

The Outcast Manufacturers

by

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CHAPTER I

TO THE west, the street-wide Palisades, dull-gray as a block of lead; a streak of North River gleaming like bright, clean metal melted from the base. Windows of tenement houses black with the inside pall of dark homes, unclean children, seeming dirtier because of their pallor, playing ball, with a banana stalk for a bat, in the middle of the street. A dead horse lying in the southside gutter; boys jumping on it, enjoying the elasticity of its ribs; a greasy old man prying off the horseshoes.

On the sidewalk, stained where passing epicures had thrown out stale beer before having pails and pitchers filled up again, stood a young man -- very young man; light clothes, straw hat, suit-case in hand -- tall young man with half-closed eyelids and wide, irregular, heavy lips; lids and lips like a fleeting impression of the stubby nails of fingers idly dropping a skein of worsted; young man standing irresolutely between the dead horse and the low stoop of a house. On the stoop's first step, a young woman, in a sleeveless wrapper, making her form serpentine, bulging out a hip to support an infant under her arm. On the top step, a burly woman, her hair gray with ashes that she had been sifting.

"Scabs! scabs!" she shouted back into the house.

"The boss inspector!" jeeringly from a woman, darkened in the front hall.

"Union men for me!" from her of the powdered coiffure. "Union men who ain't afraid to go out of doors nights!

"You can't stand out on the stoop with them, if things keeps up!" she said plaintively to the serpentine young woman, who budged some more, giggled, and, giggling, turned her face away.

"Lot of damn scabs! scabs! or you're no union men, anyway! How the lot of yez makes a living is the block's mystery!"

"The boss inspector! Everywhere she ever lived she was known as a disturber!"

"Let your old man come out and fight me! I'll show him what a woman can do." Then, very gently, to the young woman: "Warm ain't it? How's baby?"

A bulky man came out to the stoop, his suspenders hanging in two loops behind him; a man with a large face, curiously flat and white of nose tip, chin tip, and cheek-bones; such a face as bakers see pressed white and flat against their window glass.

"Oh, now, Mrs. Maheffy, my wife didn't mean anything. You ought to know

that by this time. Isn't she always saying: 'What would the house be without Mrs. Maheffy?' You two haven't any call to fall out."

"Ah, sure, man dear, 'tis the weather; sure, any woman's apt to be expressing the bit of an opinion now and then. What's ailing you, man dear? Don't pay any attention to me."

"Excuse me!" said the youth with the suitcase, his long lips flickering in an uncontrollable grin. "I'm a little lost I think -- I mean I think I've got the wrong number. What I mean is I'm looking for the Universal Manufacturing Company --"

Said the pressed-faced man: "Come right this way. Am I wrong in taking you for Mr. Rakes, of Jersey?"

"Yes -- well, they generally call me Sim. Yes, I'm Sim Rakes. I was looking for a factory, though. Is Mr. Birtwhistle here?"

The man had turned his broad back, with the dangling suspender-loops, and was shuffling to the first doorway of the rooms east of the hall. He whispered to some one in the front room, and shuffled back to the young man who was generally called Sim, who had slowly followed. He said awkwardly:

"Oh, did you get my letter? You're Mr. Rakes? Yes, I'm Mr. Birtwhistle. Yes, we have a vacancy at present. Warm, ain't it?" facing Sim, slowly shuffling backward toward the side door, calling over his shoulder: "He got my letter."

A pattering sound. When Sim was permitted to reach the doorway, he looked into the front room, and saw a woman darting around; a woman husked in wilted green, her hair, like a tuft of sunburned corn-silk, hanging and unkempt; darting here and there, picking up clothes and papers, with which the floor was strewn; pattering to things that she kicked under a stove, which was opposite the doorway; thrusting things under a sofa, which was between the two front windows. She saw Sim, and ran to an inner room, through a doorway, where blue curtains, meeting at top, dwindled away from each other, like overalls of a straddling giant. Against the hall wall were two tables, at which sat the office staff of the Universal Manufacturing Company -- a man and a woman. On the office floor were newspapers and trodden letters and stained paper that had been wrapped around meat; bones and heads of fish that had been thrown to a cat; excelsior from the sofa, the springs of which touched the floor.

"He got the letter, all right," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

By the first table -- the two tables along the hall wall -- sat a woman, with one shoulder somewhat lower than the other; with shoulders rounded so that she was almost humpbacked; her hair was black and shiny and compact with pomade; parted in the middle, this heavy hair, smooth and shiny, looked like the slightly parted wing-cases of a monstrous beetle. The woman wore a glaring red waist, ribbons of a lighter, and even more glaring red, at her elbows.

"He's come, Miss Guffy," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

Miss Guffy turned, and threw her left arm over the back of her chair, which made her shoulders seem of equal height; she stared at Sim, saying nothing.

At the second table, which was by a window, sat a man; hair cut in the shape of a chopping bowl, worn down over his ears -- or ear, for one ear was gone -- chopping bowl clapped down over his head; features gentle and boyish.

"He's come, Asbury," said Mr. Birtwhistle. The man was wearing a nightshirt, tucked down in his trousers; sockless feet in heelless slippers; he was holding his hands, drooping like a kangaroo's front paws, over a dusty typewriter.

"Mr. Rakes, Mr. Asbury Parker."

Mr. Asbury Parker, sitting with hands wilted over the typewriter, slowly looking around; then-- "Oh! were you speaking to me? Oh, how are you?" He rose, standing beside his table, saying nothing-- Sim's hand shifting and shifting hat and suit-case.

Emotional blue curtains; the woman behind them clutching them.

Piles of stationery between the two tables; disordered piles of typewritten letters that had fallen upon stacks of envelopes, mixed with catalogs and paper wrappers.

"Have a seat, have a seat, sir," said Mr. Birtwhistle in wretched briskness. Sim sitting in a chair with its back to the blue curtains; Sim spurred forward upon the very edge of the chair, protruding springs of it prodding him.

The green-painted walls of the room were blotched with stove smoke; soot-smearred with strange shapes; a green room, like a caisson of glass sunk in the sea; in a green sea, but in no clear, bright ocean depths; a caisson sunk somewhere amid suspended, water-soaked wreckage and weeds; a sunken cell in the Sargasso Sea.

"We didn't expect you to-day, or we'd have-- but I'll not apologize!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, Mr. Asbury Parker still standing stiff by his table-- Miss Guffy, with her arm over the back of her chair, staring at Sim.

"Oh, that's all right" said Sim. "Quite a lively street, here." He laughed immoderately. He tried not to look at fish heads on the floor; then he looked away from a pan of ashes halfway under the stove.

"I guess we can do better for you than that," said Mr. Birtwhistle, pointing to the chair that prodded when Sim sat back in it.

"Delia," he said, going to the wriggling blue curtains. At first Mrs. Birtwhistle would not come out. Whispering behind the curtains, the wriggling curtains. Mr. Birtwhistle reappeared, carrying a chair with a concave, cane seat, nevertheless a chair that would not prod. Then Mrs. Birtwhistle came out defiantly, eyes straight ahead, eyes away from Sim, though she nodded in his direction slightly. She had piled her hair into a high, toppling peak; her face was sallow; under a short upper lip were two exposed, white teeth, standing out like only two kernels upon a scraped, sallow ear of corn.

"Asbury," she said sharply, "you can go on with your work."

"Mr. Rakes," began Mr. Birtwhistle, in a kind of desperate pomposity; in stepping forward pompously a hanging loop of his suspenders caught upon a corner of the stove, dragging him back. "Oh, cusses!" said Mr. Birtwhistle weakly.

"Mr. Rakes must take us as he finds us," declared Mrs. Birtwhistle. With her foot she pushed the pan of ashes farther under the stove.

"Certainly!" quickly from Sim.

"Oh, sit down!" said Mr. Parker. He dropped into his chair and sat holding his languid hands motionless over the rickety typewriter.

"That's all right; that's all right," said Sim. "Don't mind me-- I always make myself at home everywhere"-- laboriously speaking, his eyes wavering, his mouth in a twitching grin-- "I mean-- that's all right, you know."

"Then you got my letter?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle. "Has your dropping in this afternoon got any reference to that?"

"I happened to be in town, you know. I just dropped in, you see. If you're too busy, why, we can talk the matter over some other time."

"Well, I haven't anything particular on just at present, if you haven't."

"No; I often run up to town for a day or so."

Here feeling broke from Mrs. Birtwhistle. She had been slyly closing a closet door, picking up a pair of socks drying on the oven door, collecting papers with her feet.

"Any other man wouldn't be found living so," she mumbled sullenly. "You had money last month. Why didn't you make a home, then? I'm too silly asking you will we get this and will we get that. No more 'will we,' but every bit of trash goes out of here. I never lived like this, like a thief, in fear of our lives every time there's a rap on the door. There's no use saying any more. No, don't stir, Mr. Rakes; you're not in the way." She spoke with a slight Irish accent.

"My dear," Mr. Birtwhistle's voice having a slight Western twang, "never apologize for anything."

"Oh, 'tis all very well for you."

"I'll tell you, Mr. Rakes," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Can you typewrite? Asbury here hasn't the greatest skill." Mr. Parker cautiously pressed the typewriter keys. "You might start in here with us; your fortune might be made here."

"Oh, yes," said Sim; "you mustn't bother about me," looking around nervously, smiling uneasily at Miss Guffy to have that silent, staring person friendly with him.

A child strolled into the office of the Universal Manufacturing Company; a matronly-looking little girl, who wore her wide-brimmed hat on her shoulders, the elastic of it around her neck. She said to Miss Guffy, who was resuming the pasting of edges of a row of paper wrappers: "Oh, that's a nice waist you got!" and to Mrs.

Birtwhistle: "Oh, your hubby home?" She went to the chair of the protruding springs and sat on it, but soon got up, exclaiming: "My heavens!" then went to an armchair by the east window, where with hands behind her head and legs swinging, she sighed, whether with care or comfort.

Silence in the room, then-- but overhead sounds of some one jumping upon firewood to smash it into stove size; and, in a quavering, old man's voice, a monotonously repeated oath was groaned in a room upstairs.

"Yes," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "we are thinking of extending our business."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the little girl; for the back had fallen from the armchair. Then:

"But, Mrs. Birtwhistle, Mrs. Maheffy sent me down to know would you have the sharing of a pint of beer with her."

"Shall we?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Shall we run up for a moment? Mr. Rakes will excuse us. Will I bring her up a cup of this soup? Will I?"

Mr. Birtwhistle shrugged his shoulders and held out his hands weakly.

"I suppose we can run up for a minute. This mole under my chin is loose. Will I tear it off? Will I?"

"No!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, promptly and decisively. "Well, then. Mr. Rakes," in a jovial voice, jumping up, rubbing his hands together, "social duties seem to call us. Social duties, you know. We'll be right back. Don't be afraid of Miss Guffy. You can start in with us anyway, you know."

"Go 'long with you!" from Miss Guffy, who quickly turned from renewed staring at Sim.

"Just make yourself right at home, and, when we come back, we'll talk it over." The manufacturers went away, the little girl following them.

"I think," said Sim, reaching down for his suit-case, "I'd better be going; I only dropped in."

"Sure, man dear-- sure, you're only a boy," said Miss Guffy. "Sit where you are; they'll be right back."

"I've got a little business to attend to"-- hesitatingly-- playing with the handle of his suit-case.

The little girl, looking in the front window, from the stoop, called:

"I'm coming in again." By way of the hall door she returned to the room, taking tiny china dolls from her pocket, holding them up for Sim to see, saying: "I have a new red hat; grandma has a new hat and shoes. Miss Guffy, Miss Dunphy and the other Miss Dunphy is coming up the street, and coming here, I guess." And again she went out to the stoop.

"Bad luck to them!" said Miss Guffy; "they always come when the house is upset." To Sim: "They're living-out girls; they're Mrs. Birtwhistle's nieces."

The first Miss Dunphy who came into the room was a potted-palm young woman, short and broad-shouldered, dressed in a suit of flower-pot color, green feathers, like scrub palmetto, in her hat. She came noisily into the room, shouting: "Ho! ho! is it yourselves? Where's the Birts?" Then, turning to the hall door, waving a large, red hand to some one on the stairs, shouting heartily: "Ho! ho! is it yourself, Mr. Tunnan? And how the divil are you?" She ran to the blue curtains, standing between them, calling: "Birt! ho, Birt!" Then, in a hoarse whisper, turning to Miss Guffy:

"Is the slave-drivers out? Is the slave-drivers out airing themselves? Here's Emma! What do you think of Emma? She leaves me at Fifty-seventh Street, and says she's going shopping, and I runs across her down on your corner."

The other Miss Dunphy came into the room, a straight-up-and-down young person, dressed in white. Had she stood very still, with her big colorless, round face, she might possibly have been mistaken for an aquarium globe on a marble pedestal.

"No, but this one," said the white Miss Dunphy, pointing to her sister, glancing at Sim, glancing away from him, glancing at him again; "the two of us swore-- the slave-drivers is out, are they?" in a whisper-- "the two of us swears we'll never come here again, as you well know why, Miss Guffy, and this one says, 'Emma,' she says, 'go about your business, but I'll not stay out this afternoon and the family not at home, but'll go back for a bit of sewing,' this one says. And I meets her down on the corner, after the two of us taking our oath never to come here again. 'Tis the nature in us brings us, I do suppose, Miss Guffy. How are you, Mr. Parker? 'Tis unnecessary to ask you; you're looking good."

"What?" said Mr. Parker. "Oh, looking good? Oh!" Crouching over the typewriter, seemingly unobservant to the last degree, he was nevertheless trying to catch Miss Guffy's eye, that she should introduce Sim to the potted-palm young woman, and her sister, the aquarium.

"The both of them out, as usual!" said Miss Guffy; "the both of them out cabin-hunting, and leaving business to look after itself."

"How am you? How the divil are you?" said the terra-cotta Miss Dunphy, running to the window, shaking hands at an acquaintance at a window across the street, shouting:

"Is the old man working yet? Oh, you're doing your bit of wash, are you? Upon me soul, he's been long enough idle, now. He ought to get something to do, so you'll not pass another dry Sunday." Turning around, remarking:

"'Tis a pretty waist you have, Miss Guffy. And how much was it?"

"Oh, just a little thing I got over on the avenue. They don't half sew the buttons on these made things."

"And how much was it, if it's no harm to ask you?"

"Two-ninety-eight."

"I declare!" from both Miss Dunphys, standing together, then sitting together on the sagging sofa between the front windows.

"Not married yet?" said Miss Guffy jokingly.

"I didn't ask you if you was, Miss Guffy," answered the white Miss Dunphy, frowning heavily.

"You did not, girl dear, and I'm but joking with you. I suppose you're like myself-- no hurry, but leaving it to the will of God."

"Oh!" said Miss Dunphy, smiling brightly, "I have a gentleman friend." She flushed a little-- flushes, like goldfish in an aquarium, fluttering in her globe-like, colorless face-- goldfish in a globe of milk, perhaps-- or goldfish struggling in a globe of whitewash, have it. "Well, he's not my special friend, though he bought me this dress-- I suppose you know?-- and this ring," taking a ring from her pocketbook; "but I don't like it, and don't be wearing it except when he's around. He's a fine, big man, though, and as tall as this here gentleman-- "

"My! where are my manners?" cried Miss Guffy. "What did you say your name was, mister? Miss Dunphy-- sure, I'll introduce the two of yez together-- this gentleman says he is Mr. Rakes."

"Just at present," Sim said, laughing uneasily and rising awkwardly. The Miss Dunphys rising, Miss Guffy seeming to think it over, then half rising.

"So warm!" said Sim, the smirk that he could not control distorting his mouth, his lips like apple-parings. "It's warmer in the city. than in the country."

"Oh, are you from the country?"

"Do I look it?" reaching out for the back of his chair, or anything else to hold while standing.

"I was only asking," the white Miss Dunphy's expression heavy and frowning.

"Well, I suppose you were only asking. I suppose when a person asks a question they are only asking," laughing awkwardly. "I mean yes; I came in this morning."

"Oh, did you?" said the white Miss Dunphy, smiling sympathetically, she and her sister returning to the sofa, Katie Dunphy shaking her hand out the window again, Mr. Parker rising.

"And," continued the white Miss Dunphy, who was Miss Emma Dunphy, "he took me to Coney Island three times and spent twelve dollars on me each time. Are you going to work here, Mr. Rakes, if it's no harm to ask you? Lawd have mercy on you, if you are, but it's only your coming in from the country makes me ask if you are another of their slaves. Do they, owe you much, Miss Guffy?"

"Arrah, what ails you, girl? Do you think I'd let them run up on me? 'Twas only last night, out in the hall, for everybody to hear, speaking right up to her, I says, 'Pay me what you owes me, Mrs. Birtwhistle, and small thanks for me own.' She felt like

she was shot; she slunk away like a shot cur. She wouldn't wish it for ten dollars for me to be telling you this blessed minute. I bought these ribbons, too; they go nice with the waist. And have you got a good place, now?"

Mr. Parker sitting down again.

"The two of us is working in the same house, you know. They can't do enough for us; the other help dassn't say 'boo' to us; but if my gentleman friend hadn't bought me this dress-- I suppose you know?-- I'd have scarce a rag to my back. As you well know, and as is no news to you, Miss Guffy, every time we comes here, it's 'Just five dollars more,' or 'tis 'Just ten dollars till a week Friday.' I took my solemn oath I'd come here no more; this one done the same. They paid our passage over, but it's been well taken out of us. Yet here we are; 'tis always some nature we must have for our own, I suppose."

"Ho! ho!" was Katie Dunphy's whole-souled way of laughing; she beat her knees with her large red hands; then shook the hands excitedly at her acquaintance across the street, leaning toward the window, shouting:

"And is the old man's corns better? Ah, 'tis the sad infliction! And what are you cooking? Yes, I see the smoke of it. Lamb? Egg-plant, you say? Oh, steak?" Katie standing up, and leaning out the window.

"I ain't really a lover of steak myself-- what? I say I ain't really a lover of steak myself. No, not a lover, but likes it rare, with the blood running out, but not a lover of steak, really. What? Corn-beef bash?"

"I guess," said Katie, returning to the sofa, "she don't like the smoke seen coming out of her room. She's closed the windows."

"Faith, I don't know," Miss Guffy was saying. "The two of them is good to me. There's no denying that. They don't pay me, and I'm the poor slave runs all their errands for them, the bigger fool me for doing so, but they took me in off of the streets when I had nowhere to lay my head."

Crouching Mr. Parker seemingly oblivious to everything; Sim tracing spirals on his straw hat, listening to learn all that he could; Mr. Parker sitting up and winking at Sim.

"Oh, you men!" said Emma Dunphy, blithely slapping out a hand at Mr. Parker. "Can't a girl have a bit of gossip with you?" all three girls laughing, momentarily checked in their discussion, then up and at it feverishly again.

"But, about being good to you, Miss Guffy! How can you say that? They couldn't be good to anybody. Good to themselves and naught else! She fixed our pockets for us, and yours, too, as you very well know. How will Katie ever face her, with that new hat on, I don't know. It's too bad the poor girl would buy a hat for herself, isn't it? How can you say they're good to you? I thought you had more spirit, Miss Guffy. I'd thought, one day last winter, she'd yanked the arm off of me,

when I had the audacity to look in a shop at a bit of fur, at a dollar-ninety-eight, for my neck. Did I get it? Ask me do I get anything I need. If she was the right sort of woman, she'd say, 'Emma, you'll catch your death unless you get something for your neck.' Indeed, Miss Guffy, 'tis licking the hand that strikes you to say they're good to you. My!" Emma's dull face lighting up, like a shadowed globe suddenly transfixed, with a sunbeam, "how her ears must be burning!"

Miss Katie Dunphy slapped both of her knees and pinched them hard; she turned to the left and grimaced, and squirmed, grimacing, to the right, pinching hard, which was her silent way of laughing.

"But did we see e'er a sight of New York, when we first come over? Was there any Statue of Liberty or e'er a sight of Broadway for us? No; but put right to work in a hotel, starting to earn back for them, sixteen hours a day, if you don't mind, till we got in private families. Oh, we're well satisfied where we are now, aren't we, Katie? Our lady can't do enough for us; can she, Katie? Around at our heels all day-- 'You're doing too much,' she's saying. The two of us is playing the lady most of the time. Just wait, you, till she comes down and sees Katie's hat; you'll see the spite crawling in her face, you will, indeed! The audacity of you, Kate, to go dare buy anything for yourself, while they-- though I will say he's not so bad--"

"He's not so bad," agreed Katie, sitting with knees far apart, and a large band clasping each knee. "She ought to make him work at something more regular; 'tis all her fault."

"He's not so bad," said Miss Guffy. "And, speaking now, I could tell you something if I wanted to. Has she any gratefulness for all you've done for the two of them, Miss Dunphy? No, but 'tis keeping the door, here, shut when youse come calling, so the neighbors won't be seeing you. Oh, hoity-toity! we're up in the world! We're manufacturers, we are, and look out would the neighbors see our nieces are living-out girls and late landed. 'As good as gold, the girls are,' that's her saying it; good as gold, the both of them, but do look and act so servant-girlish. They've not been over long, but they'll learn'-- so keep the door closed on yez whilst ye're learning."

Whereupon, rival torrents:

"Indeed, but we could be dressed in silks if we'd kept what belonged to us!" and "We haven't learned to sponge on others, anyway!" and "We could be dressed in the finest in the land, wasn't our hearts so soft!"

"You could indeed, girls, dear! But, as you say, he's not so bad. This is a pretty waist, isn't it? I can wear it in the fall; so durable; only four-ninety-eight."

"I declare!" exclaimed the Miss Dunphys.

"They've been good to me--"

"She has not! she has not!" the white Miss Dunphy cried so quickly that she

sputtered.

"And, with all his faults, I must say she's the only one to blame for it."

"Will you excuse me a moment?" asked Sim. With his teeth he nicked a finger-nail. "Say! this is fierce for me, you know! On my word, I don't know where I stand here, you know. Why, just see where I'm placed. I got hold of one of Mr. Birtwhistle's catalogs, and I wrote to know if he had any vacancy. And he told me to come on. Say, this is fierce for me! You know how it is when you leave home and come to the city for a job-- well, you can't go back, that's all. In our town there ain't a man, woman or child isn't saying, 'Oh, my! Sim's got a job at last!' That's right, that's what they're saying. I don't think I've been treated right. I came here expecting to see a big factory, where everything you could think of was made and sold-- his catalog said so. Don't he sell anything, then?"

"Arrah, man, dear---though you're only a boy," Miss Guffy said roughly-- "of course he do sell everything under the sun, he do, and makes good money, at times, he do!"

"If she'd only manage him better!" said Miss Emma Dunphy. "He means well, but he's no man of business; is he, Mr. Parker?"

"I don't see anything here," said Sim "Has he a storehouse?"

Then the white Miss Dunphy took a kindly interest in Sim; she rose, as if to take a chair nearer Sim, but then sat again beside her terra-cotta sister, elbows on her knees, her globe between her hands.

"Did ye never hear tell of the mail-order business, sir? Was he better managed he'd make out well enough with it; no money invested; no office rent nor taxes nor insurance to pay; no bad debts-- he'll tell you the same; I got it all from him-- but he's crazy, or, at least, my aunt don't manage him right, sir. The first thing, when he gets a little money, he must hire a lot of help, and talk of having a floor in a skyscraper-- and the faker he is!-- not saying one word against him-- but he is, and the Universal Manufacturing Company, how are you!"

"Indeed, how are you!" said Miss Guffy.

Miss Katie Dunphy beat her knees and shouted: "Ho! ho!"

"But, as I was saying, the grand ideas he has! Living here, and having a telephone number printed on his bill-heads! Do you look about you and see the telephone, sir? 'Tis down in the cigar store, is that number. And him advertising to have correspondence sent to Desk K or Desk W-- is it your desk is Desk K, Mr. Parker? And 'Established in 1776' on his letter-heads; 1776, how are you!"

"Upon my soul, the grand ideas of him would be the ruination of anybody. And the sense of him, or, rather, his lack of sense, advertising skates and snowshoes for sale in the summer, and fans and that like in the winter; no judgment at all, and everything mixed up; no letters filed, and no orders promptly attended to, and be

can't stand prosperity."

"Oh, a man of business?" said Mr. Parker.

Sim was asking: "How is the business done, then?"

"I'll make it plain to you, sir," said Miss Dunphy, waving her hands, her elbows on her knees. "He advertises, and sends out his catalogs, like as if he has in stock all the things he advertises, but he hasn't; not a blessed trick nor toy nor patent baby-carriage. I doubt if there's anything he sells that he ever set eyes upon. The McGuire Supply Company has everything, and they fill his orders for him. Say, for instance, he gets an order from Mr. Brown, of Newark, for a coffee roaster. Mr. Brown sends him twenty-five cents in stamps-- everything's in stamps. He writes Mr. Brown's address on his own printed label, and sends that with sixteen cents to the jobbers, keeping nine cents of it himself. The jobbers sends the roaster, with his label on the package, to Mr. Brown, with nothing to show it don't come from Mr. Birtwhistle, who gets nine cents by the transaction."

"That's not so bad," said Sim thoughtfully. "The only thing is, are there orders enough?" Miss Guffy felt with her foot under the table, reached down, and dragged out a potato-bag, pear-shaped with contents.

