

## CHAPTER VIII

There was a slight awkwardness even to Tembarom in entering the dining-room that evening. He had not seen his fellow boarders, as his restless night had made him sleep later than usual. But Mrs. Bowse had told him of the excitement he had caused.

"They just couldn't eat," she said. "They could do nothing but talk and talk and ask questions; and I had waffles, too, and they got stone-cold."

The babel of friendly outcry which broke out on his entry was made up of jokes, ejaculations, questions, and congratulatory outbursts from all sides.

"Good old T. T.!" "Give him a Harvard yell! Rah! Rah! Rah!" "Lend me fifty-five cents?" "Where's your tiara?" "Darned glad of it!" "Make us a speech!"

"Say, people," said Tembarom, "don't you get me rattled or I can't tell you anything. I'm rattled enough already."

"Well, is it true?" called out Mr. Striper.

"No," Tembarom answered back, sitting down. "It couldn't be; that's

what I told Palford. I shall wake up in a minute or two and find myself in a hospital with a peacherino of a trained nurse smoothing 'me piller.' You can't fool ME with a pipe-dream like this. Palford's easier; he's not a New Yorker. He says it IS true, and I can't get out of it."

"Whew! Great Jakes!" A long breath was exhaled all round the table.

"What are you, anyhow?" cried Jim Bowles across the dishes.

Tembarom rested his elbow on the edge of the table and began to check off his points on his fingers.

"I'm this, he said: "I'm Temple Temple Barholm, Esquire, of Temple Barholm, Lancashire, England. At the time of the flood my folks knocked up a house just about where the ark landed, and I guess they've held on to it ever since. I don't know what business they went into, but they made money. Palford swears I've got three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. I wasn't going to call the man a liar; but I just missed it, by jings!"

He was trying to "bluff it out." Somehow he felt he had to. He felt it more than ever when a momentary silence fell upon those who sat about the table. It fell when he said "three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year." No one could find voice to make any remark for a few seconds after that.

"Are you a lord--or a duke?" some one asked after breath had recovered itself.

"No, I'm not," he replied with relief. "I just got out from under that; but the Lord knows how I did it."

"What are you going to do first? " said Jim Bowles.

"I've got to go and 'take possession.' That's what Palford calls it. I've been a lost heir for nearly two years, and I've got to show myself."

Hutchinson had not joined the clamor of greeting, but had grunted disapproval more than once. He felt that, as an Englishman, he had a certain dignity to maintain. He knew something about big estates and their owners. He was not like these common New York chaps, who regarded them as Arabian Nights tales to make jokes about. He had grown up as a village boy in proper awe of Temple Barholm. They were ignorant fools, this lot. He had no patience with them. He had left the village and gone to work in Manchester when he was a boy of twelve, but as long as he had remained in his mother's cottage it had been only decent good manners for him to touch his forehead respectfully when a Temple Barholm, or a Temple Barholm guest or carriage or pony phaeton, passed him by. And this chap was Mr. Temple Temple Barholm himself! Lord save us!

Little Ann said nothing at all; but, then, she seldom said anything during meal-times. When the rest of the boarders laughed, she ate her dinner and smiled. Several times, despite her caution, Tembarom caught her eye, and somehow held it a second with his. She smiled at him when this happened; but there was something restless and eager in his look which made her wish to evade it. She knew what he felt, and she knew why he kept up his jokes and never once spoke seriously. She knew he was not comfortable, and did not enjoy talking about hundreds of thousands a year to people who worked hard for ten or twenty "per." To-morrow morning was very near, she kept thinking. To-morrow night she would be lying in her berth in the steerage, or more probably taking care of her father, who would be very uncomfortable.

"What will Galton do? " Mr. Striper asked.

"I don't know," Tembarom answered, and he looked troubled. Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year might not be able to give aid to a wounded society page.

"What are you going to do with your Freak? " called out Julius Steinberger.

Tembarom actually started. As things had surged over him, he had had too much to think over. He had not had time to give to his strange responsibility; it had become one nevertheless.

"Are you going to leave him behind when you go to England?"

He leaned forward and put his chin on his hand.

"Why, say," he said, as though he were thinking it out, "he's spoken about England two or three times. He's said he must go there. By jings! I'll take him with me, and see what'll happen."

When Little Ann got up to leave the room he followed her and her father into the hall.

"May I come up and talk it over with you?" he appealed. "I've got to talk to some one who knows something about it. I shall go dotty if I don't. It's too much like a dream."

