

## CHAPTER XXII

"Dick, boy, your position is distinctly Carlylean," Terrence McFane said in fatherly tones.

The sages of the madrono grove were at table, and, with Paula, Dick and Graham, made up the dinner party of seven.

"Mere naming of one's position does not settle it, Terrence," Dick replied. "I know my point is Carlylean, but that does not invalidate it. Hero-worship is a very good thing. I am talking, not as a mere scholastic, but as a practical breeder with whom the application of Mendelian methods is an every-day commonplace."

"And I am to conclude," Hancock broke in, "that a Hottentot is as good as a white man?"

"Now the South speaks, Aaron," Dick retorted with a smile. "Prejudice, not of birth, but of early environment, is too strong for all your philosophy to shake. It is as bad as Herbert Spencer's handicap of the early influence of the Manchester School."

"And Spencer is on a par with the Hottentot?" Dar Hyal challenged.

Dick shook his head.

"Let me say this, Hyal. I think I can make it clear. The average Hottentot, or the average Melanesian, is pretty close to being on a par with the average white man. The difference lies in that there are proportionately so many more Hottentots and negroes who are merely average, while there is such a heavy percentage of white men who are not average, who are above average. These are what I called the pace-makers that bring up the speed of their own race average-men. Note that they do not change the nature or develop the intelligence of the average-men. But they give them better equipment, better facilities, enable them to travel a faster collective pace.

"Give an Indian a modern rifle in place of his bow and arrows and he will become a vastly more efficient game-getter. The Indian hunter himself has not changed in the slightest. But his entire Indian race sported so few of the above-average men, that all of them, in ten thousand generations, were unable to equip him with a rifle."

"Go on, Dick, develop the idea," Terrence encouraged. "I begin to glimpse your drive, and you'll soon have Aaron on the run with his race prejudices and silly vanities of superiority."

"These above-average men," Dick continued, "these pace-makers, are the inventors, the discoverers, the constructionists, the sporting dominants. A race that sports few such dominants is classified as a

lower race, as an inferior race. It still hunts with bows and arrows. It is not equipped. Now the average white man, per se, is just as bestial, just as stupid, just as inelastic, just as stagnative, just as retrogressive, as the average savage. But the average white man has a faster pace. The large number of sporting dominants in his society give him the equipment, the organization, and impose the law.

"What great man, what hero--and by that I mean what sporting dominant--has the Hottentot race produced? The Hawaiian race produced only one--Kamehameha. The negro race in America, at the outside only two, Booker T. Washington and Du Bois--and both with white blood in them...."

Paula feigned a cheerful interest while the exposition went on. She did not appear bored, but to Graham's sympathetic eyes she seemed inwardly to droop. And in an interval of tilt between Terrence and Hancock, she said in a low voice to Graham:

"Words, words, words, so much and so many of them! I suppose Dick is right--he so nearly always is; but I confess to my old weakness of inability to apply all these floods of words to life--to my life, I mean, to my living, to what I should do, to what I must do." Her eyes were unfalteringly fixed on his while she spoke, leaving no doubt in his mind to what she referred. "I don't know what bearing sporting dominants and race-paces have on my life. They show me no right or wrong or way for my particular feet. And now that they've started they are liable to talk the rest of the evening...."

"Oh, I do understand what they say," she hastily assured him; "but it doesn't mean anything to me. Words, words, words--and I want to know what to do, what to do with myself, what to do with you, what to do with Dick."

But the devil of speech was in Dick Forrest's tongue, and before Graham could murmur a reply to Paula, Dick was challenging him for data on the subject from the South American tribes among which he had traveled. To look at Dick's face it would have been unguessed that he was aught but a carefree, happy arguer. Nor did Graham, nor did Paula, Dick's dozen years' wife, dream that his casual careless glances were missing no movement of a hand, no change of position on a chair, no shade of expression on their faces.

