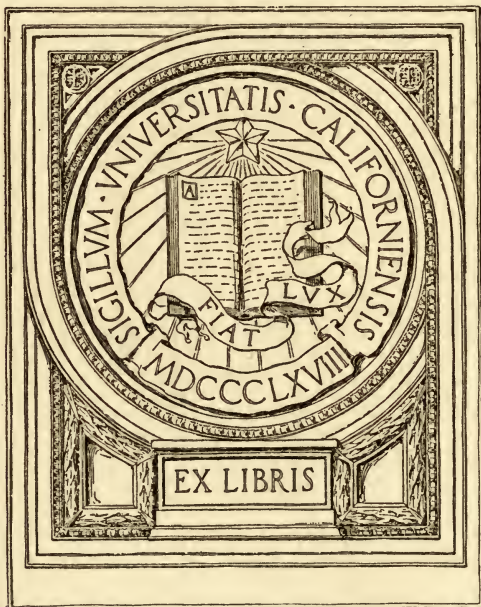


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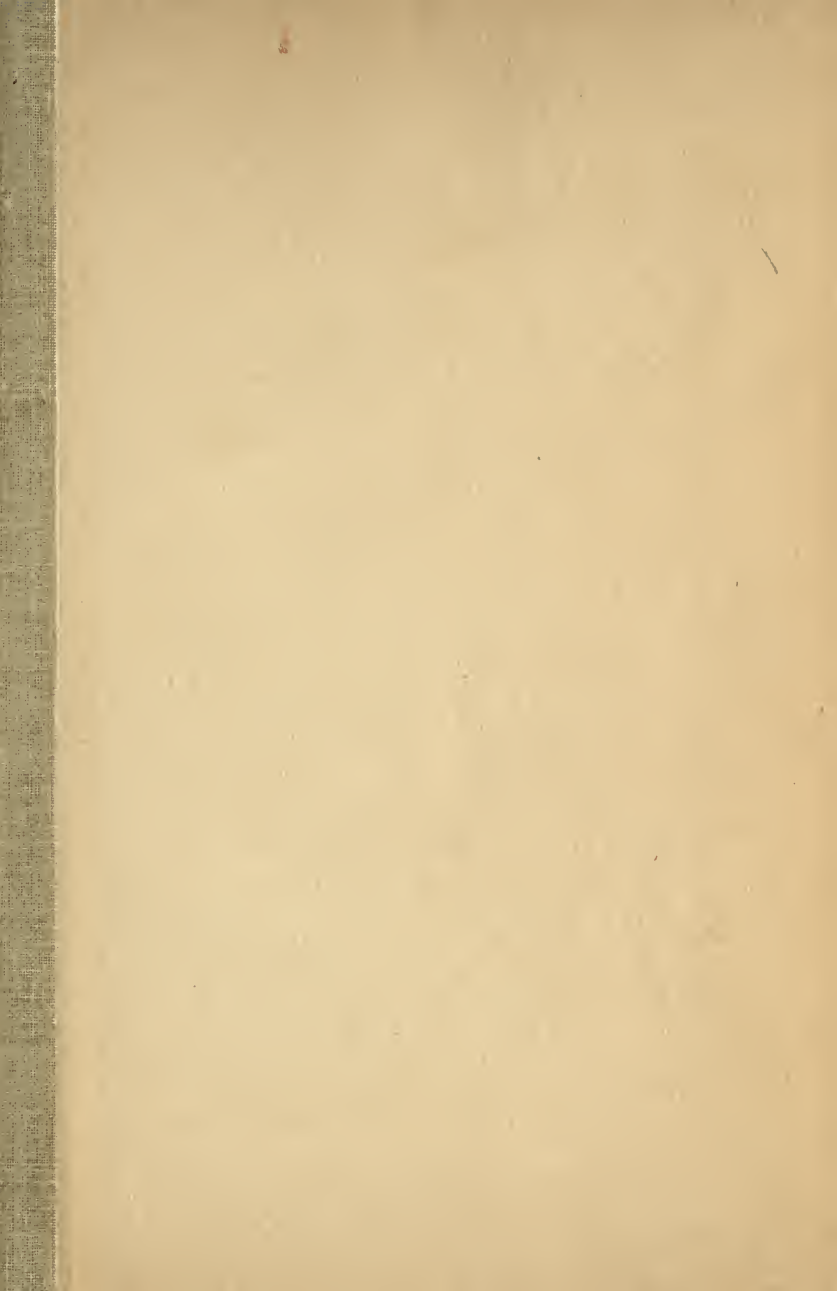
JAYNE ST.

MARY AUSTIN

GIFT OF
Class of 1907



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NO. 26 JAYNE STREET

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BY

MARY AUSTIN

Author of "The Ford," "Isidro," "A Woman of Genius," etc.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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TO THE
ASSOCIATION

NO. 26 JAYNE STREET
BOOK I

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NO. 26 JAYNE STREET

I

§ 1

THE lease was signed on the 23d of February, in Pepe Brothers' basement office, at the right-hand corner of the Square where you turn into it from Macdougall Street and Fourth Avenue.

Between pride of possession and the difficulty of explaining the matter satisfactorily to the Aunts, Neith was conscious of a note of flatness in the determined resistance of Pepe Brothers to any sort of pleasantness between themselves and their client, which might be brought up against them in the ever-present possibility of deferred payments. Once, however, she was away from the crabbed atmosphere of the renting office, Neith gave rein to exhilaration.

It was all rather formless and out of proportion to the occasion. There was little in the leasing of three rooms with bath and kitchenette at Twenty-Six Jayne Street, which should have carried such a lift with it, particularly as one of the rooms, except for a narrow slit of half walled-up window, was dark, and the plumbing doubtful. But for a month or six weeks past the fringes of Neith Schuyler's consciousness had been stirred by the Wind before the Morning. Premonitions of form and

order were making their way toward her across the social confusions which, ever since the first week in August, 1914, had wrapped her like a cloud. The taking of the lease had been an almost instinctive movement of her rather shy soul to be alone with the approaching guest.

Now that it was accomplished, she thought she might as well go home and tell the Aunts about it, but the invitation of spring that dripped from the soft air, in the clear round chirp of the sparrows, kept her moving cornerwise across the Square. Tiny points of green showed overhead among the moving branches, like flecks of the nameless exhilaration in her mind. Instead of turning at the Arch toward the red-brick bulwark of Old New York's last stand against the tides of social change, she moved without intention up the Avenue, toward the church under whose square towers in the old family pew of the Van Droom-Schuylers she sought, more often than not without finding it, the spiritual release of the great European cathedrals.

It was almost four of the afternoon and the traffic of the street had taken its customary leisurely drop before the next hour's home-going hurry. Neith moved in a kind of muse of physical content, the surface of which was lightly pricked by considerations of window boxes and the comparative expressiveness of Adam and Hepelwhite furniture. At the crossing of Tenth she ran into Mrs. Sherrod.

"You need n't tell me," the older woman laughed by way of greeting. "I can see that you have done it."

Neith nodded, half smiling. "How ever I'm going to make the Aunts understand I don't know. Emmy will be all right after the first blow. Aunt Emmaline has given up trying to understand things; she just wonders. But Great-Aunt Doremas will make a new will."

"Poor old Becky. She never will get over thinking that what she thinks is important." Madelon Sherrod slipped her hand under Neith's arm and gently turned her. "Come back to the Brevoort with me and pour tea," she insisted. "Bertie Condin is to interview me for *The Era*. His 'Modern Players' series, you know."

Neith yielded to the kindly compulsion, wholly absorbed in the larger item.

"That boy! I don't see why you consented!"

"Oh, *The Era* is always worth while, and Bertie will put what I have to say so that the dear public will find that it has always agreed with me."

"He'll put it so that it will appear that you have always agreed with *him!*"

"My dear, if you ever care for any art as I do for my acting, you won't mind who gets credit for ideas about it, so long as the public gets the ideas."

"How can they, the ideas of a woman like you, who has experienced and suffered and accomplished so much, strained through the intellect of a permanently young man whose soul has never traveled west of Broadway! It's an indignity!"

Madelon Sherrod laughed with that lovely candor which frequently stood between her and a public insist-

ent that genius should seem that intricate and mysterious thing it so often is not. "Bertie's older than he looks," she extenuated, "and he is really a very decent little man. He may write himself into the interview as the fountain head of my ideas, but at least he'll never make the mistake of imagining himself the object of my personal preference."

Neith flung off the consideration with a gesture of young disgust.

"In any case it would have to be a man," the actress reminded her. "It is something you will have to accept, Honey, if ever you undertake to get yourself appreciated in your native land. Between you and your public there is a wall of men, a felted, almost sound-proof wall of male intelligence, male reporters, critics, managers, advertisers. Even if I knew how to write, and I don't, you know, there would still be men editors, men publishers, men reviewers. Bertie happens to be the most popular thing in dramatic critics just now. He'll get me past the cub reviewers as I could n't hope to do by myself."

"Just the same, it's an indignity," Neith insisted. She half turned, eyeing the older woman for a moment's affectionate suspicion, "I never know whether these things you tell me are true, or just a part of your insidious propaganda for making a suffragist of me."

Mrs. Sherrod laughed, this time almost gravely.

"Just you try to do in your own country what you did in England, and I won't have to be insidious," she

cautioned. "And I think you are going to have a chance to try," she concluded with a fall to her flexible voice that caused the girl to look up quickly.

"You really think it possible? That we won't keep out of it, I mean?"

They had reached the high stoop of the Brevoort by this time, and stood aside for a party arriving just ahead of them to pass up the narrow stair. Mrs. Sherrod deliberated, searching the Avenue as though she expected to find her answer walking there.

"I don't know anything about politics," she said at last, "but I know people in the mass. It is part of an actress's business to smell out the change of opinion before the public itself is aware of it, and every now and then I seem to get a whiff of approaching dreadfulness." There was a realism in the lift of her fine nostril and turn of her beautiful head that set a shiver of reminiscence between Neith Schuyler's shoulders.

"If they only knew *how* dreadful! You can smell a moving army for miles, and a hospital —" She broke off, surprised to find herself tricked into mentioning what she had so carefully avoided since her return to America.

A crowd of new arrivals swept them up the steps, and a moment later Mrs. Sherrod's "There's Bertie!" and the formality of greeting carried them forward into the easy leisure of the afternoon.

Neith was aware of nods and smiles and of waiters bending to explain to guests not habituated to the place,

the stir of friendly greeting that accompanied Madelon Sherrod to the place reserved for her. Out of these things and the comfortable bourgeois air of the room, beginning to be pleasantly streaked with the spring sun, distilled a poignant recollection. It was so like the days before the war when she and her father had drifted happily about Europe; the comfortable interval in the day's distraction, the chatting groups, the excellent food; herself the thrilled and modest abstraction of young womanhood sitting between the genial notables her father loved.

She supposed that Bertie Condin must be a notable of a sort, or *The Era* would never have selected him to write interviews with the greatest American actress, on "The Promise of the Drama in America." At any rate, he was dressed for the part, his hair sleeked modishly back almost beyond the suspicion of the curl behind the ears, that, with the bulge of the brow and a subtle thickening of the roots of the nostrils, betrayed a persistent racial strain. The eyes were clear and keen, and the pallor of the immature, sophisticated face a trifle over-emphasized by the wide black ribbon of the eyeglasses that he obviously did not need.

This was the third of the Sherrod interviews, so that the two protagonists slid very easily into it the moment the ordering of tea was disposed of. Neith, as she waited her service of pouring, found time for recalling whether, in her travels with her father, who collected distinguished friendships as other men collect snuffboxes and

old ivories, she had ever observed anything of the kind in any other city of the world. Was it peculiar to America that a woman who stood for the best that America was able to produce in her own line, must find her sole vehicle for the expression of more than thirty years of distinguished service in a man young enough to be her son? Could it have happened anywhere except in the United States that such a woman should be compelled to draw upon her precious store of vitality and charm to play the young man up to the requisite pitch? Under penalty, if she failed, of finding herself, in her effort to give form and serviceability to her contribution, stranded in the shallows of his dryness.

It struck her for the first time that the bright chestnut of Madelon Sherrod's thick coils must be as much of an art as her acting. Her own father's hair — and he had been about of an age with the woman whose friendship for him dated from the time they had been able to call one another by their first names — had been of an adorable whiteness. Recalling Duse's badly done locks, and Ellen Terry's frank fatness, Neith considered what she knew of Mrs. Sherrod's life which might have grayed her temples and at the same time compelled her to concealment. Could this necessity for keeping herself still within the interest of masculine immaturity be one of them? She was sure at least that there was nothing that in Europe would have been recognized as a reason for a woman of so illuminated a personality recording herself at second-hand.

Taking the note from her father, Neith had always admired Mrs. Sherrod extravagantly. Now in their common grief at his loss, the younger and older woman had come into the loveliest of relations since Neith's return to America, a nearness which, as she watched the young dramatic critic complacently draping himself in the rich fabric of Mrs. Sherrod's art, brought her a distinct flavor of affront. She was brushed for the moment by the fringes of that feeling for the community of sex, which, viewed from afar, had always so astonished her in her countrywomen.

At the same time that she felt herself touched with resentment on behalf of other women, Neith kept glancing about the sunny room with its Old-World items of furnishing, taking little sips of the ease and brightness of living. Her mind, recovering from the fever of the past three years in France and England, seized on trifles with the avidity of convalescence. What ravishing little cakes! How white the cloths were, and how lovely the stalks of hyacinth and asparagus fern in the Victorian vases! Between the obviously artificial begonias in the boxes crowning the half wall between the two rooms, somebody had stuck fresh stems of pussy-willow. How bourgeois that was, and how utterly French! As her resuscitating femininity took hold on these things, Neith's hand stole with a satisfying pat to her embroidered bag where reposed the crackly new lease of Twenty-Six Jayne Street.

§ 2

The tea-things came at last, and as she balanced between lemon or cream, her attention came back to Mrs. Sherrod and the childlike joy of the artist in her art, talking with a freedom and vitality that washed the complacency out of Bertie Condin's face as the rain takes the red from the raddled cheeks of a shopgirl. Neith's sympathy came back with that sweet readiness which women pluck somehow from long attendance on a beloved invalid. She decided that Bertie was, after all, rather nice, and if Madelon had to be written up by a young man, it was a mercy she had got somebody she could like. So between sympathy and simple sensuous content, the afternoon burnt itself away like a purring flame. It reached its golden tip at a quarter to five when the rising of a party at the table next to them disclosed Adam Frear and two other men, about to sit down at the first table beyond the half wall.

Frear rose instantly on catching sight of her, and came all the way around to their table to shake hands, bringing Mrs. Sherrod back from the peak of art to the normal uses of society.

"You!" she cried. "I thought you were watching the wheels go round at Washington."

"Until to-day," Frear assured her. "We all came up together." He moved aside as he spoke to show them the other members of his party.

With quick friendliness the actress pushed away the

cold tea-things and with the same gesture beckoned a waiter. "That's Van Harwood, is n't it?" Her fine eyes took in the blond young war correspondent staring across at them in the shy hope of recognition. "Bring him over, all of you. Bertie's had enough for one session. Besides, he is coming to dinner with me Tuesday." This was the first that Bertie had heard of it, but he was too much flattered by this public inclusion in her plans to do anything but accept.

He put up his notes and made a place for Harwood and the third guest, who was introduced to Miss Schuyler as the editor of a radical weekly which maintained its place in the procession of the hour by a certain small-boy facility for making faces at the policeman.

Harwood's glance, as he acknowledged his own introduction, stayed for a puzzled moment on the younger woman's face, before it moved on discreetly, catching her plea for silence on the wing. He recalled her now in attendance on her invalid father as they were all hemmed in, unbelievably, in Belgium by the first German advance.

His natural inquiry for her invalid's welfare, dropped before the prompting of three years of war experience, that there are many occasions when it is better to let sleeping horrors lie.

He had time for a brief moment of wonder whether this characteristic American inability to meet the dreadfulness of war had n't something to do with our failure to deal with it, before Mrs. Sherrod distracted him to

the consideration of one lump or two. Neith looked up, relieved to find Frear's kind eyes and smile still fixed on her, and to be glad that she had put on her most fetching hat.

Miss Schuyler specialized on hats. She liked, she always said, to have people look at her when they talked, and it was only fair that they should have something worth looking at. For the rest of her dress she had acquired a simplicity suited to the emergencies of her father's ill-health and their perpetual flight from resort to resort. But her hats were always marvels of feminine intricacy, dash of line, and swift surprises of color.

People were intrigued by them into imagining that theirs was the awaited touch which was to bring the same color and piquancy to the face beneath them. It was "the thing" among Neith Schuyler's friends to behave as if the trick of making Neith beautiful was just about to be turned. Hers was precisely the sort of face that invited the attempt; oval and slightly irregular, pale, with long-lashed, rather absent-looking eyes, framed in masses of pale brown, gold-dusted hair. An accented curve, a brighter flush, a glint of fire — men had tried for these with love-making, and women had tried introducing her to their favorite dressmaker. Neith was very sweet about it, but secretly rather hurt. She thought if her friends found her lacking to that extent, it would have been kinder to say no more about it.

Now, as she looked up at Adam Frear, she was pleased not to note in his glance any intention of affecting those

extensive alterations in her appearance with which so many men initiated an acquaintance. She knew the opening moves so well! At twenty-six Neith had grown to be a trifle resentful of the nearly universal desire of men to establish relations with her on the basis of what they might make of her. Frear's quiet air of being pleased with her as she was, came to her like a warm waft out of a country for which, ever since her return, she had been grievously homesick. Subtilties of home-coming, which, until now, she had expected from her native land without finding them, pervaded her attention. So that she missed finding out that Frear had deliberately remained standing in order that, in the general rearrangement of the party which had been widened to include Miss Fleeta Spence, he might finally secure the place beside herself.

Miss Spence had been swept up by Harwood as she came in alone, and good-humoredly welcomed by the rest of the company, to whom she seemed to be the source of amused and affectionate raillery. Miss Spence wore bobbed hair and sandals, and a dress that ran mostly to "lines" as these were understood in the neighborhood of the Square. Her particular "line" was social reconstruction. It did not greatly matter to Fleeta what was being reconstructed or who set about it; the mere suggestion that somebody was undertaking to put right anything, which, since it was a part of the present system, must be necessarily wrong, was enough to bring Fleeta roundly to the colors.

Harwood, who had gone to school with her somewhere in that vague and generally reprobated region known as the Middle West, had not hesitated to include her in Mrs. Sherrod's invitation. Fleeta's admiration for the great actress was one of the endearing traits that burned like a steady candle undisturbed by the frequent gusts of her enthusiasms. Neith observed that the war correspondent was entertaining himself greatly at Fleeta's expense. What she did not know was that he used her as a vane to the ever-veering winds of radicalism, to which, as a successful journalist of current opinion, he was constantly alert. It was commonly reported that the President himself had recourses to Harwood's prophetic faculty, to which Fleeta's whirling social sympathy was a straw. It was with an eye to her possible reaction that he answered Mrs. Sherrod the moment the business of re-ordering had been disposed of.

"Have you come," the actress asked him with an appearance of lightness, "to break up my dream of a theater again?" They all knew well enough why the most competent actress in America was without a theater of her own, and how the expectation of having one built for her had been dashed three years before, when Van Harwood came back from Belgium with very positive conclusions about the probable duration of the war. She had come back to what was a practical certainty of fulfillment during the past winter, and the full import of the light-seeming query was lost on no one around the table.

“We’ll build it for you,” he returned as lightly, “out of our war indemnities.”

“You think we are really going in, then?”

“I’ll give us six weeks. I saw the President yesterday and I think he has his mind made up.”

“But, Van! How *can* he —” This was Fleeta, rallying to the defense of her line of the moment, which was international abolition of militarism. Instantly the talk around the well-furnished table was away on the track of the imminent declaration which was in everybody’s mouth, but Neith felt certain, with the exception of the war correspondent’s, not in anybody’s consciousness. Frear, who talked very little, had the air of thinking that all the improbable and contradictory things that Fleeta, Harwood, and the editor of *The Proletariat* said, might happen.

“Workers will never fight workers!” Fleeta insisted.

“Well, they are!” Harwood reminded her.

“They’ll fight” — the editor spoke for his constituents — “but they’ll fight the Capitalists who made the war. It means revolution. Have you seen our last cartoon?”

This last was not so much a question as a reminder that there, in the pages of *The Proletariat*, was to be found the true Delphic article.

Harwood nodded. “Also I expect to see you jailed for it.”

Fleeta mingled affirmations as to the impregnability of Free Speech with her diatribes against militarism.

To Neith none of the talk, except Harwood's, rang seriously informed or true, and Frear's detachment troubled her. She had been nourished in an idealization of America as something lovely and young, with the crudities of youth, but of irreproachable promise.

She had felt, in the first shrinking from the unreasoning horror of war as it burst upon them at Aix-les-Bains, a sort of moral superiority in her country's exemption, which the ensuing years in France had taught her to recognize as snobbish and provincial.

She had endured there something of what the French themselves suffered; hurt of disappointed admiration for the strong young Nation whose only response to her extremity had been a handful of loose coin and a fulsome amount of lip sympathy. Later, in England, where she had heard it called "blood money," she had suffered a fierce accession of loyalty to the country which she had not seen for five years. If America was making money while England bled, she insisted, what else had England been doing while this basilisk hatched under her garden wall? It was in a sudden deep impatience with both England and France for letting loose, by their blindness, this monster on the world, that she had abandoned the relief work in which she had tried to sink the immensity of loss after her father's death, and had returned to the family home, facing with unabated sense of merit the encroachments of Little Italy across Washington Square. And it was to an America stranger than Europe that she had come back.

Now, as the eddy of opposing views swept about the table, with its revealing lack of world knowledge, its formless consciousness of class, and its welter of personal predilections, Neith found herself turning to Adam Frear with an extraordinary sense of need. It had been but a matter of a week or two since she had renewed an acquaintance begun and broken off five years before. Partly on account of what he had been to her father on that occasion, and partly for the attribution of political astuteness which had kept him, all that time, a bright, outstanding peak in the American scene, her confidence ran toward him now like a spider on its slender thread. She had an odd impulse to tuck her hand under his arm as she used to do with her father when, in foreign circles, the talk left them feeling a little too much on the outside, too much the American. In the instant of recognizing the impulse she blushed, for Frear, without look or sound, became immediately aware of her need of inclusion, and drew the talk back to the commonplace with a good-humored thrust at Fleeta.

“You’ll let yourself in for a brand-new experience if you keep on talking for Germany like that. Somebody will accuse you of being afraid to lose your job.”

Fleeta taught German in one of the high schools in the intervals when she was not engaged in stage-setting the social revolution; but Fleeta was immensely superior to the personal consideration.

“It amounts to that already,” she declared. “You’ve no idea how the classes have fallen off. First thing I

know I can't even afford to live in Jayne Street." Fleeta was comfortably established in a reconstructed residence, where the street turns out of Seventh.

"You should worry!" Harwood teased. "You'll be living in Jane Street all your life, Fleeta."

"I hope at any rate for this year," Neith smiled pleasantly across. "I have just taken a lease there myself."

"You don't look it," Harwood assured her.

Mrs. Sherrod came to the relief of Neith's sudden mystification. "Just one of Van's silly jokes," she explained. "He spells it J-a-n-e. It's a way of saying that you have become a confirmed feminist."

"Oh, well," Neith smiled back pointedly, "I'll be in good company. That's why I'm going there to live," she added for the benefit of the others. "So I can have the company I like without disturbing my Aunts. You must all come and see me as soon as I am settled." She blushed with a becoming accession of consciousness at finding herself the object of their friendly attention. "It's not that the Aunts are n't perfectly lovely, but they are Great-Aunts, really, and the gap is too wide for me to cover."

Harwood felt it time to define his status as a former acquaintance. He was sure he was going to be a frequent caller at Twenty-Six.

"I take it, then, that I shan't be seeing you again Over There."

"I shan't dare to go back," Neith told him, "until

I know how to reply to some of the things they are saying about us there. I really came back to discover America. Now that I am here I am bothered which to believe of the things we say about ourselves. I find them extraordinarily contradictory."

"That," said the editor of *The Proletariat*, "is because the voice of America is an orchestra with the bass parts all left out. It is labor that beats time to the march of events, and until labor can have a free, unprejudiced hearing in America, all you can puzzle out of the rest won't lead you anywhere."

"Does n't it?" Neith was on the point of asking how that could be with at least one newspaper of their own and a weekly like *The Proletariat*. She found herself, instead, taking in the fine, workless hands of the editor, the full forehead, the well-cut, mobile mouth, too full, the whole appearance of the man and especially the mouth giving the impression of an instrument too complex for any music that had yet been played on it. She contented herself with saying quite simply: "It's what I should like above all things, finding out what the masses of the Americans really think. It's one of my reasons for wanting to live by myself. My people — the Aunts, you know — speak in terms of — of Capitalism." She hesitated over the unfamiliar patter, looking shyly to Frear for support.

"You are getting on rapidly," he encouraged, "if you have already realized that."

Mrs. Sherrod leaned across the table. "I've been

wanting to ask," she said rather directly to Frear, "what does Rose think about it — our going into the war, I mean?"

In the little tribute of silence which was paid to Mrs. Sherrod as the more important speaker, Neith was instantly aware that this, for some reason which Mrs. Sherrod had not divined, was the wrong question to have asked. She had no idea who Rose might be, that Adam Frear's knowledge of her should be so easily assumed, but she was sure, from the slight detachment of his answer, and the hand at his mustache, that it had annoyed him. But he answered without too much hesitation. "I don't know, really. I have n't seen her lately."

The next moment Mrs. Sherrod rose with a hasty recollection of her dressing hour, and carried Neith off with her with a swift unceremoniousness that completely severed her from the rest of the party, who, after the confusion of half rising, settled back for another turn of talk. Neith hesitated at the curb from which the actress had taken flight in a deftly snatched taxi, hoping some of the others would come out, and finally surrendered herself to the charm of the home-going crowd and the twilight hour.

There was a smell of sap from the budding trees that line this part of the Avenue, and a little sailing sliver of new moon. Thin silvery slivers of children's laughter floated up from the open Square to join it. Far up the Avenue, like the strings of a harp, rows of street lamps

vibrated into light. At the corner of Washington Mews Neith lost the delicate fretwork of boughs against the illuminated dusk of the sky, as she bumped into the billowy figure of Aunt Emmaline.

II

§ 3

IF Neith had had any doubt about where Aunt Emmy could have been going in that state of fluttered feminine consciousness, it would have been resolved by the sudden yielding to relief and the mysterious caution with which the elder woman convinced herself that they were unobserved. The look of the defrauded child, which was the most pitiful thing Neith had to bear in connection with Aunt Emmy, gave place to a simpering discretion, and the thrust of a thick, soft arm through hers.

“Of course,” said the fluttered lady, “I expected to meet you, otherwise I should have waited for Becky.”

Knowing very well that her aunt could n't have had the least notion of her whereabouts, Neith yielded to the pressure that turned her back up the Avenue. She did her best to give an air of casual survey to the darting looks Aunt Emmaline cast up and down the cross-streets, from any one of which Great-Aunt Doremas might surprise them. If that happened, Aunt Emmy would be instantly relegated to a mere incident in the occasion which had called her forth, might even be re-

duced to a state of nerves which could serve as an excuse for sending her home with her errand unaccomplished.

Since almost the only personal enterprise Neith had known for the past four or five months had been to see that Aunt Emmaline should n't be made unnecessarily unhappy, she assumed, against the unexpected appearance of Aunt Doremas, the air of directing the affair in her own interest.

"I hope the General is n't ill?" she managed to ask with a surprising naturalness, as they turned into East Eleventh.

"Oh, no! It's about the mills." Aunt Emmaline was flutteringly impressive. "Otherwise I should have waited for Becky." She was firm on that point. "But the dear General retires so early. It did n't seem kind to keep him waiting."

Neith herself was nothing if not kind. "Of course if he needed you —"

Aunt Emmy was at ease again. "If things are as he says, something ought to be done about it right away."

"The dear General always thinks something *can* be done right away." Neith instinctively adopted a tone of light banter as the best way to meet what inevitably happened after one of Aunt Emmy's business interviews with the General. Neith did not even think him a dear, but it was as our dear General that the Van Droom-Schuyler-Doremases always referred to him.

"The military temperament!" Aunt Emmy sighed. "One never knows," she continued, "how to refuse these

masterful men!" It had been fifty-odd years since Eustace Rittenhouse had been mustered out of the Army of the Potomac, but Aunt Emmy suffered from time to time the happy agitation of discovery. As they stood for a moment after ringing, where the light from the old-fashioned, hooded stoop threw into fullest relief the foolish tremors of the fat, faded face, it swept freshly across her niece's mind that Emmy's time for loving must have come just when the country had paid out the pick of her young men as the price of Emancipation.

She thought swiftly of all the women of France and England whose love life must stand forever arrested around the figure of young soldiers. If what Harwood and the others had been saying that afternoon proved true, it was a thing that might happen to Neith herself. She had not been given to thinking much of men in the personal relation, but Aunt Emmaline had a way of making spinsterhood — horrible! A kind of maimed unnaturalness against which Neith's whole nature suddenly took flight.

Being dragged into this silly savor of sex adventure, which Aunt Emmy persisted in reading into a simple visit to an old man who was also an old family friend, affected her spiritually. She felt her powers ebb in the passage from the cool, spring starlight into the stale and mothy shadows of the second-floor front, which was all Eustace Rittenhouse had been able to retain for his own use of what had once been the Rittenhouse mansion.

Aunt Emmaline suffered an accession of girlishness on the landing. "You go first," she simpered, and Neith hastened to throw the General and his room like an old shawl over the tatters of Aunt Emmaline's maidenhood.

They had both been handsome together, Eustace and his room, and the first impression one received was that in the shake-down the room had rather the advantage. It still had high, delicate cornices and a carved mantel of white marble, holding aloof from the senile squalor that prevailed over all the furnishings. It succeeded far better than the General did in impressing the visitor with its quality. It made an appropriate background for the badly remembered ritual of gallantry which the General paid to the tradition of Aunt Emmaline's youth and singleness. But at least it did not lend itself to his anxiety to lay hands on some portion of Miss Schuyler's patrimony to feed the doubtful investments which were his sole claim to participation in the generation to which he had survived. It maintained, with its stately proportions and chaste ornament, a sort of high-bred detachment from the General's senile enjoyment of his sole remaining masculine function, that of advising his female friends about the management of their property. It had the air, indeed, of offering its somewhat ratty and neglected collection of military miscellanies as an alternative to the intermittently acted farce of masculine concern and fluttered feminine acquiescence that went on in it.

“So kind of you, my dear Eustace, to take an interest . . .”

“A matter on which you may absolutely rely on my judgment, Emmaline, absolutely . . .”

“If you would only put it to Becky yourself. I assure you I have n’t the least influence . . .”

Neith knew that the Aunts’ property was so snugly tied up that almost their sole prerogative, besides spending the income, was the making of frequent wills about it. And the General’s financial capacity was chiefly evidenced by his having sunk his own and most of his wife’s fortune without a trace. But ever so often the General warned and advised and the ladies fluttered, advanced, and finally denied. As though the whole performance were a dance of which they remembered the figures, but had forgotten the tune, and yet they must be up and at it whenever the turn was called.

§ 4

With deliberate detachment Neith withdrew her attention from the occupants of the room and began to compare the worn knapsacks and the swords sealed into their scabbards with rust, with what she knew of modern equipment. All at once they leaped out at her, invested with human interest. Figments of personal history, such as the General had told her as a child, draped them like old cobwebs, dark with dust. She thought of trophies more recently seen over the hearths of France and England. Once more she found herself penetrated

with the desire to know and understand, which for the last year or two had eaten like a fever into the very joints of her being. What was the matter with the world when the figure of History took shape as senility, measuring its days from the high-water mark of death and destruction?

Neith had been brought up in the tradition that all these faded tintypes, framed commissions, and bundles of old letters tied with varicolored string were of immense but unspecified value. Now she saw them cheapened by the use to which they were being put, of illustrating the General's own History of the Great War from Day to Day. As if that tremendous drama of civil strife were reduced impudently to being viewed by the light of the single reading-lamp dropping its sixteen-candle power from the vast ornate chandelier of other days.

Would all the heroism, the sacrifice, the vision of the past three years in Europe come to this; or was there something more in the Democracy which professed to be born of such travail? Whatever it was, she must find and feel the pivot of the time in which she lived, even if she impaled herself upon it.

The resurgence of this sharp personal hunger detached her attention from the very objects that had called it up. Across the room there was a querulous note in the voice that held Aunt Emmaline in the thrall of military masterfulness.

"Of course Becky will understand that this is an opportunity that I would be glad to take up myself, an

opportunity that I — ah — a Rittenhouse could not afford to neglect, if I were not so — so unfortunately placed. If my property were not tied up with the interests of — others — ah — that Becky will understand my reasons for leaving unmentioned.”

“Aunt Emmy,” Neith called sharply, “I am afraid if we don’t hurry —”

§ 5

“One never realizes the flight of time when Eustace is talking,” Aunt Emmy apologized, trotting heavily apace with her niece’s light step. “So interesting, and important, too, when you think of everything that might happen. It seems he has heard of a wonderful new process of making potash from sea water. Quite indispensable, you know, in making ammunition. Potash, I mean. They get it from seaweed, and a friend of the General’s has a friend who has invented a method of taking it out of the sea water direct. Such a simplification.”

“He wants you and Aunt Rebecka to put your money into it, I suppose.”

“He would much prefer financing the thing himself. Eustace is so patriotic! But the way he is placed — so unfortunate. Frances, you know —”

Neith did know. It was the neglected item which made this harmless visit to his rooms by a maiden lady an affair of discretion edging always toward the indiscreet. The General was a married man. Somewhere in an uptown apartment he had a wife whom he had

stripped of everything but the traditions of her generation, which made her refuse to divorce him on the grounds the General himself had amply provided. It was five or six years since Neith had met this unfortunate lady, but every introduction of her into the conversation touched her own attitude with asperity.

“If I were you,” she warned, “I’d let the General tell Aunt Rebecka about it himself.”

“But about the strike. At the mills, you know. She’ll see that in the paper to-night. That’s why he wanted her to know at once —”

“A strike at Marcy?” Neith recalled that Adam Frear had said that very afternoon that he might be going down to Marcy any moment and the others had seemed to understand. He had n’t known, of course, that the principal mills at Marcy were chiefly owned by the Van Droom-Schuylers. “Aunt Emmy,” she suddenly demanded, “I never asked, but is any of my father’s money invested in the mills?”

“Oh, no. Uncle Van did n’t leave him any shares, you know. Your father was young then, and he had — sort of notions. Uncle Van was much vexed. Your father always said that he did n’t like investments that were tied up with Classes. Quite right, too, I think he was — all this Socialism sort of thing that is going about. That’s why the General —” She twittered on with a theory of investments contemporaneous with side whiskers. They began, like the whiskers that were once the General’s glory, in the personal issue and undulated gracefully in

all directions, not without a suspicion of the mousiness that characterized the state of the General's whiskers to-day. Neith heard nothing. She was caught up with a thrill into the certainty that now she should find out what a strike really meant.

She knew it was something about which the English people among whom she had been socially cast, with every appearance of being considerately calm, had been inwardly cowed. It was a thing that was constantly occurring between Labor and Capital with a great deal of inconvenience to the bystanders, but without, so far as she herself had been concerned, accomplishing anything. It appeared to occur as causelessly as a drought or an earthquake, but without any of the traditional assurance of its not occurring again in the same place. And yet in her recent attempt to sum up the meaning of the present hour, not being able to calculate on the source and direction of strikes was like doing arithmetic and leaving out all the nines.

Neith attempted to extract some particulars of the strike at Marcy from Aunt Emmaline, but Emmaline's information went only as far as the General had thought it necessary to go to intimidate her about the status of the family investment. It was a habit of the General's to deprecate any investments not undertaken by his advice. Neith reflected that she might be able to learn something from Adam Frear. She did not know what his function in regard to strikes might be, but that also might be an item of the day's news.

Great-Aunt Rebecka Doremás was moving heavily about in the back parlor when Horlick opened the door to them. Neith, to whom it was instinctive to attack in open order, walked directly toward her.

“Oh, I did n’t know we were having company!” was her opening move. It was the custom for the family when alone to sit in the small room at the head of the stairs; but Mrs. Doremás was plainly making those unnecessary and wholly feminine passes among the furniture known as tidying up.

“I must run right up and dress,” Neith concluded. Nevertheless she lingered until she heard the nearly inaudible click of Aunt Emmaline’s door upstairs. If there was to be company it was more than ever important that there should n’t be one of those scenes that occurred between the sisters after every attempt of poor Emmy’s to take the initiative. By sheer force of will Neith kept Aunt Rebecka’s attention on the plumping of undented pillows and the redisposing of them in utterly inappropriate chairs.

Mrs. Doremás’s ideas of household decoration dated from a period in which every article of furniture was supposed to be handsome enough to speak for itself. Her busying herself about it now was the unconscious operation of a habit of not letting anything speak for itself if she could help it. Neith suspected her Great-Aunt’s housewifely activities as being purely disciplinary; a sort of renewal of the act of possession, without which there might be who knows what insubordination even among

the sofas and consoles. She dragged a chair out of its lawful relation to the light and filled its squared arms with a round cushion as she answered her niece's implied question.

"Only Bruce and Millicent. They are to join Mrs. Winthrop Lennox at the opera afterward, so I asked them just to drop in."

"Oh, I'm glad," Neith assented. "I have been wanting to see Bruce for an age." What she was thinking was, how like Aunt Doremas to catch her grand-nephew at the moment of juxtaposition to the Winthrop Lennoxes. It was one of the ways she had of rendering tolerable a man who had no claim on her attention other than being her niece's husband. It was just then that Neith caught the dull thud of Aunt Emmaline's door and repeated her intention of running right up to dress.

Mrs. Doremas was still wearing the handsome gown in which she had attended two teas and a reception that afternoon, and her heavy furs were lying across a chair as earnest of her intention not to change again. Neith hesitated on the point of offering to carry the black sables upstairs for her, and was lost.

"Where's Emmy?" Aunt Doremas demanded.

"Dressing, I imagine. We just ran around to the General's for a minute." Neith made the best of matters by including herself. It would never do to let Becky imagine that Emmy had started off alone. "Some business he telephoned about," she hastily interposed. "Emmy can tell you about it. I must fly."

Neith had the faculty of quick toilets, but she lingered unnecessarily now, laving her face with scented water and massing her soft hair with broad shell pins that matched its brownness.

If the Aunts were to have one of their ridiculous scenes about Emmy's visit to the General, they had better get it over with before dinner. Not but what Aunt Emmaline was foolish enough . . . old maids always were, she supposed . . . Neith paused in her dressing for the start of a creeping chill that had found its way to her consciousness rather frequently of late. Was Aunt Emmy's foolish femininity something that went with being . . . being unmarried . . . something you could n't help, like arterio-sclerosis, which was what most people were supposed to have at fifty-six.

Neith was twenty-six herself . . . and going to live alone in a flat in Jayne Street. The pleasantry of the afternoon came back, and with it the magic of association, like the rosy glow of wine through chilled glass. Her own things again, the lovely things she and her father had so lovingly collected, her own friends, Madelon Sherrod . . . that pleasant young war correspondent . . . and Adam Frear. Oh, she would get the better of whatever came from Aunt Emmaline in her blood.

Neith's wardrobe was conscientiously slender . . . there were people she and her father had known in France . . . Italy, too. But in anticipation of Millicent's crisp toilets she selected the one gown by which she should be able to refute whatever Millicent might be

disposed to think of it, by mentioning the name of the designer. It was not new, but Millicent had only seen it once. There was an underslip of smooth satiny brown, a trifle darker than her hair, and over it a tunic of soft, sea-cavern blue, threaded with ripples of silver. Blue stones set in silver went with the dress, but after a quiet, uncalculating look at herself in the tall old mirror, Neith laid them gently aside. Thoughts of her father, and the little sacrifices he had made to give them to her, sent her to the window, where, outlined against a sky blue as her jewels, a cross lifted from the roof of a building opposite, confident with light. To Neith there was nothing theatrical nor inappropriate in that cross. Europe, the war, her own abiding loss, had made her very tender of the symbols of the unspeakable things of the heart. The steady glow of it, the white wandering star behind it, the delicate tracery of budding boughs against the sky's aerial blue, came to her like the promise of something the world wanted very much. It dispelled the cold drop that had distilled at the pit of her heart from the chill of the moment past, touched her with the thrill of the soul's immemorial quest. She stood so long looking out at the Square in a gentle muse of spring that Millicent came up to call her.

§ 6

Much as Neith had wished to hear a strike discussed by some of the parties to it, watching Aunt Doremas doing it turned out not a pleasant affair. There was a

great deal of Aunt Doremas. She had wattles; there were deep purple puffs under her eyes, and at table with the light from the chandelier shining on her from above, it was impossible not to discover that the front of her hair did not belong to the back. She was fond of her dinner in a way difficult to reconcile with a hopping rage at the conduct of the mill workers at Marcy. She and Emmaline were already at it when the cousins came down, in a sort of ladies'-chain of condemnation and corroboration.

It was, in Mrs. Doremas's opinion, "exactly like" the operatives to go on a strike just when there was a chance of the owners making something. It was like their improvidence, their inherent incapacity for knowing what was for their best good.

Was it thinkable, with a sixty per cent war profit cut off short by the stoppage of the mills, that the owners could afford increased wages and double pay for overtime! How was business to go on unless there was cooperation, mutual consideration!

"Consideration!" said Mrs. Doremas. "They've no consideration for anything but their own backs and stomachs! Get another bottle of the Du Guesclin, Horlick, Mr. Haven does n't care for the sherry — and you might bring another glass — Consideration! It is all envy of seeing the money go into other people's pockets. Envy and greed. That's all one gets from the working-class nowadays. Have another bit of the fish, Millicent, there's only a roast and an artichoke coming, and some kind of a salad. You may fill my glass, too, Horlick."

“Not that one minds their getting a raise of wages once in a while,” Emmaline bumped along like an empty tow in her sister’s wake, “if they did anything with it, but they think of nothing but just spend, spend.”

Neith laughed. “I spend mine, too,” she explained.

“Oh, but, Neith,” Aunt Emmy was firm, “the things they spend it for! If you’d just look at the girls going along Fourteenth Street. White shoes! And such hats! You may give me a little more of the sauce, Horlick.”

“Beer!” said Aunt Doremas, with such emphasis that for a moment Horlick thought he had received an order. “Positively buckets of it going along the street every day. And when they get into trouble it’s our sort has to help them.”

“They never seem to think that the rich have obligations,” Aunt Emmaline ran true to form. “There’s all our war charities. I’m told there is n’t a child under five years of age left in Poland. If they would only think of that one thing —”

Neith was thinking. It was the sort of thing that often came over her compellingly as she sat at table with her Aunts, with the rich smell of food and the clink of cut-glass and silver. At such times her Aunt Doremas’s hands had a positive fascination for her, moving stubbily among the wine glasses, dull colored from over-feeding, stiff with rings; fat, self-contained looking diamonds, the four Doremas emeralds set in platinum . . . Aunt Emmaline’s hands, flabby and whitish as was everything she did . . . Neith wished she could think

of something to bring Bruce Havens into the conversation.

“It makes one agree with Eustace, that investments that have to depend on Labor are hardly worth having these days.” Poor Emmy had fallen a victim to her own invincible disposition to edge the conversation in the General’s direction. The silence that ensued, on this introduction, lured her to destruction. “He was telling me only this evening of such an interesting development . . . patriotic, too. If only Frances were not so — so peculiar.” She primped her mouth Christianly over the tolerant word.

“If that old gazook has another gold brick like he sold Hart and Shafner,” Millicent’s husband squared himself to the attack, “Frances will have to be a lot more peculiar than she has ever been to save him from the grand jury.” Quite without his volition his fork, which he had been holding properly as Millicent had taught him, interlaced itself upright between his thumb and little finger. It was an effect Aunt Emmaline often had on him, particularly when she chose to be cattish about the second Mrs. Rittenhouse.

“I suppose Eustace is bound to suffer in his dealings with that sort of people.” Emmy’s old face quivered with the effort of maiden dignity. “He’s been brought up among gentlemen.”

The subtilty of her retort lay in the implication that all Millicent’s family felt that Millicent’s husband had n’t. Michigan had produced him and any number of

places had done their ineffectual best to put their stamp on him. He had thick shoulders, an office in Wall Street, and either a trifle too much width across the jaw or too little above the eyes. Aunt Doremas had always disapproved of him for reasons succinct and inclusive.

"Who," she demanded when Millicent presented him as her fiancé, "ever heard of a Havens?"

"Whoever has n't," Millicent had spiritedly replied, "is going to." Which seemed likely to be the case. At present he was something over thirty and was worth two million dollars.

Neith was extraordinarily interested in him. Millicent she understood perfectly and with a quiet, cousinly affection, touched with the realization that they two were the sole representatives in their generation of the Van Droom-Schuylers. Millicent was what Aunt Emmaline might have been. In time she would become what Emmaline was now except for what sat so graciously upon her, happy marriage and maternity. But Bruce Havens was to Neith one of those American factors which, like the strike, would have to be studied to be understood.

She liked his coming to the defense of poor Frances Rittenhouse, especially as she was sure that his instinct would be to feel that any woman living away from her husband must be rather vaguely to blame for it. But he was not to be made to read into Frances's refusal to permit the sale of the Eleventh Street house anything more than it had turned out to be, a far-sighted provision for

her aged and alienated husband, whose senile dream it was to recover the two fortunes he had spent by flinging this last remnant of his property after them.

“If it’s gentlemen he’s hankering to deal with,” Bruce countered to Aunt Emmy’s harmless dart, “he’ll have his wish. Son Eustace was lunching at the Club to-day with the Head of Aviation.”

“Eustace back!” cried both the cousins; Millicent finishing with, “Oh, Bruce, and you never told me!” Neith’s more intimate acquaintance with soldier home-coming bringing her in with the anxious hope, “Not invalidated?”

“I’ve a notion the Government sent for him.”

“You think we’re going in?” Everybody was in that but Aunt Doremas who settled these things for herself without asking anybody.

“I think the country has had about all it can stand.”

“So improvident of Frances to let him go in the first place.” Aunt Doremas had been silent as long as she felt called upon to be at her own table. “Much the Belgian Government would have done for her if he had broken his neck. Horlick, you may tell the cook that the artichokes are a trifle underdone, and the next time we’ll have some of that California claret served with them. Your father, Millicent, used to say that claret was the only wine that really belonged with artichokes.”

“The poor, dear General, too,” chimed Emmaline; “you remember how fond he was of artichokes.”

“Horlick —” said Aunt Doremas, and stopped.

Neith knew perfectly that her aunt had been about to order a portion of the artichokes set aside to be carried to the General, and had reconsidered it because Emmaline had thought of it first.

§ 7

It was not until coffee was served in the back parlor, and Millicent had gone off to confer with the nursery governess by telephone, that Neith got around again to discovering what Bruce Havens thought of the prospect of war. He was turning his cigar in his firm and rather thin-lipped mouth, with his back to the heavy black marble mantel, and his legs rather wide apart. It was an attitude that brought out the suggestion of corpulency in his figure, which seemed to belong to the power and possession of two million, and brought smouldering spurts of annoyance from Aunt Doremas.

Behind him the black, porphyry-veined over-mantel supported a Sèvres vase of Victorian style and expensiveness. Carved chairs of the same heavy intricacy flanked the massive fire-basket, and unwieldy fire tools of hammered brass leaned against the marble bosses.

