

## CHAPTER XXXIX

It was Mr. Hutchinson who, having an eye on the window, first announced an arriving carriage.

"Some of 'em's comin' from the station," he remarked. "There's no young woman with 'em, that I can see from here."

"I thought I heard wheels." Miss Alicia went to look out, agitatedly. "It is the gentlemen. Perhaps Lady Joan--" she turned desperately to the duke. "I don't know what to say to Lady Joan. I don't know what she will say to me. I don't know what she is coming for, Little Ann, do keep near me!"

It was a pretty thing to see Little Ann stroke her hand and soothe her.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Temple Barholm. All you've got to do is to answer questions," she said.

"But I might say things that would be wrong--things that would harm him."

"No, you mightn't, Miss Temple Barholm. He's not done anything that could bring harm on him."

The Duke of Stone, who had seated himself in T. Tembarom's favorite chair, which occupied a point of vantage, seemed to Mr. Palford and Mr. Grimby when they entered the room to wear the aspect of a sort of presidiary audience. The sight of his erect head and clear-cut, ivory-tinted old face, with its alert, while wholly unbiased, expression, somewhat startled them both. They had indeed not expected to see him, and did not know why he had chosen to come. His presence might mean any one of several things, and the fact that he enjoyed a reputation for quite alarming astuteness of a brilliant kind presented elements of probable embarrassment. If he thought that they had allowed themselves to be led upon a wild-goose chase, he would express his opinions with trying readiness of phrase.

His manner of greeting them, however, expressed no more than a lightly agreeable detachment from any view whatsoever. Captain Palliser felt this curiously, though he could not have said what he would have expected from him if he had known it would be his whim to appear.

"How do you do? How d' you do?" His Grace shook hands with the amiable ease which scarcely commits a man even to casual interest, after which he took his seat again.

"How d' do, Miss Hutchinson?" said Palliser. "How d' do, Mr. Hutchinson? Mr. Palford will be glad to find you here."

Mr. Palford shook hands with correct civility.

"I am, indeed," he said. "It was in your room in New York that I first saw Mr. Temple Temple Barholm."

"Aye, it was," responded Hutchinson, dryly.

"I thought Lady Joan was coming," Miss Alicia said to Palliser.

"She will be here presently. She came down in our train, but not with us."

"What--what is she coming for?" faltered Miss Alicia.

"Yes," put in the duke, "what, by the way, is she coming for?"

"I wrote and asked her to come," was Palliser's reply. "I have reason to believe she may be able to recall something of value to the inquiry which is being made."

"That's interesting," said his Grace, but with no air of participating particularly. She doesn't like him, though, does she? Wouldn't do to put her on the jury."

He did not wait for any reply, but turned to Mr. Palford.

"All this is delightfully portentous. Do you know it reminds me of a scene in one of those numerous plays where the wrong man has murdered somebody--or hasn't murdered somebody--and the whole company must be cross-examined because the curtain cannot be brought down until the right man is unmasked. Do let us come into this, Mr. Palford; what we know seems so inadequate."

Mr. Palford and Mr. Grimby each felt that there lurked in this manner a possibility that they were being regarded lightly. All the objections to their situation loomed annoyingly large.

"It is, of course, an extraordinary story," Mr. Palford said, "but if we are not mistaken in our deductions, we may find ourselves involved in a cause celebre which will set all England talking."

"I am not mistaken," Palliser presented the comment with a short and dry laugh.

"Tha seems pretty cock-sure!" Hutchinson thrust in.

"I am. No one knew Jem Temple Barbolm better than I did in the past. We were intimate--enemies." And he laughed again.

"Tha says tha'll swear th' chap tha saw through th' window was him?" said Hutchinson.

"I'd swear it," with composure.

The duke was reflecting. He was again tapping with his cane the gaiter covering his slender, shining boot.

"If Mr. Temple Temple Barholm had remained here his actions would have seemed less suspicious?" he suggested.

It was Palliser who replied.

"Or if he hadn't whisked the other man away. He lost his head and played the fool."

"He didn't lose his head, that chap. It's screwed on th' right way-- his head is," grunted Hutchinson.