"Come on up when you're ready," answered Hutchinson. "Ann and me can give you a tip or two."

"I'm going to be putting the last things in the trunks," said Ann, "but I dare say you won't mind that. The express'll be here by eight in the morning."

"O Lord!" groaned Tembarom.

When he went up to the fourth floor a little later, Hutchinson had

fallen into a doze in his chair over his newspaper, and Ann was kneeling by a trunk in the hall, folding small articles tightly, and fitting them into corners. To Tembarom she looked even more than usual like a slight child thing one could snatch up in one's arms and carry about or set on one's knee without feeling her weight at all. An inferior gas-jet on the wall just above her was doing its best with the lot of soft, red hair, which would have been an untidy bundle if it had not been hers.

Tembarom sat down on the trunk next to her.

"O Little Ann!" he broke out under his breath, lest the sound of his voice might check Hutchinson's steady snoring. "O Little Ann!"

Ann leaned back, sitting upon her small heels, and looked up at him.

"You're all upset, and it's not to be wondered at, Mr. Temple Barholm," she said.

"Upset! You're going away to-morrow morning! And, for the Lord's sake, don't call me that!" he protested.

"You're going away yourself next Wednesday. And you ARE Mr. Temple Barholm. You'll never be called anything else in England.

"How am I going to stand it?" he protested again. "How could a fellow

like me stand it! To be yanked out of good old New York, and set down in a place like a museum, with Central Park round it, and called Mr. Temple Temple Barholm instead of just 'Tem' or 'T. T.!' It's not natural."

"What you must do, Mr. Temple Barholm, is to keep your head clear, that's all," she replied maturely.

"Lord! if I'd got a head like yours!"

She seemed to take him in, with a benign appreciativeness, in his entirety.

"Well, you haven't," she admitted, though quite without disparagement, merely with slight reservation. "But you've got one like your own. And it's a good head--when you try to think steady. Yours is a man's head, and mine's only a woman's."

"It's Little Ann Hutchinson's, by gee!" said Tembarom, with feeling.

"Listen here, Mr. Tem--Temple Barholm," she went on, as nearly disturbed as he had ever seen her outwardly. "It's a wonderful thing that's happened to you. It's like a novel. That splendid place, that splendid name! It seems so queer to think I should ever have talked to a Mr. Temple Barholm as I've talked to you."

He leaned forward a little as though something drew him.

"But"--there was unsteady appeal in his voice--"you have liked me, haven't you, Little Ann?"

Her own voice seemed to drop into an extra quietness that made it remote. She looked down at her hands on her lap.

"Yes, I have liked you. I have told Father I liked you," she answered.

He got up, and made an impetuous rush at his goal.

"Then--say, I'm going in there to wake up Mr. Hutchinson and ask him not to sail to-morrow morning."

"You'd better not wake him up," she answered, smiling; but he saw that her face changed and flushed. "It's not a good time to ask Father anything when he's just been waked up. And we HAVE to go. The express is coming at eight."

"Send it away again; tell 'em you're not going. Tell 'em any old thing. Little Ann, what's the matter with you? Something's the matter. Have I made a break?"

He had felt the remoteness in her even before he had heard it in her dropped voice. It had been vaguely there even when he sat down on the



trunk. Actually there was a touch of reserve about her, as though she was keeping her little place with the self-respecting propriety of a girl speaking to a man not of her own world.

"I dare say I've done some fool thing without knowing it. I don't know where I'm at, anyhow," he said woefully.

"Don't look at me like that, Mr. Temple Barholm," she said--"as if I was unkind. I--I'm NOT."

"But you're different," he implored. "I saw it the minute I came up. I ran up-stairs just crazy to talk to you,--yes, crazy to talk to you--and you--well, you were different. Why are you, if you're not mad?"

Then she rose and stood holding one of her neatly rolled packages in her hand. Her eyes were soft and clear, and appealed maternally to his reason.

"Because everything's different. You just think a bit," she answered.

He stared at her a few seconds, and then understanding of her dawned upon him. He made a human young dash at her, and caught her arm.

"What!" he cried out. "You mean this Temple Barholm song and dance makes things different? Not on your life! You're not the girl to work that on me, as if it was my fault. You've got to hear me speak my

piece. Ann--you've just got to!"

He had begun to tremble a little, and she herself was not steady; but she put a hand on his arm.

"Don't say anything you've not had time to think about," she said.

"I've been thinking of pretty near nothing else ever since I came here. Just as soon as I looked at you across the table that first day I saw my finish, and every day made me surer. I'd never had any comfort or taking care of,--I didn't know the first thing about it,--and it seemed as if all there was of it in the world was just in YOU."

