

*Her
Mother's
Daughter
Nalbro Bartley*



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Her Mother's Daughter

By

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"The Gray Angels", etc. etc.*

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I Min.....	9
II The Pioneers.....	21
III Beaumont’s Bakery.....	29
IV Gloria.....	38
V The First Promise.....	42
VI Gloria Entertains.....	48
VII Tag Surrenders.....	56
VIII More or Less Serious.....	68
IX Gloria Enters the Sanctuary.....	74
X Dodo’s Secret.....	80
XI “Absolutely!”.....	86
XII The First Promise Broken.....	98
XIII At Forestvale.....	103
XIV The New Toy.....	115
XV Tag Learns of the New Toy.....	125
XVI Playtime Complications.....	139
XVII The Cure.....	151
XVIII Jerry’s Summary.....	160
XIX New Playfields.....	169
XX Top o’ the Heap.....	174
XXI Bello Trevano.....	184
XXII Almost Madame La Marquise.....	193
XXIII Pierre’s Luck Holds.....	202
XXIV Thrills Versus Happiness.....	209
XXV Lullaby Land.....	223

XXVI	The Cook Has Callers.....	231
XXVII	Enemies at Least.....	238
XXVIII	The Enemy Betrays Herself.....	257
XXIX	With the Under-Privileged.....	270
XXX	Burr is Banished.....	277
XXXI	The Enemy to the Rescue.....	285
XXXII	Concerning a Number of Things.....	295
XXXIII	Brigit was Right.....	303

Her Mother's Daughter

CHAPTER I

Min

AT the mountain's edge, a vivid blue sky seeming close to her dusty self, Min Beaumont decided to steal the clapper of the pension bell.

To her rebellious mind this challenged the bell's unfair directing of her life. For the moment she forgot that the bell directed the lives of the Beaumont family, the pension guests. It was a raucous sounding affair—clang, clang—grrr, as if grinding its teeth between strokes. At dawn it summoned the farm hands, Aunt Marguerite ringing it relentlessly. Then it called the family to their tasks. There was Aunt Louise, who cared for the blind grandmother in a neglected outbuilding. Aunt Julie, who acted as pension housekeeper—Aunt Julie with snow white hair and snapping, black eyes, who had been seven years in England as maid to the Countess of Haddonfield and who despised all that was English, including Min's dead mother. There was Aunt Marguerite, Uncle Gabriel's wife, tall and always smiling, her thin, blue lips scarcely moving as she spoke. Aunt Marguerite's fanatical interpretation of religion led her to adopt Olga Bialias, a Jewish refugee as well as to beat her half-English niece, Min Beaumont, with a thick whip for no greater offense than picking flowers in the pension garden. Then there was Uncle Gabriel, a slight, kindly little man completely under his wife's supervision. There were the cousins, sons of Uncle Gabriel and Aunt Marguerite—Henri, Gabriel, Victor, Amie, thin, dark, meek-spirited lads who obeyed their mother and hoodwinked their father. Min felt herself disliked by all but Amie. Amie had been rather nice in the matter of sharing jam. But when Olga, the Jewish orphan, came to live with them, Amie had lost no time in transferring his favors. Olga was golden haired and blue eyed, with telltale scars on her arms and neck where she had been punished by burns. To look at Olga was to become sympathetic. Min had been sympathetic, too. More than ever Min hated her own thickset, healthy body, her round, red face with its small gray eyes, the mop of auburn hair which Aunt Julie braided so tightly that it “ached at the roots.” Nothing about Min inspired sympathy.

“What a great, healthy child it is,” the neighbors commented. “Truly her Devonshire mother must have lived off clotted cream.”

Aunt Marguerite's shoulders would shrug pettishly. “You should see this one eat. But she shall learn to work, too.”

Min's thoughts had strayed from her original intention: to steal the bell clapper.

She was drowsy as she lay on the mountain's edge staring down at terraces of sunbaked grapes. Pink, lavender and yellow blossoms grew everywhere, wild roses jutted from rocks and crevices. Jasmine, heliotrope and larkspur streaked the green meadows down, down, down almost to shining Lake Lemman with the French coast rising on the other side, its barish, blue mountains glittering in the sun. Fishing boats with terra cotta sails swept up and down, so did tourist steamers. There was music on the steamers—faintly the snatch of a popular waltz floated up the mountain. Directly below her, still closed for the season, was Château Blonay. Its feudal towers fascinated the child. She longed to explore its corridors, even the dungeon and torture chambers.

. . . but she must steal the clapper of that growling bell. No one suspected that Min had nerves. That this absurd idea had obsessed her until she could no longer control herself. Or that she was shy and sensitive—and stubborn. No one cared enough to wonder whether she knew that her father was Madame Beaumont's youngest brother. That Beaumont was so common a name in that part of the Alps that it had been her aunt's maiden name as well.

But Min did know. She knew that her father while chef in a London hotel had married a despised English maid, a fresh, rosy cheeked girl from Torquay. That a year at the Beaumont pension had faded the roses from her cheeks and the romance in her heart. That she had taken Min, a little, new thing, and gone home to die. For four happy but vague years, Min lived with her "grammer," an apple-cheeked person who owned a cottage with live oak trees about the door. After a time, her grammer had died and her father arrived from Paris. He had remarried and was working in a hotel frequented by extravagant Americans. He lost no time in taking Min to Tusinge in Switzerland. Here, she was given over to his sisters and forbidden to speak English. She was punished upon every possible occasion and ignored upon the remaining ones—and cried over by the blind grandmother who had been exiled in the forlorn outbuilding. It was then the terrible, growling bell began to order her life: go here—grrr—go there—grrr—get up—grrr—go to sleep—grrrr!

That had been five years ago, as nearly as Min could gather. She spoke French poorly and remembered bits of English. Whenever the pension had English guests, she talked with them—Aunt Marguerite listening with smiling disapproval. They were poorish guests since the smart tourist seldom heard of the Pension Beaumont. But they were her mother's people and she grieved whenever they went away. There was an old English woman, Miss Brown, who lived on the top floor of the pension almost the entire season. She was given reduced rates due to the stairs and agreeing to no lights until eight forty-five. Miss Brown taught Min to read English. From this

meager summer home Miss Brown went to a meager winter one in Italy, taking with her a curious portmanteau, a caned foot stool and a shabby music roll. She was at least a hundred years old, Min told Olga. Yet she lived in hopes of a legacy from some cousins, enough to allow her a summer at home.

There was so little to look forward to at the pension, Min thought, as she buried her bare, brown toes into the grass. Always hard, stupid, often ill-smelling work. Olga was permitted to pick flowers and prepare vegetables, go to market with Uncle Gabriel. Min had little school and a surplus of hypocritical religion. She wore her aunt's remade and sour-smelling clothes. She was fed thick, tasteless soups and goat steak, remnants of sticky puddings. What she craved was silk stockings and curly hair and white bread and butter three times a day. She wanted to escape from being harnessed to a two-wheeled cart with Victor or young Gabriel and sent down to Vevey while Amie and Olga scooped up the street manure and passing tourists threw coins and murmured "how picturesque!" All the while the anger in her heart made her face redder and fatter than ever and her strong, squarish body squirmed rebelliously as she tugged at her side of the cart. Her grammar would not have permitted this! She was not of these people, despite her father.

Once, toiling back up the mountain, they had stopped at Monsieur Terriet's and he treated them to cakes and sweetened water. Min never forgot that day. Monsieur Terriet tutored occasional English boys but a fierce black cat was his boon companion. He lived in a rather shut-up villa, its neglected terrace cluttered with ragged rose vines. There was a painted wooden sign all about "les leçons dans philosophie et mathématiques et histoire et musique" but no one paid any attention to it. Even in worn gray flannel, a disfigured eye due to a student duel, Monsieur was a personage to be remembered. Inside, the house felt damp and ancient. The walls were pale blue plaster with countless sheets of pressed butterflies framed and hung in rows.

The boys answered Monsieur's questions readily and he patted Olga's scars with a tenderness which caused Min's plump chin to quiver with envy. He merely smiled at Min and murmured something about "ze roas' bif of ol' England——"

All the rest of the way to the pension, Min longed to break out of the cart harness, to throw herself before the tiny funicular and let the car wheels crush her "roas' bif" self into oblivion. What she wanted was to be beautiful and good—and happy. To escape from these scolding hypocrites who told her at least once a day that they cared for her out of charity, that she must work hard to repay them, that she was stupid, fat, uninteresting—English!

She turned her sunbaked head and looked at the bell clapper. There it hung

beside the front door. Some of the guests were walking by—the sort of guests the Beaumonts encouraged as summer residents. Stiff, elderly women who drank half a glass of wine for both lunch and dinner and carried measuring tape in their petticoat pockets to see if the waitress had treated herself to a sip. On Sundays their relatives visited them—then they drank a glass of wine. They carried white cotton umbrellas and tied blue handkerchiefs over their hair on week days and soft lace ones on Sundays. They, too, called Min fat and stupid and questioned Madame Beaumont as to whether or not she earned her board.

Two deaconesses in black uniforms, who were spending their vacation at the pension, had just paused beside the bell. Min disliked their staring faces, the solemn way they played a game of croquet in the morning and a game in the evening—as if it were compulsory. The rest of the time they took walks or sat on their tiny balcony staring at Lake Lemán or reading Bibles.

Min staggered to her feet. It was a protest against her environment—that running to the bell porch and clambering up the sides, snatching the thick clapper and running back to the mountain's edge to toss it away before she realized what she had dared to accomplish. Her next reaction was one of fear. Perhaps she would do well to toss herself over—no, her thick self might stick on the edge. Then realization replaced the fleeting triumph.

This was July ninth, 1882. Since June first, 1843, that bell had done service for Grandfather Beaumont and his pension. Now the clapper, growl, snarl and clang alike, was tumbling down the mountain. If it struck someone, they might be killed. She would be a murderess. Confession was her next impulse. She glanced down at the Château Blonay. The courtyard became prominent because of its historical gibbet which stuck out like a witch's black forefinger.

The whistle from a chocolate factory and the toot of the approaching funicular roused her. It was time for Aunt Marguerite to ring for tea. The stiff, elderly guests and the sombre deaconesses would come into the garden to be served . . . but the bell clapper was gone. Triumph still caused her to smile. She pictured her aunt's toiling at the bell rope and the mocking silence that would follow. She, squat-shaped, red-faced, English Minnie had stilled the tyrant's voice.

Then a noise, a swish of the tall grasses told her that Olga Bialias was coming toward her. She would have known Olga's swift, precise footsteps anywhere. No one was ever quite like Olga with her tow-colored hair and pale blue eyes, that drawn, appealing face that quivered if one spoke harshly. There was something uncertain about Olga, something which caused her to hedge, to pretend, to dissemble. A zealous missionary had found this starving little creature in a Polish

orphanage and had brought her to share a vacation at the pension. She intended to send the child to a home in Geneva. But her tragic story, those reddish scars on her arms and back, her terrified whispers had caused Madame Beaumont to offer adoption. Madame Beaumont herself hardly knew why—she had many mouths to feed, her blind mother might live for years. Besides, there was Min, that stubborn, stubby-fingered child whom she hated no matter how often she included her in her prayers. Still, she took Olga. She had always wanted a daughter. Olga was fair and appealing, moreover, she was a Jewess and to make a convert was to win another star in Madame Beaumont's heavenly crown. Olga was tractable; she could wait table in due time. She was everything Min was not. It would curb Min's vanity to have to give way to this little refugee. Madame Beaumont's thin lips had smiled at the thought of this new thorn in Min's abundance of flesh.

Although only seven, Olga had learned how to flatter, she became Madame Beaumont's pet, she stirred the guests to pity—and the gift of a few francs. At night, she told Min her thoughts. Strangely, no rivalry existed between them. Min accepted this fair-haired starveling just as the boys accepted her. Olga “clung” to Min. Min was so stolid, so real. It was a relief to whisper the tales of cruelty in the Warsaw asylum, being locked in the morgue for overnight, being told that she was to be carried down into hell for breaking some petty rule, being crowded, halfway smothered into a bucket-like arrangement and taken down steep stairs until the roaring open fires of the institution kitchen were reached. This was hell—these were the flames everlasting. Exhausted, sometimes fainting, she would be carried back to the nursery of terror-stricken children . . . the branding on the arms . . . here and here . . . so and so. . . . No, Min never hated Olga.

“Tante Marguerite is ringing for tea,” Olga said in her whispering voice, sliding down on the grass beside Min. “The guests are waiting. Amie has sold his goat. He is to have half the money for himself. He will buy me new ribbons. Tante Louise let me see the grandmother again. She is all wrinkles and crumbs . . . she smells like the black coat Tante Marguerite had in the chest. It is not nice to be blind and old and to live with a manure pile against the window. See, Tante Julie gave me this cake,” her small fingers broke it in half. For once Min was not hungry.

“The bell does not ring,” she confided suddenly, her stubby fingers clutching Olga's arm. “I—I threw the clapper down there——”

“You have a fever,” said Olga instantly, her voice more whispery than ever. “The sun has hurt your brain——”

“I have thrown the clapper away. I hate it. I have always hated it. I'll be beaten but I don't care——”

“What did a bell matter?” Olga whispered. “What could any *bell* matter?”

Min glanced at Olga’s scars. Vaguely she realized that everything in life was relative—pain, joy—even bell clappers!

“I hate it here. I hate myself—and her,” she continued wildly. She was watching the confusion about the bell porch.

Aunt Marguerite had reported the theft. Uncle Gabriel had climbed up to verify it. Aunt Julie scolded shrilly while the guests flocked about. Who had dared to steal the bell clapper?

“The loafers who tramped by yesterday. I refused them water,” suggested Aunt Julie.

“No, they were in Vevey. We saw them at the market,” Uncle Gabriel corrected.

“It is ill luck,” said Aunt Louise.

“It is robbery,” answered her sister Marguerite.

Min clutched Olga’s hands. “I’ll find it,” she said in sudden terror. “They won’t beat me quite so hard if—if—I find it——” pointing at the steep decline. The harsh bell tongue suddenly seemed a good friend; at least, it had done nothing more than snarl at her.

“Lie about it,” urged Olga, “no one may have seen.” Her thin face shone with a sweet smile. It was this in Olga which baffled Min.

“They’ll know when they look at me. You—you tell them I’m looking for it. I won’t come back unless I find it,” Min scrambled to her feet.

Aunt Marguerite was walking toward them. In one hand was a scrap of Min’s hair ribbon. Like a startled animal, she fled down the mountain side. She could starve to death if she failed in her search. Down—down she plunged wildly, madly, her bare legs bleeding from the brambles. Once she fell on her face. When she picked herself up the blood from a cut cheek stained her fingers. But she must not come back unless she found the clapper. Even so——What had made her do it? What did it mean? What was it that she had been trying to express? What use was there in trying to express anything?

At dusk Min came into the pension parlor. For once its red plush furniture and apricot colored draperies, the jars of dried grasses and the closed upright piano failed to impress her. Her uncle led her in before the assembled family. But protecting strangers were with her. Smartly dressed Americans who had come upon her at the foot of the mountain and who had taken her into their carriage while she sobbed out her story, the bell clapper clutched in her tired arms. She had found the clapper halfway down the mountain side, stumbling upon it unexpectedly, her burning foot bruising itself against the metal edge. As she picked it up something tiny and shining

caught her eye. It proved to be a ring set with a reddish stone, the most beautiful thing Min had ever seen. She wondered who had lost it and if she must give it back. Should she bury it and tell no one until she found the owner? On her stout thumb it was a trifle tight. She was tugging to remove it, the clapper under one arm, when the Americans had driven by below.

“She has found something,” called out the American lady. “Stop, driver. Little girl, little girl,” and she left the carriage and came running towards her, all creamy lace and blue parasol and smiles.

“It is my ring,” she called out again. “Jack, do you hear? Oh, you heavenly infant—I was heartbroken. There wasn’t a chance in a million—see, Jack—it’s the ring! What a tired looking chunk of a girl! Wherever have you been—and look—it’s a—a—what is it?” the tip of the blue parasol touching the bell clapper.

“The child is exhausted,” said the American gentleman. “Let us take her home. We must do something nice for her.”

Before Min realized she was leaning against the carriage cushions and crying—neither prettily nor appealingly as Olga would have cried but great, hoarse sobs, her dirty, stained fingers holding the bell clapper as she told her story.

They drove her to the pension and promised that she should be rewarded not punished. The ring was an heirloom and the stone a pigeon-blood ruby. The American lady had advertised for it all along the coast and had almost resigned herself to its being lost. Her fingers were thin from a fever and it must have slipped off when she had come here to pick narcissus. Why, there was nothing to be frightened about; surely her uncle and aunt would understand a prank like stealing a bell clapper. If she had not done so, the ring would have remained lost. So it was more than all right. Could she not stop those strange-sounding sniffs?

Snuggling among the cushions, Min caught the look of amused pity which passed between them. She was ridiculous even if she had found their treasure! Could she never do anything that was both appealing and graceful? Still, the worst fear had lessened . . . she admired the lace on the American’s gown and the blue parasol.

The Beaumonts were awed by the tourists, rather impressed by the coincidence of Min’s wickedness and finding the ring. (Min was beginning to be impressed, too.) They were always impressed when there was the clink of gold—particularly Aunt Marguerite. And they kept their word once they gave it. They promised that the child should not be punished for her “prank” as the American lady called it. Conscientiously, they protested against taking any reward but, having been prevailed upon to accept it, agreed that half of it should be spent for Min’s needs.

By and by Uncle Gabriel restored the bell clapper and life at the pension was

resumed as usual. Then Min found herself alone with Aunt Marguerite. She was in her nightgown after a hasty supper of bread and milk. It was good to go to bed. Her feet burned until she could have groaned. Aunt Marguerite had given her word—she dared not to break it. Stealing the clapper had accomplished something, at all events.

“I am wondering, bad little niece,” broke in her aunt’s voice, “whether you would have told of the jewel had the carriage not come by. When you pray to-night, pray that you would have done so.”

She left the room. Outraged yet triumphant, Min sprang out of bed and shook her fists at the closed door.

“I’ll pray for rings—and blue parasols,” she gasped.

Clang, clang—grrr went the bell—you didn’t get rid of me, English brat—clang, clang—grrr!

Sobbing, Min jumped into bed. One by one the children came in to sleep. She shared her bed with Olga but, to-night, they did not speak. Unsuspected, Min remained awake, her aching body throbbing rebelliously and her aching heart trying to decide what it was all about. What was it she wanted these days, that gnawed at her deep inside? Olga slept peacefully, her fair hair untumbled on the edge of the pillow. Olga, who had been burned and starved and cast out, smiled in her sleep while Min tossed and turned and fought the air with her fists . . . it was something more than wanting to be rid of a bell clapper or to keep a ring or to have a blue parasol. But she did not know what it was. She knew that she had met with kindness but only for a moment; that the ugly and tyrannical had come back into her life while the beauty and kindness passed on. That would always happen to such as she. She buried her wide face in her share of the pillow so that no one would hear her sob.

Outside came the forlorn sound of a farm-hand’s horn; he was playing a hymn in faltering, wretched style. It made her teeth on edge and her forehead puckered as if in pain. The night wind brought the nauseating smell of the manure pile through the raised window. A pig grunted with sudden anger and a burst of drunken yodeling out on the road caused Olga to stir. Dreary rain began beating on the tin roof.

Min had said no prayers because she had answered none of her own questions. Nor did she suspect that during this childish crisis what she had wanted was God.

The Pioneers

WHEN Min was eighteen she married Jules Beaumont. He was a remote and worldly cousin, a small, dark, reddish-eyed person, pockmarked yet dapper and fifteen years Min's senior. The Beaumonts at the pension did not think overly well of Jules but they were glad when Min was off their hands. Even Aunt Marguerite had failed in training her to her ways. Secretly, Aunt Marguerite believed that her mistake had been in not punishing Min the night she had thrown away the bell clapper and found the American's ring. To have broken her word to the American and explained it to God afterwards would have been a wiser procedure. She dated Min's rise in spirit from that day.

At eighteen Min was a broad-hipped, red-haired girl with sharp, small eyes and a flexible mouth that could sulk or curl up at the corners in a happy grin. Her fat hands with their short nails and turned-back thumbs were the hands of a curious, capable person. They were as hopelessly red as her neck and face. Since Min was fourteen she had worked on the farm. The stables held no terrors for her. Barefoot or in sabots she tramped from cattle pen to pig sty to wash or feed or milk or doctor. She did not shrink from the frankness of farmyard life. She assisted as willingly at the mating of a mare as she mothered day old chicks. Anything as long as she escaped the pension with its rooms of stiff elderly guests and her smiling, thin-lipped aunt.

The Beaumont boys regarded Min as one of themselves. Olga was the belle. She wore the peasant costume as effectively as if it were her native land, waiting table and slyly pocketing tips under Madame Beaumont's nose. Two English students came up for afternoon tea for no other reason than Olga's shy whispers and flaxen curls.

Jules Beaumont, thirty-three and worldly wise, regarded Min as a rarity. She was so strong, so simple that neither her flesh nor her crudeness prejudiced him. After years in hotels, Jules was surfeited with flirtatious underlings. But no man desires lonely old age. Without warning Jules had found himself longing to come home for a visit, to be with his own people. Yet a week at the pension found him ready to quarrel with everyone, to shock them with his stories, his gambling, his wine, the theory that America was the one land where a man might come into his own.

There was no doubt but what Jules would have fled to Paris but for Min. He admired her spirit, her childish capacity for enjoyment. Moreover, she spoke English. Jules was not a bad sort but he was conceited and stubborn. It pleased him to ignore the smirking Olga Bialias who made eyes at him for all of the English students. It pleased him to buy Min Beaumont a fan which her red fingers handled awkwardly, to take her to casino concerts, to praise her because her English blood was obvious, to make love to, in short, to propose to—all within a month.

Min's father having died, there was no one to consult as to marriage. Min was a little past eighteen. She had saved fifty francs. She had a wooden chest filled with fragments of a wardrobe. She knew nothing of marriage nor the world—nor of Jules. America was a magic name. England roused sad memories of her unhappy mother and the apple-cheeked grammer. But she must escape from the pension. To her mind Switzerland seemed a stupid, painted landscape filled with toy houses and toy tourists. Jules had promised that they go to America. In New York his friends would help him to a position. Soon money would flow their way. They could buy clothes and jewelry, their children could attend splendid schools. Everything would be infinitely better than if they stayed abroad. She must be a sensible girl and marry him without waiting. They would go by way of Paris where he would buy her a silk dress and a necklace—well, what did she say? Come, he was not such a bad fellow and she would not have many such chances. How they overworked her at the pension; how he liked the way her red hair grew back from her forehead in tiny waves, the heavy lashes of her small eyes! At eighteen Min was tempting to a man like Jules. He could train her to his ways . . . he wanted to kiss that red, happy mouth (he had not seen it sulk as yet) and to feel her eager arms about his neck . . . she knew nothing of the world—absolutely nothing . . . Jules' reddish eyes glistened.

At the time he proposed, they had been walking in the private cemetery of Château Blonay. Imposing tombs of the once mighty counts of Savoy and their good ladies filled the forsaken little yard. Min was sitting on no less than the Countess of Zeppelin's monument. She gazed down at the lake, gray and soft due to a coming rain. Above were the grape terraces and rose arbors set in a background of trees.

Jules thought, that Min was listening intently to his plans. She only halfway listened. She was looking up at the road, searching for a squarish boulder that marked where she had found the bell clapper and the ruby ring . . . well, fair or unfair, her aunt had never beaten her since that day.

"Yes, Jules, we may as well be married now," she heard herself saying. "America is where I want to go."

"I shall open a shop. You shall see, *ma petit*. I shall have them flocking from all

sides for my Basle honey cakes, my peach kuchen, my London Bridge puddings. Oh, I can take a cabbage and make it taste like a pomegranate. I can cook anything,” and he kissed his fingers to the air. “I have a little book—tiny, very old—but it contains the recipes for our success and wealth. My own recipes, please understand. I shall show the Yankees what baking ought to be.”

“I shall have a silk dress and a necklace and our children shall have everything—everything,” she repeated. “Let us be married without anyone’s knowing. They might object and I should lose my temper. Let us run away—you are old enough to take care of me now—*now*,” her warm, strong body suddenly leaned against his with childish assurance.

Jules’ lips met her red, happy mouth, the thick lashes closed over her eyes.

“Now,” he agreed.

It was August, 1890, when Min and Jules Beaumont reached New York. One of those dreary midsummer storms that send people scurrying home from resorts to rummage for wraps and blankets. A sharp wind swept the city like the wail of a starving gutter cat. Min’s first impression of America was of a crowded, cold city with many horse-cars and abusive drivers and friendly policemen, high-voiced citizens and tall buildings, rows and rows of brownstone and red-brick dwellings, shops aglitter with prohibited articles.

She was still nauseated from the sea voyage. They had come second-class on a cheap line, the weather proving rough from the moment they boarded the Cherbourg tender. Marriage with Jules had not been as Min had expected. So far it had been quite as Jules had wished it.

They had hurried to Paris after their wedding in a notary’s office. Min had left a rather boasting, now-what-have-you-to-say-about-it note for the Beaumonts. The nine-hour ride from Basle in the second-class compartment had brought an irritable Min into an indifferent Paris. Jules had taken her to the lodgings of his friends. They welcomed her in their way but dropped hints about her lack of style, the difference in their ages. The next day Jules bought her two dresses but neither was of silk. When she reminded him of the promised necklace, he pinched her cheek and called her a “greedy little one.”

“You are married now,” he added in a tone of finality. “The journey to America is expensive and we must live until something turns up.”

So Min looked at necklaces in the store windows. By contrast her reddish, plump neck seemed barer than ever. Jules cut short his stay in Paris and took Min to Cherbourg, that bleak seaport where she felt the world must be coming to an end whenever she looked at its grim fortifications and the pool of dull water beyond.

That was the English channel which she had crossed as a child. Perhaps she had been wrong to encourage Jules to go to America, perhaps it would be wiser to try England. But it was too late to change. Jules was impatient to be off. He was beginning to be impatient if Min did not have things just as he wished, if she did not understand the first time he spoke. Despite her youth he was a trifle ashamed of her gawkishness. His Parisian friends had made him realize what a country product she was.

She had been glad to leave Cherbourg even for the ill-smelling inside ship's cabin. For almost two weeks she lay with her face toward the wall, refusing food and biting her lips to keep her homesick sobs from Jules' unsympathetic ear. He left her alone a great deal for he was an excellent sailor. Once or twice she had struggled up on deck—a dismal clod, she dimly felt, with her unbecoming clothes and tear-stained face. Even mal de mer did not relieve her of her florid color. She watched Jules, well-groomed and jaunty, playing deck games or talking with the sailors. He seemed unaware of her presence, so she groped her way back to the cabin.

Then New York and icy rain and sharp winds and forlorn rooms high up in a lodging house near Second Avenue. Jules' friends, of whom he had been so confident, did not materialize. That was the way with this new, unstable country, he complained. Promise anything and do nothing. He must strike out for himself. Would she please stop her complaints? She was off the ship, was she not? Well, then, what was there to wail about?

They must go to work at once or their stock of money would be gone. They must do anything they could find. Later they would be in a position to choose.

Jules drove a team for a wholesale grocery house and Min found herself as chambermaid in a Seventh Avenue hotel. They saw little of each other for the next six months. They met at night, tired, disgruntled, rather bewildered. Jules was no longer trim and dapper and Min's red mouth became permanently sulky. But it was Min who learned of America—not Jules. At first hand Min saw the life in the cheap hotel, the waste and extravagance, the possibilities of living! She listened to everything that was said about America and by Americans. She saved her wages and her tips and made herself invaluable to the housekeeper. Despite Jules' sneers about the "rawness and dishonesty and arrogance of America" Min defended this new country.

"It is a fine land," she would insist. Since she earned her share of expenses Jules could no longer make her be still.

"You are a fool," she dared tell him at the end of ten months. "Still driving that team, you, a cordon bleu—why don't you cook? Go from restaurant to restaurant,

bakeshop to bakeshop until you find something to do, anything that is in your line. For me, it does not matter. I can make beds in a hundred years from now and still remember how to weed a garden or harness a team. But you—where are our fortunes coming from?”

Jules was uncomfortable under such a harangue. He did not like New York; he was afraid of it. He had been too conceited to go from restaurant to restaurant, bakeshop to bakeshop. He refused to join the union. He complained about the dampness from the Sound, the noise, the crowds, the lack of opportunity. He wanted to try a smaller city. There he would go into business for himself. Everyone advised his doing this; America was said to favor independence.

Min was tired of her work at the hotel. She, too, disliked the noise of crowds. She longed for green spaces and neighbors. She hated listening to Jules rail night after night—and do nothing to remedy his plight. Min had saved a hundred dollars. Jules had three hundred.

They left New York almost a year from the day they had landed and went upstate to Rutledge. It was a substantial American city of seventy-five thousand—with room for seventy-five thousand more. Someone told Min it was certain to become of industrial importance. Its situation in a fertile valley could not fail to attract industry. Rutledge prices would prove more reasonable than New York prices and there the people would be different. They were the “real Americans.” Min was eager to know what “real Americans” would be like.

They rented comfortable rooms in a downtown, “foreign” section, according to Rutledge natives. The city proved an old-fashioned, conservative spot with broad hills nestling about it protectively and wide, tree-bordered streets which formed a dignified background for its numerous mansions. Business was conducted in a leisurely, we-don’t-care-what-the-rest-of-the-world-is-doing fashion. These “real” Americans apparently enjoyed what the New Yorker termed “quiet” wealth. Rutledge had no slums at this time and few poor families. The mills and the manufactories furnished employment to anyone who wanted work.

At first Jules was for their trying the mills but Min held him to his original promise.

“Start a bakery,” she commanded. “These rich people like to eat and there is no bakery here like we can run. We have enough to rent rooms and buy a stove and some flour. When our things are in the windows, they’ll come buy. Oh, yes, they will. Everyone has a stomach.”

Grumbling, Jules obeyed. He had not expected this turn of affairs. Romance having exhausted itself, he found Min’s large strong self something of a tyrant. More

and more he was inclined to sit back and let her engineer their fortunes. She was not lazy but the months in the New York hotel had ruined her. She had acquired strange ideas and silly ambitions, all of which would cost a pretty penny to gratify. What was this chatter about owning a fur coat and a diamond ring, drawing books from the library? Better save her money and allow them to go home for their old age . . . well, age made everything different and one's people were one's people. Jules was losing his bravado and cosmopolitanism. He longed for the quiet of his native canton, the aimless chatter of old inhabitants, the security which a small annuity would bring.

But Min was for spending "pretty pennies," acquiring the fur coat and diamond ring, the American novels, for going to church suppers and lectures with lantern slides, for Jules becoming naturalized and member of a fraternal order. She wanted to rent a cottage with a parlor and a veranda, to buy furniture on the installment plan. This was America, she kept reminding him, the greatest country in the world.

Beaumont's Bakery

BY Christmas time Beaumont's bakery was a mecca for discriminating citizens in search of dainties. Nowhere else could one buy such pink frosted triangles and apple strudels or fruit wheels or *Nuremberg Lebkuchen* or savarins or Bohemian houska. Nowhere else were the crusty loaves of rye bread and fancy éclairs, Baba Rheums and Napoleons to be had. The obscure shop on Elm Street was so crowded at four of an afternoon—the time for the bread and rolls to be done—that people stood outside or walked up and down, popping their heads in the door to say:

“Don't forget me, Mrs. Beaumont—twelve sweet buns and two loaves of bread,” or “I'm waiting for my Red Riding Hood cakes. The children will be heartbroken if I come away without them.”

Behind the counter, clad in a shining white apron, her auburn hair piled carelessly atop her head, she would regretfully report that the filbert cream tartlets had been sold over an hour ago.

A boy made deliveries for them after school. The owner of the building was persuaded to rent them an adjoining room. Here they served sandwiches and coffee. So many people who waited for their orders had formed the habit of buying cakes to eat, munching them untidily over Min's spotless floor. They hired another helper for the lunch room and still another to assist Min. Jules, now in chef's costume, had a return of his former enthusiasm. Min had been right. Beaumont's bakery was considered a valuable addition to the city of Rutledge.

It was some time before Min realized that she would be treated patronizingly by Rutledge's fashionable set should she attempt to become of it. That the praises and words of good will were not American democracy but spoken in the same spirit of condescension as when a pension guest tipped for an additional service. At first Min's simple mind had estimated American life as anything but complex. America with its sparkling backgrounds, its dazzling opportunities was a place where everyone could make money and where money could buy everything. Jules and she were making some of this money. Soon they would have enough money to buy everything. As for being able to enjoy that everything—but Min had not thought this far ahead.

Socially, she might have been on equal terms with the women in her

neighborhood. But she was so busy, particularly when Jules bought a team and undertook to deliver bread throughout the city, that she had no time for her own pleasures. So she was called “that Swiss woman” and their success was something to be exclaimed over and envied. Several tried to borrow money of Jules or buy a half interest in the business. But Min waved all such offers aside. Accumulation became the Beaumont goal.

At the end of two years they bought the building they were in and moved over the shop into what was a remnant of a flat. Min selected a little furniture and repapered the rooms. There was no occasion to do more. From half past five in the morning until eight at night, she was below stairs, now in the kitchen, now in the store, now making sandwiches and boiling coffee, even doing the stable work and making the deliveries if the man had left without warning them. She scarcely looked at herself in a mirror. On Sundays they rested from sheer exhaustion. Occasionally Min slipped away for evening church but Jules lay upstairs reading newspapers and sipping his wine and grumbling about Monday’s tasks and the infamous price of help and supplies. Each Saturday Min took their savings to a bank. She was well known by the cashier.

“Well, well, baking’s a pretty fine thing, isn’t it?” he would say, as he handed back her passbook. “Got many more like you over in cuckoo land?”

Jules was content that Min tended to the financial end of the business. All he need do was bake and look in at the door when a customer insisted on thanking him personally for a particularly delectable cake. Evenings and Sundays he rested and enjoyed being waited upon by Min.

In 1893, when the World’s Fair attracted even some of their neighbors, Min proposed that they take a holiday and go to Chicago. Jules flouted any such idea. What could there be to see in Chicago after one had lived in London, Paris, Brussels? Where would their trade go—whatever was she thinking of?

“I don’t know,” Min answered. She was sitting in the one rocking chair of their living-room. As she rocked the floor creaked and the chair slipped along on the faded carpet. “I wonder what we are working so hard for—a trip home? No,” as Jules shook his head. “To be murdered in our beds? I’d like to spend something before that happens. I’d like a red carpet and a gilt framed mirror, a piano, too. I want to join a pedro club like the one Mrs. O’Toole belongs to. When she entertains them, they have prizes and a course supper. Her husband gave her a sunburst of pearls for a Christmas present and he only works in a store. Americans enjoy what they earn but we don’t . . . you’re growing thin, Jules, have you noticed it? And my hands are as rough as when I cleaned the pig stys.”

A snore rewarded her. It was Jules' most effective way of refusing to argue.

That night Min went to church. As she sat in an obscure pew listening to the music, her small, sharp eyes were watching the people, taking note of the women's clothes and manners and comparing the husbands with Jules. For almost the first time she felt a stranger in a strange land. She was out of everything—excepting the bakery. She had chosen a prominent church, several of their customers were attending the service. Either they did not see her or they did not want to see her. Only the usher and a professional greeter had made her welcome. Oh, it was one thing to be Mrs. Beaumont in a white apron and behind a baked-goods counter and it was another to attempt being one of the community. Jules had never helped in her efforts at Americanization. He could have done much had he joined a lodge or a singing society. There was the Orpheus and the Saengerbund and the Alliance Française—all jolly, wholesome organizations, in which the foreigners banded together.

In 1894 the Beaumonts bought the building next door to their bakery. Three helpers stood with Min behind counters. The lunch room had become a popular business-man's café. Jules had sent to New York for an assistant baker. But Min still wore her starched white aprons, her thick hair combed carelessly atop her head. She still rose at five-thirty and dropped into bed at half-past eight,—with a snore from Jules as a welcome. They lived in the same rooms over their first building. Beyond repairing a leak in the roof there had been no other improvements.

Min was only twenty-two; she looked thirty-two; she felt forty-two—perhaps more. She wondered if the customers ever speculated as to her age. A sense of bitterness was creeping over her. The satisfaction of their success was warped by the fact that this success had brought nothing but hard work and long hours—and snubs. What did it matter if she had enough money to buy an “electric” sealskin coat, ankle length, as was then the fashion? Where would she wear it, how would she wear it, as Mrs. O'Toole, her more happily situated but poorer neighbor had taken pains to point out? Mrs. O'Toole was past thirty but her husband took her to the theater and she wore slimsy silk dresses. She had both a front and back parlor and a gilt-banded china set. Her little girls took piano lessons and wore coral beads.

It was four years since Min had left the Beaumont pension and set off for Paris in pursuit of a silk dress, a necklace—and life. She was in America, it was true, and Jules was about to become a citizen. They had paid off most of their obligations and their bakery was the best patronized in the city. They received out-of-town orders for wedding and birthday cakes. They could have sold twice the amount of wares had they been able to produce them. But Jules insisted upon quality not quantity. Min

was beginning to think otherwise. These careless Americans would hardly notice the difference between a hand kneaded coffee cake and a machine kneaded one—if the almonds were sprinkled as lavishly and a foreign name given it. But it did not seem the time to defy Jules on such points; nor could she decide when she could defy him. Certainly not until she had a definite purpose.

That was the thing, she told herself one fragrant summer morning. The good-natured O'Tooles had gone down the river for a picnic and the German family across the street were packing to go camping. They had bargained for a supply of stale bread. Nobody cared whether Min came or went or merely stayed! She had nothing for which to work except to see the figures in that bank-book multiply; to listen to Jules' satisfied chuckle when they paid off their loans or wrote another boasting, statistical letter to the unbelieving Beaumonts in Switzerland. What did any of it amount to when it was summer and one was but twenty-two? Min felt greedy. She wanted a lot of happiness, a lot of beauty, a lot of pretty pennies!

The same unreasonable irritation and longing possessed her that had mastered her twelve years ago when she flung the bell clapper down the mountain and then, in a panic of fear, rushed to find it.

There was no bell clapper to fling away, no ruby rings lying beside it in the thick grasses. Min was "settled," as Jules reminded. This was American life and she must be forever content.

What she wanted was to see someone of her own, if not herself, enjoy the spending of what they had made, someone who had been spared the drudgery and hardship and who was neither self-conscious nor limited. She was resigned never to become one of the attractive, well-groomed persons who swept into the bakeshop and said a few gracious words and swept out again, the scent of violets lingering afterwards. Min might have more money than this sort of creature, yet she could not be like them. It was mockery—to make money only to discover that one could not make oneself as one wished to be.

Min despised herself all over again—her coarseness, her shrewdness, her undisciplined heart, her loud laugh. Some day she would have a great deal of money. Often these "old" Americans were shamelessly poor. Jules was obliged to dun them. Still, they were different, to be envied. Supposing money did buy everything—what use was it unless one knew how to understand that everything? Min was of the common people, strong and capable, with sordid aims, perhaps, and sentimental weaknesses. Oh, to be born free and slim and lovely . . . that night she cried herself to sleep.

Once Min bought a pair of white kid gloves, sixteen button length. She paid nine

dollars for them—smooth, creamy affairs. The girl offered to fit them, powdering and expanding the slim fingertips with her polished wooden stick. Min had refused, hiding her stubby red fingers. When she was alone she forced her hands into the gloves. They covered her arms, arms with large freckles, to be exact. She was oblivious to the rest of her costume. Those cool, white hands and arms lent a feeling of satisfaction. But she hurried to take them off before she should be discovered. There was never any occasion to wear them. Sometimes she was provoked at herself for spending nine dollars in such a fashion. Still, she liked to look at them, sometimes try them on, imagine herself wearing black velvet and ermine furs and silver filagree ornaments—and the gloves. She had read descriptions of such costumes.

Six months after she bought the gloves, she joined a neighborhood club. It was the sort of thing where women bring their sewing and their suspicions and spend the afternoon, punctuated with refreshments and perhaps pianoforte solos by the hostess's children. Mrs. O'Toole and Mrs. Myers, a German woman, belonged and a woman from the south and one from Newfoundland. Then there was Min, half Swiss, half English, and two Swedish girls with lovely, fair skin and braids of white-gold hair. Also a Greek woman whose husband ran a candy store. The rest were natives of Rutledge whose husbands held mediocre positions in factories or stores. But Mrs. Myers' husband and the Swedish girls' and the Greek's and Min's husband were all in business for themselves. These had more of the world's goods than the "old" Americans but they seemed to have far less pleasure in life. It was a topic for discussion among the "old" Americans, the consensus of opinion being that "the foreigners will live like dogs to save a dime. Who'd want their money if one had to do that? I guess they don't have the same feelings."

Another thing impressed Min about this cosmopolitan little group. The "old" Americans were preoccupied with their present ambitions. The foreign women spoke of the future, of what their children should do and have and be. They, themselves, were resigned to doing the frontier work which should enable these children to be considered "old" Americans—to spend what had been saved! There was a certain fortitude in the way they accepted the name of "foreigners" and were barred from the intimate neighborhood life. No matter how deep their sympathies or how keen their brains—and none of them were stupid—they were not adjudged competent to share in the "old" American life.

"They look at things so differently," Min had overheard Mrs. O'Toole saying. "Working day and night and living off scraps. The awful clothes they wear—why, that Greek woman wears a shawl except on Sundays and her husband is worth thirty thousand. I don't care how nice they seem, they aren't our sort. Poor things, I

suppose it seems heaven after what they left in Europe. Of course, their children ——” a hopeful note in her thin voice.

Min went to no more of the meetings. She felt humiliated, her English blood insulted. That this O’Toole person dared to say that she did not understand when all the time she was intelligently acknowledging her limitations. So did the others—even the Greek woman who had beautiful twin daughters in a convent school.

“My girls be all right in America—hey?” she would ask Min eagerly.

In the old world these foreigners had had certain set standards and social boundaries. Competition was unknown, so was ambition. In America they found themselves without a class background. The result was a sense of inferiority, discomfort, one did not know just what to do or where to go. Of necessity material gain became the paramount issue. The O’Tooles and their ilk had class backgrounds, lending a sense of security. They knew certain people intimately, were at ease in certain theaters and stores. Life was lived within these boundaries while they enjoyed gossiping and speculating about everyone outside of them. Above the O’Toole faction were petty tradespeople, civic employees, stenographers and school-teachers. Then came more important merchants, bankers, lawyers, and doctors. There were any number of boundary lines in Rutledge. There were the so-called aristocrats, possessors of the “quiet” wealth. Even among them the Merediths and the Tuckers and the McCrays were subservient to the Grants and the Duff-Porters. So it went. But everyone bought Beaumont’s baked goods, Min would remind herself, after puzzling over this situation. As she had told Jules, they all had stomachs.

These “old” Americans regarded the foreigners as unimportant rabble, someone to do the hard tasks and make the “old” Americans more comfortable. Out of this rabble would come many police court cases, a few successes, an occasional genius. America was so young and virile that it had plenty of room for the rabble. What did their presence matter? Poor things, they were not to be blamed for wanting to leave the old countries.

Min was not missed from the neighborhood club. She had made an unfavorable impression the afternoon she entertained. Wearied of pastries and cakes, she had served but sandwiches and coffee whereas the club members had anticipated nothing less than a banquet at “that Swiss woman’s.”

Moreover, Min was not satisfied with the social strata that the club typified. She had become absorbed with dreams of her children’s future—a future which should be shared with the Grants and the Duff-Porters . . . if Jules and herself had been detained on Ellis Island, her children should be entertained on Long Island. This

summarized Min's ambition, proved how well she understood. For now she could afford to be snubbed and overworked. She was still young and dauntless and her mother's blood ran full in her veins.

Gloria

IN 1895 Jules Beaumont had a heart attack which kept him in bed for three months. Min saw her opportunity and grasped it. When Jules came below stairs he found machines mixing his dough and new helpers daring to tamper economically with his sacred recipes. The money box held more profits but Jules' reign had ended.

Min was more domineering than ever—still looking thirty-odd and feeling forty-odd at heart.

“Where would your business have been but for me?” she scolded at his protests. “Why should I run upstairs to tell you everything I do? I had to run up and down enough taking care of you. No nurse would come to such a place as ours, the doctor said as much. Of course I bought machines and hired extra help when I saw it was to our advantage. We have made twice as much as when you pattered around—yes, pattered around,” she flung back at him. “And we’re going to go on this way. It’s the Yankee way of doing things. The men at the bank said so. I’ve leased the ground floor of the new Grant Building and taken an option to buy it, as well. I’m going to have the girls in the new tea room (it *is* a tea room, mon mari) wear black dresses and ruffled aprons and caps and a woman is going to paint peacocks and vines on the walls. Well, it is my business how much she will charge. I’m to have canary birds in wicker cages and a big music box. Oh, but we’ll get it back on the price of tea, *stupide*,” as Jules broke into argument.

“We are ruined—you fool of a wife,” he screamed back at her. “Only millionaires lease in the Grant Building. How much can you charge for a cup of tea—a hundred francs? Peacocks on the wall! Mon dieu—” and his heart trouble threatened to begin again.

“I am to have a child in September,” finished Min as if he had not spoken.

She spoke in such a reverent voice that Jules could not remain unimpressed.

“So,” he said softly, “another mouth to feed—yet you lease in the Grant Building and plan on peacocks for the wall decorations! May it be a son to help me in my old age—and against your mad plans.”

Min did not attempt to share her hopes. She alone believed that this child, boy or girl, was to enjoy everything which the Beaumont money could buy. This child was the answer to her restless longing for self-expression, her disappointment in personal achievement. This child was to be born free and sheltered and adored—to

be given everything the Beaumonts could earn. In America's mushroom soil, the Beaumont bakery would be forgotten in the greater light of the child's education and new environment. How many of these Rutledge aristocrats but whose parents had been in trade?

That her child might have its own preferences or even abilities never once occurred to Min. It was to be hers—a sense of supreme possession completed the self-hypnosis. Her future power in dictating her child's future helped her to endure the monotonous months when Jules grumbled because she bought nursery furniture and fine, white baby clothes, refusing to take her turn at the machines when the help was away. Jules resented the coming of this child; Min revered it. To its advent she gave the same fervor that she would have given to a new creed.

She planned to move into a house on the west side, a house with double-parlors and a veranda and a stable. She would make Jules pay for the proper furnishings. She would stay away from the bakery except for the Saturday rush so that she might take proper care of her child. She would join another club and they must have a buggy for pleasure drives. Her full, red mouth would curl upwards in that glad grin as she thought of all this and she would go to the best department store and buy filmy white slips or a corded silk bonnet edged with swansdown. She would return to stand behind the bakery counter, making change and taking orders. No one suspected that she was miles away from the little shop with its hungry customers—millions of miles away. She was standing in an imaginary drawing-room while her beautiful daughter was acclaimed the belle of the evening or in the front pew of a fashionable cathedral while her handsome son preached to his adoring congregation or in an opera box while her prima donna child made a successful début. She, Min Beaumont, mother of these matchless creatures——

“I wanted the bread with caraway seeds, please,” some flat voice would interrupt.

“Have you any more Poor Man's Cake left?”

Scornfully and only momentarily Min would descend to reality.

Min's child was not born easily as the doctor had expected of this broad-hipped young woman but after hours of agony and doubt as to her surviving. It proved a delicate, tiny girl with a fluff of fair hair and blindish blue eyes blinking solemnly upon the room of curious neighbors. It was the sort of child a woman like Min never has, thought the Doctor, the kind of newborn creature that arrived in the big houses on the avenue, suggestive of being carried on down pillows and dressed in gossamer slips and family lace shawls, being overly burdened with godparents and silver mugs and bank accounts . . . the Beaumont setting was anything but correct.

The doctor told Jules that his wife never must have another child. She must rest for a long time before going back into the shop.

“You must think of her before you do your customers,” he emphasized, for he had not been overly impressed with Jules’ tenderness during the confinement. “As for the child, she is all right. Probably she will grow into a great, strong woman—you wanted a son? Well, most of us get what we don’t want. Remember, Mrs. Beaumont must rest for a long time.”

Min had heard everything they said although she pretended to sleep. She was eager to be alone with her treasure, dreaming without interruption. She wished the neighbors to go away and the old woman, who was half nurse and half housekeeper, to start making broth. Then she could smile at this flaxen-haired doll and wonder what she should be named. She must find some superb, effective title. Perhaps Pearl or Rosita—there was Marcella, after the leading woman of the local stock company, an institution which Min infrequently enjoyed. Or Corinne or Muriel—Regina was a name she almost decided in favor of but was swayed by recalling the heroine of a recent novel whose fortunes she had followed with unflagging interest. The name of that beautiful and persecuted creature had been Gloria. Gloria! Mentally Min pronounced it several times. It had a satisfying effect. Gloria Beaumont! Min had found her religion. The relationship of parent and child never was to be established; it was to be adoring and adored.

The First Promise

WHEN Gloria was nine years old and owned no less than four party frocks, two necklaces, white furs and a Newfoundland dog which she harnessed to a cart and drove ruthlessly over everyone's front lawn—Jules Beaumont died in his sleep. The heart lesion must have been more serious than anyone expected.

Gloria did not mourn for her father since they had never been permitted to become intimate. He almost always stayed away at the bakeries. (There were seven Beaumont bakeries now, located in seven corners of the growing city. Bright yellow wagons with Beaumont's Baked Goods Can't Be Beat painted on them rattled and clattered all over the township.) Her mother stayed at home, an ornate, old-fashioned house, its rooms crowded with ornate, new-fashioned things. Gloria attended a select school where she was noted for the endless supply of "tarts and tantrums." At the teachers' conferences she was referred to as "the pattycake princess."

Her father's death merely meant that the small, rather subdued man would not whisper, "What did this cost?" whenever Min purchased something for the house. He would no longer mend her dogcart harness, or say, "tch-tch" under his breath when she flew into a tantrum, her mother offering bribes for an amiable termination of the same. He would no longer ride her on his stooped back or bring her gingerbread figures or play the old music box which had been shunted into a spare room.

As for her mother and herself it meant that she wore black hair ribbons and her mother long veils which made her face less florid. The parlor curtains were drawn low and men came to talk of estates and trust funds. Because she could not attend the Punch-and-Judy show the day following the funeral, her mother bought a beautiful doll that walked and talked and had twelve dresses packed in a miniature wardrobe trunk.

Soon they went to a Rutledge hotel. The Newfoundland dog was kept below stairs and more strangers came to see her mother while the yellow delivery wagons raced by their windows every hour.

"Those are ours," she said one afternoon, pointing at one.

"Ours," agreed Min absent-mindedly, looking up from her desk. She seemed forever figuring these days. Too busy to offer bribes, there was no inducement for

Gloria to fly into tantrums.

“Come here,” commanded Min a little later.

Gloria obeyed, her graceful little head tilted on one side like a bird inspecting some new tidbit.

“Would you like to live in a new and beautiful house on Blaine Avenue?” began her mother somewhat nervously.

Blaine Avenue was the most fashionable street in Rutledge. Its houses were built in defiance to the antiquated and inconvenient mansions on Deering Avenue. Several of Gloria’s classmates lived on Blaine Avenue.

“I should like to go there now,” she said promptly.

“First we must build a house,” her mother explained. “I have a corner lot and the man is coming to-day with plans. I guess people will admit that it is as handsome a house as there is on the street—three bathrooms and a conservatory and a library,” tossing her head.

“When will it be ready?” her daughter demanded, bored with details.

“Not for many months. While we are waiting we will go to New York and then to the mountains for all summer. You have never been to the mountains. There will be a hotel with playgrounds and ponies. We’ll—we’ll be ready for the new house by the time we come back.”

“When will we start?” directness was one of Gloria’s outstanding traits.

“Soon,” Min drew the child into her arms. “Mother has sold part of the bakeries to a big firm in New York. They want to start a great many other bakeries——”

“With our name on the yellow wagons?” stipulated Gloria.

“Of course,” Gloria did not understand the regret in Min’s voice. “It is the name for which they will pay!”

“I always can have gingerbread dolls and cakes with my name on them?”

“Thousands of them; we will have a great deal more money and no more hard work.”

“Why didn’t father sell?” Gloria’s blue eyes looked straight into Min’s.

“He didn’t understand,” Min answered briefly, memories of recent arguments crossing her mind. “But we will be happy about it, won’t we, Gloria?” hugging the child closer. “You and I—in the new house.”

“Can we take Major to New York?” Gloria interrupted. Major was the Newfoundland dog who howled in the trunk room these days.

“I don’t see how,” began Min, “but we’ll buy a cunning white poodle—a soft, silky thing and he can be with you all summer——”

“I want the Major,” demanded Gloria, freeing herself from her mother’s arms.

“But Major is too big. He can go board somewhere——”

“I want the Major. Not a poodle. I want to go back to our old house. I don’t want men to own part of our yellow wagons——”

“You’re a dear silly who does not understand,” Min slurred over the question as to Major’s destiny. “You’ll thank me the rest of your life for doing as I am——”

“Who will be our new friends?” asked Gloria with unexpected shrewdness, “when we live on Blaine Avenue?”

“Blaine Avenue friends,” was her mother’s fond response.

“I’d rather have old friends and the Major,” she protested.

“You may have all the toys you want and a tricycle, too.” Min’s face was flushed with enthusiasm. She had sold at a figure which Jules would have thought impossible and had retained enough common stock to make her presence at a director’s meeting count for something. It was inconsequential that the bakeries were to become the tools of a gigantic syndicate which produced inferior goods at superior prices. Beaumont’s bakeries had won an enviable reputation. Such a name meant much—and Jules was dead. Min was glad to have finished with the deal. She was eager to leave Rutledge for a few months. Plenty of persons in New York could teach her how to dress and what to say and a summer at the mountain resort would supply valuable suggestions as to living on Blaine Avenue.

“You are a fortunate child,” she answered Gloria’s pleas for taking the Major to New York. “You have everything you want and mama never says no, does she? Mama never had things like you have. She was poor and ugly and nobody loved her. She worked hard all day. When she was no older than you, she scrubbed out pig stys and picked feathers from dead fowls and carried cheeses on a wooden board strapped onto her head and sold them from door to door. If she lost ten centimes or broke a dish or spotted her dress, she was beaten.” Min enjoyed contrasting her own and Gloria’s backgrounds. So did Gloria.

