

CHAPTER V

At about the time Tembarom made his rush to catch the "L" Joseph Hutchinson was passing through one of his periodical fits of infuriated discouragement. Little Ann knew they would occur every two or three days, and she did not wonder at them. Also she knew that if she merely sat still and listened as she sewed, she would be doing exactly what her mother would have done and what her father would find a sort of irritated comfort in. There was no use in citing people's villainies and calling them names unless you had an audience who would seem to agree to the justice of your accusations.

So Mr. Hutchinson charged up and down the room, his face red, and his hands thrust in his coat pockets. He was giving his opinions of America and Americans, and he spoke with his broadest Manchester accent, and threw in now and then a word or so of Lancashire dialect to add roughness and strength, the angrier a Manchester man being, the broader and therefore the more forcible his accent. "Tha" is somehow a great deal more bitter or humorous or affectionate than the mere ordinary "You" or "Yours."

"'Merica," he bellowed - "dang 'Merica! I says - an' dang 'Mericans. Goin' about th' world braggin' an' boastin' about their sharpness an' their open-'andedness. 'Go to 'Merica,' folks'll tell you, 'with an invention, and there's dozens of millionaires ready to put money in

it.' Fools!"

"Now, Father," - Little Ann's voice was as maternal as her mother's had been, - "now, Father, love, don't work yourself up into a passion. You know it's not good for you." "I don't need to work myself up into one. I'm in one. A man sells everything he owns to get to 'Merica, an' when he gets there what does he find? He canna' get near a millionaire. He's pushed here an scuffled there, an' told this chap can't see him, an' that chap isn't interested, an' he must wait his chance to catch this one. An' he waits an' waits, an' goes up in elevators an' stands on one leg in lobbies, till he's broke' down an' sick of it, an' has to go home to England steerage."

Little Ann looked up from her sewing. He had been walking furiously for half an hour, and had been tired to begin with. She had heard his voice break roughly as he said the last words. He threw himself astride a chair and, crossing his arms on the back of it, dropped his head on them. Her mother never allowed this. Her idea was that women were made to tide over such moments for the weaker sex. Far had it been from the mind of Mrs. Hutchinson to call it weaker. "But there's times, Ann, when just for a bit they're just like children. They need comforting without being let to know they are being comforted. You know how it is when your back aches, and some one just slips a pillow under it in the right place without saying anything. That's what women can do if they've got heads. It needs a head."

Little Ann got up and went to the chair. She began to run her fingers caressingly through the thick, grizzled hair.

"There, Father, love, there!" she said. "We are going back to England, at any rate, aren't we? And grandmother will be so glad to have us with her in her cottage. And America's only one place."

"I tried it first, dang it!" jerked out Hutchinson. "Every one told me to do it." He quoted again with derisive scorn: "'You go to 'Merica. 'Merica's the place for a chap like you. 'Merica's the place for inventions.' Liars!"

Little Ann went on rubbing the grizzled head lovingly.

"Well, now we're going back to try England. You never did really try England. And you know how beautiful it'll be in the country, with the primroses in bloom and the young lambs in the fields." The caressing hand grew even softer. "And you're not going to forget how mother believed in the invention; you can't do that."

Hutchinson lifted his head and looked at her.

"Eh, Ann," he said, "you are a comfortable little body. You've got a way with you just like your poor mother had. You always say the right thing to help a chap pull himself together. Your mother did believe in it, didn't she?"

She had, indeed, believed in it, though her faith was founded more upon confidence in "Mr. Hutchinson" than in any profound knowledge of the mechanical appliance his inspiration would supply. She knew it had something important to do with locomotive engines, and she knew that if railroad magnates would condescend to consider it, her husband was sure that fortune would flow in. She had lived with the "invention," as it was respectfully called, for years.

"That she did," answered Little Ann. "And before she died she said to me: 'Little Ann,' she said, 'there's one thing you must never let your father do. You must never let him begin not to believe in his invention. Your father's a clever man, and it's a clever invention, and it'll make his fortune yet. You must remind him how I believed in it and how sure I was.'"

Hutchinson rubbed his hands thoughtfully. He had heard this before, but it did him good to hear it again.

"She said that, did she?" he found vague comfort in saying. "She said that?"

"Yes, she did, Father. It was the very day before she died."