What's up? was Dick's secret interrogation. Paula's not herself. She's positively nervous, and all the discussion is responsible. And Graham's off color. His brain isn't working up to mark. He's thinking about something else, rather than about what he is saying. What is that something else?

And the devil of speech behind which Dick hid his secret thoughts impelled him to urge the talk wider and wilder.

"For once I could almost hate the four sages," Paula broke out in an undertone to Graham, who had finished furnishing the required data.

Dick, himself talking, in cool sentences amplifying his thesis, apparently engrossed in his subject, saw Paula make the aside, although no word of it reached his ears, saw her increasing nervousness, saw the silent sympathy of Graham, and wondered what had been the few words she uttered, while to the listening table he was saying:

"Fischer and Speiser are both agreed on the paucity of unit-characters that circulate in the heredity of the lesser races as compared with the immense variety of unit-characters in say the French, or German, or English...."

No one at the table suspected that Dick deliberately dangled the bait of a new trend to the conversation, nor did Leo dream afterward that it was the master-craft and deviltry of Dick rather than his own question that changed the subject when he demanded to know what part the female sporting dominants played in the race.

"Females don't sport, Leo, my lad," Terrence, with a wink to the others, answered him. "Females are conservative. They keep the type true. They fix it and hold it, and are the everlasting clog on the chariot of progress. If it wasn't for the females every blessed mother's son of us would be a sporting dominant. I refer to our distinguished breeder and practical Mendelian whom we have with us this evening to verify my random statements."

"Let us get down first of all to bedrock and find out what we are talking about," Dick was prompt on the uptake. "What is woman?" he demanded with an air of earnestness.

"The ancient Greeks said woman was nature's failure to make a man," Dar Hyal answered, the while the imp of mockery laughed in the corners of his mouth and curled his thin cynical lips derisively.

Leo was shocked. His face flushed. There was pain in his eyes and his lips were trembling as he looked wistful appeal to Dick.

"The half-sex," Hancock gibed. "As if the hand of God had been withdrawn midway in the making, leaving her but a half-soul, a groping soul at best."

"No I no!" the boy cried out. "You must not say such things!--Dick, you know. Tell them, tell them."

"I wish I could," Dick replied. "But this soul discussion is vague as souls themselves. We all know, of our selves, that we often grope, are often lost, and are never so much lost as when we think we know where we are and all about ourselves. What is the personality of a lunatic but a personality a little less, or very much less, coherent than ours? What is the personality of a moron? Of an idiot? Of a feeble-minded child? Of a horse? A dog? A mosquito? A bullfrog? A woodtick? A

garden snail? And, Leo, what is your own personality when you sleep and dream? When you are seasick? When you are in love? When you have colic? When you have a cramp in the leg? When you are smitten abruptly with the fear of death? When you are angry? When you are exalted with the sense of the beauty of the world and think you think all inexpressible unutterable thoughts?

"I say think you think intentionally. Did you really think, then your sense of the beauty of the world would not be inexpressible, unutterable. It would be clear, sharp, definite. You could put it into words. Your personality would be clear, sharp, and definite as your thoughts and words. Ergo, Leo, when you deem, in exalted moods, that you are at the summit of existence, in truth you are thrilling, vibrating, dancing a mad orgy of the senses and not knowing a step of the dance or the meaning of the orgy. You don't know yourself. Your soul, your personality, at that moment, is a vague and groping thing. Possibly the bullfrog, inflating himself on the edge of a pond and uttering hoarse croaks through the darkness to a warty mate, possesses also, at that moment, a vague and groping personality.

"No, Leo, personality is too vague for any of our vague personalities to grasp. There are seeming men with the personalities of women. There are plural personalities. There are two-legged human creatures that are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. We, as personalities, float like fog-wisps through glooms and darkneses and light-flashings. It is all fog and mist, and we are all foggy and misty in the thick of the

mystery."

"Maybe it's mystification instead of mystery--man-made mystification," Paula said.

