

CHAPTER IX

Type as exotic as Tembarom's was to his solicitor naturally suggested problems. Mr. Palford found his charge baffling because, according to ordinary rules, a young man so rudimentary should have presented no problems not perfectly easy to explain. It was herein that he was exotic. Mr. Palford, who was not given to subtle analysis of differences in character and temperament, argued privately that an English youth who had been brought up in the streets would have been one of two or three things. He would have been secretly terrified and resentful, roughly awkward and resentful, or boastfully delighted and given to a common youth's excitedly common swagger at finding himself suddenly a "swell."

This special kind of youth would most assuredly have constantly thought of himself as a "swell" and would have lost his head altogether, possibly with results in the matter of conduct in public which would have been either maddening or crushing to the spirit of a well-bred, mature-minded legal gentleman temporarily thrust into the position of bear-leader.

But Tembarom was none of these things. If he was terrified, he did not reveal his anguish. He was without doubt not resentful, but on the contrary interested and curious, though he could not be said to bear himself as one elated. He indulged in no frolics or extravagances. He

saw the Hutchinsons off on their steamer, and supplied them with fruit and flowers and books with respectful moderation. He did not conduct himself as a benefactor bestowing unknown luxuries, but as a young man on whom unexpected luck had bestowed decent opportunities to express his friendship. In fact, Palford's taste approved of his attitude. He was evidently much under the spell of the slight girl with the Manchester accent and sober blue eyes, but she was neither flighty nor meretricious, and would have sense enough to give no trouble even when he naturally forgot her in the revelations of his new life. Her father also was plainly a respectable working-man, with a blunt Lancashire pride which would keep him from intruding.

"You can't butt in and get fresh with a man like that," Tembarom said.

"Money wouldn't help you. He's too independent."

After the steamer had sailed away it was observable to his solicitor that Mr. Temple Barholm was apparently occupied every hour. He did not explain why he seemed to rush from one part of New York to another and why he seemed to be seeking interviews with persons it was plainly difficult to get at. He was evidently working hard to accomplish something or other before he left the United States, perhaps. He asked some astutely practical business questions; his intention seeming to be to gain a definite knowledge of what his future resources would be and of his freedom to use them as he chose.

Once or twice Mr. Palford was rather alarmed by the tendency of his

questions. Had he actually some prodigious American scheme in view? He seemed too young and inexperienced in the handling of large sums for such a possibility. But youth and inexperience and suddenly inherited wealth not infrequently led to rash adventures. Something which Palford called "very handsome" was done for Mrs. Bowse and the boarding-house. Mrs. Bowse was evidently not proud enough to resent being made secure for a few years' rent. The extraordinary page was provided for after a large amount of effort and expenditure of energy.

"I couldn't leave Galton high and dry," Tembarom explained when he came in after rushing about. "I think I know a man he might try, but I've got to find him and put him on to things. Good Lord! nobody rushed about to find me and offer me the job. I hope this fellow wants it as bad as I did. He'll be up in the air." He discovered the whereabouts of the young man in question, and finding him, as the youngster almost tearfully declared, "about down and out," his proposition was met with the gratitude the relief from a prospect of something extremely like starvation would mentally produce. Tembarom took him to Galton after having talked him over in detail.

"He's had an education, and you know how much I'd had when I butted into the page," he said. "No one but you would have let me try it. You did it only because you saw--you saw--"

"Yes, I saw," answered Galton, who knew exactly what he had seen and who found his up-town social representative and his new situation as

interesting as amusing and just touched with the pathetic element. Galton was a traveled man and knew England and several other countries well.

"You saw that a fellow wanted the job as much as I did would be likely to put up a good fight to hold it down. I was scared out of my life when I started out that morning of the blizzard, but I couldn't afford to be scared. I guess soldiers who are scared fight like that when they see bayonets coming at them. You have to."

"I wonder how often a man finds out that he does pretty big things when bayonets are coming at him," answered Galton, who was actually neglecting his work for a few minutes so that he might look at and talk to him, this New York descendant of Norman lords and Saxon kings.

"Joe Bennett had been trying to live off free-lunch counters for a week when I found him," Tembarom explained. "You don't know what that is. He'll go at the page all right. I'm going to take him up-town and introduce him to my friends there and get them to boost him along."

"You made friends," said Galton. "I knew you would."

"Some of the best ever. Good-natured and open-handed. Well, you bet! Only trouble was they wanted you to eat and drink everything in sight, and they didn't quite like it when you couldn't get outside all the champagne they'd offer you."

He broke into a big, pleased laugh.

"When I went in and told Munsberg he pretty near threw a fit. Of course he thought I was kidding. But when I made him believe it, he was as glad as if he'd had luck himself. It was just fine the way people took it. Tell you what, it takes good luck, or bad luck, to show you how good-natured a lot of folks are. They'll treat Bennett and the page all right; you'll see."

"They'll miss you," said Galton.

"I shall miss them," Tembarom answered in a voice with a rather depressed drop in it.

"I shall miss you," said Galton.

Tembarom's face reddened a little.

