

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AT SHANDY'S

On a late-summer evening in New York the atmosphere surrounding a certain corner table at Shandy's cheap restaurant in Fourteenth Street was stirred by a sense of excitement.

The corner table in question was the favourite meeting place of a group of young men of the G. Selden type, who usually took possession of it at dinner time--having decided that Shandy's supplied more decent food for fifty cents, or even for twenty-five, than was to be found at other places of its order. Shandy's was "about all right," they said to each other, and patronised it accordingly, three or four of them generally dining together, with a friendly and adroit manipulation of "portions" and "half portions" which enabled them to add variety to their bill of fare.

The street outside was lighted, the tide of passers-by was less full and more leisurely in its movements than it was during the seething, working hours of daylight, but the electric cars swung past each other with whiz and clang of bell almost unceasingly, their sound being swelled, at short intervals, by the roar and rumbling rattle of the trains dashing by on the elevated railroad. This, however, to the frequenters of Shandy's, was the usual accompaniment of every-day New York life and was regarded as a rather cheerful sort of thing.

This evening the four claimants of the favourite corner table had met together earlier than usual. Jem Belter, who "hammered" a typewriter at Schwab's Brewery, Tom Wetherbee, who was "in a downtown office," Bert Johnson, who was "out for the Delkoff," and Nick Baumgarten, who having for some time "beaten" certain streets as assistant salesman for the same illustrious machine, had been recently elevated to a "territory" of his own, and was therefore in high spirits.

"Say!" he said. "Let's give him a fine dinner. We can make it between us. Beefsteak and mushrooms, and potatoes hashed brown. He likes them. Good old G. S. I shall be right glad to see him. Hope foreign travel has not given him the swell head."

"Don't believe it's hurt him a bit. His letter didn't sound like it. Little Georgie ain't a fool," said Jem Belter.

Tom Wetherbee was looking over the letter referred to. It had been written to the four conjointly, towards the termination of Selden's visit to Mr. Penzance. The young man was not an ardent or fluent correspondent; but Tom Wetherbee was chuckling as he read the epistle.

"Say, boys," he said, "this big thing he's keeping back to tell us when he sees us is all right, but what takes me is old George paying a visit to a parson. He ain't no Young Men's Christian Association."

Bert Johnson leaned forward, and looked at the address on the letter paper.

"Mount Dunstan Vicarage," he read aloud. "That looks pretty swell, doesn't it?" with a laugh. "Say, fellows, you know Jepson at the office, the chap that prides himself on reading such a lot? He said it reminded him of the names of places in English novels. That Johnny's the biggest snob you ever set your tooth into. When I told him about the lord fellow that owns the castle, and that George seemed to have seen him, he nearly fell over himself. Never had any use for George before, but just you watch him make up to him when he sees him next."

People were dropping in and taking seats at the tables. They were all of one class. Young men who lived in hall bedrooms. Young women who worked in shops or offices, a couple here and there, who, living far uptown, had come to Shandy's to dinner, that they might go to cheap seats in some theatre afterwards. In the latter case, the girls wore their best hats, had bright eyes, and cheeks lightly flushed by their sense of festivity. Two or three were very pretty in their thin summer dresses and flowered or feathered head gear, tilted at picturesque angles over their thick hair. When each one entered the eyes of the young men at the corner table followed her with curiosity and interest, but the glances at her escort were always of a disparaging nature.

"There's a beaut!" said Nick Baumgarten. "Get onto that pink stuff on her hat, will you. She done it because it's just the colour of her cheeks."

They all looked, and the girl was aware of it, and began to laugh and talk coquettishly to the young man who was her companion.

"I wonder where she got Clarence?" said Jem Belter in sarcastic allusion to her escort. "The things those lookers have fastened on to them gets ME."

"If it was one of US, now," said Bert Johnson. Upon which they broke into simultaneous good-natured laughter.

"It's queer, isn't it," young Baumgarten put in, "how a fellow always feels sore when he sees another fellow with a peach like that? It's just straight human nature, I guess."

The door swung open to admit a newcomer, at the sight of whom Jem Belter exclaimed joyously: "Good old Georgie! Here he is, fellows! Get on to his glad rags."

"Glad rags" is supposed to buoyantly describe such attire as, by its freshness or elegance of style, is rendered a suitable adornment for festive occasions or loftier leisure moments. "Glad rags" may mean evening dress, when a young gentleman's wardrobe can aspire to splendour

so marked, but it also applies to one's best and latest-purchased garb, in contradistinction to the less ornamental habiliments worn every day, and designated as "office clothes."

G. Selden's economies had not enabled him to give himself into the hands of a Bond Street tailor, but a careful study of cut and material, as spread before the eye in elegant coloured illustrations in the windows of respectable shops in less ambitious quarters, had resulted in the purchase of a well-made suit of smart English cut. He had a nice young figure, and looked extremely neat and tremendously new and clean, so much so, indeed, that several persons glanced at him a little admiringly as he was met half way to the corner table by his friends.