"The curious fellow has a number of friends," the duke remarked to Palford and Grimby, in his impartial tone. "I am hoping you are not thinking of cross-examining me. I have always been convinced that under cross-examination I could be induced to innocently give evidence condemnatory to both sides of any case whatever. But would you mind telling me what the exact evidence is so far? "

Mr. Palford had been opening a budget of papers.

"It is evidence which is cumulative, your Grace," he said. "Mr. Temple

Temple Barholm's position would have been a far less suspicious one-- as you yourself suggested--if he had remained, or if he hadn't secretly removed Mr.--Mr. Strangeways."

"The last was Captain Palliser's suggestion, I believe," smiled the duke. "Did he remove him secretly? How secretly, for instance?"

"At night," answered Palliser. "Miss Temple Barholm herself did not know when it happened. Did you?" turning to Miss Alicia, who at once flushed and paled.

"He knew that I was rather nervous where Mr. Strangeways was concerned. I am sorry to say he found that out almost at once. He even told me several times that I must not think of him--that I need hear nothing about him." She turned to the duke, her air of appeal plainly representing a feeling that he would understand her confession. "I scarcely like to say it, but wrong as it was I couldn't help feeling that it was like having a--a lunatic in the house. I was afraid he might be more--ill--than Temple realized, and that he might some time become violent. I never admitted so much of course, but I was."

"You see, she was not told," Palliser summed it up succinctly.

"Evidently," the duke admitted. "I see your point." But he seemed to disengage himself from all sense of admitting implications with entire calmness, as he turned again to Mr. Palford and his papers.

"You were saying that the exact evidence was--?"

Mr. Palford referred to a sheet of notes.

"That--whether before or shortly after his arrival here is not at all certain--Mr. Temple Temple Barholm began strongly to suspect the identity of the person then known as Strangeways--"

Palliser again emitted the short and dry laugh, and both the duke and Mr. Palford looked at him inquiringly.

"He had `got on to' it before he brought him," he answered their glances. "Be sure of that."

"Then why did he bring him?" the duke suggested lightly.

"Oh, well," taking his cue from the duke, and assuming casual lightness also, "he was obliged to come himself, and was jolly well convinced that he had better keep his hand on the man, also his eye. It was a good-enough idea. He couldn't leave a thing like that wandering about the States. He could play benefactor safely in a house of the size of this until he was ready for action."

The duke gave a moment to considering the matter--still detachedly.

"It is, on the whole, not unlikely that something of the sort might suggest itself to the criminal mind," he said. And his glance at Mr. Palford intimated that he might resume his statement.

"We have secured proof that he applied himself to secret investigation. He is known to have employed Scotland Yard to make certain inquiries concerning the man said to have been killed in the Klondike. Having evidently reached more than suspicion he began to endeavor to persuade Mr. Strangeways to let him take him to London. This apparently took some time. The mere suggestion of removal threw the invalid into a state of painful excitement--"

"Did Pearson tell you that? " the duke inquired.

"Captain Palliser himself in passing the door of the room one day heard certain expressions of terrified pleading," was Mr. Palford's explanation.

"I heard enough," Palliser took it up carelessly, "to make it worth while to question Pearson--who must have heard a great deal more. Pearson was ordered to hold his tongue from the first, but he will have to tell the truth when he is asked."

The duke did not appear to resent his view.

"Pearson would be likely to know what went on," he remarked. "He's an



intelligent little fellow."

"The fact remains that in spite of his distress and reluctance Mr. Strangeways was removed privately, and there our knowledge ends. He has not been seen since--and a few hours after, Captain Palliser expressed his conviction, that the person he had seen through the West Room window was Mr. James Temple Barholm, Mr. Temple Temple Barholm left the house taking a midnight train, and leaving no clue as to his whereabouts or intentions."

"Disappeared! " said the duke. "Where has he been looked for?"

The countenance of both Mr. Palford and his party expressed a certain degree of hesitance.

"Principally in asylums and so-called sanatoriums," Mr. Grimby admitted with a hint of reluctance.

"Places where the curiosity of outsiders is not encouraged," said Palliser languidly. "And where if a patient dies in a fit of mania there are always respectable witnesses to explain that his case was hopeless from the first."

Mr. Hutchinson had been breathing hard occasionally as he sat and listened, and now he sprang up uttering a sound dangerously near a violent snort.

