

CHAPTER XXXI

When she was alone Joan sat and gazed not at her wall but at the pictures that came back to her out of a part of her life which seemed to have been lived centuries ago. They were the pictures that came back continually without being called, the clearness of which always startled her afresh. Sometimes she thought they sprang up to add to her torment, but sometimes it seemed as if they came to save her from herself--her mad, wicked self. After all, there were moments when to know that she had been the girl whose eighteen-year-old heart had leaped so when she turned and met Jem's eyes, as he stood gazing at her under the beech-tree, was something to cling to. She had been that girl and Jem had been--Jem. And she had been the girl who had joined him in that young, ardent vow that they would say the same prayers at the same hour each night together. Ah! how young it had been--how YOUNG! Her throat strained itself because sobs rose in it, and her eyes were hot with the swell of tears.

She could hear voices and laughter and the click of balls from the billiard-room. Her mother and Palliser laughed the most, but she knew the sound of her mother's voice would cease soon, because she would come back to her. She knew she would not leave her long, and she knew the kind of scene they would pass through together when she returned. The old things would be said, the old arguments used, but a new one would be added. It was a pleasant thing to wait here, knowing that it

was coming, and that for all her fierce pride and fierce spirit she had no defense. It was at once horrible and ridiculous that she must sit and listen--and stare at the growing wall. It was as she caught her breath against the choking swell of tears that she heard Lady Mallowe returning. She came in with an actual sweep across the room. Her society air had fled, and she was unadornedly furious when she stopped before Joan's chair. For a few seconds she actually glared; then she broke forth in a suppressed undertone:

"Come into the billiard-room. I command it!"

Joan lifted her eyes from her book. Her voice was as low as her mother's, but steadier.

"No," she answered.

"Is this conduct to continue? Is it?" Lady Mallowe panted.

"Yes," said Joan, and laid her book on the table near her. There was nothing else to say. Words made things worse.

Lady Mallowe had lost her head, but she still spoke in the suppressed voice.

"You SHALL behave yourself!" she cried, under her breath, and actually made a passionate half-start toward her. "You violent-natured virago!

The very look on your face is enough to drive one mad!"

"I know I am violent-natured," said Joan. "But don't you think it wise to remember that you cannot make the kind of scene here that you can in your own house? We are a bad-tempered pair, and we behave rather like fishwives when we are in a rage. But when we are guests in other people's houses--"

Lady Mallowe's temper was as elemental as any Billingsgate could provide.

"You think you can take advantage of that!" she said. "Don't trust yourself too far. Do you imagine that just when all might go well for me I will allow you to spoil everything?"

"How can I spoil everything?"

"By behaving as you have been behaving since we came here--refusing to make a home for yourself; by hanging round my neck so that it will appear that any one who takes me must take you also."

"There are servants outside," Joan warned her.

"You shall not stop me!" cried Lady Mallowe.

"You cannot stop yourself," said Joan. "That is the worst of it. It is

bad enough when we stand and hiss at each other in a stage whisper; but when you lose control over yourself and raise your voice--"

"I came in here to tell you that this is your last chance. I shall never give you another. Do you know how old you are?"

"I shall soon be twenty-seven," Joan answered. "I wish I were a hundred. Then it would all be over."

"But it will not be over for years and years and years," her mother flung back at her. "Have you forgotten that the very rags you wear are not paid for?"

"No, I have not forgotten." The scene was working itself up on the old lines, as Joan had known it would. Her mother never failed to say the same things, every time such a scene took place.

"You will get no more such rags--paid or unpaid for. What do you expect to do? You don't know how to work, and if you did no decent woman would employ you. You are too good-looking and too bad-tempered."

Joan knew she was perfectly right. Knowing it, she remained silent, and her silence added to her mother's helpless rage. She moved a step nearer to her and flung the javelin which she always knew would strike deep.

"You have made yourself a laughing-stock for all London for years. You are mad about a man who disgraced and ruined himself."

She saw the javelin quiver as it struck; but Joan's voice as it answered her had a quality of low and deadly steadiness.

"You have said that a thousand times, and you will say it another thousand--though you know the story was a lie and was proved to be one."

Lady Mallowe knew her way thoroughly.

"Who remembers the denials? What the world remembers is that Jem Temple Barholm was stamped as a cheat and a trickster. No one has time to remember the other thing. He is dead--dead! When a man's dead it's too late."