“Tell some more,” Gloria would say, “tell about the time Aunt Marguerite was going to whip you for throwing away the bell clapper but you found a ruby ring and so nothing happened.”

“Nothing happened,” Min would echo. “You see, money makes everything different. If it had been a flower I had found, I’d have been whipped until the blood ran. But it was a ruby ring,” her mouth curving into a scornful smile. “That is what money can save one from——”

No one knew of this sort of dialogues. Had they known, no one could have pointed out their folly. But such conversations had been frequent ever since Gloria remembered. In her childish way she realized that she was a creature favored before

all creatures. Because of her mother's hardships, she was spared everything. Her mother's life sounded more intriguing than her own existence of "tarts and tantrums." As an individual she rather disapproved of her mother. As a parent she was loyal to her. There was something harsh and greedy about Min which disappointed and angered Gloria—some queer, slightly abnormal thing about her brain, or perhaps her heart, that made her different from the other mothers. She was forever harping upon one theme: Gloria had everything and she had had nothing. Gloria agreed that this was justice yet she wearied of the repetition.

This afternoon in the hotel sitting-room, the same idea returned to her. The new house, the trip to the mountains, the sale of part of their bakeries—it was due to her mother's strange greed. The old-fashioned house on Oak Street seemed preferable, so did the pleasant neighbors and Ellen Ann, the "hired girl." Gloria longed to return to them. To hide in the umbrella jar and cry, "Boo-who is who?" when her father came in. She wanted a ride on his stooping back with the barking Major walking in between his legs and upsetting things in a jolly fashion. She wanted——

A knock at the door brought matters to a crisis. A bell boy brought the news that Major, breaking from his rope, had dashed into the courtyard only to be killed by an incoming team. The manager was most sorry but assumed no responsibility. Mrs. Beaumont would please remember that he had not wanted the dog at the hotel.

Mrs. Beaumont remembered. She dismissed the bell boy and devoted herself to Gloria. Surely a poodle—two poodles, perhaps—would prove sufficient consolation.

"Major is in dog heaven," she informed her child. "Of course there is a dog heaven—well, mama knows about those things. Mama could not have taken him to New York. But she'll have him buried at Gardenville and buy a tombstone with his name carved on it. You can fix flowers in a little vase—just like they do for people. Gloria, don't stiffen and scream like that—whatever will people think? But you must care what people think—yes, even if you have lots of money. They're apt to think just that much more! Besides, screaming won't bring Major alive . . . maybe Major is with your father—well, dog heaven and people heaven may be near each other . . . mama hopes so . . . Gloria, if you don't stop screaming I'm going to be cross . . . when I was a little girl, my pet rabbit was eaten for dinner, yes, he was and when I wouldn't take part of him, they wouldn't let me have anything else. That was the way little girls were treated in my time . . . Gloria, stop screaming about that foolish old beast——"

"You can't buy him alive," accused Gloria. "I don't want a poodle . . . I want Major. Why does it hurt inside?" her hand against her heart. "Why can't you make it

stop?”

“It’s grief,” admitted Min in unwilling defeat.

“Then promise I’ll never have any more grief,” screamed the patty cake princess.

“I promise,” was Min’s glib answer.

Gloria Entertains

EVEN in Rutledge the days of decorous dancing, when musicians were not seen but heard, had ended by 1917. Canteen hostesses joined hands with débutantes in according privates the attention due major generals.

Finishing the last trot of an all-night romp given for some transient regiment, Gloria Beaumont whispered the word to a chosen few that breakfast waited at the Beaumont home. She was growing faint and wan for her coffee and waffles.

Ignoring the embryo heroes, who had endured patronage and petting as they were prepared to endure the trenches, there stole from the community hall four young things and Jerry Fisher. Jerry played around so beautifully that he felt righteous indignation when contemporaries asked him to stag dinners.

The first to tumble into Gloria's car was Enid Sayre, distant cousin and official toady for Miss Agnes Duff-Porter, known to her intimates as Duffy. Enid was one of those who asked a little extra of life with the hope that some day she might get it. She was tall and classical featured with shining green eyes and dull brown hair wound around her head in quaint braids. There was something impressive about Enid until she began to speak. Following came Jerry Fisher, slightly egg-shaped of figure and mottled of face, pompous and gray haired. Gloria often fancied that his protruding yellow teeth were not unlike fangs. Pushing Jerry with the end of her swagger stick was Dodo Grant, her closely cut black head nodding vivaciously as she gave orders as to the seating. Dodo's was the vitality of the Murillo type, dark, inscrutable eyes and a sallow, healthy skin. She stood out among a thousand of young things—the boyish, athletic type that could wear untrimmed hats pushed far back on her clipped head and say timely, clever things whenever conversation lagged. It seemed natural for Dodo to smoke incessantly and wear knickers for walking. One thought of her as a sexless, delightful comrade whose main interests were golf and dogs and social settlement work. No one remarked at Dodo's appearing at a dance in a severe white frock and upon all other occasions in mannish tailleurs and swashbuckling neckties centered by a sparkling cock made of diamonds. No one anticipated the day when Dodo Grant would marry and no one could have been persuaded that she was other than sincere and original, her prejudices as strong as her loves, even the minor ones, including a loathing for parsnips and men who read poetry.

Behind Dodo was her brother. Officially, he was Theodore Ainslie Grant, an assistant city bacteriologist. Unofficially, partly for abbreviation's sake, he was Tag—and almost always “it.” In his arms was Gloria Beaumont. He carried her as easily as Gloria's mother carried flour sacks in the old days. Six foot one and ugly in a fascinating way, Tag presented a striking contrast both to Dodo and to Gloria. He was thin, almost scrawny, freckled of face and sandy of hair. His honest, gray eyes were magnified by thick glasses and his nose was hopelessly too long while the firmness of his chin was offset by an annoying dimple. Tag was untidy even in formal dress, a characteristic and not intentional untidiness.

Gloria cuddled in his arms as she always cuddled whenever there was an opportunity. Tolerant scorn was in Dodo's eyes as Tag set her future sister-in-law at the wheel, wrapping a silver cape about her shoulders.

“Let's go,” he ordered, placing himself beside her.

The car started with a jerk that sent Enid and Dodo and Jerry tumbling against each other.

“One too many Manhattans,” they called out.

“One too few—let's give four cheers that the night is spent,” Gloria was driving recklessly through the dawn-tinted streets. “I drew nothing but dumb-bells. The one high spot of the evening was the pacifist we sneaked off to hear.”

“She ought to be reported,” Jerry began briskly. “Who is she? Some Slav taking an American name? This country has admitted every undesirable that wanted to come. Now, when we've ideals to defend, we must expect that they'll welch. I'd like to report—”

“You wouldn't dare,” Gloria turned to beam at him. “You were my guest. I dug up the excitement for you. Then, too, you'd have had to go to police headquarters and would have missed my breakfast—mere patriotism is not worth it.”

“Oh, she's the screaming, soap box type—harmless,” Jerry defended, “but it's the principle.”

“Cut it,” ordered Dodo. “You enjoyed the lark and you'd be a rotter to squeal. I thought her anything but harmless. Didn't you, Gloria?”

“Y-yes,” Gloria was thoughtful. “But she didn't give me a single new idea. I hate going places unless I come away with something new to think about, if it's only a hat.” She slowed up before an imposing house on the corner of Blaine Avenue.

Another ten minutes and they were around the breakfast table, calling for coffee and ham and eggs. Min Beaumont, portly of figure, all flaming, marcelled hair, pink negligée and diamonds—rather a theatrical horror—had welcomed them and been unofficially dismissed.

“Nobody’s spiffed, mama, so you can run back to bed,” her daughter ordered in her sweet, imperious way.

“Have a good time, children, the house is yours—I guess you know that when Gloria has a party, everyone has a good time,” had been Min’s response.

Later the subject of the pacifist meeting was renewed. It had been Gloria’s notion of a bat when she heard that a Mrs. Angiette Vaughn was to speak against war and the present government in an east side hall.

“The name sounds like a Pullman car but it might be fun,” she reported. “Let’s look in. I’m fed up on saluting the colors and selling things for French orphans.”

For all of an hour they endured the stuffy hall crowded with fanatics and listened to Mrs. Angiette Vaughn advocate the downfall of government and the uplift of herself.

“I believe in her theories,” Tag insisted, before devouring his ham and eggs. “Only theories are never practical.”

“Scrap heap ’em,” flung in Dodo.

“Don’t you believe in war?” giggled Enid. “Isn’t it fortunate that your poor eyes bar you? You’d be interned if you had a commission and then said such a thing.”

“I think we must fight in this war. It is war, per se, that I decry.”

“Nonsense—Tag’s such a pacifist,” explained Gloria, “that he’d train his dog to hunt mushrooms instead of rabbits. I adore war: cannons, submarines, air raids, murder and sudden death! I’m heartbroken because Tag can’t go. They can’t stage the thing too fiercely to please me. This war is just what I want, even if it sounds selfish. I’m enjoying it ever so much.”

“We’re upstage,” said Dodo sensibly. “What do we know about war—or peace? What does smug Rutledge know of it, for that matter?”

“Hear, hear,” cried Tag.

“We youngsters have a slovenly manner of thought,” Dodo continued. “Or rather we don’t know how to think. Gloria wants to make a party out of a world tragedy. But I don’t think she ever has known just what she wanted.”

“I do, too—Tag,” cried out Gloria.

“But you’ve always had me,” reminded Tag.

“Have I? Oh, of course. Then it’s How Cum, the adorable Chow at the Waverly kennels. How Cum is what I must have . . . and just a sliver of bacon, Jerry, please.”

“I wonder if any of us will choose to go off at the deep end. You can either wade out until you’re obliged to swim or else dive off ker-plunk and swim instanter. Funny idea, perhaps—but it seems to me that most of us stay at the shallow end these days, paddling like kids. I wonder if something won’t shove some of us off at the

deep end, whether or no.”

“Oh, applesauce——”

“Don’t be a plumber——”

“You’re as useful as the cat’s spare time——”

“Snap out of it, Tag. Just because you are going to marry Gloria doesn’t mean we can take you seriously. She doesn’t!”

“If you talk that way,” Gloria warned, “we will be Ships That Pass in the Night. I can’t endure anyone with principles, Tag. I adore people with pasts—and even with a philosophy. But never principles. They’re wearying. Do you know what you sound like whenever you try to preach? As if Uncle Remus and Bunyan had collaborated. Oh, but you do—half hi-brow and half nonsense and quite Tagesque . . . I’ll have some more jam, please. It’s rather late. I’m beginning to wish I hadn’t asked any of you. I want Tag to take you home and then come back and let me warn him what will happen if he tries to have me jump off at the deep end . . . Enid, I love your dress. Where did our Duffy get that hat she sported yesterday? The smashed-in affair with a large, surprised bird crouching on its rim? And were you helpless to prevent her wearing her sapphires on the toes of satin slippers? Or do you really consider it shows individuality? Forgive me, Tag, but she’s going to be my Aunt Duffy, too. I’m afraid I can’t regard her as a legend like the rest of you pretend to do . . . I think Bagatelle House is an awful sell——”

“I thought you were a blonde with a brunette disposition,” cut in Dodo effectively, her severe, white frock with its high collar giving her the appearance of a Carmelite novice. “Have I overestimated?”

“But Duffy is absurd,” Gloria protested. “What is the use of coming to the breakfast table if you can’t talk about the absent members of the family? Besides, Duffy objects to my calling her Pekinese a Pekinese.”

“What is it, pray tell?” demanded Jerry, enjoying himself no end.

“It is a living ornament,” Gloria chanted solemnly, her eyes bright with mischief. “It has the soul of an oriental for it neither forgets nor forgives. That is what she claims for Foo Wee, doesn’t she, Enid? Enid has to stand by and say, ‘Yes, Duffy, you’re quite right’ at intervals. Wait until How Cum mistakes Foo Wee for an unoccupied toupee! I’m afraid I can’t overlook the fact that Duffy is responsible for Tag’s being a bacteriologist. The only rival I could name would be some rare germ. Children, I appeal to you—ought Tag to be a bacteriologist? Ought he devote his life to the fleas’ ductless glands instead of me? I really need him—down at the shallow end. Is it fair that he spends months discovering that scarlet fever germs are never at the same house party with cholera germs and that the soul of a measles is not worth

saving?”

“I said cut it,” ordered Dodo, “and adjourn. We’ve all got to show at the canteen bridge this afternoon. All in favor of a cold shower, four hours sleep and a nip of Scotch say ay—”

Enid rose from the table and posed herself effectively against the red draperies. “Oh, Gloria, you are such an amazing person,” she purred, “do you remember what they called you at school—the pattycake princess?”

“You’re such a press agent,” retorted Gloria as she finished a square of toast with a topknot of jam. “What you mean to say is that I’m heir to the Beaumont money, the Beaumonts being a ‘sturdy, limited peasant pair who made a fortune out of flour while we lost ours in a foundry.’ That was the way Duffy sized it up when my engagement was announced. Oh, but I listened. I’m always underbred if there is anything interesting in the air. Besides having the money, I’m neither crosseyed nor humpedback and mama obeys me far better than How Cum ever will. Lastly, I’m to marry Tag and become one of the sacred and inner circle of Rutledge’s royal family. And because this is America no one can prevent its happening.”

Gloria had risen from her chair in her quick, graceful way. There was something vivid about her personality in spite of her baby-doll features—the short, tilted nose with its sprinkle of faintish freckles, the petulant, cupid’s-bow mouth, the rounded chin with a one-sided dimple that showed whenever she wore a one-sided smile and eyebrows like tiny golden feathers, one placed a trifle higher than the other: her “ladylike” eyebrow and her “roughneck” eyebrow as she called them. Her vividness was not unlike a flame, now burning steadily, now flickering low only to burst into a brilliant flare.

At this particular time she was like an exquisite figurine in her dress of brocaded cream satin made after the fashion of a Russian bridal costume with long, tight sleeves and high neck line. A head dress of pearl beads was woven in and out of the waves of yellow hair and her deep sea blue eyes fringed with heavy golden lashes glanced coquettishly at Tag as she spoke.

But Enid had her revenge. Pushing aside the draperies which led into a back hall, she revealed the vanishing of a pink negligée. It was Min Beaumont who had been crouching, as was her custom, outside the scene of her daughter’s social triumphs. If Min was ordered off stage, she considered it her privilege to return as a silent watcher. There was something soul satisfying in seeing Gloria as the ringleader of action.

“That’s the worst of entertaining clever people,” Gloria said easily as the others rose to go, ignoring the incident. “The cook is trying to write scenarios and she is on

a still hunt for copy.”

“How charming! To have the cook in flamingo taffeta, typical of her boiled state of mind, I presume . . . ’bye, lamb, thank you for a marvelous party.”

Gloria stood in the doorway as Tag drove her car away, a flutter of hands waving at her from the windows. Then she turned back and a firmer, less flippant expression came into her face. Smothering a yawn she started towards her mother’s room to “report in.”

On the threshold she paused. Min was taking a last of forty winks nap. She lay at one side of her ornate walnut and gilt bed, a plump, red hand clutching the lace coverlet.

Gloria was not sorry to have found her so. She glanced about the room, a garish place in spite of the interior decorators and Gloria’s tyranny. On the desk was a pile of envelopes ready for the foreign post. Gloria knew what each contained—a sheet of monogrammed, violet shaded paper with a few effusive words and a great many “Glorias” in Min’s round hand. Underneath the signature or beside the monogram was pasted the newspaper announcement which was causing Rutledge to murmur:

“I wonder how Agnes Duff-Porter is taking it?”

Grant—Beaumont

Mrs. Jules Auguste Beaumont of Blaine Avenue announces the engagement of her daughter, Gloria, to Mr. Theodore Ainslie Grant, nephew of Miss Agnes Duff-Porter of Bagatelle House. The marriage will be solemnized the first week in June.

Tag Surrenders

GLORIA glanced back at her sleeping mother. "She had so set her heart on my winning a title! Only I up and chose Tag. It might have been someone in Madagascar for all I could help it. And because Tag's family arrived a hundred and fifty years ago, Tag is a gentleman and I am fresh from the Beaumont ovens."

The idea amused her for she gave a little laugh which caused Min to display symptoms of wakening. In alarm Gloria fled. She would wait downstairs for Tag's return. They must have it out this morning. Her "roughneck" eyebrow came into prominence as she prepared for battle. She slipped into the drawing-room, a tasteful affair in lime yellow with old French pieces of furniture and the light cleverly subdued by thin silk curtains. Above the mantel was Gloria's portrait as a painting by Velásquez. Min had sent for a New York artist the winter Gloria came out.

When Agnes Duff-Porter had viewed the result, she had murmured to Enid: "I have it. Min Beaumont is like an alarm clock suddenly come into money and buying itself a cathedral chime!"

It was too pertinent a remark not to make the round of the Rutledge tea tables and, in time, reach Gloria's ears. For once she had no retort. Something about Duffy's white-haired, golden-eyed self caused Gloria to feel "all shiny new"—a Christmas tree in contrast with a stained-glass window.

Lounging on a floor cushion before the remains of the open fire, Gloria glanced up at her portrait as she analyzed the situation. First, Tag must realize that she would have her own way. Under Gloria's domination Tag's future was assured. That Tag should remain under the sway of an eccentric aunt who had paid his University tuition and retained him as a favored vassal during vacations was not to Gloria's liking. She was intolerant of the pauper gentility in the famous Bagatelle House, that hidden curious pile of stone with winding, criss-crossed paths leading from the main road in every direction but that of the front door. She did not understand the mind state which preferred shabby rugs and old books and grim ancestors looking down from panelled walls rather than a smart apartment with a great deal of "shiny newness." She did not believe in considering servants as pensioners if it meant not having a car any more than to forego the season's wardrobe in order to afford surgery for century old elms. There was something deadly stupid about Duffy's scheme of life—and something worse than stupid in the way Rutledge revered

her scheme. If Duffy nodded her imperious white head, Rutledge accepted the nod as final. Whatever she smiled upon flourished like a bay tree; whatever she decried was hopeless from the outset.

Rumors as to the extent of Duffy's fortune were many. Some held that she was husbanding her resources in order to leave Bagatelle House as an art museum upon her death; others that she was scarcely able to pay taxes, that there was reason for her wearing out-of-date clothes, serving codfish and gingerbread for luncheon (but off family plate) and of shopping at the public market with her familiar Normandy basket to carry home the spoils.

Then Duffy would sail for France—and more rumors would be abroad about her owning a block on lower Broadway. Upon her return would follow mysterious packing cases containing rare art treasures. These were set up in the great drawing-rooms of Bagatelle House. For fifteen years these rooms had been thrown open to a selected public once a month. Wisely, Duffy knew that what human nature could not easily obtain, it both craved and respected. Never did she break the rule of allowing her drawing-rooms to be visited by tardy strangers, however distinguished or appreciative. On the first Tuesday of each month, they would be welcome—from three until five. All other times the doors of the old house were discreetly guarded. There was one Gothic room which the public never entered. It was said to contain cathedral stalls from an archbishop's chapel, paintings on silk by old masters and brasses and hammered silver of almost forgotten dates. An enticing hidden courtyard was built next to this Gothic room. While snow and wind beat against the outer walls, a fig tree and an acacia bloomed within and a Spanish fountain with a lazy, musical drip punctuated the worthwhile conversations of its mistress and her chosen friends.

The entire Grant family must have been queer, Gloria decided upon recalling Tag's futile effort to obtain a private view of this Gothic room for her.

"Duffy says no," he had been obliged to report. "You see, she doesn't know we are going to be married. Then it will be quite different."

"But you have the key," Gloria had insisted. "You have been caretaker and janitor for years. Why can't I just peek in? She is in bed with her bad knee."

"My word, she'd hear us walking if she was on the Sahara—walking across the doorstep," Tag answered. "I'd as soon think of using her lace shawls as fish nets. Part of her is in this room; it never leaves it. Odd sounding stuff, I know—but it's Duffy's way of self-expression. Awfully sorry, Gloria, but you must wait."

Her cupid's-bow mouth set in a hard line as she remembered this refusal. All the Grant family were queer, she repeated, lighting another cigarette. What had Tag's

father been but a retired rake, the spendthrift son of a wealthy father, married to young Laura Duff-Porter and pleasantly invalidated at Bagatelle House until his death? Here he pattered over unimportant correspondence, drummed harmoniously on the ancient piano, played chess with Duffy. To go further back, thought Gloria, the Duff-Porters were queer. Their parents had been the largest holders of government securities in the country, yet these girls had been given but ten cents a week for allowance and made to wear bargain straw hats at midwinter. Despite such economies the government securities had dwindled although in time Agnes Duff-Porter reigned over the famous Bagatelle House with all its treasures while her little sister had married Theodore Ainslie Grant in an attempt to deprive him of his vices. Whatever she had not been able to reform or understand about this attractive man, she forgave. When it proved an increasingly difficult task, she never complained. She preferred to die and have a memorial window "to my beloved wife, Laura Duff-Porter Grant" placed in old Saint Peter's church.

When Dodo was fifteen and Tag thirteen their father died. Duffy arranged for a companion memorial window to "Theodore Ainslie Grant, husband of Laura Duff-Porter Grant" and secretly regretted that she never had told her brother-in-law her unexpurgated opinion of him. In time Dodo took a course or so in social service work while Tag plodded through a scientific course. Duffy insisted upon a great future for Tag, a future in which Gloria was not included.

Then there was Enid—Gloria paused in her summary, thinking she heard Tag's footsteps. She was glad it was not he, for she wanted to review the situation as clearly as one could after an all-night romp and an early breakfast party.

Enid Sayre, that third cousin of the Duff-Porters, an orphaned, arrogant snob who preferred to play court jester or masseuse as the occasion demanded, submerging her individuality but living at Bagatelle House with its treasures and traditions. To be known as Duffy's companion eating codfish and gingerbread off the family plate, mingling with Rutledge's sacred and inner circle—such was the life Enid selected. It had seemed duty that Duffy accept this tall, pale-faced girl who always agreed with one and seemed eager to do the things everyone else refused to attempt.

With the selfishness of such women as Duffy, Enid's tasks increased and her pleasures lessened. Between Enid and Dodo was an unspoken agreement to "be decent to each other but keep hands off." Since Dodo's interests lay in other directions, Duffy came to rely upon this remote cousin. She gave her old clothes and free tickets and social privileges. Once she took her to Europe. Once she was angry for some complicated reason and tried to find her a situation as governess only to discover herself begging Enid to return to Bagatelle House. It was not only the

matter of the spring cleaning—at which time Dodo grubbed in the garden and Duffy visited friends in Charleston—a subtle tie had been formed. Duffy was dependent upon this ingratiating, omnipresent creature. The day Enid returned to Bagatelle House Duffy gave her a garnet necklace and asked her to tea in the hidden courtyard to meet Paul de Chavannes, an artist.

“Duffy reminds me of marble cake,” Dodo once remarked. “There is a wiggly, dark streak through her white part. She can do the bulliest sort of things but without warning turn unfair.”

Dodo was right. Perhaps Duffy was a trifle more human than most persons. Certain it was that with her tenderness and vision was that inconsistent, disappointing “dark streak.” If a friend gave offense she never forgave. If a stranger needed help Duffy provided it. Rather than face her sarcasm one preferred to be called a coward. While she presented a painting to the municipal art gallery with one hand, she berated Enid for burning a thirty-watt light in a dim hall on a rainy afternoon. Her sense of humor was a rare treat but her sense of superiority something well nigh intolerable. Duffy never failed one in a crisis—but in everyday life she was a hard task mistress.

“They will hate me,” said Gloria aloud, “Duffy and Dodo and Enid—blow them! I don’t care—do you hear me, Senorita?” glancing up at her portrait with a spirited toss of her head. “I don’t mind because—Tag—is—mine!”

Gloria could not comprehend the economies which Tag’s sort practiced. She resented the fact that despite dyed gowns and mended glove tips women like Duffy were welcomed where Gloria in Parisian creations was not. That Duffy sold a stamp collection to obtain the needed sum for re-shingling Bagatelle House and boasted of it in the light of an achievement—this seemed poor taste. One must conceal poverty, so Gloria had been taught. Not poverty of ideas nor breeding but of material possessions. When Tag said, “I can’t afford it,” or Duffy remarked that her coal bill was still unpaid because she bought a collection of porcelains to help out an artist friend—Gloria accused Tag’s world of being “threadbare snobs just waiting to be auctioned off.” Duffy and Enid did fine washing such as laces and gloves—and then took tea with a countess. Duffy was expert at selecting the cheaper cuts of meat and serving them on her silver platters. Dodo sold some jewelry in order to rent a saddle horse. Distinguished guests always remained at Bagatelle House far beyond their schedule. These inconsistencies both disturbed and displeased.

“Why don’t you all go to work?” Gloria would insist. “Instead of sitting around hugging remnants of past glories, afraid to earn new ones. It is easy to earn money these days—oh, positively! Who cares whether Bagatelle stables once had the finest

mares Kentucky ever bred or your mother's wedding veil cost over a thousand dollars? What good does it do you *now*? I call it dishonest to try to keep things one cannot afford; and try to crowd out the people who can afford them. But we win in the end, as you'll see. I suppose you call it 'the moneyed mob's rushing in' and so on. When your aunt snubs my mother and forgets to pay her coal bills and my mother snubs no one and pays cash for everything whether it is a ton of coal or a ton of coral—I know which woman is to be admired."

Tag was too deeply in love to argue. Moreover, he had never been called upon to defend his sentiments—they were part of him, no detached, sharp convictions that one could use in debate.

"We are not such a bad lot," he urged. "It's not a case of snubbing or dishonesty—it is life. Old families die out and new ones spring up to become old ones. No one has ever been able to remedy the thing. I admit we are a spoiled, shiftless lot according to your lights. But we pride ourselves on traditions, on standing for something a trifle higher than a pocketbook, with an impersonal loyalty towards each other. In time, Duffy will pay that coal man if she has to re-sell the porcelains. As a matter of fact, the coal man would never dun her because using Duffy's name as a reference has gained him the trade (and payment) of all the new people. She couldn't fail an old friend in need—she was brought up that way, to be loyal to the damn-fool people in her own world. Don't jump to conclusions. I admit I'm no bright star and I'd rather play golf and cruise in a yacht than earn my daily bread. But I'm trying to do something worth while because it seems the thing to do. In time you may come to root for shabby, dishonest gentlefolk, too."

They had been in the library at Bagatelle House when this last discussion took place. Gloria had been glancing about the room, wondering at its indefinable charm even if the walls were dingy and the furniture somewhat nondescript. The library at the Blaine Avenue house lacked this something. It was imposing and paid for but un-lived in!

Idly, she picked up a stray book. It happened to be one of Tag's. On the fly leaf was written in his mother's pointed hand:

"Dear Tag: You go away to school to-morrow. Take this old tale with you and read it now and then. Beside the joys that school life will give you, may you learn to interpret life in these terms:

"To thee be all men heroes; every race noble;
All women virgins; and each place
A temple: know thou nothing that is base!" "

In contrast Gloria recalled her diary with its jeweled clasps. Min had presented it upon her leaving boarding school. After the affectionate inscription Min had quoted:

“We can attain whatever we wish, when and as we wish, by cultivating poise, cheerfulness of spirit and by concentrating upon the desired goal. No one can interfere or undermine or prevent our success if we hold thought steadfastly to whatever we wish to attain.”

A trifle puzzled, Gloria had abandoned further argument.

The striking of the drawing-room clock broke in on her reverie. She reached for her ukelele.

“Oh, who’ll take care of the caretaker’s daughter,
While the caretaker’s taking care?
Oh, who’ll take care of the caretaker’s daughter,
While the caretaker’s taking care?”

She hummed and strummed.

“Oh, I’ll tend door for the doorman’s daughter,
While the doorman’s tending door,
Oh, I’ll tend door for the doorman’s daughter,

While the doorman’s tending door——” answered Tag coming in and sitting beside her.

“This is a deadly time to become serious,” Gloria began, “but do you mind getting at it?”

Tag regarded her indulgently. She seemed so tiny and exquisite—so impertinent, he found himself thinking.

“Lead on,” he challenged. “Right from the shoulder.”

“You’re to resign from the city laboratories—that is, if you still want to marry me. Wait,” holding up an imperative hand. “You must have a sensible, settled position in order to make us happy. Your family consider you are throwing yourself away—oh, but they do,” her mouth was in the straight, firm line. When Tag bent to kiss her, she pushed him aside.

“Please, darling, not a tantrum—not at this hour.” Gloria’s face had taken on the appearance of an unemotional mask. Tag knew and dreaded the symptoms.

“I’m not going into a tantrum if you are reasonable,” was her promise. “But I consider that you are throwing yourself away by working in the laboratory. An

underpaid job at a day laborer's wages. Duffy has made you feel eternally grateful to her. She was determined one of you should have a career. Dodo ducked it at the start. Then she hoped that Enid might become a prima donna, but a pale ballad sung at tea time is Enid's capacity. So you, poor thing, were the victim. After begging off from medicine, law, interior decorating, the church and the Russian ballet, you went and studied bugs! I consider that I have loved you in spite of yourself not because of it."

He caught her to him affectionately. "See here, Gloria, I like my line. Duffy's been more than generous. She's believed in me. I can't disappoint her. Besides, I'm still hoping I can get into service some way. I know you agree about that. Until then, I ought to stick where I am. I'm not adapted for business of any sort——"

"You don't have to be—not for big business. Only the underpaid jobs take brains and all that," Gloria murmured. "It is so easy when one can start at the top. Besides, you must become my sort of a person. It'll be for the good of your soul," laying a finger on his cheek. "Your family are decadent—sort of give me the creeps every time I'm at Bagatelle House. They've spent everything their ancestors earned and are waiting for someone to gird up his loins and go forth for another haul. You are the logical candidate. But not with bugs! Big business, Tag—believe me, that's the tip. Duffy's advice isn't practical—what does she know about real things? She's the sheltered type whose life has been spent gazing at cathedrals or telephoning the bank to send up grandmother's silver teapot. She is one of those fighting for dependency! Mama says so."

"Your mother has said a great many things along these lines, hasn't she?" asked Tag quickly.

"A few. As a mother-in-law, you rather wince. But I prophesy that mama will be a remarkable ancestor."

"Doubtless. What else about this serious stuff? I'm due at the laboratory by nine."

"It won't be difficult to replace you, will it?" looking up with that impertinent expression he both dreaded and admired. "You see, I've decided not to marry you in June and go live in anybody's barn. What would we do with your eighteen hundred a year salary—and my five thousand a year allowance . . . and all Bagatelle House gazing at us through lorgnettes?"

"But you said you would, you promised me that you would——"

"Did I? Well, I've changed my mind. I knew I would, too."

"I'd like to explore your brain," he remarked. "It would be much more interesting than Peru."

“Start your expedition any time you like—but first, take the job mama has for you. A marvelous chance and five thousand to start.”

“Would you consider it honest?” he asked soberly. “When I don’t know a darned thing about bakeries and don’t want to.”

“That doesn’t matter—the job is ready-made for you. Your hours will be your own. Why, Tag, you’ll never have to be down before ten and you can take tremendously elastic luncheon intermissions. You can scamper home by four and the week-ends we will always go some place. They need you there, too,” unconscious of her absurdity. “Mama says there is a great chance for a young man. Somebody’s got to take charge of this sugar-ration business—it’s really serving your country to help out about that. Because the world has to have a weeny bit of frosting on its cake even if it is fighting. Then, Tag, I want to live at home. Mama would be so lonely in this big house. And it’s quite comfortable now that I’ve done it all over. After a year or so, if we don’t like it, we can be transferred to the New York offices and get a country place and——”

“I can’t, Gloria, please don’t urge it. My plans may lack glamor but they are honest,” Tag insisted.

“Then you don’t love me,” was her retort.

“It is because I do, that I want things straight.”

“Bakeries are as respectable as dissecting pollywogs. And if you don’t know anything about them, you can learn.”

“I’d feel so obligated, so—so kept,” he flung out. “You are doing this to get the upper hand of Duffy. You don’t understand her. You don’t appreciate all it could mean if you would let me work out my own salvation and come live in a barn on my eighteen hundred a year. I love you so much and want you so much,” his gray eyes were both appealing and honest, “that it is hard to say anything that might make you change. You mean everything to me, Gloria. Are you going to jeopardize happiness for a few thousand a year?”

Her eyes had darkened wilfully. “I don’t want to be hateful but you force me to put it this way: I won’t marry you unless you accept mama’s offer and come live here. You have no right to ask me to crowd into a few rooms and have Duffy patronize and advise.”

“Are you afraid to be poor?” he interrupted.

She shrugged her shoulders. “I wouldn’t be poor—that is just it. I’m trying to share with you. I want you to become independent. You can help everyone at Bagatelle House as well as yourself. If I didn’t love you, Tag, I wouldn’t argue this matter for an instant.”

“Is it that—or because I love you?” Tag was puzzled.

“I love you,” she swept on in her vehement way. “Do as I say and we will be happy. Don’t do as I say—and good-bye. Can’t you realize what a marvelous chance it is? After a few years, you can retire and have microscopes and pollywogs as a hobby . . . kiss me, Tag, say which . . . say it now—now,” her pink mouth against his. “Hold me close, oh, very close . . . it isn’t long until June . . . Tag,” humming softly, “Please take care of the caretaker’s daughter——”

Suddenly, she rose and broke away from him. Tag rose, too, looking down at her in puzzled fashion.

“It is no light thing to switch a man’s career,” he began.

She snapped her fingers with impatience. “Career—pollywogs—eighteen hundred a year! Are you a moron? Don’t you realize all that you are in danger of losing? Can’t you see how my plan will work out? Don’t you want me? Oh, but if you do, you’ll try my plan—just try it——”

Without warning Tag crushed her to him. “I’ll try,” he breathed hoarsely. As he spoke he felt the tenseness of her body relax and a sigh, either of triumph or exhausted eagerness, preceded her kiss.

More or Less Serious

BECAUSE she did not know what else to do with life, Gloria was an expert at wasting it. Having won Tag over, she dismissed him and ran up to her mother's room to demand that she arrange for Tag's invaluable services to begin without delay.

Min bridled. "Now, honey, I said I'd find him a place," she began. "But Tag ought to learn the business——"

"Begin at the flour sifters and wear a white skullcap and apron? Oh, lovely. Only skullcaps would never be becoming. I'm off for some rest, mama, so write the letters to the president and call up Violette. Tell her I must have my dress by four or I won't accept it. You'll get my flowers, won't you? And make me some chicken broth—I feel as if that was the only thing I could enjoy. Tag and I will have the three rooms at the back—my old one and the two next to it. We won't need so many new things but you might get a line on Jennison and ask if he could have some time for me next week," vanishing before Min could reply.

It was difficult for Gloria to indulge in forty winks even the delectable orchid and white room of her own furnishing. She tore off the Russian frock, the strands of pearl beads snapping as they were disentangled from her hair. She broke a finger nail as she unstrapped her slippers. Her head ached and her eyes burned. For a moment she wished that she had asked her mother to brush her hair. But she decided not to call her. Min would talk. Gloria wanted to think.

By the time she had slipped into some gauze-like negligée and flung herself upon the canopy bed with its endless down pillows, she had decided to engage a personal maid. She would need one after marriage and it was time her mother's services should end. She preferred that Tag never knew the extent of these services. Jealously Min had cherished the privilege of waiting upon her child.

Tag had been easy to convert, she thought, reaching for a midget cigarette from a Dresden shoe on her night stand. Whenever she was fagged, a quarrel proved stimulating. She wished that Tag had made more of an issue of the matter. Of course he loved her too much to cross her, she thought soberly. He always had loved her—away back in the days when Dodo omitted her from her birthday party list and Tag saved her a piece of the cake, the piece with the wedding ring, no less.

Was it that she loved Tag or that he loved her? Time must prove that. There was

so much time ahead. And she flattered herself that she knew life at first hand and, therefore, knew how to spend that time to the best advantage.

Following her graduation from Miss Finch's Finishing School, Gloria had decided against college and in favor of doing some "serious work." Miss Finch's had been an eastern establishment where one met the best people. During Gloria's four years spent under Miss Finch's expensive eye, Min had remained in the background, sending prompt checks for her child's tuition and presenting the school with chimes for its chapel. It never proved convenient for Mrs. Jules Auguste Beaumont to be present at school festivities until the actual day of Gloria's graduation. Correctly gowned and wisely monosyllabic, Min had been an imposing figure upon the velvety lawns.

Gloria's serious work had taken the form of working at the Beaumont bakeries! A steel magnate's daughter and the ward of a financier so inspired her. They were to do "serious work" work in the offices of the steel plant and the stock exchange. College taught only theories, these chiffon-clad young things chattered. They desired reality.

Within six months the steel magnate's daughter eloped with a bookkeeper and was lucratively forgiven. The financier's ward abandoned sharpening lead pencils to appear in a Broadway revue while Gloria, who spent all of a week in the ovens of the Beaumont plant, was promoted to the office force. Here she redecorated to her heart's desire, making it an issue with the general manager as to whether or not she be allowed to have built-in gold-fish aquariums instead of window sills and bedroom cretonnes fluttering throughout the shipping department. Each afternoon she served tea at her desk, from one to six friends dropping in to see the show.

Her picture in a swank sports costume was printed in the New York and local papers as "Gloria Beaumont, a refreshing type of modern rich girl, who prefers to learn at first hand the reason for her wealth."

The week after the pictures appeared Gloria resigned in favor of a six weeks' cruise to South America. Throat trouble was the reason given to the general manager. Upon her return Gloria "came out" at a tea. It was not the sort of affair she would have liked but the amount spent on the decorations was whispered about even to the confines of Duffy's hidden courtyard and the list was fairly creditable. Well-bred people are always willing to work for a prospering cause.

Ever afterwards Gloria democratically referred to the time when she "worked her way up at the plant." She deluded herself that she understood the mechanism of that growing octopus which threatened to supply the nation with its baked goods. As time went on the delusion grew. She claimed a camaraderie with the factory girls as

well as being informed as to the office end of the game. Had she not triumphed over the general manager in the matter of the gold-fish aquariums? She was intolerant of anyone who spent the money a business earned but who refused to understand that business. She gave out an interview in which she was quoted as “being proud to be part of such a marvelous concern whose coöperation made for harmony and prosperity, to trace its growth from the industry of her father and mother and their shabby red book which recorded the famous Beaumont recipes. Indeed, to-day, she valued that little book as another might treasure jewels,” etc., etc.

“She’ll kid herself around the whole course,” was the general opinion of the Beaumont employees.

Every few weeks the foremen threatened to resign if Miss Beaumont and her friends made another lengthy tour of the bakeries, dawdling through the departments, tampering with the machines and finally clamoring for lunch being served at the employees’ cafeteria—lunch with specially made cakes frosted with individual initials. If they were going to work for a sight-seeing company, they wanted time to train for it.

As for philanthropies, Gloria considered that she had scientifically mastered the art of giving. She wrote liberal checks for certain established charities and donated tons of stale bread loaves and cakes. She was always captain of a team for raising funds—with plenty of supper dances to celebrate each additional donation—and whenever she spoke to the district nurses association she mentioned the fact that when one was privileged to serve humanity the financial aim was subservient—*n’est-ce pas?*

Now and then Gloria came into contact with some beaten but still proud individual who could not face the associated charities. She was always liberal—particularly if the dramatic element was uppermost. As a consequence she had been cheated by imposters who knew how to win sympathy. She took her losses lightly, charging them up to the “Beaumont memorial fund” as she dubbed it.

But she never gave of herself. “I cannot endure sniffy, underbred people,” she explained. “Besides, they are stupid to be wretched and abused. If a man beat me, I’d beat him. If someone stole my money, I’d arrest them. That’s fair play. I’m sorry for children with twisted spines and sore eyes, and overworked horses and homeless old women. But that is no reason that I must wear Jaeger cloth and go about with pails of mutton broth. I’m sure our board handles that sort of thing more efficiently. Such cases are fearfully depressing.”

Sometimes Min ministered to such cases. Min had an ability for individual relief work. She feared neither drunken bully nor disease placarded slum. Hers was a

practical but unscientific method of immediate relief and blunt advice. She seldom told Gloria what she did in this line.

Min's personal life was a rather shy affair. While she revelled in Gloria's success, she kept her own interests to herself. There were commonplace visits to friends who remembered the days when Min was "that Swiss woman" and envied Mrs. O'Toole. There were sentimental matinées which Gloria would have considered "too killing for words" and at which Min wept gullible tears. She took a shrewd interest in the stock and bond market and never missed a director's meeting at the bakeries. At night, waiting for Gloria's return, she would read old-fashioned novels and make black coffee in a quaint French kettle which she kept by the side of her bed. Whenever there was an opportunity she slipped into the kitchen and cooked. She enjoyed the immaculate cupboards and refrigerator room over which supercilious servants reigned. She liked to "poke around" and discover what was being wasted and what was neglected. To concoct some Swiss delicacy of which Gloria was fond and place it in her room for a surprise. She did Gloria's fine washing—unless Gloria caught her at it. She delighted in making the gossamer underthings twice as gossamer as before.

Min would have been a happy woman could she have supervised a modern middle-class home. She would have been in her element with the new labor-saving appliances, driving her own car to market, arranging her own rooms. There was an element of loneliness in this correct grandeur. While Gloria was a child or away at school Min was necessarily supreme, a glorified caretaker. Not that she resented the deposing of her authority. But she was wistful for the days on Oak avenue when she had tied up her dauntless head in white cloth and given the front parlor a vigorous cleaning to put to shame the hired girl's efforts, only to replace the white cloth with a feathered hat and drive her bay mare downtown to call for Jules. Min's plight was to be expected in the case of any alarm clock purchasing a cathedral chime!

Throwing away the cigarette, Gloria rolled over on a nest of pillows until her heels kicked up in the air and her chin rested in the palms of her hands. Then what? Children? Possibly. New York? She rather thought so. Tag's increasing devotion? Certainly. The fault with wading pools is their shallowness . . . what was it she wanted, what satisfying, worthwhile feat? Restlessly, she tried to sleep . . . nice old Tag, what good times they would have. Duffy would rage when Tag became a vice-president of the bakeries . . . but what was it she ultimately wanted to achieve? "Who'll play with the playman's daughter, when the playman's out at play?" she hummed as she drifted off to sleep.

Gloria Enters the Sanctuary

THE worst of it is she has a brain," Duffy confided to Jerry Fisher and Enid. The tea guests had left and the trio lingered in the hidden courtyard over a last sip of orange pekoe. Dodo had just come in. Her terriers, Boxer and Fencer, gave their usual rush at Foo Wee, who curled in the crook of his mistress's arm.

"Who has a brain?" demanded Dodo helping her terriers to thin bread and butter.

"Gloria," Duffy's finely modeled lips closed in a disapproving line. "She is being shown my Gothic room. When Tag asked me this time—what else could I do?"

"Gloria in the Gothic room is good," Dodo chuckled, sitting on the rim of the old fountain. "Well, having a brain is no crime. How was this afternoon? You do enjoy sitting on a camouflaged cracker barrel and passing the time of day with all who go by, Duffy. Did young Dixon sing? Were there enough scones to go round?"

Duffy ignored Dodo. "Her brain is her biggest handicap," she continued, "because she does not realize its inferiority. Well enough to start bakeshops with but not to direct Tag's life. He is going into the business; they are to live with Min Beaumont," Duffy waited for sympathy.

Jerry chuckled. "I should say that the queen is dead—and long live the pattycake princess!"

Jerry delighted in such moments. Underneath his respect for this eccentric cousin was a dislike because she despised his self-centered existence at the club, his trading upon her name for social favors and his interest in passé actresses, divorcées with questionable pasts and broken hearted spinsters, who still retained their figure. Such as these provided Jerry with his chief recreation. His was a sinister delight in showing them guarded attentions. In New York he boasted of knowing one-time Broadway favorites, now faded, impoverished women who were pathetically grateful for any favors. Few analyzed the cheapness of such chivalry. These women cost but a supper or a gewgaw and had neither the ability nor intention to entangle. They were keen to talk of the days when they had been supreme, days which Jerry knew and preferred. It created an illusion of ever-present youth. When he was in Rutledge he delighted in telling the young things with whom he played of these "philanthropies."

"Poor little girl," he would report. "Once she was the prettiest member of a light-opera company. Now she wears a transformation and her husband beat her until she

has neuralgia of the fifth facial nerve. Many's the millionaire she turned down in the old days. A chap from Idaho bought her a silver bath tub and she used it for her spaniel. Gad, but she was happy when I took her to an Italian table d'hôte," bridling with self-importance at the feat. Feeding his sense of superiority by such attentions and creating an unreal atmosphere of youth by playing with the younger set, Jerry was successful in avoiding reality.

"Poor Gloria," said Dodo, "she may discover that even she can be deposed."

"They say that at the lecture on prison reform," purred Enid, dutifully finding Duffy a hassock, "Min Beaumont stated that she was in favor of capital punishment if it was not too severe. . . ."

"Haw-haw-haw," applauded Jerry's choking laugh, "I must remember *that* one."

"So Tag is going to chuck his profession to sell buns," Jerry continued, choking and gurgling. "What a come-down! Well, if Tag wants beauty, he must take beauty at its own terms . . . she reminds me of poor old Delia Forrest whom I helped start a tea shop last fall. Once noblemen fought to fasten her slipper straps and now——"

Duffy coughed, a signal for Jerry to postpone his memories. "Tag may deteriorate," she admitted, rising and handing Foo Wee to Enid, "but we must stand by. When Gloria becomes his wife, she becomes one of us."

"You don't believe that Tag really is throwing himself away?" Jerry was loath to cry quits.

"Not exactly. I have always known Tag would never set the world afire. But I hoped that he would be one of those to keep it from burning up. Gloria would make it burn, if she happened to like bonfires!"

Jerry extricated himself from a Chinese chair and inspected a budding magnolia with the aid of gold rimmed pince nez. "Exquisite," he pronounced a moment later, "reminds me of the pattycake princess herself. Now I always fight shy of beauty—for I find myself either wanting to ravage it or break its damned neck—haw-haw-HAW!"

Enid was collecting the tea things while Dodo slipped her arm through that of her aunt. "Want to toddle upstairs?" she asked, "and avoid meeting Gloria when she leaves your Gothic paradise?"

Duffy nodded. As she passed into the hall she heard Gloria's high-pitched laugh. There was barely time in which to escape. Another five minutes and Gloria was driving down the winding road. She had ordered Tag to stay behind and snatch an hour of sleep before he took her to her sorority dance.

"Thank Duffy for the private view and tell me what appraisals they gave me," she

whispered.

“Appraisals?”

“Of course; I didn’t expect compliments,” and the whirr of the motor engine and the picking up of Jerry Fisher who was en route to the club precluded Tag’s reply.

“Well, did you finally get to see the Gothic room?” Min demanded as Gloria came into the Blaine Avenue house. “Don’t you want to lie right down? You ought to rest. Yes, your dress came. You will look wonderful in it, too. Not many girls could wear that queer shade of green. Well—did you see the Gothic room? Let me unhook that, honey—my, it is tight. How do you stand it? By the way, the cook is going. I told her that you wouldn’t grieve—that you wanted a Japanese couple. I guess Tag won’t object, after being on his aunt’s rations . . . there’s no danger of his being accepted for service, is there? . . . now lie down, Gloria and I’ll rub your head. My, you’re thin. You ought to stop this tearing around. You’ll need your strength for the wedding parties. I suppose you haven’t had time to think about them. Did you see the Gothic room? Was Jerry Fisher there? Did you hear why Mr. and Mrs. Burr Meredith are going to summer in Rutledge?”

Yes, she must engage a maid, Gloria thought again as Min’s hands rubbed her aching head and her loud voice rumbled all about the room. She was too tired to be rude, it was easier to answer questions.

“The Gothic room was like an undertaker’s chapel—after my being there I think Duffy will have it exorcised. Yes, Jerry was there . . . don’t rub my neck any more, please . . . I’d like some hot milk . . . what about the Burr Merediths? I can’t seem to place them.”

Min bent over her solicitously. “You’re as pale as milk yourself,” she described. “The old Meredith house is on Ten Eyck avenue. No one has lived there since Burr’s mother died. I remember the old lady well. She drove fat, spotted ponies and a red-wheeled cart almost to the day she died. Miss Duff-Porter never patronized *her*. She used to drive down to our first shop for rolls—and she paid her bills, too. Then Burr, a regular lady-killer, married General Ransom’s daughter and went to New York. The old lady drove her ponies and wore her cut-jet earrings with as much spirit as ever. But they said she grieved herself to death after he had gone. Burr made one fortune, his wife brought him another and his mother left him a third. I guess he can use ’em all. There must be some reason for spending the summer here and not at their camp. Oh, you and Burr Meredith have given the town something to talk about,” Min’s hearty laugh filled the room.

“I remember him—a tall, gypsy-like man. They say his wife is a professional invalid. He owns a hunting box in Scotland and has entertained the king.” Gloria

nodded indifferently. "Please hurry with the milk, mama, and just one toasted biscuit."

At two A.M. Tag brought Gloria home. "We must rest," he insisted. "Do you realize what a stretch it has been? Promise you'll not make a stir all day. As for me, if I'm to be a successful vice-president of any baking company I must have my eyes open——"

"No—your mouth shut," Gloria corrected. "It has been a nice stretch, anyway—all but the Gothic room. As Pepys would have said, 'I did at that time strive to make a good impression,' but I don't think Duffy appreciated it. What would she say if she knew that instead of genuflections we kissed each other and I retied your necktie? 'Night, Tag, you are very nice——"

Inconsistently he clung to her. "Why am I?"

"Oh, because I feel so safe with you. One knows just where to find you. I like you for all these Tag reasons," the one-sided dimple and its complement, the one-sided smile showing in her tired, flushed face. "I like you for Theodore Ainslie Grant reasons, too—ever suspect them? Because you have ancestors and no money and foolish idealism; you would bleed white over things I'd turned yellow about—oh, I might. I like you for other reasons, too—very few but extremely nice reasons," she was in his arms, her bright veil of hair brushing against his thin, freckled cheek.

"What are they, darling?" he begged, "tell me—for they must be the real reasons."

Gloria drew away from him. In the soft light, she looked up and a rare and serious expression crossed her piquant face. "There is only one reason," she confessed, "and it is so trite that you ought not make me say it."

"But I do. Why do you think I am nice?"

"Because I love you," was his reward.

Dodo's Secret

GLORIA showed more discretion than Duffy had hoped for in arranging for her wedding. Since her mother's social background was a barren affair and her own but a surface popularity due to youth and *carte blanche*, she had decided in favor of a private ceremony at which Tag's family should be paramount.

This was disappointing to the climbing, well-to-do families who visited at the Beaumont home and called Min their friend. With such as these Min had been taught to be patronizing—that is, when she could refrain from talking about Gloria. The younger members of these families did as Gloria had done—featured their youthful charms and their spending money and mingled, for the time being, with the youth of the inner circle. Barriers between young things seemed to have been pushed aside. Only after matrimony or as one grew settled both of figure and convictions did the line of demarcation assert itself.

Knowing this Gloria had anticipated the time when she should cross this line. Her mother must accompany her if for no other reason than because Gloria could not do without her. But her mother would be satisfied to accept snubs and indifference as long as Gloria found her place in the sun. Since Gloria was bored with the men and women who called Min their friend, Min, in turn, tried to believe that she was bored with them. But it was an effort—just as it was an effort to wear the clothes Gloria selected and remain silent and aloof at moments when she felt particularly opinionated.

“What are you going to do about these good people?” Min asked the day before the wedding. An onslaught of tardy gifts from those not included in the invitations inspired this question. “They are showing that they don't need to be invited in order to send a token of their good will, which is more than some people not more'n a mile off would do,” as she unwrapped silver and crystal ware. “They may not be in the social register, as you will be by the next edition,” smiling fondly, “but they are kind-hearted, prosperous citizens and I guess they have had no worse things in their lives than other people have had, only they haven't tried to deny them. Why, Agnes Duff-Porter's first cousin was mad as a March hare. Everyone knew poor Sadie Faulkner had to be put away. Ask Tag some day. As for thieving—Jerry Fisher's brother, he's dead now, used to go to parties and come away weighted with silver. Everyone called him an unfortunate kleptomaniac.”

"I wish you would stop," ordered Gloria, "I've heard it all so many times. Yes, yes, yes, if you want me to agree and no, no, no, if you do not. I wish these people had not sent things. I cannot go on knowing them. You would have been furious had I married one of their sons. Yes, you would. You were disappointed when it was only Tag Grant. Just wear your black velvet and pearls and keep your reactions to yourself, mama. After I am Mrs. Tag Grant, I can manage things much better than now."

"Of course you can. Tag's family don't know you, do they? It's a good thing you started right out to show them that you intend to have your own way——"

Gloria had left the room. Min's face was a trifle more florid than usual. But she was used to such rebuffs. Patiently she collected the gift wrappings and put them into an empty box.

Gloria had gone to the rear of the house. Opening from her orchid and white room were Tag's future quarters, very correctly done in sealing-wax red and black lacquer. Adjoining the bedrooms was a sitting-room which suggested an old-world parlor. It was in admirable taste with its carved maple chairs and cool green walls, rose draperies and fine old French carpets. Already two of Tag's ancestors had been removed from Bagatelle House to smile suspiciously at her from the opposite wall.

It satisfied Gloria—as a beginning. There would come a time when they would reign at Bagatelle House, she fancied, since Dodo was apt to remove to an artistic garret and live with a black cat and a pot of pansies for her family. Enid was not worth consideration. . . . Yes, it was an excellent beginning.

"Glad I found you in," said Dodo's voice. "What is it—a last private view? Ducky rooms, if you ask me. Like 'em better than the rest of the house. You look fagged—what's to-night? The dinner dance and a midnight treasure hunt? Sensible kid to have no fireworks to-morrow. It won't be so hard—to-morrow." Gloria became aware that Dodo was unnerved, that she was speaking in a jerky fashion, her slender brown fingers winding and unwinding the tassels on the chaise longue.

