The Turtles of Tasman

By

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I

Law, order, and restraint had carved Frederick Travers' face. It was the strong, firm face of one used to power and who had used power with wisdom and discretion. Clean living had made the healthy skin, and the lines graved in it were honest lines. Hard and devoted work had left its wholesome handiwork, that was all. Every feature of the man told the same story, from the clear blue of the eyes to the full head of hair, light brown, touched with grey, and smoothly parted and drawn straight across above the strong-domed forehead. He was a seriously groomed man, and the light summer business suit no more than befitted his alert years, while it did not shout aloud that its possessor was likewise the possessor of numerous millions of dollars and property.

For Frederick Travers hated ostentation. The machine that waited outside for him under the porte-cochère was sober black. It was the most expensive machine in the county, yet he did not care to flaunt its price or horse-power in a red flare across the landscape, which also was

mostly his, from the sand dunes and the everlasting beat of the Pacific breakers, across the fat bottomlands and upland pastures, to the far summits clad with redwood forest and wreathed in fog and cloud.

A rustle of skirts caused him to look over his shoulder. Just the faintest hint of irritation showed in his manner. Not that his daughter was the object, however. Whatever it was, it seemed to lie on the desk before him.

"What is that outlandish name again?" she asked. "I know I shall never remember it. See, I've brought a pad to write it down."

Her voice was low and cool, and she was a tall, well-formed, clear-skinned young woman. In her voice and complacence she, too, showed the drill-marks of order and restraint.

Frederick Travers scanned the signature of one of two letters on the desk. "Bronislawa Plaskoweitzkaia Travers," he read; then spelled the difficult first portion, letter by letter, while his daughter wrote it down.

"Now, Mary," he added, "remember Tom was always harum scarum, and you must make allowances for this daughter of his. Her very name is--ah--disconcerting. I haven't seen him for years, and as for her...." A shrug epitomised his apprehension. He smiled with an effort at wit. "Just the same, they're as much your family as mine. If he is my

brother, he is your uncle. And if she's my niece, you're both cousins."

Mary nodded. "Don't worry, father. I'll be nice to her, poor thing. What nationality was her mother?--to get such an awful name."

"I don't know. Russian, or Polish, or Spanish, or something. It was just like Tom. She was an actress or singer--I don't remember. They met in Buenos Ayres. It was an elopement. Her husband--"

"Then she was already married!"

Mary's dismay was unfeigned and spontaneous, and her father's irritation grew more pronounced. He had not meant that. It had slipped out.

"There was a divorce afterward, of course. I never knew the details. Her mother died out in China--no; in Tasmania. It was in China that Tom--" His lips shut with almost a snap. He was not going to make any more slips. Mary waited, then turned to the door, where she paused.

"I've given her the rooms over the rose court," she said. "And I'm going now to take a last look."

Frederick Travers turned back to the desk, as if to put the letters away, changed his mind, and slowly and ponderingly reread them.

"Dear Fred:

"It's been a long time since I was so near to the old home, and I'd like to take a run up. Unfortunately, I played ducks and drakes with my Yucatan project--I think I wrote about it--and I'm broke as usual. Could you advance me funds for the run? I'd like to arrive first class. Polly is with me, you know. I wonder how you two will get along.

"Tom.

"P.S. If it doesn't bother you too much, send it along next mail."

"Dear Uncle Fred":

the other letter ran, in what seemed to him a strange, foreign-taught, yet distinctly feminine hand.

"Dad doesn't know I am writing this. He told me what he said to you. It is not true. He is coming home to die. He doesn't know it, but I've talked with the doctors. And he'll have to come home, for we have no money. We're in a stuffy little boarding house, and it is not the place for Dad. He's helped other persons all his life, and now is the time to help him.

He didn't play ducks and drakes in Yucatan. I was with him, and I know. He dropped all he had there, and he was robbed. He can't play the business game against New Yorkers. That explains it all, and I am proud he can't.

"He always laughs and says I'll never be able to get along with you. But I don't agree with him. Besides, I've never seen a really, truly blood relative in my life, and there's your daughter. Think of it!--a real live cousin!

"In anticipation,

"Your niece,

"BRONISLAWA PLASKOWEITZKAIA TRAVERS.

"P.S. You'd better telegraph the money, or you won't see Dad at all. He doesn't know how sick he is, and if he meets any of his old friends he'll be off and away on some wild goose chase. He's beginning to talk Alaska. Says it will get the fever out of his bones. Please know that we must pay the boarding house, or else we'll arrive without luggage.

"B.P.T."

Frederick Travers opened the door of a large, built-in safe and methodically put the letters away in a compartment labelled "Thomas

Travers."

"Poor Tom! Poor Tom!" he sighed aloud.

II

The big motor car waited at the station, and Frederick Travers thrilled as he always thrilled to the distant locomotive whistle of the train plunging down the valley of Isaac Travers River. First of all westering white-men, had Isaac Travers gazed on that splendid valley, its salmon-laden waters, its rich bottoms, and its virgin forest slopes. Having seen, he had grasped and never let go. "Land-poor," they had called him in the mid-settler period. But that had been in the days when the placers petered out, when there were no wagon roads nor tugs to draw in sailing vessels across the perilous bar, and when his lonely grist mill had been run under armed guards to keep the marauding Klamaths off while wheat was ground. Like father, like son, and what Isaac Travers had grasped, Frederick Travers had held. It had been the same tenacity of hold. Both had been far-visioned. Both had foreseen the transformation of the utter West, the coming of the railroad, and the building of the new empire on the Pacific shore.

Frederick Travers thrilled, too, at the locomotive whistle, because, more than any man's, it was his railroad. His father had died still striving to bring the railroad in across the mountains that averaged a hundred thousand dollars to the mile. He, Frederick, had brought it in. He had sat up nights over that railroad; bought newspapers, entered politics, and subsidised party machines; and he had made pilgrimages, more than once, at his own expense, to the railroad chiefs of the East. While all the county knew how many miles of his land were crossed by the

right of way, none of the county guessed nor dreamed the number of his dollars which had gone into guaranties and railroad bonds. He had done much for his county, and the railroad was his last and greatest achievement, the capstone of the Travers' effort, the momentous and marvellous thing that had been brought about just yesterday. It had been running two years, and, highest proof of all of his judgment, dividends were in sight. And farther reaching reward was in sight. It was written in the books that the next Governor of California was to be spelled, Frederick A. Travers.