She was desperate enough to drive her javelin home deeper than she had ever chanced to drive it before. The truth--the awful truth she uttered shook Joan from head to foot. She sprang up and stood before her in heart-wrung fury.

"Oh! You are a hideously cruel woman!" she cried. "They say even tigers care for their young! But you--you can say that to me. 'When a man's dead, it's too late.'"

"It is too late--it IS too late!" Lady Mallowe persisted. Why had not she struck this note before? It was breaking her will: "I would say anything to bring you to your senses."

Joan began to move restlessly to and fro.

"Oh, what a fool I am!" she exclaimed. "As if you could understand--as if you could care!"

Struggle as she might to be defiant, she was breaking, Lady Mallowe repeated to herself. She followed her as a hunter might have followed a young leopardess with a wound in its flank.

"I came here because it is your last chance. Palliser knew what he was saying when he made a joke of it just now. He knew it wasn't a joke. You might have been the Duchess of Merthshire; you might have been Lady St. Maur, with a husband with millions. And here you are. You know what's before you--when I am out of the trap."

Joan laughed. It was a wild little laugh, and she felt there was no sense in it.

"I might apply for a place in Miss Alicia's Home for Decayed Gentlewomen," she said.

Lady Mallowe nodded her head fiercely.

"Apply, then. There will be no place for you in the home I am going to live in," she retorted.

Joan ceased moving about. She was about to hear the one argument that was new.

"You may as well tell me," she said, wearily.

"I have had a letter from Sir Moses Monaldini. He is to be at Broome Haughton. He is going there purposely to meet me. What he writes can mean only one thing. He means to ask me to marry him. I'm your mother, and I'm nearly twenty years older than you; but you see that I'm out of the trap first."

"I knew you would be," answered Joan.

"He detests you," Lady Mallowe went on. "He will not hear of your living with us--or even near us. He says you are old enough to take care of yourself. Take my advice. I am doing you a good turn in giving it. This New York newsboy is mad over you. If he hadn't been we should have been bundled out of the house before this. He never has spoken to a lady before in his life, and he feels as if you were a goddess. Go into the billiard-room this instant, and do all a woman can. Go!" And she actually stamped her foot on the carpet.

Joan's thunder-colored eyes seemed to grow larger as she stared at her. Her breast lifted itself, and her face slowly turned pale. Perhaps--she thought it wildly--people sometimes did die of feelings like this.

"He would crawl at your feet," her mother went on, pursuing what she felt sure was her advantage. She was so sure of it that she added words only a fool or a woman half hysteric with rage would have added. "You might live in the very house you would have lived in with Jem Temple Barholm, on the income he could have given you."

She saw the crassness of her blunder the next moment. If she had had an advantage, she had lost it. Wickedly, without a touch of mirth, Joan laughed in her face.

"Jem's house and Jem's money--and the New York newsboy in his shoes," she flung at her. "T. Tembarom to live with until one lay down on one's deathbed. T. Tembarom!"

Suddenly, something was giving way in her, Lady Mallowe thought again. Joan slipped into a chair and dropped her head and hidden face on the table.

"Oh! Mother! Mother!" she ended. "Oh! Jem! Jem!"

Was she sobbing or trying to choke sobbing back? There was no time to be lost. Her mother had never known a scene to end in this way before.

"Crying!" there was absolute spite in her voice. "That shows you know what you are in for, at all events. But I've said my last word. What does it matter to me, after all? You're in the trap. I'm not. Get out as best you can. I've done with you."

She turned her back and went out of the room--as she had come into it--with a sweep Joan would have smiled at as rather vulgar if she had seen it. As a child in the nursery, she had often seen that her ladyship was vulgar.

But she did not see the sweep because her face was hidden. Something in her had broken this time, as her mother had felt. That bitter, sordid truth, driven home as it had been, had done it. Who had time to remember denials, or lies proved to be lies? Nobody in the world. Who had time to give to the defense of a dead man? There was not time enough to give to living ones. It was true--true! When a man is dead, it is too late. The wall had built itself until it reached her sky; but it was not the wall she bent her head and sobbed over. It was that suddenly she had seen again Jem's face as he had stood with slow-growing pallor, and looked round at the ring of eyes which stared at him; Jem's face as he strode by her without a glance and went out of the room. She forgot everything else on earth. She forgot where she was. She was eighteen again, and she sobbed in her arms as eighteen

sobs when its heart is torn from it.