"You'll fall for Lake Louise and the Canadian Rockies," continued Dodo in the same unnatural way. "A month there and you'll plan on escaping civilization forever. I didn't think you'd choose a spot like that—but you're taking a maid and two wardrobe trunks, aren't you? Oh, well—each fellow to his liking——" without warning Dodo's voice broke. She sank down on the chaise longue, her trim, tailored back to Gloria.

Gloria slipped around in front. "Whatever has happened? What made you come at this unearthly hour? Why, Dodo—are you crying?" and she knelt in front, looking

up at her dark, flushed face.

“Being an idiot,” Dodo confided, “I wanted to explain just the sort I am. I’m glad for you to-morrow—I hope you’ll make a go of everything. But I won’t be here when you come back. I’m sailing for France—a canteen hostess is my job. Don’t be horrid to Duffy. She never fails in a crisis and she could help you a great deal. As for Enid, she’ll have a dismal life unless she vamps someone when Duffy is not looking. It isn’t up to us to judge her——”

“I know all this,” Gloria dismissed the remarks with a wave of her hand. “But you—what’s broken loose? Why France? Why tears?”

“Do you like me?” demanded Dodo, trying to be self-composed.

“In spots,” Gloria admitted.

“You’re going to be Tag’s wife and one of us, so you’ve the right to know. I’ve been through a rocky time over a man, a married man,” folding and refolding her gay, sports handkerchief. “Foolish enough but I can’t help it. He’s hypnotized and fascinated and dominated me for years; I’m helpless whenever he’s about. I was sixteen when it began—great fun for him. Oh, I know he’s cruel and a cad but it doesn’t seem to break the spell. When I was nineteen his wife heard about it and made a row. She always does, they say. I was rather a wreck. No one has suspected that I was the romantic kind—I’ve never been anything but pals with the boys. You never suspected, did you? That’s good. I’ve something to be thankful for. But all this time I’ve adored and feared him and suffered, suffered, suffered,” beating her slender hands together.

“You of all people,” Gloria was carried out of herself.

“Yes, me! Duffy knows. She helped me not to break. Of course the thing was hopeless from the start. I lost my head . . . this overseas thing will be a blessed life-saver.”

“Does Enid know?” Gloria still knelt before Dodo, holding her hands.

“I’m afraid so. Enid knows everything that one wishes she did not. She is like the blind wife of the philanderer who knew to a detail every one of his affairs. One day he came upon her at his desk. She was reading a love letter with the two cold, glittering eyes that were centered in her bosoms! That’s Enid . . . but Tag doesn’t know it. Men *are* blind.”

“But it is so stupid and unlike you, Dodo. Why run away? Why let the thing go on? If he is married and won’t get free to marry you, why think of him again?”

Dodo smiled through her tears. “Ah, if only I could. Perhaps you would. You don’t know what it means to be under someone’s spell. You despise yourself yet you cling to what you realize means disaster. Your sense of values becomes warped—

you suffer and drift——”

“Who is it?” demanded Gloria unexpectedly.

“Burr Meredith,” was the honest answer. “And he has come back for the season. I thought I was through going to pieces about him. That it was a scar that throbbed only under pressure. But that was not true,” shaking her head. “It is a scar that bursts open at the slightest touch, only to bleed again. That’s the worst of this sort of affair. You are never quite through until you are dead. Perhaps not then. It breaks down something in you that cannot be built up. That is why I’m glad no one knows, that they think me queer and mannish—all the rest. . . .”

“I always said you had possibilities if you’d go to a decent dressmaker and learn to use a fan,” Gloria was impatient over the situation. “Burr Meredith would never make me run away. Tell me—did you see much of him?”

“Oh, secret times—walks and talks and pathetic moments when I fancied myself the happiest creature in the world. It was play on his part and tragedy on mine.”

Gloria bridled. “You great goose girl even to remember him. How terrible it must be to have his charms—I should think he would be afraid of himself.”

Dodo bit her underlip. Gloria had only glimpsed the surface. “I will be all right,” she insisted, “don’t bother about it any more. But I wanted you to know why I went away. And be nice to Duffy. Perhaps she has a scar or two——”

“I’m not interested in Duffy. Let’s get this Meredith thing straightened out,” Gloria was intrigued.

“It’ll have to die—not straighten out,” Dodo corrected. “I’m a queer, monogamous creature who must fight out tragedy in her own way. I could not stay in town while he was here. His wife adores Duffy and I’d meet them often. Dugouts and trenches will be my salvation. They used to take the veil when love affairs went badly—now it’s a ukelele and a uniform! See you to-morrow—is the dress ready? How about a peep?” Dodo had regained her self-control. She was crisp and boyish of manner as she followed Gloria into the wardrobe room where there hung an ivory tinted satin gown with billows of rare lace breaking out at unexpected places.

“You will be very lovely,” she said wistfully, turning to go.

Gloria caught her arm. “I say, Dodo—you can count on me,” was her brief but satisfactory answer.

Absolutely!

I'M afraid I'll always have my big moments when Tag has his little ones," Gloria accused.

Min, who was enjoying a second helping of dessert, looked up brightly as if anticipating excitement.

"Do you? Seems to me we have both given up having any big moments," Tag bantered. He glanced about the dining-room with its summery decorations of green and silver. The lavish correctness was irritating. He could not express himself in these rooms. The entire Beaumont house, now that he lived here as Gloria's husband, repressed him. He longed for the quaint rooms at Bagatelle House where the dirt from open fires did not imperil the rugs nor the finish of the furniture, where books of all sizes and ages were piled in inexcusable places, where Dodo's dogs dozed on shabby cushions and Duffy's plants bloomed in every window.

Gloria pushed away her plate. Her "roughneck" eyebrow was elevated dangerously as she pursued the subject. "You know so well that you do not have to be at the office to-morrow or Friday. You could come home Saturday at noon. Why not take this motor trip with the Prescotts and enjoy yourself for a change? Do you fancy that you are so essential in the office that the world would breakfast without Beaumont's bread if you didn't show up?"

"No. That is exactly what I'm struggling to do—to make myself essential," Tag answered. These three connered dialogues were tensing. Not that Min ventured original opinions unless Gloria permitted her to do so. Nevertheless there was something about her overdressed, florid presence which was displeasing. She seemed something of a jailor, not only of himself but of Gloria. They were locked in this perfect, unreal setting and given parts to play while she held the manuscript and murmured their cues.

"Instead of being essential to me," said Gloria with assumed pathos.

"That is beside the point. I'm not worth being essential to you unless I am essential in my job. Well you know it, too. I've hardly put in a serious day there—not one."

"Listen, Tag," began Min, after glancing at Gloria as if for permission. "Don't wear yourself out trying to change our business methods. We'll tell you what to do—and when. You're in line for promotion if you do as you're told. Don't spoil your

chances by telling the——”

“Then call me office boy and pay me fifteen a week,” Tag said with impulsive bitterness.

Gloria laughed. “Duffy would adore that. She brags about your salary——”

“She thinks I earn it,” said Tag sadly. “She doesn’t know how much we play.”

“Why not play? What else did you expect I’d do?” the “roughneck” eyebrow rose even higher. This time she pushed her chair from the table. Sota the butler came forward with a respectful bow. “I’m going upstairs until the people come—my head aches,” she announced petulantly. “If you need more convincing, talk to mama.”

Tag rose when Min straggled to her feet. He followed her into the drawing-room and selected her favorite chair for her.

“Don’t go,” Min ordered unexpectedly.

“Was there something else?” Tag stood at attention.

“You don’t like your new work, do you?” demanded Min.

“I haven’t had a chance to prove whether I do or not. You know what work really is, Mrs. Beaumont—you realize what my situation is at the plant. Gloria cannot understand. You’ve seen to that. You’ve bought me for her—that’s what it amounts to,” an angry flush disguised Tag’s freckled cheeks. “To-day a report came in from the division of field artillery I tried to sign up with and couldn’t. The chap who had my place was killed during the first ten minutes of action. Of course it would have been I. I don’t know but what he has been of more use in the world than I’ll ever be, if I go on like this.”

“Don’t you worry Gloria with any of this,” Min said gravely. “She’s all nerves. You must have realized that she could never live on your salary and you know that you have a chance in ten thousand to——”

“I want to earn my money and not be paid for being your daughter’s husband,” Tag retorted. “I can’t endure this way—three hours at the office twiddling my thumbs and stopping my ears and seventeen hours of nonsense and four hours for rest. Nobody could stand up under it. You mean well—don’t think I misjudge you. But it is not the way your husband made his money nor the way I intended to make mine.”

Min did not feel competent to debate the matter any further, Gloria not being in the offing. She picked up a novel with a studied gesture. “You listen to Gloria, Tag, and she’ll set you straight,” she ended.

In the hall Tag hesitated. His coat and hat hung tempting near by. Then the memory of Gloria’s “roughneck” eyebrow and of recent scenes made him square his shoulders and leap upstairs, two at a time, to the green and rose sitting-room over

which Gloria presided, awaiting his apology.

“I’m sorry if you don’t understand,” Tag began humbly, coming up to sit on the arm of her chair. “But I want to be a real he-man, the sort any woman respects _____”

“Once and for all,” said Gloria in sharp accents, “I am not going to stay at home no matter how much you grub. There is no reason for your slaving at the office. You say you must learn the business. Well, the business has been learned by better men than you. You draw your salary—and play with me. When we own a good share of the business, you and I, you can tamper with it all you like. Do come on the motor trip, Tag; it’s only for five days and I’m fed up with town. September is a deadly month. Nothing is started and nothing has ended. Please—if you love me——”

He balanced himself on her chair arm, his arms folded across his chest.

“Your people play,” she accused. “Their sort of play. They live on the past glories of their name. Why not live on the present income of mine? I think being a gracious hostess and doing credit to you—and even Duffy’s Gothic room—taking an interest in the town players and the concerts and all that sort of thing—well, isn’t that worth while? In Europe mama says men who do the same things are called gentlemen and not shirkers. It is a type America is still fearful of cultivating. Here, men must grub and save and then watch their children blow it all. They don’t know the satisfying art of being a man of leisure with a cultural interest in the arts. They leave that to women and play poker and break hearts for their recreations. I consider playing an art and not a disgrace. But you don’t try to get my viewpoint.”

Tag was disarmed. This was another mood—a patient, tender mood which seemed to comprehend and was tolerant with arguments. He knew the mood for he had succumbed to it only too often. Usually it preceded or followed a tantrum. There was certain to be some stormy, incoherent interval during which Gloria accused him of everything she knew him to be innocent of and threatened everything which she had no intention of doing and finally wept copiously, falling into his forgiving and bewildered arms—an exhausted, pathetic little person.

“No, I don’t. I can’t see going your play-pace. Your interest are women’s stuff, but——”

“Ah, you see. Just what I said. America calls a man who doesn’t punch a time clock a lounge lizard, a tea hound, a sponge. Tag, you’ve the soul and the brain of a gentleman. For generations your family have been gentle folk. It seems to me that it is up to you to become a brilliant man of leisure. Think how Duffy stands in the community. Isn’t it wiser to train for that sort of thing than to try figuring how many peanuts you can smuggle in among the almonds for our nut cakes, still charging the

almond price? Leave that for morons. Besides, you are mine. I want you to lead in the art of leisure. What is the use of grubbing?" her hands thrust out in appeal. "We don't need any more money—you've often said so——"

"But it is me. I want to do things. I liked my work. Yet you wouldn't agree that a gentleman of science was a creditable person?"

The "roughneck" eyebrow tilted itself a trifle. "That was Duffy's plan—and without a decent salary. This is mine—and well paid."

"I get you," said Tag slangily, his mouth in a thin line. "You must dominate."

"Not dominate—I must have coöperation. Oh, Tag, you do enjoy yourself, now, don't you?" The tender mood gave way to coquetry. "You don't refuse the flowing grape or the prettiest girls for partners or me—and moonlight. You played put-and-take last night until your belt buckle and your cuff links were pledged—and said you had a ripping time at Betty Buck's bathing party."

Tag began walking up and down the room. "That's it; I could slip so easily," he admitted. "There is something in all of us that would give way to play unless we keep ourselves jacked up. Do you know the definition of honor? No? It is 'that which you have when you are all alone.' That's the way I feel about you and me—and honor. We are all alone, responsible to no one, free to do whatever we like. It is doubly up to us not to misuse this honor."

The doorbell told them that the party was about to begin.

"I'm not in a foolish mood to-night," Tag ended. "I'm aching for a tramp. I'd like to get Dodo's terriers and walk their grizzled paws half off. I'd like to go camping with men and sleep on a gunny sack and forage for grub. Oh, I love you as I never can love another woman but either I must succumb to you or we must agree to disagree."

Enid and Jerry had entered the room.

"Burr Meredith drove us over," Enid announced, "so he said he considered himself invited. He's downstairs—shall I have him come up?"

"Do," Gloria ran to the door and waited. "I adore people like that . . . moreover, I owe his wife a call."

"How goes it, Tag?" asked Jerry with a show of briskness. "How's business? I hear you people are going to invade Canada in the spring. Great stuff! You'll be international inside of five years. How's the common stock—good for spec—eh? I could use a little extra. Gad, I'd like to buy poor little Jesse De Mille some decent clothes. There's a story—a more beautiful Juliet never appeared either in London or New York back in the nineties but she took to dope because of some Frenchman and——"

Tag forced himself to listen. Burr Meredith, tall and dark with that disarming dignity which kept all men at arm's length, was bending over Gloria while Enid murmured innocent, pertinent things as the room filled with the rest of Gloria's playmates.

Two hours later the playmates were listening to Gloria's imitation of her class in soul rhythm which met of a Tuesday with Mrs. "Mouse" Kennilworth, an ex-bareback rider. Here, twelve tried and true followers of Mouse wore bathing trunks and open hearts while Mouse whispered her psychic secrets.

"Can't you see us, lean and fat, married, unmarried, remarried, and ex-married?" chattered Gloria. "We prance in a row while Mouse murmurs, 'Sisters, let us pretend that it is a warm, summer's day and we are downy caterpillars uncurling in the sun—stretch—stretch—*stretch!* So . . . never mind a rip in the seam, Miss Battles—we are caterpillars not binoculars . . . stretch, stretch, *stretch!*' "

Tag did not join in the applause. He had heard the story before. But it was not that. Loneliness possessed him. He seemed a gaunt, unwelcomed shadow in this chattering, gay room. With pardonable conceit Tag told himself that he still could talk of something besides the new Black-and-Tan cabaret—and downy caterpillars. All that a society man's vocabulary need consist of these days was: "Absolutely," spoken in a tender bass. It answered all questions and postscripted every comment. All that a girl need say was, "Marvelous," with an upward inflection and the blowing of smoke rings. It was the age of everything's being "absolutely" and "marvelous."

He felt rather confused when someone asked when he sailed with Gloria on their Mediterranean trip. He had not known they were to sail at all. Someone else asked for a tip as to stock in the Beaumont corporation and was there any chance to place someone's younger brother who was terribly popular in Cleveland, a riot at parties, could get up and sing original limericks—oh, absolutely!

He fancied his smile must be a grim one as he answered that he knew of no opening—absolutely! Instead of the crowded room with its tea wagons of drinks and the tinkle of mandolins and the hum of:

"Who'll make dresses for the dressmaker's daughter——"

Tag saw the impressive offices of the Beaumont Baking Corporation, the "big" business background into which he had been led. He saw the keen-eyed men who tolerated him because he was Min Beaumont's son-in-law and who told him as little of what was happening in their business world as they told the filing clerks—perhaps less. Their very tolerance stung him. Already Tag gleaned that they did not intend that he should learn the business. All tips as to stocks and mergers were carefully

kept from his knowledge. His stenographer, Maisie Jackson, a sharp-featured, bobbed-haired young woman of uncertain years, betrayed amused contempt for his inefficiency and ignorance. Maisie had been with the concern since the day Min Beaumont sold a three-quarters interest to the New York syndicate. What she did not know and what she could not do as regarded the office machinery was not worthy of record. She was maternal towards Tag, after proving that he was vamp-proof. She took his aimless dictation as one plays store with a child and brought him magazines to read while she disappeared into the general manager's private office.

As nearly as Tag could estimate, he was an object of envy at the office. Gloria's slant on the situation was the popular slant; a slant leading to the shallow end. Tag felt out of step with his own kind and unable to fall into step with Gloria's successful, selfish world. Socially, Tag knew it to be an enticing, rather clever world. But there was something underlying the social side, some scheme of things with both virtues and defects and of these Tag was ignorant.

He accused himself of being a weak personality, too easily persuaded. Was it that his family was decadent, run-out, in-bred, any of the damning adjectives which helped to compose the tracts issued by the Society for the Betterment of the Human Race or some such wise-sounding tomfoolery? Duffy was a director of this society, by the way. Good joke, that. Good joke on the ancestors. Good joke on everyone!

While the party increased in speed, Tag continued to argue the thing with himself. What was the use in amounting to anything if one's pioneer work augured future lack of ability in one's offspring? Far wiser to do as Gloria urged—stop short this side of work and learn to play gracefully, the veneer of artistic interest to be featured in one's obituary.

There was little use in arguing the matter with Gloria. If you laid your cards on the table, she was going to use them to play back against you. She had gauged the general condition among the old families, a condition which Tag would have avoided had he continued with his microscopes and pollywogs . . . well, why the devil hadn't he continued? As he thought of this he found himself dancing with some fluffy creature who snuggled in his arms and confided that his dancing was 'elegant'—'elegant' was her pet word, so there. When she was dead she wanted a cocktail shaker done in granite above her remains and engraven on it these words: "She is dead—*ELEGANT!*"

"Absolutely," murmured Tag as he passed Gloria and Jerry dancing cheek to cheek.

Why did he not withstand Gloria's onslaughts? Was it a further symptom of degenerate strength which caused him to succumb? He had fancied that it was a

cave-man's determination to win his woman, no matter what the odds. Instead of dragging her by her bright hair and clubbing her deep sea blue eyes, he had turned his back on the laboratory and taken his place in her bakery. He had pictured it as an invasion of her territory—that he would become a forcible person who should bring about labor reforms and efficient methods . . . the memory of those soft-carpeted offices and his æsthetic cubby-hole with Gloria's last picture framed in hammered silver and a gold-fish aquarium for diversion . . . in this cubby-hole he dictated to Maisie Jackson for all of thirty minutes a day . . . he might have deluded himself that he was using cave-man tactics in winning Gloria but he was forced to admit that they were really teddy-bear tricks. That was what it had amounted to!

Was he so dumb and unable to hold his own—take Burr Meredith, looking across at him as he applauded for an encore. Burr made and lost fortunes in a night, invented things, went exploring, hunting big game . . . he was an old-family product . . . it must be an individual question. Or was it a change in the age? Meredith was past forty. His generation had not known the present-day distractions. They had obediently flung themselves off at the deep end, so to speak. What was Meredith doing now but playing? He, too, had yielded to the age of play, the age of “marvelous” and “absolutely.”

After the second encore Tag changed partners. Enid slipped into his arms, clear-eyed and smiling. He recognized her knee-length frock as one of Duffy's tea gowns. For a moment he resented the old velvet frock in its present, brief plight.

“Gloria is unusually lovely to-night, isn't she? She said her mother was helping with the refreshments—killing, isn't it?” whispered Enid as they danced into the hall and paused. “How do you like business, Tag? The golf course is ripping this season, isn't it?”

They glided back into the room. Of course he ran off from his farce of a job to play golf and poker and drive with Gloria. Of course he did—it was what she demanded. Of course he showed up at Bagatelle House as little as possible. It was too uncomfortable for everyone. Gloria with clever impudence and dauntless spirit, all shiny-new as she said herself, walking roughshod over family traditions and wishes while Duffy, whiter of hair than ever, sat in scorn and Dodo's lonesome terriers sniffed at him as if begging for an old-time tramp. Tag had formed the habit of running off to see Duffy alone, short but harmonious visits when they talked of everything but Gloria and the terriers lay at his feet as if to welcome him home.

He was still arguing the matter when Gloria smiled at him across the supper table, one of her adorable, melting smiles that made everything else seem inconsequential and himself a thoughtless brute. He returned the smile. There was a

wistful look in her eyes which puzzled Tag. Gloria, too, had a capacity for emotional suffering. Was she, after a little more than three months of marriage, unhappy, hiding it with this sad rush and dash? Had he disappointed her? Must he yield every inch of his ground in order to avert complete disaster?

“He buys antiques while she pays the ice bill,” someone at his elbow was chattering.

“If I could have whatever I want,” Burr Meredith was saying, “I’d demand an extra hour a day.”

“What would you use it for?” Gloria insisted.

“I don’t dare to tell you—yet.”

“Oh, his people are the real thing—the Tewkesburys,” Enid announced. “She is nice—middle west, I think. Her father owns one of those feudal-system wheat farms. Really, the difference between them is the difference between a celluloid and a linen collar . . .”

“Do I think the Merediths are happy?” his partner was whispering across the table. “Well, it’s a case of half-baked pitted against hard-boiled . . .”

“What colored hair? Why, bobbed, of course,” and the following laughter made Tag’s nerves jump.

“Yes, I can have the cards out by Tuesday,” Gloria was promising. “An immigration party will be worlds of fun. We’ll have the gangway beginning at the front hall and Jerry can be the customs official——”

“How interesting,” murmured Enid, “your mother must give us some suggestions _____”

Under Gloria’s color Tag saw a white, startled look. Her eyes were appealing. He wanted to reach across the table and gather her in his arms, tell her that old families and play versus work and immigration parties and bald headed fools and pussy-willow Enids were all blah. Yes, absolutely! She was his and he loved her; he would play until she was tired of it. That was the hopeful note to stress. Until she was tired of it. Even Duffy admitted that she had a brain.

In the early morning Gloria, ready for sleep, admonished Tag lest he try reaching the office before noon. There was no reason for it—mama said so. For an impromptu affair, hadn’t it been a marvelous party?

“Absolutely,” Tag found himself answering.

The First Promise Broken

IN October the Theodore Ainslie Grants were in New York for the opening of the season. While Tag looked up classmates and did a few stag dinners with a daily look-in at the Beaumont offices, Gloria collected creations and made-to-order footwear and had two layers of skin removed from her lips in order to obtain a brilliant and unchanging scarlet effect. Together they visited Duffy's friends, bought some etchings and a rug or so.

In November they engineered the opera company's coming to Rutledge for four performances. They supplied the deficit with just enough publicity to spur Rutledge on to next season's success and to win for Gloria an invitation to assist Duffy at her next musicale.

December was spent directing the charity ball and the flower fête and tacking down the records of an obscure English ancestor, Peter Puff. He had come to America in 1760 and, later, served two days in the continental army. After this Peter resumed his occupation of cobbler in Albany but his descendant, Gloria Beaumont, reaped the benefits of his shortlived patriotism by being admitted into a colonial society of distinction. Even Min saw the humor of the incident and announced spontaneously:

“Good for Peter Puff,
He served two days,
But that was enough,”

as Gloria displayed her credentials.

Following the holidays the Theodore Ainslie Grants left for Palm Beach. Min experienced both regret and relief. She brought forth her banished pink pillow and lamp shades and wore her flamingo-colored negligées, telephoning awed and curious friends that they would now be welcome at the Blaine Avenue mansion.

Returning in March, preparatory to Lenten rites and Easter plans, Gloria was obliged to reconstruct her schedule. She was pettish regarding this change. That she was to have a child in June augured but two things: It might interfere with their taking a summer place in the Berkshires and she was fearful lest Tag develop a parenthood complex and become deadly serious.

She had wanted a child but it had been a vague and undetermined desire. She

kept the matter secret even from Tag until they were south and she wished to gain some new point.

“I am to have a child,” she had said—and repeated it upon similar occasions. It proved a powerful weapon. Not until they had returned to Rutledge and Duffy produced battered silver mugs and discussed family names while her mother prematurely put a codicil to her will—not until then did Gloria meet the argument.

“Then get ready for the child,” Tag unexpectedly ordered. “Oh, what do clothes and a nursery frieze matter? Prepare to be a mother.”

“You dare to say that to me?” her “roughneck” eyebrow towering above its mate.

“Someone must say it.” Tag took her hands and tried to quiet her. “You are a bundle of nerves and phobias and whims. You’ll run amuck unless you take yourself in hand. Can’t you see how different it will be? We’ll have a new incentive—you’ll want me to work in earnest,” his eyes were so sincere that Gloria was impressed.

“Then you call it a wasted year?” she asked.

“No, I’ve tried out your viewpoint—that was worth while,” Tag made himself say. “Now we have someone’s else viewpoint to consider, someone who is going to mean the most of all. He’ll be hopelessly spoiled, won’t he?” he added happily.

She nodded. “You’ll think of me only as his mother—not your wife.”

“Wrong. I’ll think of you as just Gloria.”

Mollified, she leaned against his arm. “Mama will be the problem. She’ll fuss over him so. I don’t mind her fussing over me—but not over my child. She’ll have to learn to keep her hands off. She’ll quarrel with nurses if she hears him cry and try to buy him the King of Rome’s cradle. As for me,” shrugging her shoulders, “I can’t tell how I’ll feel. I’m not experiencing any miracle of motherhood so far. I’m irritable and my back aches. I can’t tear around as I’d like. All at once you seem a trifle freckled and your nose decidedly queer. I never minded before. But I do hope he will resemble only himself. Please don’t be solemn and consider me as sacred. This same thing has happened to a great many people. You’re like mama—hovering over me until I want to harness black bulls and drive off into the clouds. She nearly died when I was born so she feels justified in having dreams and premonitions—you know the sort of old woman thing. She thinks I may have the poor taste to die. As if I could when life is interesting. The only time I’d die—just plain die—would be when I was bored or poor or toothless. Then whole gallons of oxygen and fleets of nurses couldn’t save me. I’d just fade out——”

“I half believe you would,” he said thoughtfully, as he watched her dart about the room to find her chinchilla cape and her flat, black hat.

“I’m going to a Lenten lecture, old thing,” she added, kissing him hastily, “and the reason I’m going is to plan my spring clothes . . . the only time I can concentrate is when everyone around me is struggling to understand what is being said. It’s sort of a Yogi streak in me, I do believe. I can ‘remove my aura from the lecture course’—I read that in a book, Tag—and while the world’s authority on current events is telling us of congress’s capers, I can design an evening gown that makes an Arabian princess’s look like a Mother Hubbard . . . proud of me . . . thanks, so much. ’Bye.”

In June Gloria’s son was stillborn.

For the first time Tag and Min Beaumont came to a sympathetic understanding. After the fashion of the old country Min washed and dressed the tiny body with its faint fluff of bright hair, so like Gloria’s, her hot tears falling on the cold cheeks. Tag watched her.

“Thank you,” he said slowly when she had finished.

Upstairs in her orchid and white room, nurses sitting beside the bed and the satin shades drawn low, lay Gloria. She looked cold and tiny, too, the fluff of light hair brushed back from her face giving it a pathetic expression.

When they told her the child was dead she made no outcry. Indifferently, she looked at it when Tag brought the white case to the bedside.

“He was like you, darling,” he whispered, “try to be brave——”

She nodded. An expression of resentment or wilful indifference, he could not determine which, crossed her face. Her mother crowded forward, her red hands outstretched.

“Poor little Gloria,” she began, “why must this happen to you——”

(In a flash Gloria recalled that afternoon in the hotel. She was a long-legged child with black hair ribbons and her mother was wearing widow’s veils. Major had been killed and she had appealed to Min to know what hurt “way inside.” “Grief,” had been the answer. She had been promised there should be no more grief . . . now she was too tired to explain what she was thinking or that her tears were not merely from grief but from resentment. It was all wrong, she told herself with that clearness of vision which sometimes accompanies a crisis. A false reasoning, a false security—she was furious that she had been duped. Grief could and would crash through the tinsel paradise which her mother had clumsily constructed. This was a selfish sorrow. Neither Tag nor the dead boy occupied her thoughts as she turned her head away and asked to be alone. For the first time in her life, Gloria had experienced defeat. This thing called death to follow on the heels of the agony of giving life—it was unfair. Yet there was no redress, no compromise.)

Four days later Gloria had Tag telegraph the realtor who leased Berkshire properties that the Theodore Ainslie Grants would take the Runnymede estate, White Hill, for the season. White Hill was the most imposing of all the available places. It adjoined Burr Meredith's show-place, Forestvale.

At Forestvale

WHITE Hill was a delightful residence windscreened on three sides by silver birch trees. A sense of well being pervaded the estate. From the lodge-keeper's cottage to the sober, panelled rooms of the big house, rooms with quaint treasure cabinets and Chippendale chairs, windows clad in pale silk and floor cushions smelling like Araby the blest, there was an impression of age-old culture. The Runnymede family either having died or removed themselves to other corners of the earth, the executors were experimenting in renting this summer place, including family servants in the lease. Gloria's was the advantage of being first to invade its heretofore restricted atmosphere.

For the first time she admitted Duffy's supremacy by telegraphing for her to come and bring Enid for a fortnight. She flattered herself that she precluded any stage fright in handling the servants and meeting estate owners by telling Duffy of her great desire to rest, to devote herself to Tag. (Mercifully a sprained ankle detained Min in Rutledge.) With grudging admiration she watched Duffy's technique in arranging White Hill's schedule to suit the present tenants.

This summer Tag fancied that Gloria was to rest and forget her grief. But he was puzzled by her increasingly careless attitude, the refusal to discuss the past or plan for the future.

"She is still numb," he told his aunt one of the first mornings after Duffy's arrival. (Enid was in the garden picking iris.) "She has not realized all that it means. I want her to get through this summer with as little excitement as possible. She's been tearing about like mad for years. This place is Bagatelle House in a rural setting _____"

"And a jolly balance at the banker's," flung in Duffy grimly.

"Right. But it will make Gloria love Bagatelle all the more when she comes back to—Blaine Avenue."

"I hope so," was all Duffy said. "Now I'm off for Norway unless we are submarined. I'm sending Enid to Maine. The Stevensons are coming with me and they've invited Enid to look out for their brood at Old Orchard; rather a nice vacation if you ask me."

"Is it?" Tag questioned. "Enid always draws some such spot."

Duffy shrugged her shoulders. "What would you have her do? Stay alone—"

work at the Beaumont bakeries?"

"God forbid," Tag walked the length of the serious old room. "Only it seems such a stupid existence, always sleeping on the third floors of rich people's houses. Why not stay here? Gloria is sure to be dismal once I'm gone and she can't fill the place with house guests. She'll have a nervous break if she tries the last . . . I wish Dodo were here. Dodo gets along with Gloria."

"Dodo's better off in France," Duffy's strange, golden eyes looked towards Burr Meredith's lodge. But Tag did not notice the glance.

"Old Dodo's doing her bit the best she knows how . . . I miss her. I miss a lot of things," he dropped into a chair in dispirited fashion.

"You're the one to rest," Duffy's foot was tapping in characteristic fashion. "You are the one who is worn out—done out by all of it."

"I'd like to stay here with her, just we two," he confessed with a return of boyish enthusiasm. "What a setting in which to be alone with the one you love. I believe I'll do as she says, soldier at the office, run off for six day week-ends. She needs me. She'll be herself at the end of such a season—her real self, Duffy."

"But remember you must go back to Blaine Avenue and Min Beaumont in October," Duffy reminded. "No, Tag, never neglect business, not even for Gloria."

Enid was coming in, her arms filled with blossoms. She hesitated in appropriately shy fashion. "Am I interrupting? I'm looking for huge jars, if you please—blue, if possible, and red for a second choice. Aren't these gorgeous?" Her braids of light brown hair were becomingly disordered and when she held out a blossom for Tag's inspection he noticed how clear and shining were her eyes, how well she wore the rose-colored muslin. What a shame Enid must be exiled as housekeeper—governess for the Stevenson kids . . . what a shame no one introduced her to the right man. How Enid revelled in such a house as this, how she became it—yet, the next instant, she was pointing out a side window and saying in her innocent drawl:

"How well Gloria knows how to rest—yet be diverted!"

Following her direction, Tag and Duffy turned to see Gloria perched on the neck of a weatherbeaten gargoyle—an intriguing Gloria in a brief scarlet frock with wistful eyed monkeys painted about its hem while a dado of angel fish went swimming around her black felt turban. Her boots were strands of red satin and stripes of gray suède woven crisscross and fastened with tassels of crimson. As she raised one hand to adjust the turban there sparkled a bracelet of superbly cut square diamonds, Min's consolation gift for her child's bereavement.

Lounging carelessly on the haunches of a companion gargoyle was Burr Meredith in tennis flannels and a six weeks' growth of beard which lent a savage and

altogether distinctive appearance.

Annoyed—not by Gloria, but by Enid’s murmur and his own unexplainable resentment—Tag turned to hunt for the needed flower jars, remarking how splendid it was that the Burr Merediths would be near at hand. As he rummaged in pantries and cupboards, summoning the housekeeper from her morning ordering, Tag was telling himself that he was several kinds of a damned fool. Why resent Burr’s acquaintance with his wife? Why experience pangs of alarm and disappointment only to be followed by a sense of scorn as to the situation? It was time he went back to work, his mouth drooping into a bitter smile as he pictured his inconsequential return to the consequential office.

Meanwhile Gloria was flattering herself that she had used the sixth sense which every woman fancies she possesses concerning this fascinating man. She had solved Dodo’s infatuation—it was nothing to have gone running off to France about or to spend years in being wretched and aloof. Burr was a super-man; one could not judge him from ordinary viewpoints. His was an independent schedule. Gloria believed that she, too, was of the super-breed which was one reason for their mutual attraction. Dodo had made a god of him. The god, like all gods, had been pleased to be worshipped. Thereupon Dodo expected the god to decry all other worshippers and devote himself to her. This was impossible—just as Gloria sometimes felt it was impossible to think only of Tag, who had done as she wished at every turn and who was a bit tiresome because of his docility! Really, Dodo had made a great fool of herself over this man; Gloria was going to write a frank letter and tell her to come home, realizing that a man like Burr could not be expected to take any young thing seriously—at least no young thing like *Dodo*, absurdly monogamous and idealistic and rather plain of face. Good experience for Dodo to have known Burr and to have benefited by his brilliancy. But to expect him to re-order his life and marry her—Gloria laughed out loud. Meredith was telling a hunting story and Gloria’s laugh came at the one point at which most women shuddered. It surprised and pleased him. She was a beautiful little beast, he decided—and came over to share her gargoyle as he finished the tale.

Gloria continued to analyze the situation: Burr was mysterious and indefinite besides being handsome in his gypsy way. There was an occasional flash of something both rugged and coarse, a defiant something which disarmed critics and charmed friends. She recalled rumors about Burr’s grandmother, a mustachioed old lady who smoked a pipe when the family was not on guard. She had been a Basque girl who had captured Burr’s grandfather while making his “grand tour.”

Gloria wondered just why Burr married Alice Ransom, a pale, devout girl who

had developed into a paler, more devout woman devoting herself to missionaries on home-leave? What was the bond? Was it unsuspected weakness which might be indicated by his closely-set eyes and rounded chin? Had the pale, sharp-featured woman unexpected strength when Burr's infidelities became a trifle too flaunting even for a wife to ignore?

The Meredith situation had always interested Gloria; now it presented a new angle of life. Hitherto she had been content, even absorbed in having every sort of flapper attention and possession which her mother and Tag could give her. She had not grown up, she decided, laughing again at some unexpected point of the gruesome tale. Now that she had borne a dead son and turned away her face from its tiny coldness—she was grown up! She had refused to dwell upon this incident. To Tag and her mother it remained an unfair tragedy. Witness the renting of White Hill and the square cut diamond bracelet—offerings to appease Gloria's grief. Since she could not explain it, Gloria chose to consider it as an incident. An incident which had effected her maturity. No one suspected this but herself, and perhaps this man Burr.

She had come to White Hill a tired and more than usually exquisite little person with an inexhaustible wardrobe and a restless desire for diversion. She had no wish for house-parties of Rutledge friends. They, too, seemed immature. Something about this grave mansion and her tired, restless heart turned her from former pastimes. Later, perhaps, when she went back to town. For now, the prim gardens, and the unexplored forest beside Burr's lodge, both soothed and flattered. As she kept telling herself that she had grown up, she kept thinking of Tag, of how she could make him do whatever she wished . . . but she could not persuade this amiable ogre beside her to spare the life of a song bird if he otherwise decreed . . . or could she? What a lark to pit oneself against such a personality . . . silly Dodo, how little she had known of life!

"That's too precious for words," was her tribute when his story ended.

He gave a harsh laugh. "You superior blonde Nordic, you haven't even listened. You're planning some new recklessness."

"Perhaps. I adore being reckless. Don't you?"

"It's my life," he admitted, standing up and stamping on the gravel path.

"Is Alice reckless?" asked Gloria with sudden daring.

"Only in the matter of religion," his smile made Gloria wonder how even a pale, devout woman could endure such scorn. "She's come on a little since we married; she no longer considers having ice cream delivered on Sundays a direct insult to the Almighty. Come and have lunch with me," he broke off suddenly. "She's at a Bible

conference and won't be back for days . . . inspect my lair or don't you dare?" Looking at the windows of White Hill where Duffy's figure was outlined against the glass.

Gloria sprang to her feet. "How silly! I'd adore to—I'll run in and tell them what I'm about to do——" as she spoke she was conscious that she must appear immature. She felt as if he were amused but not impressed. It angered her—just when she was positive that she had matured and her super-powers were about to find expression. She would prove a match for Burr. She might not have hunted in the Himalayas or sailed north poleward, made infamous love to noted beauties or entertained royalty at a Scottish shooting box—but she was Gloria, she ended in innocent conceit! Being Gloria Beaumont, she could *do* anything that she wished. Up until now it had read: being Gloria Beaumont, she could *have* anything that she wished.

She told the Runnymede butler that she was lunching at Forestvale and ignored any surprise which flickered across his withered face. Rejoining Burr, they struggled through the brush which separated the two places. He had left it as wild as his wife and the Runnymedes would permit—and he had not been back in two seasons. At one place the tassels of Gloria's boots were torn off by thorns. She paused with helpless coquetry while Meredith swung her into his arms and carried her triumphantly up the steps and into the living-room with its fur rugs and antlered walls, its collection of fire arms and Burr's concert grand piano.

Having deposited her on a divan, he stood looking down and enjoying her discomfiture. "White Hill has the atmosphere of tiaras and sables," he said while she rearranged her hair. "So tremendously correct. This place has an aura of saddle horses and bacon being cooked outdoors. Alice hates it. She has a pale, dotted-Swiss room or two of her own and, thank God, comes only for the week-end. She should have married some respectable merchant and been exiled in the suburbs to rave over 'our radishes'——" he turned to pour out a stiff drink of whisky. "She is my one non-essential possession," he added as he rumped up his hair with his strong, heavy-veined hands, his eyes still laughing at her.

"Essential in no way?" questioned Gloria rather flatly, wondering what she ought to say. This unexpected frankness in Burr disarmed her.

"Oh, to remove cuff links before the laundry man calls," he added, sitting at the piano and beginning to play.

"What is that?" she asked, unconsciously rising and coming closer as the chords rumbled on.

"Sarcasme. Three sharps for the right hand and five flats for the left—sounds like

starting a Ford, doesn't it?" When he laughed, he threw back his head and his strong, white teeth seemed to bite the air.

Gloria was even more disarmed. "Stop playing and talk to me," she commanded.

"I am playing whenever I talk to you," he corrected, rumbling on in a minor key.

"You are rude. I shall go home unless you change," she threatened.

"Do. I really planned on lunching alone. I don't know why I decided to run off with you. One time you gave a party and I happened in. Someone asked me what I'd wish for and I said I'd like a spare hour a day and you demanded what I'd do with it. I told you that I did not dare say . . . probably you've forgotten all about it," another tremendous thump at the bass. "But I remembered just in time to steal you away from that damned proper house you've snobbishly rented and bring you here and feast on you while you feast on Wing Lo's luncheon . . . you can't run away for that spare hour. I've put a spell upon you," he finished Sarcasme with a surprisingly gentle chord.

Gloria turned to go. "You are impossible."

"So are you. That is why you will stay," he did not rise. "We are two of a kind. It's great fun to have a spare hour."

Gloria hesitated. "Why am I impossible?" she demanded.

"Because you are going to demand something of life besides the obvious—only no one has had the sense to suspect it. You are going to be disappointed all along the way—and yet keep on demanding. My dear, I warn you—but you won't take heed. Stop demanding anything but the obvious," he rested his arms on the keyboard and smiled. Burr knew what lines to speak.

Gloria stayed for luncheon. It was carelessly served in the rough living-room by Wing Lo, Burr's devoted celestial. It was a delectable meal—crabs' legs and shrimps in stiff mayonnaise bordered by tiny lima beans, anchovy rolls, halves of broiled chicken, creamed hominy and peas with glazed fruit and cordials for dessert.

Burr was hungry and he ate as if he were alone. It was a novel experience to watch him tear into his food and ignore her wants, pausing to drink a glass of wine as a toast and finally to lean back and smoke a fierce looking cigar in an absurd carved holder weighted by nymphs and dolphins.

"You stayed," he reminded.

"I never refuse a novelty," was her defense.

"You interest me," he admitted as he puffed at his cigar. "Your type seldom does," flecking the ash in approved villain style.

Gloria's temper burst its bounds. "You are the rudest man I have ever known,"

she began, “and a cad besides. Do you realize that your affairs are town talk? As Dodo’s sister-in-law, I have taken it upon myself to——”

His rollicking laugh stopped her. “Just what have you taken upon yourself? Poor little Dodo wouldn’t realize things; was a weird little thing. What’s she doing, strumming her way through the dugouts or something like that?”

Gloria’s face was an expressionless mask, the first hint of an approaching tantrum. “You broke her heart,” she accused. “Come, admit that you are proud of it. You’ve broken many hearts only to crawl back to your wife when trouble threatened,” she was amazed by the change in his face. The strength and swarthinness of his rumored Basque ancestor left it and there remained the pallor of a coward with furtive eyes and a quivering, protesting chin. In another instant Gloria wondered whether she had imagined this. Burr was begging her to continue her tirade, daring her to, challenging her with epigrams.

“What is your scheme of things?” Gloria demanded.

“As long as I have enough money—to break the ten commandments. When I lack the money, to abolish them!”

“Why remain married to a woman who is essential only to remove cuff links before the laundry man calls?” the scorn in Gloria’s voice would have surprised Duffy.

“Why? Because one can become used to anything if it is about long enough—even rubber plants or whining women . . . see here, Gloria, let’s drop sparring and admit that we’re in love! I’ve put a spell upon you and you cannot escape,” as he spoke she recalled Dodo’s very words. She shivered. The rough room was somehow sinister, she wished that Wing Lo would stop shuffling in and out for the dishes, that they would go back to old White Hill and find Duffy and Enid and Tag. Yet she stayed.

“I don’t love you—you merely interest me, I’m beginning to be afraid of you. Does that satisfy you?” she flung out.

“You do love me. You interest me and I’ve been afraid of you for a long time,” his voice softened. The swashbuckling manner became deferential. “You have been ill, haven’t you?” he said. “You look so frail.”

Gloria played her trump card, despising herself at the same time. Once and for all she must bring this man to her feet. Then she would be positive that she was “grown up.”

“I have lost a little son,” she said simply.

Burr’s face was a study in sentimental tenderness. “A son,” he repeated softly. “You seem such a tiny girl. . . . Gloria, I would give my kingdom—and anyone’s else

that I could steal—to have a son . . . but she is sterile,” an ugly, thwarted expression replaced the one of tenderness.

Gloria felt rather exalted. “I—I can’t talk of it,” she faltered; it occurred to her that she, who had so consistently refused to think of it, could utter no pertinent statement.

“Of course not,” he took her hand, the hand with the diamond bracelet on its wrist. As he did so she was thrilled, stimulated. “But you will have another son some day, even if you are but a tiny girl.”

“No,” shaking her head. “I never want another child.”

“You would have a son if you were my wife,” he said with the same unexpected frankness. “My son would live; Tag is like Alice—pale-blooded and brittle. Pah!” standing up, he selected a pipe from a nearby rack.

Gloria remained at the dismantled luncheon table. Being grown up was rather terrifying. She lacked the shelter and the nursery supervision of her mother and Tag. This man was right—his son would have lived. She would have been forced to bear sons for this man, no matter what her wishes. . . .

“I have longed for a son,” he said again in a sharp staccato voice. “Always—and you have borne and lost one, you odd, lovely midge! I wonder why I have remembered you, why I came to Forestvale when they said you would be my neighbor. Do you wonder why? Not even the beginning of a wonder?”

Again Gloria felt supreme.

Burr swept on: “I have loved a great many women, Gloria. I shall go on loving them until the end of time—unless—unless——” he turned and kicked away a blackened log in the fireplace.

She came tiptoeing close to him. “Unless what?”

“Unless I meet the woman who can bear me a son—oh, I haven’t any right to talk to you this way—at least, not to-day . . . but later, later,” he said as if to himself. He turned and took her hands in his, crushing them until she winced—yet smiled.

“I’m going to send you home,” he said, “I don’t want you to come here again or go sit in the garden and tempt me to break my boundary lines—not unless you want me to care for you a great deal. Remember, I am a married man, a firstwater cad, as you concretely expressed it. . . . Probably I have spoiled many lives—but I don’t give a continental damn. I’m married to a gentlewoman whose shoe I am unworthy to tie and I despise her and I tell her so and anyone else who will listen to me. I drink and gamble and rage when things don’t please me. I’m a savage, a cheat, a visionary fool by turn. I’m cursing fate because I met you. I’ve remembered you ever since the summer in Rutledge. I didn’t like you overly—only you were so exquisite. I listened

to the chaff about your mother and the bakery and the way you walked roughshod over that pale-hearted husband. I agreed about it. I'm a gossip, too. Men are—but they have managed to keep alive the myth that they are otherwise. I'm a spendthrift and rather cruel and a coward about toothaches! I prefer prize fights to art exhibits and the follies to opera. I choose an African hunt for a vacation and making love to married women for my serious purpose in life. Gloria, the only decent thing about me is my desire for a son!—Oh, I want that son—Now run away as fast as you can unless you decide that you want me to run after you—and catch up!”

Like a flash she was gone, laughing at him, blowing kisses as she darted out the door. Safe in the tangles of the little forest she paused to tell herself that life was just beginning.

The New Toy

UNWILLINGLY Tag returned to town. He expected Gloria to protest his brief stay, his seeing Duffy sail and putting Enid on her train for Maine. But she was evasive, rather indifferent regarding his plans. She preferred to send for her mother and ignored the hints of friends to be invited down.

“You won’t play around too much, will you?” Tag asked the night before he left.

“Not at all. I’ve endless books and How Cum needs endless exercise. I may have a saddle horse later. There’s the club if it’s rainy——” but she spoke with an effort.

Tag reproached himself for having planned to go so soon. “I could stretch it out until Monday,” he offered.

“You mustn’t,” she interrupted lightly. “You see, you have had your way after all! I’m resigned to being the wife of a busy, preoccupied man,” when she laughed Tag wanted to stop his ears. There was mockery in the sound.

Tag had been telling himself that being a well-bred moron was an easy, almost excusable rôle when thrown into present-day conflict with the “new” Americans, Americans robbed of their birthright due to their parents’ glorified inferiority complexes. Why think when to laugh made one much more popular? Why try to serve when being smart won coveted invitations? These “new” Americans were taught to go through life as tourists rather than pilgrims. Therein was the telling difference! The tourist expects pleasure and gain from each point he visits while the pilgrim pursues experience and knowledge, offering a gift, perhaps a sacrifice. Gloria felt self-justified in being a tourist; Tag had been taught to be something of a pilgrim—a dilatory, light-hearted one, perhaps, but none the less sincere.

So he went back to town to drop in at his superfluous office and to tell Min Beaumont the pleasing details of Gloria’s summer setting, to see Duffy and Enid off and, later, Min Beaumont en route for White Hill. Then he turned a cold shoulder on the Blaine Avenue house, taking refuge at the club despite Jerry Fisher’s tattling presence.

Once more Tag determined to make himself essential at the plant, prove to Gloria that he was right in placing business before play. No matter how he loathed the business with its claptrap methods, there must be some part of it which he could improve, perhaps create, become allied to in a manner which should cause even

Maisie Jackson to be impressed. Perhaps impressing Maisie Jackson would be a greater feat than impressing Gloria, he admitted humorously.

Meanwhile Min Beaumont journeyed to the Berkshires and became established in an imposing front chamber of White Hill. She was more florid than usual from the heat of the journey and less talkative due to the impressiveness of her new surroundings.

"I came as soon as I could, honey," she announced as Gloria settled herself for a series of confidences and requests. "This ankle certainly laid me up; it was a little touch of rheumatism, too. It was just as well as long as Tag's family were here," glancing about as if seeking definite results of Duffy's stay. "I don't see why you wanted this gloomy place. A shore hotel would be a lot better. And you haven't asked anyone down here—not a soul! Now, honey, tell me if you feel well? You're not keeping anything from me, are you? Tag says you are tired but you don't look it. Whatever will you do all summer in this—this barn?" Min's small, shrewd eyes peered into her child's face.

Gloria tilted her head, the "roughneck" eyebrow towering above its ladylike twin. She began flying about the room in a pretense of putting her mother's things to rights. In her pastel-shaded frock she seemed a dancing, golden-haired shadow. Presently she settled again at the foot of Min's bed. It had been the wisest thing to put Min to bed for the first day or so—the servants would become used to her in that time.

Min disapproved of White Hill more strongly than she had dared to say. Although impressed by it, she felt it suffered by comparison with Blaine Avenue. Min's ideas of happiness and luxury were infantile. She wanted Gloria to have square cut diamonds and Berkshire estates and drama leagues but for herself, to be quite honest, five pound boxes of assorted chocolates done up in stiff, shiny papers, pink satin negligées to match pink satin quilts and pink satin overdrapes, matinées on the order of "Moths" and "As In a Looking Glass," mink coats and excessively aigretted hats, beaded dresses, card parties with substantial prizes, summer hotels frequented by theatrical celebrities, singing festivals and masquerade balls—such things as these composed Min's notion of an earthly paradise.

"For the first time in my life I am in love," Gloria announced, curious to see the effect of her words.

"Yes, I'm afraid you are," sighed Min. "And he is a worse case than you. No matter what anyone says about Tag, he adores you and has done——"

"But it is not Tag," she spoke so distinctly that after she had finished there seemed to be remnants of her voice floating about the startled atmosphere.

“It isn’t Tag?” repeated Min, her series of double chins quivering like a chiming dinner gong. “Who have you been seeing down here?”

“I merely was in love with love when I married Tag. But I shan’t tell him until I’m positive of it; I mean to be kind during the whole readjustment. I only hope he was in love with love, too. Don’t be provincial, mama; people can’t expect always to love, honor and obey as the prayerbook suggests. I’m not going to be unhappy because Tag expects me to love him. You can’t make yourself love someone unless you really do—can you?”

“Who is it?” demanded Min hoarsely.

“Burr Meredith.” Gloria’s head turned in the direction of Forestvale.

“But he is married,” gasped Min, “his poor little wife——”

“Don’t, I pray! His ‘poor little wife’ is impossible. Oh, she suspects nothing. She was here yesterday for a contribution for some church that had been playing around with a tornado. I was generous. I just said that I intended to be kind. But Alice is out of Burr’s horizon. Why, mama, haven’t you seen her?”

“She was General Ransom’s daughter,” Min said weakly, “a very sweet girl _____”

“True enough. But she should have gone into a nunnery, not Burr Meredith’s house. When other people make mistakes it is not my fault.” Gloria was prepared for a spirited argument. She had never hesitated in asking her mother for anything. But this was different. She felt obliged to pave the way, argue her side of the case. In her own mind she was a trifle uncertain as to the outcome—as to Burr’s stability. In the few weeks since she had run away from Forestvale—blowing kisses as she went—Burr had run after her and caught up as he had threatened. During this time Gloria had experienced a sense of conquest, triumph, of making this fascinating savage plead for an hour’s extra time, a smile, the promise of a kiss. They toyed with emotion, these two, Gloria in impulsive, neophyte fashion and Burr with deft skill. His skill was tempered by romantic interest; it had been a long time since he had met anyone whom he longed to run off with forever and ever.

Glimpsing this, Gloria had assumed a great deal more. Tag became a discarded toy, an immature individual whose love was irksome because of its very sincerity. She was quick to reflect Burr’s careless appraisal of persons and things—Duffy, Bagatelle House, Rutledge, all the world and the worlds to come for that matter. His was a personality which dominated or destroyed. Gloria fancied that she would reverse affairs, she would dominate and develop Burr, be the means of his achieving fame. At least it was a colorful adventure conducted within the confines of proper old White Hill and picturesque Forestvale—with hardworking Tag writing daily and

Burr's eternally smiling wife slipping about the countryside for church donations . . . it was a great lark.

"You can't be in love with a married man unless the world knows of it and judges you," Min warned. "Burr Meredith always has flirted and run home to his wife afterwards. If you must fall in love with someone else besides Tag——"

"Mama, there is nothing to be said about it. I love Burr; he loves me. We must belong to each other."

Min raised up from her pillows in a last protest. "Do you mean divorces and scandal——"

"Probably. Then life—his sort of life—New York and Paris and Calcutta—oh, I'm fed up with Rutledge and Tag's funny sort—Blaine Avenue with its rose curtains and silvered doorknobs! I want Burr's world. I adore his ruthless way of just breaking life open to see what it's made of—I never should have married Tag——"

"I always thought that. You should have done better," Min interpolated. Gloria swept on:

"Mind, there's nothing definite as yet. But he loves me. Our love is—different," as she spoke an uncomfortable memory of Dodo disturbed her peace of mind. Dodo talking of her hopeless love, preparing to slip off to France. Still, there was no disloyalty to Dodo—that had been a schoolgirl's crush. There was no disloyalty to Burr's wife nor to Tag—not if she loved Burr and wanted him.

"How different?" asked Min weakly.

"It is mature—and colorful—and—oh, mama, one word of Burr's means more to me than everything that Tag ever said. I want Burr; I must belong to him," she insisted in the same way that she had demanded toys and new frocks, parties and ponies, a place for Tag at the Beaumont bakeries. "And I want Burr's son!"

"Have you talked of—of *that*?" Min's red forefinger pointed at her accusingly.

"Why not? There is nothing to cry boo about. As soon as I am free, Burr will ask for his release."

"She'll never give it," Min prophesied.