Twenty years had passed since he had seen his elder brother, and then it had been after a gap of ten years. He remembered that night well. Tom was the only man who dared run the bar in the dark, and that last time, between nightfall and the dawn, with a southeaster breezing up, he had sailed his schooner in and out again. There had been no warning of his coming--a clatter of hoofs at midnight, a lathered horse in the stable, and Tom had appeared, the salt of the sea on his face as his mother attested. An hour only he remained, and on a fresh horse was gone, while rain squalls rattled upon the windows and the rising wind moaned through the redwoods, the memory of his visit a whiff, sharp and strong, from the wild outer world. A week later, sea-hammered and bar-bound for that time, had arrived the revenue cutter Bear, and there had been a column of conjecture in the local paper, hints of a heavy landing of opium and of a vain quest for the mysterious schooner Halcyon. Only Fred and his mother, and the several house Indians, knew of the stiffened horse in the barn and of the devious way it was afterward

smuggled back to the fishing village on the beach.

Despite those twenty years, it was the same old Tom Travers that alighted from the Pullman. To his brother's eyes, he did not look sick. Older he was of course. The Panama hat did not hide the grey hair, and though indefinably hinting of shrunkenness, the broad shoulders were still broad and erect. As for the young woman with him, Frederick Travers experienced an immediate shock of distaste. He felt it vitally, yet vaguely. It was a challenge and a mock, yet he could not name nor place the source of it. It might have been the dress, of tailored linen and foreign cut, the shirtwaist, with its daring stripe, the black wilfulness of the hair, or the flaunt of poppies on the large straw hat or it might have been the flash and colour of her--the black eyes and brows, the flame of rose in the cheeks, the white of the even teeth that showed too readily. "A spoiled child," was his thought, but he had no time to analyse, for his brother's hand was in his and he was making his niece's acquaintance.

There it was again. She flashed and talked like her colour, and she talked with her hands as well. He could not avoid noting the smallness of them. They were absurdly small, and his eyes went to her feet to make the same discovery. Quite oblivious of the curious crowd on the station platform, she had intercepted his attempt to lead to the motor car and had ranged the brothers side by side. Tom had been laughingly acquiescent, but his younger brother was ill at ease, too conscious of the many eyes of his townspeople. He knew only the old Puritan way.

Family displays were for the privacy of the family, not for the public. He was glad she had not attempted to kiss him. It was remarkable she had not. Already he apprehended anything of her.

She embraced them and penetrated them with sun-warm eyes that seemed to see through them, and over them, and all about them.

"You're really brothers," she cried, her hands flashing with her eyes. "Anybody can see it. And yet there is a difference--I don't know. I can't explain."

In truth, with a tact that exceeded Frederick Travers' farthest disciplined forbearance, she did not dare explain. Her wide artist-eyes had seen and sensed the whole trenchant and essential difference. Alike they looked, of the unmistakable same stock, their features reminiscent of a common origin; and there resemblance ceased. Tom was three inches taller, and well-greyed was the long, Viking moustache. His was the same eagle-like nose as his brother's, save that it was more eagle-like, while the blue eyes were pronouncedly so. The lines of the face were deeper, the cheek-bones higher, the hollows larger, the weather-beat darker. It was a volcanic face. There had been fire there, and the fire still lingered. Around the corners of the eyes were more laughter-wrinkles and in the eyes themselves a promise of deadlier seriousness than the younger brother possessed. Frederick was bourgeois in his carriage, but in Tom's was a certain careless ease and distinction. It was the same pioneer blood of Isaac Travers in both men,

but it had been retorted in widely different crucibles. Frederick represented the straight and expected line of descent. His brother expressed a vast and intangible something that was unknown in the Travers stock. And it was all this that the black-eyed girl saw and knew on the instant. All that had been inexplicable in the two men and their relationship cleared up in the moment she saw them side by side.

"Wake me up," Tom was saying. "I can't believe I arrived on a train. And the population? There were only four thousand thirty years ago."

"Sixty thousand now," was the other's answer. "And increasing by leaps and bounds. Want to spin around for a look at the city? There's plenty of time."

As they sped along the broad, well-paved streets, Tom persisted in his Rip Van Winkle pose. The waterfront perplexed him. Where he had once anchored his sloop in a dozen feet of water, he found solid land and railroad yards, with wharves and shipping still farther out.

"Hold on! Stop!" he cried, a few blocks on, looking up at a solid business block. "Where is this, Fred?"

"Fourth and Travers--don't you remember?"

Tom stood up and gazed around, trying to discern the anciently familiar configuration of the land under its clutter of buildings.

"I ... I think...." he began hesitantly. "No; by George, I'm sure of it. We used to hunt cottontails over that ground, and shoot blackbirds in the brush. And there, where the bank building is, was a pond." He turned to Polly. "I built my first raft there, and got my first taste of the sea."

"Heaven knows how many gallons of it," Frederick laughed, nodding to the chauffeur. "They rolled you on a barrel, I remember."

"Oh! More!" Polly cried, clapping her hands.

"There's the park," Frederick pointed out a little later, indicating a mass of virgin redwoods on the first dip of the bigger hills.

"Father shot three grizzlies there one afternoon," was Tom's remark.

"I presented forty acres of it to the city," Frederick went on. "Father bought the quarter section for a dollar an acre from Leroy."

Tom nodded, and the sparkle and flash in his eyes, like that of his daughter, were unlike anything that ever appeared in his brother's eyes.

"Yes," he affirmed, "Leroy, the negro squawman. I remember the time he carried you and me on his back to Alliance, the night the Indians burned the ranch. Father stayed behind and fought."

"But he couldn't save the grist mill. It was a serious setback to him."

"Just the same he nailed four Indians."

In Polly's eyes now appeared the flash and sparkle.

"An Indian-fighter!" she cried. "Tell me about him."

"Tell her about Travers Ferry," Tom said.