"Art tha accusin' that lad o' bein' black villain enough to be ready to do bloody murder?" he cried out.

"He was in a very tight place, Hutchinson," Palliser shrugged his shoulders as he said it. "But one makes suggestions at this stage--not accusations."

That Hutchinson had lost his head was apparent to his daughter at least.

"Tha'd be in a tight place, my fine chap, if I had my way," he flung forth irately. "I'd like to get thy head under my arm."

The roll of approaching wheels reached Miss Alicia.

"There's another carriage," was her agitated exclamation. "Oh, dear! It must be Lady Joan!"

Little Ann left her seat to make her father return to his.

"Father, you'd better sit down," she said, gently pushing him in the right direction. "When you can't prove a thing's a lie, it's just as well to keep quiet until you can." And she kept quiet herself, though she turned and stood before Palliser and spoke with clear deliberateness. "What you pretend to believe is not true, Captain

Palliser. It's just not true," she gave to him.

They were facing and looking at each other when Burrill announced Lady Joan Fayre. She entered rather quickly and looked round the room with a sweeping glance, taking them all in. She went to the duke first, and they shook hands.

"I am glad you are here! " she said.

"I would not have been out of it, my dear young lady," he answered, "for a farm' That's a quotation."

"I know," she replied, giving her hand to Miss Alicia, and taking in Palliser and the solicitors with a bow which was little more than a nod. Then she saw Little Ann, and walked over to her to shake hands.

"I am glad you are here. I rather felt you would be," was her greeting. "I am glad to see you."

"Whether tha 'rt glad to see me or not I'm glad I'm here," said Hutchinson bluntly. "I've just been speaking a bit o' my mind."

"Now, Father love!" Little Ann put her hand on his arm.

Lady Joan looked him over. Her hungry eyes were more hungry than ever. She looked like a creature in a fever and worn by it.

"I think I am glad you are here too," she answered.

Palliser sauntered over to her. He had approved the duke's air of being at once detached and inquiring, and he did not intend to wear the aspect of the personage who plays the unpleasant part of the pursuer and avenger. What he said was:

"It was good of you to come, Lady Joan."

"Did you think I would stay away?" was her answer. "But I will tell you that I don't believe it is true."

"You think that it is too good to be true?"

Her hot eyes had records in them it would have been impossible for him to read or understand. She had been so torn; she had passed through such hours since she had been told this wild thing.

"Pardon my not telling you what I think," she said. "Nothing matters, after all, if he is alive!"

"Except that we must find him," said Palliser.

"If he is in the same world with me I shall find him," fiercely. Then she turned again to Ann. "You are the girl T. Tembarom loves?" she put

it to her.

"Yes, my lady."

"If he was lost, and you knew he was on the earth with you, don't you know that you would find him?"

"I should know he'd come back to me," Little Ann answered her. "That's what--" her small face looked very fine as in her second of hesitation a spirited flush ran over it, "that's what your man will do," quite firmly.

It was amazing to see how the bitter face changed, as if one word had brought back a passionate softening memory.

"My man!" Her voice mellowed until it was deep and low. "Did you call T. Tembarom that, too? Oh, I understand you! Keep near me while I talk to these people." She made her sit down by her.

"I know every detail of your letters." She addressed Palliser as well as Palford & Grimby, sweeping all details aside. "What is it you want to ask me?"

"This is our position, your ladyship," Mr. Palford fumbled a little with his papers in speaking. "Mr. Temple Temple Barholm and the person known as Mr. Strangeways have been searched for so far without result.

In the meantime we realize that the more evidence we obtain that Mr. Temple Temple Barholm identified Strangeways and acted from motive, the more solid the foundation upon which Captain Palliser's conviction rests. Up to this point we have only his statement which he is prepared to make on oath. Fortunately, however, he on one occasion overheard something said to you which he believes will be corroborative evidence."

"What did you overhear?" she inquired of Palliser.

Her tone was not pacific considering that, logically, she must be on the side of the investigators. But it was her habit, as Captain Palliser remembered, to seem to put most people on the defensive. He meant to look as uninvolved as the duke, but it was not quite within his power. His manner was sufficiently deliberate.