"Did you think that?" she asked falteringly.

"Did I? That's how you looked to me, and it's how you look now. The way you go about taking care of everybody and just handing out solid little chunks of good sense to every darned fool that needs them, why--" There was a break in his voice--"why, it just knocked me out the first round." He held her a little away from him, so that he could yearn over her, though he did not know he was yearning. "See, I'd sworn I'd never ask a girl to marry me until I could keep her. Well, you know how it was, Ann. I couldn't have kept a goat, and I wasn't such a fool that I didn't know it. I've been pretty sick when I thought how it was; but I never worried you, did I?"

"No, you didn't."

"I just got busy. I worked like--well, I got busier than I ever was in my life. When I got the page SURE, I let myself go a bit, sort of hoping. And then this Temple Barholm thing hits me."

"That's the thing you've got to think of now," said Little Ann. "I'm going to talk sensible to you."

"Don't, Ann! Good Lord! DON'T!"

"I MUST." She put her last tight roll into the trunk and tried to shut the lid. "Please lock this for me."

He locked it, and then she seated herself on the top of it, though it was rather high for her, and her small feet dangled. Her eyes looked large and moist like a baby's, and she took out a handkerchief and lightly touched them.

"You've made me want to cry a bit," she said, "but I'm not going to."

"Are you going to tell me you don't want me?" he asked, with anxious eyes.

"No, I'm not."

"God bless you!" He was going to make a dash at her again, but pulled himself up because he must. "No, by jings!" he said. "I'm not going to till you let me."

"You see, it's true your head's not like mine," she said reasonably. "Men's heads are mostly not like women's. They're men, of course, and they're superior to women, but they're what I'd call more fluttery-like. Women must remind them of things."

"What--what kind of things?"

"This kind. You see, Grandmother lives near Temple Barholm, and I know what it's like, and you don't. And I've seen what seventy thousand pounds a year means, and you haven't. And you've got to go and find out for yourself."

"What's the matter with you coming along to help me?"

"I shouldn't help you; that's it. I should hold you back. I'm nothing but Ann Hutchinson, and I talk Manchester-- and I drop my h's."

"I love to hear you drop your little h's all over the place," he burst forth impetuously. "I love it."

She shook her head.

"The girls that go to garden-parties at Temple Barholm look like those in the 'Ladies' Pictorial', and they've got names and titles same as those in novels."

He answered her in genuine anguish. He had never made any mistake about her character, and she was beginning to make him feel afraid of her in the midst of his adoration.

"What do I want with a girl out of a magazine?" he cried. "Where should I hang her up?"

She was not unfeeling, but unshaken and she went on:

"I should look like a housemaid among them. How would you feel with a wife of that sort, when the other sort was about?"

"I should feel like a king, that's what I should feel like," he replied indignantly.

"I shouldn't feel like a queen. I should feel MISERABLE."

She sat with her little feet dangling, and her hands folded in her lap. Her infantile blue eyes held him as the Ancient Mariner had been held. He could not get away from the clear directness of them. He did not want to exactly, but she frightened him more and more.

"I should be ashamed," she proceeded. "I should feel as if I had taken an advantage. What you've got to do is to find out something no one else can find out for you, Mr. Temple Barholm."

"How can I find it out without you? It was you who put me on to the wedding-cake; you can put me on to other things."

"Because I've lived in the place," she answered unswervingly. "I know how funny it is for any one to think of me being Mrs. Temple Barholm. You don't."

"You bet I don't," he answered; "but I'll tell you what I do know, and that's how funny it is that I should be Mr. Temple Barholm. I've got on to that all right, all right. Have you?"

She looked at him with a reflection that said much. She took him in with a judicial summing up of which it must be owned an added respect was part. She had always believed he had more sense than most young men, and now she knew it.

"When a person's clever enough to see things for himself, he's generally clever enough to manage them," she replied.

He knelt down beside the trunk and took both her hands in his. He held them fast and rather hard.

"Are you throwing me down for good, Little Ann?" he said. "If you are, I can't stand it, I won't stand it."

"If you care about me like that, you'll do what I tell you," she interrupted, and she slipped down from the top of her trunk. "I know what Mother would say. She'd say, 'Ann, you give that young man a chance.' And I'm going to give you one. I've said all I'm going to, Mr. Temple Barholm."

He took both her elbows and looked at her closely, feeling a somewhat awed conviction.