"That's a ferry on the Klamath River on the way to Orleans Bar and Siskiyou. There was great packing into the diggings in those days, and, among other things, father had made a location there. There was rich bench farming land, too. He built a suspension bridge--wove the cables on the spot with sailors and materials freighted in from the coast. It cost him twenty thousand dollars. The first day it was open, eight hundred mules crossed at a dollar a head, to say nothing of the toll for foot and horse. That night the river rose. The bridge was one hundred and forty feet above low water mark. Yet the freshet rose higher than that, and swept the bridge away. He'd have made a fortune there otherwise."

"That wasn't it at all," Tom blurted out impatiently. "It was at Travers Ferry that father and old Jacob Vance were caught by a war party of Mad River Indians. Old Jacob was killed right outside the door of the log

cabin. Father dragged the body inside and stood the Indians off for a week. Father was some shot. He buried Jacob under the cabin floor."

"I still run the ferry," Frederick went on, "though there isn't so much travel as in the old days. I freight by wagon-road to the Reservation, and then mule-back on up the Klamath and clear in to the forks of Little Salmon. I have twelve stores on that chain now, a stage-line to the Reservation, and a hotel there. Quite a tourist trade is beginning to pick up."

And the girl, with curious brooding eyes, looked from brother to brother as they so differently voiced themselves and life.

"Ay, he was some man, father was," Tom murmured.

There was a drowsy note in his speech that drew a quick glance of anxiety from her. The machine had turned into the cemetery, and now halted before a substantial vault on the crest of the hill.

"I thought you'd like to see it," Frederick was saying. "I built that mausoleum myself, most of it with my own hands. Mother wanted it. The estate was dreadfully encumbered. The best bid I could get out of the contractors was eleven thousand. I did it myself for a little over eight."

"Must have worked nights," Tom murmured admiringly and more sleepily

than before.

"I did, Tom, I did. Many a night by lantern-light. I was so busy. I was reconstructing the water works then--the artesian wells had failed--and mother's eyes were troubling her. You remember--cataract--I wrote you. She was too weak to travel, and I brought the specialists up from San Francisco. Oh, my hands were full. I was just winding up the disastrous affairs of the steamer line father had established to San Francisco, and I was keeping up the interest on mortgages to the tune of one hundred and eighty thousand dollars."

A soft stertorous breathing interrupted him. Tom, chin on chest, was asleep. Polly, with a significant look, caught her uncle's eye. Then her father, after an uneasy restless movement, lifted drowsy lids.

"Deuced warm day," he said with a bright apologetic laugh. "I've been actually asleep. Aren't we near home?"

Frederick nodded to the chauffeur, and the car rolled on.

III

The house that Frederick Travers had built when his prosperity came, was large and costly, sober and comfortable, and with no more pretence than was naturally attendant on the finest country home in the county. Its atmosphere was just the sort that he and his daughter would create. But in the days that followed his brother's home-coming, all this was changed. Gone was the subdued and ordered repose. Frederick was neither comfortable nor happy. There was an unwonted flurry of life and violation of sanctions and traditions. Meals were irregular and protracted, and there were midnight chafing-dish suppers and bursts of laughter at the most inappropriate hours.

Frederick was abstemious. A glass of wine at dinner was his wildest excess. Three cigars a day he permitted himself, and these he smoked either on the broad veranda or in the smoking room. What else was a smoking room for? Cigarettes he detested. Yet his brother was ever rolling thin, brown-paper cigarettes and smoking them wherever he might happen to be. A litter of tobacco crumbs was always to be found in the big easy chair he frequented and among the cushions of the window-seats. Then there were the cocktails. Brought up under the stern tutelage of Isaac and Eliza Travers, Frederick looked upon liquor in the house as an abomination. Ancient cities had been smitten by God's wrath for just such practices. Before lunch and dinner, Tom, aided and abetted by Polly, mixed an endless variety of drinks, she being particularly adept with strange swivel-stick concoctions learned at the ends of the earth.

To Frederick, at such times, it seemed that his butler's pantry and dining room had been turned into bar-rooms. When he suggested this, under a facetious show, Tom proclaimed that when he made his pile he would build a liquor cabinet in every living room of his house.

And there were more young men at the house than formerly, and they helped in disposing of the cocktails. Frederick would have liked to account in that manner for their presence, but he knew better. His brother and his brother's daughter did what he and Mary had failed to do. They were the magnets. Youth and joy and laughter drew to them. The house was lively with young life. Ever, day and night, the motor cars honked up and down the gravelled drives. There were picnics and expeditions in the summer weather, moonlight sails on the bay, starts before dawn or home-comings at midnight, and often, of nights, the many bedrooms were filled as they had never been before. Tom must cover all his boyhood ramblings, catch trout again on Bull Creek, shoot quail over Walcott's Prairie, get a deer on Round Mountain. That deer was a cause of pain and shame to Frederick. What if it was closed season? Tom had triumphantly brought home the buck and gleefully called it sidehill-salmon when it was served and eaten at Frederick's own table.

They had clambakes at the head of the bay and musselbakes down by the roaring surf; and Tom told shamelessly of the Halcyon, and of the run of contraband, and asked Frederick before them all how he had managed to smuggle the horse back to the fishermen without discovery. All the young men were in the conspiracy with Polly to pamper Tom to his heart's

desire. And Frederick heard the true inwardness of the killing of the deer; of its purchase from the overstocked Golden Gate Park; of its crated carriage by train, horse-team and mule-back to the fastnesses of Round Mountain; of Tom falling asleep beside the deer-run the first time it was driven by; of the pursuit by the young men, the jaded saddle horses, the scrambles and the falls, and the roping of it at Burnt Ranch Clearing; and, finally, of the triumphant culmination, when it was driven past a second time and Tom had dropped it at fifty yards. To Frederick there was a vague hurt in it all. When had such consideration been shown him?

There were days when Tom could not go out, postponements of outdoor frolics, when, still the centre, he sat and drowsed in the big chair, waking, at times, in that unexpected queer, bright way of his, to roll a cigarette and call for his ukulele--a sort of miniature guitar of Portuguese invention. Then, with strumming and tumtuming, the live cigarette laid aside to the imminent peril of polished wood, his full baritone would roll out in South Sea hulas and sprightly French and Spanish songs.