"One evening, before you left for London, I was returning from the billiard-room, and heard you engaged in animated conversation with--our host. My attention was arrested, first because--" a sketch of a smile ill-concealed itself, "you usually scarcely deigned to speak to him, and secondly because I heard Jem Temple Barholm's name."

"And you--?" neither eyes nor manner omitted the word listened.

But the slight lift of his shoulders was indifferent enough.

"I listened deliberately. I was convinced that the fellow was a criminal impostor, and I wanted evidence."

"Ah! come now," remarked the duke amiably. "Now we are getting on. Did you gain any?"

"I thought so. Merely of the cumulative order, of course," Palliser answered with moderation. "Those were early days. He asked you," turning to Lady Joan again, "if you knew any one--any one--who had any sort of a photograph of Jem. You had one and you showed it to him!"

She was quite silent for a moment. The hour came back to her--the extraordinary hour when he had stood in his lounging fashion before her, and through some odd, uncivilized but absolutely human force of his own had made her listen to him --and had gone on talking in his nasal voice until with one common, crude, grotesque phrase he had turned her hideous world upside down--changed the whole face of it--sent the stone wall rising before her crumbling into dust, and seemed somehow to set her free. For the moment he had lifted a load from her the nature of which she did not think he could understand--a load of hatred and silence. She had clutched his hand, she had passionately wept on it, she could have kissed it. He had told her she could come back and not be afraid. As the strange episode rose before her detail by detail, she literally stared at Palliser.

"You did, didn't you?" he inquired.

"Yes," she answered.

Her mind was in a riot, because in the midst of things which must be true, something was false. But with the memory of a myriad subtle duplicities in her brain, she had never seen anything which could have approached a thing like that. He had made her feel more human than any one in the world had ever made her feel--but Jem. He had been able to do it because he was human himself--human. "I'm friendly," he had said with his boy's laugh--"just friendly."

"I saw him start, though you did not," Palliser continued. "He stood and studied the locket intently."

She remembered perfectly. He had examined it so closely that he had unconsciously knit his brows.

"He said something in a rather low voice," Palliser took it up. "I could not quite catch it all. It was something about 'knowing the face again.' I can see you remember, Lady Joan. Can you repeat the exact words?"

He did not understand the struggle he saw in her face. It would have been impossible for him to understand it. What she felt was that if she lost hold on her strange belief in the honesty of this one decent thing she had seen and felt so close to her that it cleared the air



she breathed, it would be as if she had fallen into a bottomless abyss. Without knowing why she did it, she got up from her chair as if she were a witness in a court.

"Yes, I can," she said. "Yes, I can; but I wish to make a statement for myself. Whether Jem Temple Barholm is alive or dead, Captain Palliser, T. Tembarom has done him no harm."

The duke sat up delicately alert. He had evidently found her worth looking at and listening to from the outset.

"Hear! Hear!" he said pleasantly.

"What were the exact words?" suggested Palliser.

Miss Alicia who had been weeping on Little Ann's shoulder --almost on her lap--lifted her head to listen. Hutchinson set his jaw and grunted, and Mr. Palford cleared his throat mechanically.

"He said," and no one better than herself realized how ominously "cumulative" the words sounded, "that a man would know a face like that again--wherever he saw it."

"Wherever he saw it!" ejaculated Mr. Grimby.

There ensued a moment of entire pause. It was inevitable. Having

reached this point a taking of breath was necessary. Even the duke ceased to appear entirely detached. As Mr. Palford turned to his papers again there was perhaps a slight feeling of awkwardness in the air. Miss Alicia had dropped, terror smitten, into new tears.

The slight awkwardness was, on the whole, rather added to by T. Tembarom--as if serenely introduced by the hand of drama itself--opening the door and walking into the room. He came in with a matter-of-fact, but rather obstinate, air, and stopped in their midst, looking round at them as if collectedly taking them all in.

Hutchinson sprang to his feet with a kind of roar, his big hands plunging deep into his trousers pockets.

"Here he is! Danged if he isn't!" he bellowed. "Now, lad, tha let 'em have it!"

What he was to let them have did not ensue, because his attitude was not one of assault.

"Say, you are all here, ain't you!" he remarked obviously. "Good business!"

Miss Alicia got up from the sofa and came trembling toward him as one approaches one risen from the dead, and he made a big stride toward her and took her in his arms, patting her shoulder in reproachful

consolation.

