

Mr. Winner switched on the lights suddenly to look at his notes. Arthur's face, no longer masked in twilight, was still expressionless.

"I've got a good dozen to pick from," said Mr. Winner. "And I have a couple of days' time anyway. There's something more difficult I have in hand. I told you"—he addressed himself in particular to Richard—"the catalogues are going out in two weeks' time. Well, I'm sending out a four-leaf folder a week in advance, to announce the catalogue. See? Catalogue's a little late. Besides, I believe in creating a little anticipation, you know. When the catalogue comes, makes the buyer feel it isn't a total stranger."

"You've always followed that policy," said Richard.

"It's a good, sound policy. My motto is, 'don't let him forget you. Be an old friend of his. Give him the impression you're always there, looking after his interests, always ready with good offers.' Well, about that folder. I want the first page as a kind of short, snappy talk on economics—simple and straight. Show him it's a man's duty to buy and sell."

"The country needs it," concurred Richard.

"That's right. Work that dope about what we need now are men who are not afraid to buy. That's it, by golly! I'll put that phrase down. The Country Needs Men Who Are Not Afraid to Buy. No, wait a minute. Put it this way. The Man with Character Buys. No, that's no good. Want something that strikes more—like a thunderbolt."

He twisted his left moustache vigorously, using his right hand. "Not Afraid to Buy. Must have that phrase in."

"The man that doesn't buy is a traitor to his country," said Eric dramatically.

Mr. Winner paused, dubious. "No. Can't put it that way exactly, you know."

"Buy, for your country's sake," said Mrs. Winner, pathetically.

"Fair, fair," said Mr. Winner, judicially. "Good for you, mama. I've always said you don't give us enough suggestions."

He paused. "Then there's that front page to the folder. I'm going to head it—A Word to the Patriotic Businessman."

He paused again, and his eyes came to Arthur, and then a slight embarrassment came over him, always the preliminary of a vigorous offensive.

"Arthur, you're the economics person. You could turn out a front page for me in the right style, if you wanted to."

Arthur's grey, still eyes defocussed themselves from infinity, and rested on his father's.

"I can't write that sort of stuff for you, father."

Mr. Winner gathered up his energies, and put them into a slow, tense, ironic "And why not?"

"There's a full-dress rehearsal coming now," said Eric to nobody.

"Hold your tongue, Eric," said Richard.

"Why can't you write it?" asked Mr. Winner, in the same charged voice.

"You'll pardon my saying so, father, but I can't write piffle."

"Piffle!" repeated Mr. Winner, gently. "You called my last summer's advertisement piffle—but it sold one million dollars' worth of shoes in one month. Can *that* be piffle?"

Arthur did not answer.

"How can that be piffle, young man?" insisted Mr. Winner.

"Piffle or no piffle," said Arthur, forced to answer, "it isn't the kind of stuff I care to write. 'A Word to the Patriotic Businessman.' How can you do that kind of thing, father?" He roused himself. "What rhyme or reason is there in it? Did you ever buy a pound of leather for patriotic reasons? Doesn't everybody know that kind of thing is just empty poppycock?"

"What's the good of talking, father," interrupted Elma, violently. "Arthur's about as patriotic as—as——"

"Grover Bergdoll," suggested Eric, and winked at Arthur.

"Quiet, children," said Mr. Winner, sternly. "Now, Arthur. Just you forget whether the American Businessman's a patriot or not. I say he is, though even if he isn't, all I ask is this: Is it, or is it not good for the country if people buy and sell freely and without hesitation? Answer me that."

"I don't know," said Arthur, carefully. "Buying and selling are not causes."

Mr. Winner lost some of his patience.

"That's the man who says poppycock to me," he exploded. "Listen: Have I been in business for nearly forty years for nothing? Don't I know that large buying and selling are the signs of prosperity? Don't I know what's good for me? And if a thing is good for me, it's good for my neighbor and it's good for everybody."

"Listen, father," said Arthur, trying to keep to the subject. "I can't write what you want. I can't become shoe-mad. I can't become a fanatic, like you."

"Yes, I am a fanatic," said Mr. Winner, slapping the table triumphantly. "You've got to

be a fanatic if you mean business. If I don't believe in myself, who else will?"

"I'm sorry, father. I can't work myself up into a state of belief that the sale of Winner's shoes is of vital importance to the whole of the world."

"I don't understand *you*," said Mr. Winner, fiercely. "Isn't Winner's shoes a thing to believe in? Hasn't Winner's shoes given me an eight million dollar a year business? Hasn't it made me a respected, self-reliant member of society? Show me the thing that'll do as much for you, and you have my permission to believe in it as much as I believe in Winner's Shoes."

Arthur looked away, despairing. How could one argue with this point of view?

"Answer me that," pounded Mr. Winner.

"Believe in it then," said Arthur, "but don't ask me to believe in it. Don't ask me to write a folder appealing to mankind to buy your shoes for morality's sake and patriotism's sake and what not."

"All right then," cried Mr. Winner, who was growing frantic. "If you think that kind of a letter won't turn the trick, write a better one. I'll be only too glad to see it."

"You don't get the point," said Arthur, his anger rising under this attack. "I can't write the kind of trash that turns morality and pa-

triotism into business touts. I can't, I won't write that wretched stuff that keeps ignorant people ignorant and makes them arrogant besides."

"That's enough," said his father, his lips white under their moustaches. "You seem to think there's nothing but ignorance outside of a college. I never went to college and I never studied economics, but you get your cleverest college professor to fool me in a deal of any kind —and I'll take off my hat to you and start a business course at the age of fifty-five. Show me your education. Write me a letter that'll sell ten pair of shoes, and I'll say you're educated."

Arthur did not answer but Mr. Winner, feeling the wordless and bitter antagonism that radiated from his son, continued vehemently.

"I know what you're thinking. You're thinking there's nothing in me but business and grab. No, sir. There's lots more in me. But I keep it down because it's all weakness and softness. I'd like to get off some of your pretty phrases about mankind and beauty. I'd like to get all excited and pat myself on the back and think I'm a regular savior. But I know that the business of life is more serious than that. Yes, sir. Life doesn't mean words of brotherly love, or love of humanity, or whatever you call it. Life is just

a stern fight, and the man that can't produce results goes down."

"We seem to agree on one point then," said Arthur coldly. "Life isn't humanity or love of country. Then why appeal to your customers in the name of patriotism?"

His father stopped dead in his rapid to and fro walk.

"By God, Arthur!" he exploded. "You're a fool!"

And the next moment he snatched his papers from the buffet and was gone from the room.

CHAPTER II

FULLY half a minute passed in absolute silence, for even Eric was cowed by the fury his father had shown. Elma spoke, slowly, incisively.

"You may think yourself real clever and smart because you can sit there and call your father a fool," she said. "But you're only doing one thing. You're just making home a hell. Father'll be upset a whole week just to please your little fancies. And what've you got out of it? What good does it do you, or anyone else? It's natural meanness. It's going to get so that either you leave the house or I do."

She said every word carefully, as if she wanted to bore through a thick wall of stupidity.

"What do you get out of it?" she asked again. "What do you want of father?"

"I don't want anything," he answered wearily, knowing the utter futility of talk.

"All right then," she riposted, as though he had exposed the weakest point in his arguments. "Who isn't leaving you alone? Father wanted you to go into the shoe business, and you didn't want it, and so you didn't go. Isn't that leaving you alone? Is father interfering with your life

if he asks you to help him to write a simple letter for him, which wouldn't take you more than fifteen minutes? Why, you'd humor a stranger to that extent, wouldn't you? Yes, you would, and you'd call it humanity. But just because it's your father you make a long argument about it and upset the whole house. What's the good of it all?"

"Elma is quite right," said Richard suddenly. "Nobody is asking you to sacrifice any beliefs. You are free to believe what you like. Where's the sacrifice if you help your father to write a letter, just for fifteen minutes?"

All the savagery that his father's speeches had aroused in him broke forth from Arthur.

"Thank you for your kind permission," he said, mimicking his older brother's grave delivery. "What you mean of course, is that I am at liberty to think what I like, as long as I do what you like. Thank you."

Then Mrs. Winner made her only contribution before she left the room.

"I should think, Arthur, that you would at least answer your elder brother less rudely, even if the peace of the family means nothing to you."

She was going to look for her husband. From of old she knew that it was not well to seek him while the first paroxysm of rage was on him.

But the few necessary minutes had now elapsed, and she went bravely to her duty. At the door she cast back her final reproach. "You forget, Arthur, you're only one person. But when you behave like that you make it miserable for all of us."

"That isn't my fault, mother," he pleaded. "It's father's."

His mother did not answer, being on the other side of the door before he had finished.

"Why is it father's, why is it father's?" asked Elma, hotly.

"Because he loses his temper, not I."

"I like that. Hasn't he a right to lose his temper when you call him a fool?"

Arthur followed her up from a sort of morbid curiosity in the workings of her mind.

"But I didn't call him a fool, Elma. He called me a fool."

"Oh yes, of course. You didn't use the word fool, I know. At least you've got manners enough for that. Why, the way you sit there and turn up your nose at us shows you think him and the rest of us fools."

"But the fact remains that he called me a fool, and not I him."

"Well, he's quite right, too, that's all I can say, because a person who thinks everybody else foolish except himself must be a fool."

"But Elma, you are simply explaining now why father called me a fool, and endorsing his opinion. But you are not proving that I called him a fool."

Elma rose, blazing.

"You make me thoroughly sick." She was choking with rage. "Talk, talk, talk, argue, argue, argue. I wish to God I'd never see your face again."

"But Elma, that isn't to the point. You're trying to prove that I'm at fault in this row because, you say, I called father a fool. You must prove that I called father a fool, instead of which you call me a fool."

Elma mastered herself. "Thank goodness you understand that much," she said. "I don't want to hear any more." She followed her mother with a rush: like her mother, she stopped at the door for a last reproach. "I know you're never happy except when you've put people into a rage. But if you think I'm in a temper, you're mistaken. I just despise you, that's all."

"She's mistaken," Arthur said grimly, "but even that wasn't to the point."

Eric, who had lain silent on the couch since the violent withdrawal of his father raised himself to a sitting posture, made an imitation spy-glass of each hand, and swept the room.

"We are retreating in good order across the

Bug," he announced. Neither Arthur nor Richard paid any attention to him. They were both considering intently the questionable value of a good tussle, and neither of them could make up his mind. But, strung up as they were, it was impossible to withdraw in silence. From the couch Eric considered them closely, and wondered who would open the combat.

It was Richard.

"Arthur," he said slowly. "Let's talk this over reasonably, if we can, and maybe we can patch up some arrangement. We can't go on like this forever."

Arthur shook his head. "I'm afraid it's no good. I know what you mean by an arrangement. You want me to come and foam at the mouth about the Winner slogan, and about 'putting it across' and about 'getting it over'. I won't."

"You're just talking to be clever, Arthur."

"What's wrong with being clever?"

"It isn't serious. It isn't responsible. Life must be faced with a proper realization of its solemnity."

"Oh don't. I can reel that stuff off better than you can, Richard. Life is real, life is earnest, and let who will be clever. It's no use our talking further. You've done your duty as

the coming head of the family, as the responsible eldest son. Let that suffice."

A little of Richard's dignity forsook him.

"You really are a fool, Arthur."

"That's the first human and sensible remark you've made this evening, Dicky."

"It's absolutely futile trying to discuss things with you."

"That's not bad, either. Keep it up."

Richard made no reply to this. He cast an overtly malevolent glance at his younger brother and then, recomposing himself, followed the example of the others. It was fairly obvious that only by an effort of will did he avoid slamming the door to behind him.

"I hold the fort," piped Eric from the couch.

Nausea came over Arthur suddenly.

"What d'you say, Eric?" he asked, as if pleading with the boy for a little intelligence.

Eric left the couch and settled himself in the armchair left by Richard.

"You've got the wrong dope, Arty, sure as c'n be."

"Why?"

"Why? Because. Because you can't get away with it, that's why."

There was a brightness in Eric's eyes that Arthur loved to watch, but at this moment he

could not help seeing in it the old Winner sophistication.

"But why is my dope wrong, Eric?"

"Well, it ain't wrong. I guess you think I don't get you, but I do, honest. You're different. You ain't like dad, or ma, or sis, or Richard. You're more like me. But what's the good of being that way? You don't have to show it, no more'n I do. Anyway, it's fun being like everybody else and getting your whack. D'you know why sis was so sore?"

"No."

"She was going to ask dad for a dress she saw at Altman's today. She said it's a dingbuster and only eighty-five dollars. And you just cleaned out her chance of getting it, see."

"Yes." Arthur was subdued now.

"Sis got sorer'n a weasel because you did it tonight. She wouldn'a' cared if you'd 'a' done it some other night."

"Well, what should I have done, Eric?"

"Why, nothing. When dad asked you to help him with that letter you should 'a' said sure. You didn't have to help him. You could 'a' said you'd do it tomorrow, and he'd 'a' done it himself by tomorrow. You've got to learn how to get away with things, Arty, or you'll always be in Dutch."

"And that doesn't pay, does it, Eric?"

"No sir, it doesn't pay," said the boy, seriously.

Arthur mused a while. "Poor old Eric, they've caught you young, and they're going to hold on. All those damned little fussers who think they're great men because they've made money. By Ginger"—he was speaking more to himself now—"there's a time coming when they'll worship God because he was the 'One that Put it Across'."

"That's not bad," said Eric, startled.

Arthur laughed, and stopped halfway in his laughter. Looking out of the window at the dark gold that overhung the Palisades he went on speaking to himself.

"They've got us," he said. "They're getting us from every side. Once upon a time they kept to making and selling. Now they've gone in for worldwide education. They're educating us to the ideal of . . . buying their goods. Have you force and character? Then buy Stinker's cigarettes, made for the Man with a Will. Did you think the Apollo Belvedere was a pretty fair human type to aspire to? Well, the young intellectual non-combatants who wear the Spear Collars are the world's need. Did you think that Lincoln, or even Christ was a fair model for the young to keep their eyes on? Well, they show you some-

thing better. It's the man that 'did it because he went ahead with our system of correspondence—the road to success and power'."

He turned to Eric suddenly.

"They've got you everywhere, eh, old Eric? In the schools, in the magazines, the subways, the theatres, everywhere, everywhere. They're proud because they make a certain style of underwear more talked of than William Shakespeare. And the man that does it is a great public benefactor, and instead of being prosecuted as a public nuisance he . . . well. Where's everybody, Eric?"

"Guess dad and ma are talking over what to do with you. And Richard and Elma went out."

Arthur did not want to stay in. He did not care to meet any member of the family again that evening. As he went out of the dining-room and along the lobby, he heard his father's voice in the library. He walked faster, then, before he reached the outer door, he paused, and knocked softly at another room. He heard a low reply, "*Herein,*" and opened the door.

A very old man sat in a low armchair by the window that looked out on the drive. He turned a wrinkled face to Arthur and continued to look at him absently.

"What is it, boy?" he asked at length, in German.

"Nothing, grandfather," answered Arthur, in the same language, and came over near the window. "I just wanted to say hello before I went out."

The mild eyes turned back to the street and the broad river.

"It is quiet here," said the old man, and sighed profoundly. With his right hand he tapped lightly the book that was open on his knees. His left arm, moveless forever, lay along the broad arm of the chair.

"It is quiet here," he repeated, after a long silence. The German he spoke so quaveringly was the quaint, friendly language of the Austrian, a language of soft syllables and long, subdued vowels.

"Do you want anything, grandfather?"

"No, my boy."

"Grandfather, do you like the book I brought you?"

"Yes, my boy. It is the work of a good and a holy man."

Arthur waited yet a while, but there was no more talk.

"Goodnight, grandfather."

"Goodnight, my boy. God go with you."

To the old man it was as if a shadow had entered the room and had passed out again. His eyes turned back to the broad street and the shin-

ing river, and he looked beyond them, as he had been looking before Arthur entered, at a vague and troubled world in which he could not determine what belonged to the realities he had outlived and what to the glory he had not yet known. And at times he repeated, remembering the boy, "God go with him."

CHAPTER III

At certain times there would come over Arthur such a sense of universal oppression that he could scarcely draw breath freely. Walking this evening from Riverside Drive down towards Washington Square he felt that oppression slowly and inevitably closing down on him. It seemed to him that his family was only a part, though the most active part, in a great conspiracy whose ends were woven into the vital tissues of every human being—a conspiracy to change him, to subdue him, to make him not what he wanted to be, but what they were. The very crowds, multitudes of individuals unknown to him, seemed to have a share in the plot. Invisibly they wrought on him with shadowy fingers: their voices were like the soft waves which play for centuries with pebbles and in the end reduce them to sand.

Yet he knew that he was not alien to these crowds; he knew that all that was strong and vital in him belonged to them—love, desire and creation. All that he had, every nerve of him, every impulse, he would give to them freely and gladly, if only they would let him work in his own way.

He walked steadily downtown, sunk in meditation. Many people that passed him in the opposite direction, noticed the bitter smile that lay on his lips. Some of them, women mostly, remembered the smile for long minutes, and wondered what recollections or hopes had been working in the mind of the dark-faced boy.

Near the arch he turned off Fifth Avenue into a quiet street. Halfway down the street lay the "Apollo Bookshop." He went down the three steps that led into the shop. Two men were standing near the door, and both of them nodded to Arthur. At the back of the long room there was a small group of young men and women, talking and laughing eagerly. For a while Arthur did not join them. He paused by a counter and looked at some books, and wondered why he had come to the Apollo.

One of the men near the door left. The other, the owner of the shop, came over to Arthur.

"Well, Arthur?"

"Well, Leslie?"

"Looking for something decent to read?" Leslie spoke with an English accent. He had a metallic voice which jarred on Arthur's ear, though this man, of all that he had met in the Village, was the only one he thought worth listening to.

"No, I don't want anything."

Leslie turned over a number of books, and Arthur watched him. The Englishman had an exceptionally uninteresting face, with a touch of vulgar cheerfulness in his colorless eyes. But his face belied him utterly, to Arthur at least, who knew and understood him.

"Bored?" asked Leslie.

"No, I'm feeling right enough."

A young man at the back of the room hailed them both. "Hey, you two! Come here!"

Leslie made a slight grimace. "They make me sick," he said in an undertone.

A girl's voice called them. "Come here. Frank's made an epigram." The girl who spoke was leaning against the wall, smoking. Her tense, pale face, with its bobbed, unlustrous hair was visible only through a blue haze.

"He's crowing about it as if he'd laid an egg," shouted another, amid derisive laughter.

The contempt on Leslie's face deepened.

"What's the epigram?" asked Arthur.

"It isn't an epigram at all," said one man, short, thin, long-nosed. "Jennie said her family pastor died last week, and her father said he had gone to his eternal reward. And I said that not being of a vindictive nature, I hoped he'd done nothing of the sort."

Even Leslie smiled slightly.

"That's right," he said. "It isn't an epigram. It's a Christian sentiment."

A burly young man at the edge of the group seized Arthur by the hand.

"How are you, Arthur?" he said, with a strong foreign accent. Then lowering his voice, and speaking only for Arthur, he added significantly. "Say! I've written three more poems."

Arthur nodded. "Show them to me later, Boris. What's all the talk about, people?"

"We never talk about anything," said Frank, with mock haughtiness. "We just talk, that's all."

"You forget, Arthur," said Leslie, vindictively, "that to talk about anything in particular one must know something about it."

Nobody seemed any the worse for the remark.

"What's the use of learning anything about anything?" asked Jennie, and appealed to Arthur for an answer. The other girl was whispering to Frank, whose face was broadening into a smile.

"You don't expect a serious answer, do you?" returned Arthur.

"Oh no. Leslie's the only man who ever gives serious answers." It seemed as though Leslie's remark had struck home.

"They don't like it," said Leslie, grinning.

"They're all for speaking their minds out freely—but when I do it now and again they get sore. You people spend too much time talking ever to learn anything."

"Get off that, Leslie," said Frank, who had missed nothing while listening to the girl. "Books are only a substitute for talk."

"God save us from the books that are a substitute for yours," retorted Leslie.

"They couldn't be published," said one girl, and laughed.

"You said it, Ettie," replied Frank, and passed his arm round her. "This world is too cowardly even to listen to what I have to tell it. And anyway I'm strongest on the subject which is least discussed."

"They're off again," said Leslie, shrugging his shoulders. "It's the most curious thing in the world but there isn't a sentence uttered in your presence but what it turns automatically toward the one subject you people care to talk about."

"What subject?" asked Frank, pretending.

"Well, stop squeezing Ettie and think," answered Leslie.

"Leslie, you have an uptown streak in you as broad as the Hudson," said Ettie, holding close the hand that Frank had passed round her.

Leslie did not answer. He went off to the

other end of the room, muttering something under his breath in which Arthur thought he caught the words "Damn lice!"

"What makes you pensive, Arthur?" asked Jennie, and tugged his sleeve.

Arthur could not tell her, but Frank made a shrewd hit. "His family wants to make a shoemaker of him."

Most of the group down at the Apollo knew that Arthur was one of the shoe Winners, and that he was holding out against going into the business.

"Something like it, Frank," said Arthur, annoyed by the other's indelicacy, and walked off to join Leslie at the other end of the store. Those that remained smiled—with the exception of Jennie, who looked toward Arthur and wondered whether she could go and speak to him. Frank's smile was bitter.

"Isn't there something shallow about Arthur?" he asked Ettie.

She made a sign of assent.

"He comes down here to feel he's advanced," sneered Frank. "He's about as advanced as his grandmother, I should say. It makes me ill to see these rich snobs adding lustre, as it were, to the place. He approves of us, doncherknow. I'm going to leave the Village anyway."

This was an old threat, not only of his, but

of everybody else's down there. In secret nearly everyone in the coterie despised everyone else as a superficial and artificial bohemian, nothing akin to the true, carefree spirits that should constitute a colony of artists and poets and good fellows. Everyone spoke with contempt of the Village.

"I'd have left long ago," said Frank, "and I only live here because it happens to be convenient."

"And then, they do bother you less down here than they do elsewhere," said Ettie, alluding to the rest of the world in a general way that might have indicated cockroaches and other vermin.

"That's true, too," said Frank. He was wondering how he could bring in an easy allusion to something he had written the evening before, and was torn by two impulses; should he give up the attempt to introduce his short sketch into the conversation, and take the stand that this crowd of silly and futile drifters was, after all, beneath contempt? Or should he persevere, and force them to listen to the sketch, knowing they would praise it generously? In the end he decided that it was best to maintain a proud silence, especially as the sketch was not quite finished.

At the other end of the store Arthur was talking quietly with Leslie. Somehow Leslie could

talk of personal matters without making himself offensive.

"Every section of Society, Arthur, yours included, of course, is a gang. If you don't want to be one of the gang, you're a hindrance, and therefore a danger. It's simply the collective will to survive, which resents a dead weight or a possible antagonist. Most people don't realize how deep the will to survive goes. A brick wants to survive. A ripple on a pond wants to survive, and would go on being a ripple forever if it were not prevented. A thought, a mood, wants to survive. If you've got the blues, the blues resent the intrusion of destructive cheerfulness, and cheerfulness resents the intrusion of gloomy thoughts. Fights them, in fact. That's the will to survive in your moods."

"That doesn't help me any, Leslie."

The Englishman looked at him in astonishment.

"You're a queer duck, Arthur. You have the superstition that a knowledge of the truth will help you?"

"Well, if that won't, what will?"

"Nothing can help a human being, because there's nothing to be helped to."

Arthur made a gesture of impatience.

"What's the good of all this to me, Leslie?"

"Fool, what do you want?"

"I want something positive, in God's name."

Leslie was looking across the room. He turned to Arthur suddenly.

"I'll tell you something positive. D'you know Jennie's stuck on you?"

Arthur reddened slightly.

"So what about it?"

"Isn't she a nice kid?"

"Sure she is."

"Don't you like her?"

"Of course."

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"Isn't that something positive?"

Arthur did not answer.

"You poor fish," said Leslie, with bitter contempt. "What are you waiting for? Are you afraid she'll want you to marry her?"

"Don't talk like that, Leslie."

"What kind of positive thing are you waiting for? You like her, don't you? She wants you. What could be more positive for the next year or two? Hey! Jennie!"

Jennie detached herself deliberately from the group and came over, still smoking.

"Come over here," said Leslie, "and leave that collection of neurotic freaks. We're going over to the Golden Calf for drinks. Hey, you

people," he shouted across the room, "stay here till we come back."

At the Golden Calf, in a little room that overhung the Sixth Avenue "L" they sat down to three cocktails. Arthur was perplexed by Jennie: she had suddenly become more immanent, she was nearer to him, and though he had always suspected that she liked him, Leslie's declaration had somehow brought the matter to a head. She seemed to be questioning him all the time, and he could not answer.

"God, what foolish worries you have, Arthur," said Leslie, when the drinks had come. "At twenty-five one's future life is of such overwhelming importance. At forty one's past and present don't seem to matter a damn. Here's to a happy solution."

"If there is one," said Jennie, sardonically.

"There is one," said Arthur, firmly.

"There is one even if there isn't one," said Leslie, grinning. "Because to admit that life has no solution is also a solution—the solution of eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you may find your conscience."

"Sure that's a solution," said Jennie, eagerly. "We may have to leave out the eat and drink, but we will be merry."

The cocktail was warm in Arthur now. His passivity vanished.

"I won't have that," he said. "There's more in life than that. There's something in this game."

"Bah!" said Leslie, and made a gesture that waved away all life.

"There is a game to be played," said Arthur, decisively. "You can't frighten me out of it by being superior."

"What game?"

Arthur hesitated: there was something so abysmally immovable in the cynicism of these two that he knew his words wasted before he uttered them.

"Well," he began at last, "the big game, the people's game, the game of the big crowd." He loosened up. "You said my people and their crowd are nothing but a gang. You're right. But the mass, the crowd, Leslie—there's the thing that matters."

"Poor little democrat," said Leslie, friendly in his contemptuousness. "Can't you find a better thing than that—socialism?"

"I'm not a socialist," said Arthur, insistently. "I'm nothing as yet. I want to leave my gang and get nearer to life. I feel that if life means anything at all it has put its meaning into these millions of obscure, struggling men and women."

"Oh-oh say can you see, by the dawn's early light," chanted Leslie, softly.

"I do love this country," said Arthur, growing warmer, "if you must know. To you that's an intellectual sin. To me it's the breath of my life. I love the big crowd that stretches from here to Frisco. There's something in it, Leslie, blind as it is, noisy as it is. There's strength in it, and a brutal will, and such an impulse to live and create as no other country ever knew. And if that isn't the worthwhile thing of life, what is?"

Leslie shrugged his shoulders.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know," said Arthur, slowly. "I only know, as yet, what I don't want to do about it."

"What's that?"

"I don't want to join the gang that's debauching the country—my gang, that is. If I never do anything else in life, at least I'll refrain from their game. Won't that, after all, be doing something?"

"Right," said Leslie, and looked from Arthur to Jennie. "The best think you can do for the world is to leave it alone. Why add one more to the fools who are tormenting it? Tell 'em to go to the devil. Snatch what you can. *Carpe diem,* and all the rest of it."

"Leave him alone, Leslie," said Jennie. "He's one of those who are afraid to risk their souls by being happy."

"It isn't that," said Arthur. "But my own convenience isn't a good enough reason for breaking with everybody, that's all."

"Oh, Hell!" exclaimed Jennie. "I hate to listen to this talk of conscience. It just sickens me. There's only one code I can understand. Do exactly as you like as long as you're hurting nobody by your actions. And if some people are hurt on account of their views, why the fault is with their views and not with your actions."

Her swift, vehement voice reminded him in a startling way of Elma—the same impatient contempt of what stood in her way. Clearly and more clearly, as they talked, the hidden purpose of their conversation became manifest. Somehow Arthur felt she was urging not a view of hers, but herself. For Jennie was bound up in his mind with this life that she pleaded for, this life of repudiation, of careless indulgence, of indifference and merry cynicism. And there was temptation in both, in her fierce eager voice and her black eyes, and in the life of abandonment she offered him. Why struggle, why care?

And Leslie's insistent eyes, too, urged him. "Take her, you fool. Forget your silly dreams

and scruples. The world is too old, too bitter, too big."

"Let's go," said Arthur suddenly. Another face had come into his mind—two faces, two worlds, two philosophies.

"I have an appointment," said Leslie, abruptly. "I'll leave you people. If you're going by way of the store tell them I'll be back in half an hour. Good-bye."

Arthur was certain now that Leslie had staged this situation, if not at Jennie's request, then at least to please her.

"Which way are you going, Jennie?"

"Anywhere."

He was loath to leave her, even though he felt it would be wrong of him, knowing what he did, to complicate matters. It was pleasant, after all, to walk with Jennie, and to listen to the undertone of her conversation. So they walked slowly together up Fifth Avenue, and while they talked he wondered if she understood what he meant by his opposition to her views.

"I've known so many good fellows who began like you, Arthur," she said. "They had the right feeling about things, and they determined to stay in their own class and raise its intellectual and moral level. And where are they now? What are they now? Comfortable young fathers of families, members of the Association

for Improving the Conversation of the Working-classes, or of the Society for the Purification of America. They go to church and talk in bass voices and preach hundred per cent. Americanism and join the National Guard—to improve it, I suppose."

But her undertone, clear to his inner perception was saying to him: "I can never enter your class of people. Leave it, and come where I can hope to get you."

"You're a curious girl," he said, almost involuntarily. "If it doesn't really matter to you, why should you argue so much? Go your way and never mind others."

"But I hate to see good material going into their melting-pot," she said, hotly. "I mean you, if you want to know. You're one of us, after all."

"Am I?"

"Yes, because there are only two kinds of people, their kind and ours: the people who love life as a pigsty, and behave accordingly, and the people who don't like the pigsty and take their lives out of it."

"And what are you people doing with life?" he asked, pointedly.

"Nothing. But we're not turning it into dirt and hypocrisy——"

"And to Putting It Across," added Arthur.

She nodded. "You understand perfectly well. Why do you talk as if you didn't?"

She had taken his arm, and was punctuating her words by pressing it.

"You're only flirting with liberty, Arthur. Are you afraid?"

But Arthur could no longer listen to her words. The hand laid on his arm was like an insistent voice putting a firm question of its own—a trifling question, and yet significant in its degree. Should he or should he not make that slight motion with his elbow which should invite her to take his arm completely and, as it were, officially? His arm was close to his side: he needed just to lift it and crook it slightly. Perhaps he would never have given this absurd matter a thought had not Leslie spoken so plainly to him. But now it seemed to him that with this tiny gesture he would be choosing one of two paths leading to points as far apart as the poles.

"Some other time I'll tell you," he said suddenly, stopped in his walk, and turned to face her—the only decisive and graceful way of shaking off her hand.

They looked at each other squarely.

"You don't know yet?"

"I'm only sure of one thing just now," said Arthur. "I can't look on life as an empty

thing. Merely to leave my crowd would mean nothing to me."

The tone of his voice indicated that he was about to say good-bye. She was disappointed, and yet quick to make the best of it.

"When will we see you again, Arthur?"

"I'm always down at the Apollo," he said. "In any case, I'll surely be there on Saturday. So long, Jennie."

"So long," she said, and he knew she was hurt.

CHAPTER IV

ARTHUR would have been unable to explain why, when he left the house on the evening of the quarrel, he had been oppressed by such a sense of universal conspiracy. But a little thought would have shown him that when he passed the door of the library, going out, he had heard his father's voice, and a profound instinct wrote on an invisible tablet in his mind: "They're plotting."

So the instinct said. From Mr. Winner's point of view it was less plotting than planning. After the first raging moment Mr. Winner had come to realise that action was necessary. The thing had been too long deferred.

"I know when the time's come, Ruth," he said to his wife. "Last year I could still let it go. Arthur wouldn't think of going into the business—so I persuaded him to keep up his courses. I hoped he'd change—and he hasn't."

Mrs. Winner, who had joined her husband in terror, had been relieved beyond words to find him cool and unabusive. In her gratitude she bent every effort to appearing grateful and sympathetic.

"He's only a boy," she said. "He doesn't know what he wants. It's only a question of teaching him properly." The appealing note in her voice said: "You're a strong man. You can do it." Long years of study of cause and effect had taught her that this note was the most pleasing in her husband's ears.

"And he isn't a fool, really," she added hopefully.

"Of course not," was the testy reply. Mrs. Winner recoiled inwardly: she had forgotten that a reflection on his sons was to Mr. Winner a reflection on his creative skill.

"No, he's no fool. He's got brains. But brains are nothing if they're not properly used. It's no good my trying to break his will. He doesn't care two pins about remaining at home."

"Oh, Alfred, don't say that."

"He'd leave this house in a day if we played it too hard," said Mr. Winner. "He doesn't care. And I want that boy in the business. He has brains, lots of them, and I'm the last man to deny it."

"Oh, he'll come round in time, Alfred."

Mr. Winner shook his head vigorously.

"He's got to be led, Ruth. But it's got to be done carefully—he mustn't see who's doing it. And it must be started at once."

Mr. Winner fell into silence, and the look

beloved of his hard-driven stenographers came over his face, the look predicting that his next sentence would come slowly and carefully.

"We've got to get to the root of the evil," he said decisively. "Do you know where the root is?"

Mrs. Winner did not know. She could not think of such a thing as the root of an evil—it was too abstract. Her motto, had she been able to formulate it, would have been: "Let's go easy and be nice"—and with such a motto she did not care to think about roots of evil in her family.

But her husband was different—so were her sons. They all had a habit of insisting on things that were such a nuisance. It was very hard to go easy and be nice all the time. Mrs. Winner became slightly melancholy.

"No, dear," she said, and she would have liked to add: "Do let's stop fussing" but she knew, at least, that such a statement would have been useless.

"The root of the evil," said Mr. Winner deliberately, "is that we've never thought of Arthur's friends. And it isn't so much all his friends as perhaps one of them—or two."

Mrs. Winner agreed vaguely. "It's so hard to know these days, dear," she said.

"Arthur is twenty-three," said Mr. Winner,

still reflective. "Tell me, what do you think of the Stewarts?"

Mrs. Winner brightened. She did not see the connection, but she could tell anybody what she thought of the Stewarts.

"Well dear, Mrs. Stewart is quite a sensible woman, though she's a bit pushing. She really does well on what her husband allows her, and I don't think he can allow her very much. They say he's awfully close——"

"No, Ruth, not that," said Mr. Winner, impatient. "What do you think of their daughter —what's her name, Muriel."

"Why she seems to be a very sweet and sensible girl. Not that I've seen much of her, but Mrs. Rupert too thinks she's very nice and quiet. I don't think she's much like her parents. They are a bit vulgar, don't you think? Though you never can tell. Mr. Stewart may be worth so much more than most people think, and then she would really have a right to do as she does. That's the worst of people being so secretive, you can't tell whether they're really rich or they're just vulgar people flying out of their own sphere."

"Never mind that," said Mr. Winner. "How far do you think things have gone between Arthur and that girl, Muriel?"

"Why Arthur, I don't think anything has——"

"Yes it has. I see Stewart now and again down town, and I know his wife is pushing him to make friends with us. And it's not for business reasons, either. You don't see things, Ruth."

"I know, Alfred, that Mrs. Stewart would only be too glad. You needn't tell me that. But I don't know whether Arthur and Muriel see each other often. How can I ask Arthur?"

"You needn't ask Arthur," said Mr. Winner.

"But when I do see Mrs. Stewart, she never tells me."

"No, because I guess she isn't sure how you feel about it, and she'd rather have the thing go further before asking you."

Mrs. Winner was really alive now: in this part of the conversation she was functioning with all her faculties.

"But how do you know all this, Alfred, dear?"

"I guess it from the way Stewart talks, and then I have a hunch. I believe Arthur's very much in love with that Muriel girl."

"What do you think we should do?" asked Mrs. Winner, worried.

"I'm thinking. I'm not sure it isn't a good thing."

"But Alfred, he's so young. And do you think the Stewarts are quite what——"

"They don't matter, Ruth. If the girl's the

right kind of girl, a girl that'll bring Arthur to his senses——" he stopped to think.

"They say she's very quiet and very sweet, not strong-willed at all."

"That's nothing," said Mr. Winner, grimly. "It's those quiet, sweet girls, as you call them, who know best how to wear a man down. And that's what Arthur needs."

"But she doesn't know, Alfred. How do you expect her to persuade Arthur——"

"That's not it. What I want to know is this: how keen is Mrs. Stewart on such a match?"

"Oh, my dear, she'd jump at it." Mrs. Winner swelled with pride and certainty.

"That's it then," said Mr. Winner, as if he had come to a decision. "Mrs. Stewart's a sensible woman."

"I certainly don't think she's silly." Mrs. Winner did not see the light yet.

"I want to get the Stewarts to help," said Mr. Winner, at last. "If you can make Mrs. Stewart understand that we'll encourage the affair on condition that the girl can get Arthur to go into the business."

Mrs. Winner stared at her husband.

"The girl can do it, if we can't," said Mr. Winner. "That is, if she's sensible, like her mother. You tell Mrs. Stewart there's nothing doing if Muriel can't get Arthur into the busi-

ness. If course, you needn't put it that way. I leave that to you."

"Of course, my dear." Mrs. Winner saw at once just how it could be done, and then a doubt occurred to her. "But do you think I can speak like that to the girl?"

"No need to. Leave that to Mrs. Stewart. Leave it to her to tell the girl that we would authorize the engagement—and for all I care the marriage too—on the day Arthur comes to his senses. And if the girl really cares for Arthur, and I know Arthur cares for her——"

Mrs. Winner nodded. Already she saw herself confiding so sweetly to Mrs. Stewart—with cautious and provisional praise for Muriel—and indefinite hints about Arthur's restlessness. "Do you know, dear Mrs. Stewart, I really believe the day Arthur decides to come into the business my husband would be only too happy to see him settled with some sweet girl—and I do think he's right." She saw the flutter of Mrs. Stewart's bosom. "Some sweet girl who would understand what's good for Arthur, and persuade him to decide . . ."

Mr. Winner broke in. "Only the girl *must* be made to understand that there's *not a thing* doing unless Arthur does the sensible thing."

"But Alfred, dear, we can't force Arthur to

see it that way. He might tell the girl just the opposite."

Mr. Winner became impatient. "Then he can't get the girl, don't you see. It isn't the girl. You've got to make Mrs. Stewart understand just as plainly as can be that if Arthur goes and marries the girl, and she hasn't persuaded him to go into the business, we'll wash our hands of him and the girl and her family. That's the point."

And Mrs. Winner saw the light, that it was good.

"I understand, Alfred. It's very, very sensible."

It *was* sensible. And it was a pleasant prospect, that of being able to offer so much to Mrs. Stewart—to hold out such a prize—to make her feel that she, Mrs. Winner, could do so much for her, Mrs. Stewart. An endless vista of gentle patronage and kindly encouragement stretched away from Mrs. Winner. She would be so sweet with Mrs. Stewart, and yet she would be firm. She would make Mrs. Stewart appreciate how friendly and yet how tactful she was.

And Mr. Winner would learn that he had a wife who could do things—a woman with true social genius.