One, in particular, had pleased Frederick at first. The favourite song of a Tahitian king, Tom explained--the last of the Pomares, who had himself composed it and was wont to lie on his mats by the hour singing it. It consisted of the repetition of a few syllables. "E meu ru ru a vau," it ran, and that was all of it, sung in a stately, endless, ever-varying chant, accompanied by solemn chords from the ukelele.

Polly took great joy in teaching it to her uncle, but when, himself questing for some of this genial flood of life that bathed about his brother, Frederick essayed the song, he noted suppressed glee on the part of his listeners, which increased, through giggles and snickers, to a great outburst of laughter. To his disgust and dismay, he learned that the simple phrase he had repeated and repeated was nothing else than "I am so drunk." He had been made a fool of. Over and over, solemnly and gloriously, he, Frederick Travers, had announced how drunk he was. After that, he slipped quietly out of the room whenever it was sung. Nor could Polly's later explanation that the last word was "happy," and not "drunk," reconcile him; for she had been compelled to admit that the old king was a toper, and that he was always in his cups when he struck up the chant.

Frederick was constantly oppressed by the feeling of being out of it all. He was a social being, and he liked fun, even if it were of a more wholesome and dignified brand than that to which his brother was addicted. He could not understand why in the past the young people had voted his house a bore and come no more, save on state and formal occasions, until now, when they flocked to it and to his brother, but not to him. Nor could he like the way the young women petted his brother, and called him Tom, while it was intolerable to see them twist and pull his buccaneer moustache in mock punishment when his sometimes too-jolly banter sank home to them.

Such conduct was a profanation to the memory of Isaac and Eliza Travers.

There was too much an air of revelry in the house. The long table was never shortened, while there was extra help in the kitchen. Breakfast extended from four until eleven, and the midnight suppers, entailing raids on the pantry and complaints from the servants, were a vexation to Frederick. The house had become a restaurant, a hotel, he sneered bitterly to himself; and there were times when he was sorely tempted to put his foot down and reassert the old ways. But somehow the ancient sorcery of his masterful brother was too strong upon him; and at times he gazed upon him with a sense almost of awe, groping to fathom the alchemy of charm, baffled by the strange lights and fires in his brother's eyes, and by the wisdom of far places and of wild nights and days written in his face. What was it? What lordly vision had the other glimpsed?--he, the irresponsible and careless one? Frederick remembered a line of an old song--"Along the shining ways he came." Why did his brother remind him of that line? Had he, who in boyhood had known no law, who in manhood had exalted himself above law, in truth found the shining ways?

There was an unfairness about it that perplexed Frederick, until he found solace in dwelling upon the failure Tom had made of life. Then it was, in quiet intervals, that he got some comfort and stiffened his own pride by showing Tom over the estate.

"You have done well, Fred," Tom would say. "You have done very well."

He said it often, and often he drowsed in the big smooth-running

machine.

"Everything orderly and sanitary and spick and span--not a blade of grass out of place," was Polly's comment. "How do you ever manage it? I should not like to be a blade of grass on your land," she concluded, with a little shivery shudder.

"You have worked hard," Tom said.

"Yes, I have worked hard," Frederick affirmed. "It was worth it."

He was going to say more, but the strange flash in the girl's eyes brought him to an uncomfortable pause. He felt that she measured him, challenged him. For the first time his honourable career of building a county commonwealth had been questioned--and by a chit of a girl, the daughter of a wastrel, herself but a flighty, fly-away, foreign creature.

Conflict between them was inevitable. He had disliked her from the first moment of meeting. She did not have to speak. Her mere presence made him uncomfortable. He felt her unspoken disapproval, though there were times when she did not stop at that. Nor did she mince language. She spoke forthright, like a man, and as no man had ever dared to speak to him.

"I wonder if you ever miss what you've missed," she told him. "Did you ever, once in your life, turn yourself loose and rip things up by the

roots? Did you ever once get drunk? Or smoke yourself black in the face? Or dance a hoe-down on the ten commandments? Or stand up on your hind legs and wink like a good fellow at God?"

"Isn't she a rare one!" Tom gurgled. "Her mother over again."

Outwardly smiling and calm, there was a chill of horror at Frederick's heart. It was incredible.

"I think it is the English," she continued, "who have a saying that a man has not lived until he has kissed his woman and struck his man. I wonder--confess up, now--if you ever struck a man."

"Have you?" he countered.

She nodded, an angry reminiscent flash in her eyes, and waited.

"No, I have never had that pleasure," he answered slowly. "I early learned control."

Later, irritated by his self-satisfied complacence and after listening to a recital of how he had cornered the Klamath salmon-packing, planted the first oysters on the bay and established that lucrative monopoly, and of how, after exhausting litigation and a campaign of years he had captured the water front of Williamsport and thereby won to control of the Lumber Combine, she returned to the charge.

"You seem to value life in terms of profit and loss," she said. "I wonder if you have ever known love."

The shaft went home. He had not kissed his woman. His marriage had been one of policy. It had saved the estate in the days when he had been almost beaten in the struggle to disencumber the vast holdings Isaac Travers' wide hands had grasped. The girl was a witch. She had probed an old wound and made it hurt again. He had never had time to love. He had worked hard. He had been president of the chamber of commerce, mayor of the city, state senator, but he had missed love. At chance moments he had come upon Polly, openly and shamelessly in her father's arms, and he had noted the warmth and tenderness in their eyes. Again he knew that he had missed love. Wanton as was the display, not even in private did he and Mary so behave. Normal, formal, and colourless, she was what was to be expected of a loveless marriage. He even puzzled to decide whether the feeling he felt for her was love. Was he himself loveless as well?

In the moment following Polly's remark, he was aware of a great emptiness. It seemed that his hands had grasped ashes, until, glancing into the other room, he saw Tom asleep in the big chair, very grey and aged and tired. He remembered all that he had done, all that he possessed. Well, what did Tom possess? What had Tom done?--save play ducks and drakes with life and wear it out until all that remained was that dimly flickering spark in a dying body.

What bothered Frederick in Polly was that she attracted him as well as repelled him. His own daughter had never interested him in that way. Mary moved along frictionless grooves, and to forecast her actions was so effortless that it was automatic. But Polly! many-hued, protean-natured, he never knew what she was going to do next.

"Keeps you guessing, eh?" Tom chuckled.

She was irresistible. She had her way with Frederick in ways that in Mary would have been impossible. She took liberties with him, cosened him or hurt him, and compelled always in him a sharp awareness of her existence.