"Say, you haven't done what I told you--have you?" he soothed. "You've let yourself get rattled."

"But I knew it wasn't true," she sobbed. "I knew it wasn't."

"Of course you did, but you got rattled all the same." And he patted her again.

The duke came forward with a delightfully easy and--could it be almost jocose?--air of bearing himself. Palford and Grimby remarked it with pained dismay. He was so unswerving in his readiness as he shook hands.

"How well done of you!" he said. "How well arranged! But I'm afraid you didn't arrange it at all. It has merely happened. Where did you come from?"

"From America; got back yesterday." T. Tembarom's hand-shake was a robust hearty greeting. "It's all right."

"From America!" The united voices of the solicitors exclaimed it.

Joseph Hutchinson broke into a huge guffaw, and he stamped in exultation.

"I'm danged if be has na' been to America!" he cried out. "To America!"

"Oh!" Miss Alicia gasped hysterically, "they go backward and forward to America like--like lightning!"

Little Ann had not risen at his entrance, but sat still with her hands clasped tightly on her lap. Her face had somehow the effect of a flower gradually breaking into extraordinary bloom. Their eyes had once met and then she remained, her soul in hers which were upon him, as she drank in every word he uttered. Her time had not yet come.

Lady Joan had remained standing by the chair, which a few moments before her manner had seemed to transform into something like a witness stand in a court of justice. Her hungry eyes had grown hungrier each second, and her breath came and went quickly. The very face she had looked up at on her last talk with T. Tembarom--the oddly human face--turned on her as he came to her. It was just as it had been that night --just as commonly uncommon and believable.

"Say, Lady Joan! You didn't believe all that guff, did you--You didn't?" he said.

"No--no--no! I couldn't!" she cried fiercely.

He saw she was shaking with suspense, and he pushed her gently into a chair.

"You'd better sit down a minute. You're about all in," he said.

She might have been a woman with an ague as she caught his arm, shaking it because her hands themselves so shook.

"Is it true?" was her low cry. "Is he alive--is he alive?"

"Yes, he's alive." And as he answered he drew close and so placed himself before her that he shielded her from the others in the room. He seemed to manage to shut them out, so that when she dropped her face on her arms against the chair-back her shuddering, silent sobbing was hidden decently. It was not only his body which did it, but some protecting power which was almost physically visible. She felt it spread before her.

"Yes, he's alive," he said, "and he's all right--though it's been a long time coming, by gee!"

"He's alive." They all heard it. For a man of Palliser's make to stand silent in the midst of mysterious slowly accumulating convictions that some one--perilously of his own rarely inept type--was on the verge of feeling appallingly like a fool--was momentarily unendurable. And nothing had been explained, after all.

"Is this what you call `bluff' in New York?" he demanded. "You've got a lot to explain. You admit that Jem Temple Barholm is alive?" and realized his asinine error before the words were fully spoken.

The realization was the result of the square-shouldered swing with which T. Tembarom turned round, and the expression of his eyes as they ran over him.

"Admit!" he said. "Admit hell! He's up-stairs," with a slight jerk of his head in the direction of the ceiling.

The duke alone did not gasp. He laughed slightly.

"We've just got here. He came down from London with me, and Sir Ormsby Galloway." And he said it not to Palliser but to Palford and Grimby.

"The Sir Ormsby Galloway?" It was an ejaculation from Mr. Palford himself.

T. Tembarom stood square and gave his explanation to the lot of them, so to speak, without distinction.

"He's the big nerve specialist. I've had him looking after the case from the first--before I began to suspect anything. I took orders, and orders were to keep him quiet and not let any fool butt in and excite

him. That's what I've been giving my mind to. The great stunt was to get him to go and stay at Sir Ormsby's place." He stopped a moment and suddenly flared forth as if he had had about enough of it. He almost shouted at them in exasperation. "All I'm going to tell you is that for about six months I've been trying to prove that Jem Temple Barholm was Jem Temple Barholm, and the hardest thing I had to do was to get him so that he could prove it himself." He strode over to the hearth and rang a bell. "It's not my place to give orders here now," he said, "but Jem commissioned me to see this thing through. Sir Ormsby'll tell you all you want to hear."