CHAPTER V

THERE fell a sudden and suspicious calm on the Winner household after the conference which had ended in such discord. Everyone was aware of it, with the exception of the oldest—but he was not truly a Winner: whenever he spoke of himself it was as old Adolph Wiener, sometime of Vienna and now of the wilderness: he could not truly be reckoned of the household.

Arthur felt the interlude most keenly. Dimly he was aware of forces that, as at the command of a general, had retired into subterranean armories, where, in darkness, they regrouped and recast themselves. He was doubly impatient those days, for Muriel Stewart was not in town, and he found the village unsatisfactory just then. Books irked him, for summer was coming, and he knew that this summer would mean decision: the very calm that had followed his father's incautious outbreak showed him that the final encounter was at hand.

He could talk with no one exactly as with Muriel. He was confident of her—there was something clean and detached in her friendship.

She was not just vaguely sympathetic; she responded consciously to his own bitter discontent. That was why, instinctively, he kept secret the intimacy between them. He distrusted the world, and, most of all, his own family. They had a habit of looking at things with gross cleverness; they lumped all phenomena, and he revolted from having his friendship with Muriel lumped with all the sly purposes implied in "paying attentions."

Hence, even if they did suspect how helplessly he waited for her return, he knew they did not understand why. Nor did they really know how eagerly, on the evening she replied to his phone call, he rushed up to the Stewart house on University Avenue. By a happy chance which was not all a chance, he found her alone, and to exploit the chance he insisted that a house was the finest thing in the world to be outside of that evening.

"Bother your dear old grandmother, Muriel," he said, by which he only meant to show his resentment of the cause of her four days' absence. "There's not a soul to talk to when you're not in New York."

He might have added "nor to look at" if he had been aware of the way he was keeping his eyes on her.

"We had something of a row at home," he

said, when their conversation had become more consecutive. "They're going to make things hot for me."

Muriel knew the situation well.

"Your father's getting impatient, isn't he?"

Arthur looked for words to express all that had been seething in him these last days.

"They think they've got me. God, if I only knew exactly what I am going to do. I only know so far what I don't want to do."

"That's it," he added, after a pause. "They get you in the end by not leaving open a single avenue. And a man can't pass all his life in going to college and in doing nothing."

"Would your father object to something else —not shoes?"

"What's the difference?" he asked. "I'd as lief go into the shoe business as anything else. But I loathe the whole business game. I can't stand their way of looking at things."

"I know," she said. "I was teasing."

"Am I so darned crazy, Muriel?" he asked, in desperation. "Do I see things like a lunatic if I get sick of their eternal hypocrisy? If they'd only look at things reasonably it wouldn't be half so bad. If dad only said: 'I make shoes and sell them' and that would be the end of it, it wouldn't be so bad. I would say 'All right!' then. 'I'll help you to make and sell them, if you want me

to.' But when he wants my soul and my hopes and my ambitions, it's grotesque. It's like torture of the soul. He wants me to talk shoes all day, pray to shoes, exalt shoes to the highest heaven, rant about the duty of mankind to shoes. I tell you Muriel, they fill me with loathing."

How curious, ran Muriel's underthoughts, is this boy, with his passionate voice and his passionate will—different from all the others. A response deeper than her will quivered to Arthur's imperious words, and Arthur felt the sympathy that welled up towards him.

"I am sick of the business side of America," he said. "These captains of industry are all right, I suppose. One has to live on material things, but to shove out God and everything else for the sake of business, to distort every human function to business, to sing it in hymns —it's crazy. It's just inverting all life."

They had come to a little park on the further side of Moshulu Parkway. Going down between two tree-clad slopes, they found a bench under a lamp.

"Let's sit down here," said Arthur, and then minutes passed without words. Muriel was not thinking then. She only felt the strange excitement that Arthur's voice awoke in her—an excitement that was half revolt and half rebirth. She, like Arthur, would have re-

sented furiously any implication that these hours she passed with him pointed to the same want as with other girls and boys. Who ever talked to other girls as Arthur to her?

"They're all like that, Arthur," she said. "And they have to be so, because the man that won't give all his soul to business goes down. I've heard that said over and over again."

"By God!" he said, fiercely, "I'd rather see this country of ours without a railway or a telegraph—or a pair of decent shoes—than as she is, with the price they pay for their comforts. We, the people with the money, we, the ones with leisure, who should thank God for the opportunity of making something decent out of life—what are we doing? Preaching the holiness of business efficiency and the divine purpose of the best filing system."

He relapsed into burning silence.

"But Arthur, there's more than that, surely, in this country. It's too big to be lost in these things."

"You're right, there. There's something great here—but it's blind. And mark my words, Muriel, it isn't with the captains of industry and the cheap merchants. It's with the mob, the voiceless mass. Some day it will find utterance—how I don't know. But there'll be a storm and things will be cleaned up. I sound like a

demagogue, don't I? But I'm not. I think just as little of this socialist and communist froth as of the rest of the political ranters. Life is deeper than politics, as it's deeper than business. I tell you what, we want a new faith, the faith of clean thinking and clean seeing—and it's coming. There's a time coming when these unclean beasts who pester us from the billboards, and crawl into our homes through the magazines, and mould the ideals of the young, will be brushed away by a storm—they and their filth, their ideals and their sickening greed and shamelessness."

She was thinking, now, how incomprehensible he was, after all. How marvelously true and sincere he sounded—and how helpless and hopeless. They would kill him, crush him.

"I wonder where it will end," said Arthur, suddenly calm. "For me, I mean. I have the feeling that I must break away soon—get out of this."

A chill passed through Muriel.

"Are you thinking of leaving New York?" she asked in an unmoved voice.

"I can't stay here," said Arthur. "They're too vicious. One can't fight alone all the time."

She felt a poignant desire to contradict that word "alone"—and she could not. Not for the dearest prize in the world could she admit that

in her friendship for him was there anything of herself.

"I know it all so well," she said in a low voice, suffering for every word she uttered. "It's so hard to keep different from the others. They can worry you, day in, day out."

Arthur was thinking, then, how strong this girl was in her tenderness and understanding. And then she wanted to hint to him, without involving herself, that he would not be "alone" if he stayed in New York. But she could not find words, and she was ashamed of herself.

"Are you thinking of going soon?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I don't know. It isn't definite. I have only the feeling that I can't play with things much longer. I must decide—or go soon."

"A man can do that," she said, almost inaudibly—and he felt for the first time the reproach of her weakness—she was a woman.

"How different you are from the other girls, Muriel," he said abruptly, and seized her hand. "I wonder how many there are like us in this abominable city. Doesn't that sound conceited? But I feel that way." Then he was at a loss for words: her hand remained lying in his, and a quick warmth flushed through him. Why could he not relinquish the hand as naturally as he had taken it?

Minutes passed in a queer silence. The thoughts of the boy and girl were concentrated now in the touching hands, and each of them maintained a tense immobility, as if to betray nothing. Arthur made one or two dry-tongued efforts to speak, and found he could say nothing that was not irrelevant. What had he been talking of? Why was he dumb now, and why did his heart within him swell and beat so strangely? He was aware of a desire to say "Muriel!"—just that—to repeat her name many times—and nothing else. But even that, the only word that did not seem out of place then, he could not utter. He dared not look at her, though he knew that with her head drooping so, she would not notice the motion of his eyes.

Her fingers trembled. She could bear this silence no longer, and suddenly she withdrew her hand. Arthur started as if she had sprung away from him. The word he wanted to utter was on his lips—and it issued so softly that he did not know whether she had heard him.

By a common instinct they rose to their feet and began to walk homewards. In Muriel's heart shame and happiness fused into something intolerably sharp and sweet. She, too, wanted to utter his name, but she knew it was impossible. Instincts not her own lay like rocks on her heart, and choked its utterance.

They did not see the streets through which they walked. The multitudes of footsteps and moving lights went by them like noiseless rivers. The earth, the heavens, the great houses bulking up on either side of them, were wan and unsubstantial apparitions. They were walking not through streets, but through infinity, from nowhere to nowhere, and alone. In their hearts there was pride and pain because of the silence they had kept: for here was something which even to whisper was to desecrate . . .

When she found herself standing alone in front of her house she did not know which way to turn. She wondered whether she could not get in without being seen, go up to her room and lie down. Softly she walked down the drive and went in through the back. No one saw her. She went light-footed and carefully up the stairs, hearing their voices in the drawing-room. A stair creaked, and sent thrills of meaningless terror through her. She reached her door and, as she closed it, she prayed that no one had heard her.

She lay down on the bed and the tears she could no longer keep back flowed through her fingers. And then an indescribable sweetness and rest poured through her. She was amazed at her own happiness. She rose and seated herself at the window, as though she could send

her happiness out into the world. Opposite, across an irregular wall of trees, there was the house of the MacAlisters. The lights shone on the ground floor windows, and shadows went to and fro across the light blinds. On her right lay the avenue, just a short stretch of it visible from this window. Cars went left and right, carrying halos of light and human laughter. She felt it all within her, beautiful and unutterable. She wanted to speak to the world, call it by endearing names, because it could be so good to her, and yet not know it.

After many minutes she heard footsteps behind the door, then a knock. She started out of her tranquility. "Come in."

Her mother was standing in the doorway.

"Why Muriel, dear, I didn't know you'd come back. When did you come back?"

"I don't know. Just a few minutes ago." She wished her mother had not asked her like that when she had returned.

"Better put the light on," said Mrs. Stewart, and did so. Muriel did not turn from the window. She wished intensely her mother had not come in. Mrs. Stewart looked at her daughter, smiled to herself, and came over. "Day-dreaming, child?" she asked, with a world of meaning in her tone, and her hand on Muriel's hair.

"No, mama,"

"Then why so solemn? You haven't had a quarrel, have you?"

"No, mama." Muriel was distressed.

"That would certainly have been foolish," said Mrs. Stewart, with a touch of dryness. "Quarrels don't do any good. Ask mama—she knows."

Muriel had not turned from the window. Mrs. Stewart sat down on the couch opposite the bed.

"Muriel, darling, please come away from that silly window and sit down here. I want to talk with you."

Muriel knew how hopeless it was to try and retain now her mood. She tore herself away from the window and, vaguely resentful, sat down near her mother.

"I suppose you know what it is I want to talk to you about, don't you?" Mrs. Stewart threw such a world of cajolery and significance into her words that Muriel could not have failed to understand under other circumstances. But just then she was still in a daze of recollection.

"No, mama."

"Oh, come, Muriel," said Mrs. Stewart, more serious. "You know well enough what I mean."

An abrupt sickness took hold of Muriel.

"Yes, mama, I know what you mean." She did not look at her mother. Mrs. Stewart, big,

blond, hard, laid a diamonded hand on Muriel's shoulder, and looked her over approvingly.

"Of course you know. Or did you think your mother just a blind old woman, who doesn't understand a thing? That's the way with you girls now—you think there's nothing to learn from your mothers and you can manage everything yourselves. You silly child, wasn't I too a girl once? Don't I know these things too?"

Not for the world could Muriel have said why a faintness came over her as her mother continued: surely there was nothing offensive in her words: and yet a subtle nausea touched the girl's heart.

"Yes, mama."

"You know, of course, Muriel darling, that I trust your intelligence. If I hadn't done that I would have spoken to you before now. That isn't what I meant of course." Mrs. Stewart said this very gently, as became so delicate a subject: but her words were like fingers of lewdness thrust into the girl's heart, fingers that thrust themselves into the innermost recesses, and touched with tepid slime the cool cleanliness of the sanctuary.

"I always did approve of your encouraging Mr. Winner. It shows you have a great deal of common sense. But it's very hard for an inex-

perienced girl like you to know exactly how to manage things. Always remember that men have to be managed—because they're so undecided and unwise. Now look at Mr. Winner; he's a very fine young man, exceptionally. I'm very fond of him, Muriel, really, and I'm sure he's just the kind of man to make you happy —if you know how to handle him."

It was just then that Mrs. Stewart betrayed herself without knowing it. The word "handle" was the *faux pas*. "Manage" had been a little gross, but "handle" went through Muriel like a dagger of ice. Mrs. Stewart felt a little uncertain now—and so she repeated the word "handle," feeling she would give it better status, legalize it, as it were, by repetition. "Yes, you must know how to handle them."

There was in Mrs. Stewart a certain brutality of which she was wholly unaware. Somehow the continued and increasing financial successes of her husband gave her an increasing sense of personal merit. The more he succeeded, the more she felt she deserved it. An arrogant belief in her own destiny grew in her, and Mr. Stewart was the blind instrument that fulfilled it. It was not the fault of Mrs. Stewart if the knowledge of her own worthiness broke through words quite harmless in intent.

"You've got to handle them wisely," said

Mrs. Stewart, decisively. "They're only grateful to you afterwards, believe me. Now, Muriel dear, tell me if Mr. Winner has said anything definite to you yet."

Muriel, with teeth set, could not reply. Then, realizing that an answer could not be avoided, she shook her head.

"Well, of course, that's nothing. He will say something definite before long. And I'm not the only one who feels that way about it. I've heard it from others who know even better. Of course, Muriel, I understand how you'll answer him when he does say something, but the really important thing I haven't told you yet. Has Arthur ever spoken to you about his future?

Muriel shook her head.

"It's a very delicate matter," said Mrs. Stewart. "Now I know that Mr. and Mrs. Winner are very anxious about Arthur. You know his father wants him to come into the business, and Arthur can't make up his mind. They're very much worried about it, because he seems to be so obstinate. Mrs. Winner's spoken to me lots of times about it, and I can understand their point of view very well. I know they'd like to see their boy settled with some good, sweet, sensible, steady—" and Mrs. Stewart pressed her daughter's hand at each adjective, "girl—

you see. And that girl has to make Arthur understand where his duty lies. I can tell you this much, Muriel, and I know you'll be grateful to me for having found all this out for you —Mr. and Mrs. Winner would announce Arthur's engagement the day that girl persuaded him to go into the business." She uttered the last sentence in a sharp, executive spirit. She wanted her daughter to understand clearly.

"And Muriel, remember that all said and done the Winners are pretty big people. They're big people and they're nice people, and that means a whole lot."

So the first point was made. Mrs. Stewart gave it time to sink in, and made the next one.

"Muriel, dear, I can say the road is open to you now. It all depends on you, dear, and on no one else. I know the Winners wouldn't dream of letting Arthur get married or engaged even, if he won't go into the business. Mrs. Winner took me into her confidence and said that Mr. Winner would cut his son off absolutely if he refused this summer to do the right thing. And you're the one that can persuade him. And don't forget that unless you do persuade him you can give up all hope. The boy hasn't any money of his own, and unless his father stands by him he can't marry—not a cent of his own. And if he's a real man, and truly loves you, and

if you're a real woman, and my daughter, he ought to be in the business before many months are over." She stopped, and repeated, like a horrible incantation, "Not a cent of his own, not a cent."

Muriel made no sign of having understood. She was indescribably sick.

"I've always longed to see you marry well, Muriel, and it's such a relief to know that you'll know how to act in the right way. It's always been my motto to let a girl choose for herself, thought I do know so many girls nowadays are just intolerable—just out for pleasure and all that kind of thing and never think of the serious side of life." She became solemn and wished her husband would come in, as per arrangement, and not delay so long that she would have to go and call him and spoil the situation. She wondered whether it would be well to allude to Arthur's brother, Richard, in connection with Alice, and whilst deciding in favor of a pretty little hint she was interrupted by Mr. Stewart. He put his head round the door, and said roguishly, "Can I come in?" hinting at abysmal things in their conference.

"Of course, daddy," said his wife.

Mr. Stewart came in, shaking his head, as though he was intimidated slightly by the atmosphere, but he smiled at the same time, as if

he would have it known that he was not so terribly afraid after all.

"And so we'll be hearing things soon," he said, pinching his daughter's cheek, and he hummed a bar of the wedding march and shook his head at his wife. "And she didn't tell papa first. Well, well."

He sat down on Muriel's left. Muriel felt the meaning glances that passed between her father and mother, glances charged with friendly vulgarity, and she could have screamed.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Stewart, jocosely. "Young people are that way. You can't keep 'em from it, eh mama? And our daughter's been trapped by Dan Cupid just like the rest of 'em."

He rubbed his shining head, and twinkled down at Muriel.

"When's the day, daughter?"

"Hush, daddy," said Mrs. Stewart, "you know there's nothing definite yet."

"Awgwan," said her husband, with mock contempt. "Leave it to the young folks. Bet you a dime they've got it all fixed up and doped out just so. Yes, sir. And they keep it a secret from the old fogies. I know you"—and he shook his finger at his daughter—"young folk, all the pep. Leave the old drybones out of it, ah?"

There was an unanalyzable wealth of sugges-

tiveness in his voice, a background of indefinable abomination. He looked sentimentally at his wife: "They're leaving us old birds, mama, the fledglings. But we're not so old, are we? Our little girlie's maybe a wee bit mistaken."

He laid his hand on Muriel's shoulder, as if to give her a little shaking. Then, to the utter amazement of both, the girl rose swiftly and silently to her feet. Before either of them could utter a word she had rushed to the door, and they heard her footsteps like a quick, muffled drumroll on the stairs. A door banged to downstairs.

"I'll be damned," said Mr. Stewart.

CHAPTER VI

Arthur did not quite understand how urgent was the wish of his father to have him in the business. Richard had gone into law, and was now junior member of Stapleton, Brace and Winner; but then, the firm was entrusted with all of the Winner Shoe legal interests, and Richard was the connecting link between the law firm and the manufacturers. Mr. Winner had the plan neatly in his mind. He was a far-sighted man. He saw his three sons taking over the business in time, Richard at the legal end, Arthur at the business end and Eric at the production end. It pleased him to think of the thing working out so well; it showed him that he was not one of those mushroom manufacturers, but an institution in the country, a man who would be looked back to in its commercial and industrial history.

But there was this fad of Arthur's. It was only partly comprehensible to Mr. Winner. He could understand well everything that Arthur said, and still he failed to see any connection between that and a flat refusal to consider a business career. After all, you may disagree

with life, but you have to live it. A little time, a little pressure, and this would change, but while it lasted it irritated and baffled him. He had talked more than once with his son, always trying to be reasonable and large-minded.

"Suppose what you say is right," he had said once. "Then what about it? Do you think the world hasn't considered these things? If business is what it is, it's because people have discovered that this is the only way of doing business."

Did his son expect the world to cease doing business?

"Now is business necessary or is it not?" he asked.

His son admitted it was.

"Well then," said Mr. Winner, utterly at sea. "How else can you do it? Surely you're not going to teach me, after forty years in business, that there's a better way and you've found it right off the bat?"

And he was not so blind, after all, to everything that Arthur said. More than once, in church, the preacher had touched strings that were stretched through the dark parts of his being, and the strange vibrations had sounded for many minutes. That was all right. Men felt that way sometimes, but what did that have to do with his offices, his factory, the buying of

hides, the writing of good, snappy, stinging ads? The world is the world we live in: the Church is the Church. It was the proper business of the preacher to say what he did. It was expected of him. But it was the proper business of the world to go on efficiently, with plenty of initiative and pep, with good business intelligence and business methods. There had always been the world, and there had always been the Church. They could get on very nicely side by side, cooperate, in fact, rather than disturb each other.

And all this talk about beauty and decency and democracy—it was perfectly all right. He had no objection to Arthur speaking that way, within limits. The boy did it very well, and people called him clever. But there was such a thing as pushing this cleverness too far.

"You don't know life," he said on another occasion. "The world has its way and you've got to learn it. Now just imagine if everybody was to act as you say. Where does efficiency go? Where does production go? Where does everything we've got go? Who's going to run things properly?"

"They're not being run properly," said his son, obstinately. "People are making hogs of themselves and one another. Who cares about the better things of life? Who cares about

books, or music, or proper friendliness, except as cheap business adjuncts? The life of the businessman is just the ugliest thing God ever permitted."

And so he went on, driving his father to stormy reaction. The boy was unjust. Didn't the Winners go to the opera? Didn't they go to concerts—classical ones, too? Didn't they keep the best gramaphone records? Didn't Elma play Schubert and Mendelssohn when visitors asked her to—she liked it just as well as she did jazz, and she sometimes said that she liked it even better. Didn't they have excellent pictures in the house, recommended by the very best critics? And good books? What did the boy want?

"It's just young, dissatisfied blood," said Mr. Winner to himself. "He hasn't got anywhere to put his energy, and he's eating himself up: and it's going to stop. I can see that boy, after he's been a year in the business, just as happy and snappy as can be, with lots of plans, organizing and reorganizing. Then he'll understand."

The boy was more obstinate than he had thought, that was all. But that was nothing. It would have to be broken one way or another, and this summer was going to see an end of the quarrel. Mr. Winner was quite clear in his own mind as to that. He had not given sufficient

time and energy to the problem. He would change all that. No problem had ever baffled him completely. And this was a problem like any other.

And so he organized carefully. Muriel Stewart was one part of his plan. And when he was certain that this part was at work he brought another part to bear. He was going to confide fully in Van Starr and get him to help. Van Starr was as much of the business now as Mr. Winner himself. He was its crack salesman—also head of the sales department—a young fellow, not over thirty—really after Mr. Winner's heart, a tornado of cheerful energy, of slickness, of good nature. "A man with real personal magnetism," said Mr. Winner, and meant it.

In the Winner household Van Starr was something legendary. He was Mr. Winner's chief allusion, a sort of reliable moral standby. It was a pity he was so seldom in town, and came to the house perhaps less than once in three months. But Mr. Winner would change that: he would see about keeping him in New York for a month or two, throw him with Arthur, have him up to the house for several days at a time, and give him his instructions. He went in advance over the words he would use:

"Starr," he would say. "You're one of us now. You've got into this business as an in-

sider. And I want you to put across the biggest deal of all." (They always talked of "putting things across." It was a label for them, indicating the content of great psychological accumulations.) "You've been selling shoes. Now I want you to sell business, see? I want you to make my son understand that he *needs* the business, see?—he's got to have it." (Van Starr always made purchasers understand that they *needed* Winner Shoes, they had to have them.) "Make him realize he's going into the biggest thing in his life. You'll find him a sensible boy, and a good prospect. He'll listen to you. He'll put up a whole line of back talk. But don't answer him with arguments. Just make him *feel* how happy he'll be in the business game. Suggest it, by the mere fact of your own pleasure."

So he would talk, paraphrazing more or less his views on the higher advertising. Talk was no good: you had to *suggest* always, so that people couldn't come back at you with an argument. That was very clear in his mind. If you said "Winner Shoes are good shoes," the other man would answer, just as plausibly "Winner's Shoes are rotten shoes." But if you merely behaved as if Winner's shoes were good shoes, if you made the fact radiate from your soul, without using words, why, the other

fellow just couldn't put up a counter-argument.

That was the whole trouble in this business with Arthur. Argument is foolish—it only leads to more argument. You had to *suggest* to Arthur that business was a great old game. He himself couldn't suggest it to Arthur because he was played out. As a stimulant he was stale. But Van Starr was the very man to do it.

Arthur knew, of course, that the great game was afoot now. Unconsciously he stiffened to meet the attack, determining that he would be rushed into nothing. True, he did not know what he wanted to do, but that was no reason for being forced to do something that he knew he did not want to do. And he realized, keenly, that no one could help him. Advice was useless, books were useless: it was only his own strength that he could rely on. It was himself against the world.

Himself against the world. He had come to understand this only latterly. Once he had hoped much from a career at college. But now, when he was pursuing with more or less interest a post graduate course in history and economics, he knew too well that Colleges were not meant for education, but for instruction. College was of a piece with his father's world. A few men, he believed, just a few among the instructors, had gone through his own struggles.

They knew something of what he wanted. But they said little. In the literature courses there had been one professor he had liked, a man who, from time to time would abandon literary biographies and staple rules and criticism, and talk for a few minutes on literature and life. And then a couple of bitter, piercing phrases would break out in the cheery lecture room. A handful of students would be startled and interested. The rest suspended taking notes, and were puzzled. Then the professor would check himself, smile strangely, and resume his literary drawl.

Once, lecturing on George Eliot, he quoted from Felix Holt—"one of the people to whom poetry is merely literature" and he broke forth in his dry, quick voice "A fine resumé of the way you people will ultimately look at things. Poetry is literature. It's something in the books, and you've got to know what the books say for decency's sake. You'll make no mistake. Literature and poetry and beauty have nothing to do with your daily lives, of course. Well—to return to the influence of Lewes on George Eliot . . . "

Arthur had tried to get nearer to this professor of literature, and something like a friendship sprang up between them. But while Dr. Freyer sometimes spoke freely, he admitted that he had lost out in his first plans. He was an ex-

traordinary mixture of childlikeness and unfathomable cynicism. "You can't teach literature," he said once, to Arthur. "These people and their parents and their class don't want it. They want culture—the kind that's advertised and advertisable. They want it in courses. Well, I can do that as well as anybody else, and it gets me seven thousand a year. If I tried to teach literature I wouldn't get a nickel a year."

Freyer was the best of them, at that. In the others Arthur saw automatons. They were not devoid—or many of them were not—of real intelligence, but they wore a kind of mask. It was a cheerful, pushful mask, the mask of the peppy salesman. They spoke in phrases, and colored everything with a single, aggressive color, till College was for Arthur a monochrome blending with the life outside it. They touched nothing without seeming, in an indirect way, to harness it to the duty of making things bigger and better.

Such was the tenor of College tuition to Arthur. They could not help him, for they were themselves helpless. The sparks of earlier and more generous resolutions lingered in a few of them. But they were covered with ashes, and only rarely would a wind of chance uncover them. But such winds were rare in college. The still air, easy and friendly, rested always,

and one generation of students after another passed through its untroubled deeps, with no hint of the thunder that slept in those innocent books, in the knowledge of the ages. There was no one to tell them.

Of course there was an artificial and fictitious air of sincerity and progress in the university. Men talked of liberty, knowledge, advancement . . . There were a few enthusiasts in literature, a handful of socialists and one or two cautious communists. There was much ado about tolerance and large-mindedness; but everything was conditioned by the great purpose—Americanism. It was an American University, and if it could not be a University without being American, it could not be a University either. Arthur would have found pride in this, but that the word "Americanism," like the phrases "God in His infinite wisdom," covered everything that a college should have combatted. And thus, at the end of four years, Arthur saw in the anticipated freshness and strength of college nothing but spiritual decay hidden under youthful energies and joyousness. No one talked of the things that mattered. The world, life at large, the broad impulses of human longing and endeavor, these were curtained off into Literature A, History 2D, Economics 4. Great utterances which great men had meant for world-shakers be-

came pretty and pious sentiments, pointing always to growth and prosperity and improvement in the most praiseworthy of countries.

And in the Village there were one or two he could talk to after a fashion. There was Leslie who, for all his cynicism, had a large sympathy by sheer dint of comprehension. If he ridiculed—as he did—Arthur's struggle, it was not meanly, but with a touch of sadness. Frank Selman sometimes broke out in rational protest, but he had never felt, Arthur opined, any need of a cleaner bigger life. The rest of them were meaningless to him. They sneered sincerely enough at the abominations of the middle classes, but they were themselves empty and indifferent. Boris, the Russian, was the worst of them, but typical. Absorbed in tiny, irregular poems, in which a few phrases—like "reels of lust," "soul-screaming sickness," "quaint and curious passions"—went through a hundred metamorphoses, his quarrel with the world was that it did not yearn sufficiently. A little praise quieted him. There were others, one or two with touches of talent, with no discipline, who hated the world because they could not love anything largely. A little recognition and money would have put them at ease. Sometimes they got these, but more often they went on, year in, year out, the sneer frozen on their faces, till they

themselves no longer felt it except when someone tried to disturb it.

Jennie was of a different type. She was frankly a hedonist. She pretended to no talents, though likely enough she did her little writing in secret. She had only this legitimate quarrel with the world that it made earning a living disproportionately difficult, and that its stupidity threatened to interfere with her private notions of how life should be lived.

The evening after Muriel's return there was some kind of family gathering at the Stewarts. Arthur went down to the Apollo bookshop. He found a larger crowd that evening, but he stayed out of it, speaking first with Jennie and then with Leslie.

Jennie was aware at once of a change in him. He opposed to her advances now not his former timidity and indifference, but something more formidable that she could not analyse.

"There's something wrong with you this evening, Arthur."

"No, I'm the same as ever."

"Not the same as last time I saw you."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing precise. You've lost something of your—your mooniness. You have something decisive about you this evening. You have such funny moods. One evening you seem to be full

of enthusiasm about things in general—another evening you seem to care nothing."

"That's very precise, Jennie. What do you want me to care about this evening?"

"Well, about me, if you can care for nothing else."

Jennie felt she could not bring him back to the mood she wanted in this place, with this chattering around him, and with his mind working continuously on some hidden thing. She wanted him badly. She did not care whether he loved her or not. She was rational in this—love and liking were matters of degree, not of kind: and they merged easily into one another. If only he would yield just so much—bend to a single kiss, to one small jesting caress, she could hold him.

"Won't you come out of here for a walk, Arthur? This place stifles me. They chatter chatter all the time."

They went round the outer edge of Washington Square. Here, alone with him, Jennie was overtaken by a keener wave of desire than she had felt hitherto. Arthur did not even offer his arm.

"I have a headache," she said, stifling an impulse to make her voice plaintive. "This walk does me good."

After a little walking she suggested that they

go and sit down for a few minutes, and she led him to one of the less illumined benches.

"Well, what are you going to do, Jennie?" he asked humorously.

"What is there to do? I'm going to grow older and sourer, and be sorry for what I haven't done, and get sick of life and die."

"And meanwhile?"

"And meanwhile I'm going to do what I can to forget it. What else is there to do?"

"God knows," he answered, feeling how futile it would be to open his dreams to her.

"There isn't anything, Arthur," she said. "People tell you there's something in life, and fool you along so as to keep you from getting what you want. Take everything you can, big or little, every pleasure and sensation that's offered to you. Never mind what they say, and never mind what you've been taught to say yourself."

"Don't turn preacher, Jennie."

"All right. What shall I talk of?"

"Tell me what you want of life," he said, teasingly. "Maybe it'll help me."

"Shall I?" Why not, started up in her mind. "Well then, listen."—No, she could not. The quick agitation died in her. She could not tell him so plainly. Then, before she could think, she blurted out—"I want you, for one thing."

She almost choked with the words, then, with a terrific effort, she controlled the desire to continue in that strain, and turned her feelings into jest: "That'll help you to fill a year or two. I can't think of anything better for the moment."

Arthur sat in a trance of amazement, staring blindly at the narrowing double file of lamps running toward Broadway.

"It's a hell of a thing to want, Arthur, isn't it."

"I wasn't thinking of that," he stammered.

"Don't be embarrassed, poor Arthur," she said, a brazen courage slowly returning. "I won't do anything to you. But when you do find out there's nothing worthwhile—" she broke off and looked into his face—"why, you unhappy little bourgeois, you're all upset. Good heavens, what would you have done if I'd kissed you?"

Her artificial assurance slowly took root and became real. It communicated itself gradually to Arthur.

"That would have been different," said Arthur, trying to laugh.

He was pained by her directness—and yet, now that he knew definitely she was pleading in vain, she made a strange, impersonal appeal to him—Jennie, the self-reliant little drifter, so

strong because she could exist without believing in anything.

As they walked back to the bookshop she thought suddenly of something: "Arthur, tell me, are you in love with anyone?"

"I don't know," he answered very slowly.

"You probably are, then. If you are not, you soon will be. Some day you'll marry a fine, sweet girl, an idealist, of course, like yourself, a dreamer, who understands you—oh, so completely. And she'll educate you. She'll bring you home to your class—she'll make a praiseworthy citizen of you—and a Rotarian. She'll teach you gently the way and the life—and before you know where you are you'll be chanting in the cathedrals of commerce—and yet a real idealist of a girl—of course."

Yet she said this without bitterness. She was only sad.

The crowd was unchanged at the Apollo. Boris stood frowning in a corner, trying, it seemed, to think up some thunderbolt with which to attract everyone's attention to himself. The others ignored his unhappiness.

Leslie, as usual, was at the other end of the long room, indifferent to the chatter of the villagers. He saw Arthur and Jennie coming down the stairs, and he ignored them too. Arthur was

sure now there was a motive in Leslie's actions. He was doing his best to bring him close to Jennie—why, he could not tell.

Here, in the noisy room Jennie seemed to feel that to stay with Arthur would be an anti-climax. She drifted over to the group at the other end, and Arthur sat down near Leslie.

"Why are you trying to put this match across, Leslie?" he asked bluntly.

"Why?" repeated Leslie, smiling. "Self defence. I want you and Jennie to hitch up to strengthen me. Don't you understand?"

Arthur shook his head.

"It's this." Leslie settled down deliberately to an explanation. "I'd hate like the devil to see you drift back to your own people. You'll do it sooner or later, no doubt. I can see you're struggling now—you're beginning to doubt yourself. And sooner or later you're going to find yourself a dear, decent girl, a proper young lady—and then finish Arthur the thinking man. They'll get you, my lad. And I'd like to see you with us as long as possible. Jennie would keep you straight. Now do you understand?"

"Yes. But what does it matter to you?"

"I hate them" said Leslie abruptly and venomously. "I hate them with all my heart. They're the last thing in filth, in selfishness, in ignorance, these hundred percenters, these poker players,

these . . . The middle classes! Look at 'em, lice swarming over the earth, fat, greasy insects, scuttling in and out of their holes, with their God and their prayers and their dirty little ambitions. Can you help hating them? Why should I let them get you? Think of the smug, lewd rejoicing—"He's a fine, sensible boy, American to the core—of course he's 'with us'—another recruit. Beasts!"

"Is there no hope for them, Leslie?"

The Englishman was roused. "I know what's in your mind, you fool. Maybe they're not so bad, eh? Maybe they can be purified by an earnest young man, eh?"

"Well, admitting," said Arthur, stung. "Haven't the middle classes progressed? Didn't they once believe in slavery and all that sort of thing?"

"Boy," said Leslie, angrily, "the middle classes are an eternal thing. Their beliefs have nothing to do with it. They've been with us from of old, and they'll be with us forever. They never change, they never improve. They substitute one belief for another, but the way of their thought is the same. They are, for ever, the middle classes. As long as there are human beings they'll be there: and with them the big stinking mass, the sweaty workers—and above them all a few thinkers."

"Is there no hope then?" asked Arthur. "This mass, this motion, is there no meaning to it all?"

"A meaning in it all," repeated Leslie, ferociously sarcastic. "You might as well ask me if there isn't a half-past three in it all, for all the intelligibility of your question."

In Arthur resentment and obstinacy joined hands. "You're wrong, Leslie. Perhaps you and life have done with one another. But it's different with me. I know there's a meaning in life. I couldn't live if it were not so. I know that humanity has a purpose. Mankind is building greater than it knows. Would it have the heart to go on so long if there were no aim?"

His own words filled him with exaltation:

"You and I don't matter, Leslie. But the mass of us matters. My own little body and soul may perish, but all this"—he made a gesture which took in the city and the world—"all this lives for ever. We are tiny cells, if you like. I for my part would feel sick and unreal unless I played my small part worthily."

"I know that my Redeemer liveth," said Leslie. "Have it your way. You think it's God: I think it's puberty."

"You're dead," said Arthur, "or in a trance. And I am alive, because I live a life infinitely greater than my own. I live the life of man-

kind. I am with God and you are with the worms."

"That's right," said Leslie. "Get abusive."

"You're hopeless," sighed Arthur.

"Quite. What you're trying to do is get me down to the age of twenty-two, when I thought I believed in God and democracy and the human species. And you still look for salvation in the masses, don't you?"

"Where else shall I look for it?" asked Arthur. "In the middle classes, God save us? In the intellectuals, like you? I'm a democrat because there's nothing else to be, because I've been repulsed by all but the ignorant masses. If there's something in life, it will be found with them. They're still untampered with. They're big, they're vital. They're too strong to be mean and too deep to be dirty."

Leslie looked disgustedly at Arthur.

"I'll tell you what, sonny," he said. "We'll give you a lesson in democracy some evening."

Arthur did not understand.

"Never mind what I mean," said Leslie. "I have a course in mind—a five-hour course which ought to start a cure. Some evening next week or so."

"That's folly, Leslie, you'll never change me."

"I will," said Leslie.

"Never!" answered Arthur fiercely. "Never!"

"Never!" he repeated later in the evening, as he walked homewards through the surge of men and women along Fifth Avenue and Broadway. No one would ever beat the faith out of him. He would keep it as long as he breathed; he would consecrate to it his last moment of consciousness.

Contact with the crowd always brought him to himself. It renewed him as light renews life. This, the vast, many-throated monster, mattered, this great blind power, spilling through a thousand streets.

"America!" he said to himself—a word of infinite strength. America! Greater than she knew, America, the dumb and terrible, untouched by the silly stupidities of the worldly successful, untouched by the Winners and Stewarts!

What treachery if he were to turn his back on this greatness, treachery to himself, to life, to God.

He dared use the word, God, for the spirit which moved him then. He felt he could restore to that name its true magnificence, rescue it from the ignominy in which his class had dragged it.

"I will be clean and strong," he said to himself. "I will not let them work their will on me."

A prophetic sense of the long and bitter struggle in front of him served only to strengthen him then. He would be a greater fanatic than his father. He would struggle with all the powers of darkness and prevail.

"God be with me always and keep me pure," he said, many times.

CHAPTER VII

BETWEEN Muriel and her sister Alice, younger by five years, there was sincere friendship, but not much understanding. Alice was too intelligent not to feel the human value of her sister, but then, she was too fond of temporal pleasures to follow the quieter path with Muriel. There was no clash between them: in actual life profound differences of character and purpose are often hidden under common customs and a common exterior. In effect, it appeared that Muriel liked books rather more and visitors rather less, while Alice preferred to pass over books hastily and grow serious over dresses.

They themselves did not feel that their lives were to be widely separate, for there appeared to be so much in common between them. But in reality the same words meant different things to each of them. In their revolts against their parents, Alice's protests were almost meaningless. They were merely young blood impatient of old blood. But Muriel thought she knew what was wrong, in a way. Alice could say "Older people are awful fakes, aren't they?"

and mean it as a half-laughing acquiescence in things, whereas to Muriel these words conveyed a tremendous denunciation.

And so Alice, who had picked up from her father—whose especial weakness she was—some hints as to the status of Arthur, felt herself free to take up the subject with Muriel, only a few days later. It happened in Muriel's bedroom, when the rest of the household was asleep. Alice was alive with interest, and Muriel knew she was coming to her, but this she did not mind. There was an indescribable difference between Alice and her mother, for whatsoever Alice's inclinations, whatever her tendency to follow later in her mother's footsteps, she was at least young, and to talk to her of love was somehow more decent and permissible.

Both girls knew what the subject of conversation was going to be. Muriel had snuggled herself against the wall, as a kind of symbol of her desire to play the passive rôle at the beginning, and Alice sat hunched at the head of the bed, frowning and smiling alternately, as though she could not carry off a diplomatic bluff as yet.

At that moment Muriel felt a broad wave of affection for her sister. Perhaps it was reaction from the loathing her mother had inspired in her and perhaps it was spontaneous, but just then Alice, half-roguish, half-serious,

and wholly sincere, grappling for some sort of conversational opening, stirred in Muriel a profound friendship. The girl was clean, natural, a delight to eye and heart.

"Papa told me something," said Alice at last, twinkling at a picture on the wall opposite.