Once, after one of their clashes, she devilled him at the piano, playing a mad damned thing that stirred and irritated him and set his pulse pounding wild and undisciplined fancies in the ordered chamber of his brain. The worst of it was she saw and knew just what she was doing. She was aware before he was, and she made him aware, her face turned to look at him, on her lips a mocking, contemplative smile that was almost a superior sneer. It was this that shocked him into consciousness of the orgy his imagination had been playing him. From the wall above her, the stiff portraits of Isaac and Eliza Travers looked down like reproachful spectres. Infuriated, he left the room. He had never dreamed such potencies resided in music. And then, and he remembered it with shame, he had stolen back outside to listen, and she had known, and once more she had devilled him.

When Mary asked him what he thought of Polly's playing, an unbidden contrast leaped to his mind. Mary's music reminded him of church. It was cold and bare as a Methodist meeting house. But Polly's was like the mad and lawless ceremonial of some heathen temple where incense arose and nautch girls writhed.

"She plays like a foreigner," he answered, pleased with the success and oppositeness of his evasion.

"She is an artist," Mary affirmed solemnly. "She is a genius. When does she ever practise? When did she ever practise? You know how I have. My best is like a five-finger exercise compared with the foolishest thing she ripples off. Her music tells me things--oh, things wonderful and unutterable. Mine tells me, 'one-two-three, one-two-three.' Oh, it is maddening! I work and work and get nowhere. It is unfair. Why should she be born that way, and not I?"

"Love," was Frederick's immediate and secret thought; but before he could dwell upon the conclusion, the unprecedented had happened and Mary was sobbing in a break-down of tears. He would have liked to take her in his arms, after Tom's fashion, but he did not know how. He tried, and found Mary as unschooled as himself. It resulted only in an embarrassed awkwardness for both of them.

The contrasting of the two girls was inevitable. Like father like

daughter. Mary was no more than a pale camp-follower of a gorgeous, conquering general. Frederick's thrift had been sorely educated in the matter of clothes. He knew just how expensive Mary's clothes were, yet he could not blind himself to the fact that Polly's vagabond makeshifts, cheap and apparently haphazard, were always all right and far more successful. Her taste was unerring. Her ways with a shawl were inimitable. With a scarf she performed miracles.

"She just throws things together," Mary complained. "She doesn't even try. She can dress in fifteen minutes, and when she goes swimming she beats the boys out of the dressing rooms." Mary was honest and incredulous in her admiration. "I can't see how she does it. No one could dare those colours, but they look just right on her."

"She's always threatened that when I became finally flat broke she'd set up dressmaking and take care of both of us," Tom contributed.

Frederick, looking over the top of a newspaper, was witness to an illuminating scene; Mary, to his certain knowledge, had been primping for an hour ere she appeared.

"Oh! How lovely!" was Polly's ready appreciation. Her eyes and face glowed with honest pleasure, and her hands wove their delight in the air. "But why not wear that bow so and thus?"

Her hands flashed to the task, and in a moment the miracle of taste and

difference achieved by her touch was apparent even to Frederick.

Polly was like her father, generous to the point of absurdity with her meagre possessions. Mary admired a Spanish fan--a Mexican treasure that had come down from one of the grand ladies of the Court of the Emperor Maximilian. Polly's delight flamed like wild-fire. Mary found herself the immediate owner of the fan, almost labouring under the fictitious impression that she had conferred an obligation by accepting it. Only a foreign woman could do such things, and Polly was guilty of similar gifts to all the young women. It was her way. It might be a lace handkerchief, a pink Paumotan pearl, or a comb of hawksbill turtle. It was all the same. Whatever their eyes rested on in joy was theirs. To women, as to men, she was irresistible.

"I don't dare admire anything any more," was Mary's plaint. "If I do she always gives it to me."

Frederick had never dreamed such a creature could exist. The women of his own race and place had never adumbrated such a possibility. He knew that whatever she did--her quick generosities, her hot enthusiasms or angers, her birdlike caressing ways--was unbelievably sincere. Her extravagant moods at the same time shocked and fascinated him. Her voice was as mercurial as her feelings. There were no even tones, and she talked with her hands. Yet, in her mouth, English was a new and beautiful language, softly limpid, with an audacity of phrase and tellingness of expression that conveyed subtleties and nuances as

unambiguous and direct as they were unexpected from one of such childlikeness and simplicity. He woke up of nights and on his darkened eyelids saw bright memory-pictures of the backward turn of her vivid, laughing face.

IV

Like daughter like father. Tom, too, had been irresistible. All the world still called to him, and strange men came from time to time with its messages. Never had there been such visitors to the Travers home. Some came with the reminiscent roll of the sea in their gait. Others were black-browed ruffians; still others were fever-burnt and sallow; and about all of them was something bizarre and outlandish. Their talk was likewise bizarre and outlandish, of things to Frederick unguessed and undreamed, though he recognised the men for what they were--soldiers of fortune, adventurers, free lances of the world. But the big patent thing was the love and loyalty they bore their leader. They named him variously?--Black Tom, Blondine, Husky Travers, Malemute Tom, Swiftwater Tom--but most of all he was Captain Tom. Their projects and propositions were equally various, from the South Sea trader with the discovery of a new guano island and the Latin-American with a nascent revolution on his hands, on through Siberian gold chases and the prospecting of the placer benches of the upper Kuskokeem, to darker things that were mentioned only in whispers. And Captain Tom regretted the temporary indisposition that prevented immediate departure with them, and continued to sit and drowse more and more in the big chair. It was Polly, with a camaraderie distasteful to her uncle, who got these men aside and broke the news that Captain Tom would never go out on the shining ways again. But not all of them came with projects. Many made love-calls on their leader of old and unforgetable days, and Frederick sometimes was a witness to their meeting, and he marvelled anew at the

mysterious charm in his brother that drew all men to him.

"By the turtles of Tasman!" cried one, "when I heard you was in California, Captain Tom, I just had to come and shake hands. I reckon you ain't forgot Tasman, eh?--nor the scrap at Thursday Island. Say--old Tasman was killed by his niggers only last year up German New Guinea way. Remember his cook-boy?--Ngani-Ngani? He was the ringleader. Tasman swore by him, but Ngani-Ngani hatcheted him just the same."