"There talks the true woman that Leo thinks is not a half-soul," Dick retorted. "The point is, Leo, sex and soul are all interwoven and tangled together, and we know little of one and less of the other."

"But women are beautiful," the boy stammered.

"Oh, ho!" Hancock broke in, his black eyes gleaming wickedly. "So, Leo, you identify woman with beauty?"

The young poet's lips moved, but he could only nod.

"Very well, then, let us take the testimony of painting, during the last thousand years, as a reflex of economic conditions and political institutions, and by it see how man has molded and daubed woman into the image of his desire, and how she has permitted him--"

"You must stop baiting Leo," Paula interfered, "and be truthful, all of you, and say what you do know or do believe."

"Woman is a very sacred subject," Dar Hyal enunciated solemnly.



"There is the Madonna," Graham suggested, stepping into the breach to Paula's aid.

"And the *cérébrale*," Terrence added, winning a nod of approval from Dar Hyal.

"One at a time," Hancock said. "Let us consider the Madonna-worship, which was a particular woman-worship in relation to the general woman-worship of all women to-day and to which Leo subscribes. Man is a lazy, loafing savage. He dislikes to be pestered. He likes tranquillity, repose. And he finds himself, ever since man began, saddled to a restless, nervous, irritable, hysterical traveling companion, and her name is woman. She has moods, tears, vanities, angers, and moral irresponsibilities. He couldn't destroy her. He had to have her, although she was always spoiling his peace. What was he to do?"

"Trust him to find a way--the cunning rascal," Terrence interjected.

"He made a heavenly image of her," Hancock kept on. "He idealized her good qualities, and put her so far away that her bad qualities couldn't get on his nerves and prevent him from smoking his quiet lazy pipe of peace and meditating upon the stars. And when the ordinary every-day woman tried to pester, he brushed her aside from his thoughts and remembered his heaven-woman, the perfect woman, the bearer of life and custodian of immortality.

"Then came the Reformation. Down went the worship of the Mother. And there was man still saddled to his repose-destroyer. What did he do then?"

"Ah, the rascal," Terrence grinned.

"He said: 'I will make of you a dream and an illusion.' And he did. The Madonna was his heavenly woman, his highest conception of woman. He transferred all his idealized qualities of her to the earthly woman, to every woman, and he has fooled himself into believing in them and in her ever since... like Leo does."

"For an unmarried man you betray an amazing intimacy with the pestiferousness of woman," Dick commented. "Or is it all purely theoretical?" Terrence began to laugh.

"Dick, boy, it's Laura Marholm Aaron's been just reading. He can spout her chapter and verse."

"And with all this talk about woman we have not yet touched the hem of her garment," Graham said, winning a grateful look from Paula and Leo.

"There is love," Leo breathed. "No one has said one word about love."

"And marriage laws, and divorces, and polygamy, and monogamy, and free

love," Hancock rattled off.

"And why, Leo," Dar Hyal queried, "is woman, in the game of love, always the pursuer, the huntress?"

"Oh, but she isn't," the boy answered quietly, with an air of superior knowledge. "That is just some of your Shaw nonsense."

"Bravo, Leo," Paula applauded.

"Then Wilde was wrong when he said woman attacks by sudden and strange surrenders?" Dar Hyal asked.

"But don't you see," protested Leo, "all such talk makes woman a monster, a creature of prey." As he turned to Dick, he stole a side glance at Paula and love welled in his eyes. "Is she a creature of prey, Dick?"

"No," Dick answered slowly, with a shake of head, and gentleness was in his voice for sake of what he had just seen in the boy's eyes. "I cannot say that woman is a creature of prey. Nor can I say she is a creature preyed upon. Nor will I say she is a creature of unfaltering joy to man. But I will say that she is a creature of much joy to man--"

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"And of much foolishness," Hancock added.

"Of much fine foolishness," Dick gravely amended.

"Let me ask Leo something," Dar Hyal said. "Leo, why is it that a woman loves the man who beats her?"