"Well, she never said anything she hadn't thought out," he said in slow retrospection. "And she had a good head of her own. Eh, she was a

wonderful woman, she was, for sticking to things. That was th'
Lancashire in her. Lancashire folks knows their own minds."

"Mother knew hers," said Ann. "And she always said you knew yours.
Come and sit in your own chair, Father, and have your paper."

She had tided him past the worst currents without letting him slip
into them.

"I like folks that knows their own minds," he said as he sat down and
took his paper from her. "You know yours, Ann; and there's that
Tembarom chap. He knows his. I've been noticing that chap." There was
a certain pleasure in using a tone of amiable patronage. "He's got a
way with him that's worth money to him in business, if he only knew
it."

"I don't think he knows he's got a way," Little Ann said. "His way is
just him."

"He just gets over people with it, like he got over me. I was ready to
knock his head off first time he spoke to me. I was ready to knock
anybody's head off that day. I'd just had that letter from Hadman. He
made me sick wi' the way he pottered an' played the fool about the
invention. He believed in it right enough, but he hadn't the courage
of a mouse. He wasn't goin' to be the first one to risk his money.
Him, with all he has! He's the very chap to be able to set it goin'.

If I could have got some one else to put up brass, it'd have started him. It's want o' backbone, that's the matter wi' Hadman an' his lot."

"Some of these days some of them 're going to get their eyes open," said Little Ann, "and then the others will be sorry. Mr. Tembarom says they'll fall over themselves to get in on the ground floor."

Hutchinson chuckled.

"That's New York," he said. "He's a rum chap. But he thinks a good bit of the invention. I've talked it over with him, because I've wanted to talk, and the one thing I've noticed about Tembarom is that he can keep his mouth shut."

"But he talks a good deal," said Ann.

"That's the best of it. You'd think he was telling all he knows, and he's not by a fat lot. He tells you what you'll like to hear, and he's not sly; but he can keep a shut mouth. That's Lancashire. Some folks can't do it even when they want to."

"His father came from England."

"That's where the lad's sense comes from. Perhaps he's Lancashire. He had a lot of good ideas about the way to get at Hadman."

A knock at the door broke in upon them. Mrs. Bowse presented herself, wearing a novel expression on her face. It was at once puzzled and not altogether disagreeably excited.

"I wish you would come down into the dining-room, Little Ann." She hesitated. " Mr. Tembaron's brought home such a queer man. He picked him up ill in the street. He wants me to let him stay with him for the night, anyhow. I don't think he's crazy, but I guess he's lost his memory. Queerest thing I ever saw. He doesn't know his name or anything."

"See here," broke out Hutchinson, dropping his hands and his paper on his knee, "I'm not going to have Ann goin' down stairs to quiet lunatics."

"He's as quiet as a child," Mrs. Bowse protested. "There's something pitiful about him, he seems so frightened. He's drenched to the skin."

"Call an ambulance and send him to the hospital," advised Hutchinson.

"That's what Mr. Tembarom says he can't do. It frightens him to death to speak of it. He just clings to Mr. Tembarom sort of awful, as if he thinks he'll save his life. But that isn't all," she added in an amazed tone; "he's given Mr. Tembarom more than two thousand dollars."

"What!" shouted Hutchinson, bounding to his feet quite unconsciously.

"What!" exclaimed Little Ann.

"Just you come and look at it," answered Mrs. Bowse, nodding her head.

"There's over two thousand dollars in bills spread out on the table in the dining-room this minute. He had it in a belt pocket, and he dragged it out in the street and would make Mr. Tembarom take it. Do come and tell us what to do."

"I'd get him to take off his wet clothes and get into bed, and drink some hot spirits and water first," said Little Ann. "Wouldn't you, Mrs. Bowse?"

Hutchinson got up, newspaper in hand.

"I say, I'd like to go down and have a look at that chap myself," he announced.

"If he's so frightened, perhaps--" Little Ann hesitated.

"That's it," put in Mrs. Bowse. "He's so nervous it'd make him worse to see another man. You'd better wait, Mr. Hutchinson."

Hutchinson sat down rather grumpily, and Mrs. Bowse and Little Ann went down the stairs together.

"I feel real nervous myself," said Mrs. Bowse, "it's so queer. But he's not crazy. He's quiet enough."