"Hello, old chap! Glad to see you. What sort of a voyage? How did you leave the royal family? Glad to get back?"

They all greeted him at once, shaking hands and slapping him on the back, as they hustled him gleefully back to the corner table and made him sit down.

"Say, garsong," said Nick Baumgarten to their favourite waiter, who came at once in answer to his summons, "let's have a porterhouse steak, half the size of this table, and with plenty of mushrooms and potatoes hashed brown. Here's Mr. Selden just returned from visiting at Windsor Castle, and if we don't treat him well, he'll look down on us."

G. Selden grinned. "How have you been getting on, Sam?" he said, nodding cheerfully to the man. They were old and tried friends. Sam knew all about the days when a fellow could not come into Shandy's at all, or must satisfy his strong young hunger with a bowl of soup, or coffee and a roll. Sam did his best for them in the matter of the size of portions, and they did their good-natured utmost for him in the affair of the pooled tip.

"Been getting on as well as can be expected," Sam grinned back. "Hope you had a fine time, Mr. Selden?"

"Fine! I should smile! Fine wasn't in it," answered Selden. "But I'm looking forward to a Shandy porterhouse steak, all the same."

"Did they give you a better one in the Strawnd?" asked Baumgarten, in what he believed to be a correct Cockney accent.

"You bet they didn't," said Selden. "Shandy's takes a lot of beating." That last is English.

The people at the other tables cast involuntary glances at them. Their eager, hearty young pleasure in the festivity of the occasion was a healthy thing to see. As they sat round the corner table, they produced the effect of gathering close about G. Selden. They concentrated their combined attention upon him, Belter and Johnson leaning forward on their folded arms, to watch him as he talked.

"Billy Page came back in August, looking pretty bum," Nick Baumgarten began. "He'd been painting gay Paree brick red, and he'd spent more money than he'd meant to, and that wasn't half enough. Landed dead broke. He said he'd had a great time, but he'd come home with rather a dark brown taste in his mouth, that he'd like to get rid of."

"He thought you were a fool to go off cycling into the country," put in Wetherbee, "but I told him I guessed that was where he was 'way off. I believed you'd had the best time of the two of you."

"Boys," said Selden, "I had the time of my life." He said it almost solemnly, and laid his hand on the table. "It was like one of those yarns Bert tells us. Half the time I didn't believe it, and half the time I was ashamed of myself to think it was all happening to me and none of your fellows were in it."

"Oh, well," said Jem Belter, "luck chases some fellows, anyhow. Look at Nick, there."

"Well," Selden summed the whole thing up, "I just FELL into it where it was so deep that I had to strike out all I knew how to keep from drowning."

"Tell us the whole thing," Nick Baumgarten put in; "from beginning to end. Your letter didn't give anything away."

"A letter would have spoiled it. I can't write letters anyhow. I wanted to wait till I got right here with you fellows round where I could answer questions. First off," with the deliberation befitting such an opening, "I've sold machines enough to pay my expenses, and leave some over."

"You have? Gee whiz! Say, give us your prescription. Glad I know you, Georgy!"

"And who do you suppose bought the first three?" At this point, it was he who leaned forward upon the table--his climax being a thing to concentrate upon. "Reuben S. Vanderpoel's daughter--Miss Bettina! And, boys, she gave me a letter to Reuben S., himself, and here it is."

He produced a flat leather pocketbook and took an envelope from an inner flap, laying it before them on the tablecloth. His knowledge that they would not have believed him if he had not brought his proof was founded on everyday facts. They would not have doubted his veracity, but the possibility of such delirious good fortune. What they would have believed would have been that he was playing a hilarious joke on them. Jokes of this kind, but not of this proportion, were common entertainments.

Their first impulse had been towards an outburst of laughter, but even before he produced his letter a certain truthful seriousness in his look

had startled them. When he laid the envelope down each man caught his breath. It could not be denied that Jem Belter turned pale with emotion. Jem had never been one of the lucky ones.

"She let me read it," said G. Selden, taking the letter from its envelope with great care. "And I said to her: 'Miss Vanderpoel, would you let me just show that to the boys the first night I go to Shandy's?' I knew she'd tell me if it wasn't all right to do it. She'd know I'd want to be told. And she just laughed and said: 'I don't mind at all. I like "the boys." Here is a message to them. "Good luck to you all."'"

"She said that?" from Nick Baumgarten.

"Yes, she did, and she meant it. Look at this."

This was the letter. It was quite short, and written in a clear, definite hand.

"DEAR FATHER: This will be brought to you by Mr. G. Selden, of whom I have written to you. Please be good to him.

"Affectionately,

"BETTY."