"Shake hands with Captain Carlsen, Fred," was Tom's introduction of his brother to another visitor. "He pulled me out of a tight place on the West Coast once. I'd have cashed in, Carlsen, if you hadn't happened along."

Captain Carlsen was a giant hulk of a man, with gimlet eyes of palest blue, a slash-scarred mouth that a blazing red beard could not quite hide, and a grip in his hand that made Frederick squirm.

A few minutes later, Tom had his brother aside.

"Say, Fred, do you think it will bother to advance me a thousand?"

"Of course," Frederick answered splendidly. "You know half of that I have is yours, Tom."

And when Captain Carlsen departed, Frederick was morally certain that

the thousand dollars departed with him.

Small wonder Tom had made a failure of life--and come home to die. Frederick sat at his own orderly desk taking stock of the difference between him and his brother. Yes, and if it hadn't been for him, there would have been no home for Tom to die in.

Frederick cast back for solace through their joint history. It was he who had always been the mainstay, the dependable one. Tom had laughed and rollicked, played hooky from school, disobeyed Isaac's commandments. To the mountains or the sea, or in hot water with the neighbours and the town authorities--it was all the same; he was everywhere save where the dull plod of work obtained. And work was work in those backwoods days, and he, Frederick, had done the work. Early and late and all days he had been at it. He remembered the season when Isaac's wide plans had taken one of their smashes, when food had been scarce on the table of a man who owned a hundred thousand acres, when there had been no money to hire harvesters for the hay, and when Isaac would not let go his grip on a single one of his acres. He, Frederick, had pitched the hay, while Isaac mowed and raked. Tom had lain in bed and run up a doctor bill with a broken leg, gained by falling off the ridge-pole of the barn--which place was the last in the world to which any one would expect to go to pitch hay. About the only work Tom had ever done, it seemed to him, was to fetch in venison and bear-oil, to break colts, and to raise a din in the valley pastures and wooded canyons with his bear-hounds.

Tom was the elder, yet when Isaac died, the estate, with all its vast possibilities would have gone to ruin, had not he, Frederick, buckled down to it and put the burden on his back. Work! He remembered the enlargement of the town water-system--how he had manoeuvred and financed, persuaded small loans at ruinous interest, and laid pipe and made joints by lantern light while the workmen slept, and then been up ahead of them to outline and direct and rack his brains over the raising of the next week-end wages. For he had carried on old Isaac's policy. He would not let go. The future would vindicate.

And Tom!--with a bigger pack of bear dogs ranging the mountains and sleeping out a week at a time. Frederick remembered the final conference in the kitchen--Tom, and he, and Eliza Travers, who still cooked and baked and washed dishes on an estate that carried a hundred and eighty thousand dollars in mortgages.

"Don't divide," Eliza Travers had pleaded, resting her soap-flecked, parboiled arms. "Isaac was right. It will be worth millions. The country is opening up. We must all pull together."

"I don't want the estate," Tom cried. "Let Frederick have it. What I want...."

He never completed the sentence, but all the vision of the world burned in his eyes.

"I can't wait," he went on. "You can have the millions when they come. In the meantime let me have ten thousand. I'll sign off quitclaim to everything. And give me the old schooner, and some day I'll be back with a pot of money to help you out."

Frederick could see himself, in that far past day, throwing up his arms in horror and crying:

"Ten thousand!--when I'm strained to the breaking point to raise this quarter's interest!"

"There's the block of land next to the court house," Tom had urged. "I know the bank has a standing offer for ten thousand."

"But it will be worth a hundred thousand in ten years," Frederick had objected.

"Call it so. Say I quitclaim everything for a hundred thousand. Sell it for ten and let me have it. It's all I want, and I want it now. You can have the rest."

And Tom had had his will as usual (the block had been mortgaged instead of sold), and sailed away in the old schooner, the benediction of the town upon his head, for he had carried away in his crew half the riff-raff of the beach.

The bones of the schooner had been left on the coast of Java. That had been when Eliza Travers was being operated on for her eyes, and Frederick had kept it from her until indubitable proof came that Tom was still alive.

Frederick went over to his files and drew out a drawer labelled "Thomas Travers." In it were packets, methodically arranged. He went over the letters. They were from everywhere--China, Rangoon, Australia, South Africa, the Gold Coast, Patagonia, Armenia, Alaska. Briefly and infrequently written, they epitomised the wanderer's life. Frederick ran over in his mind a few of the glimpsed highlights of Tom's career. He had fought in some sort of foreign troubles in Armenia. He had been an officer in the Chinese army, and it was a certainty that the trade he later drove in the China Seas was illicit. He had been caught running arms into Cuba. It seemed he had always been running something somewhere that it ought not to have been run. And he had never outgrown it. One letter, on crinkly tissue paper, showed that as late as the Japanese-Russian War he had been caught running coal into Port Arthur and been taken to the prize court at Sasebo, where his steamer was confiscated and he remained a prisoner until the end of the war.

Frederick smiled as he read a paragraph: "How do you prosper? Let me know any time a few thousands will help you." He looked at the date, April 18, 1883, and opened another packet. "May 5th," 1883, was the dated sheet he drew out. "Five thousand will put me on my feet again.

If you can, and love me, send it along pronto--that's Spanish for rush."

He glanced again at the two dates. It was evident that somewhere between April 18th and May 5th Tom had come a cropper. With a smile, half bitter, Frederick skimmed on through the correspondence: "There's a wreck on Midway Island. A fortune in it, salvage you know. Auction in two days. Cable me four thousand." The last he examined, ran: "A deal I can swing with a little cash. It's big, I tell you. It's so big I don't dare tell you." He remembered that deal--a Latin-American revolution. He had sent the cash, and Tom had swung it, and himself as well, into a prison cell and a death sentence.

Tom had meant well, there was no denying that. And he had always religiously forwarded his I O U's. Frederick musingly weighed the packet of them in his hand, as though to determine if any relation existed between the weight of paper and the sums of money represented on it.

He put the drawer back in the cabinet and passed out. Glancing in at the big chair he saw Polly just tiptoeing from the room. Tom's head lay back, and his breathing was softly heavy, the sickness pronouncedly apparent on his relaxed face.