"Well?"

"Nothing."

The meaning behind those words! In Alice's breast there was vicarious unrest, anticipation, and envy: and Muriel was holding her breath, before the conversation took its final, irretrievable plunge.

Alice sighed: "I'm glad, Mu. I'm awfully glad."

"Why, Ally?"

Alice shook her head. "I don't know, but I'm awfully glad."

"You silly kid," and Muriel could have flung her arms around her sister. "But why should you be glad?"

"Well, won't you be glad when it happens to me?" asked Alice, and, hunched up, hugged her knees closer, as if in anticipation of approaching delights.

"But what's happened, you crazy kid?"

"Don't pretend, Mu. I told you papa told me."

"What did he tell you?"

"Mu, you hypocrite!"

"I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

"I'm not."

Alice swayed backwards and forwards and, her eyes still fixed on the wall opposite, said, to the rhythm of her swaying, "Yes—you—are —yes—you—are—!" Her face was aflush with responsive emotions. She was indescribably charming, even in Muriel's eyes. There was double happiness in Muriel, because of Alice.

"Of course I'll be glad," conceded Muriel, at last, and something fluttered in her because she had made the admission. And then, stronger than her control, came the words, "Alice, you're a darling."

"I know I am," said Alice, smiling, "and you're not because you didn't tell me first."

"But Ally, I didn't tell anybody. They found out."

"I don't care. You ought to have told me anyway. I'll tell you, you know I'd tell you."

"But, Alice dear, there wasn't anything to tell."

Muriel was dimly aware of a certain descent in herself. There was a vague uneasiness in talking, even with Alice, of things so beautiful and elusive, in terms of social actuality.

"Muriel, you're a beastly old swindle. I

know it's a secret, because papa told me it was. But I tell you I know."

"What do you know?"

"Well—" Alice hesitated, and then, in a quick whisper— "that you're engaged to Arthur Winner. Now!"

A violent thrill passed through Muriel—first terror, that one should use that commonplace word—and then a queer mingling of happiness and quick relief.

"Is that what papa said?" almost to herself. Engaged to Arthur! The daring of that thought! She would never, never, have dared use a word so definite—almost gross. But now that another had uttered it, it danced in her mind. Engaged! Engaged to Arthur! She could not speak.

"Muriel, isn't it true?"

"I don't know," she managed to utter.

"Then it's true," said Alice, with infinite assurance. "It's true, and I'm awfully glad, because he's a darling."

"It's mean, it's gross, to think like that," said Muriel to herself, and she tried to resent Alice's interference. But she could not. She was trembling from head to foot, as when she had left Arthur that unforgettable evening. Engaged! To Arthur! It was marvellous that such a thing should be possible—and somehow

it was sacrilegious. And yet she dared not deny her pleasure in it.

"I don't know what I want," she said, choking.

The exaltation passed over to Alice.

"It must be wonderful," said Alice, and, shutting her eyes tightly, felt that the arms she passed round her body were not her own. She did not belong to herself at that moment: she was another's, the possession and joy of some compelling, overwhelming individuality.

"Yes, it's true," said Alice. "I feel it's true. It must be true." It seemed to her that to deny that truth for Muriel would be to deny it for herself.

"What must be true?" Muriel was driven to ask Alice to repeat that word.

"That you're engaged."

"Alice, darling!" Muriel did not know how to protest. But when the first thrill had passed away, that word—engaged!—rang strangely in her ears. It was as though a lovely mask had suddenly dissolved from off a familiar thing. Was this all it meant? She remembered something great, infinitely beautiful and intimate. It was mean to talk of it in this way.

"Alice, don't speak of it like that."

"Don't you love him, Mu?"

"Don't, Alice."

Alice could not understand, and Muriel knew

it, but she could not accuse her sister of being like her mother. And yet . . . an echo of the loathing her mother had wakened shook her now. Or perhaps she herself was crazy, an impossibilist. Suppose she did love Arthur—and Arthur loved her, what then? Of course they would want to—her mind balked at the word—they would want to marry each other. And if they wanted to marry each other, why, they were—engaged. And she was a fool for thinking that she was different from the rest of the world.

Only why had it seemed so different, so much more marvellous, before mother and Alice had begun to talk about it? Surely it had to be talked about. And who should talk of it more naturally than a mother or sister? And yet . . . She tried again to revolt; something was strangling her.

"Alice, do you think I'm crazy?"

The flush had passed away from Alice. Her frank, brown little face had lost its mystic expression.

"No, of course not. I know I'd feel funny talking about it for the first time."

Was that it then? All this bother and to-do in her world was just "maidenly coyness."

"But just look at the fun of it," continued Alice. "Why, it's the greatest thing in the

world. I bet you mama and papa have started making preparations, and they're talking about a trousseau, and papa's been to the bank, and then they've got to arrange where the ceremony will be, and the bridesmaids, and what you'll be married in, and whose going to be the clergyman——"

Alice babbled on, and Muriel tried to conquer herself. It was stupid of her—Alice was right—perhaps even mother was right.

"Mu, are you going to have an engagement ring?"

"No, no, no."

"It's nothing, Mu. It's only a matter of taste. I think you're right. It's awful to be walking about announcing to everybody that you're ticketed off to be married."

"But what about a wedding ring?" asked Muriel, somewhat surprised at these words.

"Well, you *are* married then," said Alice, laughing. "It's no use pretending anything else, and if you don't wear the ring people'll think you're just up to mischief, that's all."

"You always think of practical things, Ally."

"Indeed I do," said Alice, seriously. And she did feel herself more capable and worldly than her sister, despite a certain vague suspicion that Muriel harbored strange, untranslatable abilities. "And after all an engagement ring isn't

so foolish," she added, defiantly. "It does make things clear, you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, words are words. When a man makes love to you nobody's supposed to be listening. And he says what he likes and thinks what he likes. But if you're wearing a ring he gave you, all the world can see that, and there can't be any mistake about it."

Was this the right way of looking at it? Muriel was astounded at this mixture of innocence and astuteness in her sister. Then she excused her: when she would love, she too would feel differently.

Alice guessed something of what Muriel thought. "Why, Mu, I don't mean that Arthur's that kind of man. I'm sure if a man loved me it wouldn't be the ring that would convince me. But still——"

Her thoughts were not quite clear. She broke off. "Mother said she thinks we ought to have a little party or something, just one or two friends——"

"What for?" asked Muriel.

"Well, you know, just so. Not to announce anything really, she said. She only meant a kind of friendly gathering, with the MacAlisters and the Gross's and you and Arthur. Father said it was really a secret, and nothing ought to

be said, and only we would really know about it. Some time next fortnight, or so. It would be fun. Only the family knowing, and I bet you all the others guessing and speculating, and Mrs. MacAlister trying to pump me, and I'd keep close and just hint, and then say outright that it was nonsense, but of course one never knows ——" she ended up with a peal of laughter.

Muriel had turned her face to the wall. She was ashamed, down to her innermost consciousness. Surely Alice meant no harm: and yet she was so hopelessly . . . vulgar.

"What do you think, Mu?"

"Perhaps, Ally."

"I bet you I'll get more fun out of it than you——"

"Ally, I want to sleep."

"No, you don't. You want to dream." And Alice pinched her sister. "You bet I know."

But she kissed Muriel and went off to her room, and Muriel lay wide awake, and wondered what it all really meant, and why she could not see things as Alice saw them.

Was it true that Arthur could say things and then forget them? No, no, it was incredible. She could never, never forget. They had said things, without words, but both of them had understood, and those things were surely eternal.

She wanted no word from Arthur. She wanted

only his presence; she wanted to walk with him and feel that both of them had forgotten the outside world.

Alice, foolish little Alice! What could she understand, with her silly worldliness! Rings! Engagements! Parties! What had all this to do with Arthur? As long as he was there . . .

A shiver ran suddenly through her body. Could he love her and yet leave her? He was a strange boy.

"Arthur," she whispered suddenly. He must not leave New York, as he had threatened. He must stay near her.

Her thoughts were altogether incoherent. One instant she would remember with something akin to anguish his deep brown eyes. Then followed a stabbing pain—he would go away! Then his eyes again. Then revolt—he *must* not go away. He must stay near her. Was Alice right? Was mother right? Had she to do something in order to keep him? Had she to make him speak, flaunt him in the eyes of others, so that he would feel himself thoroughly compromised?

She played with the idea of the party her mother had suggested. Of course it had only one purpose: everyone would notice the attentions she and Arthur would pay each other.

Well, what of it? Did it matter to her and Arthur? Let others talk, they loved each other.

And then, was it true, what her mother had said, that Arthur's father was so bitter about Arthur's coming into the business? Did it mean so much—that Arthur would get nothing from his father?

There was no thought of herself in this: she thought with dismay of Arthur suddenly penniless—humiliated.

And then—Arthur would be unable to marry her for ever so long. She tried to dislodge this thought, but it stuck. She did not care. She wanted Arthur's love, not marriage . . . She tried to make herself believe this, but a vehement denial throbbed in her heart.

She felt terror stifling her. She must know at once whether Arthur was still in New York. She would not sleep that night unless she found out.

She got out of bed and walked to the door of her room. What was she going to do? The knowledge of her utter impotence came over her. She would have to wait till tomorrow, till Arthur came. And if he did not come.

She opened the door of her room carefully, and listened. She heard nothing but the throbbing of her blood. Very carefully she pulled the door to behind her, and took two steps down the lobby, toward the stairs.

She was going to telephone to Arthur's house. If he answered her, good. If another answered,

she would drop the receiver without disclosing herself. The silliness of the subterfuge made her blush. But then, if only Arthur would answer . . .

She went down the stairs and reached the alcove between the dining-room and the drawing-room. She picked up the receiver boldly. Central's voice seemed to ring through the house. She answered quickly and softly with the number, and heard the ringing at the other end.

"Hello!"

It was Arthur!

She answered in a voice uncontrollably weak —"Hello!"

"Muriel!" Arthur's voice was almost a whisper.

A pause. What was there for her to say? Surely he understood that she had called him without reason.

"I'm glad you called me, Muriel."

"Why?"

"Nothing . . . It was the one thing I wanted."

How good it was to hear him say this.

"Indeed, I was waiting for it, and I knew you were going to call me."

"Was it *you* I felt in me asking me to call you?" said Muriel, trembling, and then, under-

standing what she had said, she put down the receiver and covered her face with her hands.

At the other end of the wire Arthur sat tranced. "Was it you I felt in me asking me to call you?" He rehearsed the words again and again.

He went back to his room, and lay down to sleep, but not a touch of drowsiness was in him. All the world's beauty and gladness was in his heart then. He was aware now of immeasurable strength. How he would triumph over life, for Muriel's sake, and because she believed in him. "She has come to strengthen me." he thought, remembering momentary weaknesses and doubts. "Now I know why I must keep myself clean and not give in—that I may give myself to her."

What would poverty matter, loneliness, a struggle with all the world? He had to keep clean, for her sake. He had to keep out of the contamination of his father's world, because of Muriel. How could he come to her as one in the dirty cohorts of their world, stripped of beauty, of truth?

His thoughts flew in restless ecstasy from himself to Muriel and back again. How wonderful her face was—so simple and so pure. Like her acts, like her uncorrupted and uncorruptible self. No woman would ever dare to call a man

in the night with those words—"Was it you I felt in me asking me to call you?" She dared because she was infinitely beautiful, and beauty is not shamefaced. "Was it you I felt in me asking me to call you?"

Better than sleep and rest were those foreshadowings of the happiness and beauty that life could still afford. He did not sleep till the night was nearly gone, and the wind that ran before the dawn was shaking the trees along the drive.

CHAPTER VIII

It was a hard world, for mothers, reflected Mrs. Stewart. In her time mothers went to daughters and said, in effect, "You're in love with John Higgins? Good for you. We'll manage it together, and if you're not married to him by next Christmas, well, I'm not your mother." Perhaps one was not quite so crude. Love is love, after all, and one alludes to it gently. But they were impossible nowadays. The only sign the girl gives of being in love with the man is refusing to talk about him. "I don't want to talk about Mr. Winner," said Muriel. "I don't want to have his name mentioned."

So she got most of her information from Alice. Only the day after the bedroom conversation between the sisters, she had Alice in the witness box as it were. Alice was willing—even delighted.

"Why, mama, she's crazy about him. Accept him? Why you couldn't keep her from him with —with a bayonet."

"Well," said Mrs. Stewart, smiling, "it's a good match, and I'm glad you have the common

sense to realize it. Pity that Muriel can't see it in that light."

"But mama, darling, how can you expect her to? She's just nutty about him. She can't see the world for Arthur."

"There's no reason why she shouldn't be in love and realize that it's a good match at the same time. That's the way we were," said Mrs. Stewart with dignity, as though she were vaunting the moral superiority of her generation.

"Well, we ain't," said Alice, "but we get there just the same."

"Alice, please use proper language. I suppose results are what count, after all. I only wonder how Arthur Winner feels about her."

"He's just as crazy about her," said Alice. "Crazier."

"How do you know, Alice?"

"I can tell it by the look in Muriel's eyes. You know—that perfect-bliss look. Take it from me, mama."

"I'm glad," said Mrs. Stewart, thoughtfully. "It's only the question of managing him. Now listen, Alice darling. You must do your best, too. You know that Arthur's father——"

"Yes, mama, papa told me everything. I think the party idea is an awfully good one."

"Why?"

"Because it'll really put things up to Arthur, if he's a man, and of course he is. I'm sure everybody there'll hint enough by their looks to make it clear what a wonderful pair they are, and all that sort of thing. But mama, it won't be so easy to get Muriel to invite him."

"Why can't we invite him?"

"Oh, because, mama. Because if Muriel invites him it shows that she's the one who's pushing the thing to a head, and that makes it harder for him."

Mrs. Stewart stared at her daughter thoughtfully. "She'll go a long way," she thought.

Alice, seeing the stare, broke into happy laughter.

"There's the question, though," said Mrs. Stewart, hardening suddenly, "Will Muriel invite Arthur? You know how that girl is feeling."

"Sure she will," said Alice.

"She won't even mention his name to me," said Mrs. Stewart, resentfully. "She flew out of the room when I mentioned it casually this morning."

"Leave it to me, mama," said Alice. "I know just when that moony-get-off-the-earth-you-vulgar-creatures feeling'll go away, and she'll start weighing up things—if it hasn't gone away already."

Mrs. Stewart didn't quite like that kind of talk. "No!" she said sharply. "Don't you talk to Muriel. It's my place to do that. I want Muriel to know that I'm doing my best to help her."

"Well, I thought you'd prefer it," said Alice, unruffled. "Muriel's awfully touchy, you know."

Every implication on Alice's part that her mother might fail only strengthened her determination. "I want to know," said Mrs. Stewart firmly, "when all this is over, that I did it, that I didn't desert my daughter, and let things go on just so. I shall arrange it with Muriel."

So it remained. Mrs. Stewart found an opportunity soon after lunch that very day. Alice withdrew discreetly to her own room and Mrs. Stewart found Muriel in the drawing-room.

With a distinct effort Mrs. Stewart assumed her rôle. She had a curious faculty for sincerity, like some transcendently skilful actor. As some persons can twist their bodies into all kinds of strange postures, so she could give an instantaneous twist to her mind, and hold it for an hour at a stretch. She took on a tenderly, motherly twist, having rejected a tentative authoritative twist as dangerous.

She sat down on the couch near Muriel.

"Muriel, dear."

"Yes, mama." Muriel was in a listless mood.

A night and morning of exaltation had receded from her, and now a vague pessimism enveloped her. She was distrustful of the outcome of all this: she could not believe that for her, Muriel, such beauty and happiness could be permanent.

The signs were good. Mrs. Stewart's very manner was tantamount to a declaration that she was going to talk about Arthur—and Muriel had not shied.

"Muriel, dear," said Mrs. Stewart, softly, and adding vigorously an additional twist to her tenderness. "You know"—her voice was tremulous—"you know how anxious I am to see you happy. There isn't a thing in the world that I wouldn't do for my daughters."

"Yes, mama," Muriel's voice was quiet and resigned.

"Don't be sad, Muriel. Trust me—" and she added with masterly instinct, feeling the girl's depression—"everything will be all right in the end."

The meaningless words were a comfort to Muriel.

Muriel felt weak and helpless. Other people, like her mother, seemed somehow to go after things, conquer them, get them. In this acquisitive world she was lost. The best might come to her, and she could not stretch out a hand to take it. It was drifting away from her—

it was still within reach—it would be gone in a moment. And there was her mother, ready to help her—her mother, hard as iron, but swift in action, dreadful—and reliable.

"I wish I were like you, mother," she said, miserably.

Mrs. Stewart was almost startled out of her twist.

"Why Muriel, it's lovely of you to say that—" she began to untwist slowly towards friendly jocularity, but she kept a firm grip on herself. "Trust me, Muriel, and I will make you happy."

It was very likely, thought Muriel, and if she trusted herself she would end up in wretched fashion. She *could* not do things. Yet it was miserable to have to rely on others—to interpose alien and unfeeling hands between herself and the beauty she longed for. Arthur—that elusive boy—how could she alone hold him? He would be gone in a day—why had he not telephoned that morning? He would be gone tomorrow, or the day after. Why should he stay near her? She was impotent to hold him.

Then suddenly she was crying on her mother's shoulder, all the helplessness and perplexity of her mood breaking out in quiet, repressed sobs. Mrs. Stewart was amazed, and gratified to the heart of her. She stared almost open-mouthed

at the portrait of her grandfather on the opposite wall.

"No, no, you child you. What's this for. Why, if I were you, I should be singing all day long."

Muriel gave way to her feelings. It was not a tenderness to her mother that had broken her reserve. She felt rather as if she were kneeling abandoned and suppliant in front of a great machine. She cried because she herself could do nothing, because all the strength and will lay in the hard machine, with foundations caissoned deep in the earth and vast wheels that swung arms over cities.

"I'll do everything you say, mama," she whispered at last, and a chill shame came over her.

"Muriel dear, you talk as though I'm going to ask you to—to—goodness knows what; why, there's hardly anything to do, hardly anything."

Muriel wanted to ask, "Will it be all right, everything, mother?" but thus far she could not go.

"Listen, Muriel dear," added her mother slowly. "There's nothing to do. Just let things go on like that. I suppose you'll see Arthur this evening—you surely will. And tomorrow evening too. Well, tomorrow evening just ask him to

come to a little party—oh, just a private dance, or what not, eh? Say this Saturday, eh? Just friends, maybe the MacAlisters, and the Grosses, you know. You'll feel better after that, trust me. Trust your mother, Muriel. She'll take things in hand and inside of a month everything'll be fixed, and sure and certain."

"Fixed and sure and certain," said Muriel to herself, and set her teeth.

"And then afterwards," said Mrs. Stewart, more briskly, "We'll speak about other things, eh? Mustn't do too much at a time. Muriel dear, never, never, never let a man get a suspicion that you're managing him."

"No, mama."

Mrs. Stewart was still puzzled at her daughter's depression.

"But why do you feel like this, Muriel?"

"I don't know." Muriel took better hold of herself to speak bluntly. "I'm sometimes afraid it'll all come to nothing."

"My dear!" Mrs. Stewart was shocked. "It's going to come to the right end. But you'll have to manage it, that's all. You have to be up and doing."

"Doing what, mama?"

"Why, this invitation to the party, for one thing. You don't think this party means nothing to you, do you? Arthur's going to come to the

party, and believe me before he goes away he's going to feel that it's high time for him to speak up and say something."

What can I say, thought Muriel. It's either her way of doing things, or it's nothing at all. And perhaps nothing would be better.

No! She shuddered at the thought of losing Arthur.

"The MacAlisters, and the Grosses and perhaps the Simpson girls. Next Saturday. That's time enough. I'll start today—and you can start planning too. Or you might drop them a note yourself."

When her mother left her Muriel sank into despair. Something tangible weighed her down. She had perpetrated a deliberate meanness, a desecration. And what words would she find with which to invite Arthur to that hideous party? How weak, how foolish she had been. Why had she told her mother? Why had she so cheapened the beauty of her love?

But if she had not told her mother, what would have been left? Suppose Arthur were to pursue his wild scheme, and leave New York—become a beggar somewhere? What then?

Did he not need someone to shelter him, someone less uncompromising than himself, who would understand his world as well as his father's? Did he not need someone to soften the

hard contact of the two worlds, lest he should be broken between them?

Brazenly, and half against her own will, she followed up this thought. He was too pure to make anything of life. Oh, how well she would shelter him! She would sell her own soul, she would lie, she would deceive him and her mother and everyone else, that he might be happy. Neither he nor her mother would know the double treachery.

But though she began to believe all this, yet the words that she tried to form to invite him to the party stuck in her throat.

CHAPTER IX

The sense of imminent combat which had been over Arthur for some time past sharpened suddenly the day after Muriel's telephone call. The morning had begun happily—how else could it have begun for him? He came to breakfast late, but the good humor that radiated from him seemed a kind of excuse. Eric and Elma were not at table, Eric because he breakfasted soon after seven, to be in time for his morning classes, and Elma because nobody could convince her that sleep from twelve to seven was just as good as from two to nine. Mr. Winner, generally very businesslike at breakfast, shone that morning, and even Richard, who managed to concentrate all the family dignity within himself, was almost jocund.

That very friendliness, however, was just what precipitated the trouble. That morning Mr. Winner, aware of the happier atmosphere, and feeling obscurely responsible for it, lingered a few minutes after his second cup of coffee, and felt himself impelled toward a few random remarks.

"I think I'll take an hour off this morning,

and go down and talk with that man Eldridge at the Excelsior Business College."

Arthur pricked up his ears.

"I'll be getting too busy later in the month, and then I won't get a chance. And the place mightn't please me as much as it does on the prospectus. I'd like to have time to see two or three other places, too."

He took a folder from his pocket, and turned the pages over. "Stenography. I don't think there's much sense in considering that. And yet I don't know. The boy may need it after all. Or typewriting. President Wilson used 'em at the peace conference, didn't he? Bookkeeping, m-m, Commercial English, Business Organization, Efficiency, I don't trust these courses in Efficiency, somehow." He looked up. "It isn't the kind of thing one can really teach. It really amounts to character formation, if you come to think of it—making the mind systematic and disciplined. Well, that isn't easy. Most of these fellows spend too much time talking about efficiency to be efficient—that's my way of looking at it. They're like people who're going crazy on the subject of sanity."

Richard nodded. "But it's a wonderful thing when taught," he said, "making a fellow feel from his very childhood that there's a sloppy way of doing everything, and a right, clean-cut way. That's the difference."

"Yes," said Mr. Winner. "That's one of the things I want to see this Eldridge man for. I don't want him to be teaching Eric the principles of success unless he has made a success of his school. I'll say that plainly. A man who's keeping a one-horse school isn't the man to teach my boy how to succeed."

Arthur felt the trouble that was coming. There had been indefinite talk in the house of what to do with Eric when he left public school. There had been talk of a scientific career, of classics, of business. Mr. Winner, who often made decisions alone, and afterwards solicited advice in support of them, had been reserved on the subject. As a matter of fact there was still time to influence him. To Arthur the idea of a business school for Eric was indescribably loathsome. As between science and the classics, it was for the boy to decide, and in either case there was a chance for general education. But a business school! It was revolting! What kind of a human being could a school of that kind turn out?

"I like the school, from the prospectus," said Mr. Winner. "It's broad. They've got civics, I notice. Elective, of course. But it's the right spirit." Then he began to read from the last paragraph.

"The Excelsior Business College is not an institution which aims to turn out soulless, mechan-

ical workers without initiative or individuality. It aims rather at the development of the individual by skilful guidance in a cheerful atmosphere of productive activity. It seeks to cultivate those human virtues which, independently of all courses, equip the man for the battle of life: promptness, accuracy, adaptability, affability, a sense of business responsibility. It teaches the young man to be a booster and not a knocker: it advocates friendly cooperation rather than destructive criticism. It inculcates the clear doctrine that inefficiency, irresponsibility, lack of initiative and snap, inability to seize the opportunities of life at the right moment—that all these lead to failure and unhappiness. In a single phrase, the Excelsior Business College is an American institution in the best sense of these words."

"That doesn't read so badly," said Mr. Winner. "Though of course you can't rely on that very much. Very often, you know, the head of the school gets someone to write up a snappy prospectus. It sounds good but it has nothing to do with the school. Eldridge is the only man I need see. I can tell what's what after ten minutes with him."

Arthur listened grimly, and his face darkened. So that would be the end of his dreams for Eric, the hope he had nourished of seeing the

boy grow up into a full man, of helping him with his courses, of long talks about books, about right thinking and right living: this would be the end of it—pep, snap, courtesy which pays. . . .

Yet how could he raise objections? Was he not himself a centre of family storm? And was not this decision of his father's only another move?

"Have you absolutely decided to send Eric to a business school?" he asked his father suddenly.

"Almost, Arthur."

"It's a pity."

"Where's the pity?" asked Mr. Winner.

"The boy needs a general education."

"Well," said Mr. Winner. "Perhaps he does. But what the boy needs first is an education which will help him make a success of life."

"And supposing I do send Eric to high school," he went on after a pause. "What's going to happen? At the age of twenty-three he'll find out he's too poetical and too soulful for business."

Arthur saw the attack developing.

"Besides," went on Mr. Winner. "The business end of the Winner Shoe is more important. You'll get lots of people to produce shoes, but few folks can handle the selling of them. If you'd gone into the business end of it, maybe

Eric needn't have had to go through a business college. He could go to high school and take up science."

"Don't you think that a general education is going to make a better businessman out of him?" said Arthur, determined to keep himself out of the argument, despite his father's attempt to involve him in a kind of bargain.

"No sir," said Mr. Winner. "I've seen it in your case. I want that boy to have his mind on the business. He's got to eat business, drink it, sleep it, dream it—or he won't do. You were my big mistake."

Arthur held off from further argument, but he went out of the breakfast room seething with anger. The intangible oppression round him was taking form. He had never believed that his father really meant to condemn the boy to the vulgarity of a business school—and it was here.

The indecency of it! And there was no one who could put out a hand to stop it. Arthur almost visualized the slow and steady disintegration of the boy's integrity of spirit—the gradual advance of orthodox business psychology, the shallow, professional optimism, the infinite hypocrisy and lying altruism, the vulgar goodfellowship, the lying courtesy, the restless, unslumbering hunt after gain, every human foot-

hold, every human nook considered a business advantage.

He tried to shake off this spirit of impotent protest, to think of something definite, a plan . . . But that was futile. What plan could he evolve? They had the boy, they would not let go.

Yield himself up as a substitute conscript? Go into business in order that the boy might get a decent education? They would both be lost that way.

Fight them? Folly! How fight if not with their own weapons? Were they not invulnerable otherwise? Why, if Christ were to come among these brazen-faced successes, they would never listen to Him unless he could prove Himself a smarter business man than they. Then they would believe there was something worthwhile in what He had to teach.

"And if I fight them I must fight them on their own ground, and beat them at their own game. If I want to save Eric I must be a better businessman than they, and by the time I am a better businessman than they, they will have beaten me. I shall be what they wanted me to be."

And then he thought of Muriel, and his heart became heavy in him. There was another like himself, as helpless. All her beauty and sweet-

ness counted for nothing in this world. At most they were pretty ornaments. People admired her. But if she married poorly, if she did not make her life too, a success, what was she? "She wasted herself on a slacker."

Many minutes went by. Then he rose to make ready for a lecture he had that morning, and he began to put his papers in order. But his thoughts ran on elsewhere.

A change was about to come into his life. What, how, whence, he could not tell yet. But he knew that the days of indecision were drawing to a close, and it galled him to think that not he, but blind events, might determine his future life. He wanted to take hold of life himself, turn it to disaster, rather than be its thing.

He went out along the drive, musing, wondering. Who knew where he would be in a year's time, with whom associated, and in what enterprise? Not with his father, surely. There was only one experience in this life that he would carry over into the new life that was coming—Muriel.

"I will be alone for a long time," he said to himself. "Except for her."

He felt himself submerged in perplexities. What was the meaning of this bond between himself and Muriel? "Shall I take her with me?

Whither? Into a struggle which is only for a man?"

He was utterly bewildered now. He could not follow two consecutive thoughts. He felt the purpose of his life, obscurely veiled but powerful, calling him urgently. Then he looked round him, and found himself opposite the College. He looked at the papers he was carrying and a kind of primitive amazement came over him. What was he doing here, in this foolish place? What could all this mean to him, this place of taboos and silly conventions, of spiritless knowledge and sham prophetic spirit. At the foot of the steps that led up to the lecture hall he stopped for a breathless moment. He was done with all this! He realized it suddenly, irresistibly. It was not for him.

With beating heart he turned round, and went back towards the town. He knew as certainly as he could know anything that he was done with college, with courses, with Professors and students. He would return here never again. He had sterner battles to fight than with books, and he was wasting his energies here.

And then light-heartedness returned to him. It was as though he had shaken himself free of ancient chains. He felt stronger. This was only the first resolution out of many which would gradually straighten out his life.

One thing at a time. This was the first step. His father had wanted him to stay on at college because it had acted as a kind of sedative on his nerves. It delayed the conflict, and helped to weaken him in advance. But there would be no more delay. They would break definitely now on this question of Eric's going to a business school.

And he felt in himself new confidence. He was in the swim now. College was already a thing of the past.

Half an hour later he walked, radiant, into the Apollo Bookshop. He wanted to tell Leslie of his decision. At the sound of his joyous footsteps Leslie emerged from behind a high double shelf.

"Hello, Leslie!"—Arthur's voice rang through the dingy little bookshop.

Leslie looked him over with his queer, Cockney little eyes:

"What makes you so cheerful?"

"Nothing. I've quit College."

"Well, what about it?"

Under Leslie's incalculable sophistication fold on fold, there lurked a natural instinct. Arthur, young, fresh, spontaneous, appealed to that instinct, even as Arthur's moral outlook repelled him. He looked at the boy in a queer, shamefaced way, his way of expressing affection.

"Do you know why you village people don't give a damn about life?" asked Arthur suddenly. "It's because your vitality's ebbed away. You pretend it's intellectual superiority, and sophistication and that kind of thing. But it isn't. It's just lack of the life force."

"You've said that before," said Leslie. "You're always telling me that you've got God on your side and I've got the worms."

"Well, the nearer the truth a thing is, the oftener it should be said. Leslie, how's everybody down here?"

"Jennie's fine."

"And how's Boris?"

"How the Hell do I know? Or the rest of them. Frank's hatched a poem. Absolute drivel. I told him so, so he's kept away for a week. But he's writing another, and he'll bring that too to be read. They just can't resist it. He knows I'll call it piffle—but he comes down, kind of sick at heart in advance, and reads it to me. It's the fascinated bird and serpent stuff."

The door above was darkened suddenly and a little, ill-dressed man, with sallow, unshaven cheeks and hungry eyes came in hurriedly.

"Hello, Leslie."

"Hello, Ezekiel."

"Won't you lend me fifteen cents for breakfast?" said the little man, with a strong Yid-

dish accent. "I've got to be paid for a poem today or tomorrow."

Arthur's presence did not seem to abash him. He looked eagerly at Leslie.

"Sure," said Leslie, and fished for change in his pockets. "Ezekiel here writes poetry in five languages."

"It's true," said the little Jew to Arthur. "I'm learning a sixth now—Italian, and hope to write some poems in it soon. You can't make ends meet on five languages. Thank you, Leslie."

"How's your big work coming, Ezekiel?"

The little Jew blazed up suddenly. Despite his obvious hunger he stopped and seized hold of Leslie by the lapel of his coat.

"It's wonderful," he said eagerly. "I lie awake of nights and marvel at the power that is going into it. I tell you, Leslie there will come a time when the peoples of the world will read what God says through me, and the exile of man will be over."

Leslie shook his shoulders helplessly. "Those Jews!" he said. "Here, talk to this guy—" indicating Arthur. "He's capable of anything."

"I can't just now," said Ezekiel, weakening suddenly. "I'm so hungry. I was awake half the night, wrestling with the spirit."

"What language do you write in?" asked Arthur.

"The real language, you mean? My own language? I write in Hebrew. I do not really write. It is spoken from on high, and I transcribe. It is the word of salvation. The children of this generation are sunk in evil, and they pursue ugliness, and I will not go with them. My way is with God, and I walk in His purity. Please excuse me. If I don't get some coffee and rolls I'll fall down. I've had nothing in my mouth since yesterday early morning."

He scurried away up the stairs.

Arthur and Leslie stared at each other. "There you are," said Leslie, "he's with the masses and the rest of it. He believes in the Great Throb."

"Do you class me with him, Leslie?" asked Arthur, musing.

"Sure you're alike. Both of you are silly futilities. Both of you are suffering from paranoic delusions. Neither of you can do with life what nature intended you to do—grab the best. And you'll both come to the same end. Do you think you are less ridiculous than he because you speak without an accent and because you are better dressed and don't have to beg fifteen cents for breakfast—yet?"

"There's no help for it, Leslie. Let me be as ridiculous as is possible, this is my way of life. I'll go neither your way nor my father's. Oh,

he's a clever man, my father. It's his work if I have delayed a decision so long. But he will benefit nothing by the delay. If the worst comes to the worst, I shall find a way for myself. I want a way of life which is genuine and authentic, in touch with spiritual realities, in line with the true onward movement of life. I want a way of life which has natural dignity and natural beauty."

"All that," said Leslie, half laughing, half pitying.

"That's the problem of this country," said Arthur. "Wealth we have; brains we have. We have courage and initiative and strength and endurance. But we have gone off on a foolish hunt. Our spirit is that of a mountebank; we have courage only for gross and palpable dangers, and initiative only for physical innovations. What's the good of all our qualities, then?"

"Well, I was that way fifteen years ago," said Leslie. "You'll change, and get into life's routine. If you were a boor and a fool, I would say to you, remain with yours. Get the pelf and the women and the power. As it is, I tell you, there is nothing in life worth struggling for, except your own liberty. Read, think, write, take Jennie and waste your days, brouse, keep clear of the middle class vermin and of the perspiring mob, become old, laugh at everything and every-

body. Don't let the preachers fool you into getting excited. They want you to support their particular form of things. Don't be fooled Arthur."

"They haven't fooled me, Leslie. It isn't that which makes me restless. It's the knowledge that life is so powerful, that there are masses which know the genuine things, hunger and need and effort and disappointment. There are masses in this country which will build a new world, great primitive forces, pure from the hand of the Creator. Don't you understand, one hundred million—it is life itself, it intoxicates, it gives you everything worth having, a sense of immortality even."

"What do you know of the masses?" asked Leslie, in a voice which contempt nearly converted into falsetto. "I will take you out some day and teach you what the masses are, you fool-democrat."

"I've heard that threat before," said Arthur unmoved. "Leslie, I've quit College. I'm going to quit home, and I'm going to quit the village. There's none of you can give me what I want."

CHAPTER X

It was evening before Arthur called Muriel. He whiled away the afternoon reading and thinking. More than once the impulse came over him to call her, but a mixture of motives, clear and obscure, held him back. He believed he stood now before a step which would be irretrievable, and a deep-rooted instinct bade him hesitate. And besides that, there was a queer epicure's pleasure in delaying the meeting with Muriel. It would be sweeter than anything he could imagine, so he held off, as it were for a climax. And before he called her, he staged a hundred different ways of meeting her, and a hundred detailed settings. He would call for her at home, and perhaps she, knowing he was there, would herself open the door. Or she would not hear the bell, and the maid would open the door. And he would go in unannounced and she would look up swiftly, and they would both be silent. Or else she would see him from a window, and he would look up and meet her glance—and stand stock-still for a moment.

He called her at last.

"Muriel."

"Yes, Arthur."

"I'm coming to see you. I'll be up in less than an hour."

"Yes, Arthur."

"Muriel."

"Yes?"

". . . nothing . . . I'll see you soon." Other words were choked back.

"Yes Arthur."

It was all she could say, his name. When she had put the receiver down she went up into her own room, and waited there most of the time, unwilling to speak to anyone, or be spoken to. Most of all she dreaded her mother.

She walked up and down the room, then she lay down and looked at her wrist watch. She did not know from what direction Arthur was coming, so she felt a great circle closing in on her as he approached, and somewhere in that circle he was moving toward her. How deep were the waters that she felt now, covering her. She would never rise out of them. They would never sink or recede. As long as life was in her they would surround her—"deeper than plummet ever sounded."

She went back and forth from her room to the room that overlooked the Avenue. She looked out of the window, knowing he was

not yet due. And then at last she saw him. She ran back to her own room, put on her hat and coat, trembling, and ran out of the house. She could not meet him that evening where her mother might see them. But she knew that Arthur would be glad if she came out like this to meet him. She wanted him to know everything before she spoke.

"Arthur."

He did not answer. He stopped in his walking and took her hand.

"I didn't want you to come to the house just now."

"Where shall we go, Muriel?" Then, in a low voice, he added, "darling."

The unexpected love-word flushed through her like a caress. She looked at the ground. "Anywhere. Where we walked that evening."

They turned west. Unasked, she slipped her arm through his, and slowly they went down toward the river and then north. The sky was red above the Heights, illumined by the underside of a bank of clouds. The river was greyish purple. On the street winding above the river great trees stood up in full blossom. A few people were about, but they two saw none of them. They heard no one. The living world had shrunk to the tiny moving sphere that enclosed

them as they walked along. Everything outside that was dead or, if alive, it was only dumb warmth and pleasantness, just a setting to themselves.

It could not be that from this glory and exaltation life should revert to the stupid and the commonplace, thought Arthur, exulting. Whereto was this faculty given him, and the purification that went with it if not to lift him permanently beyond the life of his parents.

"Muriel, Muriel, Muriel, Muriel, Muriel," in his mind the word sang itself over and over again. "What shall I do with you, Muriel? Shall I not lift you, carry you away from here to the wilderness, carry you out into a cleaner life of labor and poverty? What shall I do with you, Muriel, Muriel, Muriel?"

Unbearable pain and unbearable happiness, one indistinguishable from the other, welled up in him. He dared not look at Muriel, knowing that tears were shining in her eyes.

But Muriel would not have seen him. She was walking in a world of her own, with her own conflict, her own agony. The beauty that flooded Arthur flooded her too. He was hers! She knew it. And because she was sure he was hers, the terror of her responsibility mingled with her triumph and her joy.

Oh, if she were only strong enough to leave him, knowing herself to be less than he! Having found love, to keep love clean.

What was the alternative? Could he take her somewhere, clear her of all responsibility? Should he turn his back on wealth and comfort, labor for a mean livelihood, the victim of all the ugly cares that go with poverty? He, Arthur, the beautiful-spirited, the graceful?

Or else—the advice her mother had given her. She turned cold when the details came back to her—the party, the MacAlisters, the Grosses, and perhaps the Simpson girls, inveigle him into marriage by the force of gossip, and with the marriage force him to do what was hateful to him . . .

The very thought of this gradual undermining of his integrity made her dumb. Why talk? Better now to walk with him, sit down with him in the shadow of trees and think only of lovely days to come, evenings together with him, silence between them, and the world a subdued symphony in their ears.

They walked slowly northwards, dreaming. Now and again they looked up at each other. Light shone in their eyes. There was laughter on their faces, but it did not come to utterance. They were afraid to speak. He was afraid to press on the arm that rested in his.