Each young man read it in turn. None of them said anything just at first. A kind of awe had descended upon them--not in the least awe of Vanderpoel, who, with other multi-millionaires, were served up each week with cheerful neighbourly comment or equally neighbourly disrespect, in huge Sunday papers read throughout the land--but awe of the unearthly luck which had fallen without warning to good old G. S., who lived like the rest of them in a hall bedroom on ten per, earned by tramping the streets for the Delkoff.

"That girl," said G. Selden gravely, "that girl is a winner from Winnersville. I take off my hat to her. If it's the scheme that some people's got to have millions, and others have got to sell Delkoffs, that girl's one of those that's entitled to the millions. It's all right she should have 'em. There's no kick coming from me."

Nick Baumgarten was the first to resume wholly normal condition of mind.

"Well, I guess after you've told us about her there'll be no kick coming from any of us. Of course there's something about you that royal families cry for, and they won't be happy till they get. All of us boys knows that. But what we want to find out is how you worked it so that they saw the kind of pearl-studded hairpin you were."

"Worked it!" Selden answered. "I didn't work it. I've got a good bit of nerve, but I never should have had enough to invent what happened--just

HAPPENED. I broke my leg falling off my bike, and fell right into a whole bunch of them--earls and countesses and viscounts and Vanderpoels. And it was Miss Vanderpoel who saw me first lying on the ground. And I was in Stornham Court where Lady Anstruthers lives--and she used to be Miss Rosalie Vanderpoel."

"Boys," said Bert Johnson, with friendly disgust, "he's been up to his neck in 'em."

"Cheer up. The worst is yet to come," chaffed Tom Wetherbee.

Never had such a dinner taken place at the corner table, or, in fact, at any other table at Shandy's. Sam brought beefsteaks, which were princely, mushrooms, and hashed brown potatoes in portions whose generosity reached the heart. Sam was on good terms with Shandy's carver, and had worked upon his nobler feelings. Steins of lager beer were ventured upon. There was hearty satisfying of fine hungers. Two of the party had eaten nothing but one "Quick Lunch" throughout the day, one of them because he was short of time, the other for economy's sake, because he was short of money. The meal was a splendid thing. The telling of the story could not be wholly checked by the eating of food. It advanced between mouthfuls, questions being asked and details given in answers. Shandy's became more crowded, as the hour advanced. People all over the room cast interested looks at the party at the corner table, enjoying itself so hugely. Groups sitting at the tables nearest to it found themselves excited by the things they heard.

"That young fellow in the new suit has just come back from Europe," said a man to his wife and daughter. "He seems to have had a good time."

"Papa," the daughter leaned forward, and spoke in a low voice, "I heard him say 'Lord Mount Dunstan said Lady Anstruthers and Miss Vanderpoel were at the garden party.' Who do you suppose he is?"

"Well, he's a nice young fellow, and he has English clothes on, but he doesn't look like one of the Four Hundred. Will you have pie or vanilla ice cream, Bessy?"

Bessy--who chose vanilla ice cream--lost all knowledge of its flavour in her absorption in the conversation at the next table, which she could not have avoided hearing, even if she had wished.

"She bent over the bed and laughed--just like any other nice girl--and she said, 'You are at Stornham Court, which belongs to Sir Nigel Anstruthers. Lady Anstruthers is my sister. I am Miss Vanderpoel.' And, boys, she used to come and talk to me every day."

"George," said Nick Baumgarten, "you take about seventy-five bottles of Warner's Safe Cure, and rub yourself all over with St. Jacob's Oil. Luck like that ain't HEALTHY!"

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Mr. Vanderpoel, sitting in his study, wore the interestedly grave look of a man thinking of absorbing things. He had just given orders that a young man who would call in the course of the evening should be brought to him at once, and he was incidentally considering this young man, as he reflected upon matters recalled to his mind by his impending arrival. They were matters he had thought of with gradually increasing seriousness for some months, and they had, at first, been the result of the letters from Stornham, which each "steamer day" brought. They had been of immense interest to him--these letters. He would have found them absorbing as a study, even if he had not deeply loved Betty. He read in them things she did not state in words, and they set him thinking.

He was not suspected by men like himself of concealing an imagination beneath the trained steadiness of his exterior, but he possessed more than the world knew, and it singularly combined itself with powers of logical deduction.