"Oh Jem! Jem!" she cried. "If you were only in the same world with me!
If you were just in the same world!"

She had forgotten all else, indeed. She forgot too long. She did not know how long. It seemed that no more than a few minutes had passed before she was without warning struck with the shock of feeling that some one was in the room with her, standing near her, looking at her. She had been mad not to remember that exactly this thing would be sure to happen, by some abominable chance. Her movement as she rose was almost violent, she could not hold herself still, and her face was horribly wet with shameless, unconcealable tears. Shameless she felt them--indecent--a sort of nudity of the soul. If it had been a servant who had intruded, or if it had been Palliser it would have been intolerable enough. But it was T. Tembarom who confronted her with his common face, moved mysteriously by some feeling she resented even more than she resented his presence. He was too grossly ignorant to know that a man of breeding, having entered by chance, would have turned and gone away, professing not to have seen. He seemed to think--the dolt!--that he must make some apology.

"Say! Lady Joan!" he began. "I beg your pardon. I didn't want to butt in."

"Then go away," she commanded. "Instantly--instantly!"

She knew he must see that she spoke almost through her teeth in her effort to control her sobbing breath. But he made no move toward leaving her. He even drew nearer, looking at her in a sort of meditative, obstinate way.

"N-no," he replied, deliberately. "I guess--I won't."

"You won't?" Lady Joan repeated after him. "Then I will."

He made a stride forward and laid his hand on her arm.

"No. Not on your life. You won't, either--if I can help it. And you're going to LET me help it."

Almost any one but herself--any one, at least, who did not resent his very existence--would have felt the drop in his voice which suddenly struck the note of boyish, friendly appeal in the last sentence.

"You're going to LET me," he repeated.

She stood looking down at the daring, unconscious hand on her arm.

"I suppose," she said, with cutting slowness, "that you do not even know that you are insolent. Take your hand away," in arrogant command.

He removed it with an unabashed half-smile.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I didn't even know I'd put it there. It was a break--but I wanted to keep you."

That he not only wanted to keep her, but intended to do so was apparent. His air was neither rough nor brutal, but he had ingeniously placed himself in the outlet between the big table and the way to the door. He put his hands in his pockets in his vulgar, unconscious way, and watched her.

"Say, Lady Joan!" he broke forth, in the frank outburst of a man who wants to get something over. "I should be a fool if I didn't see that you're up against it--hard! What's the matter?" His voice dropped again.

There was something in the drop this time which--perhaps because of her recent emotion--sounded to her almost as if he were asking the question with the protecting sympathy of the tone one would use in speaking to a child. How dare he! But it came home to her that Jem had once said "What's the matter?" to her in the same way.

"Do you think it likely that I should confide in you?" she said, and inwardly quaked at the memory as she said it.

"No," he answered, considering the matter gravely. "It's not likely--

the way things look to you now. But if you knew me better perhaps it would be likely."

"I once explained to you that I do not intend to know you better," she gave answer.

He nodded acquiescently.

"Yes. I got on to that. And it's because it's up to me that I came out here to tell you something I want you to know before you go away. I'm going to confide in you."

"Cannot even you see that I am not in the mood to accept confidences?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I can. But you're going to accept this one," steadily. "No," as she made a swift movement, "I'm not going to clear the way till I've done."

"I insist!" she cried. "If you were--"

He put out his hand, but not to touch her.

"I know what you're going to say. If I were a gentleman--Well, I'm not laying claim to that--but I'm a sort of a man, anyhow, though you mayn't think it. And you're going to listen."

She began to stare at him. It was not the ridiculous boyish drop in his voice which arrested her attention. It was a fantastic, incongruous, wholly different thing. He had suddenly dropped his slouch and stood upright. Did he realize that he had slung his words at her as if they were an order given with the ring of authority?

"I've not bucked against anything you've said or done since you've been here," he went on, speaking fast and grimly. "I didn't mean to. I had my reasons. There were things that I'd have given a good deal to say to you and ask you about, but you wouldn't let me. You wouldn't give me a chance to square things for you--if they could be squared. You threw me down every time I tried!"

He was too wildly incomprehensible with his changes from humanness to folly. Remembering what he had attempted to say on the day he had followed her in the avenue, she was inflamed again.