"Full of letters we gets," she said, holding up the bag. "We keeps them and sells them to a letter broker, who rents the names in them to business men all over the country."

"Oh, Desk K?" asked Mr. Parker.

Voices on the stairs; voices of Mr. and Mrs. Birtwhistle, and of the passionate but gentle woman whom Sim had seen on the stoop. "Sure, send him right up! He'll be heartily welcome. I'll treat him like one of my own family.

"Lovely voice!" said Miss Guffy sneeringly.

Mr. Birtwhistle had gone away with a baker's-window face; he came back with the jeweler's-window face of a man indifferent to expense, however that change may have been wrought. He instantly saw the Miss Dunphys, but was pleased to turn to Miss Guffy and say:

"I wonder where the girls can be keeping themselves? I'm very glad they are staying away from us. You know, Miss Guffy, how I hate Katie. Oh, I can't bear Emma. As you know, I'm always saying 'The girls! why don't they keep away from us? If there's anybody I can't bear-- ' Great heavens, Miss Guffy! do you suppose they heard me?"

"He's the devil's own! if he isn't the devil's own!" said the Miss Dunphys, delighted with this pleasantry. "Sure, there's no use asking you, Mr. Birtwhistle, how you are. You never looked better."

Mrs. Birtwhistle had gone out with a cup of soup in her hand; she came back with a sandwich in one hand, and a kitten in the other.

"Emma and Katie! Didn't I say I heard Katie?" going to Emma, kissing her and giving her the sandwich, kissing Katie and giving her the kitten. "Will you have a little mustard on it? And how are you?"

"As good as gold," said Emma, without much resentment-- Miss Guffy warningly shaking a fist at her.

"But to business! to business!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Emma, pardon me; Katie, pardon me. To business with this young man!" He strolled about the room, said "To business!" again, and stopped in front of Sim, who, between Miss Guffy and the stove, sat facing the sofa.

"So now, young man, your case!" his important manner making Sim sit up respectfully. "Young man, you probably but very likely do not know that I have a recognized standing throughout the United States." To one side of Sim he stood, by the corner of the stove, the back of his left hand behind him, pressed against a back suspender-button; wrist of his right hand against a front suspender-button; right hand held out, flat palm upward. The others, except Mr. Parker, talking; Mr. Parker typewriting, cautiously printing a letter, and then crouching, with kangaroo hands, finding the next letter.

With his right hand out flat, Mr. Birtwhistle affected a moment of deep thinking; then an affectation of deep breathing, which threw out his massive chest and increased his look of importance. "I received your esteemed favor, and answered you with an offer, I believe. My own early experience has nursed a warm spot in my heart for any young man just embarking, as a lowly pioneer, upon the waves of life."

"Yes, sir," said Sim respectfully.

"Then let me tell you something that I have never ceased to regret. I am not a man of education, which is why I need the services of some young man who has enjoyed better advantages than I ever had. I have had only two years' schooling in my life." Right thumb closed upon two fingers, leaving two fingers out flat. "When I started out in life, I only had five dollars, Mr. Rakes. I often look back and wonder how I did it all." A rhetorical pause. Mr. Birtwhistle, having thrust out his chin toward a costly bronze figurine on the mantelpiece, rigidly held his chin where the pause had found it, both arms out wide. "As business has grown, I have employed help to answer inquiries, address envelopes, mail circulars, and attend to the routine work, but those were the happiest moments, alone with my wife at my side, addressing my own envelopes, and establishing myself upon a sound basis. I need more help. I need a young man of the education your esteemed favor indicates, for I have had but two years' schooling myself." Wrist back to button; two fingers held out. "This enterprise of mine is only in its infancy, so here, young man, is a chance to grow up with me. I must have my own enterprise. Am I a mere machine to work for some one else?-- though for a young man to do so is the only way to acquire experience. I was never

born to be the serf of an alarm-clock, but, when, I get up in the morning, to take a spin in my auto or a canter on horseback. before breakfast, whenever weather permits."

"Yes, sir," said Sim.

"He's up in the clouds again," said Mrs. Birtwhistle indifferently to a Miss Dunphy. "Let him rave. Guffy, shut the door-- I don't want that kitten to get out, or Tunnan will catch it and torture it. He's a beast and a torturer, Tunnan is; begs for the kittens to drown when anybody's cat has kittens; goes down to the Greek restaurant to kill their chickens for them; took the mouse-trap out of my hand yesterday to take the mouse out by the tail and beat its head against the wall. Shut the door, Guffy."

"My dear!" Mr. Birtwhistle had said to his wife. He continued:

"We are as yet but in our infancy, but I see my way, now, at last-- "

"If it's for any other reason than the kitten you want your door closed-- " Emma was saying-- Miss Guffy shaking a fist warningly.

"--at last. Already I can hear the click of many typewriters and the tread of my staff of clerks, busily hastening to and fro."

Bones and heads of fish on the floor; pan of ashes spilled under the stove; the blotchy green walls; the bronze figurine like something of value that had fallen into the caisson from a wreck overhead.

Mr. Birtwhistle was pausing; hands on hips, head wagging slowly from side to side-- then:

"Let me congratulate you, Mr. Rakes, upon your serious determination to make a start in life. In conclusion, let me say that success requires three things: honesty, industry and perseverance. I think I must have impressed you--" He stepped forward, with a paternal hand intended encouragingly for Sim's shoulder, already patting.

"Oh, cusses!" A suspender-loop had caught upon the corner of the stove, switching him back sharply. Important manner snatched away from him; Mr. Birtwhistle pretending to study his suspenders, as if a serious mishap had befallen them; Emma, saving heavily to Miss Guffy, who was clapping her hands:

"Maybe you're laughing at something I said and didn't mean?"

Studying his suspenders, Mr. Birtwhistle, was saying:

"You take Mr. Rakes up to Mrs. Maheffy's. You can do something, can't you? You tell him he's to board with Mrs. Maheffy, as we're full-up here. Well, can't you?"

Mrs. Birtwhistle pretending not to hear this, ignoring Sim, pretending not to be aware of his existence.

"Isn't Mr. Parker looking well?" from a Miss Dunphy.

"What?" Mr. Parker slowly rising, a finger hovering over the typewriter, and cautiously pressing as he rose.

"I'll take you up to Mrs. Maheffy's," he said.

"Yes," hesitated Sim; "though I have hardly arranged--"

There was nobody with whom to arrange-- Mrs. Birtwhistle ignoring Sim; Mr. Birtwhistle sitting on the sagging sofa, between the Miss Dunphy, his head hanging almost to his knees; Mr. Birtwhistle murmuring plaintively: "Got a match? Anybody got a match?"

"Well, yes, all right," said Sim helplessly; and leaving helpless-looking Mr. Birtwhistle he went with helpless-looking Mr. Parker.

"I was that mortified!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I don't know what the young man must think of us. He held his hat all the time, not daring to put it down on anything; he was forever switching his satchel from one spot on the floor to another."

"What do I care?" Mumble from Mr. Birtwhistle. "What do I care what anybody, thinks? Never be mortified, my dear."

"Oh, 'tis easy for you to talk! What! must you leave us, Emma?"

"Yes; we only run in for a moment. This one got her pay, and I'm not short, by any means." Heaviness smiled brightly from Emma's face. "Don't house two go short for the lack of anything we've got. This one wouldn't see you go short; neither would I."

"Oh, cusses!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, slightly raising his head.

The flower-pot Miss Dunphy standing in front of him, laughing her shout of "Ho! ho!" her large red hands swinging in front of her like mittens that are hung by a cord from shoulders.

"Of course," said Mr. Birtwhistle, leaning back against the wall, "a little capital is just what I do need, and what, at times, every business must need; and every penny invested with me is absolutely safe, but, even if there is no risk, I can't take any more from you girls."

"I'm speaking for this one, too," said the white Miss Dunphy. "We must look out for our own. 'Tis only nature to stand by your own, and if us poor folks don't stand by each other, who will? This one and me don't need anything this month."

"Never!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle, violently folding his arms. "Say no more; my mind is made up!"

"You were good to us; you were, indeed, and we don't forget and don't want to come here with one arm as long as the other. 'Tis a true saying a bird can't fly on one wing, you know."

Mr. Birtwhistle's arms unfolding, as he took a Miss Dunphy's hand in each of his. "You're very good girls, but I can't let you help us any more, even if the investment is good. I'd die first; I would, really. Things are brightening up so that we are on the very verge of success, even if I was perhaps a little impulsive in sending for this young

man who came to-day. When I wrote to him I was, perhaps, a trifle more enthusiastic than I had a right to be. Anyway, it stands, Katie and Emma, that I'd die before I'd take another cent from you. I mean that absolutely; that is final, really. Then when will we see you again? Come down next Monday evening, and we'll all go to the theater together."

"Raving!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle in a hopeless, indifferent way. "He's raving again. Theater, is it? And poor Mr. Parker without an extra sock to his foot, when he steps, with his bad shoes, in a puddle, never looking where he's going. Let him pay off some of what he owes before he talks of theaters."

"Make things worse! make things worse!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, releasing the bands of the Miss Dunphy, who were moving toward the door, pausing a moment to watch Miss Guffy, who, at her table, was pasting a row of paper wrappers. Out in the hall with them where Katie began to shout good-by.

"Then we'll be down as soon as we can. You never see anything of Mrs. McGee, her whose husband wasn't dead two days when she went out with a light hat?"

From the stoop Katie shouted:

"Oh, you never see anything of the girl over the way-- the Jew girl who married the nigger? He must of hyppitized her. The cigar man seen him going in there one night and said, 'Say, where are you going?' He said, 'None of your business!, just so impydent!"

Out in the street, Katie shouted:

"Oh, listen! the dream I had last night. I dreamed I had two of my old teeth in my hand and three others fell out. Losing false teeth means losing false friends. Some one," said Katie, "must of called her away from the window."

"Don't be shouting so; 'tis ridiculous!" said Emma.

"Let me alone!" said Katie. "But would you be coming down to a store-window with me? There's the makings of a silk dress I'm wanting to see."

"Faith, but you are putting on airs, Katie!"

"'Tis airs of me, maybe, Emma, but for two years, at home, my heart was set on a silk dress; one that could stand alone, Emma. 'Twas the first thing I thought of when we landed, but something always putting me off--"

Some one was calling them; Mrs. Birtwhistle, holding her toppling peak of hair, was running after them. "Katie! Emma! well, you know the rest, I'm thinking. You know how he is. Oh, yes, so noble and grand one moment, and then sending me for-- you know the rest, I guess!"

"Why, sure, dear, wasn't we offering it to you? You can have all you want--"

"You know how he is."

"You can have it for the asking. Wasn't we willing and more than willing? We'll have to step in this doorway a minute, though."

So, some minutes later, Mrs. Birtwhistle returning to the office of the Universal Manufacturing Company; the Miss Dunphy going down the street.

"Our unfortunate selves! our unfortunate selves! Now where's the makings of a silk dress?"

"Will you never have sense, Katie Dunphy? You were going right home to a bit of sewing, were you? Yet you makes right for here with your wages. Will the two of us ever have sense, I don't know? Slaving and scratching, and the devil a cent to show for it! Where's my money going? my lady is asking me, for 'tis all I can do to keep myself presentable." Here Emma's illumining smile.

"Faith," she said, and found comfort in it, "with her hair scraped up, Aunt Delia is a fright, she is!"

"Ho! ho!" shouted the potted-palm Miss Dunphy.

CHAPTER II

MORNING. The Maheffy kitchen, second room from the front windows; central gas burning over a round table, covered with white oilcloth; four ordinary chairs and a high-chair around the table; a plate upside down in front of each chair; a milk-bottle full of water in the middle of the table. Eight o'clock; late breakfast, for Mr. Maheffy had a not very exacting job, in the engine-room of a hotel, where he worked, he had seen a man killed. Damage suit; hotel's claim that accident was result of man's own carelessness; Mr. Maheffy the witness; hotel very kind and easy-going with Mr. Maheffy.

Red curtains in each kitchen doorway; stove at east side of room, and a red-curtained closet at one side of the stove; a red-covered wood-barrel at the other side of the stove. With an infant in her arms, and followed by a little girl, Mrs. Maheffy came in from the front room; Mrs. Maheffy in a wrapper of the extravagant, and repeated extravagance of, design usually seen in wallpaper. Mrs. Maheffy sat the infant in the high-chair, and got a frying-pan from the closet, placing the frying-pan upon the stove.

Mr. Maheffy, in his socks, shoes in one hand, came into the kitchen from the bedroom between the kitchen and Sim's room-- Mr. Maheffy's bleak face; a dismal face with a straggling yellow beard; desolate, like waste land, with canebrake on part of it in winter. Mr. Maheffy setting his shoes down beside the chair nearest to the bedroom doorway, then going to the stove, pulling out the damper.

"Don't be so smart!" said Mrs. Maheffy, pushing in the damper. "I'm building a fire. Don't be so smart around a kitchen. You see too much." Mr. Maheffy, paced up and down from curtains to curtains.

"The devil take the lodgers!" said Mrs. Maheffy; she slapped the hands of the infant, hands stretched out for the water-bottle; then went to Sim's door, rapping on it-- door instantly opened; Sim following his landlady to the kitchen-- sleepy eyelids of Sim; his irregular mouth, with upper lip out of line slightly, as if raised by an invisible toothpick between his teeth.

"Tis the young gentleman!" said Mrs. Maheffy. "Sure, what did you bother to put your coat on for?" Mr. Maheffy had turned quickly, and was slowly pacing back to the front-room curtains. He kept his back turned to Sim, put his hands in his

pockets, and whistled, which confused Sim so that he started to sit in one chair, seemed to think that Mrs. Maheffy indicated another chair-- bouncing from one chair to another, leaned away back in a chair, as if thinking he should not have sat down before breakfast was ready, then crouching far forward so as not to lean back in the way of pacing Mr. Maheffy.

"If you can eat in a kitchen without no oilcloth on the floor!" said Mrs. Maheffy, in a high, affected voice. "The landlord's been promising us a new floor, and these boards would wear out any oilcloth; but the landlords do nothing for you; they're very independent."

"Oh, that's all right!" Sim laughed a silly, embarrassed little laugh; leaned back, crouched forward; made crosses and multiplication marks with knife and fork; took hands away from knife and fork; hands in his pockets; hands out of his pockets.

"It was very different where we lived before, and bad the whole floor to ourselves-- indeed, there wasn't scarcely anything but doctors and dentists and undertakers in that street. How do you like your eggs, sir?"

"Me? Oh, any way!" Sim examining a fork, then quickly putting the fork away from him.

"Some likes them hard and some likes them soft and some likes them medium."

Sim laughed his silly little laugh. Mrs. Maheffy put eggs in a gallon tomato canful of boiling water. In the high-chair, nearest the stove and opposite Sim's chair, sat the infant; an infant with a double chin and the bald head and high, intellectual forehead of a United States Senator; of the ideal United States Senator; Senatorial infant looking at Sim and smiling benevolently. Sim turned his plate over, played with his knife, quickly ceased playing with his knife, saw a dish of butter, and, for the sake of any little act that would seem to mean easiness and at-homeness, took butter.

"Oh, look, mamma, at all the butter he's taking!" from Miss Maheffy, a child with hair close-clipped; with the faintest of possible eye-brows; with ears pressed to her head with strips of plaster.

"You mustn't tell on me!" Sim still more confused.

Mrs. Maheffy was like a hall-room frying eggs and boiling eggs-- her wall-paper wrapper-- Mrs. Maheffy like a hall-room turned inside out. She was snapping at Mr. Maheffy:

"Look around and see if there's anything else wrong! I never see such a man; no standing him since he got back. Nothing suits him. It everything was so refined--like where you were, 'tis a pity you didn't stay there. You must make yourself right at home, Mr. Rakes--"

"Oh, me? I always do. That's my way."

"Sit down," in rough pleasantry to her husband. "If I hit you one lick with this frying-pan, there'll be less old guff out of you." Mr. Maheffy sitting beside Sim,

again whistling; then he snarled because his wife set his cup of coffee at his left, instead of at his right side.

"You-- you damn old ex-convict, you!" shrieked Mrs. Maheffy. Then to Sim: "Oh, Gawd pardon my soul-- but you do get so tough in the tenements. I been on the bum since I been in the tenements. They're such a coarse lot here, Mr. Rakes. I can't sleep nights for fear of being in the same house with such rough people," pouring out coffee, turning to jerk the frying-pan. "You must help yourself, if there's anything I can't get around to, sir. There's those says I have a proud walk, and that keeps me back. Let them; 'tis my own walk."

"Not at all!" said Sim-- Mr. Maheffy sitting with his straggling-bearded chin sunk between high-pointed, thin shoulders. He stirred his coffee, almost having to reach up to it, so far down under the table was he sitting. Then he turned around in his chair and put on his shoes. "Sit down and have a bowl of coffee," he said to his wife, speaking with motionless lips.

"Oh, my!" Mrs. Maheffy's high, affected voice; "oh, now, I couldn't think of touching it, now you said bowl to me. Oh, my! anything in a bowl is so coarse. I couldn't; my appetite is gone, now you mention bowl to me. If I hit you a clip on the lug," to Miss Maheffy, "you'll stop that, I bet you! No, no, don't do that, Helen, dear! Mamma won't speak again, Helen!"

"And," to Mr. Maheffy, "don't dare to ask me to sit down in my own house! I'll sit down or stand up, just as I please, in my own house." Sliding fried eggs from the pan to his plate; Mr. Maheffy, his high-pointed shoulders almost to his ears, his elbows spread far apart on the table, slashing the eggs with his knife, cutting them up fine and cutting furiously before eating.

Boiled eggs for Sim, and Sim breaking egg-shells unskillfully-- Sim's nervous hands-- hands even going into his pockets, but right out again to go on with shell-breaking-- Sim putting down his spoon-- snatching it, because it touched Mr. Maheffy's plate.

A woman out in the front room-- another tenant of the house-- coming into the kitchen-- a woman who wore no shirtwaist, but held, at her throat, a towel around her shoulders. "Good-morning, Mr. Maheffy!"

Mr. Maheffy looked up at the top of the curtains and whistled.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Maheffy, I thought you were alone," glancing at Sim; "but if you're washing to-day, can I have the loan of your suds after you're through with them?"

"You can have them and welcome!" said Mrs. Maheffy cordially.

"The cheek of her!" after the woman had gone. "So afraid they'll miss anything; any excuse to come in and see any new boarder we have-- oh, now, baby!" Senatorial infant starting to roar and to pound, with a cup, the tray of the high-

chair. "Oh, see de man, baby!" Mrs. Maheffy, taking the cup away, pointing with it at Sim. "Oh, laugh, baby! see de man!" Whereupon the Senator took a better look at Sim, laughed sarcastically, but then smiled indulgently. Whereupon Sim felt called upon to say, "That's a fine big child! How old is he?" and to "press astonishment when told, though not knowing whether he should regard the age as astonishingly great or astonishingly little. He tried to look benevolent, but gave that up, so great was the noble and intellectual-looking infant's superiority.

"Give me a penny!" cried Miss Maheffy, who had been sitting on the floor, chanting meaningless jumbles, such as "'Mary went to church with her baby in a trunk and fed the horse pork-chops."

"Give me a penny!" Rakes, Shakes, Jakes, Snakes! Oh, what a name! Is that his name, mamma?"

Some one else out in the front room. A stocky woman with string-beans held up in her apron, appearing between the red curtains, asking: "You want to see me, Mrs. Maheffy?"

"I do not, Mrs. Schufelt. And who was telling you?"

"'Twas my little boy says so," staring at uneasy Sim.

"Then 'tis lies your little boy's telling you, to ma'am."

"He did? I'll fix him! I'll beat him within an inch of his life!" Mrs. Schufelt running to the hall, calling down the stairs, as if to a little boy: "See here, if you tell me such things again! You let me catch you telling me things not so again!"

"Give me a penny!" cried Miss Maheffy, seizing Sim's arm and shaking it so ferociously that a strip of plaster loosened, and one of her ears shot out of captivity.

"Lambie! lambie! you mustn't speak so to the gentleman-- oh, look out or de man carry you away with him, baby!"

Mr. Maheffy rising, and Sim saying to him awkwardly: 'Good-morning!."

"I haven't gone yet." Mr. Maheffy laughing dismally.

"Oh, excuse me!" Mr. Maheffy pacing and whistling.

When Sim went down to the office of the Universal Manufacturing Company, there was no click of typewriters, and no tread of busy clerks. Door of the front room, east, closed, and Sim rapping and rapping, but no one appearing. Sim going out to stand on the front stoop.

The house was a cataract house this morning; the fluttering of wash from the windows; falls broken by ledge-like fire-escape landings. On the stoop, under the falls, were three maids of the mist, two sitting down by the sidewalk, burly-backed maids, gently swinging baby carriages in front of them; and the young woman in the sleeveless wrapper standing on the sidewalk, one foot up on a step so as to have a projecting knee to perch a child upon. The three maids were watching an elderly woman who was coming up the street; her head in a black hood that made her head

block-shaped; with her hands held primly together in front of her she carried a prim little satchel. This woman was kicking a bit of folded tobacco-wrapper in front of her. Finally she stooped and picked it up, for to one with one's mind upon dollars, it did look rather like a dollar bill.

Mrs. McKicker, the old miser!" said a maid. "Ain't she the miser!" another maid. "Own a dozen houses and live here! That's the way they get rich, though. They say she picks over the cabbage leaves in the grocer's barrel--"

"Hush, would ye!"

"Good-morning, Mrs. McKicker! I hope you're well this morning."

"You do?" Mrs. McKicker standing by a baby carriage. Her head back, and the prim satchel raised high in both hands; Mrs. McKicker cackling a jeering laugh; then, passionately:

"You do? Oh, I like sincerity, I do! I like to hear people say what they mean! I like sincerity!"

"Yes, Mrs. McKicker, there ain't no trusting them's not sincere."

Mrs. McKicker taking a newspaper from a baby carriage. "Is this this morning's paper? I didn't have a penny with me; it's robbery buying a paper every morning to keep track of the kidnapping case. That poor mother! my heart goes out to her. I have the means, but didn't have a penny with me. See that!" indignantly pointing at the newspaper, which, with the satchel, was in her left hand; "only a line! I'm glad I didn't buy it!" Going up the stoop, she smartly rapped the shoulder of the sleeveless maid, who withdrew a projecting, burdened knee to make room, saying: "I like sincerity!" her head far back; the satchel high in both hands; the cackling, jeering laughter.

"Musha, bad luck to her!" when she was well out of hearing. "The old rip, with all the money she's got-- there! there! da! da! did it wake up? And won't spend a cent for a paper! Willie! Willie! where's Mollie?"

Miss Guffy appearing in the doorway; shabby but vivid Miss Guffy; sunset in a smoky atmosphere; a salmon-colored waist; vermilion ribbon around her neck; bright green ribbons at her elbows.

"Merciful heavens!" cried Miss Guffy, clasping her hands, casting her eyes up, as if witnessing a frightful disaster; "is it yourself?"

"No," said Sim. "Is this you?" his nervous grin distorting his mouth.

"Go right in, sir. Everybody's up and having breakfast Was it yourself knocking on the door? I'm just running out for a loaf of bread. Did you have your breakfast? Go right in, sir." She went down the stoop, looking back to wave her hand toward the hall, repeating: "Go right in, sir!" and down the street, drawing up her left shoulder, so that shoulders seemed of equal height; conspicuous Miss Guffy; misshapen in salmon, vermilion and bright green.

"Isn't she the bold thing!" from the maids of the mist. "Willie! Willie! You'd be thinking any one so unfortunate would dress quiet and try to keep out of sight. Willie! Willie! oh, you bad child! I'll fan you if you don't keep out of the gutter that dress on clean this morning, too! Yes, if it was the will of God to afflict me so, I'd keep mighty quiet and out of sight."

When Miss Guffy came back she carried a cabbage as well as a loaf of bread; afflicted, but defiant, Miss Guffy; expressing rebellion with vermilion; conspicuous, in her deformity, in salmon; wearing bright green in her refusal to efface herself because misshapen.

"Mercy! you didn't go in yet?"

"Well, I didn't like to," said Sim. "I mean I didn't like to just yet--"

"You did not! you did not, indeed! Let ye come in now, then."

In the office of the Universal Manufacturing Company, Mrs. Birtwhistle was frying a steak, and Sim saw the cause of the blurred suggestions of deep-sea monsters upon the green walls. It was too much trouble to chop sticks into stove size, with a tilting pan, Mrs. Birtwhistle was frying on a fire of long, protruding sticks, making an aperture, between stove and pan, out of which smoke was puffing.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Birtwhistle," said Sim, trying to express with his voice that it was indeed a pleasure to see Mrs. Birtwhistle again.

"Good-morning," replied Mrs. Birtwhistle sullenly, frying steak, keeping her back to him. And Sim's attempts to ingratiate himself-- "Fine morning; it might be very warm, though; but the sun so bright--"

"You can sit over there I suppose!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle, in green that had wilted yellowish, twitching a hand toward the deeply indented sofa between the front windows. Messrs. Birtwhistle and Parker were having breakfast in the room beyond the overall-like curtains; a lamp was burning there, and, between the straddling curtains, Sim, though he looked that way only covertly, caught glimpses of this room. Mr. Birtwhistle calling affably:

"Ah, Rakes, my son! With us? Early bird, hey?" Glimpses of this inner room, a pile of unwashed dishes precariously balanced upon the front end of a long table; Messrs. Parker and Birtwhistle at the other end; behind them, against the wall, a bulk of wash waiting for a wash-tub.