"Then he'll take it; he'll go to Paris and establish a residence. He said so."

"Then you have planned; that was a fib you told mama," Min was grave.

"Oh, what of it? We haven't made cut-and-dried plans. In a single hour, if it is the right hour, one can change everything in his world and the chap's next to him, too. I want to stay here until fall. I'll stay in town until after the holidays. You are going to be a dear and help me, aren't you?"

"Tag may fight," Min was trying to bring every argument to bear although she knew that it was a losing cause. Had her child only demanded another rope of pearls

or a house boat on the Nile, anything which writing a check could satisfy and bring to pass. But this intricate, daring, uncertain thing—Min winced.

“You may change your mind,” she said. “This may be only a crush. You’ve been so unhappy, my darling, you’ve run off here and hidden and seen no one. It hasn’t been wholesome.”

“I never forgot Burr. All the summer he was in town I wanted to see more of him only I didn’t let myself realize it. He felt exactly the same way. No, it is fate—it is what I want.” (Fate and “what I want” being one and the same thing.)

“I think that he ought to talk to me—like Tag did,” Min began to admire Tag’s method of winning her daughter.

“Talk to you? My dear, Burr wouldn’t ask God for a favor. He’d just up and take it. We’re not children and this is no crime. People have married, unmarried and remarried very happily. You want a grandson, mama. You said so. We’ll never live in Rutledge but we’ll give Rutledge something to talk about. Can’t you hear them—at Duffy’s courtyard teas? Once I was actually awed by her Gothic room! Why, mama, Burr roars about the Gothic room. He gives me a different perspective on everything, makes me see that I’m a pale little silly to waste my time hobnobbing with Rutledge when there’s the world to explore, when I’m young and——” she hesitated.

“Beautiful,” supplemented Min obligingly. “But, Gloria, how do you know Burr means all he says? Men are often cheats. How do you know you’ll be happy? You have had your own way with Tag?”

“I can have my own way with Burr because I adore his ways,” Gloria persisted. “I’m awfully tired now and to argue pro and con is ruination to any disposition. I’m no moron, neither is Burr. I don’t want to rush. I don’t hope to marry Burr before another year—possibly more. But our minds are all set,” the glint in her blue eyes warned Min that further argument would be dangerous.

“Must we go to Nevada?” Min asked wistfully. “Isn’t that the place where divorces don’t take very long?”

“It is. We’ll be away only a few months.” Gloria consulted her watch. “I’m due below—Burr is coming over. Alice is back in Boston . . . well, what if it isn’t quite all right? Are you so stupid that you can’t grasp it? Don’t you see that it is life—it is *me*? I want Burr. I am not going to be a timid martyr in this day and age——”

Before Min could answer Gloria had rushed over to kiss her and had gone downstairs. She hummed gaily as her sharp little heels clicked over the polished floors. She wondered if she had convinced her mother as to the seriousness of her purpose. Min wondered if she had dreamed the last half hour—or had Gloria

confided someone's else experiences and desires . . . true to form, Min rose and tiptoed down the backstairs. She was not overly familiar with the house and collided with a loving housemaid and gardener's helper before she reached the security of the drawing-room portières.

Peering through them, she saw Gloria listen as Burr improvised at the piano—one of his thundering yet harmonious improvisations trailing into unexpected melodies.

"You are lovelier than ever," he was saying as he played. "I wonder how long I'll think of you every minute and curse time because I can't come over here and pick you up bag and baggage——"

"I shall put you to the test," said Gloria with self-assurance. "I'm going to send you away—for all of a week. You are neither to call nor telephone nor write not even if you're just over the way. I want to see how much I'll miss you," she danced away from the piano.

"I accept the challenge," Burr finished his rhapsodies with a meek little chord. "When does my banishment begin?"

"Now," she announced, amused at his surprise.

"I must kiss you good-bye," he began, coming closer to her.

"I want you to," was her naïve admittance.

"Good-bye," he said, holding her head back and bending deliberately to capture her lips. "You are going to hate this week; so am I. You'll try to hurry it up; so will I. I love you, you beautiful little beast. Do you love me—an ugly, huge one? It isn't a summer affair, is it? I'm wishing to be clear and free. I'd make you my wife this night if that were so. I'd show you whether I could be banished for a week," his deep laugh seemed to go rumbling all about the staid drawing-room and through the portières into Min's horrified ears; it was like the boom of a warning gun. "I'm going to get free as soon as I can, Gloria, I'm damned if I won't this time. I must have you. You've never been in love before—never," punctuating his words with kisses. "It has taken you by surprise—I've never been in love with any woman so much that I wanted a divorce; that I was willing to fight for her in order that she bear me a son—now do you understand, you precious manikin?"

Min turned away. For the first time she felt that eavesdropping was a shabby trick. As she did so she realized that Gloria was spellbound, that she would do anything Burr Meredith wished her to do . . . poor Tag . . . poor little dead son of Tag . . . and poor Gloria!

Creaking back to her room, Min began planning Gloria's next triumph. She would take her to Nevada and finance the thing so superbly that Rutledge would be

ignorant of what was occurring, ignorant until the moment was at hand when Gloria was to become Mrs. Meredith . . . she would see that Tag had some stock of his own when he was turned loose, free to return to his tadpoles and pollywogs.

Later that evening Gloria stole into her mother's room, innocent of Min's trespassing. In her nightgown and wrapper she seemed a startled child.

"Are you awake, mama?" she asked softly.

"Yes, honey—didn't you have any dinner?"

"I wasn't hungry. I sent Burr away for a week—I wanted to know if he really cared and if I'd feel frantic for the week to end. Well, an hour ago he came climbing up at my window like a schoolboy and a brigand all in one. He announced that the week had ended!" she laughed hysterically. "And I said, 'thank the saints' and he said, 'thank me instead' and we went into the garden and planned. Promise that you will stand by and help me tell Tag. Poor Tag! Oh, mama, it is wonderful to be loved by a man like Burr but it is terrible too. It is like—grief," she flung out almost in accusation.

"Like grief," repeated Min, thinking of Jules and her monotonous unhappiness. "But it shan't be grief, honey. What has to be has to be . . . we'll make things come right. As Mrs. Burr Meredith you'll do him credit if——"

"If what?" Gloria sensed the unfinished sentence. "Oh, I know, you worry about Alice. But she can be managed. Burr has never been in earnest before; he has never wanted to marry someone else. This is his great love."

"Kiss me good night," said Min weakly. "Why couldn't you have met him first, you poor little girl?"

"I'm a happy woman," Gloria corrected. "I'm grown up. And if I had met Burr first he might not have cared as he does now——" She was conscious of a strange debt to Tag and the little dead son. "What's the use of supposing, mama, when you've everything in the world before you? It'll make a great stir, won't it?" she added in matter-of-fact tones. "As much of a stir as I have ever made!"

Tag Learns of the New Toy

IT seemed best to invite house guests and to have Alice Meredith in for an occasional tea, to coax Tag to come for a fortnight while Burr unwillingly dragged himself to New York on business. Now that they had decided upon what they were to do, there was no use in letting sentimental romance muff it.

"I'm still surprised at my constancy," Burr would say during their hurried moments together, Min often acting as guard. "I still want you—want you more than anything else in the world," his conceit being as colossal as his charm.

Later he would add, "I wonder how we'll come out—will things break right for us? Now that I really want someone, am I going to have to lose out?"

Even among the quiet of the Berkshires there was a ripple of gossip concerning the affair. By September it had penetrated as far as Rutledge where Tag sweltered through the heat and wondered if his efforts to readjust the sugar usage were to count for anything in the eyes of the bakery directors.

The gossip reached Tag via Jerry Fisher who had been one of Gloria's first house guests. Jerry lost no time in announcing the rumor with a series of disconcerting haw-haws.

"She has lost her head over Burr Meredith," he announced. "They say he is harder hit than usual. What an asinine trick, Tag, to let beauty go alone and unafraid for a summer next to Forestvale. What were you thinking of?"

No matter what Tag thought, he proved equal to Jerry. "Yes, Burr has played with Gloria all summer; mighty good of him, she needed new interests. They've tramped and ridden and played golf and bridge and it has been a bully thing. But I'm afraid you have forgotten that Gloria has a head on her shoulders——"

"Of course she has—that is just it. Burr usually picks 'em without brains or else so young that the brains haven't had a chance to sprout. I hear this may be a bona fide thing—eh—what?" Jerry's round face with the yellow, protruding teeth seeming a malicious cartoon.

"What do you mean by 'going to be a bona fide thing'?" asked Tag quietly.

"I mean, old man, if you must have it that Burr's dead in love with her. She is apt to divorce you and have him ditch poor old Alice. You know, he usually runs back to Alice but with Gloria——"

Tag's fist doubled. Then he controlled himself. "Gloria went to the Berkshires

because the baby died,” he reminded in deliberate, angry accents. “Burr is past forty. I think you are running out of Broadway banter, Jerry. You’ve such a habit of talking slime that you forget when you are speaking of a friend’s wife.”

The rest of the afternoon, while Maisie Jackson took his dictation about fairness in sugar conservation and the sun streamed through the windows without intermission, Tag kept seeing Gloria’s face when she had said good-bye, the becoming little pout which appeared when he mentioned her return to Rutledge.

“This has been such a wonderful playtime,” she had told him. “I don’t want to come back and be a prosperous bourgeoisie. I’ve learned to adore White Hill and its quiet. I’ve hated it when we had a party. I believe I could go live in a forest—if I had the right comrade.”

Foolishly, he had taken the compliment to himself, holding her close and whispering the tender things which sometimes won him a rare response. But she had been lack-lustre, rambling on about the bore of having to go to meetings of the town players and the art league, of hearing Duffy tell about Norway and the fortitude of the English and circumventing Min’s doing the drawing-room in green damask . . . It would be so stupid, Gloria anticipated, particularly when one planned to live Burr’s alluring sort of existence—to divorce one’s husband and scamper off to Cairo until the furor died down . . . to bear Burr’s child . . . no wonder that she seemed lack-lustre.

Going home that night Tag found a wire. Gloria and her mother were returning the next day. White Hill was being given up a month sooner than he had expected.

“Silly ass of a Jerry,” he murmured upon rereading the message.

But Min arrived without her child. Gloria’s maid accompanied her, a superior person laden with hat-boxes and wraps.

“Gloria decided to motor—at the last moment,” Min explained hastily. “Burr Meredith was driving here—something about his house, I think, so he offered to bring us. I can’t stand long motor trips, not even when you drive. It was a lovely way for her to come and I knew you’d be glad. They’re due around ten.”

Min flattered herself that she had covered the situation neatly. She began praising everything Tag said and had done, agreeing so glibly that he marvelled at her amiability. Min was sorry for Tag. She was apprehensive for Gloria. But it was too late to assert her authority or push her opinions. There had been nothing to do but to board the train while Burr swept Gloria into his powerful roadster and began burning up the road.

Min would have been more at ease had Burr secured his divorce first—then she would have whisked Gloria off to Nevada or Abyssinia if needs be. She resented

her child's dropping out of the sacred and inner Rutledge circle. Min's business sense told her that Burr was not putting up any collateral—memories of other women who disorganized their lives for men, who, in turn, regretted extremely but hid behind their wives' skirts, recurred to Min. She must put Gloria on her guard; she must not risk possible catastrophe. As for what would happen once Gloria was Mrs. Burr Meredith, that, too, was food for thought . . . even Gloria would not be unimpeachable in the eyes of a husband such as Burr. What was the hold Alice Meredith had maintained? Gloria would do well to discover—and copy—it. Back in town, old interests asserting themselves and new ones offering fresh pastimes, Gloria might gain a perspective of the thing, relegate it to the background, a summer's mad adventure . . . by turns, Min was hopeful and appalled. Above all she flattered herself that she was discreet.

It was midnight when Burr brought Gloria home. Tag was waiting for them, rather stilted in his greetings. Being tired, Gloria was glad to dismiss Burr; for once she did not urge a party.

"Good-bye," she said in such a matter-of-fact fashion that Tag's heart leaped.

"Good-bye," Burr answered in an impersonal tone.

Tag's heart leaped again; he resolved to have revenge upon Jerry.

Alone, Gloria started for her mother's room. "I've something to tell her," she said in answer to Tag's protest.

"But you left her only this morning," he insisted. "What happened—en route?" trying to laugh.

"Nothing—to my disappointment . . . I want to talk to her. I always go to mama whenever I come home."

"What would you do if the day came——" Tag began, in spite of himself. Then he tried to turn the matter into a joke. "I like your motoring home with a wild man and running away from me in favor of 'mama'. Don't you want to tell me things? I've lots to tell you. Some of it is business but most of it is to say how glad I am that you are back——"

"After I've seen mama," she said, patting his cheek and slipping away.

Tag waited in vain. With something akin to scorn he listened to her footsteps slipping into her room, the stealthy closing of the door and the turning of its lock. Rebuffed—perhaps not as puzzled as before—Tag went away.

In the morning his mother-in-law poured his coffee and showed a clumsy interest in his plans. Gloria had a bad headache, she was going to remain in bed. The drive had been too strenuous; Burr was reckless . . . so he thought that the firm ought to yield in the matter of more pay for the men—well, possibly . . . the common stock

was a hundred and ninety-five and the dividends nothing to be ignored . . . all the time Min talked, she looked at him in an unfamiliar, irritating way, as if she wished to say something nice but did not in the least know how. He shuddered lest she draw forth her check-book and make some absurd present. Without further confirmation Tag knew that Min sensed the rift between Gloria and himself, that while she would abet Gloria in whatever she might elect to do, her sympathies were with him . . . he was irritated that this was so. Confound the blundering woman—it was all her fault. He left the house to walk to his office, a recent habit of his, without so much as a backward glance at Gloria’s drawn shades. But the tantalizing image of her was with him all day, lying asleep in the middle of the great, lace-draped bed, her small, bright-haired, satiny-skinned self wrapped in a chiffony creation—a wilful, charming sleeping beauty!

Gloria barred her mother until afternoon. Then she sent for her to do some things for which even her maid had not sufficient skill—and to conclude their last conversation. Once and for all, Min must understand how final were her plans.

“It is just as I have said,” Min insisted while Gloria sipped her coffee. “If you want to be sure of Burr—and honey, I don’t know that it’s such a grand exchange after all—well, I don’t. Tag’s a coming young man, now that you’ve weaned him from his family. But if you want to be sure of Burr, make him get a divorce first . . . it’s only fair . . . or at least start getting one. You can’t tell what row that General’s daughter is going to kick up . . . she’s gone through pretty stormy times with Burr and still held him. Seems to me if she could successfully lose him, she ought to be content. He’s gone through a lot of money, Gloria, and I’m warning you now that I’ll leave your fortune in a trust fund. I’m not going to take chances with such a man . . . why, he’s apt to start out after breakfast and finance a revolution by lunch time . . . you don’t know what that would mean. You’ve always had everything you wanted. I don’t forget the New York days, when I worked at the Blenheim Hotel and——”

“Don’t begin ranting, mama. I know what to do. Don’t you suppose I know how much Burr loves me? I’m not afraid to put him to any test.” Gloria set aside her breakfast tray and sprang out of bed. “You and your bugaboos about his not wanting me hard enough to make a creature like Alice Meredith stand aside——”

“But have you any right?” murmured Min pathetically, “it breaks up two homes _____”

Gloria had slipped into her smart pink-and-black bathroom and was running the water. In another moment she was under the shower, white, glistening arms and legs waving at unexpected intervals.

“Who’ll oversee the overseer’s daughter,
While the overseer’s gone overseas——”

came floating out to Min.

Instead of paying her respects at Bagatelle House, as she had been invited to do, Gloria drove to the Beaumont offices with a fond belief that she was welcomed and appreciated by the staff “with whom she had once been a fellow-worker.”

Perhaps she was welcomed and appreciated. Any business routine is monotonous. In the midnight blue net embroidered with seed pearls, metal kid boots with jewelled buttons and her silver fox scarf, Gloria was a novel interruption.

Mr. Grant was at a conference, Maisie Jackson told her, taking note of her appearance for the benefit of her next creation. Would she wait? No, she could not call him for it was important and he had left word not to be disturbed. Petulantly, Gloria wandered about the offices, looking with disappointed eyes at the absence of the gold fish aquariums and the reappearance of honest-to-goodness window sills. The bedroom cretonnes in the shipping department had also vanished, so had the individual flower vases which she had placed on each desk and which tipped over at the rate of every other telephone call.

For a moment she became interested in what she felt needed doing. She must devote an afternoon or so to making the office the same individualistic place that she fancied she had created. Tag’s room was positively drab; even if she was going to marry Burr, she must see that he had new chairs and an individual ice-box. All officers of important companies ought to have individual ice-boxes. They were nothing short of marvelous!

Waiting for Tag her mood changed. Impatience overmastered her. Her mother’s words acted as a spur. Why not put Burr to the test? What sense in another Rutledge winter, a winter during which Madame Grundy would be given opportunities to shake her warning finger—for she did not intend to forego seeing Burr any more than Burr would forego seeing her. It was kismet, she summarized with characteristic sophistry—kismet—absolutely! Dodo, Tag, Alice were but pawns in the situation. Kismet—the word steadied her. It was really more up-and-up to tell Tag, to tell Alice Meredith, to see the thing through without delay. Only yesterday, during their drive, Burr had urged her to hasten.

“I’m shamefully old,” he admitted, “forty-three next June . . . do you realize that you’ll be tied to a selfish, adoring old man? But you are not thinking ahead, are you, darling? That is another wonderful thing in which we agree. . . .”

Forty-three! As if she associated birthdays with Burr. His personality was

beyond time limits. His “poetical, piratical, piggish” personality as he had quoted “I’m all three,” he insisted, “as you’ll soon enough discover . . . meantime, when can I see you? And, dammit, why did you make me bring you home all safe and sound?”

Yes, she had better tell Tag now. She was rehearsing her speech when the door opened and Tag came in swiftly.

“Hullo, I’d no idea——” he began, trying to be unconcerned. “This *is* a surprise—How are you, Mrs. Tag? You were a sleepy lady the last I heard. Trying to lure me away? I won’t be hard to win,” as he sat at his desk and fumbled among its papers. Gloria felt that it was merely a matter of breaking an engagement rather than a marriage; he seemed so boyish, so colorless.

“I must tell you something,” she began. “Will you lock your door for ten minutes so that we will not be interrupted——”

“Why not go home or to tea somewhere?” he suggested, still fumbling with the papers.

“No, I want to be businesslike; I’d rather stay here, if you please.” Gloria fancied that her dignity was unimpeachable. “You seem disturbed; I hope what I must say won’t make it too hard——”

Tag stopped arranging the papers and looked at her, his honest, gray eyes darkening with tenseness. “I am disturbed,” he admitted. “I’ve just resigned from the Beaumont Company. I don’t know how you will feel about it but I could not do otherwise. Oh, I’m not going back to tadpoles and pollywogs. You’ve put me on my mettle about becoming a commercial success. I don’t think I was meant for it but that’s neither here nor there. . . . I’ve resigned rather than be a catspaw for a dishonest, prospering syndicate just because my mother-in-law happens to own part of it. This has been brewing for some time. When we were first married I knew that I could not approve of what was being done. They knew it, too, so they saw that I remained in blissful and well-paid ignorance. You wanted me to play with you, become a clever dilettante, a man of art affairs. I almost believed that you had the thing dead to rights. I tried my hardest to obey. After the boy died and you went so far away from me—in many ways—I determined to make myself felt down here. I forced them to let me know what was being done. I declared myself on every issue that had to be decided. I encouraged this row, brought it to a head.” Tag’s scrawny self stiffened with determination. “I wanted them to scrap-heap certain plans and men. They would still pay fourteen per cent on their common stock. But they wanted eighteen per cent! At first they tried the ‘run away and play, sonny’ game with me—but they couldn’t put it over. I knew the facts. I knew what they ought to do. I told them that it was no case of cheap exposure—I’d just step out. Of course they didn’t

believe it; they thought that I would not dare!”

Gloria flushed and hated herself for so doing. This might have been a subject for a pitched battle a few months ago. Now it was inconsequential, delaying the subject nearest her heart.

“You are so foolish,” she murmured, “you poor shorn lamb! As if you could whitewash any syndicate whose common stock pays fourteen per cent! As if it mattered; my dear lad, don’t throw up your job even if——”

“You can’t make me change. I’ll find another job—in another business. I don’t care if it is concerned with pearls or pumpkin seeds. I’m going to go ahead in business. I can’t be a playmate as you suggested nor a pawn as your mother’s firm would have me. Now you know the best and worst of it, Gloria,” reaching for her hand. “Aren’t you just a little glad?”

“Why should I be? You’ve been most indiscreet. And Duffy will miss your salary.”

“Not when she knows what happened. Have you no confidence in me?” he pleaded. “Aren’t you rather glad that——”

“I don’t think that I care. Impersonally I’d like to see you stick to what I know is a splendid opportunity. No matter what happens between you and me, your job would not be imperilled——”

Gloria picked up a paperweight and began dropping it with nervous little thuds.

For a moment Tag ignored the answer. “I’ve just had word that Dodo is coming home. She’s been ill; did some foolish and heroic thing during an air raid. Just like her, isn’t it?”

“Is she?” Gloria frowned. She wanted to be away from Rutledge before Dodo should return. She wanted Burr to be away. Oh, for a magic, all-powerful wand that could erase in a moment the ties and obligations one wished to have erased and with another wave bring true one’s heart’s desires . . .

“Tag,” she began slowly, dropping the paperweight for the last time. “I am not in love with you any more; perhaps I never was in love. I think we have had a very—very marvellous year and a half of it,” it was going to be harder than she had fancied. “But I don’t believe that it is meant for us to spend our lives together. You see, this very thing—this abrupt resigning from mama’s plant almost proves it . . . you’d have to stay here if we were to remain married.”

“Why, may I ask?” the expression of his voice startled her.

“Why? Because mama, because I—why, you’d *have to*, Tag. It would be the thing to do. But I don’t want to remain married to you. I hope you are going to be sensible and nice about it and not start to drink or say bitter things. I’m not

frightened by the prospect of a divorce, are you? I'd be willing to give you one if you met someone you really loved . . . you see, we've tried it all out—even to the tie of a dead son. If that doesn't hold us, I'm sure that nothing ever would. It is just that you are not the permanent husband for me," falling back on flippancy instead of her rehearsed and dignified speech.

"Is it Burr?" Tag asked quietly.

"Um! I rather think so," still using flippancy to conceal unrest. "We—we rather think so."

"So I suspected. No, I didn't—to be honest. I suspected an affair. Burr is not the marrying sort. I thought that you had had a summer of Burr and would settle down and see the things that I'm fighting to achieve, to find myself in this pandemonium of money and morons. I was neither jealous of Burr nor fooled by your indifference. Burr isn't my sort; I'm not his. But I hope I'm fair enough to understand him. You are strangely innocent," the tenderness of his voice offset his words. "Yes, innocent in spite of all the things you do and say. You don't know life, Gloria; it could eat you up, I believe—like the wolf in Red Riding Hood. Your mother knew life so well that she conspired against your ever being introduced to it _____"

"You sound as if you pitied me," Gloria objected.

"Sometimes I do. People who have never been introduced to life——"

"That sort of talk is like newspaper syndicated sermonettes, all blah. I tell you I am glad, glad," she caught up the paperweight again. "As for Burr, I can't talk about it any more than he can talk about me to his wife——"

"Or you think that he can't," Tag arose and lit a cigar. "Burr is the operatic type that charms 'em by moonlight and runs back to his wife at sunrise. On the dead level, Gloria—do you wish to duck our marriage? Or is it curiosity to have another sort of excitement for the time being?"

"It is kismet," she told him forcibly.

"What a convenient thing kismet is; it serves a lot of cheap tricks! Well, what is it I am expected to do?"

"Be nice and stay on here. By and by, you will meet someone you love and _____"

"Stop," he ordered, coming up beside her. "You can't fool yourself to that extent. I love you. I always have and always will love you but I shall give you up. I think I ought to do so, even if Burr had never come on the scene. We have not been in step—not once. You have never understood; I've cheated in pretending that I didn't care to understand. Sometimes people ought to give up the thing they love . . .

but I'd have held onto it, I'm afraid, unless——”

“I don't like you to talk like this,” she pleaded. “I feel queer and throbby inside—like a misplaced toothache; as if I wanted to stay friends with you and be interested in your new job—pearls or pumpkin seeds! I don't want to feel that way; I don't want to think of anyone but Burr. Burr is to be my world——”

“Will you be game under the discipline he'll give you?”

“Oh, you don't know how easy real love makes everything,” she added hastily.

“Don't I?” he caught her arm and held it; there was a mark on her soft flesh for days afterwards. “I'm not tearing my hair and calling upon God to witness your selfishness. I'll omit dramatic platitudes—but it cuts deeper than anything in the world. You, the boy's mother—you——”

“Oh, will you stop—please, stop?” she had not wanted him to mention the dead child. She wanted to forget about it—it, too, caused her to feel queer and throbby inside.

“Mama and I will go away until I have my divorce. Burr will get his in Paris. We will be married there. I never want to come back to this stupid town with its snobs and sneers. I've always hated it but never known just what was the matter. You and your sort think yourself the real thing . . . you are not. Burr is the real thing. He wouldn't be afraid to make love to a Chinaman's daughter if she were the woman for him, to win and lose a kingdom in a day or to beg for bread if he was hungry. He has neither limitations nor standards. His grandmother was a greasy old Basque—with the gift of second sight. His grandfather was a young gallant. Burr is both of them—and himself besides. I know what I mean when I say that Burr is my world. He'll show me that world through his eyes; he will teach me what life is but he'll not stop for a polite introduction . . . Tag, you can't argue such love as this. You can't! Oh, I'm so sorry for you—so very sorry——”

“I don't want to gauge such love,” he was unlocking the door and ringing for Maisie Jackson, definite signs of dismissal. “I want you to decide upon your plans. I'll help you with them. Knowing you as I do, I'd like you to be sure of what you intend doing, surer than you ever have been. Once you start, I'm afraid that I never can change, no matter if you begged me on your knees——”

Her laugh stopped him. “On my knees begging you to change,” she repeated. “You conceited native son! I believe you're going to be queer about it, after all!”

Maisie Jackson passed her as she was coming in. Gloria dashed ahead and out to her car to drive to Burr's house. He had said that he would stay in town for a week, the old caretaker making him comfortable in an opened wing.

“Did you want—anything?” Maisie asked Tag in a maternal tone of voice.

Maisie knew all that had transpired at the conference. She admired Tag almost as much as she yearned to chastise him for his virtue.

“No,” he said hurriedly. “You may go for the day.” He did not turn his head. Maisie paused, undecided whether or not to add her bit of advice; it was not too late for this noble fool to retract, effect a commercial reconciliation.

“No,” he added in the same muffled voice. “Please go away—shut the door . . . Gloria,” he cried out when he was alone. “Gloria, how dare you? How—dare—you?” It was not of himself that he was thinking but of Gloria’s self-invited hazard.

At the door of the Meredith house Gloria met with a rebuff. Mr. Meredith had been called to New York. He would be at his Park Avenue apartment, the caretaker mumbled. Oh, he might be gone for a week, one never could be positive—

“I’m sorry he is not here,” Alice Meredith’s flat voice interrupted. She appeared silhouetted against the dark doorway, more dowdy and smiling than ever. “I only came a few hours ago to find that Burr was gone. Won’t you come in? I may be able to discover something resembling a cup of tea,” the amused look in her pale eyes was maddening.

“No, thanks, I must run along—it was about some business that mama and I—but we can write——”

It seemed as if a great, wet hand had reached into her warm happiness and quenched its glow.

“Perhaps you’ll go to New York to see Burr,” Alice Meredith added in flat, even tones. “If he is not at the apartment, he may be stopping at a Russian pension on 78th Street—Kirkchoff is the name. He is fond of their way of living . . . and they have beautiful young daughters.”

“I have no intention of going to New York,” protested Gloria, knowing that she was lying and that Burr’s wife was aware of the fact. It never had been difficult to *have* anything she wanted—but to *do* everything she wished to do . . . she was aghast at the unexpected hurdles in her path.

“Haven’t you?” was the monotonous murmur, expressing something of triumph, “so often one does go.”

Playtime Complications

GLORIA found her mother checking over the linen, a task which she never had been persuaded to forego. She delighted in the wealth of luncheon and dinner sets, banquet cloths, cobwebby serviettes and cocktail napkins.

“Honey, you won’t need to get a thing for this season,” she announced as Gloria swept into the room, her tense expression causing Min to stand back in alarm.

“Get a bag packed—I’ll have my things ready in fifteen minutes. We can make the New York Express. We are going to see Burr. Don’t argue. We must see Burr. Oh, that woman, that glittering-eyed beastess of a wife of his—how dared she say to me—to me——” in a frenzy, Gloria dashed out of the room, her mother following.

Before her maid she was self-possessed, even languid in her orders. “One dinner frock, an afternoon thing and some hats,” she said slowly, “my rust colored taitleur for the train; it’s a school reunion, Marnie, nothing thrilling or I’d pack you along, too . . . be back by Tuesday—you can finish the lingeries while I’m gone. . . . I told Mr. Grant good-bye at his office . . .”

“Why, Tag’s coming in now,” Min peered out the window. The relief in her voice added fuel to Gloria’s wrath.

“He’s coming to tell you that he has resigned at the plant and is out for some honest, underpaid job,” Gloria jerked at her gauntlet until the strap broke.

“Will you tell me just what has happened?” Min began with an attempt at authority. “Honey, I’m not going on any wild trip while you are in this mood . . . why, he’s not coming in to see us,” as Tag’s footsteps began to pass the door.

“Mama, I forbid you to talk to Tag now—I forbid it,” stamping her foot and her voice rising to a hysterical pitch. “Don’t you dare to send for him or to go in there—I don’t want you to talk to Tag——”

“Why?” said Tag suddenly, opening the door.

Gloria brushed past him, her hat box in her hand. Weighted with bags Min tried to brush past, too. Tag caught her by the arm.

“Where is she taking you?” he asked; there was almost a smile on his face.

Gloria caught the expression. The note of comedy which Min’s red-faced, rotund self added was impossible to endure.

“Go downstairs,” she shrieked at her mother. “I’ll explain later but please go downstairs——”

Min reached the front landing, her head throbbing from the rush. Upstairs she could hear Gloria's high pitched voice and Tag's firm, angry one. The taxi ticked outside and the great hall clock ticked inside and Min's heart ticked violently as she waited for Gloria's descent. In this sudden cataclysm of domestic events she was annoyed to find herself recalling Jules' heart attacks. How many years had it been since she had remembered them! So often had he asked if she "could hear my heart beat" whenever she bent over him. She knew now what he meant . . . she regretted that she had answered him shortly.

Gloria was rushing down the stairs. They were in the taxi—on the train—the drawing-room door closed and barred. Then Min forgot the violent ticking of her heart. Gloria had flung herself down on her mother's knees, as she used to do in the old tantrum days; she was crying and laughing all in one.

"I despise him," she kept repeating. "I despise her. But they shan't stop our happiness . . . poor Burr, I know all he has stood for—years of that smile and those pale, glittering eyes . . . and Tag a goody-goody hypocrite . . . but Burr will understand. When I see Burr nothing else will matter."

Later, when Gloria had passed the talkative stage, Min took a mental review of the situation. Since Gloria had determined to marry Burr Meredith, Min must help her to accomplish the feat. She understood why Gloria wished to be his wife. In Min's estimation it was a step up—leaving Rutledge for Park Avenue. The more she considered it, now that Gloria had proven her desire, the more she approved. It was similar to the old days of taking Gloria to see the Christmas toys, having her stand before some novelty and insist that she take it home with her *now*! No matter what promises, what threats of Santa Claus' wrath, she wanted it *now*. If it had been sold, it must be unsold so that she could take it home *now*. With memories of toyless Christmases at the Pension Beaumont, of joyless Christmases as Jules' wife, Min would obtain the novelty, be it walking bear or talking doll, and Gloria would leave the store with the new treasure in her arms and a row of exasperated yet admiring clerks staring after her.

She wanted to be Burr Meredith's wife *now*. She had thrown aside discretion and told Tag the truth. They must go to Burr *now*. Very good! Min would go with her, not only for now but for always.

Early the next morning Min was established in hotel rooms while Gloria kissed her on her left ear lobe and told her to be a "nice duck" and rest until she came back. She was going to see Burr—she preferred doing it this way. Well, what did it matter what anyone said or thought *now*?

Wistfully, Min regretted not having brought her old French coffee pot and an

unfinished novel.

“Don’t be too long, honey,” she said affably, as Gloria finished giving instructions. “I’m sure that Burr will know just how to go about it. Don’t get yourself talked about or written up in those scandal magazines. I love reading them but not if they had anything in about you.”

Unhearing, unseeing, unfeeling, Gloria left the room. It seemed a million miles to the Park Avenue apartment and a million minutes until traffic permitted her cab to stop at the curb—and a million more miles and minutes until she stood outside Burr’s apartment. Suppose that he was not there, that he was at the Russian pension or had set sail for Mesopotamia . . . well, she would follow him. She must follow him. Life meant nothing unless it meant Burr. She was hopelessly, shamelessly in love—as she never fancied anyone could be in love . . . as she had never been at White Hill, even when they planned their future. All in a moment she was consumed with this strange emotion that tortured and tempted . . . she wanted to see Burr *now*.

He was in. His man smiled knowingly as he admitted her. Another five minutes and she would have missed him. He would have gone for an early canter.

As Gloria sank into the first chair at hand, her vivid emotion seemed to vanish. She almost wished that she had not come. What did this to her? She studied the room—a room with something of the East and the West and the Middle Ages and Moscow and Paris and Alaska in it—and a great deal of Burr himself. It frightened her. She felt as if she had wakened from a tantalizing dream and was attempting to make it come true. She felt that she looked tired, perhaps irritable, that she might appear absurd. What should she say first? She was jealous, besides, a thing she seldom had found it necessary to be. She was jealous of early morning canters and of Burr’s unwanted yet dominant wife, of his sleek valet who could tell many secrets if he chose, even of Dodo. She was thoroughly jealous! She was leaving the shallow end and drifting into the deeper waters. They were cold and uncertain. She had never taken the trouble to learn how to swim.

“I don’t call this a surprise—but a miracle,” Burr interrupted. He was in the doorway, his riding clothes making him seem taller and less the gypsy vagabond. “Whatever are you doing here, lovely? I wrote you four pages—with crosses for kisses’n everything. You’ll find it when you go home,” he came towards her with a slow deliberation which hinted that he knew his own power.

Gloria was tongue-tied. The power of her shrieking tantrums seemed like tissue paper trying to resist a bayonet thrust in comparison with Burr’s magnetic personality. If she did not manage to plead her case effectively, he would laugh at her. She felt it—dreaded it—wondered if she would deserve it!

“You went away so suddenly,” she began.

“Yes, I had a wire that Alice was coming back. I fled. I wanted to think about you unmolested—get a line on some business things—play hookey, in brief. It’s my favorite sport as you may find, Gloria. I must kiss you and send you home—oh yes, you’ve got to go. This is New York and not Forestvale. Summer is over. You’re altogether too much of a self-spoiled woman and I’m too much of a self-made man. That combination means mischief if it proceeds unchecked. Come,” he was kissing her as he spoke. “Does anyone know you are here?”

“Tag and mama. Mama is at the hotel. And your wife—your wife——” her temper asserting itself as she repeated the conversation.

Burr’s face darkened. His closely set eyes had a reddish gleam—like an angry dog who is too cowed to bite.

“Then she knows you are here,” he diagnosed.

“What does it matter?” Gloria demanded. His kisses lent courage to her words. “What does anything matter except each other?”

“Oh, but you can’t——” he began.

“But you said so—a hundred times this summer. You taught me to think so. Please, Burr, I can’t wait another instant. Tag doesn’t mind so terribly. He’ll enjoy a neat little heartbreak. He’ll be petted by all the tabbies in town who will consider he has escaped from a hideous fate. They’ll find him a neat little job—as librarian or selling bird baths. He’ll seem fascinating to the younger set and Duffy will pick out someone perfectly safe for him to marry. We won’t care—we’ll be in Tangiers or Arabia—perhaps you’ll have beaten me——” she stopped as she felt the pressure of his arms lessen.

“Let’s get down to earth,” he suggested closing the door and sitting opposite her. “I love and want you—and your son. That is as true as anything I have ever said. I’ve loved many women but I’ve never wanted their sons. You seem so different from the rest—and I want to be careful of what happens to you. I’m not the best sort in the world, darling. Every family has its skeleton and when one happens to be it—well, I’ve been honest about myself, haven’t I? Never tried to paint halos or make excuses.”

Gloria slipped over to him and knelt beside his chair. She had taken off her hat, the waves of bright hair rested on his sleeve like rippling sun-illuminated water.

“I love you,” she persisted almost pathetically. “I want you—and your son. Now that Tag knows, you must tell Alice. You’ve never been in earnest about other people, have you? She’s always known you were playing. Oh, nobody wants anyone who does not want them. Can you imagine a woman clinging to a man who

tries to escape?”

“I can,” without warning he picked her up in his arms. “I could still want you even if you hated me; if you ran away from me. I might behave but I’d still want you.”

Reassured she snuggled in his arms. “Let’s hurry. Mama and I will go West and you to Paris. Mama says she will do whatever we say——”

“But my heavenly bunting, may I suggest that Alice will not be willing and we must bide our time? You’ve rushed the programme considerably since I brought you home from White Hill.”

“I know, Burr, but I care so hard and it’s such fun—so glorious to care hard for someone like you,” her cheek against his as she talked. “I didn’t mean to rush but it—it happened. Tag resigned from the plant due to scruples. Scruples! Do you know the meaning of the word? I almost hope not. It angered me and I told him that he must resign from me as well. He knew you were the reason—he had suspected for weeks——”

“So has she,” Burr’s tone was uneasy.

Gloria lifted her head in surprise. “That makes the telling easier. Why, Burr, you funny thing—not afraid of boa constrictors but afraid to tell the truth!”

“It isn’t quite that. It’s wiser to go slowly and surely. You have years ahead and you said my age would not matter. I’m conceited enough to believe that is true. Let’s wait and not make a hash of things,” when he tried to put her down she clung to him.

“I’ll die unless you let me belong to you,” she whispered, a sob in her voice. “I’ll die or go mad and rave about it day and night. There! Oh, be brave for me and tell her—tell her *now*. When you act like this you frighten me . . . please . . .” Somehow their lips met in a long kiss.

“I’d sell my soul for you,” began Burr as she drew away.

“Don’t—tell the truth instead,” Gloria compromised. She was getting the upper hand of the situation, feeling herself a super-creature and able to command this super-hero. She would be able to mould and dominate him. What a goose she had been to have doubted, a remnant of her days of Rutledge flapperism! She was in her prime, free and beautiful and rich, she could *do* anything she liked. . . .

“Not until later in the season,” Burr persisted. “I’m clumsy when I try to explain. A man can’t talk to a woman about another woman—when she happens to be his wife.”

“Ah, but you have,” Gloria accused, catching his hand and holding it tightly. “You told me intimate things about her, how wretched you have been, how she whined and maddened and bored you——”

“Yes, but there are other things; she’s been a good sport, in her way. Oh, I don’t love her. But she’s worthy of some consideration. She’s given me her life and her fortune and her prayers. While I sneer at the last, they are sacred to her. I wish she’d fall in love with a missionary—I’ve not much hopes of anyone else. I wish she’d die—because she’s so blatant about how she will adore the hereafter. I’m frank in saying this. I mean it. But until something drastic happens—or I can soften the blow, Gloria, I can’t walk in and say, ‘Alice, I want a divorce in order to marry Gloria Grant. This time my love affair is serious.’ It might turn *her* mind and make her rave day and night. It might kill her. Such things happen. We never could be happy with that shadow between us, could we?”

“Yes,” said Gloria sullenly. “I could be happy with you no matter what—no—matter—what.”

“You darling,” his dark, rough head against hers. “We are happy, aren’t we? We know how much we care; we are going to belong to each other sometime. . . .”

“It must be *now*,” interrupted Gloria. “The whole town will talk when I leave for Reno. It’s certain to trickle back. I don’t mind unless you do. I’m proud of it—proud, do you hear? I don’t want anyone to go mad or take poison because of what we intend doing but if they should it would be a sign of a very poor sport, one incapable of accepting the inevitable and you said——”

“She has been a good sport when I’ve been a drunken beast, a penniless gambler, an infamous lover—a craven, ill-tempered fool. Oh, I’m not perfect, Gloria, but, damn, women will have it that I am!” Burr disengaged himself and walked to the window.

“I’m abominably selfish,” he added, turning to her again. “So are you. A fine pair we will be, eh, Gloria? Let’s be lovers, decent, of course, but lover-friends. There is a great deal of romance, and thrill in such an affair as this; marriage might shatter it. If you tried to bear me a son you might die . . . there are so many perhapses and you are such a little girl in your heart. I’ve been a rotter to let you love me as I have. You were so virginal to my mind, so exquisite—and such a little beast in the bargain. What man could resist that combination? But everyone should be trained to duck away when danger threatens——”

Gloria’s voice became clear and cold. For the first time Burr frowned at her. “You must go through. I won’t brook interference. Don’t you mean what you have said—that I am everything to you? Or just another scalp for your belt?”

“As honestly as a man can answer a woman—at this hour in the morning,” he added with half a chuckle, “I love you and you mean everything to me. But I don’t want you to spoil your life because of it.”

“We must go through,” she repeated. “Oh, Burr, my head throbs so—I’m dizzy. I didn’t expect you to be like this. I’ll hate you, for at least ten minutes, unless you promise me that you’ll do as I say.”

“Don’t you see, distracting infant, that neither of us is free? Summer chaff is one thing; winter wheat another. If I didn’t care for you in the right way, I’d be damned ruthless—right now.” His eyes narrowed. When he came toward her, she felt as if she must run away—without blowing kisses as a farewell. “I’m behaving more decently than I’ve ever behaved; that’s why I’m convinced that I care for keeps. But I intend keeping myself in hand and not going off at any tangent risking my wife’s sanity and——”

Gloria winced. “Don’t call her that,” she commanded. “I can’t bear it.”

“Can’t you?” He lit a cigarette and began humming under his breath.

“Do you realize that you don’t dare to put me aside?” Gloria began again, resentment causing her to lose the thrill of romance.

“My child, my baby, come, listen: I’ve had ladies with hatpins about to poke my eyes out and ladies with knives ready to carve their initials in me and ladies with pistols (usually loaded with blanks although I was supposed not to know it) and ladies with poison crystals and lawyers and papas and husbands and so on—but I’ve always escaped. So don’t threaten; it cheapens your charm. Besides, you don’t do it very well.”

“You have always escaped because of her,” said Gloria with more shrewdness than was pleasant. She started to leave the room.

Burr followed. “Don’t judge me as hastily as you have tried to act——”

“I don’t know why I love you—a shopworn, cruel man,” she added in a frightened sort of voice. “This summer seemed a heaven-sent episode. Until five minutes ago our love was a radiant affair; now it has become a dangerous affair but we must go ahead. I want you; I shall get free. Burr,” as he shook his head, “don’t fail me—admit that I’m only a little girl, after all, and terribly in love—shamelessly in love. I’m pleading, begging—I——” amazed at her unexpected procedure.

“I’m going to take you back to the hotel and have you rest. To-night, when you are both dazzling and sensible, we will talk some more. For now—not another syllable—not even to ‘mama’.”

In silver gauze with zigzag iridescent spots, her hair bound with jade colored beads, Gloria made Burr’s prophecy come true.

They selected an obscure side table in the palm court of the hotel. An October moon disregarded the colored lights which flashed irregularly upon the dripping,

central fountain and came peering in at them. Gloria was both dazzling and sensible!

When she came to kiss her mother a dutiful good-night, Min started up from her sleep to ask fretfully: "What time's it? 's he gone? What'd you d'cide?"

"It's early but he has gone—back to Rutledge. We will follow to-morrow. We are going to be most discreet—but happy. I want five thousand dollars in the morning, mama. Burr's in a tiny jam and he ought not to have to go to Alice again . . . and, mama, be nice to Tag and Dodo. Fix it so that they have stock or something—or have Dodo be appointed welfare worker at the plant. She is coming home. We're to go to Reno as soon as I can get things together. Put the house on sale. Well—we can't be definite as to time—how can we be under such circumstances? She has a weak heart and Burr is absurdly sentimental, I find. He's part child, mama, it's just as well that I understand him. But such a dear," looking out at the black night with its silvery streak of moon. "Mama, don't you believe in kismet? It is my religion from now on; Burr and I consider all this as kismet. You can go back to Switzerland and visit everyone, put on tons of dog. Oh, there will be someone left that you know—it's your fault that you haven't kept in touch. You stopped writing as soon as I was married. Burr and I will motor down to see you—I know I'm planning way ahead—but that's part of the lark. I want to see the place where you threw away the bell clapper and meet Olga Bialias with the scarred arms . . . mama, tell me about the time you met those Americans. . . . I'm so tired but so happy. It makes one tired and happy when one finds out what they really want and pushes aside all other things. Lucky me . . . lucky Burr . . . tell me foolish stories and rub my head like you do when it aches." She had lain down beside her mother, her slight figure seeming but a shadow of Min's bulk. "Isn't it queer to feel so? As if I'd never been married to Tag, as if I were a little girl again—let's talk about papa and the old house and Old Major, the dog——"

"Oh, honey, I'm so glad you have everything. I never had anything," began Min in something of a monotone. "Only hard work and abuse and old clothes and hate in my heart because of it," her deft, red hands rubbing her child's head. ("There—is that the place?") One time I remember so well: I wanted to go haying with the Beaumonts. It was July and sizzling hot and so—(is that the place—oh, now I have it)—and so they set me to washing those feather beds they have over there and when I was through, I——"

The even breathing made Min peer down to see that her long ago grievances had sent Gloria into a peaceful sleep.

The Cure

NOTHING mattered to Gloria except Burr's love letters—nothing at all. Even the armistice was a passing holiday. Nothing had mattered from the moment that she had rushed her mother back to dismantle the house. She was numb both to protests and praise. Nothing was real but Burr. Everything that Burr said or did mattered, it colored her days and determined her moods.

When he wrote that he was eager for their future, that he was almost angry at his increasing eagerness, Gloria's was a rosy world and she threw largesse to the crowd, so to speak. When a letter did not come or proved a hasty line saying that he was rushed or going out to some formal thing with Alice, Gloria became a wan, dark-eyed creature of tears and woe.

When she had said good-bye to Tag, she felt a sense of relief—for him as well as herself. She had been uneasy lest he begin some idealistic harangue, appealing to her to reconsider her decision, to come and try life with him in a barn-apartment, after all! He had simplified matters by removing himself and his things to Bagatelle House and by calling upon her as briefly as one would upon a new acquaintance.

"Duffy's rather violent about this thing, as you may imagine," he explained, "and Enid eggs her on; they all do. It's something new to talk about. If you were planning to say any sort of a good-bye to her, it would be wisest not——"

"Hardly. I leave Duffy and her Gothic room and her first Tuesdays of the month to rest in peace or pieces, as the fates decree." Gloria blew a kiss in the direction of Bagatelle House. "Enid won't let me get away without a third degree of some sort. Oh, she'll just manage to be about and run into me, smiling and serene. You've been nice to fold up your tent and slip away——"

"Is he going to get a divorce, too?" interrupted Tag.

Before she answered, Gloria noticed how white and shiny Tag's face looked, as if he had been ill for a long time. Impulsively, she told him that he needed to rest.

"From what? Idleness?" was the retort.

"So you are still bent upon being the prophet and not the profiteer! Very well. Of course Burr is going to be divorced, what else could you have thought?"

"Many things, but they would no longer interest you. Good-bye, Gloria, good luck," awkwardly he held out his hand. As her small fingers lay in it, he pressed it tightly. He was thinking, as any man would think, and as Gloria, too, was thinking,

how strange it was that these two—still husband and wife—were about to separate for all time; how many times she had lain closely in his arms and he had bent back her head and kissed her on the lips and throat. Now, a handclasp was signal for dismissal. . . .

“Thanks so much, Tag. If there ever is anything I can do——”

“If ever there is,” he interrupted, “don’t do it, I beg. Stay at your shallow end. Or have you forgotten that breakfast discussion?”

“I remember it. I shall remember many things,” she answered steadily. “Almost all are pleasant ones. Divorce *is* barbarous; makes one have to perjure oneself, take a mental mud bath—when all that would be necessary would be politely and briefly to say that the time has come to dissolve their marriage contract. Oh, good-bye, Tag dear,” she ended quickly.

“Good-bye,” he repeated, letting her hand drop, “and good luck.”

So he had left her. Peering from the upper windows Min wondered if Gloria would experience a change of heart; often she had discarded her latest toy in favor of a battered but beloved predecessor. But Gloria had never mentioned the call. There was the rush of packing and dismantling, browbeating her mother into placing the house on sale at a ridiculous price. Gloria wanted to be so through with the town that not even a house could be considered a tie. She wanted to be free to live wherever Burr lived be it in Madrid or Cape Hope.

A dozen things prevented her saying a last good-bye to Burr. It would have been indiscreet to have forced the issue. But he called her long distance in Chicago and sent her aboard the Overland limited with reckless hope in her heart. Burr’s sort of elusiveness was the sort that said or did just enough to make one say and do a great deal more!

Gloria rather enjoyed Reno and the “cure.” She wrote intimate friends frankly about her experience. In turn, they saw that all Rutledge shared the information. Several invited Tag for dinner; they felt so sorry for him. But Tag remained a hermit. Enid reported that he was “finding himself,” whatever that might be. Enid made herself invaluable these days. She planned Tag’s favorite menus, saw that his beloved books were on his nightstand, mended his linen and sang old tunes at twilight, her soft brown hair taking on a haloesque appearance under the candles’ glow. . . . Enid was too busy to bother about Gloria.

Min rather enjoyed Reno and the “cure,” too. She enjoyed meeting every one from Broadway favorites to a Turkish official who was taking time off from Constantinople duties until he could return free to annex his latest desire. Every one from everywhere met at the old red-brick River Hotel—next to the courthouse for

convenience sake. It was the unpretentious, comfortable sort of hotel of which Min approved. It had never-ending table d'hôte meals and broad verandas with countless (and broad) rocking-chairs. Here Min sat during the mild winter days and gossiped with other fond parents and chaperons, prospective husbands or about-to-be-discarded wives. She felt in the world again, released from the pressure of Rutledge society. She delighted in comparing notes as to her daughter's romance, hinting mysteriously as to the splendor of her future.

There was plenty for Gloria to do as well. Everyone plied their trade while awaiting freedom. The crack golf coach of the country gave lessons, thereby establishing his residence; modistes of international fame supplied new creations while prima donnas warbled at tea time in order to keep in practice. Artists did miniatures and lightweight champions undertook to reduce the waistlines of the inharmonious married folk, authors scribbled copy on their cuffs and ballet dancers organized a class in Grecian movements.

There were hot springs to go to for picnics and the high Sierras to wander among, stopping to look at Virginia City with its dead glories. Gloria was voted a member of the Moron Club, which met whenever the spirit moved in the various hotel suites. It had for its motto: Alimony and freedom for all.

Then there were trips to San Francisco—while one's wardrobe trunks and hotel bill remained in Reno and continued the good work of establishing a permanent home and residence. The dryness of the desert was lost in the wetness of the California cafés. The success of this first jaunt led to a cruise to Honolulu with Min regretting having left the comforts of the River Hotel and Gloria planning that Burr should buy a hacienda at which they should spend their honeymoon. Returning from the islands she found that Burr could steal away for all of five days—golden, glorious days in which Gloria cut her friends and her Moron Club, her golf and dancing and French lessons and went on horseback with Burr into lover-like trails leading to Mt. Rosa and old Peavine.

"I was almost afraid that you would never come," she told him. "I've been so determined, so steadfast in my purpose that I've forgotten to be impatient and wilful. Haven't you noticed how angelic I am? Not a single cross letter, not a nagging telegram? Oh, Burr, is it really you? I've 'served' three months' time, my love—and my lawyer has drilled me beautifully. The case won't take ten minutes unless Tag has a change of heart. But he's very reliable once he gives his word."

"Tag's a nice boy," said Burr slowly. "I wish I had his ideals and youth—I would not waste them the second time."

"Don't waste time telling me how nice Tag is—when I've convinced myself that

he is impossible,” Gloria was in a flirtatious mood. Inwardly she was tense as to the outcome but did not want to sink below surface frivolity.

“I’m no longer a freshman. I’m almost a junior,” she continued. “The Moron Club always gives the ‘graduates’ a good-bye party. They make a lark of the whole thing. My dear, we must go to court to-morrow. Aline Strauss, daughter of the suspender king, is being released to marry a movie actor. He’s on location now somewhere along the Truckee and Aline drives down every day to take him canapes and champagne. He hasn’t come to town because he let his beard grow for his part. But he’s promised to shave the day Aline’s case is called, marry her and let it grow all over again.”

“Where is Aline’s ex-husband?” asked Burr idly.

“He was served with papers and signed; incompatibility is the cause. For instance—he flew into a rage when she wanted to have hammered brass and wrought iron in the same room. He’s an interior decorator, you see, and it maddened his artistic sense of values. Then he was sullen when she turned thumbs down on having parchment shades for the bathroom and——”

“Do you mean that people try such horseplay in a court and get away with it—or from each other, to be more accurate?” Burr drew in his reins and halted, looking down at her.

“Worse than that. They bring up the question of stealing the affection of the other’s spaniel and——”

“Do you know what I want to do? Carry you off bandit fashion and love you half to death. I don’t want any such farce as this,” with an expressive wave of the hand. “I’m no dancing tea-hound. What red-blooded man stands for this drivelf?”

“Plenty of them—if they want someone enough. It isn’t asking you to kill dragons or walk through flames, my valiant knight, but it is the modern method of obtaining the otherwise unobtainable. I suppose that any man prefers making a martyr of himself rather than a fool.”

“Let’s run off to Hongkong, Gloria; it’d be quite as moral as this. When we were bored we wouldn’t have to stand for any such tomfoolery,” he grasped her reins and drew her horse closer.

“When we are bored?” she was startled.