"What in the name of New York slang does that mean?" she demanded.

"Never mind New York," he answered, cool as well as grim. "A fellow that's learned slang in the streets has learned something else as well. He's learned to keep his eyes open. He's on to a way of seeing things. And what I've seen is that you're so doggone miserable that--that you're almost down and out."

This time she spoke to him in the voice with the quality of deadliness in it which she had used to her mother.

"Do you think that because you are in your own house you can be as intrusively insulting as you choose?" she said.

"No, I don't," he answered. "What I think is quite different. I think that if a man has a house of his own, and there's any one in big trouble under the roof of it--a woman most of all--he's a cheap skate if he don't get busy and try to help--just plain, straight help."

He saw in her eyes all her concentrated disdain of him, but he went on, still obstinate and cool and grim.

"I guess 'help' is too big a word just yet. That may come later, and it mayn't. What I'm going to try at now is making it easier for you--just easier."

Her contemptuous gesture registered no impression on him as he paused a moment and looked fixedly at her.

"You just hate me, don't you?" It was a mere statement which couldn't have been more impersonal to himself if he had been made of wood.

"That's all right. I seem like a low-down intruder to you. Well, that's all right, too. But what ain't all right is what your mother has set you on to thinking about me. You'd never have thought it

yourself. You'd have known better."

"What," fiercely, "is that?"

"That I'm mutt enough to have a mash on you."

The common slangy crassness of it was a kind of shock. She caught her breath and merely stared at him. But he was not staring at her; he was simply looking straight into her face, and it amazingly flashed upon her that the extraordinary words were so entirely unembarrassed and direct that they were actually not offensive.

He was merely telling her something in his own way, not caring the least about his own effect, but absolutely determined that she should hear and understand it.

Her caught breath ended in something which was like a half-laugh. His queer, sharp, incomprehensible face, his queer, unmoved voice were too extraordinarily unlike anything she had ever seen or heard before.

"I don't want to be brash--and what I want to say may seem kind of that way to you. But it ain't. Anyhow, I guess it'll relieve your mind. Lady Joan, you're a looker--you're a beaut from Beautville. If I were your kind, and things were different, I'd be crazy about you--crazy! But I'm not your kind--and things are different." He drew a step nearer still to her in his intentness. "They're this different.

Why, Lady Joan! I'm dead stuck on another girl!"

She caught her breath again, leaning forward.

"Another--!"

"She says she's not a lady; she threw me down just because all this darned money came to me," he hastened on, and suddenly he was imperturbable no longer, but flushed and boyish, and more of New York than ever. "She's a little bit of a quiet thing and she drops her h's, but gee--! You're a looker --you're a queen and she's not. But Little Ann Hutchinson-- Why, Lady Joan, as far as this boy's concerned"--and he oddly touched himself on the breast--"she makes you look like thirty cents."

Joan quickly sat down on the chair she had just left. She rested an elbow on the table and shaded her face with her hand. She was not laughing; she scarcely knew what she was doing or feeling.

"You are in love with Ann Hutchinson," she said, in a low voice.

"Am I?" he answered hotly. "Well, I should smile!" He disdained to say more.

Then she began to know what she felt. There came back to her in flashes scenes from the past weeks in which she had done her worst by

him; in which she had swept him aside, loathed him, set her feet on him, used the devices of an ingenious demon to discomfit and show him at his poorest and least ready. And he had not been giving a thought to the thing for which she had striven to punish him. And he plainly did not even hate her. His mind was clear, as water is clear. He had come back to her this evening to do her a good turn--a good turn. Knowing what she was capable of in the way of arrogance and villainous temper, he had determined to do her--in spite of herself--a good turn.

"I don't understand you," she faltered.

"I know you don't. But it's only because I'm so dead easy to understand. There's nothing to find out. I'm just friendly --friendly--that's all."

"You would have been friends with me! " she exclaimed. "You would have told me, and I wouldn't let you! Oh!" with an impulsive flinging out of her hand to him, "you good --good fellow!"

"Good be darned! " he answered, taking the hand at once.

"You are good to tell me! I have behaved like a devil to you. But oh! if you only knew!"

His face became mature again; but he took a most informal seat on the edge of the table near her.