In the front room, Mrs. Birtwhistle was saying helplessly to Miss Guffy: "Where's the key to the wood-shed?" Then: "Did you see my hair-pins?" leaving the stove, going around and around, one hand searching on tables and along the mantelpiece.

"I did not, girl." Miss Guffy having a languid manner, during which her rotund, beetle-like hair sagged down-- a big, tilted beetle-- upon her higher shoulder-- a galvanized beetle; Miss Guffy crying:

"I'd 'a' been back half an hour ago, but for Mr. Dickerman's clerk keeping me. He

will keep me, talking to me; there's no getting away from him. 'Indeed, Mrs. Guffy,' is his very words to me, 'if I wasn't a married man, you're the first woman I'd be thinking of'-- the cheek of him! 'Indeed,' says I, 'I'd not marry the best man living.' 'Is your husband long dead?' he asks me. I tells him. 'My wife,' he says, 'is in very delicate health.' 'Sure,' says I, 'she was never your equals in the first place.' I'm sorry for the poor man; with her everlasting doctor's bills, he'd be well rid of her. But this cabbage here! That's what I gets for washing his white jackets for him. Ho! ho! that's the way to get along. I'd of had a can of corn, too, if Mr. Dickerman didn't come in just then."

"Did you see my hair-pins?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle, searching and searching in places where she had searched and searched before. Upon the office tables were white tablecloths; in red letters each bore the name of a hotel; souvenirs; but clean white table-cloths; and the center of a mirror over where Sim was sitting had been polished; rim of greasy glass around the clean spot.

"Are you feeling pretty well this morning, Mrs. Birtwhistle?" inquired Sim, striving to ingratiate himself with one who was not kindly, disposed toward him.

"Did you see any hair-pins? Oh, yes, I'm well, I suppose. Watch the steak, Guffy. I almost wish it would rain, Guffy, and I'd just whip some things out on the line, and wish 'em that way."

Appearance of Mr. Birtwhistle. Clean shirt of window-shade yellow, broad as a not very wide window-shade; Mr. Birtwhistle's flat face above, like a face pressed and peering over a window-shade pulled part way up from the bottom. Mr. Birtwhistle shuffling in gorgeous velvet slippers, each embroidered with a pink and purple eagle; briskly rubbing his hands, exclaiming:

"To work! to work! this will never do! Asbury, to work! Rakes, my son, to work! What! what! you and Miss Guffy been out for a morning walk together? Never do I never do! Delia, you must watch Miss Guffy!"

"Indeed!" said Miss Guffy languidly; beetle toppling to her higher shoulder; "the gentleman wouldn't be seen out with the likes of me."

"Not at all!" said Sim confusedly.

"To work! to work! You can go in and eat, Miss Guffy-- if Asbury left anything for you. Asbury! Asbury!"

"If I didn't forget you, Guffy!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I suppose you can have a bit of my steak."

"Don't mind me, girl, dear! Sure, any pickings will do me," replied Miss Guffy, listlessly going to the inner room, Asbury Parker listlessly coming out, not noticing Sim, going to the table nearest the front window, reaching under the table, pulling out the typewriter, which had been on the floor all night, blowing away the dust that covered it.

"Mr. Birtwhistle," said Sim, with every sign of great effort, "you-- well, you haven't arranged with me--"

"To work! Everybody to business!"

Sim glanced weakly and appealingly at the back of Mr. Parker's head. "You know-- shall I sit here?" pointing to the table nearer to the door, no longer trying to say whatever he wanted to say.

"Oh, anywhere!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, sliding into the sofa indentation that Sim had left. "Miss Guffy will show you what to do, or Asbury will. Where's the morning paper?" Mr. Birtwhistle stretching out on the sofa, feet slanting, slippers hanging perpendicular from his toe-tips. "Delia! did Miss Guffy bring in the paper? Maybe she'll go out and get it for me? Like a good soul, Miss Guffy?"

"I will, indeed," said Miss Guffy, appearing between the blue curtains. "And gladly, and be back in a minute. No, I don't need no penny," going to the hall door. "I'll snap up a paper under my arms when nobody's looking." Mrs. Birtwhistle, behind the curtains, complaining: "Where's the knife? I had it a minute ago. Where's the knife, and me just using it? Let him go to the devil, Guffy! let him wait on himself and get his own papers."

"Coarse language in there! coarse language!" said Mr. Birtwhistle indifferently, lying on his back, dabbing with his hands, trying to catch flies.

"My eye with you, you lazy dog!" mutters behind the curtains. Sim, embarrassed by these little connubialities, sitting at Miss Guffy's table, squirming from one strained attitude to another.

"Good-morning!" said Asbury Parker, turning to Sim.

Asbury," said Mr. Birtwhistle, snatching at flies, "we'll have some new letter-heads printed; these don't quite make us important enough. We must print on addresses-- oh, any addresses will do-- of our London, Paris and Berlin branches, and speak of this as the 'home office.' A lot of banks, too, Asbury, for references-- nobody ever looks up references. What are the most important banks, Asbury? I don't know much about banks," snatching at flies.

"Here are some letters on file, if you want to go through them," said Asbury Parker to Sim. From under the table he brought forth the "file," which was the spout of a can of insect exterminator, with letters impaled upon it.

"But what about them? I don't know what to do!" nervously, despairingly from Sim.

"Don't you?" said Asbury Parker.

"And," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "print something about our sales department, and give our cable address. How is 'Whistlebirt?' Why do they mix up a name for a cable address? I don't know, but think it adds a finish. How about a long-distance telephone number, Asbury? There's finish to that, too--"

Miss Guffy, returning: "The morning papers is all gone. Will I see can I get you an evening paper? I will and gladly."

"Never mind, Miss Guffy; I'm busy now. I'm engaged, just at present. Did you have your breakfast? You'd better start folding catalogs. Making out all right, Mr. Rakes? You'll learn."

Miss Guffy taking a chair to sit by the window and fold catalogs-- Sim jumping up. "Oh, have I your place, Miss Guffy? Excuse me!"

"Sure, sit where ye are." And roughly: "Don't make us laugh, putting yourself out for the likes of poor Guffy!"

"No, but--"

"Don't make us laugh, man, dear! Any place is good enough for Guffy." Miss Guffy motioning, in seeming anger, to Sim to sit down, turning to her chair by the window, finding Mr. Birtwhistle's feet on it.

Mrs. Birtwhistle. Mrs. Birtwhistle saying sneeringly: "That just suits you. Lie on your back and catch flies! Now you are doing what you're fitted for."

"You stop bothering me! I tell you I'm busy. We'll have on the letter-heads, 'President Birtwhistle, Secretary Parker, and Treasurer Rakes.' Don't laugh, Rakes, my son. When we once get going, it'll be no small thing to be treasurer of us. Out in Three Stars, Nebraska, a young man in this business cleared a hundred thousand dollars in two days--"

"For God's sake! what are you doing now?" exclaimed Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Feet up on a chair where people'll be sitting! You dirty slouch, you'll never have anything fit for anything."

"If I get up at you!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, up on an elbow-- sinking back. "Pardon me, Miss Guffy."

"But what am I to do?" Sim nervously to Asbury Parker.

"Those are complaining letters," explained Mr. Parker.

"Yes; but what of it?"

"There are complaints in them," Mr. Parker explained.

Miss Guffy sitting at the east window, with a pile of catalogs beside her, and a board on her lap. "Oh, how fine we are! Such airs!-- oh, my! but aren't we fine this morning!" said Miss Guffy, looking out bitterly at same well-dressed woman passing.

"Never mind my feet!" grumbled Mr. Birtwhistle. "It's a wonder you wouldn't do something yourself. Everything swept under the sofa, to breed disease for us!"

"If you weren't doing nothing so much, you wouldn't see so much!"

Miss Guffy mumbling and grimacing at the woman who had aroused her bitterness. "Complaining letters?" asked Sim despairingly; "what shall I do with them?"

"There are complaints in them."

Then, after a moment, Sim glanced about him. He whispered:

"What wages do you get here, Mr. Parker?"

Mr. Parker rubbed his forehead.

"Well, Mr. Rakes," said Mrs. Birtwhistle coldly, scowling at Sim's back-- she was still searching along the mantelpiece for hair-pins-- "how do you like the Maheffys?"

"I didn't notice much about them," said Sim indifferently; but then he turned around and asked quickly:

"Is it true Mr. Maheffy is an ex-convict!"

"Oh, shame on you, Rakes!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Gossiping like that! Anyway, let me think; I'm busy!" A snatch, and this time he did catch a fly, which, between a second finger and a thumb, he shot across the room.

"It's true for you!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle eagerly, going to the end of Sim's table and leaning on it. "Isn't it a great wonder she ever dares open her mouth in this house? Why? What did she say, Mr. Rakes?"

"Well-- there was some reference to it, I believe. I don't just remember how it came out."

"The poor devil! I feels sorry for him," said Miss Guffy.

"He burned some horses for the insurance on them, but he got pardoned right out. He's a brute!"

"He is that; he's a wicked brute!" said Miss Guffy.

The sound of indistinct profanity shouted in a room upstairs; the oath repeated, but this time, instead of being shouted angrily, it seemed uttered as if appealingly.

"That poor old man's dying," said Mrs. Birtwhistle to Sim. "It's old Mr. Strout; he won't last long now, because he's had two strokes already."

"Yes?"

"Yes; the second took all his speech away except one oath that was always on his lips when he was well. Now that's all he can say, and he shrieks it when he's mad about anything, and then his daughters draw down the shades to darken the room, like you cover a parrot's cage to make it keep quiet. He swelters in the dark, and tries to tell them he'll be good if they'll only give him air and light, but his oath is all his lips will form; so he groans it or roars it. You can tell by the sound whether he's wrathful or imploring something.

"But, Birt," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "I don't think it is very nice of you to leave Mr. Rakes to look after himself so. Haven't they told you what to do, Mr. Rakes? Then I will. It's our ads that don't satisfy us. You can write ads, can't you? But you must know what we want first-- ah, 'tis grand to have an education! Then, Mr. Rakes, don't you do another thing till you learn what our wants are. I'll get you printed matter, and you do nothing but read it till you understand our needs--"

A woman in the doorway. A big-headed woman, wearing a little, round, black

hat; black veil, from the hat, in a cylinder around her head; massive nose, projecting lower teeth, almost horizontal, and forcing her lower lip far out.

"Ah, Mrs. Kilgore!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. not much interested. "You'll have to excuse me. I'm so busy; but come in-- you're not disturbing me. I'm so busy, Mrs. Kilgore--"

"That was!" the woman interrupted with a deep, bass voice.

"Oh, yes! I forgot; excuse me; Mrs. Melody, I should say. And how's Mr. Melody?"

"The knees bothers me," said Mrs. Melody, stooping to rub her knees, dropping carrots from a paper bag. "Does the knees ever bother you, Birtwhistle? 'Tis the rheumatiz. Does the knees ever bother you, Guffy?" Sim offering his chair to the woman; but Mrs. Birtwhistle bringing a chair from an inner room; Sim picking up the carrots; caller sitting between Sim's chair and the stove; Mrs. Birtwhistle starting to sit on Sim's table, but then leaning against the wall.

"Have you a bit of a fire going, Mrs. Birtwhistle? I was thinking, was you boiling anything, I'd be dropping my carrots in the pot, and save the two fires going this hot day," sitting, rubbing her knees.

"Sure, leave the carrots. Are you still down there, Mrs. Kilgore?"

"That was!"

"Oh, excuse me, Mrs. Melody; I do forget."

"'Tis me day off, Mrs. Birtwhistle, you know. And are ye not coming back to work yourself!"

"Indeed not! My old man is earning good money now. I was only down there till we could pull through. And how's Fanny?"

"But you might be earning for yourself. 'Tis too bad you were not working there; there was six poisoned with the corn beef, and two in the hospital."

"Oh. wages?" whispered Mr. Parker to Sim.

"I could smash him!" This from Miss Guffy, who was looking at a newspaper that she had pulled from under the sofa. "I could smash anybody that gets rich in this world. They can't but by thieving and grinding the poor. I could smash him!" She tore up the newspaper, and threw the pieces upon the floor.

"And how's Catherine, Mrs. Kil--ody?"

"Oh, Catherine! Florrie Noonan never came back. Oh, Catherine asks me two or three times do I ever see you, me never letting on I've moved next door to you. What they don't know will be of no information to them. Josie was asking."

"Not the one in the green waist?"

"You know; the skinny one. She had a scrap on watch-- expressed herself something terrible, and the steward listening. You know the blonde?"

"The tall, new girl?"

"The one on the mangle, in the plaid skirt. She do have me cursing so, God forgive me, it was better I stayed away from there. Does the knees ever bother you, Guffy? Then I'll be in later for the carrots?"

"Yes; and you must drop in some evening, Mrs. Kilgore."

"That was!"

"Such talk!" grumbled Mr. Birtwhistle, when the woman had gone. "Delia, you don't have to talk over all your business in public, do you? You might better be tidying the room. No one lives like us. Mrs. Maheffy always has things presentable--"

"Go up and live with Mrs. Maheffy!" passionately. Sullenness for a moment, and then:

"Will I be bothering with her old carrots? Will I?"

"Cook her carrots," said Mr. Birtwhistle with a look of judicial gravity. "To work! to work!" but he reached out for a piece of newspaper on the floor. "Say, hand us that, will you?"

"You're as able to get it as I am," Mrs. Birtwhistle retorted, again searching for hair-pins.

"Well, get me a match! Can't you get me a match?"

"Go get your own matches!"

"Oh, cusses!" said Mr. Birtwhistle weakly, lying back on the sofa, his feet sprawling out on the floor; Miss Guffy handing him a piece of newspaper from the floor; Mr. Birtwhistle eying a fly on the ceiling, mumbling:

"Mrs. Maheffy never had rooms like these!"

Mrs. Birtwhistle: "Shut up!"

Mechanically from Mr. Birtwhistle: "Room's shocking!"

Mechanically from Mrs. Birtwhistle: "Mind your own business!"

"Live like beasts!"

"Get decent rooms, then. A woman could work like a horse, here, and never have anything done."

"I won't stand it!" sleepily.

"Well, get out, then! Nobody wants you here!" Sim pushed his chair sharply back from the table; for a moment he seemed to think something over; drew his chair up to the table again.

"My little dear," drawled Mr. Birtwhistle, "would you be so kind as to get me a match?"

"Why, certainly, darling!" mockingly from Mrs. Birtwhistle; but she went amiably to him, searched in his trousers pockets, and brought forth a match for him.

"Many!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, in a lazily elliptical way of saying "Many thanks!" "She's looking pretty good this morning, isn't she, Miss Guffy?"

"Grand!" said Miss Guffy.

"Go on with you!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle, laughing. She went beyond the blue curtains, and came back with a handleless mop.

"I love your big feet!"

"Say, you mustn't bother me so! I'm busy."

Mrs. Birtwhistle rubbed the mop on the oil-cloth all around and in between the velvet slippers, and moved backward. "No, don't stir," to Sim; for, as she had polished only the center of the mirror, she cleaned only the center of the oilcloth, down on hands and knees, looking up to laugh at Miss Guffy:

"She's at it again!"

"Bad luck to her and the money she never come honest by!" said Miss Guffy angrily. Loud pounding in a room overhead. "She's the biggest old thief in the world, or she'd never have that much money."

"Mrs. McKicker is putting a new lock on her door," said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "She has every kind of a padlock and spring-lock on now. It's an insult to the whole house to see the locks she has on her doors!"

"Oh, that reminds me!" exclaimed Mr. Birtwhistle, sitting up. "Get me my coat, Miss Guffy."

"Are you going to do that?" demanded Mr. Birtwhistle, standing up-- Miss Guffy handing him his coat, which was upon the window sill, easily within his reach.

"You're going to be such a fool as to add a dollar to your own rent, and nobody asking you for it?"

"Am I a pauper to pay less than others?" said Mr. Birtwhistle excitedly. "You got the rooms for a dollar less than any one else pays--"

"If you have a dollar to spare you might better spend it on your own wife."

"Me pay less than anybody else! Miss Guffy, here are fifty two-cent stamps. Like a good one, run up to Mr. McKicker, and tell him that hereafter we shall pay as much as anybody else. I'd go myself, but there might be somebody ahead of me; I can't bear to wait for anybody in anybody's office-- my cussed pride! my cussed pride! Oh, cusses!"

"I'm sure 'tis very honest of you, Mr. Birtwhistle," said Miss Guffy.

"Very foolish, you mean!"

"Ah, yes! 'tis very foolish of him."

"He's an old fool and always will be. His pride! 'Tis but to show off and make a big fellow of himself."

"If I get up at you!"

"You! You're too lazy to get up at any one! Make a big fellow of yourself, and your wife with everything she owns in the pawn-shop! Oh, I won't be still! Mr. Rakes must know you sooner or later. Pay him more? If I could, I'd pay him nothing!"

"Right!" said Miss Guffy, excitedly jumping up and clapping her hands. "My blessing on you! My blessing on anybody who won't pay nothing. You might better run up a month on them and get out; or two months if we can; so don't think of such a thing, I beg you, Mr. Birtwhistle. Look at this picture they call beautiful! 'A beauteous wife,' is she? Holy farmer! a regular old biddy! God save the mark, everybody gets in the papers is beautiful, nowadays!" murmuring: "Beautiful? I don't see it. Beautiful, how are you! What next?"

"Was that Mrs. Kilgore?" asked Asbury Parker.

"Miss Guffy, will you take this money up to Mr. McKicker?"

"Oh, I suppose I'll have to, if you say so."

"I'll go with it, if you want me to," Sim offered hesitatingly.

"Oh, Mr. Rakes, I can't bother you. Miss Guffy don't mind--"

"I'd take it very kind of you, sir," said Miss Guffy. "It do make me sick to go near them. It takes me down with the sick headache for the rest of the day to see anybody that gets along in the world by robbing and thieving from the poor. He's a thieving old money-lender! Real estate business, how are you! No, but a thieving old robber, wringing his twelve per cent. from the poor! The bloody misers to live here, in this tenement, when they've got money enough to live on Fifth Avenue! How clean she is, even if she does live here with us; buying wood and making the woodman leave it at the door to search in it for cockroaches-- ye divil, ye!" slapping a traveling spot on the wall-- "before she'll bring the wood into her rooms. And when she goes in the street cars, fetching a newspaper with her for to sit on!"

"We pay everybody in stamps," said Mr. Birtwhistle, drawing in his feet, leaving on the shininess of the wet oilcloth two dull, dry footmarks where his feet had been.

"Well, will the stamps be all right?"

"Oh, sure! We get our money a good deal in stamps-- but if you will be so kind as to go up to the office? It's the third floor room, right over this."

"Well, you see," said Sim, stammering, speaking with great effort, flushing, "I don't believe in running errands for anybody-- I mean I'm doing this for Miss Guffy--" Worse stammering, still greater effort. "I'm not running errands for you, Mr. Birtwhistle, you know."

"Oh, of course! Now, Delia don't let me be disturbed; I'm very busy, and mustn't be disturbed."

CHAPTER III

WHEN Sim returned to the office of the Universal Manufacturing Company, commercial activity was about as when he had left it. Mrs. Birtwhistle was not in the room. Mr. Birtwhistle, on his back, was, with thumbs and forefingers, making rhomboids at the ceiling; Mr. Parker was doing nothing; Miss Guffy, glancing out the window, suddenly held herself as straight as she could, head far back-- and, in disdainful bitterness:

"Oh, mercy! but how fine! She do think herself the real thing, but if she could only see herself as others see her! Oh, hoity-toity! if she only knew how all the men, women and children in the street are laughing at her."

"Don't be so bitter!" said Mr. Parker brightly.

"Go 'long with you!" replied Miss Guffy, laughing good-naturedly.

"Ah, Rakes, my son, what was said? What did they say, Rakes, my son?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle, with hands on his chest, fingers interlocked.

"I don't know," said Sim glumly.

"Thought it a little unusual, maybe?"

"Oh, very! Couldn't get over it! They said it was very honest of you, and praised--"

"I don't want praise. I never did a thing in my life for praise. I always do according to my own view of right and wrong, and never gave any consideration to what may be thought of me. They thought it a little remarkable, hey?"

"Couldn't get over it! But do you know a big-headed fellow, whose coat and pants are too short, who comes here?"

"Can't say I ever noticed. Why?"

"If he values his big face any," ferociously, "he'll keep out of my way! I'm always polite to everybody, and everybody's got to be the same to me. That's my way, that is! I don't care what anybody thinks of me, either, I don't. Oh, this fellow got gay with me, and-- oh, I'm not the kind always telling what they'd do! But if Mrs. McKicker wasn't there, I'd have shown him--"

"The impertinence of him!" cried Miss Guffy. "The audacity of him! Now dare he! The cheek he's got! You can't tell who you'll meet nowadays. I'm sure you am indeed a perfect gentleman, Mr. Rakes. He must be one of Mr. McKicker's political

friends; Mr. McKicker's a great politician."

"But they were a little impressed, were they?"

"I said to him-- just like this! He was sitting here, and here I was standing-- I said to him: 'Look here, my friend, you speak or I'll speak; we can't both speak at once, so you shut up!' Ferocious Sim! drooping eyelids, like nails of thumbs turned down-- *habet!*" "I don't care what I say to anybody when I get going. I'm not looking for trouble over every trifle, but I won't be imposed upon. I like business talk and business ways," said Sim looking waveringly at Mr. Birtwhistle. "If I'm engaged to do anything, I want to know what the wages will be and-- all that, you know."

"Indeed you do, man, dear-- sure you're only a boy!" said Miss Guffy; "but indeed you do not!" Mrs. Birtwhistle returning to the room.

Mrs. Birtwhistle, pleasantly, to Sim: "Sure, why don't you take your reading matter out to some park, Mr. Rakes? 'Tis stuffy here, and you might as well be enjoying the air."

"No; I'm going to make a study of this." Sim at his table, before a pile of advertising matter.

"Or, let ye go down to the river and read it over."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Birtwhistle. I've started here, you see."

"My! but you will have your own way, Mr. Rakes. Then take off your coat and be comfortable."

"Oh, that's all right-- thank you. I'm all right as I am."

"Sure, take off your coat and be comfortable," said Miss Guffy.

"No. I'm all right, thanks."

"And you'll not take your coat off?"

"No; never mind me, thanks. I'm alright."

"Ain't he the obstinate thing!" said Miss Guffy. Sim flushing a little, as if obstinacy were the noblest of human qualities, and he flattered that obstinacy should be observed in him.

"Keep out of your neighbors', you," said Mr. Birtwhistle to Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Where was I? Now you're so smart-- where was I?"

"Tunnans! and you've been taking snuff with her. You can't be with such people out being low yourself."

"That's a lie!" replied Mrs. Birtwhistle, rubbing her nose. "Anyway, you keep a tight watch on your wife, don't you? This might as well be State's prison! You do as you please, and then spy on a woman! Where was I? Who was I with?"

"If you were a nice little woman"-- indolently, indifferently-- "you wouldn't even speak to such cattle, but would attract better people."

"I would? Where am I to find better people in this hole you make me live in? How am I to attract them? Will I run out in the street and grab them and drag them

in here? Oh, yes, and say, 'Come here! I'm just the nice sort of person would attract you!"

"Well"-- indolently-- "she is a nice sort of person-- sometimes. Isn't she, Miss Guffy?"

"Oh, you!" then, after a moment: "Do you care particular for the evening paper? Oh, you! Well, I can be nice when you are, and then only; and, 'pon my soul, when you're ugly I can be just as ugly."

"You should have a mind of your own, and not be according to the way some one else is."

"Oh, no, I'm whatever way you make me. You can have a good home, and everything nice and homelike, if you want to. Indeed, I have a mind of my own-- I'm whatever you make me."

"Well, I must be a pretty inferior kind of a sculptor or molder most of the time, then."

"You! You couldn't sculpture anything!"

"Come sit down," said Mr. Birtwhistle; "I've got some great plans." He moved toward the wall, and she sat beside him, smoothing his hair-- slovenliness and dirt and the walls with the smoke stains. The matronly little girl came into the room. She was lugging a pallid infant, with a mouth sagging to one side and tongue protruding, in one of the hands clasping the infant she held a rag with a needle and thread dangling from it. "Mamma's coming down, Mrs. Birtwhistle!" going to the chair that Mrs. Melody had sat in, behind Sim, squirming and twisting in it, to have the infant upon one knee so that, with needle and thread, she could go on hemming the irregular-shaped rag. "Hush! my little baby's asleep, and you mustn't wake him." Infant with protruding tongue, eyes wide open, staring up at the ceiling.

Mrs. Tunnan! Clean, pink wrapper; frowzy hair; greenish eyes, buxomness; double-barreled effect of her large nostrils under an upturned nose.

"I just run out on him," said Mrs. Tunnan-- expressionless greenish eyes; stolid face; lips rounding into a little tube with each slow, deliberate word. "I hit him a clip with the chair. Did you hear us, Mr. Birtwhistle? Sure, you must have heard us, and why am I asking?"