He turned and spoke solely to the duke.

"This is what happened," he said. "I dare say you'll laugh when you hear it. I almost laughed myself. What does Jem do, when he thinks things over, but get some fool notion in his head about not coming back here and pushing me out. And he lights out and leaves the country--leaves it--to get time to think it over some more."

The duke did not laugh. He merely smiled--a smile which had a shade of curious self-questioning in it.

"Romantic and emotional--and quite ridiculous," he commented slowly.

"He'd have awakened to that when he had thought it out `some more.'

The thing couldn't be done."

Burrill had presented himself in answer to the bell, and awaited orders. His Grace called Tembarom's attention to him, and Tembarom included Palliser with Palford and Grimby when he gave his gesture of instruction.

"Take these gentlemen to Sir Ormsby Galloway, and then ask Mr. Temple Barholm if he'll come down-stairs," he said.

It is possible that Captain Palliser felt himself more irritatingly infolded in the swathing realization that some one was in a ridiculous position, and it is certain that Mr. Palford felt it necessary to preserve an outwardly flawless dignity as the duke surprisingly left his chair and joined them.

"Let me go, too," he suggested; "I may be able to assist in throwing light." His including movement in Miss Alicia's direction was delightfully gracious and friendly. It was inclusive of Mr. Hutchinson also.

"Will you come with us, Miss Temple Barholm?" he said. "And you too, Mr. Hutchinson. We shall go over it all in its most interesting detail, and you must be eager about it. I am myself."

His happy and entirely correct idea was that the impending entrance of Mr. James Temple Barholm would "come off" better in the absence of audience.



Hutchinson almost bounced from his chair in his readiness. Miss Alicia looked at Tembarom.

"Yes, Miss Alicia," he answered her inquiring glance. "You go, too. You'll get it all over quicker."

Rigid propriety forbade that Mr. Palford should express annoyance, but the effort to restrain the expression of it was in his countenance.

Was it possible that the American habit of being jocular had actually held its own in a matter as serious as this? And could even the most cynical and light-minded of ducal personages have been involved in its unworthy frivolities? But no one looked jocular--Tembarom's jaw was set in its hard line, and the duke, taking up the broad ribbon of his rimless monocle to fix the glass in his eye, wore the expression of a man whose sense of humor was temporarily in abeyance.

"Are we to understand that your Grace--?"

"Yes," said his Grace a trifle curtly, "I have known about it for some time."

"But why was nobody told?" put in Palliser.

"Why should people be told? There was nothing sufficiently definite to tell. It was a waiting game." His Grace wasted no words. "I was told.

Mr. Temple Barholm did not know England or English methods. His idea--perhaps a mistaken one--was that an English duke ought to be able to advise him. He came to me and made a clean breast of it. He goes straight at things, that young fellow. Makes what he calls a `bee line.' Oh! I've been in it--I 've been in it, I assure you."

It was as they crossed the hall that his Grace slightly laughed.

"It struck me as a sort of wild-goose chase at first. He had only a ghost of a clue--a mere resemblance to a portrait. But he believed in it, and he had an instinct." He laughed again. "The dullest and most unmelodramatic neighborhood in England has been taking part in a melodrama--but there has been no villain in it--only a matter-of-fact young man, working out a queer thing in his own queer, matter-of-fact way."

When the door closed behind them, Tembarom went to Lady Joan. She had risen and was standing before the window, her back to the room. She looked tall and straight and tensely braced when she turned round, but there was endurance, not fierceness in her eyes.

"Did he leave the country knowing I was here--waiting?" she asked. Her voice was low and fatigued. She had remembered that years had passed, and that it was perhaps after all only human that long anguish should blot things out, and dull a hopeless man's memory.

"No," answered Tembarom sharply. "He didn't. You weren't in it then. He believed you'd married that Duke of Merthshire fellow. This is the way it was: Let me tell it to you quick. A letter that had been wandering round came to him the night before the cave-in, when they thought he was killed. It told him old Temple Barholm was dead. He started out before daylight, and you can bet he was strung up till he was near crazy with excitement. He believed that if he was in England with plenty of money he could track down that cardsharp lie. He believed you'd help him. Somewhere, while he was traveling he came across an old paper with a lot of dope about your being engaged."