"I do know--part of it. That's why I've been trying to be friends with you all the time." He said his next words deliberately. "If I was the woman Jem Temple Barholm had loved wouldn't it have driven me mad to see another man in his place--and remember what was done to him. I never even saw him, but, good God! "--she saw his hand clench itself-- "when I think of it I want to kill somebody! I want to kill half a dozen. Why didn't they know it couldn't be true of a fellow like that!"

She sat up stiffly and watched him.

"Do--you--feel like that--about him?"

"Do I!" red-hotly. "There were men there that knew him! There were women there that knew him! Why wasn't there just one to stand by him? A man that's been square all his life doesn't turn into a card-sharp in a night. Damn fools! I beg your pardon," hastily. And then, as hastily again: "No, I mean it. Damn fools!"

"Oh!" she gasped, just once.

Her passionate eyes were suddenly blinded with tears. She caught at his clenched hand and dragged it to her, letting her face drop on it and crying like a child.

The way he took her utter breaking down was just like him and like no

one else. He put the other hand on her shoulder and spoke to her exactly as he had spoken to Miss Alicia on that first afternoon.

"Don't you mind me, Lady Joan," he said. "Don't you mind me a bit. I'll turn my back. I'll go into the billiard- room and keep them playing until you get away up-stairs. Now we understand each other, it'll be better for both of us."

"No, don't go! Don't!" she begged. "It is so wonderful to find some one who sees the cruelty of it." She spoke fast and passionately. "No one would listen to any defense of him. My mother simply raved when I said what you are saying."

"Do you want "--he put it to her with a curious comprehending of her emotion--"to talk about him? Would it do you good?"

"Yes! Yes! I have never talked to any one. There has been no one to listen."

"Talk all you want," he answered, with immense gentleness. "I'm here."

"I can't understand it even now, but he would not see me!" she broke out. "I was half mad. I wrote, and he would not answer. I went to his chambers when I heard he was going to leave England. I went to beg him to take me with him, married or unmarried. I would have gone on my knees to him. He was gone! Oh, why? Why?"

"You didn't think he'd gone because he didn't love you?" he put it to her quite literally and unsentimentally. "You knew better than that?"

"How could I be sure of anything! When he left the room that awful night he would not look at me! He would not look at me!"

"Since I've been here I've been reading a lot of novels, and I've found out a lot of things about fellows that are not the common, practical kind. Now, he wasn't. He'd lived pretty much like a fellow in a novel, I guess. What's struck me about that sort is that they think they have to make noble sacrifices, and they'll just walk all over a woman because they won't do anything to hurt her. There's not a bit of sense in it, but that was what he was doing. He believed he was doing the square thing by you--and you may bet your life it hurt him like hell. I beg your pardon--but that's the word--just plain hell."

"I was only a girl. He was like iron. He went away alone. He was killed, and when he was dead the truth was told."

"That's what I've remembered "--quite slowly--"every time I've looked at you. By gee! I'd have stood anything from a woman that had suffered as much as that."

It made her cry--his genuineness--and she did not care in the least that the tears streamed down her cheeks. How he had stood things! How

he had borne, in that odd, unimpressive way, insolence and arrogance for which she ought to have been beaten and blackballed by decent society! She could scarcely bear it.

"Oh! to think it should have been you," she wept, "just you who understood!"

"Well," he answered speculatively, "I mightn't have understood as well if it hadn't been for Ann. By jings! I used to lie awake at night sometimes thinking `supposing it had been Ann and me! I'd sort of work it out as it might have happened in New York--at the office of the Sunday Earth. Supposing some fellow that'd had a grouch against me had managed it so that Galton thought I'd been getting away with money that didn't belong to me--fixing up my expense account, or worse. And Galton wouldn't listen to what I said, and fired me; and I couldn't get a job anywhere else because I was down and out for good. And nobody would listen. And I was killed without clearing myself. And Little Ann was left to stand it--Little Ann! Old Hutchinson wouldn't listen, I know that. And it would be all shut up burning in her big little heart--burning. And T. T. dead, and not a word to say for himself. Jehoshaphat!"--taking out his handkerchief and touching his forehead--"it used to make the cold sweat start out on me. It's doing it now. Ann and me might have been Jem and you. That's why I understood."

He put out his hand and caught hers and frankly squeezed it--squeezed

it hard; and the unconventional clutch was a wonderful thing to her.