“It might happen to either. It happened to you with Tag——”

“Oh, Tag’s so different. An unemotional, nice kid. I’m—I’m——” she wanted to impress him with her subtlety, her mature charms. Yet she knew that in her rough gray habit, the velvet tam flapping over her bright hair, she was anything but dignified or mature. “Burr, you do want me?” she found herself saying, “then we must go

ahead. Oh, I've been good—truly, I've been good,” like a penitent minor appealing to an adamant guardian. “I've done just as you said—neither pried nor bothered. I trust you, don't you see? And I'll go on trusting you to the end. But it frightens me when you talk of being bored and wanting to run off to Hongkong in slipshod fashion _____”

“Of course it does, darling. I must cure myself of thinking out loud,” unexpectedly he reached over and gathered her onto his saddle, one hand encircling her waist and the other tying her horse to a tree. “Now we can talk a little more coherently—so! Please remember I am only halfway civilized. Bludgeons and lairs are more to my liking than alimony and incompatibility . . . but of course we must do nothing slipshod . . . you've been adorable and I want you more than ever,” he kissed her as a punctuation mark.

“Have you told—Alice?” she demanded, peering up from under the rim of her floppy tam.

“Not yet,” he spoke in clipped, displeased fashion. Gloria determined to clinch her point.

“When will you tell her?”

“As soon as I think it is the logical time; she is not at all well. An old spinal trouble that is agony for her—and me.”

“You actually dread telling her?”

“I'd rather cut off my right hand.”

“Then you must love her!”

“Never! I respect her and I don't respect myself. Alice has been decent—I've been a rotter.”

“Doesn't she know that you don't love her?”

“She couldn't very well avoid knowing it. It haunts her.”

“Why does she want someone who doesn't want her?”

“Why is the sky blue and your eyes bluer?”

“No answer me: why want someone who is trying to escape you? Is that sportsmanship?”

“I haven't a code book in my pocket . . . oh, please, Gloria, I must go back tomorrow. Don't spoil our last day. It'll all come right somehow—it must,” as he knitted his brows Gloria saw the same reddish gleam in his eyes and, unexpectedly, his womanish chin quivered. “I wouldn't have made love to you, my child, if I had known how much I was going to care—if I had thought——”

“Thought what?” she was so close in his arms, her lips brushing his as he answered her.

“Thought that you would want everything under Madame Grundy’s inspection! There—do you love me after that? I’d have liked an affair, Gloria, a sparkling, unexpected affair——”

“So she need not have known?”

“She would have known; she always does. But it would not have uprooted her whole existence like—like a divorce.”

“Would she, a six-cylinder Christian, have preferred sin to a successful separation?” Gloria was struggling to be flippant and impressive at the same time.

“I’m afraid so. I’m afraid religion is Alice’s form of dissipation—therefore she doesn’t begrudge me mine . . . you see, I never have been serious before—never,” he buried his face in the waves of bright hair. “Oh, when I let myself think of what the future could mean for you and me—and of how I must drag back East and go about the old grind and be sympathetic about Alice’s aching spine and—damn it, I’ll run off with you now—I won’t wait——”

“Yet you lost time, you silly, wonderful creature, by not telling her what is inevitable. You must promise not to delay. I don’t want to feel adrift for months after I finish here. Even if mama is with me, I’d be adrift—waiting for you. Even if you rush, it’ll be almost a year—a damnable, respectable year before I can belong,” she made a little face which prevented his taking another kiss.

“I’ll tell her—if I can,” he promised. “Now I must take you back to the hotel—and ‘mama’. . . I feel on inspection here—all your sharp-eyed contemporaries looking me over as if to say, ‘So that is Gloria’s next husband—poor old burglar, does he know all that he is being let in for——’”

Gloria winced. This unexpected jocularity was displeasing. “Don’t talk of it that way,” as she picked up her own reins. “There are remarkable people here—talk of cosmopolitanism! I’ve met the sort of personalities one longs to meet all their lives but lacks the opportunity. Brains as well as wealth—and as for pasts! Burr, you have no idea how many sorts of pasts a woman can have—and still blush. Miss Finch taught us there were only seven or was it ten original fiction plots? After Reno, I could reserve the space now occupied by Webster’s unabridged and not duplicate once. . . . Burr, I love you. . . . I might forget to tell you again before you go.”

They had turned their horses and were going back, Gloria serene and altogether charming, Burr’s closely set eyes watching her with admiration, an admiration which suggested amusement.

With relief Min received Gloria’s report about Burr’s telling Alice that he must have his freedom. Not only from the hotel fans had Min received warnings as to

what happened when “she got her freedom and he went back to his wife” but common sense, despite its having been anesthetized in most respects, managed to assert itself. If Gloria won her flimsy divorce and Burr did not marry her, an alarming situation would be created.

“Keep right after him, honey, until he puts it into writing that he has told her,” she suggested. “I don’t see what you were thinking of in the first place, either of you . . . things were going nicely as they were.”

“Don’t you mind?” said Gloria indulgently. “Well, don’t try. Just believe in me. For now I’m like Mahomet’s coffin, suspended in space and waiting for Burr to come and set me down on earth again.”

In the next three months Gloria won a spring sports contest—and her freedom from Tag. Incidentally she lost five pounds—and her faith in all mankind.

Jerry's Summary

GLORIA'S divorce case had taken but eight minutes and a half, as a matter of history. The Moron Club gave her a farewell dinner, halfway expecting to see Burr Meredith emerge from the midnight express and carry Gloria off to San Francisco en route for a trip to Japan. This was what several of the club expected to experience.

But Burr was in New York, enmeshed in business and suffering from a vicious liver, so he wrote. He was overjoyed at Gloria's success and his thoughts of their future never flagged. He could hardly see his way clear to meeting her in Chicago, much as he wished that he could; it would scarcely be wise just at this time. Alice was at Forestvale, she had expressed the wish to summer there. He had many things to tell Gloria—was she the same tantalizing little nymph-beast with untroubled eyes and honey-colored hair? He should soon see for himself. He hoped that her brief stay in Rutledge would not be unpleasant; she must make light of the matter and, for heaven's sake, don't hint of their plans. Have a round of jolly reunions and remember that he loved her, unworthy, impoverished savage that he was.

It was well into May when Min and Gloria slipped into Rutledge for a few days. Min to conclude her business affairs and Gloria to find out what "they" were saying.

There was an unexpected pleasure in the informal week at the hotel, despite her longing for Burr, her doubts as to his plans. It was not unlike revisiting a former prep school while in the first flush of college life, wandering through the classrooms and condescending to talk with the faculty. Shielded by dividends and Min's large, determined presence, Gloria was spared running the gauntlet of open criticism. But she was conscious that everyone had been and was and would be discussing her treatment of Tag, her plans, her future. To all intents and purposes she was treated with respectful interest, in some cases with mild envy. Unless she proceeded to marry someone like Burr or go on the stage, Gloria realized that Rutledge would count her a self-created failure. During despairing moments, she fooled herself with the thought that she had once done "serious work"—she could always turn to a career!

Going about town was like slipping into an old shoe after a day's tramp in a tight slipper. The familiar streets and houses, even the faintly visible towers of Bagatelle House, the Meredith mansion with its shrouded windows—all these landmarks

soothed her. She liked being here almost incognito, running into her twenty intimate friend at odd times and places and proceeding to have informal and hectic parties.

The first person Gloria did not care to meet but unexpectedly came upon was Dodo Grant. She had come into the hotel to talk at some men's luncheon club about her recent Americanization work. Dodo wore a modified uniform and, strangely enough, had let her black hair grow into a becoming neck coil fastened with odd red pins. She was not as thin as when she had gone to France. The satisfied, healthy look in her eyes caused Gloria to wonder if, in turn, she betrayed unrest.

Gloria would have turned aside but Dodo came towards her in direct fashion. Oddly, Gloria experienced a homesick pang. Dodo was such a good fellow . . . then came a wave of unreasonable jealousy. Dodo had loved Burr. Undoubtedly Burr had whispered sweet flatteries, held her in his arms and kissed her—she was ashamed of her jealousy even as she was embarrassed when Dodo extended a hand.

“Hullo,” she said simply. “I hear your mother has sold Blaine Avenue. What next?”

Gloria hesitated. Despite the lobby swarming with the noonday crowd and train arrivals, Dodo and she seemed to be alone. She felt self-conscious in her bottle green silk with its gold braid.

“We haven't decided. How was it, Dodo? And how is—everything?”

“Everything was frightful. Everything is fine. I must run along. I'm talking to any club that will listen while I ask for money for the legion. It was a tremendous hash, Gloria, not at all as the associated press would have you believe. Perhaps you're not interested—although you once said that the war was just what you wanted.”

“Did I? I've wanted so many things. How—how is Enid?”

“Quite the same. Just now she is mending Duffy's curtains. Duffy is trying to start an art school in Rutledge—isn't she brave? The old dear has had a rocky time with her knee, to say nothing of the bottom falling out of the stock market.”

“Everyone else is well?” Gloria wondered just how she sounded.

“Quite well. You hurt him a great deal but I'm inclined to think it was wiser so. That is what you wanted to know, isn't it?” Dodo's dark eyes searched her face.

“Yes—of course. I shall always be interested—it'd be so—so middle-class to have estrangements,” Gloria faltered.

“He has taken a new job and we are still living on codfish and gingerbread at Bagatelle House. I think he'll pull out rather well. So long, Gloria——”

Gloria caught at her sleeve. “You—you haven't blamed me?” she whispered, as if alarmed at the omission. “Do you know all—about—it?”

“I don’t believe that I want to. If you mean that you are waiting for me to blame you about Burr—that would be unnecessary. I’ve been seeing so many beautiful things concerning death and so many ugly ones concerning life that my own puny experiences have evaporated. Burr no longer exists for me. I only wish that he no longer existed for you. Because you were my brother’s wife and deliberately smashed a scientific career and his heart and your home because of a rotter like Burr—well, a year ago, I would have said many things. Now I have seen enough to realize that silence is the one rebuke.” And she darted away into the crowd.

Gloria came upstairs to demand how soon they could leave Rutledge. She must get to New York. Burr was ill, which in itself was a sufficient excuse. Besides, she had met Dodo Grant—no, she had said nothing but she had made her feel impossible. Well, she just had. She did not want to chance any other such encounters. Couldn’t her mother understand?

“I can’t go to-night, honey,” pleaded Min. “You go to bed and rest, let people think you are ill. I’m to close the house deal Thursday—I think you can manage until then. There were one or two people that I wanted——”

“Don’t say that you want to hobnob with the old Oak and Elm Street natives,” Gloria stormed. “No doubt their tongues are hanging out to hear about me—which is the only reason they pretend to want to see you. Let your lawyer close the deal—pay him more to do everything. My nerves are at the breaking point. I must get to Burr and find out what I’ve really done——”

Min stood beside her, her hands beginning their customary massage. “Yes, honey, you must find out what you have done,” she agreed in a troubled voice. “I think I can get away by to-morrow—will that do?”

“To-morrow,” Gloria agreed in a muffled voice.

At eight o’clock Burr Meredith telephoned to her. He had brought Alice to town to see a favorite surgeon about the spinal trouble. He had not had a moment in which to telephone any earlier—upon his honor—wouldn’t she be reasonable enough to understand? He must beg her to be patient for just a little longer and go to New York and wait there until he could come. Then they would make plans—yes, definite plans—she did not doubt him—or his love?

Gloria left the telephone and stood looking down at the street. He would not have neglected telephoning or writing her a few months ago. A year ago he would have come to her, free or not free, to beg that she return his love . . . She felt ostracized, put in her place, as it were—this being told to wait in New York savored of being kissed behind doors like a housemaid. She resented the inference that Alice Meredith’s wishes came first, that physical delicacy precluded her being told the

truth.

If Burr fancied that she, Gloria Grant, feared his wife, if it must come to a clash of wills—she was prepared for the test! She refused to be shunted into the background, languishing in a hotel suite unheralded, unwelcomed, while he came to his town house to humor a hypochondriac wife . . . she would wait no longer. Her temper overshadowed her dignity and common sense. If Burr was afraid to tell his wife, she would do the telling. It was the decent thing from any angle one chose to consider it. No one was happy the way things stood. If out of three unhappinesses could come two happinesses, why hesitate? She knew so well that she could inspire Burr, make him be the leader among men which he was capable of being. Alice Meredith repressed and restricted him, drove him to dissipation instead of development . . . oh, there were no arguments on her side. It was clear that she must be told the truth NOW.

It kept recurring to her that Burr had been in town for twenty-four hours, knowing that she was free and alone—yet he had not slipped away for a half hour's greeting . . . her anger changed into the old longing to be in his arms, to listen to his reassurances, his hopes that she must be the mother of his son. Oh, surely she was right in thinking that she had done her part and Burr must realize that it was time to do his.

She called a taxi to pilot her through the foggy May night. Passing the Blaine Avenue house with its deserted looking windows she caught a glimpse of the For Sale sign still above the entrance. Five blocks further on and two streets over and the car halted before the old Meredith house. A moment more and she walked resolutely up the side entrance steps.

The caretaker would have questioned admitting her but she had thought quickly enough to ask for Mrs. Meredith—she was passing through town and her errand would take but a moment.

She was amazed at her own steadiness of thought, the unnatural calm with which she entered the softly lighted bedroom. At least she was going to know the truth NOW. She found Burr sitting near the bed reading aloud while Alice, paler than ever, her unbecoming flannel gown buttoned high about her thin neck, listened, her eyes half closed yet watchful.

"I beg pardon," said Gloria simply. "But I want to see——"

Burr jumped up with an exclamation of protest. "Why, it's Gloria," he said in confusion. "You see how ill Alice is—I'm sorry that you have tried to call."

In that instant he seemed to be all womanish chin and shifting, closely set eyes. How simple things can become during a crisis. Burr was nothing if not a coward—

she began to loathe him. His savage, swashbuckling personality seemed to vanish under his wife's narrow, cautious gaze. She sat up among the pillows despite her ailing spine.

"What can we do for you?" she said distinctly. She began looking from Burr to Gloria with quick, malicious glances. "Has she come here like all the rest of them, Burr?"

Gloria did not hesitate. She would accept defeat and disillusionment even as she had tried to achieve victory. "For a long time," she said simply, "your husband has wanted me to be free in order that he might ask for his freedom—and then marry me. I am free—I want to know what he is going to do—oh, but she shall hear me out," she added to Burr in an angry aside. "I want to know what you will do—whether you will be reasonable."

Burr's wife gave a harsh laugh. "Reasonable! That is what they have all asked me—you are not the first woman who has called on a similar errand. But Burr has never asked me for freedom—have you?" looking at him in her studied, astute way. Burr made no answer.

"Then you were playing fast and loose with me, after all," said Gloria abruptly, as if Alice had not spoken. "You let me go away and——"

"You insisted—you tried to rush matters," interrupted Burr forcibly. His hand trembled as he raised it in an accusing gesture. "Figuratively speaking, I abhor surgical operations; you delight in them. I believe in slow and lasting readjustments—you would have none of it——"

"Right or wrong, ruthless or not, I wanted action, decision—you favored drifting and deceit. You have made a fool out of me—*me*," stamping her foot with helpless anger.

"Ah, he always makes fools of them," said the low, angry voice. "For he is nothing but a philandering child—and I have the rest of his money. Unless he chooses to work, he is dependent upon me. Go back to your husband, Mrs. Grant, believe that we shall never mention the matter. You are not the first woman I have so advised," seemingly exhausted she leaned back and gasped for breath.

Burr rushed to her side. "She is right," he said in a thick, uncertain voice. "You had better go," as Gloria remained in the center of the room, angered, frightened—quite bewildered.

"Or do you want your freedom?" broke in the low cold voice from among the pillows. "Do you want it *this* time?"

"Please go," Burr added as if his wife had not spoken.

"I never wish to see you again," was Gloria's last word as she walked down the

dark hallway and groped her way towards the side door.

He came stumbling after her—perhaps only to unlock the heavy bolt, perhaps to call out, “Gloria—you have been fearfully wrong—you’ve made a mess of everything—I’ll see you some other time—but not for awhile—”

She had passed out the entrance and down to the curb to saunter a little in an aimless manner and look out at the dimly lit street in hopes of a passing taxicab.

Jerry Fisher sauntered by.

“My word, here’s Mrs. Ex-Tag,” he hailed.

“Oh, it’s Jerry,” Gloria heard herself responding. “I don’t want to talk to you now—I’m through with all of you,” she corrected in a sudden hysterical spasm. “I’m through with Rutledge—I’m through with love and life,” she added mentally.

Jerry’s yellow, protruding teeth glistened in an evil grimace. He must remember her exact words: “through with all of you—through with Rutledge”—had she actually gone to bits about Tag? Whatever had she run off from him for? Burr? She was dangerously near the Meredith house—and Burr was reported to be in town . . . had there been some row? She was not as fresh looking as a year ago; they soon lost that first pristine glory, orchids and hollyhocks alike . . . poor kid, in a few years she would be happy to welcome him for a dinner partner . . . obligingly, he left her and strolled on to the club.

In the dark Gloria found herself walking back to the hotel. She must find her mother. Until then she did not want to think—merely to walk was enough, it relieved the tension. As she rounded the corner leading to the hotel, a truck with a tottering load of something or other was having difficulty in making the driveway. With the spectators she loitered to watch the man’s maneuvers. He was a scrawny appearing young man with freckled cheeks and an absurdly long nose. His glasses were the means of magnifying honest, gray eyes, bright with irritation. He swore lustily as he missed in his third attempt. He wore a blue denim overall outfit, his collarless neck and the tips of his fingers shining with machine grease. Theodore Ainslie Grant had gone to work at the deep end!

He did not see Gloria in the increasing crowd. Rushing on, she managed to reach her room before she began to cry.

“Burr doesn’t intend to marry me,” she sobbed. “He is afraid of her. . . . I’ve been worse than a fool not to have listened . . . take me away—take me away NOW. But I’ll show them all that I can come into my own, I’ll make them rush to know me. The world is very large, isn’t it, mama? I intend to be part of its largeness . . . but I’m suffering, do you hear? Suffering . . . and no one can stop it.”

Next day’s papers contained several items of local interest. One to the effect that

Burr Meredith, while cleaning his pistol that morning, had accidentally shot himself through the left eye. He would recover, however, but the shock of his accident had caused his invalid wife to suffer a relapse.

Another was the announcement that at ten o'clock that morning Mrs. Minnie Beaumont, owner of a large amount of the Beaumont Baking Company stock, as well as being an active director, had sold her holdings and resigned from her directorship.

The third was the social item that "Mrs. Jules Auguste Beaumont and Mrs. Gloria Beaumont Grant, formerly of Blaine Avenue, were leaving for New York en route for Europe where they expected to remain for an indefinite stay."

Rutledge drew a composite sigh of amazement, curiosity and relief.

New Playfields

ABOARD the world's most palatial steamship, the New York harbor fading from view, Gloria took an initial turn about the promenade deck, conscious that even in the dismal drizzle her almond green waterproof and hood attracted favorable comment.

As she swung jauntily around corners saluting other energetic deck athletes, she was telling herself that she must stop thinking about Burr Meredith or Tag. She must disconnect the past in order to insure a successful, even brilliant future—as one disconnects wires at a switchboard. Her marriage to Tag had launched her in provincial society, she tried to summarize. Her affair with Burr had created a poised, worldly wise woman able to find her place in the cosmopolitan sun. But her tilted, slightly freckled nose wrinkled with disdain as she thought of the whimpering man-god who had welched, trying to end everything for everyone. Even in that he had failed.

She suppressed any quiver of tenderness for homely old Tag from whom she had wrung no word of reproach or regret . . . then there was Burr's note. She paused near the bridge as if to watch a fleet of fishing boats. The note that Burr had left addressed to her before he cleaned his gun in premeditatedly clumsy fashion. To the end of her days she would wonder what had been in that note. It was the kind of cruelty which women with low cold voices possessed—to read and destroy a note left for another woman, to send word of what had been done, threaten her with lawyers and headlines if she attempted further alienation of affections or some such inane crime . . . Gloria shivered.

“. . . dirty weather,” ventured an admiring youth lingering at her side.

“Quite,” said Gloria so sharply that the youth lurched forward in pursuit of giggling sub-debs.

She was picturing Burr with a disfigured eye and a broken spirit, a wreck of a man being nursed back to health and captivity by Alice Meredith . . . but he must have cared, she consoled herself turning to go below and find out if her mother was coming to table. He must have cared. He loved himself so utterly that she must have meant something in his life or the thought of giving her up would not have driven him to desperate measures. He would have continued caring clandestinely—with promises as a smoke-screen. He had feared far more than he had cared. She was

well out of the flurry of melodrama, her mother's sudden anger. That huge, red-faced woman who suddenly broke docile silence when the news had reached her: "All the town is whispering that Burr Meredith tried to commit suicide because Gloria Gaunt insisted he divorce his wife . . . Gloria never can come back again. Shame upon her—stealing from a woman like Alice," etc., etc.

"I'll show them," Min had threatened, her series of flushed double chins quivering with emotion. "What is Rutledge but a smug village? Jules and I should have gone back to New York years ago. Gloria would have married the right sort. Rutledge! When there is London and Rome and Paris—and you're so beautiful, honey! We'll travel as leisure folk, Gloria, that's the way brilliant international marriages come about. We'll make it known that we live on our income and not on dividends from any baking company . . . a year from now and you'll laugh at it. But don't ever let me hear of your writing to Burr Meredith. A fine mess he made of it—for you. A fine mess he'd have made of your money. You leave things to me—you may get a title yet."

So inspired Min had driven a hard bargain with the rest of the directors. She had engaged passage and embarked before Gloria had time to re-order the situation. She glimpsed something of her mother's energy and executive ability—the same ability that enlarged the bakery during Jules' illness and substituted machines for hand labor.

Gloria had made no protest. She fancied herself suffering from shock; it was pique and humiliation. En route for Paris she recaptured the reins.

Below stairs, in one of the best suites the ship afforded, Gloria found her mother and gave her first orders. "You stay down for meals, mama, you wouldn't enjoy the dining-room while it is rolling so. I'm going to the dance to-night but only for half an hour. Would you put fresh tulle on my gray satin? I wish I had brought a maid, after all—oh, I know we can get smarter ones over there but it is awkward during the trip. So many of the passengers have them——"

"It is only for six days," urged Min, "and I can do anything you need. See here, Gloria, I wish we'd sent ourselves some steamer baskets, the other staterooms are crowded with them. Of course people didn't know when we sailed and if they had——" her voice becoming a husky whisper.

"If they had they would have dipped their pens in gall to write a farewell opinion of my conduct. . . . I'm done as far as Rutledge is concerned. Let's make a wager with each other; in a year from to-day if I haven't made the social grade wherever we are, let's come back and try California. I may not marry into a family that has been knighted since William the Conqueror, never lacking a male heir and never

being in trade—but I'll marry someone who isn't a coward and a provincial. I'm going to *live*, mama! Oh, I've my own code. But I'm not going to be cheated again," as she spoke Gloria regarded her mother with new dismay. Whatever was she going to do with her? In Rutledge Min was accepted paradoxically enough because everyone knew that she was not accepted. She was counted an example of the mushroom prosperity which was the lot of "new" Americans, a whole-hearted, simple-minded woman with atrocious taste and the heaviest footstep of anyone on Blaine Avenue. But in London, Paris—even while the size of her fortune be whispered judicially from guest to guest—would they accept her at her intrinsic value? Would their snubs be sugar coated?

Gloria was puzzled yet on the defensive. Inconsistently she felt a wave of advance resentment at the possibility of her mother's being considered taboo.

"Why don't you go to Switzerland and dazzle them like a searchlight?" she suggested. "Oh, you'd find enough to do there. Such a flock of Beaumonts couldn't have disappeared—and you have Olga Bialias' address in Paris."

"Yes. I want to see Olga," a smile of expectancy lighting up Min's face. "I don't intend to bother you, Gloria—I'll stay in the background. All that I live for is to see that you have what you want," a reddish hand stroking the bright hair.

"I know, mama," Gloria said soberly, "you're wickedly good to me . . . and in a year from now, who can tell?"

"I can," Min prophesied. "You'll be at the top of the heap. Besides being lovelier than ever, you've learned your lesson." Min could not have told just what the lesson was or when it had been learned but she felt it incumbent to make some moralizing remark to offset her glowing forecast.

Gloria was dressing for dinner, slipping into a red taffeta frock with a creamy lace bertha. Apparently she did not hear what her mother said. She was thinking that there was no one in the passenger list who promised to be at all "exciting" or "marvelous"—but she had out-grown "exciting" and "marvelous" persons or pastimes. She demanded distinction. Oh, it was good fun this being grown up . . . would Burr's eye be badly disfigured—and was Tag going to stick at driving the truck? Tramp thoughts interrupted her new stream of consciousness. She must maintain a better mental order. She *was* rather lovely to look at, as she stood before a pier glass . . . in a year from to-day she would not be too amazed if what her mother prophesied had become the truth.

Top o' the Heap

A YEAR from to-day" Gloria was looking up at the "top of the heap" and preparing to ascend. She had been wandering about England with traveling companions of the moneyed, casual variety. Nice enough people who were not averse to knowing other nice people provided the latter could pay for their share of niceness. Min had gone to Switzerland where Gloria was to join her in Lausanne.

Min felt her return to old environs had not been worth the effort. Aunt Marguerite and Uncle Gabriel were dead, so was Aunt Julie while Aunt Louise had taken the place of the blind grandmother and now lived in the wretched little outbuilding back of the manure pile. The farm squalor was all that remained unchanged. Young Gabriel with his wife and a brood of grown and half-grown children were in possession of the pension. Amie had died of a fever in the Congo and Victor had taken to drink years ago when Olga Bialias eloped with an Austrian officer. Monsieur Terriet's chalet was a tea shop; electric lights and motors gave Tusinge a strange, modern air. The Château Blonay still rose majestically below the mountain's edge but one paid a franc to visit its courtyards and dungeons while souvenirs and post cards were sold at the gatekeeper's cottage. The old dirt road was a paved highway these days and the boulder beside which Min had found a ruby ring, was replaced by a telegraph pole.

The old guard having vanished and Olga fallen into disgrace, no one cared about Min's diamonds or Min's Gloria. Her French was abominable; their English was worse. The tourist season was at hand with its rush of added work. It was made plain that she would be more comfortable elsewhere.

So Min took refuge in one of those dreary continental hotels with crystal chandeliers and faded carpets, gambling machines and attendants in shabby evening dress. The salon was cluttered with last week's London papers and music boxes that would not play. In the dining-room assembled those who felt it safer to be reported "on the Continent." There were the Ouida type of heroines and not a few of Schnitzler's running away husbands, blasé lovers—American tourists in dusty street clothes, palsied countesses speaking to no one but the manager, and war-prosperous Germans who gave orders in Italian, a table of Egyptians holiday bent, ragged-looking Russians and an occasional mysterious figure who gave the impression that questions were taboo.

Here Min spent her days driving through the parks and playing an occasional ten francs at the casino, gossiping with homesick Americans and awaiting Gloria's letters.

In July Gloria arrived—all enthusiasm and new clothes—and debts.

"Mama dear," she began as soon as they were alone, "it has been a dreary year, if you ask me—up to a fortnight or so ago. All very well to drag from city to city and ruin to ruin, study café types and try to look intelligent while listening to symphonies. But deadly stupid when you want to live and—" she was going to add, "love." She checked herself because Min would misunderstand, fancy that Gloria regretted Rutledge, no doubt, and fretted about Burr or what Duffy might say of her.

"I'm tired of ruins, too," Min agreed, "and the cooking is not the sort your father knew—and did. Oh, no, dear, I haven't told a soul who we are—I've just mentioned my beautiful, widowed daughter—and our income."

"I've been homesick," confessed Gloria sitting down to look out at a window with its panorama of housetops and various-sized chimneys. "I admit it now because it is over. I was homesick for Blaine Avenue and the old friends, the old, foolish times . . . I thought of the little boy," her lips quivered. "Mama, do I seem any older?"

"Not a day," said Min in a thick, comfortable voice.

Gloria looked a trifle dashed. "I hoped that I did. I was such an inane young thing . . . but anyway, mama, I've met someone of whom I'm fond. He's both rare and wonderful and his father is the Marquis de Lasseuere. Pierre is his only and impoverished child. His father is a tiny, bent-over dandy with eyes like a roguish parrot's and white hair with a carnation-pink scalp peeking through. I almost believe he uses coloring for it. His hands are like Pierre's—slender, refined things. They live outside Paris in a dream of a château, if only it were put in repair. The furniture is so old that it seems primitive and——"

"How did you meet them?" Min became interested.

"The first time was at tea at the Polo Club—a woman I knew in London took me there. Her brother invited us to Longchamps and the Lasseueres were present. They were well-known figures in Paris—Pierre so slender and straight with his gray pompadour and his young face and his elegant little father on his arm, both saddled with debts and usually bored to tears. A woman named Mrs. Brigit Pascal, a Britisher who escaped in time as she terms it, introduced us. She knew the Keiths. That same night we found ourselves dining at the Café de Madrid and driving home through the Bois—Pierre and I in the same motor. I adore driving home through the Bois, watching the twinkling lights of all the places that you don't intend to go to. He

called the next afternoon and we walked together and the next day he brought his father and then—let me see—I had a dinner for the Keiths and Mrs. Pascal and the Lasseueres and then—everyone began to whisper,” Gloria’s face was a happy flush. “It seems that many heiresses have wanted to marry Pierre. His mother was a southern girl—Charleston. A true love match, they say, and not a penny with which to restore the château. Pierre seems frightfully indifferent about money——” she drifted into silence.

This new personality both overawed and baffled her. He stood out in contrast to Tag’s honest self, Burr’s savagery. In Rutledge Pierre would be considered foppish, she realized, bristling with indignation at the thought. His correct dress and precise manners, his drawling, well-chosen words which commanded attention. He was surprisingly agile and quick in his movements. Something about the bright smile which shone in his tawny eyes reminded Gloria of a panther.

Pierre’s deliberateness of speech and action, of emotion no less, was an unvoiced challenge to bring him to his knees. By nature he was a savant, not a roué. Love of ease had produced his present state of genteel vagabondage. Had he worked harder in his twenties he might have been known as a man of letters for he wrote with amazing originality. His chief joy in life was a collection of enamels for which he beggared his father and himself. He was known by every art dealer in Paris and his presence at play premières and fashionable salons was something taken for granted.

Having reached thirty-six and exhausted his creditors’ patience and his own ingenuity, Pierre was not averse to a successful marriage. He preferred an American girl, possibly due to his mother’s blood, and someone who was young and beautiful. Several candidates had qualified but Pierre either found himself bored or experiencing all the annoyance which attends any calculated bargain. He would terminate the acquaintanceship gracefully and escape to Brittany or the Pyrenees. His father was eager that he marry a French girl—perhaps the old Marquis’s marriage had not proven as successful as romance would have it. But rich and young and beautiful French girls were not easily found—moreover, the old Marquis and this well-bred scapegrace were most companionable. They clung to their masculine world as long as creditors would leave them a bottle of cobwebby wine and the collection of enamels.

“You think he is in love with you?” Min questioned.

“I rather do. He’s not the obvious type like Tag—or the cave-man like Burr,” she faltered. As she spoke she thought again that she did not wish this suave French-American to know of Tag or Burr. She wished that she had been unmarried and but

twenty-two; his very cynicism might make him picture her as more worldly wise than she actually was.

“When is he coming to see you?” Min was beaming. To have Gloria marry a Marquis was the sort of fate of which Min had dreamed during those early, overburdened years. She would not begrudge replenishing the coffers of a marquis.

“Don’t jump to conclusions, mama. You must realize how deliberate and subtle Pierre is. It is just that I know he is interested. He mentioned our coming near Paris and taking a villa; he wants us to dine with his father and meet an old aunt who is an invalid but whose opinion counts for a great deal in the Lasseuere family . . . there isn’t very much to bank on,” Gloria finished frankly, “only I think—and—wish——”

“Listen, honey,” interrupted Min. “You know that you can have everything I have. If you want to make a display for Pierre and his father you can do it. You’d be far happier married to him and living here than back in Rutledge—or even on Park Avenue. I only hope that Miss Duff-Porter comes across sometimes and has to kowtow to you for a change——”

“But, mama, I did meet her. She is still over here somewhere. I ran into her on the Champs Elysées, she was walking along with her head high in the air. For a moment my knees were like blanc mange. You see, I was with Pierre. Then I spoke—she was quite willing to stop. I—I introduced him . . . that was all.”

That was not all. Gloria was forced to admit that Duffy had impressed Pierre favorably. In a sense they spoke the same language. If this was the aunt of Gloria’s divorced husband, she must have known the best people in America, Pierre had decided as they strolled onward. He admired this regal, golden-eyed spinster whose few words had made him want to ask her to see his collection of enamels. And he admired Gloria’s spirit in accosting her, in asking carelessly:

“How’s everyone—including Tag? We’re having a splendid trip.”

She was as dauntless as she was exquisite—and still sufficiently plastic to learn his ways. As they went on, Pierre spoke of taking her to meet his aunt while Gloria chafed under the fact that it was Duffy who had furthered her cause.

“Oh, you did meet her?” said Min. “Then she must have money—trotting over here to buy junk. I always thought that she did. I suppose that some day Tag and Dodo——”

“What about our going to Paris?” interrupted Gloria. “I’m much impressed with Pierre. He’s the only man I’ve met over here with whom I could be satisfied. I’m not in love, understand, nor in love with love. I’m through with such things. But Pierre could give me a position where I’d meet the best people, we could travel to all kinds of queer places and have a distinguished home. I know that I’d be happy. I think

Pierre's father doesn't dislike me . . . they have both been wicked! All such men are. Pierre continues to be wicked. It's town talk about a beautiful actress who is mad about him. Oh, I've had a tantalizing, weeney glimpse of the real Paris. I'm intoxicated by it."

As Gloria talked, dilating on possible joys and splendors, Min was planning and realizing what lay before her. Perhaps her father's blood asserted itself, made her eager to bring about this alliance. After all, Americans were crude money-makers, minus tradition. Her child would have both of these if Pierre de Lasseuere asked for her hand in marriage.

Min cast ahead to the letters she should write back to Rutledge speaking of her daughter as the Marquise, of the contented old age which confronted her under these new conditions: sidetracked in some fashionable hotel where Gloria could come to her but where she would not, in any sense of the word, intrude upon her child's social career. To achieve this career she needed even more money—money to do things of which even Gloria was innocent—she must make Lasseuere understand how advantageous it would be to marry her daughter.

Inside of a month Min had rented an expensive and uncomfortable villa outside of Paris. Here Gloria held full sway. There had been a hard moment when she introduced Pierre but inherent loyalty plus dauntlessness came to the rescue. Having inspected many mamas, Pierre had been prepared for something of the sort. Indeed, Min was not as formidable a prospect as he anticipated, Gloria having her under such excellent control. In black satin and sables she could be rather imposing—if she confined herself to crowds and monosyllables.

As for Gloria—Lasseuere was weighing the matter cautiously and hating himself for so doing. He wished that he had fallen in love at twenty-one and married whoever she was, running a fruit stand if necessary as a means of support. But it was too late to fall in love—his affections were dissipated by reckless, passing affairs—even his friendship with Brigit Pascal was something not wholly to his credit. Brigit knew so well that she must expect nothing from him, yet she proved the gamest of comrades. There were times when he wished to be in love with Brigit to the extent of being carried off his feet. But he always regarded her with a self-centered perspective. She was a small, boyish figured woman with shingled white hair and sparkling young eyes that bore out the statement that her hair was the result of a fever.

Gloria had found Brigit an unfamiliar type—she was unable to gauge her. That she would marry Pierre was absurd; yet she might prevent his marriage because of her brilliant mind.

"I'm one of the clever poor," she had explained to Gloria, when the latter came to tea in the sky parlor studio. It was an attractive place, all gay oriental silks and Persian kittens, interesting autographed photographs.

"I've always been poor and lately I've become clever. I have a daughter, besides—a long-legged, serious-minded darling of fourteen. I'm afraid of Gretchen. Her sort of brain will disapprove of me. She's at school in England and comes out for the holidays. I'm worried lest she'll have to become a bluestocking because I won't be able to buy her silk ones. It's a tragedy on this side if a girl has no money but a brain; she's ground down into becoming a postal clerk or a governess. Sounds rather frank? One has to be with a fourteen-year-old daughter and a fourteen-year-old heartbreak . . . still, the last doesn't matter any more. Only it's taken something out of me that I can't get back. I went to Calcutta as a kiddie bride. He drank and taught me the art. I was rather bad for a time; it helped me to forget. But I'm straightened away now. Occasionally I forget Gretchen and the doctor's warning and frolic all by myself. . . . I'm intense, unfortunately—and frightfully fond of Pierre."

"Are you?" Gloria's voice was childishly grieved.

Brigit laughed, her eyes narrowing. "And I understand him. He's a selfish saint. He can't marry me and only sometimes does he want to. He ought to marry—I fancy it will be you. That's why I'm being nice to you; I want to be invited to your parties afterward. I abhor clandestine things and I should fade out of everything unless I could see Pierre. He stimulates me, makes me feel like going on a little longer . . . you don't begrudge me that, do you?"

Gloria had heard only the one sentence: "I fancy it will be you."

"You think that he cares for me?" she faltered as awkwardly as Mrs. Pascal's Gretchen might have done.

"Yes and no," tossing her cigarette butt away. Brigit's thin self in a huge Persian greatcoat and underslip of strawberry satin stretched and turned in her chaise longue. "He is Pierre! No one can expect to have all of him, to understand or know all. I flatter myself that I come rather close to it. Still, you may discover entirely new angles and viewpoints. I'm generous to rivals. Oh, you funny, soft American, you don't get things at all; you've ridden roughshod over everyone unless I'm utterly stupid. I've met the type before. But I warn you not to try it with Pierre; he'll cut you dead. No man can abide being dominated. The great art is to do so without their suspecting."

Before this white-haired, fascinating hostess, Gloria felt tongue-tied. She could not but understand Pierre's interest in her.

“So you want to know him after he is married,” she pursued, “whether it is to me or to someone else?”

“Why not? Pierre will have it that way. You can’t expect to fold him up like an opera hat. Such men must have their friends and loves as well as wives. Our friendship is a decent institution; we talk about things and seldom personalities. Pierre can set me straight with a word or two; he can ruin my day with a frown. Yet I’m not cut up about his wanting to marry. I shall be radiant at the wedding breakfast. Remember, I’m one of the clever poor,” she repeated, “with only a hundred pounds a year that I’m certain of—the rest must come from my wishing well.” And she refused to discuss the subject further.

Gloria’s first impulse upon leaving Brigit was to rush to Pierre, as she would have rushed to Tag or to Burr and demand an explanation, a declaration as to future loyalty. But she knew that Brigit had spoken the truth. To be clever was the needed trick. So she achieved an interesting pallor by means of worry and powder, a pallor enhanced by a deep violet hat and a silvery colored tulle gown with winglike draperies. So armed, she sought out Pierre and his father at an exhibition of Chinese decorations in oil.

For all of an hour she charmed the old Marquis, murmuring demure, non-committal sentences and edging a trifle closer to him whenever Pierre tried to claim her. She went to tea with them afterwards and drove home with Pierre’s father still beside her prattling of bygone conquests while Pierre, elegant and lithe and tawny-eyed, sat tugging at his wisp of a moustache and laughing at them.

He begged for an hour’s time the following evening at which Gloria pouted, making great, solemn eyes at the old Marquis before finally consenting.

“Papa, am I to have a new mama?” saucily inquired Pierre as he drove his father to the club.

“Were I ten years younger, you would have, mon fils,” was the gallant and not incorrect answer.

Bello Trevano

COMING into the villa drawing-room Gloria found her mother in conversation with Madame Olga Bialias. It was Olga's initial visit at Min's home. They had met at a hotel for luncheon after which Min had taken Gloria to visit Olga's establishment, one of the smart shops of Paris to which flocked not only Parisians but English and Americans. After a vivid career, Olga had divorced her now forgotten husband, assumed her maiden name and set herself up as an individual perfumer.

She was the same golden-haired Olga with a sweet whispery voice. The years had treated her kindly. Whatever her surprise at Min's florid, browbeaten self, she greeted her as admiringly as if she were a distinguished patroness and acclaimed Gloria as a beauty beyond description. Gloria's chic was supreme, according to Olga—she exclaimed over her enchanting little satin bag and delicate crystal pendant, her fantastic metal-colored boots with jeweled buttons, her frock of tarnished silver silk. She must sit for a portrait; there was an odd genius who would do her hair and eyes justice . . . wouldn't Min arrange for it?

Min did arrange for it—and Olga arranged with the odd genius as to her commission. Min also arranged for Gloria to have an individual perfume. For herself, she was adamant—musk remained her never-failing favorite.

"But your Gloria," Olga had enthused, "she must have something like—like sunrise in the Garden of Eden, do you not agree? Something delicate yet subtle—that lingers after one has left the room. Let me compose such a one. But first—first, I must have a lock of her hair and a bit of her handwriting and the data needed to cast her horoscope. My dear child, do not smile—an individual perfume is the material expression of one's aura! Your horoscope is essential in order to determine what blend it shall be . . . see," pulling out a card index and showing the filed horoscopes and locks of hair of her customers.

Gloria was impressed; Min was puzzled. She had looked forward to seeing Olga after more than thirty years but she had expected to take up life as she had left it—to talk of the old, cruel days at Tusinge. This svelte, smiling person was a stranger; Gloria could become her friend.

It was not until Olga had benefited by Min's generosity that she dropped her pose and confided actual opinions.

"My dear," she had whispered just before Gloria came in this afternoon, "there is

one thing for her to do if she wishes to marry Pierre de Lasseuere.”

“And that is?” Min almost dreaded the answer.

“She must acquire a background. Oh, but I am right—the world passes my door quite as much as it strolls down the boulevards. He has had countless chances such as Gloria. Of herself she is merely young and wealthy, he wishes more—like the pigs men are. If Brigit Pascal had Gloria’s income, she would become the daughter-in-law of the Marquis.” Olga’s whisper was emphatic.

“You know about them?” Min rather dreaded hearing the truth.

“Of course,” Olga’s slim shoulders shrugged carelessly. “For myself, I do not admire Pierre, he is bitter and insincere at the same time. I am not bitter, it causes wrinkles, my friend—but my insincerity has made me my living. I glory in it.”

“I don’t think Gloria wants any fortune-hunter,” Min began slowly, “and if she knew about Brigit Pascal——”

“She knows but still wishes to be Madame la Marquise. You always give her what she wants, my old friend,” the soft whisper was cloying. “Listen to my plan——” Olga’s blonde head leaned close to Min’s.

At this point Gloria came in, after which they discussed the Bal Creole and the Steeple Chase Militaire in which officers were jockeys. Later Min sent Olga home in a cab and told Gloria what was about to transpire.

At first Gloria listened with intolerance—as she did whenever her mother mapped out some bromidic campaign. But as Min’s sincere, heavy voice continued in detail, she became animated, even enthusiastic.

“Oh, mama, but can you?” as Min came to a pause.

“Of course I can, honey. Won’t it make up for anything Tag’s aunt ever said or Burr Meredith didn’t say? It’ll make Pierre de Lasseuere realize that an American bride is more of a treasure than all the starving, sharp-witted Mrs. Pascals in Paris——”

“And you?” asked Gloria simply, kissing her mother’s flushed, tired face. “You’ll stay close by? I’ll need you.”

“I’ll stay close by,” Min promised without wincing.

During the September heat, Paris and the American colony watched with interest the cautious romance of Gloria Beaumont Grant and Pierre de Lasseuere. Both played their cards wisely, guardedly. Long ago Pierre had learned how to play his and someone must have coached Gloria in playing hers.

Unmistakable signs of increasing wealth manifested themselves on the Beaumont side of the field. Debts multiplied and creditors grew stony-hearted regarding the Lasseuere household. Gloria reflected something of Brigit Pascal’s diplomacy. She

talked of current events and books quite as fluently as Duffy herself might have done. She wore less dazzling and more individualistic clothes, sought strange effects that a younger, less beautiful woman would have shunned. When she displayed a novelty, it was something impossible to duplicate without the expenditure of more money than any of the clever poor could afford—be it a cube-shaped cigarette box of shark skin with a diamond monogram or knee boots of rose-colored kid with brilliant gold tracery. She became possessed of a most extraordinary collection of minute and behemothian dogs which she exercised with considerable skill.

She let her bright hair grow long and wore it in inimitable swirls and coils dotted about the nape of her white neck. She named her gowns these days: the Butterfly—a magical creation of golden chiffon painted with lavender and blue motifs: the Siren—a soft satin resembling an April sunset. When she gave an at-home she wore a mandarin coat stiff with plum-colored embroideries and jade buttons while adorable green trousers and curled-up-at-the-toe shoes buttoned with glowing cats' eyes completed the costume.

To all intents and purposes Gloria became emotionless. She was noted for saying heartless, shocking things in a soft drawl. When a laborer was crushed before her gate, she described it that same evening as a “glorious riot of color—like claret wine and shreds of blue sky and sunshine rushing into one glowing pool.”

Her dinners were the properly ordered affairs that Pierre's sort were pleased to attend—with just enough plate and good wine to offset the abundance of food. She gambled recklessly, studied Russian and motored with friends to the Fair of the Singing Birds at Plougastel, pretending to be thrilled by the simplicity of Normandy country life.

Late in October the old Marquis and his sister invited Gloria to their magnificent relic of a country place. For a fortnight Min struggled to remain silent and satisfied while Gloria rode horseback at dawn and played golf until luncheon, visited tenants in the afternoon, sipped liqueurs at neighboring and equally run-down estates and ate gloomy, impressive dinners in the barish château dining-room—Pierre staring across the candlelit table at Gloria, her hair seeming an illumined halo about her pale face.

She would do nicely, Pierre's aunt had decided by the end of the first week. As for the mother—à bas! It was like violets sold by a hag. Some arrangement must be made to keep her away, in America if possible.

At the end of the first week Gloria was bored but determined to stick it out. When they returned to town her engagement must be announced. Once married to Pierre she would show him that it was impossible to make that dour farm-castle habitable. Nor did she intend to retire into any Brittany wilderness for the sake of

moth-eaten tapestries and a carved altar. They would have a smart apartment in Paris and one in Rome—and her own palace. Each time she said the last, there was a sense of unreal triumph, dizzy anticipation. Mama had seen that some of the pretty pennies had bought a palace!

With Olga Bialias' assistance, Min had purchased the castle in the same lavish spirit that she had bought talking dolls and electric runabouts, given Tag a position and Burr Meredith a loan. Olga had selected the property—a tremendous bargain, she assured Min. (Secretly, Olga counted on the commission she received to add to her old age nest egg.) It was located in Switzerland, a neutral ground for all. For a mere three hundred thousand Min became owner of a million dollar estate—Bello Trevano overlooking an Italian-Swiss lake. A huge and shabby park and a bevy of hot springs surrounded it. There were many other outstanding features—a tiny opera house where Gounod once conducted *Faust*, a swimming pool by Veta the sculptor, grottos with aquariums and water plays, unique Japanese bronze fountains.

The castle was elaborately furnished, containing sixteen bedrooms, two private stairways and a double staircase of carved Carrara marble. It boasted of the finest Roman atrium extant, a hundred feet long and two stories high with endless columns and traverses of multi-colored marbles, three hundred colonettes of Bohemian cut glass, bronze lamps, antique statues of Venus and Cupid and a throne from which the Empresses Victoria of England, Eugenie of France, Elizabeth of Austria, and Tsar Nicholas and lesser royalty had admired this architectural gem. The banquet hall had innumerable carvings of historical scenes, its walls being covered with embossed leather. The owner once had received offers from a king, an emperor—and a Standard Oil director. A few years later having blown out his brains due to a romantic crisis, the heirs decided to make short work of this superb white elephant.

So to Min Beaumont, who once was harnessed to a manure cart and driven through the streets of Vevey, who had stood behind the counters of Beaumont's bakery on Elm Street, Rutledge, who timidly selected mahogany veneer and green plush for the parlor on Oak Street and who impoverished the shops of rose-colored velours for the Blaine Avenue draperies—to Min Beaumont was the castle sold, signed and delivered! And to Gloria Beaumont Grant, betrothed wife of Pierre de Lasseuere, was the castle to be deeded over to be hers forevermore.

This done Min drew a sigh of relief, gave her consent to an early marriage and had a bit of an emotional collapse. Olga took her to a quiet place in the hills until Gloria should have things moving more to her liking and Paris had assimilated the fact that the marriage of the Marquis de Lasseuere's only son to this wealthy young American would take place in March.

There was to be no vulgar advertisement about the event. More and more Gloria reflected Pierre's restrained attitude of mind. For the first time she was annoyed by her mother's crudities and superlative manner. She realized the gulf between Min and this jaded, attractive patrician whose single sentence conveyed volumes and who, although polite, unconsciously revealed Min as the Swiss goat tender. Intermittently Gloria realized that she was timid of marrying Lasseuere. It was like a thrilling adventure—those months in polite pursuit of him, directed by Olga Bialias and goaded to win by memories of Rutledge. But the present never seemed quite real. Nor did she understand her own change in viewpoint; she was baffled by something in Pierre which hinted of centuries of service and achievement. It caused her to feel a lack in herself, a spiritual lack, as nearly as she could define it. She wondered what Pierre would demand of her as his wife. He had no right to demand anything of her, she would retort, falling back on the hackneyed money basis of their marriage. But he would demand definite things: loyalty and dignity, a comprehension and appreciation of old, foolish but precious things which were in his very blood and for which he would be willing to die. That he was wasting his birthright did not occur to Gloria. She fancied that he had the right to do and be as he was. She wondered in a dim, pained way if she had the right to purchase this old, foolish, precious attitude of mind which she so admired, which the world termed as being the real thing, a blue blood. Could one purchase it even as her mother had bought the showy Swiss castle?

While amused by Min's purchase of Bello Trevano, Pierre told himself that it confirmed the reports of the latter's wealth. Already he had decided to re-sell the place, using the money obtained for his father's lands. There would be time enough to tell Gloria of this when they had returned from their wedding journey to Spain. He appreciated that she wanted to play about in the castle—like a child with its Christmas toys.

Gloria would be easily dominated, so Pierre and his father believed. She had neither thought nor suffered, being too madly in love with herself. Everything which enhanced her value—and becoming his wife would do that—would stimulate this self-love. Influencing her in this way he could convince her to do almost anything.

Pierre had no intention of seriously rearranging his life because of an American wife. Tag had done so; Burr intended to do so but lacked the manhood. Pierre meant to share a segment of his existence with Gloria and have enough money to transform the rest of the segments into delectable portions. He had promised Brigit to send her Gretchen to a better school, a dozen painters and authors and lovable idlers who starved merrily would benefit by his wife's dowry. He would buy the sort

of horses he liked and his father should winter at Nice and spend his evenings—and Gloria’s money—at the casinos. . . . Gloria should bear but one child. He wished for a daughter. She would be more like himself so far as brains and breeding were concerned, but physically slim and exquisite like Gloria. One beautiful bud of a daughter—yes, the marriage to this selfish, gullible beauty would be most satisfactory. In time to come he would reform his ways—when the bud of a daughter reached womanhood. She must marry brilliantly. By then her mother would be a tiny, faded person, well-trained and inoffensive. Later, they would lie side by side in the clammy vaults of the Lasseuere crypt. He would go to heaven knowing that he had saved the family credit as well as Gloria’s soul. For Pierre was not careless in matters of religion. Gloria knew nothing of religion. She dismissed it by saying that it “never appealed to her.” It had never been represented to her in the light of being “marvelous” or “absolutely.” The surface drama of Pierre’s ancient faith attracted her but she did not glimpse its esoteric truths which succored and disciplined by turn. Religion was something to be arranged as easily as one opened an account at a desirable tradesman’s.

“I want you to have a daughter, dearest,” Pierre told her one day. They were at Bello Trevano in all its newly opened splendor, Gloria feeling quite the queen as she walked through its halls. It would not have taken overly much to persuade her that her veins contained the one drop of “golden” blood which makes different the monarch from his men.

She paused, pretending to enjoy the panorama before her.

“Oh, do you?” she asked with assumed carelessness.

“A beautiful daughter,” he repeated, “although most men wish for a son.”

“Most men do,” she said swiftly, staring at the mauve tinted hills flecked by brilliant, tempestuous sunshine.

Could she never forget that fleeting glance at the tiny, cold-featured son? Could she never realize that Bello Trevano and Pierre were realities, that she was about to become his wife?

“You have had a child?” he asked, his head bending close to hers. Pierre had asked few personal questions; he had respected her silence and accepted whatever statements she chose to make—as he expected her to do.

“A stillborn son,” she answered.

“Then you are not strong?” he spoke quickly, as if alarmed.

Tag’s reverent pity; Burr’s vivid sympathy—this man’s “you are not strong?”—fearful lest his possible daughter might be a weakling. . . . Gloria felt as if chains closed on her wrists instead of Pierre’s fine, pointed fingers, chains that were slender

but which might prove unbreakable.

“Oh, quite strong,” she said, moving on, “I, too, wish for—a daughter.”

Almost Madame La Marquise

IN February, when Gloria planned the wedding gown and Brussels lacemakers were busied with a semi-veil suitable for a second marriage, Brigit Pascal helped find a town apartment and Olga Bialias to furnish it.

They seemed to understand each other very well, these two, Gloria decided after a morning spent in the shops. She was bored by the new apartment with its impressive black-and-gold furniture. It was not what she would have chosen but she must wait to make radical changes until she was Pierre's wife . . . she shivered at the thought of Brittany next winter and of Brigit Pascal and the old, parrot-eyed Marquis with his flair for gambling. Her comfort was her ownership of a castle. She could fly to it for refuge. Pierre would fly after her. As yet Pierre had not succumbed to her own charms. Courtship in America permitted greater intimacy, greater display of emotion—or was it that Pierre was less interested? However she was certain of her own powers—and in March she would become his wife.

Admiring letters from Rutledge ex-intimates were the antidote for occasional cuts from certain of Pierre's friends. Socially, Gloria was on probation.