Suppose Michigan had produced him and his mining schemes had been developed in Alaska! He was as much a product of the Van Droom-Schuyler point of view, of their heavy furniture and heavy traditions of prosperity and respectability, as if he had been born among them.

“The way I look at it is, we are already in so far as

money and credit goes." Havens had the air of delivering his opinion like a public speech, a habit acquired by men whose wives are not in the habit of contradicting them. "We are in so far that we can't afford to be out when the settlement comes. We have to get in with both feet to keep them from pulling the leg that *is*."

"But is n't there a great deal of anti-war feeling among the — the masses?" Neith ventured. "This strike at Marcy —"

"That's a reason. The way I look at it. The country is getting so restless, no telling where we'll land if we don't have something to pull it together. With Labor getting so fed up with war wages, and all this pro-German propaganda, something is bound to break loose. I was for keeping out as long as possible, but there's a limit! Looks like we have to have a war once in a while just to keep things together. That's the way I look at it."

Millicent came back, young, matronly, and apologetic in her green and silver gown. "Bruce, dear, do you mind if we start early enough to stop at home for a moment? Ellen telephones that Junior won't say his prayers to Fräulein because she's a German and God can't love the Germans. Where *do* children pick up such things!"

"Oh, well, he is n't so far wrong, I guess." Bruce junior's father chuckled, looking at his watch. "We won't miss anything but the overture."

"Mrs. Lennox herself never gets there until the mid-

dle of the first act. But I have been so careful not to let any hate-thoughts come near the children. I suppose if there's war we'll have to let Fräulein go altogether, and it is so impossible to get good nursery governesses in this country."

Aunt Doremus remembered her grievance. "When you've had as much to do with the working-classes as I have," she warned her niece, "you'll find that they have no consideration for *anything* or *anybody*. I'm not sure but I agree with you, Bruce," she conceded handsomely. "A war will be a good thing for them."

III

§ 8

NEITH turned back from the head of the stairs from which she had seen Millicent off, to fetch a crêpe shawl for Aunt Emmy. In the five or six minutes required to reach the back parlor with it, she had run swiftly through all the incertitudes of the past five or six months and come to a conclusion. She came to it with all the latent strength of her Puritan strain because a few minutes before, as she listened to Bruce Havens talking war from the point of view of Wall Street, she had had doubts.

Would she ever be able to make out, behind this confused and cloudy personal opinion, the America of her own and her father's imagining? This America, which she had tried to think of for three years as holding

sanely apart, was showing itself speckled all through with little scabby private issues.

Everybody had them, and there was n't even a common disorder traceable as their source. Or was there? Was the lack of a unifying understanding of social issues owing to an essential lack of a unifying principle in Democracy? She recalled the difficulties the few Americans she had known in Europe had in making clear their position. Had n't they, in fact, a position? Were they simply being caromed by events into the pocket prepared for them?

Practically everybody agreed that within a month or six weeks America would be in the big fight; even Fleeta, who was confident that the fighting would be on American soil for the right not to fight. The editor of *The Proletariat*, who looked to be as far derived and American as any Van Droom-Schuyler, was inclined to accept the war as insuring the downfall of Capitalism, and Bruce Havens welcomed it as a method of reducing Labor to amenable terms. If there was any common ground among them, it was the concession that there was something seriously wrong with America that there was no effective way of righting except by turning the world into a sort of Donnybrook Fair, which only came to an end when everybody had his head well broken.

The fine sense with which Neith had begun the evening, of the house in Jayne Street as a coign of vantage from which to view the American scene, had dropped appreciably. Here, at least, the point of view was estab-

lished, the coast of opinion mapped and charted. But in the isolation of Jayne Street who knew what drenching seas might break over her? It was at this point, the lowest she had known since the Jayne Street project had been broached in her mind, that she came to her decision. She would tell the Aunts once and for all what she was doing, and why leaving them.

In the twenty steps that lay between that moment and what she knew to be the most important pronouncement of her life, Neith reviewed the whole of her twenty years or so of personal consciousness. It had begun with her coming down this same stair, a child of six or seven, to meet her father returning from the hospital to which her mother had been taken after the carriage accident, and realizing in a dim, childish way that she should never see him again quite the man he had been, and never coming to her in any other way than alone and in need of comforting. It was from this door, held open by a young and obviously disapproving Horlick, she had left with him, a shy, devoted girl of fourteen, on that first trip abroad, from the delightful intimacies of which he had never had the courage to surrender her. He had never, indeed, had the courage to return to his native land until Neith herself had reached an age to combat the united family opposition to their vagabond way of life and her informal bringing-up. Instantaneous pictures of these comings and goings streamed through her mind as she passed along the hall to drop the scarf across Aunt Emmy's thick shoulders.

§ 9

Instinctively Neith took up a position in front of the fireplace where a few minutes since she had watched Bruce Havens, thinking how inevitable it was that Millicent should have married him. As she stood warming first one bronze slipper and then the other, to give a casual air to what she was about to say, it came strongly home to Neith that at least those traditions and this furniture had not produced her. Her father had renounced them for her long ago. With a quickened sense of finding herself at his side again, she turned to confront the aggressive correctitude of Great-Aunt Doremas. It was then that she perceived that the sisters had been quarreling again over Aunt Emmy's visit to the General.

It hardly seemed the time, in view of what she had to say for herself, for one of Neith's sallies to the rescue of Aunt Emmy. At the same time the necessity for saying *something* sharpened her own desire to cut herself off definitely from all the implications of poor Emmy's frustrate maidenhood. While she turned over several openings in her mind, Aunt Emmy seized the opportunity with her usual aptitude for the wrong thing.

"I suppose that I owe you an apology, Neith. It seems I've been leading you into improprieties." She primped herself to a feeble malignity. "Becky is so upset at my running in to see dear Eustace for a few minutes this evening . . . She must think it much worse at *your* age . . ."

"It's for not knowing better at *your* age!" Aunt Becky's wrath must have had a touch of sincerity, for she made a false move. "It is n't as if there had n't been anything between you and Eustace . . ."

Neith did not know how much truth there was in that old story that, before he had settled on the unhappy Frances, the General had cast a speculative eye in the direction of Aunt Emmy. Even so slight an admission of her having been the object of legitimate "attentions" was a great restorer of the poor lady's dignity.

"It is n't as if you had n't had opportunity, sister, to observe how I conduct myself in a delicate situation," she soared.

"Or as if we had n't outgrown all sorts of silly notions about what unmarried women can or cannot do." Neith snatched the conversation at its highest point. "Now if Aunt Emmy should go off and set up house-keeping for herself, as I am thinking of doing!"

Silence fairly crackled under this announcement.

"You've been so good to me here," she plunged on, "I've almost forgotten what I came back to America to do. I'm afraid I have imposed on you. But I've found what I've been looking for, and I shall have everything arranged in a week or two. If you can still keep me so long."

There were cigarettes on the mantel, of the expensive gold-tipped kind Aunt Doremas sometimes served to her men visitors. Neith had a wild idea of lighting one of them. Not that she had ever done such a thing. She felt

a desperate need of some such visible symbol of her repudiation of the family attitude, something comparable in her Aunts' minds with the thing she was trying to say, something that would make way against their heavy astonishment without the need of saying anything. Her hands itched toward the packet, but she took a firmer hold on the mantel and made another effort to lift the conversation up out of the pit into which it had dropped.

"I've found something that will do very nicely. Over in Jayne Street." There seemed to be astonishingly little she could say.

"Why, Neith . . . Neithie, dear . . ." Aunt Emmy's voice quavered to a full stop, coasting along the edge of hysteria.

"Of course it's dull for you here, Neithie . . ." she began again. "But you did n't seem to want company. Your father, you know. We'd have been only too glad . . ."

"If you think," boomed Aunt Doremas, "that I have been calling on everybody this winter . . . people that are n't *anybody* —" There was a singular movement up and down between her wattles. It came over Neith astonishingly that she had dealt these two old people a blow. They had thought for her in their way, counted on her.

"When I think of the people I've invited down to the country this summer . . ." Mrs. Doremas stood up, her old head trembling. "And my own brother's child — grandchild," she corrected, and found a new flavor of

indignation in the term — “my own grand-niece flying in the face of everything!”

“But goodness me, Auntie!” Neith tried for lightness; “I’m only flying to Jayne Street. And I hope you won’t leave me out of your plans for the summer . . .”

“Exactly,” Mrs. Doremas delivered at large, “like one of the lower classes. Two weeks of the Fresh Air Fund.”

“They’ve no right, no right at all!” Neith told herself.

“I can’t think what your poor father would say.” Aunt Emmy wiped her eyes. “Dear Irving was always so fond of me.” As usual the poor lady had furnished ammunition to the enemy.

“It’s what we always planned to do together,” Neith returned quietly. “To live among the people and get to know our own country. And now that he is n’t here, can’t you see that my greatest happiness . . . You must not think of it as leaving you. I’ll be in and out a dozen times a day. Just around the corner, Twenty-Six Jayne Street. That house with the lovely Georgian door.

“The Severences lived in Jayne Street,” Aunt Emmy recalled. “You used to be fond of Amy, Sister.”

“Amy Severence did n’t live there alone. And I’m sure I did n’t know you wished to meet people who are not in *Society*, Neith. One picks up such peculiar notions abroad.” And having thus intimated that her niece’s bringing-up had turned out as she had always said it would, Aunt Doremas prepared to withdraw. Not, however, until she had removed the subject beyond the pale of discussion.

“I hope I may take it for granted, since you are going to live alone in this way, that it *is* alone. Such goings-on as one gets accustomed to when one is n’t in Society!” The Schuyler doors, of course, did n’t slam, but Mrs. Doremas managed her exit so that this slight deficiency was n’t missed.

“Becky! Oh — Neith! I hope you don’t think that I — You know how correct Becky is.” But Emmaline had her own feelings to reckon with. “I hope,” she said, “that you’ll be as happy as you think you will.”

Neith knew that there was one way in which she could always manage her maiden aunt; it was to treat her as though they were exactly the same age. She came swiftly from behind as Emmy was leaving, and put her arm as far as it would go round the thick waist.

“Emmy, *you* must stand by me! Can’t you understand that there might be people who would want to see me, who might want to see a great deal of me, who would n’t feel easy coming *here*?” You know yourself that there are times in a woman’s life when she has to have a chance to be herself, to let other people see what she really is —” She knew exactly what Aunt Emmy would make of that, but she knew, too, what sustenance for the poor lady’s heart there still was in any suggestion of a sentimental situation.

“Oh, Neith . . . of course! It’s only that I did n’t want to feel — left out!” They went up the stair with their arms about one another, in a whisper of sympathy and caution.

IV

§ 10

It was only a day or two later that Neith, proceeding along Sixth Avenue in search of an upholsterer, ran into the strike at Marcy. That is to say, she ran into Fleeta Spence, who in the pleasant way of the Village introduced her to an upholsterer with a true artist's attitude toward his work, who did your things for you for practically nothing compared to what they charged you uptown.

Neith arranged with him for the refurbishings of two lovely old hickory chairs, decorated with intriguing little garlands in the best Adam period, the property of some earlier Schuyler. Aunt Emmy had produced them from some limbo of lost furniture under Aunt Becky's very nose, which was still in such a state of high disapproval that it could not stoop even to interference. Having directed their reinstatement in some remnants of blue-and-cream Italian rep, salvaged from a bankrupt Medici palace, the two young women sauntered along Waverley Place, by way of a window-box-maker's, back into Sixth.

There was a kind of thick soup of winter refuse in the gutters, but sparrow song distilled from the spring air like sap. Even the branched scaffolding of the El. had a sylvan look, its long arcaded shadows interlaced with light. Crossing under it, they came plump into a brisk,

brown woman, a little older than themselves, who presented herself in the light of a personal agent of the strike.

She began by demanding to know if they had anything on for that evening, and if not, that they should come with her to Marcy by the six-fifteen train. In the intervals of her explaining that there was to be a mass meeting that night, from addressing which Adam Frear had been interdicted by the police, Fleeta introduced her as Mrs. Kendries. "Lutra Dunham, you know," after the custom of the Village which believed in giving credit where credit was due.

Neith did n't know. She recalled that there had been a Dunham who had married a Greenslet who married a Schuyler, which somehow accounted for the second Mrs. Rittenhouse being considered a member of the family, but it did not seem likely that the brisk woman could derive her distinction from that.

"But Adam Frear!" Fleeta was saying. "I supposed *he* could speak anywhere. If it had been Gurly Flynn, now, or even Me —" Fleeta ran up her colors and nailed them to the mast.

"That's what becomes of Free Speech the moment the country begins to be interested in Militarism!" And before Mrs. Kendries had completed her impressment of Fleeta and Miss Schuyler in the interests of the strike, Fleeta had invited them both to a meeting of the Woman's International Peace Association, on Thursday.

"It is n't that Adam has said anything he ought n't,"

Mrs. Kendries explained. "But they're afraid he's going to. It's the small shopkeepers this time. They remember what happened to them four years ago —"

"I'm beginning to think," Fleeta concluded, "that if you trace it back you'll find it's always the bourgeoisie that are the real obstructionists."

"Precisely," Mrs. Kendries accepted cheerfully, "it's they that make the bulk of your Peace parties."

"It's not the change that they object to," she protested to Miss Schuyler, having temporarily reduced Fleeta to speechlessness, "but the changing. They'd like the mill workers to get more wages, it would make so much more spending. What they can't bear is the inconvenience of their getting it the only way that is open to them."

"Of course," she went on, "Mr. Frear could carry his point in the courts, but there is n't time for that. What we want is to take as many as possible down with us for a demonstration."

Talking of demonstrations: it appeared that Fleeta was also hot upon that business.

It was popularly rumored that the President had a special secretary whose work it was to count the telegrams received each day from people who knew perfectly how the country ought to be run, and arrange them in two piles for and against the measures contemplated. Public-minded persons telegraphed on their own account. Proletarians who were public-minded, but had n't the quarter for a message, were kindly saved

from exclusion in the general count by Mrs. Carteret Keys, who made special contributions for that purpose. Thus one became *Vox Dei* by proxy and at a very small cost, considering.

“All that we want at Marcy,” Mrs. Kendries explained to Miss Schuyler, Fleeta having declared her undivided allegiance to International Peace and the project of chartering a car to take conscientiously objecting proletarians to Washington *en masse*, as many of them at least as could be got in a car — “All that we hope for, is a demonstration among the workers for their own sakes. There are a good many of them who have never had such high wages before, and are disposed to let it go at that. Direck has had trouble with them.”

Neith registered the item for future reference. Workers, it seemed, did not always strike of their own initiative. To Mrs. Kendries’s plea for her own presence among the demonstrators she replied conditionally. ✓

“If I could get to a telephone for a few minutes —”

She presently found herself guided to a public booth by Lutra Dunham that was, as Aunt Doremas would have called her. Actually she was so much there that Neith discovered that, without quite knowing where, they had lost Fleeta completely, swept away in a flood of history of strikes at Marcy.

Marcy was a center, she gathered, for Labor agitation which spread in widening rings over all the country. There was much more that was crowded out for the moment by the necessity of composing some sort of a

fib that would serve with the Aunts, in case Madelon Sherrod failed her, as an excuse for leaving the house at the unaccountable hour of six-fifteen.

She had occasionally stopped over Saturday night with the actress for the sake of a Sunday motor trip into the country. Her purpose in seeking the telephone now was to persuade Madelon to invite her for that night and then to overlook her not putting in an appearance until eleven o'clock in the evening.

Mrs. Sherrod, it turned out, had reasons for wishing to see Neith particularly, and charged her with shopping commissions that involved Neith's coming to early dinner with her, and rendered the smallest fib unnecessary.

§ 11

Whatever personal interest had edged Mrs. Sherrod's invitation did not immediately appear even at the early dinner which was served in her rooms. Not at all the sort of rooms a successful actress would be expected to have. They had a certain character: a character that was of the place, a rather old-fashioned, but well-kept hotel in the East Thirtieths. If they had any quality of Madelon Sherrod in them, it was, Neith concluded, taking in their dark, elaborate woodwork and the inoffensive durability of the furnishings, the quality of a woman who lived almost wholly outside herself. They were rooms in which the sort of thing happens that happens inevitably without any help from its environment, and so the sort of rooms Madelon Sherrod would be expected to

have. At that moment, Neith was less interested in the rooms than in what their occupant could tell her about Adam Frear. What he did, everybody could know. But what had produced him? From what, for instance, did he come?

“Where do Americans with ideas come from?” Mrs. Sherrod had demanded in return. “Kansas, in this case, or was it Iowa? Anywhere but from New York. It is the Bertie Condins who won’t admit to being born west of Broadway or south of Twenty-Third Street. Men with fine-toothed intellects combing the American product for the sort of thing they would have liked to do themselves supposing they had been able to do anything. But all the people who make things happen come from Kansas, like Adam Frear, or Van Harwood, from California, and Direck Kendries —”

“You know him?”

“Bless you, I discovered him! On a Minnesota farm. He tramped eleven miles to see me in ‘The Doll’s House.’ Called on me at the close of the performance to say that he had decided to join my company. Can’t you see it is just the Squarehead sort of thing he would do. He thought then that he wanted to act, but it was only because acting was the only interesting kind of work he had seen. He found that out before we got to Cincinnati. But the next winter he turned up in New York. He found the Rand School somehow and Lutra Dunham. She did the rest.”

“I’ve been wanting to ask, Dunhams of Stamford?”

“Probably, but I would n’t mention it to her. She thinks she’s a proletarian.”

Neith returned to her original inquiry.

“Is Mr. Frear a Socialist?”

“Adam,” said Mrs. Sherrod, “is a mystic who denies the existence of his medium.”

People who had heard her, rated being gossiped about by Madelon Sherrod among the major experiences. The way in which she collected the flotsam and jetsam of your character from the drift of talk and set it asail on her broad humanism was worth any amount of conversational shipwreck. She created you like a rôle, and displaced the shabby reality with her creation. But today, after this brief and cryptic characterization she left the discussion to the younger woman, who felt perhaps that her interest demanded some extenuation.

“Father admired him immensely,” Neith explained, “at Homburg, where we met him. He had his wife with him then. I understand that she has died since.”

“As a wife, she died years before. She was childish, quite, for a long time before the end.”

Neith considered.

“That accounts, perhaps — Somehow she gave one the impression that she felt — thwarted, and yet every one was talking of Mr. Frear’s brilliant possibilities.”

Madelon responded with one of her inimitable humorous gestures. “Other people’s possibilities are apt to be thwarting. But you must not believe that Adam was ever anything but kind. Extraordinarily kind.”

“What I want to know,” said Neith, “is what he stands for that could get a speech of his interdicted by the police.”

“For the freest kind of Free Speech. Freer than I admit myself. I think people have a right *not* to hear. And he stands for change. Almost any kind of change. To me there are some changes which are changes of deterioration and decay. And then Adam is always trying to get people to apply their own ethics to the other man’s situation, and they think him sarcastic. If there’s one thing the American people can’t stand, it’s sarcasm. Honey,” she said, with a sudden drop into seriousness, “if you are going into this — this ferment of ideas here in America — you don’t want to forget how new it all is, how untested. Some of it will stick, no doubt, but for the most part we are just — shopping. We’d most of us be shocked at the idea that we were expected to take home and live with our ideas.”

Looking at her directly, Neith perceived a great weariness in the actress’s eyes, and a detachment that was more than her customary abstraction just before assuming her rôle of the evening. She began to talk lightly of matters suggested by Mrs. Sherrod’s last word and her shopping commission of the afternoon.

“. . . A dozen of each! If I did n’t know you better, I should call it extravagance!”

“But we’ll be on tour six or eight weeks. Did n’t I tell you?”

“But the play is going so well! And Mr. Sherrod —

I saw him at the opera — told me he was a fixture here for all summer.”

“Yes. Hershgeimer is to manage for me.”

Neith caught herself back. “One does get a *Wanderlust* in the spring.” She hoped it sounded casual enough. She was glad it was time to call a taxi to take her to her train. Should she drop Madelon at the theater?

§ 12

On the train going to Marcy, Neith had opportunity for taking in and appreciating the company with that delicate and experienced faculty developed in ten years of wandering with her father.

It was a faculty which enabled her to extract from the scene all sorts of subtilities of contrast and resemblances, and converging racial strains. It did not succeed, however, in maintaining itself at the tempo of the humorous. Every now and then the frail fabric of her appreciation was rent by gusts of inherited or acquired prejudices. There were faces, particularly in the group that centered about the Kendries, that were the hall mark of everything inimical to her environment. Around the editor of *The Proletariat* there was a circle of young women who had, as Madelon had put it, “shopped” extensively in bobbed hair and futuristic social remedies. Between the two Neith wavered like a candle in a gust. The things they said about war! Childish! The things they did n't know about Europe and the things they so acutely and terribly did know! And the tone!

From what she had already heard, Neith gathered that the company as a whole was opposed to war, or, if not opposed, uninterested. They were untouched in imagination of any of its breath-tightening instances. But about their own enterprises they were crammed with the time-honored reactions, ambushes, triumphs, martyrdoms. Neith had heard young soldiers talk in the Rest Stations.

It came over her oddly that her own class, Great-Aunt Doremas and Bruce Havens, were the protagonists of these strategies and surprises. She gathered enough to understand that Direck Kendries was a professional labor organizer who moved freely over a territory equal to the whole of Europe. Though he looked, at first glance, like a prosperous working-man, she was shrewd enough to divine that he was dressed for the part. The loose, rough-surfaced coat had been made by an experienced tailor, the ease of his carriage was supple rather than indifferent. But there was no doubt about his being tremendously and acutely on the side of the working-men.

It was singular, when one thought of it, that there was nobody of the company who appeared in the least proletarian. Unless, of course, one was thinking wholly in terms of the European proletariat. Even the young women with short hair and long "lines" had a sharpness of quality not to be expressed except in the native phrase of their being "all there."

By degrees Neith found her attention fixed on the

only member who betrayed any of the stigmata which her own rather meager experience had settled upon as wage-earning characteristics. She was moving from group to group when Neith first noticed her, without seeming to belong to any of them, joining vehemently in talk, quick, spurting talk like the jets of blue flame with which steel riveters work. Something in the thinness and the slight warp of her figure, like a sapling too much exposed to the wind, in the texture of her finger nails and the ready-made smartness of her hat, ranked her with the crowd of young women that swarmed across Fourteenth Street about six in the evening.

In the course of her coruscating progress this young woman came opposite the seat which Neith occupied alone. She sparked instantly to Miss Schuyler's friendly attention.

"Are you interested in Syndicalism? Don't you think it's the coming movement?"

"You see, I'm just finding out about it."

"Have you met Hippolyte Leninsky?" She slipped into the vacant place, her pale, triangular face lighting with the joy of propaganda. "He's the leading authority on Syndicalism in this country. He's wonderful!" Her eyes had a catlike quality of expanding and contracting with her enthusiasms. Having picked up Neith's gaze with her own, she carried it down the aisle to a tallish young man whose strongly marked Russian-American face appeared to be dragged forward by the weight of his shell-rimmed glasses. His features bulged about the

brow and squared across the jaw, running into a peaked chin a trifle too short for him. His hair would have stood up, had it not been of just the length that caused it to curve back on either side his forehead like incipient horns.

“He’s one of the editors of the ——,” Neith’s new acquaintance remarked with pride. The name must have been Yiddish, for it passed Miss Schuyler completely.

“I wish you’d tell me,” she interposed, “who they all are. Besides the Dunhams I know almost nobody — and Mr. Frear.”

“Is n’t he *wonderful?*” The girl took in the assembled company with a glance. “They’re Intellectuals.”

“Oh!” said Miss Schuyler. Her glance, to avoid a certain vacancy, fixed inquiringly upon her companion.

“I suppose I shall *be* one. I’m teaching school over in Jersey, in the country. It is n’t as much as I used to get shirt-waist finishing, but it gives me time for study. I can get to town on Saturdays. I’m taking Sociology with Professor Bartell. He’s wonderful, too!”

Definite pointing movements of the triangular chin indicated the man occupying the seat next to the Kendries. Neith had heard his work quoted in England. Beyond him was the attorney for the Free Speech League. That woman in blue talking to the editor of *The Proletariat* was the highest-paid newspaper woman in New York.

“Does it — *The Proletariat*, I mean — really represent the working-classes?” Neith wished to know.

"They don't *look* like that," she hastened to explain. "Do they think like it?"

"Well, it's been suspended publication twice." And then with a relevance that Neith failed to follow, "Hippolyte has had three indictments."

No doubt feeling himself the subject of comment, Hippolyte strolled down the aisle toward them and was introduced by the young woman, who so far had neglected to mention her own name. Neith judged him something over twenty, underfed, and the feel of his hand, which he offered and withdrew too soon, not quite wholesome.

"Wonderful demonstration, wonderful!" he congratulated with the air of having produced it by the process of wringing his pale, clammy palms. The conductor came down the car as though he might have forgotten what he was there for, and about halfway remembered to announce that the next station was Marcy.

§ 13

It was not, however, until they reached the entrance of the hall that they saw anything of Adam Frear.

They had emerged from the train in a region of doubtful lodging-houses and down-at-the-heel business. From this the demonstration straggled down a long street of shops bitten in close to the pavement by half-smothered lights, like stump fires in old pastures. The street issued at last in a little square of resigned and unidentified pretensions where a sign, announcing that this

was Crescent Garden Hall, spewed a reddened light about the entrance. A steep stair led in a flying arch up from the pavement in such a way as partially to mask the saloon entrance underneath.

Across the top of the stair guarding the entrance to the hall stood a row of policemen in all the exasperated resignation to their duty, without the fundamental good-humor that Neith recalled in London Bobbies set to stop a Suffrage raid. Two streams of men and women moved along the street and disappeared behind the policemen into the open doorway. From time to time, as these streams tended to coagulate in the splash of light under the sign, the officers relieved the tedium of their situation with sallies of authority. Always as the arriving audience mounted, they lingered and looked back with mingled expressions of sympathy, curiosity, and triumph. At the focus of their attention, as her own party neared the entrance, Neith discovered Adam Frear. He stood on the stair a step or two below the waiting policemen, and as the party of Intellectuals swept up beside him, he introduced them.

“Meet my friends, Chief.”

The badgered officer had all the appearance of a man fond of children, with rather rigid ideas on the subject of women, not averse to “making a little on the side,” officially, and totally unable to understand why anybody should wish things other than they were. He welcomed the necessity for a show of activity in respect to the choking passages, incident to the arrival of the dem-

onstration. There was nothing whatever in the Regulations which instructed him how to accept a personal introduction to people who insisted on making light of his authority and yet looked as if they might be possessed of the mysterious quality of "influence."

The checked stream moved on, quickened in volume and interest, with good-humored reluctance. Now and then there was a hint of pressure that might easily have broken into mass action. Friendly hails and suggestions reached Frear, not unmixed with regret for Frear's equally friendly rejections. Kendries edged in toward the perplexed Chief of Police and opened the inquisition.

"We came over here because Mr. Frear was advertised to speak," he began pacifically.

"Well, it looks like you're gonna be disappointed."

"Now, see here, Chief, you know perfectly well this is an unconstitutional proceeding. You could n't get away with it even if you arrested every one of us."

"I ain't gonna arrest nobody without they ask for it," affirmed the beleaguered official. "But Mr. Frear is n't gonna get into that hall to-night, an' he knows it."

"Not even if he promises not to make a speech?"

"What would you do, Chief," interposed the distinguished Sociologist, "if we decided to take Mr. Frear in with us?"

"Now, look here, Mr. Frear" — the Chief breathed heavily — "can't you get your friends to go along peaceable?"

"That's all right, Chief, there is n't going to be any trouble."

Frear stepped back to give place to his attorney for what was evidently a prearranged interrogatory. His eyes, steady and calculating, took the measure of the crowd. Roving from face to face they surprised Neith. From the pavement she was taking in, absorbedly, the fine finish of the man, the texture of his skin, the live brownness of his hair, the easy make of his clothing, his manner, avoiding description as the perfectly fashioned instrument leaves no mark upon the hand. He was never the sort of man of whom it is said, his figure is short, or tall, his eyes this or that. For the first time, as those eyes encountered hers, Neith observed that they sparked out, quick electric blue, blue like hot metal.

He dropped quietly down the stair until he stood beside her. "Getting what you came for?"

"Seeing how much there is to get."

He appreciated that. "Don't try for facts," he advised. "Not what are called facts. They are confusing. This" — he included the moving scene with a movement of the head — "what it stands for, is the sum of all the facts."

She nodded. "It is the last thing I expected to get in America. You — all these — Intellectuals" — the new term came trippingly — "the people, and a row of policemen standing between."

"Democracy." He laughed. "Half a dozen of us specialists in human living, social living. Five or six hun-

dred workers wanting to hear what we have to say, and looking idly on at our being publicly prevented."

"But why? Who —"

"Over there." He indicated a fringe of slowly moving onlookers on the pavement opposite. "Representatives of the local government who have ordered the police to prevent us because their interests are jeopardized." He spoke aside to his attorney, and as the crowd swarmed upon itself again, Neith felt herself gently extricated and piloted in the direction of the highest-paid woman reporter who engaged a group of the sidling bystanders in the mildly inquiring manner which was largely responsible for the figure of her salary.

"Would you oblige me" — she fixed a squarish figure completely buttoned into a good, but coarse, spring overcoat — "just what has Mr. Frear done that the police won't let him speak?"

The squarish figure, which was topped by a rather anxious, shop-keeping face, was happy to oblige.

"Four years ago he stirred up a strike here that lasted fourteen weeks. Just one business man after another went broke." There was a puzzled hurt in the voice, ending in truculence. "Perfectly good business men with families. We don't want any more of that. What's more, we ain't going to have it."

"It ain't the police that's stopping them," a thin man with a drooping mustache on a face so short that the mustache appeared to sprout directly from under a brown derby, thrust in. "It's the citizens."

“Citizens?” The highest-paid reporter tapped her cheek with a meditative pencil. “Do you mean those people over there?”

“I mean honest-to-God American citizens that recognizes that other folks have got a right to live. We ain’t got anything against Mr. Frear; it’s all them Wops and Guineas that come over here to get a square meal, and right away they go to stirring up conditions.”

“What’s the matter with him, anyway?” demanded the square figure, indistinct in the dull flare of the shop windows behind him. “He’s got a good education, ain’t he? Got a good brain? He could make as good a living as anybody if he’d go into some regular business. What does he want to come here for, upsetting conditions?”

“I suppose,” said the reporter, “that the people felt that way about Jesus, just at first.” Perhaps the innocence of this remark was a little overdone. Something of the look of the badgered policeman crept over the anxious, shop-keeping face.

“Now, we don’t want any of your sarcasm!”

He melted into the shifting procession that traveled from time to time the length of the pavement in response to repeated urging of the police. Fragments of resentful comment drifted past.

“Talk about Patriotism —”

“If the country ain’t good enough for ’em as it is, why do they come here?”

“Well, I don’t blame anybody for getting all the wages they can, but why do they have to upset everything —”

Neith's escort touched her on the arm. The stream of arrivals had almost ceased. One or two figures still remained beside Frear, but the rest of the party of Intellectuals was about to pass into the entrance of the hall. Neith and the attorney joined them.

§ 14

They came out through an unused coatroom to the upper corner of the hall, from which they had a view of the audience and of the platform from which Hippolyte Leninsky was just concluding a speech.

The horns of his hair fell forward, touching the unnecessarily large rims of his glasses. His whole body slanted forward with the weight of his denunciation of capitalism as a reincarnation of the personal devil. So it seemed to Neith, who, like most neophytes in the Social Revolution, had her teeth rather set on edge by the note of exaggeration. Having delivered himself on the subject of the evening, Hippolyte, copiously cheered by the audience, rose to his peroration, in language compounded of the best Rand School English and the dialect of Potash and Perlmutter.

Let them seize this opportunity, when they were united in the struggle for free speech and better living conditions, to register their opposition as a working-class to the war that was now being forced on them by the tricks of a capitalist class. (Loud applause.) The workers of America, shouted Hippolyte, had no grievance against the workers of any other country.

“Hear! Hear!”

Let their capitalist masters understand that they were not, like the unfortunate proletariat of Europe, to be driven to the murder of their brother workers. They neither desired nor would assist at any victory against any nation or group of nations which involved treachery to the sacred principles of Internationalism and the brotherhood of workers.

“Good work!”

“Give it to 'em!”

Let them talk of fighting for the flag. There was but one flag for the workers of the world, the red flag of working-class solidarity!

Hooray! Thump! Thump!

“Aw—uh! Ugh!” The response wavered and broke in an uncertain growl, then a voice from the rear of the hall:

“Let the flag alone. Go on with the strike!”

Hippolyte drew himself together for one triumphant fling at capitalism and sat down mopping his pale, bulging brow.

Neith studied the audience with interest. How modern they looked, and how American, in spite of the preponderance of foreign faces. The clothes, of course! Style. Precisely the sort of thing one sees in Fifth Avenue, only cheaper, pitifully cheap, but “the thing,” and their own. Not a hint of the dingy hand-me-downs that so belied the dignity of labor in a London audience; nowhere the draggled “ostridge” feather, the immemorial regalia of British self-respect.

Direck Kendries was on his feet by this time, reading from a typewritten manuscript. Respectful silence swelled from the audience and filled the room like a presence. Like bubbles rising from the bottom of a pond, little grunts and splashes of amused triumph rose and expired in breath. Neith caught sentences, whole paragraphs, of what appeared excellent matter, but she had lost the clue to both the amusement and the triumph.

“This is a fight for Democracy, for Democracy of the means of production and sustenance,” Kendries read. “But you must remember that all the Democracy you are ever going to have is the amount of Democracy you can deliver between daylight and dark. Living Democracy does n’t mean merely a particular way of electing a president, or even of choosing to live under a president instead of a king. It means a living insistence on equality of opportunity to choose how you will live. You must resist, even to the point of dying, the effort to force you to choose inadequate wages, insufficient housing and clothing and food. . . . You must live your idea of Democracy all the harder because there is a little group who refuse to live it at all, who, while they talk Democracy, insist on living an Autocracy of wealth. . . .”

“You are being told that this war is a war against the abuse of political power, but I adjure you to continue your own good fight against the abuse of economic power . . .”

Mrs. Kendries plucked Neith from behind. They must

go out softly, she whispered, not to miss their train. Once in the passage she explained that Direck was to remain at Marcy all night for purposes of organization.

As they passed into the street, Neith had a glimpse of Adam Frear swinging on ahead of them in close consultation with his attorney. Halfway to the station the soft blackness of the night broke into a chill drizzle of spring rain.

And after all the train was late.

V

§ 15

“THERE’S a place just around the corner where we can get a sandwich and hot chocolate.”

Adam Frear had come up beside her in the dark and touched her lightly on the arm. Neith yielded to the tacit suggestion of private withdrawal. As they faced one another across the marble-topped table she felt suddenly cheerful and at ease.

“Hungry?” Frear scanned the well-thumbed card.

“Ravenous, Casabianca,” she smiled across.

“Oh, nothing like so much of a martyr. More like Brer Rabbit when he had set up the Tar Baby for Brer Fox, or like the Tar Baby, perhaps. Kendries did as well with my speech as I could have done myself,” he finished to her slight lift of inquiry.

“You don’t mean to say —”

“Exactly as I would have said it myself if the police had let me. And as the morning papers will report it under the headlines of Free Speech denied.”

“I think,” said Miss Schuyler, “that I begin to understand what is the matter with my Beloved Country. It’s lack of imagination.”

“You would n’t call the Woolworth Building unimaginative, would you?”

“Never! I should have said,” she reconsidered, “lack of *social* imagination. I’m always in a state of perpetual wonderment at what we can do in concrete and steel and electricity. But when it comes to foreseeing what *people* will think and do . . .” She was silent, taking the idea seriously. “That’s what killed my father . . . the shock of seeing Europe do the unimagined thing. He’d always admired the Germans extravagantly.”

“Harwood told me something of what you had been through.”

She looked up, grateful that he should have cared to ask. “We were too slow getting out of Germany. Father just could n’t believe. After Belgium it was as if he was always trying to wake up from a nightmare, but he could n’t in this life. And yet we’d spent most of ten years in Europe! I suppose I ought n’t to be surprised at the police keeping you out of that meeting, and letting your speech in.

“I wish I had listened closer,” she went on while Adam wrote their order on the waiter’s pad. “I got a wonderful idea of the spirit of the strike from what I

heard, but I did n't find out what exactly they expect to gain by it."

Frear told her.

Neith made a rapid calculation. "Just about what we're spending on a little supper! On a week's work! I suppose I ought to tell you — My family are large stockholders in the mills. I happen to know they are making about sixty per cent."

Frear made a little note.

"That's good," he said; "if they are losing as much as that with the mills closed, they'll be the more anxious to have the strike over."

The arrival of the steaming cups interposed a lighter interval, but Neith pulled the subject back.

"What I don't understand is their not seeing over here that this war *is* the war against capitalism. I am sure the English workers see it that way. There was a time when they did n't and it was a very bad time for England . . . Capital is pretending not to see it, but I'm sure they do."

"It's different over here. Wealth has always had a sense of obligation over there. But there's nothing our people resent so much as a sense of obligation. It's wealth *per se* they object to."

"I wish —"

Miss Schuyler's courage failed her after all. She had to look up from rolling a bread crumb to catch that hot, blue spark of his eye again, and that sudden effusion of kindness which was the greater part of his charm. It

exhaled from him like perfume from a shaken vial. One had always the delightful conviction of having evoked it from him on one's own account.

What she wished was that he would tell her, in so many words, what he thought the whole business would come to. She had an idea that that was asking too much. And the spark of his eye told her that nothing would be too much to ask at that moment. The air was suddenly charged with the sense of immense and unutterable intimacy. Nevertheless Adam found it possible to go on.

"More livingness in our politics, for one thing. We must get rid of our passion for permanence. Immediately we get hold of something that answers to a need, we expend an enormous lot of energy trying to establish it on a basis that will preclude our getting rid of it as soon as the need has passed. You women are the worst at that!" Immediately he had begun to say that which might prove offensive, there was an accession of that friendly charm of his, like the accentuated perfume of a flower at the fall of dusk. Neith understood how it was that he had been so successful always in handling people under the taboo of society.

"Ah," she gave back, "I have always been afraid of that. It's why I have never been able to commit myself to Suffrage. Madelon Sherrod says it's the keepsake habit of women that keeps them in bondage."

"It's the fear of being bound that keeps many men opposed to giving women political privilege. Men have a genius for experimentation." He corrected himself.

"I'm talking of men as Man. Actually, they are about as guilty as women when it comes to great changes such as are involved in this war. But if we did n't take change so hard, it would n't take us so hard." He settled into the easy stride of the practiced speaker.

"One of the important things I learned when I began to study what I might call the personnel of capitalism, was that we are not, as a Nation, really fond of money. We get, as individuals, precious little out of it. Perhaps there is not much to be got for the individual in any case. Our richest men are as a rule men of simple tastes and habits. But they cling to their money, and to the happy hunting ground of capitalism as a field in which to exercise their dominant activities. If we could make them understand that there is some other form of society in which they could still have full scope for their talent for achievement, we'd have less difficulty in persuading them to accept it."

"Then it *is* imagination they need. Social imagination." She was wonderfully beautified for the moment by the modest pleasure of feeling that she had met him with adequate understanding; she the novice, and he the expert marshal of men's opinions. No doubt she gave him credit for more than was his due, but she was much under the influence of the evening's episode. It was plain that to the Kendries, to Professor Bartell and others of their group, Adam Frear was even more of an outstanding peak than her father had esteemed him.

"You know" — she was flushed to the point of con-

fidence — “I’ve begun to have a horrible suspicion about American women since I came home. One hears so much abroad about how progressive they are, how they are taking up all sorts of things. But my suspicion is that they are not new things.”

“Yes?” He put up his hand to stroke his fine mustache. It struck Neith that this was an habitual gesture of his to hide a secret interest, though she could not trace the association which led her so to conclude. The slight inflection of eagerness in his voice merely warmed her to her subject.

“There’s Millicent — Mrs. Bruce Havens, you know; my cousin. She’s interested in playgrounds, and milk stations. She thinks it’s new. And progressive. But, after all, it is the same kind of thing — housekeeping kind of thing — women have always been doing.

“And the Aunts knit for the Belgians. Knitting!” A vision of gray wool and Doremas emeralds flitted in her smile. “Aunt Becky’s rings must be worth at least forty thousand dollars, and she’s done almost two sweaters since Christmas. You don’t think I’m cynical, do you?”

If Adam Frear thought so he concealed it admirably. He suggested, however, that there were women who were doing things that could be rated as revolutionary.

Neith was humble instantly. “Those are the things I must know. One hears, of course, about such women, but one does n’t meet them —” Suddenly afraid she importuned too much, she veered quickly. “There’s

Madelon, of course . . . Did you know that she's leaving town? On tour. Just when the play is going so well." She looked into her cup guardedly. After all, it was n't for her to advertise Madelon's troubles if they were not already known. She caught the fleeting tail of intelligence in Adam Frear's eye as she looked up again.

"Hershgeimer is to manage for her."

Frear allowed his attention to be abstracted for a moment by a boy with the late evening papers, navigating between the marble-topped islands of refreshment. He was about to slip his purchase into his pocket after a brief glance at the head lines, when his eye was caught by what came uppermost as he folded it. After an instant's perusal he handed it over to Miss Schuyler.

"Ah!" she said, and "Ah — ha!" as she scanned the features of the latest Broadway "lead." "Madelon taught her everything she knows. If Julius has to do that sort of thing — I suppose you know he's doing it on Madelon's money."

Frear's hand went up to his mustache. "I thought Mrs. Sherrod would be rather big about those things."

"It's because she's the biggest woman in America, in her line, that she should n't have things like that done to her."

Something in her companion's manner suggested to Neith that he was disconcerted to have her speak of such things. In Europe everybody did, but perhaps people were different in America. She felt the necessity for explanation.

“There’s nothing to the girl but youth and assurance, and, of course, Madelon’s training. She brought her with her to Switzerland the last time. You know, Vera’s father was killed by falling scenery while he was playing in one of Madelon’s companies. Madelon felt it her duty rather to look after the girl. But Vera thought she had been taken up on her own account. Madelon did n’t expect much of her, but she thought that with three or four years’ hard work in stock — And now Julius is starring her.”

“Women are n’t always the best judges of women . . .”

Neith gave him back his paper with a tiny cold shiver of antagonism pricking her satisfaction.

All around them groups and couples of their party, who had strayed in out of the rain, were rising hastily. There was a general rush and scramble for the train. Frear found a seat for her, but he was staying on with Kendries, he told her at the last moment, and in the general claim on his attention left her without even a good-bye.

Later Neith found herself accosted somewhat enviously by the little teacher from Jersey who expected to be an Intellectual.

“You’re great friends with Adam Frear, are n’t you? He’s the most wonderful man we have. He’s very radical. Some people think it would be better if he would make more of a point of his radicalism. Do you think it would? Or do you agree with me that as long as the Conservatives act the way they do it’s better for him not to antagonize them?”

"I should be disposed to think that whatever Mr. Frear thinks the best way for him to work is the best way."

"Yes. But then he has an independent income. It's different for those of us who have to make a living," she sighed. "The people in my district are so very bourgeois. Do you know Rose Matlock?"

So that was Rose's other name. Neith admitted having heard of her.

"She's great friends with Adam Frear. I thought you might know her, too. She's quite wonderful. I can never make up my mind whether she's Radical or Conservative, but anyway she's wonderful."

"Do you know," Neith smiled, "I don't yet know your name."

"Sadie. Sadie Comyns. I'm part Russian, really. And maybe a little Jew. But of course I don't believe anything now. I'm a Syndicalist. Hippolyte is three quarters Russian. The Russians are such wonderful people, aren't they?"

§ 16

Crossing the flaming zodiac of Broadway at Thirty-Third Street — she had dropped most of her party at downtown stations — Neith was touched momentarily by the power and pride of cities.

Crowds of people, noisy as noon, poured along the pavements still glistening with the rain. She had a splendid sense of being part of the crowd, even in the

isolation of her cab. She remembered the short laughs, the vital breaths drawn in the press at Marcy as the index of power, the power of common purpose. She sung a little to herself as she consulted her watch, considering whether she was still in time to pick up Mrs. Sherrod at the theater, and decided to go straight to the hotel.

Turning into the long corridor that led to Mrs. Sherrod's rooms, she saw that her friend was before her. Her hand was at the door, her face turned in invitation to the man who was just leaving her there. Too plainly he meant to leave. A handsome man making the most of what was left of his handsomeness; a jocular manner assumed to cover his pretense of not seeing what Neith turned away her eyes to avoid, the beautiful yearning of the woman's face, the invitation of the half-opened door. And he could not get away with the pretense.

He came back. All at once the woman softened, flooded incredibly with tenderness. Just for that, just for his not being able to pretend that things could ever be as casual as that between them!

Neith turned aside into a corridor. Anything, she felt, would be better than admitting to Madelon that she had met Julius Sherrod outside her door. For even Neith, who had never been kissed, understood that the kiss asked for and accorded, had been cover merely for the refusal of the dearer thing that might now never be given at all.

BOOK II

VI

§ 17

IN the business of settling in Jayne Street, in the very midst of this unfamiliar and importunate present, two very touching and tender experiences shaped for Neith.

She had been there only long enough to be conscious of it as the place to come back to from an excursion into the city, when she began to be beautifully aware of a renewal of continuity in that gay and affectionate intimacy with her father, which had been the most formative influence of her life. It rose to her like a delicate fragrance out of Della Robbia garlands and Roman candlesticks, was shaken from fragments of old embroideries, long-stored treasures of the sort that can still be picked up in Europe by people of discriminating taste and a selective narrowness of means.

Thus far her father's identity had seemed to her utterly swallowed up in the immensities of war, cut off as a limb is cut off in amputation. There had been an aching numbness in the faculty of affection, and at night dreams of rehabilitation of the severed member, ending in shocked realizations of loss. Free-flowing grief, such as might have restored her to the natural sense of his still going on in some other and not too distant place, made her ashamed. How could one weep when all were in such need of tears! Now as memory rose upon her out of

all these visible associations of their life together, she would lean her head against the chest from which she had just unwrapped them, and cry quietly with great recovery of the livingness of affection.

She would find herself talking to him audibly as she moved about her rooms disposing of the lovely accessories of furnishing, collected in anticipation of a settled home in some such environment, for that personal study of America which they had pleased themselves with imagining they would make. To know and to understand their native land had been a sort of delightful expiation of their long absence from it.

“Now you have come back to me, my dear,” she would say to the presence which filled the Jayne Street rooms with warmth, “you must never leave me. Without you I shan’t be in the least able to understand it.”

The morning after the visit to Marcy, she cut out the quotations from Adam Frear’s speech as Kendries had delivered it, and, as Frear himself had predicted, it was published in the morning papers.

“But you must remember that all the Democracy you are ever going to have, is the amount you can deliver . . .”

As she pasted this inside the lid of her writing-desk, she had almost the feeling that her father had committed her to the leadership of Adam Frear’s mind as the one American of whom he felt most hopeful.

§ 18

It was not until the furnishing of her rooms was practically complete and had begun to reflect a subtle color of her personality, that the other experience unfolded itself about her like a delicate veil.

She was much alone the first three or four weeks. Madelon Sherrod was still on tour and Adam Frear away in the West on one of those inexplicable errands of opinion-making which occupied his time.

Neith yielded to a half-conscious prompting not to initiate her social life in the new environment without one or the other of the two friends who had some connection with her past. She sat quietly in her rooms and began to weave the thoughts of her friends and her father, the past into the future.