They went on through slowly darkening streets. They reached lonely, shaded walks, that went up- and down-hill. The great apartment houses passed, and gave way to cottages. They went on, through half-darkness, through the obscurest paths they could find.

They wandered round, wordless, seeking the spot where they had sat that evening. When the light had died away completely in the west, toward north, they found the place again, a tiny valley running east and west, and shaded with trees. A few lights shone here and there, hard blue in masses of green. The bell of the nearby convent, to the south, tolled dreamily. Far away, on the nearest road, the lights of passing cars twinkled right and left.

They found the same bench in the deserted hollow, and there they sat a long while, she with her head on his shoulder, one hand in his. Not one word of love had passed between them. There was nothing to be said. Now and again Arthur would raise the hand that rested on her shoulder, would pass it lightly over her head. Once he lifted back her face and, stooping swiftly, pressed a light quick kiss on her lips.

The bell had ceased tolling. The sky had darkened utterly. The wind woke and played with them as it played with the trees. From the tremendous city to the south, out of the swarming

distance, came a subdued, profound music, something infinitely sad, infinitely far-reaching.

"You will never leave me, Arthur," she whispered.

"Never, Muriel."

* * *

Dazed and happy, she left him, at last, near the door of her house. She stayed to watch him go. She was glad that, at the corner, he did not turn to look at her again.

Then she hardened herself for the ordeal that was coming. She succeeded in reaching her room unperceived, but she knew too well that her mother was lying in wait for her. If she could only get through it quickly, send her mother away soon, and be left alone to dream.

The door of her room opened and the light streamed in. Mrs. Stewart peered in and saw her.

"I didn't hear you come in, Muriel." She switched the light on, and closed the door behind her.

"Do you know what time it is?"

Muriel stared at her mother.

"It's two o'clock in the morning, if you please."

Muriel still stared. Mrs. Stewart came over with a swish of her dressing gown and seated herself by Muriel. Her face and voice were

both sleepy, her hair was in disorder. But through her weariness stared her will.

"Tell me, Muriel, have you at least had supper?"

Muriel started.

"What!" Mrs. Stewart was shocked. "You've had no supper! Now isn't that crazy? And that boy never thought of it. You come down with me, and you'll tell me everything downstairs. You can have some cold chicken and mayonnaise." She rose, expecting Muriel to rise too.

"I don't want anything, mama. I'm not hungry. I had something."

"It isn't true."

"Mama, I'm not hungry."

"Tut-tut, Muriel. Don't get angry." Mrs. Stewart became playful. She sat down near her daughter again. "Tell me, Muriel, what did he say? Does he say he loves you?" Mrs. Stewart put her arm round her daughter and looked eagerly into her eyes. It was as though she was trying to taste through her daughter something lost and now forbidden to her. She melted to her daughter.

"Tell me, Muriel darling, did he say he loves you?" she gloated over the word.

"Yes," said Muriel, with set teeth.

"My own, darling, daughter." Her arm be-

came tighter. She looked ecstatically at the girl. "He loves you. And you love him. And did you tell him about the party?"

"No."

"Of course not. Not tonight. It was the first night in which he told you he loves you. Oh, Muriel, it is a sacred night in your life. Bear that in mind. I know, because I am your mother. Love is the holiest thing in the world, and when love comes for the first time it is a wonderful thing." She sought her handkerchief. "The most sacred night in your life. Remember it, as I remember mine." She paused a moment. "Yes, of course, you couldn't speak to him tonight about the party. But you won't forget to ask tomorrow night, will you?"

"No, mama."

"Of course he'll come now. If he's told you he loves you, and I know he's a serious boy. I don't think he's like other young men. You know, nowadays, there are men who will say to a woman, 'I love you' and then—just nothing. He just says I love you and that's all there is to it. It's the fashion. But I know that Arthur isn't like that. A week on Saturday. You're sure he'll come?"

Muriel nodded, afraid to open her mouth lest she would scream.

"Then tomorrow I'll telephone to some peo-

ple, and so can you. But wait. Why shouldn't the Winners come too? That'll cinch matters. I'll talk that over with Mrs. Winner. You can leave that to me," she patted Muriel on the shoulder. "If you're not wearing an engagement ring in a month from now, I'm not your mother. Love works wonders, Muriel, don't ever forget that."

A quick doubt crossed her mind.

"You feel he loves you, don't you?"

"Yes, mama, yes, yes."

"Why are you so impatient, Muriel? You should only be too happy to talk it over with your mother. Because if he really loves you, the rest is a trifle. I wouldn't talk to him about the business till after the party, Muriel. You might even speak to him at the party about it. You don't know, Muriel, how proud young men feel at a party where it's shown they're engaged to someone. They'll do anything that evening. But you mustn't rush things."

"Yes, mama."

"You mustn't rush him, Muriel. There are modern, silly girls who don't know what love means. Love shouldn't be made into a kind of whip to get everything out of a man. You should be gentle with him. You should hint, not command. You mustn't make him feel that he's forced to do things because if he doesn't

you'll leave him. If you act like that you'll make him feel that you're using love as a kind of advantage over him. Never let him feel that way, Muriel. If you make him feel anything at all, make him feel that love is sacred, pure, unselfish, that for love a man does anything, because it is love. Never make a jest or a whip out of your love. Once a man feels that love is a jest or a whip, you can do nothing more with him. Keep it sacred, Muriel, keep it pure and holy. Good night, my daughter."

She imprinted a kiss on Muriel's ice-cold forehead. Then she rose and went majestically. She felt righteous and lofty and deserving of much reward, and she was certain she was going to get it.

And Muriel, left alone, cowered in the darkness, burning with unutterable shame. It was long before she came to herself, before sweeter memories drove from her mind the image of her mother and the unctuous sound of her voice. But even later, in the midst of happy and abandoned thoughts, the face and voice of her mother would suddenly emerge, and she would shrink as from an obscene threat.

CHAPTER XI

For Arthur there went by a number of days that were like a succession of undisturbed dreams. He forgot his father and mother. He forgot college, forgot the problems that had harrassed him day and night, forgot the Village, with its strange repulsion and attraction. He thought only of Muriel. With her he was too happy to be aware of happiness. Absent from her he lived in an unthinking daze of wonder and anticipation.

He saw her daily now, at all hours. One capricious morning a sudden whim seized both of them. They took a train out of the city and went to the Atlantic coast halfway down New Jersey. A whole day they walked southward along the beaches, quickly where there were visitors, slowly where there were few or none to be seen. They found a pleasant inn in one of the smaller towns, a place just opened, fresh with paint and new furniture. They laughed at everything, at the anxious proprietor, eager to please his first guests, at the perfect waiter whose envy of them was just noticeable, at the long rigmarole on the last page of the

menu, all about "leaving a dusty city and spending a glorious day by the sea and making the day happiest by visiting the New Epicure Inn, to which you should bring your family and friends if, etc., etc., etc."

When dusk came they took an automobile at a station and went for a ride along twisting roads, under new-blossoming trees, by pleasant houses, and broad dark fields. Sometimes they came out upon the sea again, sometimes they were lost in the labyrinth of roads. They did not ask the chauffeur if he knew his way. They half hoped he would not. Perhaps he was in a conspiracy to lose them somewhere.

On either side of them the field crickets chirped continuously, like applauding streets of happy fairy folk along the route of a visiting king and queen. Sometimes, by lakes, they heard the deep, melancholy booming of invisible bull-frogs. Those were the speeches of pompous city officials. The night held them close, full of understanding, larger of heart than the day. The dusk rejoiced with them. The stars knew of their happiness.

Those days Arthur talked little of himself and much of the world at large. He forgot himself in love, and remembered only mankind, as though, having himself attained the best, he wanted mankind to do the same.

He spoke of the wrong that people did themselves in the silly lust for success; they could never find themselves. They had become hypnotized by a process into believing it a purpose. He became angry and excited, argued as if in the presence of opponents. "Sure we must have shoes and clothes and food and houses, and someone has to produce them. But in God's name, why make an ideal of it? Is it an ideal to eat? Is it an ideal to put on shoes? Does one glorify the morning bath? Of course not. Then why glorify the food grower, or the tailor, or the soapmaker? Confound them! They can make soap so well, and trousers so well, that they insist on being admired.

"They went wrong because they left the masses. The poor masses, who have to bear all these abominations, who are harrassed, tortured day and night into buying, buying, buying, are different, Muriel. Do you know, I have just read a book with a special section on the psychoanalysis of advertising! Would you believe that? They are going to pursue you into the unconscious with appeals to buy chiclets! They are going to delve among the deepest, most primitive sources of power and emotion—in order that you may buy the Laxative of No Regrets. Can you imagine anything more obscene?

"Success! Success! Success! Put it across.

Put it over. Hang them all. Cannot a man be great, God-fearing, without success? Success? And where is dignity? Where is sweetness? Where is simplicity? Who shall inherit the earth, the God-like or the Go-Getter? Whose praises shall be sung by the angels, the lover's or the live wire's?"

How much stronger he felt the truth since Muriel was his! How much clearer and cleaner things were to him.

"If at least they would be content with material things! If they would gather all the riches of the earth and stew in them, and if all the iron and gold were theirs, and nothing were ours but our souls! But not even that! They must have our souls too. We too must be peppy and must worship their peppiness. Is it Christ? Is it God? No, sir. It is Snap and Smashing Personality. Is this the thing mankind was intended for? Is this the purpose of our country?"

They were walking, when he spoke those words, along Broadway. It was night, and above there rose and fell in automatic alternation the light of a famous tire advertisement—a pun conceived and illustrated in the spirit of The Perpetual Grin That Pays.

"Do you see that, Muriel? That imbecile witticism has stared New York in the face for I don't know how many years. Can you expect

a people to be free and great who must see that piece of idiocy every day for ten years? I tell you, Muriel, America will not be free until the masses who have suffered this arise, and tear down that abomination and destroy it.

"Argue with them, with my father, with his crowd? It's crazy—I see it now. If I spoke to the management of that tire company, do you know what he'd reply. 'My dear sir, the fact that this tire advertisement has annoyed you is proof that we have put it across.' He reminds me of one toad I have heard of who, in the days of his obscurity, had his name and address printed on his card, and, in a corner, the words 'please mention me.' It didn't matter if they mentioned him as a fool, as a knave—as long as he got the advertisement. And he got it. Oh for a wind from the Atlantic, Muriel, for a great wind, to sweep this country clean, and give us a fresh start, with God as our guide . . ."

So he talked those days, and Muriel listened, tranced by his voice and by his passion. She felt, she knew that the power that glowed in his words was for her. He praised God, he flayed humanity, but in all this he was wooing her. Beneath his enthusiasm, his exaltation in the name of the universe, there was the steady undertone of his love for her.

And she, what could she say to him? How could she speak to him of her mother's plans? How could she mention the party, an engagement, a ring (loathsome!). How, against the torrent of his speech, bring up the subject of his entering his father's business?

Terrified and yet strangely delighted, she saw him receding from the plans that were laid for him. Day after day went by and she found herself deeply and more deeply involved in a mesh of procrastination and subterfuge. There was inquisition every night at home.

"Have you invited him to the party, Muriel?" The question became very blunt and imperative.

A nod, a helpless sinking of the heart.

"Will he come?"

"Yes."

Muriel counted in her sick heart on a simple trick. The evening of the party she would just ask him plainly to come to the house. Once there together with the others, he would stay, and the thing would be done. It could not fail. How miserable it was! But there was no other way of delaying it from day to day.

And then other questionings. "Muriel, do you and Arthur ever speak of the business?"

"Yes, mama."

"Have you made him understand, Muriel, that his father will not under any circumstances hear

of his engagement to you unless he has fixed a definite date to join his father's business?"

"And does he tell you often that he loves you?"

"And do you love him?"

"Does he know that you love him?"

This was the tenor of those nightly interviews. As evening succeeded evening Mrs. Stewart became less circumlocutory and more insistent. Her idea of delicacy was just carefulness at the beginning. Once the conversation was firmly established she could not understand the purpose of hint and allusion.

Muriel hardened herself progressively against these attacks. At first the violation cried in her soul for hours after the conversation. Gradually she mastered her repugnance; she never overcame completely the sense of loathing, but she repressed the manifestations of it. She could sit still and reply when driven to it.

She developed a trick of not listening to her mother. With a little practice she found that it was easy to think of something else and just barely remain aware of what her mother was saying.

Yet she could not disentangle her own feelings. Though she hated the tone of her mother's calculations she suspected, scarcely conscious, that she could not have dispensed with those

hours except with a feeling of despair. Her mother was the world, harsh, ugly, imperious as the world. And she needed the world because without it she might lose Arthur some day. And yet, because she loved Arthur, she could not bear to know him caught in the meshes. One half of her planned to trap him, and one half longed passionately to see him escape, anticipated with revengeful joy the day when Arthur would say—"You cannot have me. I am beyond you all." In that day, she knew, she herself would be torn in two, each bleeding half at war with the other.

That agonizing duality thrust a cruel pincer into each side of her. Under the passionate joy of loving Arthur slept and stirred a feeling of treachery. In the treachery stirred a rebellion that threatened its fruits.

Perhaps that uncertainty and indecision added a desperate sharpness to her enjoyment of him. For as days passed she found that his presence was ever more to her. She felt when she was with him, that she did not move of her own free will, that he had her in his keeping, that he lifted her and took her with him. She was abandoned to him completely, as sunken ships are abandoned to the sea. She swam in a twilight between upper and lower waters: the storms of the surface came down to her subdued but powerful, and deeper currents lifted her slowly and silently. There

was no life or motion in her but what came from him, no light or consciousness but what came down to her from far-removed heavens, through this enveloping spirit.

At these times all else seemed illusion to her. The harsh outer world, her own doubts and plans, her mother, the shallow mechanism of life, everything. . . .

Strangely unreal seemed all the years behind her and all the years to come. This was to her an interlude of dim reality, a momentary realization of the fullness of life. Surely the outer world was mere seeming. The light that shone on walls and houses served not to reveal but to limit; the heavens were closed down to the blue dome of reflected light. The boundlessness of space was hidden by the earth under her feet, by the hard line of the horizon. But here, with Arthur, in the almost darkness of rest, she became aware again of infinitude. At moments her timid spirit, thrust back upon itself these many years by the hard enclosure about her, spread out, opened gratefully, till she felt herself diffused to the uttermost ends of peace. . .

CHAPTER XII

Mrs. Stewart pressed desperately forward, her hope and motto being, "Marry in haste and rejoice at leisure." From her husband she had learned that deals had to go through quickly or they lost their flavor. Also, though Mrs. Stewart could plan well, she lacked long range delicacy and patience, for she was essentially uncultured. She used to say: "It's all very well telling me 'He who laughs last laughs best,' but if you delay that laugh too long there's no joy in it. You've got to get your comeback at once—you don't want to wait ten years before you turn the tables. Can you imagine Columbus coming back after twenty years and trying to get the laugh on the people who used to drive him crazy by sneering at him? Why they never even remembered who he was. Strike while the iron's hot."

Mrs. Winner, on the other hand, prided herself on a certain degree of subtlety. She also prided herself on her practicability, on her gentility and on her manner.

As between the two women, Mrs. Stewart was the stronger. She refused to waste time prac-

ticing subtleties or appreciating them. Mrs. Winner, on the other hand, could not take a step unless flanked by a subtlety on the left and a delicate suggestion on the right. Hence Mrs. Stewart was the quicker of the two.

Mrs. Stewart wasted no time. If anything, she anticipated developments, hoping thereby to influence them. Soon after learning of Arthur's state of mind from Muriel she called on Mrs. Winner, triumphant and confident.

"Why, Mrs. Winner, from what Muriel tells me, there's a wonderful change coming over Arthur. Muriel says he's becoming all ambitious, and thinking of how he can make good—for her sake, you know. There's such a difference in the way he talks about things now. Of course, the dear sweet girl does know what Arthur needs, and I know how she turned him round. Oh, she didn't argue with him—she isn't that kind, you know that, dear Mrs. Winner. And I don't believe it does to argue. Influence is what I believe in. Of course, she knows that you and Mr. Winner would never consent until . . ."

Most of the anticipated joy of the affair evaporated from Mrs. Winner. She had looked forward with so much gratitude to patronising Mrs. Stewart, to giving her helpful hints and generous advice. But somehow the thing went too smoothly. Mrs. Stewart was certainly respect-

ful—but she seemed to imply with her manner, "Just so much patronage, please, and no more." Mrs. Winner had seen her, *en perspectif,* blushing and stammering with gratitude. Mrs. Stewart neither blushed nor stammered.

"Oh, I do believe she'll be a wonderful influence in his life, dear Mrs. Winner. She's so thoughtful, and so simple and so *good.* She never thinks of herself. Not even now. She only knows she wants Arthur to do what would please you and Mr. Winner, because she know's it's for the best."

Mrs. Winner's pride was a little outraged by the ease with which a stranger handled her son. And she resented in her subtle way this intimacy in conspiracy which Mrs. Stewart enjoyed with her. On the other hand, she rejoiced at the developments, for she believed Mrs. Stewart implicitly. She felt the firm hand and the vulgar will, and she relied on them. Her pride she soothed in talking with Mr. Winner, for she assumed all the credit and really believed she deserved it.

"Alfred dear, I think it will all work out for the best. Only one mustn't hurry. I can see that things are moving properly. I do confess I don't like Mrs. Stewart too much, but I know how to talk with her . . ."

"No, I'm not hurrying it," said Mr. Winner.

There was something in him, thought Mrs. Winner, rather resembling Mrs. Stewart. He was not very strong on subtleties, either.

"I've hardly seen him these last few days," said Mr. Winner. "I suppose he's with the girl most of the time. That's all right, of course, if what you tell me is correct. I've dropped the business school stuff for Eric. I'm not very strong on it, to tell the truth, but I wanted to show Arthur that if education means leaving the business, then the boy'll have to do without education, that's all."

"Oh, he *will* come into the business in the end. I'm sure of it, Alfred. Leave that to *me* now."

"All right. Except I'll have to be talking with him soon. Van Starr is coming to town in a few days, and I'm going to have him talk with Arthur. I want him to press Arthur. He can do it better than I. He's a better salesman and a better talker. Then I'll speak to Arthur flatly. He can have the girl"—(Mrs. Winner shuddered slightly)—"and Eric can go to any school that Arthur chooses, if he says definitely and flatly that he's going to settle down like a sensible fellow and take up business. He's got the brains, and the culture and the manner. If he'd only argue for the Winner Shoe half as cleverly as he does for the bug-ideas, he'd make the greatest business manager that this country

ever produced. Why don't you bring the girl round some evening, Ruth?"

Mrs. Winner smiled.

"Not just now, Alfred dear. She's rather occupied—" she hinted subtly.

"Oh yes, spends her time with Arthur, I guess. Well, later'll do."

"Yes, dear."

"Well, go ahead with it," said Mr. Winner, restlessly. "And let's have results as soon as you can."

Mr. Winner's suggestion, an evening visit for Muriel, was impracticable, but Mrs. Winner decided to ask for an afternoon call, when she alone would receive Muriel and her mother. She suggested it to Mrs. Stewart on the telephone, and the visit was arranged. Arthur remained in ignorance of it, though Mrs. Stewart bade Muriel tell him. But the gulf between Muriel's supposed influence over Arthur and her real influence had so broadened and deepened that she could not speak to him of anything that flavored of the practical world. A hint that she was "calling" on Mrs. Winner, that she was about to "pay a visit," with all its vast and shadowy implications of "arrangements" and "advances" would have come with a terrific shock into the atmosphere of their relationship. What had they to do with the ordinary and vulgar concommit-

tants of "courtship"? They two were not "courting"—they just happened to be in love with each other—that was all.

Muriel knew always how widely apart were these two worlds, the one in which Arthur and she now drifted, the world of true reality, and the world into which she was to pull him, the world of pretence. But she never realised the sharp contrast so well as on the day of her first call with her mother.

The call was a brief one—a little less than half an hour. Mrs. Winner was awfully sweet and tender. She treated Muriel with the tentative sentimentality of a probability—of a more than probability, but there was inherent in her manner the consciousness of three superiorities, her own, her family's and her son's. As to the last, the conversation degenerated at one moment into a kind of duet, with leaders and responses. Mrs. Winner deprecated the idea that Arthur was unique among young men—but. Mrs. Stewart intimated something similar in regard to Muriel. It was not done as vulgarly, as blatantly as among the poor, for each of the ladies, being highly conscious of her ladyhood, restrained herself. But the feeling was there, a lyrical desire to demonstrate the superior value of one's own.

Muriel writhed under the comparisons. She

did not like to be compared with Arthur as at a public auction. But she felt unhappier still when the talk turned briefly and sweetly not only on rivalry, but on cooperation. It was only hinted —a sort of post-impressionist allusion to her and Arthur together, Facing the Battle of Life. Here she felt guilt as well as disgust, for she knew that the battle in which she might help Arthur would not find him on the same side with Mrs. Winner.

Part of the conversation consisted of gossip and part of a vague kind of acquiescent noise. Mrs. Stewart worked in an allusion to Tom MacAlister, whose name rumor had linked with Muriel's for some time. He was about to be engaged to the Gross girl, whom he had been paying attentions to for the last year—which covered the period he was supposed, in common report, to have been angling for Muriel. Muriel knew there was nothing at all to justify her mother's announcement, but she understood the reason. Mrs. Stewart wanted to offer her unsoiled, untarnished even by the breath of a possible proposal. She was to be Arthur's, all Arthur's, as if dedicated to him from before the cradle. She was to be Arthur's, pure, immaculate and predestined. To Arthur she brought complete and unapproached virginity. Mrs. Stewart insisted on that point with a deli-

cacy which was quite astonishing in her: her daughter was a virgin soul, dedicated completely to Arthur. Her insistence brought forth from Mrs. Winner one of the vague, acquiescent noises, tapering off gradually into a suggestion of an embarrassed laugh.

The visit went off well. The retreat, always a little confused in these cases, was covered by a continuous use of the vague-acquiescent noises on both sides. These noises, though they sound foolish as here alluded to, are an essential part of all polite conversation, especially on social occasions. They vary from a bi-syllabic murmur, with closed lips, conveying a mild kind of astonished interest, to a polysyllabic and rapid run "M—m—m—m—" done partly through the nose. Mrs. Winner was very good at that kind of thing, Mrs. Stewart, being a thinking woman, rather less. But they managed to produce enough on either side to make the farewell quite a social success. Muriel, who said "Goodbye, Mrs. Winner," quite distinctly, and did not make the prescribed noise after it, but remained silent till she was out of the house, was considered by both women to be rather gawky; she felt slightly so herself.

"A very nice woman," said Mrs. Stewart, outside. "And a wonderful house, I think. The Winners, my dear, are a rising family."

Driving homewards Mrs. Stewart expatiated on this theme. She felt that Muriel had not been sufficiently impressed—which reflected on her own enthusiasm. These girls! These children! What would happen to them if their tastes were allowed to run away with them?

But Muriel scarcely listened. She knew a day of reckoning was approaching. She knew that before long her mother would ask her to "produce the goods." Arthur would have to come to the party. Arthur would have to be made to propose to her. Arthur would have to promise to be good and become a shoe manufacturer. Arthur would have to become a go-getter. Arthur would have to learn to produce those vague sympathetic noises, bi-syllabic and poly-syllabic, for social purposes. And Arthur was further from these than ever. Arthur was in love and the love was going to his head. Arthur was getting "crazier" day by day—"crazier" and more lovable.

Muriel despaired. She felt the shadow of her treachery spreading slowly over her. Explanations would have to come. Mrs. Winner would want to know, Mr. Winner—where was all this leading to? There was a stipulation about Arthur's coming to the business, was there not? Not all the polite noises in the world, potent as they were for social purposes, could cover this

argument—there would have to be plain talk, plain conditions.

Such were her thoughts while Mrs. Stewart talked. But at home, coming to herself again, she remembered that Arthur would be there in a few minutes, and mother and Mrs. Winner passed completely out of her mind. Arthur would be there in a few minutes! A good ending would surely be found. It could not be that all this loveliness would cease, wither like a plucked flower. How could the world blossom and be lovely one day, and be chilly and barren the next? Arthur was coming. Arthur would find a way. As long as he was there, hope was there.

CHAPTER XIII

Mr. Winner was satisfied. Like the able man he was, he neither exhibited his satisfaction nor tried to make too much of a good thing. He liked how things were shaping. He felt how deeply Arthur was in love—somehow there was an aura of Arthur diffused through the house—and he believed firmly the girl would bring him round. With that, and with the promise he was about to make formally—that Eric should continue his education, and not go to a business college if Arthur gave way—he was confident and at ease. But beside this there was the tacit moral pressure of the family; something invisible yet potent, wearing Arthur down gradually. On top of which Van Starr was coming in a few days—Van Starr, the radiant, irresistible salesman, the tornado of faith, the cataract of conviction. He would turn him on Arthur—if that did not turn the trick . . . but it would.

The morning before Van Starr's visit he dropped a hint at breakfast, sowing the seed, as it were, for Van Starr. "I've been thinking over this Business College idea of Eric's," he said, deliberately. "I'm not very keen on it

yet—I'm just thinking if you weren't right after all, Arthur."

Arthur looked up startled and did not answer.

"It's perhaps a little premature," said Mr. Winner, thoughtfully. "We'll talk it over again before the autumn."

That was all he said. Arthur, whose thoughts had been haled halfway across the universe, did not get the import of the words, and did not take up the conversation. Mr. Winner thought he had said enough. He had put enough significance into his tone.

He spoke the same evening with Mrs. Winner. "I think it's going to be all right, Ruth. If Van Starr doesn't put the thing across with Arthur—I'll eat my own head. I'd like Van Starr to stay with us a couple of days. And don't forget—arrange to bring him together with Arthur if you can."

"I happen to know that Muriel Stewart must go out of town tomorrow evening," said Mrs. Winner. "If Mr. Van Starr comes up in the late afternoon, and he's here in time for supper, he and Arthur can spend part of the evening together."

"That'll make a good start," said Mr. Winner. "And why not the whole evening?"

"If Mr. Van Starr likes," answered Mrs. Winner, keeping something back in her mind. Mr.

Winner, not being Elma's mother, could not see as clearly.

Arthur knew of Van Starr's coming, and knew, too, that his father was bringing him to the house chiefly for the purpose of preaching the gospel. But these days he felt himself so remote from everything his father planned and hoped for, that the arrangement conveyed nothing to him. He did not even bristle, as it were, in anticipation. It was as though Van Starr was coming to preach to him in a language he would not understand.

He knew Van Starr in an offhand way, a tall, blond young fellow, brimming over with good humor and vitality—a jolly, restless, intelligent young man, in an eternal fever about selling shoes, possessed, as it were, by a Winner-Shoe-Sale complex. Once he had hated Van Starr as the personification of young America corrupted and corrupting. Now he could not summon up interest enough to dislike him—his thoughts were elsewhere.

That evening, with Muriel out of town, Arthur felt he had to be home out of courtesy to Van Starr—a courtesy he would have foregone had Muriel been in town. As it was, the excuse was lacking. So he was home before supper, and heard Van Starr's jolly voice in the drawing-room as he went by to wash. He made a

grimace. If the blond salesman kept on insisting, if he became too provoking, there would be an argument—a futile waste of time. But he would try to avoid it.

When he came in Van Starr rose, a perfectly groomed young man set in a blaze of geniality.

"Why, Mr. Winner," he cried, "I'm awfully glad to see you again."

"How are you?" asked Arthur.

"Fine and dandy," laughed Van Starr. "Taking the best out of life. Not a solitary kick coming. Just telling everyone of the great time I had on the road."

The whole family was there—Mr. Winner, his wife, Richard, Elma and Eric. Elma and Eric had their eyes glued on Van Starr. Richard was smiling gravely and approvingly, as to say, "Splendid specimen of Young America. He Made the Country What She Is."

"And how's yourself?" Van Starr came back. (Van Starr's speaking was the vindication of a certain style of novelist: he did not believe in saying things; he "laughed" a remark; he "parried" a question; he "retorted", he "evaded", he "suggested", he "snapped", "barked", "gurgled". In short he was aggressive. He was there all the time.

"I'm splendid, thank you," said Arthur, feeling like a foolish stranger in this assembly.

"Van Starr's just come back from the road," said Mr. Winner. "He's been having a good time."

"Yessir," said Van Starr. "It's been a great little trip. Give me five seasons like the one that's coming and they'll be wearing Winner Shoes everywhere except in Central Africa, where they go barefoot."

His good spirits more than his remarks set everyone laughing except Arthur, and Arthur smiled not to seem boorish.

"You're always saying that, though," said Mr. Winner, with a wink. "You've never come back but what all the States are crying for the Winner Shoe like the babies for Castoria."

"Well, what about it? Don't you like to hear me talk that way? Doesn't it make you feel good? If you want the report look at my order books. But when you talk to me, why, you get my impression, that's all. If I didn't sell a shoelace, I'd still talk that way. It's the way to talk, the way that leads to the sales. Admit that sales are bad, and they're going to be bad and keep on being bad. But kid 'em along, and they'll soon wake up."

Everyone laughed, Mr. Winner loudest of all.

"That's the way I sell," said Van Starr. "I just jolly the old universe along. I come into some big buyer. I don't pull a long face and go

serious. No, sir. I just kid him along. Make him feel good. If I make him feel good he'll like my shoes. I don't hesitate and apologize—I come right out with it—as if I were bringing him good news—slap right out—and it is good news. I feel that way about it. Last week in Rochester a big buyer asked me, 'Why are you always so jolly, Mr. Van Starr,' and I said, 'Wouldn't you feel jolly if you were going around selling the finest shoe in America and selling lots of it, and he laughed, and I placed a big order with him. Of course, there are some old grouches—if you come in with a smile they think it's a draft or something. But the big people aren't that way. The big people believe in doing it with a smile. A smile goes a long way. And once you get the habit of smiling, it's the easiest thing in the world."

"Of course," said Richard, "good spirits always did mean more work and better work. All progressive men recognize that."

"A workman that's serious and thoughtful isn't as good as one that whistles and sings," said Mr. Winner, reflectively. "A man that's thoughtful at his work isn't thinking about his work—he's thinking about radicalism, probably. Keep your workmen cheerful and you'll get the service. It's the same from the humblest sweeper right up to the boss."

"Keep 'em cheerful," said Van Starr. "If this country could be kept cheerful it would never have to worry about anything. It isn't good business makes people cheerful. It's cheerfulness and pep that make good business. They've got cause and effect all mixed up."

The conversation went on in this strain until supper was announced. Van Starr was the lion of the evening. Two persons paid him particular homage—Elma and Eric, but more the latter. Eric listened with such interest that he had to be reminded of his food. Van Starr told stories of the road, how he had pulled off a big order here, how he had missed one there, how he got away with twenty-five cents on a pair on this buyer, and how he mislaid his samples in one place, and how another buyer nearly fooled him, how he made three cities in one day, and an order in each. And cheerfulness, pep did it all. The word "pep" sounded at frequent, irregular intervals, like explosions. Arthur counted in a fascinated way, the number of times the word occurred in ten minutes and found it thirteen.

Van Starr began to irritate him, so, fearing to offend the guest, he prudently kept out of the conversation. But toward the latter part of the meal Van Starr, noticing Arthur's reticence (and probably his lack of pep), addressed himself to him quite pointedly, so that Arthur was per-

force dragged into the talk. Arthur was annoyed by this frontal attack; the man should have the decency to respect his reticence; if he was here proselytising, he should have kept it for a less public occasion. But then, he reflected, Van Starr did not go in for delicacy; he went in for smashing personality, full of vim and pep.

"You don't seem to agree with me, Mr. Winner," said Van Starr directly to him.

"I didn't say anything," said Arthur smiling.

"Oh, you don't have to *say* anything, and I can still feel you don't agree with me," laughed Van Starr. "You learn lots of things on the road, and one of 'em is to feel what a man thinks of your proposition long before he utters a word. It's a kind of second nature. Now, if you'll pardon my saying so, you're a serious thinking kind of man. (Arthur was getting angrier, but not showing it). You don't believe in my way of doing things, the peppy way."

"I don't," said Arthur.

"And why, if I may ask. What is there wrong with the gospel of pep and snap," asked Van Starr, feeling he had put it rather neatly.

"I think it's immoral," said Arthur, coldly.

There was an audible gasp round the table at the last word, but Van Starr held the floor, unperturbed.

"Because it confuses issues," said Arthur,

carefully. "There's an essential immorality in the doctrine of the success-mongers. They want to convince you that every man, by being bright and snappy and peppy, can succeed—*every man.*"

"Right!" cried Van Starr.

"Hence, if a man fails, it is his own fault."

"Right again," cried Van Starr.

"Whereas," continued Arthur, "the truth is that only a limited number of people can achieve success, and if the whole world becomes snappy and peppy, there'll still be the same number of failures. But by constantly asserting that *everybody* can succeed, the success-mongers commit two evils; they accentuate human selfishness to a degree approaching frenzy—at the same time cloaking this indecent selfishness with a kind of doctrine to give it color; and they discredit social reform. If happiness comes from being peppy, why, then, let everybody be peppy and we won't need any social reform."

"Right," said Van Starr again. "Let everybody be peppy and there *won't* be needed any social reform."

"But being peppy doesn't lead to success and happiness," said Arthur, patiently. "It's being *peppier.* You can be as peppy as Roosevelt, and if the next man's peppier, he'll beat you."

"Well, then," said Van Starr, triumphantly, "That's what I say. *Be* peppier."

Arthur almost laughed aloud.

"But you admit there must be some failures," he urged.

"Sure. And it's their own fault for letting others get ahead of them—unless they're cripples and that kind of thing."

Van Starr had a curious habit, fairly common among people in a discussion. When delivering the weightiest part of an argument he talked not to his opponent, but to a spectator and at his opponent, finishing up the argument with a kind of laugh which said: "Let him answer that if he can." It irritated Arthur as a vulgar device to enlist the attention and sympathy of third parties and to prevent him from speaking.

"But, for God's sake," asked Arthur. "Are there not millions of decent, deserving, honorable people, without snap and pep? Must they not only suffer from lack of wealth, but must they always be regarded with contempt?"

"The race is to the swift and the battle to the strong," said Van Starr. "You don't cheer for the loser."

"What has that to do with me?" asked Arthur, bitter. "I can't imagine God cheering for the strong and swift."

This last remark annoyed Mr. Winner profoundly. Somehow Arthur never got beaten in an argument but what he lugged God in. It was simply cowardice.

"Never mind God," said Mr. Winner, sharply. "We're not God. Van Starr is talking sense."

Mr. Winner was not only annoyed, but astonished. He had expected a friendlier reception for Van Starr on the part of Arthur. If all that his wife had told him was true, if Arthur was so keen on Muriel Stewart, and she was supposed to be bringing him round, what did this mean? Or was Arthur just perverse, venting his resentment at his own surrender? Or was he on the outs with Muriel? And would he not be going to that party at the Stewarts? Mr. Winner was perplexed.

He had hoped to see a kind of tacit partnership struck up between Arthur and Van Starr—and here they were as near quarreling as the circumstances would permit.

For both young men were highly strung by now. Each was annoyed by the obstinacy of the other, but Van Starr more than Arthur, for whereas the latter was accustomed to logical opposition, the former met it seldom. And he could not understand it. How on earth deny that snap and pep and ginger were the mainsprings of progress? How on earth could any-

one contend that it was selfish to desire success? Where would the country be with such views? What was the good of America without success?

And the table was with Van Starr—particularly Elma and Eric. Eric was distressed, being in the heart of hearts fonder of Arthur than of anyone else, but he thought his brother rather a poor stick for talking as he did.

"You can't have success without snap" said Van Starr firmly.

"Probably not," said Arthur.

"It's not the money," said Van Starr, insincerely—but hoping to crush Arthur with his own idealistic arguments: "It isn't the money that means success. It's true that success has to bring money to prove it's success; it's the sign of success. But it isn't the money itself. It's not selfishness."

"It isn't the money, it's the principle," Arthur helped him out.

"That's it," said Van Starr, triumphantly. He thought he had Arthur now.

"Yes, that's just it," said Arthur. "It isn't the money, it's the principle. I don't mind the men with the snap and pep getting all the money. But I object to their getting the praise. I object to their ceaseless braying about success. I object to their making out they're the leaders of humanity; I object to their screaming their vul-

gar doctrines from the housetops, eager for applause as well as for pelf. I object to their corrupting young America. It's not the money, it's the principle."

"Arthur," said Richard sharply, seeing Van Starr dumbfounded, "that's the sorriest piece of quibbling I've ever heard."

Mrs. Winner was thoroughly unhappy. She saw a storm approaching. Elma was silent but furious. She thought Arthur gratuitously offensive to that splendid young fellow, Van Starr. Richard was angry. Mr. Winner was angry and bewildered. And Van Starr was astonished and irritated. He kept himself well in hand. He was an efficient salesman—and despised the kind of man who resorted to being nasty when he couldn't make a sale. Sale or no sale, he was urbane. But he was irritated.

"I am sorry to hear you speak like that, Mr. Winner," he said regretfully. "It isn't the talk of a man who's going to be successful."

"I would rather," said Arthur, thoughtfully, "be a beggar, and go hungry, and be homeless, than be snappier and peppier and more gingery than the others."

That ended the conversation for the evening. It was considered the insult direct to the snappiest, peppiest and most gingery member of the firm. But Arthur was speaking quietly, and in

all sincerity. He had not meant to wound. The meal went on, but the talking changed violently to other subjects. It did not become a conversation again, despite Richard's efforts. No one could forget the violent though quiet ending of the conversation on pep. Arthur felt the tenseness, but he could not understand he was believed to have insulted Van Starr deliberately and profoundly.

There was broken talk about business, about people, about trains, about politics. Van Starr might have carried off a conversation, but the others, including even Richard, were too angry to follow a line of talk. Remarks became scrappier still when the meal ended and the assembly returned to the drawing-room. Finally, a little after nine, Van Starr excused himself, saying he would go to his room and unpack. Actually he was uneasy, and sorry he had made such a bad beginning with Arthur. He had hoped for better results. He had hoped to sweep the young man off his feet with a tornado of success and geniality. He had relied on his smashing personality and it had failed him. He would try another method now—Arthur was a hard and grouchy buyer.

When he was out of the room the family sat for a while in a kind of murderous silence. Then Richard rose and said he would go and see

if he could help Van Starr, and try to make him understand that he was a welcome guest—at worst a welcome guest to all but one. The family gathering began to disintegrate. No one wanted to take up the incident before Mr. Winner —and he was wordless. Eric and Elma went off to their rooms —they were helplessly uncomfortable.

And when only Mr. and Mrs. Winner were left with Arthur, the first spoke up tensely.

"You've not behaved like a gentleman, Arthur," he said. It was the bitterest thing he could think of, for Arthur.

"I'm sorry," said Arthur. "I don't see it."

"You do see it," said Mr. Winner, restraining a crescent savagery. "You talked to Van Starr in a way that made me ashamed."

"I don't see it," said Arthur, himself restraining an impulse to be savagely offensive. "He thrust a discussion on me, and wouldn't let me alone. What was I to do? Sit still and let him talk on? He talked drivel and then absolutely insisted that I answer him. I tried to keep out of it, and he insisted."