"I guess it'd seem rather fresh for me to tell you how I shall miss you," he said. "I said that first day that I didn't know how to tell you how I--well, how I felt about you giving a mutt like me that big chance. You never thought I didn't know how little I did know, did you?" he inquired almost anxiously.

"That was it--that you did know and that you had the backbone and the

good spirits to go in and win," Galton replied. "I'm a tired man, and good spirits and good temper seem to me about the biggest assets a man can bring into a thing. I shouldn't have dared do it when I was your age. You deserved the Victoria Cross," he added, chuckling.

"What's the Victoria Cross?" asked Tembarom.

"You'll find out when you go to England."

"Well, I'm not supposing that you don't know about how many billion things I'll have to find out when I go to England."

"There will be several thousand," replied Galton moderately; "but you'll learn about them as you go on."

"Say," said Tembarom, reflectively, "doesn't it seem queer to think of a fellow having to keep up his spirits because he's fallen into three hundred and fifty thousand a year? You wouldn't think he'd have to, would you?"

"But you find he has?" queried Galton, interestedly.

Tembarom's lifted eyes were so honest that they were touching.

"I don't know where I'm at," he said. "I'm going to wake up in a new place--like people that die. If you knew what it was like, you

wouldn't mind it so much; but you don't know a blamed thing. It's not having seen a sample that rattles you."

"You're fond of New York?"

"Good Lord! it's all the place I know on earth, and it's just about good enough for me, by gee! It's kept me alive when it might have starved me to death. My! I've had good times here," he added, flushing with emotion. "Good times-- when I hadn't a whole meal a day!"

"You'd have good times anywhere," commented Galton, also with feeling.

"You carry them over your shoulder, and you share them with a lot of other people."

He certainly shared some with Joe Bennett, whom he took up-town and introduced right and left to his friendly patrons, who, excited by the atmosphere of adventure and prosperity, received him with open arms. To have been the choice of T. Tembarom as a mere representative of the EARTH would have been a great thing for Bennett, but to be the choice of the hero of a romance of wildest opulence was a tremendous send-off. He was accepted at once, and when Tembarom actually "stood for" a big farewell supper of his own in "The Hall," and nearly had his hand shaken off by congratulating acquaintances, the fact that he kept the new aspirant by his side, so that the waves of high popularity flowed over him until he sometimes lost his joyful breath, established him as a sort of hero himself.

Mr. Palford did not know of this festivity, as he also found he was not told of several other things. This he counted as a feature of his client's exoticism. His extraordinary lack of concealment of things vanity forbids many from confessing combined itself with a quite cheerful power to keep his own counsel when he was, for reasons of his own, so inclined.

"He can keep his mouth shut, that chap," Hutchinson had said once, and Mr. Palford remembered it. "Most of us can't. I've got a notion I can; but I don't many's the time when I should. There's a lot more in him than you'd think for. He's naught but a lad, but he is na half such a fool as he looks."

He was neither hesitant nor timid, Mr. Palford observed. In an entirely unostentatious way he soon realized that his money gave things into his hands. He knew he could do most things he chose to do, and that the power to do them rested in these days with himself without the necessity of detailed explanation or appeal to others, as in the case, for instance, of this mysterious friend or protege whose name was Strangeways. Of the history of his acquaintance with him Palford knew nothing, and that he should choose to burden himself with a half-witted invalid --in these terms the solicitor described him-- was simply in-explainable. If he had asked for advice or by his manner left an opening for the offering of it, he would have been most strongly counseled to take him to a public asylum and leave him there;

but advice on the subject seemed the last thing he desired or anticipated, and talk about his friend was what he seemed least likely to indulge in. He made no secret of his intentions, but he frankly took charge of them as his own special business, and left the rest alone.

"Say nothing and saw wood," Palford had once been a trifle puzzled by hearing him remark casually, and he remembered it later, as he remembered the comments of Joseph Hutchinson. Tembarom had explained himself to Little Ann.

"You'll understand," he said. " It is like this. I guess I feel like you do when a dog or a cat in big trouble just looks at you as if you were all they had, and they know if you don't stick by them they'll be killed, and it just drives them crazy. It's the way they look at you that you can't stand. I believe something would burst in that fellow's brain if I left him. When he found out I was going to do it he'd just let out some awful kind of a yell I'd remember till I died. I dried right up almost as soon as I spoke of him to Palford. He couldn't see anything but that he was crazy and ought to be put in an asylum. Well, he's not. There're times when he talks to me almost sensible; only he's always so awful low down in his mind you're afraid to let him go on. And he's a little bit better than he was. It seems queer to get to like a man that's sort of dotty, but I tell you, Ann, because you'll understand --I've got to sort of like him, and want to see if I can work it out for him somehow. England seems to sort of stick in his

mind. If I can't spend my money in living the way I want to live,-- buying jewelry and clothes for the girl I'd like to see dressed like a queen--I'm going to do this just to please myself. I'm going to take him to England and keep him quiet and see what'll happen. Those big doctors ought to know about all there is to know, and I can pay them any old thing they want. By jings! isn't it the limit--to sit here and say that and know it's true!"