"Everything is at a standstill in town," one of the ex-intimates had written. "We depend upon you for thrills—we used to depend upon Burr Meredith. My dear, that man is a changed critter—was that shooting accidental or was Burr trying to make an end of things? Whatever happened between you two? Just now he's off qualifying for the Canadian trail riders. But his wife is with him. . . . So—you are going to be a Marquise? My lamb, when we do get across, please pick out something just half as good for the rest of us. How does it seem to be surrounded by titles and have tradesmen kowtow when your cab stops before their doors—or don't they? Is he wonderful? And wicked? And handsome?"

"Your mother is bursting with pride, I suppose. It seems ages since you were here and we had our wonderful times. Come back on a grand tour—Rutledge needs to be patronized. By the way, your husband-in-law, Tagums, is doing amazingly well. Whatever do you think is his line? Junk! Yes—j-u-n-k. He's running the swankiest junkyard in the country! He is too killing. One can't leave yesterday's paper within his reach . . . and, my dear, he has become quite a sheik. Absolutely! But what does Madame la

Marquise care? Oodles of love,

Maxine.”

Junk! Gloria kept repeating the word as she went to fittings and antique shops and to tea with Pierre. That evening it was the opera with a party of his friends. Junk! She regarded Pierre as almost foppish in his immaculate dress, so agile and tawny-eyed and sweet of voice. Tag was driving a junk truck; Burr was qualifying as a Canadian trail rider . . . was she never satisfied?

She watched Brigit Pascal’s white head bobbing gaily in time to the overture. A glance of understanding passed between Brigit and Pierre. Gloria was disturbed. Unfair was her helpless summary. She wished that her mother were waiting at the villa instead of being exiled at Bello Trevano until her child’s wedding day . . . Pierre must be made to understand—but she ended in a dismal blur of emotions. Nothing was quite clear. Pierre of noble, brittle lineage, understood so much that he dared to discard and disregard as the mood dictated. Burr with the Basque grandmother and tradesmen’s fortunes of six generations, refused to understand. Tag, a “frontier” aristocrat, had struggled to interpret rather than understand . . . and what had she done? The question came in spite of herself. Her lack of an answer brought a pang of alarm. What had she done? Junk was the unintelligent response.

“. . . there should be a law against anyone’s attempting to destroy the beautiful nonsense of a legend,” Pierre was saying. “To analyze folklores and religion is worse than listening at keyholes. Could I afford it, I should live a legend sort of life. I want to challenge anyone who tries to discover just what I am.”

“You are so many things, Monsieur Mosaic,” said Brigit gaily. “It would be hopeless. Continue a fascinating myth and Gloria will like you the better for it.”

He turned to Gloria politely. “Will you?” his high, sweet voice making her want to scream a harsh negative.

“I was not listening,” she fibbed.

“Dear infant, she’s a myth herself,” was Brigit’s consolation.

The sticks of Gloria’s fan snapped under her tense fingers. It seemed all deceit and sophistry and evasion. What was it about this glittering, perfumed place that caused triphammer pulses to beat in her temples and a stifled feeling in her throat? She wanted—what was it that she wanted, had wanted, would always want? She felt ill at ease, fearful of the future. She was to bear this man a daughter, who, in turn, should be cleverly patronizing and indifferent? Bear Pierre de Lasseuere a daughter . . . Gloria flushed. He had been absurdly formal in his courtship. Tag had held her close the moment she listened to his love—a boy-and-girl, sweet-breathed closeness

. . . Burr had crushed her in his arms and left bruises on her wrists. Her mouth burned after his kisses . . .

They were talking of the races now, Brigit describing the Moorish towers of Longchamps, the drags with scarlet-coated footmen panting breathlessly before the glittering whiteness of Auteuil . . . now it was psychoanalysis, now Drina, the newest and most mysterious of professional beauties. Pierre's tawny eyes had an expectant gleam when he admitted that he had been asked to her salon . . . now it was politics and the Russian situation—with Brigit dominating the conversation. Gloria tried to study the occupants of the other boxes . . . Junk! Every now and then the word burst in upon her tinselled thoughts. She wanted to laugh and cry, to have her mother rub her head, to have Tag come in and strum his ukelele while they hummed nonsense songs but she was going to marry Pierre de Lasseuere and restore his family estates, to live in her Christmas tree of a castle and pension off her mother in smart watering places . . . bear her noble husband a daughter!

There was a supper at Brigit's studio. Laughingly, the latter sympathized as everyone climbed the twisting, darkened stairs. But Brigit knew how to entertain whether it was a "count or a courtesan," so Pierre assured her. Her parties were inexpensive but distinctive affairs. To-night her frock was a purple cobweb batiked in burnt orange. She had done it herself, offering to instruct anyone else in the art. Her silvered slippers were the result of a paintbrush and a can of glistening finish. She wore no stockings. Her only jewelry was an old-fashioned wedding ring, its mid-Victorian respectability serving as a foil for Brigit's costume as well as an appeal for sympathy, the reminder that she was a woman of conventional experience and no footloose daughter of to-day.

Pierre always enjoyed the ingenuity Brigit displayed in giving a party as well as the excellent food which she prepared herself, dashing into her kitchenette of a kitchenette to bring forth chilled lobster with rice, endive and cheese salad and champagne punch. When Brigit was out of the room she still dominated the situation. Occasionally one glanced at her busy-looking little desk and saw the picture of Gretchen, a sober schoolgirl with a shaggy dog at her feet. Then one redoubled his efforts to be nice to Brigit, resolving to "do something for her" the very first chance.

Gloria was silent throughout the party. She knew that her silence annoyed Pierre and amused Brigit. The others paid little attention to her. They were bohemians of the sort Pierre delighted in knowing but with whom he could not afford to be too intimate. He found himself paying their debts and letting his own stand, neglecting his relatives and running off for country trips only to return hopelessly drunk, penniless and delighted.

“But there are one or two of them you need to know,” he had told Gloria. She searched the faces trying to discover who these might be. There seemed to be no one whom she felt that she needed to know.

When Pierre drove her home at dawn, politely kissing her hands and hoping that she would rest and dream of him, and all the rest of the courteous, vapid farewells, Gloria was as near to an old-fashioned tantrum as Pierre was to yawning in her face.

She slept restlessly until noon. Pierre was to call for her and take her to decide about old French carpets in which he was interested; they promised to be the correct thing for the drawing-room of the town apartment.

Long before it was time for him to appear, Gloria had dressed carefully in a severe blue frock. She had decided to put her charms to the test. Naïve conceit asserted itself in this extremity. As her mother would have said, “Honey, you can do anything.” Not only was she achieving an international marriage of distinction—even now American journals were announcing the affair—but she must bring Pierre to her feet as she had brought the others . . . she was not to be ignored, yawned at. She must discover Pierre’s Achilles’ heel. That he loved her partly because of her money was to be expected. She had been brought up to think in terms of money. When one wanted something, money acquired it. She had begun to learn that money could not prevent everything but it could acquire everything—witness Pierre. Having done this, she must disregard his wish and analyze him, shatter the atmosphere of the legend in which he was enveloped. There was something else which Gloria resolved to do but she did not put it into words even to herself. An unfamiliar shyness prevented. She was not attracted to Pierre in the ordinary man-and-woman sense. Sex was something which both had ignored, Gloria because she did not feel intrigued and Pierre because he was too blasé and well-bred. But she must make him feel that she was to be desired not only as a well-dowered wife but as a woman.

When Pierre was announced Gloria found her resolutions changing into impatient constraint.

“I’m fonder of your father than of you,” she coquetted.

Pierre’s tawny eyes looked over and around and beyond her. “He is more human; you treat me like a country cousin to whom you are pledged to be polite. I don’t see what you are driving at when you talk of not wanting to analyze myths. I adore analyzing. I analyze everyone and everything; I’m keen about it. You may as well know it now as later.”

“I am not alarmed,” was Pierre’s dry comment.

“But I shall analyze *you*,” she threatened. “Legends and myths are for children and old women. You’ll be telling me that you believe in elfs and fairies——”

“Sometimes I do,” his eyes were serious. “But such thought are not to be told _____”

“What nonsense,” called out Gloria impatiently. “You don’t go in for séances and table tipping, do you?”

Pierre’s shoulders shrugged. “Should I be obliged to tell you if I did?”

“Of course; we must tell each other everything,” she said in her most literal tones.

“Must is a word my dictionary never contained,” Pierre was bored. He had come prepared to discuss French carpets not to submit to schoolgirl tyranny.

Gloria was puzzled what to answer so she nibbled at a cake and fancied that she looked reproachful.

Pierre began again in a businesslike manner. “My dear Gloria, let us understand each other, if it is possible. Usually to understand is fatal but since you incline that way, please know that you are marrying a paradox. My bite is stronger than my bark.” He smiled but Gloria knew that this was not a pose. “As Madame Lasseuere you will have your position, your home, your friends—your daughter. As your husband I shall pay you the attentions which I consider are your due. Beyond that, my pretty child, marriage to me means nothing more; it could not endure if it did,” folding his arms and awaiting her agreement.

“But, Pierre, you are so uneven, so scintillating and tender one moment, so ruthless and aloof the next. You don’t really love me, do you?” and her eyes were the blue of her dark frock.

“Of course I love you,” he said quickly. “I love you for all that I have just said—but there is a great deal more in life besides marriage. You must find that something more, too. Mon Dieu, how could one exist unless one did?”

“In America,” said Gloria steadily, to her own surprise, “we call marriage the great partnership; it means everything or nothing. If it means nothing, we get a divorce. If it means everything, we——”

“America was my mother’s country,” said Pierre gently, “but it never could become mine. What you do in America is not my concern; it no longer will be your country once you are married to me. You are like your country, young and lovely and untrained—the finer half-tones and tints of life are still undiscovered, unappreciated. You are still concerned with only the primitive needs of civilization. For ages we have been supplied with those; we have learned to enjoy and indulge in the intricate, often unappreciated things of life—the sort of hidden art which an ivory carver displays when he carves infinite balls of ivory within each other, each as perfect and ornamental as the outside sphere. Those sorts of things are what delight

me—that is the civilization of which I am a part, which you may share and learn to appreciate.”

“It is decadent, jaded,” began Gloria, uncertain of her arguments.

“We have neither forgotten nor become deaf to primitive needs. The war proved that. But for matrimonial partnership such as America prates of—with its single bedroom, its single purse, its lack of privacy, individuality—and yet, you were not of that school,” he broke off and regarding her with interest. “You divorced your husband because you felt that it had been a mistake; in other words you found yourself bored. Now we are not so impolite. We simply go our own ways still holding to the pledge which we have taken. We keep marriage sacred because we keep freedom unimpaired. You surrender freedom in your passing and deluded enthusiasm—only to find that it is the one possession to be retrieved no matter what the cost. Then follow chaos—divorce—stupidity,” he began humming a popular air.

“You need not remember this conversation,” he added, as if Gloria had expressed the wish that she might not. “Let it be unnecessary to repeat it. We will be united harmoniously in the things for which marriage was intended and free in the things which God intended us to be free in . . . now shall we go look at the carpets?”

There was a tone of dismissal, a warning which Gloria struggled to set aside. She felt vanquished as she smiled a truce. She tried to shrug her shoulders in the same gay fashion Brigit would have done, joke about a recent scandal, tell the news from Bello Trevano where Min held forth in solitary, shivering splendor . . . by all means let them see the carpets.

Later, having purchased some of them, Pierre excused himself from dining. He was going to Calais and on to London for a week of wretched family business which he had neglected as long as it was possible to do. He would wire her upon his arrival. She was not going to cry her eyes out for him, was she? But remember him just enough to make his return an occasion of joy.

Gloria came back to the villa to find Olga Bialias waiting to tell of someone who had been the social godmother to many American brides. It might mean a vast difference in Gloria’s future if she would incline her ear to Madame Bertrand’s teachings. How were things progressing? How well she had appeared at the opera; Olga had been hidden away in the pit and admired Gloria from afar. Then she might bring the social godmother to meet Gloria in the morning? Excellent.

There was a telegram awaiting her, too. But Gloria did not open it until she had seen Olga off and had gone to her room, deciding not to dine downstairs.

Idly her fingers tore the envelope flap. Over and over she found herself reading the summons. Her mother had died suddenly that same day.

Pierre's Luck Holds

PIERRE had left for Calais. Olga Bialias had disappeared mysteriously, it would seem. Until the midnight express connecting with Lugano, the fastest connection to be made, Gloria could find no one to go with her but Brigit Pascal. In her extremity she had sent for the latter. Looking more mid-Victorian than ever in her black frock and the broad wedding band on her shapely hand, Brigit had answered the summons.

"You poor thing," she said gently, not at all in her usually crisp, mocking voice. "This is hard—but fortunate," the last so softly that Gloria scarcely comprehended.

"You'll come with me?" Gloria pleaded. "I've never known what death is like. Mama wouldn't let me look at papa for fear I'd have a terror about it. I hardly saw my little baby . . . I feel so numb, so alone. I can't go without someone and Pierre —"

"You poor thing," Brigit repeated. Lighting a cigarette she walked the length of Gloria's room.

"Pierre would wish you to come with me," Gloria appealed.

"Yes, I think that he would," was Brigit's calm answer. "And I think I should come with you even if he did not. Let's get ready and start."

"You would do anything for Pierre, wouldn't you?" Gloria murmured as she gave the order to pack.

"Anything," Brigit admitted in the same calm way. "It's rather terrible to find yourself caring so intensely. . . . I want to see you take this thing as gamely as he would," with an abrupt change of manner.

"Is Pierre so game?" Gloria insisted—as if to talk of Brigit and Pierre and packing helped to keep away the fact that her mother was dead, that within twenty-four hours she must come to grips with reality.

"Very game. During the war he was almost a saint, if only for a moment," Brigit began eagerly. "But I must not tell—he is furious when people make him out a hero. For now let us forget Pierre and remember that your mother is dead. Pierre was always—fortunate."

"What do you mean by fortunate?" Gloria whimpered. "You mean that——"

"Just this," said Brigit hurriedly as if to get it done with. "You must realize that your own and Pierre's sense of values are worlds removed—each quite all right in its

own way but unless one realizes this truth, one is apt to be rather shocked and disappointed from time to time. Oh, he will be beautifully sympathetic and correct in everything that he does concerning your grief—but he will be—what shall we say—relieved of an undesirable although estimable connection. In his scheme of things your mother could have no place. When you marry Pierre you become his wife—he does not become Gloria’s husband—you see? Your mother has lived to see her fondest ambition gratified—and the good Lord has had mercy enough to rearrange matters so that you will not come to feel that she is a bromidic burden . . . just now, let us see if there is everything we need in the boxes.”

After a sleepless, troubled journey Bello Trevano was reached late the next day. The castle gates were draped with black. The servants wore sleeve bands—and smiled as if a fête were to be celebrated. Food and wine were plentiful now that the red-faced American chatelaine lay in state. It seemed a mockery—this outer atmosphere of formal grief with the undercurrent of indifference and curiosity.

Gloria was led into the great bedchamber with its canopied bed, candles burning to throw a pale, sanctimonious light on her mother’s face—no longer florid but curiously lined and tired. The overpowering odor of lilies made the room seem stifling. The housekeeper was smirking and overly interested as she awaited Gloria’s praise for the arrangements. The details of Madame’s death were few. She had been walking through the main hallway and had fallen suddenly—see, the bruise on her temple. When they carried her up to bed, she called out for her daughter and had tried to say some sort of a prayer—it was in English, the housekeeper added disparagingly!

It was ended before the local doctor could reach Bello Trevano. She had lain gasping and asking for Gloria. Then her eyes set—so—the housekeeper had something of histrionic ability and this was a rare opportunity. The doctor said that it was a stroke. She was too heavy and indiscreet as to food and lack of exercise. She had stayed in bed a great part of every day. She seemed worried and anxious about her daughter—these photographs of Mrs. Grant were kept on her nightstand—so.

“It is all very satisfactory,” said Brigit cordially, “I rather think Mrs. Grant might like to be alone—wouldn’t you, old girl—just for a moment?”

Gloria nodded. She waited until the servants and Brigit had closed the heavy oak doors. Then she tiptoed to the bed and knelt down. The flicker of the candles cast quivery shadows across her mother’s purplish lips—as if they twitched with the longing to speak to her beloved child: “Honey, you can do anything——”

“Mama,” she said softly. She glanced about the ornate room and then at this tired, lined face, the heavy figure wrapped in embroidered covers. It seemed as

garish as one of her father's prize wedding cakes—the very absurdity of the simile but strengthened the impression. Those many tiered cakes with plaster of Paris lilies-of-the-valley and miniature figures perched under a bell glistening with frosting. Exhibited in the windows before delivery it was a magnet to attract passers-by. There was something of the same artificial ostentation in the dead woman's setting. She who had tended the goats and driven her husband's delivery wagons, lay dead in the newly purchased castle, triumphant proof of her success, of her daughter's exalted future . . . Junk! The word suggested itself despite the solemnity of the occasion.

Gloria glanced at the photographs of herself; as a little girl in a tucked organdie, a silly pout on her lips; as Tag's bride in ivory satin and lace, her eyes smiling defiantly; as Pierre's fiancée, taken but two months before, in rich silk and furs, an attempt at worldly indifference in her cold stare. . . .

"Mama," she repeated the words echoing in the high-ceilinged room. Only a speck of fire burned in the fireplace. A chill wind made the trees rustle as if someone with stiff, harsh skirts tiptoed about the halls.

"Mama," she repeated, touching the unresponsive cheeks.

She must stop this meaningless calling out. She must go down to Brigit and wire Pierre concerning the funeral; cable the news to the baking company directors, arrange for many things . . . they would be married privately although her mother would have regretted it. She had wanted this second marriage to be a thing of superlative beauty . . . how blue were her lips . . . had she suffered for long yet told no one? Suddenly it occurred to Gloria that her mother never mentioned herself—or was it that Gloria never asked. Her mother lived only for her. At the zenith of success, unsuspecting of the tragedy she had forced upon her child, she had died for her . . . as Brigit had said, "it was quite convenient."

"Oh, mama," Gloria heard herself saying again. She was angered at her lack of ability to suffer intelligently. . . . Min would have known how to take charge. Brigit knew how. Soon Pierre would command the situation. She was just a soft, Yankee kid, as Brigit said . . . and her mother was dead.

She burst out of the room and down the halls, the harsh wind seeming to be in pursuit. She found Brigit indulging in a philosophical cigarette and brandy in the library.

"Got a grip on yourself?" the latter asked as Gloria came shivering beside the fire. "You've a lot of stuff to get cleared up, you know—an estate like hers——"

"I don't know," said Gloria suddenly. "I don't know anything."

"Good enough. Begin to learn," Brigit flung back as she finished her brandy.

“Buck up, Gloria. Pierre can’t abide a woman with red-rimmed eyes.”

In a month Gloria knew the worst. She lost no time in telling Pierre upon whom she had come to rely during the funeral and the flurry of announcements and rearrangements. He had proved surprisingly tender. She fancied that Brigit never had seen this side of his nature. He held her so gently in his arms when he wanted to suggest something that she do or say, as if to assure her of his protection and love. They had decided on a private marriage on Easter Monday. Min would have wished for no further delay. Also, the castle was to be sold. Pierre had intended that this should happen. Now Gloria was childishly eager that this come to pass. Her mother would have agreed. Gloria would consent to whatever Pierre wanted. His background was to be hers.

But she found that the sale of the estate must go to pay some of the enormous bills. For over a year Min had speculated wildly in her desire for greater wealth. Unscrupulous advisers had not neglected their opportunities. Unbridled ambition for Gloria’s future had caused Min to become bankrupt, explanation of those worried lines on her dead face. To cover one loss she had chanced another—and another. From week to week she had struggled to retrieve her original fortune. Anything but to worry Gloria or imperil her future—anything. Then death had overtaken her. While she lay a pauper in the chamber of state her creditors were preparing their onslaught.

Gloria was trapped. She had never questioned what her mother did regarding finance. Now there seemed nothing to do but to sell everything—was it not so?

As she questioned Pierre a suspicion of what his answer would be caused her to stiffen with dread—like a child expecting an undeserved blow.

“Sell everything,” he agreed.

“We can stay quietly in Brittany for a time. Some of the securities may not be worthless. Her lawyers at home can investigate. She must have been horribly cheated—oh, Pierre, what a thing to have happen—what a terribly unfair thing.”

“I am deeply sorry,” Pierre told her gravely. “With all my heart I regret this turn of fortune. But it is well that we knew before it was too late——”

“You mean?” began Gloria steadily, no longer stiffening with anticipation, for the blow had fallen. “You mean that you don’t want to marry me—now?”

“My debts, my father, the estates—would it not be madness? Who could expect it? We would be worse than ruined; we would be submerged. You must realize that no one could survive——”

“Exactly, no one would survive,” she turned to leave the room.

“We will talk it out, Gloria,” he was still tender, almost pleading. “You must come to appreciate my viewpoint. For now, you can make an indefinite postponement of our wedding—it is to be expected under the circumstances. Later, you can announce your change of heart and mind. It is often done. My dear child, what else did you think would happen? Surely you understood my attitude towards marriage—just as I think I comprehend yours—it was to be a mutual benefit—a——”

“Brigit said that you were always fortunate,” she interrupted in a dull voice. She was moving towards the door.

“Where are you going?” he asked suddenly.

“Home,” there was a little catch in her voice.

Thrills Versus Happiness

THAT she had mistaken thrills for happiness would be the outstanding indictment against her, Gloria realized as she sat a dreary little spectator, in the dining-room of the Stratford Arms Family Hotel. To have mistaken thrills for happiness, she kept repeating, conscious that everyone turned an eye in her direction. No doubt she was a thrill in their lives, a semi-mysterious, semi-absurd person who occupied a front suite and whose trunks were altogether too overpowering for the Stratford Arms storage quarters. They lined one side of her room until such time as she could bring herself to inventory their contents and strip down to knapsack proportions.

There was much to do but so much more to realize! Life had not passed her by as it had some of the sharp-featured spinsters who sat opposite. She had passed life by. It would be no trifling feat to fall back into step, she was telling herself as she had been telling herself for weeks or was it for years or perhaps only a few tense moments?

For the present it seemed as if she must leave this unfamiliar table of curious boarders and rush out of the hotel—but where would she go? Who was there to understand?

Mrs. Alfreda Potter, a homegrown psychoanalyst who sat beside her, was passing a card for her lecture course, *You Can Become Whatever You Wish*, proving the initial subject.

Gloria nodded politely; if it was possible she promised to attend.

“But you’ve nothing else to do, my dear,” accused Mrs. Potter lightly. “Your mind seems filled with vagrant thoughts,” she added, seeing another victim in the offing. “I can show you how to close mental doors on the past and raise mental window shades on the panorama of the future. I can teach you poise, concentration, how to send your unconscious mind in search of your true mate . . . another few walnuts, please, Tilly,” as the waitress was escaping, “and don’t forget my glass of milk at nine.”

“Can anyone do all that?” asked Gloria wistfully. As she listened to the verbose assurances she was deciding that this pseudo-poised and eternally smiling creature was a success merely because she made people think that they thought. Her fingers crumpled the card with its list of tempting subjects as she excused herself on the plea of having to write letters.

Finding her way up the winding stairs she passed others of the boarders. They were the commonplace, more or less defeated types she had always ignored. Now she was one of them. This fact kept presenting itself in spite of her drifting mind state. Eventually she knew that she must rouse from this inertia, admit that she was no longer secure from life's invasion. She was Gloria Grant, a penniless, motherless divorcée who had burnt her bridges and who must now set about to earn a living.

"Want to go to the movies?" someone asked as she was turning in at her door.

She shook her head; she had not yet learned to respond to these people as she had responded to the old circle.

"What's new?" there was friendliness as well as curiosity in the brisk voice.

Gloria glanced at her questioner. "Oh, it's Flo Wood," she said slowly.

"Count me as nothing more than the snake's hips, if that is the way I make you feel about it," responded Miss Wood somewhat tartly.

"Please don't mind me—I'm horribly tired——"

Miss Wood opened Gloria's door and stood on the threshold after she had gone inside. "It won't be quite as bad after a time," she said more gently. "Nothing ever is."

"What won't be as bad?" asked Gloria sharply.

"Oh—the noise of repaving our street," Miss Wood chuckled. "See here, Mrs. Grant, if you're up against it, it might help to talk it out. I'm no Mrs. Alfreda Potter with a lot of bunk about the unconscious. But no woman has been an insurance president's wisdom tooth for more years than I wish me and God knew about without having a few wise remarks ready for immediate delivery," she came inside and closed the door. Gloria watched her with curious but admiring eyes.

"Do you realize that everyone is offering a solution about you?" continued Miss Wood. "You're better than a crossword puzzle."

"How dare you?" Gloria cut in with a sudden return of her old spirit. "How dare any of you——"

"Anyone can dare anything if they are willing to take the consequences," was the answer. Miss Wood took an easy chair and ignored Gloria's standing posture.

"I wish you'd not wonder about me," Gloria began again.

"I don't. Everyone else wonders about you; I'm interested. It seems to me that you've suddenly struck a tough piece of road and don't know whether to detour or try to make it."

Gloria came over to Miss Wood's chair. This tall, overdressed business woman of almost fifty appealed to her. There was a hint, oh, a very faint hint of her mother's flattering optimism. At least, there was a temporary sense of security, of someone

who was willing, perhaps a trifle anxious that she state her problems. But Gloria did not yet know what these problems were; that was the worst of it. She had yet to come out of the self-administered anesthetic of self-pity.

The hurried flight from Paris and her running to cover, as it were, into this glorified Manhattan boarding house had been the only thing that Gloria had been capable of doing. She had fancied to escape everyone—herself included. A limited supply of money and a pathetic ignorance concerning the conservation of it was causing her to languish in the front room suite, embittered and childishly frightened.

Still, one could not escape people. This Flo Wood with her brusque good-humor and curiosity typified the rest of the boarding house. And were they so very different from the circle of one-time friends who had waited breathlessly to see how Pierre's engagement would be terminated or from Duffy's select circle which condemned her forever when she left Tag and went rushing off in pursuit of Burr Meredith?

"Remember, it takes brains to be a snob; you're in danger of becoming merely a snip," Miss Wood's deep voice interrupted.

Gloria started.

"Oh, I'm not knocking. I'm trying to boost. I don't think you've ever checked up on yourself, have you? You can't play the haughty lady rôle unless you can pay for it and people who can pay for it don't come bag and baggage to the Stratford Arms . . . see here, do you want a job?"

"Yes," said Gloria wondering at herself. "But I don't want to answer questions. Do you mind?"

Miss Wood's rouged and sophisticated face was wreathed in an understanding smile.

"We've all been there . . . what can you do?" she answered.

"I don't quite know. I'll have to learn—something." Gloria sat on a small, gilt framed chair. Once a parlor ornament until weakened from injudicious use, it was now relegated to the front room suite. It suggested Gloria's present state of mind—a pretty, useless thing.

In her soft black frock with its leaflike frills Gloria seemed a forlorn child. Even Miss Wood's practical, slightly envious heart was softened.

"We'll have to find out what you can learn," she continued in the same crisp manner. "There are plenty of jobs but more applicants. You'd be no good for business, I take it."

"I'm afraid not. I can speak French but I can't teach. I can sing a little, dance a little—perhaps I could dress hair acceptably. I've trunks of gay clothes. I might learn to do designing or be a companion to some long-suffering old party in search of

climate. Or else——” trailing off into an uncertain whisper.

“That won’t bring home the bacon,” advised Miss Wood. “What you need is a job.”

“I suppose so,” Gloria agreed.

“Do you intend to stick around here?” pursued Miss Wood. “Or fight your case until you emerge rolling in alimony?”

Gloria started to her feet. “It is not that sort of a thing, not at all,” she began with her former disdain. “What right have you to come prying?”

“I thought you wanted a job,” Miss Wood reminded.

“So I do—but does that mean I must recite my life history?”

“Sometimes it is a life history that gets the job. See here, old dear, check up on yourself and what you think you want to try for. I’ll be here to-morrow at dinner time. Let me know the worst.”

“How did you start?” asked Gloria staring up at Miss Wood’s squarish, smiling face. It was not unattractive when one looked closely.

“Me? I started right back on the farm in Iowa. I came to New York when I was twenty-three. I was going to show the home folks how mistaken they had been in me. I had the poor taste to love somebody who was not worth it—often happens, doesn’t it? So I broke camp and made for the big town. I was to be the world’s greatest woman financier—oh, right from the start I was out only for the vast profits. My first job was licking postage stamps. In six months I was trying to address envelopes and answer the switchboard. I went to night school and lived on Second Avenue and forgot all about good-looking clothes and good times—and love. Meantime the folks back home forgot all about me, including the man over whom I had made a fool of myself. It’s all right now—I can laugh about it. But it seemed rough for a few years. I took to wearing mannish collars and ties, untrimmed hats and reading melancholy bunk; you wouldn’t think it to look at me now, would you?” Miss Wood’s polished finger nails patted her permanent wave. “I was the disillusioned kid until I hit into my thirties and had a job as private secretary to one of the Wall street powers. In those years I worked ten hours a day, harder than anyone else in the plant. I made ’em admit that I could deliver the goods. I didn’t bat an eye at the best looking man on the force not if he could outrival the young men in the collar advertisements. I wanted to win my place on my merits. After I did and I came over to help out the biggest insurance company in the world—and the folks back home had stopped writing or died and my salary was more than I could spend unless I used some of it for six dollars an ounce perfume—well, I realized what a lot of fun I’d missed; how easy it was to grub but how hard to play. So I cut out the

mannish clothes and untrimmed hats and had facials and a course in posture. I showed up for work in rose-colored taffeta with cascades of lace. I took Turkish baths and went on a diet until I was the perfect thirty-six . . . but it was too late.” Miss Wood’s face betrayed pathetic wrinkles. “So there you are, my dear, you can take your choice. You can carve out a career and an income tax paying salary if you wish—and spend what is left of your life in trying to play and making a fool of yourself. Or you can play hard, as I think you’ve done, and then sit back and check up—and go get a job. Kid, I think you’ve lived in the way I’ve always wanted to live. Don’t mind what’s hurting you now; you’ve had the other experience, the emotion—maybe the love that I’d give my savings account to have had for a day . . . going to work ought to be easy after the other. Do you know what my work is to me?—a torture. Oh, those wasted years when I was pink and white without using facial creams and my hair was thick and curly and I could smile and show all my teeth without a qualm . . . and now. Only men past sixty think I’m worth taking out to dinner, the respectable married men whose home life palls and who want to be discreet but playful——” she paused, conscious that she had betrayed herself to this helpless, golden haired creature.

Gloria was impressed even as she was embarrassed. It was not to her liking—this sudden weakening of a self-sufficient person whose passing interest had caused her to feel a childish sense of security.

“So that’s that,” ended Miss Wood brusquely. “A closeup of one of New York’s successful business women . . . and when you’ve decided what you want to do, I’ll try to frame for the closing of the deal. You’re young,” she added with a sudden bitterness, “and whatever has gone wrong can come right again if you do your part. I’m old; I’m hopeless.”

“There always come a time when one is—hopeless,” said Gloria slowly, “doesn’t there?”

“Quite so. Think it over and tell me where you want to qualify.” Miss Wood’s tall self in her girlish dress moved towards the door. “Don’t wait too long before you do,” she advised, “remember that life is long—but rum is fleeting. And anything I’ve happened to say is to be considered strictly graveyard.”

After she had left—with the scent of the six dollar an ounce perfume lingering after her—Gloria found herself following the freely given yet sincere advice. She attempted to check up on herself.

Leaving Paris had not been as difficult as she had anticipated. There had been little left to see to, after all. There had been Pierre’s courteous yet impersonal presence and Brigit Pascal’s sympathetic but practical one. Olga Bialias had offered

her a “job”—Gloria’s lips curving scornfully at the memory. Olga had hinted that she come into her select shop as a first aide to this highly successful individual perfumer. She had made it clear that Gloria must become economical, punctual, somewhat humble. Still, she had no desire to see her go footloose and penniless into the world. Min’s memory had prompted the offer—as well as the comfortable commissions earned through Min’s gullibility.

“You are beautiful, *mon enfant*,” Olga had encouraged, “you can still plan to marry well. But he must be oldish or an American. You cannot be too particular. I will help you. Life is not over because Pierre de Lasseuere could not afford to keep his promise.”

If only they had known the truth—that it was not Pierre of whom she was thinking, regretting. It was Tag. Tag of whom she thought and for whom she grieved throughout the dismal settling of what remained of Min’s estate, the enduring of condolences and questions. Not even to Brigit Pascal, who had been both efficient and kind, asking as little as possible, had Gloria told the truth—that it was Tag for whom she longed now that the actual crash had come.

Her parting from Pierre had been a trivial detail in comparison with this suppressed longing. With almost amused relief she had watched his courtesy concerning inconsequential details, his concern lest she misjudge him and his world. Had she been less childlike, Brigit told her, Pierre might have made love to her; was she shocked to hear it? She might have seen another side of this temperamental, highly strung aristocrat who thanked his saints that he had been saved from a penniless marriage and who blushed to himself that he was not romanticist enough to have kept his bargain. Pierre felt obligated to Min for having died when she died, disclosing her state of ruin; he wanted her child to understand that he was grateful, that he would always be her friend. In a dozen ways he would delight to serve her—could she not comprehend his attitude of mind? Ah, she had never lived as Brigit had done, that was it. She had merely spent money!

Nor did Gloria think often of Burr once the de Lasseuere chapter had ended and society journals printed their last verbal sword thrust about the departure of the American divorcée for her native shores. It was only Tag who mattered; Tag who could have set her straight. That was the real tragedy, the facts of which she must keep always to herself.

She continued to visualize him as she had happened upon him that humid spring night—driving the truck into the hotel area way, his tall, thin self in crumpled working man’s clothes giving the spectators cause for a laugh as he profanely remonstrated over refractory brakes. Tag had checked up on himself. Tag had not passed life by.

He was not floundering at the deep end! She found herself worse than remorseful, she was simply homesick. That rare old Latin word “desiderium” expressed her emotion. She wanted so much to begin again yet she must learn that often the only way to begin again is to go on where one has just attempted to leave off!

Absurd, appealing memories of Rutledge kept suggesting themselves: the early days on Oak Street, her quiet father with gingerbread figurines hidden in his pockets, the old Newfoundland dog, her mother’s crowded double-parlors, appalling in their elegance, the first months on Blaine Avenue with the excess of rose-colored drapes and social snubs, Tag’s early devotion, the days when to be invited to Bagatelle House was the greatest desire of her heart although she had taken an ungracious method of achieving it.

Yet she fancied that she had done “serious work” in those days of “absolutely” and “marvelous,” days when amusing oneself with serious emotions and cheating as to values were encouraged by Min’s cheery, loud-voiced: “Honey, you can do anything!”

It had been all wrong; almost cruel. That her mother had been to blame did not in the least swerve Gloria’s new line of thought. There was no reason to stop checking up on herself. She must go on. She must understand why her mother had been wrong—having forgiven her in advance. It was enough to know that she was without a future, economically speaking, that she could not come rushing back to Tag and expect him to understand all that had happened to her real self. He could understand only the externals. Perhaps he did not care to understand even these. She must not expect Tag to understand, she reminded herself as one lashes a tired horse to make him reach the top of the hill.

Taking Flo Wood at her word, what sort of a job could she apply for? Suppose she attempted a tea room, just as every tired business man fancies that he can succeed on a chicken farm? How would it be to hang up a sign, Gloria The Wild Goose, on some country turnpike . . . but she did not know how. She had no money. She had some absurd clothes which she had saved from the wreck. Her jewelry had gone to satisfy minor creditors and to bring her back to New York. There was a very little left. She had Brigit Pascal to thank for that. Brigit had undertaken to wrestle with the lawyers.

“One can always come out with just a little,” she had insisted. “I did. Let me talk to them.”

But it was such a very little and there were so many years ahead. No, Gloria the Wild Goose was a passing vagary. Nor could she typewrite nor manicure nor sell stocks and bonds nor teach school. Besides, she wanted to find herself before she

started her job. To do this one must have money. That word job had replaced the word junk. It haunted and prodded her drifting, benumbed mind, pulling her away from living over the past or creating an imaginary, altogether impossible future.

It was after midnight before Gloria had decided what she must do. The noisy street was hushed. Only late homecomers and obliging taxicabs broke the stillness. There was spring in the air as she leaned out the window to watch a pessimistic crescent moon climb over the housetops. Spring . . . and she must find a job. But she knew what it was that she wanted. Something which would bring her into direct contact with the sort of people of whom she had once been. In contrast she would be in the subservient background, working for them and gauging herself. She must gain a merciless perspective on just what she had been. She must go among her own kind in the rôle of a subordinate . . . she would explain this to Flo Wood in the morning.

It was a month before Gloria found her chance. Meantime the number of wardrobe trunks had dwindled to a sensible two. Despite the heat and summer rates, Mrs. Gloria Grant had been moved into Number Eighteen. This was a significant maneuver. Among the regular members of the family the word was passed along that the finances of the former front suite occupant must have collapsed. She was no longer urged to play bridge after dinner.

It had been an interesting month in which Gloria had been tried out according to Flo Wood's best methods and had been found hopelessly wanting. There had been the employment agencies and the want ads and afternoons of riding aimlessly on the buses, watching the stream of humans, with and without jobs and wondering what was the use of any one particular human making any sort of an independent effort. There were stifling, starless nights of sitting at the window and wondering why she still wanted to live, of growing shivery and inexpressibly weary but never answering the question.

Then came the inspiration. The flower fête given by her school alumnæ was to take place on a Long Island estate the next Tuesday. Despite the staggering blow that tickets were five dollars, Gloria selected a cloud gray tulle and a flat black hat and found her way through the subway and suburban train sheds until she alighted at the gates of the Laddbarry estate, dismissing her hired jitney with a reckless tip.

For a few moments she happened upon no one whom she knew. She felt forlorn as she wandered among the crowds of chattering, flower-decked creatures. A few men looking most uncomfortable in afternoon dress paid her a fleeting glance. Then she ran into the arms of a former classmate, one of those who likewise believed that she had done "serious work"—now Mrs. Jack Stacy, wife of a penniless dilettante

poet who had met with scant favor in the eyes of his father-in-law.

“My darling lamb, wherever have you been and what cute thing have you gone and married now? I’ve heard wonderful rumors about you—marquises and diamond necklaces and no end of jolly things,” noting the smartness of the gray frock. It had been one which Brigit Pascal had advised buying in case one had a nunish mood. Gloria bethought herself of the occasion as Patricia Stacy took inventory.

“I’ve had a distressing time,” Gloria began frankly. “I’m so glad to see you. We must have a real talk. I’ve something to ask——”

“You’re not in any sort of a money jam, are you?” asked Patricia uneasily. “Suppose you see some of the older girls? I’m so rushed just now. I’m on the reception committee—where are you stopping in town? We can have lunch next week——” she was moving away when Gloria put out a detaining hand.

“You must listen. I’m in grave trouble. Mama died in the early spring. When they found that she had lost everything it broke my engagement to Monsieur de Lasseuere; that is the way things happen——”

“You mean all that damn-gorgeous fortune of yours has vanished into thin air?” her classmate was most unwilling to hear the worst.

Gloria explained. “I must find something to do. I’ve tried the best I could but it doesn’t seem any use. I’m hopeless unless some of us can dig up something that _____”

Pat Stacy frowned. It was most inconvenient that at this time of times Gloria Beaumont Grant should appear as other than the overly lavish, scintillating person she had always been. Find her something to do—horrors! And yet—there was the same begrudged loyalty for Gloria that one has for an annoying blood relation. It was up to Gloria’s own sort to rally to her cause. Of course everything would be very different from now on—still, one could not see her go adrift. There must be something, somewhere——

“A librarian or social secretary might be just the trick,” Pat said enthusiastically. “Daddy knows scads of rich idiots that like to write letters to the press. You might even marry one of them if you thought you wouldn’t come any more croppers. I’ll ask daddy; he always knows. I’m terribly hard up or I’d make you a loan without a murmur. But you know what poets have to live on and daddy doesn’t appreciate Jack. My dear, we simply could not exist if it weren’t for mama’s sisters. And they do such uneven things—send their limousine for me one day and buy my heavenly plum of a daughter the most marvelous clothes and then we don’t hear from them for a week. My nerves are frayed trying to live on nothing and knowing that my family has everything and will have to leave it to us some day. It’s an ordeal. There are so

many of us in the same boat. You never had *that* to contend with. Besides, Jack is temperamental. I've gone in for astrology—it helps me control his moods. I always did like serious things. It's fascinating—why, take yourself—probably you are going through a depressing period—your controlling planets are retrograding I haven't a doubt. I'll look up your birthday when I get around to it. We'll dig up something, old dear—drop in for lunch on Tuesday. I'm down in the Village, you know. I'll get Daphne Rhodes on the case. She's a wizard. Personally, I think you ought to have stuck to Tag . . . isn't it thrilling the way people have turned out to-day? Chin-chin until Tuesday," and she was gone in pursuit of a stately looking dowager with a plump looking gold mesh bag.

Gloria felt as if she had asked for a drink of water and had been given a sniff of smelling salts! She wandered aimlessly about the grounds avoiding those she knew and studying those she did not.

"Why, it's Gloria," someone would exclaim every now and then. "You bad angel, wherever have you been—we thought—we read—oh, so sorry, dear. Do look us up. We've moved into the country but it's an adorable motor trip."

Or else: "Pat Stacy has been telling about you, Gloria. Rotten luck. We thought you had gotten great with the best people in Paris. But we'll find something—you can always visit, you know. I think winter is the time when things happen, don't you—I mean interesting things like new work and all that? Oh, don't give it another thought. Have you bought one of these satin orchids? Aren't you going to? Only two dollars and they're marvelous. Oh, thanks—I knew you would . . . that makes my third dozen . . . have tea some day, won't you? Just give me a ring."

Lullaby Land

ON Tuesday Gloria heard and accepted her fate. In the futurist basement of the Jack Stacys, an attractive little coal bin done in vivid blue and burnt orange, she ate Russian salad and drank tea well fortified with Bacardi rum while listening to Pat's and Daphne's explanation of their new business venture and, in turn, Gloria's new job. It took Gloria some time to comprehend the exact state of affairs.

Patricia was the main spokesman. Gloria was to have the privilege—using the word with emphasis—of taking charge of a marvelous school for children—very, very young children—children, in fact, in their most plastic age. Didn't it sound enticing? Upon further questioning, Lullaby Land, the school, proved to be a de luxe baby crèche situated in a top floor apartment of a smart east side neighborhood, a roof garden and play pens being included in the equipment. In brief, it was a day nursery for the children of the near-rich, children of such persons as Pat and Daphne who had married “angel sheiks but desperately poor,” and whose families were taking their time in supplying the angel sheiks with a proper amount of pocket money. Business women who fancied that they were not submerging their personalities could park their infants at an early hour and call for them when the day's routine was ended. Lullaby Land was referred to as a “school” for very young children because—well, because they intended it to be a school in its own fascinating way. It was made clear to Gloria that she, too, must consider it in the same light. That one could enter at the age of three months to take a general course in raw or pasteurized milk and the art of rattles was in no way a contradiction of the fact that Lullaby Land was a school. A trained nurse and helpers were in attendance and a baby specialist had offices just across the street. There was everything to make the “angel mites” happy and to insure their mothers of unhampered time. No child older than four was admitted, diplomas being figuratively granted at this age and the child progressing to kindergarten.

“Oh, they learn a great deal. It makes them so much brighter and more tractable to be with the other children. I noticed a tremendous change in my twins,” volunteered Daphne. “It is marvelous that this opening has occurred, Gloria. I don't know of anything that you could do any better. All you have to do is wear a ducky white uniform and be a sort of superintendent, see that everything is shipshape; order milk and things and pay wages and if anything goes wrong try to find out who is to

blame. You'll adore the mothers, they're a swank lot, aren't they, Pat? Some of the smartest young women in town—only they're up against it financially and can't have their own nurses. Of course they're not going to stay home and they can't have their children neglected. Poor Gerty McLaughlin strapped her child to its bed and went off to play golf. Some perfectly stupid neighbors complained about it. Imagine the way the McLaughlins felt—owning half of Pittsburgh, you might say. But, at least, it made them ashamed that they hadn't done the decent thing by their son. So Gerty got a nurse and a car the next week and won the golf championship for the season besides. That is only one instance of the things young mothers have to endure unless they've oodles of money—like you had. Finally a few of us got together and decided that we were getting colic complexes and having heart tremors at the sight of a pram so we decided to found our school. My dear, it has been a wonderful success. We have more—pupils—than we can accommodate.”

“We have night school, too,” Pat volunteered gayly. “You'll have to stay about now and then. But we have an extra nurse on the job. You will have an awfully good looking room and bath of your own. You see, you are the resident——”

“Chaperon,” said Gloria, laughing in spite of the prospect.

“Cherie, please don't treat it as any joke. It is an excellent proposition. The woman we have now isn't the right sort. She's a bit midwifey and would talk outside. We want to make the place exclusive and keep it up to a certain standard. By the end of another year we can have another nurse. We get our little helpers from an orphan asylum—so don't leave money lying about——”

“The night shift lets us have our precious things off our minds if we must go out of town or to a theater. But we have it a rule not to have anyone left longer than forty-eight hours. I don't think the average mother's instinct would permit it, do you?”

“We don't want a boarding school,” prompted Daphne, “that is—not yet.” With a sudden change and hauteur of manner: “Now as to your salary, Gloria——”

The upshot of it was that within a week Gloria found herself as the resident chaperon of the Lullaby Land School for Infants of the Near Rich; she also found it a unique and not altogether uncongenial mental tonic.

A paramount reason for having obtained the post was the confidence placed in her silence. Being one of their own sort—just whatever that might imply—Gloria would not broadcast the news concerning Lullaby Land and invite unfair criticism and journalistic exposure. Because it was a self-supporting institution instead of a day crèche where one sent jelly and coaxed opera stars to come trill at silver teas, the public might misinterpret its motive, so the founders declared. Gloria realized that

she would have entered her children in just such a school had she been married to Tag and Tag been earning the income of a beginning bacteriologist.

It took Gloria several weeks to become oriented in this atmosphere of wails and gurgles and coos, enthusiastically insincere and hurried mothers who exhausted every superlative adjective known to civilized man in parting with their offspring and whose reception of them after “school hours” was a time of monosyllables and resigned sighs. The trained nurse fawned upon these mothers and tried to match her wits and authority with those of Gloria. The orphan asylum helpers played with the school toys and ate up the junket and oranges whenever the occasion permitted. Disapproving grandmothers and in-laws visited the school, stalking about the “classrooms” delivering opinions in no favorable terms.

The night school consisted of the same sort of program, Gloria sleeping with one eye open for squalls. The attendance at the night school was quite as heavy as some of the classes in Americanization which were conducted by one of the Spartan patronesses. While the latter encouraged the latest arrivals from the toe of Italy to learn their alphabet—admiring their brown eyes and her own cleverness—her two children writhed and squirmed through the midsummer nights. Night school began at five o’clock—with a bath and an oil rub and a farewell bottle! It ended at nine the following morning. The fee for the school was graded according to the ability to pay. Because an actress chose to have her child attend day and night sessions almost without a break and paid lavishly to do so was no reason why Daphne Rhodes, one of the founders, could not have “scholarships” awarded to her flourishing twins! Gloria, who kept the books, found herself puzzling over the situation. Her own salary was almost a nominal affair—but her room and bath were decidedly good-looking.

“This gives you a background, darling,” the founders urged when Gloria murmured something about the lack of wages. “My dear, you don’t want to be on the same plane as that expensive and ordinary trained nurse. When winter comes you’ll have wonderful times—we intend to invite you to parties. We’ll have someone else to relieve you. Ever so many heavenly plums come to school as soon as the season opens. You’ll be given theater tickets, too—and awfully nice presents at the holidays. That means more to you than it would to have a bigger salary and no background. . . .”

Gloria decided to stand by. It was the last job in the world that she fancied she would ever undertake or succeed in holding. Being the resident chaperon involved far more than wearing the ducky white uniform and seeing that everything was shipshape. She understudied for the rest of the faculty! It seemed an unreal experience, as unreal as Pierre and her life at Bello Trevano had been. She felt that

sooner or later she must stop this semi-hiding existence on the fringe of her old world, come into the open and declare herself. There was borne home the knowledge that out of all this funny, helpless little crowd of pupils, she and she alone was going to a stern school and learning its lessons.

Every time she stopped to see why a “pupil” wept or wrapped one up to be delivered back to its parents the presence of her dead boy seemed near at hand. She found herself wondering how his eyes would have looked had they ever opened and gazed at her, how fluffy was the tuft of hair across his forehead—Tag’s forehead, so her mother had said . . . how cold he must have felt. There was a strange regret that she had not touched him. With this was an equally strange satisfaction that she was being haunted. Cheerfully, she accepted any penance. Woven in and about her days was the vague disciplining memory of this dead child.

The grief about her mother remained a thing apart, a shocking catastrophe which necessitated a complete readjustment. With the last had come the realization that she had been badly cheated. Not that she blamed her mother. Instead, she pitied her. For she saw Min’s viewpoint and herself the helpless, yet willing victim. She shrank from franker analysis just at this time. It seemed enough to be alone and without resources, with the memory of her stillborn child for comradeship.

There must be an end to penance, too, Gloria decided as October appeared and additional heavenly plums entered school for both day and night sessions while more outraged but penurious in-laws stalked the classrooms in various degrees of protesting rage.

The promised invitations remained but bait for her to stay on in her job. While Gloria’s own sort were sorry for her, they were more impatient because she so muffed it, to state matters briefly. She, who might have been secure in all the splendor of upstate aristocracy had chosen to burn her bridges and try for stakes beyond her possibilities. That she had slumped into the drab rôle of a baby-crèche matron did not concern them; she was fortunate to be among her own kind, paid after a fashion. If one is a fool—and without money—what more can one expect? In her way Gloria was good-looking but she could not expect life to suddenly smile upon her and forget that she was penniless. Her mother had been the only one who had insisted, “Honey, you can do anything”—speedily writing a check to pay for the “anything” in order that her statement be sustained.

The last week in October an item in the New York papers told that Tag’s aunt had died. Gloria happened upon it during an exceptionally dull season of the “night school.” She was surrounded by dim lights and cribs from which occasional protests came floating out to her. It was the première of one of the season’s most talked-of

plays so the heavenly plums had been parked in numbers for the evening.

In her peculiar way Duffy had been of value, Gloria concluded as she laid the paper aside and began her round of the cribs. She had stood for something other than material wealth—oh, her pathetic, mistaken mother, had she never realized how hard she made it for her child? Had she never suspected that happiness is but the exercise of spiritual functions and that to lose or ignore dominant principles is to lose life's very significance?

No, she had had but the one thought, the one false theme: to give her child everything without thought as to whether her child had the right or the ability to possess it. Now, this child in a nurse's uniform, alone, uncertain, was wandering among other people's children, groping within herself to find out how to begin again!

Within a few days the terms of Duffy's will were printed as an Associated Press dispatch. At last public curiosity was to be satisfied. Miss Duff-Porter's none too prosperous financial standing was public property. To Dodo was left Bagatelle House in all its impoverished, unique grandeur—there were several strings attached to the owning of it. Enid Sayre was to consider it as her home as long as she should so desire. The public receptions were to be continued. To Enid was left a sum of money and Duffy's collection of laces. To Theodore Ainslie Grant was given a lesser sum and Duffy's cherished library. Servants and old friends inherited characteristically peculiar bequests.

As Gloria read the dispatch the same "desiderium" possessed her. She wanted to go home. To read in this formal manner of Dodo and Enid—of Tag, caused something within herself to cry out in protest. She wanted roots, that was it. Her mother had made her a charming air plant but she needed roots if she was to survive. Not only was Rutledge Tag's home and Burr's home but it was her home: it had been her parents' home . . . if she had all the money in the world she would still want to go home. No one was there to welcome her or to care; she would be cast on her own again. Even the capable and slightly disbelieving Flo Wood, who followed her present career with good-natured contempt, would not be in Rutledge. What door would be open to her? In spite of this she felt that she must go back.

What door had been open to her parents, she found herself asking? In different circumstances but with the same impelling motive, she was seeking to make a place for herself. She was a "new American." For the first time she was willing to struggle—to think. With all the handicaps Rutledge would hold for her, she was keen to be there, to be nearer to Tag. Perhaps she no longer loved him but she had come to appreciate him. Perhaps he had done worse than to despise her—he might have forgotten her! There would be Burr and Alice Meredith to meet or rather to avoid as

well as Dodo and Enid. Still, no one would care to seek her out. She would go to work as her people had done. Empty of purse but willing of spirit, they had created their own place. Slowly there was borne in upon her the conviction that she must do likewise. She must change into an “old American.”

Deaf to the reproaches of the board of managers, Gloria resigned from Lullaby Land.

“But whatever will you do now?” they chorused. “We are deadly serious when we say that it is best for you to stay.”

“If you are serious, I’m profound,” was her retort.

She packed her diminished possessions with a corresponding lightness of heart. She felt buoyant, almost dauntless as she used to feel in the days when she demanded life to give her whatever she wished *now*.

The Cook Has Callers

TO inherit a talent for the operatic or dramatic stage or to be blessed with the beauty which made one's mother a famous belle is a pleasing inheritance. But to find a clue to one's ability by means of a shabby, red book containing cake recipes—that is another and somewhat disconcerting matter.

Could it be possible that she had a talent for becoming a cordon bleu—this hitherto exquisite person whose nose had wrinkled in scorn at the thought of kitchen detail and whose rapid transit through the mammoth bakeries of the Beaumont Company had been accompanied by flippant, often belittling remarks? It is transcending all romantic ruling to say that one's flair for cooking becomes apparent in the same thrilling manner that one knows when love has arrived on the scene. Thumbing over the worn pages of her father's recipe book, the very names suggesting tempting possibilities, there came an unspoken challenge for Gloria to match his success . . . filbert cream tartlets and Fanchion-nettes, miriltions and D'Artois cakes—how well she remembered those fascinating window displays, crowds assembling to be in time for fresh talmouses with cheese and cupid's well filled with green gage jam . . . there were the almond gauffres and profiterolles, Suisse lecrelets and Russian biscuits . . . those ever popular Henry the Eighth's shoe strings, mosaic tarts and marigolds . . . mille-feuilles cakes containing honey and orange water mixed with the exactness of a chemist . . . she, who never so much as toasted a muffin, was inspired with a new purpose.