As they neared the bottom of the staircase Little Ann could see over the balustrade into the dining-room. The strange man was sitting by the table, his disordered, black-haired head on his arm. He looked like an exhausted thing. Tembarom was sitting by him, and was talking in an encouraging voice. He had laid a hand on one of the stranger's. On the table beside them was spread a number of bills which had evidently just been counted.

"Here's the ladies," said Tembarom.

The stranger lifted his head and, having looked, rose and stood upright, waiting. It was the involuntary, mechanical action of a man who had been trained among gentlemen.

"It's Mrs. Bowse again, and she's brought Miss Hutchinson down with her. Miss Hutchinson always knows what to do," explained Tembarom in his friendly voice.

The man bowed, and his bewildered eyes fixed themselves on Little Ann.

"Thank you," he said. "It's very kind of you. I--I am-- in great trouble."

Little Ann went to him and smiled her motherly smile at him.

"You're very wet," she said. "You'll take a bad cold if you're not careful. Mrs. Bowse thinks you ought to go right to bed and have something hot to drink."

"It seems a long time since I was in bed," he answered her.

"I'm very tired. Thank you." He drew a weary, sighing breath, but he didn't move his eyes from the girl's face. Perhaps the cessation of action in certain cells of his brain had increased action in others. He looked as though he were seeing something in Little Ann's face which might not have revealed itself so clearly to the more normal gaze.

He moved slightly nearer to her. He was a tall man, and had to look down at her.

"What is your name?" he asked anxiously. "Names trouble me."

It was Ann who drew a little nearer to him now. She had to look up, and the soft, absorbed kindness in her eyes might, Tembarom thought, have soothed a raging lion, it was so intent on its purpose.

"My name is Ann Hutchinson; but never you mind about it now," she said. "I'll tell it to you again. Let Mr. Tembarom take you up-stairs

to bed. You'll be better in the morning." And because his hollow eyes rested on her so fixedly she put her hand on his wet sleeve.

"You're wet through," she said. "That won't do."

He looked down at her hand and then at her face again.

"Help me," he pleaded, "just help me. I don't know what's happened. Have I gone mad? "

"No," she answered; "not a bit. It'll all come right after a while; you'll see."

"Will it, will it?" he begged, and then suddenly his eyes were full of tears. It was a strange thing to see him in his bewildered misery try to pull himself together, and bite his shaking lips as though he vaguely remembered that he was a man. "I beg pardon," he faltered: "I suppose I'm ill."

"I don't know where to put him," Mrs. Bowse was saying half aside; "I've not got a room empty."

"Put him in my bed and give me a shake-down on the floor," said Tembarom. "That'll be all right. He doesn't want me to leave him, anyhow."

He turned to the money on the table.

"Say," he said to his guest, "there's two thousand five hundred dollars here. We've counted it to make sure. That's quite some money. And it's yours--"

The stranger looked disturbed and made a nervous gesture.

"Don't, don't!" he broke in. "Keep it. Some one took the rest. This was hidden. It will pay."

"You see he isn't real' out of his mind," Mrs. Bowse murmured feelingly.

"No, not real' out of it," said Tembarom. "Say,"--as an inspiration occurred to him, --"I guess maybe Miss Hutchinson will keep it. Will you, Little Ann? You can give it to him when he wants it."

"It's a good bit of money," said Little Ann, soberly; "but I can put it in a bank and pay Mrs. Bowse his board every week. Yes, I'll take it. Now he must go to bed. It's a comfortable little room," she said to the stranger, "and Mrs. Bowse will make you a hot milk-punch. That'll be nourishing."

"Thank you," murmured the man, still keeping his yearning eyes on her.

"Thank you."

So he was taken up to the fourth floor and put into Tembarom's bed. The hot milk-punch seemed to take the chill out of him, and when, by lying on his pillow and gazing at the shakedown on the floor as long as he could keep his eyes open, he had convinced himself that Tembarom was going to stay with him, he fell asleep.

Little Ann went back to her father carrying a roll of bills in her hands. It was a roll of such size that Hutchinson started up in his chair and stared at the sight of it.

"Is that the money?" he exclaimed. "What are you going to do with it? What have you found out, lass?"

"Yes, this is it," she answered. "Mr. Tembarom asked me to take care of it. I'm going to put it in the bank. But we haven't found out anything."