V

"I have worked hard," Frederick explained to Polly that evening on the veranda, unaware that when a man explains it is a sign his situation is growing parlous. "I have done what came to my hand--how creditably it is for others to say. And I have been paid for it. I have taken care of others and taken care of myself. The doctors say they have never seen such a constitution in a man of my years. Why, almost half my life is yet before me, and we Travers are a long-lived stock. I took care of myself, you see, and I have myself to show for it. I was not a waster. I conserved my heart and my arteries, and yet there are few men who can boast having done as much work as I have done. Look at that hand. Steady, eh? It will be as steady twenty years from now. There is nothing in playing fast and loose with oneself."

And all the while Polly had been following the invidious comparison that lurked behind his words.

"You can write 'Honourable' before your name," she flashed up proudly. "But my father has been a king. He has lived. Have you lived? What have you got to show for it? Stocks and bonds, and houses and servants--pouf! Heart and arteries and a steady hand--is that all? Have you lived merely to live? Were you afraid to die? I'd rather sing one wild song and burst my heart with it, than live a thousand years watching my digestion and being afraid of the wet. When you are dust, my father will be ashes. That is the difference."

"But my dear child--" he began.

"What have you got to show for it?" she flamed on. "Listen!"

From within, through the open window, came the tinkling of Tom's ukulele and the rollicking lilt of his voice in an Hawaiian hula. It ended in a throbbing, primitive love-call from the sensuous tropic night that no one could mistake. There was a burst of young voices, and a clamour for more. Frederick did not speak. He had sensed something vague and significant.

Turning, he glanced through the window at Tom, flushed and royal, surrounded by the young men and women, under his Viking moustache lighting a cigarette from a match held to him by one of the girls. It abruptly struck Frederick that never had he lighted a cigar at a match held in a woman's hand.

"Doctor Tyler says he oughtn't to smoke--it only aggravates," he said; and it was all he could say.

As the fall of the year came on, a new type of men began to frequent the house. They proudly called themselves "sour-doughs," and they were arriving in San Francisco on the winter's furlough from the gold-diggings of Alaska. More and more of them came, and they pre-empted a large portion of one of the down-town hotels. Captain Tom was fading

with the season, and almost lived in the big chair. He drowsed oftener and longer, but whenever he awoke he was surrounded by his court of young people, or there was some comrade waiting to sit and yarn about the old gold days and plan for the new gold days.

For Tom--Husky Travers, the Yukoners named him--never thought that the end approached. A temporary illness, he called it, the natural enfeeblement following upon a prolonged bout with Yucatan fever. In the spring he would be right and fit again. Cold weather was what he needed. His blood had been cooked. In the meantime it was a case of take it easy and make the most of the rest.

And no one undeceived him--not even the Yukoners, who smoked pipes and black cigars and chewed tobacco on Frederick's broad verandas until he felt like an intruder in his own house. There was no touch with them. They regarded him as a stranger to be tolerated. They came to see Tom. And their manner of seeing him was provocative of innocent envy pangs to Frederick. Day after day he watched them. He would see the Yukoners meet, perhaps one just leaving the sick room and one just going in. They would clasp hands, solemnly and silently, outside the door. The newcomer would question with his eyes, and the other would shake his head. And more than once Frederick noted the moisture in their eyes. Then the newcomer would enter and draw his chair up to Tom's, and with jovial voice proceed to plan the outfitting for the exploration of the upper Kuskokeem; for it was there Tom was bound in the spring. Dogs could be had at Larabee's--a clean breed, too, with no taint of the soft

Southland strains. It was rough country, it was reported, but if sour-doughs couldn't make the traverse from Larabee's in forty days they'd like to see a chechako do it in sixty.

And so it went, until Frederick wondered, when he came to die, if there was one man in the county, much less in the adjoining county, who would come to him at his bedside.

Seated at his desk, through the open windows would drift whiffs of strong tobacco and rumbling voices, and he could not help catching snatches of what the Yukoners talked.

"D'ye recollect that Koyokuk rush in the early nineties?" he would hear one say. "Well, him an' me was pardners then, tradin' an' such. We had a dinky little steamboat, the Blatterbat. He named her that, an' it stuck. He was a caution. Well, sir, as I was sayin', him an' me loaded the little Blatterbat to the guards an' started up the Koyokuk, me firin' an' engineerin' an' him steerin', an' both of us deck-handin'. Once in a while we'd tie to the bank an' cut firewood. It was the fall, an' mush-ice was comin' down, an' everything gettin' ready for the freeze up. You see, we was north of the Arctic Circle then an' still headin' north. But they was two hundred miners in there needin' grub if they wintered, an' we had the grub.

"Well, sir, pretty soon they begun to pass us, driftin' down the river in canoes an' rafts. They was pullin' out. We kept track of them. When a

hundred an' ninety-four had passed, we didn't see no reason for keepin' on. So we turned tail and started down. A cold snap had come, an' the water was fallin' fast, an' dang me if we didn't ground on a bar--up-stream side. The Blatterbat hung up solid. Couldn't budge her. 'It's a shame to waste all that grub,' says I, just as we was pullin' out in a canoe. 'Let's stay an' eat it,' says he. An' dang me if we didn't. We wintered right there on the Blatterbat, huntin' and tradin' with the Indians, an' when the river broke next year we brung down eight thousand dollars' worth of skins. Now a whole winter, just two of us, is goin' some. But never a cross word out of him. Best-tempered pardner I ever seen. But fight!"

"Huh!" came the other voice. "I remember the winter Oily Jones allowed he'd clean out Forty Mile. Only he didn't, for about the second yap he let off he ran afoul of Husky Travers. It was in the White Caribou. 'I'm a wolf!' yaps Jones. You know his style, a gun in his belt, fringes on his moccasins, and long hair down his back. 'I'm a wolf,' he yaps, 'an' this is my night to howl. Hear me, you long lean makeshift of a human critter?'--an' this to Husky Travers."

"Well?" the other voice queried, after a pause.

"In about a second an' a half Oily Jones was on the floor an' Husky on top askin' somebody kindly to pass him a butcher knife. What's he do but plumb hack off all of Oily Jones' long hair. 'Now howl, damn you, howl,' says Husky, gettin' up."