If he had been with his daughter, he would have seen, day by day, where her thoughts were leading her, and in what direction she was developing, but, at a distance of three thousand miles, he found himself asking questions, and endeavouring to reach conclusions. His affection for Betty was the central emotion of his existence. He had never told himself that he had outgrown the kind and pretty creature he had married in his early youth, and certainly his tender care for her and pleasure in her simple goodness had never wavered, but Betty had given him a

companionship which had counted greatly in the sum of his happiness. Because imagination was not suspected in him, no one knew what she stood for in his life. He had no son; he stood at the head of a great house, so to speak--the American parallel of what a great house is in non-republican countries. The power of it counted for great things, not in America alone, but throughout the world. As international intimacies increased, the influence of such houses might end in aiding in the making of history. Enormous constantly increasing wealth and huge financial schemes could not confine their influence, but must reach far. The man whose hand held the lever controlling them was doing well when he thought of them gravely. Such a man had to do with more than his own mere life and living. This man had confronted many problems as the years had passed. He had seen men like himself die, leaving behind them the force they had controlled, and he had seen this force--controlled no longer--let loose upon the world, sometimes a power of evil, sometimes scattering itself aimlessly into nothingness and folly, which wrought harm. He was not an ambitious man, but--perhaps because he was not only a man of thought, but a Vanderpoel of the blood of the first Reuben--these were things he did not contemplate without restlessness. When Rosy had gone away and seemed lost to them, he had been glad when he had seen Betty growing, day by day, into a strong thing. Feminine though she was, she sometimes suggested to him the son who might have been his, but was not. As the closeness of their companionship increased with her years, his admiration for her grew with his love. Power left in her hands must work for the advancement of things, and would not be idly disseminated--if no antagonistic influence wrought against her. He had

found himself reflecting that, after all was said, the marriage of such a girl had a sort of parallel in that of some young royal creature, whose union might make or mar things, which must be considered. The man who must inevitably strongly colour her whole being, and vitally mark her life, would, in a sense, lay his hand upon the lever also. If he brought sorrow and disorder with him, the lever would not move steadily. Fortunes such as his grow rapidly, and he was a richer man by millions than he had been when Rosalie had married Nigel Anstruthers. The memory of that marriage had been a painful thing to him, even before he had known the whole truth of its results. The man had been a common adventurer and scoundrel, despite the facts of good birth and the air of decent breeding. If a man who was as much a scoundrel, but cleverer--it would be necessary that he should be much cleverer--made the best of himself to Betty----! It was folly to think one could guess what a woman--or a man, either, for that matter--would love. He knew Betty, but no man knows the thing which comes, as it were, in the dark and claims its own--whether for good or evil. He had lived long enough to see beautiful, strong-spirited creatures do strange things, follow strange gods, swept away into seas of pain by strange waves.

"Even Betty," he had said to himself, now and then. "Even my Betty. Good God--who knows!"

Because of this, he had read each letter with keen eyes. They were long letters, full of detail and colour, because she knew he enjoyed them.

She had a delightful touch. He sometimes felt as if they walked the English lanes together. His intimacy with her neighbours, and her neighbourhood, was one of his relaxations. He found himself thinking of old Doby and Mrs. Welden, as a sort of soporific measure, when he lay awake at night. She had sent photographs of Stornham, of Dunholm Castle, and of Dole, and had even found an old engraving of Lady Alanby in her youth. Her evident liking for the Dunholms had pleased him. They were people whose dignity and admirableness were part of general knowledge. Lord Westholt was plainly a young man of many attractions. If the two were drawn to each other--and what more natural--all would be well. He wondered if it would be Westholt. But his love quickened a sagacity which needed no stimulus. He said to himself in time that, though she liked and admired Westholt, she went no farther. That others paid court to her he could guess without being told. He had seen the effect she had produced when she had been at home, and also an unexpected letter to his wife from Milly Bowen had revealed many things. Milly, having noted Mrs. Vanderpoel's eager anxiety to hear direct news of Lady Anstruthers, was not the person to let fall from her hand a useful thread of connection. She had written quite at length, managing adroitly to convey all that she had seen, and all that she had heard. She had been making a visit within driving distance of Stornham, and had had the pleasure of meeting both Lady Anstruthers and Miss Vanderpoel at various parties. She was so sure that Mrs. Vanderpoel would like to hear how well Lady Anstruthers was looking, that she ventured to write. Betty's effect upon the county was made quite clear, as also was the interested expectation of her appearance in town next season. Mr. Vanderpoel, perhaps, gathered more

from the letter than his wife did. In her mind, relieved happiness and consternation were mingled.

"Do you think, Reuben, that Betty will marry that Lord Westholt?" she rather faltered. "He seems very nice, but I would rather she married an American. I should feel as if I had no girls at all, if they both lived in England."

"Lady Bowen gives him a good character," her husband said, smiling. "But if anything untoward happens, Annie, you shall have a house of your own half way between Dunholm Castle and Stornham Court."