Mr. Birtwhistle, grumbling, drew up his legs behind his wife's back, legs down to the floor, so that he was sitting beside Mrs. Birtwhistle, making room at her other side for Mrs. Tunnan-- heavy dark nostrils of Mrs. Tunnan; nose like a tiny model of a subway entrance; nostrils almost perpendicular and shaped like soles of tiny feet; soles of the feet of a fairy, rest of him investigating within.

"You're looking fine, Mrs. Tunnan!" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Go 'way! what's that he's saying, Mrs. Birtwhistle?" Mrs. Tunnan standing up, looking into the mirror over the sofa. "Go 'way! 'tis that I have good corsets on,"

looking steadfastly at her reflection, smoothing down her pink sides; then:

"And is that the lad, Mr. Birtwhistle? How are you, sir?" to Sim. "And the sleepy look you have! You sleep too late!" Sim laughing confusedly. "And are you late landed? Sure he's not Irish, but Yankee. Your eyes is glued together with the sleep. Would ye get up earlier of a morning!"

"Thanks," laughed Sim, not feeling resentment when confusion was upon him; "I'll take your advice."

"But I'm glad you're not drinking, Mr. Birtwhistle, for I have no money to treat." Mrs. Birtwhistle nudging Mr. Birtwhistle; Mr. Birtwhistle muttering "No!"

"Goodness!" said the little Tunnan girl; "this great lump of a child has the life dragged out of me!"

"Sure, give me your bundle, you poor child!" Mrs. Tunnan taking the staring, silent infant, sitting, wrestling it from knee to knee.

"'Tis not the first clip I've given him! We were married scarce on three days," lips slowly forming different-shaped, short tubes, "when he comes home to me at two in the morning. 'Lizzie,' he says, 'cook me them pork chops,' is the salute he gives me. 'I'll pork chop you, at two in the morning,' I says to him. 'Then, Lizzie,' he says, 'the easiest way is the best!' to me in my bed; and he ups with a chair and throws it in on top of me. 'Then this time, 'tis no lie you're telling, my fine bucco!' I says. 'The easiest way is always the best!' and leave him stretched for dead from the pasting I give him, at two in the morning." General amusement; Sim laughing a loud, ingratiating laugh.

"'Twas me honeymoon" said Mrs. Tunnan sentimentally.

Shrill whistling in an upper hall. The Birtwhistle' next-door neighbor calling up the stairs, "You mustn't think she's always here, Mr. Tunnan. I haven't set eyes on her all morning!"

"He's calling me," said Mrs. Tunnan, imperturbably. "Did you hear the two of us scrapping, Mr. Birtwhistle? Faith, you must of! And Mrs. McKicker comes in to us. 'Upon me faith,' I says to her, 'when I'm as old as you I'll settle down, but now I'll enjoy life, I will!' making out to give Looey another clip. 'And do you call me old?' she says. 'Sure, you're old, you with your face wrinkled like a bit of fried bacon.'"

Miss Guffy clapping her hands and crooning: "And what did the old thing say to that, Mrs. Tunnan?"

Whistling in the upper hall, and cries of "Lizzie! Lizzie!" Mrs. Maheffy's next-door neighbor calling up the stairs, "As I live and breathe, I haven't seen her since yesterday, Mr. Tunnan! Indeed, and I have plenty to do and all I can do without having callers. I should say I have enough to do!"

"Lizzie! Lizzie!" a door slamming furiously.

"He wants me," said Mrs. Tunnan, her face expressionless. "He's that uneasy if I'm

a moment out of his sight."

"They, all are," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Oh, the men!" exclaimed Miss Guffy. "I hate them! I suppose I'd marry, like the rest, if it was God's will, but I hate them! I never saw the man that was worth my old shoes. You couldn't give a snap of your fingers for the lot of them, all in a bunch together."

Mr. Parker jumping up, seizing Miss Guffy around the neck. "You'd have me in a minute, you know you would, Miss Guffy! Tell the truth!" Miss Guffy giggling, pushing him away, "I would, indeed! the prize I'd win! 'Twould be indeed the happy day for me. Go back to your work, like a nice man-- the prize I'd win, and wouldn't I be lucky!" Mr. Parker back to his chair, crouching dull-eyed over the dusty typewriter.

"To work!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, sitting up straight-- chest falling, his back curving against the wall again. "Well, what was said, Rakes? They were a little astonished, were they? The truth is, I ought have waited a month. Truth is, I need that dollar. I almost admit I ought have waited till next month-- I'm satisfied!"

"Would make a big fellow of himself!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "But if he knew how everybody can see right through him!"

Mr. Tunnan coming into the room Wedge-shaped face; round, yellow cheeks that converged toward a red nose; cheeks like the convex sides of old yellow saucers, with a radish pinched between them.

"Mr. Birtwhistle, please!" Mr. Tunnan whining, excusing himself, explaining himself. To the little girl he shouted, "What do you sit there for, when Mr. Birtwhistle hasn't no chair?" roughly slapping the back of her head.

Said Mr. Birtwhistle, "Let her alone! What do you want?"

"That's no way to speak to Mr. Tunnan!" broke in Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Oh, Tunnan! Tunnan? that's pretty good! Who's Tunnan? How many times have I got to put him out of here? What did I tell you, the last time you stuck your face in here, Tunnan?"

"Oh, Mr. Birtwhistle, please! Please, Mr. Birtwhistle!"

"Sit ye down, Looey; 'tis but Mr. Birtwhistle's way of speaking, and you ought to know him by this time. I'm sure Looey's as good as any one else around here."

"Will you have a light, Mr. Birtwhistle?" said Mr. Tunnan, striking a match, holding the flame to a cigarette in Mr. Birtwhistle's mouth, Mr. Birtwhistle permitting him to hold the match, but not puffing the cigarette. Mr. Tunnan holding the match until he burned his fingers. Mr. Birtwhistle striking a match of his own. Then:

"Well, sit down, Tunnan, but if you start any of your cursing or dirty stories, out you go!"

"Mr. Birtwhistle, please!" and Mr. Tunnan to Sim:

"Do you want a light, mister?" offering Sim a lighted match.

"No! No, thanks."

Lighted match held to his cigarette. For a moment, as if admiring Mr. Birtwhistle's way, Sim ignored the offered light, looking toward Mr. Birtwhistle, as if for approbation; then came squirming and twisting in his chair, and his weak, silly, little laugh. "Thanks!" said Sim, courteous for no higher reason than his inability to offend.

"He needn't of hit the back of my head!" the little girl was complaining, Mr. Tunnan turning to her furiously, raising his hand as if to strike her again.

"Be still, you!" Mrs. Tunnan dragging from knee to knee the silent, staring infant. "Ida, you better be still! Ida, you killed your little brother, you know. Be thinking of that, Ida; you rolled over on your little brother, Benny, in your sleep, and smothered him to death. You know you did, Ida, and when you think of killing your little brother Benny, you'd better not have a word to say.

"That do keep her quiet. The childer is the devil!" said Mrs. Tunnan to Mrs. Birtwhistle in an undertone. Little girl, with forearm over her eyes, starting toward the door, but glancing at Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Come here, darling!" Mrs. Birtwhistle's arms out to her. "Come here, darling; you couldn't help it, and it's nothing to your shame that's cast up at you so!" Little girl running to her, falling on her knees, head in Mrs. Birtwhistle's lap.

"There! there! darling; don't you cry."

"Oh, I wish!" sobbing in Mrs. Birtwhistle's lap-- "oh, I wish I was grown up and big! I'd leave them!"

"It's a shame, Mrs. Tunnan! a shame for you to talk to the child so!"

"Don't you mix into other people's affairs!" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"So?" Mrs. Tunnan astonished, holding her lips for a moment tube-shaped, without speaking, but her face expressing feeling of no kind. "It do keep her quiet, it do. Go out and play, Ida, and don't have no such carryings-on; a big girl like you, whining and crying so!" Little girl clinging to Mrs. Birtwhistle's lap, Mrs. Birtwhistle softly stroking her hair: "Darling, don't you cry!"

Mrs. McKicker looking in the doorway. Mrs. McKicker wearing a hat gay with red roses-- an effect like that of a stern gray shaft of a ruined temple, straight and lonely in a Grecian plain, and made burlesque by some mocking hand that had placed millinery on top of it. Mrs. McKicker seemed to have come upon business, but Mr. Birtwhistle fascinated her. Mr. Birtwhistle leaning back against the wall, his pink-and-purple eagles stretched out on the floor.

"The most sensible man in New York!" Mrs. McKicker cried. "I like to see a man who doesn't believe in killing himself. That's right." She drew back in the hall-- gay

hat reappearing: "The most sensible man in New York! Ida, do you want to come shopping with me?" Little girl up from her knees and running out in the hall.

"Heavens above! such a hat!" from Miss Guffy, who was still folding catalogs on a lapboard. "Oh, I wish I had money and could dress! I'd make that woman turn green with envy if I had the clothes. It'd be my joy to make that woman turn green!"

"Sit over here, Looey!" said Mrs. Tunnan. Mr. Tunnan going to the west window-sill, cringing past Mr. Birtwhistle, as if a ball-player had knocked a foul into a tree above him-- shoulders and head cringing, as if he knew not where the ball would land.

"When I think of that old thing upstairs, and all the money she's got, it makes me sick!"

"Sure, here's your only friend!" said Mrs. Tunnan, unbuttoning her wrapper and drawing from her bosom a bag made of ticking, tied around her neck. "'Tis here is your only friend; your money is your only friend. I've got a friend so long as I got this. Sure, there's no small change in it, or I'd treat"-- bag back to her bosom. "Do you want that carrot on the mantelpiece, Mrs. Birtwhistle? Then I'll take it and be planting it. 'Twill sprout. Did ye ne'er see the plants we got in our back window? And 'tis mortal hard to get good earth for them. I goes up to the Farm School with a bag with me, and reaches under the fence, and scoops up handfuls of dirt for them. We have a lovely geranium, and not one dead leaf off it; but the sun's too hot, and we put an umbrella over it the daytime. I wonder if I ought put in a stick and brace it up, Looey?"

"The morning-glories we got!" said Mr. Tunnan eagerly. "Every morning the lot of us, kids and all, makes one race to see if it's two, or eight, or twelve blossoms out that morning. Maybe there's fifteen; then the surprise we get! And we got some nice weeds up to Fort George; didn't we, Lizzie?"

"Sure we did; the four of us up to Fort George, and sitting by the roadside--"

"I could point you out the very spot by the roadside"" excitedly from Mr. Tunnan.

"The lot of us!" Mrs. Tunnan's greenish eyes staring, without expression, down toward her tubular lips. "And we brought along a fifteen-cent pound-cake. There was woods around. Looey saw something run across the road, that he swore was no cat."

"I could point out the very spot to you."

"And the lovely little plants we brought home with us, as good as ever after being in a glass of water. What ails you, Looey? They were no weeds, Looey. I'm that scared the umbrella will break the geranium. Could I tie it together and stick it with mucilage, did it ever break, Mr. Birtwhistle? Sure, when the first bud was on it the two of us was like it was the first tooth of little Ida."

"Mrs. Tunnan," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "'tis very wrong of you to speak to the child the way you do. If she was so unfortunate as to roll over on her little brother, you're darkening her whole life by reminding her of it."

"Arrah, whist, woman!" very indifferently. "You've got to say something to the childer, or they'll run away with you. 'Twas meself done it one unfortunate night, wasn't it, Looey? A bit of the drop too much, I suppose, and I rolls over on little Benny-- God save his little soul -- meself, and smothers him. 'Twas for the best, perhaps, like I always tells Looey."

"Mrs. Tunnan! Mrs. Tunnan! you'd be spoiling a child's whole life for what you done yourself!"

"It makes her behave when I cast it up to her," said Mrs. Tunnan reasonably. "Always remember that you killed your little brother, Ida," I says to her, and then there's not a sound out of her. Come, Looey. Will I take the carrot with me, Mrs. Birtwhistle?"

Silence for a moment. Then: "You're welcome to the carrot, Mrs. Tunnan."

"Come, mama's; tootsomes!" holding the silent, staring infant against her bag of ticking. In leaving the room: "Sure, Miss Guffy, what do you be leaning over your work so for? That's how you come by the lump on your back. Sure, the little boys calls 'Humpy' after you in the streets. You're deformed, woman; sit up!"

"I am," said Miss Guffy humbly; "'tis God's will so."

"Good-by, Mr. Birtwhistle!" said Mr. Tunnan.

Mr. Birtwhistle looked at him and sneered.

"Good-by, mister!" to Sim.

Sim trying to look and to sneer. Sim's look wavering, his sneer changing to a grin; Sim shaking himself in his chair, and saying, roughly, "Oh, you're going?" and down low, for Mr. Birtwhistle's approbation, "That's good!" this very low.

"Say by-by!" said Mrs. Tunnan to the infant. Infant smiling a flickering, ghastly smile; twitching lips of a galvanized little corpse.

"Isn't that fellow a dog?" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

In the hall, while still within hearing, Mr. Tunnan was saying: "Oh, he's a nice man! such a fine gentleman is Mr. Birtwhistle! Oh, such a nice man!"

"Guffy," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "where's my hat? Guffy, if I never live to do another thing I'm going right down to the Gerry Society to bring it onto these people. They're no fit parents for that dear little girl. Guffy, where's my hat?"

"You might better stay at home and pick up the room," grumble from Mr. Birtwhistle.

"I will indeed! I've nothing to do but wait on you morning, noon and night! I do more now than I'm paid for, seeing I get nothing. Guffy, where is the Gerry Society?"

"Mind your own business!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Say, I need that dollar very bad!"

You don't suppose-- perhaps you'd better go up, my dear, and explain to Mr. McKicker that we'll begin paying the extra dollar next month instead. You'll know how to put it."

"Indeed and I'll not! Am I always to be the one to do your crawling for you? But I knew how it'd be! Guffy, didn't I tell you? How noble he was? and now he wants his dollar back! What I want to know is, if you're going to get a pint of beer?"

"Not till the day's work is over!" firmly.

"Oh, medicine time!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle savagely. "Why should I have my beer dealt out to me at a certain time, like medicine? I want it for dinner time. It's a hell of a note-- oh, excuse me, Mr. Rakes! Guffy can go with the can-- can she? Guffy, you don't mind. Can she? Guffy will take the pail and go down to the corner?"

"I will, indeed, girl! I would, indeed, only--"

"Oh, go ahead, then!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "But this is the last time. No woman must go for beer from my house. In my house no woman must descend to any such tenement plane as that. That may be the custom in the tenements; this is my house, and I am above the tenements. I never had such advantages as you've had, Rakes, but had to work, and work hard, to raise myself to my present position-- yes, I said my present position! It is something to be Mr. Birtwhistle, of the Universal Manufacturing Company-- takes me to tell it!" Mr. Birtwhistle laughing heartily at his own conceit.

"Indeed I don't mind!" said Miss Guffy; "only, Mrs. Birtwhistle, the little boys do be hollering at me, thinking I'm running for so much beer for myself. Indeed, I'd do anything to serve you-- I'd go nights and gladly--"

"Let me go!" interrupted Sim.

"Not at all! I'll go myself! No woman must go for beer from my house! No hurry!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, stretching out on the sofa, accommodating his bumps to indentations in it. "Well, if you don't mind, Rakes." And, drowsily, "To work!"

"You see," Sim stammering, but forcing himself, "I'm not running errands for you, Mr. Birtwhistle-- I mean I despise running errands for anybody. I'm not getting beer for you, Mr. Birtwhistle-- "

"Oh, such a time you seem to make over anything, my son!" remarked Mr. Birtwhistle, in amiable irritability.

"No, but I mean--"

Mrs. Maheffy appearing, and shouting, in playful roughness:

"Here! where's my boarder? What have you done with my boarder? Maheffy must get his dinner, too; he thinks he ought to go do a little work to-day. It's his conscience; he thinks he ought to show up to his work, anyway; he's that conscientious!"

"But," said Mrs. Maheffy, in her high, affected voice, " 'tis very coarse, working in

an engine-room! When we was first married he had work where he wore white gloves the day long.

"Here, where's my boarder? Let ye come up to your dinner, Mr. Rakes."

CHAPTER IV

ALMOST ten o'clock in the morning. Sim coming sleepily down the stairs, on his way to work.

Office of the Universal Manufacturing Company! Typewriter clicking almost spiritedly; Mr. Parker, the operator, smoking a big cigar, and wearing a sky-blue shirt fresh from the laundry. Floor oilcloth shining with cleanness; mirror shining; mantelpiece figurine of bronze, standing on a bright, silk lambrequin; Miss Guffy, in faded orange and purple and yellow and red and pink, sewing, sitting in Mr. Birtwhistle's principal indentation in the sofa.

The walls had been washed; but the way to wash tenement walls is to start at the bottom; walls washed downward, causing a pale-green trickling in light green--caisson moved out of the Sargasso Sea and into bright depths hung with only a tracery of seaweed; monsters and derelict fragments gone.

Mr. Birtwhistle! Linen coat diverging from the top button, showing a triangle of black waistcoat--like tied-back sash curtains, with a triangle of black room-interior, and Mr. Birtwhistle's face pressed against an uncurtained upper pane.

"Mr. Rakes! Mr. Rakes! very bad! very bad!" Mr. Birtwhistle tearing up a letter and scattering the pieces upon the floor, head to one side, as he surveyed Sim, as if striving, behind window-glass, to look far up the street. "Never do! never do to come to work at this hour!"

"But," stammered Sim, "I was around hours ago, and you weren't up!"

"Oh, tut! tut! Mr. Rakes, you're only imagining that. Very bad to start imagining so early in the morning. All of us were up and holding a jubilee here five minutes after the first mail this morning."

"I was!" said Sim confusedly. "Anyway, I mean I stood on the stairs and didn't come down, because your door was shut."

"Our door shut? Open to the world, Rakes, my son! Let the whole world look in at us, now! Stock in the Universal is booming! As bury, have you got the letter to the McGuires written?"

"Bet your life!" said Mr. Parker enthusiastically. "Have a cigar, Rakes?" holding out three big cigars to Sim.

"Thanks," said Sim. "Just the same, your door looked shut from the stairs!" Sim

sitting down at his table, looking very glum, brooding, suddenly pushing back his chair, facing Mr. Birtwhistle. "Anyway, what does it matter? Look here, just because I'm in from the country, I'm not green, or anything like that, you know, and I'm not a child and not to be treated like one!" Pause; signs of great effort; then: "You haven't told me one word of what my wages are to be, and I'm not so easy as to start working for nothing. I like straightforward, business ways, I do. I don't care about the money, but I won't be treated like a child, I won't!"

Mr. Parker leaning over to him, patting his shoulder: "Say, Rakes, don't go losing your temper. What's the use? Old Birt is square with everybody in the world-- when he can be. He wouldn't play a mean trick on any one in the world-- except when he has to. He'll do right by you-- because, this morning, he can afford to. Everything's fine; don't go spoiling it."

"I'm not going to be treated as if I didn't have any strength of character," said Sim sullenly. "I've got lots of strength of character. No one can impose on me, and I don't care what they think when I tell them."

"What do you want?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Oh!" said Sim. "What do I want?" aggressiveness failing to pieces. "Well, I suppose that is more like business. Well, that's all right, then; I suppose I did lose my temper a little, Mr. Birtwhistle. I don't like to be treated as if I didn't have any strength of character, nor as if I never saw New York before, because I'll bet you I know New York as well as you do. This isn't my first trip here, you know."

"What do you want?" repeated Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Oh, that's all right; I don't want to be ugly, you know. I just won't be imposed upon; that's all. Oh, that's all right."

"Rakes, my son," said Mr. Birtwhistle, serious and friendly, "it's all my fault! It is, but what could I do? Everything was at very low ebb when you came here. How could I talk business? How could I talk anything? But I can now. Hey, Miss Guffy, you sitting over there and taking in every word to repeat it to the old lady when she comes in with the dinner."

"Mr. Birtwhistle, no such thing! My mind was far, far from the lot of yez. Good-morning, Mr. Rakes; excuse me for not seeing you before, but my mind was far, far from the lot of yez."

"Is there anything special you want me to do this morning?" Sim asked.

"Now," continued Mr. Birtwhistle, "I am in a very different position. We've caught our trade at last. Wait till I show you. The popular boy's boxing outfits, four sets; witch's dream-book; the new Franklin printing outfit; hit-the-nigger outfit; one gross of the great Japanese mystery--"

"Oh, by heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Parker, leaning back, slapping his knees, "we've caught the trade at last! Don't forget one gross of 'Art and Etiquette of Courtship,'

and all the 'Famous Comic Imitations' and the Crawling Alligators!"

"And," said Miss Guffy, "the Great Ten-cent Packages! I'd like to see what's in that, myself. We've sold dozens; I wonder what's in that. The Fighting Roosters and the Frightful Rattlesnakes and the Jumbo Microbe Finder-- I'll not rest in my grave if I don't find out what that Great Ten-Cent Package contains. Sure, what could it be?"

"What! all different orders?" Sim asked.

"Well, no," said Mr. Birtwhistle; "I wish it was. It's from some one stocking up a new store, out in Ohio, but it shows that our five-line ad is a great success. But to business, Rakes, to business! I'll pay you thirty dollars a week to start with-- merely a starter!" with a lordly sweep of his hand. "You're to be our advertising manager. That will be pretty good for a young fellow of your age, when we start up factories and offices of our own. We don't expect to stay here long."

"You bet not!" exclaimed Mr. Parker laughing and slapping his knees. "Didn't I tell you, Rakes, how square he is-- when he can be?"

"Here! Where's a chair? Give me a chair," said Mr. Birtwhistle, finding a chair and sitting beside Sim. "Yes, my son, there's a big future for all five of us, and I'm going to send Katie and Emma to school to educate them, so as to have everybody in it. Rakes, we'll look back to these days when all of us were struggling together. Let us have no fallings out to mar it, then."

"I'm sorry if I said anything," said Sim, his lips quivering, beyond his control. "It would be too nice to look back at for me to spoil."

"You didn't say a word that I don't give you credit for. What I say is we mustn't mar it by any disagreements, because there's something that seems beautiful to me in the lot of us having hard times, but sticking together and then all together enjoying what we struggled for. Miss Guffy in her automobile, for instance. Asbury, in evening clothes, with his box at the opera. How does that strike you, old boy?"

"Oh, by heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Parker, ecstatically making a ball of a newspaper, and throwing it at Miss Guffy. "But I don't think I'd care about a dress suit. Would I have to wear it?"

"Positively!"

"Would I?" asked Mr. Parker, looking worried.

"Go 'long with you!" said Miss Guffy. "What would the likes of me be doing in an automobile?"

"Doing? Why, throwing champagne bottles at the bicycle policeman pursuing you for breaking all speed regulations. That's what Miss Guffy, faithful little backbiter, and good but malicious little vixen, will be doing, and then putting up cash bail with thousand-dollar bills. Sim, wouldn't I be a hummer if I had money! Miss Guffy, I've been mean with you sometimes, but that will come out all right

when the Universal gets booming. I wish I'd named it the Birtwhistle Company instead, so Birtwhistle would be as well known as Universal. That'd be more satisfaction to me than anything else. That's my chief aim: to glorify the name of Birtwhistle. I admit it, you see. It's a failing. I know that, but can't help it Miss Guffy, look at the rich, powerful manufacturer, Isaac Birtwhistle-- that's only a way of mine, Rakes; I don't mean it. What'll she be doing, she asks, Asbury?"

"The dress suit worries me," said Asbury; but here he winked at Sim, to indicate that he was but humoring himself in a passing whim, and that his was not such seeming simplicity.

"Sure, I'd slave my fingers to the bone for you, Mr. Birtwhistle, for, in all the world, and since I was born, you and Mrs. Birtwhistle is the only ones ever good to me. Go 'long with Guffy in the automobile!-- she's crooked and ugly, and the sight she'd be! He does get that excited, doesn't he, Asbury?"

"Now, Sim, I don't want you to live here, you know. The rest of us will have to for a while, for a few weeks, maybe, but we're used to it. I haven't a word to say against the Maheffys, or anybody else in the world, for that matter, but I don't want you to live in such surroundings. We'll look through the paper, and see where there are lodgings advertised in a nice locality, and start you off, anyway. When your week is up, you'll get your thirty dollars, but here are ten now. You get a good room; no hall-room, mind you, but pay five a week for the room alone. Put down the whole ten for the room alone, and if you can't live in style befitting our advertising manager on thirty dollar a week, you shall have fifty!" holding a ten-dollar bill out to Sim.

"No, sir," said Sim; "that's not right, and I don't want what's more than right. I won't take one cent more than ten a week, because I don't know the advertising business. You take this back, Mr. Birtwhistle; my week isn't up yet, and when it is, Mrs. Maheffy's all right, anyway. You can't afford to throw money away so."

"Sim, old boy," forcing the bill into Sim's hand, "take it and buy a room for yourself. I won't have it on my record that I caused you to live in such surroundings as these."

Surroundings coming into evidence here; sounds of some slight misunderstanding between Mrs. Maheffy and a top-floor tenant.

"No. I won't!" said Sim; "I couldn't be so mean."