"I - believe - you have," he said.

And here the sound of Mr. Hutchinson's loud and stertorous breathing ceased, and he waked up, and came to the door to find out what Ann was doing.

"What are you two talking about?" he asked. "People think when they whisper it's not going to disturb anybody, but it's worse than shouting in a man's ear."

Tembarom walked into the room.

"I've been asking Little Ann to marry me," he announced, "and she won't."

He sat down in a chair helplessly, and let his head fall into his hands.

"Eh!" exclaimed Hutchinson. He turned and looked at Ann disturbedly.

"I thought a bit ago tha didn't deny but what tha'd took to him?"

"I didn't, Father," she answered. "I don't change my mind that quick. I - would have been willing to say 'Yes' when you wouldn't have been willing to let me. I didn't know he was Mr. Temple Barholm then."

Hutchinson rubbed the back of his head, reddening and rather bristling.

"Dost tha think th' Temple Barholms would look down on thee?"

"I should look down on myself if I took him up at his first words, when he's all upset with excitement, and hasn't had time to find out what things mean. I'm--well, I 'm too fond of him, Father."

Hutchinson gave her a long, steady look.

"You are? " he said.

"Yes, I am."



Tembarom lifted his head, and looked at her, too.

"Are you?" he asked.

She put her hands behind her back, and returned his look with the calm of ages.

"I'm not going to argue about it," she answered. "Arguing's silly."

His involuntary rising and standing before her was a sort of unconscious tribute of respect.

"I know that," he owned. "I know you. That's why I take it like this. But I want you to tell me one thing. If this hadn't happened, if I'd only had twenty dollars a week, would you have taken me?"

"If you'd had fifteen, and Father could have spared me, I'd have taken you. Fifteen dollars a week is three pounds two and sixpence, and I've known curates' wives that had to bring up families on less. It wouldn't go as far in New York as it would in the country in England, but we could have made it do--until you got more. I know you, too, Mr. Temple Barholm."

He turned to her father, and saw in his florid countenance that which spurred him to bold disclosure.

"Say," he put it to him, as man to man, "she stands there and says a thing like that, and she expects a fellow not to jerk her into his arms and squeeze the life out of her! I daren't do it, and I'm not going to try; but--well, you said her mother was like her, and I guess you know what I'm up against."

Hutchinson's grunting chuckle contained implications of exultant tenderness and gratified paternal pride.

"She's th' very spit and image of her mother," he said, "and she had th' sense of ten women rolled into one, and th' love of twenty. You let her be, and you're as safe as th' Rock of Ages."

"Do you think I don't know that?" answered Tembarom, his eyes shining almost to moisture. "But what hits me, by thunder! is that I've lost the chance of seeing her work out that fifteen-dollar-a-week proposition, and it drives me crazy."

"I should have downright liked to try it," said Little Ann, with speculative reflection, and while she knitted her brows in lovely consideration of the attractive problem, several previously unknown dimples declared themselves about her mouth.

"Ann," Tembarom ventured, "if I go to Temple Barholm and try it a year and learn all about it---"

"It would take more than a year," said Ann.

"Don't make it two," Tembarom pleaded. "I'll sit up at night with wet towels round my head to learn; I'll spend fourteen hours a day with girls that look like the pictures in the 'Ladies' Pictorial', or whatever it is in England; I'll give them every chance in life, if you'll let me off afterward. There must be another lost heir somewhere; let's dig him up and then come back to little old New York and be happy. Gee! Ann,"--letting himself go and drawing nearer to her,-- "how happy we could be in one of those little flats in Harlem!"

She was a warm little human thing, and a tender one, and when he came close to her, glowing with tempestuous boyish eagerness, her eyes grew bluer because they were suddenly wet, and she was obliged to move softly back.

"Yes," she said; "I know those little flats. Any one could---" She stopped herself, because she had been going to reveal what a home a woman could make in rooms like the compartments in a workbox. She knew and saw it all. She drew back a little again, but she put out a hand and laid it on his sleeve.

"When you've had quite time enough to find out, and know what the other thing means, I'll do whatever you want me to do," she said. "It won't matter what it is. I'll do it."

"She means that," Hutchinson mumbled unsteadily, turning aside. "Same as her mother would have meant it. And she means it in more ways than one."

And so she did. The promise included quite firmly the possibility of not unnatural changes in himself such as young ardor could not foresee, even the possibility of his new life withdrawing him entirely from the plane on which rapture could materialize on twenty dollars a week in a flat in Harlem.