As if it had waited at the door of imagination for the timid knock of suggestion, there began to flow into the Jayne Street rooms out of the train of associations thus set in motion, one of those girlhood dreams that in good women lie so close to the house-making instinct that one can scarcely be stirred without waking overtones of the other.

During a period of more than ordinary depression in her father's semi-invalid life, Neith had spent the season that should have been filled with flirting and dancing and gay preoccupations, drifting about the Florentine galleries, growing Madonna-eyed herself in the presence of so many glorified young mothers, companioned at

last by small shapes such as flock like doves to their proper cotes about the flowering souls of young womanhood. They would wait for her in the shadowy rooms of great palaces, or she would find them playing about the fountains in the cool morning gardens. There were two in particular who ran at her side and slipped, almost with the touch of reality, their small hands into hers, a boy with soft dark hair and eyes of deep blue, pricked even in her fancy of him with a tingling intimacy, and a younger, rosier sister.

Far below consciousness there must be in women an instinct creating semblances for the young souls that may bud from their bosoms. As the two came back to her in Jayne Street, Neith had a sense of their having been called there by a summoning instinct working far in advance of experience. Not to disturb them, she kept her house to herself and spent long hours there, half busy with a piece of needlework and full of a vague tender brooding. Years afterward she was to be grateful for this visitation and to find in it almost the sole assurance of the veracity of the convictions that shaped that year's experience.

In the meantime the whole country moved steadily toward war, and her cousin by marriage, twice removed, Eustace Rittenhouse, fell in love with her.

§ 19

Millicent was directly responsible. Millicent was giving Eustace a dinner, and Millicent, like all happily mar-

ried women, wishing everybody the same state, was suddenly struck by the possibilities latent in the meeting of two handsome young people who already have reasons to think well of one another.

Young Eustace and her cousin had known one another as children, but the last and only occasion of their meeting as grown-ups had been when Bruce had cabled to Lieutenant Rittenhouse to go down to the obscure village in Southern France where he had died and help Neith bury her father. Millicent had forgotten this until she saw the recollection flash up between them as they met at her hearth, and the swift mutualness with which they laid the common memory aside in deference to her hospitality.

Millicent had the loveliest of intuitions in respect to things within her experience, and people in her class. She remembered the impression Neith's contained and quiet grief had made on young Rittenhouse as he had afterward written her, and appreciated the pleasant start with which he identified her in a social rôle. Neith, in Millicent's rooms and a made-over apricot satin of Aunt Doremas's, looked to be the expensive, hand-grown product that the American man likes to think himself responsible for.

Aunt Doremas, who liked nothing better than seeing other people made splendid by her economies, had been largely placated over the Jayne Street affair by Neith's acceptance of the dress, and Aunt Emmy's dressmaker had made it up for her after an illustration in *Vogue*.

Neith had demurred at first and then relented. After all, she had reflected, looking like an illustration in *Vogue* is one phase of Americanization.

As she stood on a white rug in front of Millicent's fire she seemed as if she might have stepped from it, all rosy net and flashes of silver and flame-colored satin. Her face, touched with the glow and the warm quality of her welcome for Eustace, for the once had the meaning and the spark that many people found wanting in it. Millicent, watching as Lieutenant Rittenhouse, with all his medals aswing across his breast, and distinctly unaware that he wanted to be married, crossed the room to shake hands with her, excused herself instantly after to go and make some changes in her table arrangements to bring the young people next to one another. Neith, feeling for some recognition of their last meeting which should not impinge too pointedly on Eustace's occasion as the distinguished guest, had the happiest instinct just to run the tips of her fingers, as one touches a familiar instrument, lightly across the medals on his breast.

Suddenly there were all the heroic realities of the past three years between them. What Eustace particularly liked was her not speaking of them. He continued to look down at her as she looked up at him with a contented sense of her being allied with him against the possibilities of Millicent's other guests wanting to know, as Americans so often did, how he came by his honors.

Young Rittenhouse was dark, with rather deep-set

eyes in a round, close-cropped head, the mechanic's head, with the slight cast forward of the head and shoulders which gave him the eagle look, the mark of his profession of aviation. He was not much over thirty, a taut slenderness crammed full of the consciousness of all the young men's world pressing from behind, about to break into step with him. Rittenhouse had been summoned home by Washington, and knew much more than he dared to talk about. Neith's quick and instinctive motion of sharing with him all these inexpressible certainties, created a point of contact at which his pent-up excitement discharged in a kind of boyish gayety. It did not occur to him that her quick response was part of a technique, learned in the service of Rest Rooms in England and France, so perfect that it had become almost automatic.

§ 20

Millicent's dinner, on the whole, went off pleasantly.

There was an ex-Senator from Idaho or Montana, and his wife, who found New York the only possible place in which to invest the accumulated social and financial capital accumulated during twelve years in Washington; there was a Naval Reserve officer who resented all comment on military affairs as an infringement on his field; and several young married, or about to be married, pairs of about the same quality and status as their hosts.

As it turned out, nobody, with the exception of one of

the youngest of the unmarried women, was in the least interested in Eustace's medals, and the Senator told him a great many things about American aviation for which Eustace did his best to appear grateful. The Senator was of the opinion that aviation had been allowed to go on in America chiefly as the happy experiment of young, and not always expedient, men, but that once the "business sense of the country" took hold of it, you would see what you would see. All of which was dependent on whether the President had or had not done wisely thus far. Eustace alone was guardedly explicit on what the President had not done.

"He had to wait," the Senator explained, "until he had the country behind him."

"The people were n't ready for war," insisted one of the married men. He was a stock broker himself and his knowledge of the country was largely confined to the headlines of the daily paper and the stock report.

"I know the army is n't," Eustace allowed himself.

The Naval Reserve officer implied that, of course, Eustace could n't know.

Bruce Havens admitted that Roosevelt had been right in that point, at least, but it was the general impression of the company that Roosevelt would n't have had the country behind him.

"I had somehow got the impression," Miss Schuyler ventured, "that the country, the Labor element at least, *is n't* behind him."

"Oh, *Labor!*" said the ex-Senator.

The young husband was convinced that once the country got under military control they 'd *show* Labor.

"Anyway, the women are!" Millicent was sure with the sureness of a member of the Red Cross, actively interested in Belgian relief.

"Oh, I don't know," the young wife demurred. "We never can get anybody to come to our Chapter unless there's bridge." And then, feeling she had hardly done her circle justice, "I must say, though, that there have been some mighty erratic hands at bridge this winter."

"We gave a bazaar for the Belgians at Sandy Grit," cheerfully supplied Mrs. Senator, "and when we got through the Belgians owed us five thousand dollars."

But on the whole it was agreed that when the pinch came, the country would get behind Mr. Wilson.

There was a general disposition to fall back on the quality of American efficiency for defense, though the Senator issued a warning against the over-indulgence in "experts" as opposed to that business sense which he himself so amply illustrated. What was wanted was production, not theory. As for the submarines, let the inventors get together and invent something.

The party broke up early in order that the Senator might get an early train to Washington. Eustace and Neith were taken away in the Havens's own car by the stock broker and his wife. As they rolled toward the white-light district, Eustace urged his long deprivation as an excuse for a turn at some place where there was dancing. Expansively assuming the host, the young hus-

band proposed one of those places west of Broadway where visitors are supposed to participate harmlessly in the vices of the Metropolis.

"Well," the young wife conceded, "I suppose we are perfectly safe not to meet anybody we know."

Eustace and Neith took a turn about the morbid brilliance of the dancing space, circled by extravagantly feathered birds drinking and feeding themselves into a simulcrum of that Paradise Lost of simple human delight.

"Back me up," whispered Eustace, "and I'll have you out of this in no time."

Probably nothing encourages the growth of diplomacy in young men like the determination to find occasion for being alone with attractive young women. In ten minutes Lieutenant Rittenhouse had handed their host and his wife into their car under the impression that they had conferred a welcome evening of gayety on the representative of American gallantry. Three minutes later said representative was speeding down Seventh in a taxicab beside a symphony in apricot and silver and rose.

"I hate to rob you of all that swellness," he suggested appreciatively, "but just how long will it take you to get into something plain and dark?"

Neith considered the negotiation of those four hooks in the middle of the back, and said fifteen minutes. She found, however, when she issued from her bedroom at the end of that time, that it required some minutes more

to detach Eustace from rapturous contemplation of her two living-rooms.

The hideous "graining" of a previous occupancy had been painted ivory white, and the walls, covered with warm gray, matched by an unpatterned gray rug. Across the windows, which were recessed, Neith had drawn thin curtains of persimmon-colored silk. For the rest it was all old mahogany and Italian rep with vivid notes of European occupation.

"You can't imagine," said Eustace, "how war makes you forget things like these and yet makes you think all the more of them."

He struggled awhile with the usual American lack of success in the subtleties of personal emotion and gave it up. "Now," he announced, "we will *dance!*"

§ 21

At the Grand Central Palace, where he presently landed her, Neith had an impression of noble bulk, of mysteriously lighted arches and infinite beading of lamps such as no palace of her acquaintance gave her the figure for, and then of a bright acreage of dancing floor cut off by a simple, and on the whole tasteful, arrangement of bamboo and an infinitude of small tables. Quick, swinging music issued fountain-wise from an island of artificial palms in the midst of the dancing space, in regular two-minute jets. In the intervals "soft drinks" and the free search for partners took place among the tables. It seemed, in its simplicity, the freest

place imaginable, until one caught sight of the placards announcing that gentlemen were not expected to invite ladies to dance until they had been introduced by the official chaperon.

“But fancy” — Neith was only half convinced — “regulating social intercourse by placards!”

You could n't, Eustace insisted, except where there was a habit of self-regulation to begin with. Most of the dancers were self-supporting, he told her; ribbon clerks, and stenographers, assistant accountants, two-stepping with their fiancées.

They had a two-step themselves and then a waltz. Finally Eustace essayed to teach her the fox trot. He danced as might be expected of a man whose life from moment to moment depended on the perfect poise and handling of his body. Neith yielded herself to his guidance and a native sense of rhythm.

All her attention was for the place, its sights and savors, the decorum, the absorbed individualism of the couples dancing by themselves. Here and there were parties taking their enjoyment with almost the freedom and isolation of a home entertainment. There was so much going on among the three or four hundred patrons of the place that nothing was singled out, and it was not until she heard Eustace calling to them over her shoulder, that she was aware of the entrance of other of her acquaintances.

“Hello, Lute!”

“Eustace — *Rittenhouse!* Of all people!”

So it was the Dunhams of Stamford, after all! Then under the pleasant start of discovery, Neith suffered an odd pang. Behind the Kendries and Fleeta and Van Harwood, she discovered Adam Frear.

Eustace had to be introduced to him, and to Fleeta, and almost immediately Harwood swung her away into the skipping measure of "Katie, Katie."

"Do you come here often?" Neith wished to know.

"When I am in New York. It is the only place where you can get dancing for dancing's sake." So they skipped for its own sake, and Neith kept her questions for a less importunate occasion.

Then Direck Kendries took her around once, and Eustace claimed another waltz before she discovered that Adam Frear was not dancing at all. He occupied himself with ordering grape juice and ginger ale for all of them as he could catch them between dances. On the plea that she had been dancing some time before the others arrived, Neith decided to sit out with him. This left Van Harwood temporarily without a partner. He insisted on hunting up one of the official chaperons and being introduced to a young woman who turned out to be a filing clerk in the City Hall, and, so Van Harwood averred on his return, chewed her gum like a perfect lady.

"The most remarkable thing I have discovered in New York," Neith found herself saying to Adam Frear; "is it under the auspices of — anybody?"

"Auspices!" exclaimed Mrs. Kendries, getting up to

dance with the indefatigable Eustace, "it's common consent! Common victims one might say. Nobody's house in New York is big enough to dance in. This is a Communal Parlor."

"It's what everything has to be, to be of any real value," put in her husband. "A business proposition. It pays for itself out of its own excuse for existence."

"It's Socialism," Mrs. Kendries insisted.

"Oh, can the sociology, Lute! This is a party." Eustace took her bodily away.

Turning back from watching their skillful flight across the floor, Neith found her interest in them occluded by that electric-blue gaze of Adam Frear's which had the effect always of creating its own *milieu*, in an atmosphere at once impersonal and intimate.

He had just come, he said, with the effect of continuing an interrupted confidence, from a meeting where he could have wished her to be present, but there had not been time between that and the arrival of his train — So he had meant to let her know! How, he interestedly inquired, had the great quest been progressing?

"Oh — I've been house furnishing. But I've learned something even from that. The extraordinary things there are to buy in New York, and the things one can't buy! The miles and miles I have walked trying to find something that is n't in the mode of the moment. I could n't have imagined such a passion for likeness."

"Ah, that's it! The phrase I wanted." He smiled his

thanks. "That's the trouble with the Middle West about the war."

"They're coming in, are n't they?"

"As soon as they can be sure of coming all together."

"But their leaders — who *are* the leaders of the Middle West?"

"It is n't leaders that are wanted in America. Leaders are a denial of the doctrine that every man's opinion is as good as any other man's. That is as far as we get in Democracy," he explained. "We have leaders in finance, we have leaders in organized politics, but when it comes to opinion — I suppose there is no country in the world that has as little use for leaders in opinion!" There was something less than the customary easy detachment in his tone. She supposed that he might have met some check, himself.

He looked tired, and she unconsciously felt for a lighter, relieving touch. She looked across where Direck Kendries was dancing with his wife, with a happy gravity and downrightness that suggested the peasant strain that Madelon Sherrod's account of him had led her to suspect.

"I am often seeing things like that," she explained in her turn, "things that in Europe one recognizes as the root of race feeling and — and nationality. What you say you have n't arrived at here. Well, what *do* you do with it?"

"Oh, in Kendries's part of the country we've made the Non-Partisan League of it."

“You mean” — she puzzled it out — “that political ferment in America is simply the working-out of something that in Europe finds its expression in — what, in a general way, is called art?”

“Say a new art of communal expression. But art implies a community of ideas to be communicated. Opinion in the Middle West is like this” — he indicated the whirling hundreds — “everybody dancing his own idea to the same music. Only just now they are waiting for the music. Presently somebody at Washington will strike up the ‘Star-Spangled Banner’” — The orchestra behind them struck it up just then and they rose with the others.

During the momentary silence Adam Frear’s eyes rested on her with quiet appreciation. The dress she had put on at Eustace’s suggestion was dark blue and simply made. Here and there were little touches of colored embroidery placed with French expertness, which knows so well how to create the effect of feminine intricacy with the utmost economy of means. Her hat was a close toque, trimmed with clusters of little velvet wings. Sitting down again she found him in the chair nearest to hers. They sat through the next number in a sort of possessive silence each of each, a silence which Miss Schuyler had from moment to moment surface impulses to break, impulses that lapsed in half-articulate sound against the protecting wall of music. At the end of that dance the rest of their party came back ready for refreshment.

“What I want to know,” said Fleeta, “is why soldiers turn to dancing for recreation. You’d think they would go in for less strenuous amusement.”

There were a surprising number of uniforms on the floor, considering that the country was not yet in arms. Half a dozen French sailors had come in under convoy of as many U.S. Navy men.

“Well, you can’t think when you dance,” Kendries suggested.

Harwood loudly disagreed with him. “It is because the habit of living in hourly sight of sudden death brings them back to fundamentals.”

“But, *dancing* —” Fleeta began.

“It’s art,” the war correspondent insisted. “A low form of it, but the only art the average man has any skill in. It’s sex, too,” he added, watching the whirling pairs. “And what’s more fundamental than that?”

Fleeta was instantly diverted. “Rose Matlock says that all the sex phenomena that arise in war are manifestations of the sudden rush of life to preserve itself in the face of imminent catastrophe.”

Kendries, who had been across twice on Labor Commissions, expressed himself freely on things he had observed in the streets of London and Paris.

Neith was always being astounded at the way these things were discussed in America. In Europe it was permissible to admit a grand passion to the conversation. She had seen all Paris turn out to grand opera on the mere rumor of a new liaison of the prima donna’s, expect-

ing a new savor in her art. But in America prima donnas were supposed to be virtuous, and quite decent people talked unreservedly of Complexes and the Social Evil.

She was pleased with Eustace for the turn he was able to give to the present discussion.

“Soldiers like dancing,” he declared, “because it is movement to music; it’s the easiest way for a man to get himself together. To succeed in war, a man must be all there, especially in the Air Service.”

“We’re going to have three bands for the Peace Demonstration in Washington,” Fleeta confirmed cheerfully.

“Which makes it obligatory for me to teach you something more about keeping time,” said the aviator, whisking her to the floor with the admonition that the place would close in fifteen minutes.

§ 22

At ten minutes past twelve they all walked over to Fifth Avenue and rode down on top of the bus, dropping Adam Frear at Twenty-Sixth and the Kendries at Eleventh. There was a lopsided medal of pale gold peering at them between the high stark cliffs of the buildings. Going along Waverley Place, Fleeta and Van Harwood took the opposite side of the street. Neith discovered that Eustace was holding the ungloved hand he had pulled through his arm as they got down from the bus. It was just so he had walked back with her from the little cemetery in Provence where they had buried her father,

but the swinging rhythm of the dance was still in their walk.

Although he had not yet discovered what had happened to him, Eustace had a good deal of difficulty in parting from her at Twenty-Six Jayne Street.

“It has been a perfectly bully evening, has n’t it?”

“Oh — bully!”

“I’ll pick you up to-morrow about six — if you don’t mind. We’ll have dinner at a place I know, and a show afterward if you have n’t anything on.” She had n’t any engagement, and she had heard there were some good shows. She liked going about to different cafés and seeing New York. And at last she had to go in and leave him there.

She turned on all the lights and looked at her rooms with a critical eye. They were really charming, considering! After all, why should she wait for Madelon before inviting her friends in. She would begin with something informal, say a Sunday afternoon, and a few of the most intimate guests kept to such a little supper as she had so often managed for her father’s friends.

For the first time since she had settled there, as Neith fell asleep, it was the future and not the past that claimed her. While she had been dancing with Eustace all the little ghosts had slipped away.

And then after a quarter of an hour’s sleep, suddenly she awoke. She was caught back for an instant with the singular conviction of hearing her name called importunately. The impression was gone as mysteriously as it

came, but as she slipped back into slumber as a swimmer yields his body to the water, she was struck with the notion that whoever had called her had blue eyes.

VII

§ 23

THE next evening Eustace took her to dinner at one of the few places where French cooking can still be had in New York. It is located not far from the Square on a by-street, and can be recognized by the foreign-looking gentlemen — French cavalrymen come to buy ammunition mules, Russian financiers and Swiss commission agents who might so easily have been German spies — who can be seen at the windows of the coffee room playing backgammon and écarté. The dinner was excellent, though in respect to the polyglot patronage of the place there was an inconsiderable amount of standing up to national airs. Eustace was of the opinion that the first fruits of Internationalism would be a single international hymn for the convenience of eating-places.

They did not, however, go to the theater. It was too late for any of the Broadway houses when they thought of it. They went back to Neith's rooms and kindled a fire under the white marble mantel. It lit up beautifully the Roman candlesticks and the Dutch copper coal scuttle, and did not smoke more than was to have been expected.

“I wonder,” said Neith, “if fireplaces have n’t always smoked more than we have noticed. Lutra Dunham says domesticity is one of the retarding forces of civilization. It has kept us concentrated on the *means* of living, when our proper objective is to live.”

“There is a lot of sense in everything Lute says,” agreed Eustace, “but before the war I would n’t have admitted it. It is the sort of thing this war teaches you — that we’ve got to get the machinery of life under our feet. I never used to think that housekeeping was part of that machinery, but at a time like this you see that it is. It has to take its place in the *how* of things.

“Why,” he expanded, “you can’t do anything with an army until you drag it out from under the wheels of just living, three meals a day and the buttons sewed on and the shoes and socks mended.”

“Well, as I understand it, that’s the whole philosophy of feminism in America,” Neith agreed. “That women have got under the wheels. You put it, I must say, Eustace, very aptly.”

Looking at her across the blue rep sofa, in her brown and sea-blue dress, Eustace had an illuminating idea. “You know,” he said, “I should n’t wonder if this war is going to bring men and women closer together, understanding one another, you know.” He felt very close to her then, to something mysterious and sacred in her, like the emanation from an altar. He thought that with just another turn of the mind he would have made a tremendous discovery, come upon one of those submerged

wonders that seemed to swim everywhere so close to the surface of the national life in those days just preceding the war. Probably all that he would have discovered would have been that he was in love with her. As it was, he found her utterly charming, and uncramped his soul.

They spent the next morning riding up Riverside Drive on top of the bus, along the river, spread in a noble glitter to the sun. Long Island and the new Flying-Grounds claimed him for the next two days, and then, between that and a trip to Washington, he carried her off to the Grand Palace where they danced every other dance together for an hour.

Very little passed between them but the lightest of light exchanges.

“You must fly with me sometime. I can tell by the way you dance that it would come natural to you.”

“Oh, with you, Eustace —”

“By Jove, I’ll show you America!”

They embroidered on this, planning extravaganzas of sight-seeing. She saw no more of him after that until the Sunday afternoon when she opened Twenty-Six Jayne Street to hospitality.

In the meantime Adam Frear had taken her to Cooper Union to a meeting celebrating the new Russian Republic. Neith began to be intrigued with the exhilaration of Internationalism. There was something very comfortable about being able to extend the hand of fellowship to struggling peoples, with the consciousness, also, of being

able to extend it well filled from the pocket. It came as a surprise to find that Adam Frear regarded the movement in Russia as a prelude only to the real revolution which was presently to take place. "You must meet the real revolutionists," he told her. "There's a man over on the East Side called Trotzky —" But for the moment he made no offer to bring about the necessary contacts.

§ 24

It occurred to Neith, on the first occasion of her being formally, or, as it turned out, informally at home to her friends, that he had waited to prove her. It was not a happy discovery. She did not find herself at any time in sympathy with what seemed to be the prevailing American assumption that everything a woman does is a performance, to which the American man sits as perpetual audience.

It had struck her more than once that there was something Oriental in a widely expressed attitude toward Suffrage — which she had never espoused, but toward which she now felt herself driven — that the activities of its adherents represented a series of tricks which if cleverly performed might bring the expected morsel of political privilege. She had suspected — but only suspected, and at odd moments — that the vaunted freedoms of American women covered a more irritating, because more fundamental, servility to the effect they produced; an effect measured by their relativity to a game

to be played. So the mere intimation, which she gathered from his manner, of Adam Frear being present at her afternoon in the character of audience, affected her like the acrid waft of smoke in what should have been the pure flame of her social quest. It might have proved quite the most disturbing element of timid adventure, had it not been for the evidence he freely offered of finding her handling of her oddly assorted company, as a performance, entirely adequate.

If he appeared to discover strategy in what was an instinctive expression of personality, he at least approved of it almost to the point of losing himself in the enjoyment of what the particular strategy had contrived.

Everybody came.

Fleeta, who had assumed a responsibility for providing Miss Schuyler with the largest possible variety of social contacts, had turned up with a Syrian poet of sorts, and a Japanese gentleman who was credited with having rediscovered one of the lost arts of eleventh-century enamels. Eustace brought his mother. This was disconcerting, because Neith had invited none of the family, having taken the precaution to select for her first venture, a Sunday when she knew that Bruce and Millicent would be in the country. She would have liked to have her own people, of course. But supposing she could have reconciled Bruce to the radical editor, there was still the Japanese gentleman, who did not carry his enamels about with him, and who looked rather

like a cotton flannel pup after the baby had played with it awhile.

But Frances Rittenhouse showed herself not in the least discomfited by Neith's guests. She had been hurt too deeply by life ever to hurt anybody else, even by inadvertence. Neith recalled her as beautiful. She saw her now as a fine piece of hand-weaving from which the pattern has been eaten by acid grief. She "toned" beautifully with all Neith's things as she sat on the sofa and exchanged reminiscences of Stamford with Lutra Dunham. She had read everything that Harwood had written about the war, and Eustace had had him at the house. It even turned out that she had "sat under" the noted Presbyterian divine who was the father of the radical editor, and related to the Winthrop of Boston.

"You must come to see me, my dear," she said to Neith, as Eustace was preparing to take her away. "I used to be very fond of your father, and was longing to meet you."

Neith suddenly realized that Frances Rittenhouse never would have called on her at Aunt Doremás's and relented toward Eustace for bringing her uninvited, which, lacking such excuse, had a note almost of officiousness.

"I'll come, soon," she responded instantly, and in the flush of relenting, added to Eustace, "Come back to supper; there'll be four or five of us."

As a matter of fact there were seven or eight. The

Syrian poet had involved himself with the editor of *The Proletariat* in a discussion on modern poetry, which everybody wanted to hear. Then there were Van Harwood, Fleeta, and the Kendries, of course, and Adam Frear, and the art student with shell-rimmed glasses and bobbed hair simply could n't tear herself away. She was a tenant of Miss Schuyler's, really. Fleeta had produced her. For the back suite on the second floor of Twenty-Six had been occupied when Neith moved in, by a young man who was something or other downtown between nine and four, and the rest of the time found himself in a state of sniggering suggestiveness over the idea of occupying the same floor as a beautiful young society woman entirely unchaperoned. He developed a habit of being always on the stairs or in the hall when Miss Schuyler was going in or out, and on one occasion followed her to a Village tea-room and claimed her acquaintance.

Fleeta, on being consulted, had made short work of him. "I know his kind. Thinks if you give up any of the conventions, you are ready to chuck the whole Ten Commandments. There are dozens of him trying to get counted in the Village by renting a room there."

As a matter of fact, the young man had confided to Neith at the tea-room that though he was n't an artist himself, he liked artistic people, and considered that he had a special gift for bringing them out.

Thus far Neith had successfully resisted Aunt Emmy's reminiscences of the "really nice" people who had left.

their traces in Jayne Street in lovely fanlights over pure Corinthian doors, in marble mantels, and moulded cornices, and in particular of the Severences to whose social tradition Aunt Emmy took for granted Neith had become heir. But the sudden relaxation of Aunt Doremas's disapproval had brought an inundation of heavy furniture, pieces which Aunt Doremas had no use for, and, in the thrifty way of the rich, found too good to give away. Neith had accepted a gate-legged tea-table and one or two smaller articles that had belonged to her mother. But she rebelled against a carved and gilt-trimmed black walnut bedroom "set" which Aunt Doremas obligingly sent over one morning.

"There's a certain continuity of personality one gets out of association with one's own past," she confided to Fleeta, "but I don't know why I should have Aunt Rebecka's past thrust upon me."

It was Fleeta who had already found fault with Neith's rooms on the ground that they "did n't belong" to the neighborhood nor to her project of self-Americanization.

"They are part of me, part of my experience," Neith protested. "I have to begin with what I am, don't I?"

"With what you want to be" — Fleeta was immensely confident. "That's why I cut off my hair. Woman's 'crown of glory,' you know, all that sentimental sex stuff. I cut it off. When I lived in Michigan I was crazy about things like yours, but now I belong to the future." Fleeta had amazingly expressed this sureness in the fur-

nishing of her own apartments in bright purples with a great deal of black and orange.

But it was Fleeta who had solved both Neith's problems by proposing that Neith add the back rooms to her lease, the young man with the gift for bringing out artistic people only claiming them by the month. This being accomplished, and the "set" duly installed there, Fleeta had produced the art student as tenant. She was engaged in helping Miss Schuyler to serve the supper by the time Eustace returned.

It was a delightful supper. There was something hot in a chafing-dish to be eaten with thin bread and butter and ripe olives. There was a nearly unattainable cheese, beaten to a paste with oil and paprika; and a glorified apple cake that had been waiting in the ice-box, ready to be popped into the oven at the last moment. Neith admitted that the apple cake, by affinity, called for beer, but that she had been ignorant of the local measures for acquiring that beverage. Whereupon Harwood and Kendries volunteered for that service and returned with Eustace and half a dozen bottles apiece.

As the supper proceeded, the discussion on Free Verse reached a point at which the Syrian, who was really a poet, recited the six perfect examples of the art which hang in the Mosque at Mecca. Harwood, who was all for a purely spontaneous product, sang Trench songs in the vernacular in a very tolerable barytone. Very little was said about the war in any character.

That was said by Fleeta, for though the Zimmermann

letters had left the Pacifists with not a leg to stand on except to be glad that they at least had not started the war, it was not in Fleeta to admit the impossible. Fleeta, in view of the lapse from popularity of the German language, had been given a vacation on half-pay, and was installed as corresponding secretary of the Peace Association.

Harwood rallied her a little on her qualifications, wanting to know if it was n't a fact that most of their subscribers spoke German. Upon which, Fleeta committed the triumphant indiscretion of admitting that this could n't be proved because so many of the subscriptions came in anonymously.

Fleeta insisted, however, that current opinion was n't the true indicative of current thought that it seemed to be. The Proletariat had n't had a chance to register in the Capitalist Press. And when Mrs. Carteret Keys had chartered a car to carry a protesting delegation to Washington, they had been obliged to resort to the ranks of the unemployed to fill up the seats. Which proved her former contention that this was a Capitalist war. She claimed in her position the support of the radical editor, whose father was a minister and whose name, Stafford Winthrop Evans, was quite as good in its way as Schuyler or Doremas. Mr. Evans was unequivocal but half-hearted. It struck Neith that the radicals among her guests were rather camouflaging, under economic and political pretenses, a purely American love of things doing. ✓

As she thought of the evening afterwards, it seemed to her that in spite of the enjoyability of everything, its quality was thin. It lacked subtlety. Everything was said and nothing inferred.

It lacked, as she had so often heard said abroad, with the sense of at last understanding what it meant, background, the rich shadows of history, the high lights of class and caste. The sort of people who assembled thus in Europe had always the effect of detaching themselves from a picture, composed and mellowed, within which at any moment they might resume their appointed places. And you knew, of course, what those places were. The consciousness of place was always present like the accompaniment of music to the tune of their social intercourse.

But with her guests there had been actually, with the possible exception of Frances Rittenhouse, no picture to come from. America was after all not a picture, but a procession. Perhaps that was all that Democracy could be, moving streams that crossed and recrossed and eddied together for a little space. It was in the nature of processions that they should move, and it was in the nature of pictures that they should ripen and mellow — and decay.

This, then, was the American bond, to be bound for the same place, or at least in the same direction. Democracy, of course, could have nothing to do with the place from which you came. And Adam Frear's testing attitude had meant simply that he wished to make certain that she was worthy to march in the direction from

which the light arose that illuminated him. It was the final happy note of her conclusion that he had been so patently pleased.

§ 25

Neith's retrospective pleasure in the success of her evening was pricked through with the uneasy question as to what Eustace had meant by bringing his mother to call, if, indeed, he meant anything at all.

Neith Schuyler was not the sort of young woman to imagine that every young man who seeks her society does so with the object of marrying her. She had accepted the young aviator's readiness to be entertained as part of the reaction she was accustomed to in men fresh from the Front. She liked Eustace and was proud of him, so far as their somewhat remote cousinship allowed, and curiously indisposed to any alteration in their present status.

She was all the more prompted to find an excuse for Mrs. Rittenhouse's interest in her, in the situation of the General, her husband. There came back to Neith, as she reflected, suggestions of an indefinable new animus in the attitude of the Aunts toward Frances. Their jealousy of one another had apparently been quashed in the common opportunity, as Bruce Havens expressed it, to "put something over" on the unhappy wife. Only a day or two ago she had met them carrying a basket of delicacies to Eleventh Street. The dear General was down with a touch of influenza.

Neith recalled all she could remember of that old quarrel of the General's with his wife, unconsciously bringing to bear upon it new interpretations of her wider knowledge. Incredible as it now seemed in his present condition of ratty senility, Eustace Rittenhouse senior had been the sort of man women loved. He had been handsome. In Eustace junior there was proof of that. But if there had been any more to him than the flaunting maleness which was so much admired by women of the last generation and looks so ridiculous to women of this, there was, as Neith saw him, nothing left of it. He was not even a "General" in fact. Neith seemed to recall a long suit at law to confirm the distinction that he claimed, but could not for the life of her say how it had turned out. And he had had "affairs." He had belonged to that nearly extinct species who imagined themselves certified in a superlative maleness by the number and variety of their relations to women. To the modern American man there is something absurd in such a rating. Gallantry has "gone out" along with whiskers and top boots.

The second Mrs. Rittenhouse had been much younger than her husband. Too young to realize that he had married her for much the same reason that he combed his whiskers fanwise across his chest. She with her beauty and her possessions had been a flourish to his maleness. Besides, it was not in Frances Rittenhouse to question the particular marriage, any more than it was in her generation to question marriage in general.

But it was native to the generation of her son to question it for her.

Young Eustace had already begun to find his father ridiculous, before the General's inroads on his wife's fortune, which according to report went to mitigate the General's advancing years with a popular dancer, gave him the excuse he needed for insisting on a separation. For which the General had never forgiven his youngest son.

It was almost incredible to Neith that the old wound of the publicly affronted wife should rankle in the gentle breast of Frances Rittenhouse. But she found it preferable to conclude that it was to assure his mother that Neith, as well as Millicent and Bruce, was on her side, that Eustace had brought her to call. She deliberately turned her mind away from accepting any other suggestion. The determination to keep this phase of the matter to the fore led her to mention his father's illness to Eustace, when he took her to dinner at Sherry's on Tuesday evening.

She began by assuming that he would know, and inquired for the progress of the General's influenza. She saw instantly that he did not, at least, know as much as she had expected.

"If I could find out! It is a continual worry to my mother, to know that he is ill, and not to know just how seriously. I suppose" — he hesitated — "you could n't find out — though I don't want to drag *you* in —"

"I can, and will," she told him. "Your mother has a

right to know, and I shan't in the least mind. Indeed, I want you to know that I think my aunts behave abominably."

"If one could only make out why! But I suppose there's no hoping —"

"Now, Eustace! There's no more mystery about why women behave badly than why men do. If you could explain to me about your father — Let us not begin to apologize to one another for our kin," she conceded. "I'll find out and let you know. One thing you can be sure of, your father is getting every care."

"Even that is hard on my mother."

"I can understand that. I was always jealous of my father's nurses. But your mother — Eustace, do you think you could care like that, so that no matter how badly you had been treated you could still —"

The table had been cleared between them for dessert. The aviator's fine, sinewy hands were clasped before him on the cloth. They tightened a little as they might have on the wheel when the first breath of a new wind struck him. But he looked at her steadily as he replied:

"I'm like my mother in most things. There never would be but one person for me."

"Yes," said Neith. "It is odd how you know those things before they happen, you know, but you do." She said to herself that she must be careful, careful, and began to talk about the play.

§ 26

Neith's method of getting things out of Aunt Emmy was to treat her like another girl. She had her over to a cozy tea and a chat the very next afternoon, and possessed herself of all the details of the General's influenza. There were plenty of details, because Aunt Emmy and Aunt Doremas, who adhered to different schools, had each had her own doctor in to see him.

"It's the disappointment really," Aunt Emmy confided. "About the Potash stock, you know. They're forming a company, and the General's friend wanted him to be the President. It's the only thing the poor dear General *can* do now, for his country. And Frances is so obdurate."

"You mean she won't give him the money?"

"Oh, *give!* You can't imagine Eustace would *ask!* But his friend, a Mr. Mellows, went to call on her. In the friendliest way. As an investment merely. But she would n't even *see* him. And, of course, you know how it is with Becky and me. We can't touch our principal. And with our position to keep up — Still —" Aunt Emmy's fair, fat face was suffused with the satisfaction of secret sources of information. "Eustace is not *entirely* without friends nor his friends without means. There are *some* people who have their country's interest at heart, even if they have to make sacrifices."

Neith knew that Aunt Emmy had a tiny fortune in her own name, a legacy from some dead and gone Schuy-

ler, two or three thousand dollars, in the possession and unaccounted spending of which she fortified herself against Aunt Doremas's injunctions. Always in imagination she was about to assert herself in the wild use of her small capital, but actually a lifetime of timidity had kept it intact.

It occurred to Neith now as a possibility that Aunt Emmy might be at the point of offering it up on the altar of the General's financial indiscretions, which had already seen the smoke of two women's patrimonies. But it occurred to her also that Emmy would probably get more fun out of it that way than any other, so she contented herself with a mere precautionary murmur.

"I should n't be too ready to give my confidence to a man who had been turned down the way the General has by his wife. A wife's opportunity for knowing is usually superior to an outsider's."

Aunt Emmy winced, but maintained herself. "Which makes it all the more regrettable when she fails in her duty of perfect trust, don't you think? But you are n't having your cigarette, dear —"

Neith did not care for smoking, but Aunt Emmy had once or twice seen her light a cigarette at houses where her hostess so obviously wished to smoke herself. And since she had accepted the house in Jayne Street for her niece, Aunt Emmy rather insisted on the smoking as the evidence of the advanced ground on which she had accepted it.

Neith having offered up the propitiatory fumes to her aunt's open-mindedness, they came back to the General.

"He need n't feel so badly about not being able to offer his country the opportunity to make potash out of sea water," suggested Neith. "There's Eustace. He's given *him*."

"Oh," said Aunt Emmy, "that's part of his disappointment. Eustace did n't wait to be given. He went."

"It *was* inconsiderate of him," Neith admitted. "But don't you think it is rather hard on Mrs. Rittenhouse to have to be anxious about Eustace and his father both?"

"Frances made her own choice."

It was in Neith's mind to say that the General had n't apparently given his wife any choice about the conduct of their marriage, but before she could shape it to Aunt Emmy's understanding, the fat old face hardened to maiden censoriousness. "There are some things," she said, "that when she has given her promise to love, honor, and obey, a *lady* should never see. She owes it to herself."

"I wonder," said Neith, "if the condition of being what you call a lady does n't itself include the probability of there being some things she *can't* see." This went high and wide.

"I should think very likely that it does," Aunt Emmy agreed.

VIII

§ 27

ON Friday of that week, Neith allowed Fleeta to carry her off to a Peace meeting at Mrs. Carteret Keys's.

Mrs. Carteret Keys lived on East Sixty-Fourth.

This statement deserves a paragraph to itself and a paragraph it shall have. That which calls itself Society in New York has its roots in Washington Square, steadily gnawed upon by the cellar and attic infesting hordes of Little Italy. Up the long stem of Fifth Avenue, around Murray Hill, and the upper Forties, you can still see, as on the trunk of a chestnut tree, the leaf scars of its progressive growth. Above Fifty-Ninth it burgeons discreetly as far as the Seventies and across Park Avenue, with an occasional unpruned branch on Lexington and Madison. Within these boundaries Anybody who is Anybody in New York can be found. Mrs. Carteret Keys had a house on Sixty-Fourth.

The most disconcerting discovery Neith had made about being "in Society" in America is that it does not constitute an occupation. People who are striving to get "in" may manage to keep busy at it, but the most pitiful struggle of all that goes on in New York, is the struggle of those involved in its rich exclusiveness to get out into the living world of affairs. Mrs. Carteret Keys was among the richest and most importunate of these strugglers. She was perpetually starting new movements in

the hope of finding one that would remain on her hands long enough to give her the thrill of achievement. Suffrage, Child Welfare, Recreation Parks, all had a way of slipping out of her direction into that of trained workers. The Peace Association was the only thing so far which had not developed into an empty succession of sitting on platforms and signing checks. So far nobody had offered to take it off her hands.

Something of all this Neith had already gathered from Fleeta's own artless admissions. She had met, in company with Miss Spence and Mrs. Kendries, a dozen or more presumably unmarried — with the Village fashion of name-keeping one never felt quite certain — young women whom she had been disposed to take at Fleeta's valuation as moving forces in the world of Radicalism. Lately she had come to suspect that the measure of their importance, by the quantity of printed matter they could manage to distribute, was hardly the true one. But it was not until that evening, as she rode up Fifth Avenue with Fleeta and a Miss Wilkins, whom she had first met in connection with Better Babies, and who was now managing a campaign for Curing Criminalism by the application of musical rhythm, and a much-persecuted — Fleeta said she was persecuted — advocate of Voluntary Parenthood, that Neith suspected the relation of all this agitation to East Sixty-Fourth Street.

Mrs. Carteret Keys, and women like her, paid. It was probable that Neith had lights on Mrs. Carteret Keys — for there was no question that Great-Aunt Doremas

was Society in the utmost apotheosis — that were not shared by Fleeta, lights which enabled her to see not only Fleeta, but Miss Wilkins and to some extent Lutra Dunham and the Birth Control lady, as so many points at which the real social impotence of Society discharged itself in floods of propaganda. Which made her all the more interested to hear what they said when presently Fleeta and her friends began to talk of Rose Matlock.

“I don’t care,” Fleeta was insisting, “how many people leave us so long as we have Rose.”

And though the others showed no enthusiasm, they admitted that it was a point in their favor to have Rose.

“There’s nothing,” Fleeta was confident, “that Rose takes up that does n’t sooner or later work out successfully.”

“It is not,” Miss Wilkins reminded her, “because of anything Rose does for it.”

“She’s not a leader,” said the Voluntary Parenthood advocate. “She’s never been arrested.”

“And she says you need n’t be either, if you said what you have to say to the people that were anxious to hear it, instead of insisting on saying it to those who are anxious not to.” Fleeta was spirited. “You have to admit that Rose can say things that nobody else can say without getting arrested.”

Mrs. Kendries came to the rescue. “And she does get us things at a pinch. That permit for the Public School — ”

“Adam Frear helped her!”

"Well, if he did? Adam does n't help everybody."

"You forget," said Miss Schuyler, "I don't know everybody. Who *is* Rose Matlock?"

"The trouble is," Fleeta explained, "that you are n't able to say." There was no getting at Miss Matlock. She had such extraordinarily original approaches to things herself, and adduced facts of so unusual a complexion that you never knew how to refute them, you never knew even whether or not they were refutable. And yet, of a hundred movements which arose and chopped on the waters, that one which later exhibited a genuine tidal force was the one which Rose Matlock had espoused. She lectured and she wrote, but it was chiefly as an informal talker that she scored. She held her audience in the hollow of her hand, and yet people, the Social Revolutionists at least, did n't care particularly for her. She was too clear, too well defined. She either knew things or she did n't know them. There was about Rose Matlock none of that delicious whirl of social speculation which makes the *milieu* of the Social Revolutionist.

"I should like to know her," Neith concluded.

"Oh, you probably won't like her," Fleeta threw out. "But you will go around quoting her, like the rest of us."

§ 28

All through the first part of the meeting Neith tried to identify Rose Matlock among the thirty-five or forty women gathered in Mrs. Carteret Keys's handsome

drawing-room, where there was nothing native but Mrs. Carteret Keys. There was discreet plunder of every European period, but nothing that could be called American unless one counted the good taste with which it had been assembled. Neith began to understand the significance of Fleeta's futuristic furnishings. The Future was the only indisputable American period.

Neith was by this time sufficiently acquainted with the personnel of Social Reconstruction in New York to realize that there were few women present who were important as personalities. Fully half of them were like Miss Wilkins and Miss Spence, paid disseminators of those sticks and straws of fact that collect and cohere on the surface of social currents. She heard their names tossed about in connection with the names on Aunt Doremas's calling list, who stood to them, no doubt, in the relation of Mrs. Carteret Keys to the Peace Association.

The search of the evening was for a suitable demonstration to convince the President that in spite of accumulating appearances, the Country would not, in the event of a declaration of war, be behind him. Neith recalled a remark of Van Harwood's that if the President did n't get a move on, the country would be before instead of behind. Fleeta's idea was the circulation of a pledge with a million signers, not to fight under any circumstances. The Voluntary Parenthood lady proposed a universal strike of women not to bear children until war was abolished. This was well received, but

damped by the realization that the present war might well be over before the efficacy of such a measure could be tested. Neith made a rapid calculation of the probable diminution of the population by the enforcement of such a strike among those present, and decided that this measure lacked cogency. Most of them were strong for a pamphlet, a serial pamphlet which should contain all the arguments freshly set forth and should somehow be distinguished in its make-up from all other pamphlets. They proposed to make it up from the assembled company.

Mrs. Kendries wished to know if all the important writers on International topics had n't actually declared in favor of war.

The Proposer explained that she had expected to edit the pamphlet herself; she had had a most interesting talk lately with a man who had just come up from a six weeks' tour of Mexico. In view of his confirmation of her personal views, she felt she could handle that phase of the subject. And there were others. Her glance included the others as all present.

Mrs. Carteret Keys subscribed a thousand dollars.

Some one, rising too far back for Neith to observe her, claimed the privilege of a question.

"I should like to know," came a quiet voice, with a delicate coldness like the edge of a knife, "whether anybody here still imagines that the entrance of the United States into the war can be averted. Is n't it a fact that war is now so near us that the only practical considera-

tion is whether this war can in any way be turned to advantage in the prevention of causes of war for the future?"

Opinion chopped about in a confusion of Ayes and Noes. Neith detected relief in many of the affirmatives.

"It is the conclusion I have come to," said the voice, "and it is only one of many conclusions I have reached in watching the progress of recent events and thinking of them."

"If you would just please come forward —" suggested the chairman.

"Madam Chairman" — this was the pamphleteer — "I thought the object of this meeting —"

"Go on, Rose!" Several voices encouraged.

The chairman rapped decisively. "I guess we all want to hear Miss Matlock."

Neith was conscious first of a wonderfully free and simple movement as the figure passed her, of grace without gracefulness. As the speaker faced them she showed, in the middle thirties, a face of contained, smooth sadness, under dark-banded hair. A striking face, not beautiful, rather a lurking-place for beauty that played and threatened every moment to break through the surface.

"I have n't changed my opinion about war," said Rose Matlock — "about the stupidity of it and its needlessness. But I begin to see that we are all wrong in our handling of it. We are handling it like a fever, an

outbreak, to be healed by direct application. And I have come to see it as only another expression of social incompetence, of a profounder and more incurable stupidity of our conception of society."

"Capitalism!" said a Socialist member to scattered notes of assent.

"Capitalism," said the voice, with a steady, uninflected quality like the tones of a bell, "is only another expression of the thing I am thinking of, of our incompetent handling of ourselves, of our handling of ourselves primarily as Self, of insisting too much on ourselves as women, on insisting on men as men. I have worked hard to prevent this war. Nobody in America is really *for* war, but we are going to have this war chiefly, or perhaps solely, because we do not know how to eliminate war. *We do not know how!*

"Because we are all of us, at all times and in the most sacred impulses of our lives, at war . . .

"All our language of sex is phrased in the terms of war, of strategy, of maneuvers, surprises. . . . We talk of conquest, of winning and being won. . . . We cannot come together for the purpose of increasing our kind without a treaty of peace between the protagonists. Contracts hedged about with reprisals and indemnities. . . . And without that contract we fail to respect ourselves and one another."

The audience had an arrested look. Errant enthusiasms remained as they were, with one foot in the air.

The chairman rustled some papers on her desk.

Miss Matlock fixed her with a steady, shadowed insistence.

“As you know, Madam President, I have, while opposing all war, agreed with those who see a great practical advance in Democracy as the fruit of this particular war. And now I have come to agree to it myself for the sake of the advance it will make in personal Democracy. For I see that we can make very little by the abolition of political autocracy so long as we set up in our private lives an autocracy of personal feeling, the counterpart of that which we fight against when we see it thrown large on the screen of politics.

“I have just come from the West,” she said, coming out of the cloud to draw a little nearer to her audience. “And I have seen the American people moving toward this war with an urge too deep even for their understanding. And it is because I have come to understand that urge myself as being the instinctive rightness of the American Spirit moving toward something that makes for unanimity of men and women, not as men and women but as humanity . . . I am for Peace, I believe in ultimate Peace, but I see no good in following a personal vision apart from the crowd, even when it is a vision in the interests of the crowd. I see that a vision itself may become an autocracy which denies the very end it seeks. . . . And because I have come to see that it is not theories of Democracy the world lacks, but experience of it . . . not believing it, so much as being it . . . I have come to welcome this war with all its horrors and stu-

pidity, and to wish more than anything else to take my part in it . . .