"And doesn't love the man who doesn't beat her?" Leo countered.

"Precisely."

"Well, Dar, you are partly right and mostly wrong.--Oh, I have learned about definitions from you fellows. You've cunningly left them out of your two propositions. Now I'll put them in for you. A man who beats a woman he loves is a low type man. A woman who loves the man who beats her is a low type woman. No high type man beats the woman he loves. No high type woman," and all unconsciously Leo's eyes roved to Paula, "could love a man who beats her."

"No, Leo," Dick said, "I assure you I have never, never beaten Paula."

"So you see, Dar," Leo went on with flushing cheeks, "you are wrong. Paula loves Dick without being beaten."

With what seemed pleased amusement beaming on his face, Dick turned to Paula as if to ask her silent approval of the lad's words; but what Dick sought was the effect of the impact of such words under the

circumstances he apprehended. In Paula's eyes he thought he detected a flicker of something he knew not what. Graham's face he found expressionless insofar as there was no apparent change of the expression of interest that had been there.

"Woman has certainly found her St. George tonight," Graham complimented. "Leo, you shame me. Here I sit quietly by while you fight three dragons."

"And such dragons," Paula joined in. "If they drove O'Hay to drink, what will they do to you, Leo?"

"No knight of love can ever be discomfited by all the dragons in the world," Dick said. "And the best of it, Leo, is in this case the dragons are more right than you think, and you are more right than they just the same."

"Here's a dragon that's a good dragon, Leo, lad," Terrence spoke up. "This dragon is going to desert his disreputable companions and come over on your side and be a Saint Terrence. And this Saint Terrence has a lovely question to ask you."

"Let this dragon roar first," Hancock interposed. "Leo, by all in love that is sweet and lovely, I ask you: why do lovers, out of jealousy, so often kill the woman they love?"

"Because they are hurt, because they are insane," came the answer, "and because they have been unfortunate enough to love a woman so low in type that she could be guilty of making them jealous."

"But, Leo, love will stray," Dick prompted. "You must give a more sufficient answer."

"True for Dick," Terrence supplemented. "And it's helping you I am to the full stroke of your sword. Love will stray among the highest types, and when it does in steps the green-eyed monster. Suppose the most perfect woman you can imagine should cease to love the man who does not beat her and come to love another man who loves her and will not beat her--what then? All highest types, mind you. Now up with your sword and slash into the dragons."

"The first man will not kill her nor injure her in any way," Leo asserted stoutly. "Because if he did he would not be the man you describe. He would not be high type, but low type."

"You mean, he would get out of the way?" Dick asked, at the same time busying himself with a cigarette so that he might glance at no one's face.

Leo nodded gravely.

"He would get out of the way, and he would make the way easy for her, and he would be very gentle with her."

"Let us bring the argument right home," Hancock said. "We'll suppose you're in love with Mrs. Forrest, and Mrs. Forrest is in love with you, and you run away together in the big limousine--"

"Oh, but I wouldn't," the boy blurted out, his cheeks burning.

"Leo, you are not complimentary," Paula encouraged.

"It's just supposing, Leo," Hancock urged.

The boy's embarrassment was pitiful, and his voice quivered, but he turned bravely to Dick and said:

"That is for Dick to answer."

"And I'll answer," Dick said. "I wouldn't kill Paula. Nor would I kill you, Leo. That wouldn't be playing the game. No matter what I felt at heart, I'd say, 'Bless you, my children.' But just the same--" He paused, and the laughter signals in the corners of his eyes advertised a whimsey--"I'd say to myself that Leo was making a sad mistake. You see, he doesn't know Paula."

"She would be for interrupting his meditations on the stars," Terrence

smiled.

"Never, never, Leo, I promise you," Paula exclaimed.