"It's all right now, ain't it?" he said. "We've got it straightened out. You'll not be afraid to come back here if your mother wants you to." He stopped for a moment and then went on with something of hesitation: "We don't want to talk about your mother. We can't. But I understand her, too. Folks are different from each other in their ways. She's different from you. I'll--I'll straighten it out with her if you like."

"Nothing will need straightening out after I tell her that you are going to marry Little Ann Hutchinson," said Joan, with a half-smile. "And that you were engaged to her before you saw me."

"Well, that does sort of finish things up, doesn't it?" said T. Tembarom.

He looked at her so speculatively for a moment after this that she wondered whether he had something more to say. He had.

"There's something I want to ask you," he ventured.

"Ask anything."

"Do you know any one--just any one--who has a photo-- just any old photo--of Jem Temple Barholm?"

She was rather puzzled.

"Yes. I know a woman who has worn one for nearly eight years. Do you want to see it?"

"I'd give a good deal to," was his answer.

She took a flat locket from her dress and handed it to him.

"Women don't wear lockets in these days." He could barely hear her voice because it was so low. "But I've never taken it off. I want him near my heart. It's Jem!"

He held it on the palm of his hand and stood under the light, studying it as if he wanted to be sure he wouldn't forget it.

"It's--sorter like that picture of Miles Hugo, ain't it?" he suggested.

"Yes. People always said so. That was why you found me in the picture-gallery the first time we met."

"I knew that was the reason--and I knew I'd made a break when I butted in," he answered. Then, still looking at the photograph, "You'd know this face again most anywhere you saw it, I guess."

"There are no faces like it anywhere," said Joan.

"I guess that's so," he replied. "And it's one that wouldn't change much either. Thank you, Lady Joan."

He handed back the picture, and she put out her hand again.

"I think I'll go to my room now," she said. "You've done a strange thing to me. You've taken nearly all the hatred and bitterness out of my heart. I shall want to come back here whether my mother comes or not--I shall want to."

"The sooner the quicker," he said. "And so long as I'm here I'll be ready and waiting."

"Don't go away," she said softly. "I shall need you."

"Isn't that great?" he cried, flushing delightedly. "Isn't it just great that we've got things straightened so that you can say that. Gee! This is a queer old world! There's such a lot to do in it, and so few hours in the day. Seems like there ain't time to stop long enough to hate anybody and keep a grouch on. A fellow's got to keep hustling not to miss the things worth while."

The liking in her eyes was actually wistful.

"That's your way of thinking, isn't it?" she said. "Teach it to me if you can. I wish you could. Good-night." She hesitated a second. "God bless you!" she added, quite suddenly--almost fantastic as the words sounded to her. That she, Joan Fayre, should be calling down devout benisons on the head of T. Tembarom--T. Tembarom!

Her mother was in her room when she reached it. She had come up early to look over her possessions--and Joan's--before she began her packing. The bed, the chairs, and tables were spread with evening, morning, and walking-dresses, and the millinery collected from their combined wardrobes. She was examining anxiously a lace appliqued and embroidered white coat, and turned a slightly flushed face toward the opening door.

"I am going over your things as well as my own," she said. "I shall take what I can use. You will require nothing in London. You will require nothing anywhere in future. What is the matter?" she said sharply, as she saw her daughter's face.

Joan came forward feeling it a strange thing that she was not in the mood to fight--to lash out and be glad to do it.

"Captain Palliser told me as I came up that Mr. Temple Barholm had been talking to you," her mother went on. "He heard you having some sort of scene as he passed the door. As you have made your decision,

of course I know I needn't hope that anything has happened."

"What has happened has nothing to do with my decision. He wasn't waiting for that," Joan answered her. "We were both entirely mistaken, Mother."

"What are you talking about?" cried Lady Mallowe, but she temporarily laid the white coat on a chair. "What do you mean by mistaken?"

"He doesn't want me--he never did," Joan answered again. A shadow of a smile hovered over her face, and there was no derision in it, only a warming recollection of his earnestness when he had said the words she quoted: "He is what they call in New York `dead stuck on another girl.'"

Lady Mallowe sat down on the chair that held the white coat, and she did not push the coat aside.

"He told you that in his vulgar slang!" she gasped it out. "You--you ought to have struck him dead with your answer."

"Except poor Jem Temple Barholm," was the amazing reply she received, "he is the only friend I ever had in my life."