If she had lost her head up until now, she was convinced that it was good to have something for which to hunt. Here was a clue to finding it—this testing her ability as a cook! One could not remain on tiptoes about romance and finance and social snubs when one's small capital required clever expenditure in order to take preliminary lessons in domestic science. It was the same sort of nerve tonic to Gloria that golf is to the man of affairs who has exhausted the stimulus of cigars and his wine cellar. A psychologist would have said that Gloria had entered into a new threshold of consciousness. She expressed it more simply: she was going to be a cook! To let her rosy tipped fingers become stained and sometimes blistered, her nose betray a wholesome shine after a morning in class. At least cooks are always certain of a welcome! She would return to Rutledge and bake cakes, the sort of cakes which had founded the Beaumont Baking Company, which would put to shame their

present counterfeits.

She was amused at this right about turn of affairs, her first reward being that a sense of humor was replacing the sense of tragedy. She who had been certain that at this time she would have returned from her wedding journey in Spain was trudging to beginner's domestic science classes, learning calorie tables and judging food values!

Moreover, she was content; it was a desperate sort of contentment at times, including something of her mother's determination. She must make good. Just as Tag, disillusioned and adrift, had made good. He had gone in for junk! She was a cook! She might become rotund and wear checked aprons for all she could forecast. Life was as surprising as it was uneven. At least she would no longer shrink from meeting Burr Meredith or reading of Pierre's successful marriage. Gloria was out to prove that one person in action can constitute drama regardless of scenery or a supporting caste.

By Christmas time Rutledge seemed not at all disturbed by the appearance of a modest sign over a modest shop, the Cakery, the window of which held wicker baskets containing tarts and wafers with a hand-composed layer cake or two to vary the array.

Gloria was slightly disconcerted by her comfortable obscurity. No one seemed to know that she had returned. She had returned to a different Rutledge, as different and as far removed as the Blaine Avenue home had been from the house on Oak Street.

To date the Cakery had invited only the rivalry of the Woman's Exchange, its proprietress going to live in a tiny apartment rather than endure the horrors of a hometown boarding house.

As Mrs. Grant, a businesslike, rather too thin person who slipped in and out at ridiculous hours and whose stolid Swedish helper was not of the communicative type, Gloria was ignorant of the fact that she escaped recognition—even as she was denied a welcome.

Her customers were the common-house-and-garden variety. They exclaimed over the prices and took issue to the statement that no baking substitutes were used, returning reluctantly to buy more from this obstinate, white-uniformed person who refused to bake buns or bread but whose cakes were without equal.

"Sometime, someone was bound to come in and discover me—but I was hoping that it might not be you," Gloria found herself saying two days after Christmas. "If you don't want to buy anything, Jerry, please run along. Think of all you have to tell them!"

Jerry Fisher gasped but refused to move. He had been prowling down the

snowy side streets for want of better occupation when he happened upon the Cakery and Gloria, who, slipping and sliding on the icy pavement, was attempting to rescue her wind-besieged sign. As they came face to face a sudden and hostile silence followed. Gloria bowed and retreated with Jerry in instant pursuit.

“It’s Mrs. Ex-Tag,” he announced triumphantly, warming to Gloria’s ignominious situation. “By Jove, you’ve changed—and couldn’t you do something else than—this sort of thing—or is it really yours—and is it yourself? What the devil was your mother thinking of to go smash? Did you see the American clippings? They didn’t spare either of you . . . poor little kid, the pot of gold wasn’t at the end of the rainbow, was it? You don’t mean to say that you——”

Gloria felt it time to deliver an ultimatum.

“But I don’t want to go away,” Jerry protested. “I—I want to buy some cakes for I happen to be going to tea at Bagatelle House,” his red, melon-shaped face broadening into a malicious smile. “Isn’t this poetic justice? I bringing a box of Mrs. Ex-Tag’s cakes to the future Mrs. Tag? Oh, perhaps you didn’t know——” he broke off, his eyes seeming to sink further into their rolls of bluish-white fat.

“I don’t know about anything but my cakery,” Gloria assured him. “I’ve not had the time to become informed. I’m earning a living and doing nicely, if you want to report. It does happen—even in the worst of families. I thought I’d be a marquise and put on side because of twelfth century tapestries but I’m running true to form. I’m about to become a famous cake cook and boast of having the last word in the art of frosting. I’m doing what they did—only not half as diligently. I don’t know what I think about anything but I’ll sell my cakes gladly whether they are to be eaten at Bagatelle House or the Seaman’s Mission . . . that is, if you pay for them,” her lips were a trifle tense.

“So you’re not just showing off? Sure you’re not just having me on? I say, Gloria, let’s have dinner some night and talk it all over. You need an adviser, little girl, someone who——”

“You haven’t grasped it yet: I’m a cook. You are in search of one time careerstinas. A cook is the settled sort who finishes her day by reading impossible love stories and wearing comfortable slippers. I’ve finished with the other sort of thing. I told you that I was running true to form. Remember this,” her eyes showing dark, stubborn lights that Tag had never seen. “You may say whatever you like about me—even jeer, if you think I deserve it. Guess madly as to why I happened to come back, prophesy a dismal ending. But don’t make fun of my cakes,” with an unexpected little laugh that sent Jerry’s hand into his pocket for change.

“We ought to get together,” he insisted, “we surely can——”

“You have such a waiting list. Besides, my hair might smell of doughnuts,” she was picking out his cakes with delicate silvery tongs. “Do you like Henry the Eighth’s shoe strings? I’m sure the others would—they’re my special pride. A few madeleines? Any midget éclairs? Oh, you think that will be enough?” obediently placing them on the scales.

“Don’t you know about the future Mrs. Tag?” asked Jerry as he laid his money on the counter.

“Um—perhaps; if you’d like a few more it would make an even pound. They don’t weigh heavily, now, do they? There—that’s better.”

“There have been several changes since you dashed off to the West. You knew about Duffy? Game old thing, we shall always miss her,” Jerry was distinctly intrigued by this new Gloria. Eager as he was to reach Bagatelle House and announce the sensation there was a desire to linger on in this snug cakery—even if he was to be insulted.

“Yes, I know. . . .”

“Her mantle seems to have fallen on Dodo’s shoulders. She is devoting herself to the rescue of æsthetic rascals. She does it very well. She seems rather pleased when she finds out that she has been done—an awfully sweet attitude of mind, don’t you agree? Tag has developed into a twelve cylinder business man—you can’t tell just where he will fetch up. He is going to marry Enid sometime.”

“I put the shoe string cakes in an extra box, they crumble easily—carry it just so, Jerry—that’s it.”

“What shall I tell them for you?” as he accepted his parcels and his dismissal.

“That I can’t charge any less for my cakes and have them to be the real thing . . . I’m going to try wedding cakes later on. Some of them may be interested,” her head was tilted with its customary defiance.

Jerry lost no time. Tea at Bagatelle House proved more than a thrill. When Tag, preoccupied with new business ventures, strolled in and, all unsuspecting, began to devour Henry the Eighth’s shoe strings, it was Dodo who curtly but not unsympathetically informed him:

“Gloria made ’em—honor bright. Good enough? She has taken a page from her mother’s book of life and all the pages from her father’s cookbook and started a cake shop. I’m dead sober—you can prove it by those present. Jerry found her down on Maple Street—didn’t you? Says she is thin and white looking but tremendously capable and self-assured. Not a bit dashed by all that must have happened to her.”

“You said her hands were ugly,” murmured Enid who had not tasted Henry the

Eighth's shoe strings.

"She is trying an entirely different sort of line—about making good and not caring how hard she works. Jerry says she must bake some of the stuff; the place isn't prosperous enough looking to be a complete pose."

"She sent us a message that she was going to do wedding cakes," Enid interrupted. "We must keep it in mind. I suppose it's up to us to stir up everyone and have her shop become the mode."

Tag was silent.

"I rather admire her, spunky little devil that she's been." Dodo helped herself to another cake. "She's not taken any soft job where exercising a lap dog is the toughest part of the program. Nor gone on a hunt for susceptible octogenarians."

"I wonder what really happened?" Enid questioned. "Come and sit beside me, Tag. I've missed you no end . . . more business things? How I do despise them! It may be awkward to have my wife-in-law turn out to be such a good cook. Of course, it's in her blood. After all——"

"She's in earnest," championed Jerry, wiping the crumbs of an éclair from his pursed-up little mouth. "Once she's discovered she will be the rage. I think she has planned it cleverly."

"I second the idea," Enid agreed. "As if she didn't know that to do some such menial thing—as long as her hair is still yellow—would inspire sympathy. Most everyone else would run a gift shop or try to marry the first available widower. When one can make good things to eat—yes, it is more clever than I first realized. She may marry well yet. I wonder what will happen when she knows that Burr's wife actually divorced him——"

Tag moved over to mend the fire, Enid's narrowed eyes watching him.

"She'll soon enough move into smarter quarters and have her helpers wear smocks," Enid continued. "Then she'll begin all her old tricks. . . . I wonder what really did happen."

"Dashed good stuff she makes and dashed independent is her line of talk," added Jerry, whose memories of Gloria were as puzzling as they were intriguing. Gloria had assumed a prominent place among Jerry's list of favorites.

When tea ended a meager pile of cakes were left on the silver platter. Jerry and Dodo had some mysterious errand concerning Dodo's latest scapegrace and Enid had to dress for a dinner. One of Dodo's terriers came slipping across the room in search of forbidden food. On his hind feet he muzzled the platter. Tag rose from beside the fire and throttled him. Solemnly, almost after the manner of a rite, he tasted a last tempting cupid's well. Then he went back to his chair beside the log

blaze, a look of disturbed tenderness in his eyes.

Enemies at Least

GLORIA was rediscovered fast enough but when it was apparent that she could not be patronized, she was let alone. Instead of serving the “cream of the town,” figuratively speaking, she seemed content to serve the “top milk.” The former circle could not comprehend this procedure. Had she only fallen into line and become one of the clever poor à la Brigit Pascal, she might have had a tremendously interesting time. Because she turned a deaf ear to such overtures she was voted as being surprisingly game but as having had a change of head as well as of heart. She was not the same Gloria. Her blood was telling. Any good cook—particularly a Beaumont—had a chance to make a fortune.

Dodo alone persisted. Dodo’s personality had crystalized even as it had narrowed since her aunt’s death. She was to be to Rutledge a different version of Miss Duff-Porter. In the same eccentric, forceful way she chose to rescue rascals and champion the under-dog rather than search for art treasures and encourage local symphonies. No one would attempt to argue with Dodo once she achieved fifty years and her black hair had turned to iron gray. Bagatelle House might be turned into a barracks for worthless tramps and reckless flappers might swarm through the gardens but no one would be brave enough to suggest to Dodo that matters should be otherwise. In a sense, Dodo looked upon Gloria as a reform prospect. There was something magnanimous as well as altruistic in her overtures.

But she did not mince matters. “We’re all awfully down on you, my dear,” surveying the shop with a single keen glance. “I don’t know whether it was a good thing to try coming back or not—somewhat dramatic, don’t you think? But you seem so capable—and eatable—that I’ll give you any orders that come my way.”

“Good enough,” Gloria answered with equal frankness. “Please understand that I’m not playing a part. I’ve decided to be a good cook,” turning to wait on incoming customers.

She must make it plain to Dodo and to anyone else that she asked no favors nor would she grant one.

When, without warning, Burr Meredith, heavier of figure and sightless of one eye, came into her shop, Gloria proved to her own satisfaction the sincerity of these intentions.

It was almost closing time, in the dusk of a January afternoon. Downtown

Rutledge was homeward bent and uptown Rutledge was lighting soft lamps in the living-room and serving tea before open fires.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were here?” he began with characteristic bluntness and lack of introduction.

Gloria was taking the wicker trays of leftovers into the kitchen. She was grateful for having to hold tightly to the handles—he would not notice how her fingers trembled.

“Why did you think that I would?” she retorted.

“Has the time come when you don’t want to see me—have you so forgotten?” as he came nearer she saw how he had aged, coarsened. New and not complimentary lines were about his eyes and mouth. There was a hard, glaring smile in the one closely set eye—the other, puckered by a reddish scar, made her feel sickish.

“No,” she said quickly.

“Why not? I don’t believe you. Sometimes I don’t believe that you ever believed in me. . . .”

“Why ponder it now? Please—please go buy your cakes of someone else,” she ended lightly.

“I’m free—she divorced me. Wonder of wonders,” his raucous laugh made Gloria shiver. “Once upon a time you would have been in ecstasy—” he spoke with a begrudged interest. “You, who made me almost——”

“Once I would have cared,” she admitted. “To-day, I am merely curious. . . . Do tell about it, Burr. Of course it must have been a missionary——”

“A youngish one who was returning to a God-forsaken part of China to dedicate his life to the already dedicated. The game is to take away their deity and substitute his. Alice had corresponded with him for years. Without warning,” he drew a deep breath, “after—after I was well, she forgot her weak spine and her delight of possessing me legally—she asked to be free.” He turned his head and stared out the window at the blizzard so that Gloria saw only the blinded eye.

“Much has happened to you, hasn’t it?” Burr turned back to study her face. “None of it highly successful—” his hand making an impressive gesture about the shop.

“Perhaps. And you?”

“Not so good,” with rough flippancy. “I’m growing old . . . well, I don’t know whether I’ve forgiven you,” there was the same begrudged interest in his voice which made Gloria both sorry and afraid. “I wonder if you’ve forgiven me. We weren’t—successful, were we?”

"I've not forgiven either of us," she said, beginning again to carry out the wicker trays.

"Does forgiveness matter—I don't believe so. I may be growing old but I've not changed in the essentials," he suddenly cried out careless of the shop setting. "I'm damned if I know why I came trailing down here—why I couldn't keep away. What is there about you that makes me do it? Has Tag showed up? But you'd turn him down even harder . . . he'll come though . . . you've that about you. I tell you that had you only waited and let me work it out, we might have belonged to each other. Why not say it——"

"You were a drifting coward," Gloria accused—as if the long, sober months had never been and she was facing him with the former selfish ruthlessness of purpose. "It served you right. I am glad that she left you. I am glad that you are growing old. I'm not sorry for the scar. I don't want you to come to me. I have no more charms, do you understand? I despise that sort of romance. I was a great fool about you but it's too late ever to convince other people that I realize what I was. From being a great fool about you, I was an even greater one about someone else. Still, I refuse to live in the past. You may sulk and rage or try to coax and cajole—but I'll have nothing more to do with you. . . ."

"Not so fast. You owe it to me—oh, but you do—you, who were so damnably sure that you almost sent me into eternity——"

"When one is purposely clumsy in cleaning his gun, he is a coward. You thought yourself crowded into a blind alley, you hadn't the spirit of a rat. A rat will fight if you corner him . . . now do you see how I feel?"

The red, angry light glowed in his one good eye. His hand reached out and clutched a pair of the silvery tongs until they twisted into ruin.

"You don't know what you really want," he accused. "You're too new at this kind of a game—this cake baking independence stuff—to be able to gauge yourself. You'll soon enough discover that you'll need me. People won't forget, even if you do. You can't go on alone—always alone, can you? Our names were coupled together in too awkward a situation to have your return and my attention ignored."

"I do not intend to see you," she said steadily.

"But I do, I still want you, that's the worst of it," his voice was almost ashamed. "She never gave you the—the note . . . no, I knew she never did. She was that sort."

"I've come to be glad of it," Gloria answered. "There were weeks when I would have given my soul to have seen it. I was still under your spell. Oh, I understand myself now. I don't care enough to understand you. I know you to be a poor sport

_____”

“Don’t be too sure,” he warned between set teeth. “You can’t turn me out of your store like an insolent panhandler. I’ve humbled myself to come to you. . . . I must see you again. I’ll never be able to forget.”

“Too much water has run under the bridge since Forestvale to let our association stand for anything but a hectic incident. I’ve finished with romance. I’m—I’m a good cook. I can’t experience a thrill over anyone—least of all you. Be glad you’ve only a blinded eye and a wife who chucked you for a missionary. You’d deserve pity if you had done as I’d asked you and married the old me! I’m grateful to Alice or any other force that kept us apart. I welcome the scandal. It means that we’re free of each other.”

He put a heavy hand on her shoulder. She did not give him the satisfaction of trying to draw away. “You are the only woman I have ever loved,” he said sullenly. “The only woman whose son I——”

“Never speak of that again, do you understand? But, no, you couldn’t understand—you—just—couldn’t,” she ended in a tired voice.

Mercifully the door opened to admit tardy customers.

It was Lenten season before Tag and Gloria met. An early, stormy season with church bells ringing at odd moments, stirring and soothing, and rips in everyone’s senescent fur coats and a dearth of butterscotch pie and dinner dances. The bakery had flourished. Gloria was on the way to becoming an accepted institution. Her story was one of the Rutledge scandals to be repeated to out-of-town guests. It was referred to as: “Gloria Beaumont’s life—my dear, if anyone could write it just as it has happened they would have a best seller. I can’t give you every detail but here are the main facts—we’ll go down and buy some cakes to-morrow. Oh, I really want them. Nobody can make things taste as good as she can. That’s the interesting part. She has a talent for baking cakes. Her people, you see——” etc., etc.

Gloria was left to find her own pastimes and friends. Dodo never flagged in her efforts to “rescue” her and Jerry Fisher dropped in at inconvenient times with a few sly words as to the town’s capers. Burr Meredith came and went as his mood dictated. With the arrogance of defeat he was not willing to admit Gloria’s lack of welcome. He was angered by her lack of appreciation. She must be made to realize that he was paying her court in a decent, orthodox fashion. He no longer attempted to win her by storm, playing the impetuous bandit. He was careful not to avoid scandal. He wanted to marry her, nor did he care who knew or who did not. Let them gossip and surmise, tuppenny souls that they were. He would have his way yet.

Did she realize that Tag was to marry Enid Sayre? Did that create no desire to possess an establishment of her own? Was she going to persist in this messy cake business with nobodies crowding about her counter? Argument after argument was hurled at this new, quiet Gloria who listened with a half-smile, half-sneer upon her lips.

Burr could not comprehend her. He did not know how to combat being sent away like a disgraced schoolboy. If she feared his anger she concealed it. If any fascination of his cave-man tactics remained she was careful never to betray herself. She proved a puzzle as well as a coveted prize. With it all, there was the undercurrent that he was doing her a great favor—he was asking a cook to become his wife!

After a few unsuccessful weeks Burr went south to sulk—waiting for her to beg him to return. The old Meredith homestead was being wrecked preparatory to building a business block. Social Rutledge was moving further uptown. Bagatelle House itself was in danger of invasion. Boarding houses appeared among the old mansions; it was no longer considered smart to build on Blaine Avenue. New and parklike tracts were being opened at the edge of town. Some one told Gloria that Tag and Enid were planning to build in one of them. Likewise, new and slightly different personalities were leading the social life. The sub-debs of yesterday had become the opinionated and directing personalities of to-day.

There were so many new people with new money and so many of the old people who had lost the old money! Life swept over and around Gloria but it never seemed to take hold of her and sweep her along with it.

She was disappointed that this was so. Despite her businesslike purpose there was the hope that somehow Tag would come to her, that she might have the chance to tell him a fraction of the things which she had come to understand. If only he would be angry enough to come to her or curious enough or even contemptuous. . . . Meantime, she engaged more helpers and joined a professional woman's club, played a few games of bridge with new and businesslike friends who were limited to evening hours, started a reading course, unashamedly wore orthopedic shoes, neglected to wave her hair and took out an endowment policy on the same day that she told Burr that his absence would make Rutledge seem far more harmonious.

She finally convinced herself that Tag needed to see her. Rumors as to Tag's exhausted nervous energy, his having too many irons in the fire were in circulation. The commercial age possessed him. Having made the junk yard a success, he had turned with restless ambition to buy part interests in dog kennels, a milk farm, a suburban bus line, a realty corporation. The junk yard now received but his "left

heel's attention" according to Dodo. Then there was his engagement to Enid . . . whenever Gloria began to consider this she would turn to her day's work with an enforced interest.

On a snowy March evening she found herself walking slowly around Tag's junk yard, rather amazed at herself, a queer thumping at her heart as she read his name above the door. Then she came face to face with him but there was neither an awkward pause nor reproachful greetings. Instead, Gloria took matters into her own hands.

"I finally came to see you," she began, "or perhaps I was not in when you came to see me?"

Tag had been rushing from his junk yard office to his car. He was late for some tea thing at which Enid was pouring. He had no inclination for the event but he had promised to do the graceful thing for the benefit of the eleven odd and envious women who would tell Enid what a dear he was.

"No," he said shortly, "I don't believe that I've even walked by."

In the dusk Gloria saw that his eyes had lost none of their honesty but they betrayed a tenseness which she did not understand.

"I'm sorry because it is a nice cakery. Or perhaps you have never tasted any?"

He looked down at her in an unwilling way. "Yes, I have. They are above reproach."

"Which is more than their maker, isn't it?" her heart beating furiously and a nervous little thrill in her voice.

"I am glad if things are going well for you," Tag answered slowly. "I think you have been sensible."

"Do you? I wonder. It was either the cakery or—but you're in a rush, aren't you?"

"I am; do you happen to be going my way?"

"Which way is it? I've never gone your way, have I?"

"I'm calling for Enid at the Stevensons'—oh, then I'm sorry. I'm late as it is," he began plodding through the wet snow, his long footsteps seeming to put miles and miles between them.

Unconsciously, Gloria stamped her foot.

Unconsciously, Tag paused. Both regretted what they had just done.

"I want to talk to you," she confessed. "Oh, not just now—but sometime. There are things I'd like to say; would it be too great a hardship to have to listen?"

"Surely not," was the mechanical answer. "Shall I come round to the cakery or will I have Dodo ask you to tea?"

“No, no, never that. Enid has been too successful in avoiding me,” she hated herself for having let the words escape.

“I see,” Tag’s tone was as impersonal as her own when ordering supplies. “Then I’ll drop around some afternoon. ’Bye.”

In another instant the tracks of his motor were stretching along the street. She tramped back towards her apartment, hot tears pushing their way down her cold cheeks. It was almost too much to discover how hard she cared. Of course she deserved it . . . but he was engaged to Enid.

A week later Tag came. He had a note from Dodo about an order of scones for the supper at the working girls’ home or some such thing. Moreover, he was buying property in her neighborhood. A few others and himself were starting a shoe shining and boot repair parlor. They planned to have a chain of them throughout the city. The building they had just purchased happened to be next door to her cakery. He hoped that it would not be displeasing.

Tag lingered at the counter as she waited on someone, selecting a cookie and absorbing it in a bite.

“Isn’t it closing time?” he asked as the customer left the shop.

“It is—but if they see me linger they will keep rapping on the door. Do you want to walk? I’m keen for a chance; I’m so housed up all day,” with a quick indrawing of her breath as he hesitated. “Why—Tag,” and those two words told her that she was self-betrayed.

“I’d rather have tea and someone else’s cakes—I had no time for lunch. They pointed out a foreign place to-day; it’s not far from here. It may not be half bad and, besides, that would not be——”

“As conspicuous as a tramp, which is the main thing,” she answered as she began locking up. Laden with unsold buns the Swedish helper shuffled into the twilight. Gloria slipped on her storm coat and a shaggy tam. Tag did not offer to help. He was ill at ease, his tall, ungainly self leaning awkwardly against her most fragile glass showcase.

“I don’t like this,” he announced as they rounded a corner and a March wind came slapping their faces. “Do you?”

“Ever so much, if you mean the weather. I’m sorry that you don’t want to walk. It’s Lucca’s we are headed for, isn’t it? I often run in there by myself.”

They did not speak again until they were at a table in the rear of the dingy café. Ancient Italians played cards near by and a neglected but regal-looking black cat stalked about the tables. Children squabbled in a rear room while a sore-eyed old man with gold hoops swinging from his ears took their order for coffee.

"I can't help your not liking it," said Gloria with sweet persistence. "Now I'm not talking of the weather. I wanted to see you and explain——"

"If you fancy for a moment," Tag began, the words seeming to explode from his tightly set lips.

"Oh, I know what you mean—you think that I'm quite the same—wanting to play, to flirt. Not at all; I merely want to be friends. Don't you think it possible even if one has been married and unmarried?"

"It would be making history," said Tag dryly.

"I'd adore making history," then her brave display of spirit vanished. She was silent and unresponsive, the shaggy tam hiding all but a lock of her yellow hair. In her white uniform she might have been a sick-nurse off for afternoon leave.

"What are you thinking of now?" asked Tag in spite of himself.

"That I'm a great idiot to have attempted this. You'd not be human if you understood."

"I'm growing more human all the time," he admitted, his blue eyes tense. "Let us be frank, Gloria—but brief. You know how deeply it went with me."

"That's just it—I didn't know. Or won't you believe it? I hadn't the ability to comprehend—I had mama in those days," her voice dropping to a whisper.

"Possibly," he spoke judicially but without feeling. "But that doesn't change the way that it cut—and the way I had to re-order my life. Things do happen as you've found out. But they can't unhappen. When you left me, I stopped caring."

"Didn't you hate me?" with wistful doubt in her voice.

"No. I stopped caring and went to work. I didn't care what happened to you. I don't care now. We can't be friends any more than we were ever enemies. We can't be anything. As you go on living you'll come to understand the rightness of such an attitude. I'm glad for you in an impersonal way—any man who tries to be fair would be glad. But as far as anything else goes, it is impossible."

"Tell me if I have it clear at last," said Gloria slowly, "I realize that I wasted a very fine love; I nearly wasted as fine a life. But I wonder if you are not still in danger of being wasted, if a more clever woman with just as cheating instincts could not fool you," she paused as if expecting that he would ask her to stop. "Could such a woman waste you slowly, subtly, until you'd not be able to come back?" Looking at him she seemed to see Enid Sayre's delicate, thin-lipped face with the braids of light brown hair wound around her head.

"No one can ever influence me as you did—no one."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite," impatiently he waited for her to conclude the conversation.

"I almost believe in platonic friendship," said Gloria, changing the subject abruptly. "Unless you are marooned on a desert island. The trouble is that both are apt to be on a still hunt for just such a place. But you and I have had our desert island; surely we might be friends."

Tag frowned. "Why offer friendship when you know it is not wanted?" was his retort. "Of course there is a sort of ghost tie between us, no matter how either may wish it to be otherwise. We cannot forget that we once were man and wife—no matter if half a century should pass before we meet again. But I don't want to meet again—is that frank enough?"

"No. You'll have to say, 'I *won't* meet again.' Oh, please, Tag, you need me. Once I needed you but didn't know it. You need to be friends with me; I'm the sort that you can talk to—now. You're running around in circles these days, not knowing where you will fetch up."

"Really?" with almost boyish conceit. "Is that your idea of a busy man's routine? I'm forging ahead on my own—I'm on the way to become rich, as rich as your mother once was. I want riches as a concrete proof that I have made good. I intend having a good time in the bargain. I've proven that I can work and achieve, no influential connections must provide me with a ready-made job. If I've regretted foregoing a professional career—that's done with. I've found business a stimulating substitute. I'm not running amuck but straight ahead."

"Straight into a cul-de-sac! You, who ought to despise such a thing, have come to be a money-seeker. You want to play because you want to blot off any serious thoughts—you might appraise yourself too intelligently. You want to build Enid a great showy pile and have it cluttered up with butlers and pipe organs and all that—why, Tag, you're acting like a 'new' American. Duffy would be ashamed of you."

"What's wrong in having a showy pile of a place with butlers and pipe organs—if one knows how to manipulate them," he smiled in spite of himself.

"You are losing out with yourself," she continued. "You will have neither the brain nor the heart for worthwhile things if you keep on; the things that you once felt I lacked. What's driven you into this whirl? Why did you go get engaged to Enid Sayre? Tell me that before you ask me to leave the table!" As she pointed an accusing index finger, he noted the blister at the tip.

"What right have you to ask such things?" leaning his elbows on the table and staring defiantly into her eyes.

"None, perhaps. Only I'm becoming a real person and real people always ask things. Once, I only demanded things. What made you go get engaged to Enid?"

"I love her," said Tag glibly.

“Lie number one. You wanted someone to love you—you always pitied her and she knew how to make you comfortable. Lately, she has fooled you with my old tricks. You think her a tender comrade; I think she is a cheat—a different sort than I used to be. You’ll never be able to indict her. Where I coaxed you to abandon work and serious effort, she’ll be a merciless taskmistress. You’ll be all nerves and indigestion and millions by fifty. She’ll have a steam yacht and a fleet of French motors, a visiting list that will make Duffy’s seem inconsequential. She may give you a child or two—if it happens to suit her fancy. But they’ll be the sort that agree in thinking their father must be all nerves and indigestion and millions. You’re losing out with yourself—but it is my fault. That is why I’m humble and persistent, even impossible. It is my fault! I took you away from your funny bugs and pollywogs and made you a rubber stamp for the bakery corporation . . . and I thought it was proof of your love! Oh, my dear, never forgive me—I don’t deserve it.” She pushed aside her coffee cup and put her blistered little hands up to her face.

“But I can’t grasp what you’re driving at,” said Tag with admirable self-control. “If you think that I don’t know my own mind on all matters, you are suffering from a delusion. As for Enid—I do love her. Differently than that first love—but none the less sincere. Perhaps I always loved her—only you came along and turned my head.”

“That doesn’t hurt me—or stop me from talking. You are very wrong. You never have loved her. She has always craved a man circumstanced as yourself. She wants to be the top of the heap, Tag, and you’re to be the ladder. She’ll be well-behaved; she won’t have moods or tantrums like I did. But she’ll hold you to the grindstone until you are worn out. Then she’ll see that you are well taken care of while she continues on her own sweet way. Enid has been a slave too long not to become a merciless tyrant. She flatters where I commanded. She eggs you on to take chances and to work still more furiously, but she’s only playing her own cards. She wants what money can give her. I wanted to give only what I wanted. Neither of us thought much about you.”

“Most interesting. What would you suggest for a cure? That I confine myself to the junk yard and retire with a scant hundred thousand?”

“Exactly; go back to your pollywogs and books, the old, quiet things that you were meant to do and have. Don’t try to beat big business, Tag: haven’t you suspected your defeat if you persist? You can’t have an interest in every corner of the town and do justice to yourself. You aren’t the sort to become a millionaire—unless someone dies and leaves it to you. You weren’t meant for business—that thought haunts me. You were meant for a laboratory or a library, a country

gentleman life.”

Tag frowned. “I’ve just told you that things cannot unhappen. Why conjure up possible endings to something which is coming out very nicely? How do you know I’m in such a bad way?”

“Dodo told me; so did Jerry; so did half a dozen others. Perhaps they thought I would be a trifle pleased, that it would prove an antidote to my running a cakery. You gamble too much—and drink more than is sensible. You don’t have enough sleep and your foolishly idealistic ideas can never fit in with to-day’s business world; do your own sort of work. If you don’t you will break down or your sensibilities will dull. She isn’t worth it either. She is as counterfeit—as I was. I won’t let you go smashing ahead if I can help it. If you refuse to be my friend, be my enemy—come and quarrel with me every little while. That may solve the problem,” she held out an inviting hand.

“Come and be your enemy,” Tag repeated, laughing in spite of himself. “I’m halfway inclined to accept.”

“Be my bitter enemy. Hurl accusations at me; I’ll hurl ’em back. Let’s fly at each other’s throats—but let us be honest. Honest enemies! Oh, if you will agree, I’ll feel that I’m not quite hopeless,” she pushed her chair back from the table. Tag made no move to go.

“What do you intend to do with your own self?” he asked. “I mean—after your cake shop has proven successful enough to go on without you or else you’ve tired of it.”

Gloria hesitated. “Does my enemy want to thwart me?” she began gayly.

“Possibly. But since you’ve mapped out such a dismal, nerve-racked old age for me with a selfish wife who is too clever to let me catch her at it—what of yourself? In the old days——” but he stopped and made himself light a cigarette.

“I’m going to be real—as real as money in the bank,” she told him earnestly. “I’m not going to let the cakery run on without me or start branches or do wholesale business. I’m not interested in the commercial end. I’m going to try to be an individual and not a type. I’m carrying on from where they left off—don’t you understand? They went as far as they could, struggling, and working for a fortune. I’ve learned to struggle and work for something else. Oh, if only—only,” there were tears in her eyes, one rolled down onto her cheek. “I’m not asking to be friends when I tell you this: but if only the boy had lived, if only I had him to leave for our monument, to carry on from where we must leave off. I’ve come to realize what he would have meant . . . but that part of my future is not to be,” pausing until her voice grew steady. “So I’ll go on alone trying to be something else than a clothes tree and

having chemically yellow hair until the end of time, pretending to be thrilled by any man who has brown eyes and can strum a guitar . . . I never can do things like Duffy or Dodo—salons and study prison reforms. But I can express the same sincerity of purpose—even if I’m only a cook. It doesn’t matter if I, myself, cannot say the things that I think. If one thinks hard enough they usually find someone else to speak for them . . . so I’ll go on baking cakes and thinking and being your enemy.” She rose and buttoned up the sport coat with determined fingers.

“You are quite settled away on this line?” asked Tag as he found his hat.

“Quite. Oh, there will be times when I’d choose to be all black and white chiffon punctuated with pearls and occupy an opera box . . . or wear dazzling red flannel and go country clubwise for a week end. But I’ll have to stay home to see that the cakes don’t burn. Yes, I’m quite settled away, Tag. I’ll be content with only this on my tombstone: ‘Gloria Grant: even her dressmaker spoke well of her!’ Enid need not fear me—I’ve suspected that she did. Tell her that you and I are avowed enemies.”

They were outside of the café and headed towards the cakery.

“Want to tramp a little?” Tag asked carelessly.

Gloria’s one-sided smile made him retract the invitation.

“I couldn’t go, that’s a fact. I’m due at a directors’ meeting.”

“Then I’ll take a back cut to the shop. Good-bye, mine enemy,” before he could answer she had slipped behind delivery trucks piled with freight and was disappearing through a thin wedge of an alley.

Easter saw Dodo and Enid about to sail for Bermuda, the former to enjoy a respite from her rascals and the latter to enjoy the distinction of being Theodore Ainslie Grant’s fiancée instead of Miss Duff-Porter’s companion. When Tag came down to bring them home they would plan their wedding date.

It saw Burr Meredith returned from the south, his important looking car crowding the curb before the cakery. Once, it came too late to park—Tag’s dusty roadster having the coveted place.

Enid’s electric cab was gliding down side streets in search of a parchment lamp shade shop—she happened to be passing by in time to appreciate the situation. She glided on serenely, found her shop and chose another route home. But it was then that she decided to set a definite marriage date. That evening, in the dusk and open firelight, she took care to sing Tag’s favorite ballads, to tell him again that his powers as a man of affairs were without limitation; everyone marveled at the way he forged ahead. They could have a Georgian brick place in Argyle Park, could they not? And a Colonial clapboard cottage at the lake—substantial proofs of his ability and

success. Was there no chance for him to become interested in the big power merger? Why not see about it? Many fortunes were certain to be made. Perhaps her woman's brain could not comprehend it but she had fancied that here might be another opportunity. For all of Gloria he would have been twiddling his thumbs in a dummy office, dancing whenever she pulled the string. Did he ever think of his escape? What a silly Gloria! She hoped that Gloria might marry Burr, after all. In time people would forget and Gloria could come back socially. That is—if Burr wished to marry! A bit of gossip was going the rounds—oh, not only from Jerry, but from reliable sources. Burr went to the cake shop a great deal and his disposition was becoming ingrowing; he was having rheumatism and going on diets—imagine the virile, rough-and-ready Burr! He never had recovered from his accident . . . only Gloria knew the exact details. Well, she would be shrewd enough to take her chance if it ever offered. From all appearances, she had learned her lesson.

“Perhaps she has become real,” said Tag suddenly, “as real—as real as money in the bank,” falling back on Gloria's homely phrase.

“So?” smiled Enid, “has she convinced you in spite of—everything?”

“In spite of everything,” said Tag honestly.

“Are you such good friends?” with effusive sweetness in her voice.

“No, we are such good enemies,” he corrected.

Enid's hand slipped into his. “Does that mean——”

“Not petty enemies—impersonal ones, if you can understand. It means that I'd be more disappointed now if Gloria should fail herself than I was when she failed me four years ago.”

At that same moment, Gloria was entertaining an unwelcome caller. It was the general manager of the Beaumont Baking Corporation, a brisk terse person who was annoyed that any woman as attractive yet poverty-stricken as Gloria could remain deaf to his offer.

“This is the chance of a lifetime; if your mother were alive and knew your circumstances, what do you think she would advise? Remember, you have the opportunity to repeat her success without her drudgery.”

“That would be fatal,” said Gloria more than half to herself.

“You need not repeat her mistakes,” urged the general manager. “You have learned what to avoid; you have only yourself to look after.”

“Quite true! Only myself—but we are not talking about the same things. It is flattering of you people to want me; I may be an utter goose to say no. But as long as I can't say yes—what else is there to tell you?”

The general manager consulted his watch, waited a moment for Gloria to

experience a change of heart and then found his hat and the way to the door.

The Enemy Betrays Herself

TAG was discovering the difference between freedom and independence. He had won freedom when Gloria left him and he started to create a world and a career of his own making. A fine, careless energy had directed all that he had done. Now he craved independence instead of being enmeshed in civic committees and charity drives, as well as various business alliances. Enid gently persisted that his future must be staged in the political arena. There would be no heights to which he could not—and would not—rise. With the mental gluttony of a poor relation Enid longed to devour the feast of Tag's increasing prosperity. It had been worth those snubbed and meager years of mending laces and exercising lap dogs, sleeping on "rich peoples' third floors." Until Tag admitted that he was Gloria's "pleasant enemy," Enid had come to feel secure, that life owed her nothing more. After that moment, she was uncertain, redoubling her efforts to keep him involved and flattered.

From the woman who did not want him to do anything he found himself in the hands of the one who demanded that he do everything. He had not analyzed this as yet. Instead, he experienced a feeling of being bored, of encroachment. He wondered how it would seem when he had married Enid and they were living in the "showy pile of a place cluttered with butlers and pipe organs."

He accused himself of cheating to have become engaged without being certain that he was sufficiently in love. Looking back it had seemed the logical, almost inevitable thing to have done. The Enid whom he had asked to be his wife had been a gentle, yielding person, keen to interpret his desires. She was the idealized Enid of his boyhood, the days when Duffy tolerated and praised her by turns, someone who was always there, who would understand and sympathize without intruding. That Enid was as unreal as Gloria had proven a faulty romantic phantasy. It had taken months for Tag to understand that the present Enid was neither booky nor fond of philosophical evenings before open fires, that to garden and hike were never her choice of sports—they had been a part of her former job. To wear the most expensive clothes and jewelry of any woman at any social affair was as essential to her peace of mind and happiness as it had been for Min Beaumont to have given her child more spending money than any other girl in Rutledge. It was true that Enid's taste was impeccable—this but camouflaged her greed. Unknowingly, Duffy had taught her a sense of harmonious values. Enid was as capable of presiding over

Bagatelle House as she would have been capable of presiding over Pierre de Lasseuere's Normandy estates. Moreover, she would have seen that the marriage had taken place before bankruptcy was admitted to be her sole dot. Enid had learned the arts of the promoter. Gloria had been an unblushing, easily detected cheat.

"Duffy's legacy to Enid has been like giving a tiger its first taste of raw meat," Dodo told Gloria during an impromptu lunch eaten in the Cakery kitchen. "Enid started on an independent schedule from the moment the money was placed to her account. I don't blame her; she never has had her fling until now. But she is spending it in showy, self-indulgent ways, proving to be such a different sort than Tag believed her. Perhaps Tag is proving a weakling to be so fooled—twice," with unconscious candor.

Gloria poured her a second cup of tea and then sat back in her chair, her arms folded judiciously across her chest. "So you think he is headed for another cropper?"

"I know it. I haven't breathed this to anyone excepting yourself—odd, isn't it?"

"Plenty odd. But I'm glad to be trusted. Do you think Enid will be cut up if the engagement should fall through?"

Dodo's shoulders gave a temperamental shrug. "I can't decide. She is drunk with the desire to lead Rutledge socially. For all her gentle ways she drives Tag. Fairly prods him! I'm helpless to prevent it or expose her. I can pick derelicts out of gutters and get men released from prison but I must stand by and see Tag—" Dodo's voice quivered. "It is always that way; the ones closest to us are the farthest away in so many vital things."

"You are quite sure about all of this?" Gloria repeated, still maintaining her judicial pose.

"More so each day. First, you took him and broke him. He mended himself somehow—only to have Enid fairly pulverize him," Dodo paused. After all, she was eating Gloria's cakes and tea.

"True enough. But we won't let her pulverize him," Gloria objected, her "roughneck" eyebrow in the ascendency. "Let's talk of something else. You are in a dangerous mood, Dodo—as savage as a snapdragon! We'll admit Enid to be a mental hazard and let it go by the board for the present. Seen my new frosting machine? Come over here and watch for a moment——"

When the afternoon bakings were well on the way, Gloria deserted to slip home to her apartment. She telephoned Tag at six of his eight offices only to locate him at a club where some altruistic enterprise was being born with Tag as the attending official. He regretted being so tied up with engagements that he could not come to

see her as soon as she wished. If it was important he would drop in around nine—was that agreeable?

At nine fifteen, Gloria told herself that no traditions were as invincible as those of savage tribes—Tag, belonging to that of the masculine egotists. Proof of this was the tradition that when a woman wears something pink and fluffy and sits near a soft-shaded lamp as she murmurs, “I’m afraid of you—”, the masculine egotists become disarmed of any stern intentions and decidedly interested in her fears.

In flesh-colored tulle, the skirt painted with water lilies and a bandeau of flat, satin rosebuds winding around her forehead, Gloria stationed herself on the rather ratty looking chaise longue which stood beside a tinted droplight. Thus established, she began plaintively:

“I’m timid of you to-night, Tag,” pausing to note the effect.

“I can understand it,” he said blandly. “What is troubling? You look like your old self. I don’t know but what you ought to do this every once in a while. It’d be a mental tonic after these uniforms.” Tag flattered himself that he had betrayed no personal interest.

Satisfied so far, Gloria proceeded: “I’ve saved only two gowns from the wreck. This is the shabbier. The other is to be worn at some great jollification—your wedding, if I’m invited! But to business: I sent for my enemy to tell him how worried I am about him. I prophesy that unless you stop your mad tearing around, trying to make a fortune out of every enterprise you borrow money to put into, to say nothing of running the players’ club and the country club and the Old Boys’ Club, seeing that Dodo doesn’t give Bagatelle House outright for tramps’ headquarters—let me see, what else do you consider your particular jobs—oh, being Enid’s fiancé and manager of your junk yard and——”

“Having you for an enemy,” he reminded, a smile on his face.

“That takes no time—nothing but a little hate,” she corrected. “Let me finish, please. I’m worried lest my enemy become a nervous wreck and I’ll be forced into being magnanimous, sending jelly and love and foregoing arguments. I’d miss you so much, Tag. Please say you’ll check up on things and reorganize yourself. Make Enid let you alone until you’ve had time to take a personal inventory. I never rushed you any harder in the days when I wanted you to sleep two hours, work ten or eleven minutes and play the rest of the time.”

“Why refer to those days?” the gravity in his voice was discouraging. “We are enemies only in the present; we were far from being enemies then.”

Gloria was dauntless. “I shall have to repeat everything—you don’t seem to grasp what I’m saying. I am really leading up to asking you to do two things: break

your engagement with Enid and return to pollywogs and microscopes! As your undying enemy, this is my request. I confess that I am not saving my other glorious frock for your wedding but for some tiptop occasion when you are being given a medal for having discovered some peppy little germ hitherto unsuspected.”

As she leaned back in the chaise longue her hands clutched its sides tightly.

Instead of lighting his cigarette Tag broke the match into splinters.

“Am I to understand that you are serious?” he finally asked.

“As serious as only enemies can become.”

“You wish me to explain why I must refuse?” Tag was uncertain just what attitude to assume.

“Let me give you a battle beforehand!” With a sudden, graceful gesture she rose and came beside him, standing with her hands clasped behind her like a penitent child. She seemed the old, carefree Gloria. He almost expected her to begin some violent tirade about something which she wished him to do or say *now* and to hear Min’s full voice calling out, “Honey, you can do anything”—to end by being vanquished but charmed. It seemed as if the colorless little room might change into the Blaine Avenue drawing-room and Gloria might be wearing some new and dazzling creation, stamping her silvery slippers at his unresponsiveness. He felt as if time had played an unfair trick and gone somersaulting backwards for he also found himself wanting to state his arguments with the aid of kisses!

When she began speaking, Tag knew it to be nothing of the sort. He was the sober enemy-caller upon his former wife and he was to marry Enid Sayre within the year. To-morrow he was to be made director in a lumber company. There were many things to be done before to-morrow. Tag was conscious of a tight-band feeling around his forehead, the pounding pulses in his temples caused a sharp pain across his eyes. He explained it by thinking that he had eaten indiscreetly at the club, torn about without rhyme or reason with numerous brandies-and-sodas to furnish the inspiration. Not that he was drinking heavily; he rarely touched anything at parties. It was when he was overtaxed with work and pressed for time that he found they supplied efficiency.

“I am not afraid that I cannot let you,” he finally said, his voice sounding thick and far away; he wondered if Gloria noticed it. “We would get nowhere at all—even if you are the most presuming of enemies.”

“I am not an enemy,” Gloria heard herself saying. “I never have been. I’m—I’m fond of you. Have you never suspected?”

“Then there is nothing to be said,” Tag concluded impatiently. “I have tried to make my feelings clear, to tell you along what lines my future lies. It is never pleasant

to tell anyone, ‘I will not see you again nor do I care to listen to anything you may have to say’—particularly when that person has once been precious——”

Gloria’s hand reached up and caught at her throat, a characteristic gesture when she was deeply moved. “Once—precious! And I wasted it. Tag, can’t you believe that I hate myself—that I’m being punished almost enough——”

“I shall not try,” there was something of cruelty in his face as he watched her struggle to keep back the tears. “I’m afraid that we are all vindictive at heart, no matter how we prattle about being otherwise: I’m afraid that I don’t regret, Gloria. I got all over that—are you so surprised? You left me rather flat; I had believed so utterly. There was bound to be a reaction. I don’t think any man ever believed any harder——”

“I am sure of it,” she spoke gently as if she wished to soothe him.

“And if you have insisted upon becoming enemies only with the idea that I might change——”

“I have,” she flashed out, her hands dropping to her sides and her head erect. “Perhaps I’m still cheating. At all events I am shameless in telling you the truth, in fairly pursuing you to tell you: I’d have pretended to be head-hunters or anything you would have agreed to be. At first, I wanted to prove that I had learned some hard lessons, that I was real——”

“As real as money in the bank?” he interrupted, smiling in spite of himself.

“As real as money in the bank,” she answered solemnly. “Vanity prompted my seeking you out. But fast enough it was you who mattered and whom I wanted to save——”

Tag’s frown made her pause. “Why speak of me as a derelict?” he objected. “My dear child, I am better circumstanced in every way than ever before. If I have no spare time it is more to my credit than when I was——”

“Yes, yes, I know what you will say. But it is not that. It is your running amuck, so to speak, here, there, everywhere for every cause and everybody, not realizing that you are dissipating your ability and who it is that is driving you—and for what? Money! You are no different from the rest of us. You have but so much strength and brain and ability. Unless you pool it for one right purpose——”

“I grant that you have stated the truth. One has but so much strength and brain and ability, you might add love and faith to the list. Once any one of them is gone—it is final.”

Gloria put her hands on his arms. “You must listen, you shan’t beat me away no matter if you try. You are wrong again, Tag dear, as wrong as I was. Enid isn’t the right person for you. She is going to crush the real you if she keeps you in this whirl

and at this pace. She wants an all-powerful sultan just as I tried to make you a slave. Do you never feel that you are meant to be a sensible old savant? Enid desires the things for which you stand . . . oh, but I'm right. I warn you that you'll suffer even keener disillusionment. This time it will be too late. Please don't fight away from me—not for one tiny moment. I'll never try again—I promise. Won't you slow up and find your right tempo, give yourself a chance? Sell out things, resign right and left and pick up the old work in a new way. You've never been happy since you left it."

"You to say this? You, who deliberately——" he broke off with a harsh laugh. "So you would cheat another woman of what you threw away——"

She held up a hand in protest. It was harder than she had anticipated. "I am not cheating. I am asking you to do what you should have done with me—stand your ground. You are both weak and at fault if you let someone rob you the second time. The first time you were merely weak."

"Most interesting! What should be my line of action?"

"Go back to your own work. Come, be honest; if you had it to do over again—would you have left it? I mean to be honest deep down, underneath all these ambitions of becoming a financial success—be honest—would you?"

"I always want to be honest with you," Tag said without hesitation. "Just as I want to be finished with certain chapters of my life. Yes, I'd choose the old work if things were otherwise. As they stand now that is an impossibility. I am out of touch with the past because I have acquired a taste for new things, I have definite responsibilities, personal and otherwise, ambitions that lead into anything but a laboratory and a professor's income. Enid——"

"Exactly—Enid! Once you wanted me to come live in a studio-barn and pretend that your salary was adequate. Because I refused, it took years and heartaches—and batches of cakes—to make me understand the opportunity I wilfully refused. But you can't talk me out of my opinions. I've the determination to speak of what I have learned—have you? You are heart-hungry this very moment for your own work. You have every right to that work. It should come first of all. If this woman who is to be your wife knows this, she ought to move heaven and earth to help you have it. Or don't you dare to tell her—to make the test?"

Tag rose and moved restlessly about the room. "What possible right have you to dictate——"

"Only because I care—or is that a right? I almost think so. I realize my caring is hopeless. I'll admit that I was vain enough to wear this dress and curl my hair and ask you to come where I had the leisure to tell you an earnest thing in a more or less favorable setting. Perhaps I ought to have called you to the shop and stood in the

most trying light, let you see the lines that are growing around my eyes, the way my hair looks after two hours playing around in the baking room, how unbecoming a white uniform is when it has seen its second wearing . . . I ought to have suggested the scent of shortening instead of the extract of moon-flowers . . . yet I would have said the same thing. I want you to become what you ought to become; I cannot bear that you should be cheated a second time. Won't you believe that I'm in earnest, that I care——”

Tag decided to make a brutal finish. “Enid and I will be married sometime in the winter,” he said tersely. “In fairness to her may I ask you to consider this interview as final? If I am such a mollicoddle and addlebrained fop as to make a second mistake, pray do not give it another thought.”

“Then you love her,” interrupted Gloria impulsively. “Oh, I cannot bear it . . . please be sure. Tag, very sure. That is the one thing that matters!”

“You have not changed so much,” he said with sudden resentment. “Your pride has been humbled and you have proven game in the fighting for an economic existence. You may have your father's ability to make cakes but your mother's blood is telling. You want everything—no matter whether you have thrown it away and someone else has reclaimed it. You want to sweep in and scream out, ‘this is mine, too—and this—and this——’ You are still shiny new and raw, like thousands of your kind—in quite as poor taste, figuratively speaking, as your mother's front parlors used to be. Do you understand how in earnest I am? That your dress and your hair and the scent of moon-flowers mean nothing to me. I'm beyond that sort of appeal. You and your kind want to invade my country and we, weak and sentimental fools that we are, have let you do so until you turn about and dictate the terms of peace! Or else——”

“Or else,” said Gloria steadily, “you come over to our side without dictation, you ape our ways and ambitions. You ‘old’ Americans with your bragging about tradition and background, what are you but copy-cats and weaklings? Why not stand your ground instead of being absorbed? Can't you see your own self, Tag? Once you railed, and rightly, against the octopus that you claimed the Beaumont Baking Company had come to be, you cried horror at sharing its profits without having earned them. What are you doing to-day? What do any of your business combines really stand for if not the same sort of a system—with less chance of success? I know the kind of thing you have gone into. I've made it my business to know. The chain of shoe repairing parlors with illiterate foreigners as your aides-de-camp, a real estate corporation that builds homes of the flimsiest of materials and the stoutest of prices, the eighth of a well-watered dairy company, a loan association, a lumber

syndicate, an investment house—all these where you give your money and your prestige and which you have not had the time to investigate. A Theodore Ainslie Grant on the letter heads makes a brave showing—don't you see? But a Theodore Ainslie Grant should stand for a personal achievement. You may call me impossible, peasant, what you will. I am only partly wrong. Error always contains an element of truth. I have learned that, too."

"Thanks," he said grimly turning to find his hat. "Do you mind if I go along? I believe you when you say that you mean it decently but I don't believe you have the ability to realize your impudence."

She followed him to the door to add her last protest. "I'm learning to stand for the ideal of a thing and not the thing itself. Oh, Duffy could say all this far better—she would be more generous, Tag; she would have believed that I knew what I was driving at, right or wrong. I may always bake cakes but I promise you they will be the best sort of cakes that I am capable of baking. I won't enter the race for pretty pennies as you have done. I won't cheapen myself—nor my cakes. You started as I have—when you drove a junk truck in the way a Theodore Ainslie Grant could drive one. Everyone respected you. If only you had been content with your amount of success. But you couldn't resist doing as my sort of people do, as she wanted you to do. You have slipped, Tag, yet you are so worthwhile that people who know you won't hold you in less regard. If you were to become a pauper or be named a prime minister, you'd still be Tag! Old priceless is what you really are. . . . Call me whatever you like, undignified, impudent, impossible . . . but prophecy is often insight, is it not? I can't help prophesying for you—that you won't stand up under this sort of thing, that you are not meant to——"

The closing of the door brought Gloria's sentences to an incoherent end. The neutral little room suddenly lost its philosophic calm. In the chair Tag had just abandoned lay Gloria's sob-shaken figure.

Suddenly life went stale! Of what use were her picayune efforts to become real? The inspiration of her desire had been to prove her cause to Tag. No one else mattered. She might as well accept the discipline of admitting this truth. She wanted Tag to believe in her; the world could disappear up Salt River as soon as it liked, as far as Gloria was concerned.

Somewhat after the fashion of the drowning with their quick panorama of the past, a thousand tender, pathetic memories of Tag presented themselves. Oh, the love that she had wasted, the tenderness, the precious moments that she wilfully changed into petty scenes . . . how could she have hoped to make him understand her new humbleness and sincerity? How could he forgive? Of course it was

impossible, she told herself sharply.