“And to ask you, Madam President, to erase my name from the list of your membership.”

IX

§ 29

AT the last war came very quietly.

The Kendries had gone down to Washington where Direck was due on some Labor business, but Neith had declined their invitation to join them. Adam Frear was there, and Van Harwood, but so also was Eustace. The last time or two that she had seen Lieutenant Rittenhouse, Neith had been careful. There was reason to be; and yet she asked herself derisively what she was waiting for. She had always meant to marry. Of late that vague intention had turned to a definite want, given force, no doubt, by the loss of her father, the need of completion. The cry of a young child, the touch of its tiny hands, woke a sudden fierceness; desires stirred in her to a tune whose instrument was out of sight. But with it all she had a disinclination to having Eustace Rittenhouse propose to her. She would not go to Washington where he would be certain to find her, and possibly read encouragement in her being there.

Early in the evening that the vote was being taken in Congress, Neith wandered farther than usual down Macdougall Street to an Italian restaurant, and caught

on every side the heightened friendliness, the rising sense of race. She fitted what she felt to Rose Matlock's phrases.

She had not yet got over Rose Matlock. She could not remember having ever been so stirred by another woman. That was the way English women were stirred by Mrs. Pankhurst. But the members of the Peace Association had not been stirred, not all of them. Neith scarcely recalled how the meeting had broken up, except that it had been almost immediately after Rose Matlock sat down. She was under the impression that the pamphleteer had put her own motion and, by the sheer inattention of the majority of the members, passed it.

Going home afterward she had not wished to talk about Rose Matlock, nor had Fleeta talked.

"I shall come around," Fleeta had said. "I always do come around to agreeing with Rose, but I feel as if a ninth wave had hit me and my face is full of sand."

Neith understood why Miss Matlock was not a leader. She could hardly imagine Mrs. Carteret Keys and the secretaries breasting successfully the strong surf of her mind. But she felt in Rose Matlock something that she felt now, walking among the alien peoples of lower New York, the rising sense of race. That was, no doubt, what made the English woman the power she was. But, of course, the English were a race. The war would be a good thing if it made them all Americans together. And

she wondered what Rose Matlock meant by an autocracy of personal feeling.

She was alone in her room that night, when suddenly the band from the Fourteenth Street Armory began to play. "Yankee Doodle!" A few minutes later the stringed quartette from a near-by restaurant began to play the "Star-Spangled Banner" in the street, followed by the "Marseillaise," and the Italian national air. Far uptown a kiltie band piped along the main thoroughfare, and a little later the bells of Santa Maria Madde-lena began to ring.

On a sudden impulse Neith left the house and found a taxi to take her to Mrs. Sherrod's hotel. Madelon had been back in town for nearly a week; she would be coming home from the theater about this time; Neith frequently went up and spent the night with her.

With the new sensitiveness that had come upon her of late, Neith divined that this lonely home-coming was the actress's worst hour. The hour which means so much to the artist, of exultation in the successful practice of her art, the response of the audience, and the sharp reaction of weariness. At times, no matter what they talked about, it seemed to Neith that her friend's pain was like a palpitant presence in the room. She could not get her own mind off thinking where Julius must be at that hour, and who leaned upon his interest and support.

On the way to the hotel it occurred to Neith that surely at this moment of national decision, Julius Sherrod would think of his wife. Her own heart was full of

tears, of a solemn submission to the will and the power of God. It seemed to her so natural that Julius would rise to the need of nobleness, if only for an hour, that she did not go to Mrs. Sherrod's rooms at once, but waited, half hidden in the lobby, until she saw Madelon come in alone. Contrary to her expectation, she found the actress in a high mood, one that fled like an innocent soul over hot ploughshares to proof of its own integrity.

"You can't imagine, honey, what an audience it was to play to, electrified as they were. The news came in between the third and fourth acts. Suddenly the orchestra broke off and then, after an interval, 'America.' We could hear the audience come rustling up out of their seats like the rush of a tide." There were other exciting things to tell, dramatic things at the opera, where a German prima donna was singing, crowds singing as they issued on the streets.

They looked out of the window and saw searchlights playing over the city from warships in the harbor.

"A little beam that strikes across the dark
And falls far short of heaven,"

Mrs. Sherrod quoted.

"Madelon, tell me, does one get any closer to heaven, as one goes on?"

✓ "One feels more confident that there *is* heaven. Order . . . and law. But whether one gets any closer to order in one's own life, or feels any surer of the law . . . I don't know, honey, I don't know." Mrs. Sherrod sighed, and

then, having trusted Neith to make the connection herself, she asked, "Have you seen Vera yet?"

"No."

"I'm told she is having a great success."

"Madelon . . . It's no use pretending. I should n't go to see Vera Jerome under any circumstances. I think she has behaved abominably to you. Abominably!" She did not add that the particular circumstance of her having refused to go involved an invitation from Adam Frear, a party having been hastily made up with the Kendries.

The invitation had been over the telephone and Neith had simply pleaded a previous engagement, not seeing her way to an explanation.

"Neith, dear," said the actress, "you must not let anything — anything you think about Vera and me — influence your judgment of her acting."

"I don't. I shan't think anything of you that you don't wish me to think. But nothing on earth could prevent me from thinking Vera Jerome anything but a flashy, ungrateful little cad! Madelon! You are n't going back on all you've always insisted on about your art! You can't believe that anybody who would behave as Vera has behaved to you, could have anything worth while to say!"

"Perhaps she has that to say."

"I don't understand, Madelon."

"If I was right, and there is nothing to her but a handsome body and a bag of tricks —"

“Which she picked up from you!”

“And the best manager in New York —”

“Whom *you* trained!”

“If that is all she has, it is bound in the end to show. She will demonstrate all that I believe about the substantial fiber of acting, all the more for having a little flare-up of success at the start.”

“At your expense! Yours!”

“My dear child, when you give yourself to the Powers to be proved on their behalf, you can't always ask that they will prove you pleasantly. All that I have ever asked is that the truth about acting shall be manifest in my work — or against it, if that is the way it has to be. Besides, I may have been mistaken about Vera. Some of the critics seem to think she has real talent.”

“And you know how much dependence to place on the critics! Perhaps I've no right to ask, but — does Julius think she has talent?”

The worn, lovely face of the actress whitened. “Ah, my dear, that I have n't asked.” She closed the window and came back into the half-lighted room. “Here we are talking about men and women, and the country at war!”

“Rose Matlock says that is what we are at war about, the fundamental relations . . .”

“You've met Rose!”

“I've heard her. Yes. I see what she meant. Personal Democracy. Autocracy of personal feeling . . . That's what Julius and Vera have done, they've just gone ahead . . . Forgive me, Madelon! It is horrid of me to

talk about your personal affairs as if it were a case in court."

"We are all in court now, honey. The whole country. Democracy itself. Yes, that is what Rose meant. It has come to her rather lately, I think. I have heard her two or three times. There is n't any real reason why a man should indulge his personal feelings about women any more than his personal feelings about money, or power, or any of the things we are fighting about. Or if there is a reason why sex feeling can't be — democratized, why, then democracy is n't a principle. It is just — an expedient, a method."

"I suppose this war will help us to find out," Neith ruminated. "They've found out a lot of things in England. You'd be surprised! Sit down, Madelon, I'm going to make you some cocoa." It was past midnight, but they heard a band going by in the street, playing "Tipperary."

"Have you any one to go, Madelon?"

"I've a nephew or two, and a boy in my company. That's the pity of it; all that young talent, in so many lines, cut off."

"I know. And yet somehow I feel more reconciled than I thought I was going to be. Something Rose Matlock said about not following the personal vision when it leads you apart from the crowd. It's the togetherness. All those peoples, marching, marching . . ."

"Yes," said the actress. "Even the Germans. They'll get something, too. Even though they are cast for the

villain in this piece, we've got to remember *that!* We'll all get something."

§ 30

Neith found herself trying to give shape to some of the reasons she felt for being more contented with America than she had been since her return. This was three or four evenings later, when, after a rather formal note asking permission, Adam Frear came to call on her in Jayne Street.

It was not all at once that she could get to the point of her own reactions. Adam seemed tired; showed himself appreciative of whatever there was in her society and environment that served to cut him off from the strenuities of his two weeks at Washington. In his willingness to be charmed, for once, Neith was able to meet him personally outside their common interest in the American scene. The day had closed in early with one of those quick, chill rains that come skurrying on the track of the first April suns. There was a rawness in the air that justified the kindling of a fire under the white mantel. It glinted pleasantly on the brass fire furnishings, on the satiny surface of scarlet tulips in the Pomona bowl, and on the great shell pins that confined Neith's shell-brown hair. Adam Frear's eyes rested on her with the quiet gaze with which a man takes in a pleasing scene, too familiar to do more than quietly please. If Neith had found him delightful in his character of the practiced interviewer, giving himself kindly and consciously to

the elucidation of the personal point of view, she found him endearing in his surrender of the conversational lead.

Their earlier rôle of prophet and neophyte was laid aside. For the first time they talked. Presently she found herself putting her new-found security into words.

"I've found what I want to do." She shaped it at last. "Not a career. I don't care in the least for a career. So far as a career is concerned with the thing done. I'll roll bandages or fill cartridges cheerfully. But I do want, and mean to have, a part in bringing to consciousness whatever it is that is struggling in this war to get through to us. You feel sure, don't you, that there is something trying to get through?"

"Oh, undoubtedly."

"And you think — I remember you said something about that once — it is a larger sort of Democracy?"

"Something like that."

"Well —" She was struck suddenly with the general resemblance of his views to Rose Matlock's and the striking difference. She wondered — "It will take a lot of finding out, I suppose."

She veered off from what she had meant to say; she had a curious inhibition against mentioning Rose Matlock, and took up the thread a little farther along. "The thing that concerns me is to change with the changes that are coming. I suppose they will be tremendous."

"Oh, tremendous!"

"Sometimes I am tempted to agree with Fleeta," she

said, glancing about the pleasant room which for the first time struck her as having nothing American in it. "I brought too much of my past with me."

"You are farther along than most Americans if you can recognize it as belonging to the past."

"Oh, I can do that. I know that most of my opinions are heirlooms. Even if I have n't the courage to take them to the shop and change them for something else, I at least recognize them as genuine antiques. I suppose" — she addressed herself to a slight abstraction which she discovered in him from time to time — "you scrapped *your* past ages ago."

"I had n't very much. The past of a small town in Iowa, which is the skimpiest past imaginable."

"You've no idea," she smiled, "of my 'satiabile curiosity' as to how you came to be." She noted that the quotation escaped him, as much of the small change of the book-nourished circle to which she was habituated often did.

There was not much he had to tell her. His father had been the proprietor of what had begun in *his* father's time as a crossroads store. In Adam's time it had developed into the General Merchandise Emporium of an agricultural center. The concern did a little banking on the side and loaned money on first mortgages.

"Even then," Adam Frear told her, "I had a notion of the whole thing as absurd, inadequate. My father accepted my attitude as indicating that I had 'no head for business.' He sent me to college with the idea of making

an editor of me, and even acquired an interest in the country paper in advance."

"How proud he must be of you."

"Disappointed. My father takes the limitations of his life seriously. He has no measure for what is done outside of it. But he was a good old sport. He let me have all the money I needed for college and two years abroad. Then the *Evening Star* bought my series on 'Municipal Management Abroad.' Lanier Stevens was editor at that time and he had an eye for social change. And the rest developed. It is good of you to take this interest in my affairs." He turned back to her with intention. They were sitting together on the sofa across from the delicate flicker of the fire, just reached by the perfume of a spray of white lilac thrust low down between the tulips. "I had meant to tell you of them hoping that you might be led through them to take an interest in me."

"As if we were n't, all of us — more than anybody."

"Ah, but I mean personally. As interested as I am, as I have always been, in you."

Silence opened like a gulf. Twice Neith tried to bridge it with a light rejoinder, and fell into the gulf from which Adam presently rescued them both.

"I wonder if you ever guessed the degree of my interest in you that time we met at Homburg . . . or the nature of my interest."

"I did n't guess." Six years! It would be six years in June.

"I hoped you had n't . . . *then*. You knew, did n't you, that my wife died more than a year ago?"

"Mrs. Sherrod told me. And how devoted you were."

He seemed unaccountably to get a lift of relief from that. "I like to think that she was as happy as she was capable of being until the last."

Neith recalled Mrs. Frear's fretful confidence of frustration with a rush of commiseration for her husband. "I am sure she was."

"I am glad you feel that, having met her. It makes it possible to say that, though I did my best, my marriage left me with a great deal to give . . . and to get."

It was incredible to Neith that the conversation should be tending where it seemed to tend. If anything had happened to break it off at that point, she would have made herself believe that the implication of the moment had been preposterous. It went on, however. It began to be penetrated with a delicate poignancy, like the perfume of the lilacs.

"It was not until I saw you again that I realized," he said, "how much there was to get. How much I had missed. As often as anybody has a right to think of himself in times like these, I have thought how I could make you understand also what I have to give."

The gesture that Neith made at this point was purely instinctive. It came to her instead of speech, as a way of saying that whatever he gave, the woman should feel

honored. She found her hand taken with a warm, compelling pressure.

"And now," he said, "there is n't time. I am on my way to Russia. But I could not go without letting you know what had been my intention."

Neith made an ineffectual noise or two. She recovered her hand and, after an effort, her voice.

"You must realize that I have not thought of anything like this at all. Never at all."

"If you could think of it . . . I shall be away three or four months. I am going for *The Era*, and for Labor. But I would do better for everybody I represent if I could feel sure that you are thinking of me, that you are taking what I say in lieu of much that I shall take the first opportunity of saying on my return . . ."

He must have gained the assurance that he wanted from her silence, for he went on presently telling her where he should be, and of the feeling he had that what seemed to be coming to the surface of the revolution in Russia was not what must finally come. He felt himself called to be the herald of the new issue. So he talked, getting possession of her hand at last and drawing her up with him as he rose to leave.

"There is so little time," he extenuated, holding it warmly. "I have a thousand things to do to-morrow, but if you could dine with me? I'll call . . . you won't mind if I can't be entirely sure of the hour." He was utterly the master of voice and eye and every wooing inflection. Neith hardly knew, when at last he released her, how

much she had promised. Around all her thought there played a white dazzle of the man's personal charm and his destiny.

X

§ 31

IF Neith Schuyler was not the woman to imagine that every man interested in her meant to propose, neither was she the sort to find herself in love with any man simply because he had proposed. She found herself extraordinarily stirred by Adam Frear's declaration of love for her, but she did not in the least know whether this tremulous agitation of all the chords of life into which its unexpectedness had struck her, was any answer to his question. Oddly, her first reaction into reality was an impulse to send for Eustace Rittenhouse. Without her quite realizing it, he had been so much in possession of the field of her imagination, so far as her imagination worked with the stuff of the future, that for days she could not think of him without a hurt pang of his being dispossessed. She had acquiesced so completely in his delight in their mutual discovery of each other as play-fellows, he had so made her feel that his interest in her was something preciously worth protecting, that she had the oddest impulse to cry out to him that this interest must now be defended. She had moments even of finding, in the public excuse of his absence, reasons for defending it for him.

Neith was not altogether without the experience of being sought. There had been a winter in Rome when her social contacts had included an Italian count of incredibly ancient lineage and a fresh and romantic charm so appealing to her still impressionable Americanism.

Count Mario had been more than impressed. There had been passages — those delicate, hedged attentions which make the flavor of a Roman courtship. He had gone so far, in fact, as to make her the tender of one of his hands, the other being clasped fast in that of his mother who had no intention of surrendering it until her own had been properly filled with the evidence that the Signorina Americana's dowry was more than equal to her son's lack.

As a matter of fact, it might have been. There were concessions which Mr. Schuyler might have made to a fortune left to him conditionally, which he had never cared to make on his own account. They might easily have been made to his daughter's happiness.

It is difficult for Europeans to understand that, though Americans like money, they value it chiefly as evidence, and outside of certain limited purlieus of New York, have not yet acquired the habit of liking it as conditions. If the Count had been hers, Mr. Schuyler would have taken pleasure in giving his daughter anything that would have enhanced her enjoyment of him. But he was not buying counts. It was characteristic of them both that as soon as the situation presented itself to them in that light, as it was characteristic of Count Mario's

family so to present it, the Schuylers fled both him and Rome with a precipitance that left the Count rather in the position of dangling still from the maternal hand-clasp, emptily in the air.

There had been other flutters of the matrimonial opportunity; a consumptive young Englishman at Davos Platz, a middle-aged Frenchman, a widower, who took to bringing her bouquets as an accessory to long and unnecessarily ceremonious calls upon her father. For though Neith's romanticism had been more hurt than her affections by the Roman incident, it had the effect of inhibiting those tentative gestures of the mating instinct which youth so engagingly discloses. It produced on her surface that close-folded effect which invited the sort of offers from which her father openly and humorously snatched her away.

There had grown up a legend between them, as often as this became necessary, that he was saving her for the ideal young American who, with the glamour of some conspicuous achievement and with a surprising amount of pocket money, was to carry her away. That Eustace Rittenhouse was much more her father's ideal for her than Adam Frear, greatly as Mr. Schuyler had admired him, had unconsciously softened her toward that declaration of his intention which Eustace had somehow signally failed to make. For, after all, it was Adam Frear, and not Eustace, who had asked her to marry him. As she sought now for the due proportion of her own resistance to Eustace's love-making, it flashed upon her that

her instinctive avoidance of a crisis owed itself to the quality of Adam Frear's unexpressed six years' attachment.

It is doubtful if any man ever means as much by his love-making as the woman gets out of it.

Love with women like Neith Schuyler is a possession, the very air and atmosphere of the landscape of the heart, without which it does not flourish. Adam Frear had told her his love for her began at Homburg six years before, and as by the flash of that surprise, she had seen it lighting the whole landscape of the past. And just by accepting the idea of that love as a continuously operating force in her past, she gave it a footing in her present which it by no means had, so far as it involved reciprocal emotion on her own part.

She was still trembling with the impact of his desire on her own unawakened heart when Adam called for her the next evening, a little earlier, rather than later, than she expected him. She had expected him with embarrassment, for she was not yet able to think of him as hers, and he had so far refrained from the possessive gesture that might have made her his in fact. But there was that in his manner, as soon as she had ushered him into the half-formal and wholly charming front room, of having happily escaped to her from multitudinous perplexities, that gave her the note not only for that occasion, but led like the call of a bird up gentle by-paths of future security and rest. She could see that if she married him there would be many evenings when he would come to her

like that, evenings when the happiest thing she could do for him would be not to share his responsibilities, but to forget them for him.

There are women to whom the art of being restful comes as a kind of studied duplicity, one of the feminine bag of tricks by which men are caught and kept. But to Neith Schuyler it had come as part of the necessity of affection, in the long semi-invalid life of her father, a thing which in giving brought relief to her nature like the mother's giving of milk. She found herself at once eased of her embarrassment in supplying Adam Frear with the needed quarter of an hour of release from the hurry of his preparations.

"I hope," he said, after an interval of those momentarily trifling exchanges which engage the attention of even prospective lovers, "that you won't mind meeting some friends of mine at dinner. Russians," he said, "political refugees who have much to tell me about things I must see there, and persons I must interview. I have asked them to meet me at a restaurant near here. I should have liked you to see them in their own homes on the East Side, but the time is too short."

"I should have liked that, too," Neith agreed. "I have been seeing the East Side with Mrs. Kendries, a little. What surprises me about it, except for the scale, the key, how like it is to our Side."

"I could show you a part of it that is not only unlike ours, but has its whole interest and attention centered on something that scarcely takes into account the exist-

ence of ours, except, perhaps, as something due to disappear. Like a dew, like a slime rather, when the sun of *their* revolution appears."

"But I thought it had, the Russian Revolution, I mean?"

"A revolution," he admitted. "Did I ever speak to you of a man called Trotzky —" He left it hanging in the air. "I wish," he returned to the personal issue, "I might have had the evening alone with you."

"But you'll be coming back. You don't intend staying there?" And this light admission of a possibility of evenings to come, spent in his company, lightened him like wine.

"Oh, I'm coming back!" he cried boyishly. "Nothing could keep me from coming back!"

§ 32

They went out presently into the street where the electric lamps nibbled at the twilight. Somewhere back of the Square and in the neighborhood of the El., they found a passage leading between irreconcilable back walls into a narrow court, and a stair that went up from that to a floor of what had been little cubicles of rooms, all let in together by the removal of half walls and partitions, to become one of those eating-places so popular in the Village, where the excellence and cheapness of the cuisine made up for inadequacies of service.

The place was liberally brightened with yellow and purple paint, and at the scattered tables Neith recognized

the flamboyant Village types, cheerfully opposing their youth and inexperience to the drab indifference of the city. It was only a few moments after they had seated themselves at a table set for five, that the Russians came in, two men and a woman. The woman Neith understood, for though she had the Slavic features and spoke the tongue, she had everywhere about her the unmistakable savor of race which clings to the least drop of Hebrew blood.

Neith's work with Mrs. Kendries had made her familiar with the short-limbed, high-breasted figure of the female compacted by the exigencies of race to the greatest economy of function. She was tolerably acquainted with the quick flare of temperament and the complex of persecution, bred of pogroms and ostracisms.

But the men were new to her, strange as Harvard graduates who had learned their Russian in the back alleys of Petrograd, and worked at the garment-cutting trades for a livelihood, might have seemed to the former inhabitants of the Winter Palace. Their oddly imperfect English, their enormous grasp of economic details, left her far behind. And they left her without any of that polite compunction which characterizes the American male in his intellectual flights, without any effort to lend a wing to her slight attempts to follow. She was thankful that in their wake, evidently of their party, but quite willing to be excluded from it so far as Adam Frear was concerned, came two people who found themselves happy and important in being remembered by her. She

was pleased when Adam insisted on their pulling up another table and adding themselves to the number of his guests.

"Is n't it simply wonderful!" breathed the girl at sight of Neith. "Our meeting here like this, and in these rooms! They used to be slave quarters, you know, when this was a fashionable neighborhood. They say there are staples in the basement walls — But of course you don't remember us."

"Oh, but I do remember you," Neith insisted when she had freed herself from the effusive and rather clammy handshake of Hippolyte, and to prove it she hazarded, "I suppose your school is out for the summer or you would n't be here."

"I'm out," Miss Comyns nodded. "I'm shirt-waist finishing."

"She's demonstrating the principle of self-determination in personal conduct," Hippolyte explained.

"Dear me, how formidable that sounds! What did you do?"

"It's what I would n't do. They wanted me to teach the children to promise to obey the laws of the country."

"Well," Neith temporized, "what are laws *for*?"

"But, Miss Schuyler, you don't believe in *obedience*, do you!" The greenish eyes expanded slightly. Miss Comyns was on the verge of being scandalized. "I could n't make children promise to obey laws that I know to be stupid and unjust. Would *you* obey a law that you knew was *bad*?"

“It had n’t occurred to me,” said Neith with a sudden rush of genuine humility, “that I was able to judge in most cases.” She was continually amazed at the literalness of the democratic premise of these people.

She had been trying to follow the conversation between Adam Frear and his other guests. It appeared that American recognition of the present revolution in Russia was about to be discredited because the United States, which approved of it, had unjustly convicted a man named Mooney of something or other which Neith did not remember having heard specified.

Evidently word of Adam Frear’s imminent departure had circulated freely among the radical group, for one and another of them appeared during the evening and claimed a share of his attention. Most of what was said escaped Neith’s understanding. But insensibly she began to be penetrated with a feeling of reality in the sum of social forces which hitherto she had heard as the inchoate clamor of a world in unwonted motion. Whatever social movement Adam Frear subscribed to, and she was by no means sure of its name or content, it had a force and direction as yet unmeasured in any terms that she was able to handle. It came over her floodingly as, in terms of her known world, unmeasurable.

One of Adam’s guests, pallid-faced, bearded, the eyes wide and spurting blue fire, the nose jutting sharply, pointed, but a trifle thick at the nostrils, leaned across the table to him.

“When the time comes we will act,” he declared. “We

will act in whatever way the time makes open to us. You talk, Adam Frear, of a bloodless revolution because you are an American; you have not seen blood. I tell you he is not a true revolutionist who will not have a revolution unless it comes gently. Tell the comrades that for me. Tell them that when it comes, the true revolution, that the Proletariat of the world will be with us. The American Proletariat will not follow the lead of its Bourgeoisie. It will go with us against the Bourgeoisie. . . . Tell them from me that when the true revolution comes there will be blood and there will be Terror . . . did not the Bourgeoisie use Terror when it suited their purpose . . .

“I tell you, Adam Frear, that this idea of yours that the Russian Revolution is to be a smooth and orderly progress, is a dream, an American dream . . . I tell you that a revolution is not a revolution unless it breaks the resistance of the opposing class . . .”

There was more of this, but it was not this that struck chillingly to Neith's soul. It was the sudden, the complete realization that to Adam Frear, to the Kendries with their wholesome Americanism, to the young editor with the Presbyterian background and the New England family name, it meant other things and more things than it was possible to fathom.

She made swiftly and instinctively a movement toward Adam to find in the renewal of the personal relation a surcease from alarm. He looked down at her. Suddenly there was no revolution, only a warm, excluding

intimacy, from which she almost as instantly detached herself to find her perceptions of Miss Comyns enlarged to the point of a swift, nameless community of sex. She was sure that Sadie was engaged to Hippolyte if not — as it oddly occurred to her — already married.

§ 33

“Is n’t Trotzky wonderful!” Miss Comyns had accepted the moment of confidence for what it was worth. “He’s going over, you know. Hippolyte is helping to raise the money. Of course, Hippolyte is a philosophical anarchist and Trotzky is a Socialist. But it all brings us nearer. Hippolyte says that Adam Frear is an Anarchist, but he does n’t know it. That’s why he is opposed to force.”

“Oh,” murmured Neith, “can one be an Anarchist and not know it? You’ll think I am very ignorant, but I had always associated Anarchism with force. Bombs, you know.”

“That’s the way the Bourgeoisie look at it. You see,” the pale cat’s eyes widened, “a bomb is just a sort of medium of expression.”

“I see,” Neith said; and for the moment she most extraordinarily did see at least what the little shirt-waist finisher, who wished to be an Intellectual, meant by it. She also saw that the girl was looking at Hippolyte with an unmistakable tender possessiveness. Hippolyte himself was hanging on the words of the second of Adam Frear’s guests, a broad man, flushed and thick-

lipped, who had been going farther in his identification of the most hated phases of Capitalism with his adopted country's government, than the woman member of their party found advisable.

"André, André!" she warned, with the rising note of hysteria, "they have their spies everywhere!" She put one of her fat hands over his, protectingly.

"Do you believe in marriage, Miss Schuyler?" Miss Comyns found some relativity in the question which escaped Miss Schuyler. "I mean do you believe in the bourgeois contract? Anarchists don't, you know."

"Not even the philosophical ones?"

"I was brought up orthodox, myself," confided Miss Comyns, "but Hippolyte was always an Anarchist. You've been so nice to me. You asked me to come to see you, you know. I thought I'd better tell you. Hippolyte and I are n't married; we're just living together. Of course, I know if you are Adam Frear's friend you *could n't* be bourgeois —"

"I've never discussed the subject with him."

"Anybody can see you've got your own opinion. That's why I like you. Hippolyte, too. Hippolyte thinks you are just wonderful. But he would, anyway, the way he admires Adam Frear. I thought you ought to know."

"I shall be very glad to have you come to see me. And bring your — and bring Hippolyte."

"Oh, yes, *of course* I call him my husband," Miss Comyns supplied joyously. "We're perfectly happy!"

Tears blinded suddenly her greenish eyes. "You're too wonderful!"

§ 34

Neith did not try to talk of her impressions of the evening on the way home. She was relieved to find that Adam did not require it of her. Some notion that he had taken her to that place, had shown her these people as an earnest of the sort of thing a life with him might hold for her, had flitted through her mind from time to time and disappeared before his evident lack of interest in any surprises the evening may have had for her. Either he took her attitude altogether for granted, or the evening had meant less to him than it seemed, a mere kaleidoscope incident in the life of a sociological journalist, as he had once called himself in answer to some light query of hers.

He looked at his watch as they came to her rooms again.

"I have to meet a man who is coming up from Washington with my passports," he said. "You must n't hold against me that I have so little time to give to proving to you how completely I am leaving my hope of future happiness in your hands."

"Ah" — she met him on the same plane of gentle gravity — "I should do scant justice to your choice of me if I thought you had any doubt of my understanding how pressed you are for time, and how important the business is that calls you."

“If you could only understand how sure I am in my choice. How utterly sure.” His gaze roved tenderly over her face, her soft folded hair, the charming feminine intricacy of her dress. He took her hand.

After a moment or two Neith found the courage to face him fairly. “Whatever comes of this,” she said, “I want you to understand that I am honored, that never in my life have I felt so honored.”

“It’s more than honor that I want,” he told her, as without force, but with a slow, tender compulsion he took her in his arms and kissed her.

BOOK III

XI

§ 35

It was fortunate for Miss Schuyler's resuscitating appreciation of her country that, between the Declaration of War and the successful operation of the Universal Service Act, she had a pressing personal issue to occupy her mind. There were others, who as the slow peasant stuff which is the warp of American life, began to manifest through the woof of easy sentiment and easy living which masks the American people from themselves, like Neith, were only saved by their personal preoccupations from mortification.

As it was, mortification was in the air. Politicians, the Press, rushed about making the early republican gestures of patriotism and world Democracy. There were bands and banners. None of which quite concealed from the honest, the suspicion that the moral aloofness on which America had prided herself for the past three years had more than a touch of doltish vacuity of purpose. Accustomed to take themselves at the measure of their surface shrewdness, stripe of the dominant peasant strain, there were many Americans as the national consciousness shambled itself together its complacent mediocrity, flushed to something that was close akin to shame.

In spite of a tremendous milling about and insisting

that the country should get together, there was no very clear idea, after all this period of bystanding, what they were to get together about.

And through it all there was a rather tight-jawed younger generation, not by any means springing to arms overnight in the expected millions, but demanding stubbornly to be *shown*, exhibiting something menacingly like the ungenerous attitude which, as she had seen the British seeing it, had driven Neith in an unreasoning accession of loyalty to her native shore. Oddly enough it was this younger generation, represented for the moment in Neith's circle by Lutra Dunham's nineteen-year-old brother, Carter, that brought her at last a saving sense of the situation.

The Kendries were among the first of the Socialists to accept the war for a fact. They made up for the concession by a hot, wholesale opposition to any form of conscription. Like all doctrinaires, the Kendries were perfectly sure of the moral bearings of everything. Even Fleeta had her moments of doubt whether or not a thing proposed was "radical," and if so, was it sufficiently radical to warrant a break with your former self for the sake of being done. Not that Fleeta had any doubts about conscription. She was all the more sure, since her Peace Association had recently been closed by the police, in view of certain unspecified contributions to its funds, that conscription was only an insidious form of slavery.

She was at present completely occupied in planning to take advantage, in the radical interest, of the riot

that was to occur on the first attempt to enforce the Universal Service Act. She had even momentarily allied herself with the lady who was circulating a non-fighting pledge, and had made arrangements to surrender the lease of her apartment in anticipation of being sent to jail. An anticipation which, rather to her regret, was never fulfilled.

It was, therefore, to Lutra Dunham and her circle an entirely simple matter that her brother should enlist if he wished. And if he did n't wish, to expect quite as interesting a time with the Authorities. It remained for Neith, who was not at all sure of things, and at the same time had a charming way with boys, to become the recipient of young Carter Dunham's perplexed confidence.

He had come up from some place of vague and absorbing interest called "The Tech," shaking his problem in his teeth as a terrier shakes a rat, quite plainly driven by the attraction of war for youth, and as plainly fighting off the emotional appeal of bands and posters and the calling flap of flags. What he wanted, and what Lutra Dunham, with her brisk doctrine of self-determination, could n't help him to, was a clear ground for deciding his own participation in the war, untouched by what in his more lucid moments he characterized as "bunk."

It seemed, at the first go, an unlovely attitude for youth. One expects always of the young a certain high regardlessness, the want of which in Carter Dunham

made it particularly difficult for Neith to face, for the sake of getting to the bottom of it, his attitude of watching over his shoulder to see what the other fellows were going to do.

Put this, as she had put it at its kindest to Adam Frear, as a passion for likeness, it was still an unlovely attitude.

But the moment she had faced it, one night when they were coming home from a showing of war "movies" together, she found herself rewarded. They had been confronted, as they got down from the green bus in the Square, with the tail-end of some sort of Italo-American demonstration.

"That's all right, of course," Carter Dunham burst out, as they had paused for a moment to admit the thrill of seeing the Roman Fasces and the S.P.Q.R. set up in an American plaza, around, of all things in the world, the statue of Garibaldi. "It's fine, this getting together with everybody. Only — why did we have to wait until somebody landed us one, to find out that it is fine? And if it is as fine as all that why don't we just do it? All this blurb about patriotism. And heroes. Yah! Who wants to be a hero?" He scuffed the gravel with his shoe.

"I was up to the camp the other day," he went on presently. "There's some of the fellows from the Tech there. They were teaching them some kind of a college yell while they were learning to stick Germans in the stomach . . . Not that I mind sticking Germans. When I think what they did in Belgium." Then, with a sudden

extraordinary flash of lucidity: "That's the way the Kaiser's gang got them to do what they did, feeling like movie heroes.

"Anyway, if it's got to be done, why is n't it just like anything else? Like street cleaning," catching the figure from a group of white wings moving across the Square. "Who wants all those paunchy old guys from Wall Street clapping us on the back?" He burst out again: "What business they got putting it up to *us* . . . fellows like me!"

"I see what you mean," said Neith. She did n't, quite, but she wished him to go on talking. She guided him deftly to an empty bench. Young Dunham wanted to talk.

"The other day," he said, after a moment of discontented silence, "I saw the Sixty-Ninth marching down the Avenue. There was a woman waving her handkerchief. *With a dog under her arm*. Diamonds, too! What business was it of *hers*?" He kicked the gravel again. "I don't mind — going, you know, but I don't want to put in a year or two getting all shot up, just to come back and see a fat woman with a dog waving a handkerchief at me."

"Ah, I *do* see what you mean," said Neith.

"It's more than I can get Lute to see. She thinks it's just a question of Militarism. If you believe in it you go, and if you don't, you call yourself a conscientious objector and stick on at your old job. But it is n't that. Not with me. If this thing has got to be done" — he took a

fresh hold on his grievance — “what they call ‘Making the world safe for Democracy,’ I don’t care *how* it’s done! Fighting, or any old way. But I don’t want to lose an arm or a leg, or get myself all full of — cooties” — he dropped his voice in that instinctive avoidance by the American man of the mention of any kind of uncleanness to a woman — “and then find that I had just picked myself out for a Grand-Stand Play.”

§ 36

“You’re wrong about this conscription business, Lutra,” Neith had said to Mrs. Kendries at the first opportunity afterward. They had already come to first names, by virtue of Mrs. Kendries’s being one of the Dunhams of Stamford. “I am not sure of much, but I am of that. It is n’t fair to put the responsibility of enlisting on our boys by working on their feelings. It’s just a form of shirking on our part.” And she tried to tell her about the talk with Carter.

It was not easy for Mrs. Kendries to get away from the dogmas of her class. She said, “What becomes of self-determination if we make the decision for them?”

“What becomes of it in any case? How much self-determination is there left to a sensitive young man with the whole country ‘blurbing,’ as Carter puts it, about patriotism. What they did to youngsters in England to persuade them to enlist was cruel. Cruel! And I don’t feel so sure about self-determination. Is n’t the Kaiser about the most self-determined person you know?”

"Rose Matlock is right," she said, with new conviction, "we are n't getting any forwarder by setting up an autocracy of personal feeling in place of the old autocracy of authority. We've got to find some sort of a Democratic medium in which the personal equation can be solved.

"I wonder," she speculated aloud, "if that is n't what Adam Frear means when he talks about the livingness of politics."

And as she said that there passed over her mind a thin shadow of grayness, too insubstantial for her to recognize it as cast by the crossing of the views of Rose Matlock and Adam Frear in her mind, and the subtle suggestion in their likeness of some common source. It lasted long enough for her to miss the first part of Mrs. Kendries's answer and to catch only at "I'd like to know what you mean by a Democratic medium."

"I don't know," Neith admitted: "I don't know what I mean, but I have a notion I'm going to find out."

That formless sense of things due to make themselves plain in some manner not yet disclosed, things of tremendous and unspecified spiritual value, was the state of mind in which the greater part of America made its entry into the war.

Then the Universal Service Act went into effect, and practically none of the things happened that had been predicted. On the contrary, there was a marked release of the social tension. The war emerged from the tawdry trappings of sentimentalism as an adventure in Social

Consent. Men came forward to do their part as they were required. All that remained of the brief spirit of national heroics was in youngsters like Carter Dunham — who, after reviling all the most sacred precedents of sentimentalism, had gone off suddenly and signed up for the Artillery — now engaged in making the new conscripts unhappy on the basis of being himself a voluntarily enlisted man.

“We ought to have known all along,” said Neith to Mrs. Kendries, “that that is the way it would work. Everybody doing his share because it is his share and not because of something he happens to feel about it.”

“I ought,” her friend admitted, “after all I have said about Socialism. Carry it into ordinary life and conscription *is* Socialism, community work distributed among those who are best fit. Only — I can’t reconcile it with self-determination to have other people deciding whether or not you are fit. It works with the Army, it sounds as if it would work with other kinds of work. But suppose they should try to do that with marriage — and child-bearing. Child-bearing is going to be an acute problem, you know, after this war. Are we going to have conscription of mothers?”

“Oh, let’s finish the war first,” pleaded Neith. “That’s as far as I’ve got.”

“That’s a great deal farther than most people,” contributed Fleeta, who was present, considerably dashed in her hopes of the Social Revolution by the general

acceptance of conscription. And as Fleeta's statement of the case seemed to be the accepted one, they let it go at that.

§ 37

All this time the thought of Adam Frear played about the gates of Neith's private decisions like an angel with a flaming sword. So far the sword had not touched her; it only played and flashed across the road to every conclusion. It warmed and dazzled; at night she heard the singing blade through all her dreams.

Adam Frear had told her that he had begun to love her six years before. He could hardly have done better for himself than to tell her, and to leave it at that. It had the effect of flashing the sword back through her past. She saw it now as playing between her and all possible suitors. It was across that invisible barrier of Adam's unguessed love she had looked, only looked at Eustace Rittenhouse.

In the white blaze of that six years of secret devotion, the figure of Eustace with his undeclared attachment faded out.

It was natural that Neith should think of Adam Frear's interest in her as existing at its present level all those years. She knew as little of man's love as could be expected of a delicately nurtured young woman. She had seen her father's lovely and unwavering devotion to the memory of her mother, and her inexperience did not admit the item of her father's invalidism in the measure

of his fidelity, nor allow for the circumstance that his love for her young mother had been sealed and perfected in marriage.

If it had taken Adam Frear more than the year since his wife's death to discover her, there was the war with its confusions and distractions to extenuate. He had at least lost no time in letting her know the state of his affections the moment he had found her. That she did not herself come as speedily to a conclusion about him and their future together, was very much owing to the lack of material for the setting forth of that future in her mind.

It had been different with Eustace. The very ease with which she could place him, the home he would make for her, the faces about their table, had been part of his claim on her attention. She could make no such picture of herself and Adam Frear. And yet that was a part of his charm for her, the unexpectedness, the beckoning of the unguessed adventure. That, and his having kissed her. For the kiss was not something that he had asked for nor she given. It had simply happened. She had known the instant before what he was about to do, and had not been able to make any motion either of consent or rejection. And in that kiss, the memory of which shivered through her like slow, sweet fire, Neith Schuyler had found that intimation of overshadowing personal absorption which is the soul of love for women.

It was at this point, in her attempts to rationalize the ground either for accepting or rejecting Adam Frear,

that all her thoughts about him ended. He was so much in her mind as a symbol of destiny and so little yet as a person, that she had not been touched to anxiety even by what Van Harwood had to tell her, how partly by luck and partly by connivance of the Powers, Frear had been able to slip through to Russia by way of Scandinavia. The only thought about it in her mind was that he would thus cut off some weeks of the time he would be absent from her. She had no dreams of submarines or mines, no thrill of sharing in his behalf the common adventure of war.

She read his book, "Creative Industry," still with a curious feeling of unreality. One by one, with almost a sensation of indelicacy, as though she had secret access to his rooms and was engaged in the business of rummaging trunks and opening bureau drawers, she collected and read his scattered articles in newspapers and magazines. Adam Frear hardly wrote so well as he talked; or perhaps it had been the spark struck by his personality from hers that had illumined. It was only by reflection, as though they took their vitality from the association with his image in her mind, that the things she read leaped into life. They did so leap occasionally with the poignancy which gave them rank with personal experience. Years afterward, as she was to recall the steady reach of her spirit toward Adam Frear, she was not always able to say whether she had read these things in his work or had caught them from him in those golden moments of exchange, to the renewal of which she began to

look forward as the days slipped by with the swiftness of troubled waters.

For as she read, and out of the necessity of coming to a decision about him translated what she read into terms of living, Neith made that mistake which women are prone to make about the social prophecies of men. For men see the Ideal rising on the horizon like a cloud. It climbs and changes at the will of unmeasured winds; it gathers head and rains benefactions from a removed, unreachable heaven.

But for women the Ideal is a dew distilled close to the roots of life. It reflects, in its roundness, the rainbow of the Universe. Neith translated all the large-mindedness of Adam Frear's political outlook into terms of personal living, when, as a matter of fact, he wrote of men in nations. He dealt with parties and policies and she thought of men and women. She thought explicitly of marriage with Adam Frear. But she thought of it in that rare and uncomplicated medium which he predicted for society at large.

Adam had been gone less than a month when Neith's attention was recalled to Eustace Rittenhouse by an item in the evening paper. Not that Eustace had left her unnoticed all these weeks. She had had flowers from him, and a letter in which he had charmingly excused himself from seeing more of her on the ground of his tremendous preoccupations with Aviation. And she had replied to it with an equally charming acceptance of his extenuation. She had, indeed, magnificently resolved that, even ad-

mitting Adam Frear as a factor in her final decision, Eustace should n't suffer any disadvantage through his war service. There were days, though these were fewer and farther apart, when her mind still reverted to Eustace as a near and perfectly apprehended certainty, as against the strange and intriguing possibility of Adam Frear.

So when she saw in the paper that the General's famous collection of Civil War relics had been attached for debt, her interest went out to Eustace in a pang of sympathy. There was quite a quarter of a column in the evening paper about it, including a not very sympathetic revamping of the General's history, his long struggle with the War Department over his title, his famous extravagances and his gallantries, that had led to the separation from his wife and the quarrel with his son, the now notable aviator. Poor Eustace, thought Neith, his notability, if it was worth anything at all, should have saved him from that!

There was a "follow up" in the morning paper in which the mover in the process for attachment put himself on record as saying that he should n't have thought of proceeding within the General's lifetime, which was admittedly likely to be short, but that he had had positive proof that the General himself was making private arrangements to dispose of this last remaining property. Next day the sensation dwindled to an inconsiderable item to the effect that friends of the General had come to his rescue anonymously, and that the famous collec-

tion would remain in his possession and intact. Neith suspected the Aunts. She recalled Aunt Emmy's mysterious intimations of rescue, and reflected that after all, the poor lady could do no better with her unattached thousands than to make herself responsible for the last figment of the General's importance.

"I wonder if anybody else thought of it," she said to Mrs. Sherrod, "but I could n't help thinking, when I saw the notice of the attachment, that it was somehow a pitiful thing for men that all their heroism should be outlasted in time by the impression they managed to make on some women's susceptibilities. I suppose the General really was a hero, in his day, just as Eustace is in his. And all those poor young originals of the tintypes, and the writers of those letters, they were really indispensable. And it's to a poor old maid on whom the General cast the tail of his eye, on her property really — for you need n't tell me that a man that loves himself as much as General Rittenhouse does, ever loved a woman — it's to poor, befooled old Emmy that he owes it that he is able to keep any of the pomp and circumstance of war in his own possession. It is too pitiful when you think about it!"

"No," said Madelon, "it's only pitiful when you think how men fail to know that love outlasts everything. They go rushing about seeking an effect upon themselves. They seldom realize that it is really the effect they produce that gives the final measure of their destiny.

“One sees that on the stage . . . actors trying for and being satisfied with the *feel* of popularity. And they ought to be working their heads off to make the people experience something on their own account.

“I suppose,” she mused, “the Kaiser and the men who made this war are something like that. They have to *feel* powerful, they have to be made up for the part with an army and banners —” She laughed. “That’s a far cry from poor Emmy and her General.”

“Not so far,” Neith insisted, recalling Carter Dunham.

“Anyway, I find myself making deductions like that nowadays. It’s all I have to make deductions from.”

“It’s all I have, really,” Neith agreed.

“Ah, I suspected you had something.”

Neith nodded. She could not bring herself to talk of Adam Frear, not at least till she had talked more with him. What she did say was that not all the personal experience of war helped her so much in elucidations of war as the personal emotion which had nothing to do with it.

“Rose Matlock says — she was talking to the Stage Women’s War Relief yesterday — that that is precisely what we must contribute, we working-women. She says that the measure of war has been taken too long by women in terms of giving and grieving. She says we’ll never get it out of the prance and flourish class of experience until we apply to it the measure of other experiences.”

“I wonder,” said Neith, “what experience she brings

to it herself, that we should always be going back to her measure.”

“Not a happy one, I’m sure. Not that that old marriage of hers still troubles her. Something more recent, I should think.”

“Was she married?”

“At eighteen, by her mother, to a man much older than herself. She left him after three weeks and then all the considerations that ought to have protected her, family affection, social standing, her own youth and inexperience, were used to force her back. Fortunately, he died after a year or two.”

“Somehow, Madelon, all the women that interest me most in America have been unhappy. With men, I mean. Maybe it was so abroad — there was Duse — but perhaps I just did n’t notice it so much.”

“Or it was n’t advertised so freely.”

“Of course there’s Millicent and Lutra Kendries, they are happy,” Neith continued to follow her own thought, “but somehow we are n’t drawing any conclusions from them the way we are from Frances Rittenhouse and Rose Matlock, and even poor old Emmy.”

“Happy women have no history,” Mrs. Sherrod misquoted, “and it’s history we are making. It might be,” she suggested, “that if we took to drawing conclusions from important men, if we knew enough, we’d find that they were unhappy too.”

The logical conclusion of all this in Neith’s mind was that she went home and wrote Eustace a little note.

DEAR EUSTACE [she said] —

I also am a part of the Country. Are n't you ever coming to see me again?
NEITH

For two or three days after that she expected him every time she heard the doorbell or the telephone ring. And then, quite unexpectedly, she heard Aunt Emmy, in a voice charged with mysterious caution, urging her to come over to the Brevoort immediately.

XII

§ 38

“OF course,” Aunt Emmy fluttered as they came down the hotel steps into the street, “with the young man from the bank there, and the dear General’s own son, too, it would have been entirely suitable for me to go over alone. Still, those sort of people *do* have ideas sometimes. It is so difficult to make them understand how our sort of people feel — about business and all that. It is their *life*, you know, they make it *so* important.

“Of course I meant to go right around to the bank and explain. But I did n't think Mr. Mellows would be in such a hurry, and my man of business was so much slower than I expected —”

“My dear Aunt, what *are* you talking about?”