When he had begun to decide that Lord Westholt did not seem to be the man Fate was veering towards, he not unnaturally cast a mental eye over such other persons as the letters mentioned. At exactly what period his thought first dwelt a shade anxiously on Mount Dunstan he could not have told, but he at length became conscious that it so dwelt. He had begun by feeling an interest in his story, and had asked questions about him, because a situation such as his suggested query to a man of affairs. Thus, it had been natural that the letters should speak of him. What she had written had recalled to him certain rumours of the disgraceful old scandal. Yes, they had been a bad lot. He arranged to put a casual-sounding question or so to certain persons who knew English society well. What he gathered was not encouraging. The present Lord Mount Dunstan was considered rather a surly brute, and lived a mysterious sort of life which might cover many things. It was bad blood,

and people were naturally shy of it. Of course, the man was a pauper, and his place a barrack falling to ruin. There had been something rather shady in his going to America or Australia a few years ago.

Good looking? Well, so few people had seen him. The lady, who was speaking, had heard that he was one of those big, rather lumpy men, and had an ill-tempered expression. She always gave a wide berth to a man who looked nasty-tempered. One or two other persons who had spoken of him had conveyed to Mr. Vanderpoel about the same amount of vaguely unpromising information. The episode of G. Selden had been interesting enough, with its suggestions of picturesque contrasts and combinations. Betty's touch had made the junior salesman attracting. It was a good type this, of a young fellow who, battling with the discouragements of a hard life, still did not lose his amazing good cheer and patience, and found healthy sleep and honest waking, even in the hall bedroom. He had consented to Betty's request that he would see him, partly because he was inclined to like what he had heard, and partly for a reason which Betty did not suspect. By extraordinary chance G. Selden had seen Mount Dunstan and his surroundings at close range. Mr. Vanderpoel had liked what he had gathered of Mount Dunstan's attitude towards a personality so singularly exotic to himself. Crude, uneducated, and slangy, the junior salesman was not in any degree a fool. To an American father with a daughter like Betty, the summing-up of a normal, nice-natured, common young denizen of the United States, fresh from contact with the effete, might be subtly instructive, and well worth hearing, if it was unconsciously expressed. Mr. Vanderpoel thought he knew how, after

he had overcome his visitor's first awkwardness--if he chanced to be self-conscious--he could lead him to talk. What he hoped to do was to make him forget himself and begin to talk to him as he had talked to Betty, to ingenuously reveal impressions and points of view. Young men of his clean, rudimentary type were very definite about the things they liked and disliked, and could be trusted to reveal admiration, or lack of it, without absolute intention or actual statement. Being elemental and undismayed, they saw things cleared of the mists of social prejudice and modification. Yes, he felt he should be glad to hear of Lord Mount Dunstan and the Mount Dunstan estate from G. Selden in a happy moment of unawareness.

Why was it that it happened to be Mount Dunstan he was desirous to hear of? Well, the absolute reason for that he could not have explained, either. He had asked himself questions on the subject more than once. There was no well-founded reason, perhaps. If Betty's letters had spoken of Mount Dunstan and his home, they had also described Lord Westholt and Dunholm Castle. Of these two men she had certainly spoken more fully than of others. Of Mount Dunstan she had had more to relate through the incident of G. Selden. He smiled as he realised the importance of the figure of G. Selden. It was Selden and his broken leg the two men had ridden over from Mount Dunstan to visit. But for Selden, Betty might not have met Mount Dunstan again. He was reason enough for all she had said. And yet----! Perhaps, between Betty and himself there existed the thing which impresses and communicates without words. Perhaps, because

their affection was unusual, they realised each other's emotions. The half-defined anxiety he felt now was not a new thing, but he confessed to himself that it had been spurred a little by the letter the last steamer had brought him. It was NOT Lord Westholt, it definitely appeared. He had asked her to be his wife, and she had declined his proposal.

"I could not have LIKED a man any more without being in love with him," she wrote. "I LIKE him more than I can say--so much, indeed, that I feel a little depressed by my certainty that I do not love him."

If she had loved him, the whole matter would have been simplified. If the other man had drawn her, the thing would not be simple. Her father foresaw all the complications--and he did not want complications for Betty. Yet emotions were perverse and irresistible things, and the stronger the creature swayed by them, the more enormous their power. But, as he sat in his easy chair and thought over it all, the one feeling predominant in his mind was that nothing mattered but Betty--nothing really mattered but Betty.

In the meantime G. Selden was walking up Fifth Avenue, at once touched and exhilarated by the stir about him and his sense of home-coming. It was pretty good to be in little old New York again. The hurried pace of the life about him stimulated his young blood. There were no street cars in Fifth Avenue, but there were carriages, waggons, carts, motors, all pantingly hurried, and fretting and struggling when the crowded state

of the thoroughfare held them back. The beautifully dressed women in the carriages wore no light air of being at leisure. It was evident that they were going to keep engagements, to do things, to achieve objects.

"Something doing. Something doing," was his cheerful self-congratulatory thought. He had spent his life in the midst of it, he liked it, and it welcomed him back.

The appointment he was on his way to keep thrilled him into an uplifted mood. Once or twice a half-nervous chuckle broke from him as he tried to realise that he had been given the chance which a year ago had seemed so impossible that its mere incredibleness had made it a natural subject for jokes. He was going to call on Reuben S. Vanderpoel, and he was going because Reuben S. had made an appointment with him.