It seemed as if Gloria called out these questions and some dismal and dour echo shouted back: "Of—course—not"—besides, Tag ought not to forgive her. Could she never get it through her head that she was real these days and life was a problem and not a pastime? Her bread and butter now depended upon the success of her cakes! She must be prepared to grow thin and sharp-featured, to have no one but the curious seek her out. She felt old—a new and terrifying sensation. Despite his heartbreak Tag did not seem old! Or did men's hearts break? They bent a trifle only to come bobbing back again in better form than before.

Besides, men's minds have partitions. They can relegate their emotions, painful or otherwise, to their liking. Women allow emotions to go wandering into every corner of their mental field . . . abstract reasoning did not lessen the sting. Tag had her. She was no longer his enemy. She, who once was precious——

"Old priceless—hates me—couldn't help trying—care—so—hard——"

The doorbell brought Gloria to her feet. It might be Tag! He might have abandoned sensible thinking and justice for the sake of the love he once bore her. Perhaps nothing had ever quite taken its place. She was fairly certain that it was he as she flung open the door with an impulsive gesture. It was Tag come back to her—she would persuade him all over again that she had grown up, had qualified. She could see his honest, gray eyes shining through their disfiguring glasses and hear his voice saying in the old, tender fashion: "After all, Gloria, love can undo the things that life does to one——"

A yellow envelope was thrust under her nose and a grimy hand waited for the annoying ten cent delivery charges. Unwillingly she accepted the telegram.

It was an ardent message from Burr Meredith. He was returning from New York and he must see her; he anticipated the welcome which he hoped would prove a reality.

Gloria went back to the chaise longue. She sat tearing the yellow paper into tiny bits. Burr Meredith was returning and Tag had gone. Even love could not undo the things that life has caused to happen. . . .

With the Under-Privileged

DAMNED if I know what's inside his brains but he could sell that square-shaped head of his to any laboratory and make a tidy profit," Jerry boasted.

"Sure that might not be wiser than for you to finance his inventions?" Gloria felt dutybound to inquire. They were at one of Dodo's community parties, a tortuous affair where the unwashed and the washed pretended to approve each other. It was the first time that Gloria had reentered Bagatelle House. She had had a shivery sensation when she accepted the invitation, as if she must stand spectator at a reopened grave.

Her fears had proven groundless. Bagatelle House seemed some strange although interesting place. It had lost its atmosphere of mystery and reserve. Duffy's personality had vanished even as Dodo had filled it with that of her pet vagabonds, shunting the art treasures into the crowded front parlors which were kept locked excepting on public exhibition days.

She had not asked whether Tag or Enid was to be present. Somewhat to her disappointment she discovered that she did not care.

"Come and play with us," Dodo had suggested. "It is ridiculous to have personal prejudices. I think of you only as Gloria Grant, a satisfactory and businesslike person. See how we have both come on! You think of me only as Dodo Grant, a scatterbrained philanthropist—and never as Tag's sister. Now that you have made your way in the business world you must begin to enjoy social outlets. Of course, you'd never want the old sort of fun, would you? I knew it," as Gloria politely shook her head. "You want to do something that makes for the betterment of the race," launching into a sociological and statistical flock of arguments.

"Then you can't refuse to help with my Americanization work," she had ended. "We need you at Bagatelle House on Tuesday evening. I'm having no less than forty of the under-privileged for supper and games. Some are adorable rogues. Two are Adonises and one a golden-haired Madonna. By the by, Jerry has found a new *raison d'être* since I've dragged him into slumming. You'd never know him for the same Jerry."

"What is it—the golden-haired Madonna?" murmured Gloria.

"Nothing of the sort. An unusual Slavish boy named Peter Fronczak. He was working at the steel plant until a fortnight ago. When I first met him I felt that he had

worthwhile if eccentric notions in the back of his extraordinarily shaped head but it was no use trying to win his confidence. I was forced to be content when he came to night school. Somehow Jerry discovered him and—but he'll tell you the outcome. He is jealous if anyone else has done so."

The forty under-privileged were waiting for dismissal, so to speak, when Jerry had taken Gloria aside to tell of his new interest in life. Americanization had rather palled, to judge from the expressions of the guests. Food having been devoured and prizes awarded, nothing remained but conversation which was, of necessity, a chaste and restricted affair.

"This boy has a fortune and a laurel wreath awaiting him," insisted Jerry enthusiastically. "He is one of to-day's wizards—only he might have grubbed on forever at some plant unless I had recognized his merit. I'm pledged to support Dodo's cause for all time because of discovering young Fronczak. I wonder why I have never had that sort of ambition before," his red, melon-shaped face glistening with a satisfied grin.

"Because you had blondes," Gloria reminded.

"Oh, that stuff," Jerry dismissed his past with a wave of his stubby fingers. "I mean ambitions for a career, a fortune, the sort of thing young Tag is going after. Not that I approve of his ways and means. Putting each egg into a different basket may be right enough for old ladies with small means but not for to-day's man of affairs. Tag has so dissipated both his money and his talents that if one thing goes wrong he is suffering from the delusion that another will right it—blah! If one thing goes wrong he will be too busy fussing with other things to check up in time. It becomes a landslide. But what is that to me? I have offered my advice only to have it refused. From now on all my eggs go into Peter Fronczak's basket. His electrical machines either will make us too rich to be in good taste or so poor that my friends will pension me—a jolly prospect either way. At least life is no longer stupid."

Gloria smiled an assent. But she was not concerned with Jerry's flair for square-headed Fronczak's machines. She was concerned with Tag and his eggs so lavishly distributed into so many baskets.

Before Jerry could continue his enthusiasms Enid came in from some lecture from which Tag had been absent. She glanced at the under-privileged, now in the throes of paying their last respects to Dodo, who voted the evening nothing short of a masterpiece.

Then she glided over to Gloria just as Jerry left in pursuit of his protégé. "I've been wanting to talk to you for ages," she began with effusion. "I don't wonder that you look fagged. Dodo has the oddest ideas—so did Duffy. Only Duffy's were in

ravishing taste. Can you picture her expression if she could see the beloved courtyard cluttered with garlic-smelling citizens in the making?" Enid's tone was patronizing. She was condescending to Tag's sister. Some day Bagatelle House would be nothing but a poverty-ridden public settlement, with Dodo in a few rear rooms and the rest of the place given over to game tables and blackboards. Enid had no intention of maintaining any active interest in Bagatelle House once she married Tag. She had no intention of maintaining any active interest in Tag once she was Mrs. Theodore Ainslie Grant. A new and dazzling world would be in store for her. With characteristic diplomacy she had concealed any such intentions. But before Gloria, a disgraced and impoverished person, proprietress of a cake-shop and whose yellow organdie with a necklace of cool-looking, inexpensive beads bespoke her reduced circumstances, Enid felt secure.

She was more than usually magnificent in her orchid tulle gown, the sort Gloria used to delight in wearing. It lent any wearer added charms. There was something alluring in Enid's thin-lipped, palish face, the braids of dull brown hair wound in and out with silvered leaves.

Gloria took an accurate and womanly inventory. "That represents five hundred to put it mildly," she told herself with a mental smile. "Enid is squandering her legacy on pre-trousseau propaganda. She is preparing Tag for what must follow. Poor Tag! He must out-strip Jerry's wildest visions if he is going to keep up the pace."

"I hadn't realized that you were keen to meet me," Gloria said after a difficult pause. "You managed so well to avoid it."

"I have had to manage until it has become an unfortunate habit," Enid purred. "How you have changed—you poor thing," the patronage extending to Gloria. "What a time you must have had . . . Tag says your cakes are nothing if not delectable. Tell me how you feel about—everything."

"I'm deliriously numb," Gloria suppressed a desire to use profane language and escape through a nearby window.

"Come, be truthful—it is interesting from a psychological standpoint," urged Enid, sinking into a chair and extending a hand as if inviting Gloria to kiss it. "I find myself without a personal reaction upon meeting you; yet I'm to marry your former husband by the new year."

"What do you intend to do with him after that has been accomplished?" demanded Gloria.

Enid affected surprise. "Do with him? My dear, I never accepted your estimate of Tag—a toy to play with as you liked. He is a wonderful man whose future is so promising that at times it is overwhelming to stupid little me. Odd that you never

discovered this fact,” her thin lips scarcely seeming to form the words.

“Quite so,” Gloria heard herself agreeing.

“Tell me something in exchange. Aren’t you going to be sensible and marry old Burr after all? Surely you aren’t keen to go on like this.”

“Why not?” said Gloria quickly.

“You’re *déclassée*,” Enid confided as if with regret. “To me you are——”

“Dangerous? It need never alarm you. He does not recognize me even as an enemy,” her frankness was as convincing as it was embittered.

“As an enemy?” Enid repeated. “What a weird notion——”

“Oh, I tried to be his friend—but he would have none of it. I was content to be his enemy,” Gloria’s eyes were a challenge. “But I don’t expect that you can understand. I’ll tell you this much: I over-stepped all rulings for an enemy and warned him of danger. It lost me my enemy! We are enemies, Enid, and I’ll play as odd a game—I’ll warn you. Don’t drive Tag too hard. Be satisfied with what he can give you and not what you want him to give you. You can’t justify your driving him on and on—for in your heart of managing hearts you know that you are goading and forcing him even as I belittled and repressed him. Give him freedom and you have the great tie which must exist between a man and his wife.”

“You have become as absurd as Dodo with her radical ranting,” said Enid unpleasantly. “You who transgressed every——”

“Everything,” ended Gloria. She turned and walked away. The room was emptied by now and Dodo’s voice could be heard calling out good nights. Jerry and his cubical-headed genius had departed and the caretaker was turning off lights.

“Wait,” ordered Enid. “I have something else to say. If I cause Tag to succeed beyond his own expectations it is because something in me, something born of those lean days of toadying and subservience, second-hand life as you called it, has bred in me the desire to forge ahead, on and on. I recognize no more limitations,” pausing as she saw that she was too self-revealing.

“Then give me credit for having been an excellent foil,” was Gloria’s retort. “You have made him believe you to be everything that I was not. You, too, boast of being an ‘old’ American—but what claim have you to such a title? Have you made anything else matter more than money? Your methods may differ but your objective is the same. Can’t you realize that men with Tag’s tradition and makeup should work for a future and not for a fortune? You have persuaded him that to become a great man means to become a rich man. Where is the difference between the penny-seeking immigrant and the dollar-seeking aristocrat? I have learned that you cannot put people into categories and label them ‘new’ and ‘old’ Americans—it must

forever remain an individual problem. With your viewpoint you are not capable of realizing that I don't care to come back socially, that I shall never marry—I am content to work.” Tag had entered the room as she said the last.

“Do go on,” Enid urged unaware that he was nearby.

“Once upon a time I would have bought an age-old name to restore it with shiny new dollars—sheer impudence. But you would take an age-old name and submerge it with shiny new dollars—sheer wickedness——”

Enid turned away and discovered Tag. “Oh, my dear,” she began affectionately. “I wondered when those beastly loan association people would let you go—isn't it sniffy in here? I heard Dodo tell a reporter that nine nationalities were represented. Jerry's dotty about his inventor—he's going to give him as much backing—as much backing as a mirror,” with a falsetto laugh. “Here is Gloria—she has ladled temperance punch and played backgammon all evening. Dodo's arranged about having her taken home—we've had an interesting chat. I can't get her to believe that I've meant to look her up for ages—and add a few pale pink touches about past pleasant times, an olive green blot relating to her having been so far away from us and a deep blue one for sincere friendship——”

“'Night, Enid, 'night, Tag—Dodo calls,” said Gloria as impersonally as if she had been speeding the nine nationalities on their way. Before Tag could answer she had gone.

Burr Is Banished

THE situation between Gloria and Burr remained to be solved, Rutledge betting even money, so to speak, as to the outcome. When it is sultry midsummer and the most gloriously frosted of hand-composed cakes grow stale in one's shop window, when Swedish helpers suddenly grow gray of face and short of breath and word comes that they have died, when the shoe-repairing emporium sends a message to the effect that one's shop has been purchased by them and occupancy must end after sixty days—there comes an urge to discard high resolves and accept the offered hand of even a Burr Meredith.

Ingleborg, Gloria's chief standby, died the middle of August. Standing beside her coffin, a flamboyant, shiny affair with scrolls and knobs not unlike an electric range, a thing which would have delighted Ingleborg's faithful but tasteless heart, Gloria turned to Burr with a feeling of relief which almost amounted to dependency.

The powerful droplight, newest of undertaker's novelties, which was fastened on the casket's lifted lid, directed its merciless glare not alone on Ingleborg's gray face but upon Burr's lined and discontented one.

"There's nothing more that you can do here," he told Gloria. "You must get the thing out of your mind; nothing you can wish will change it," taking her arm to lead her from the room.

A troop of appreciative relatives streamed after them as they left the cottage. Outside the coming night was more oppressive than the unnatural cool of the small house. The dusty, treeless street never seemed more unlovely than when Gloria walked unwillingly to Burr's car. It was a narrow street of no importance, one of the side lanes which pioneers had laid out in the hope that business would sweep down upon it. In time it had dwindled into an insignificant, residential affair with cottages and picayune stores crowding down to the neglected curbs. Ingleborg's neighbors stood in their doorways to watch the excitement which death awards even to the mediocre. In life Ingleborg had never enjoyed such dignity and distinction.

"That's Gloria Grant, the cake-shop lady—and Burr Meredith," whispered the neighbors. "She's not very much when you look at her closely. I guess they'll marry by and by. He sent a pillow of roses—he did it to please *her*."

"Let's drive through the park where it is cooler and where there are flowers," said Gloria hurriedly as the car headed towards the main thoroughfare. "I'm gasping

for breath.”

“It’s the damned atmosphere of death we’ve been in,” said Burr. “I abominate it. I hate every clammy, hypocritical detail connected with it. If I had my way I’d be dropped off at sea with the boom of a gun to do duty for both prayers and tears. Let’s drive where there is life, eat supper at some gay place, listen to jazz, laugh and forget——”

Gloria shook her head. “Through the park and then home, if you please. Poor Ingleborg—happy Ingleborg,” she corrected. Leaning back in her seat, she drew off her hat with a careless gesture. “Why is anyone afraid of death—after having been forced to live?”

“That is morbid,” he accused turning a sharp corner and speeding through the heated downtown section. “One cannot abide morbidity when old age stands in one’s trail. I’m in danger of becoming a crabbed old coward as you once accused. No, not just as you pictured it—worse, perhaps. What the devil difference does one poor drab of a housekeeper matter either to you or the world? Don’t let yourself remember her; she’s better off.”

“Granted—the last. I’m not morbid but tired. I’m uncertain of—things,” a faint breeze stirred the yellow hair and made it stand up in a curly way about her forehead.

“You look as you did long ago—at Forestvale,” he said softly. “Is there no chance of your feeling the same?”

She shook her head. “Never that way. Perhaps I am disappointing, Burr, but I can become neither tragic nor emotional. I’m too concerned casting ahead for a new shop and a new helper. Tag’s shoe repairing enterprise has bought my building. I’m wondering if I must move uptown and serve afternoon tea or move further downtown and serve chowder on Fridays! I’m afraid I’ll find myself putting on ‘side’ as mama did. I never wanted that. I told myself that no matter where I stayed that if I baked better cakes than other people the world would come to buy them. But putting on ‘side’ has come to be a legitimate part of business as it exists to-day, just as one must advertise. Perhaps I was wrong and overdid the humble beginning. Times have changed. . . . I shall name my new shop The Wild Oat or the Mauve Mushroom and have orange colored furniture. I’ll speak French to everyone who cannot and hint that I’m clairvoyant but afraid to have it generally known. Then I’ll become the rage and need more helpers than good old Ingleborg and I ever dreamed of needing. I’ll play golf again and learn the new dances, flirt even with you and charge twice as much for my wares.”

“You’ll sell out the damned shop and marry me,” he corrected. “I’ve been a

better waiter than you were,” turning to look at her, the blinded eye seemed to wink reproachfully.

“Oh, yes, you will,” as if she had refused. “You’ll be glad to—be honest for a change. You don’t want to go to all that effort just for a bakery. Perhaps I’m battered and not quite what you like but I know you better than the rest of the world, your moods and your faults and your past. I’ve found nothing serious to object to in any of them. If I was weak and vacillating heretofore I have paid up for it,” the blinded eye seeming to wink again in penitent agreement. “So have you! I know my mind now and for all time—I think I understand yours. Your position in this town isn’t of the best at the present rating.”

“Do you think that frightens me?” she said sweetly.

“No, but what does baking cakes amount to? You have no one to care what becomes of you. Were you to die like that helper of yours only the curious would attend your funeral. ‘She did it herself, silly thing,’ they would say and rush off to call on Enid when she marries Tag. Since you are all for frankness, listen to this: You will grow no younger, no more beautiful. I don’t care; I’ve found my heart. I am a candidate for Indian summer,” they were passing the lily pools in the park. Fluffy wind clouds massed themselves at one side of an aquamarine sky. The rose gardens, scarlet, white and sunset pink rivalled the lily pools for attention. Rows of optimistic petunias and verbenas ran riot along the edges of the drive. Everywhere one turned was another evidence of midsummer, the season’s completed, colorful picture. It was like Burr when she had met him at Forestvale, at the zenith of his powers. Looking up at his disgruntled face, the hint of age creeping over it like a film, she shook her head.

She was thinking of herself and the years ahead. Gloria was beginning to be haunted. There seemed so little choice as to her future. On one side was Burr, the parasitical career as his wife with provincial society rushing to her house so that it could rush away to someone else’s and report all that they had seen and heard. Once before she had been cast in a parasitical rôle with Tag as her victim. This time a tyrannical cheat would cause her to become her own victim!

On the other side was lonely independence, repressions and regrets. She must watch Enid do her clever worst with Tag and realize that once she had been equally abominable . . . of finally going away because she could not endure it, disappearing into the indifferent world. No one would care; no one would know? She would be quite alone. She might turn queer and take to talking to herself, trying out new religions, wearing untrimmed hats . . . one must do something when the daily baking is done.

Burr had taken the shake of her head as a stubborn refusal. He began anew.

“Don’t you believe in Indian summer? What then—squaw winter?” his harsh laugh drew his mouth into a curious, three-cornered grimace.

“Only squaw winter,” protested Gloria, “turn off here, Burr. We can make a short cut to the apartment.”

“You cannot escape me; I’ve put a charm upon you,” he said rapidly, a pleading tone in his deep voice.

“There was a time when whatever you said charmed and fascinated me. But no one can charm another person unless they have been invited to do so. I invite you no longer.”

“So you think me too old? What of yourself—I mean of your experiences? What really happened in France? Didn’t he want you? Was marrying you to count for nothing? Tell me the truth; I’ll try to understand. I’m hoping that you could not quite forget me—that you thought of me and it influenced you just a little,” his rough face bent so close to her own that she saw how puckered the blinded eye would always be.

“You actually think that was it? That you prevented——” his conceit was as amazing as it was distressing.

“I hope so. Having once loved me, you are not the sort to have forgotten. You never loved Tag nor this fine foreigner. You wanted my son! Gloria, it is not too late. All our plans and dreams can come true—Tangiers, Hongkong, Egypt. I’m not so old that I’ll be a millstone. I’d be truer to you than a younger, more questioning man; have you thought of that? For God’s sake stop this seesaw argument and time-wasting. I want you, I need you,” his car drew up before the curb. “I’m going to have you. I’ll compromise you if I must, I’ll have your shop boycotted,” his laugh was a fierce, wolfish sound that made her leave the car without his assistance.

“You will neither compromise me nor boycott my cakes,” she said flippantly but her eyes were steady. “I wish no part of your friendship, Burr, but I wonder what arguments are needed to convince you of it.”

“Damn arguments; I want emotions. If you won’t marry me because you want to, you’ll marry me because I want you to. The worst that can come of it would be another divorce; there is always a way out,” he dragged himself from the car, his thickest frame seeming suddenly inert.

A moment later they faced each other in Gloria’s living-room.

“If you continue to annoy me,” she warned in a voice which made his closely set eye show a reddish gleam, “I shall show you scant mercy. I shall show you emotions which will not please——”

“Then what the devil did you come back for—to hang around as a social outcast, a—a—cook?” he laughed again in the same wolfish way.

“You think it must be for matrimonial purposes?”

“What else is there for a woman like you?” Then he saw his error. “I mean it decently—I’m in love with you; isn’t that sufficient tribute? I’ve begged you as I’ve never begged another woman. I’ve overlooked what most people would—but you will come to regret this,” as she walked to the door and opened it, waiting for him to pass. “So, you’re after him—Tag,” in a final, furious outburst. “What good will it do you to throw yourself at his head, a man you once threw aside? He is nothing but a sluggish prig.” Burr’s temper got the better of his self-control. He was lost in a stream of angry, unlovely words, a vituperation of Tag and of Gloria, of anyone who thwarted his desires. He wanted her but he intended to make her sorry unless she saw the error of her decision. Over and over he urged his selfish, shallow side of the question. Had she forgotten her promises in former days, her kisses; she had almost forgotten conventions—once——

When he had exhausted arguments and stopped, breathless and sullen, the red gleam in his one good eye was a defeated glare.

“So you think me a cheat and a cad! You’ve a lot of fine names to call me,” he accused as he found his hat. “But you’ll have to admit that I’m as honorable as your Tag; perhaps you have exaggerated his virtues. It would be a jolt to discover that he was tarred with the same brush as the rest of the world. He never has put his cards on the table—that is all. There are many ways of cheating. Perhaps his——” the red gleam returning in his eye.

“Won’t you please go?” she begged, her hand reaching up to her throat in its characteristic gesture of nervous alarm. “If you do not I shall make a scene that we will both regret. We have had our share of melodrama, have we not? Know that for all time and under all circumstances I refuse to marry you. Your Rutledge means nothing to me. I have found my own Rutledge if you like to put it that way. Your Rutledge and my Rutledge can exist for anyone, anywhere. You can neither threaten nor frighten. I despise your measuring stick. Dodo knew the truth about you. Perhaps you have forgotten how you hurt her. But she lived through it; I have had to live it down. Now go before you mention his name again, you hopeless, *old man* _____”

Clumsily Burr’s thickset figure went lunging down the stairs.

The closing of the outer door sent Gloria back to her living-room with a sense of security. For the moment it overshadowed the thought that she was now confined to one line of action: to walk alone.

The Enemy to the Rescue

WHILE Enid coaxed Dodo away from slumming long enough to go to New York for theaters and clothes, Gloria became established in a smarter neighborhood at an increased overhead expense. Jerry Fisher had continued his backing of the square-headed prodigy, remaining immune to the warnings of his friends.

That Jerry was headed for financial ruin as well as being cheated by an uncouth pretender was the burden of their protests. There was a rumor that someone ought to have the surrogate court declare him incompetent and turn his affairs over to a trust company. Unheeding, Jerry continued to sell his securities in order to promote young Fronczak's ideas. He lost his zest for scandal and second-rate beauties. That Burr Meredith had removed to Washington for reasons known only to himself did not produce an iota of curiosity. Ordinarily such a happening would have sent Jerry on a self-appointed round of investigation, buzzing with questions and ironical comments, hinting to Gloria that she had missed her chance for social reinstatement and urging that she send Burr a conciliatory letter.

Launched upon his new career Jerry left town with Fronczak the week after Gloria balanced her first monthly accounts in the new shop and told herself that putting on "side" had paid. Mediocre competition had been too keen. Exploiting herself as well as her cake was the thing unless——But she dismissed the alternative with a mental frown. She planned for more orange colored furniture. She was wearing purple suède slippers and black satin smocks. A back room was to be done in futurist motifs where the "top milk" of the town could come and find its tea.

She had not seen Tag since the night of Dodo's party for the under-privileged. It was impossible not to hear of Tag. He was spoken of as one of the city's rising commercial lights, proof that the last male of an old family need be neither decadent nor impoverished. He was prominent in patriotic societies as well as in directing boot-repairing emporiums, organizing the season's dinner dances and the construction of a twenty story office building. On all sides and on every hand Theodore Ainslie Grant was known and quoted; no paper but what printed his name daily and his picture on the average of once a week. Unwillingly, he had become an after-dinner speaker, one of the little great. He was in demand for semi-philanthropic banquets where one "talked down" to the listening mediocrats.

A distinct sense of aloneness possessed Gloria; temporarily, she lost her

optimism. As Min had sat in the shabby room above the first Beaumont bakery, rocking noisily as she dreamed of her child's future, so Gloria sat alone—and regretted. Burr had been right; there was no one to really care. These new friends were worse than strangers for they knew just enough to make them fancy that they knew all. Gloria had lost her sense of continuity. A dozen impulses suggested themselves. To appeal to Tag once more, to leave Rutledge, to live with Dodo as the latter suggested now that Tag was to be married at the new year. Min had her child to plan for and believe in; Gloria had only memories.

When the first hint of Tag's dilemma reached her, she was ashamed of the resultant thrill. Tag was threatened, insecure, he might have need of her.

It took the form of a paragraph in an evening paper stating that Washington was to investigate an alleged fraud of the Atlas Lumber company of Rutledge, N. Y.—a concern whose tremendous profits and minute tax returns had attracted suspicion for some time and whose supplying government orders with inferior materials had brought matters to a head. The company was headed by Theodore Ainslie Grant, one of Rutledge's best known citizens.

"One's misfortunes are not always displeasing to friends," Dodo told her a few days later. "I am surfeited with sympathy and questions. As for Tag—it is almost amusing. One faction fears lest they, too, become implicated and asked for funds. The other faction shakes its head and says, 'Poor young man, we were afraid he might come to this—going too fast'—oh, Gloria, why must this come to him in addition to everything else?"

For the time being Dodo had forgotten her under-privileged; she was nothing if not Tag's sister.

"Does it look as bad as all that?" asked Gloria.

"Worse. Tag is slated to be the goat. To disprove this he needs unlimited means and influence. The company has been crooked for ages but Tag never suspected, never questioned. Of course they were keen to have him as an impressive figurehead—poor boy, he fancied that it was an honor! You believe this?" she added somewhat fiercely and as if Gloria had offered an argument.

"Without doubt. Tag has always believed too much and understood too little."

"Thanks," Dodo patted her hand. "When I've told others the same thing they were polite in that, 'yes, yes, if you want to whitewash him, go to it but *we* know' fashion. Maddening! I've had no opportunity to talk with Enid. She is trying the ostrich stunt, to disbelieve that the thing is serious, thinks it will blow over somehow and that no one will have noticed about it. Tag and I have no such hopes. Investigations for graft pay too many morons extra salaries to let one come to

naught. Besides, the charges are true. The thing to prove is Tag's innocence," Dodo began stalking around the kitchen. "He is such a helpless thing," she broke out again, pausing beside the pantry door. "This might have happened to any other of his interests except the little old junkyard. He has always taken too much for granted. I'm dreading lest he become angelically stubborn and say, 'I must accept this because it was due to my own lack of thoroughness.' Perhaps he won't run to cover if it is offered."

"I wonder," said Gloria softly.

"I don't," Dodo cut in. "If this thing goes to trial, Tag will be the one to take the blame. Do you understand all that could mean?"

"A fine or prison or both?"

"Exactly; and a nervous smash for Tag which would finish him. It will take every penny he has for the trial——"

"He must sell out everything and hand it over to lawyers!"

They regarded each other curiously as if trying to read the other's thoughts.

"I've wasted so much time on those—those people that I've little left for him," confessed Dodo regretfully. "I can't sell Bagatelle House. It would cost more than it would bring to break Duffy's ridiculous will. Good old Duffy, how little she ever dreamed that Tag——"

"Enid——" suggested Gloria begrudgingly.

"Most of her money has gone for herself. Tag's money is here and there and everywhere. He needs real money this time, Gloria, the sort of money——"

"I used to have," Gloria finished the sentence.

"The sort you used to have would save him. It is all so corrupt and unfair and he is so stupidly innocent and decent that I can't——"

"Yet it is his own fault," interrupted Gloria. "He would not be content with just his junkyard. He copied *us* newcomers."

"Everything that happens to everyone is their own fault," Dodo's face went crimson with indignation. "Put it that way and deal in generalities or be human and help me save him. Does this make you want him to be punished?"

"No, I never want him punished. We'll see it through. Only tell me that I can trust you," Gloria had become eager, somewhat bouyant. "Give me your pledge never to let him know any part that I may play in helping him. He would object—oh, but he would—you don't know how bitter he has come to feel. He'd soon enough show 'angelic stubbornness' and refuse my aid. We must be practical and get down to facts. Enid must give all that she has. Jerry, worse luck, cannot be relied upon. He is east with one of your under-privileged who may or may not prove worthy. We may

have to have a tag day for Jerry before we have finished. You can do something, Dodo, you can't be absolutely flat."

"I can sell things. Better still, I'll steal from Duffy's collections, some of those fussy little idols that would bring hundreds and never be missed. Yes, but I will—there's a plot for you. My turning burglar to prevent Tag's being accused of having been one," her dark eyes shone with a defiant sparkle. "Duffy would want me to—of course, she would——"

"We'll keep that in reserve. If anything must be stolen from Duffy's collection, let me play the thief. Nothing more can hurt me. Your under-privileged must look upon you as unimpeachable. Why, Dodo, you are crying—please," putting her arms around her and holding her close.

"It is going to be all right; this is no disgrace but a stupendous lesson, a warning. I am the one to blame. I took him from his real work and drove him into the beastly bakery offices only to ridicule him for trying to amount to anything. Then I left him. What would happen to any man with Tag's sensibilities? Just what has happened. He would over-reach himself trying to make good on his own. He is no more fitted for what he has tried to become than I am to cook for a lumber camp. He is meant for microscopes and I—I to bake Henry the Eighth's shoestrings," trying to laugh. "Buck up, Dodo, and let's help him find his own work. You are appointed as the go-between; to take charge of Tag and forget your unwashed. At least until he is pottering around his laboratory wearing shabby coats and forgetting to be home for dinner. . . . Oh, I'm glad, *glad*."

Amazed, and momentarily forgetting her brother's peril, Dodo stepped back to look at Gloria as one looks at a surprising stranger who has suddenly thrust himself into the thick of one's personal affairs.

"You'll really stand by?"

"More than that. I'll help him even—even if I disappoint him," Gloria promised. It was her turn to become incoherent and Dodo's to be encouraging.

The lumber investigation gathered momentum as a snowball rolling downhill. Newspapers seized upon the topic to make it a headline affair. Officials eager for reelection issued statements, editorial writers composed pertinent paragraphs. Rutledge was forced to look askance at her heretofore favored son. Rumors were revived of some bygone Theodore Ainslie Grant who had sold the government mules during civil war days and demanded the price paid for racing thoroughbreds. Tag's picture was published weekly but with a new variety of caption. Petty reformers lost no opportunity to advertise their virtues in denouncing Tag.

"He has resigned from almost everything where he could still retrieve his money,"

Dodo reported to Gloria within a few weeks. “But he has so little. His quietness frightens me. This will leave him without ambition. How can he find the heart to begin again? Oh, the company says it will see him through, that the investigation will be dismissed at the twelfth hour but who knows? Even so, it won’t bring back Tag’s faith.”

“Then something else must bring it back,” persisted Gloria. “You’re tremendously game—how does Enid take it?”

“I can’t be sure. She says little but thinks a great deal. As for myself, I can neither eat nor sleep. How can you remain so blunt and matter-of-fact? But, then, you are nothing to him; you didn’t want to be,” with sudden resentment. “What you are doing is from a sense of duty. Decent, I admit, but you are neither hurt nor harassed——”

“If the worst happened to Tag do you think Enid would still be keen to marry him?” Gloria cut in trying to ignore what had been said.

Dodo’s face darkened with doubt. “Enid is beginning to evade. She has just left to visit friends on the plea that it will make it easier for everyone; she dreads having to make sob-statements to the press. She told Tag that she might hurt his cause but that is not her reason. Enid is afraid of becoming a poor man’s wife! She’ll not return to poverty without a battle. She’d call it ‘managing’—of course she has not hinted of this but you know her well enough not to question what I say.”

“I do. Can’t you picture her—tearful and self-sacrificing, saying that she must ‘slip out of his life in order to leave him unhampered’—visiting about until she discovers someone else. She has never cared but he has never suspected. He believes in her as he has believed in all the others.”

“Perhaps,” Dodo mused. “When she went away he seemed relieved. If only he would storm and swear, even cry as men sometimes do. The calmness is alarming.”

“You are emotional enough for both. Tag isn’t going to break down—at least, not until it is over. Do you know what I plan to do, Dodo? Buy his junkyard at a fair price. I heard that it was for sale. You are to manage the transaction and hold the money until he is out of the fog. It will give him a bit to start his new-old work. I want him to have it even—even if the money goes to make Enid’s marriage a brilliant affair,” Gloria’s lips settling into a firm line.

For a moment curiosity overcame distraction. “You have already given everything——”

“Not quite; I’m going to make a radical change—something that will bring me some money and be much easier. Later on, oh, at any time, you can tell him if you feel that you must and he can repay. But for now——” and she broke into a gay

French song which sent Dodo home mystified but encouraged.

The next afternoon in the office of the general manager of the Beaumont Baking Company, Gloria Grant signed a three years' contract to become the exploited head of the cake department, foregoing her independent interests, allying herself in all ways with the corporation. Her position was to be a many-sided affair including pseudo-domestic science talks to women's clubs, visits to the various Beaumont plants throughout the country, contributing to a newspaper syndicate which would print her father's famous recipes, her own opinions and experiences concerning fancy baking. Her picture was to be published at the head of the column—a picture in which she would wear a jaunty white cap and a professional smile. She must attend food exhibits and be hostess at the Beaumont Bakery booth, serve tea and wafers to visitors when she was at the home office—in brief, this authority on cake was to do everything except bake them!

"I must have a lump sum for my shop and its good-will," she had insisted. "Yes, of course it was stupid to have refused your first offer," remaining under fire of the general manager's reproaches until he had brought her to his own terms.

"But I want a lump sum; I'll forego having any of the stock. I have something urgent to meet," she reiterated before she would sign the contract. "I'm closing out my shop at a ridiculous price. My mother would have driven a far fairer bargain . . . but I must have an immediate sum of money."

"Be ready to start on a western tour by the first," the general manager advised. "We want to open branch stores in a number of towns; your job is to create interest among the society women. Your experiences can make up the copy for your syndicated column. Later, we may send you abroad. An international culinary exhibition is to be held in Paris. We are laying our pipe lines to invade England, and, later on, the Continent."

"I'll be ready," Gloria promised.

"I feel that this is going down in history as a mutually successful afternoon," said the general manager affably. "You understand that you will be away from Rutledge the greater share of the time; I fancy you will not be sorry," his glance straying to the afternoon papers which had just been laid upon his desk.

"Lumber Graft Case to be Tried Soon," ran the headlines. "Theodore Grant Ready Now, Attorneys State."

"I don't mind," she said in offhand fashion.

"So you preferred a career, after all," pursued the general manager, "I should have thought you would mar——"

"I preferred the career," she interrupted. "As to my expense account——"

“Exactly; let us get all the details clear,” curiosity giving way to efficient bargaining.

When she left the office Gloria paused at a nearby dress shop. Medium priced, overly fashionable models were in its windows. She must plan her wardrobe for this new career. She could no longer be the plain little proprietress of the cake-shop any more than the old, exquisitely costumed Gloria. She must step into the thick of the crowd and pretend to be of it, dress to win their approval, talk in order to interest them—serious work, after all! She must make them feel I-am-with-you-and-both-you-and-I-are-above-the-other-fellow! Create an atmosphere of commercial ability plus social distinction. It would be easy enough to fool the crowd. The hard part would be to know that she did not fool herself.

She was following Min’s formula for success, only the latter had substituted machines for hand labor. Gloria was laying aside personal struggle to win the applause of the mob. Min had sacrificed for her child. Gloria was sacrificing for Tag. In advance she knew that her reward would be his contempt, the conclusion that she had not been game!

Concerning a Number Of Things

RETURNING from the initial western tour, Gloria ate Christmas dinner at a hotel and went to a holiday concert with the general manager and his wife.

During the program she turned her head to catch Dodo's welcoming smile. She was not unaware that she had been the center of no small attention, the general manager and his wife enjoying their reflected importance. To their bromidic minds it was a distinction to take this successful and good-looking cake-expert to hear an equally successful and good-looking prima donna. Both had enjoyed social and matrimonial pasts which would not be forgotten for a generation or so. It meant much to the general manager and his wife that Gloria was the former wife of the recently exonerated lumber company president and erstwhile sister-in-law of the eccentric Miss Grant who occupied a stage box and whose thin, straight self was wrapped in an old Paisley shawl which had belonged to the late Miss Duff-Porter. Besides, Gloria was an intimate of Jerry Fisher, whose reputation as a man about town had been forgotten in his spectacular discovery of an amazing electrical genius. The general manager and his wife followed Gloria's glance and viewed Dodo's escort which consisted of Jerry Fisher, redder of face and more glistening of smile than ever, and the square-headed Fronczak who wore his tuxedo with a resigned air and whose heavy, square-tipped fingers crumpled the program into fragments.

"It is true?" whispered the general manager's wife. "That this young Pole has invented things which are making a fortune?"

"I'm not sure; I haven't seen any of them in months," as she spoke Gloria kept looking into the shadowy recesses of the box as if searching for someone else. But only Dodo and her escorts were visible.

"They say so; you must drop around and get caught up with the times. Then tell us benighted ones, for we are frantic to hear." Until her marriage the general manager's wife had been in the "skim milk" strata. Secretly she envied Gloria; she had argued with her husband as to whether the former's hair was chemically treated.

Gloria nodded in assent to Dodo's sweeping gesture that they have a rendezvous after the program. "Yes, of course," she agreed aimlessly. "A great deal has probably happened since I left Rutledge."

As soon as possible she found Dodo with Jerry and young Fronczak. They had waited for her at a side entrance until she had succeeded in saying good night to the

general manager and his wife.

"I'm stopping at a hotel," she told them. "I shan't plan to have any more definite headquarters here. It has been an interesting trip—don't judge of it by what my column says, will you? Imagine having to grind it out a week in advance. I've been traveling from Texas to British Columbia singing the praises of the Beaumont Bakeries! I've almost forgotten what you look like. As for news——" with assumed indifference.

Jerry had offered his arm. "Come, you can't cheat that much. You must have heard a few things that happened to us." Jerry's debonair air was replaced by an impressive, business like demeanor. "You knew that Tag——"

"She knew about that, of course," Dodo cut in. "It was published from Texas to British Columbia. That they didn't want a trial as long as an investigation stirred things up and gave everyone a chance to the limelight——"

"Yes," said Gloria easily. "I knew of that. What else has been exciting?"

"Poor Burr," began Jerry, "it looks as if he was done for."

"What about Burr? Where are we driving?" as they whirred through the snowy streets. "Not to Bagatelle House—not to——"

Dodo prevented Jerry's answer. "Tag has gone into the north woods, to be snowbound and rejuvenated. It was as I feared; he was too quiet. When the thing was over, he went to pieces, the taste for life had gone. He's been packed into a never-never land miles from a post-office, the sort of place where one must be taken in on a sledge. He'll wear four pairs of socks, the chamois vest of an Alpine climber and the raccoon coat of a North Pole chauffeur! They'll eat salt pork and drink black tea—boiled. They keep busy telling time by the sun and splitting logs. It's a sort of cabin inn kept open the year round for just such human fragments. He'll not be back until he is himself—it may be spring . . . yes, we are going to Bagatelle House."

Gloria turned back to Jerry. "What about Burr?" she repeated, her voice betraying a quiver.

"He planned to go game hunting in Africa—at the time they failed to pin Tag to the wall. Burr had been unpleasantly vicious about Tag; I almost suspect him of stirring up the trouble. At any rate, his traps were packed and he was all set to discover the fountain of youth and a few sets of tigers when he had a stroke. He's a ghastly sight, eh, Peter?" consulting his square-headed prodigy who remained a silent, disinterested member of the party. "We were in Washington last week and looked him up. His right side is like that of a dead man's and the other twitches intermittently. Has to be fed and all that . . . too bad Alice doesn't know of it. She

might ship the missionary and return. She is that cruelly conscientious sort.”

“He may live for years,” said Dodo softly. “Poor Burr—even if he did hate Tag,” in the dark of the car she peered at Gloria to see if she betrayed emotion.

“I had not heard of it,” Gloria admitted. “Somehow—I am not surprised . . . what of your fortunes, Monte Cristo? You’ve a glamorous reputation these days. What will you do—buy a south sea island? Tell me, Mr. Fronczak, just *what* have you invented?”

Until they reached Bagatelle House the monotonous voice of young Fronczak held the stage. Technical detail after technical detail was expounded, the fortune remained unmentioned.

“Which means,” Jerry was trying to speak easily, “that Peter has the brains and I am absorbing the profits. I’ll buy you a new baking company, if you like. Since Peter doesn’t care about the money, it is up to me to spend it with abandon.”

“Jerry has promised me a community house and a fresh air camp and a swimming pool,” reported Dodo. “We all agree that Jerry does not deserve the fortune. Since it is thrust upon him and Peter is marrying a nice girl whose people knew his people in the old country—it is up to us to take charge of Jerry. I’m going to have things named for him, startle him into giving all kinds of endowments. The Jerry Fisher Day Nursery and the Jerry Fisher Memorial Home and the Fisher Drinking Fountain for Small Animals and——”

“Help, leave me a few ducats with which to buy a total bewitcher for my last days,” pleaded Jerry, slipping with elephantine grace upon the icy curb. “I delegate you, Gloria, to pass final judgment upon her.”

“Why me?” flung back Gloria as they passed into Bagatelle House. “I’m a cooking expert. Ask someone who is better qualified—say—Enid.”

Abruptly Jerry turned to young Fronczak and reminded him of an appointment with power plant managers the next morning. His face was flushed beyond its customary redness, as if detected in unworthy mischief. But Gloria was thinking only of Tag, snowbound, heart-bruised, struggling to come back and begin again.

Six months later the advertising manager of the Beaumont Baking Company announced with due pomp and ceremony the early sailing of Mrs. Gloria Beaumont (they ignored the other name since the signing of the contract) for Paris where she would represent her company at the food exhibition as well as scouring the Continent for attractive cake recipes.

“A wretched fame I’ve been given,” Gloria protested. “Slated for all time to do syndicate articles and pretend to be the inspired author of cookbooks, travel about with a trunk of beaded frocks to wear while being gushed over by brides and

farmers' wives. Who would have suspected it? You are the first person to whom I can admit my regret. However, worse things can happen. Here I am with limited time and you haven't started to tell me a single thing——”

“There is nothing to tell,” explained Dodo. “I’m wondering if Jerry would tell you when Enid really began to make love to him? You may run across them over there; Enid is dragging him to Deauville, I understand. They’re to go to England later—probably to buy a country place or two.”

They were in what remained of Bagatelle House’s formal gardens—now a nondescript affair filled with sandboxes and swings. A brood of ragged children tore in and out of the winding paths, social workers appearing to quell arguments or issue orders and look with curiosity at the corner where Dodo and Gloria sat in beach chairs. But Dodo gave no hint of wishing to be disturbed, not even if the children were impatient to do their exhibition drill.

“Think of Enid’s being Jerry’s wife—with thirty-odd years to keep them apart and a million dollars to bridge the gap,” commented Gloria. “What an escape for Tag!”

“As rare an escape as it was unforgivable of Enid.” Dodo lit a cigarette and glanced up at a turret of the house. “He has taken over those rooms,” she explained. “Remember how the stairs wound up to them and the leaded windows gave a medieval effect?”

“Perfectly. Once I considered them fit only for unused trunks . . . he seems all right in other ways, doesn’t he, Dodo?” she could not disguise her eagerness. “Happy in his work——”

“Quite. I’m afraid we are both doomed to become eccentric characters that the rising generation will smile at and point out to visitors. Oh, I don’t protest the fate—what would be the use,” her dark eyes very clear. “I’m known now as the under-dog’s champion. Sometimes, *entre nous*, I realize what an advantageous position the under-dog really has! But I must fight for someone. I’d have chosen a nursery and my own children rather than juvenile court and abused wives—but someone must be impersonally tender!”

“You’re no longer hurt about—Burr?” asked Gloria quickly.

“I finished with that when I went overseas. I’m not ‘hurt’ about anyone. I’m prepared to end as the odd Miss Grant who challenges brutal horse-owners and champions lost causes—my hats are queer enough to have been the cause of the Civil War. It isn’t half bad. Besides, I have Tag—he has come back to me. Tag realizes that he, too, is becoming a character. He’ll be the conscientious, pottering old scientist twenty years from now, wearing shabby coats and forgetting to come

home for dinner just as you said. He'll be respected by everyone but loved only by me."

After a moment Dodo added: "When he came back from the north and Enid broke her engagement on the plea that she might hamper him in his new undertaking, eloping with Jerry a fortnight later, Tag took it in the same quiet way that he did the investigation and——"

"My leaving him," supplemented Gloria.

Dodo ignored the remark. "He went into the city laboratory and grubbed to his heart's delight. People forget—the sort Tag had known. He realizes that he is not missed, he never will be rich or even popular. But he will be himself. Sometimes, I think he is lonely but no one can wring an admission from him. Do you never want me to tell him what you did? I think he is disappointed in what you have been doing. You see, he doesn't suspect—he believes it to be an affluent job that you hold just because you are Gloria Beaumont. I'd like to——"

"No word—not until we are toothless and superannuated and in need of something to talk over rainy afternoons. My dear, I feel worlds removed from Tag. I'm merely interested impersonally—as you are in your waifs and strays," two somewhat artificial spots of color burned in her cheeks. She rose. The exhibition drillers had massed in a body near the beach chairs. They were to be restrained no longer.

"You must see them do this stunt," said Dodo with forced interest. "It will only take a few moments."

Gloria nodded and returned their welcoming salute.

"Not such a scrubby lot," Tag's voice interrupted as the children finished. He had slipped in at the rear gate and was beside her, his remark directed to the social worker but his honest gray eyes looking down at Gloria.

"Oh, I had no idea——" she began, annoyed at her confusion.

"Nice bunch of kids; Dodo gets a great thrill out of 'em. She has slackened in her attentions to derelicts—good thing, too. So you're off to Paris with all the tricks of your trade," as he spoke, Gloria felt a sense of resentment, as if she were being put under some gigantic microscope by this shabby keen-eyed scientist, examined and found wanting.

"Yes, I'm off for Paris," was her only answer.

"You abandoned the Cakery, didn't you?" he asked. "What brave promises we make and how logically we excuse our breaking them!"

"I found it impractical to be real—as real as money in the bank," determined to carry the thing off lightly. "One has to be on paper these days unless one has a

scientific flair and can live off bread and cheese.”

“So you like the new venture—all the journeys where you create a hurricane in a pond, so to speak—” he looked at her trim, tailored self, her extravagantly curled hair creeping out from under her blue felt hat. “Yes, I was afraid that you would like it,” escaped from his lips.

There was an enthusiastic yell as the drillers disbanded. During the disorder Gloria turned and made her way out of the old garden.

Brigit was Right

SHE had a faint hope of finding Brigit Pascal in town despite August humidity and Brigit's love of the Brittany coast. With a sense of anticipation she climbed the winding pension stairs and tapped at her door. It would be refreshing to see Brigit after her work at the bromidic food exhibition where her cabled reports had met with the approval of the home office. She had done her job to the best of her ability, numb to the sly paragraph or so in Parisian journals. That she was once an heiress and fiancée of Pierre de Lasseuere was not so easily forgotten; that she had become a successful business woman was worthy of ironic comment. These Yankees—one could scarcely comprehend them!

There was no one else in town that she need see. Olga Bialias had removed to Vienna. Her successor confided that Madame Bialias had abandoned her art of individual perfumer for that of being third wife to an irascible but affluent merchant.

When Brigit's door opened and Pierre, white of face and hair, stood on its threshold, Gloria felt that she was greeting a ghost. He wore a careless studio costume, the fastidious elegance was lacking. Slowly he reached out one slender, temperamental hand to touch her—as if he, too, wondered whether she was real.

“You—here?” he whispered. Without seeming to do so he had drawn her inside and closed the door.

“Brigit?” she asked with a feeling of dread.

“Brigit?” his face seeming to crumple into a thousand sorrowful little lines. “You did not hear? But, then, you would not. Dead for over a year. Her lungs were always weak and she caught cold visiting during an English winter. Her child is there at school; I'm to look after her.”

While he was speaking they had walked into Brigit's living-room. Her busy-looking desk with the photographs of her child stood in an alcove. The other possessions had been carefully arranged at one side while artists' materials cluttered the remainder of the space.

“Dead!” Gloria repeated the word as if to convince herself. “What—of yourself?”

“Me? I am rich, married—a wretched failure,” he said in quick confession. “My wife is a beautiful, brainless Brazilian—we despise each other. My father is bedridden. I have restored the old place at Coutances for him. The only times that I

find peace are to come here and work for a day or so—a few hours, if need be—work at what never can be a success. Here, I can think of her——”

“She loved you so,” said Gloria in gentle accusation.

“Weak lungs are well enough for the death certificate; but my cowardice killed her! And you?” he demanded suddenly. “You quaint, undisciplined child—have you forgiven me? What has happened to you? You’ve grown bigger and braver than I can ever be—you have survived and struggled—and loved. Yes, I know. I can tell,” he ran on breathlessly as if she might refuse to answer. “I’m to be trusted, Gloria, even if you once thought me guilty of treason. Not that I’ve reformed—Once I lock this door, I become the same cynical parasite—But for now—you never saw this side of me, did you—you never suspected it?”

“She told me. She knew. She said that you had the power to be a saint—for just a moment!”

“You believe it?” admiration and curiosity in his eyes. “Give me your confidence—tell me what you would have told her—is that not a fair bargain? Forget if you can the selfish worldlings we both were——”

“Once you said that you would choose to live a legendary sort of life, be a powerful myth in the minds of the world. Brigit said that you could be. I didn’t understand. Yet all in a moment you seem strangely intimate. Was I once a waster and you a fortune-hunter? Yes, yes, we were,” her hand reaching to her throat in the intensity of emotion. “And she was here, looking on and loving and hoping, Pierre, hoping against hope that you might be brave and claim her. As a successful cook I can understand what a mere pattycake princess could not. If you care to know why—I care enough to give you the trust that I would have given her,” as she spoke she moved across the dusty, studio floor.

It was dusk before she left Brigit’s old rooms. In the added darkness of the entry Pierre’s face and hair seemed gleaming, unreal in their odd pallor. As he stooped to kiss her hands, an odd lump in her throat prevented her saying good-bye. It was not that she wanted to cry for Brigit or for herself or for the elegant, cynical Pierre who would presently saunter into his club but for the myth-like Pierre who found occasional sanctuary in Brigit’s rooms to think of what might have been.

It was one of those strange experiences which one never relates lest it be misinterpreted—like keeping the doors of a precious shrine locked against the unbelievers. Brigit had been right; there had been a Pierre capable of a great love. Was there no one who could understand that she, too, had grown worthy of an equally great emotion?

A month later Gloria rested from her labors, having refused no less than three

chefs and a baking powder manufacturer her hand in marriage. She had chosen to rest at Tusinge, in an obscure chalet a stone's throw from the old Pension Beaumont and peering shyly down at Château Blonay's feudal towers.

She wondered why she had come here; everything must be changed or was it that she had never known Tusinge save in her mother's words? She was finding it for herself, exploring walks and taking drives. She fancied that she might go on to Bello Trevano for a day; there was an urge to further test this surprising lack of pain and regrets. Was she immune from emotion or merely self-anesthetized?

She was debating the question as she found her way back to the chalet after an alpine ramble. A visitor had arrived for her, his halting French making the host wait impatiently for her return.

As she mounted the steep wooden steps he stood at the top and smiled down at her, his honest, gray eyes shining behind the thick lenses of his glasses. His mouth twitched nervously in the way it used to do when he wanted to tell her something which he feared she would refuse to accept. Tag had come back to her! Then he must understand. In some heaven-sent fashion he had regained his faith. Perhaps he had come for her! At least he was waiting for her to climb up the rest of the way.

Suddenly she was tired. A weariness of spirit made her lean against the railing as if she refused to come further. There was nothing for her to say—it was Tag who must speak. She had exhausted her ability to explain. In a moment she would become flippant, non-committal. She might even be a trifle mad—she had dreaded lest that happen—she might find herself sending him away, saying that it was all a great joke, that she was well content with life as she now lived it. . . .

More likely, this was but a cruel mirage. Madness might have taken that form. If she glanced up, Tag would have vanished. Only the steep stairs would be swaying in the wind. Then, indeed, she would know that she was mad. Her fingers clung to the wobbly railing until the palms burned from the splintery wood. Of course it was a mirage; he had not spoken. She did not dare to glance up. Oh, if this were true and she were a trifle mad because she had failed in making him understand. She would fling herself over the mountain side in melodramatic finality . . . Min had flung away a bell clapper, a raucous-voiced tyrant which limited and belittled her very life . . . but Min had found a precious ring——

It was no mirage. Tag had come down to her, the pressure of his arms telling her that he understood.

“Pierre told me to hurry,” Tag wasted neither time nor words. “He said, ‘Put down your damned microscope and catch the next steamer. She’s going to Tusinge to rest up before sailing home. Drop in on me at the club in Paris and let me know if

you have managed to make it come right.’ Then he vanished. I’m here, Gloria; I want to tell you that you are real—more real than money in the bank,” he began to smile. “We need not be too serious when we’ve found happiness?”

“I can’t understand—I’m quite tired; I wish——” they had reached the top of the stairs and were alone on the slanting, viewful little balcony.

“It was Pierre who told me. After he saw you, he sailed as soon as he could make a boat. He wanted things to come right for you because he had made them come so wrong for someone else. He seemed like—like a character in a legend,” unconscious of his pertinent choice of words. “He slipped into Rutledge for half a day and was away before even Dodo knew what he was about. He said that he had every right to betray your confidence; he told me all of it—about the money and selling the shop and signing up with the company and caring all the time, about the little boy—oh, Gloria, shall we hurry back to Paris to tell him that it has come right?”

“Brigit knew; he was a saint—just for a moment,” she whispered as her lips met Tag’s.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Her Mother's Daughter* by Nalbro Bartley]