"I repeat," said Mr. Winner, hoarsely, "that you behaved as no gentleman would behave. You talked like an impudent snob. You were being clever and superior and lofty all the time. You treated him as if he were a Pullman porter.

You didn't talk to him as man to man. And I won't stand for it."

His acute commonsense put a bridle on him there—there was a larger purpose to be considered—he toned his voice down.

"We'll let that be," he said curtly. "Maybe it's a way you have and don't understand; you'll grow out of it as you grow older and mix with men. There's something else that's got to be made clear right now."

Mrs. Winner clasped her hands with a gesture of poignant dismay. She saw a great crisis approaching, and she would have to be in the thick of it. A sickness settled on her heart. Those men! Those strong merciless men!

Arthur felt the pressure falling before this coming tornado. From unsuspected deeps there came upwards a blind power. They were closing in on him; they wanted to swallow him alive. He had a sense of bared knives; two abysmal beasts were face to face.

"It's got to be settled quickly and definitely," said Mr. Winner, a fierce light in his eyes. "I want to know what is the meaning of all this talk I've been hearing from your mother."

"What talk?"

Mr. Winner turned on his wife. "You've been telling me plainly that this girl, Muriel Stewart——"

At the mention of the name all the lights danced suddenly before Arthur's eyes. What was this? Who dared . . . ? What abomination . . . ?

"She told you she'd persuaded Arthur to join the business. She told you they were going to announce the engagement tomorrow night, at the party, on the strength of this, that Arthur was going to be there . . ."

"Oh, I didn't say that, Alfred," stammered Mrs. Winner, aware that her son was pale, that his eyes were staring dumbly at her. "They weren't going to announce it yet, at the party. It was only just so Arthur was going to be there . . ."

"Never mind all this damned diplomacy now," snapped Mr. Winner. "Look you here," he said to Arthur. "You're in love with that girl. Now I tell you this. There will be no engagement unless you turn round, damn quick too. The girl knows it. She had it from me, or from your mother, which is the same thing. She was told that there was *nothing doing* unless you got into the business. And she said she'd persuade you before the engagement came off. D'you get me? She promised that. And she's told your mother she's as good as done it. Now I want to know this. Where d'you get off at with this line of talk to Van Starr?" Mr. Winner's voice be-

came fraught with such fury that Mrs. Winner was terrified, but in Arthur, hatred flashed up through the dazed feeling of treachery and desecration.

He rose to his feet. "Understand me once and forever," he said, passionately. "You brought me up and clothed me and fed me and educated me in the hope that I'd join the dirty money-hunting game. You've kept me from leaving you because you hoped I'd become a shoe salesman. I will not do it. I loathe your world of business. I will not come into it. I will have nothing to do with it. My life is mine, not yours."

Mr. Winner was on his feet, too.

"Then I tell you," he answered, "that this nonsense with that Stewart girl has to stop——"

"As to that," said Arthur, swiftly, "You've laid dirty hands on something clean. I will not talk of this with you. You're not fit to talk of these things."

"Not fit," repeated Mr. Winner—and keeping his voice down he stammered for a moment, seeking the right words. There was a knock at the door, and Van Starr came in. He saw father and son, pale, trembling, glaring at each other. He made a startled move to retreat—but Arthur suddenly rushed past him, and, snatching his hat from the rack, was gone from the house.

CHAPTER XIV

He wanted mainly to calm himself, for he knew that in anger there was no clear thinking, but calmness was now impossible. He was amazed, he was wounded to the heart. What was this? Muriel? Muriel had promised—Muriel had reported—Muriel had bargained—? Were they crazy? God! He had felt somehow that no one ever spoke of him and Muriel, that no one ever guessed at their marvellous secret—and now—it was a mere bargain, a common counter proposition.

He raged as he walked through the crowded streets. He wanted to seize someone by the throat, to cry: "You swine! You have done this! You have done this!" The sense of mean and merciless conspiracy about him became acute, intolerable—these well-dressed people, walking, driving, lounging, they were in it with his father and mother, they were in it with Van Starr and Mrs. Stewart—and Muriel.

His rage did not last long; it gave way to utter sickness and sadness. They had laid hands on Muriel. She did not know what she

was doing. They had frightened her and bullied her, and she was ashamed to tell him. She had not really meant to betray him—hers was only the treachery of a weak, hunted child. She had never mentioned to him one of the things she had been supposed to tell him. And yet—how would he face her now? Knowing that, in the eyes of her parents and his, and of God knew whom besides, she was only "permitted to have him" on condition: knowing she had accepted this condition, had soiled their relationship by acknowledging the deal—how could he face her now? She was weak, weak, weak, but mere weakness, too, could lead to catastrophe as surely as wickedness. He could not be angry with her, but an irrevocable change had come over their relationship.

"Morning brings council," he said to himself, and tried to direct his thoughts elsewhere. He looked to right and left and tried to think of the things about him. He was now on upper Broadway, drifting between two violent, opposing currents. He saw a subway entrance and went down. It was somehow better down there. The rush of the train took up some of his attention. He thought of the strangeness of this phenomenon, hundreds of loaded trains underground, scuttling in all directions, with loads of human beings coming and going: day and night it went

on, hidden from moon and sun and stars, as though these millions were travelling on secret and shameful errands; day and night it went on, a tumult under the earth, in places that for all the past eternities had been utterly dark and silent and peaceful—worms had never crawled down so deeply—only the roots of trees had once made a quiet stirring there, stretching blind, careful fingers through the soil, groping in the moist loam for the breasts of mother earth—and now roaring things went back and forth, monsters of light and power.

He forgot himself a while, and then a spasm of rage and despair went through him again. He mastered himself and compelled his mind again to other things. This was the way of life, making a noise in the silent places of the universe. All this tumult, all this harrying restlessness, this rushing to and fro meant something. In this fierce motion, this shooting back and forth, something was being woven—trains like shuttles across a gigantic loom—a great pattern would emerge. Men might be blind, but not humanity; men might rebel, but not the power that drove them.

And here he was, in the deep of earth, stretching blind fingers, groping for the strength that had brought him forth. All this meant something, he repeated to himself—the mass, the un-

corrupted mass, was driving purposefully, even if unconsciously.

His own tangled life would take on meaning if he watched long enough and carefully enough —his own tangled life—he shook again with rage and despair, remembering it—but again he mastered himself. Tomorrow would bring counsel. "Refer back always," he said to himself, "to first principles. Only life in the mass can teach me what to do now."

He came down into the Apollo Bookshop. The place was crowded. Leslie sat in a corner, his vulgar Cockney face wrinkled above a book of prints. He did not notice Arthur—he seemed to be absorbed in an attempt to ignore everyone.

A few greetings sounded across the room at Arthur. He responded, but went over to Leslie.

"Hello, you," he said, tapping Leslie on the shoulder.

Leslie looked up, annoyed at first, and then relieved.

"Hello you, Ahmenotep, worshipper of the sun and restorer of religions. How's your papa?"

Arthur was grateful for the sardonic greeting.

"Everyone at home is fine," he said, sarcastically. "And they all send you their greetings and hope to see you soon."

Leslie grinned. "You look upset," he said,

"How's democracy been treating you? Have you had a tiff with the Life Impulse, the Purpose and the Aim?" He winked. "See this collection of yammering artists and hunters after the way of life? If I didn't keep away from them I'm liable to be spew. You're the only one down here that's dared to come and speak to me. Lovely lot, aren't they—" he indicated the jabbering mass of lean young men and short-haired women—"never think above the waist."

"Shut up," said Arthur.

Leslie rose and threw down the book. "I'm going to take you out for an educational walk," he said. "I need it myself. I take one regularly to keep my mind balanced and to prevent me from joining democracy."

He went over to one young man and gave brief instructions—then returned to Arthur.

"It's a nice evening," he said. "The masses are out. God's purpose is taking a walk. Didn't I promise you a lesson in democracy, young Savonarola? I'll show you the Divine Aim aiming. Come out of here."

Arthur went along with him, glad to listen, refreshed by the cool, bitter merriment of the words, and amused slightly by the Cockney accent.

"There are times," said Leslie, "when abominable thoughts come over me—filthy suspicions

that there's something to humanity, that the masses are something more than herds of swine. It's a weakness of mine, and I'm ashamed of it. I have a simple cure—I go out and mingle with it. Say, have you ever tried this—Arthur——"

He seized Arthur by the arm, and with him walked close behind a couple, a young man and a girl. He made a motion to Arthur to be silent and listen. Leslie's hold on his arm was so tight that he obeyed despite himself.

The young man was neatly dressed, with a touch of the swagger. The girl looked interesting from behind—

"Like Hell, I says," said the young man—"an' him raking off a clear three dollars a dozen? No SIR. The guy that wants to put that over on me'll have to chloroform me first . . . Didya, I says . . . oh sure, that was all he was after . . ."

Arthur wanted to back away, but Leslie held him mercilessly by the arm.

"I told him to cut it out," said the young man. "If he wants the service lerrim pay for it. How d'ye get that way, I says to him."

"Is thasso?" said the girl.

"An say, you should a' seen that guy's face. You should a' seen it——"

Arthur made a violent effort and backed away.

"Don't do that, Leslie," he said, vehemently.

"Don't be an ass," said Leslie. "What's the harm? Don't you want to know what democracy is talking about? Why not keep your ears open? You might catch that voice of God you're always singing about."

They were on Broadway, near Fourteenth Street, and going northward. The street was well filled, for the evening was mild, and a quiet, warm wind was coming up from the south.

"Come here," said Leslie, and holding Arthur fast, walked quietly with him close behind two girls, keeping slightly to the left.

"Yeh, she was the kid for him. She's like her sister, any piker that'll take her out to a ten cent movie can have her. I don't believe she ever seen a five dollar bill—an' he's——"

They lost something, and then they heard the other girl.

"Some dress, I'll say. *Some* swell dress. That guy has some taste. Youghto be glared he didn't clam on to yeeou—"

"Yeh!" The other girl laughed a hoarse laugh. "If he wants to take me out he ses I've got to come acrorse——"

Arthur tugged, but Leslie held fast.

"The very woids he used to me, the low bum. Now ain't that the limit. He says to me—Kid,

if ye wanna come out with me the sky's the limit—but yere gorra come acrorse, the doity bum——"

"This," said Leslie, "is the great mass, the pure-hearted great mass."

Arthur stared ahead at the vast crowd. From a distance a profound murmurous sound went up from it. The old sense of greatness and revelation came over him—the masses, the vast, blind masses . . .

Leslie held him fast behind a man and a girl—

"That's the way life is, haw, haw," laughed the man. "Yer alive today and you get bumped off tomorrer, haw haw——"

The girl joined in his laughter.

"So what's the use, I says. Today yer alive an' tomorrer yer dead. So what's the use of gettin' all het up? Keep cool. Yer goina be dead soon. An' he keeps 'ollering 'e wants his money back an' it's a swindle. 'Now looka here, I says to him, you're gett'n' excited. ' . . Now that's foolish . . . might bump off any minute. I wouldn't give a damn if I was you. . . ."

"The masses philosophize," said Leslie.

They walked behind two young men:

"Oh, baby—in that bathing suit—boy!" The young man spoke excitedly and shivered. "Some peach—the form on her, boy. When she went up

the beach you could see fifty fellers watching on the sly. You should a' seen her *form,* boy—" he made a suggestive outline of rich curves with his hand and laughed vehemently and quickly. "An' her hair—and some hips that kid had. Boy, that night I kissed her the first time—Holy Gee! . . ."

The other young man murmured something.

"Now Helen, I says, yer got to quit . . ."

"The masses love," said Leslie.

They walked almost level with a man and woman.

"That's the way life is. It's a conventional world—and you've got to be conventional. A man can see at once that you're ill-bred and vulgar if you can't do the right thing in the right place."

The woman was on the further side and her reply was inaudible.

"Now I reckon that a man has to know these things if he wants to make the right impression—that's why I want to buy those books. If you read them carefully and do as they tell you you'll make the impression of a gentleman—if you don't——"

"The masses get culture," said Leslie.

"Sure it makes a difference," said the man. "In business just as well. The man that knows how to invite you to lunch, and how to offer you

theatre tickets an' all that without seeming to be vulgar, why——"

They walked behind two men:

"What's fair's fair, I can't say no fairer'n that. You take a thoid and he takes a thoid and I take a thoid. An' that bastard Stein can go to hell—what's he done, anyway? He didn't pull off a nickel's worth of business since last Janooary—sits on his goddam . . all day long and smokes cigars and telephones to a bunch a' Janes. Howds'e get that way? If yer don't come across yer don't get no dough. A square deal is what I want an' a square deal is what I give. I don't care who the guy is—if 'e was the goddam Prince of Wales I'll say the same thing to him—I wanna square deal that's all . . ."

"The masses moralize," said Leslie.

One or two suspicious looks had come their way. They got too close sometimes, and Arthur was uncomfortable, he was fascinated by the game—he had never suspected that it was so easy to eavesdrop on a street. It could not be done for more than a minute at a time, but somehow the very shortness of the intrusion was its most interesting point.

A few times the experiment failed—the voices were too low, or the speakers became acutely aware of them and dropped their voices.

They caught detached sentences:

"If ya wanna make it by the quickest way, take my advice——"

"Cos what the eye don't see the 'eart don't grieve——"

"A little short feller, one o' them wise guys what knows it all—black eye——"

"That was a lulu, boy——"

"Mr. Beenstock says to me,—Miss Levy, he says,——"

"Legs like a elephants, an' wants to go on the stage——"

"I read a book last week—I was sick in bed with indigestion—and mother says——"

"Difference between a table an' a postage stamp? Ha! ha! What the——"

"Take me for a sucker, me join up again——"

"I'm a lady, I says to him an' you talk to me as if I was a lady, I says——"

"First yer drop three an' then catch up——"

"Just a plain bit of breast with gravy, I wanted——"

"F.O.B. Michigan, thirty days. It would pay——"

"Aw, chase me, kid, I'm shy."

"That's what the Bible says, sure, I don't deny it, neither, but who——"

"If I was to die he wouldn't turn round to look, he's that obstinate——"

"What the hell's a kiss, anyway. It wasn't like I was sleeping with the goddam woman . . . They're all like that——"

At the thirties they turned down-town again. Arthur had forgotten his good taste and his scruples; he let Leslie push him close to others, that he might hear them well.

"An he says to me, why that's my sister. . . You could a' knocked me down with a feather ——"

"You gotta be awful careful what you say to people you don't know——"

"That's my sister he says, so help me God. Can you beat that? Ha! ha! ha! I got red all over—an' you take it from me, I skiddooed from that party like a bunch of greased lightning—his house, too——"

"Wouldn't do me no good if I had it. Y'only think so before you get it——"

"Sure that's the way every time."

"Sure. You save up and save up, and when you've got the blame thing it isn't what you thought it was. That's the way it is every time—what's the use?"

"That's right enough, but a feller ought to have ambition: if everybody thought like that nobody'd ever try to get anything——"

"Two crosswise and two straight, and then two crosswise and two straight, till it's about

three feet high. Then you cut off the ends that's sticking out——"

"It's just a line of bunk. Your feet was made to walk on, and that's what they're built for. If you needed 'em so dam bad, you'd be born with rubber heels on——"

"On Broadway," said Leslie in a lull, "there walk every night about two hundred thousand human beings. There are hundreds of thousands walking on other streets, on Fifth Avenue, in Central Park, on a Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, on Fordham Road and Flatbush Avenue —and there are millions walking every day and night in Chicago and San Francisco and in Buenos Ayres and Paris and London and Moscow and Yokohama and Valparaiso and Vladivostock, and this is just what they say—" he waved his hand round, as to include all the remarks they had overheard that evening. Then he dug Arthur in the ribs viciously: "Democracy, damn you, democracy, *vox populi, vox Dei.* D'you get the great purpose and aim? D'you get the blind yearning of the masses for God and purity? I tell you, you fool democrat, you can walk for ten years among these cattle, and pick up maybe ten conversations with a spark of decency in them—and those will be as much of the mob as you and I are. What d'you say?"

"Nothing," said Arthur.

"The masses!" said Leslie, with extraordinary ferocity. "The masses—who make wars and hang out flags, and elect presidents and pass laws! The masses, the dirty stinking masses—it's their conventions you have to obey: because the masses'll get you if you don't watch out. You young fool! D'you think you can leaven this monstrous herd? D'you think there's a power in heaven or hell can influence this abysmal monster—think of it, sprawling over the earth, like a big scab—and you twittering of God and salvation—and devoting your life to learning what life means. Come in here—" they were at the door of a theatre on fourteenth street: outside there was a display of placards, voluptuous and vulgar women, abominable men—"come in here and I'll show you what the masses love—what they've always loved—what they'll always love, world without end——"

He kept up the conversation while he bought the tickets and escorted Arthur in.

"When the Day of Judgment comes, when the sun falls on the earth, or the earth freezes over, or bursts asunder, at the other end of eternity, d'you know what mankind'll be saying? It'll be saying: 'An she says to me, she says, why, she says'—that'll be the last word of humanity, the message of the human race to the eternities to be."

The stage was in half darkness when they came in. They were escorted to an orchestra row near the front, and made their way to its centre. The theatre was well-filled, considering the tempting weather outside.

They sat down and turned their attention to the stage. A country scene had been set up, trees, a church and a large yellow moon above the spire. Inside the church voices sang in nasal harmony "My Old Kentucky Home."

"Artistic scene," said Leslie into Arthur's ear. "You know this bunk about *ars est celere artem* is piffle for the masses, especially when they're in a theatre. The audience wants the artistic—wants it thick an' slab. It wants art laid on with a trowel—it wants to gurgle ecstatically, Oh, my, ain't that artistic. It wouldn't recognize art otherwise. The simple and sincere they would consider a piece of impudence—the idea of people behaving on the stage as if they were at home! What the hell's the theatre for? They want to play at the theatre—in quotes you know. The more obvious the device, the creakier the mechanism, the better. They want to hear the machinery before they're sure it's Art and not merely life."

The singing ceased and the lights were suddenly switched on, making the moon, with the

light behind it, almost invisible. From the church came forth a crowd of painted chorus girls, headed by the leading lady and the comic man, the latter evidently Irish.

"So this is the dear old South," said the Irishman.

"Yes, Mike, this is the dear old South, where my heart has always been yearning to be."

"An' now you're in the south, what're you going to do about it, and your young millionaire still in the north?"

The leading lady, fat, blond and very exuberant, turned round to the chorus girls, who made a half circle round them, and exclaimed: "We'll find a way to amuse ourselves, won't we girls?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the chorus.

"Why, and there comes someone to amuse us," exclaimed the leading lady, as an old negro entered with a steaming bucket in each hand.

"What, one old darky amuse all you girls?" shouted the Irishman.

The audience giggled.

"Why, sure," exclaimed the leading lady. "You're going to amuse us, ain't you, Rastus."

"Why, lerdy, ah's gorna dew mah best," said the old negro, putting down the buckets and looking round. He scratched his head doubtfully. "But ah's only one po' old darky an' youse an

awful lot a lerdies." He looked round suggestively. The audience giggled again. The chorus giggled, too.

"Now, you darky," said the Irishman. "Whatchoo got in them buckets?"

"Ah's got corn on the cob."

"Oh, corn on the cob, corn on the cob! Ain't that lovely," exclaimed the chorus.

"An' how much d'you charge for that?" asked the Irishman.

"Why, ah gives it to the lerdies for nuthin," said the negro.

"Oh, ain't that lovely," exclaimed the leading lady, supported by the chorus. She swaggered forward, and put an arm round the old negro's shoulder. "But Rastus, we can't take them for nothing, you know."

"Ah doesn't want no money," said the negro.

"Well, Rastus, we'll give you a kiss for each corn."

The old negro made ecstatic motions. The Irishman uttered a shout—"I'm goin' to Ireland to be a Sinn Feiner. Oh, why wasn't my mother a darkey—or my father."

The audience laughed delightedly.

"Now, Rastus," said the leading lady, "you're going to give me a corn, and I'll give you a kiss, and then each girl'll step forward, and you'll

give her a corn and she'll give you a kiss. Won't you, girls?"

"Oh yes," exclaimed the girls.

"Now give me a corn, Rastus."

"Oh, you wait a minute," said the Irishman, and he seized the negro. "Looka here, you, fair play." He pulled out a big watch. "None of these here lynch holds, you know. Quick break-away." The negro nodded and wiped his lips eagerly. The audience giggled.

"Go!" shouted the Irishman, taking up the posture of an eager referee.

The negro took a corn out of the bucket. The leading lady looked at it archly and then said, "Oh, no, Rastus. I want a bigger one than that."

The audience howled with laughter.

"Sure," shouted the Irishman. "You can't amuse her so easy."

More howls from the audience. The negro found another corn. By now their conversation was inaudible in the applause of the audience. She took the corn and offered her lips to the negro. The negro threw his arms round her and glued his face to hers. The leading lady had her back to the audience. The negro's hands paddled in the exposed flesh. The audience was in one roar of laughter.

The Irishman dashed between them.

"You stop that," he shouted. "You want me to drop dead? Bejabers, you ought to give her the whole bucket for that."

Arthur looked round him. Leslie's face was convulsed with such loathing and ferocity that Arthur was startled. From him he looked at the audience—mostly men, but no lack of women: one sea of merry and delighted faces.

"The masses, you cockeyed democrat," said Leslie, and dug his fingers into his arm. "The masses, the voice of God!"

Arthur kept his eyes on the stage awhile. The kissing went on and the audience never wearied.

"Now yeeouse a little lerdy and yeeow needs a little corn," said the negro. Arthur looked up and saw the girl addressed pout. "Oh no," she said, shaking her head and shoulders in mock petulance, "I wanna big one too."

"Well, well," said the negro, amid the laughter of audience and chorus alike.

Arthur looked away again. He kept his eyes off the stage, but he could not help getting snatches of the dialogue.

Then the scene came to an end. The lights went out for a minute, and then were partially relit. The moon emerged strong again. The leading lady came out from the church door and advanced to the front and center of the stage. The orchestra played soft music.

The leading lady sang in the half-darkness with pathos, accompanied by the orchestra.

Oh, it's long ago, dear mammy,
Since I was a little baby on your knee,
But where e'er I've wandered over the earth,
You've always seemed, dear mammy, to be with me.
I know I've not always been good to you,
But you'll forgive me, I know.
For I've always loved you, despite all I've done,
As I loved you long ago.

The limelight flashed up and gave her an aureole. She sang on with yearning. In the audience there was a deathly silence.

So now I'm back dear mammy,
After all these years and years,
And I'll make you happy, mammy,
And wipe away your tears.
And I'll sit again on your knee, dear mammy,
As I did in years gone by,
And you'll rock me to sleep, dear mammy,
And sing me a lullaby.

She continued in prose, while the orchestra played softly:

"Yes, dear old mother, all these years I've forgotten the good advice you gave me. I've made many mistakes. Oh, how much happier I would have been if I had only listened to you, and never gone astray. But I'm coming back, and I'll be good to you, for you are my only mammy, the best mammy in all the world."

The orchestra took the chorus up softly—she sang softly with it.

So now I'm back, dear mammy,
After all these years and years,
And I'll make you happy, mammy,
And wipe away your tears.
And I'll sit again on your knee, dear mammy,
As I did in years gone by,
And you'll rock me to sleep, dear mammy,
And sing me a lullaby.

She lingered on the last note, and as she ceased she dropped her arms with a gesture of despair. The audience broke into thunderous applause. From every part of the house the storm beat loud and long.

The leading lady raised her head and began to sing again: again profound silence fell on the audience.

I've had many friends, dear mammy,
Some were false and some were true,
But the best friend in the world, dear mammy,
Has always been you.
I know it now, dear mammy,
Though I never knew it before,
That's why I've come back, dear mammy,
As I did in the days of yore.

So now I'm back, dear mammy,
After all these years and years,
And I'll make you happy, mammy,
And wipe away your tears.

And I'll sit again on your knee, dear mammy,
As I did in years gone by,
And you'll rock me to sleep, dear mammy,
And sing me a lullaby.

The house rocked again with applause. Leslie kept digging viciously at Arthur, and, while the uproar was at its loudest, yelled in his ear: "Democracy, you paralytic! The working classes, God blast you! They're the working classes here—none of your Broadway middle class snobs. You'll rock me to sleep dear mammy, and sing me a lullaby—fifteen stone if she's an ounce."

When the lights rose again there was a young man on the stage, and with him the darkey of the preceding scene.

YOUNG MAN: "Rastus, for God's sake, a drink."

RASTUS: "They ain't no drinks round here, boss. You reckon you'd see me on mah feet if they was anything to drink?"

YOUNG MAN: "Rastus, I must have a drink."

RASTUS: "Oh, mah goodness, ah clean forgot. Why, Mr. Brown, ah've got the greatest thing in the world for you." (Produces box of chocolates from under his coat.) "See these here chocolates?"

YOUNG MAN: "Yes, Rastus."

"Well, Mars' Brown" (whispers in his ear.

Young man's face lights up. He grabs the chocolates, takes one, and looks ecstatic.)

And so the buffoonery went on. Before long one of the chorus girls came on. The young man offered her the chocolates. She ate them and became gradually drunk—the young man with her.

Then ensued a scene of such grossness that Arthur was astounded less by the bestiality of the performers than by the absence of the police. The drunken couple tried to dance: their gestures, their posturings, were indescribably indecent. And at every indecency the audience giggled joyously. At the abominable climax of their dance the audience simply roared.

"Democracy," said Leslie. "Songs of mother and the sanctity of the home sandwiched in between the capacious bosom of the leading lady and the fat legs of the second lady. They sing the Star Spangled Banner in grand chorus at the end of the performance, and I shouldn't be surprised if they didn't actually produce a parson out of that church to preach the morality of the respectable."

Arthur went home slowly, riding most of the way. Before he could turn in he walked for half an hour up and down the drive, looking at the garden which led down to the water's edge, and across the river at the lights on the opposite

bank. It was after midnight. A few couples lingered on the benches. A few passed him on the footpath.

The strong pain of the early evening had left him. In its place there was a quiet and profound wretchedness. He felt like a dumb animal in a tremendous and complicated trap. If one clutch was released, another would fasten on him, innumerable claws all round him, rank after rank, like shark's teeth.

Life was bitter, unfriendly. It was too big, too wild, he thought. Where could one begin with it? It pressed on all sides. It demanded surrender. It could not wait. From a hundred million sources it welled up, beat against him, roared at him.

Let it be so. Let life roar at him, rise up to swallow him—he had to keep himself pure. Let life raven like a great animal—he would resist, he would not be swallowed. And suddenly he became aware that he was praying. A silent prayer went out of him into the night. He prayed, he did not know to whom—to the universal God, to the spirit, to the life-force, prayed that he might not be engulfed in the world's ugliness, that he might not be taken from himself, but left whole, and pure and sincere, to do good work and help men in their upward struggle. "Keep me whole, and pure, master of my-

self, and let me understand what I must do. Let life have no power to prevail against me. Let me work with understanding and by your light."

Very slowly he went into the house, letting himself in with his own key. He was about to go straight to his own room when he heard someone stirring in the drawing-room. There was no light. Puzzled, he opened the door and looked in.

"Come in," said his father.

He saw his father, in his dressing-gown, walking up and down the breadth of the room. Light came in and up from the Drive.

His father stopped walking and stood with his face in a stream of light. Arthur saw the bitter and harrassed look which told of impatience and unhappiness.

"Tell me now," said Mr. Winner, abruptly, "I want to know this thing definitely. Have you realised that the time has come for you to make a choice of a profession? Do you know what you are going to do with your life? What work have you in mind?"

Arthur went over to the window and stared at a lamp in the street.

"I don't know," he said, in a low voice.

"But you must know," said Mr. Winner, sharply. "And I must know. This business is going to come to an end, here and now."

"I think," said Arthur, in the same low voice, "I may become a priest."

After some moments Arthur became aware of the silence and looked at his father. Mr. Winner simply could not answer. A sudden awe had come over him—the awakening of ancestral terror in the presence of a lunatic.

"A priest!" he whispered, at last.

"All men are priests," said Arthur. "You and yours are priests to the gods of Manhattan. I shall be a priest to the Universal God."

Mr. Winner said nothing more. He stared awhile at his son, then turned and went out of the room closing the door very carefully and very softly behind him. Arthur stared out again at the lamp in the street.

* * *

In the early morning Arthur opened gently the door of his grandfather's room. The old man was awake, and lay gazing from his bed at the river across the street. He did not hear Arthur at first, but as the door gave a little creak, he turned his head suddenly. Then Arthur came in, and closed the door.

He put down the bag that he held in one hand and came over to the bed.

"Good morning, grandfather," he said, in German.

"Good morning, my child," said the old man,

his wrinkled face lighting with a smile of infinite tenderness. "You are going out early."

"I am going away, grandfather."

"Where, dear child?"

"Away from the house. I must go a long way from here, and it may be long before I return. Perhaps I shall never return."

"You are going away from the house," said the old man, in his quaint, slow German. "I knew you would surely go, sooner or later. For you are my son, and not my son's son. You must go soon, must you not?"

"At once, grandfather."

"Kneel down, Arthur, and I will bless you."

A flush passed through Arthur. He knelt at the edge of the bed, his head bowed. The old man placed his right hand on him and said slowly:

"God be with you in your wanderings. God keep you clean of heart. God make your ways pure and true so that all men can learn from you. I have wandered a long way from my early years, and I have not found peace yet. You too will wander a long way, but may you find peace."

He bent over and kissed the boy, then lay back on his pillow.

"Go now," he said.

Arthur rose and went from the room and the house.

CHAPTER XV

THE house learned of his departure that very morning, through a note he had left on Mr. Winner's desk in the library. The note said nothing more than that he had found it best to leave the house and go out somewhere, at least until he could understand himself. He made no mention of destination or of condition of return. He might write later.

Mr. Winner showed the note to his wife before breakfast. When she had read it they stared strangely at each other.

"A fool, an utter fool," said Mr. Winner, despairing.

"He'll surely come back," said Mrs. Winner, miserably. "The foolish boy. He has no money. He has nothing. He'll have to come back."

"I'm not sure," said Mr. Winner. "In fact, that's the last thing that'll bring him back."

"Shall we tell Richard and Elma?" asked Mrs. Winner, feeling under her husband's acceptance of the situation a storm that was held in chains.

"Certainly. You don't think he's going to

come back today, do you? The fool, the utter fool."

Mrs. Winner suddenly clasped her hands in terror. "Oh, Alfred!"

"What is it?"

"Maybe he's run off with Muriel Stewart."

Mr. Winner started. "The hell!" He stood motionless a moment. "The boy's fool enough to do anything. I tell you if he's done that I'm through with him. I want no idiots in this house." He paused. "I don't believe it. I don't believe it. The girl's too sensible for that."

Mrs. Winner's despair was untouched.

"Alfred, I'm sure she's run off with him. Oh, Alfred, it's her mother's doing. I never trusted that woman. She's a climber, a social climber."

"Hold on," said Mr. Winner, curtly. "Don't go off like that." He pulled his moustache savagely. "Let's see. You can't very well phone—no, surely, they'd have phoned if she was missing."

"Not if Mrs. Stewart is in it," said Mrs. Winner, her mind and tongue sharpened by the crisis.

"I don't believe it," said Mr. Winner, angrily. "The woman would have to be an absolute—scoundrel."

"Alfred, I'm afraid to telephone."

"You certainly must not. In either case telephoning can't alter the situation. And we'd better restrain our impatience. The fool, the utter, helpless fool."

Then Mr. and Mrs. Winner were struck by a simultaneous thought. "Van Starr!"

Mrs. Winner sat down, aghast. Mr. Winner was paralyzed.

"Can—you—beat—that?" said Mr. Winner at last.

Mrs. Winner stood, helpless.

"If that isn't the God damnedest insult that was ever offered under my roof," said Mr. Winner, slowly. He turned it over in his mind awhile and became angrier still. "I tell you that boy is just clean crazy. He told me last night he wants to become a parson. I wash my hands clean of him. I'll just tell Van Starr I'm sorry." He slammed out of the room.

Elma was thoroughly glad when she learned the news. "It's about time," she said, overtly venomous. "We'll see now if he'll make good with all that talk of his, or come back and ask pop for a job. I was sick and tired of his talk." This was before Van Starr, already advised by Mr. Winner, came in, somewhat subdued. At breakfast the subject was avoided,

and a painful conversation kept on the rack until the men left the house.

At ten o'clock Muriel received a special delivery note from Arthur.

"Dear Muriel:

I am leaving New York for some time—probably for a long time. I have only just come to understand what has been going on, with or without your knowledge, and there is only one way of putting an end to it. All other ways lead to misery.

You will wonder that I can take such a step. These last days I have lived only in you and through you. I feel that this going away is a tearing in two of my whole life, and I, too, wonder that I can do it. But if you could see, as I see, the wretchedness which would wait for us under the guidance of our parents, you would understand that I have acted well.

All that was best and dearest and loveliest in life I placed in your keeping. Now that I know that you are not strong enough, I have lost the only safeguard I ever had outside of myself. I, too, am not strong enough—yet.

Arthur."

Muriel received the note in the presence of her mother and Alice. She opened it without fore-

boding. She read the first words and became pale. Mrs. Stewart started and Alice uttered a cry.

"Leave the room, Alice," said Mrs. Stewart, sharply. "At once!" as Alice was about to object.

"What is that note?" asked Mrs. Stewart.

Muriel read silently through the note. She did not answer. She had heard nothing.

"Give me that note," said Mrs. Stewart, in the same sharp voice, and went over to her daughter.

Muriel made no motion or reply. Mrs. Stewart snatched the note from her daughter's hand. She guessed something of its contents.

She read through the note grimly, looked at her pallid daughter, set her lips, and said, coldly, "You fool!"

Muriel scarcely heard. Mrs. Stewart looked at the note again. "And he's worse than a fool—he's an idiot, a plain idiot—and a scamp. He doesn't even say where he's going." She was about to read through the note again, when she stopped sharply: "The party!" She drew fierce breath. "The party! The MacAlisters, the Grosses, they were all coming——"

"The scamp, the utter scamp!" blazed Mrs. Stewart. She walked up and down the room. They all knew by now. Muriel Stewart had

landed Arthur Winner. Were they not coming to witness it for themselves? The blackguard, the unprincipled blackguard, the scamp! He knew of it—and he had left them in the lurch, made such fools of them all, of Muriel, of Mrs. Stewart——

"What's he drivelling about?" asked Mrs. Stewart frantically, and looked fiercely at the note she held. "'All that was best and loveliest and dearest I placed in your keeping. Now that I know you are not strong enough, I have lost the only safeguard I ever had outside of myself.' What's he *drivelling* about? Why didn't you tell me the boy was just plumb mad? 'The wretchedness that would wait for us under the guidance of our parents!' Is this how he reckons to make you happy? Tell me!" she asked furiously.

Muriel did not answer.

"You never told him anything, *I'll* bet, you little fool—he says he only just found out. He had a row with his parents. *I* know. And everything I told you, how to break him in gently, just went for nothing, for nothing. I suppose you thought you were cleverer than I. And that's what I get for trying to teach my daughter something."

She stopped.

"You manage men! You're not fit to be a

wife. You ought to be a servant girl or something, for all the social ability you've got. And it's your fault. It's all your fault because you didn't do as I told you—you didn't tackle him in the right way. I suppose you wanted to show me how clever you were, and now, instead of having you teach him that he has to go into the business—he learns it from his parents during a row, and he thinks that you've been playing tricks on him behind his back."

She pulled the reins suddenly, and stopped.

"All right. That's ended I suppose. And a good job too, if that's the kind of man he is. I don't want a maniac in my family, even if he is the son of a millionaire."

Then she remembered the party again. "Beautiful, isn't it? I'll have to telephone them tomorrow morning, and say you're sick. Though they'll know all about it in a week or so. It'll be lovely, won't it—and you without anyone left. And you couldn't weigh him up better than that——" she added with a last, bitter stab. Then, coming quite to herself, and seeing her daughter pale, motionless, she shrugged her shoulders and sat down by her.

"Never mind, Muriel," she said, with a harsh laugh. "It's nothing so dreadful. It happens to every girl once or twice. It might have been

worse. Don't take it to heart so, you little goose. You don't see me worrying so horribly, do you?"

She was about to put her arm round Muriel when the latter shrank away. "I'm glad he's gone," she almost whispered.

"That's the way to look at it," said Mrs. Stewart, heartily.

PART II

CHAPTER XVI

Outside the railroad station of the city of Sargon, Ohio, Arthur stood, trying to decide on his road. To the right the street went downwards into what seemed the thick of the town. To the left it went away level into a residential district.

His valise was at his feet. He was physically tired from the twenty-four hours in the train; but he was alert and very hungry. The best thing was to make for the one-arm lunch counter across the way and strike up a conversation with some one.

It was seven o'clock. The street was busy and the traffic heavy. In the lunch counter Arthur found a crowd of men in overalls taking hasty meals. There was no chance of speaking to anyone.

He breakfasted, and remained sitting a while, thinking out things. He had fifty dollars in his pocket. He wanted a room and a job. The first puzzled him more than the second; he had heard

on the train that any man, however unskilled, could have a job for the asking at one of the rubber works. He was going there that morning. But he needed a room first. He wanted to wash up, and he wanted, more than that, to get settled.

He picked up his bag and went downwards into the town. This was the business and public section. On the right he passed the library, and cut across Main Street, keeping his eyes open for "to let" signs. A quarter of a mile beyond, the section became residential, and the windows blossomed up with signs. He went up the steps of a likely looking cottage, and knocked at the door.

A thin, angry woman came out, opened the inner door and talked to him through the screen.

"What d'ye want?"

"I want a room."

"For how long?"

"For good."

"For you alone?"

"Yes."

The woman examined him bitterly.

"Well, I'll tell you," she said in a harsh voice, "this is a very quiet house. There can't be any noise or rough-housing in here."

"Yes," said Arthur, and determined not to take a room with this unfriendly creature.

"Do you drink?"

"No."

"There hasn't got to be no spitting on the floor."

"No."

"D'ye chew tobacco?"

"Pardon me, madam," said Arthur, "I'm just looking for a room; I'm not trying to join the Salvation Army."

"The Salvation Army barracks is on Main Street," said the woman, "near the corner of Market. The room is four dollars a week. You've got to pay every week in advance."

"That settles it," said Arthur, "I never pay in advance."

"Goodbye," said the woman, briefly, and closed the door. Arthur remained staring at it a little while. The woman made him meditative.

He went down the steps. Opposite, a narrow street ran off between two lines of splendid trees, and turned off to the right. Arthur thought it would be a fine thing to get a room somewhere down that leafy lane. He found that, after the turning, the street became a narrow valley between two green slopes. At the top of the slopes, perched on flights of stairs, stood neat, detached cottages. The scene was Arcadian in its simplicity and freshness.

He did not go far before he climbed up to

one of the cottages. A boy of thirteen perceived him and raised a long yell of "Maw!"

A little woman came out on the verandah.

"I want a room," said Arthur, gladly putting down his valise.

"Ah, yes," said the woman, in a thin, non-committal voice.

"Have you got one to let?" said Arthur.

"Why sure," she answered, exhibiting no anxiety to please.