"Buy a hat with it, and come to me for more. Buy a cigar with it. Go out and buy a good ten-dollar cigar, Sim; you've got to live in style befitting the advertising manager of the Universal Manufacturing Company-- what could I have been thinking of, not to have named it the Birtwhistle Manufacturing Company? I suppose I didn't realize how important we'd become."

"Oh, what do we care for ten dollars?" said Mr. Parker, snatching the bill and

lighting a match.

A shriek from Miss Guffy, who pounced upon the bill.

"As if I would!" laughed Mr. Parker.

"Is the lot of yez gone daffy, entirely?" asked Miss Guffy. "Here's Mrs. Birtwhistle now. No; but I'll give the money to her, and then 'twill sure go to some good purpose."

Voice in the street: "Guffy!"

Voice on the stoop:

"Asbury!"

Voice in the hall:

"Birt!" Notes of awful distress, appeals for help in the voice. Bundles appearing in the doorway; Mrs. Birtwhistle's right arm squeezing a large ham which was the slippery, insecure foundation of a superstructure of many wobbly bundles, embraced by Mrs. Birtwhistle's left arm, top bundle pressed down by her chin.

"Quick! take the potatoes, Asbury!"

"Oh, the potatoes?"

"Guffy! the potatoes!" Mrs. Birtwhistle's face turned downward with the pressing of her chin, but her big blue eyes rolling up in distress.

"And are you back already?" asked Miss Guffy, trying to brace the bundles with one hand, piling them on Sim's table with the other hand.

"If," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "the market's one block or two miles away, I always reach home just on the second when I can't go another step without dropping everything. Good-morning, Mr. Rakes. Sure, why don't you take your coat off? I've spent a host of money. Isn't that a good five cents' worth?" pointing to a bundle.

"Grand! munificent!" exclaimed Miss Guffy.

Messrs. Rakes and Birtwhistle laughing in sympathetic superiority to excitement over a good five cents' worth.

"But that'll be enough cabbage, won't it-- two young heads?"

"Munificent!" declared Mr. Birtwhistle. "Oh, you! But look at these potatoes! The miserable scoundrels!-- they tried to cheat me on the measure! you can't be up to them, the miserable scoundrels!"

"Wretches! vampires!"

"Oh, you!" Mrs. Birtwhistle in a neat black skirt and white waist. Her two little teeth, like side-by-side aprons of waitresses, far away. There were a few wrinkles near her big blue eyes, and touches of gray in her brown hair, but her face was pink, instead of sallow, however that may have come about. She winked a big blue eye when she told of her own cunning with the miserable scoundrels who had tried to cheat her with a bad potato, or a withheld onion; pretty little wink-- petal of a rose flickering over a robin's egg, maybe. Mr. Birtwhistle was saying:

"Then you'd better give me that ten dollars, Miss Guffy. Delia. what do you want for yourself? Miss Guffy, tell me something you want."

"The ham was a dollar-twenty," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"No; but what do you want? And you, Miss Guffy!"

"Sure, Mr. Birtwhistle, I have everything I wants, now with the clearing of the pawnshops." Mr. Birtwhistle scowling a little with mention of the pawnshops. "I do suppose there's on'y one thing I wants-- sure, who'd be bothering with the wants of poor Guffy?"

"I must see about my eyes; they're going back on me," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Then we'll go to the best specialists in the city, or the world, for that matter."

"Indeed, and I'll go to the five-and-ten-cent store. A pair of ten-cent spectacles will do me. You mustn't feel too rich, you know. Everything I've bought is absolutely necessary. They give you letters different sizes to try your eyes in the five-and-ten-cent store."

"No, no! Do you want hats, shoes, furs, lace, silks, diamonds? What do you want most, Miss Guffy? We'll start with you, then."

"It's not diamonds," said Miss Guffy.

"I guess not!" declared Mrs. Birtwhistle. "What would Guffy be doing with diamonds? I'm sure I haven't bought a thing not absolutely necessary. My shoes are going, but I'll get a cheap pair of rubbers; I begrudge to pay the price for nice shoes when I never go anywheres."

"Well, then, we'll go everywhere. Guffy, what is it you want, if it's not diamonds?"

"The Great Ten-cent Package--"

"Oh, yes!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I'm dying to know what's in the Great Ten-cent Package. That's right, Guffy! I'm that curious about the Demon Mirrors and the Jumping Napkin Ring we're selling but never seen yet."

"Oh, tut! tut!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "But where are you going now?" Mrs. Birtwhistle picking up the ham, and moving toward the door.

"Just across the hall, to Mrs. Schufelt's."

"To work!" exclaimed business-like Mr. Birtwhistle, forgetting the dented sofa, pacing up and down, supervising his busy staff of assistants. "Now, Asbury, get out your letter to the Rochester people, and find out the particulars of their envelope scheme. Miss Guffy, if you will collect all the threatening and complaining and indignant letters, so that we can sell them! Oh, yes, Rakes, we get twenty-five dollars a thousand for them. Now, aren't these beautiful surroundings for a business man!"

Mrs. Maheffy crying: "Please give me back me saw, Miss Strout! Never mind the bit of bacon you borried to grease it with, for your own sister told you ate that long ago!"

Protestations, and:

"The saw, is it?-- and the old bit of bacon I threw to the cat?"

"Give me back me saw, Miss Strout; I'd not be so low-minded as to trouble you for the bacon. You've had me saw a month, now."

"And is the saw all I got belonging to you?"

"Give me back me saw, instantly, Miss Strout."

"Then, Mrs. Maheffy, give me back me six glasses, two with the gilt rims to them, one with the piece your thirsty husband bit out of it, the three of the others plain, but too good for you; my boiler, my wash-board, my ironing-board, stove-lifter, scuttle, stove-polish, that you'll never get again, for you black the shoes of your whole family with it; plush chair that you didn't have chairs of your own, but ashamed of your life when folks come calling on you; my needles and thread and soap and lard; where's the twenty-five cents you didn't have change for to put in the meter, but if I could let you have it till morning? My sofa pillow, my coal-scuttle, my plush chair and my paper of tacks! Where's my beeswax and six glasses, two with the gilt rims, my stove-lifter--"

Mrs. Maheffy was shrieking: "Give me back me-- me-- you-- you-- where's me half paper of pins?"

Mrs. Birtwhistle, returning with the ham: "Isn't that disgraceful? But, faith, I'd not say I don't like to hear them fight; that makes it seem so quiet and peaceful at home. Mrs. Schufelt can't cook for a cent! There's the gravy standing on the back of the stove, and all thick with grease on top. She didn't know how to make it" Mrs. Birtwhistle again crossing the hall; this time with cabbages.

"Mr. Rakes"-- the business man speaking-- "in looking over that advertising matter, I wish you would keep your eye open for a certain firm that gives cash for stamps, at four per cent. off; we're paying five. There is such a firm somewhere, but we haven't the address. And, Mr. Rakes, here is a good phrase to use in your advertising: 'From the rocky coast of Maine to the sunny shore of Japan.' I don't know where it will come in, but make a note of it.

"Asbury, write to the man who prints six-by-nine circulars, in large editions, at thirty cents the thousand. We want order-blanks and electrotypes, and I'm thinking of getting those imitation typewritten letters. They're on good bond paper, in three colors. Asbury, make a note of an index card system. We've started at last.

Birtwhistle! It's a good name, Mr. Rakes; it has distinction; you'd remember it, wouldn't you? Oh, I'm not taking credit to myself for possessing it. Of course, it doesn't indicate any superior wisdom on my part to be Birtwhistle, but it is, nevertheless, a good name for business purposes. I'm not boasting of it as if it were my own achievement, Mr. Rakes-- but it has distinction!"

Mrs. Maheffy shrieking: "You're not talking to Mrs. Birtwhistle, when you're

talking to me, Miss Strout!"

Mrs. Birtwhistle, out in the hall: "Don't you dare bring my name into your rows!"

Mr. Birtwhistle to the hall, and dragging back Mrs. Birtwhistle and the cabbages, the cabbages undulating, convulsed with emotion.

"The cheek of her!" exclaimed Mrs. Birtwhistle. "If you'd let me go, I'd show her! I know too much about her! Oh, her old husband! I'd give her a shot about her old husband that would quieten her! But," continued Mrs. Birtwhistle, who did deserve credit, for, of her own wisdom, she had acquired a name with distinction to it, "the dinners I see cooked in this house! 'Tis no wonder the saloons are full, for their free lunches. That woman don't know the first thing about cooking!" Mrs. Birtwhistle again going out; this time with turnips, pork chops, butter, and eggs-- running back, crying: "Oh, merciful heavens! merciful heavens!"

"What?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle, alarmed.

"Mercy! the onions are still to come, and that's five cents more, anyway," said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "What did you let me go to Mrs. Schufelt's for? Why didn't you prevent my going? I'll never take her in another bargain. What do you think of this? 'Oh,' she says, just like this, her nose up, just like this, 'oh, I never bring in a lot of stuff to get old, like that; I like everything fresh.' "

"Well, then, keep out of your neighbors', and let's have some dinner; Sim'll stay to dinner with us. You can keep away from your neighbors, can't you?"

"Mind your own business! You can mind your own business, can't you?" Mr. Birtwhistle sat on the sofa. Mrs. Birtwhistle scowled at him, looked toward Sim, who was bending over piles of advertising matter. Mrs. Birtwhistle's arms around Mr. Birtwhistle's thick neck: "I mean to do everything in the world to make you happy!"

"Sure!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Mr. Rakes," he said, "'The ransacked wonders of the Orient' is a good phrase. I don't know where it will come in, but make a note of it. Asbury, I'll typewrite some follow-up letters; you fold circulars."

The housewifely cares of Mrs. Birtwhistle! Her two white teeth seemed placed exactly to express the cares of a household; permanently where the teeth of other housewives appear only in such dreadful moments as "Merciful heavens! did I leave the chops where the cat can get at them?" or "Oh, heavens above! have I flour enough for the stew?" "Was I right," Mrs. Birtwhistle was saying, "in paying so much for the ham? It's well worth it!" Then Mrs. Birtwhistle, was building the fire in the stove, knocking out central pieces in a mosaic of kindling wood, trying to keep the cord-bound oval of outside pieces intact-- whole thing collapsing into the stove-- never mind! Ham put into a pot of water, and some discussion, here, between Miss Guffy and Mrs. Birtwhistle, as to whether a ham should be put into water while cold, or not until hot, Miss Guffy taking the hot-water side, to Mrs. Birtwhistle's contempt, and Miss Guffy coming around, vehemently declaring: "Right you are!"

Indeed, it should be cold! Certainly it should be cold!"

"Say," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "let's go to Coney Island. Where's my other coat?" throwing off his "sash curtains" and taking a dark-blue coat from the back of a chair.

"And leave my ham? I guess not!"

"Coney Island, the lot of us!"

"And leave my dinner to take care of itself? How bad you are for Coney island, and the time it takes you! Indeed not!"

"Coney Island, Sim! Hey, Asbury! Delia, are you coming? Miss Guffy?"

"Oh, now-- oh, say, now--" stammered Sim.

"Oh, me?" said Asbury. "It doesn't matter to me where I go."

"You?" said Miss Guffy. "Faith, and if Mr. Parker went anywhere to-day, he'd not begin enjoying it till to-morrow-- if it's no harm to say so, Asbury. Let ye be a nice man, Mr. Birtwhistle, and sit down to your work, and we'll all go up to the park in the evening."

"Park, Sim! Park, Parker! Park to folks like us! Well, aren't you coming? Sim and Asbury are!"

"Oh, now-- you know--" weakly from Sim.

"You can go, I suppose," said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "You can go anywhere, I suppose. It's 'where were you?' when I'm a moment gone from the room, but you have a free leg for yourself."

"Come, Sim!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, slapping Sim's hat upon one side of Sim's head; dragging Asbury Parker backward from his chair, impatiently rocking the back of Sim's chair. "We'll go, anyway. Delia, I'll take you somewheres else-- you don't care about it, do you?"

"It wouldn't do-- so early in the day," said Sim, standing up, swinging his hat.

"There's small use trying to do right with a man like that!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle, throwing the stove-lifter upon the stove.

"He does get that excited whenever there's a bit of prosperity!" declared Miss Guffy.

"All aboard for Coney Island!" exclaimed Mr. Birtwhistle, pushing Sim and Asbury before him, linking arms with them, out in the hall, pulling them toward the stoop, where Mrs. Maheffy and Miss Strout stood, with arms about each other's shoulders.

"May every Coney Island frankfurter you eat choke you!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle from the front window.

"Oh, say, Mr. Birtwhistle --" weakly, from Sim.

"Don't come back here!" from the window. "There'll be nothing left here, so don't one of you come back here!"

"All aboard for Coney Island!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle.

CHAPTER V

BACK in the Sargasso Sea. The caisson had drifted not quite back to its original profundity, of sunkenness, but smoke from the stove had formed grotesque shapes, faint on the walls, as if at a distance. The middle of the floor was a clearing with a serrated fringe of papers and letters, swept under the sofa, under tables, chairs and the stove, comers of papers piled upon other corners, in a notched, white fringe; Sim's feet. Sim at his table, shuffling in this fringe; Asbury Parker, crouched over the typewriter, like a cramped chauffeur, rattling papers when he moved his feet; Sim writing a letter, now and then smoking a cigarette butt, consumed so that he had stuck a pin through it to hold it. Mr. Birtwhistle prone on the sofa, hands folded over a sleeping kitten on his chest, puffing smoke so that his flat face seemed pressed against glazed glass; then he, with a forefinger, and the kitten, with a paw, were fencing. Miss Guffy was not in the room; Mrs. Birtwhistle sitting in the chair by the west window, hammering an empty condensed-milk can, knocking off crystallized flakes to make a saucer of milk for the kitten and for a cat, looking up to her and crying.

"Aw, shut up!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle to the cat. "I can't be feeding you every minute."

A pencil falling from behind Mr. Birtwhistle's ear; Mr. Birtwhistle groaning: "Give me a pencil! Who's got another pencil?"

There was nothing to suggest that there had been prosperity, except a cheap little phonograph on Sim's table, bought with the hope of keeping Mr. Birtwhistle home nights.

Some one, in passing the blue curtains, had torn one down, and it dangled, showing the inner room, where, by the light of a lamp, the oilcloth of a table glimmered in streaks where fingers had rubbed in grease.

"Sim," drawled Mr. Birtwhistle, "here's a good phrase: 'The opulence of the Orient.' You can use that somewheres. Are you practicing ad-writing?"

"Get out!" said Sim contemptuously. "What for? I'm writing home to the folks."

"Don't be discouraged in your letter, Sim-- oh, the little devil! she stuck her claw into me that time! We are just on the verge of success, if we can only pull through this bad spell--"

"Verge! always the verge!" exclaimed Mrs Birtwhistle, viciously knocking flakes of condensed milk from the inside of the can. "I'm tired hearing of that verge we're always on."

"If I only had some one who had faith in me!" Mr. Birtwhistle groaned. "Delia haven't you the least faith in me?"

"Not the slightest in the world! You haven't got it in you!. I don't look forward to nothing but poverty and misery all the days of my life with you, and never a new hat or things a woman wants. You're a lazy, big, ignorant fool, without the education of a boy like Mr. Rakes, and, if I shut my eyes, it makes me crazy to look forward to my future with you. Not a hope! nothing but rotten poverty and misery!"

"Hey, pussy! pussy!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, dabbing the kitten's nose-- high-spirited kitten instantly dabbing back at him.

"Any faith in you?" jeered Mrs. Birtwhistle, laughing harshly.

Then she asked:

"How much water will I put in this milk? A whole saucerful?"

"About three-quarters of a saucer," said Mr. Birtwhistle precisely. "I have immense abilities. If I only had some one, some child, some kitten, some guinea-pig who believed in me-- a white rat, even! I'll bring in the next yellow mongrel I see in the street." Mr. Birtwhistle sitting up. "I'll be no failure then! I'll succeed! I'll make my abilities felt! I'll have a yellow dog who believes in me!"

"You won't bring anything else in here to feed! Yes, it would be just like you, when there's not enough to go around as it is!"

"With one eye, and a can tied to his tail," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "When I say to him, 'I'm the great Mr. Birtwhistle,' he'll look at me steadily with his one eye, meaning, 'If you say you are, that positively and for all time settles it.' I'll say, 'I know I am because of the feeling of power I have; I can feel power, especially when I hear music, and it surges in me. He'll bark a little, and mean, 'I know it. Can anybody doubt it?' I never cried in my grown-up life, but there'll be almost a tear in my eye when I find the yellow dog, with a rope to his tail, and one eye, that can look at me and mean, 'I believe in you!'"

Mrs. McKicker, wearing her black hood, looked into the room-- Mrs. McKicker, grim and hooded like a falcon. "There's the most sensible man in New York!" pointing admiringly at Mr. Birtwhistle. "Here, Mrs. Birtwhistle!" handing Mrs. Birtwhistle three cakes of soap. "Don't say I never give anybody anything!" Like a falcon pouncing upon a serpent, she darted to a piece of string on the floor and wound it around her strong, curved talons-- it might be useful some time. She flew away, repeating: "That's right, Mr. Birtwhistle, you're the most sensible man in New York!"

Said Mrs. Birtwhistle: "She'll sing another song if our rent isn't paid by the end of the month. Oh, how fine and big and grand! Raise your own rent for last month, and couldn't pay this month's when it was due even then! Oh, no, couldn't pay the rent, when you had the money, but-- come, Sim! come, Asbury! but we don't hear much of that now. Come, Sim, don't you want to come down to the Waldorf with me for dinner? I've got the money; oh, pocketfuls! I'm the big Mrs. Birtwhistle. Sure, you've heard of me! Mr. Birtwhistle's wife! Don't you know Mr. Birtwhistle? Never heard of the great and talented Mr. Birtwhistle? Why-- oh, I see I you've not been very long in New York. Well, if anybody should ask you, I'm his wife! And does that stun you, Sim and Asbury?"

Mr. Birtwhistle reaching out, laughing, dragging her to sit beside him; Mrs. Birtwhistle, laughing, sitting beside him, patting his head, laughing:

"Come, Sim! 'twould be beneath the distinguished Mrs. Birtwhistle to dine anywheres but the Waldorf!"

"I'm busy!" laughed Sim-- crouching Mr. Parker seemingly hearing nothing of what was going on. "I dare him to read his letter aloud!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "We'd hear a fearful description of ourselves, I'm thinking."

"Of yourself!" Mrs. Birtwhistle said sharply. "I'm sure I do my best to get along and make both ends meet, as Mr. Rakes very well knows. Oh, I'm what you make me! Be an honest, industrious man, and nobody could have a prettier kept home than yours would be. I never lived like this before I met you; I'm what you make me, and everything I do wrong is only your fault. Do read what you've written about him, Mr. Rakes; it might take some of the conceit out of him, though I do suppose nothing could do that. Birt, put that kitten down and do get up and do some work."

"To work!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle, half rising. "Everybody to work!" Mr. Birtwhistle sinking back. "Here, pussy! pussy!" then grumbling: "What'd you take that soap from Mrs. McKicker for? We don't want anything from her or anybody else. You give it back to her; do you hear? We can buy our own soap."

"Here's the letter," said Sim. "I'll read it. I pass over 'Dear Uncle.' and some inquiries about people I know, and that sort of thing. Well, here: 'Just at present I'm living in the St. Regis'-- see," holding up the letter. "Last night I went in the St. Regis and got some of the hotel stationery."

"Would you dare go in such a place, having no business there?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle, awed.

"Me? I'd go anywhere! There's nothing bashful about me, Mrs. Birtwhistle-- I guess you've noticed that?" His uneasy smirk; his inability to sit still when speaking; hands twisting and waving in no accord with his words, like illustrations bound up in the wrong book. "Me bashful! how's that, Birt? Anyway, listen: 'I expect to take apartments at one of the clubs, where I have been put up for membership by Mr.

Parker, who is the secretary of our concern. I am now in full charge of the Universal people's advertising affairs, and just this morning signed a contract for twenty thousand dollars' worth of advertising, to appear chiefly in the West, though we are preparing to deluge the entire West with advertising that will make that appear a trifle. I can't say, though, that I'm so much better off, with all my promotions, for the increased cost of living makes results about the same, so far as surplus is concerned--' "

"Are you really so ignorant as all that?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Oh, now, hey, now, I won't have you calling me names, you know! I don't want to lose my temper with you, Birt, but, now, I'm very particular about being insulted, now, you know."

"Are you a fair sample of nephews, as nephews are running, nowadays, Sim? Do you suppose that anybody's uncle would believe that anybody's nephew could make such progress as that, in just a few weeks?"

"Oh, well, say, now, you needn't call me down in public like that, you know. I didn't mean to read it aloud, anyway. Do you think I'd better tone it down a little? I wish now I'd never started writing that way. At home I've given them all the idea I'm one of these, now, merchant princes you read about. Then how am I to go back, if we don't make out here? I can't go back-- yet. I am going back, but I can't go back-- yet."

To Mrs. Birtwhistle, I've got myself in an awful fix. There're complexities in it. You see, when I first thought of coming here, my whole idea was to come here and be a failure. Then circumstances turned out so that my idea to come here and be a success. At the same time it was my plan to be a failure-- you see?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "You wanted to be a failure and a success? You have great individuality in the way you express yourself, Sim; you'll make a great advertisement writer."

"Yes! You see my idea? When I first wrote you, it was my plan to come here and fail. I wanted to go somewhere and fail, so I was going to slip out of town and have it reported I was away visiting. Dear me, the first thing I knew I was showing your letter to all kinds of people, and then the whole town knew it. There were bets about it; the excitement was intense; the *Palladium* told about 'one of the most prominent young men of the west side accepting a responsible position in New York'; the rest of the town said, 'Oh, my! Sim's got a job!' I think the odds were ten to one against that when the news first came out. That's why, the first night I was here, I wrote home about the tremendous abilities I was showing."

"Well, yes, Sim, though it puzzled me at first, I can believe that you wanted to succeed. Now how about your determination to fail? It ought to be easy to explain that."

"Don't be so clever with Sim!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle; "he's as smart as any one else I see here."

"Yes, there are complexities in it. It's because my uncle, who's a very good business man, now-- oh, some forty years ago, when he started his first business venture, he made a fearful fluke of it. I don't know much about assets and liabilities, but he was all mixed up in that sort of thing. Anyway, he says everybody's got to fail at first, and it's the best thing in the world to do so, and no one can learn any other way.

"Now, he's going to take me in business with him some day, but he's positively superstitious about one having to fail first. So it's best for me to go somewhere and do my failing there, or here, as it is, and then go back, and do my succeeding with him. But don't think we ever actually discussed or arranged anything like that. That'd be a fine thing, to tell me to go out and fail somewhere! No; it was just sort of understood between us that way.

"Well, after the letters I've written, I can't go back yet; maybe not for months yet; that's plain.

"Say, Birt, get up and let's start doing something! Your catalogs are out working for you; you can't tell when things will boom again. If we don't do another thing, let's sort out these order-blanks and follow-up letters and envelopes, and put things into shape--"

"To work! to work!" excitedly from Mr. Birtwhistle. "Then come on, everybody! You, too, Mrs. Birtwhistle! I'm here, and I can't go back, and we must succeed!"

"To work!" said Mr. Birtwhistle faintly. "Oh, what can you do with a fellow like that? I bet you I could take hold here and make the thing a success for a while."

Miss Guffy coming into the room.

The weather was cool, though scarcely cool enough for cape-wearing, but Miss Guffy wore a cape. Miss Guffy taking off her hat, with one hand that seemed not free; other hand remaining under her cape-- coleopterous Miss Guffy-- beetle-wing hair having a corduroy appearance, strands of it thick with pomade.

"Bad luck to these half days!" she said to Mrs. Birtwhistle. "And run I late? Faith, I could not get away sooner. She took a great fancy to me, Mrs. Murray did, and would have me sit talking to her long after my work was done. But 'tis not worth your while to go out by the half day; and there was a nigger cook, which I always hates to work with; they're such thieves, and you, like enough, blamed for their thieving. You can't trust any of them kind; some day they're bound to walk out with everything in the house with them. They're not civilized, the coons isn't; of my own choice I'd never work with one, and perhaps be blamed for her thieving. And the food you gets, Mrs. Birtwhistle! 'Twas noon, Mrs. Murray says to me, 'Mary, you can go down and get your dinner, now.' I goes down to the kitchen, and the girl-- I

declare, I'm afraid of my life working with them; there's no trusting them; they're always thieving-- she points to a table, and there's one egg and one cold potato and a bit of butter on the side of the plate. 'Where's me dinner?' says I to the girl. 'Tis there,' is the answer she makes me. 'Where?' 'Are ye blind, not seeing it on the table before ye?' 'Then I am blind,' I says, going up the stairs, and, Mrs. Murray, I says, 'would you have me go on with my work, and no dinner?' 'And had ye not yer dinner?' 'I had not, ma'am.' 'Ye had not? Then that is strange; come down with me.' Down in the kitchen she says, 'Why, there's your dinner!' 'Oh, no, you'll excuse me, Mrs. Murray, ma'am, but that is no dinner for a woman doing her half day's work. Indeed, I see no dinner there. Then may I make bold to say where is my dinner, ma'am?' 'Will you take a quarter and go out and buy your dinner?' she asks. 'I will and gladly!' and goes out and walks for a while; and here's the seventy-five cents altogether, Mrs. Birtwhistle, and I wish to Gawd 'twas seventy-five dollars I was bringing home to you."