"There do you belie yourself, Mrs. Forrest," Terrence assured her. "In the first place, you couldn't help doing it. Besides, it'd be your bounden duty to do it. And, finally, if I may say so, as somewhat of an authority, when I was a mad young lover of a man, with my heart full of a woman and my eyes full of the stars, 'twas ever the dearest delight to be loved away from them by the woman out of my heart."

"Terrence, if you keep on saying such lovely things," cried Paula, "I'll run away with both you and Leo in the limousine."

"Hurry the day," said Terrence gallantly. "But leave space among your fripperies for a few books on the stars that Leo and I may be studying in odd moments."

The combat ebbed away from Leo, and Dar Hyal and Hancock beset Dick.

"What do you mean by 'playing the game'?" Dar Hyal asked.

"Just what I said, just what Leo said," Dick answered; and he knew that Paula's boredom and nervousness had been banished for some time and that she was listening with an interest almost eager. "In my way of thinking, and in accord with my temperament, the most horrible



spiritual suffering I can imagine would be to kiss a woman who endured my kiss."

"Suppose she fooled you, say for old sake's sake, or through desire not to hurt you, or pity for you?" Hancock propounded.

"It would be, to me, the unforgivable sin," came Dick's reply. "It would not be playing the game--for her. I cannot conceive the fairness, nor the satisfaction, of holding the woman one loves a moment longer than she loves to be held. Leo is very right. The drunken artisan, with his fists, may arouse and keep love alive in the breast of his stupid mate. But the higher human males, the males with some shadow of rationality, some glimmer of spirituality, cannot lay rough hands on love. With Leo, I would make the way easy for the woman, and I would be very gentle with her."

"Then what becomes of your boasted monogamic marriage institution of Western civilization?" Dar Hyal asked.

And Hancock: "You argue for free love, then?"

"I can only answer with a hackneyed truism," Dick said. "There can be no love that is not free. Always, please, remember the point of view is that of the higher types. And the point of view answers you, Dar. The vast majority of individuals must be held to law and labor by the monogamic institution, or by a stern, rigid marriage institution of

some sort. They are unfit for marriage freedom or love freedom. Freedom of love, for them, would be merely license of promiscuity. Only such nations have risen and endured where God and the State have kept the people's instincts in discipline and order."

"Then you don't believe in the marriage laws for say yourself," Dar Hyal inquired, "while you do believe in them for other men?"

"I believe in them for all men. Children, family, career, society, the State--all these things make marriage, legal marriage, imperative. And by the same token that is why I believe in divorce. Men, all men, and women, all women, are capable of loving more than once, of having the old love die and of finding a new love born. The State cannot control love any more than can a man or a woman. When one falls in love one falls in love, and that's all he knows about it. There it is--throbbing, sighing, singing, thrilling love. But the State can control license."

"It is a complicated free love that you stand for," Hancock criticised. "True, and for the reason that man, living in society, is a most complicated animal."

"But there are men, lovers, who would die at the loss of their loved one," Leo surprised the table by his initiative. "They would die if she died, they would die--oh so more quickly--if she lived and loved another."

"Well, they'll have to keep on dying as they have always died in the past," Dick answered grimly. "And no blame attaches anywhere for their deaths. We are so made that our hearts sometimes stray."

"My heart would never stray," Leo asserted proudly, unaware that all at the table knew his secret. "I could never love twice, I know."

"True for you, lad," Terrence approved. "The voice of all true lovers is in your throat. 'Tis the absoluteness of love that is its joy--how did Shelley put it?--or was it Keats?--'All a wonder and a wild delight.' Sure, a miserable skinflint of a half-baked lover would it be that could dream there was aught in woman form one-thousandth part as sweet, as ravishing and enticing, as glorious and wonderful as his own woman that he could ever love again."

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And as they passed out from the dining room, Dick, continuing the conversation with Dar Hyal, was wondering whether Paula would kiss him good night or slip off to bed from the piano. And Paula, talking to Leo about his latest sonnet which he had shown her, was wondering if she could kiss Dick, and was suddenly greatly desirous to kiss him, she knew not why.