"Well, will you let it to me?" asked Arthur, exasperated.

The woman turned round, and called into the house: "John!"

A voice answered her.

"There's a young feller here for the room."

A tall heavy man, broad-faced, with thick lips, came out.

"You're a well-behaved young feller?" he asked Arthur, without introduction.

"Yes," said Arthur.

"Well, come upstairs, and we'll see."

Arthur went up into a neat, shining room that looked out on a garden, and a cherry tree in full blossom.

"This is the room," said the man. "You're supposed to keep it clean—no spitting on the floor."

"I don't chew, I don't drink, I don't roughhouse," said Arthur, tartly. They were queer folk in Sargon.

"D'ye go to church?" asked the man.

"No!" said Arthur.

"That's a great pity," said the man, his face hardening. "I'm a Baptist myself, but I wouldn't care what kind of church you went to. I'd like a man that goes to church. They're more reliable that way." He paused. "But you look all right. Besides, there's no one been round in a week for the room, and I guess I'll let you have it. Four dollars a week, in advance. Ye'll get a towel three times a week. The bathroom's over there. You can have a warm bath twice a week, and the missus'll give you a big towel when you ask for it."

Arthur took out his wallet and gave the man a five dollar bill.

"Here's a dollar," said the man. "Come down, and I'll give you a receipt."

"I don't want a receipt," said Arthur.

"Oh yes, you *do*," said the man, grimly. "I don't like money without receipts, giving or taking. Where d'you work?"

"Rubber works," said Arthur, curtly.

"Firefly?"

"Yes."

"Why d'ye leave your last room?"

"The landlady died."

"Ah."

"I'll stay up here for a while," said Arthur. "You give me the receipt when I come down."

The man looked round suspiciously. "All right."

"What's your name?" asked Arthur.

"John Evans."

"My name's Arthur Winner. I'll be down soon."

Left alone, Arthur felt more comfortable, and smiled to himself. He took stock of the room. There was a simple, comfortable looking bed, a three-shelf chest of drawers, two chairs and a little wicker table. On the wall were three cloth-work texts. "With all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long Suffering, Forbearing One Another in Love," Ephesians IV, 7; "Christ came into the World to save Sinners, of Whom I am Chief," Tim., I, 16; "Home, Home, Home, Sweet, Sweet Home."

A towel hung neatly folded on the bed rail. He took it into the bathroom, washed and came back. Then he sat down for a while at the window and stared at the masses of white cherry blossom billowing in front of him. A multitude of sweet and bitter thoughts made confusion in his mind. New York was far away, ten thousand

miles—more, an immeasurable distance. And he himself was curiously changed in these twenty-four hours. Strange world of ours! Strange ways of life!

He went down and, forgetting the receipt, passed out of the house. When he reached the top of the stairs he heard Evans calling him back.

"Say, mister."

Arthur turned back into the house.

"What d'you say your name was?"

Evans sat at a table, a receipt book in front of him.

"I never give money without a receipt, nor take it neither. How d'you spell your name?"

"A-r-t-h-u-r W-i-n-n-e-r."

Evans wrote laboriously, and tore out the slip. "Now you can go," he said, severely. "I don't trust men who don't take receipts. Ain't that right, Maw?"

"It sure is, John," said his wife in her thin voice.

"I trust every man and every man trusts me," said Evans, "and that's because I always give a receipt and take a receipt—that's reliable."

"Goodbye," said Arthur, and made his way down the two flights of stairs that led to the foot of the hill.

He was not pleased with his first taste of the

Middle West. Nor did his feelings improve as he walked through the streets again in the direction of the station and toward the Firefly rubber works. He was sore from the uncouth welcome at the two houses and somehow he read into the faces of the quick crowds the same hard, suspicious unfriendliness.

He walked his mood away. The Firefly rubber works were two miles out of town, and he went on foot all the way in order to become acquainted with the district. Half-way between the town and the Firefly works he came on a factory of the Shaker Oatmeal Company, and lost a minute in order to step inside. It might be worth inquiring into. He went up three steps into a large, bleak corridor. On the rough wall opposite the double door hung a neat, printed card.

GET TO HELL
OUT OF HERE.
WE DON'T NEED
ANY HELP

He made no further inquiries, but continued on his way. The Firefly rubber works, at which he was going to make his first application, was the biggest rubber concern in Sargon. It employed twenty thousand men, and manufactured, besides tires, all manner of articles in rubber—raincoats,

water bags, goloshes, gloves. Its advertisements dotted the country from end to end. The Firefly was better known than Abraham Lincoln.

Between the city and the factory stretched ugly land, neither decently abandoned nor decently cared for. Here and there rose gaunt and scabrous enterprises. The Essex Battery Co., the Supreme Belting Factory, the Automatic Scale Company. They lined the road like sinister footpads. From all of them there came a humming, and with the humming an impression of merciless and unremittant activity.

He reached the Firefly. The first low building lay on both sides of the street. Men in blue overalls, dirty, noisy, lounged outside and smoked. Arthur asked his way to the employment bureau. It was a small one-story building, abutting on the main office.

He came into a square room lined with benches. At one side was a window, and a man sat behind it, and with him two filing clerks. The room was half-filled with applicants, mostly young fellows, badly dressed, unshaven. Arthur, neat and clean-shaven, felt out of place.

The line worked on slowly, but Arthur was not in a hurry. He sat down in the first vacant place and took stock of his surroundings and his situation. He could not think clearly yet. He could not determine what was to be his course

of action. He only knew that he had returned to himself, that he was going to find out definitely where he stood. He had withdrawn, for a while at least, from the complications of his life. He did not hope to escape them: but he wanted a breathing space.

Curious, he thought, how the twenty or thirty men there in the room with him were nearer reality than he. They, at least, were about their business. This job, this work, was their all in all. This was their life. It was so much simpler, and therefore so much stronger. But he was a dilettante in life. All this was superficial to him.

And yet he was at the source of modern life. These men, these uncouth and powerful hordes, were keeping the world going. Theirs was the strength that made countries great, their blind, obstinate labor, their sullen slavery.

A man got stuck at the window, unable to make himself understood. He spoke only Polish. A compatriot came to his help, and the three men wrestled with the record. The man behind the window, a young, spectacled fellow, was good-humored and patient. The tangle was slowly picked straight. The Pole got his instructions, and waited for his friend.

"You worked here before?" said the man ahead of Arthur.

"No."

The man grunted.

"If ye have, don't give yer own name. They got it all written down, an' if ye quit just so they won't take ye back."

"Yes."

"Worked here three times," said the man. He was about forty, gaunt, powerful-throated. "Pit, then cord-room, then mill-room. All shifts."

"Good pay?" asked Arthur.

"Yah. Lousy work. Keep ye going like hell."

They moved up a couple of places. Some newcomers took the place behind Arthur.

"Got a chaw with yer?" asked the man.

"No, I'm sorry," said Arthur.

"You're the hell of a queer guy to be in here," said the man.

Arthur nodded. He felt he had displeased the man.

There was no further talk between them. The man got a mouthful of tobacco from some one in front of him and began to chew. He looked now and again at the window, then bent down and spat slowly and heavily on the floor. By the time Arthur moved up into his place there was a pool of filth to be avoided.

It took two hours for Arthur's turn to come round. He reached the window. The young

fellow in glasses was still good-humored but very tired. He freshened up slightly at the sight of Arthur. He took his name, age and other details on a card.

"Never worked before at rubber?" he said.

"No."

"What's your line?"

"I've got none."

"Millionaire gone bankrupt," said the clerk. "Well, what d'you think you can do?"

"Anything."

"Unskilled labor," said the clerk. "You've never heard yourself called that way, have you? Tried the office?"

"No."

"You're right, too. You'll get more as an unskilled laborer, if you have a strong back an' a weak head. How're you fixed that way?"

"Pretty fair."

"I'll give you the softest line there is—but if you stick it a month I'll buy you a box of cigars, kind you used to smoke before you went broke. I'll give you the stock-room. But you'll have to take graveyard shift. That's the only vacancy they have. Eleven to six-thirty. You'll get twenty-two bucks a week if you stick it that long. How about it?"

"Anything'll do," said Arthur.

"That's the way you feel about it, is it? I'll give you a card. You go to Building D, tonight, at half-past ten. They'll give you a regular card to punch there. For Christ's sake man, don't come in that rig-out. Get yourself a pair of overalls, and a cap, to keep the dust out of your hair."

Arthur took the slip the clerk handed him, signed his name on the register, and left the place. He was intensely glad to get out—he looked so meanly amateurish among these grim dirty men, an aristocrat gone slumming: all this was to them deadly earnest, the day's slavery; to him it was refuge. But he thought to himself that time only could vindicate him. Let him stay there three months—he would be one of them.

There was the desire that burned in him—to lose those superficial traits, those emotions, which made him not of them. He was a jest till now: a futile and helpless boy. What to him was the good of academic ability? Even of business ability, of organization and management? He would be playing with counters. Here at least was the raw material of life, the uncorrupted and uncorruptible, the bitter, passionate first sources of strength.

Down in the factories only—not in these busi-

ness streets that he walked through now, staring about him. Here the same obscene anxiety to attract attention, the same base and vicious scramble for income. The men who were toiling down there, the dirty slaves, thousands upon thousands of men, were turned here into mountebanks. "Firefly Tires Never Tire—the Best Attire for Your Car." "You don't know what Rubber can do until you've tried the Excelsior Corded Tire." No difference between this and the streets of New York—the same from end to end of the country—the Gods of Manhattan were the Gods of America.

"Only the source is uncorruptible," he kept repeating. The mass, the terrific, swirling mass, was clean. He was not of the mass—not of it yet; perhaps never of it in the physical sense. But because he was of it spiritually he would easily become part of it now.

Till the early afternoon he walked through the town, getting his bearings. He went into the library and applied for a card. Then he looked in vain for a bookstore, and found one only in the back section of the local department store. He bought a couple of cheap classics and went home. During the afternoon he tried to sleep and failed. He was restless because of the work he was going to begin. Later on he went

out again and bought himself overalls. Then, as evening fell, he took a car out of the city, and walked between green fields and orchards till it was time to go to work. He felt that something tremendous was happening in his life now.

CHAPTER XVII

By half-past ten, when Arthur presented himself at Building D, there was no more light in the western sky. The street, with the Firefly buildings on either side, was lit by flickering blue lamps. Crowds of men were pouring in from the city, in jitneys and on trolleys, for the night shift. The afternoon shift was not ended yet.

At the office of Building D Arthur, in his new overalls, found himself with a large group of newly hired men. A man behind a desk began to call names out, laboriously, and the men, confused at first, began to sort themselves out slowly. Arthur watched intently. It struck him how slowly mental processes went on—it took a long time before the heavy mass moved.

His own name was called, and he was assigned to a group. Half an hour was fiddled away in recalling of names, in comparing and checking of lists. Arthur watched the group of foremen. How curiously different he felt from that type of man. How much they were at ease with each other: they had a natural vulgar way, somehow in consonance with their work and surroundings. What a queer duck he would be among them.

At last he was marched away with some ten others. They went down the corridor and the foreman opened a wide door. A sickly stench was wafted into their faces. Arthur looked round quickly at the other men. They were silent, stolid; no one seemed ready to speak or be spoken to.

They crossed a hall lined with rows of lockers, and came to a flight of steps leading downwards into darkness. When they reached the head the doors at the bottom swung wide open, and the afternoon shift began to stream upwards—wave after wave of black faces, bare, smeared arms, sweat, the growing stench, a blend of sickliness and acridity that tickled the bottom of the lungs.

The group of new workers waited and watched. Arthur looked round at his companions—they were sullen, moveless. He could not venture a remark to anyone.

The upward-pouring crowd clattered on interminably. The waves of heat and stink beat always stronger with them. The lockers in the room rang as they were opened and slammed to.

At last the pouring came to an end. The foreman led the new gang down. They passed through iron double doors into a long stone corridor, glass-walled, and, on either side a

tremendous hall Arthur saw vaguely long rows of revolving wheels, belting, a blue haze, mannikins that ran to and fro behind trucks, a terrific confusion of motion; he heard a thundering and rolling. Down in the corridor the stink was even stronger, but it was only when the foreman opened a door into one of the halls that the full blast of it came over them.

Arthur almost staggered back. He had never suspected that the sense of smell could cause such agony. The muscles of his stomach were suddenly convulsed, and only by setting his teeth could he prevent himself from vomiting. He tightened his lips and stared at the others. The foreman saw his look of dumb pain and grinned. Nobody said anything.

The stink came in irregular waves. As they followed the foreman down the hall Arthur was aware of remarkable changes in the quality of the odor. It was extraordinarily complicated. There was always a powerful background of hot sickliness. On top of this, and in varying thicknesses, came the solid body of stink, as distinct as color or sound pitch; it billowed about one; it soaked heavily into the brain; it gripped the stomach in its hot, clammy paws. But this was not all. Somehow, through background and body, there ran varying *motifs*, light, elusive, stabbing — something like the

sound of a flute against a throbbing background of string and wood-wind. They came and fled—curious aberrations that put the last touch on the desire to vomit—now a waft of overdone fried fish, so incredibly faithful and poignant that Arthur found time to be startled; now a pure laboratory touch of carbon disulphide; then the stabbing, racking touch of milk gone green in a cardboard container; then all kinds of elusive side smells—marvelously reminiscent of things, but what, it was impossible to say; it was amazing to Arthur. Then, before he was aware of himself he had staggered against a standard and was racked by vomiting pains. Three times he felt his stomach bear upwards towards his mouth. The great roaring room went round him. He held himself in, then heard the foreman's voice: "That's all right. You're here first time. You get used to it. Breathe through your mouth."

He mastered himself, and the gang went on. They were led into a small dirty office branching off a short lobby. Arthur heard his name called. "You stay here," said the foreman, "there's yer boss——" and he pointed to a squat, powerfully built Italian. "Mike, here's yer stock-room boy." He marched off with the rest. Arthur watched them depart—his last contact, he felt somehow, with amateurishness.

But he had no time to think. The foreman beckoned him over.

"Hey. You know how to write?"

"Yes."

"You write good?"

"Yes."

"Let's see."

Arthur took the pencil and paper offered him and wrote "Firefly Rubber Works." The foreman looked at it dubiously. "Looks all right," he said. "You must be an educated feller, that right?"

Arthur nodded.

"Thought so when I seen ye coming in," said the foreman, "only ye can never tell." He squirted tobacco juice near Arthur's foot, making the latter jump.

"If you're educated," said the foreman, "you gorra good job with me. Soft. You come with me."

They went out of the office and into the great hall again. The blue, flickering light danced through vast spaces, misty with bluestone powder. Midway down the hall there was a crack right across the width, and in this crack two tremendous flywheels were spinning with incredible speed, and emitting a malevolent humming noise. The double row of mills down the length of the hall revolved evenly—Arthur could

not organize the picture yet—the men, the trucks that came and went, the running to and fro. And, through all, in all, the waves of stink—warm, insidious, implacably slimy, insistent.

"This way," said the foreman. He took Arthur down one side of the hall, where, in a long alcove, were stretched rows of cubic wooden bins, one on top of the other, the open ends to the side. On the edges of the bins were labels. At the end of every row was a table of the contents of the set of bins.

The foreman began to explain in great detail the simple system. Meanwhile there were men coming and going down the alleyways, carrying sheets of rubber to the bins, taking others away.

"Them sheets," said the foreman, "belongs to the boxes," and he spat again near Arthur's foot, making the latter jump again. "Never let a guy get away with rubber unless you give it to him. See it's the right number——" he seized Arthur suddenly by the arm and jerked him to one side; an electric truck darted by. "Keep yer eyes open," he said. "Yer liable to get knocked down. When you give the rubber or take it, see you count the sheets right, cos they take stock every month and I get hell if I'm out—then you'll get hell." He swished tobacco juice near Arthur's foot—Arthur could not quite make out whether this was absent-mindedness or

a sort of humorless playfulness. "Here's a pencil. Ye write on them sheets of paper——" hanging at the end of every row. "Every sheet. Sometimes the sheets comes in stuck together—see, like this———" he snatched three sheets stuck together off a truck that was delivering to a nearby row. "Then ye do this." He went to the end of the row, on the inner side, and flung the sheets down on a box. "Here, tear 'em apart," he said to Arthur.

Arthur bent to the job. The sheets of rubber were about two feet square and a quarter of an inch thick: they were warm, and unpleasantly smooth to the touch. Arthur put his knee on one part of the rubber, seized a sheet in each hand and began to tear apart. It went slowly: he put all his strength into it and it went faster. The sheets came apart. "Then ye do this," said the foreman. He picked up a white burlap bag, filled with bluestone powder, and tied up at the top. He dumped it down several times on the rubber sheets, so that a coating of powder was left on them—meanwhile blue-white clouds burst up into the air at every dumping—and Arthur felt the tiny particles creeping into his nose and ears.

"Then ye put 'em in the right bin, 'cordin' to the number," said the foreman, pointing to the number chalked on the sheets. He began ex-

plaining again, at great length the whole system. "See?"

"Yes."

The foreman looked at him, grinning. "Yes!" he repeated. "A-a-yes! All right. Sure you know what I mean?"

"Yes."

"Well, these three rows is yours, F. G. H. Don't let them truckers get away with anything on you. They'll try and help ye get the rubber, see—they don't care if it's the right number or not. They gets paid just for truckin' —don't let 'em help you."

"All right," said Arthur.

"Yes!" said the foreman grinning, "yes! I guess you must 'a' been a swell guy. Yes! haw-haw——" he walked away, chuckling delightedly. Arthur felt the blood coming to his face.

He went up and down the three rows several times, memorizing the positions of the numbers —X213, X432, Z212, Y818—the numbers were arranged unevenly — the sorting system was probably not numerical but qualitative he thought.

A truck, laden to the top with rubber, halted at the end of row G. A perspiring truckman —he looked a queer little fellow to be propelling that tremendous pile of rubber—came darting

round the truck, and began to throw sheets of rubber, singly, and stuck together, into the bins.

Arthur came dashing up. "Here," he said, "Go slow."

"Hell!" yelled the truckman, without pausing, "Can'tche see I'm helping ye?" He went on flinging rubber at random into bins.

His furious speed and energy took the wind out of Arthur. Before he could make effective resistance the man had unloaded and was off. Arthur caught a sly grin on his face as he retreated, shouting—"Gangway."

Too late his anger flared up. He began to examine the bins and to re-sort the rubber. Someone interrupted him—a tall, bony fellow in short sleeves.

"He did ye good and proper," he said, "ah?" He spat tobacco at the floor.

"He did," said Arthur.

"That's how they do it on new guys," he said. "I'm on C. D. E. Don't pull any of that stuff on me." He spat again. "Come back at 'em, you God damn fool. Don't let 'em get away with it."

Arthur nodded. The other stockman returned to his bin. Arthur went on resorting the rubber, separating sheets and powdering them. Before

he had finished, another truckman stopped at F, a wiry little Italian, naked to the waist, and streaked with sweat and bluestone powder. He cast a hasty glance at Arthur and began to sling rubber.

"Cut that out," yelled Arthur.

"Wota hell s'amarra," yelled the truckman in reply. "Me help you, God damn——"

Arthur seized the rubber the Italian had flung into the bin and flung it on the floor. The Italian took no notice. He went on flinging sheet after sheet into the bins, and before Arthur knew it he was gone, shouting jubilantly, "Me help you, God damn!"

Arthur grinned despite himself. "God damn is right." He began to re-sort the rubber. A few minutes later the first truckman returned. This time Arthur was on the spot. Before the man had time to snatch up a single piece of rubber Arthur had put his hand on the pile. "You cut that out," he said sharply.

"How d'ye get that way?" snapped the truckman. "Take a — like you ten years. I'm going to help you."

"By God," roared Arthur, "you keep your hands off the rubber if it takes me a month. Get that?"

He began to put the sheets away. The truck-

man watched him, glowering. In the middle of the sorting he seized a sheet and flung it into a bin. Arthur came back at him, snatched the sheet out of the bin and slapped it down on the truck again. "You stand clear of the truck," he ordered, "or I won't move another sheet."

"Like hell!" snarled the other, and he suddenly lifted a mass of rubber and dumped it on the floor. Arthur stooped and tried to lift the mass. It was too heavy. The truckman pitched the rest of his stock on the floor and was off.

"You report that to Mike," said someone. Arthur looked up and saw another stockman, this time from rows A B.

"Report hell," said the C D E stockman, who seemed to get through with his trucks in no time. "You got to make yer own way."

Arthur was almost certain there was a subtle mockery passing between the two men. They were amused at his helplessness. As he realized this he felt a curious tingling of silent rage—something alien to him. He turned abruptly from the men and began to sort the rubber sheets on the floor.

Awhile he was left alone. He had time to get to the end of the bins and look around. He saw the men rolling their heavily loaded trucks up and down the hall. They all passed in front

of great scales, and their trucks were weighed, so much credit for every hundredweight. Arthur understood now why they were in a fever of impatience.

Slowly he was becoming accustomed to the thundering noises, the smell, the powder that was creeping into his ears, his nostrils and under his finger-nails. He fell gradually into mood with this underground tumult.

He heard a shout and saw a truck running into alley F G. He darted in and found the first little Italian slinging rubber into the bins. A flood of anger washed through him. He seized the Italian by the shirt collar and pulled him violently away. "God damn you-" he shouted. The Italian glared for a moment like a wild beast and then leapt at Arthur. Arthur felt two blows landed on his face, but they did not seem to hurt, though he knew they landed hard. He was half blind with rage now. He had the Italian by the throat, shoved his head into a malodorous bin, and banged him futilely against the rubber sheets. The Italian tried to get a knee into Arthur's stomach, but Arthur hugged him close and kept banging away furiously, though, even in his rage, he was half aware that he could not be hurting the Italian.

"Ala right," gasped the Italian.

Arthur let go. The man stood up straight, and looked at Arthur with blood-shot eyes. "Geta that rubber out, quick," he said.

Arthur obeyed. He was confused and astonished at himself. It took him longer than before to sort the rubber, but the Italian did not interfere. When the latter was gone Arthur found himself trembling, he did not know why.

Other truckmen came, always aggressive, always in a frenzied hurry. None of them was as bellicose as the Italian, but Arthur found that remonstrance was useless. It was always yelling, swearing and a show of fight. Before the last they all backed away, not because they were afraid, but because fighting meant loss of time.

There came a longer pause in his section. He watched the great mill-room again, and the other stock-section, diagonally opposite his. He watched, and admired, the skill of the truckers. On the trucks there might be piled thirty and forty sheets—between six and eight hundred weight, and sometimes more. It was hard pushing—and sometimes there were collisions and jams. The truckers manipulated their cars as it were by instinct—a quick pull here, a push there. There was a special way of stooping, and placing the shoulder against the truck, to send it flying out of a jam.

He watched the stripped men at the mills. At

their side lay heaps of sorted rubber sheets. They picked these and threw them into the thick steel rollers. The rollers seized them, pulled them in, and wound them round and round, packing them tighter, and pressing out flaws. The millman watched. When he thought that one lot was finished, he picked away the sheet from the surface of the roller, waited till three feet or so of rubber was unwound, and cut the sheet neatly away. When a pile of sheets had accumulated a trucker passed and carried it off.

It was the smooth flow of action under the tumult that fascinated and half-hypnotised Arthur. There was no pause or let up. Only here and there work might slow up, to be intensified elsewhere. But the whole went on, like a rustling sea.

He caught sight of a clock at one end of the hall. One o'clock! What? He had been here only two hours? He noticed suddenly how sleepy he was. The heat poured a pleasant weariness into his limbs. He shook it off and walked up and down one of the stock room alleys.

The work began again for him. He fought his sleepiness and sorted rubber. Towards two o'clock there came a rush and he found himself swamped. Three men descended on him at a time, and one man waited for stock. He tried to fight them off, one by one, and saw a couple

of idle stockmen watching and grinning. They got the best of him, threw the rubber at random into the bins, and retreated. The Italian was one of them. As he pushed by Arthur he let out a side kick and sent Arthur staggering into a bin. Arthur picked himself up and began to straighten out. He was in a simmer of rage.

So it went on, as if forever. The hours crept along with agonizing slowness. The truckers came, singly, in pairs, in threes, always impatient, always ready to take advantage of him. He became almost sick with repressed anger. He became so tangled up that he gave up at one time straightening out: he left a muddled layer in some of the bins, and began to pile on top of them. But the thought rankled in him: the truckers were getting away with it.

Between three and four o'clock the dawn began to show at the eastern windows, a faint grey bleariness at first, and then a tinge of dirty blue through dusty panes. The thundering and rolling went on. Arthur could barely stand on his feet, could barely keep his eyes open. There was a sweet, heavy poison in his limbs, a poison that pulled him down, that threw him sometimes against the row of bins and closed his eyes for him. Then he would start up, master himself, and walk with firm steps up and down the alley.

Mike came round once, and inspected his bins.

He found the upper layers correct and nodded. "Didn't let them lousy truckers bulldoze ye, ah?"

"No," said Arthur, but thought of the muddle five or six sheets below.

"That's the stuff," said Mike and passed on.

Arthur felt the weariness grow on him. At intervals of infinite length he would look at the clock, and find it had shifted perhaps five, perhaps ten, minutes. The light at the eastern windows strengthened slowly. The western windows too began to glimmer up dirtily. A mixture of light was poured on the vast room. The bluish cloud and dust began to tinge with hard grey. The two vast wheels that split the room went spinning on tirelessly, swiftly, infinitely vicious.

Towards five o'clock his weariness overcame him. In a forgetful moment he half sat on the edge of a bin and leaned against the side. A warmth poured through him, so grateful that tears started to his eyes. He suddenly thought of Muriel, and, with a touch of light-headedness imagined her coming down the vast, turbulent hall towards him; she was in a white dress, cool, light, infinitely fresh. She would come down that narrow alley-way, and would see him, and would come and take his hand.

He started up quietly and staggered out into the alley. A trucker was unloading in alley G H.

Arthur reeled towards him and, wordless, pushed him aside. He was too dulled to say anything. He sorted the rubber out, half asleep. Another trucker came for rubber. Arthur took his list and served him. It was all dreamlike now, he was waiting only for the half-past six signal—then he would wake, and he would creep somewhere into a corner and lie down. He would not go home.

Towards six o'clock, when the light was almost full outside, Arthur freshened up slightly. It was as though a small last reserve of energy had been tapped accidentally. He walked up and down the alleys, and inspected his bins. The upper layers were all right. The man after him, on the morning shift, would find the mixture. Well, that could not be helped. He had done his best.

The last half hour went rapidly. A whistle began to sound. The men came out of their bin-alleys. The mills stopped rolling—only the great fly-wheels went on humming savagely. Mike came down the line and shouted something.

Arthur followed the rest. He went out by another route than by the one by which he had come in. He followed the crowd through corridors, through other halls; he scarcely knew what he saw: wheels, mills, trucks, pillars—one room

that looked like an inferno, with pits dotted over it. He passed by a cafeteria—but he could not eat. He came out on the street, some distance from Building D.

The fresh air wrapped him round, and soaked him through and through. He looked up and saw blue heaven and tender white clouds, drifting in the morning wind: so clear, so clean—and somehow so strange, and alien.

He took a jitney homeward. He could scarcely crawl up the forty stairs to the house perched on the hill. The greenness round him, the dew at his feet, the blossoms and scents, were like illusions: if he had strength in him they would all disappear.

* * * *

The first week passed very slowly—the hardest week, thought Arthur, that he had ever lived through. It was not the physical side of the work that took such heavy toll of him, but the exhausting strain of mental and spiritual adjustment.

The physical side was hard enough. He did not realize this until the beginning of his second night, when he came down into the evil-smelling inferno stiff in all his joints and with mind dazed. He had come home broken with weariness, but he had not been able to sleep. The first couple of hours he was kept awake by winds

that came in and passed across his bed. They were so marvelously fresh, so sweet, that their contrast with the abominable stink and darkness of the factory kept startling him with recurrent sharpness. Was it possible that within ten minutes of each other there should be two such worlds? Was it possible that men submit to the one instead of claiming the other? Afterwards, when mind and body had reacclimatised themselves, and he thought he was ready to fall asleep, the Evans family woke, and there began a shouting and clattering and bumping that drove every drowsiness out of him. Then Evans himself put up a ladder outside, climbed up to Arthur's room and began hammering at the sill. Arthur looked round and Evans saw him.

"Tired after your night shift, ah?" he said, blatantly.

"Yes," said Arthur.

"Yep, it tires you out," said Evans wisely, and went on hammering with all his strength.

So it went on till noon, and then Arthur gave up the attempt to sleep. By evening he was as tired as he had been the night before, and he found that keeping awake at the job was a soul-racking task.

It was only toward the end of the week that he learned to sleep a little in the morning—and then it was not so much an acquired habit as an

accumulation of weariness that simply would not be denied. He came to loathe the Evans's with a loathing that was actually grotesque. He knew full well that it would be absurd to ask them to keep quiet. They were the kind of people to whom noise and loudness are as natural and necessary as speech. So he bore it for the first week, and nursed against them all—and against Evans in particular—a rage which took on a tinge of the crazy from his condition of sleeplessness. Evans was a vigorous and tuneless hymn singer; his singing was devoid of all reverence, or even of aesthetic pleasure so that it impressed one as persistent lung exercise; on top of this he was fond of lecturing. In whatever room he found himself he would be speaking at the top of his voice to members of the family scattered through the house. Arthur would listen and groan at the ceaseless vocal energy of the man.

Loudly: "Love one another—'at's what the Bible says——"; a few steps; a door closes; then, in a muffled voice, through three walls: "I love everybody, whether they love me or not. I love everything." Two minutes later, then, from the back of the house. "Neither a borrower nor a lender be. 'At's what the Bible says. I don't borrow and I don't lend."

But Arthur's physical weariness, slightly relieved towards the end of the week, was less than

his mental weariness. He found himself, after the first night, constantly on his guard. He was anxious to become friendly with the men around him, with the stockroom men on either side of him, with the truckers, with the nearest millmen, but instead of finding it easier as the nights went by, he found it increasingly harder. The millmen and truckmen, were generally busy, and their slack minutes they passed in their own sections; but he would see them pause near other stockmen, say a few words and pass on. When they came near him he found himself tongue-tied. He had no idea what kind of conversation to open; he had no idea what he could say that would sound natural.

Once or twice he stopped them with a question, as he had heard the other stockmen do: "You guys busy up your way?" Or, "How's the rubber coming?"—but in his own mouth this way of speaking sounded so idiotic—at least to himself—that he could not continue. Once or twice he asked them something in his own way—that is, just as simply, but speaking with his natural intonation, and at once he sensed an antagonism and amusement in the other man.

It was worse among the stockmen. When the work let up for a few minutes they came together in small groups. Arthur would stand on the outskirts of a group of three or four, and listen and

observe. And before long he became aware of a fundamental quality in the form of their speech and contact. There was a kind of *timbre* which he could not sound. Their conversation would be nine-tenths meaningless — just odd remarks without an iota of mental effort. But the delivering of it was something quite alien to him. He could reproduce their remarks—detached and unsustained—but if he tried to get their manner, he felt a fool. In the first place no one showed any interest in conversation. Talking was done slowly. If one man asked a question of another, the second one would wait a few seconds, would spit first, or stare at something, and then answer absent-mindedly. In the second place there were not two sentences without a "Hell", "God damn", "lousy" and the like: they were natural and accepted embellishments: there was no emotion behind them. But when Arthur tried two consecutive sentences without their assistance, he felt that he had put up an additional barrier between himself and these men.

But apart from these superficial characteristics there was a certain natural brutality of tone, a gross indifference and heavy ignorance, unabashed because unconscious, that gave their conversation its authentic tone. It was here that Arthur was most at a loss. And he became gradually aware of his own impotence. These

men were strong. They were untroubled by fineness of reflection; they were powerful in their baseness. Him, Arthur, they considered something perhaps ridiculous, but certainly weak. And how could he break through to them? How could he be inside that circle, at ease, as they were, indifferent, untroubled?

The sense of his own inferiority became stronger as the nights went by and he found the gulf between him and them widening instead of narrowing. He tried hard to get on a footing with them. He came and listened to their talk, and said little. He acted out their mannerisms: he took up their tone of voice. But the longer he stayed with them, the more alien he was to them. And because they did not care, because they laughed at him, he felt them to be stronger than himself. They were fundamental and self-sufficient; he was disrooted and self-conscious.

In more obvious ways, however, he did not let anyone take advantage of him. He learned the first night to resent bullying, even if it meant fight. But what he could not get so easily was the indifference they displayed with regard to insult. The filthiest names, the grossest abuse, were bandied passionately between two men in a quarrel over a piece of rubber. Ten minutes later these men would spit amicably in each other's company: "How's the rubber comin' tonight?"

"Lousy." When a trucker first reviled him Arthur felt himself turn pale with anger—the epithets were unspeakably foul; he could not reply in kind under the circumstances: how could he abuse a man unless he knew him? When the trucker left he felt his unuttered rage eating him; and though he soon learned that this kind of language was only vigorous small talk, he could not easily compose himself. Therein, too, he felt his inferiority. It was only weakness, he argued, that gave way to ineffective anger.

In the fourth night, there came a stoppage in the mills: the truckers laid off and the stockroom was left in peace. When the rumor passed round that the stoppage would last an hour or so, Arthur went into the "pit", adjoining the mill-room. He had passed through the section every morning, after work, but he had always been too dazed and weary to stop.

When he came in he found the pit working at full blast—a demonic scene. No man was allowed to work in the pit who stripped at less than a hundred and seventy pounds. All of the men were husky; most of them powerful; and a few of them were giants. The work called for strength and endurance. The men stripped to the waist, worked in teams of four; their movements were swift, strong and precise. They worked in a temperature that went up at times to two hundred and

twenty-five degrees and seldom fell below two hundred and ten. In the great room there was ceaseless pandemonium—the crack of steel on steel, the fierce hiss of steam, the scream of whistles, and the abysmal roar of big machinery.

In this room the tires were encased in steel jackets, and lowered into hot circular pits. There were twenty such pits in the room; they were wide enough to admit one tire in its steel casing and deep enough to hold perhaps fifteen. It took four men to attend to each pit—to enclose the tire in the case, to carry it to the pit mouth, to lower it carefully, to clamp it in, and to force it down. Later the process was reversed.

Not the individual movements took Arthur, but the fierce rhythmic power of the whole scene. Here was nothing really human. The dim mist that hung over the room and deepened into a curtain at the far corners, the passionate pulse of huge pistons, of ponderous wheels, the noise, the merciless rush of effort—all was confounded into an unearthly orgy of creation. Less than human or more than human were these straining figures that carried steel circles, snapped to the bolts of the pit, bent with frantic effort over wheels and levers, grunted hoarsely as they swung their bodies right and left; more than human or less than human were the minds that had con-

ceived this place, had wrought it in detail, had projected it out of nothing. Under these vaults life was monstrous, distorted; out, above, there was cool air, winds, clouds, perhaps fresh, sweet rain that sings on the skin, like tiny fingers on a guitar.

What can a man be who gives half his waking life to this, thought Arthur? What but blind, fierce, unreasoning: life is a machine shop, tools, wheels; adapt it to this end or that. What is mind in this inferno—love, beauty, the worship of God? Every day in the year—one might go mad . . . .

The stoppage suddenly spread to the pit. Arthur had a curious sensation of speeding backwards through a black tunnel towards fresh air, as the wheels begans to slow down and the men abandoned the pits. The silence that grew slowly pressed blankly on his eardrums. He was astonished at the new qualities of quiet.

A husky young fellow, stripped to the waist, and streaming perspiration, came past Arthur and took a drink at a low faucet in the wall. Then he stood up, straightened out, and grinned at Arthur. The sleek muscles of his arms and hairless breast flattened out, and faint waves of shadow ran back and forth over his splendid body.

"Some job," said Arthur, half shyly.

"You said it," answered the man.

"How long have you been working down here?" asked Arthur.

"Eighteen months. You work in the stock room?"

"Yes."

"Lousy job," said the man. "What d'you make there?"

"Twenty-two dollars," said Arthur, unaccountably ashamed.

The man spat, then took a plug of tobacco from a trouser pocket, and chewed.

"Hell!" he said. "Make three times that in the pit."

They stood silent a while. Most of the other men had crowded to the doors. Now that the steam no longer jetted from a dozen escapes the cool night air had a chance to get in. In repose the big workroom seemed less monstrous, less like a blind and murderous master of men.

"You're a college man," said the man, suddenly.

"Yes," said Arthur.

"Working down here on vacation?"

Arthur detected some refinement in the man's voice, and was more at ease. "No," he answered. "Just so."

"Couldn't get another job?" asked the other.

"No. This is good enough."

The other spat, slightly puzzled.

"I'm hoping to go to college next year," he said. "Saving up for it."

"What are you going to take?"

"Engineering. That's the dope just now."

Arthur nodded.

"Got a brother an engineer," said the man. "South America. Railway engineer. He worked his way through college."

"They're putting the juice on," said someone hurrying by, and in a moment wheels began to revolve again slowly. The men came back deliberately. Arthur's man left him. In a few minutes the room had taken on its natural aspect of fierce activity. Arthur watched a little while longer, and then bethought himself that the mill-room was probably going again, and he should be at his place in the stockroom. He hurried back.

Through the rest of the long night his thought recurred again and again to the pit-man. He wanted to see him again. He was the first friendly person he had yet encountered in the factory.

When the night-shift was over Arthur went up to the cafeteria and succeeded in locating him. He came over with his breakfast tray and sat down next to him. They nodded to each other and ate in silence. Arthur was astounded by the gigantic meal of the other: fruit, eggs, fish, bacon

and seven or eight rolls. Arthur ate very slowly, to let the man finish, and then rose with him.

"That's some meal you put away," said Arthur, as they went downstairs.

"Got to. D'you know how much weight I lose every shift?"

"No."

"Five an' a half pounds," said the other. "Got to make that up in the day. I used to weigh myself—hundred and eighty-five and moré at night: hundred and eighty in the morning."

They stood on the street where the cars passed.

"Which way do you go?" asked Arthur.

The man pointed away from town.

"Walk?" asked Arthur.

"Yeh."

They went along together, then turned left into what looked like a bungalow colony.

"There's five of us got a cottage here." said the man. "One of the fellers reckons he's getting married and got it from the firm. Five dollars a week for a hundred years, I guess. We're all living there till he gets married."

They stopped in front of a cottage.

"I'd like to live round here." said Arthur.

"Where d'ye hang out?"

"Got a room downtown. Too damn far from work," said Arthur.

The man spat. "There's a feller leaving here

this week," he said. "You could have a room. He pays three dollars a week."

"I'd take it," said Arthur quickly.

"Fellers name that owns this place is Pitcher. Works on the morning shift. So do the other fellers. Come round in the afternoon."

He was about to go in.

"I'll be round this afternoon," said Arthur. "What's your name?"

"Hogg."

"Winner's my name," said Arthur.

Hogg nodded. "Yeh," he said. "He'll give you the room. Guess you can move in tomorrow."

Arthur raised his hand and turned back, glad because of his discovery. He was sick of living with the Evans's, and he was happy to move in among these men.