“About the young man from the bank. But it will be perfectly all right, I'm sure.” By the empty impeccability of her voice, Neith was certain that whatever diffi-

culty Aunt Emmy had got herself involved in, she was by no means so sure of carrying it off as she pretended to be. "And if young Eustace makes any trouble," she broke out again, with a feeble effect of archness, "I am depending on you to manage him for me."

"My dear Emmy, would you mind telling me —"

"But I must say, Neith" — the good lady fell by accident into the tone of grievance and then grasped at it as the drowning man at a straw — "you have n't been as sympathetic as I expected. After all you and Eustace have been through over in Europe . . . still it was n't your *own* country, I suppose that *would* make a difference, but you *ought* to have understood how the General would feel about doing his bit."

Neith gripped her patience in both hands. "Just what is it you expected Eustace and me to understand, Aunty?"

"About the money for the potash man. Of course Eustace ought to have come straight to me, and not gone upsetting the poor dear General. I could have explained *perfectly*." She lost her poise a little as they turned in toward the General's door where a waiting taxicab slanted against the curb. "You may have to help me out a little," she panted. She looked up and down the street as though overtaken by a prescience of disaster. "You don't suppose that Frances —" She began and shut herself off suddenly, as though by inhibiting the thought she could dispel the unwelcome possibility.

Aunt Emmy had dabbled in New Thought recently as an antidote to the persistently unhappy things that kept thrusting themselves on her world. All the way up the stairs Neith could see her visibly trying on one or another of the preferred attitudes and settling on a jaunty ease, as they came in sight of the General's open door.

It was open to mitigate the closeness of the summer warmth beating up from the sun-baked avenue, and the musty smell of old knapsacks and yellowing documents that issued from it was like the very odor of senility. To Neith's vibrant energy, there was something almost indecent in it.

All at once these rags of history that had hung so long about the decrepit figure of glory, took a new note from the squared shoulders of young Eustace in his Belgian uniform, with the row of medals across his breast. He was standing with his hands resting on the back of a chair as they might once have rested on a sword, wearing the habitual soldierly mask of deference to a superior officer. An attitude which, even as she hurried across to him, struck Neith as the one thing in the situation, the saving note, to be thankful for.

"Eustace," she said, "I don't know what has happened, but I can't have Aunt Emmy bothered about anything."

"There are some things I must ask Miss Schuyler to explain." Though he was surprised to see her, even with Neith the officerly bearing was not relaxed. Beyond him

an unknown and exceedingly correct young man, who could not possibly have been mistaken for anything but what Aunt Emmy described him, the young person from the bank, rose tardily.

“I assure you,” he addressed the room at large, “the Bank has always realized that the matter could be satisfactorily explained.”

“You should have come directly to me.” Aunt Emmy was appeasable, but firm. “My man of business” — with a large air — “disappointed me or I should have been around to the bank myself to explain. Though, of course, I had no idea you would be in such a hurry about a few hundred dollars. I had always” — with a flattering reproach — “always understood that yours was a perfectly reliable bank. Perfectly. Besides” — here she included Eustace in her explanation which she evidently regarded as proceeding very satisfactorily — “I understood that the stock was to be delivered first. The potash man gave me to understand that it would be delivered *immediately*.” She triumphed, preparing to receive their acknowledgments graciously.

“You mean,” said young Eustace, abating nothing of his fine impersonal officer’s manner, “that when you forged my mother’s name to a note of my father’s, you expected to receive something for it?”

“Oh!” cried Neith at the injurious word. She crossed over and put her arm as far as it would go around Aunt Emmy. Beyond her in the inner room she could see the General at his table, combing his whiskers with a fretful

hand as he disdained both his son's interference in his affairs and Aunt Emmy's imbecile explanations.

"Not for myself, Eustace, nothing at *all* for *myself*." There was a hurried note in the poor lady's protest, as though she found herself half overtaken by fear. "But your father — the man assured me operations were to begin at once, and the General was to have controlling interest in the stock. So appropriate. I should think *you* could understand that." She recovered her jauntiness with the subtly implied question as to Eustace's military standing.

"I suppose it did n't occur to you that if this note, endorsed with my mother's name, got past the bank, the amount would come out of the little left to my mother by my father's extravagance."

"I was going around to tell the bank just to take it out of my account, only, I have already explained, my man of business disappointed me." It began to dawn on Aunt Emmy that she was rather in a mess and that the dear General was leaving her pretty much to her own methods of extrication. "Anyway," she flared suddenly in justification, "I should think you would *prefer* having your mother's name on your father's note. I should n't think you would want the bank people to know that she had driven him —"

"*Damn!*" said the General.

"You leave my mother out of it," ordered young Eustace.

"Neith! You understand, don't you?" Aunt Emmy

fluttered heavily to the chair her niece provided for her.

“Yes, Emmy. You wanted the General to buy the potash stock because you thought it was patriotic, and you used Mrs. Rittenhouse’s name because it seemed more suitable. It was sweet and kind of you, and I am sure the gentleman from the bank understands.” She left Eustace out of it. How could he mortify those two poor old things in this fashion?

“I assure you,” the young man from the bank rose to the suggestion, trying not to look as if he wished he had n’t come, “that the Bank has been of the opinion from the beginning that it was merely a misunderstanding.” He bowed to the elder Miss Schuyler, having in view the amount of her current account. “And Mrs. Rittenhouse has already assured us that she has no intention to prosecute —”

“Oh, Neith, they could n’t do *that*, could they!”

Eustace brushed the poor lady’s trepidation impatiently aside. “You have not yet explained what part my father had in this.”

“I have already explained, young man,” chopped the General impatiently, “that I did not examine the note after Miss Schuyler endorsed it.” Aunt Emmy chirked up immediately at this intimation of support.

“Naturally, I could n’t let him!” Tears threatened.

“I was perfectly willing for Eustace to have my money, but how would it have looked, my name on a married man’s note! And Eustace has n’t been . . . He

was n't always careful . . . other women's names . . .” Neith wanted to laugh at poor old Aunt Emmy growing skittish over the ghosts of the General's ancient scandals. She felt herself choked instead.

“If the gentleman from the bank is satisfied?” she suggested.

He met her promptly with a tentative gesture of departure. The last thing he wished was to associate himself in the mind of Miss Emmaline Schuyler with an unpleasantness which might lead to the withdrawal of her account.

Neith held his attention. “You understand that my aunt is perfectly able to meet any note she may endorse; it is simply that she is unaccustomed to business methods.”

The young man murmured his convictions as he got himself out.

“I think you had better give me that, Eustace.” Neith held out her hand for the note which Lieutenant Rittenhouse folded and unfolded between his fingers.

“No!” said Eustace.

There was a slight trembling among the medals on his breast. The General had got up and begun pacing to and fro in an accession of senile impotence. They were extraordinarily alike, those two, except for the deep cleft of indulgence in the General's chin and a little uncertainty in the contours once hidden by the magnificent whisker. Eustace took a paper from his pocket and spread it open on the chipped mahogany console.

“Father” — He had difficulties with the word — “there is something here I must ask you to sign. Miss Schuyler will witness it.”

“Sign! You — whippersnapper!” The General must have had some intuition of the meaning of that paper which was closed to the two women. “You think because a fool woman does n’t know how to endorse a note —” He struggled with his wrath for the habitual manner of the sufficing male. “You think because a mistake has been made, a mistake natural to a lady who has been brought up *as* a lady, *and* my friend — I let you come here and humiliate me with your damned witnesses,” he broke out afresh, “because it was a mistake. But you go too far when you try this sort of thing, young man!” He tapped the offending document with his cane. It was as if he would have struck the author of it if he had dared.

Eustace winced and darkened. It occurred to Neith that there was less in the relationship to govern those two at this moment than in the shared military tradition. The river wind, seeking up the hot avenue, rustled the blinds and drew a faint clanking from the ancient accouterments; it fanned hot jealousy of age against youth.

“Don’t you come trying things like that on me, you — I’ll have none of your damned interference! I’ve stood all I’m going to from you and your mother! You in your foreign uniform! To try and tell me what I shall do and not do to serve my Country!”

“If you refer to this alleged potash concern —”

“I’ll not have it, young man, do you hear, I’ll have none of it! You and your witnesses.” The General began to move up and down the room, priming himself for a final strut. “You heard what this young lady said, that her aunt is able to meet any note she may choose to endorse. There’s a witness for you! You’ll find, you King-server, that your father is not entirely without friends —”

Aunt Emmy bridled as she felt her status publicly defined.

“You have one friend whom it is my duty to protect,” said Eustace, “my mother —”

“Your mother, sir!”

“My mother has recently sold her remaining jewels to rescue your historical collection from the process of law to which your folly exposed it. I do not propose that she shall suffer any further risk or embarrassment in your interests. I have brought with me my mother’s receipt for the bill she met, and a bill of sale for the collection, made out to me, which I expect you to sign.”

“Eustace, Eustace! May I come up?”

The voice below them on the stair pleaded doubtfully. Frances Rittenhouse had seen the young man from the bank go past. It had been her cab, after all, as Emmy surmised.

“Not yet, Mother!”

Neith strained for a glimpse of the face over the banister because she found it more supportable than facing

the drop of mortification as the bubble of Emmy's romance about mysterious friends rallying to the General's rescue exploded.

She was the sorrier for Emmy as she realized that the loss of the opportunity for a final triumph over Frances had probably been owed to Aunt Rebecka. While Mrs. Doremas had haggled over the dollars that bulwarked her own sense of social importance, Frances Rittenhouse had outbid them in the General's defense.

"I'm sorry, Father," said Eustace, softened as he always was by his mother's presence, "that this step has become necessary, but" — he turned back to the General — "I am leaving off this uniform that offends you so much, in a few days, and I cannot leave my mother exposed to the risks of your — speculations. I have here a contract in which she allows you the use of this apartment for the rest of your life, and fifty dollars a month, to which I have added something from my pay, and a suitable provision in case anything happens. In return you are to make over your entire interest in the collection, which remains in your care, and agree not to make any further demands —"

"Eustace, Eustace!" Frances Rittenhouse was coming up.

"I'll not sign!" The General's voice was hurried as if it raced with that soft step on the stair. "I tell you I am able to take care of my own affairs. All I need is a little time. Time for development. I tell you —"

"If you are thinking of your Mr." — Eustace con-

sulted the note in his hand — “Mellows, you’ll not hear of him again. I have reported him and his potash company to the proper authorities for an attempt to sell fraudulent stock.”

“It’s a lie! It’s another of your infernal tricks to interfere with my business! You impudent young scoundrel!”

“Eustace!” Frances Rittenhouse leaned against the banister outside her husband’s rooms. “Eustace!” she said again, and Neith remembered that that also was her husband’s name. “Don’t speak so to him. He is going — so soon. Our son! We may not see him again.”

“No son of mine would be wearing a foreign uniform with his country at war!”

“Only for a few days, Eustace. That he might learn to serve his country better . . . our only son . . .”

“Hush, Mother! I think you had better sign, sir.”

§ 39

In the few minutes more that the scene lasted, Neith had one of those swift, wordless illuminations, in which whole tracts of unexplored experiences are intimately possessed.

With the appearance of Mrs. Rittenhouse the focus of her interest had changed from the struggle going on between father and son to the more tragic because less expressive and dramatic struggle between the two women. It came to her all the more poignantly because it was the first time of her realizing that there was,

or could be, any divergence in the interests of women which was more than incidental, or of any wider import than the accidents of birth and breeding.

She had begun by being touched with the pity of perceiving, as Frances Rittenhouse hung on the landing outside her husband's door, that for her at least the real pain of the situation lay still in the amputated relation. Something of her, by the mysterious alchemy of marriage, was still bound up with that aged and broken life, something called imperatively for the touch of that trembling hand, the need of his breast against hers. Dear as her son was, and it was impossible not to see in every inflection of her voice, in every turn of the once beautiful head toward him, how dear he was, the pain of his going had no such pang for her as the fact of his father's deliberate exclusion of himself from that pain. She wanted her husband now in the hour when, as she saw it, she gave her son to possibilities of death, as, in the first weakness of accomplished motherhood, she gave him to life. Never wholly hers so long as the unsevered fiber of affection bound her to the boy's father, nothing could so have beaten down the dignity of her giving like the father's refusal to share it.

The moment before, Neith had been taken by the pity of the General's having lost, in his self-centered wrath, that which should have become his military career like nothing which his vanity could have contrived, the survival of his best in his son. The generous impulse to resist oppression which had sent young Eustace to the re-

lief of Belgium, had been bred in his spirit and his flesh by the same spirit that had dropped the first Eustace out of his dormitory window to enlist in the Army of the Potomac. Intimations of the strange cross and clash of what was the best in successive generations of men, glinted here and there through the situation. They sharpened its shadows like the gleams of metal in the thin rays that found their way between the blinds to the pommels of old swords, to the points of the war medals aswing on young Eustace's breast. But now, as she saw Frances Rittenhouse flutter outside the rooms which only her affections preserved to her son's father, all Neith's finer and more discriminating faculties were engaged in the profound and importunate significance of the relation between her and the woman inside, her fat old face stiffening with the sense of the strategic improvement of her position by the General's cold exclusion of his wife.

How was it possible, as it amazingly seemed to be, that Aunt Emmy's should be the superior right to be there? How had it come about that women's rating, even with themselves, should take such color from the personal favor of a man? What fundamental weakness was it in women, or in their rendering of their relation to such situations, that gave to Eustace Rittenhouse the right to affront the gentle lady who bore his name, by refusing to participate in their common parenthood. Ah, had not women sanctioned that refusal too many times on behalf of other women? Had they not

in every tradition of their lives consented to live by favor? All the women that Eustace Rittenhouse had known, the women who had cajoled him, who had been the recipients of favors that he had stripped his wives to provide, the women who, in the current phrase, had "fallen for him" — oh, they had fallen! The woman who was the mother of his son, and by her lingering there outside his threshold confessed the need of that favor for her right of entry — had they not struggled with one another? Made of the inestimable possession a weapon for their own defeat?

What was militarism . . . what was Capitalism, but the extension among men of the perpetual battle of the hearth? Propaganda . . . German propaganda . . . politics, even at its best as the public concern for man's private convictions — what was it but the overflow — the organized overflow into the world of affairs, of that subtle play among the passions and weakness of men which has been the age-long serious occupation of the mothers and wives of men? America . . . the world . . . and Frances Rittenhouse!

The General signed.

As was to be expected, having pushed his resistance to the utmost, he took a sudden tack back upon the track of his ancient vanity, and made his signing a renouncement of all his wife's claims upon himself. Put it, as he seemed to do, in the light of her need of his personal interest, as a triumph over his wife, it left him free to avail himself, without reproach, of whatever he could wheedle

out of Aunt Emmy and Aunt Doremas. Although Neith had been too deep in private speculation to note the steps by which this had been brought about, she realized, as she found herself affixing her signature as witness, that he would interpret it as a new lease for the same sort of indulgence that had brought him to just this pass. But she no longer cared what became of the General. She was dazed in her inmost comprehension, like a string suddenly and strongly plucked, disappearing in its own vibrations.

The one clear point of consciousness was to get Aunt Emmy away before she became a further indecent witness to the hurt of Frances Rittenhouse's poor heart. Rid of the other woman, before whom necessity obliged him to play the conquering part, there might be some naturalness of farewell between father and son. Neith signed standing.

"We must go, Emmy."

She was ashamed before the maiden smirk of Emmy's eyes, poor Emmy in whom the glory of womanhood had run to this mean triumph of the sex proprieties. But Neith hurried her too much. Emmy had seen herself romantically standing by the General to the last. She fumbled her leave-taking. Eustace gained his mother's side. Going, he saluted. It was the best thing he could have done.

"If you wish to communicate with me at any time, you can reach me through the Aviation Headquarters, sir."

"I have no communication to make to the wearer of a King's uniform."

"Very good, sir! Come, Mother."

He was out on the landing and had his arm around her.

XIII

§ 40

ONCE in the Avenue, Neith made short work of Aunt Emmy.

"You would better go right up and spend the day with Millicent and the children," she said. "You can telephone Aunt Rebecka after you get there that you are staying to lunch. You know if you go home now Becky will see that you have been agitated, and she will have it all out of you in no time."

"But — I thought we could just go in somewhere together —" Emmy had counted on an hour or two with Neith in which to build up some sort of a version of the morning's occurrences in her own mind which would be proof against Becky's criticism.

"I have an engagement," Neith promptly fibbed. "At least," she extenuated to herself, "I'm going to have." She had caught the tiny spark of an appeal from Eustace as he put his mother into her waiting taxi. "You know how pleased the children are to see you," she was glad to be able to add. Millicent's children played with their Great-Great-Aunt Emmaline as

though she were a tame and not too intelligent elephant.

Neith was not surprised to find Eustace at her elbow as she turned back from putting Aunt Emmy into a cab.

“There was n’t time for me to go home to lunch with my mother,” he explained; “I thought you might be willing to lunch with me here.” She saw that he was pale and still shaken.

“How much time have you?”

“I have to meet Beardsley at two-thirty.” Beardsley was his chief.

“Come home with me, then. I can scramble up something and we can talk. My maid has gone to make munitions,” she added lightly, “and I am doing as I can for myself.”

Eustace accepted with relief. They kept the talk as impersonal as possible so long as they were in the street. He was to put on his country’s uniform to-morrow, he told her. After that it would be a matter of weeks, perhaps days. He added modestly that he would begin the new services as a major.

And his own father not to say good-bye to him! Neith regarded the distinguished aviator with a sudden rush of sympathy.

“And are you satisfied with what you leave behind, conditions in the Air Service, I mean?”

“Oh — theoretically, ideal. A combination of aviation experts and big business men. Only, who do you

suppose is at the head of the Construction Committee?
— Bruce Havens.”

“Not *Bruce!*”

“The Senator had him appointed. Oh, well, Bruce has a habit of getting things done. And the Senator has a large spruce interest in the Northwest.”

“Also Bruce has a habit of not being willing to let people tell him things. But Bruce is above profiteering.”
Neith did him full justice.

“What he must get above is the habit of doing business as if the profit were the only thing to be made out of it. And looking at the scientific expert as an impractical dreamer. But it’s like that in all the departments.”

“So I should imagine. You know Lutra Dunham’s idea of centralized cooking for wage-working women, the five or six million of them that have families to look after — well, she and Rose Matlock went down to see the Food Administration about it last month.”

“Hoover should have put her on his staff.”

“Ah, they did n’t see Hoover. They saw a stock broker.”

“Not really! And Lute has pretty near given her life to things of that kind! What did they do?”

“Came home again. She’s not in the food work at all now, she’s on the Women in Industry. She says wages, at least, is something Big Business can understand.”

“One thing we’ll know in America by the time this war is over,” opined Eustace as they crossed under the

El.; "we'll know how much, or how little, Business is good for, Business brains, Business efficiency. Our little American Joss."

"They are always telling me, Eustace — the Kendries, you know, and others — that this is a Capitalists' war. Is it?"

"If it is they've made mighty poor preparation for it." Eustace enlarged on this point all the way from Waverley Place to Jayne Street. "They talk about Capitalism being organized and plotting against the masses," he said. "Darned short-sighted plotting, then. You know," he ingeniously propounded, "I'm beginning to think that the real evil of the Capitalist system is that it is n't a system at all, that it does n't plan nor foresee, nor organize its efforts in any degree."

They came to the house in Jayne Street and fell with relief into the personal note. Eustace followed Neith about in a restless intimacy from kitchen to table as she put together a meal.

"I'm sorry you had to go through what you did this morning, Neith."

"You were n't responsible for that. I had to stand by Aunt Emmy, of course, and in a way I'm glad I was there. I mean, I found it profitable. It made me feel more hopeful that we should n't make quite such a mess of *our* personal lives."

"We?" said Eustace, with sudden hope.

"Our generation. There is n't so much of what Carter Dunham calls 'bunk,' in our way of looking at things.

Poor Emmy's notions of propriety," she went on, emerging from a temporary eclipse in the pantry, "and your father's notions of — Glory, of his always having to be on parade as Man, as masculine. It really was thought creditable to a man to do what he did when he was young; spending his wives' money to drink champagne out of an opera-singer's slipper. Not that he did that exactly, but you know what I mean. Do you mind my talking this way about it?"

"No. I want to hear."

"He was really rather magnificent according to his time. That raid of his with his men —"

"He'd be court-martialed for it now."

"Well, we must n't judge him too much by now. It's a changed way of looking at things, and I do believe it is really a better way. I thought that this morning. I suppose," she meditated, "your father did n't treat the first Mrs. Rittenhouse very differently from your mother."

"Rather worse. She died under it."

"And your mother escaped."

"She has n't escaped suffering." Eustace clouded.

"One sees that." Neith was silent a moment in tribute to what she had read in the face of the second Mrs. Rittenhouse. "But she saw her way out of it with dignity. Or you saw it for her. We — the onlookers — may see a way to escape without getting out." She tried to lighten the matter with a humorous smile. "Even if I should miss all my chances, as Aunt Emmy has, you can't see

me doing the same sort of thing that Aunt Emmy does, ever!"

"No." He opened his mouth as if to say more, impulsively, and shut it again. "Oh, no," he said.

"Well, then, we *are* advancing. It's a comfort to think that, in the face of all that's going on. Rose Matlock says —" She checked, laughing.

"Well?" Eustace demanded.

"Nothing, only I was amused to catch myself quoting Rose Matlock like the others. I've really only heard her once."

"I understand she's a remarkable woman."

"I begin to see why. She has a way of coming out ahead of us in the very place where we are bound, only we don't see it until we get there. This morning I suddenly saw a great many things that I had never thought of before. I can't explain exactly. It was very clear at the time, but it is gone now. Only, I think we women are much more to blame for things as they are, than we are willing to admit. I have n't said anything to you about *this*, Eustace" — she lightly touched his medals with the tips of her fingers as she passed — "but I want you to know that I am beginning to see it as something very fine. Men *are* brave." She changed the note suddenly in the interests of hospitality. "If you think you are brave enough to carve a cold chicken —"

By common consent they were as gay as possible during the meal. Later in the blue and mahogany room, which had been recurtained for the season in billowy

white and made cool with ferns in blue-and-white porcelain pots, they came back to the more personal frame. The windows were open and the slightly fetid summer odors of Jayne Street came faintly up to them.

“Shall you stay in town all summer?”

“I had n’t thought much about it; there seems so much to do.”

“My mother is going down to the cottage at Stamford as soon as I am off. She can do her Red Cross work as well from there. She told me to say that she would be more than happy if you would come down to her, if only for a week or two.”

“For week-ends, I might manage it.”

“You see,” said Eustace quite suddenly, “my mother knows how it is with me. That I love you. I had n’t meant to tell you. All these weeks there has been so much depending on me, there is so much still. I did n’t dare let myself go. As long as there was nothing to it but my wanting you, I could put that aside. But if such a thing had happened as that you would have me, I could n’t have put *you* aside. But somehow — what you said about to-day has made a difference.”

He studied his cigar carefully, not finding the courage to look at her until he had had his say.

“What you said about my father . . . Always, since I have been old enough to understand what my mother went through, I have been afraid it might happen to me to make some woman suffer like that. I’m very like my father in some ways . . . But I’m like my mother, too,

and she has made me see that marriage is n't just two people. There's the man and the woman, and there's the marriage. It's still there for my mother. Even though my father is n't there, it's there for her. A living thing. . . .

"It would be there for me," said Eustace. "It would be in my plane with me. There's a rule against taking passengers in war planes" — he gave it a wry twist of humor. "A man only really does his best when he's on his own. And when his best is not for himself, but for the whole works —" He broke off.

"You must do your best, of course." Neith groped for the thread that would pull them back from the brink of decision. But like most reticent men, when they do talk, Eustace had uncorked the fountain and must let it play.

"However it turned out," he said, "I would want a marriage like my mother's, one that would stand up by itself. That would mean something by itself and go on meaning something even though I did n't always mean as much by myself. And I would n't want a woman to marry me who did n't feel that way about it, too."

"That's the way I should want to feel."

"And do you think that you could sometime make that kind of a marriage with me?"

"I don't know, Eustace."

"I should want you to know, at any rate," he said, "that there's never been any other woman, that there's never likely to be any one else with whom I could make such a marriage myself."

“Ah, don’t say that —” The exclamation was involuntary. It struck immense and vibrant silences.

“Does that mean,” said Eustace at last, “that you think you could n’t?”

“I hardly know what I mean.”

“Is there any one else?”

“I’m not engaged to any one.”

“But there is some one who wishes you to be?”

She mutely nodded. She could not say even to herself how dear she found him in that hour, how much the man of her girlish dreams. But there was some one else.

“And you’re not sure about him either?”

“There seems so much to be thought about,” she said, “so much to be gone through. I — have n’t found myself. You mean so much to me, Eustace —”

“Do you mind telling me, is it Adam Frear?”

“How did you guess?”

“It just came to me. He’s in Russia now, is n’t he? Well, you have n’t accepted him yet, and that’s something in my favor.” There was something more than an effort to take it cheerfully in his voice. “And you like me rather well, don’t you? It seems to you we’d get on together?”

“It’s more than getting on, Eustace.”

“Yes. I want you to want to be married to me the way I want you.” He rose and stood looking down at her, a little pale, but with the confidence of a man whose business makes it inexpedient that he should ever be thrown out of himself. “I might n’t be able to resist taking you on

any terms if you'd come, but on the whole I am rather glad, since you are n't sure of yourself, that there is somebody else. I'll know, if you take me, that *you* know why."

"I feel it is very weak of me not to be able to know."

"You should n't. Frear is a fine fellow. He's the best of the Radical lot. But somehow I don't see you married to him." He took a turn up and down the room. "It's not jealousy makes me say this, Neith. But Frear calls himself a Radical, and in America that means something more than that he has new and different views about how Society should be run. A lot of fellows are having new views. It means that he is made up differently from — from the sort you've always known.

"I see how you are beginning to feel about things. There's nothing that has come home to us Over There like the conviction that a lot of things over here are going to be different after this. But, Neith, *we* are n't going to be so different, you and I. Frear's different.

"You were talking about bunk awhile ago" — Eustace let himself out for extended flight. "It's true, all right, that there has been too much bunk in the way our kind of people have lived, bunk in our religion and our politics. The Army's full of bunk. But you don't want to forget, Neith, that the Radicals have their own kind of bunk, too."

She saw that. Saw, too, that Eustace Rittenhouse was a bigger man and finer than she had ever thought him.

She had a vision of him like this, high up, flying steadily in the face of certain death or disaster, simple and collected. It was as though she heard the roar of planes sailing in sun-filled space. But all she heard was the children playing in Jayne Street, and the quiet voice of Eustace Rittenhouse.

“So you see, I don’t feel that the case is quite hopeless. Of course, if you find Frear is all you want of a man, nobody will wish you happiness more heartily than I will. But you must n’t think it small of me if I see a possibility that you might n’t find in him all that you are looking for. Neith — you are not crying about this?”

She put up a hand to check the falling tears. “I think I am a very poor sort for you to be so fine about, Eustace.”

“You’re the finest ever! Look here, Neith, if I can get Beardsley to let me off about four, can you come with me? I know where I can get a car. We’ll take a spin down to the Aviation Grounds and have dinner. After to-day, you know, anything might happen.”

XIV

§ 41

FROM the beginning of war activities, Neith put herself unreservedly in Mrs. Kendries’s hands. Not, however, without having been invited.

“You have served your time in England at relief,” said Mrs. Kendries. “Come and work with us at the

things which will remain." For with the simple-mindedness which went with their singleness of sight, the Kendries supposed that the pressure of war could be turned to the correction of many of those awkward complexities of modern living which everybody admits and no one takes the initiative to set right. It was the hope that life would issue from this stress a simpler and more livable affair that had brought them roundly to the support of the Administration. It was the completeness of the failure of those who had the direction of war activities in charge, to achieve any simplification whatever, that drove them later from its side.

But in the first stages there was a pleasant feeling abroad that the American people was about to see itself issue into world affairs in the figure of easy competency, just touched, admirably touched, with a romantic generosity. There was no doubt about the unanimity with which, as Adam Frear had expressed it, once Washington had called the tune of the "Star-Spangled Banner," the masses fell into step behind it. And even from those who descried in him the figure of the personal devil of Democracy, there was very little objection to what Eustace Rittenhouse had called the "little American Joss" at the head of the procession. Efficiency! American efficiency! As the phrase sped in the nature of a watchword from point to point of the national consciousness, there was a flash of the spirit as of suddenly uplifted swords. And where the swords rang on the breastplate of American complacency, in the sound that came back to

the waiting ear of thousands of American women, the note was flat.

There was nothing in Neith's European experience to give her the measure of that vast, interrelated organization of women which is at once the amazement and the weakness of American feminism. Amazing it is in its extent and working efficiency and enfeebling in its creation of a *milieu* which keeps the best of them turning about and about with a great waste of effort to coördinate before anything can be done. Second only to the thrill with which she now took in the capacity and close-woven texture of the eight or ten million affiliated and federated women's organizations, was the amazement with which she saw it turned back, as an instrument of social coördination, from the copper-riveted surfaces of what for the time she had to classify, at Lutra Dunham's suggestion, as the "Business Mind."

Long afterward it occurred to Neith that if the best of the women had been less completely netted into the organization; had there been more scope within the mass for free movement of such women as Rose Matlock and Lutra Dunham; had American women in their new-found passion for togetherness developed a little of man's capacity for free leadership and blind following they might not have come so badly off from the encounter. As it was, the bond of federation held, accentuated as it was by loyalty to the common cause, and the whole mass of the most informed, socially the most experienced, group of women in the world, gave slowly back.

Between them and the possibility which glimmered so brightly on their horizon for a while, of the triumphant issue of a more personal order and efficiency in social living, drifted the rank and file of American business efficiency. Efficiency, that is, conceived of and perfected in the struggle of every man against every other.

By the end of the first four months of war, Neith had to accept the judgment of such women as Mrs. Sherrod and Mrs. Kendries for the fact. There was not in America a woman of the first rank of capacity and intelligence in a position of real power toward the activities brought into being by war. There were some honorary appointments, but all the really formative and administrative business of food, child care, nursing, and spiritual welfare, were in the hands of men. Here and there, floated across the scene, and upborne by that very solidarity of organization, women of the third and fourth rank maintained themselves in the favor of the Business Mind by not presenting to it any knowledge, or any sort of expertness, different from its own. Nowhere was the reservoir of administrative power among women, accumulated in fifty years of active social betterment, tapped in the common interest.

Few of these things came to Neith dramatically or in concrete instances. All the atmosphere in which she moved was charged with a sense of profound disagreement between what American men were doing and American women could have done.

It was true that Neith had to take very largely the

word of women like Madelon Sherrod and Lutra Dunham both for things as they were and might have been. But it was also true that she always found them borne out by such facts as she could muster. And if in the intervals she reverted to her own kind, to Bruce and Millicent, for example, and to the Aunts and Mrs. Carteret Keys, it was always to return on the rebound to a profounder allegiance to the things vouched for by her new friends. One could n't, for instance, go back of the reports of the public health experts on the increase of malnutrition among American children, and the refusal of the Food Administration to take into account the wage-earning conditions of some five or six millions of American mothers. "Hewing," as Lutra Dunham put it, "the American family in pieces before the sacred cook-stove."

Lutra was very explicit as to the kind of citizenry that was produced by a generation or two of underfed children. "One in five," she quoted from the health reports, "and some of them put it higher. Russia . . . Poland . . . unstable, oversexed. Ill-balanced minds and irresponsible moral natures . . ."

She said things like that to the complacent stock brokers and electric light men and insurance men who had found their way, with the best intentions, into administrative committees, and who dropped into her office occasionally to show their open-mindedness. Unfortunately she said too much. To the mind nurtured in the faith that the American woman is the enshrined

and privileged product of American efficiency, its bright flourish to the sun, to be invited suddenly to provide for the underfed offspring of some millions of mothers, neither privileged nor enshrined, is an upsetting experience. The representatives of American efficiency went away from Lutra Dunham's office in the state of men who had been shown the dromedary and decided that there was no such animal.

There were hints even of a profounder misconception.

§ 42

"Are you quite sure, Neith, dear," Millicent had asked her one evening, having invited her to an informal meal for the express purpose, Neith was aware, of setting her right — "Are you sure Mrs. Kendries is the proper person to have at the head of such a responsible committee?"

This was along in the hot months when Mrs. Kendries had given up hope of effecting any improvement in modern living through war administration and had transferred her activities to the employment service, to secure, if she could, more livable conditions for married workers on the one point in which the efficiency expert was really expert, that of wages. Millicent had taken the children to the country very early, but she kept the town house open, and from time to time, as Bruce could be spared from Washington, charged herself with the business of overlooking, from her own point of view, her cousin's progress in Americanization.

Millicent was nothing if not tactful. She recognized it as an excellent thing for her cousin to work off this eccentric streak, the product, no doubt, of her foreign education, before she married Eustace Rittenhouse and settled down. It seemed the likeliest thing in the world that Neith should marry Eustace. One heard of their being seen together an extraordinary number of times. But there were limits of eccentricity beyond which it was desirable, for her own future, that Neith should n't go. Really, young men were often put quite out of touch by exhibitions of radicalism in young women. One saw such things. The report Bruce had brought home of a recent interview with Mrs. Kendries, with Neith, in the capacity of confidential secretary, looking on, had been — well, if not alarming, at least calling for the touch of a cousinly hand.

It was a case, however, demanding tact, as one saw by the instant bristling of Neith's interest in defense of Lutra Dunham.

"If you know anybody more experienced and capable —" she began.

"Oh, she's immensely bright and capable, I've no doubt." Millicent was just. "But the temptation to use her position for furthering those extraordinary ideas of hers . . . At a time like this when one can't be too careful. Bruce was really shocked."

"So was I," Neith agreed, going over bag and baggage to the opposition; "I never expected to see Bruce figuring as an advocate of breaking up the family."

“Neith!”

“Well, really, Millicent, that is what it came to. Bruce wanted fifty women for the Airplane Department. He wanted women of more than ordinary capacity and expertness, and, as Mrs. Kendries told him, that class of women workers are more than likely to be married and to have a baby or two. Bruce wanted them to go off to work at a place where there was no possible provision for them or their families, and Mrs. Kendries told him that until he was willing to make such provision she could n’t get the workers for him. And so far as I could discover, Bruce not only declined to make such provision, but seemed annoyed at having the fact of the families thrust upon him.”

“Bruce felt that this was a case where patriotism should have come before the personal consideration.”

“Well, I did n’t know that it had become patriotic for women to neglect their babies,” Neith found herself amazingly saying.

“You absurd creature!” Millicent’s tact and sweetness positively shone out. “It’s always worth while to touch you up to see your lovely loyalty to your friends. But if you are really going to become a good American, you know, you must n’t let yourself be influenced too much by all this foreignness —”

“Mrs. Kendries is n’t a foreigner.”

“She’s a Socialist, and *that’s* foreign.” Millicent triumphed. “It’s easy to see what she’s leading to. State care of the children. Such a shirking of responsibility.

Not that I want to go into that," she hastily conceded. "But Bruce was shocked at the idea of her using her position, a place of public trust really, for the advancement of her peculiar ideas. Of course, Bruce would n't *say* anything. He has the greatest respect for Mrs. Kendries's ability. But if it should come to the ears of — er — people who are responsible —"

Amid all the possibilities, which suddenly opened up before her, of saying the wrong thing, Neith said nothing at all.

§ 43

"But could they, Lutra," she inquired at the first opportunity, "take your work away from you just because they don't understand it?"

"They won't." Mrs. Kendries was confident. "Direck is too important to Labor adjustments right now to run any risk of offending him. But that's nothing to what they do where they dare." And as she said that, the force of many things that had been going on around her almost unnoticed began to dawn on Neith.

One by one figures the most outstanding in the Radical world had disappeared from view. Some of these had been, on the whole, so affronting in their opposition to things as they were, that public consent had closed over them as they went down almost in silence. It had continued, however, to rise against mere differences of mode, disloyalties, not to the State, but to the complacent conviction of universal rightness. Practically the

whole staff of *The Proletariat* was under indictment as Van Harwood had predicted. Hippolyte Leninsky, so Fleeta had told her, had had his paper suppressed for advising young Russians in the United States to enlist and acquaint themselves with the military art against the needs of the Social Revolution. The explicit charge had been that his paper was an Anarchist organ.

Fleeta was in her element, furnishing succor to the victims of the Espionage Act under the patronage of Mrs. Carteret Keys. She was now a secretary. The first months of the war had been a bad time for secretaries. By the necessities of their trade, being parties of the opposition, they had been left gasping by the sudden rush of their patronesses to the support of the Administration. Some of them, after the briefest possible interval, had reappeared in the interest of the Chocolate Fund, or collecting tobacco money for the Marines. Neith, in her excursions to the East Side, used to meet the apostle of voluntary parenthood in a state of apoplectic inhibition at the police proscription of her use of the argument of "cannon fodder" for the curtailment of the proletarian family. The young woman who had proposed herself as official pamphleteer to the Peace Association had got herself involved in a charge of inciting to sedition in India, along with a group of rather footless, and expatriated young Hindoos.

"Already we are worse than England!" Neith expostulated to Eustace Rittenhouse on one of those occasions, of which he afforded her the greatest possible number,

for making her feel the value to him of the time she was able to give him. They were lunching at the Brevoort and had had the subject brought freshly to their minds by the recent sentence, of unimaginable severity, of a Labor leader. The man had publicly advised his fellows to lose no point of advantage of war pressure for their own private war against oppression.

"That's because the English are more or less used to differences of opinion among themselves. It is entirely normal that classes so widely differentiated should have different ways of looking at things. We've the Democratic tradition of unanimity to keep up here."

"But why should we keep it up?"

"Because if we don't all like what we've got over here, it is a sure sign we won't always have it. If enough fellows keep on saying right out loud that they don't like it, first thing you know, there will be a change."

"I can never make out, Eustace, just where you belong. Are you a Radical or — are n't you?"

"You can put it, at least, that I don't want to swap horses in the middle of the stream." Eustace, she knew, was beginning to be seriously troubled about delays in the Air Service.

There was something particularly fine about Eustace these days. It was as if he had become the better friend by being admittedly the lover. Which made it impossible for Neith to say to him that the sum of all this unexpectedness on the part of her country, was to bring her nearer to Adam Frear. She saw, at least, that Frear

saw his way toward light and progressive social solutions. More and more, as the deep-seated feminine love of order and relativity cried aloud in her, she found herself resting her decisions on his return. And as if he divined her state, and her delicacy in not speaking of it, Eustace himself began to talk of Frear.

"If you ask me where I am," he answered, "I'll say that up to the beginning of the war I was not far behind Adam Frear. You'd have to have been brought up as most young men were before him, to appreciate the effect he has had. When I was a kid, Father gave me a quarter to hurrah for — McKinley, I guess it was. At that age I would have hollered my head off for a quarter.

"And that's how I came to be a Republican.

"But Frear has changed all that. So many fellows have come along in his trail that we have to remind ourselves every little while that he was the first to teach us any kind of reasonableness about making up our political opinions.

"It could n't have all been easy going, either." Eustace sailed up into that clear atmosphere where he was at home and could give every honorable advantage. "Ten years ago the political gangsters used to keep private detectives following Frear about in the hope of catching him in something discreditable."

"Ah, I'm sure they never did that!"

"You may be sure we'd have heard of it if they had. And yet, in a way, we owe it to Frear that a political reformer is n't necessarily a prig. He can have his moral

variations the same as other people." Neith looked up quickly, anticipating the sting of personal rancor, incredible from Eustace, but found him amiably occupied with his dessert. He went on presently, doing himself full justice in his rival's behalf. "Up until Frear's time, the only claim a political reformer had for pitching into the other fellows, was a clear record on his own account. But Frear has made us see politics as a method, don't you know. All you have to show now, is a clear record for your method, whether it does really bring a large return for the general good, I mean. A political inventor can have his private life to himself now the same as an automobile maker. All we want to know is how the machine works, and if it is worth the money.

"Well" — he brought himself back to his starting-point. "What we have now in this censorship business is just a sort of reversion. It is n't so long ago that it was perfectly good form to say any damnable thing you could think of about a man who differed from you on a question of politics . . .

"Besides, things are pretty comfortable over here, considering. I'll bet," concluded Major Rittenhouse, leaning back to enjoy his cigar, "that there are a lot of people who are real homesick for an excuse to pitch into somebody."

Thinking all this over, what stuck in Neith's mind, beside the characteristic American good-humor of Eustace's position, was the faint suggestion of a warning to be prepared to find in Adam Frear some of those varia-

tions of personal behavior he had been described as admitting into the conduct of a political career. It struck her definitely that this had come as a warning, and for the second time.

She had n't escaped, indeed, under Fleeta's tutelage, hearing all sorts of gossip about the inner circle of Radicalism. All at once the pale, expanding cat's eyes of Sadie Comyns drifted across her vision. That sort of thing! But one could n't take that seriously in connection with those two young things. They were as obviously married as if they had had said over them every one of the three or four ceremonies to which their mixed blood entitled them. And yet she supposed that before the war . . .

One did n't, however, think of such things in connection with Adam Frear. And lest she accuse herself of having thought of them, she reminded herself, the next time she saw Fleeta Spence, to send her love to Sadie and to say that she was still expecting her at Twenty-Six Jayne Street.

§ 44

There were other points at which Neith touched the incessant stream of women's war activities. Points which, if they warmed her at times to that sense of the solidarity of sex which she had lacked, at other times crowded her back on a profounder communism of interest in which there was neither sex nor solidarity, but a shouldering sense of progression. She had moments of being

glad to sink her identity in the crowd of unimportant women, from the click of whose needles and the flash of whose fingers poured that flood of material alleviation for which, as she knew, conditions in Europe so loudly cried. She found herself perpetually irritated and entertained by the Aunts, playing the bygone game of Society with war counters, scrounging for precedent and planting the Stars and Stripes at the head of their visiting lists, admitting their Country, under its extenuations, into New York's most exclusive circles. There was Millicent and her group of gracious and nearly futile activities. And there was the Stage Women's War Relief where Neith used often to go with Mrs. Sherrod. Where she never went without some fresh amazement.

Stage women, as Neith had known them abroad, were Figures of Romance. They were Genius, moving always in the aura of their art. They were either that, or they were something else which did not enter into the social count. In America they were a Force. If they lacked, as one could n't help seeing at times that they did, that rich heritage of the European past, one saw at least that they had the future in their hands. They asked nothing of Society; they made, as they moved, their own *milieu*. More astonishing still they asked nothing of men.

If it were true, as Madelon Sherrod had said, that between their public and their art there was a felted wall of men's opinions, they had, at least for their social function, won complete exemption. They could do what

no other group of women had succeeded in doing, participate in the war on their own terms and by their chosen representatives.

Neith was enormously interested in any explanation that Mrs. Sherrod had to give her.

"It's because," Mrs. Sherrod insisted, "we have a past, a tradition of professionalism. A long past of common experiences and common objectives. None of these other organizations go back any farther than the Civil War, and most of them don't go back to that. In respect to their experiences and privileges the others are *nouveaux riches*."

"Lutra Dunham says it's because you are always dealing with men just *as men*. You don't have to deal with them continually as business men."

"You must n't let Lutra put you too far off on that tack. We have our encounters with the 'Business Mind,' I can tell you. It must be, besides what I have said, that we have always been recognized as exceptional, as something different from just woman."

She had the air of considering that phase of it for the first time.

"Yes, that must be it. From the first we've been allowed to be different, we've been born outside the pale. We've had enormous concessions to our conduct as women on the ground of our being primarily players. That's what is the trouble with Lutra. She did n't come onto the scene as a social expert. She was born a lady and she'll have to prove that ladies can be expert at any-

thing. They can't, most of them. You must n't, honey, make the mistake of judging American women by the little group you're seeing most of. There are far more women like Millicent and Emmy in America than there are like Lutra Dunham and Rose Matlock and me."

"There's nobody like you, if it comes to that, Madelon. Don't imagine I don't know that."

"Well, then, I'll tell you something about me. I am by no means the woman I might have been if there had been more like me. You know what great actresses are in Europe, and that I am not in their class. Oh, I don't mean that I have n't their gifts. I have measured myself against them, and I hope I may be believed in saying without vanity that there is nothing the greatest of them has done that I could n't have done with the Public closer to me."

"Does it count for so much, the Public?"

"To an artist, to an artist of the theater especially. We're captive balloons really. We soar high over their heads, they look up. But we must n't break the tether, or presently we'll find ourselves out of sight and the Public gazing at some nearer bubble at the end of its string.

"But it can't be like that with the specialists in ideas. People like Rose Matlock and Lutra and Adam Frear can go clear out of sight, and after a while when the Public catches up, it thinks all the more of them."

Neith and the actress were having tea in one of those places of splendid resort where it was expedient for

Madelon to show herself occasionally. They had just come from the Stage Women's rooms where Rose Matlock and a woman from the Department of Labor had been telling them how the efficiency of wage-working women had been pushed down by the unconscious traditionalism of the employer's attitude. It had n't, in fact, been able to sustain itself past the point at which, as women merely, they had been able to hold the attention of employers as men. It was to this Neith presently reverted.

"I suppose Rose Matlock is out of sight already."

"If she were, people could forget her. The trouble with Rose is that she's tied herself so tight to all our secret convictions that we can't help feeling the tug of her in a direction we are n't quite ready to go."

"But suppose one did? Want to go, I mean. What would happen to one? One like me. I have n't any gifts, you know."

"Well, you have n't your living to make, that's to your advantage. But don't suppose you would n't have to throw out some sort of ballast. Rose flies high.

"After all," she said a little later, "we've two classes in America, we've the majority and the minority. You'll have to choose. You may think you can select the best things out of both and belong to neither, but you can't. I thought I could do that. In my art, you know. I thought I could have real art and real popularity at the same time. But I had to choose. So will you."

"Ah, I've chosen."

They were silent a moment together. Madelon rolled and lit a cigarette and let it die out between her fingers.

"Have you?" she said at last. There was the least, delicate *nuance* of an inflection.

"No," said Neith, after consideration. "No, I've been chosen. I don't know why. I know almost nothing of the things I hear you and the Kendries and Miss Matlock talk about, but somehow I know I am elected to the minority."

At the back of her mind there was the suggestion that she had been elected there by Adam Frear's need of her, but it was not Adam whose figure she saw rising to meet her from the top of her stairway as she returned from the office a few evenings later. It rose expectantly in the dusk and leaned above her from the banister, peering down with the triangular chin and yellowing cat's eyes of Sadie Leninsky.

XV

§ 45

"OH, Sadie!" Neith's welcome was touched slightly with dismay. It was somehow in the air that the girl had been waiting for her an unconscionable time. "Here at last! and where's Hippolyte?"

"In jail!" Sadie rang out. Then, with a sudden rush of purely personal necessity, "Oh, Miss Schuyler, I must see him, I *must!*"

"Of course you must. That's easily managed!" She

said the first comforting thing that occurred to her as she fumbled at the keyhole of her door. "When did it happen?"

"Yesterday, about five o'clock. When the Workers" — even in her anxiety Sadie capitalized the Workers with her voice — "were coming home. He was distributing pamphlets along with André Fredova and two others on Vesey Street. I did n't know until this morning what had happened. All night long I was expecting him, and this morning Mrs. Schwartz — her son was arrested, too — came and told me. We went over to the jail, but they would n't let us in. I got me a lawyer. But I could n't get around very well —"

Neith had the door open and flashed on the light. She saw, indeed, that the poor girl was in no condition to get about on anxious errands.

"Oh, my dear —" She put an arm around her. "You must sit down at once and let me get you some supper. I had mine at a restaurant —"

"Miss Schuyler, I don't want no eats, honest I don't —" The aspiring Intellectual fell back in extremity on the speech of her childhood. "I had some coffee off Mrs. Schwartz, but I could n't keep a thing on my stomach, not till I'd heard what's happened to Hippolyte."