Joan remembered well how her mother had worked to set the story afloat--how they had gone through the most awful of their scenes--almost raving at each other, shut up together in the boudoir in Hill Street.

"That's all he remembers, except that he thought some one had hit him a crack on the head. Nothing had hit him. He'd had too much to stand up under and something gave way in his brain. He doesn't know what happened after that. He'd wake up sometimes just enough to know he was wandering about trying to get home. It's been the limit to try to track him. If he'd not come to himself we could never have been quite sure. That's why I stuck at it. But he DID come to himself. All of a sudden. Sir Ormsby will tell you that's what nearly always happens. They wake up all of a sudden. It's all right; it's all right. I used to promise him it would be--when I wasn't sure that I wasn't lying."

And for the first time he broke into the friendly grin--but it was more valiant than spontaneous. He wanted her to know that it was "all right."

"Oh!" she cried, "oh! you--"

She stopped because the door was opening.

"It's Jem," he said sharply. "Ann, let's go." And that instant Little Ann was near him.

"No! no! don't go," cried Lady Joan.

Jem Temple Barholm came in through the doorway. Life and sound and breath stopped for a second, and then the two whirled into each other's arms as if a storm had swept them there.

"Jem!" she wailed. "Oh, Jem! My man! Where have you been?"

"I've been in hell, Joan--in hell!" he answered, choking, --"and this wonderful fellow has dragged me out of it."

But Tembarom would have none of it. He could not stand it. This sort of thing filled up his throat and put him at an overwhelming disadvantage. He just laid a hand on Jem Temple Barholm's shoulder and gave him an awkwardly friendly push.

"Say, cut me out of it!" he said. "You get busy," his voice rather breaking. "You've got a lot to say to her. It was up to me before;-- now, it's up to you."

Little Ann went with him into the next room.

The room they went into was a smaller one, quiet, and its oriel windows much overshadowed by trees. By the time they stood together in the center of it Tembarom had swallowed something twice or thrice, and had recovered himself. Even his old smile had come back as he took one of her hands in each of his, and holding them wide apart stood and looked down at her.

"God bless you, Little Ann," he said. "I just knew I should find you here. I'd have bet my last dollar on it."

The hands he held were trembling just a little, and the dimples quivered in and out. But her eyes were steady, and a lovely increasing intensity glowed in them.

"You went after him and brought him back. He was all wrought up, and he needed some one with good common sense to stop him in time to make him think straight before he did anything silly," she said.

"I says to him," T. Tembarom made the matter clear; "'Say, you've left something behind that belongs to you! Comeback and get it.' I meant Lady Joan. And I says, 'Good Lord, man, you're acting like a fellow in a play. That place doesn't belong to me. It belongs to you. If it was mine, fair and square, Little Willie'd hang on to it. There'd be no noble sacrifice in his. You get a brace on.'"

"When they were talking in that silly way about you, and saying you'd run away," said Little Ann, her face uplifted adoringly as she talked, "I said to father, 'If he's gone, he's gone to get something. And he'll be likely to bring it back.'"

He almost dropped her hands and caught her to him then. But he saved himself in time.

"Now this great change has come," he said, "everything will be different. The men you'll know will look like the pictures in the advertisements at the backs of magazines--those fellows with chins and smooth hair. I shall look like a chauffeur among them."

But she did not blench in the least, though she remembered whose words he was quoting. The intense and lovely femininity in her eyes only increased. She came closer to him, and so because of his height had to look up more.

"You will always make jokes--but I don't care. I don't care for anything but you," she said. "I love your jokes; I love everything about you: I love your eyes--and your voice --and your laugh. I love your very clothes." Her voice quivered as her dimples did. "These last months I've sometimes felt as if I should die of loving you."

It was a wonderful thing--wonderful. His eyes--his whole young being had kindled as he looked down drinking in every word.

"Is that the kind of quiet little thing you are?" he said.

"Yes, it is," she answered firmly.

"And you're satisfied--you know, who it is I want?-- You're ready to do what you said you would that last night at Mrs. Bowse's?"

"What do you think?" she said in her clear little voice.

He caught her then in a strong, hearty, young, joyous clutch.

"You come to me, Little Ann. You come right to me," he said.