He feared in advance his contact with them. He feared a repetition of the fiasco in the stock-room, where he knew he could never be one with the other workers. And so he determined in advance to keep strict guard on his tongue, and watch every move he made.

That morning he slept badly again for the family was noisier than ever. In the early afternoon he gave curt notice to Evans, holding back his desire to explain that they might have shown more consideration for him, and going hastily out of the house set out for the other end of the town.

He found the cottage again. Hogg was sitting on the porch smoking, and looking carelessly at a paper.

"Hello."

"Is your man in?"

"Pitcher. Guess so. Came back an hour ago. Ho, Pitcher! Other feller's washing upstairs. He'll show you the room."

Arthur sat down.

"Couldn't sleep in the other place," he said. "Family was always making a bunch of noise." He found himself automatically imitating Hogg's slovenly way of speaking. "Old man was always singing hymns. Haven't slept for a week."

A burly, unshaven man came out.

"This here feller reckons he'll take that room of Hyde's," said Hogg. "Hyde's the feller that's going tomorrow."

Pitcher eyed him.

"You work in the stockroom?"

"Yeh," said Arthur.

"Wanna see the room?"

"Reckon I'd better," said Arthur.

"All right."

He led him up to a small, barely furnished room, with a bed, wash bowl and pitcher, and a small dresser.

"All right," said Arthur. "I'll come here tomorrow." The room was dismal enough after

the delightful room at Evans's but here he might at least be able to sleep. And here he would find, perhaps, companionship and even the first friendships of his new life.

Downstairs, two other men had joined Hogg. They sat on the porch and talked with him.

"These fellers have the other rooms," said Pitcher. "There's a nigger woman comes round in the mornings, and looks after the place."

Arthur sat down on the porch stairs, finding no other seat. He listened silently to the talk that went on.

"You couldn't stick it in the pit: you ain't got the guts," said Hogg to one of the men.

"You're fuller —," said the other contemptuously. "What the hell's the big idea anyway? Work like a bastard for five more dollars."

"Five dollars more?" grinned Hogg. "When did you pull sixty dollars in the mill-room?"

"I've pulled sixty and sixty-five and seventy," snorted the other.

Hogg retorted with an unspeakable phrase. The other repeated it, and added: "When did you make seventy in the pit?"

"I've made seventy, and seventy-five and eighty," said Hogg.

Arthur noticed a distinct difference in Hogg's voice when he spoke to the other man. Its quality was nearer to that of the other men—the abys-

mal grossness that he hated and feared so much.

"Eighty hell!" said the other. "You ain't pulled no eighty—nor seventy-five."

"Mill-room pikers," said Hogg serenely.

"Aw, for Christ's sake cut it out," interrupted the third man. "You fellers gimme a pain in the ——."

"What's gittin' through you?" added Hogg.

"If you fellers wanna fight get to hell out of here round the back," said Pitcher, grinning.

They argued on for ten minutes, Hogg insisting he earned more than the other man, the other man insisting he earned as much as Hogg. Arthur could have got up and shouted with impatience. Then the conversation veered round as Pitcher took a couple of dice from his pocket and began to roll them absent-mindedly on the floor.

"No game tonight," said the man who had argued with Hogg.

"No, sir. Tomorrow's payday," said Pitcher.

"Just practicin' like?" said one, sarcastically.

"Practicin's right."

"Tryin' to make that little Phoebe. Got your goat last Sunday?"

"Didn't get *my* goat," said Pitcher.

"Didn't get your goat? You lost thirty on little Phoebe, didn't you?"

"That don't get *my* goat," said Pitcher.

The other appealed to Hogg. "Ain't that guy bugs? He's always bett'n two to one on the four, an' three to two on the five. Now what the hell's the difference? Ain't a four got the same chance as a five?"

"Like hell it has," said Pitcher, angrily. "I've played crap when you was suckin' the bottle. Don't I know? The four's the rottenest number next to crap. Don't tell me."

"That's if you ain't got the luck."

"Luck noth'n." said Pitcher furiously. "You can make a ten easier'n a four."

"Who sez so?"

"I sez so."

"What the hell do you know?"

"I know a damn sight more'n you."

"Ten easier'n a four? You're bughouse! They're the same. Just like a nine an' a five."

The third man joined in.

"I guess it's luck," he said judiciously. "Some days you'll make your ten so easy, there's nothin' to it. An' other days you'll never see it."

"Aw, you're cock-eyed," said Pitcher.

"An' you're just a pile of manure," the other retorted.

There the argument stopped. Had Arthur not been wiser by now he would have tried to point out that in dice the mathematical chances for a

four, a five, a nine and a ten were even, and were two-thirds of the chances for a six, or seven, or eight. But he kept silent. This argument, like all arguments had nothing to do with truth. It was the combat of personalities: a man's view was the man himself: he defended it as he defended himself: contradiction in argument was a personal attack.

And with what furious certainty a man uttered his opinions. It was the reflex of his confidence in himself; and the manner of his argument was a revelation of his personality.

The talk turned soon to other channels—but its tone did not alter. Arthur stayed and listened, fascinated by the way these men talked. Their intelligence in the matter argued was beneath contempt, but Arthur envied them the venom and power of their talk, the self-certainty it revealed.

It came slowly home to him how powerless reason was here, how futile was common sense and disinterested logic.

He went home later, his mind full of what he had heard and seen. It was hard to get near these men: it was hard for him to subdue his long training, his long familiarity with orderly thinking and debate, and to find a way into the hearts of these men. Outward manner was not enough: it was essential as a beginning, but it

could not carry him further than the threshold.

But he would get further. Somehow there was a way of reaching them, of communicating with them direct. And the more the difficulty of it grew on him, the more determined he was to persist.

CHAPTER XVIII

The next morning Arthur stood in line to receive his pay—only eighteen dollars, as he had not worked a full week yet, but it covered his expenses since he had arrived in Sargon. At and down the line there was joyous talk of sprees, of week-end junketings, and of hooch. Arthur went home for the last time that morning to the Evans's. There he packed before he went to sleep, and in the afternoon took his grip over to the cottage. It was infinite relief to him to know that he would no longer hear Evans's unmelodious devotions, and the shouting of the boy in the early morning.

He did not stay at the cottage in the afternoon. A hunger for quiet and rest drew him out of the town. He took a car away from the city, and got among fields. Then he walked down a narrow lane and tried to lose all sense of direction.

There were orchards on either side of him as he walked, peach mostly, but cherry, pear and apple too. The fruit had not ripened yet: it peeped out, hard to the sight, from masses of green leaves and white blossom. The wind swayed the clouds of greenery slowly, and brought

forth a low, pleasant, melancholy sound, a far-rushing whisper that ran forward and returned and died away and woke again.

He came at last to an open place and a hill. Here the grass was short and violets had grown up thickly, glimmering darkly when the wind blew, their color flickered out in waves, and the expanse shimmered green and violet like a huge stretch of shot silk. Here Arthur lay down, tired, and perplexed with much thinking.

He thought of Muriel, and of the night they had gone driving through embowered lanes near the Atlantic coast. He thought of her loveliness, of her infinitely friendly eyes, of her hand, which had lain in his. Gone! Utterly gone! What if she were sick? What if she were thinking of him now? What if he had taken away her one hope of escaping from that world of theirs?

Muriel! Abandoned there, patient as ever, gentle as ever. Was it her fault if she had not understood what they were doing with her? If she were only there with him now—would they not understand each other better? Would he not be the stronger?

He tried to change the current of his thoughts. A man's way is a hard one. Every man must fight out the battle of his life; then, when he had conquered, or had been utterly defeated, he could settle down. He was still fighting. Was it

a crazy fight, without aim or meaning? Was he sure of a goal? Was there a goal?

The way of life could be so easy. And Muriel could make it so happy for him. Muriel! Muriel! Curious name—hers peculiarly, a name suggestive of her sweetness. He saw her now, plainly—a tired, dreaming face, and eyes which gave back his own reflection.

He got up and wandered on again. It was weakness. Had he not known well what it meant to leave her, that he might find himself once for all?

He wandered by fields of corn, hidden from him by their outposts of tall stalks, and then by wheatfields, where the wind made a spray as of foam when it threw waves of light and shadow down the ranks of furry tips. Here and there a few laborers bent earthward; here and there a few walked slowly homeward. Calmness, strength and fruitfulness came up out of the wide earth. For a few minutes Arthur was at peace.

He came back to the cottage in the late afternoon. Hogg told him that Pitcher, Slocum and Hiltabidle, who worked on the morning shift, were still asleep. Later in the evening there would be the regular weekly crap game. He advised Arthur to keep out. Arthur could not help smiling at the idea of himself shooting dice.

Instead of waiting in the house he went for a slow walk round the cottage colony of the Firefly. The entire section, several hundred acres, was Firefly property, divided into small lots. Out of the twenty thousand employees of the Company nearly two thousand had already settled in Firefly houses, on Firefly property. They were the old, reliable employees, most of them married, many with grown-up children.

Pitcher's cottage was on the outskirts of the section, among the newer houses, mostly unoccupied. Further in, the colony took on a much more settled and respectable character. Arthur sensed at once the atmosphere of lower middle-class virtuousness enveloping the houses: pianos tinkled here and there; fathers pottered about little gardens. He wanted to stop and pick up conversation with these men. He could not quite understand them. There was a curious incongruity between the smug, contented life here, and the rush and passion of the factory. Well, some day in the near future, he would know a few of these houses on the inside: he would find a way in as one of themselves, not as a strange visitor.

When dusk began to fall he ate supper at a tiny restaurant and hurried back to the cottage. It occurred to him suddenly that if he wanted to be well in with his new acquaintances it would be

absurd to start by keeping away. At least he could be there as a spectator.

When he returned the game had not yet started, but there was a kind of preparation in the air. The five men were gathered in the living-room; the lights were on; there was something like festivity in the air, the prelude to the weekly relaxation. They were only waiting for some more players.

On the table Arthur found two crumpled copies of an eight-page paper: "The Firefly Light—published weekly for and by the Employees of the Firefly Tire & Rubber Company: Dedicated to the Promotion of Good-fellowship, Cooperation and Efficiency."

"Where d'you get this?" he asked Hogg.

"Didn't you get one this morning? Hand 'em out in the pay line."

Arthur nodded, and turned the pages carelessly. He recognized it at once—his father's own dear style. "Let's go with a smash—the great Firefly picnic!" "Making a record in tires—Firefly leads the way." "We make the best tires because we have the best men." "A chat with the oldest cord-room man——," etc., etc. A sporting page, preparations for the Annual Firefly outing.

"Great stuff," said Arthur, ironically.

Hogg looked non-committal. "Daresay there's

something to it, or they wouldn't do it. Guess the Firefly don't go slinging money about just so."

"This sort of stuff makes me sick," said Arthur.

"You can't tell," said Hogg sagely. "This line of bunk goes a long way with the guys who've been working here a couple of years. It's good stuff."

The other men, intensely interested in the prospect of the crap game, seemed to pay no heed to the conversation.

"But don't it make you sick to read it—the Firefly family and the rest of it?"

"Well, if it makes the fellers feel good what's wrong with it?"

"For the love of Christ," said one of the men, Slocum, "cut out that long palaver. What in hell are you guys hollering about?"

"What's gitt'n through you?" asked Hogg.

"You cheese it, Slocum," said a third, a quiet, slow-speaking young fellow, Kenlon. "I like to hear an argument. You tell him, fellers ——" he addressed Arthur, "while I mark time." The others guffawed.

Arthur smiled; the absurdity of getting up a discussion here made itself slowly clear.

A few minutes later two more men arrived. It was for these that the company had been wait-

ing. On their arrival table and chairs were shoved to the wall, and the blinds were lowered.

Arthur had never seen a real crap game. He had seen it played in jest, for small change. He knew the rules of the game, and had himself played once or twice. But he felt now that these men had come together for a grim and earnest game, in which a full week's wages, sixty or seventy or eighty dollars, might be lost and a couple of hundred dollars won.

"You playin'?" asked Kenlon.

Arthur shook his head.

"He's stockroom," said one, with a touch of contempt.

"All right," said Pitcher, and took the dice out of his pocket. They formed a circle, and brought their rolls of bills from their pockets.

Pitcher fondled the dice for a moment in his two hands, spat on them, then flung a dollar bill on the floor.

"Faded," said Slocum. "Roll 'em out good."

The dice rattled across the floor. Pitcher stooping snapped his fingers—"Ha! Seven! Shoot the two."

"Faded!" said Slocum.

Pitcher gathered the dice up and rolled again. "Ha! Eight."

"A dollar he don't eight."

"A dollar he do."

"Two dollars he eights!"

"Two dollars he don't."

The game warmed up swiftly. Pitcher rolled a nine, a ten, a four, a six, a twelve: at every throw his grunt of "ha!" and his snap of the fingers became more savage. "Eleven, nine—God damn! Here's the eight boys! Ha! Six! Come on you bones! Eight! Shoot the four!" He stood up for a moment, to ease his back.

"Faded!" said Slocum, swiftly, and put down the bills.

"Hit him, bones! Nine! ——! We make nines every day, don't we, bones!"

"Three dollars to two he don't nine."

"Two dollars he nines!"

The rolling went on simultaneously with the betting.

"Ha! Eleven! Ha! Four! Ha! . . . Seven! ——!"

The dice passed to the next man.

"Hey! Make a bigger circle, for Christ's sake!"

"Aw, you want a goddam ball-room, you do!"

"Go on with the game, creeping Jesus. Whenever he gets the dice he makes a holler about som'p'n."

"Cut it out," yelled someone, louder than the others.

The circle was widened: Arthur stood within it.

"Roll 'em out good!"

Hiltabidle was playing now, a thin taciturn fellow, of Scandinavian type.

"Shoot two bucks."

"Faded!" said Slocum.

"For the love of Mike!" growled one, "you never give a guy a chance to fade. The game don't belong to you."

Hiltabidle rolled them out and snapped his fingers.

"Crap!"

"Shoot two!" said Hiltabidle.

Pitcher was down with his money now.

"Ten!"

"Two to one he don't ten!" said Slocum.

"Right!" said Arthur, suddenly, and took out his money.

Hogg looked across at him and winked. "The old temptation, boy," he said. Arthur smiled.

"Ha! Nine! Ha! Eight! Ha! Eleven! Ha! Two box-cars! Ha! Phoebe! Ha! Ten!"

Slocum handed Arthur the money. Arthur took it with a slight touch of shame.

"Ha! Nine!"

"Three to two he don't nine!" said Slocum, to Arthur.

"Right!"

Arthur followed the dice with a little interest now. It was curious.

"Ha! Twelve! Ha! Eleven! Ha! Crap! Ha! Five! Ha! Five! Ha! Four! Ha! Nine! . . "

Slocum handed Arthur another two dollars."

"Jesus! That guy could roll nines all day long," said Slocum, savagely.

"You said it!" said Hiltabidle, grinning. "Shoot the six."

"Faded!"

As the game went on, attention focussed closer on it: the touch of social interest which had lingered in the room before the game began. and even during the first few throws, disappeared now. In its place an anxious savagery crept in. Losses and gains began to pile up. Comments became fewer, there was less time wasted.

The more the men forgot themselves the more astonishing, in Arthur's eyes, became their relations to the dice. Slowly the dice were personalised and these men, who in daily life were so taciturn, so brief-worded, developed a sudden shamelessness of abandon which excited no comment or astonishment. They spoke to the dice, with feelings that became warmer as the game lengthened. They rolled the dice between their hands before throwing them, as if somehow to pour themselves into them, to influence them, to impart to them their own eager desires.

Arthur lost himself in the game. He found it difficult at first to forget himself—but for a time he succeeded.

He won swiftly during the first few throws: then, deliberately, he grew reckless, in order that his interest might be roused. He lost his winnings, and began to dive into his capital—about fifty dollars in all. In ten minutes it had shrunk to twenty-five.

And then there crept into him the psychology of the other players. He could not take the dice into his hands without an obscure but passionate feeling that he could somehow identify them with himself, so that they should share his fortunes. He was too shy at first to make the gestures and utter the exclamations of the other men—but as he became absorbed in the game he forgot his shyness too, and, rolling out the dice, he snapped his fingers fiercely and exclaimed—"Come on, dice! Hit him!"

Strongest of all was the instinct to call out the point he was playing for: "There's the seven!" if it was the opening—"There's the eight!" if eight was his point. Again he felt, obscurely but passionately, that, exclaiming in advance the number he desired, he could influence the dice, if only by ever so little, to turn up that number. "Come on, you dice! There's the eight boys! Nine!"—at every failure a

twinge of disappointment—and of resentment: "Now dice—there's the eight—there it is——" He knew what he was doing—this was the mimetic magic of savages—in its purest form, imitating the triumph before it was achieved—"There's the eight, boys——" No, it was a seven. He almost swore.

His money dwindled further, and, with a sudden sickness at heart, he realized that he had only five dollars left. "Play on," he said fiercely to himself. He made no side bets now, but waited only for the dice.

Now, with everything at stake, he felt the fever of the game gripping him in its hot tentacles. The dice were conscious! They were little malevolent or benevolent imps, dancing in changing mockery! Oh, they could be worshipped, if they only were good to him! He could prostrate himself before them, implore them to bring him luck. He gripped them in his hand, he gathered all his soul in his finger-tips. The dice felt, they knew, they could do it if they wanted! If only, in their capriciousness, they took a sudden liking to him. . . .

"Shoot five," he said, curtly.

"Faded!"

"Ha! Seven!" (Good dice, good little pixies)

"Shoot the ten!" desperately.

"Faded!"

"Ha! Eleven!" (Boy! O you good little dice! O you little bones!)

"Shoot ten!"

"Faded!"

In an agony of apprehension he rolled them out, assuring himself ferociously that he had mastered the dice—they would obey him a little longer. "Ha! Eight."

The side-betting waxed furious.

"Two dollars he don't eight."

"Two dollars he eights!"

Arthur found time to thank in his heart the man who said: "Two dollars he eights!" That man, believing in him so, gave him confidence. And he resented the contemptuous scepticism of the other man, ready to bet money that he, Arthur, would lose, and wishing him ill-luck, too, damn him!

"Roll 'em out!"

"Ha! Nine!" (Anything but a seven! Dice, anything but a seven!)

"Come on, you bones—the little eight—there she goes—a five an' a three, a four an' a four, a six an' a two. There's eight—show 'em, bones" —Nine, five, six, twelve, ten.

"Ha! There's the eight——" It was! (O you good little bones, knock 'em sick!)

He hesitated wildly between ten and twenty.

"Shoot ten!"

"Faded!"

"Ha! Four." (God blast and curse you, dice! Come on, now, do it again.)

"Ha! Five! Ha! Seven!" (God damn and shrivel you up, you bones!)

No word betrayed Arthur's last spasm of rage. He come suddenly to himself, overtaken by utter sickness. The dice had passed out of his hands into Pitcher's. He did not bet. He only stood there, dominated by loathing and helplessness. No one took any notice of him. The playing went on, ferocious, unremittent; bills were laid down and snatched up; the dice rolled with a hollow rattling noise across the wooden floor.

He turned and went out. Someone called him, but he neither knew nor cared who it was. He went up the dark stairs to his own room, shut the door and sat down.

He could not think. He could only feel—unspeakable disgust. It was not the individual experience that racked him so, but the revelation. He had just been in deeps of dark horror which he had never understood before. This was worse than drink—than the most destructive drug. Here men lost every attribute of decency: they became viler than beasts: they became savages, clamoring and gibbering with ancient and horri-

ble greeds and superstitions, adding to these sweating, primitive passions, the cunning of half-civilized men.

He had been down there. He had seen it, felt it, partaken of it.

From downstairs came the muffled sound of the game. "Ha! Boy! Ha! Dice. O, you bones! Ha!"

But worst of all, no reaction ensued for those men. They saw no gap between their normal selves and the beastliness of their gambling moments. Life was one piece to them. And even as in gambling they were dominated not by reason, but by raging passions that refused restraint—even so their daily lives were superstitious, fierce with the hunger for self-indulgence, ignorant of reason.

How can you reason when those little bones are dancing in front of you? How can you reason when the throw will bring you success or failure? You don't reason. You just groan and pray for the best, and *believe, believe, believe* the best is coming.

"Surely I'm going to win! There it comes: there's the seven! See! It's coming! Oh, you good dice!" And "Sure I'm going to succeed in life! See it coming my way! Oh, isn't my success wonderful!"

He began to understand how deep-rooted were

the passions that directed men, how much more certain than reason. They made reason a plaything for themselves: they were old, oh, infinitely old, fast-rooted, powerful, cunning and inescapable. How can you reason with the abysmal beast which directs us? With the dice-players? With the success-hunters?

The quick revelation of the obscure and monstrous forces he had been combatting made him quail. He felt not only disgust in front of these foul and involved horrors, but actual terror. What was he doing? With whom and with what was he trying to fight? Why, these fanged and slimy things of the darkness were older than man and stronger than Christ!

His disgust passed away, and in its place crept in a pitiful sense of weakness. He, who had always been so proud of his reason, saw now that in life reason was weakness. Not reason and understanding helped men to their desire: reason was a handicap. They needed not reason, but ingenuity. And it was to ingenuity that they gave the name of reason. Ingenuity to calculate the chances in dice (and even that ingenuity marked by the directing and sustaining passion) but not reason, that calms passion.

He was weak, helpless as a child, with his trust in logic. He could understand now the fury and contempt of men when he came with

reason, mild and friendly, into the raging tornado of their instincts. How could he conquer? Who would understand his language?

His mind shifted to the picture of his grandfather, and the last words he had heard from him: "God be with you always!" He must have meant it for moments like these. God was with that helpless old cripple, flooding his heart with love toward the world. God was not with the strong men, who fought each other, fell or rose and conquered. God was only for the helpless.

Was it so?

He was perplexed, harrassed. There was no one with whom he could talk. There was infinite bitterness and sadness in him now, but not resentment.

The feeling of loneliness became too intense to be tolerable. He wrestled with it for a little while, then he put on the light quickly, and sat down at the table with paper in front of him. He could not help himself now: he had to write.

28 Hall St., Sargon, Ohio.

"Dearest Muriel:

When I left you, nearly a week ago (no, it seems like a year to me now) I did not intend that you should hear from me for a long time. I hoped at that time that you would understand

what I was struggling against, that you would understand, too, what it cost me to tear myself away from you.

I still believe that you understand, and I am not going to write now in explanation of anything. I only write because I cannot help myself.

If this is weakness, then I am weak. If it would have been manlier to bite my lips and keep on my course, then I am not manly. Whether it makes you happy or miserable to know it, I tell you that I must write to you. I must feel that we are not utterly lost to each other.

I hardly know whether to ask you to write to me. There was no such thought in my mind when I began to write. I only wanted to get in touch with you again, to know that soon you will be reading this. I have thought continuously of you since I left New York. I shall continue thinking of you, because I know I shall never find any one who will give me such rest and happiness in being remembered.

Arthur."

CHAPTER XIX

On Sunday morning the men at the cottage all slept late. Arthur was out of the house by nine o'clock. The colony of the Firefly was steeped in Sabbath calm. Bells, far and near, tolled across the air, some clearly, others dimly. There was a faint mist over the half-paved streets, and through its greyness footsteps pattered distinctly.

Arthur hesitated between church and his own company—and decided for the second. He had taken out with him a pocket edition of the poems of Francis Thompson, and these he read at moments, and paused at others to let his mind wander aimlessly, like his footsteps.

He was almost at rest that morning. Nothing was solved, nothing was clear. But he was at rest, and his soul was grateful for this quiet space. He looked with a calmer and more tolerant eye on his own life and the lives of others. He said to himself musing: "I must be growing older. I feel it, like a kind of rustling in my bones."

Returning homewards (he did not know why he returned) he stopped outside a small Luth-

eran Church some ten blocks away from his cottage. People coming out of church always interested him. He thought that faces were never more placid, more stupid than just after prayer, though he believed it should have been the contrary. He, too, prayed sometimes, not to their God, or God as they knew him. But to him prayer was painful. It hurt like a sudden blinding light. It stabbed like an intolerable revelation of beauty. But prayer to program . . . on schedule . . . He prayed rarely—it was not prayer, it was agony.

Somebody raised a hand in salute. Arthur nodded quickly before recognising the man—and then raised his hat. It was one of the millmen who stood nearest the end of row B of the rubber bins. No wonder he had not recognised him. Instead of the tousled, bepowdered and besmeared slave of the hot mill, with grey hair plastered down by sweat and with singlet clinging to his body in soaked patches, Arthur saw a grave, dignified burgher, in black, well-creased clothes, dark hat, neat and comfortable shoes. His moustache, which, at work, bristled in wild disorder over his shining face, now drooped like a trimmed willow over his mouth. He stood arm in arm with an elderly woman of stupid countenance. By them was a girl, perhaps of nineteen, and a boy of fifteen.

It was a friendly, if slightly comical picture. Arthur could not resist it.

"How are you?" he said.

"Howdy," said the other, friendly. "Didn't know you was comin' to our church. Didn't know you was livin' round here."

Arthur walked along with them on the man's side. The girl and boy walked on in front.

"I live up the line here," said Arthur.

"Funny I never seen you in our church before."

"Just moved up here," said Arthur.

"Well, you'll like this church," said the millman. "Only been here about four years, but they got a crackerjack service. Best in Sargon, I think. I didn't know you was a Lutheran," he added, inconsequentially.

"Well, my father was a Lutheran," said Arthur unwilling to introduce a discordant note by denying the implication.

"Sure," said the millman gravely, "it don't matter much, maybe; but if your father's a Lutheran there ain't no reason why you should be a Presbyterian or a Baptist. Though my father was a Baptist, but somehow I don't feel that way myself."

He was enjoying his own talking, this elderly millman. Arthur paid the most superficial attention to his words. In reality he was enjoying

the spectacle—the laborer redeemed for one day in the week, he comes out of the bowels of the inferno and becomes a smug middle-class man. Oh, the respectability that hung like a palpable halo round this poor millman; and how he enjoyed it, how his soul expanded in its light, basked in it, prayed to it, thanked God and the universe for it. Just this day he was as good as the best of them.

Yes, decidedly he was enjoying his own talking—for he talked now in a sort of harmony with his Sunday dignity.

"There ain't much to a man that won't go to church for an hour on a Sunday," he said, decisively. He looked down at his comfortable, solid clothes. "He's a bum—or else he's one of them rich fellers, too rich to care. But a decent man goes to church. Churches is for decent folk."

There was unshatterable self-satisfaction in the man's words and tone. "Decent folk"—himself. Others were indecent.

Well, thought Arthur, what else has he in life, this man? Blind labor alternating with this pitiful dignity. Shall he lose that too? Poor, valiant little fellow, unaware of his own pitifulness, strutting with his decency this one day in the week. At his side, just then, Arthur felt like a giant—the whole universe was his

for inspiration . . . Why should he attempt to take from this dumb, crippled soul its tawdry satisfaction?

"Where d'ye live?" asked the millman.

Arthur answered, without thinking, and described the cottage. The millman's face grew long.

"That's a funny place for you to be hanging out," he said, perplexed. "There's two or three cottages there that ain't no good. Bunch of young fellers, I'm surprised how them cottages got in their hands. Got an awful bad reputation. How long a' you been living there?"

"Just a day."

"Guess you didn't know the kinda place it was," said the millman, shaking his head. "Quiet, respectable feller, like you. Why, there's crap games there every night, an' drinkin' an'——" he stuttered slightly, bethought himself of his wife, at his side, and of the Sunday, and ended with the stutter.

"I shan't stay there long," said Arthur.

"No, I guess not. A young feller like you don't belong there. There's nothing to that bunch. Rough-house bunch, I call it. Young feller like you, who wants to get on in life ain't got nothin' to do with them."

"That's right, too," said Arthur.

"Surest thing. Them fellers never gets any-

where. A man as wants to make good don't hang out with them. You can't be on the job if you live like they do."

"They're on the job all right," objected Arthur. "They make pretty big money."

"That ain't what I mean," said the millman. "They ain't on the job, that's what I says. They don't get no further. Get no money nor anything. When a feller don't go to church, I says, he ain't on the job. He ain't attending to his own business properly. If he ain't got an hour's time for his church he must be spendin' it shoot'n' crap or some'p'n. A man's that's serious, and means to make out, he goes to church, same as all decent folk."

"Efficiency," said Arthur.

"Surest thing. Does ye good to go to church. Gives y' a good rest. They's always some'p'n about church in the Firefly Weekly. How d'ye reckon they'd speak so much about it if it didn't do the workman good?"

They stopped in front of a neat cottage.

"You take my advice. I know this place, an' I been workin' in the Firefly this last twelve years. You treat them right an' they'll treat you right. You quit that bunch o' roughnecks. They're as bad as the Socialists."

"As bad as that?" asked Arthur.

"Yes sir. They're worse. Look at me. I

never hung out with that bunch—got my own home, ain't afraid of anybody or anything. You quit that bunch. You can't touch pitch without being defiled, 'at's what the preacher says."

"I guess that's right, too," said Arthur. "I'll be looking for another room, somewhere round here maybe. Maybe go looking for it this afternoon."

"Sooner the better," said the millman.

But Arthur did not go on the search that afternoon. He passed his time mostly reading in his room, or wandering in fields beyond the Firefly colony. He was in and out of the house several times. There were always two or three of the boys at home, but Arthur could not get into their circle. Despite his participation in the crap game he felt the old estrangement—with its inevitable antagonism—rising between them.

They bored him: he could not deny it to himself. Their talk was hopelessly stupid. And withal there was a certain cocksureness about them, an utter ignorance of their own shortcomings, contrasting violently with his own consciousness of deficiency. And they were impossibly touchy. He had to whittle down every sentence he spoke to the absolute minimum of English, logic or good taste—lest they should smell in his accuracy and fastidiousness an as-

sumption of superiority. They were fiercely intolerant—snobbish, even pedantic. The bumpkin who would say "You ain't" in a cultivated drawing-room would not draw down one-tenth of the derisive attention evoked by Arthur when tripping up carelessly, he said "You were" instead of "You was."

So his conversations were short and uncomfortable. He grew tired of aping their grossness, of talking in the tone he had used to the millman in the morning. He wanted to talk decently but he dared not here.

Hogg was the only half-way tolerable man in the place. But even with him, he soon learned to be cautious: for with Hogg he might speak grammatically, and not feel ill at ease—but there was little beyond that. Hogg caught him reading Francis Thompson on the steps of the cottage. He seemed interested in the book, so Arthur passed it to him.

Hogg looked at it carefully, turned the pages hither and thither and tried a few lines at random, reading slowly and carefully:

"As sap foretastes the spring
As earth ere blossoming thrills
With far daffodils
And feels her breast turn sweet
With the unconceived wheat
So doth
My flesh foreloath . . .

He shook his head, spat, and tried another place.

"To a Fallen Yew."

"It seemed corival of the world's great prime,
Made to unedge the scythe of time
And last with stateliest rhyme."

He looked slightly surprised, and read it again:

"To a Fallen Yew."

"It seemed corival of the world's great prime,
Made to unedge the scythe of time
And last with stateliest rhyme."

"I'll be God-damned—" he said slowly, and emphatically. "What the hell's the idea of saying that?" He looked up at Arthur.

"Don't you understand it?" asked Arthur.

"Why, sure I do. Couldn't be plainer. But what's the sense of writing it down and printing it? Don't teach you a damn thing."

"That's right, too," said Arthur.

"Might teach you good English, though," countered Hogg to himself, thoughtfully. "Good English is great stuff."

"It sure is," said Arthur.

"Oh boy! You have to say something in a letter or an ad an' you can slam it right down, and no professor could find a fault in it—that's worth money, boy!"

"You said it."

"Though I don't see how poetry helps you much. Anyway, not this stuff." He dipped in again:

> "I fled Him down the nights and down the days—
> I fled Him through the arches of the year . . ."

No sir. I don't get that stuff, and what I can't get—there's something wrong with it. I'm no fool and I've had some education. There was a feller back home used to write poetry—real snappy stuff. An' he made out all right. Used to write for an advertising agency in Chi. He was a bright boy: I often thought of going into that line, but I guess engineering's better paid at that."

"I daresay," said Arthur, taking back the book.

A coolness sprang up at that moment between Arthur and Hogg. The latter, Arthur decided, belonged to the other bunch. He might become a great engineer, and might travel, and acquire wealth and social status, but he still belonged to the others. He was of them forever. All the "education" he craved for would not change him. They were all of one piece—these men, the middle classes, his parents: the commercial world was composed of these millmen and pitmen with "education".

He went out again and came back towards nine o'clock for a couple of hours of rest before he went down to the night-shift. He was facing the coming week with much less fear and anxiety than he had anticipated. During the night of the past week, the hour before his shift began had always been one of uneasiness and uncomfortable anticipation. He had always felt himself inferior to his surroundings—with a moral inferiority begotten of his admiration for the authenticity of the laborers. This evening, lying on his bed, he was calmer. He puzzled over that curious sense of deficiency in himself, and found it was disappearing. Why had he been afraid of the workers? Why had he ascribed to them such overwhelming virtues? Why should he have felt that his power of thought had made him less than they, rather than more?

"Well, what's the idea?"

"Aw, hell, come down."

Half-way to the Firefly he overtook Mike, the foreman, walking in the same direction, and fell into step with him.

"Back to work, boy," said Mike.

"Yeah," said Arthur.

They went on wordlessly. Arthur was at ease.

But a week before he would have felt a natural discomfort in walking side by side with this man. He would have been wanting to say something

all the time—something that would bring him closer to the other, the sense of estrangement would have made him anxious—even fearful. An active feeling of inferiority would have been oppressing him, torturing him with the desire to establish himself on a footing of equality with the other.

And with the last few days it had almost passed out of him: it was all nonsense.

"Say, you told me you're an educated feller," said Mike.

"Yeah."

A grunt. A silence of fifty yards.

"You wanna better job than stockroom boy?"

"Yeah."

Another pause of a hundred yards.

"I need a feller knows how to figure. I ain't no good at that game."

Arthur made a grunting acquiescent noise.

"I got a good memory all right, an' I can handle the men, but when it comes to figures I'm all balled up to hell, see?"

"Yeah."

"Now I told the chief I want an assistant, see. I said the work's too much for one man. I need a man 't can figure right, 'cos I can't. An' there ain't no one else in the stockroom."

"Yeah," said Arthur.

Another fifty yards in silence.

"I get all balled up," said Mike, shaking his head. "I know how to manage the game, but it's them books an' figures. Don't come out right."

"Yeah," said Arthur.

"You good at figures?"

"Yeah."

"I reckon y'ought to be."

"Yeah, sure."

Another silence of fifty yards or so. They were nearing the works.

"You get twenty-four a week."

"Yeah."

"You'd get thirty-two."

"Yeah."

"Chance of getting more later."

"Yeah."

That was how the conversation ended. The rest of the walk was silent. But Arthur was learning enough of the ways of these men to know that nothing more was to be said. Instead of going to his bins in the stockroom he accompanied Mike to the dirty little office which was his headquarters.

CHAPTER XX

Mike, he discovered in a few days' time, was a difficult mixture of good fellowship, subservience and arrogance. At times he would watch Arthur jotting figures rapidly, adding and subtracting: then he would cock his head to one side and say "Boy!" softly—a whole symphony of admiration in his voice. At other times—he was boastful without provocation:

"'At's all right, 'at stuff—but look at me. Can't figure an' I'm a foreman. Get a feller like you to figure for me, see? I could be head man, too, if I wanted—like Mr. Steel. What's the good o' them figures anyway? There's machines just as good——" and this not reflectively, but vindictively.

And still at other times he blossomed out, equally unprovoked, into good fellowship. At such times he would repeat frequently: "What the hell, anyway?" implying—"What does it all matter?"

"I guess you and me's the same, eh, Winner? Ain't no difference, eh? I say what I got's yours, and what's yours 's mine. You wanna

favor? Sure! Don't cost me nothin'! What the hell, anyway? Ain't no use livin' if you can't do a favor for a feller, eh? Might be a dog."

But for all his talk Mike was not only shrewd, but even slightly vicious. Honesty he had none. His one object was to get his stockroom accounts to tally, and to maintain a good reputation for service to the millmen. To these ends he was ready to steal from other departments, falsify accounts, avoid, when he could, signature for stock (this possibility was of course rare), and even tamper with scales. He was on a good footing with the men. Periodically he would demonstrate his authority by making himself nasty. Once he got into a fight with a stock boy and had him fired. In the presence of Mr. Steel he was ignominiously respectful. In his absence he was derisive.

"I can fool that guy seven days a week," he said, with a twisting of the lips that showed ineffable contempt. "He ain't never got things straight. He has to fool the boss, too. But put me there, boy—I'll run the place right."

Mike was at his worst after one of Mr. Steel's visits. If Arthur chanced to be there during the interview Mike was bitter with him for half an hour afterwards. In particular he resented Arthur's coolness towards Mr. Steel, his refusal

to dance attendance on him, to anticipate his every remark with an eager "Yes sir!" And in proportion he felt that he had made himself cheap in the presence of Arthur. At such moments he became boastful and talked much of the unimportance of education.

Mr. Steel was a man of the type of Hogg, barely grammatical, with an efficient correspondence school education. He played the big man, tolerant, friendly, but insistent on the goods. He scattered proverbs in between specific instructions, and took his tone and attitude from the mimeographed leaflets issued regularly to department heads by the Firefly efficiency engineers. At bottom he seemed to be a good fellow, if one could penetrate the surface of acquired hypocritical heartiness and noisy bigness to his native character. When passing through the department he nodded demonstratively to every man that caught his eye and had a jovial word for most of them. He read assiduously the Firefly Weekly and sometimes contributed a few peppy remarks to it.

Beyond Mr. Steel loomed three or four portentous figures that crossed the orbit of the department at irregular intervals. They were men of monstrous importance. Their very identities were uncertain. Men whispered and winked when one of them was seen hurrying through in

conversation with Mr. Steel. This one was Edward Carraway—according to some—while Edward Carraway was the little fellow with the brass face, according to others. There were others whose names no one even hazarded: they were seen now and again on the streets of Sargon in automobiles of lustrous and sinister magnificence. They held shares in the Firefly works. Happy, happy, thrice happy the man who got a chance to be noticed by one of them.

And at the bottom of all this was the machinery and the mass of workers, a vast base, gloomy, thunderous. To Arthur, who worked on the night shift, the factories were identified with darkness and violet light. As he sank slowly into the tumultuous underground life of the Firefly he found his individual relationships and remoter perspectives, and both of them seemed to take on the character of artificiality which belonged to the night shift.

He had hoped to establish in time a true relationship between himself and Mike and between himself and the workers. But days and nights went by and he felt his loneliness as keenly as he had felt it at home. He maintained more a method of communication than a relationship. He could find nothing real in common to them and himself. Taking them individually he could be friendly only by acting a stupid part. Taking

them in groups (as at the cottage) he began to admit that he loathed them.

In the Firefly Works there was no labor organization through which he might have found the leaders. Agitation of any sort was strictly forbidden: it was watched for by special men: and if it had not been so, Arthur believed that there were men enough to betray a radical in order to find favor in the eyes of a foreman. The Firefly Efficiency Engineers was an uninterrupted counter-propaganda to any such influence. Contentment was one of their mottoes; hard work was another; advancement was a third. The Firefly provided free classes for its workers and allowed them pay during tuition; it provided them with homes on the easiest payments; it provided them with weekly literature and occasional pamphlets; it hedged them in completely from the influences of a wicked world. The Firefly was a complete little universe, in the bosom of which a sensible workingman could live, marry, bring up a family and die without worry. And over all and through all, pervading this life as ether pervades matter, was—Efficiency.