"You needn't make such a noise about it!" grumbled Mr. Birtwhistle. "Nobody wanted you to go out; if you had any faith in the Universal, you wouldn't have gone-- oh, I'm sure it was very good of you to want to help, Miss Guffy, only you needn't come in, shouting to the whole house where you've been."

"Excuse me, sir," said Miss Guffy humbly, "but would this be of any use to you, Mr. Birtwhistle?" taking a collapsible silk hat from under the cape. " 'Twas lying around and did catch me fancy on the way out."

"Miss Guffy, you oughtn't to do a thing like that! What on earth use have I for an opera hat?"

"It did but catch me fancy, Mr. Birtwhistle. Oh, that's what it is, then? I was wondering, Indeed, and if a body didn't help themselves, they'd never have anything. Could you make use of this, Mrs. Birtwhistle? 'Twould look pretty on a table," out from under her cape with a morocco-bound volume of sermons.

"You divil, you!" exclaimed Mrs. Birtwhistle admiringly.

"And would you be smoking, Asbury? I'd not be daring to offer these cigars to Mr. Birtwhistle. I don't know what he's thinking of me, as it is; but, indeed, when I only get fifty cents for my six or seven hours' slaving, 'tis small blame to me to help myself. I don't suppose this would be any use to you?" handing out, from under her cape, a box of matches, bluing, a can of baking powder, a knife and fork, tied together.

"Guffy, you're a jewel!"

"Miss Guffy--" began Mr. Birtwhistle, sitting up.

"Oh, you let Guffy alone; that woman could well afford it."

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Miss Guffy humbly, "let him speak, ma'am; he's speaking for my own good, and I knows it. Indeed, and I will get into trouble some day, but

the bloody rich, as you well say, they can well afford it. Yes, I know you're speaking for my own good, Mr. Birtwhistle-- I scarce dare ask you would this come in useful to you," handing out a bright silk necktie.

"Oh, cusses!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, lying back on the sofa. "Where'd that kitten go? Yes, thanks, Miss Guffy. Oh, cusses! my pride, my pride! Thanks, Miss Guffy."

"Oh, do I smoke?" asked Asbury Parker.

"Sure! It's a handful of cigars I have for you." Here Sim bent over his letter, and seemed absorbed in it.

"And Mr. Rakes--" hesitatingly.

Sim looked up, his face red.

"What's this? Won some smokes?" His face was deep red. He laughed and said roughly: "Give us one!"

"Well, here's to Mr. Murray!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, he, too, taking a cigar. "Very thoughtful of Mr. Murray, hey, Sim? Nice man to remember us so. Sim, we can't do any more work today. Asbury, we've worked long enough. Let's go down to the river. Let's see, which collar will I put on?"

"If you were a decent man, you'd have all you want of everything."

"Only got two collars. Wear one till I'm ashamed of it, and then the other till the first looks quite respectable by comparison, and so on."

Asbury Parker putting on his coat, but seeming to have no collar; putting on a hat that stood high and small around on his bushy head.

"If any one comes for me," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "keep them till we come back." They went away, Mr. Birtwhistle wearing a broad-brimmed gray slouch hat, no ribbon around, a dark circle on the gray, where a ribbon had been; Sim taller than the others; his light suit; his straw hat with its bright ribbon.

The little Tunnan girl came into the room, counting on her fingers, saying, with intense earnestness: "Pork chops, have them small and lean; one quart of onions, loaf of bread and American cheese-- I'll be right back and give you your lessons, Miss Guffy." Going away, tapping fingers together, saying earnestly: "Pork chops, have them fat and lean!"

"And what lessons could the child give you, Guffy? And what is the child talking about?"

"Sure," answered Miss Guffy, "you needn't let on, but I do be taking them gyminastic lessons she do learn in school. 'Twould make me hold myself together better, would it, I don't know? I've gotten that round-shouldered leaning over my work. Then send her in to the backroom, Mrs. Birtwhistle. I wonder is there any use in them gyminastics, I don't know?"

"And, Mrs. Birtwhistle," taking her cape off, "sure, 'tis not much to offer you, but wouldn't these aprons do you around the house? You needn't let on where you got

them; what he don't know will make him none the wiser."

"Guffy, you're the limit!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle with admiration.

CHAPTER VI

MISS GUFFY was in the back room, taking gymnastic lessons; Mrs. Birtwhistle was sitting on the sofa, looking at a broom.

Loud talking and loud laughing out on the stoop; shouts up the stairs, and shouts across the street-- the Miss Dunphys! Mrs. Birtwhistle ran to the hall and then returned to the room with her nieces-- Miss Emma Dunphy in the same white dress; Miss Katie Dunphy in the same terra-cotta dress and the potted-palm hat.

"It's yourselves! And where have you been keeping yourselves? Did I ever know it to fail? Somebody always coming when the rooms looks their worst! 'Tis Birt's own words to me, 'Delia, if you ever want company, and feel lonesome, muss up the rooms is all you got to do, and there'll be somebody sure to come.' And how are you?"

"Fine and strong, and I eats everything," said Katie. "I don't know that I ought to speak to either of you. Where've you been keeping yourselves?"

The Miss Dunphys piling bundles on the sofa, taking off their hats. "'Tis true, Birt, we don't get down often, but we thinks of ye, just the same. And how is Mr. Birt and the lot of ye? And this one and meself is wondering have you accommodations for the two of us. Faith, we're playing the lady again!"

"Then did you lose your work? Have I accommodations for you, you're asking me? Go 'long with you! Upon me soul, if I didn't have, I soon would have, if I had to put himself out to make room for you."

"And how is himself? Yes, we've come to stay a while. 'Twas the grand smash-up we had with our lady this morning." Emma's hat off-- face round and pale as an arc-light-- big black bow on the top on the top of her head; big black bow at her throat; but lighter, bow showing one of its wings from the back of her head-- three big, shadowed moths playing around an arc-light.

"We're taking a rest," said Katie. Under the foliage of her hat, her hair had looked smooth, but with shedding of the verdure, her hair was unkempt and falling in strands over her face-- exposure of an unsuspected, weather-beaten bird's nest in a tree become deciduous. "Then himself is out for a walk, is he? And is there any sign of things improving?"

"He's worse than ever. 'Tis Coney Island, now, my dears. But does his wife get to

Coney Island for a glimpse of the ocean? Coney Island, how are you! "'Tis in the wash-tub her only sight of sea foam. My heart 'tis heavy in me when I look around and see how we are, and ne'er the ghost of a sign of improvement."

"Faith," said Emma, "I'd soon send him about his business, if he didn't do better than that by me. Let ye leave him and come with us, and the three of us start out in the morning."

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"But you say there's no sign of bettering!"

"Him? All day 'tis up on the broad old lazy back. Get him this, and get him that. The foolish girls you'd ever be to marry the best man living. I was a lunatic myself, but don't let youse be."

"'Tis not all sunshine is marriage, and I see enough to show me that, though you're the lucky woman the brats never came. You're the foolish woman, and I'm telling it for your own good, and you've gone to pieces something terrible living here, and was it my own sister, this one, I couldn't advise you better nor to leave him."

"Think so?" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I don't see any such change as all that. I'm looking as bad as all that? You imagine it. But leave him? No. I love him. I love him and I'll stick to him, just the same, as it's a wife's place to do, and there'll never be another woman in my place while I'm living. Sometimes I hate him so I have to scream at him, I hate him so, but was the worst to come, I'd gladly go out and scrub on my knees till my arms fell off, so's he wouldn't be lacking in comforts."

"Well, if she isn't the oddity!"

"If she isn't the odd thing!"

"So you're not working?" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Is it any harm to ask what befell you?"

"I'll not be called out of my name by nobody!" said Emma Dunphy, sitting on the sofa beside her sister; both gloomy.

"And who was it miscalled ye?"

"Faith, properly, nobody," said Katie. "She'd better not! But, by the black looks of her, she might as well called us thieves and be done with it, and you had good patience, upstairs, putting up with her black looks, Emma."

"There was some little trinket in the house missing," said Emma; "some little gimcrack trifle that you and me'd not give a second thought to. Not that we was accused, in so many words, of taking it, but her manner was that impulsive-- wasn't it, Katie? 'Twas that stiff she might as well came right out and accused us. Indeed, and I did have the good patience, Katie, but wouldn't was I to go through it all again."

"And what has a poor girl but her name for honesty? Indeed, it wouldn't be well for her did she come right out and accuse us; but the bare suspicion of it was more

than the two of us, who wouldn't touch a farthing's worth not ours, could stand. 'Tis a bad mind those have who are so ready with their accusations of others."

"'Tis plain how they get their own money, by robbing and thieving, or it wouldn't be in their minds so."

"And I've heard said, and could give the name of the party told me, that her old father is in jail this very moment for robbing a bank."

"Then was it anything of much value?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle.

The Miss Dunphys looking at each other. A humorous look came upon their gloomy, stolid faces. Emma smiled-- the flashing of the spark in an arc-light. "'Tis there, itself!" pointing to the figurine on the mantelpiece.

"Ho! Ho!" laughed Katie, beating her knees.

"Oh, but I'm sorry you got into trouble through us, girls! How bad she felt over a bit of brass like that!"

"Indeed, dear, and that's how they make their money, caring over trifles that you and me'd think naught about," said Emma, again looking at the bronze and smiling broadly; Katie squeezing her knees, holding her face to one side, eyes screwed tight shut-- her silent way of laughing.

"Well," said Emma, "we may as well pay you in advance. Ye might as well have it as anybody, and we pays our way wherever we go."

"'Tis time when I ask for it," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Sure, dear, we knows that, but to save you the asking; and you're welcome to all we got."

"And a bit of our hearts we'd give you, would it do you any good. You're all we got, you and himself, though he's not our own flesh and blood, and you are, dear. Do you need something for yourself, let alone providing for the lot of us? We says, the two of us, 'We'll leave in the bundles first, and then take Aunt Delia out with us for a bit of fur for her neck, or a hat for her head.' Would ye come out and see is there anything in the store windows would become ye, dear?"

"Indeed, and no such thing! A girl out of work needs all her money. I'll be going out soon and lay in the supper, but not another step will I stir!"

"Then we'll all go out this evening. Maybe 'tis gloves you need; we'll find something in the store windows-- bad luck to us!" Emma lamented. "We came away in too much of a hurry. There's a lovely leg of lamb in the ice box. Bad luck to us for our hurry, but we was that indignant and insulted. And how's Guffy? She's the queer thing; I don't see why you keep her. 'Tis not as if she was your own flesh and blood; she's naught to you."

Mrs. Birtwhistle touching the tips of her fingers to her shoulders; then her arms out straight; then arms tip straight-- one hand pointing toward the broken-down blue curtains. "Would ye whist! 'tis gyminastics! 'tis physical cultivation, now, my

dears!"

"And what the devil is gyminastics?"

"'Tis agricultural lessons," said the other sister. "You are the dense one, Katie. Don't you read the papers? Every night I reads 'Beauty Hints.' And she's always advising of agricultural lessons. So the humpy one's improving her figure? You must, sometimes, have all you can do to get along with her, Birt."

"Seven eggs on the shelf by the boiler!" lamented Katie. "Ye might better had them than leave them behind to those had plenty. Emma, will you ever forget us going away and leaving seven eggs on the shelf by the boiler?"

"Indeed, and she is the cross-grained creature!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle, drawing up her chair confidentially by her nieces. "Pursuing to her, but she's got stung some time in her life so bad she hates the world, she do, and has always the evil word for everybody. Was I telling you the time the two of us went over to the Island to see old Ellen? And, because I proposed a glass of beer on the way-- oh, hoity-toity! no such thing! 'twould not be her would go into any strange saloon, no matter how respectable-looking. Oh, hoity-toity! the stretch of her neck, like a cocky-doodle-do! But I'm as good as she ever thought of being. I don't believe in no such nonsense."

"You had a right to march right in and leave her waiting or follying you. Did you ever know the beat of her? You'd think it a compliment she's paying us when she does go out to get a pint of beer."

"A bag of rice in the corner by the ice-cream freezer!" said Katie gloomily.

"But wait while I'm telling you, my dears, and I don't care the snap of my finger if she's rubbering to every word of it. Coming back from the Island, we meets a woman, a black stranger to us, mind you, and when we lands, this woman, a black stranger we never laid eyes on before, she says, 'This water does make a body dry. Would you two ladies join me in a glass of beer?'

"'We would, and with pleasure!' says Guffy. And I looked at her. I opened fire on her then, let me tell you."

"The cheek of her! Is that a cabbage on the table? Oh, isn't it lovely! Isn't it the grand head! I do like it with pork; I think it's grand. Give me a feed of cabbage, and I makes the grandest dinner off of it. But she said that? If it was me, I'd slap her face, I would."

"I have to burst out, 'You drink with a stranger, Miss Guffy, but when I ask you I can parch till doomsday, can't I?'"

"And what did she say to that?"

"'Ha! ha! ha!'" she laughs, and makes me no answer. She begrudges to see anybody happy, and that's the whole to it. If there's a word in the house, she's watching to see it come to blows, and's so sore at every little thing happens. Ah,

sure, she's only a little crotchety, and has her little ways--"

"Sure, everybody has. She's a willing, poor thing."

"Always so obliging. Indeed, and I likes Miss Guffy. From the first I lay my eyes on her I takes a fancy to her. She's so obliging, the poor thing!"

"She is, and I must give her her merit. She'd do anything in the world for you-- but, well, knock it out of you the next moment."

"Wouldn't she, though! Oh, Emma, I'll never forgive myself coming away in such a hurry! Do you mind the half of the chicken-pie on the second shelf of the ice box?"

"No; but the side of bacon that Birt and himself might as well of had. But it is the young gentleman still with you, Birt? Faith, ever since, Katie's been talking me dumb and deaf about him. About what lovely hands he has, and his finger-nails so epicured. Faith, I scarce remember what he even looks like, but Katie do be admiring his necktie and his cuff-buttons and the pointed shoes he wears and the crease of his pantaloons and the handkerchief in his pocket, ever since, she do!"

"Ho! ho!" cried Katie, beating her knees. "'Tis no such thing, for was he to come in this moment, I'd not remember him."

"He's off of the same piece with the others of them. He's about as much good, for all the work he does, not saying he's not very pleasant and agreeable. But I don't know; she can be so nice sometimes-- but always waiting to give you the stab, if she can; always saying she don't wish it for the world, of course, but the next time himself raises money he'll light out and I'll see the last of him."

"If she told me that, me with my temper, I'd slap her face and slam the door on her. The hell of a cheek she has! And who is she and where'd she come from? She'd better never hold up her snoot to nobody--"

Mrs. Birtwhistle whispering warningly.

"What? Oh! oh, Guffy, sure, and if it isn't yourself! Katie, if here isn't Miss Guffy!"

"And how are you?" asked Miss Guffy, running to kiss Miss Katie. Miss Emma running to kiss Miss Guffy-- Miss Guffy in a sky-blue waist and a light-green skirt, spotted with yellow. "Sure, Miss Guffy, you're looking better every time we comes here."

"Guffy," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "we've been riddling you pretty good, and it's no more than fair to give you your turn at me--"

"Sure, girl, dear," humbly, listlessly, "who'd be bothering even mentioning the likes of poor Guffy? Ye never once thought of me is more likely."

"Oh, didn't we? Well, perhaps not; I was but joking. But, ladies, you can have me up before the jury, now, because I must go out and see about my supper."

"Indeed," said Emma-- her look of compressed vacancy, "if I can't say anything

good about people, I say naught at all."

"Same here!" said Katie. "If I can't say good of folks, I closes my trap."

"I must get my supper," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, going away-- running back, pretending to listen to learn whether the "riddling" had begun-- out again-- darting back. "What? Oh, I'm that and this, am I?" then away and down the stoop.

"Such spirits she has!" said Emma. "I don't see how she bears up so under her troubles. Such spirits she has! 'Tis a delight for this one and myself to pass an evening here with the lot of youse."

"'Tis not always so pleasant here, Miss Dunphy. Indeed, and you're quite right in saying she has a spirit of her own. And as for him, the lazy, good-for-nothing-- but what's the use saying anything? 'Tis no news what he is. And are ye off for the afternoon? Not left, have you?" noticing the bundles. "What's happened to you?"

"We're too good-hearted," said Emma morosely, pointing to the bronze. "Did we think less of others and more of ourselves, we'd still be holding a good job, where the other help dassn't say 'boo' to us, and a woman in to do the flannels."

"And broilers for the fricassee, and the grandest cuts of meat, trading with one butcher for sixteen years, who knows just what she wants, and the help getting the same, which was the grandest feeding!"

"Ah, Katie, 'twas the foolish girls we were, ever taking that old thing that's brought us trouble."

"And what's your thanks?" asked Miss Guffy. "'Tis 'Take that old brass thing out to the barrel; it gathers dust.' That's your thanks for it."

"Oh, I suppose so. There was a lovely leg of lamb we might of brought along, but I wouldn't do it to please them."

"Right, girl, dear. Why should you put yourself out for them? And I'm going to tell you another thing."

"Seven eggs, but we wouldn't please them."

"Ye might better be working and putting your earnings on your own backs. 'Ain't the two of them the dowdy things! the regular biddies!' that's your thanks-- God forgive me if I'm telling more than what I ought to."

"Indeed, you're not, Miss Guffy, we have a right to hear what's said about us, and, if we was less open-handed, it couldn't be said about us. The fool you are, yourself, for them! 'Tis Guffy go here and Guffy go there from morning till night; and what's your thanks for it?"

"Ah, yes, 'twas always that way with poor Guffy; but they are good to me, Miss Dunphy; they did take me off of the streets when I hadn't a shoe to me foot and nowhere to lay me head."

"They're not! they're not! not so!" exclaimed Emma, sputtering like an arc-light out of order. "I'm not contradicting anybody, Miss Guffy, when I'm not sure of

anything; but when I'm sure I'm positive. Why, they chase you up and down the street, like a mad dog, on their errands. Indeed, I with my temper, I'd not be so easy with them!"

"Would ye hush?" pleaded Miss Guffy. "In God's name let me at least make out, then, like they're good to me, can't you? What's the little errands I do, except it's going in the saloons I dread sometimes-- like the other night-- was I telling you? A man comes up to me and says, 'Hello! What's your name and address?' he asks me. I thought I'd drop the can in mortification. 'I have for long seen you and admired you from a distance,' he tells me. And there's a grand gentleman standing by; and he steps up, so brave and powerful, and says, 'Step aside and let this lady pass!' he said."

"Well, that's all right, but you mustn't say they're good to you, Miss Guffy. When I'm sure of anything, I'm positive."

"Hush! can't you let me make out?" Miss Guffy pleaded. "Sure, never has anybody else been good, but always the harsh word and the sneer for poor Guffy. In God's name, Miss Dunphy, let me at least make out to myself like they're good to me. I'm telling you God's truth, I've been put about and trod down all my life-- then let me make out to myself that at last I've found those who are good to me; and what harm the few errands I goes on? and if it's small pay or the divil a sign of pay, at all, what harm, either, seeing I'm not able to be worth more than the bite I puts in my mouth? She's a good, little soul. He-- he means well. The both of them are good to me. I will have it so. They are!"

"Well, if everybody isn't the oddities!" exclaimed Miss Katie Dunphy.

"They're not! It's not so!" cried Miss Emma Dunphy. "When I'm sure of a thing, I'm positive. They couldn't be good to anybody."

"They are! I will have it so!" retorted Miss Guffy passionately.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN the Dunphy sisters had made themselves at home, they had said: "Now for a few days of solid rest!" each with a broom in her hand. "We deserve a little recreation, now," putting the blue curtains in place, tying cloths on brooms, and hunting for cobwebs; washing, ironing, sweeping, scrubbing. "We must rest up well before starting out again." "Bad luck to them; they dirtied me two fine aprons!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. And that was their thanks.

No more letters were scattered on the floor; no more letters had come. "We're just on the verge, if we can only pull through this bad spell," said Mr. Birtwhistle. No money; everything pawned. Whatever money the Dunphy sisters had, had gone to the celebrating of their release from servitude, so that back to servitude they would have to go, having saved enough for their office fees-- intelligence office, where they were registered.

"If," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "I had a sugar-barrel of wood on one side of the stove, and a sugar-barrel of coal on the other side of the stove, winter could come, for all of me." She had no sugar-barrel.

"We're just on the verge," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Sim. here's a good-looking girl coming down the street." He was sitting in Miss Guffy's chair. Sim lying on the sofa.

"I know you!" said Sim. "You want to get the sofa."

Mr. Birtwhistle, seeming to groan a little: "My dear, get me my pipe."

"Get it yourself! Where did you put it? Oh, I'll get it for you. Don't bother yourself. I suppose if I was dying, my last gasp would have to fetch me out of bed to find you something."

"I suppose so," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Pretty girl!" cried Miss Guffy-- her shiny, Esquimaux hair-- looking over his shoulder. "Do you call that a girl, in the first place? Oh, God save us!" Miss Guffy taking short steps about the room, mimicking an affected way of walking.

"Don't be so bitter," said Asbury Parker.

"Go 'long with you!" Miss Guffy good-naturedly answered.

"Anyway," said Mr. Birtwhistle-- "get up, Sim, and give some one else a chance!-- anyway, we'll pull through; we never did get as far down as some people we've known. Do you remember the-- Dooley was their name?-- the people next door to

us, in 387, and the paperhanger?"

"In a room upstairs, Sim," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "the paperhanger had left his supplies before starting to work, mid these people were so far down they actually stole half his bucket of paste to make cakes of. That's what you're coming to."

"That or a job," said Sim indifferently; "I prefer that."

"Job! job!" groaned Mr. Birtwhistle. "I hate the mere thought of a job. Sim, one way or another, always managed to pull through without getting down to labor. Oh, I hate it!"

"You do, indeed!" said both. Mrs. Birtwhistle and Miss Guffy.

"No, but I'm speaking seriously."

"You are, that!"

"I mean I have such a queer, inborn dread that isn't in my body but seemingly in my imagination. The mention of a job makes me see pictures of the children of Israel and their taskmasters; and of Siberian prisoners, ironed to their trucks, down in coal mines, working till exhausted, and dropping to sleep on the tracks, to be kicked to work in the morning. If I think of looking for work, I think of manacles being put on me; chains loaded on me, and whips whistling over my head. I don't think of work as something frightful to undergo, but as something impossible to undergo. I don't see myself as simply doing a day's work with other workers, but myself as ironed and tormented and condemned with other slaves in the galleys; not piling lumber, say, or keeping books, with other workers, but building pyramids, with tottering, exhausted, outraged wretches like myself. It makes me sick to my stomach!"

"It does that!" said both Mrs. Birtwhistle and Miss Guffy.

"Keep the sofa if you want it," said 'Mr. Birtwhistle. "I'm going out on the stoop and wait for the postman."

Mr. Birtwhistle going out. The Miss Dunphys coming in.

"Any luck, girls?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Oh, no end of good, Christian homes, if we'd go there!" said Emma, sitting on Sim's table. Katie taking off her hat-- her puddle-colored hair awry.

"Plenty of faces where we'd have kind treatment and be one of the family, but not for me! no! no!" Emma's hat off-- her round head shaking so rapidly it seemed to revolve-- Emma, white and slim as a fountain-- her head like a ball on a fountain top.

"Don't you like to be treated kindly?" asked Sim.

"If any lady says, 'Good Christian home and kind treatment' to me, I knows what that means."

"Indeed you do, girl, dear; fourteen dollars a month. May the devil fly away with their good Christian homes, may God forgive me for saying such a thing!"

"Oh, my dear," said Emma, seizing Katie's arm, pulling Katie to the table, "come sit by me, and we'll have a nice chat. I'm sure you'll suit me."

"Ho! ho!" cried Katie, beating out with a free hand-- her hair standing out like a splashed puddle.

"We'll have a comfortable little chat, my dear. How old are you, and let me see your teeth, and what are your principal diseases, and how many followers have you, and where was your last place, and what were you doing eleven years ago, and how often convicted of crime between the ages of one and five?"

"Ain't that one the devil!" cried Miss Guffy.

"The cheek of them!" exclaimed Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Ask you all that," said Emma, "and tell you nothing in return; Put you off when you ask how many in the family, or when you go there, 'Oh, these is only the children, and the old aunt, and her sisters and only Uncle John, and that's only the brother!' Yes, and we could go to the country. Not me! New York for me!"

"Don't like the country?" asked Sim indifferently. "My! Wouldn't it be funny if you got jobs at my uncle's, and I was back there? I couldn't be so friendly, then-- I mean--"

"Oh, couldn't you?" asked Emma stiffly.

Asbury Parker saying nothing, but shaking his head, as if to say, "That fellow doesn't know a thing at all."

"I mean it would be queer--" stammered Sim; then, roughly: "I mean whatever I want to mean! I mean anything pleases me to mean."

"Sure, it's all right," said Emma pleasantly.

"Excuse me," said Sim humbly. "Then you don't like the country, Miss Dunphy?"