Beyond the explaining of necessary detail to him and piloting him to England, Mr. Palford did not hold himself many degrees responsible. His theory of correct conduct assumed no form of altruism. He had formulated it even before he reached middle age. One of his fixed rules was to avoid the error of allowing sympathy or sentiment to hamper him with any unnecessary burden. Natural tendency of temperament had placed no obstacles in the way of his keeping this rule. To burden himself with the instruction or modification of this unfortunately hopeless young New Yorker would be unnecessary. Palford's summing up of him was that he was of a type with which nothing palliative could be done. There he was. As unavoidable circumstances forced one to take him,--commonness, slanginess, appalling ignorance, and all,--one could not leave him. Fortunately, no respectable legal firm need hold itself sponsor for a "next of kin" provided by fate and the wilds of America.

The Temple Barholm estate had never, in Mr. Palford's generation, been specially agreeable to deal with. The late Mr. Temple Temple Barholm

had been a client of eccentric and abominable temper. Interviews with him had been avoided as much as possible. His domineering insolence of bearing had at times been on the verge of precipitating unheard-of actions, because it was almost more than gentlemanly legal flesh and blood could bear. And now appeared this young man.

He rushed about New York strenuously attending to business concerning himself and his extraordinary acquaintances, and on the day of the steamer's sailing he presented himself at the last moment in an obviously just purchased suit of horribly cut clothes. At all events, their cut was horrible in the eyes of Mr. Palford, who accepted no cut but that of a West End tailor. They were badly made things enough, because they were unconsidered garments that Tembarom had barely found time to snatch from a "ready-made" counter at the last moment. He had been too much "rushed" by other things to remember that he must have them until almost too late to get them at all. He bought them merely because they were clothes, and warm enough to make a voyage in. He possessed a monster ulster, in which, to Mr. Palford's mind, he looked like a flashy black-leg. He did not know it was flashy. His opportunities for cultivating a refined taste in the matter of wardrobe had been limited, and he had wasted no time in fastidious consideration or regrets. Palford did him some injustice in taking it for granted that his choice of costume was the result of deliberate bad taste. It was really not choice at all. He neither liked his clothes nor disliked them. He had been told he needed warm garments, and he had accepted the advice of the first salesman who took charge

of him when he dropped into the big department store he was most familiar with because it was the cheapest in town. Even when it was no longer necessary to be cheap, it was time-saving and easy to go into a place one knew.

The fact that he was as he was, and that they were the subjects of comment and objects of unabated interest through-out the voyage, that it was proper that they should be companions at table and on deck, filled Mr. Palford with annoyed unease.

Of course every one on board was familiar with the story of the discovery of the lost heir. The newspapers had reveled in it, and had woven romances about it which might well have caused the deceased Mr. Temple Barholm to turn in his grave. After the first day Tembarom had been picked out from among the less-exciting passengers, and when he walked the deck, books were lowered into laps or eyes followed him over their edges. His steamer-chair being placed in a prominent position next to that of a pretty, effusive Southern woman, the mother of three daughters whose eyes and eyelashes attracted attention at the distance of a deck's length, he was without undue delay provided with acquaintances who were prepared to fill his every moment with entertainment.

"The three Gazelles," as their mother playfully confided to Tembarom her daughters were called in Charleston, were destructively lovely. They were swaying reeds of grace, and being in radiant spirits at the

prospect of "going to Europe," were companions to lure a man to any desperate lengths. They laughed incessantly, as though they were chimes of silver bells; they had magnolia-petal skins which neither wind nor sun blemished; they had nice young manners, and soft moods in which their gazelle eyes melted and glowed and their long lashes drooped. They could dance, they played on guitars, and they sang. They were as adorable as they were lovely and gay.

"If a fellow was going to fall in love," Tembarom said to Palford, "there'd be no way out of this for him unless he climbed the rigging and dragged his food up in a basket till he got to Liverpool. If he didn't go crazy about Irene, he'd wake up raving about Honora; and if he got away from Honora, Adelia Louise would have him down on the mat." From which Mr. Palford argued that the impression made by the little Miss Hutchinson with the Manchester accent had not yet had time to obliterate itself.

The Gazelles were of generous Southern spirit, and did not surround their prize with any barrier of precautions against other young persons of charm. They introduced him to one girl after another, and in a day or two he was the center of animated circles whenever he appeared. The singular thing, however, was that he did not appear as often as the other men who were on board. He seemed to stay a great deal with Strangeways, who shared his suite of rooms and never came on deck. Sometimes the Gazelles prettily reproached him. Adelia Louise suggested to the others that his lack of advantages in the past had

made him feel rather awkward and embarrassed; but Palford knew he was not embarrassed. He accepted his own limitations too simply to be disturbed by them. Palford would have been extremely bored by him if he had been of the type of young outsider who is anxious about himself and expansive in self-revelation and appeals for advice; but sometimes Tembarom's air of frankness, which was really the least expansive thing in the world and revealed nothing whatever, besides concealing everything it chose, made him feel himself almost irritatingly baffled. It would have been more natural if he had not been able to keep anything to himself and had really talked too much.