He wore his London suit of clothes and he felt that he looked pretty decent. He could only do his best in the matter of bearing. He always thought that, so long as a fellow didn't get "chesty" and kept his head from swelling, he was all right. Of course he had never been in one of these swell Fifth Avenue houses, and he felt a bit nervous--but Miss Vanderpoel would have told her father what sort of fellow he was, and her father was likely to be something like herself. The house, which had been built since Lady Anstruthers' marriage, was well "up-town," and was big and imposing. When a manservant opened the front door, the square hall looked very splendid to Selden. It was full of light, and of rich furniture, which was like the stuff he had seen in one or two special

shop windows in Fifth Avenue--places where they sold magnificent gilded or carven coffers and vases, pieces of tapestry and marvellous embroideries, antiquities from foreign palaces. Though it was quite different, it was as swell in its way as the house at Mount Dunstan, and there were gleams of pictures on the walls that looked fine, and no mistake.

He was expected. The man led him across the hall to Mr. Vanderpoel's room. After he had announced his name he closed the door quietly and went away. Mr. Vanderpoel rose from an armchair to come forward to meet his visitor. He was tall and straight--Betty had inherited her slender height from him. His well-balanced face suggested the relationship between them. He had a steady mouth, and eyes which looked as if they saw much and far.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Selden," he said, shaking hands with him. "You have seen my daughters, and can tell me how they are. Miss Vanderpoel has written to me of you several times."

He asked him to sit down, and as he took his chair Selden felt that he had been right in telling himself that Reuben S. Vanderpoel would be somehow like his girl. She was a girl, and he was an elderly man of business, but they were like each other. There was the same kind of straight way of doing things, and the same straight-seeing look in both of them.

It was queer how natural things seemed, when they really happened to a fellow. Here he was sitting in a big leather chair and opposite to him in its fellow sat Reuben S. Vanderpoel, looking at him with friendly eyes. And it seemed all right, too--not as if he had managed to "butt in," and would find himself politely fired out directly. He might have been one of the Four Hundred making a call. Reuben S. knew how to make a man feel easy, and no mistake. This G. Selden observed at once, though he had, in fact, no knowledge of the practical tact which dealt with him. He found himself answering questions about Lady Anstruthers and her sister, which led to the opening up of other subjects. He did not realise that he began to express ingenuous opinions and describe things. His listener's interest led him on, a question here, a rather pleased laugh there, were encouraging. He had enjoyed himself so much during his stay in England, and had felt his experiences so greatly to be rejoiced over, that they were easy to talk of at any time--in fact, it was even a trifle difficult not to talk of them--but, stimulated by the look which rested on him, by the deft word and ready smile, words flowed readily and without the restraint of self-consciousness.

"When you think that all of it sort of began with a robin, it's queer enough," he said. "But for that robin I shouldn't be here, sir," with a boyish laugh. "And he was an English robin--a little fellow not half the size of the kind that hops about Central Park."

"Let me hear about that," said Mr. Vanderpoel.

It was a good story, and he told it well, though in his own junior salesman phrasing. He began with his bicycle ride into the green country, his spin over the fine roads, his rest under the hedge during the shower, and then the song of the robin perched among the fresh wet leafage, his feathers puffed out, his red young satin-glossed breast pulsating and swelling. His words were colloquial enough, but they called up the picture.

"Everything sort of glittering with the sunshine on the wet drops, and things smelling good, like they do after rain--leaves, and grass, and good earth. I tell you it made a fellow feel as if the whole world was his brother. And when Mr. Rob. lit on that twig and swelled his red breast as if he knew the whole thing was his, and began to let them notes out, calling for his lady friend to come and go halves with him, I just had to laugh and speak to him, and that was when Lord Mount Dunstan heard me and jumped over the hedge. He'd been listening, too."

The expression Reuben S. Vanderpoel wore made it an agreeable thing to talk--to go on. He evidently cared to hear. So Selden did his best, and enjoyed himself in doing it. His style made for realism and brought things clearly before one. The big-built man in the rough and shabby shooting clothes, his way when he dropped into the grass to sit beside the stranger and talk, certain meanings in his words which conveyed to Vanderpoel what had not been conveyed to G. Selden. Yes, the man carried a heaviness about with him and hated the burden. Selden quite

unconsciously brought him out strongly.

"I don't know whether I'm the kind of fellow who is always making breaks," he said, with his boy's laugh again, "but if I am, I never made a worse one than when I asked him straight if he was out of a job, and on the tramp. It showed what a nice fellow he was that he didn't get hot about it. Some fellows would. He only laughed--sort of short--and said his job had been more than he could handle, and he was afraid he was down and out."