"He was a cool one, for a wild one," the first voice took up. "I seen him buck roulette in the Little Wolverine, drop nine thousand in two hours, borrow some more, win it back in fifteen minutes, buy the drinks, an' cash in--dang me, all in fifteen minutes."

One evening Tom was unusually brightly awake, and Frederick, joining the rapt young circle, sat and listened to his brother's serio-comic narrative of the night of wreck on the island of Blang; of the swim through the sharks where half the crew was lost; of the great pearl which Desay brought ashore with him; of the head-decorated palisade that surrounded the grass palace wherein dwelt the Malay queen with her royal consort, a shipwrecked Chinese Eurasian; of the intrigue for the pearl of Desay; of mad feasts and dances in the barbaric night, and quick dangers and sudden deaths; of the queen's love-making to Desay, of Desay's love-making to the queen's daughter, and of Desay, every joint crushed, still alive, staked out on the reef at low tide to be eaten by the sharks; of the coming of the plague; of the beating of tom-toms and the exorcising of the devil-devil doctors; of the flight over the man-trapped, wild-pig runs of the mountain bush-men; and of the final rescue by Tasman, he who was hatcheted only last year and whose head reposed in some Melanesian stronghold--and all breathing of the warmth and abandon and savagery of the burning islands of the sun.

And despite himself, Frederick sat entranced; and when all the tale was told, he was aware of a queer emptiness. He remembered back to his

boyhood, when he had pored over the illustrations in the old-fashioned geography. He, too, had dreamed of amazing adventure in far places and desired to go out on the shining ways. And he had planned to go; yet he had known only work and duty. Perhaps that was the difference. Perhaps that was the secret of the strange wisdom in his brother's eyes. For the moment, faint and far, vicariously, he glimpsed the lordly vision his brother had seen. He remembered a sharp saying of Polly's. "You have missed romance. You traded it for dividends." She was right, and yet, not fair. He had wanted romance, but the work had been placed ready to his hand. He had toiled and moiled, day and night, and been faithful to his trust. Yet he had missed love and the world-living that was forever a-whisper in his brother. And what had Tom done to deserve it?--a wastrel and an idle singer of songs.

His place was high. He was going to be the next governor of California. But what man would come to him and lie to him out of love? The thought of all his property seemed to put a dry and gritty taste in his mouth. Property! Now that he looked at it, one thousand dollars was like any other thousand dollars; and one day (of his days) was like any other day. He had never made the pictures in the geography come true. He had not struck his man, nor lighted his cigar at a match held in a woman's hand. A man could sleep in only one bed at a time--Tom had said that. He shuddered as he strove to estimate how many beds he owned, how many blankets he had bought. And all the beds and blankets would not buy one man to come from the end of the earth, and grip his hand, and cry, "By the turtles of Tasman!"

Something of all this he told Polly, an undercurrent of complaint at the unfairness of things in his tale. And she had answered:

"It couldn't have been otherwise. Father bought it. He never drove bargains. It was a royal thing, and he paid for it royally. You grudged the price, don't you see. You saved your arteries and your money and kept your feet dry."

VI

On an afternoon in the late fall all were gathered about the big chair and Captain Tom. Though he did not know it, he had drowsed the whole day through and only just awakened to call for his ukulele and light a cigarette at Polly's hand. But the ukulele lay idle on his arm, and though the pine logs crackled in the huge fireplace he shivered and took note of the cold.

"It's a good sign," he said, unaware that the faintness of his voice drew the heads of his listeners closer. "The cold weather will be a tonic. It's a hard job to work the tropics out of one's blood. But I'm beginning to shape up now for the Kuskokeem. In the spring, Polly, we start with the dogs, and you'll see the midnight sun. How your mother would have liked the trip. She was a game one. Forty sleeps with the dogs, and we'll be shaking out yellow nuggets from the moss-roots. Larabee has some fine animals. I know the breed. They're timber wolves, that's what they are, big grey timber wolves, though they sport brown about one in a litter--isn't that right, Bennington?"

"One in a litter, that's just about the average," Bennington, the Yukoner, replied promptly, but in a voice hoarsely unrecognisable.

"And you must never travel alone with them," Captain Tom went on. "For if you fall down they'll jump you. Larabee's brutes only respect a man when he stands upright on his legs. When he goes down, he's meat. I

remember coming over the divide from Tanana to Circle City. That was before the Klondike strike. It was in '94 ... no, '95, and the bottom had dropped out of the thermometer. There was a young Canadian with the outfit. His name was it was ... a peculiar one ... wait a minute it will come to me...."

His voice ceased utterly, though his lips still moved. A look of unbelief and vast surprise dawned on his face. Followed a sharp, convulsive shudder. And in that moment, without warning, he saw Death. He looked clear-eyed and steady, as if pondering, then turned to Polly. His hand moved impotently, as if to reach hers, and when he found it, his fingers could not close. He gazed at her with a great smile that slowly faded. The eyes drooped as the life went out, and remained a face of quietude and repose. The ukulele clattered to the floor. One by one they went softly from the room, leaving Polly alone.

From the veranda, Frederick watched a man coming up the driveway. By the roll of the sea in his walk, Frederick could guess for whom the stranger came. The face was swarthy with sun and wrinkled with age that was given the lie by the briskness of his movements and the alertness in the keen black eyes. In the lobe of each ear was a tiny circlet of gold.

"How do you do, sir," the man said, and it was patent that English was not the tongue he had learned at his mother's knee. "How's Captain Tom? They told me in the town that he was sick."

"My brother is dead," Frederick answered.

The stranger turned his head and gazed out over the park-like grounds and up to the distant redwood peaks, and Frederick noted that he swallowed with an effort.

"By the turtles of Tasman, he was a man," he said, in a deep, changed voice.

"By the turtles of Tasman, he was a man," Frederick repeated; nor did he stumble over the unaccustomed oath.

THE ETERNITY OF FORMS

A strange life has come to an end in the death of Mr. Sedley Crayden, of Crayden Hill.

Mild, harmless, he was the victim of a strange delusion that kept him pinned, night and day, in his chair for the last two years of his life. The mysterious death, or, rather, disappearance, of his elder brother, James Crayden, seems to have preyed upon his mind, for it was shortly after that event that his delusion began to manifest itself.