"I loves it!" cried Katie, pulling away from her sister's grasp, better to express her delight. "Do you remember the little chicks we had to once, Emma-- one with a web-foot like a duck's to it? The little pond, Emma, with the whitewashed rocks in it, like they was ducks turned up, with their heads down under water? Will you ever forget the lightning-bugs, Emma-- the lot of us guessing where they'd be shining next! Oh, the country-- but New York!"

"Which has treated you so good-- and me!" said Miss Guffy bitterly.

"And you, Miss Dunphy?" asked Sim ingratiatingly.

"Ah, 'tis that beautiful! and guessing where the crickets were chirping, do you remember, Katie? When you're looking at a green vine, and the wind makes it creeping silver. Katie, will you ever forget the green hedge with the red and gold flowers spread over it? But New York for me!"

"Yes, and it's been so good to you!"

"I would not!" exclaimed Asbury Parker.

"What?"

"What?"

"What's what?"

"What what?"

"That's all right, Asbury," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, laughing. "You don't have to take those stamps up to Mr. McKicker. Sim is just going."

Mr. Birtwhistle returning to the room. Mr. Birtwhistle was reading a letter and laughing heartily.

"Did he come?" asked Sim. "I didn't hear his whistle."

"Well! well!" exclaimed Mr. Birtwhistle, leaning back, laughing.

"Tell us!" urged Sim.

"Well! well! this is the best yet."

"It's some good news; anybody can see that."

Mr. Birtwhistle laughed violently. He drawled: "Beastly interesting! so deuced interesting!" handing the letter to his wife.

"I knew it!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle, reading scarcely a line. "I knew it, because I dreamed of silver last night. I never knew it to fail. Guffy, didn't I tell you I dreamed of silver?"

"We're dispossessed," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Sim, it's about time"-- Miss Guffy screaming and clasping her hands-- "you got up and gave some one else the sofa."

"Merciful Jesus!" exclaimed Miss Guffy. "What have we done? What have we done to bring this on ourselves?" The Miss Dunphys and Sim reading over Mrs. Birtwhistle's shoulder; Asbury Parker turning in his chair, asking: "No! is that right, Birt?"

"Oh, yes! got a match? Anybody got a match?"

"No," said Asbury. "It seems as if I can't keep one. I hide them around, when we're rich, and then have stores of them laid up for when we're poor. I don't seem to have any, though. I don't think much of these matches you get nowadays. When you were in Boston did you see the kind they sell there, a lot in a chunk? You pull them from the main chunk whenever you want them. They're those sulphur matches that take such a time burning, though."

"Yes, but the heads of these others fly off. I set some lace curtains going with that kind once. They're positively dangerous."

"Oh, my God! my God! what have we done-- what have we done?" cried Miss Guffy.

"What'll we do?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"You shut up!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle savagely. "Don't you speak to me! What'll we do, you fool? Hey, Sim, how do you feel when you're dispossessed? It's a curious feeling with me; there's a raging that I can feel, right here, in the top of my forehead; it's physical; I can feel it physically, a sort of thrill in my shoulders, and running

down my arms. Delia, you'll be all right; you can go and stay with Mrs. Melody. And say, Sim, do you know, this sort of thing is a strong stimulant to the imagination. I can see myself, so plain, tramping up and down the Bowery-- Mrs. Melody will take you in, Delia-- Sim, I see myself in front of the Thalia Theater, dark from the elevated tracks; it's raining., spots of rain on the sidewalk and on my old yellowish hat-- and I guess I'm pretty hungry. Delia, I've brought you to it at last; we've always escaped this some way, but I've dragged you down to the bottom now, and I'm in despair. Sim, I was reading, some time ago, that if you express any emotion on your face, you'll actually feel that emotion; such as look melancholy and you'll actually feel sad. Let's all grin! We'll grin, for the sake of science, and see if we're happy."

Mr. Birtwhistle, Sim and Asbury grimacing at one another, laughing, and laughing so that voluntary grinning was difficult.

"Oh, how can you-- how can you?" cried Miss Guffy. "There'll be no luck in it."

"Or old shoes!" Katie Dunphy was saying-- Emma laughing at the three who were attempting to grin without laughing. "There's always a disappointment when you dreams of old shoes."

"Sim, I feel bad about dragging you down, too. What are you going to do?"

"I'll be all right," said Sim, standing behind Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Hold the letter up more, Mrs. Birtwhistle, please. What's that line by the blot? 'Pay to-morrow at noon, or be required to vacate said premises. This letter is in legal form, and no other notice will be necessary.' Is that true? Let's make all the trouble we can for him. If I meet him in the hall, Birt! if I meet him! if I meet him, Birt, I'm going to run against him; and I'll say, 'Look here-- say, you, look out who you're pushing!' I'll say, 'You push me, will you?' He'll say he didn't. Then. Birt. true as I'm standing here, I'll--"

"Do nothing."

"I suppose not," said Sim, laughing.

"That would be fine, if you did!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Then you'd do your six months, as well as all the rest of the trouble."

"I see him so plain." said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Sim, I don't wonder that the ancients thought the heart was the seat of the emotions; that feeling of passion, you know; so plain do I not only see myself, but actually feel the contact of my hurling him down the stoop; then, the very second after, I'm so calm, just sitting here smoking."

"The poor old thing she is!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "The poor, miserable, old miser, so afraid of a few dollars that we wouldn't toss to a dog. The poor, miserable old thing!"

"Oh, stop it! let it drop! It wears on one to hear so much on one subject. Sim, we may get a whole lot of orders to-morrow. I see so plain what I'll do. I am entering his office. I say, 'You want your money?' I hurl it in his face. And yet," added Mr. Birtwhistle, smiling, "I suppose we'd do the very same thing in his place, hey?"

"Never! Couldn't be so mean! Never!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle, Miss Guffy, Miss Dunphys.

"Suppose so! Probably do the same thing ourselves." said Sim and Asbury.

"Sure, Birt, 'tis well we have our office fees paid, anyway. I hope we wasn't bad luck to you. Katie, we can't pick and choose now, it seems."

"But no Christian home and kind treatment!" declared Katie. "We're not down to that. Sure, the bad luck all seems to come at once, it do."

"Or, no!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "First I change the money into silver dollars. I hurl the handful of silver dollars into his face-- or here, not pay him at all?" added Mr. Birtwhistle, looking almost as cunning as Mr. Tunnan, despite Mr. Tunnan's facial advantages. "We'll not pay at all. Why shouldn't we win the month's rent? We can use it. If we get money to-morrow we'll put him to all the trouble we can, and move, and might as well have the rent ourselves."

"Right! right! right!" cried Miss Guffy. "Now you are talking like a sensible man, Mr. Birtwhistle."

"Or, no! I'll pay him." Miss Guffy sinking back in her chair. "I won't hurl the money in his face. I'll say or do something that won't be so tenement-house-like as that. I'll pay him, and say, 'My dear fellow, I'm so much obliged to you for the experience, don't you know. I have so often wondered how it feels to be dispossessed'-- often came near enough knowing, Delia-- 'to be dispossessed. Such experiences broaden one, my dear fellow, and though you are probably too ignorant to understand me, again I express my sense of obligation for the educational value of the experience'-- or I won't repeat the word 'experience' so often."

"I don't know we have anything worth anything," said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I hate to lose my tables-- Mrs. Maheffy won't get them. And, mark my words, Mrs. Schufelt will say nothing of the quarter she owes me. Even hope to win a beggarly quarter. And isn't it like we were in the desert? No one coming near us now! There's human nature for you! Human nature is rotten! There's no Mrs. Maheffy, and no sign of the Tunnans, is there? We're well let alone now, aren't we? Oh, I'd love to get up in the world again, just to let them see! Sim, weren't you going to read us your letter? Anyway, let's say no more."

"Get up, Birt, and give me the sofa. I want to be comfortable while reading Uncle Sim's letter."

"But what's the use?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle. "There's no use saying anything at all to him. I'll think up the right thing to do. Just let me be; I'll think up the right thing."

"You think your situation is funny," said Sim, sitting beside Mr. Birtwhistle, "but so is mine. This letter begins with matters you don't care about. Here he say-- no,

that's only some trifle-- "My dear boy, you must be careful and not let such good fortune turn your head. I hope you realize that now is the time for saving. I seem to gather from your letters that you are entering upon more expensive ways of living than I could ever afford.' I wish I had a cigarette," said Sim. Birt, we couldn't possibly afford five cents for cigarettes, could we? No, that's out of the question! 'But, as you say, it is probably necessary for you to keep up an appearance. You have shown such unexpected abilities'-- how's that, Mrs. Birtwhistle?-- 'that I, even with my greater age, feel as if it was presumptuous'-- some day he'll regret writing so respectfully to me---- 'to advise you, but do let me repeat that now is the time for saving. I never before realized the greatness of the opportunities for a young man to-day--'"

"It's the rottenest insult ever offered us!" exclaimed Mrs. Birtwhistle. "The miserable old creature! May she never have a day's luck for it-- there goes Mrs. Maheffy up the stairs-- no, it's Mrs. Tunnan; she always goes up so briskly. No stopping at this door, is there? I guess not-- but perhaps they don't know."

"Oh, out on the stoop I told Mrs. Maheffy, but we don't want anybody. I think it more decent to let us alone."

"Go on, Sim."

"Me? I don't want to see any more!" said Sim, crumpling the letter and throwing it at vacant-eyed Mr. Parker. "Or, here," recovering the letter and reading-- "Whatever you do, my boy, always maintain the Rakes' standard of excellence! I'm in a fix. He writes a pretty good hand, doesn't he? Asbury, you know you've got cigarettes hidden away somewhere."

"I think it a disgrace, I do, indeed!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle. "A man of your age and the business ability you say you've got, to be dispossessed for a few miserable dollars that we wouldn't throw to a dog-- she's a miserable, old scut, she is, with all the time we've been good tenants here-- shall I get some chopped meat, or will you have bread and cheese for supper?"

"Get a can of lobster!" and "Broil a few quail for us," and "Isn't terrapin in season?"

"I know what to do!" burst out Mr. Birtwhistle excitedly. "I've found out what to do. I must get the money and then I'll know what to do."

"What?"

"Why, pay the rent."

"But you haven't the money," Mrs. Birtwhistle pointed out. "And we must lose our home. Can't you think of anything?"

Mr. Birtwhistle could not.

"Can't I depend on you? I feel I must depend on you. Can't you think of anything?"

Mr. Birtwhistle shook his head forlornly.

"You must think of something! You're a big strong man; surely you can do something for us. You can?"

"I'm down and out!" said Mr. Birtwhistle miserably.

"Then shall I get chopped meat? We have an onion for it. Or bread and cheese? Cheese? Shall I?"

"Ten cents' worth of American cheese and a loaf of New England bread," said Mr. Birtwhistle decisively, and taking all the responsibility.

Miss Guffy was crying. Miss Guffy was sobbing a little. "Sure, the two of yez, and the lot of yez, I can't but feel 'tis all my fault some way."

"Guffy, what ever put that in your head?"

"I can't but feel it; I can't, because 'tis like bad luck has marked me for its own, and where'er I go I do but bring bad luck with me. I wouldn't wish it for the world! For the world I wouldn't wish for to bring bad luck to youse."

"Guffy that's silly talk!"

"It may be," sighs, head drooping languidly to the higher shoulder, "for I am but a silly one, anyway." She hysterically added: "I was born to misfortune. Think of the misfortunes Stevie brought down on me, and that was only one case. For a year afterward I went down on my knees every morning--"

"Oh, Guffy, don't pray curses down on anybody."

"What? Don't what? I prayed the next meal would strangle him. I prayed every penny he took from me would be a curse to him; that, did he have childer of his own, they would turn agin' him in his old age; or they'd be overlooked in their infancy. Oh, you might as well be the biggest strumpet in New York. Worse than I got, and up so early, come rain or shine, to my hard day's work-- was I the biggest strumpet in New York, worse couldn't befall me."

"Sure," head again drooping languidly, manner again listless, "one time I did think the tide had turned, when Joe comes home and paid me the twenty-eight dollars he owes me-- but no tide turns for Guffy. He then runs up thirty-six dollars on me. Every day 'twas can I lend him a dime; give him a quarter, then it might as well be a dollar, and he'll pay me all together; and, when I ask him about his work, he makes me answer that Hughes won't take him on yet.

"'Hughes didn't take me on to-day,' is his answer. Hughes comes for him. 'I can't speak for him,' I says; 'he's in the front room; see him for yourself.' 'Do you want work to-day, Joe?' 'Oh,' rubbing down his legs and arms, 'I'm in no condition to start in to-day.' 'Then you'll not stay here to get into condition,' I tells him. 'Would you put me out?' 'Yes, and this minute.' 'Then there's others goes with me.' That night four of them leaves."

"You should have come to us," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Sure, girl, dear, you know I didn't know you even existed. But 'twas at that time

Mr. Eagan had given me his sixty dollars to hold for him till the next day, when the bank would open. I have it in the bureau drawer. I'm alone in the kitchen, with Stevie and little Edie, the sister's childer, all of my own left to me, and Stevie grown up the fine big boy able to take care of himself and ease the strain on me. On the table I have the pails, all in a row, to send the supper over to the men in the gas house; two eggs, slices of ham, bread and butter, and a can of tea in each pail, and each pail with a ticket and the man's name on it. Thinks I to myself, I'll run out and get a bit of steak for ourselves, to throw on the coals. Stevie's not there when I comes back. I wonder at that, for 'tis him will bring the pails over to the gas house. I'm wondering, and I'm looking to see his overcoat gone from the nail on the door. I don't know what comes over me, but my hand goes to my heart; I'm running to the bureau drawer.

"Mrs. Birtwhistle, I couldn't describe to you! The money was gone. I couldn't describe to you, because the next thing I knew, the men was throwing dippers of water over me. I'm running up to the police station, crying like mad, and I don't know what the people must of thought of me. A detective comes back with me. Sure, what good are they? The detective fools and fiddles around, expecting five or ten dollars for himself before he'd do anything.

"Mr. Eagan comes home to his supper. I say, 'Mr. Eagan, you had a right to put your money in the bank.' What else I said I don't know, and never will know. I gave him twelve weeks' board, and 'twas that left me where I couldn't pay the butcher, nor the rent, and had to sell out for a few paltry dollars.

"Oh, as sure as God, Mrs. Birtwhistle, bad luck has married me, and before my birth seen me coming. For three weeks Edie went barefoot, and comes crying to me telling me what the other childer said to her; and I having to pretend to the neighbors she would go barefoot, and there was no keeping the shoes and stockings on her, till I borried fifty cents from the woman on the second floor, and gets a second-hand pair for her."

"You ought of come to us!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle severely.

"Ah, sure, but you poor thing, I wish I'd known it!" said Katie.

"Gee!" said Sim; "I don't see any such hard luck in going barefooted; I used to want to-- but couldn't, of course. Of course we had a certain position, socially, you know, in town, Birt. Excuse me, Miss Guffy."

"Then she's down with the scarlet fever, when I thought I couldn't stand another thing. She lies here, like this, like a scarlet rag in my arms, with the deleriums, and no doctor, saying, 'What's that, auntie?' 'Hush, darling, there's nothing; you're only imagining.' 'No, auntie, there's something in the room, auntie.' 'Sure, sweetheart, what could harm you, and your auntie here by you?'

"Oh, Jesus, Mary and Joseph! I'll go crazy! I've worked so hard, and if I'd been the

biggest strumpet in New York I'd be rolling in wealth this day. I see the floors over the way is to be idle, too. Sure, how can they keep tenants there, and never a bit of repairing?

"Oh!" sitting on the window sill, beating her knees, writhing from side to side, "it seems the harder you try, the worse your luck is."

"She's had a fierce time of it, Asbury," said Sim.

"Has she?" asked Asbury.

"Come here, sit beside me," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Ah, yes, Mr. Birtwhistle, you and Mrs. Birtwhistle, the two of yez, is the only ones ever good to poor Guffy, that you took off of the streets when there wasn't a shoe to her foot, nor an extra shirt to her back. Thank God for that! There's been some one good to her--

"Then I'll repay you! I'll run like mad up and down the streets of New York, shrieking what has befallen you, till I get the money for you. I'll call it out on the housetops that the grandest man in New York, and his wife, is in sore necessity. I'll see if there is one kind heart, or one speck of Christian feeling in all this big city. Don't stop me. No, no, Mr. Rakes, let me go! If she has to go shrieking it in the streets and squares of New York, Guffy will pay a teeny mite of her debt to the two of yez. Don't stop me!" running to the hall door.

"You'd better run after her, Birt," cried Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"She's excited," said Sim. "I think she'd feel better to walk around the block a little."

"If I ever seen such oddities!" exclaimed Emma.

Said Katie: "I likes to see gratitude. And you certainly always was good to her, like me and Emma's said a hundred times. You was good to her, and I likes to see gratitude."

"I think," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "some one ought to go out after her. Shall I? Will you, Birt?"

"Wait! Perhaps"--cunning in Mr. Birtwhistle's eyes, even if cunning on his flat face was almost impossible--"you can't tell what she might do. Excitement like that is valuable, Sim; it's energy and makes people do what they can't do other times. Perhaps she might find and interest some one who would help us.

"I've fallen!" laughed Mr. Birtwhistle. "Would you ever dream me capable of saying such a thing as that, Sim? I've fallen!"

"Don't you break down!" implored Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I don't know what will become of me if you break down. I so need you. Shall we think if there is anywhere we can borrow?"

"Don't ask me. I've fallen."

"No stamps to sell, of course? All letters sold?"

"I've fallen!"

"Birt, shall I get the bread and cheese, now?"

"Ten cents worth of American cheese," said Mr. Birtwhistle promptly. "Get one loaf of New England bread."

"All right, then," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, reviving. Sim was whispering-. "There's some one at the door."

"I dassn't open it," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "I'm a coward."

"Well, I'm no coward," whispered Sim, "but I hate to face anybody"-- seeming to struggle with himself. "Go on, open the door', Birt! What do you care?"-- struggling with himself, forcing himself. "What do I care?" said Sim, opening the door.

"Aha, Mrs. Tunnan!" blithely from Birtwhistle. "How are you feeling to-day? You're looking fine and blooming as ever."

CHAPTER VIII

"GO 'long with you!" Mrs. Tunnan was saying-- her pink wrapper, with prints of pebbles in the back-- Mrs. Tunnan slept on the roof sometimes-- her large nostrils, like pebbles of a tarred roof. "'Tis a way I have of pinching me cheeks that makes me so handsome, Mr. Birtwhistle." Silent, staring infant held in one arm. Mrs. Tunnan stepping to the mirror and pinching her cheek with her free hand. "Me cheeks was always so-- Lord save us, girl!" to Miss Emma Dunphy; "you're a ghost! you haven't an ounce of blood in your body. Whoever had the bringing up of you must have starved you!"

"I eats everything," said Katie.

"Indeed, ma'am," replied Emma, flaring, "whoever had the bringing up of me fed me and taught me manners, too!"

"Must of starved you," Mrs. Tunnan continued placidly. "Yes, me cheeks was always so, and I've never lost me blush like some after a few years in this country. When you don't feed a child she's never any good to you, when she's grown, but always that pale and sickly. Come in here, Ida!"

The little Tunnan girl-- matronly in front, her mother's apron from her waist to the floor; but a short-skirted, little girl behind-- came into the room shyly, a finger in her mouth, eyes down, glancing around covertly; no longer with a friendly little wave, but as if awed by people who had suddenly become important.

"So we couldn't pay yer rent?" said Mrs. Tunnan. "'Tis very little, and was you much of a man. you'd scrape up that much, Mr. Birtwhistle, but you're too fond of the sofa, upon your back, and the pussy-cat on your boozum. But, sure, 'tis a thing like enough to happen anybody. Ye were after telling Mrs. Maheffy at the door, Mr. Birtwhistle?"

"How well Mrs. Maheffy stays away from us!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle bitterly. "'Tis very neighborly of you, Mrs. Tunnan. Here's the letter we got from the McKickers."

Mrs. Tunnan, the infant head downward under her arm, reading the letter.

"This is? This letter a dispossess? Ho! ho!"

Katie Dunphy, not knowing in the least what was laughable, struck up her shouting laugh:

"Ho! ho!"

"'Tis not worth the paper it's written on, woman."

"Have you ever known of any dispossess cases, Mrs. Tunnan?"

"I'd not say that, Mrs. Birtwhistle, but I've had a wee bit experience, and knows the wee bit about dispossess cases. Sure, the old divils is writing you this to save expenses. It costs from two-fifty to eight dollars for the regular notice, according to the fees of the marshal, and the marshal's men. You know, Mrs. Birtwhistle, the landlord has to put everything out in the street, in perfect order, or you can collect on him. 'Tis often a good plan, Mr. Birtwhistle, to loosen up the back of a mirror or some such thing on him, so 'twill fall out, and make a little for ye to start life anew on."

"I'd hate to have our things put out in the street," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "I wonder if we couldn't furnish the rooms on the instalment plan, just to be dispossessed in good style, you know. Sim, I like to have a little style about me always, you know. If we could get in some nice bureaus, and a parlor suite, and a brass bed to go out stylishly with, I wouldn't mind so much. What becomes of the furniture, then, Mrs. Tunnan? You seem to know."

"Sure"-- rather less deliberately-- "I know very little of them cases, except if you don't move your furniture, the Bureau of Encumbrances moves it for you."

"Where?"

"Well"-- as if reluctantly-- "to the City Yard. I only knows what I've heard. 'Tis only hearsay with me. But you must go down and see about it."

"See who, and go where?"

"This is the Eighth District, so you must go down to the Eighth District Court-- Twenty-third Street, isn't it? I don't be sure. Some one was telling me. Sure, all I know is what I read in the papers, but if you have childer, and tell his Honor a very sad story-- faith, Mr. Birtwhistle can think up a sad story without trouble for you, ma'am."

"It's the going away that troubles me," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "We can't pay the rent, but we must certainly have some money to leave stylishly. Sim, we'll need-- there are seven of us-- we'll need three cabs, at least, and that will be crowding some--"

"You talk like a fool!" angrily from Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Oh, I can see everything'll be just the same! You'll learn nothing from this. Go on, Mrs. Tunnan."

"Ye can get a week's time from his honor. That, together with the expenses ye bring on them, puts you where you can go up to the old divils and say: 'Would you pay me ten dollars to move out immediate and orderly?' 'I'd see ye in blazes first!' 'Ye would, and small blame to you; but would two dollars be asking your honor too much to dispossess meself immediate?' 'That's more like it; now be a nice man and don't make no disturbance, and here's a dollar down, and the rest when your things

is safe out on the sidewalk.' Anyway," said Mrs. Tunnan, "it comes to me, like a dream, I've heard somewheres of some such agreements. Let ye not worry, but take your time, and, was I in your place, I'd hold out for five but take three dollars, which won't go far to starting life anew for you, but will pay for the bit of celebrating over it. Come here, Ida, you divil! Take your hand out of your mouth. Cry, Ida!" An awkward and awed little girl. "Cry, you divil, for the ladies and gentlemen," slapping her hands, clumsily holding the infant head downward. "Would you cry, you divil? I want to show the ladies and gentlemen how you can do it. For, sure, Mrs.

Birtwhistle, Looey is that distressful over what has happened ye. 'A man like that come to this!' he says. 'I wish to Gawd I could come to his assistance. I have no money,' says poor Looey-- Mrs. Birtwhistle, you'd feel for him, the way it's took him, what's happened you. 'I have no money,' he says, stamping up and down the house like one gone mad. 'Not a thing to pawn, or I'd do so and glad to, for they're not common people downstairs that's brought to such a pass. Lord 'a 'mercy on me, why haven't I got the money for them? Then, Lizzie, I tell you what to do. Lizzie,' says poor Looey, let ye go down to them and say, silver and gold have I none,' is Looey's own words, 'but me own flesh and blood I offer you glad and freely!' Then, Mrs. Birtwhistle, Looey sends me down to offer you his two flesh and bloods to go down to the Eighth District Court, and, for all his honor knows, they're your own, and you're a poor widdy. Ida, ye divil, remember the words! At 'poor widdy lady' ye rubs yer eyes with your fist; or if she says the old man is in the hospital, ye holler. Cry, Ida, and show the ladies and gentlemen how you can do it-- ain't the childer the obstinate things! But she'll cry something piteous for you when the time comes, Mrs. Birtwhistle. Are you accepting of Looey's offer?"

"Oh, Mrs. Tunnan, I'm very much obliged to you, and it's so good of you to come down to us-- how well Mrs. Maheffy, and her we've known the longer, keeps mighty still and away from us! But--"

"Us? Me? My wife plead in a public courtroom? Birtwhistle, my wife, do such a thing? Mrs. Tunnan, I have no doubt your husband means well, and I thank him for that-- I never take offense where offense is not meant-- I'm not angry at him, but that is too much! Don't think I blame you, Mrs. Tunnan. It's meant very kind of you-- but my wife, Mrs. Birtwhistle! Go back to your husband, Mrs. Tunnan, and tell him that he little understands Mr. Birtwhistle's character; Mr. Birtwhistle, who, to all appearances, may, indeed, be far down in the world, but who, even now, even as you see him at this disastrous moment, has a name to live up to; that must be preserved in its integrity; a name, even now, known from the rocky coast of Maine to the sunny shores of California; known as the name of the president of the Universal Manufacturing Company-- that a name to be dragged into the mire of publicity, to be held up to the public and jeering gaze of a police court? I am a little

excited, perhaps, but no, no, Mrs. Tunnan; so long as I have comparative youth, perseverance and industry, I can still hope to restore that name to its honorable position of commercial importance!"