Mr. Vanderpoel was conscious that so far he was somewhat attracted by this central figure. G. Selden was also proving satisfactory in the matter of revealing his excellently simple views of persons and things.

"The only time he got mad was when I wouldn't believe him when he told me who he was. I was a bit hot in the collar myself. I'd felt sorry for him, because I thought he was a chap like myself, and he was up against it. I know what that is, and I'd wanted to jolly him along a bit. When he said his name was Mount Dunstan, and the place belonged to him, I guessed he thought he was making a joke. So I got on my wheel and started off, and then he got mad for keeps. He said he wasn't such a damned fool as he looked, and what he'd said was true, and I could go and be hanged."

Reuben S. Vanderpoel laughed. He liked that. It sounded like decent British hot temper, which he had often found accompanied honest British

decencies.

He liked other things, as the story proceeded. The picture of the huge house with the shut windows, made him slightly restless. The concealed imagination, combined with the financier's resentment of dormant interests, disturbed him. That which had attracted Selden in the Reverend Lewis Penzance strongly attracted himself. Also, a man was a good deal to be judged by his friends. The man who lived alone in the midst of stately desolateness and held as his chief intimate a high-bred and gentle-minded scholar of ripe years, gave, in doing this, certain evidence which did not tell against him. The whole situation meant something a splendid, vivid-minded young creature might be moved by--might be allured by, even despite herself.

There was something fantastic in the odd linking of incidents--Selden's chance view of Betty as she rode by, his next day's sudden resolve to turn back and go to Stornham, his accident, all that followed seemed, if one were fanciful--part of a scheme prearranged

"When I came to myself," G. Selden said, "I felt like that fellow in the Shakespeare play that they dress up and put to bed in the palace when he's drunk. I thought I'd gone off my head. And then Miss Vanderpoel came." He paused a moment and looked down on the carpet, thinking. "Gee whiz! It WAS queer," he said.

Betty Vanderpoel's father could almost hear her voice as the rest was

told. He knew how her laugh had sounded, and what her presence must have been to the young fellow. His delightful, human, always satisfying Betty!

Through this odd trick of fortune, Mount Dunstan had begun to see her. Since, through the unfair endowment of Nature--that it was not wholly fair he had often told himself--she was all the things that desire could yearn for, there were many chances that when a man saw her he must long to see her again, and there were the same chances that such an one as Mount Dunstan might long also, and, if Fate was against him, long with a bitter strength. Selden was not aware that he had spoken more fully of Mount Dunstan and his place than of other things. That this had been the case, had been because Mr. Vanderpoel had intended it should be so. He had subtly drawn out and encouraged a detailed account of the time spent at Mount Dunstan vicarage. It was easily encouraged. Selden's affectionate admiration for the vicar led him on to enthusiasm. The quiet house and garden, the old books, the afternoon tea under the copper beech, and the long talks of old things, which had been so new to the young New Yorker, had plainly made a mark upon his life, not likely to be erased even by the rush of after years.

"The way he knew history was what got me," he said. "And the way you got interested in it, when he talked. It wasn't just HISTORY, like you learn at school, and forget, and never see the use of, anyhow. It was things about men, just like yourself--hustling for a living in their way, just as we're hustling in Broadway. Most of it was fighting, and there are

mounds scattered about that are the remains of their forts and camps. Roman camps, some of them. He took me to see them. He had a little old pony chaise we trundled about in, and he'd draw up and we'd sit and talk. 'There were men here on this very spot,' he'd say, 'looking out for attack, eating, drinking, cooking their food, polishing their weapons, laughing, and shouting--MEN--Selden, fifty-five years before Christ was born--and sometimes the New Testament times seem to us so far away that they are half a dream.' That was the kind of thing he'd say, and I'd sometimes feel as if I heard the Romans shouting. The country about there was full of queer places, and both he and Lord Dunstan knew more about them than I know about Twenty-third Street."

"You saw Lord Mount Dunstan often?" Mr. Vanderpoel suggested.

"Every day, sir. And the more I saw him, the more I got to like him. He's all right. But it's hard luck to be fixed as he is--that's stone-cold truth. What's a man to do? The money he ought to have to keep up his place was spent before he was born. His father and his eldest brother were a bum lot, and his grandfather and great-grandfather were fools. He can't sell the place, and he wouldn't if he could. Mr. Penzance was so fond of him that sometimes he'd say things. But," hastily, "perhaps I'm talking too much."

"You happen to be talking about questions I have been greatly interested in. I have thought a good deal at times of the position of the holders of large estates they cannot afford to keep up. This special instance is

a case in point."

G. Selden felt himself in luck again. Reuben S., quite evidently, found his subject worthy of undivided attention. Selden had not heartily liked Lord Mount Dunstan, and lived in the atmosphere surrounding him, looking about him with sharp young New York eyes, without learning a good deal.

He had seen the practical hardship of the situation, and laid it bare.