"Nothing much happens to men in jail, Sadie."

"Oh, Miss Schuyler, you don't know. You don't know. Maybe not to the likes of you. But it's different to us."

“But your lawyer saw him!”

“He ain’t no real good of a lawyer, Miss Schuyler. He’s just a Russian Jew like Hippolyte, and he did n’t see him alone. Always the police was standing there and Hippolyte could n’t tell him nothing what had really happened.”

“But what could happen? Men are arrested for their opinions very often in times like these. It’s bad for you to take it so hard. You shall see him in the morning. I promise you that. Now you must rest and eat something.”

“Miss Schuyler, please. You don’t know about such things. But Mr. Frear. He’s got a pull with the police. *He* could get me in.”

“Mr. Frear is in Europe.”

“I know — but I thought — Oh, Miss Schuyler, I got to see Hippolyte to-night. I got a feeling here” — she touched her thin breast — “like I got to see him to-night.”

Neith was extraordinarily touched. It was true that Adam Frear was so much to these people that the mere rumor of her nearness to him made her an object of hope and confidence. She sat down beside her and took her hands.

“Listen, Sadie, I don’t know anything about American jails, but there is a lawyer who manages things like this for Mr. Frear. I’ll telephone to him at once and he will know what we can do, but in the meantime you must do exactly as I say.”

“Yes, Miss Schuyler. But I must see Hippolyte tonight. I got a feeling —”

Neith succeeded in reaching the attorney who had gone down to Marcy with them the night she had first met the little pale-faced Intellectual from New Jersey. She found him brisk and competent. Should he come over at once? No, Neith told him not to waste all that time; find out all he could first, and see Hippolyte if possible.

She was surprised to find that he seemed less confident of being able to accomplish that than she had expected.

Mrs. Kendries was out of town for the moment, and there was no one else she could think of consulting. She filled in the interval of waiting with bustling preparations for Sadie's comfort. Neith's back room was vacant, the art student having gone off on an impulse of patriotism to make more money a week than she had ever made at art, by filling cartridges. In the course of half an hour Sadie was installed there in one of Neith's dressing-gowns, and persuaded to drink hot milk. She looked more than ever catlike, peering out with her burning eyes over the white counterpane, a poor, hunted, houseless cat, overtaken by the remorseless function of maternity. Was it the very defenselessness of her estate, Neith wondered, poverty of body and of opportunity, that had caused her to be overtaken by the forces of social reconstruction? Did creativeness go about like that seeking whom it could devour? She thought of Millicent and the complacent ordering of her own occa-

sions, secure against the remotest contingency of being touched by the flame of Social Revolution. She wondered if that bright capacity for holding Life at arm's length, to make terms with it, which she had so admired in American women, was an evidence that Life had n't, after all, much use for them. It had n't, at any rate, stopped to make terms with Sadie Leninsky.

"I could have got in, maybe," Sadie was explaining, "if I had thought to say Hippolyte was my husband. The policeman asked me that and maybe I would of, if I had thought. But Hippolyte never *wanted* us to say things like that. So many Radicals, you know, are n't willing to say right out what they are. They want to go along kind of smooth themselves and get the revolution by group action. But Hippolyte always said he *was* the Revolution. We always told everybody we were n't married. So I said no, when the policeman asked me. But I would n't have said it if I'd have thought. Do you think it would have made any difference about letting me see him?"

"Very likely. The policeman could n't think of your having any business seeing Hippolyte unless you belong to him; his wife or his sister."

"I wish I had said it. I'm not noble like Hippolyte. Not all the time. I've wanted a ring, really." She twisted her bare, thin little hands on the coverlet. "Especially since — since the baby's coming. You don't think it's awfully bourgeois for me to want a ring, do you?"

“I think it’s very natural and sweet, and I think Hippolyte would think so if he knew.” Neith smiled at her. “We must n’t let the Bourgeoisie run away with all the charming and tender things.”

She saw the girl’s eyes wander over her own well-manicured fingers, and for the first time it occurred to her that some sort of relationship was predicated in Sadie’s mind between herself and Adam Frear. She hurried them both away from the suggestion.

“You have n’t told me yet just what it was Hippolyte was doing — what the circulars were about, I mean?”

“About Russia, against Kerensky and Capitalism and for the proletariat. He was n’t against war. He wanted to go himself and be an officer. So as to learn, you know. And to keep the war from turning into a Capitalists’ instrument. But on account of his heart he could n’t. That’s what makes me so anxious. He could n’t stand being beaten up by the police the way André Fredova can —”

“But, my dear child, you don’t for a moment imagine that political prisoners —”

The triangular chin stiffened, the mouth stretched in a hard line of caution and mystery.

“Oh, Miss Schuyler, you have n’t been one of the proletariat.”

Poor child, Neith thought, there were centuries of oppression and anti-Jewish persecution in her blood; no wonder she imagined horrors. She exerted herself to

keep Sadie talking about her family and her life on the East Side.

“The old folks on my mother’s side are straight Jewish. They keep the door open and the candle burning at Passover for the prophet Elias. I guess that’s where we get it, always looking for something better that’s coming. Only I tell my mother I don’t want no more prophets, what I want is something doing — right now!

“My father was Irish, he was killed when I was a kid. In a street-car strike. My mother is married to a straight Russian now. I guess he beats her up some when he’s been drinking, but she likes him a lot. My mother goes to synagogue sometimes. But she brought me up liberal. She says she don’t see any good knocking Jesus Christ all the time. She says it’s ignorant . . .”

“He was a great Jew,” Neith reminded her.

“Well, that’s what Hippolyte says the Jews are for, to introduce Christianity . . . Do you think they will let me see him the first thing in the morning, Miss Schuyler?”

About half-past nine Adam Frear’s lawyer came in, a tall, gray man with a kindly voice. Free, Neith was pleased to find, of any disposition to make heroics of the situation.

He had seen Hippolyte and found him in good courage. Yes, the Free Speech League would certainly take up the case. It was the sort of thing that was exactly in their line. He had secured one of the circulars and did not find it seditious. Sadie must commit the case for-

mally into their hands. The young Jewish lawyer she had sent in that day did n't help matters. He had been too much disposed toward the poses of martyrdom. Hippolyte had sent his love.

"Was he well? Was his heart bothering him?"

"He was lying down, resting," the lawyer told her. Sadie must rest herself to be ready for what was before her.

"Will they let me in? Even if I'm not married to him?"

"If there's any objection on that score, we'll get you married to him." She rested more contented with that.

Out on the landing the gray man offered to notify both the young people's families. He could find them through the young Jewish lawyer, whom he had already seen.

"They've beaten him up considerably," he admitted with a quiet matter-of-factness that was more terrible than indignation. "I could n't get all the particulars; he was looking pretty sick, and I did n't want to excite him. But they'll let him alone now that they know the League is taking up the case. I wish Frear were here."

"So do I. But . . . Mr. Sydnor, I . . . my family is not entirely without influence. If there is anything I can do. My cousin, Mr. Bruce Havens —"

"Oh, it would n't interest *him*."

"If there is money needed —" He thanked her for that, said that there might be for the families of the

other men, and went away. Neith started to call Bruce on the telephone, and thought better of it. Sydnor would n't have been so sure of Bruce's lack of interest if he had n't had experience with Bruce's kind.

She went back to make Sadie comfortable for the night, careful to keep out of her face and voice the least suspicion of anxiety. Sadie had put all her own anxiety on the lawyer's shoulders, with the pathetic belief of the poor that to the class just above them, all things are possible.

"You do think he'll get me in, don't you? But it would be too bad if we had to get married, *now*. Me the way I am. They'd think I was forcing him. Of course Hippolyte would be willing if he thought I wanted it. I did once, just a little. I thought it might be easier for the baby. But Hippolyte wanted his son to be a child of Liberty. Hippolyte's wonderful! Don't you think so, Miss Schuyler?"

"You poor child, yes!"

"I wish I had *said* he was my husband. I would n't care the least bit about lying to the police. Do you suppose I could do it now?"

"It would n't be exactly a lie, I think, and no doubt it can be managed. There'd probably be another officer in charge. You must rest to be ready for it." Between relief and fatigue, Sadie dropped away almost instantly into even-breathing sleep.

Neith herself lay a long time staring into the dark. She felt herself drawn into strange and incredible situa-

tions, and the strangest thing was that she did not feel more strange in them.

She was just at that halfway house between the old life and the new where she was able to have the clearest appreciation of the point of view of both of them. She knew exactly how the Aunts and Millicent would feel about her harboring the unmarried mate of an Anarchist who was in jail for sedition. She had all of a Van Droom-Schuyler's dread of the police and publicity, and yet she knew very well that she meant to go to jail and to court with little Sadie Leninsky, and to use in Hippolyte's interest, whatever remained to her of the Van Droom-Schuyler prestige. She could sound in imagination the cold depths of obliquity into which Aunt Doremas would drop her, and with genuine surprise she took the measure of her own insensibility to anything such obliquity implied.

She thought of Adam Frear and was immeasurably drawn to him. She wanted him then and there, his head on her pillow, his voice in her ear. She would want him, she knew, to-morrow; she would feel the lack of him like the lack of a hand or an arm in the business of seeing Hippolyte out of jail. For now at last she had the material for a picture of their life together. They would do things like this together; he with his knowledge of the mechanism of society, and she with the personal touch of understanding.

She thought of that portion of her father's estate that he had never realized because it had been made condi-

tional on his recantation of certain youthful enthusiasms. She remembered that she, as his heir, was under no such conditions and decided to speak to her trustee about it. Her father, she knew, would approve of the use she and Adam Frear could make of the money.

All these ideas were clear-cut and immediate. But by degrees all her thoughts merged into a great tenderness for Adam Frear and a great longing for his presence, which between waking and dozing seemed to merge into the thoughts of Sadie Leninsky; Hippolyte . . . Adam in prison . . . herself and Adam's child . . . Suddenly out of her half-dreaming state flashed that spirit-child that used to run beside her in the Boboli Gardens . . . the child with soft dark hair and blue, sparkling eyes . . . Adam's eyes! She had never thought of it before. She sat up in bed realizing something of what was in the hearts of those two pathetic young people when they renounced the formality of marriage for themselves. How trivial all that seemed before the mighty forces that draw the lover and the maid! She blushed a little for having thought well of herself for being kind to Sadie.

Toward morning she woke again with a sense of something having happened, something amputating and irrevocable. There was, she suspected, a touch of nightmare about it, a faint, irreducible tinge of horror. Adam seemed far away, and for the first time she thought of all the accidents of war that might happen to a war correspondent. Obeying an obscure impulse

she got up and lit her lamp to go and read that little slip of his she had pasted on the lid of her desk months ago after that trip to Marcy. While she fumbled with it, she heard Sadie calling her, and a hand at her door. Neith had left all the doors unlocked between the rooms, in case of emergency. Sadie was coming to find her, trailing Neith's long dressing-gown, ghostly white in the dim light.

"Miss Schuyler, Miss Schuyler . . . where are you? You must come with me. Hippolyte has called me . . . just now! I heard him as plain as plain. I am sure he wants me . . ."

"Come with me, into my room, Sadie. It is only a dream."

"Sure, Miss Schuyler. I heard him as plain as plain. Like he calls me sometimes in the night when he is sick. Sure, something is the matter." She was shaking all over with dreadful certainty.

Neith got the girl into bed and lay down beside her. "This is n't Russia," she insisted; "there are doctors attached to all the jails. If Hippolyte were sick he would be attended to." But she wished she had asked the lawyer for more particulars. Just exactly what did it mean to be "beaten up" by the police. Anyway, they had the lawyer's address at the jail, she insisted, and any news would be instantly transmitted.

They fell both of them into a heavy slumber at last, but when Neith came into Sadie's room about eight with her breakfast on a tray, she found the girl sitting

up staring across the counterpane in a dreadful, stony blankness.

“Hippolyte’s dead,” she announced.

“You can’t have heard. It’s bad for you to imagine things.”

“He’s dead. I know he is.” She ate, however, mechanically, as long as Neith told her to, and left off, like a child. While Neith was describing how they would get a taxi and go for the lawyer as soon as he had breakfasted, they heard the telephone tinkling faintly in the dining-room.

“He’s dead, you’ll see,” Sadie insisted. She must have caught Neith’s involuntary dismayed exclamation at the lawyer’s message, for before Neith had finished, she could hear the girl sobbing wildly and calling on her dead lover’s name.

§ 46

It was a long time before Neith was possessed of all the particulars of the young Anarchist’s death, not, indeed, until months later at the trial of his associates when they were given to an unregardful public.

The death itself had come suddenly in fact, without any crying out, but there must have come some inner warning, for they found a half-written note:

DEAR FRIENDS AND COMRADES,

I write you this to encourage you in the good work. We did not intend that things should be like this, but even if I had known it would not have made any difference. If this is the only way —

They kept Sadie from seeing him until he lay in a poor kind of state, lapped around with intimations of a faith that, once entertained, somehow never quite fades out of the texture of a racial life. For Sadie's sake the bruises on his cheek and forehead had been painted out, but as they stood beside him, the lawyer lifted a corner of the dead lip to show two teeth newly missing.

"They killed him," he said, "as surely as if they had meant just that."

"Oh," cried Neith, "say 'we'! Surely we are as much to blame as anybody."

Sydnor had already told her as much as he knew of the peasant bruteness lurking under all our law and order, sleeked over by prosperity until we are scarcely aware of it, kin to the horrors we had set out so high-handedly to correct abroad. One by one the young men had been taken into a room by the police, from which dull sounds of anguish issued and presently a bruised and bleeding prisoner had staggered to his cell.

"The others stood it better than Hippolyte," Sydnor told her. "And all the time he had his exemption papers in his pocket stating that he was unfit for service on account of a bad heart."

Neith marveled at the lawyer's impersonality, his want of wrath. "Surely, if we went to the papers with this, if we saw the Mayor, the Chief of Police!"

He shook his head. "That's been tried. They are n't making a fuss about it." He meant the family of the young garment-cutter who came about his bier with

grief and a strange kind of exultation, a little hot, white, licking flame of pride.

"It was like that in France," she said as she waited for Sadie, sitting in the cab outside with Sydnor leaning against it from the curb. "Among the poor, in the little villages, when their dead began to come home to them."

"It *is* like that," Sydnor told her. "It's war to them. Hippolyte's people were n't altogether in sympathy with him. They'd strained themselves to give him advantages and they did n't like his being so anti-orthodox."

"I know; Sadie told me. How all of them, even to cousins twice removed, stinted themselves to give him two years at college. How they squeezed it out of themselves, a dollar or two at a time."

"Hundreds of East Side families are doing that. The bright one, the one who by any chance might become a doctor or a lawyer. They take a stake in him. For the honor of their race, for the future. The City College is eighty per cent young Jews from the East Side," Sydnor told her.

Neith supposed this might be the secret spring of the pride that made itself felt in the manners, too eager and ingratiating, of the young men. She was surprised, day's workers as she knew them to be, that so many of them spared this funeral hour. They circled in and out of the dark room with its stale human smell, and disappeared in the crowded, fetid street; plump young men, pasty-looking, but with dark fires in their eyes. No, not fires,

but the notice of fires about to rise. She felt herself and her kind overtaken; she was strangely afraid.

“You said that his people were n’t altogether sympathetic.” She turned back to Sydnor, “It does n’t seem so to-day.”

“Ah, he’s come back to them. The victim of persecution. It’s their great common inheritance, more common than opinion or their faith.”

If this were the case, there was a sharp division, then, between the elders and the younger. It was when they brought the body down that the young men disappeared into the full life of the street, children playing, men trading, women ensconced domestically on the sidewalk, peeling potatoes for the midday meal, nursing their young.

It was the elders only who followed the body, with the shabby emblems of an elder faith. They mingled with the street, threaded its resurgent activities, making a scant way for their dead.

It was only when they brought Sadie to her, for it was arranged that that was the last Sadie was to see of her young lover, passing inertly through the life he had not been able to deliver one whit from its poverty or its superstition, that Neith had her own flash of the common vision of Liberation from a racial heritage as it looked out of the work-paled faces, from the ambush of long beards combed by bent, nervous fingers, patient, exalted.

§ 47

Sadie made very little trouble about remaining with Miss Schuyler. It was out of the question that she should go back to work, and her mother had no place for her. She had wanted at first to go back to the two rooms where she had been happy with Hippolyte, but a wisdom beyond her experience came to Neith.

“If you had n’t the baby to think of, you might. But it would n’t be good for you now. Hippolyte would n’t be there now, anyway. He’d be with us. ‘Friends and Comrades.’ You remember. You can be a help to me, managing the house. I’m so tired of restaurants, and it is so hard to get maids. Besides, I’m going to marry Adam Frear. There’s so much I have to learn, about his work, so much you can teach me.”

It was strange to Neith to find herself so islanded with the little shirt-waist finisher. The Aunts were in the country. She had tried once to tell the Havens of the Leninsky affair. They had frankly disbelieved her. Too much importance must not be attached to the statements of men like Leninsky and Schwartz. Of course, they would make out a case against the existing order. In any case, they were certainly seditious, kicking over the apple cart in the hope of picking up a share of the plunder.

“What beats me,” said Bruce, “is why, if these foreigners are n’t satisfied with America, they keep on coming here.”

“Oh,” said Neith, stung at last, “when I think of what America professes to be, I think *we* are the foreigners.”

This sort of thing could only be received in cold politeness.

As it turned out, Neith did not go down to Stamford at all that summer. Eustace lingered on at Washington and then suddenly, with no opportunity for good-bye, was spirited away to France. Mrs. Rittenhouse wrote to renew the invitation, and Neith, after brief evasions, compromised by sending Sadie down for a week. She wrote regularly and friendlily to Eustace and prayed every night for Adam Frear.

Sadie, in spite of the most delicate kindness, did not thrive at Stamford. Away from the sense of conflict and of immediate touch with her husband's interests, the courage that sustained her gave way to common human sorrow. She took to long sessions of tears, and to sitting quietly with her hands rigid with grief, staring intently before her. By the end of a week or ten days it was necessary to put her in a hospital where only by the greatest care she could be saved from losing the new life that might bring her peace and sanity.

It was just as she had accomplished this that Neith had word from Adam Frear that he had arrived in Boston. She had a long night letter from him there, and the next day his voice at the telephone. Anybody might have overheard his greeting, but some spark of mutual consenting, some *nuance* of recognition passed between

them even then. He came into the house at Jayne Street at the dim end of the afternoon, when their faces were white and almost featureless in the unlit room. There were some formalities of greeting, the beginning of a handshake. Suddenly his arms were about her.

“Tell me, are you mine?”

“Yes, oh, yes!” There was swift, warm yielding and a long interval of peace and rapture.

XVI

§ 48

IN the weeks that followed the consummation of her engagement to Adam Frear, there occurred to Neith a singular recrudescence of all the lovely and endearing items of her past. The fine gleams of architecture, the subdued polish of old marbles, the rich texture of canvases; all these things moved and melted indistinguishably into the hours she spent with him — hours that more and more made her own nature the fit and unstaining accompaniment of his. He was the song and she the following instrument.

The war, with all its strains and hesitations which had led up to these hours and made them possible, was far from her. It had become, indeed, the noisy and perilous street by which she had traveled to that safe haven of his affections, whose faint reverberations served but to accentuate the sense of her escape. She saw him weary and urgent on affairs of international import; she

heard his voice expounding the war under the war that was waged in the Balkans and along the Russian frontier. But her inner eye was fixed on long Italian vistas, deep Ægean blues, and the white crest of ruined porticoes foaming up beyond them on a fawn-colored shore. Beyond the prosceniums of platforms where he talked she saw the aisle of pointed cypresses and the jade pools of the Villa d'Este; what she heard in her soul was the incomparable swing and fall of Dante's verse. It was, as she so charmingly said to him, as if she had been viewing the beauty and preciousness of the past through the plate glass of the world's show window, and had now, by the very act of his possession of her, been admitted to the inside. At which he had indulgently smiled and intimated that, though he did not in the least understand her, he found her on all occasions equally delightful.

He was, in fact, very tired with the hard conditions of European travel, bad food, and the continuous drain upon his sympathies of unrelievable human misery. He had his notes to work up for the magazine, and his conclusions to apply to the immediate procession of events in America. So it had been tacitly agreed between them that their marriage should be delayed until he could clear himself a little from these matters. Though she could never recall by whose suggestion, it was understood that the engagement should remain unannounced even among their intimates. There was, indeed, a conscious shrinking on Neith's part from the necessity of

justifying her engagement, as she would have to do, to the Van Droom-Schuyler connection. At least while it was in its first fresh wonder.

Madelon, to whom she would have been first to speak, was away trying out the winter's play in Toronto. Lutra Dunham, whose almost vulgarly hearty devotion to Direck would have missed the more delicate shades of Neith's reticence, was fortunately in Seattle with her husband settling a shipyard strike. And it would have been impossible to speak of her happiness to poor little Sadie Leninsky, twisting her hands above the coverlet in the hospital. For the moment Sadie had no use for Adam Frear except as he could give her the assurance of the continued progress of that struggle for a vague and unmeasured "freedom" for which her young lover had lost his life. It was, indeed, as if that life and that struggle had become so identified for her that she could still think of the life going on so long as the struggle did. It was only in moments of feeling its check that she stood upon the brink of recognizing her irreparable loss. Under the stimulus of Adam Frear's account of what was going on under the surface of European events, her eager and slightly disordered imagination almost succeeded in placing Hippolyte there, in a situation so much nearer and more imaginable than any set of conditions which her scrapped and broken religious beliefs provided for her.

It was at such times when with all he had to do Adam would find time to sit by the little shirt-waist finisher's

bed, Neith came nearer the quiet fact of what marriage with Frear would mean to her. It was at such times, too, that she suffered her only misgivings.

For Neith had felt it necessary to explain herself about Sadie.

She had been struck — on the occasion of their first visit to the hospital, which had been almost as soon as she had found time to tell Adam of the circumstance of the girl's being there — with the gap of convention which had widened between the situation in which she actually found herself and what would have been thought possible to a newly engaged scion of the Van Droom-Schuylers. It would have been incredible to Great-Aunt Rebecka Doremas that any young person honored by that connection, should have paid a visit to the hospital in company with her fiancé, to the unmarried relict of an Anarchist, even then in the last stages of a condition never described by a more compromising word than "delicate." Unless, indeed, in moments of forgetful indignation it might have been characterized as "shameless."

§ 49

Neith had her own reserves. Sadie had got hold somehow, by a dreadful kind of clairvoyance, the heritage of pogroms and oppressions, of the details of that last, unbelievable, and on the part of the constituted authorities so insolently indulged in, hour of torture. At the time when it was worst for her it seemed she would

never be able to wrench her mind free from its passing horror. She would sleep uneasily. Then through the torn veil of slumber she would hear the accustomed hospital noises, the muffled groan of returning consciousness from the accident ward, the thud of a stretcher on the floor, distorted into the thump of a night stick on soft flesh, the scream of young terror and surprise. Then her own slender and anguished cry would ring shrilly down the corridors. "They're beating him! They're beating him . . .!" And the night nurse would come running with the poor relief of opiates and professional assurance. It was then that Neith, in a last expedient of anguished sympathy, bought and slipped on the unheeding finger a plain gold band. The first sight of the gold band on her twisting fingers had arrested the poor girl's attention. It distracted her for a moment to renewed awareness of herself and her reason for being where she was, so that it became a point to which the attendant recalled her to the need of control and quietness. She never asked how the ring had come there. Neith thought, perhaps, she had forgotten that she had not always had it. She would lie nursing it under her cheek, and feel herself once more included by it in the common round of living.

There was an odd reluctance on Neith's part to mention the incident of the ring to Adam Frear. It was somehow important to her never to be obliged to explain that she had meant him to see — for he must have seen Sadie cuddling it on her pillow — how completely she

meant to include Sadie's affair in the quality of their own relation. She had never discussed marriage as an impersonal subject of social interest with Adam. She did not know if he had any views about it other than the usual and traditional. Since he had never mentioned them, it was more than likely that he had not. She had been more than once surprised to find him quite conventional on those points which did not touch his immediate social interests. As though he had never taken the time, or found it important to be anything else.

Little knowledges of him like this came to her out of their enlarged intercourse, for they saw one another almost daily. She understood that the very absence of the personal point of view, those tossings to and fro of decisions which made up the personal atmosphere of his circle, only increased the sense he had of her value to him. It was a sense which needed all the more to be satisfied, since she felt, on the major issues of his life, a deep and sincere humility.

He knew so much, was competent so largely, that without this occasional realization of the thinness of his life in the points at which hers had been most enriched, she would have been a little less perfectly happy in the fulfillment of her engagement. The certainty that she could bring the treasure of that past to hang about the walls of his life as a rich and appropriate embellishment, gave her a deep and simple satisfaction. But she wished also to have him know her as the inheritor of all the fine and enduring things that had been felt about marriage.

All the more since he had made her feel, with the effect of its having flashed for the first time on the screen of human experience, the justifying quality of personal passion.

The more she was possessed of the intimate sense of mate-love as its own justification, the more she felt it necessary to make Adam clearly understand the ground for her exempting Sadie Leninsky from the common convention. In time she found her occasion.

§ 50

Frear's work of reducing his Russian notes to magazine articles carried them well on into the winter. He confessed to great difficulty in holding his mind to the task, and in confining it to those aspects of the situation which his public could be persuaded to take. To Neith it came as part of the so amazing revelation of her country as a whole, that there was a great deal ordinarily conceded to intelligent people abroad which the American public could not be made to take however skillfully administered. You could n't just tell the truth about Russia — especially about Russia — and let it go at that. You could tell only so much as could with apparent consistency be pieced on to what was already thought about it.

There was also a great deal for Adam to do in stemming the madness of censorship which by this time raged unreasonably. In the great national venture in which the actual participation of the population was

numerically so small, the fever of patriotism slaked itself with the one easy activity of censoring other people's opinions. There were arrests on every side and for the absurdest of reasons. And a ferocity in the quality of punishment that was disconcerting in view of the reputation for amiability that the country had sustained abroad. If Neith did n't always see for herself, in the growing severity of the courts, the instinct for self-preservation at work among the controlling groups, there were always people among the groups she had elected to work among, to point it out to her.

In December the Food Administration was persuaded to take into account the existence of wage-earning classes as classes deserving of special consideration. But the concession came too late to claim a common cause with them in surmounting the difficulties of a wage-earning existence. It came indeed in the affronting guise of a consideration for, rather than a coöperation with, them. Other concessions which were obliged to be made by the war management in various departments, took their place in the procession of war adjustments as advantages gained by one group against the other, as evidences, if evidence had ever been wanting, that the administration of social forces was a step beyond that boasted faculty for the administration of affairs which had been the American trade-mark.

The more Washington failed to take the measure of such forces the more they revealed themselves as the welter of great waters which the war winds had ruffled

but not seriously displaced. Even without the help of Adam Frear, without the witness of the second phase of the Russian Revolution, by the end of the winter Neith felt herself committed to some new ordering of human relation which could be felt rising on all horizons.

She was seeing very little of her own people. Between herself and the Havens there had arisen something like estrangement. It was not altogether because Bruce and Millicent had refused to see any extenuation for anybody who was so unfortunate as to get herself accused of variants of opinion. Something was due to her renewed and sustained interest in Frances Rittenhouse.

Neith had gone rather belatedly to call on Eustace's mother after her return from Stamford. She had never made any direct announcement of her engagement to Adam Frear, and hence of her permanent removal from the field of Eustace Rittenhouse's attention. She had rather trusted, when she had sent Sadie Leninsky down to Stamford, that the fact would escape out of Sadie's naïve and only half-attentive grasp. To Eustace, to whom she wrote regularly, Neith had contented herself with recording the bare fact of Adam's return and adding that she was very happy. She gathered from the promptness and the tender generosity of Eustace's reply, that he had appreciated at its full worth her instinct to lessen his own pain by admitting him to the rich revelations of life which happiness had brought her.

Once face to face with Eustace's mother, Neith found that the most had been made of her admission, and the

ground of a possible embarrassment cleared for her by Mrs. Rittenhouse's simple and graceful inquiry as to when she meant to be married. Quite as simply, Neith found herself confessing that no date had been fixed. As soon as Mr. Frear's work admitted, they meant to get away for a deserved holiday in Florida, perhaps, or California.

"Adam is so much of a public character," she explained, "that we are being as quiet about it as possible." But the ice once broken, she talked more than she realized of what the experience had meant to her, and by tacit admissions of sympathy found herself talking also of Eustace. It seemed that he had been able to convey very much more of his dissatisfaction with the condition of the Aviation Service than one would have thought possible with the state of censorship. Much more had come to his mother by way of other members of that service with whom she faithfully kept in touch.

Things were going wrong, and wrong in just the direction and in the proportion that Eustace had warned against.

"One does n't know what to think of Bruce. One can't at least accuse him of working for private profit."

"Oh, no," Neith had assured her. "He's not only working for the conventional dollar a year, but if one takes into consideration what, with his talent for money-making, he might have made out of war conditions, he's working at an enormous loss."

“And one can’t either, in view of what he has accomplished in other fields, one *can’t* think of him as incompetent,” Mrs. Rittenhouse was certain.

“Well, then,” said Neith, “we have only to think that the particular kind of ability and integrity that Bruce has, constitutes a very high degree of incompetency in public service.”

“Oh, my dear, you do go far.” Mrs. Rittenhouse was almost shocked, and recollected herself. “After all it is the kind of competence we have always required of men, to make money for their own families as against all other families.”

“That is just the difficulty.”

“I have thought,” said Frances Rittenhouse, almost blushing with temerity, “that the great mistake women have made is in allowing the world’s work to be divided off the way it is. Just assuming it as right and natural that men should be engaged in what we call Business, and women, in the other side of life — Social Betterment, I think it is the fashion to call it.”

“I’ve thought things like that, too.”

Neith recalled her moment of illumination that morning at the General’s rooms when she had seen Frances defeated by her own earlier yielding to what she had been taught to think her husband would value most in her. Lest she betray something of the personal origins of her conclusions, she hastened to add: “It’s odd that you should come to something of the same conclusion with one of the most advanced women in

America, Rose Matlock. I don't suppose you have met her?"

"I've heard her name."

"She thinks that all this social confusion into which we have fallen is due to our getting started wrong as men and women together. Above everything to our not being democratic with one another. She says we can't hope to have pure Democracy in politics until we get it in our fundamental relations."

Mrs. Rittenhouse had the air of considering this in the light of her own experience; a faint tinge of color came on her lovely faded cheek. "Oh, my dear," she said. "But it is very hard to be democratic where one loves. Love is a great autocrat. Have n't you found it so?"

Neith blushed in her turn. "But, after all, when it deals with such confirmed democrats as Adam and myself —"

"Ah, yes, you are very fortunate, my dear, to begin so close together." Rising as she saw her young guest getting on her feet to depart, she kissed her. "I hope you can find time to come again," she said. "It will do Eustace good to hear that everything is so well with you."

§ 51

It is not to be supposed that Neith did not find occasion, in the midst of her happiness, for thinking of the other woman who had shared Adam Frear's life, and for disposing of these thoughts and of her own recollections of Mrs. Frear to the advantage of both of them. It was

important to her relations to Adam that she should feel able to offer him something that his first marriage had lacked. And important to herself that she should n't appear to do so at the expense of the unfortunate lady who had been cruelly defrauded from offering him even her own poor best. She had been shy of question about the first Mrs. Frear before she had felt any title to be so interested. Now that it seemed any inquiry must have a private and personal objective, she was even shyer. What she had heard from Madelon Sherrod, and had confirmed by casual comment from other of his friends, was that the first Mrs. Frear had been a pretty, inadequate creature, who had receded from her first and unsuccessful attempt at motherhood into a fretful invalidism, which had dropped at last mercifully into complete obliviousness of her state. Her last two years had been spent in a sanitarium from which, if she could offer Adam none of the comforts of marriage, she at least made a minimum appeal upon his consideration and time. She had been so little on the scene of his public activities that few of the circle that knew him best had seen her. And if Neith looked for traces of her passage through his personal life, she found them rather in the lack of things that Adam ought to know about women, than in any positive accretion of his experience.

There was the matter of an engagement ring, which it had not yet occurred to Adam to offer her. There were two or three other little matters which belong so inherently with a young woman's idea of her engagement

that Neith found herself unconsciously placing herself in the attitude to receive, trifles that had not had time to fade out of perspective even when the engagement was delayed, as in this case, until one was within a few months of twenty-seven. There were moments, indeed, when it seemed that Adam forgot for her that this was a first engagement. Or, if he remembered it, it was only to give himself the exquisite entertainment of watching his effect on her in a hundred artless graces of fancy and affection which were new to him, without at the same time being new for him.

But if there was not that revelation of himself in their rarest moments which she had hoped for, there was the least possible suggestion of his having already made it in any other quarter. So that she was able happily to assume that all that had happened to him was a prolonged suppression of his best through lack of the proper atmosphere of warmth and intimacy. It should be her task, she thought, to bring him back to the point at which he should do his best, by always daring to be her best in his company. One thing he had succeeded in being with very little difficulty, and that was, his charmingest.

One had to make allowance, too, for his engrossment with the new principle of social coherence which he had found breaking through the confusion of Europe; to be felt like the ground swell under the tide, already shaping the direction of European events. It was part of the task he had set himself, to prepare America for the

turn of the tide, and to prevent the setting-in of cross-currents in the Labor movements which would make choppy if not disastrous sailing. Quite enough for one man to do, she told him, without the business of being engaged. But he had found a way to convince her that, except for the business of being engaged and the pleasant haven it made him, he should n't have been able to carry on the world's business at all. For the present she had the sense to see that the not too absorbing enjoyment of her effect on him was the best thing she could offer.

Almost every day he would join her when the rush of the day's work was over, early or later, according as he found himself free to prolong the visit into the evening, and they would dine together at some one of those out-of-the-way, and, from the culinary point of view, always extraordinary, places to dine that are to be discovered in New York in such numbers. They found themselves well suited with the tumultuous privacy of a Democracy which does at least go through the paces of its pretension most amazingly.

They dined at chop-houses back of "The Square" and south of Twenty-Third Street, where history was made over baked potatoes and buttermilk. They dined less often, but as entertainingly, at vast uptown caravansaries where habituated young men in the uniforms of able seamen sat opposite equally habituated young women in pearls and sables. They caught, or at least Neith caught, that air which New York sustained so suc-

cessfully during the first year of the war, of having at last an occasion to which its modernity was equal. It gave to their détours into the past, the beautiful past of all engaged couples, a freshness that more than made up to Neith for Adam's not taking them by any native instinct or intention.

It was on one of these occasions, when the exigencies of Adam's evening had brought them together early in the afternoon, that they had stopped at Brentano's for a book Adam was needing on Bessarabia. Returning they had been caught by the choked evening traffic directly opposite the show window of one of those repositories of the plunder of history which make of Fifth Avenue a paradise of shoppers. Neith had promptly turned to feed on its display her natural keenness for intricacy and color.

"Do you *like* those things?" Adam had questioned with just the easy faculty for being interested in things that interested her which was part of his perfect charm.

"Oh, so much! Not," she insisted, "for themselves, though I think them beautiful. But for the intimacy of hand and thought which I think they show, oh, immensely more than things which are made for a purpose. For a useful purpose, I mean." She was looking at a carved jade necklace and a collection of Chinese enamels.

"I see," he said; "but if you get all that out of them, they *are* useful. Let us go in. You know," he smiled humorously, "I've never bought you anything yet, and I'm going away this evening."

“Adam! You never told me!”

“Only to Washington. The President has sent for me.”

He was holding the door open as he spoke, lingering, and taking advantage of the momentary privacy created by the dusk of the half-deserted shop, for the enjoyment of her pride and pleasure in his announcement. She had a dozen questions to ask which had, nevertheless, to wait on the act of shopping. Once begun, it had, it seemed, to go on automatically in the survey of a tray full of necklaces which at Frear's gesture the attentive shopkeeper had laid before them. They had been looking at necklaces in the window and it was the first thing that occurred to him.

The shopkeeper, observing their absorption, which was of a nature not new to him, quietly placed a tray of rings and bracelets beside the necklaces and withdrew ostensibly to find something which might better suit them.

As he drew the second tray toward him automatically some appropriate connection seemed to wake in Adam's mind, between the idea of rings and the very delightful situation in which they then found themselves.

“Of course, if you really care for this sort of thing. Would n't you rather have a diamond?” He had the air of wanting to do the proper thing, supposing there was a choice of things to be done.

“Oh, no, Adam, really. Not diamonds. Or would you rather I did n't have a ring —?” He looked surprised, slightly. “If you think it bourgeois —”

"I think it very becoming," he assented to the three tiny square-cut emeralds in an antique setting which she had selected.

It was not until the sympathetic shopkeeper had retired again to the gloom of the shop's interior to verify the check Adam had given him, that the moment came that she waited for, the moment of their mutual inclusion in all that the ring stood for in the completion of their relations.

She had put it on, holding her hand extended for a full view of it below the level of the showcase, in the shadow not yet lighted by the electric bulbs beginning to glow in the farther end of the shop. Suddenly his hand had closed over hers, close, closer, until she was conscious of little beside that warm personal clasp and the pleasant pain of the ring biting into the flesh of her prisoned fingers, and the sudden tremor of his body as it crowded momentarily against hers. It stayed with them, the almost solemn intimation of finality, as they came again into the street half lighted between the ebb of the day and the first twinkling onset of the night. Almost without speaking he drew, in defiance of custom, the hand that wore his ring through his arm and directed their steps toward one of those retired and comfortably exclusive hotels between Fourth and Fifth Avenues, where, in respect to his still having all his arrangements for Washington to make, they dined early and with almost married formality.

When they reached Jayne Street an hour or two later,

he would not sit down, but stood in the glow of the fire she had rekindled for him, and the softly shaded light, waiting till she came back to him from making the room safe from the invasion of the December chill. She came back from the drawn curtain and the trimmed lamp; acts so intimate as to constitute an extension merely of the sense of superior intimacy which had begun for them in the incident of the ring.

“Must you go so soon, Adam?”

“Oh, soon . . . if I am to go at all.” The long, sweet straightness of their embrace flowed in her veins like water.

“Not again,” he whispered, “no more parting . . .”

“Oh, no more, Adam.” His mouth drank fiercely of hers. By a drowning effort she raised her hand and laid the cool emerald of her ring against his cheek.

“Soon, Adam —”

“As soon as I come back . . . just married . . . quietly.”

“Yes. Quietly. We can live here —”

“Here —”

With a movement of divine recovery she freed herself.

“Ah, I’ll hold you to that!” He kissed her ring reverently.

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She was glad then that she had taken her opportunity when it came for making him understand how she really felt about poor Sadie. It had come very natu-

rally on her telling him of the birth of Sadie's son, and of what the doctor had said of the very frailness of its hold on existence constituting the mother's safeguard against that wildness of thought and emotion into which the circumstances of Hippolyte's death had thrown her.

"She will have to work so hard to save it," the doctor had said, "that she won't have time for thinking of her sorrow."

"It will be like that in Europe," Frear had agreed, with the constant recurrence of his mind to the larger, the social scene. "They will have to work so hard for the liberties they win that the shocks and losses will pass much more quickly than anybody imagines."

"Oh, liberty!" said Neith. "I wonder if their liberties won't be much more of a form than an achievement! I was thinking of poor Sadie and Hippolyte and their attempt to get liberty by omitting the marriage ceremony. They did n't, you see, succeed in omitting anything else. They were as devoted to each other, and as bound by that devotion as if they had been married in all the religions they were heir to.

"It was that," she added, seeing him withholding his response for a fuller comprehension, "that made me so interested in them from the first — my seeing that the same thing had happened to them — something always does happen, I suppose, in a true marriage — that had happened to my father and my mother."

"Yes," he said, regarding her with that charming

willingness to be charmed which led to one of those interruptions of purest personal content that make the substance of betrothals.

“It is the thing that I hope, that I know, is going to happen to us,” she continued — “something that makes us belong to one another with a belonging that is quite outside the law and the ceremony. But it makes me wonder, since it happened to those two poor young things, what they thought they were getting rid of by not having any ceremony.”

“It left them free,” he suggested, “free to separate in case —”

“Ah, but it did n’t. They were so little free that poor Sadie has nearly died of the separation. And her child is marked with it; marked with the grief that she could n’t be freed from, even by death.”

“Don’t you think that she ought to be able to free herself?”

“Oh, no, Adam! Able to free herself from hurting anybody else, the child, the rest of us! But if love were a thing people could wholly help, like deciding to live in the town or the country, it would lose half its value in life.” She came suddenly close to him with one of those swift yieldings of herself which were rare enough to give him the most exquisite delight.

“There is something I want to talk to you about, Adam,” she said — “about our life together, and what I think are going to be some of the difficulties.”

“It seemed to me so great a difficulty to get you,

that all the rest looks small beside it," he tenderly replied.

"Ah" — in her turn she met him — "it seemed to me that I fairly melted into your arms as soon as I was asked." Upon which she did for a moment so melt that it was from the close shelter of those arms that she asked again in wonder, "Did I seem difficult?"

"Very far away, at least."

"Oh, I was, I am!" She pushed back in order to give the greater emphasis to what she had to say. "I am farther off from much that interests you and occupies your attention than you have any idea. From Sadie and Hippolyte even, and those other poor young fellows who are still in jail. I am so far away that I can't see what they do it for. I can't see why they should make so terribly much of their opinions, and feel that that is an excuse for upsetting the order of things."

"But if their opinion is n't much, it surely is n't enough for us to imprison them and beat them to death for."

"Certainly not that! But if we were n't so stupid as to do those things to them, I would n't see it as any more than the opinionatedness of very young and very badly educated young men."

"Yes," he said, "it's that." He seemed to be considering her possible drift almost with wariness.

"And I must admit that Fleeta often seemed ridiculous to me. That young Hindoo student — what business was it of his to embroil the whole world over his

idea of what is good for India? What evidence had he to offer that he really knew?"

"As much, I should think, as those who are already deciding the destiny of India are offering."

"Oh, yes. That I agree to. There is n't any evidence anywhere that the sort of people who have been managing things know anything about managing them to the best interests of humanity. I see that. I see that with Bruce and Millicent and my Aunts, who have had *everything* which ought to make them fit, no sort of real fitness has happened. It is because I see that, for my own people, that I am coming over to your side. Only I wanted to be sure that you understand that I don't always see what this better thing is that you and your people are trying to put over. I am just, in a much greater degree than you realize, taking your word for it."

"Well, then, I shall have to confess to you that I don't always know myself," Frear admitted, "but it seems to me that the way toward the better thing lies in being what the present arrangement is n't, just and kind."

"That's Christianity, is n't it?"

"Oh, my dear." He moved away from her for a moment and from the window turned half confusedly back. "I think you have found me out. I think at bottom that Christianity is what I'm trying to 'put over,' as you say."

She did not, however, rise at once to that. "I have n't really got very much out of Christianity as a scheme of

life," she said; "what I've got is, I suppose, what is called 'culture,' which means absolutely being kind, and choosing, if you have to choose, being kind to others at the expense of yourself. And somehow I thought there was more in Christianity than that. I'd have been 'kind' to Sadie, in any case, I hope."

Now she saw that he was wary, and misread it as that scrupulosity on behalf of his own womankind, to which she was accustomed in men of her own circle. "But I want you to know," she hastened to add, "that there was something more. I did n't criticize their not being married, because I saw that they had n't left out any of the things that the ceremony was meant to involve. You don't know how severe I can be, even with people who have had a ceremony, who play fast and loose with it." She thought of Julius Sherrod, but she could not pay Madelon out as an example, and she reflected that Frear himself would n't have known anything about the Rittenhouse affair. As he continued to listen with that slight air of caution or confusion with which men so often hear the modern woman expounding marriage, she finished quickly.

"It's only that I want you to know that I feel some sort of reality behind these things, something *hard*, or at least something that has substance." And on his still remaining silent, she came round at last. "I suppose really that the whole criterion lies in what you said, that the reality is *kind*; that however the thing is done, nobody should be hurt by it."

“Yes. Yes.” He brightened, agreeing eagerly. “That’s the ethics of it. Nobody must be hurt.”

As she recalled their last moment together and the fulfillment it implied, his assent had all the force of a covenant.

BOOK IV

XVII

§ 53

NEITH was sitting in the blue room, writing to Eustace Rittenhouse and thinking of Adam Frear. She had found herself greatly in arrears with her correspondence and had begun a letter to Eustace, not only with the hope of making it up, but because, since there had never been anybody but Eustace to whom she could write intimately and interestedly of herself, it was a way of making up to herself for the sudden rift of intimacy with Adam Frear. He had been gone two days, days in which Neith had measured her dependence on the daily personal touch with something like alarm. Even her inexperience recognized that the need of him and his need of her had come to that pitch where it was only possible to be assuaged with the still greater intimacy, the more complete possession of marriage. And yet, with the equally pressing claims and prepossessions of Adam's work, would marriage do any more than to make of his poor dear consciousness the field for a still closer clutch and struggle between contending interests?

She remembered that Eustace had said that he could put his desire for her out of his head, but he could n't put *her* aside. She suspected that this might be generally the case with men between their work and their wives. Should she marry Adam, then, and trust to her intui-

tions to leave a clear field for his work? Or should she with her own hands unbind him from the web of tender interest until a time when the more pressing of his tasks should be done?

The two indecisions ran in her mind with the delicate tremors of a song, while all their implications worked unconsciously into her letter to Eustace.

I have been thinking much more about men lately. As men, I mean, and not as my friends and relations. And I've been seeing some of the wonder and romance of their lives, something that men see in one another, I suppose, the basis of hero-worship. I can see that the world would have been a dull place without their willingness to trust themselves to adventure, to the unknown and the uncertain. I'm glad I never had any of that sore feeling about men as oppressors, the Kaisers of women. I can see where men and women have got themselves all wrong with one another, with a kind of wrongness that can't be changed too soon — I'm a Suffragist now, did I tell you? But it is n't going to be made right by making them more like one another. There has been a lot said about giving women the vote so they can prevent wars. But I can also see that unless women are going to keep on seeing how right and natural it is for you to have adventures, if only in science and in politics, poor dears, you are just going to have to go on having wars to get a chance to be truly yourselves. And this new adventure in politics that everybody says is coming after the war —

She broke off here, remembering that Eustace would know it was chiefly from Adam Frear that she would hear that a new adventure in politics was upon them. It occurred to her as not entirely kind to give Eustace

occasion for thinking of her and Adam together without at the same time giving him an inkling of how close together they were soon to be. If she married Adam in a week or ten days — and she was not sure, if Adam insisted on it, she had any right to refuse — then by the time this letter reached Eustace, the thing would have happened which made reticencies on her part absurd. She took a new sheet and wrote again:

— this new economic adventure that everybody who thinks seriously of these things, knows is coming and in which, as Adam Frear's wife, I shall have a part so soon — for we are thinking of being married as soon as Adam can get around to it — this new adventure of internationalism —

There was a ring at the door.

There is some quality in human intention which transmutes itself into the most trifling acts and charges them with significance. Up to that moment nothing could have been farther from Neith's mind than the possibility of anything intervening between her and the adventure she had so lightly indicated. But in the moment more that she moved across two rooms to respond to that ring — she was alone in the house, the hour was that waning end of the afternoon which she had been accustomed to reserve for Adam Frear and she had been sitting close to the window to make the most of the shallow light — she was taken with the dreadful certainty that the ring could bode nothing less than some disaster to Adam or to their happy relationship.