In the literature and philosophy which the Firefly Company benignantly poured over the life of this community the word EFFICIENCY had taken on a special and ineffable meaning. It did not merely connote, as in the dictionary,

"the quality that produces the best business results", and that directly in relation to the production of tires: it expanded in tremendous significance through the length and breadth and depth of the universe. All was subservient to EFFICIENCY—eating, sleeping, sneezing, love, religion, friendship: morality in particular was lauded as one of the most widely acknowledged ingredients. As to EFFICIENCY itself, with all its general application, no one dared to suggest its limitations: it would have been fitter a thousand years ago for a monk to challenge the omnipotence of God.

But all of this did return again toward one sublime end—the production of Firefly Tires. By obscure implication it appeared that only for Firefly Tires had God handed over to EFFICIENCY the direction of the world. Not merely *Tires,* for that might have included the Goodrich and the Goodyear and the others. Men were supposed to guide their lives in accordance with the dread edict of the Divine Vice-Verent EFFICIENCY (if indeed He himself was not identified with it) to produce Firefly Tires. People who didn't work at the Firefly were somehow out of it all—were to be regarded much as the ancient Greeks regarded the rest of the world. What was life without Firefly Tires?

By dint of ceaseless repetition the company

had created a large band of Faithfuls. Most of them were men who held homes on the Firefly Estate. Others contemplated the taking of such leases, and others yet came to the Firefly ripe for its philosophy.

Of course there were faithless ones too, sceptical workers who asserted they saw through it all as a bunch of bunk, or something even more irreverent. But their very irreverence was homage: they defied God, they did not deny Him. And their bitterness was rooted in the belief that they should have been making a much better thing out of this here EFFICIENCY for themselves.

* * * * * *

Arthur relieved Mike of a goodly portion of his work. When it became clear that he could handle the records in about one-third of the time Mike had needed, the latter turned over to him the supervision of the bins and stock boys, and began to take things easy.

Arthur found his situation painful at first. The stock boys had not liked him even as an equal—they resented the lah-di-dah stuff, and were superior to it. Had Arthur remained among them he might have found a passable adjustment—though he came to doubt even this. They might have consented to accept him as an amusing

freak. But when he joined their natural enemy, the foreman, this possibility was cut off. Their first distaste returned, reinforced by disgust at his sudden and unmerited promotion. Thenceforth no effort of Arthur's could break through and gain their good will. He was not of their world: he had eaten at the table of the gods, who despised them—so much his education betrayed; and is not a fallen god the inferior of man? And on whom could they wreak their envy of the inaccessible world if not on such a one?

He tried very hard to establish a position as an equal, but they put forth an immoveable inertia of tacit distrust and contempt. He overlooked inaccuracies in stock—or passed them over with a jest. He used their own foul language in conversation with them. He tried his best to break his own stubborn separation, to fall in with their manner, and he thought that as far as appearance went, he had succeeded. He tried to follow a lead in conversation, adapting it carefully to what he knew their notions to be. But though he spoke as they spoke, and pretended to think as they thought, it availed him nothing.

Of course he recoiled soon from the effort, so that there was between him and the men only automatic contact. In his heart he was deciding that these men were base: his first reverence was

turning into acknowledged but unrevealed contempt. He had worshipped their power in the mass: it impressed him still as a tremendous manifestation of life: but their conscious self was increasingly hateful to him: their passions were deep-rooted and true—but they were animal: impulses to goodness were there, but it was the goodness of the market-place, the justice of the mob, of the prize-ring crowd. Why should he fear to admit this to himself?

With two men he maintained more friendly relations—with Hogg and with the elderly millman, whose name was Hammond. Both of them admired his education, and both were anxious to obtain some for themselves. With the other men at the cottage Arthur soon dropped anything more than a greeting acquaintanceship—"Howdy" and "Goodbye." But Hogg sometimes came into his room, and brought a book with him. In particular he wanted to make use of Arthur's knowledge of English, and Arthur gladly extended help to him. But that help was limited by a streak of obstinacy in Hogg. Hogg had definite ideas on the kind of culture and the degree of it that he needed. He was sensibly aware that Arthur possessed stores of knowledge which could rarely find occasion for expression, certain kinds of culture which maybe could be exploited once a year, when the opportunity

came. He did not want any of that, and knew that he did not want it. He wanted culture, but only the kind which could be used with reasonable frequency and with telling effect.

"But that can't be done, Hogg," Arthur tried to explain once. "To use a little you must know a lot—you can't always be hauling out the same little stock."

This was apropos of Shakespeare. Hogg wanted some Shakespeare but was drawing the line at Milton.

"That's right, too," said Hogg. "But no business man ever heard of this Milton, so what the hell's the good of my ever talking about him. An' if there's one in a thousand who did hear of Milton, he won't expect me to quote him."

"Quite true," said Arthur, and looked in vain for some other line of approach.

"What I want is the stuff that they mostly talk about," said Hogg. And Arthur recognized the magazine advertisements from which Hogg had absorbed his idea of culture—the magazines which ask a man "Do you feel out of it when people mention Falstaff or Alexander the Great, or Isadora Duncan or the Fifth Symphony?" And recognizing, too, that Hogg had been absorbing these advertisements for years, he decided that he did not possess the power to instil a new conception of culture in a fully de-

veloped person some thirty years of age. So he dropped the conversation and, acceding to Hogg's immediate request, began to fish for Shakespearian passages which the latter might learn with the maximum benefit.

Hammond, Arthur found, was rather different, and that because he was not as intelligent as Hogg. He could not specify to himself as clearly as the other could what this culture should do for him, but he knew it was a very good thing, and went with even better things.

He invited Arthur to his house one night, when congratulating him on his appointment.

"You're all right,' he said. "I seen it as you stopped and talked to me outside the church. I says this young feller's all right. He's got education an' he goes to church Sunday mornin's. Yes sir, you're all right."

He was quite sincere in his congratulations.

"You begun good," he said. "There ain't no reason why you shouldn't be a foreman." He dropped his voice as low as the machinery would let him. "They watch you," he added, with intense significance. "They watch and they find out—an' if you can do it—well, it's yours. Yes sir. Listen—you come round to my house 's afternoon or evening, see?"

Something in Hammond appealed to Arthur and he accepted the invitation. That evening,

soon after supper, he found his way to the neat cottage and knocked at the door. Mrs. Hammond opened to him.

"I guess you're Mr. Winner," she said, with a kind of friendly sing-song in her voice.

"That's right. Glad to know you, Mrs. Hammond."

"I seen you on Sunday mornin'," she said, as she led him in. Hammond came to the parlor door and greeted him.

Their home was pleasant and cosy. All things seemed to stand in order under a shaded light. The boy was there, fiddling about with a mechanical toy, at a corner table, and the girl sat at the centre table. When she rose to be introduced to him Arthur saw her resemblance to her mother —a livelier replica. "How do you do, Mr. Winner," she said, pleasantly. "You're the new assistant foreman, aren't you?"

"Someone's been telling tales about me, eh?" said Arthur.

"Father's been talking about you so much," she answered.

"I didn't say nothin' bad about you," said Hammond, laughing.

"Indeed you didn't," said Mrs. Hammond, hastily. "He's been telling us how different you was from them other men. That's all."

"Ma, you're going to make some tea for us, aren't you."

"I'll make it, daddy," said the girl.

"No, never mind, Helen. I'll make it."

"Eight years I've been living in this home," said Hammond, feeling Arthur's pleasure in it.

"It's certainly cosy," said Arthur.

"Yes sir. I like this little home of mine. It ain't every workingman can show one."

"No," said Arthur.

"An' yet there ain't no reason why every workingman can't have one neither."

"Sure enough," said Arthur.

"You take it from me, Winner," said Hammond, earnestly. "Every worker can have his home same as me, an' if he don't it's because he's lazy, or else he ain't honest, or he don't save. I've seen 'em. There's men been working as long as me in the mill room an' they ain't got nothin' to show for it. Why? Because they ain't got the character—'at's why."

Arthur nodded.

"There's men that works six months here and six months there, an' six months somewhere else. An' when they got money they spend it, and when they ain't got any they borrow, an' then they never catch up. That ain't no way of living."

"No."

"An' this ain't nothin'—an' I know it. I'd have had a rich home, sirree, if I'd have had the education. You can't do noth'n without education. An' why?" He bent forward, intensely. "Because everyone has education, an' if you ain't got it you're outside of it."

"Not everyone has it," said Arthur.

"Sure they have. Wherever you go now—it's education, education, education, education. Everywhere. Look at all them schools, an' all them magazines an' all them lectures an'everything—" he sank his voice to almost a whisper. "At's what I tell you, Winner. If you can get some education, grab it off—like *that*"—he snapped his fingers. "My boy's goina be educated—yes sir."

"Of course it's a good thing," said Arthur, "but you're making too much of it. There are lots of men who succeed without education."

"Maybe," said Hammond. "But that's passing away. Looka here." He picked up a magazine from the table and turned its pages. "Fellers like these"—he pointed to the vehement advertisements of the correspondence schools, with their illustrations: "Like these"—he indicated men with intensely successful faces, immaculately dressed, issuing curt orders that leapt from one end of the land to the other, changed destinies and created cities. "Education! The trained

mind. 'At's what my boy's goina be. 'At's what you can be. 'At's what I *can't* be, no ways. Too late. If I was fifteen years younger—ten years younger—if I was forty-five 'stead of fifty-five—I'd do it."

He fell into silence for a moment, and read a couple of the advertisements. "Make Good! Five thousand High Executives are called for Every Year in the United States! Be one of them! Why Plod along on Forty Dollars a Week if you can make Ten Thousand a Year? Train in the World's Greatest School of Executives." And: "Fifteen Minutes a Day Opens the World's Masterpieces to you. Learn to Be Forceful. Have the World's Wisdom at Your Command. Impress People with your Character and Knowledge. Fifteen Minutes a Day spent on Our Fifty Selected Books. Write Now."

"Yes, sir," said Hammond, softly. "Them's the men, nowadays."

Mrs. Hammond brought in tea and biscuits, and the boy came to the table with the others.

"I'm sure Mr. Winner's been in grander homes than ours," said Mrs. Hammond, ingratiatingly, "but our little home is as much to us as the grandest place, ain't it, daddy?"

"You bet it is, ma."

Arthur was uncomfortable. Mrs. Hammond's

remark was not intended to draw a compliment from him: she meant, he understood well, to find out something about him.

"You certainly have a cosy home here, Mrs. Hammond," he said.

"You're not from this city, are you Mr. Winner?" the girl asked suddenly.

"Why, no. I'm from New York," answered Arthur.

"'At's what I thought," said Hammond nodding. "I said to myself this young man don't come from the Middle West."

"An' your folks is still in New York, Mr. Winner?" Mrs. Hammond put in, as though fearing that the conversation might drift away to generalities.

"Yes, my folks are in New York."

"An' you come out here to begin from the bottom, eh Winner?" said Hammond, significantly.

Arthur nodded, and his discomfort increased. "If this is what you call the bottom," he said vaguely.

"Man like you couldn't stay at the bottom," said Hammond, shaking his head. "Your father was a wise man, Mr. Winner, him giving you that education. I guess you've been through college, eh?"

"Yes."

" 'At's what I said. Knew it as soon as I seen

you in the stockroom. You can see it right away. You won't stay long where you are, no sir."

"And you've always lived in New York?" asked the girl, fixing her anxious eyes on him.

"Yes."

"I'm going to New York," said the boy, decidedly.

"I'd love to go there," said the girl. "I'd just love to."

"You're foolish, Ivy," said Mrs. Hammond. "All the young men from New York come to the West. Ain't that so, Mr. Winner?"

"Some of them do," said Arthur.

"Right here's the place for the man who wants to make good," said Hammond, "right in this little ole burg."

"But I don't have to make good, daddy," said Ivy, and they all laughed .

"That may be so. But New York ain't no place for a girl. 'Cordin' to what I know they ain't got no homes in New York. How's that, Winner?"

"They haven't as many as over here," said Arthur smiling.

"An' you're going to stay right here, eh?"

"Probably," said Arthur.

"You said it,—probably."

"But all the people that make good go back to New York, daddy," said Ivy.

"That may be so," said Hammond. "That may

be so. I don't know, though. I don't know. Maybe they do and maybe they don't."

The conversation tinkled on for half an hour longer. Arthur might have found it restful but for Mrs. Hammond's insistence on finding out who and what he was. She probably did not care very much from the personal point of view, but Arthur's detachment from a definite sphere seemed to trouble her. She as much as made him admit that his parents were well-to-do. She allowed herself to infer that he could have gone in for something more elegant than the factory, but that he was making his own way, with his father's blessing and ultimate support. Her insinuations Arthur found more annoying than her questions. She was evidently working on a theory (shrewdly close to the truth in some respects) and she submitted point after point as tactfully as she could. Her tact was as insistent as her curiosity. Arthur left before the latter was satisfied. He said he had letters to write, and refused Hammond's invitation to stay and then go to the works together with him.

He did not return to his room, but strolled through the Firefly colony, in a fit of depression. Muriel was in his mind always, and thoughts of her poured a kind of helplessness through him. What was he doing here in Sargon, away from her? What did this mean, that he should have

broken off all communion with the one person who could understand his struggles? He passed through street after street of lamp-lit homes, attracted and repelled by the comfort which shone from them. People sat at the porches. Pianos jingled. There was laughter, and play. Was this what he had come out to find?

As his depression took firmer hold on him it seemed to him that a vast, cupped hand was closing in on him and on the whole world. The shadow of its hollowed palm was cast over the city, stretched far beyond it, in all directions, across fields and farm houses. It blotted out the green of the fields, and the flashing of the rivers; it fell on the strength of new cities, like a corruption the fingers of it touched the further side of the globe: they were sliding inwards, so that the horrible flesh of the hand was creeping downwards and inwards.

It was the same shadow here and in New York, evil, evil, evil. It was his own home he had just left at the Hammonds. These homes along the streets were his. To whom could he turn now?

Had Muriel received that letter of his? Of course she had. But she had sent him no answer. Why should she? It was three weeks now since he had written it. She had forgotten it by now. No! The thought was too cruel. She remembered it well, and thought of him often enough. What of

it? Was there any sense in writing to her and hearing from her?

If she were here now, he thought, and the very thought made him stop in his walking, contracted his heart suddenly. If he were to meet her now—at that next street corner, under the lamp. He stood still. What would he say to her? What would they do? Where would he go with her?

He went on, almost afraid to reach the corner, and he stood awhile under the lamp, thinking of his unutterable loneliness.

CHAPTER XXI

Two months were gone. Arthur had fallen into the new way of his life. He had ceased to wonder and to struggle. He had ceased trying to find consolations. His mind changed slowly and bitterly, and what had before roused in him despair and disgust now touched only his understanding —and not his emotions.

"This is the way of life," he said grimly, standing under an arc light in the works, and looking in a moment of leisure on the tumult and confusion, the dust, the flying wheels, the vibrant shadows. "This is the way of life. Here or there, in Sargon, in New York, worker with brain or worker with hands—it is the same thing. It is the same spirit, the same evil.

"Damn the books! They corrupted me too. They taught me falsely. They gave me iron rules for life: do right; do good; be noble; be pure; be aesthetic. Life isn't like that. Life says—go get, you son of a gun. Life says: Do a good thing now and again. Life says: Make good. Life doesn't care. And I, poor fool, with my laws and my conscience, and rules, and this isn't right, and that isn't nice and the other isn't decent.

"Who the hell is going to listen to me? Who cares? A few impotent simpletons. A few futile, pitiful failures. Is that all that life will mean for me?

"Is that all—a creeping, fruitless, helpless little fellow in a corner——"

His blood became hot.

"No, by God!"

This life, this madness of strength, was too good, too bitter and strong.

"No! No! No! No! I want power. I want movement. I don't want to be a righteous little soul in a corner. Life isn't run by the righteous little souls in corners. It's run by blind forces, and men that enjoy life get astride these forces, and ride 'em."

Even in this place, in the Firefly Rubber Works, he could make himself a master. He knew it. It was in him to rise to command. The old sense of weakness and inferiority had passed away. He was at home in this world, at ease in it. He knew that Mike had come to respect him. The men in the stockroom had fallen into sullen obedience. He no longer feared them: he treated them coldly, indifferently—and they felt his mastery.

"Why should I turn my life into an atonement? And what can I achieve? Who will listen to me? And what shall I say? Shall I

say to America—'America! you have forgotten the way of God! America, there is corruption in your bones! America, this is the way of death!' Who will listen? Who cares? Shall I be a crank, a freak, a local curiosity?

"Life cannot be changed that way!"

This conviction came home like a flash of lightning. Life is not changed by the few who stand outside the melée and shout "In the name of God!" It is changed from within—such change as there is.

The temptation took strength from his lingering idealism.

"There lies the path—from within! Had you remained with your father you might have done a little toward bringing a decent spirit into his crude money-hunger and success-hunger. But now—your forces will be dissipated. You will go one way, he will go another way.

"How else can one hope to better life?"

True! Here in the factory, for that matter, he knew he could become a little force, to be exerted, for what it was worth, either way. He was a little centre in himself.

Yes! A man had to be successful before he could make his influence felt. As a successful business man, manufacturer, he could exert a force for good. As a nobody, let his soul be pure as snow—it did no good in the world.

Yes—but to be successful, he had to stoop to their methods: he had to exploit the vile instruments that had raised them to wealth over the corruption of the country's soul.

Only this remained—that he be somewhat less vile than they, that he should not let the means eat into his soul, be mistaken for the end.

No, life was not simple. Life could not be directed by books, by laws. Life was a raging storm: life was a living labyrinth: life was a thing of compromises, combinations, subtleties: and the strong man was not he who rose above the fight and kept his soul pure, but he that mingled in the fight and retained some elements of decency.

* * * * * *

He stayed at Hogg's cottage some three weeks in all, and then moved away. He could not get on with the men. He had to recognize in the end that there was no method of bridging the gulf between himself and them. Nor was there any point to it. It was not his world. He felt himself superior to them. They felt themselves superior to him. They tried to poke fun at him: at first he tried to join in it, but found it unspeakably stupid: then he ignored them.

For that matter he recognized that all this life was alien to him, these works, these foremen, this atmosphere. In his own world his educa-

tion did at least have some outlet. Even if only theoretically, one could talk of spiritual values. Here he was utterly dumb.

But there was no turning back. There was no writing home, or asking for forgiveness. That was utterly impossible. This was his life now. In this life he had to conquer.

Of conquest he was certain. It was not of his nature, he felt, to give his life to complete obscurity. He was going to emerge, he was going to be a force—still for good, but better a meaningless force than no force at all.

Sometimes he tried to analyse the change that was coming over him. It was a little ludicrous. Was he seeing the light—or was he just growing older? Was it truly a change in his convictions, an increasing wisdom, or was it just youth passing away, and first vitality failing? How often he had heard with contempt, that statement of theirs: "Oh, you'll grow older and you'll change——" and he had never believed it. And here it was happening!

To that question, "Was it increasing wisdom or decreasing vitality?" there was no answer. Whatever it was it was certain. His life was changing. He was stretching out towards palpable things.

His success at the factory was distinct. Despite the efforts of Mike to obscure Arthur's

work, Steel gradually learned that the new efficiency in the stockroom was the result of Arthur's control. He consulted with Arthur as often as with Mike, to the increasing resentment of the latter.

"You're gett'n' next to the boss, ah?" he once asked Arthur, half spitefully, half fearfully.

"How d'you make that out?" answered Arthur.

Mike looked long at him: "Don't sling the bull to me, Winner. If you think there's a chance of you bein' foreman you've got another think coming."

"Yes," said Arthur.

"An' all it needs is a word from me, and you go back to the stockroom."

Arthur knew he lied. Steel would never countenance such an act.

"Not but what you ain't a good man in the office," said Mike, changing his tone. "But you don't try any o' them tricks on me."

Two months before such words would have put Arthur into a rage. Now he thought: "That's the way of this man. It would take ten years to change him. Why care if he's mean? Can I alter the way of his life?" And he let the incident pass, unmoved.

Life in Sargon was very lonely for him. Out-

side the works he had little more than books to interest him. He went at rare intervals to see the Hammonds, but he could bear them only in small doses. Mrs. Hammond annoyed him; the daughter was foolish and the boy was well on the way to becoming a conventional go-getter. Old Hammond, with his eternal plaint about what he could have done if he had only been provided with a little education was the most tolerable, because there was something pathetic about him. But a coolness came between Arthur and the family, when it transpired that he did not go regularly to their church, or to any other.

At times he wandered through the streets seeking in his mind some plausible method of attacking the life around him—though the incentive was passing away, and only a theoretical interest remained. But he never found even a loophole through which his spirit could have entered. It was a world whole in content and in armor. It was complete and self-sustaining, self-producing. Every utterance of it strengthened it. The crowds that passed under the flaming advertisements, by the dull churches, by the mechanical schools and theatres were forever in the grip of the spirit of the times. Nothing they read, or heard, or saw was intended to disturb them. And from cradle to grave they

were accompanied by the spirit: it watched over their childhood, it crept into their children's books, into their courtship, into their loves and hatreds, into all their relationships, into their views on marriage and death. The pep school, the do-it school, get-it-boy school . . . .

And he thought: "It is a sign of ill-health to be out of all this. This is the way and the life. The revolutionary is a sick man. Only he is healthy who makes the most of life. To be as I was is to be unadapted to life."

He stood one week-end night on the hill to the south of Sargon, from which he could see, in a tangle of yellow lights and livid furnace reflections, the whole expanse of the city. In imagination he could see much further: to the edges of the Great Lakes in the North, to the Oceans east and west, and down to the Southern frontier of sand. And he felt then within him a reflex of the blind joyous impulse that made the country ring with effort from boundary to boundary. What cared that impulse for the spirit of God? What cared it for gentle, aesthetic distinctions? Action, raw action, and the rawest incentive to action; power, strength, fury, acquisition. What is right or wrong? What is beauty? What is tenderness?

Hail, America!

* * * * * *

In his loneliness he thought incessantly of Muriel. The memory of her would hit him suddenly, at unexpected moments, like the recurrent pang of some uncontrollable sickness. He would think of her at the works, would stop short in some operation, and stare in front of him for a few moments, feeling as though he were turning pale. He would think of her as he came out, in the early morning, from the unclean inferno, and took deep breaths of good, sharp air. Whenever she was in his mind his immediate surroundings become remote and impotent. He was near to the little garden in which he had first held her hand, and to the streets along which he had walked with her.

How good, how good was the memory of her! She was kinder to him, even in remembrance only, than all the rest of the world. Whatever he had lost elsewhere he knew he could find again in her.

He worked hard, with a savage intensity even. He came earlier to the works than his regular hour, and made the acquaintance of the foreman on the shift preceding his, and he stayed later in order to meet the foreman of the shift following. He straightened out little discrepancies in the methods used by the three shifts. He made suggestions to Steel about re-arranging the stockrooms, having noticed that certain

kinds of rubber were always in larger demand at certain of the mills. He threw himself wholly into the work, half in contempt, and half to escape his loneliness.

He became better acquainted with Steel who, as a high-salaried executive, was really out of his sphere of friendships: but they established a superficial intimacy—and Steel began to talk to him of a second promotion. He himself could do with such an assistant: he advised Arthur to keep an eye on the whole building, to learn something about the millrooms, the Kallendar rooms and the pit, and about the complete system of distribution. And Arthur threw himself with renewed energy into the work. There was nothing else to do.

So the whole life grew on him. The night of labor and noise was no longer strange to him. Order came gradually into the chaos of the works. He learned the coming and going of things, the organization of the men and their efforts. Even the stink of the various kinds of rubber became familiar phenomena, less repugnant as they assumed permanent identities. He felt himself increasingly assimilated to it all.

But back of all was the unshakable feeling that he lacked the stability of human relationship. He was lonely. He was hungry for friendship and he could not find it.

There were times when, in sheer despair, he tried to break into some circle—went back for a visit to Hogg's cottage, or struck up a conversation with one of the stockroom boys. But there was no satisfaction for him in such companionship. He could not fool himself into believing that their raw values could satisfy him. He was not afraid of being labelled snob. "We belong to different worlds," he thought, "and that's the beginning and the end of it."

CHAPTER XXII

On the morning that began Arthur's fifth month at the Firefly, Steel stopped him as he was passing out of the works.

"Want to see you, Winner. Which way're you going?"

Arthur pointed toward the Firefly colony.

"I'll drive you down there," said Steel.

They went together to the shed where Firefly workers kept their cars and motorcycles.

"You're goina stick it here, Winner, aren't you?" asked Steel, as they drove slowly from the works.

"Yes."

"You remember me saying I could use an assistant?"

"I remember," said Arthur, a faint color coming into his face.

"I've been talking with Mr. Carraway—he's on the board you know. I told him about it more'n a month ago. I told him I thought every department head should have an assistant. One man can't keep tight hold on a department. I guaranteed I could get fifteen percent. more

efficiency out of my department with an assistant. See?"

"Yes."

"Well, he said this an 'that, and he'd speak to the board, and it would mean more expense an' all that. Well, he told me last night they'd decided to give it a three months' tryout in my department. See! An' if my department made good they'd see about the others. I reckon it ought to make good. There's too much darned time lost down there, with me not being able to be everywhere. You know that."

"Sure."

"How'd you like the job?"

"I'd like it, all right," said Arthur, slowly.

Steel looked at him and winked.

"Bet you would. What d'you get now?"

"Thirty-five," said Arthur.

"You'd be gett'n fifty," said Steel, and added: "But you'll have to make it, believe me. You can't get away with much on Mr. Carraway. That man knows when he's getting the goods."

"I'll make good," said Arthur, with conviction, a feeling of elation coming over him, despite himself.

"That's nearly as much as Mike is gett'n," said Steel. "I don't put much stock in him, tho! There's no snap to him. But you can't

expect more. Believe me it's the hardest thing in the world to find men with executive ability."

"I guess it is," said Arthur.

"Which way?"

Arthur pointed down the street he lived in.

"If you reckon you want to stay on with the Firefly," said Steel, "there's a future for you. We take care of every man that's got any kind of ability. The more money you can earn with us the more we like you"—this last sentence was a quotation from a famous Firefly advertisement for hands.

They stopped in front of the house.

"I'll see you tonight, Winner," said Steel. "Come down to my office before you go and see Mike."

"All right," said Arthur.

He stepped out of the machine, slammed the door to, and turned to the house. As he put his hand on the gate latch he lifted his eyes to the parlor window and stopped dead. A quick chill ran through his body and made him rigid as stone. Muriel was standing at the window.

He felt all the color passing out of his face. Then, as Muriel started, he flung open the gate and rushed up the steps. The front door was ajar. Scarcely seeing what was in front of him he flung into the parlor and slammed the door to behind him. His heart beat so wildly that

he could not utter a word. But he held Muriel's hands and they stared at each other, he stony-eyed, she smiling, and with tears starting.

He forgot his dusty overalls, his filthy cap, his shoes, caked with accumulated sandstone. He drew her to the couch, sat down and, still holding her hands made her sit down beside him.

"Muriel," he said, at last.

"Yes," she answered, and the tears that had been quivering above her cheeks broke over the rims of the eyes—two quick drops that burned their way into him.

"But Muriel—when did you come?"

"I went away yesterday. I couldn't stand it any more——" and she broke down, and put her head on his shoulder, and cried.

He felt an unutterable awkwardness choking back his words and his actions. He gripped her arms while, with her hands on his lap, she leaned against him and cried and cried. He was amazed. He could not understand what had happened, where he was. The cheap little parlor, the flimsy furniture, the ugly prints on the wall —it was all foolishly unreal. What were they doing here—he and Muriel?

She lifted up her head and looked at him. Her face was brilliant now, dazzling.

"I was so sick of everything," she said. "I couldn't stand it any more. I was so lonely

for you, Arthur. Arthur, why are you trembling?"

"I'm not trembling," he said in a dry voice, and tried to laugh.

"I thought I'd die if I didn't see you soon, Arthur—do you know I wasn't sure you were here in Sargon any more. Arthur—oh, I want to keep on saying your name to you. I went to that address you had on your first letter and when a man said you were gone I thought I was going to faint. But then I thought you wouldn't have gone anywhere else without writing to me. Then I found this place—and you weren't here yet. I was afraid you wouldn't come, just because I was waiting for you—Arthur."

He drew in quick breath.

"Dear, why didn't you write?"

"I hadn't the heart. What's the good of writing?"

"I mean that you were coming. Look at me—" and he smiled at his own appearance.

"How could I write. If I'd have written I was coming I'd have been here before the letter. It came over me like a flash—and I just ran."

They looked at each other again. He was holding her hands now. The weariness which usually possessed him after a night at the works

was gone completely. He was fresh, whole, clear-eyed and clear-hearted. Four months were gone—like the flicker of an eyelash. They were together again.

"Were you angry with me for not writing, Arthur?"

"How could I be?"

"Were you angry with me when you left New York?"

"Of course not, you child, you dear."

"Weren't you?"

He shook his head, smiling.

"I thought you were disappointed in me, Arthur."

"No, Muriel, dearest."

"I was ashamed of myself all this time. I kept on thinking that all this time I should have left home and gone to you. I shouldn't have asked anyone, or thought of anything else, but I should have left it all and come to you, and said—'here I am'—just as I know you wanted me to do. Didn't you, Arthur, didn't you?"

"I don't know. How could I ask that of you?"

"But that's what I thought, Arthur. You didn't have to ask it of me. And you didn't ask it, you'd never think of asking it. I should just have come, and I wanted to. And at last

I couldn't stand it any more. Oh, I'm glad, I'm happy. Are you, Arthur?"

"What do you think?"

"Do you know your not writing to me after that first note was so strange and meaningful to me. Afterwards every morning, when a letter from you didn't come, I kept on saying that silence is a message from Arthur."

Her words shook him. "Muriel, do you know how different you are?"

"No, I'm not. But when I'm near you, and the others are a thousand miles away I feel as if I'm really myself."

Her mention of "the others" came like a slight shock to both of them.

"I don't care," she said. "They do everything to have their own way. They don't care about us. Why should we care about them?"

"I don't care about them," he answered, slowly. "Except for your sake."

"No, Arthur, dear Arthur, you mustn't say that. It's what you had in mind before, because you thought I was weak and silly. I'm not, dear. I want to be with you, not with them. Don't you believe me, Arthur?"

"How shall I not believe you?" he asked, troubled. "You're heroic. Muriel, do you know that?"

"I'm not heroic," she said, trembling, and

tears started into her eyes again. "I'm frightened."

"And you're tired, you child."

"I'm not tired——" Then she broke into laughter and threw her arms round him suddenly and kissed him. "And I'm contradicting you all the time. Arthur you dear, I'm frightened and I'm nervous, and I'm just silly—and I love you." Then she added hastily, her face covered with a quick flush—"and I wonder what the people here think of me."

"That's right, too," said Arthur, startled. "Listen, Muriel. I'm going to change quickly and come out with you. I'll be just a minute."

He rushed upstairs toward his room. On the landing he almost bumped into his landlady.

"Mrs. Wadsworth, I'm going out right now."

He was going to rush past, but the woman's amazed face stopped him.

"Are you leavin' us, Mr. Winner? Ain't you coming back any more?"

"No, I mean I'm just going out—I shan't go to bed. I don't know what I mean. I'll tell you afterwards." He laughed and rushed into his own room.

He did not know what to do first. His heart was singing in him. He rushed up and down the room excitedly looking for things, seeing nothing. It seemed to him that it would take

him a week to change—as a matter of fact he was rushing through his wash and change of clothes like a tornado.

Then he drummed down the bare wooden stairs. "Come along, Muriel. Have you had breakfast? Where's your bag? You had a sleeper, didn't you? You came on the same train as I did, didn't you?"

They were in the street before he stopped asking questions.

"Of course I didn't have breakfast. Can you imagine me sitting down and eating?"

"No, I can't," he answered. "So let's go and have breakfast." He stopped suddenly.

"What is it, Arthur?"

He looked at her and felt he was becoming incoherent with excitement, then he mastered himself.

"Nothing. We'll have to go downtown. You won't like these places where I usually have breakfast."

"But why won't I, Arthur?"

"You forget, Muriel. I'm a member of the working-classes, and the haunts of the working-classes aren't for the likes of a lady like you."

They both laughed.

"Please, Arthur, let's go where you always go. You know—I'll have to get used to it—and it's time."

"Don't apologize, Muriel, darling. And you won't have to get used to it."

"Why, Arthur?"

He smiled, and then added, almost stammering: "We'll have breakfast at home."

They laughed again, like two delighted and irresponsible children.

"Are you hungry, Arthur?"

"Sure I am. I've been working all night."

"Why do you work nights?"

"Because I'm told to."

"Is it far, Arthur dear? I'm hungry too."

They came to the place soon—a small corner restaurant, with self-service. There were few men in now. The night shift men had already passed through, and morning shift men were long since gone. The could scarcely eat for impatience to be outside again, where they could talk freely. The man behind the counter seemed to be laughing secretly at them. They left the meal half-way and went out quickly.

"Where shall we go now, Arthur?"

"I know," he said, thinking of the fields where he had passed so many of his lonely afternoons. They took a trolley outward bound, and a silent spell came over them as the car swung noisily from the city. They got off among fields, and Arthur led her to the hill that dominates Sargon from the South. There

on the thick grass, barely dried of the morning dews, they sat down and looked awhile at the trees, with their leaves turning brown, and at the clouds that moved steadily through the clear autumn air.

"Muriel."

"Yes, dear."

"How does one get married?"

"I don't know, darling. I've never done it."

"Ain't you never been to the movies?"

"Yes, dear."

"Well, don't you remember?"

"I thought they weren't true to life."

"Maybe not. I don't know. I've never been married, either."

"Arthur."

"Yes."

"Nothing."

They held hands and laughed.

"Muriel, isn't it silly."

"Yes, dear."

"Do you know I've been promoted, Muriel?"

"Have you?"

"Do you know I'm assistant stockroom foreman, and I'm going to be assistant department chief?"

"Honest?"

"Certainly. I'm going to get fifty dollars a week. Ain't I doing the right thing? Didn't I

go out West and build a little nest—you know the style."

"Arthur, you darling, you're so silly."

"Am I?" He pulled up suddenly, knowing there were serious things to think of. He changed his tone suddenly.

"Did you see my family recently, Mu?"

Her face, too, became serious suddenly.

"No, Arthur."

"Didn't you hear of them?"

She looked down, distressed. "I heard of them," she said blushing.

"Don't you want to speak about them, Muriel?"

"I don't care, dear."

"Everyone is well?" and with these words Arthur felt a stirring in his heart.

"Yes."

"How did you hear of them?"

"You know—father sees your father now and then downtown."

"Yes."

"He saw him a couple of days ago. I don't know why they should have talked of you. But father told mother they did."

"And mother told Alice and Alice told you," said Arthur, smiling quickly.

"Yes, that's just how it was."

"I know."

"Alice's a darling,' she broke off.

"She sure is."

"She was wonderful."

"What did *my* father say to *your* father about me?"

"I don't know exactly—he said he was upset—you know. And he wondered at never having heard from you."

There was a long silence, then Arthur said slowly:

"What would my father say if I were to come back to New York and ask to be taken into the Winner business?"

She flushed and said quickly.

"Your father would be the happiest man in America——" then she caught herself. "I shouldn't have said that."

"Of course you should." Then after another silence. "Why shouldn't you say it?"

"Because I should make it easier for you to live as you want to, not harder."

He shook his head: the tenderness in her slow, quiet voice dumbfounded him.

"Do you care so much, Muriel?"

"Yes."

"Do you know I'm going back to New York, Muriel—to father?"

She started, and looked up at him with wide, frightened eyes.

"No, Arthur. You don't mean that," she said in a quick whisper.

"Yes, I mean it."

She kept on staring, then she began to blush, and suddenly she put her hands up and covered her face.

"Muriel, what is it?"

She would not answer.

"What, dearest?"

"You're going back—for my sake."

"No, dearest. Don't believe that—you mustn't think like that. I'm going back because I'm wiser than I was, and because life means me to go back. I would have gone back without you, Muriel; and I'll always thank God that you will be there to help me. Don't you want to go back?"

"I want to go anywhere with you. That was why I came."

"And do you think I'm a coward, Muriel, to go back?"

"No, Arthur."

"I was a coward to run away."

"You were not, Arthur. It was right to run away then, and it's right to go back now."

"You wonderful woman."

"Why?" she asked, looking sideways at him, and smiling shyly.

"Because you know things without arguing about them."

* * * * * *

They sat that evening in the little parlor of Mrs. Wadsworth, still unable to take their eyes from each other, still breaking out from sensible talk into incoherent amazement. Mrs. Wadsworth, who nearly fainted when Arthur showed her their marriage certificate, hovered outside the door, always wanting to go in, and always afraid. They heard her footsteps patter back and forth, and they were somehow glad because she was so deeply interested.

They covered everything in their talk: what they had done, each of them, in four months of their separation. What they had thought, what they had looked for. And they talked of the future and of how they would live, and what life would mean to them. And Arthur near her, felt the deep springs of his purer wishes breaking upwards again, and he vowed again and again that though he compromised with life he would be true to the best that was in him.

"Life is like that, Muriel: there's no other way of living. I want to be normal, not abnormal. I want to be good within life, not outside of it. We don't need great prophets and heroes who defy life, Muriel. We need plain people who can do good things with life

as it is. That's why the prophets are stoned and crucified, Muriel."

And she, near him again, felt returning the marvellous spell of his passionate faith. How good it was to hear him again, to give herself to him completely, to feel herself mastered, overwhelmed, taken up like a disrooted tree by a flood.

"I know it's foolish to talk of affinities, Muriel, but surely you and I, together, make life whole for each of us. Muriel."

"What, dearest?"

"Don't we?"

"Yes."

"Then why don't you say it?"

"I want to hear you talk."

"Make up for four months, darling?"

"Yes."

They were quiet: then he said to himself, but aloud. "This struggle we are going into now, Muriel, is the real struggle of life. No cut and run game, but the steady battle till we grow old and die. And God give us strength to keep clean."

Suddenly Muriel snatched at his hand and uttered a short cry.

"Arthur!"

"What?"

"Look! Mama! and father!"

Arthur looked quickly out of the window into the lamp-lit street. A machine had drawn up at the door, and Mr. and Mrs. Stewart were hesitating at the little gate of the cottage. He saw Mrs. Stewart's face—hard, bitter, tight with rage.

"How did they find the place?"

"Your letter—oh, goodness—how foolish I am."

They came up the steps. The knock resounded through the house.

"I'll go," said Muriel quickly, and flew from the room, palpitating, and left Arthur standing in the half-darkness.

He heard her open the door. A brief silence.

"Mama"—a sound of kissing—then he could not help hearing the whisper—"mama, we're married, and he's going back to New York and he's going into the business."

Another brief silence. Then he heard.

"Oh, my poor, dear Muriel! And to think I called you a fool."