"What Mr. Penzance says is that he's like the men that built things in the beginning--fought for them--fought Romans and Saxons and Normans--perhaps the whole lot at different times. I used to like to get Mr. Penzance to tell stories about the Mount Dunstans. They were splendid. It must be pretty fine to look back about a thousand years and know your folks have been something. All the same its pretty fierce to have to stand alone at the end of it, not able to help yourself, because some of your relations were crazy fools. I don't wonder he feels mad."

"Does he?" Mr. Vanderpoel inquired.

"He's straight," said G. Selden sympathetically. "He's all right. But only money can help him, and he's got none, so he has to stand and stare at things falling to pieces. And--well, I tell you, Mr. Vanderpoel, he LOVES that place--he's crazy about it. And he's proud--I don't mean he's got the swell-head, because he hasn't--but he's just proud. Now, for instance, he hasn't any use for men like himself that marry just for

money. He's seen a lot of it, and it's made him sick. He's not that kind."

He had been asked and had answered a good many questions before he went away, but each had dropped into the talk so incidentally that he had not recognised them as queries. He did not know that Lord Mount Dunstan stood out a clearly defined figure in Mr. Vanderpoel's mind, a figure to be reflected upon, and one not without its attraction.

"Miss Vanderpoel tells me," Mr. Vanderpoel said, when the interview was drawing to a close, "that you are an agent for the Delkoff typewriter."

G. Selden flushed slightly.

"Yes, sir," he answered, "but I didn't----"

"I hear that three machines are in use on the Stornham estate, and that they have proved satisfactory."

"It's a good machine," said G. Selden, his flush a little deeper.

Mr. Vanderpoel smiled.

"You are a business-like young man," he said, "and I have no doubt you have a catalogue in your pocket."

G. Selden was a business-like young man. He gave Mr. Vanderpoel one serious look, and the catalogue was drawn forth.

"It wouldn't be business, sir, for me to be caught out without it," he said. "I shouldn't leave it behind if I went to a funeral. A man's got to run no risks."

"I should like to look at it."

The thing had happened. It was not a dream. Reuben S. Vanderpoel, clothed and in his right mind, had, without pressure being exerted upon him, expressed his desire to look at the catalogue--to examine it--to have it explained to him at length.

He listened attentively, while G. Selden did his best. He asked a question now and then, or made a comment. His manner was that of a thoroughly composed man of business, but he was remembering what Betty had told him of the "ten per," and a number of other things. He saw the flush come and go under the still boyish skin, he observed that G. Selden's hand was not wholly steady, though he was making an effort not to seem excited. But he was excited. This actually meant--this thing so unimportant to multi-millionaires--that he was having his "chance," and his young fortunes were, perhaps, in the balance.

"Yes," said Reuben S., when he had finished, "it seems a good,

up-to-date machine."

"It's the best on the market," said G. Selden, "out and out, the best."

"I understand you are only junior salesman?"

"Yes, sir. Ten per and five dollars on every machine I sell. If I had a territory, I should get ten."

"Then," reflectively, "the first thing is to get a territory."

"Perhaps I shall get one in time, if I keep at it," said Selden courageously.

"It is a good machine. I like it," said Mr. Vanderpoel. "I can see a good many places where it could be used. Perhaps, if you make it known at your office that when you are given a good territory, I shall give preference to the Delkoff over other typewriting machines, it might--eh?"

A light broke out upon G. Selden's countenance--a light radiant and magnificent. He caught his breath. A desire to shout--to yell--to whoop, as when in the society of "the boys," was barely conquered in time.

"Mr. Vanderpoel," he said, standing up, "I--Mr. Vanderpoel--sir--I feel as if I was having a pipe dream. I'm not, am I?"

"No," answered Mr. Vanderpoel, "you are not. I like you, Mr. Selden. My daughter liked you. I do not mean to lose sight of you. We will begin, however, with the territory, and the Delkoff. I don't think there will be any difficulty about it."

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Ten minutes later G. Selden was walking down Fifth Avenue, wondering if there was any chance of his being arrested by a policeman upon the charge that he was reeling, instead of walking steadily. He hoped he should get back to the hall bedroom safely. Nick Baumgarten and Jem Bolter both "roomed" in the house with him. He could tell them both. It was Jem who had made up the yarn about one of them saving Reuben S. Vanderpoel's life. There had been no life-saving, but the thing had come true.

"But, if it hadn't been for Lord Mount Dunstan," he said, thinking it over excitedly, "I should never have seen Miss Vanderpoel, and, if it hadn't been for Miss Vanderpoel, I should never have got next to Reuben S. in my life. Both sides of the Atlantic Ocean got busy to do a good turn to Little Willie. Hully gee!"

In his study Mr. Vanderpoel was rereading Betty's letters. He felt that he had gained a certain knowledge of Lord Mount Dunstan.