There was relief rather than surprise, then, in finding

her visitor a woman instead of the blue-uniformed messenger of disaster; a woman who, though veiled, showed at once in her dress, in her assured and easy movement, some common ground of interest, that community of association which is called "class."

But it was evident enough that the first motion of her visitor on entering in response to Neith's invitation, after consulting aloud, and with the rising inflection of doubt, the name and address which she held in her hand on a scrap of paper, was surprise almost to the point of disconcertion. What she had expected Neith could n't imagine. What she found, the delicate modeling of the furniture, the so carefully selected evidence of European contacts, the accomplished ease of everything, threw her visibly off the track of what she had come to say. She had to repeat for her own assurance the marks of identity.

"You *are* Miss Schuyler, then?"

"Oh, certainly. Won't you sit down? Shall I get a light?"

"Oh, no, no." She sat down in the chair indicated by Neith and put back her veil. The late afternoon sun, taking a saffron tinge from the façades of the buildings opposite, was still strong enough for Neith to observe the rather thick whiteness of the skin, the strong sweep of the brows and chin, and the sensitive, tragic mouth uncovered by the instinctive gesture of one accustomed to no veils or indirection between herself and her mark.

"I have had to know your name," said her visitor;

“but since you have declined my proffer to communicate without any revelation of identities, you will understand why I don’t immediately tell you mine. Unless, of course, you insist upon it.”

“Oh, no. Not unless you wish it.”

Even as she said it Neith thought to herself that in a moment she would know . . . just a remembered inflection, a turn of the head — for the head, and the voice, smooth and full, but slightly trembling, had been seen and heard before.

“It would help matters,” said the visitor, “if you would tell me your reason for not in any way replying to my letter, or message, if, as I left it open, it might have come to you in the form of a message.”

“But,” Neith audibly wondered, “what letter, what message?”

“You received none, then?” She appeared to think for a minute, calculating unguessed chances, and at last frankly said, “Will you kindly tell me, then, as the surest way of my not making a mistake, are you — engaged to Adam Frear?”

“The engagement has not been announced,” Neith heard herself presently replying, and decided that it was the right response to have made. The woman she now knew her visitor to be, could have only the best of reasons for inquiring. She went a little farther in the security of her own position. “I suppose there is no objection, since it interests you, to saying that it probably will be immediately on Mr. Frear’s return from Washington.”

The visitor appeared to turn this over in her mind for some time. "Am I to take it, then," she brought out at last, "that this is all the answer you intend, either of you, to make to my claim?"

Immense and crashing silences.

"You must realize," Neith found strength for, "that this is the first, absolutely the first, I have known or suspected of your having any claim in that connection." She hoped that her voice was free from a vague antagonism that she felt shaping behind it, as vague as she felt it to be mean.

"You really did not, then, receive my message?" Her visitor spoke with relief, as if the fact put them on a footing more workable if not actually more cordial.

Neith shook her head. "No message whatever."

When her visitor spoke again, as she did after an interval, it was with a measured seriousness that poured about Neith with the effect of substance, fixing the situation at just that level of impersonal high-mindedness against which she felt every instinct, meanly as she knew it, rise and bristle.

"When I first heard that there *was* you, at least that there was some one," she said, "though I did not make the slightest effort to discover your identity, I felt that the utmost fairness to us both demanded that you should hear my protest against a situation so absolutely unjust, not only to me, but to the whole profession which made the situation possible in the first place. I asked Adam to put it to you, leaving him the option of

doing so by means of a letter which I wrote, or by word of mouth. Since you received neither, I have felt justified in seeking you out as I have done, and putting the case to you directly."

Perhaps she supposed she had done it, for she remained silent for some minutes, until at last Neith, groping for her own clue, ventured. "May I ask why, in the first place, you undertook to conduct such an inquiry anonymously?"

"Because I felt that the situation at its best involved too much that was personal to be trusted to anything but its essentials. You can guess that if with Mr. Frear, I had been shocked to discover that the personal issue so far outweighed all those principles of conduct to which he was publicly committed, that it might even be the case with you, whom I did not know to be committed at all. From the first it has been my contention that, by his own act, Mr. Frear had put the case clear outside the personal consideration."

"If it is n't personal, then" — Neith saw her way clear to that — "why do I come into it?"

"Because I had understood from Mr. Frear that there was, or was about to be, complete identification of interests between you."

Neith sat tight in her chair; her hands clasped one another with the deep, almost submerging consciousness that she must not fail Adam at this juncture. She must act somehow within that complete identification of their interests which their visitor had so freely ac-

knowledged. But how, by what criterion, if not by that gentle, impartial justice which was the best she knew of him?

“You forget,” she said at last, “that I do not yet know what your case is.”

“Simply that, until quite recently, there was that same identity of interest between us, and that I had been led to understand it would be, it was in its nature, permanent.”

“You mean —” Neith wondered; and then hastened to fill the gap in her own slow comprehension, instinctively fighting for time in which to face all that her visitor might have meant. “If you have any claim, any charge against Mr. Frear, I think I should prefer not to hear it until he can be present to answer it.”

“Ah, how can I tell whether you will think it against him or not?” her visitor all but cried out. “You may agree with him that it is so little a claim that you may not even wish to discuss it.

“It was one of the chances I had to take,” she added after an interval. “Of all the chances, it was the one, on the whole, that I most expected. I was judging from some hint I had received — or perhaps from the sort of woman I thought Adam would have been most likely to have been interested in. But now —” She glanced about the room, taking in to the full its revelation of fineness. “I see now,” she said quietly, but with a steady command of herself. “I see that I have exposed myself to the chance of your not understanding me at all. To the

chance of your seeing in the very claim that I make, an excuse for denying it."

"No." Neith met her firmly. "I don't know what you see in my room that you should think that of me. But if you remember at all where you first saw me, you would know that it would be enough for me to know that *you* make it, Miss Matlock, to be satisfied of your right to be heard."

She rose and moved across to the other window instinctively to spare herself the shock that the other woman might feel in the discovery of her identity. "Before long," she said, "you would have remembered that I was with Mrs. Kendries the day you brought Miss Obernaur to talk about the rehabilitation of the discarded factory workers. You cannot suppose that I would have supported you so heartily on their behalf, and not have heard you with equal justice on your own."

Neith remained standing, looking out at the racing children in the street. She had taken hold of the curtain for support, and let go of it again as she perceived that it shook to her trembling. She heard, after a moment, the other woman move behind her, and turned to find her at her side.

"My dear Miss Schuyler," she said, "will you let me say that I understand, since you are who you are, that this must be a great shock to you? As great," she finished, "as it was — as it is" — with the first touch of wildness she had displayed — "to me."

“It shocks me so much,” Neith answered her with returning composure, “to discover that there can be any question of injustice, and above all things, of injustice to *you*, in anything that Mr. Frear does, that I feel sure there is only some cruel misunderstanding, and I shall ask you to wait until he comes, as he must come soon, to clear it up.”

“Adam coming here? Here?” She was visibly stricken. Her face under the wide brow was a tragic mask.

“I have been expecting him on any train this afternoon, from Washington. He will come directly here, I think.”

Miss Matlock recovered herself with an effort. “Do you wish, then, that I should go, should leave you to hear the facts first from him, since I am sure now that you will hear them?”

“If you felt you could stay . . .” What Neith felt herself was that never in the world could she open this matter to Adam Frear.

“It would be shorter — only —” Miss Matlock searched the younger woman’s face with a keen, clear look, while her own strained and whitened. “You must understand that I have already suffered much in this connection. I don’t know that I can come through such an interview as calmly as Adam would wish. I must tell you,” with sudden energy, “that I have n’t followed the common American prejudice in favor of special emotions. I have n’t been in the habit of thinking it any more dignified — or any less — to laugh than to

cry, and on the whole rather better to be able to do one or the other than to be evasive or untrue."

"With me and with Mr. Frear," Neith took that high ground easily, "you will have no occasion to be either of the latter."

"No?"

Neith winced under something sharp that whipped almost to the surface of the other woman's manner. "Adam won't, at least, lie about the facts," Miss Matlock conceded.

§ 54

They sat down again by common consent in their former places, with half the width of the room between them. Miss Matlock looked at her watch.

"There's a Washington train at four. It's twenty minutes past."

"He may go to his room before coming on here," Neith contributed.

"I wonder if you can understand," Miss Matlock began again, quite as if the interval of commonplace had never happened, "that when I finally made up my mind to protest against a situation that did so much injustice to all my life stands for, that I decided on just this method. Coming to you, I mean, as the one least likely to expose Mr. Frear to any lessening of the place and power he has in men's minds. Because, if it were n't for that, at such a time as this, once I *had* made up my mind, I should n't have shrunk from *anything*. When

you think what people are going through now for questions of abstract justice — that poor Leninsky that the police beat to death —

“Not that I believe Adam can really accomplish any genuine thing for freedom as long as he denies it in himself. It’s because he could really accomplish so much that I have waited all these months. To give him a chance to see, to come to the free admission of his case himself, and not to drive him to it with the fear of public disgrace.”

“Oh, *no!*” Neith strangled with dismay. Then, with sudden hope, “This is n’t anything that you and I could settle between us? Without bringing it to his notice, I mean.”

“Oh, as far as you and I are concerned — and as far as anything Adam can do — I don’t know what he *can* do, now! But the important thing, the thing that keeps me trying for some method of making him see, is that he should just *see*.”

As if this were the point at which her mind had hung so long baffled that she could never get by it without setting out on some unhappy journey of bewildered speculation, she sheered away from Neith and sat staring bleakly at her trouble. “I must *see* myself,” she half whispered, under some urge more exigent than Neith could divine; “I must know what this is that I have come against. I must *know!*”

Nothing in this seemed to call for a response. Neith, under the folds of her dress, gripped her chair, feeling

for some measure of reality. Clearly as it seemed to be stated, that something unfaithful to the interpretation she herself had put on her engagement to Adam Frear had gone on between him and this woman, nothing in her experience helped her to shape it as a fact. No reactions out of her late adventure in Democracy came to her relief. Out of her Van Droom-Schuyler inheritance old instincts rallied to the defense of her security by covering the author of this menace with contempt. Was n't it enough for this woman whom, as seemed certain, Adam had once preferred, that he now preferred somebody else? Why should Rose Matlock come crying to her for the broken faith of a man? . . . She choked audibly as she pulled herself back from the pit into which she felt herself flounder along with poor Emmy and Aunt Doremas. The sound of her strangled breath brought Rose Matlock back to the consideration of her as an element in her own situation.

"Just how much," she inquired, "do you know of me — personally, I mean?"

"What Madelon Sherrod told me."

"Then, at least, you know that I had very little reason for thinking of the personal relation between men and women as a thing to be cultivated for its own sake. You will believe me when I say that what happened between me and Mr. Frear was not of my seeking. I was teaching in a western college when I met him. He came to deliver a course of lectures. It was his fine impersonality that interested me then, that and his way of basing

all his social conclusions not on theories and hypotheses, but on facts. I was so far from thinking of him personally then that I was surprised, when I came on to New York two or three years later, to find that he had been thinking of me so all that time."

"A—ah!"

It was an involuntary notice of pure pain, but it passed for the call to attention as a step on the stair outside sounded and resounded through the quiet rooms. The step passed their door and ascended the next story.

With a little easing of the breath after the moment of suspense, Rose Matlock went quietly on.

"I don't know whether you can understand," she said, "that even then I was far more influenced by his need of me than by anything I wanted for myself. Except that, like everybody who was beginning to think in terms of the whole of Society, he was indispensable. As a leader, I mean, as an interpreter of events.

"He needed me . . ." She lost herself for a moment in her own inward speculation on that point, and came to her conclusion afresh. "Yes. I am sure that I was of use to him. He had lost the first flare of his inspiration, and his second wind was slow to come. I suppose," said Rose Matlock, with that stark honesty at which Neith oddly felt the bristles of all her inherited social instincts arise, "that if he had clearly asked me to take a place in his life as a stop-gap, as a bough to be momentarily leaned upon, I should have felt — so little did I feel myself at the time — that it was one way in which I could have

served the social need —” She broke off. In the dusk Neith caught the gesture of her speaking hands. “Ah!” she cried, “if I could but just talk to Adam like this. If I could just be sure of his listening as you listen —”

But it was just sitting there listening that Neith herself felt unequal to.

“We must have a light!” she heard herself saying, as she groped for the electric button, groping at the same time for something better in herself than the impulse to tell Adam, when he came, to take this woman away and to settle with her on whatever grounds it was customary for men to settle — oh, whatever it was that went on between men and women on such occasions, but not to drag *her* into it! She turned on the candles on either side the Georgian mantel, and the reading-lamp in the back room. So resolutely did she hold her mind back from hoping that in the new step on the stair he was coming to do just that thing, that his quick, final ring struck her with sharp surprise.

§ 55

The instinct of the trained interviewer, and some emanation from the charged atmosphere of the room, operated to bring Adam Frear over the threshold and full into sight of the unsuspected visitor without having committed himself to anything that might have been expected of him, in his meeting, after an absence of three days, with the young woman he soon and so happily expected to marry.

His hat was in his hand and the light overcoat which fitted him, as did everything he wore, with such unostentatious grace, was thrown open to the slight warmth of the room as he advanced, holding in check, but without any anticipation of frustration, that ready overflow of charm with which he habitually met her.

And instantly, without apparently having heard the confused half warning from his fiancée, the whole surface of him was ripped as by a blade. There was an effect almost of substance in his wrath, of sensible heat and explosion in the white flash of his teeth between drawn lips, the hot spark of his eye, the flamelike spurt of his voice.

“You!” he said. “What did I tell you if you dared —”

Oh, it had gone on! It had raged between those two; it leaped and licked at the edges of every word.

“Ah, I told *you*, Adam, that no affair, in which I was so deeply and intimately concerned as this, would be allowed to go on without my having a voice in it.”

“I deny that you are concerned in my affairs at all.”

There was a note almost of anguish in his wrath. It reached his fiancée through the swift, affronting surprise and waked a flutter of tenderness.

“Won’t you sit down, Adam?”

He heard her so far that he laid his hand on the chair which she so pointedly offered him. He continued to look at the other woman, badgered and sullen.

“What do you want?”

It was almost more than she could bear that he yet so

evidently did n't know, that he bristled with suspicion, that he imputed to her mere being there horrors of the impossible, the unrelated. Neith saw Miss Matlock visibly flinch and make with her fine hands the instinctive half gesture of renewed despair.

"Justice," she said.

"Justice!" His voice took on a note of fretfulness. "As if there were justice in an affair of the emotions! I told you all that was over."

"No, you only told me it was over for you. Of what I feel, you must leave me to be the best judge."

There was the beginning again of the quick snarl which had greeted the first intimation of her presence, but he had himself better in hand.

"I am not interested," he thrust, "in what you may be feeling."

"Well, then," she came steadily back to him, "you can't expect from me that extenuating interest, which you seem to expect, in what *you* feel."

He gave way to pure exasperation. He let fall the back of the chair which he had been holding unconsciously as a *matador* holds his cloak as a shield for his thrust, and turned between anger and frustration to Neith. "Do you understand what she wants?"

It occurred to Miss Schuyler that many of their interviews might have ended thus, in the blankness of missed understanding. His helplessness touched her again to warmth.

"I think so, a little, Adam." She came close. He was

taller than she, and as he looked down at her in his for the moment honest bewilderment, he was assuaged by the perception that, in spite of all that had passed, he still stood within the reach of her tenderness. "I think Miss Matlock feels, for one thing, that you have n't any more right to be angry with her for coming here than she would have for being with you for — well, not telling me what she wanted you to tell me in the first place."

"Telling *you*?" A new shade of bewilderment hovered on his face and passed before an indefinitely newer shade of comprehension that, however, seemed to have nothing to do with the problem in hand. She was to remember that afterward as the sore scar of a wound unfelt when given.

"Why, yes, Adam, if Miss Matlock, or any one, had a claim on you, I could n't marry you, without its becoming in a way a claim against me. And I would n't want to marry you, Adam, with any woman's unsatisfied claim against you," she brought out clearly. "We're neither of us so poor that it is necessary for us to do *that*."

"But claim, what claim? . . ." Hot, intolerable anger fairly shook him. It leaped past her to strike, with the full force of a bolt, the other woman in the breast. "I never promised her I would marry her."

"Ah —!"

He did not know which of the women uttered that, but he saw that his fiancée had recoiled from him, and the other woman sprang to her feet, so that they stood

now in respect to their former positions, those two together against him. Quick as he naturally was, thick anger prevented his seeing that this new and so amazing alignment had come about through the very fury of repudiation which had allowed him, unnecessarily, to tell too much. The realization reached him, by just the interval it took for the slow, full voice of Rose Matlock to give him the chilled steel of her rejoinder.

"No," she said. "What you did give me to understand was that you had."

He perceived now, his natural adroitness aroused by the abyss which his own words had suddenly opened under his feet, that to slacken or to attempt to go back would be but to fall into it the more deeply. If he was to go on from there at all successfully, he must clear it with a rush.

"Well, then, if it is n't to have me marry you, what is it you want me to do?" And heard Rose Matlock's voice after him like the falling of stones under his scarce securely landed feet, measuring the full depth.

"Why, principally that you should admit and conduct yourself toward me in the light of that admission, as if you had."

He gathered from some slight movement of Miss Schuyler's that she concurred in this statement, that it actually had for her also the extraordinary lucidity that it appeared to have. She turned toward him with a half-involuntary motion of her hand as if, finding the situation extraordinarily simplified, she would have drawn

him into some visible expression of a restored, a completed harmony. The gesture ended with the raising of both hands to her face, where they lingered for a moment's oblivion of all they saw, and the slow withdrawal of her attention back to Rose Matlock.

Neith found her in all respects amazing. Stricken as she saw her now, in the full light, to be, so that slow tears gathered and fell unconsciously as drops oozing from a wound, she had abated nothing of the fine integrity of her claim. What she wanted, beyond that which she so pitiably needed at that moment, acknowledgment of that integrity from the man who defied her, Neith could not wholly make out. All she knew was that suddenly she could not bear to see any woman so racked and tormented. She could not bear to see Adam Frear so cruelly and stupidly beyond the reach, equally of that integrity and that torment.

As he stood there between them, bristling with suspicion, she saw that he had no feeling for the scene except that it was a scene; a move in a game which was being played not quite in conformity with the rules as he knew them. Neith felt the need on her part, of a compensating openness of mind.

"So far as I understand you, Miss Matlock," she said, "I want you to know that I agree with you; that whatever claim you have against Mr. Frear, can't be wholly decided by what he thinks about it. And if I say to you now that I would rather that it should n't be referred to me, it is not because I am indifferent, but

because . . . because, as you must see, I can't bear that such a thing should have come about that you find it necessary to refer it to me."

"You must judge for yourself," said Rose Matlock, "how necessary it has been."

They moved together toward Frear as if some common agreement had transpired between them, and stopped, facing him as if for the finish of his consent. He had recovered in the interval a little of his habitual gentle detachment.

"But not to judge me," he insisted, "without giving me time to say that I don't yet, that I have never quite understood what it is that is required of me."

"It's *that*," said his fiancée, "that I can't bear, your not understanding." She was near to the breaking point. "I can't bear any more now of anything."

"You shan't, dear Miss Schuyler," Miss Matlock generously interposed, "if you would get me a cab, Adam." He rallied completely to that.

"There's a cab-stand on Sixth, near Waverley Place, if you would let me take you there." He took her fur which had fallen from her arm and placed it across her shoulders.

Neith, watching, felt indeed she could bear nothing more. "He has been unkind to her, he has, he has!" she cried to herself. Deeper, she felt how kind he must once have been that a woman should be so moved as Rose Matlock visibly was, at so common a courtesy from him.

XVIII

§ 56

It was half-past ten of the next morning that Neith found herself, by some obscure impulse which she did not come out of her own confusion sufficiently to analyze, threading the waste of packing-cases along one of the western tributaries of the Bowery, on the way to visit Sadie Leninsky.

Sadie had selected two rooms in Delancey Street as an alternative to the year in the country which Neith had offered her. There was, of course, the consideration of what the year in the country would do for the baby. And there was what it would n't do for Sadie herself. For the baby had somehow, in spite of the high adventure of its immediate inheritance — perhaps because of it, as if the two young parents had struggled so hard against the conditions of living, they had nothing left for the struggle for life — failed of the fortunate variation from its long line of overtaxed mothers and intimidated fathers. If it survived its second summer, it would only be as a fixed point from which to measure Sadie's own survival, her one chance of being numbered among her chosen tribe of Intellectuals.

It was with some such ironically sympathetic touch that Neith could still think of Sadie Leninsky. She was still too numbed by the bolt from her own blue to realize what, within an appreciable number of minutes, she was

to discover; that she had been thrown by the shock into that region of unassimilable behaviors along with Sadie herself.

She had seen Adam Frear for an hour the previous evening. He had rung up and begged for that, which she did n't see any advantage in refusing him. And when he had come, she had given way simply to the need of human sympathy and cried quietly on his shoulder. Where else can a woman go when she is hurt by her lover, but on past the barb to the very centers from which it took its flight? She had cried there, then, for relief in the assurance of its being still open to her to cry upon his shoulder. And it was only by degrees, as he attempted to comfort her, that she woke to new and more barbed realizations that this secret center in which she had imagined herself at home, was a strange, an unknowable place.

He had begun with murmured endearments and intimations which he was so practiced to convey, by intonations, by gestures, by the whole range of gentle seeming. If she had had an equal capacity for conveying her own meaning, they might then and there have come to fruitful understanding.

If she could have spoken out and said what moved her, which was simply that, having come to America to escape the pressure of irremediable human misery, it was the last unbearable item to have to meet it in this new personal shape in the very spot she had chosen for refuge. If she could have communicated to him that

sense she had, in common with millions, of being carried by the shock of war past any capacity on her own part to be the cause of suffering in others; if she could have somehow given him to understand that it was the pain of the other woman's pain that she cried for — But, in fact, he understood nothing of the sort.

“If you don't know, my dear, that I would have given anything in the world to have spared you this —” he had begun.

“Ah, if you had, if you had!” She went so far as to shape the words, and bit them back, not even to seem to reproach. “Give, then,” was what she finally said.

“One thing I *have* given her to understand,” he declared, “that she must not come here troubling you. I have told her that unless she keeps away from you I shall never see her again.”

He felt his fiancée draw away from him, as he hoped, assured.

“But, Adam —” Not yet did she measure the gap between their ultimate meanings. “I think it better for me to hear everything from her,” she finally said.

“My dear, I assure you that it does not concern you. That was over, on my honor; it was over before our engagement began.”

“Over . . . for you,” she made out. “But, Adam, how can a thing like that, in which two people are so intimately concerned, be over just because one of them has — changed?” She thought of Frances Rittenhouse, of

Madelon Sherrod, of her father. She thought confusedly of the autocracy of social and political opinion against which all his work was directed.

He frankly stared. But he was wary now, on his guard. He realized that he had missed his footing in the afternoon, and meant not to do so again.

With great reasonableness, and without attempting to draw her to his breast again, he asked her, "Just what did she tell you?"

"Ah, she had n't told me anything, much. It was you who told."

It rang out in the manner of an accusation. He covered a rising flush.

"If I made the mistake," he began, "of supposing that we were all of us past the point of being sensitive about things being 'told,' as you put it —"

"What you don't see, Adam, is that it was *her* experience. At the very least it was half her experience, even more, if, as you tell me, you had renounced it. If, on your own showing, it had ceased to be *yours*. It was for her to say how much she wanted me to know. She might," she gently warned him, "have not meant me even to be troubled about it as much as — as much as I feel I am going to be."

He felt himself so completely at fault, and it was a situation in which he was so little accustomed to find himself, that he two or three times opened his mouth to speak without finding anything to say. His silence gave leave to his fiancée to complete the thought that was in

her own mind. "After all, we must remember, Adam, that she is Rose Matlock."

"But Rose Matlock!" He was now so wholly at sea that he had no objection to letting her discover it, feeling that on this point, at least, he could n't well be more innocent than he was.

"You are so used, Adam" — she took a gentler note with him on a point that showed slightly to his credit — "to moving among notables that you don't always realize that I am a nobody myself. It is for a woman like Rose Matlock to decide how much of her affairs a woman like me can be trusted to know. And she did n't really know me at all. I might have been — horrid!"

"You are amazing!"

He was disposed, if she had allowed him, to let the whole situation go as a part of that mystery of femininity which men love to make of their own obtuseness. He was relieved, at any rate, to find himself so much engaged to her still that he could presently put the whole matter aside to talk to her of what had happened the past few days at Washington. The truth was that she was gasping at heart as an overtried swimmer, and accepted his readiness to talk of Washington as a fortunate shoal of the impersonal where she could find breathing space. And while she breathed she cast about, if, in any possible direction above the wide flood of doubt and bewilderment, any land might arise.

He had not, it seemed, been successful in his errand, which was to awake such of the responsible powers of

government as he met, to the recognition of the new forces which were moving under the social upheaval of Europe. He found them disposed, as he said, to wave the flag and to assume that the whole matter was as simple as administering a military defeat to Germany. He had found himself rather put off the key of his intended explanation of European events as he saw them, by the arrest, on the very day of his interview with the President, of Gifford. For the Labor leader had dared to say openly from the lecture platform, and with trenchant application to American affairs, the very thing that Frear had expected to say with the mild and rememberable force for which he was distinguished.

It was a dénouement that checked the whole flow of Frear's interview with the President, not, as he explained, because he was afraid of being put in jail himself, but for the revelation of a certain obtuseness in the American point of view, against which he felt himself powerless.

"It's all part of our damnable American optimism," Frear declared, walking up and down as he talked himself free of the strain and uneasiness of the personal situation. "Our great republican prejudice in favor of the more amiable emotions! For years we have n't tolerated a story or a play that has n't a happy ending. We've put all our unhappy endings under hatches and battened them down. And now, when somebody dares predict an unhappy ending for this European coil, which, since we are in the war has become *our* coil, we can do nothing

but put him in jail." So long as she seemed to listen, Frear found it easy to go on talking. He had the capacity, acquired by men whose trade is lecturing, of climbing completely out of himself by the successive rungs of his subject. He played himself into the masterly mood as a virtuoso on his violin.

"It has been so long," he said, "since any newspaper or magazine has had the courage to tell the public anything it does n't want to hear, that when the thing is finally done, it assumes the proportions of treason. They did n't put Gifford in jail because he said anything actually of aid or comfort to the enemy, or anything untrue. He committed a far worse offense than either of those things, by saying something that the people did n't like. Just did n't like! At the very moment we set out to overthrow the political autocracies of Europe we set up here at home —"

"An autocracy of personal feeling the counterpart of that we fight against —' It was the first thing I ever heard Rose Matlock say," completed Neith, "but she said it about men and women — I beg your pardon, Adam!"

The quotation had been almost automatic, born of the obsession of her mind with the real horror of the afternoon's revelation, and set in motion by the twice repeated phrases which were associated with the name.

"So, then, she has been talking to you!" The words tore from him.

"Not to-day, Adam, not in connection with us. I

did n't mean — I had n't thought of them myself in that connection. But perhaps they have a connection —”

“Ah, you are all in league, you women!”

She was astonished at her own capacity to offend.

“It was *we* I thought were in league, Adam, you and I. I thought we had talked this out so well, the things we have said about what a marriage becomes, beside the two people who engage in it. The things we agreed to about not hurting anybody —” This was not strictly the case, for the things she had said about marriage being more than the two, had been said with Eustace Rittenhouse. But what she had said, and Frear agreed to, about the essence of liberty lying within the condition of its not hurting anybody, was too recent for him to be able to deny it as the subject of one of those tender exchanges which make up the play of courtship. What was wholly beyond Neith's experience to divine was, that by her use of those yielding moments to fortify her position he felt himself inexcusably and speciously betrayed.

“You must remember, this is all so new to me.” With an impulse toward conciliation, seeing that he bristled still with suspicion, she laid her hand upon his breast, surprised to feel the wild pounding of his heart. He suffered, then! She wished she had realized earlier that he suffered.

“I have n't meant anything, Adam, except that I always agree with you about things, public things. But I'm not fit to talk to you to-night . . .” He yielded

slowly to her nearness and her charm. "We won't talk any more until I have had time to think this out by myself."

§ 57

And when they had parted at last with no break in the surface of their relation, she had crept into bed in a state of dull, staring wakefulness.

It was a state in which intimations, hints of meaning, moved like the figures of a dream without uncovering their identity or declaring their relationship to any solution. The one thing that faced her squarely out of the dark was the fact that it had happened to her. She had known that such things happened to very distinguished people, people removed by their gifts or their destiny so far from the common lot that they suffered no diminution of their estate in having such things happen to them. They happened also to people like Sadie Leninsky, people toward whom it was always possible to feel the extenuations of the social and personal limitation. But this thing had happened to Neith Schuyler!

Why need it have happened?

Was this, then, the meaning of Democracy? Was the root of all she had come to America and fled from Europe to find, just this demand for exemption from the disconcerting experience which she recognized in herself? Was the spiritual superiority of women nothing but a determined and autocratic selectiveness in the kind of experiences they would accept at men's hands? Backed

up by that other determination which Aunt Emmy had so firmly expressed as the whole duty of a lady, not to see? Had she and Millicent and the first Mrs. Rittenhouse simply been putting off these things on women like Rose Matlock?

But what sort of things?

So far the personal situation between Adam and the other woman had scarcely taken hold of Neith's imagination. Hers was the least jealous of temperaments, and the range of her experience in the sort of things that might go on between people like Adam and Rose Matlock was slight. Intimations of the situation, like stars that follow on a blow, swam in the blackness of her mind. She would find herself dropping off into stupors of exhaustion and reviving to have the whole horizon of her engagement lit by new coruscations. Toward the small hours they all sifted out to the one blinding fact that whatever had transpired between Adam and Rose, it had all taken place in that sacred interval in which she had believed herself defended from lesser loves by the flaming sword of his secret devotion to herself.

§ 58

It was the cold morning summary of the night's restless gleaning that gave her the first taste of Eustace Rittenhouse's characterization, "their own kind of bunk," for the essential differences in point of view between herself and the Radical group. And though she was hardly conscious of it until she found Fleeta Spence at

Sadie's, it was with the purpose of defining the quality of that "bunk" to herself, that she had come.

At the time Eustace had committed himself to this discrimination in the varieties of Radical profession, Fleeta's would have been the first name that occurred to her.

Fleeta's bobbed hair, her purple and orange furnishings, her trepidations over the question as to whether sandals were a sufficiently "Radical" departure to warrant their adoption in the face of certain marked inconveniences, had always appealed to her as rendered a little less than ridiculous by Fleeta's own sweetness of disposition. She saw them, in the light of her own overthrow in the very citadel of Social Revolution, as a sincere extension of Fleeta's beliefs to the only field over which she had any absolute control, Fleeta's own personal behavior. Sadie, too! There was her black dress and her rickety, illegitimate child as the witness of how much out of her own meager allotment of life, she was willing to pay down for her participation in a cause which had never looked nearer to defeat. And in both these young women, occupied with the deletion from the list of prisoners for opinion's sake of those names which could not be tactfully presented to the patronage of Mrs. Carteret Keys, there was a sharpness of discrimination that forbade her to dismiss them as mere witless enthusiasts of change.

If there was any reality in their "Movement" beside the hard demand for fewer hours' work and more wages for them, it must be the sort of reality Adam Frear

stood for. If there was any "bunk" it would be "bunk" that was common to the whole profession of Radicalism. Neith sat on Sadie's bed and pretended to amuse the baby, swinging her watch just out of reach of its curled, skinny, little claws, and answered to the best of her ability when she was appealed to as a more intimate exponent of the idiosyncrasies of Mrs. Carteret Keys and her kind.

No, certainly, Mrs. Keys would n't admit Bovard; was n't he, if not convicted as a dynamiter, at least only escaping conviction by a fluke? No, not Goldman, you might know that! Nor that Professor Townly; well, he *had* deserted his wife and the poor thing had nearly died of it . . .

Oh, yes, Gifford . . .

"What does Adam Frear think of Gifford's case?"

It was Fleeta who asked, but it flashed on Neith with cold intimations of horror that in just such fashion, with the same suggestion of intimate knowledge, she had heard Adam questioned as to what Rose Matlock thought. Were these things, then, the subject of common talk, of common assurance? At the mere flutter of such a suggestion below her consciousness, Neith abandoned her earlier purpose to put her case hypothetically to Sadie.

"Oh, he thinks it an inexcusable use of authority in the interest of a popular prejudice." She found herself answering Fleeta's question. "He thinks it shocking bad manners on our part not to be willing to hear what a man like Gifford has to say, simply because we don't

like it." As a matter of fact, Adam had made use of no such term. It had spurted up from Neith's own depths as though it had been waiting its chance to offer itself as a bridge to her own conclusions.

"I think you'll find that's the way Mrs. Keys feels about a lot of those people." She indicated the deleted list in Fleeta's hand. "She won't stand for them because they have done things that are — that are disloyal to all our experience about the best way of doing things. We have n't learned much about how to live decently. Still, all we have has been learned at the cost of somebody or other, and we throw them away when we throw away what they have learned. It's a frightfully underbred thing for us to shut Gifford up in prison for saying what we don't want to hear, but it was just as bad for Townly to bring all that humiliation on the mother of his children."

"But when you think of all he did for the cause! Don't you think that outweighs all those little individual moralities?"

"Ah, but I thought that *was* the cause! Not to bring on anybody a set of conditions in which he or she had n't the full equality of decision."

Neith perceived that, after all, she had stated the case for Rose Matlock.

"But, Miss Schuyler, this is the age of group action, of group psychology," Fleeta glibly recited; "we can't lose sight of the great movement in the interest of the individual case."

Sadie was as much nearer the marrow of the question as the length of her personal sorrow. "People do scab awfully on each other, Miss Schuyler."

"Scab? Yes. You'll find that Mrs. Keys and a few others of us look on men like Townly, as scabs against the Cause of Personal Democracy. You remember what Rose Matlock said" — she appealed to Fleeta — "'We have wars like this because we are forever at war in our most sacred relations —'" She broke off to follow the track of her secret thought. Was the war now on between those two, Adam and Rose? The two young advocates of the Revolution watched her as she absently swung the golden gleam just out of reach of the ineffectual hands.

"There's an awful lot of scab women," Sadie vaguely contributed.

Fleeta swept the whole subject off the board. "We've got to remember that the Espionage Act is a purely Capitalistic move —"

§ 59

The sensation of having reached after reality and grasped only a handful of cotton wool, in which Neith's visit to Delancey Street had ended, was all the more trying because she could not correct it as she had other frustrations of her search after the American idea, by resort to Rose Matlock or Adam Frear. In a general way she had understood that both of them were committed to a programme of change in which property

should become the charge of those who created it, the arts forwarded by those who practiced them, and ideals fostered by those who gave them birth.

In a general way also, she had understood that this was to be brought about by the shift of group consciousness, a playing of the wind of public opinion in new directions against the sails of the social enterprise. But it had never occurred to her that this could come about and yet leave the whole field of personal relations open to the lusts and reprisals which she understood played now in that open ground between the creation and distribution of wealth. It was in this latter field that Bruce Havens exercised his remarkable talent for profit-breeding. As she daily learned through her work with Mrs. Kendries, it was to keep open the whole of that region in the field of food, of steel, of lumber, and munitions, to future raids, reprisals, and piracies, that the business of seeing America through the war was being manipulated. The war was to be won, but nothing was to be done in the winning which would operate against the free return to the old autocracy of the "business sense."

Now it seemed to her that what Adam Frear and his friends looked forward to, was the mere shift of the accent of autocracy. In the region of his personal relations, Adam himself appeared the autocrat, as instinctively and with something of the same reaction into irritability that Bruce Havens had exhibited with Mrs. Kendries.

Nothing so concrete as this had come out of Neith's numbed attempts to square herself with the situation. All she was aware of was the pervasion of all her thoughts of one phase of it with all her encounters with the other. Adam came to take her to dinner the next evening, but constraint sat visibly with them at the table. Barbed differences ambushed in all their talk, and pitfalls opened at every step along those once shining paths in the direction of Adam's main interest. Opened at least, for Neith. For she saw, as the evening progressed, that except for the irritated consciousness of her finding such reminders under foot, he would have cleared them unsuspected. He read perversity into the ever-present alignment in her mind of their situation with Society's. Once or twice it even flashed out at her as a suspicion of collusion between herself and Miss Matlock.

It was after one such burst — they had come back to Jayne Street after deciding to go to a play and then finding nothing which suited their mood — that Adam grasped the situation almost with sternness. With an air, indeed, of finding himself the surprised, the injured party.

“When you say things like that —” he had begun.

What she had said was in reference to the new turn of affairs in Russia in which he was inordinately interested, to the effect that she thought the measure of success of the Bolshevik movement would be the success they might already have had in the performance of justice

and equity among themselves. She had said it out of her own deep preoccupation and without any undercurrent, but Adam had stopped his pacing up and down her small room and stared at her with a touch of resentment.

“When you say things like that, I begin to wonder if there has n’t been a mistake made somewhere.”

“A mistake?”

“A mistake in your understanding of the things I am interested in, in the things that I am. If it is going to be like this, if you are going to find yourself put out of sympathy with my work simply because you have discovered that I have been interested in other women — in another woman —”

“Not just the fact, Adam. Of course it is a blow to me. I have n’t been —” There was no way in which she could make it plain to him how difficult the whole subject was to her, over what hot ploughshares of violated reticences she moved. “Not the relation, Adam, but the — the excuse for it, the quality of her relation to you. That is what matters.”

As once before he frankly stared, bewilderment assuaging his impatience with her.

“Her relation to me? Why what relation *can* she have, if I won’t have her?”

“It is not possible for me to believe, Adam, that a woman like Rose Matlock can have any relation that can be disposed of as simply as your saying that you won’t have her. I have not gathered from anything that has been said that she asked you to ‘have her.’”

“Look here!” he said; “you said yourself, when we were talking about the Leninskys, that you did n’t value the ceremony in marriage.”

“If I did n’t, it is because I value the marriage so much.”

“Well, I have already told you *that* is over. I told her so weeks before we were engaged. Just before I went West the last time, to be exact. What more do you want?”

“You just . . . ‘told’ her. Just like that?”

“Well, if those things have to be done, they had better be done quickly.”

“Adam, you can’t mean that! That you just . . . *told* her. Not, at least, until you had made every possible effort to protect her from — whatever it was in yourself that made you fail her. Not until you had given her every possible chance to help you . . . Adam, you could n’t have done that!”

It was impossible for him to conceal that this was so new a view to him, so little thought about, that his surface response to it was a wave of guilty compunction.

“I talked it over with a woman I knew —”

“You mean — you talked” — the words wore heavily through the strained numbness of her understanding — “you talked of it . . . with another woman, *before* you talked with her?”

“Ah” — he turned sullen — “it is n’t so easy to tell a woman you are done with her.” His face, his very eyes, were pale, he breathed heavily.

“I know, Adam. It is n’t easy even to talk of it. But I must know. I *must* know why she refused to release you. A woman like that must have a good reason for refusing —”

“Refuse? Release?” Anger belched from him at last. “There was n’t any question of release! I tell you I was done with her!”

“Adam! I think you have behaved abominably! Oh, abominably!”

As if the interview had reached its exploding point, it was followed by a long silence in which they surveyed from their several points of view the fragments of their own relation scattered on the scene of their late happiness.

It was the woman who spoke first with the last flicker of expiring tension, as she turned back from the fire where she mechanically warmed herself. “I think you would have done better to give me that letter, Adam. I think she would have put it better than that.”

“The letter?”

“The one Miss Matlock gave you for me.”

He deeply and inexplicably reddened. “It’s burnt.” He moved over beside her and, with a real touch of humility, began: “I want you to believe that I was sorry she had to be hurt. But these things can’t be helped. They happen every day. A man can’t help what he feels.”

It had been impossible for her not to be moved at the old persuasive inflection of gentleness in his first note of

self-reproach. Equally impossible to say by what insensible and swift degrees that softness had passed the mark at which it stood for the gentleness of a full nature ripened by experience, and took on the incipience of decay. Somewhere in the passage of those few short sentences something had occurred that lifted the nostril and set the note of faint irreconcilable horror between him and his fiancée. She gave forth a low cry of mingled pain and protest, which brought him, in a more self-forgetful frame than he had yet shown, directly to her side.

“My dear — if you could just make me understand what it is I say that gives you so much distress.”

“Why, just that, Adam; that you think things we do ourselves can't be helped.” She slipped free of the caress that would have muffled her sharpened perceptions in the renewal of their effect each upon the other.

“It's what I came to America for, Adam. It's what the whole world is looking to America for, the ability to act on the intrinsic merits of a situation, independently of its emotions. It's the whole hope of the world and almost its only faith that there is a point beyond the upsetting of passion and prejudice, at which we *can* act.”

“Yes,” he agreed, “only I don't see exactly what that has to do with the present case.”

She looked at him frankly now, and almost impersonally for a longish interval.

“Somehow, Adam, I think you really don't.”

“Well, then, can’t you show me?”

She considered. “I don’t know, Adam, myself, exactly, but I might help you to find out.”

“Ah, do, then.”

“I can’t while I’m engaged to you, Adam.” She took off her ring. She had the impulse to give it back, but she saw that he had not noted her movement. He would perhaps consider such an act on her part melodramatic. She laid the ring unobtrusively on the mantelpiece. “Our engagement would have to be — suspended.”

“Only suspended?” There was a hint of real anxiety in his voice that lightened hers as she responded.

“Just — suspended. Until I can find out?”

XIX

§ 60

BEHIND Neith’s suspension of her engagement there had been that instinct for the higher form of democracy which is called breeding, not to go to Rose Matlock on behalf of Rose’s own claim with any appearance of stooping. Her removal of the ring had been an immediate and concrete way of renouncing on her own behalf any strategic advantage of Adam’s favor. She did not know exactly what was to come, for her, out of a situation so strange to all her traditions, but she had the clean Anglo-Saxon sporting instinct to throw away her sword in the presence of an unarmed adversary. She could not present herself as Adam’s fiancée before a woman so

stripped as Rose Matlock was by the defection of her lover.

Moreover, she was warned by some deeper divination than her experience gave her title to, that a right more fundamental than favor was at stake here. She felt it rise against the Van Droom-Schuyler inheritance which was at work in her, in sly and secret ways, to overthrow Rose's claim with contempt. It made the background against which Adam's own disposition to make his favor the sole criterion of any claim whatever, look more unlovely in every new light in which it showed itself.

And no sooner had she committed herself to even this slight formality of separation than she began to see herself possessed of that same urgency to "know" which had obsessed Rose Matlock.

She had recoiled from Adam's profession of helplessness the full length of her instinctive woman's notion of love as a vocation, which all the years of one's life are scarcely sufficient to perfect. But the item which drove her farthest along that track, was one she had done her best not to notice even to herself. It was that, in the half-hour that had remained to her of the evening's engagement, she had sensed in Adam's own willingness to be blown upon by inclination, to be played and handled, to make his reaction to her skill in handling the sole test of the validity of their engagement, a touch of the fatuity which belonged to her impressions of General Eustace Rittenhouse. Of all that she remembered or divined of the reasons that had driven the second Mrs. Ritten-

house from his side, the most sickening had been the old General's own pride in his complete befuddlement at the hands of a popular dancer. It had struck her that there was a touch of the same fatuousness in Adam's own confession of not being able to help what he felt about a woman.

For the moment, the convention of breaking her engagement had served to bring the situation its needed touch of reality. It became a circumscribed point from which to measure and adjust the divergences of view that began to show themselves between herself and Adam. It had always been perfectly clear to her, and it was with astonishment she began to understand that it was not equally clear to Adam, that marriage must take its measure from something more stable than the mere legality. If one was to regard it, as by all her training and tradition she now found that she had, as the point *beyond* which the real exploration of personal life began, it must be a fixed point. And because she was not quite willing to face the possibility of Adam's finding it nothing more stable than the sum of their mutual reactions, she fled all the more readily to the high ground of leaving the whole situation open to Rose Matlock's claim.

And immediately she discovered that she did not know how to so present the case to Miss Matlock without offense. To begin with, she did not know her address. And because of her own too fine reticences, she did not know what new angle the situation might have

taken between Rose and Adam since that day at her house.

She wrote a note or two and destroyed them. She considered the feasibility of asking Adam to take her to call. Then the power that intervenes to bring the subject of our concentrated cogitations across the field of view brought her in touch with Rose at one of those magnificent and half-public houses of the rich that face Central Park across the upper stretch of the Avenue. The place had been thrown open by its owner for the reception of certain French Commissioners. By virtue of their own position near the top of the host's visiting list, the Schuyler-Doremases had cards.

It was the last place in the world to which Rose Matlock, who was neither rich nor a New Yorker, would have been invited. But at the last moment, by one of those accidents that were the despair of publicity-loving feminists, Rose turned up in deep and intimate converse with one of the Commissioners. One never knew how Rose managed those things. She was n't on lists and she did n't come in the gracious train of any of the successful aspirants, but there, at the fruitful center of too many auspicious occasions, she could be found, magnificently unaware of having usurped the place of much more eminent and representative American ladies. And your good manners forbade you from just breaking in and letting the Commissioner know that the Middle West was not America, and that there really was something you could call Society in New York.

It was not until the interval allotted for refreshments that the infatuated Commissioner, who was hearing for the first time of the Non-Partisan League, surrendered Miss Matlock to that oblivion to which Fifth Avenue was born to consign her. Neith found her in the library sitting detached but not unobservant, and brought her a cup of tea. It seemed for the moment as if she had not remembered who Miss Schuyler was. As she sat, the shadow of her great perplexity drew slowly over her. Neith spoke at last before she was utterly engulfed by it.

"I have been wanting to talk with you," she said. "I have not known where I could find you." She did not say that she shrank from inviting Rose Matlock to Jayne Street almost as much as from calling on Rose at her own house. She wanted a more impersonal background for what was to pass between them. As she looked at Rose Matlock's pale, slightly abstracted face, she divined that the situation was as foreign to the other woman's traditions, to her faiths, as it was to the Van Droom-Schuylers. She felt she would not be able to talk to Rose unless they could get away into some large, new place that would not listen. What they had to say to one another was something that even the traditions should not overhear.

Rose Matlock looked at her watch. "We could go now," she said. She put down the untasted tea.

When they came out of the door together, a light snow was sifting along the Avenue and drawing veils across the Park; it swept like a curtain about the great bulk of

the Metropolitan Museum, a square or so farther up the Avenue. "It's artist day at the Museum," Rose said. "There'll be hardly anybody there." She led the way, by a side entrance, to a room stark with the pale stone of the archaic Greek period. There was nothing there that, if it could have overheard, would have cared.

"I want to tell you," Neith began, "that I am not engaged to Adam Frear any more. That I could n't be so long as there was an unsatisfied claim . . ."

"You think, then, that I have a claim."

"I think you have been treated abominably. I told him so."

"My dear Miss Schuyler" — the older woman was sharp — "there is more in this than the *how* of Adam's treating me. I could forgive that! I told you I had n't any prejudice in favor of special emotions. I could forgive his tempers. I could forgive his brutalities, even. I could forgive, I think, his not being able to go on loving me." She stopped for the recovery of that command over herself which threatened, from point to point of her rehearsed anguish, to slip away.

"What I can't forgive," she said at last, seeing that Miss Schuyler said nothing, "is his interference with my prerogative of loving him." After this so amazing statement of her position, they were both silent while the strolling guard went by.

"You have n't made him see that," Neith ventured at last.

"No. It was part of the shock I have suffered that he

had to be made to see. That it did n't naturally and unaffectedly occur to him that I had prerogatives.

"I don't know how much he has told you," she began again, "but you must know yourself that there was nothing in my life or in my work that would have permitted him to think that I would take such a situation lightly."

"Oh, no!"

"It was as explicitly put between us as such things can be, that if I esteemed the conventions lightly it was only because I attached the more importance to the relation itself. You can judge, then, of my amazement, of my utter confusion, to have him treat my attitude and my part in the arrangement as a mere silken scarf to his, something to be folded up and laid away when he was tired of it. What he can't forgive in me, what he has punished me for up to the limit of his capacity of such a situation to punish the one faithful to it, is for insisting that the freedom he insists on for himself implies an equal freedom on my part for going on with — whatever was going on in me. And for demanding the same consideration for it that he expects for himself."

"He does n't see that; he does n't see it in the least."

"Well, then, what does he see?"

"Nothing, as we see it," Neith felt certain. "I think he is shocked, too. He is shocked at your coming to me. Shocked," she hastened to add in a sudden flash of illumination, "in the same way the stockholders were shocked by the strike at Marcy."

Miss Matlock threw her a wry smile of appreciation, which ended almost in the twist of pain.

"Ah, if you can see it like that! If it is like that with him, then where does it leave — all of us?"

"I can tell you where it leaves me," Neith came out magnificently — "on your side. Absolutely! I don't know what you want him to do," she said. "But I can understand that that is a smaller consideration besides his just seeing and admitting that you had a — a share in the corporation." She drew her figure from the last that had been in her mind.

"Oh, I told him what he could *do!* There was only one thing to do; it was to sweep away all the false starts, the mistakes and misunderstandings and begin again. Where we were. It was the only chance we had of bringing the thing out right. If I would n't accept a solution based on the idea that the situation was his, to be disposed of in view of his sole attitude, then the only thing to do was to find one that would include us both. Include the fact that I could n't, that I don't wish to change, as equal to his own demand for change."

"Don't tell me he refused that! It was the simplest justice."

"It was worse than a refusal. He was afraid!"

"But, afraid! Of what?"

"Of justice!"

They looked at one another, their faces colorless almost as the stone faces from Cyprus and Ionia.

"He was afraid," said Rose Matlock, "of the living-

ness of Democracy! Lived, I mean, in terms of personal behavior.”

“Oh!” said Neith.

She was afraid herself, afraid of the tremendous simplicity and directness of this woman beside her. It was a simplicity as stark and compelling as that of the Attic statues. Far back in one of those shut compartments of the mind, from which she was later to take it out for conscious consideration, she had an instant's appreciation of man's need to dress up the essential figure of femininity, reduced as it was in Rose Matlock to two or three masterly lines, in their own wavering and infinite complexities.

“He must do you justice,” she said at last. They got up by common consent as a party passed through the room, and moved toward a window overlooking the veiled park. Behind them in the vast storehouse of art, they heard the voice of the guard clanging the hour for closing: “All out! All out!” As they moved mechanically toward the door by which they had entered, Rose Matlock spoke hurriedly and with that subdued energy which was the note of her whole personality.

“There are times,” she said, “when the personal side of this confuses my mind; when I suffer so much in finding myself here in a situation which denies all my convictions that I lose the sense of clearness. But I want you to believe that at all times there is the necessity for me, for my work, to know what this signifies. If I am not to have anything but my work, I must know when I

work for democracy in the control of wealth, of industry, whether it is Democracy I am working for, or a mere change of autocrats. I must know," she insisted, "whether men *as men*, are capable of Democracy. This new change which has come in Russia, these Bolsheviks . . . the groups that in America are clamoring for democratic control. They have never had it. Is Democracy just a name, just a new cover for the wish to control? Is it like the new names of Freedom which they give to — to experiences like mine, for an old, a very old autocracy? . . . Free Speech . . ." she said. "I have n't had it. Do you remember what Adam said to me that day in your rooms? If I '*dared*' . . .!"

They came out together into the cold gloaming through which still sifted errant flakes of snow. To Neith it was as if the interview itself had landed them there, in some sunless region unwarmed by any of the fine resolves which had lighted her way to it. She breasted the cold blast desperately.

"You *shall* have," she said, "with me! You shall have Free Speech and Justice!"

Rose Matlock turned on her. "Have you realized," she said, "that Justice, if we are to call it that, can only come of the clean desire to be just? I don't want, I can't accept, a set of sentimental postures of Justice, motivated by Adam's wish to reinstate himself in your favor. Adam can be made to do anything if you handle him right. There was a time, shortly after his return from the West, between that and his going to Russia, when

I could have played him back, temporarily, at least, where he would have done anything I liked because I would have made him like it. I loved him too well for that!"

Suddenly Neith was glad of the dusk and the snow. All the old reticences of sex, Aunt Emmy's foolish proprieties, even, took another front to her. It was n't decent that a woman should have been whipped to the point when this laying bare of her stripes was a lesser pain. If women were ashamed to tell how men treated them, it must be because of the deeper shame of their never having been able to teach men how not to treat them in such fashion.

If Rose Matlock was n't ashamed, it was because she had found the way.

"And if I did n't want a reaction which was the mere result of his being played upon by my own not quite superseded charm, you can guess how much less I want a 'justice' which is the reaction to your charm," Miss Matlock had finished.

"Ah, then," in a voice whose pain conceded all she asked, Neith fairly cried, "what can I do?"

They had drifted toward the obelisk as the dominant point of the scene, the point where the hurrying crowd was likely to leave them most to themselves, and leaned, in that cold privacy of the drift and the rising wind, against its rail. Pale rounds of light like swathed pearls beaded the whitening roads.

"We've lived in a fool's paradise, we women," said

Rose Matlock — “in a stage paradise of ‘made love,’ ‘influenced’ idealisms, ‘cultivated’ culture. We’ve played upon men. We’ve played at civilization. Now and then comes something like this war and upsets the play. I, for one, will play no more. I will not play!” She struck with her closed hand against the rail.

“I will not,” she finished, “be played upon!” She came back slowly out of her desperate preoccupation. “I must not, Miss Schuyler, keep you here in the cold.” By common consent they turned toward the gate; the clogging slither of the soft snow underfoot held them to some sort of definiteness. “I appreciate your coming to me like this, Miss Schuyler. You can see, though, that the thing I have most to fear is that you should *do* something. Something, I mean, that would prevent the situation resolving on its own merits.”

“Ah, I can do what you said. I can just let him alone.”

“Until he sees what to do himself.”

“Until he sees. You know,” Neith brightly affirmed, “I have the greatest confidence in his doing absolutely the right thing when he does.” They had stopped aimlessly at the curb. A cab from the Museum rank slipped suggestively alongside. Miss Matlock put up her hand. “One must remember,” she agreed, “how completely, in the fields outside his own behavior, he *has* seen. You’re going my way?”

“No, I shall walk.” She set out quickly, waving her hand toward the dusky interior of the cab for good-bye.

§ 61

It was in Neith's mind to walk across the length of the Park to the end of Sixth and take the El. there. Her high mood demanded action; the long stride, the breasting of winds on the hillocks and sliding runs down the tree-filled hollows. There was mysterious beauty in the trees hung with wet white drapery, in the white, sleeping flanks of the great park, the pearly lights, beauty like the high, cool tenderness of renunciation in her mind. She would give Adam up; she would stand off from him as she had seen women in England stand away from their men, giving them, unclung-to and unsoftened by regrets, to the execution of the justice of nations. She had not yet been called upon to give him to the war, but there was a greater war to come between the passions and inclinations of men, in the ordering of the new earth which was to issue from the travail of the old. Here and there broke on her musings little flares of exultation. They would take the measure of Democracy in themselves, they three: Adam, and Rose Matlock, and herself.

She began to shape in her mind phrases of the letter she would write to Adam. She would not see him again until he came to her clear of every entangling claim. She would not see him at all. And then the phrases as she brought them forth in her mind began to fail. They were strangely phrases of his own, of Rose Matlock's, phrases everywhere tossed about as the shibboleths of

the Radical group. They were phrases that had passed between Adam and herself, pregnant with fire. Some of them had already been said in her presence, and by Rose. She remembered that Adam had been irritated by them in some strange, elemental way. Rose had said he was afraid. She had seen that fretful, unnamed fear in the faces of the judges who condemned the companions of Hippolyte Leninsky. Women who went down to Washington, to urge some adjustment of the woman's burden of the war more in accordance with the facts of woman's changing relation to it, spoke of themselves as defeated always by that covert, unstated fear in the minds of the men they dealt with.

In her preoccupation Neith missed the proper turn and found herself at Columbus Circle, with wet feet and exceedingly weary. Mind and body she felt unequal to the jostle of the public conveyances at that hour. She looked about for a cab, asked her way of a street urchin dancing in the gusts of warmer air that came up from a subway grating. He ran with her for half a block to give point to his direction, thrusting his wares up into her face.

"Paper, Missus! All 'bout the death of 'stinguished aviator!"

She bought it out of pure politeness, folding its wet surface in as she climbed into the cab. She had gone a block or two before, as the cab checked in the press of traffic, it unfolded limply before her. In a moment she had seized the speaking-tube and given an order that sent the taxi darting north toward Sixty-Ninth.

She was going to Frances Rittenhouse.

It would be terrible if it came to his mother like that, the headlines of the paper, with no warning. She had heard that was often the case when the casualty was a part of the day's news. Just the ordinary evening keenness to know the day's drift of events, and then the startling headlines: "Major Eustace Rittenhouse Falls to His Death in France."

He had been up scouting with two companions, swinging in wide figures of eight over the region of the Somme. Suddenly out of a cloud five great German planes roared upon them. The Americans wheeled like eagles, up and out, and then down as agreed, to bring the enemy planes within range of the hidden guns.

One of them had trouble with his engine; the German plane was almost on him. Eustace, following, saw, and came crashing straight to the pursuer's death and his own. Their machines broke in mid-air and came dropping heavily in smoke and flame behind the German lines. The aviator who escaped remembered a thin, high shout; piercing the roar of the engines, "O—ho Boy!" It was Eustace's battle-song.

Neith went past the startled telephone girl at Mrs. Rittenhouse's apartments, straight for the stairway. She had an impression that there was not time for the elevator. Frances Rittenhouse was coming down. Behind her the colored maid, forcing her lax arms into a coat, mingled caution and persuasion.

"Now, Mis' Rittenhouse, don't you do nothin' brash.

Jest le' me git this coat on you, honey. Don't you take them papers too hard; you cain't most allus believe 'em."

"Let me go, Clorinda."

"Honey, you ought n't to go nowhere like this!"

"Let her go with me, Clorinda, I have a taxi."

Frances consented blindly to be buttoned into her coat. Neith knew very well where she would be going. "Did you get news from Headquarters?" she asked presently; she was beginning to add something about the necessity of keeping up hope until the news dispatch was confirmed, but Eustace's mother silenced her.

"I've known," she said. "The other machine had the photographs. It was exactly the sort of thing Eustace would do."

"It was a gallant thing."

After that they sat in silence until the taxi pulled up at the General's door. George, the janitor, had his own paper in his hand when he let them in. He was Clorinda's father, and he had dandled Major Rittenhouse on his knee.

"Yassum, Miss Schuyler, the General's paper done gone up at de usual time. I neve' had no suspicion; I jes' shoved it under de do' like allus. I did n' see it myse'f tel er minit ago. I liss'ened outside de General's door, but I ain't heerd nuffin. I kin' o' skeered to go in." He had dropped his voice as Frances Rittenhouse had brushed by him. "Two ladies jes' gone up de stair," he whispered.

Neith sprang ahead. But the strength of the utterly desolate was on Frances Rittenhouse; she brushed Emmy and Aunt Doremas from the threshold where they hung in tremors that were no longer ridiculous, and flung open her husband's door. He sat there in his chair staring straight before him. The paper had slipped from his knees to the floor.

"Eustace! Eustace! He's gone! My boy! My baby!"

"Gone! Yes. He's gone." The old General got stiffly up, but it was the stiffness of remembered dignity. "Gone," he said. "Major Eustace Rittenhouse, killed in action. Gone as a Rittenhouse should, Frances. My son!" In the glow of that rehabilitation, he stepped strongly forward and took his son's mother in his arms.

Neith had closed the door, but the sound of weeping came through its thin panels and shook the stale air of the landing.

"She should n't have let him go off to Belgium in the first place." Aunt Doremas's fierce old head trembled; there was a strange commotion up and down between her wattles. "If he had n't been so experienced, they'd never have let him go up that way."

"Eustace always would. I remember when he was such a little fellow that he could n't say my name . . . he used to insist on crossing the street in front of me. 'I'll take care of you, Nemeny.' . . . Were . . . were you engaged to him, Neithie? . . ."

"Almost, Aunt Emmy. I was very fond of him."

"I guess you better stay with us to-night." Aunt

Doremas got herself together. "Frances will want to stay here. I'll send Horlick over with things. You'd better stay awhile, and tell her."

She went down, leaning heavily on the banister. She was very old, and the number of her kin diminished rapidly. "I guess we'll take Frances's cab, Emmy; you can cry all you want inside."

XX

§ 62

NEITH SCHUYLER lay in her bed at Twenty-Six Jayne Street, staring into the dark. As she lay, tears forced themselves down her quiet cheeks and long, shivering sobs shook her from head to foot. It had been ten days since the news of Eustace Rittenhouse's death, but it was not for Eustace she cried. Her grief for his gallant ending was tempered with tenderness and something almost like relief. He was hers to think of tenderly now, as long as she lived. She need never feel now that the kind of love she could give him would stand in his way. And she was forever safe against the possibility of her yielding to the kind of love she had for him, in a marriage which should be less than the marriage she had been able to imagine with Adam Frear. That, she realized, might have been the case if, as it now seemed, Adam failed her.

Adam had called her up on the telephone the morning after the news had reached them about Eustace. The

things he said had been beautifully kind. A day or two later he met her between Jayne Street and the Rittenhouse place and took her to tea. The certainty which was in the air, that he had informed himself of her movements and waited about for the chance to offer her just this supporting sense of his interest in her, gave to their hour at the Brevoort, where they were presently ensconced at one of the little tables close to the half wall, a renewal of the charm of courtship. She had yielded to it more than she knew.

They kept the talk away from themselves at first and playing about those fine aristocracies of conduct, suggested by Eustace and the manner of his end. Quite unconsciously, so far as Neith was concerned, they courted each other afresh under high names of heroism and devotion to the tribal totem.

“What I like best to remember about Eustace,” Neith concluded, “is what everybody is saying, that if he had hesitated by so much as would have been long enough to make up an ordinary mind, if he had found it necessary to make his mind up at all, he could n’t have done what he did. Would have lost, I mean, his chance to do it successfully. It is beautiful to remember that his mind was so made up that there was no tripping over it in the performance.”

“It is like that,” Frear agreed, “when you have identified your life with the welfare of a group. You can go smashing through pain and death as easy as a pane of glass. You don’t see them any more than you see the

glass; you see through and beyond. These men over in Russia who are leading the Revolution, they are like that. The Revolution to them is just glass; to be broken through. Into Freedom —” He kindled.

“I wonder” — Neith kept the lowlier way of her recent contact with grief — “if breaking through pain is n’t very like breaking through glass; it only hurts as you go through, and if you go through quickly enough it scarcely hurts at all. I’d like to think that about Eustace, that he went through to the larger Freedom with no pain.” She reverted naturally to her own experience of war. “It is amazing,” she said, “what men will endure without apparently feeling it when they are convinced of the general good; things the bystander can scarcely bear to look at, much less to think about.”

“It will be like that,” Frear surmised, “with the social changes that are coming. When we get done fighting them in anticipation, and let them come, we’ll find that they are nothing like so upsetting. If we once got a real vital impulse toward social regeneration — such an impulse as carried your cousin to his end — we’d go through” — he paused for the word — “gallantly.”

“Yes, whether we were afraid or not. Eustace told me once that he was often afraid as he started up, just as he was often a little sick; but he paid no attention to either of them.”

As they said these things, because the background of her own mind was continually occupied with the personal relation, she took it for granted that, under the

cover of Eustace's achievement, they were really getting at one another again. That was how she wished him to take the personal situation, with a fine inward commitment to honor and justice that would carry him past the immediate annoyance to himself and release them all into the larger freedom. Out of her sheltered past and her intimacy with the sick man, her father, she had brought no measure for the preponderance of egoism in the casual love adventures of the average man. She had not admitted the idea of casualness to her thinking about the man she had expected to marry. Like most delicately minded women, if she thought of it at all, the disposition to casualness was something which one ignored in one's self as Eustace had ignored his disposition toward nausea in the air.

She had not, since the news about Eustace, found time to write the note that she had promised herself. Now, though she admitted Adam to the house at Jayne Street with the express purpose of remedying that omission, somehow, within the aura of his charm, the clear, high sentences broke into murmurs and endearments. And, after all, what had their talk been but high and adequate to the establishment of a mutual ground from which to take difficult situations? What she had finally said had been of the simplest, the mere punctuation of their temporary renewal.

She had seen Rose, she said, and had a satisfactory talk with her. "She is a great woman, Adam, an extraordinary woman. We can never live up to her."

“Oh, never!” he had conceded with relief.

“But we must live up to the situation. Somehow this that has happened to Eustace makes me ashamed. Ashamed not to come clear as he did, with a rush, because our minds are completely made up to clearness. I told her I would n’t see you again until we are clear. We are agreed to that, that we ought to come clear on general principles, without attempting to influence one another.”

“Yes.” He was extraordinarily gentle with her.

“I was going to write, but — I’ve been with Eustace’s mother a great deal. Miss Matlock would understand. So — I think we had better say — good-bye, Adam.”

He took her in his arms. This was not within the letter of her agreement, but she was glad, afterward, to think that she had not resisted him. He had held her there for as long — and it was not long either — as brought back the old flooding sense of his wonderfulness. Under that compulsion she had put up one thin, shapely hand to his cheek, and drawn it down to hers.

“Oh, soon, Adam, soon!”

“Soon!” he promised, and strained her to him in a quick, fierce tenderness.

§ 63

There had been an interval in which Neith had given herself to helping Frances Rittenhouse resettle herself in the Eleventh Street house. It was easier to do that

than to habituate her husband to new quarters. And the old house was full of memories of Eustace, so full that at times the General seemed to forget that he had ever left it. He was always expecting Eustace to come in, even when he was clear in his mind that what he was to come for was to tell them about his adventures in Belgium and France. This sudden reinstatement of his banished son would have counted for the weakness of senility with Neith if it had not been for a discovery, made by Mrs. Rittenhouse, of a little heap of clippings in a drawer of her husband's desk; all the things that had been in the papers about Eustace from the beginning. Love had been, after all, a greater autocrat than injured egotism.

The General's Civil War collection was being stripped from the walls, to be bestowed on the National Historical Museum, together with the History of the Great War Day by Day. It had got no farther than Appomattox, but the General himself was done. He was wholly occupied in moving relays of colored pins across a map of Europe, and writing military advice to the staff officers. He had convinced himself for the most part that his son Eustace was a prisoner inside the German lines and that at almost any time they might expect to hear from him.

Neith was quite extraordinarily moved by these things and by the deep fountains of affection which rose out of Frances Rittenhouse's heart and covered them with tenderness. This was the way in which Adam must

be loved. Neith held her own heart toward their common situation like a candle on an altar.

§ 64

And this very morning a letter had come from Rose Matlock, enclosing another from Adam's lawyer, very guarded and brief. It was to the effect that he had been taken into his client's confidence for the purpose of protecting him from any further annoyance or interference in his affairs by herself. It was not exactly a threatening letter, but instinct with cold menace; a shyster letter; for neither in the superscription nor the text did it mention Adam's name or Miss Matlock's. It was the sort of letter likely to be written by a man who, having disregarded the law for his own purposes, had found it convenient to get behind when the event seemed likely to involve him in unpleasantness. Neith knew the name at the bottom of the letter for one that stood high in Fleeta's list. Across the back of it Rose Matlock had penciled, "I don't know what this means, do you?"

Neith, lying slim and straight in her bed, shook with the anguish of hot, hard-coming tears, because she knew.

§ 65

She understood quite simply and explicitly; as though Eustace's own straight-seeing spirit had stayed awhile for the express purpose of helping her see, that the whole region of Adam's personal reactions was familiar ground. It was the wind-sown, unclaimed field in which his pas-

sions ran neck and neck with Bruce Havens's greed of the "business" game, and the Senator's crass appetite for power. Here he unleashed himself to the old tricks and evasions, the unrestricted play of selfness in the personal relation. A jilted woman was a jilted woman; one who took her measure from his desire. The law, a hurdle in the game. At all times and occasions a woman was a secondary thing.

There was extraordinary clarity in Neith's seeing, as she lay there, and no especial bitterness. That was just how it was. When it came to women, Adam was a bounder. She was thankful to see it so; to be spared the horror which Rose Matlock's own engrossment with the larger vision had made her see as something inexplicable and strange. Adam had done what Aunt Doremas would have done to the strikers at Marcy, what Millicent and Bruce would have done to Mrs. Kendries if they dared, what public opinion had already done to poor Hippolyte Leninsky. In other words, he had done an exceedingly bourgeois thing under the very banners and shibboleths of the Social Revolution. Only, few of the bourgeois of Neith's personal acquaintance would have done anything quite so bald as that. Bruce, for example. Bruce would have paid — money. A poor enough substitute for faith and consideration. But then Bruce would never have obligated himself to pay anything but money. With Bruce it would from the first have been a "business proposition."

And where had they arrived, she and Rose and Adam,

but getting outside the "business" moralities — the morality of the equivalent rendered? No, not she and Rose. She would stand by Rose; she would not — what was the word Sadie had used? She would not "scab."

Had women always scabbed on each other, that Adam expected it of her? Thank God, Rose had n't . . . she had had the courage to present her account . . . that letter . . .

A whole flight of minor items, unnoted when they happened, came trooping back, lit to new significance by the hot glow of her mind . . . the letter which never reached her . . . Rose's evident disconcertion at what she found . . . Adam's fierce certitude that Rose at least had no claim on *her*.

Had there been another and more transient interest? Let that go.

Through and over it all was her own need of him, his touch on her hand, his voice in her ear. It was like a slow-turning sword. The thing that happened when people truly mated, had it already happened to her? Was there something of her that would never be her own again, but Adam Frear's? But if she suffered like that, what of Rose? . . . She could never see Rose again. It was n't decent. She understood why animals turned their backs on one another in their pain. That, of course, was why women had always hidden these things. One had to pretend that it was impossible, because it was undignified, for one human being to make another suffer so much. No, it was n't really decent.

Suddenly there came back to her the pattern of Adam's hair, where it waved back from his forehead, the trick of his hand hiding his mouth when he was taken by surprise.

§ 66

A night or two after Eustace's death, while Neith was still staying on with her Aunts, Emmy had come into her room to sit on her bed and talk about Eustace. Neith was already lying back among the pillows with the curtain up. She could see the electric cross shining against the pure winter sky, and across the lower part of the window the ends of a maple bough, the buds of which in the last mild day or two showed mysteriously pregnant with life. She was seeing that, and at the same time she was seeing quite clearly, and without disturbing her view of the cross and the swelling bough, the snow-streaked fields of northern France, and Eustace flying high up and steadily with a singing rush. Two or three times she had been upon the brink of seeing him falling . . . falling . . . But she had pulled herself back from that and fixed her mind upon him as she had seen him once in the flying-field of Long Island, springing up and up, and leaving her, as she felt herself, a dwindling speck.

She recalled that there had been several aviators hanging about, vaguely determining from time to time to go up. Eustace had told her about that, how they hung about for hours sometimes in an unconfessed state

of reluctance, and then once up, how they dared, and invented strange dips and turnovers with a kind of delight. She wished to think always of Eustace as going up and up, and vanishing in light. She wished to think of death like that, and of the odd, human reluctance toward it falling off like a garment as one went up. And as she saw the cross it occurred to her that after all, it was one of the prime meanings of Christianity, that one did n't go down into death, but up and out toward light.

And as she thought these things, there was the hunched, heavy curve of the middle aged in the quilted dressing-gown across her picture. Aunt Emmy took up one quarter of the window frame, as the buds of the maple filled the other, and all at once Neith found herself struck with a suggestion in her Aunt's bulky outlines, of the fullness of coming life. As if age itself were only a kind of quiescent preparation for renewal! She felt the sagging of the bed under Emmy's weight as a friendly stirring of continuity of the bed and the bough and what was going on in the clear vault.

But Aunt Emmy had wanted to talk about her niece's almost engagement to Eustace.

"You are n't crying, are you, Neithie?"

"No, Emmy, not now."

Aunt Emmy had cried herself until she sounded like a bad cold in the head, but she had cried some dignity into her poor old soul.

"I'm glad, Neith. Not but what you had a perfect *right* to cry. I guess nobody would say anything if you

wanted to put on mourning, even if you were n't exactly engaged. Everybody knows Eustace was crazy about you. Millicent has told us things. But I don't want you to feel so badly about Eustace that it will keep you from thinking of anybody else. I — don't want you should be an old maid, Neithie."

"People don't think anything of that, nowadays, Aunt Emmy."

"People don't know." There was a scared, tragic quality in the old voice, as though all the outraged traditions of her generation were lurking about. "Old maids are n't supposed to say what they feel, and before they are old maids nobody tells them. Nobody told me."

"Emmy, dear! Is it so bad as that?"

"If anybody had just told me!" There was a spark of something quite definite behind Aunt Emmy's feeble fierceness of desolation. "There was a young man used to come and see me; he worked in Uncle Van's office. Becky thought he was n't good enough for a Schuyler, and I let her drive him away. But if I had known —

"You see, I thought marriage was something that just happened to everybody. I never dreamed it would n't happen to me. Neithie, I don't want you —" The poor lady made liberal use of her pocket handkerchief.

"Emmy, come over here on the pillow beside me."

Aunt Emmy shifted her unwieldy bulk, and the cross and the bough shone clear in the clear obscure square of the window. "Neith," she whispered, "old maids are n't different from other women. They want — everything!

Sometimes for days . . . Neithie, you must n't think too much about Eustace; you must find somebody else!"

"You must n't worry, Emmy. There is — somebody."

"Well, I'm *glad!*"

And now it appeared that there was nobody else.

§ 67

For Neith knew exactly what she would do. She did it as soon as she had dragged herself up in the morning and put her house in order for the day. She found her ring and two or three other little reminders of Adam, and put them together with the lawyer's letter and Rose's penciled note. When she had made them into a packet, across the back of it she wrote:

Until you see and understand.

She said nothing whatever about what he was to do. She thought she could put up very well with anything he might decide to do if once he could understand. He was to understand that this Democracy he talked so much about was something more than the bright, wavering guidon of social change. It was something more than a rule of procedure that could be applied to the frame of government or the distribution of goods. It was something as intimate as love or anger and more imperative than both, wing and wing of your being. It was something that committed you to the adventure of the whole so that the little sicknesses of your spirit, the

fears and pains and repulsions, were no more than a stain on its surface. It carried you past them with a great roar of singing planes. . . .

That these dead shall not have died in vain. . . .

If one saw it like that, it did not greatly matter what one did. And as for how one felt . . . one might just as well have the best of feeling about it since you paid as much in either case.

She undid the half-finished wrapping of the packet and wrote under her former words:

With love, Neith.

And because the urgency of her mood would not let her rest with it in the house, she called a messenger and dispatched it to Adam Frear.

XXI

§ 68

IF only there had been something Neith could do herself to clarify the situation in which she was so much concerned! Women, no doubt, whose men were at war felt like that. The helplessness, and the long, voiceless days! Perhaps she ought not to have sent back the ring; she should have kept it as the symbol of her unbroken affection, of her unbroken faith that he would yet see.

He had behaved abominably. He had behaved in a way that one must take notice of, and without any hesitations. One owed that to him as well as to oneself. But

she loved him — as other women loved the war-scarred things that came back to them. She remembered a woman in France trundling in a little cart the legless, armless trunk of a man. And the deep shining of that woman's eyes!

Oh, thank God, there were no such spiritual mutilations. One did n't have to love a half-souled man. There were regenerations, new and more splendid growths, whiter shining. She took a picture of Adam that she had cut out of a magazine and slipped it behind the face in a little Florentine triptych, before which it would seem only a quaint conceit to keep a candle burning. She tried re-reading the reports of his speeches, but she gave that up. For there were all the things she would have said, the high ground of personal democracy. She felt herself, as she read, bemused by the incongruity that had proved a pitfall for the clear intelligence of Rose Matlock.

All this time there was no word from Adam or Rose. No word about them. And without Adam she found she had no special access to the circles where he was best known.

She went instead to the Stage Women's War Relief where she heard about Madelon Sherrod.

§ 69

More and more, as Mrs. Kendries withdrew from municipal activities to follow her husband in his work with organized labor, Neith found herself with time on her hands. For the things that Mrs. Kendries had so

brightly hoped would remain as permanent social gains, offsetting the losses of war, had been all of them elbowed off the scene. One could n't say that the thing took shape as a definite movement to inhibit any gains but those private possibilities such as belonged to the Senator's timely possessions of spruce forests. It was rather that the impact of the war on social life in America, had driven it a step backward, from which there was no rebound. Just as the food shortage had been met by a recession into primitive measures, of the scrapings of individual kitchens, a patriarchal distribution instead of a sweep forward into more possessive administration of the public board; so along the frontier of social organization there had been breakages and temporary dissolutions. The whole energy of social creativeness which for the first few months of the war had seemed to gather, and to be about to exhibit, tidal force, had lapped futilely about the blank encircling walls of the "business sense" of the community, and returned to fret with a deeper insistence in the old and only open channels of organized labor.

In all public places it was possible to see placards bearing the full approval of the Administration, openly advising the working-classes that those classes that best supported the Nation during the war would gain the most at the end of it.

Lutra Kendries had shown her one of these — had pinned it over her desk, in fact, with a short, sharp laugh.

"Oh, we will," she assured. "We'll get more than they bargained for. Much more." She sat back regarding with profound, ironic mockery this general statement of the war under the war, to which American Conservatism had so short-sightedly subscribed. "We'll support the war," she said, "and we'll collect the bill. Over in Russia," she said, "they're collecting it now."

But at the Stage Women's War Relief there was an indefinable sense of being put out of reach of the checks and humiliations which had beset Mrs. Kendries's group of social experts, by much the same process by which one is put beyond the reach of infections by being inoculated against them. If its members suffered in their personal relations all the things that are suffered and appreciated by women everywhere, they at least had something under foot. Something from which no disturbance of the individual orbit completely estranged them. There was Madelon. She had suffered quite as much as Rose Matlock, but she was considerably less astounded by it.

And because of this sense of solidarity of being, rather than of achieved organization, Neith spent hours stitching in the busy quiet of their rooms and listened to gossip about Madelon Sherrod.

Madelon was coming back with a successful play and Julius was to manage for her. Vera Jerome had, it appeared, overestimated her own appeal. She had put herself in the position toward her public of the bright child who thinks herself called to entertain the company. And

the company had been bored. So Vera was now on the road and Julius was managing for his wife. Well, of course, that would last only so long as it took to recoup the future he had lost on Vera; you had to take things of that kind for what they were worth. At any rate, Madelon would have one happy winter.

One saw that in Madelon, as soon as one had sight of her. The thorn was out of her side. She irradiated the rich atmosphere of talent and charm. The machines stopped; there was a rustle of young women rising all over the room when she came into it one sharp February afternoon. Neith she took by the shoulders with a little exclamation of alarm, "Child, what have you been doing to yourself?" Then she remembered Eustace.

"Did you find out when it was too late that you did, after all, love him?" she asked an hour later when they were settled at tea.

"Oh, if it were as simple as that!"

Madelon looked her over with affectionate keenness. The girl was thin with the wasting power of frustrate passion in young flesh. There was the shadow of blank nights, staring in her eyes. Mrs. Sherrod made one swift thrust at the truth. "What has Adam Frear been doing to you?"

Neith had it in mind that whatever she told Madelon, it would not be names. She recalled distinctly that the first time she had met Adam in the actress's company, she had asked him about Rose in a manner that implied knowing — something at least. And she could n't give

Rose away; she was resolved in any case to protect Rose. But when she had sketched the bare outlines of her case, Madelon's quick intelligence overreached it.

"Don't mind telling me; is it Rose? Because she spoke to me once, only slightly. It would make a difference in everything I say to you if it is Rose."

"But why?"

"Because Rose was born to beat out the meaning of things on her own breast. No, that's not mine, it's a line out of my new play, but it struck me as suiting Rose exactly. Rose is a little obtuse about the things that are right under her eyes. She's always after the inside meaning of things, the real pull and trend of things. Well, I suppose she would have to be rather oblivious to the little subtle interchanges to get that. Like an astronomer going into a dark tower to look at the stars."

"You think she has been dull with Adam?"

"As Adam would probably have said, she handled him badly."

"Oh, but to 'handle' him; that's just what she won't do. And I agree with her, Madelon. Adam must be just, because there is some living principle of justice in him. Not because some woman plays him up to it."

"Yes, of course." Mrs. Sherrod stirred her tea and balanced her idea very carefully in the spoon. "Rose has n't any intuition; she works wholly with her intelligence, and Adam probably resented that, simply because he was n't used to it. We talk a great deal about women's intuition," said the actress, "but I sometimes

wonder if it has n't been her greatest disadvantage. It has led her instinctively, and without thinking very much about what it means, to take the easy way with men; to 'manage' them. Because, honey, I am afraid you will find, if you intend to live your life outside the conventional lines, that most of the moral and spiritual 'influence' that women are supposed to have on men is just as much as they have 'managed' to make men do. After they have played them into a yielding state which is n't entirely a state of mind," she finished with a faint ironic touch.

"Well, I shan't play!" declared the younger woman, unconsciously repeating Rose Matlock's impassioned negation. She went on a moment later, looking over the past few weeks in the rather bleak light thrown upon it by Madelon's unaccustomed irony: "That explains some things. You see, I don't really know very much about what did go on between them. Only I know that it was on the highest possible ground. Because one knows it would be that way with Rose; and because he was always high with me. He *said* the most satisfactory things. We said them."

"Lovers do."

"I thought we were absolutely agreed. We had had rather special talks on just these things. And then, it was all as if nothing whatever had been said. It's one of the things that brought me over to Rose's side."

"Love-making is like that." The actress leaned her elbows on the low table and played with an antique

chain of linked intricacy of design that became her wonderfully, as though it were the expression of her intricate varied experience. "Sometimes I think that the reason men never feel obligated to keep the promises they make when they are under the influence of — personal interest" — she chose her word with direct reference to her young friend — "is that they know it is n't a sound state in which to come to decisions. It is as if they had a deeper instinctive feeling for the truth than we have. As if they knew that love-making is a — a secondary thing which they need n't take seriously."

"Madelon —" Neith began impulsively, but found the swelling thought not quite shaped for expression. What she wished to say was that it was something like that, some such stabilizing sense of relative values as between men and women, that she had felt among the actress's friends. What she finally said was, "Then you think I need n't necessarily think of Adam as deceiving me, by not — not seeming to mean all that I thought he meant?"

"My dear, when a man is deeply in love, he does n't *mean* anything. He's only trying to express a feeling he has of being entirely at one with you. And you need n't think either that Adam will get off scot-free. He'll pay. And one of the ways he'll pay is what in the course of time he can't help knowing, that Rose will be faithful to him. Always."

"Whether he sees or not?"

"Whether he sees or not. His one chance to have

freed her would have been to get out on the same plane that he went in. The cheaper he makes it the more she will feel that she has to keep it up to the high ground it already had. And she'll keep it up. I know Rose."

"If one can keep it up about a man who has behaved as Adam has to her."

"Well, let's hope she'll find a way to reconcile the way he has behaved with some of the fundamental distinctions between men and women. Besides, all the differences of men from women are n't surely differences of inferiority. One must believe that."

"Oh, it is easy to believe! But still, I had to send him away. I could n't just — whatever made him do it — behave as if it had n't happened at all."

"One does, sometimes."

Neith remembered Julius. "Oh, I *could*! If it were merely an offense against *me*. But in this case, you see, the offense is against another woman."

"Yes, of course. And it is one of the things that women, if the new feminism is to mean anything at all, have got to decide about. How much they will forgive for the other woman. But, honey, I wish it had n't to be *you*."

"Why not, as well as Rose Matlock — or you?" Neith saw that the older woman's face had wonderfully lightened and cleared.

"Oh, I — You must do Julius justice, my dear. I brought him into this. In a way. He was only a business

man when I married him and made him my manager. With an ordinary wife and a business and a family all in one place, in one groove, Julius would have been another Bruce Havens, perhaps. But in the theatrical business, all this — this — ‘juice.’ That’s what the electricians call it, I believe. This high pressure of creativeness has never meant but one thing to the people who are not creative. Julius has n’t any gifts but just business managing; he has n’t got the — the fiber that somehow holds us players together. Oh, well, I can’t analyze and explain the way Rose does, but I feel responsible for Julius.”

“And whatever he does, I can see that you’d just take him back —”

“Ah, my dear, I’ve never given him up!”

“Well, I have n’t Adam, except officially. Until he sees that a woman has some value besides what he thinks of her.”

“Oh, my dear!” But with a gesture of her speaking hands, Mrs. Sherrod gave the subject up completely.

§ 70

It had been a relief to talk. Always in talking to Madelon one had the sensation of breadth and a kind of buoyancy that was not a mere effect, like the sparkle of a glass of Burgundy. It was more like a realization of a power in life itself to hold you up and carry you along if you trusted it. Madelon had n’t made Neith’s own situation seem more heroic, but it seemed of itself more

reasonable, more a part of things. It was something that would be the more easily endured and come to a more satisfactory conclusion the less one felt about it, the more one simply and unaffectedly insisted on the principle involved.

Neith herself felt freed somehow from the necessity of taking a moral attitude toward Adam. One could still love him and see him through, as one might through the crisis of an illness. One felt more certain of his coming through.

And then, of course, she wanted more than anything else to find Adam and tell him these things. As it had been in the time of their engagement, every lift of emotion or new breadth of perception turned her toward him, demanded the moment of communication for completion. It was so with every stimulating thing she encountered, the pictures in the Winter Exhibition, the new French tenor, the slim, curled moon between the cliffs of the Avenue. She would be crossing the Square thinking of nothing, and her attention would be caught by the prised drip of icicles from the crystal-guarded trees — and of a sudden there would be the still space of Beauty in her soul and the need of Adam to complete it.

And all this time there was no word. She got over her sense of the essential impropriety of talking to Rose Matlock. She wanted to talk to Rose. They would talk about Adam, they would love him into rightness.

And then she would revolt, savoring in such an atti-

tude the sickishness of sentimentality. If it came to conventions, was n't that one of floating a man into righteousness on the tide of some woman's love, a more abominable convention than the secretive pride which Adam had tried to force on Rose, the tradition of being too proud to insist on her injury?

But if she could just *see* him! She was ashamed of the relief it gave her merely by an accident of conversation to hear his name.

Was it necessary, she wondered, to have cut herself off so from all touch of him? They might meet in the ordinary way as friends. It came to this finally, that she took to going to those places where she had been with him, little tea-shops, cafés on side streets where they met exponents of the Social Revolution, revolving harmlessly among their satellites. And at last she remembered the eating-place that had been a slave quarter where they had gone, and where she had met the burning torch of New Russia whose name was now in everybody's mouth. Once there, she had a remarkable sensation of having lost Adam; as one loses the spoor of a trail. As if this were the last she had seen or was to see of him. She formed the habit of going back there as one does to the point at which some lost possession was missed. One evening she was rewarded by meeting Sadie and Fleeta Spence, dining in company with a permanently immature young man in whom Fleeta appeared remarkably interested.

They were all going over to Cooper Union afterward

to hear Lanier Stevens talk about Russia. He had been over there, a fortnight, at least, and he was going to tell them what to think about the Proletariat Revolution. Neith remembered this Stevens; he had been the editor who had accepted Frear's first articles about municipal governments abroad. Stevens himself had been a philosophical journalist in the days when one's sense of the impending social change was expressed by an extraordinary lucidity about the moral turpitude of things as they were. She had heard Adam say more than once how much he owed, both as writer and thinker, to Stevens.

Neith went off to Cooper Union with Sadie, in the wake of Fleeta and her young man. There was the first haunting touch of the new season in the air. Neith remembered exactly how she had felt a year ago, crossing the Square with the new lease of Jayne Street in her bag. Then she remembered Van Harwood's joke about it. "Jane" Street. Should she come to that?

But under all, like the breath of spring under the chill air, there was a secret hope. With his interest in Stevens and in Russia, it was not possible that Adam would keep away from that meeting. He would probably sit on the platform after the custom of Cooper Institute lectures, which always had to be certified, as it were, by the largest possible number of believers placed prominently about the platform.

When they reached the building, Sadie found that she must go around back of the platform to see Direck

Kendries. Neith recalled many such excursions with Adam Frear to the backs of platforms where one met distinguished speakers informally and called them by their first names. The meeting was just on the point of beginning. She did not see Adam, but the Kendries saw her and drew her into the fringe of the speaker's train. She found herself seated just back of one of the pillars that divide the platform from its shadowed, rear recesses, staring out at the usual Cooper Institute audience.

Neith kept taking surreptitious glances about the platform, which she could not wholly see from where she sat, and trying to shut out from her attention something, a worrying, dull, stinging something like an unidentified aching tooth, which kept up an incessant claim for recognition. Yet at the same time it was something that she fought off, that she deliberately kept as far as possible outside the pale of recognition. She located it presently in the speaker's voice, some *nuance* of emphasis or inflection which reminded her, with the effect of never having before noted the item on which the resemblance was based, of Adam Frear.

Stevens was describing the Trotzky-Lenine Revolution with considerable emotion, not the emotion of a revolutionist, perhaps, but of a lover of revolutions, the slightly overripe accent of infatuation. There were several people moving about in the rear of the platform, as there were so often at Cooper. In an effort to overcome the slight stir they made, Neith herself moved forward

and placed herself beside the foremost row. From here presently she made out a half-familiar figure, searching from the shadow of one of the pilasters for a better seat. The figure turned and resolved itself into Rose Matlock.

For the moment, Stevens and the whole Russian Revolution faded in the spark of their intense, their almost snatching interest in each other. It carried them, without any conscious volition, a step or two farther back into the half privacy of the rear platform.

Out in front between the pilasters they could see the speaker, a short man, leaning forward with the urgency of iteration, and beyond him, obscuring rings of faces, faces of men badly used and not well-dressed, cautious, aflame, incredulous, but all caught, oh, unmistakably snared and held and faintly fatuous.

"I have been wanting to see you," Neith found herself saying. She fancied there had passed one or two conventional phrases before that, but she had no idea what they were. "I would have written, only it seemed unnecessary. Mr. Frear would have told you that my decision had been in keeping with your suggestion that I was just to keep off and to wait."

"He told me that."

Nothing more coming, and Rose Matlock continuing to look at her rather steadily with her far-seeing eyes, Neith said all that the occasion seemed to offer her to say. "And I knew that you would neither of you leave me in the dark — I knew in good time I should hear —"

"Then you have n't heard?"

“Heard — what?”

“He has gone.”

“But . . . gone? Where?”

“Over There! Russia, most people think. I supposed you would know.”

“Since that letter, the lawyer’s, I have n’t seen him; you must have known that I would n’t.”

“Yes. He told me that. I suppose that was what decided him.”

They moved back with common consent toward the door that led into an anteroom where they could talk without disturbing the listeners on the platform.

“You mean that he did n’t see —”

“Oh, he saw everything! And saw it wrong. He thought I had worked to break off his engagement to you for no reason but that I could n’t have him myself. He believed about me, about our attitude, what the average American believes about what’s going on out there” — she indicated the vast, enamored audience — “believes, I mean, that it is all hysterical irrationalism and disappointed greed of possession. I ought to tell you, though” — her gaze came back and rested thoughtfully on the girl at her side — “that I think he suffered very much. It was all so unexpected to him to be put in the wrong like that. And he suffered on your account.” She saw that the younger woman could not speak, and opening the door, she beckoned her into the stark, unfurnished anteroom, where in the absence of chairs they walked up and down in silence.

"You don't know, then, where he has gone?" Neith ventured at last.

Miss Matlock shook her head. "People say Russia simply because that has been for months his main interest, and he has been with Stevens almost continually since his return. But Mr. Kendries heard that Adam had gone to the Far East. Anywhere, away from us."

"I suppose," said Neith, "we were rather terrible."

"I believe he found us so."

"And yet what did we want but what he wants for the whole world!"

"Ah, *does* he? Listen to that!" She opened the door on certain high, fanatic inflections of the speaker's voice, and short, half yelps of approval from the audience. "I don't know how it was between you and Adam," she said, shutting the door again and beginning her restless pacing up and down. "But me he never loved. No more did he — and most of those out there — love economic justice. They are enamored of it. They love it as moths love a lamp. They love the effect of ideals of freedom and justice on themselves." Neith nodded slowly, she had already identified the hazy suggestion of fatuousness in the speaker's tone. "You must not think, Miss Schuyler, that I have let this thing throw me out of my mind," she heard Rose saying. "It seems to me, indeed, that it will be the means of finding my mind, getting the use of it. Maybe I've been — enamored, too! That man out there, Stevens, has been a leader. Adam was one. Well, I was led. And now I am going to

find out if we are led by the blind. Freedom-blinded. That's why I am going — Over There."

"To Adam, you mean?" Neith wondered.

"Ah, I've told you I don't know where he is. I am going, I must, to find out where we are going. Whether in fact we are going anywhere! What else is there for me?" She looked, indeed, incredibly stripped and bare, the root word of woman, unrecognizably archaic.

"It's much easier for you, Miss Schuyler." She stood, from her superior height, looking down on Neith not unkindly. "All that has happened to you is that some one you cared for has turned out to be less than you hoped. But for me, something that I have done has turned out to be the falsification of my most sacred convictions. It has left me nothing to do but to be faithful. Faithful, I mean, to whatever the experience has meant to me. I'm going Over There to try and find out the utmost that it can mean."

It occurred to Neith that she knew now what people meant when they said men were afraid to give power to women. Quite aside and irrelevantly she recalled something she had heard of the praying-mantis that devours her mate, pulling limb from limb. She saw that Adam Frear was to suffer in effect such a dismemberment for the fructification of Rose's soul. What she said to Rose Matlock was, "You must not think that I have missed what it all means to all of us. I was Over There, you see, from the beginning."

"Yes. I remember. I suppose that accounts for your

being able to meet me like this. I have n't forgotten that you might have agreed with Adam. You might have expected me to have 'pride.'"

She went back and opened the door a crack, listening. "I must hear what Stevens says, and how it is received," she stated baldly. "It is a part of what I have set myself to do. If it should turn out that we women are to blame for it after all; if we have just, stupidly, never distinguished between men's sentiments about — all the fine things that we see have to be done in the world, and their will to do! If we should find ourselves involved in a Revolution here in America which should be actually as helpless to effect economic justice as Adam has been to achieve any kind of rightness between us — You see, don't you, why I have to know?"

"I think" — Neith had all the courage of conviction — "that we both know. But I see that you have to know it in terms that men will listen to. That lawyer — they would n't have listened to us!"

Miss Matlock's hand was on the door. She came back and stood close to the younger woman for a moment in which they met one another's look high and above the wreck of all their outraged reticence.

"I could n't have hoped," said Rose at last, "that you would have met me like this. No wonder Adam loved you."

Neith was entirely honest. "I am not sure now that he did. He was in love. Shall I be seeing you again?"

"I think not." They shook hands. Miss Matlock

moved toward the door, and again she turned back. "If you find out where he is, write to him. He'll come back and tell you."

"No. If he does, he'll come back without being written to," Neith insisted. And as she said it she felt the future at her heart like a small, gnawing worm.

THE END

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