"My!" said Sim admiringly, "he's a great speaker."

"My dear," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "I wish you would remind me, to-night, to cut my toe-nails; they have the toes of my socks destroyed."

"Well, 'tis none of my offering," said Mrs. Tunnan stolidly-- her nose wriggling, however-- vertical nostrils like soles of a squirming fairy. "'Twas Looney sent me. Lord sake, girl, why don't You brush your hair? You're a fright you are, indeed! 'Tis your sister, is the other lady?-- and the big, round face of her! Did ye trim yer hair different, girl, yer face'd be the less like a platter. Come, Ida!"

"Indeed," said Emma, when the good woman had gone, " 'tis not much you're losing by leaving this house. I'd platter-face her! I should of told her her own child was the starved-looking creature!"

Mr. Tunnan could not have been far away. Mr. Tunnan in the doorway:

"Oh, Mr. Birtwhistle. You may go a long distance before anybody's offering you anything again." Mr. Tunnan seizing the door-knob and slamming the door-- throwing open the door: "Well, I'll not put myself in such a position again, Mr. Birtwhistle! I'm only sorry I laid myself open to be insulted by you. You'll never hear of me offering you anything else, Mr. Birtwhistle." Slamming the door-- opening the door so as to slam it again: "That's all right, Mr. Birtwhistle!"

"I'm afraid I've insulted him," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "I don't care, except that I don't want to offend anybody. Wasn't I right, Delia? My wife appear and plead in a public courtroom? Impossible! If you are nothing else, always remember that you are Mrs. Birtwhistle, and I always expect you to carry yourself with dignity, accordingly. I was right!"

"Indeed, Mrs. Tunnan," said Emma, "is what I had a right to say, 'if it comes to signs of starvation, you needn't look any farther then what you're carrying in your own arms!' is what I had a right to tell her."

"Delia," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "of course, what I say is true, under ordinary circumstances, but, on the whole, after more mature thought, you know, is it such a bad idea? You wouldn't have to say much. Just have the children with you. They could just look piteous, you know. I think if you went up and spoke to the Tunnans--"

"Then, indeed and you'll wait a long time for me to go up and humble myself to them, you would that! Oh, if that isn't too low-down and groveling for me! What can one think of you? When you spoke before, I did say you always was a fool, but, in a way, I did admire you for it-- I wouldn't have much to say? Just have the children with me? Then here's for you, and understand it now, and forever: there'll

be no children go anywhere with me; nor anybody else, unless Katie and Emma want to come with me; but the longest day of my life, I'm through with you now and forever, Mr. Birtwhistle, the honorable, commercial Mr. Birtwhistle. When I can't stay to look up to you, in any possible way, I couldn't stay to look down at you. Where's newspapers, Katie? Where's cord, Emma? I did think to at least see this trouble through with him, but not now, but my few poor belongings into a bundle! Will you come with me, Katie? Are you coming, Emma, or do you want him to come crawling to you to go take children down to a court and plead for him?"

"A little more of that!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle. "Now, just a little more like that!"

"Asbury, you and I'd better clear out!" said Sim, laughing, turning to buffoonery, pretending to protect his head, unable to recognize a serious quarrel.

Miss Guffy coming excitedly into the room, closing the door behind her, holding up her hand, opening the door to look out, again closing the door and holding up her hand. Sim laughing: "Better stay out! dangerous in here! fur flying!"

"Guffy, help me pack! Help me pack! What have I to pack, with all belonging to me in the pawnshops? To pack, is it? But, Guffy, I'm through with that man, I hate and despise, forever! His pride, Guffy? But lets his wife do all his mean acts for him! There's a wood box down the street. Does he bring it in for firewood, like a man? No; but it's 'Delia, if you hurry, you can get a good box down the street-- hurry up, Delia!'"

"Oh, Birt, are you as bad as that?" said Sim jokingly.

"I wouldn't!" said Asbury Parker, shaking his head at Sim.

"Oh, the Lord between us and harm, and I left ye so united when I went away! And now what's ailing you? What's happened you? But, whist!-- but let ye not fall out, now, of all times!"

"The last place we were in, Guffy, he wouldn't climb down the fire escape to pick up a whole half-pound of butter, and butter at thirty-two cents the pound, that had dropped down by accident. He wouldn't, would he? but sends his wife down! That's his pride, Guffy!"

"Oh, shame on you, Birt!" cried Sim banteringly.

"You needn't holler; that's all!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Got a match, Sim? Anybody got a match? You needn't let the whole United States hear you?"

"Would you drive me distracted? Would you have me drop out of me standing?" screamed Miss Guffy. "But wait!"-- mysteriously. "Ah, let ye be good friends again! Ah, let there be a song. Honor o' God, let ye be good friends!" Miss Guffy running to the phonograph, starting a comic song upon it. "There, now! let us all be the good friends and sing a bit of a song together!"

"I hate you! I hate you! I hate you! Do you hear me? I hate you and only married you out of pity! God save me, I hate you with all my heart and soul, but once I

pitied you I Don't go out, Asbury. And you'll catch cold, sitting with your back to the windows so. I suppose you don't know what to make of me, Mr. Rakes?"

"You're a very common person," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "It is to be noticed that the common people never have any control over their emotions. I hope you'll never hate anybody like I have always hated you. Sim, I should say that the distinguishing trait of unenlightened people--"

"Oh, say, now, Birt, you know-- if you keep quiet, you know-- I mean that I'm not interfering, but you go too far, you do!"

Rattling good song pealing out from the phonograph; jolly, good song; merriest of comic songs!

"Common? Common? Then I never was before I met you! And if I am, what are you? Two years of schooling! I've had seven! Everything you know you say yourself you've picked up from your own reading."

"So much the more credit to me."

"Oh, say, Birt, I'm not interfering, but--"

"Indeed, I don't see what else you are, with two miserable years only. Never made a decent living! I go out now to support myself. You never did anything for me but bring me down to poverty and misery. I at least had good clothes and money in my pockets before I met you."

"Ain't it terrible!" said Emma to Katie. "She has a right to let him alone, when he's willing to stop."

Merriest of rollicking songs bellowed in the phonograph's jovial, husky tones.

"Make things worse!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Keep right on! Go on! Beautiful voice she has! That beautiful voice!"

"There'll be no more voice, Birt. I've had my say. I'm sorry if that voice has been such a torment to you, but you'll never be annoyed by it again. I don't wish you no harm, but there's nothing to pack, and now I'm going. You can have everything. I wouldn't touch a thing belonging to you--"

"Ah, won't you hush? You won't hush, will you? And me trying to tell you what I have for you-- here's fifteen dollars!" said Miss Guffy.

"Guffy! where'd you get it? It's in bills, Guffy! It's too late, now, for all of me. Give it to him. I'm going. I hate! I hate! I hate and despise him!"

"Ah, she does nothing of the kind! Don't believe her, Mr. Birtwhistle; she do but need a little coaxing. Here's the money-- on your life don't go paying any now! Mind what I bid you! To-morrow, go up to the office, and let on a friend loaned you, and pay five down, and promise the rest later. Don't pay the fifteen to once, and get change--"

The door was opened.

Mr. McKicker came into the room-- head projecting forward from round

shoulders; chin so far down on breast of frock coat that neither collar nor necktie was visible. "Good-evening, gentlemen and ladies-- oh, pardon me!"-- hands clasping below chin, and head in a bobbing bow-- "I should say ladies first!"

Mrs. McKicker! Mrs. McKicker, tall m a column of a Greek temple seen from a distance-- tiff gray dress with perpendicular flutings-- hatless Mrs. McKicker; her gray hair in opposite scrolls upon her forehead, like the volutes of an Ionic capital.

With a harsh, grating and masculine sound, Mrs. McKicker cleared her throat "Come in, Mr. Humphries!" A gray helmet, the blue and the brass of a burly, young policeman.

"Even if some one hadn't seen her come out of the room, there's the money in her hand," said Mrs. McKicker--- "hem!" harshness and grating.

"Oh, may God forgive you for saying such a thing!" cried Miss Guffy-- the vermilion waist of Miss Guffy; skirt of green, spotted with yellow. "What should I be doing in your rooms? And locked! How could I be in rooms never unlocked?"

Tall Mrs. McKicker, hands behind her, inclining her face down toward Miss Guffy, making a double chin at one side of her chin. "The strangest thing! I have always been so careful! Here, what I have expected, some day, has happened, on the only occasion I ever relaxed."

"May the Lord forgive you, Mrs. McKicker! What should I be doing in your rooms? Could I break down your doors? Have I keys like a locksmith?" Policeman leaning against one side of the doorway, his club making a slanting bridge, slanting up from him to the other side of the doorway-- policeman leaning and chewing gum. The Birtwhistles and the Dunphy sisters hovering, huddling at one side of the stove-- Mr. McKicker silent and smiling at the other side of the stove-- Sim and Asbury Parker sitting on the sofa.

Miss Guffy had snatched back the money, and stood Sim's table and the stove, vermilion arms hugging; a crumpled bill in each hand. "Oh, Mrs. McKicker, you'll be sorry for this! What should I be doing in your rooms?"

"Really the strangest thing!" said Mrs. McKicker, with hands behind her; neck folds at one side of her chin. Policeman turning and facing the interior of the room; club in both bands behind him; idly tapping his shoulder-blades with the club. "Oh, merciful heavens!" from Mrs. Birtwhistle, who seemed to be the most badly frightened. The Dunphy sisters huddling together, backing together toward the east window.

"I done it," said Miss Guffy, unfolding her arms in her listless, hopeless, indifferent way. "I admit I done it," holding the money out in her hands and looking at it. "What's more, I don't deny I done it. Would you be making trouble for me, Mr. McKicker? Sure, how could you, when it was meant to pay you back with? You would of got it back, Mr. McKicker; that is what it was for."

Mr. McKicker, with a hand upon each lapel of his long coat, smiling and silent.

"Ah, be your own noble self, Mr. McKicker! Would you have me sent away? I'm asking you, Mr. McKicker! Ah, be your own noble self."

"Surely you'll be satisfied to get your money back!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle-- Mr. Birtwhistle standing with his arms folded, as if he were a disinterested spectator-- Sim speaking excitedly to Asbury Parker. "It's not costing you anything," continued Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Surely you'll be satisfied and not hound a poor woman. She wouldn't harm a fly, Mrs. McKicker, and 'twas all done for us, and not for herself, at all. You wouldn't have the heart, Mrs. McKicker!"

"I want to know," said the policeman, "if you're putting up a holler, ma'am?"

"Oh, are we making a charge?" asked smiling Mr. McKicker.

"Ah, Mr. McKicker, be your own noble self! I done it! I don't deny I done it, but be your own noble self!"-- Miss Guffy's hands to her eyes; the money dropping.

Sim picking up the money, holding it out toward Mrs. McKicker, but then handing it to the policeman, who shrugged his shoulders, pointed to the nearest table, and then swished his club at the legs of children who were crowding in the doorway. People in the hall; people on the stoop, looking in the window; Sim going to both windows and drawing down the shades.

"What's more," said Mrs. McKicker, "I think you'd better take the whole lot when the wagon comes." General masculinity; nevertheless her shoulders fluttering a little. "At least, this man here. This man was in the act of taking the money when we came in here. I make a charge of receiving stolen money against him."

"Such lavishness!" said Mr. McKicker humorously. "You'll not leave me any tenants at all!"

"This man, anyway, Mr. Humphries; he's got a bad record."

A shrill cry from Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Arrest him? You would? I guess not! Not while I've got one breath left in my body! Run, Birt! Out the window, Birt!"-- throwing herself upon the policeman; arms about the policeman's arms, at his elbows, causing him to drop his club-- "Run, Birt! nobody shall harm you! Run! run! run!" Policeman succeeding in thrusting her from him, only to have her bound back; breaking one grasp about his body, only to be encircled anew; desperate policeman backing toward the hall, waving out white-gloved hands, like a flight of doves against his blue bulk-- Mrs. Birtwhistle throwings rings of arms about him; one ring snapping, only to clutch in another ring. "Is he gone, Sim? Run, Birt! No one shall harm you while I live!"

The policeman stood still. "Well, are you getting tired?" To Sim he said: "Oh, the weaker sex, hey? Oh, yes, very!" He breathed hard and chewed gum-- Mrs. Birtwhistle clinging to his belt-- "Birt, you didn't run!"

"Come here, my dear!"-- Mr. Birtwhistle and Sim rescuing the resigned and

passive policeman-- "I guess there won't be any arresting of anybody." Mrs. Birtwhistle led back to the soft, clinging to Mr. Birtwhistle, panting, closely watching the policeman, who was smoothing down his coat with one hand, and with the other feeling his collar.

"Yes, arrest me!" Miss Guffy was screaming. "I'm guilty! I must be arrested! I will be arrested! Officer, it's your duty to arrest me. Aren't you going to arrest me? Then I'll go up to the station-house and report you. I done it; I will be arrested!"

"Well, then, if she will insist--" began Mr. McKicker.

"Oh, you call yourself a man!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle, darting toward him. "You a man! I'd slap your face for you, good and hard for you, if the policeman wasn't here. Oh, Katie and Emma, see what calls itself a man!" Mr. McKicker smiling, leaning back against the mantelpiece, holding the lapels of his coat. "Emma, Katie, I'd show him, if I was half the man I'd like to be, for one minute only-- don't you cause any trouble, Sim! Birt, don't you stir! Sit down, Sim! Birt, I beg of you, I beseech of you, Birt, don't say a word. For God's sake, Birt, don't you interfere."

"Be still, Sim!" Mr. Birtwhistle was saying. "You're only making things worse by that kind of talk."

"There's no worse about it," said Mrs. McKicker, turning to leave the room. "I want that woman arrested."

"Yes, arrest me! I'd go myself, anyway. Officer, you've got to arrest me, or I'll put in a complaint about you. But you'll give me time to put on my hat, won't you?"

"Take your time! take your time, lady," said the policeman, still feeling his collar, and wriggling his neck to have the collar set right.

"My good shoes!" Miss Guffy was sobbing. "Emma, if he can only wait for me to put on my good shoes-- ah, they're gone-- everything's gone."

"And I'll ride up to the station-house with you", said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"No!"-- Birtwhistle's hand upon her arm.

"Yes, I will, and indeed and certainly I will! And we'll do all in human power for you, dear. Don't you worry, for we'll get you bailed out in five minutes, and have a lawyer for you the first thing in the morning. Indeed, I will, or, if I can't go in the wagon, I'll run up all the way.

The Miss Dunphys, awed and silent, helping to put on Miss Guffy's hat, pinning several thicknesses of veil over her face. Mrs. McKicker had left the room; out in the hall, the sound of her heels marking each determined step-- Mr. McKicker detaching himself from the mantelpiece, following her; his hands flat upon his collar-bone, finger-tips touching--his head in a bobbing bow over the flat hands. "Good-evening, ladies and gentlemen!"

The sound of a gong outside; the grating of wheels against the curbstone.

"Well, then, are you ready, lady?" asked the policeman, stepping to the mirror

and twitching his collar.

"No," said Mr. Birtwhistle again. He held Mrs. Birtwhistle's arm.

Front hall crowded; people all the way up the stairs. A woman, halfway up, exclaiming: "The cheek she has to bring a cop in here!" A man saying to a woman: "You keep quiet. Don't you go mixing in this." A girl to another girl: "That was Eddie Hogan you seen me speaking to; he was my first sweetheart."

Policeman and Miss Guffy coming from the front, east door; Guffy holding up her head, behind the thick veil, saying: "How do you do, Mrs. Schufelt?" In the street, another policeman, with his club, opened a gantlet from the stoop to the patrol wagon. Miss Guffy seeming to cling for protection to the first policeman, saying to him: "That's going to be a fine new schoolhouse down the street." A top-floor woman running down the stoop, saying: "Let's run up, and we can see her when she gets out."

The gong. A whip slashing.

Back in the front, east room, Mr. Birtwhistle, rushing from windows to blue curtains, was shouting: "Where's my hat? Where's my coat? Have you seen my collar, Sim?"

"I'll go up, but you won't leave one step!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Oh, cusses!" exclaimed Mr. Birtwhistle, sitting down. "Somebody ought to go up! Somebody ought to be there and see what's the charge. Somebody ought to be there to show her she ain't without friends. Oh, cusses! somebody!"

"But not you, Birt! I won't let you out of my sight. I'll go. Why not? Can't I? Can't you let me go? Sim, will you go, and promise me faithfully not to say one word to Mr. McKicker?"

"Asbury's already gone!" said awed and frightened Katie. "Oh, Emma, ain't it terrible! Asbury's gone on the run."

"How could she do it!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle. "How could she dare do it! I'd no more go into anybody's rooms! And she was always predicting something evil for me, but now got it herself-- why did she ever do such a thing!"

"I can't do anything, Sim," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "There's no use talking of my getting a lawyer."

"But you might ask Mr. Maloney to go bail for her."

"I can't, my dear; I can't ask favors from anybody."

"You've been going there long enough. I hope no one'll think we put her up to that! You see what she's done? She's made it look as if we had something to do with it. How could she be so wicked! Oh, well, so long as we have peace and unity at home, that is the main thing--"

"Of course, we have our little spats at times, but that's nothing."

"A word now and then, but any married couple's apt to have a word at times. All

I say is, I don't want any quarreling now, Birt. We must get out, but we'll stick just as close together. What will become of us all, I don't know? We'll get out to-morrow, and get out decently, not making no trouble, but as if we didn't care in the least about it-- but Mrs. Maheffy, won't get my tables. She needn't think she'll profit any by us! How well she hasn't come near us! Birt, I'm not in the least prejudiced, and there's good and bad of all kinds, but I never knew a Far-down that didn't have that streak in them. If we have to tramp the streets, we'll leave as if we didn't care, and stick together."

"I like to hear a woman talk that way," said Sim; "that's the right spirit."

"Oh, mercy!" from Katie; "I've knocked over a cup of salt!"

"How could you be so careless?" cried Emma excitedly.

"What's the difference?" asked Sim.

"Oh, dear! how could you!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Why?" asked Sim.

"Oh, dear! that means bad luck's coming!" and, "Well, what are you laughing at?" to Sim and Mr. Birtwhistle.

The angrily shouted oaths of the paralytic upstairs; the roof over his head leaked, but it was a roof. Scrambling and squeaking of mice; but the mice had nests behind the baseboards. Sounds throughout the house of people, who, for at least a month, were safe; the throbbing of a washboard, some one jumping on firewood.

"What I had a right to tell her," Emma was saying, "was that she might be plump enough herself, but look at her miserable, skinny little husband--"

Slight knock on the door-- door flying open-- Mrs. Maheffy coming into the room-- Mrs. Maheffy broad, in black, and flecked with the infant.

"Oh, my dears!"-- Mrs. Maheffy running to the sofa and sitting-- "oh, my heart! Hold the child for me, Mr. Rakes. My heart! how it is going! I'm not the bit of use where's any excitement! Do you see how my hand is going? I couldn't hold it out straight to save me! Oh, my heart! I feel faint! Stay with Mr. Rakes, baby; mamma's not a bit of use with all this excitement!

"And what are you going to do, to say nothing about what is all this about Miss Guffy? And she done it, all right! Well, I'm not one of these 'told you so's!' Just the same she done it, all right!

"But I want ye all to come up to supper with me. That's what I've been about till I could come down to invite ye. There's a nice hot supper waiting, and the places laid for the lot of ye. There's cots to accommodate ye. The Maheffys ne'er went back on man, woman or child they were e'er friends with. 'Tis not warm to-day and cold to-morrow with the Maheffys, but true to your friends in their hour of trouble. Then let the lot of yez come up and stay with me, and welcome to all I own in the world, till yez can start up again for yerselves. Me rooms, and storage for your furniture,

Mrs. Birtwhistle, me purse to the last that's in it, me provisions for the winter, all me belongings, and all the warmth of me heart I offer ye all, or freely and gladly share with ye!"

"Oh, Mrs. "Maheffy--"

"Come up! You're heartily welcome!"

"Mrs. Maheffy--" began Mrs. Birtwhistle, her voice shaking.

"Not a word from ye, but up with the lot of ye! Up to me own rooms and me own heart, ye divils!" Her arms out, shooing them into a bunch, shooing the bunch from the door. "Let yez all come up!"-- shooing them to the stairs, and then crowding up, with the bunch, so as to get to her door first, and throw open the door, and cry: "Ye're most heartily welcome, the lot of yez!"

CHAPTER IX

A FEW days later. Mrs. Maheffy's rooms. Front room, with its walls, green as cemetery grass, and the white-netting-covered, long pictures, like tombstones laid flat by a wind-storm perhaps. Then the kitchen -- the red of calico, and the green of its walls -- inside of a gouged watermelon; scraped to the green of the rind in spots, and the red tissue of it untouched in other spots. A table in the kitchen; a front-room table in a line with it, line broken by the curtained doorway; tables covered with newspapers for tablecloths. In the doorway stood Miss Emma Dunphy, not at all trying to attract Sim's attention, of course; but she seemed not displeased with the effect of a red curtain wound around her white length; round, pale face, like the ball surmounting a barber's pole; red curtain in a spiral around her white slimness. Katie Dunphy rather suggested a Skye terrier planted in a flower-pot; broad-shouldered form, in terra cotta, tapering toward her feet; no neck to mention; face above the rim of the flower-pot; strands of hair down over her face. Mrs. Maheffy was out in the hall. Infant on the front-room floor; Miss Maheffy on the front-room floor, shrieking:

"How does the cat get down the fire escape? The roof fell and broke the horse! I went to confession and gave the father two cents, and he gave me one back to buy a bicycle!" Messrs. Rakes, Birtwhistle and Parker sitting in a row against the west wall. Mr. Maheffy standing at the east window, back turned, hands upon window framing; standing as if dismally gazing out a cell door. Hat on the back of his head; his coat loose on his sloping shoulders, and in a furrow between his sharp shoulder-blades; hat and coat hanging loose upon him, as if upon a nail. Something was cooking on the kitchen stove, but social relations had taken Mrs. Maheffy to the hall. There seemed to be a little trouble on hand; nothing out of the ordinary; Mrs. Maheffy was crying to the top floor, with only her ordinary vigor:

"Oh. I'm Irish, am I? Well, the Irish pays their coal bills! Pay your coal bill! Pay your coal bill!" Mrs. Maheffy returning to her front room, carrying a broom like a spear, and a dish-pan like a shield. She looked at her guests, and her eyes widened; in the act of leaning her Amazonian weapons against an east-wall barrel, she picked them up and charged again into the hall:

"See here, ma'am, you're making a great mistake, if you think I'm afraid of you!

Go soak my head? Oh, so lady-like! Let me tell you, I could always keep my head above water. Such a lady!" She returned to her barrel-armory, looking a fit consort for Uncle Sam, not only in her undoubted independence, but in a red-and-white-striped wrapper, and a blue-and-white-checked apron.

Emma, drawing the red-curtain spiral tighter around her, said: "You don't have to go out in the hall, Mrs. Maheffy, if you mean any slurs on me. I'm sure I could always keep my head above water, too. You might better come right out direct with what you mean for me, ma'am."

"If I'm not the unfortunate woman! If I'm not persecuted with you, Emma! For you know well 'twas the impudence of that person up top that was occupying me. They're such a rough class here!" -- hand to her heart "I do lose my temper with them, and never used to the likes, before we came here, but a piano in every room, and never bought coal by the bag, but a ton of red-ash. It begins in my feet, and rolls up to my poor heart, that begins to beat in my throat, till, if I didn't scream, I'd suffocate. I was always delicate like that. I was so delicate, when a child, my mother despaired ever raising me, but could never control me. Nobody couldn't. Maheffy? Ah, a man's word should be law in his own home -- You've let the fish burn on me! Katie Dunphy -- Maheffy, you stood there and let the fish burn on me!" running into the kitchen.

Mr. Maheffy turning around to look toward the kitchen -- his dismal gaze resting upon his guests -- he turned sadly back to the window. Whereupon Sim laughed and nudged Mr. Birtwhistle, who whispered: "Stop, Sim!"

"And this heifer," cried Mrs. Maheffy, is standing in the very doorway, and letting the fish burn on me!"

"You call me a heifer?" demanded Emma. "That's like when Mr. Donovan came to call on us one evening, Katie. We was that mad at him! We was out. There was three in help, and he says to the other girl: 'Where's the two heifers gone?' Wasn't we mad, Katie? The cheek of him! What business of his was it where we'd gone?"

Whereupon Sim laughed boisterously, but most of his mirth was caused by the melancholy of Mr. Maheffy's loose coat and sharp shoulder-blades -- Mr. Birtwhistle drawing away from Sim, muttering to him.

"Hello, Katie, old girl!" Katie passing him-- Sim grabbing her, dragging her to sit on his lap, tumbling her hair more untidily over her face.

"You let my sister alone!" cried Emma laughing, running to him.

"Ah, go on! I'd hug you, too, if you were a little younger!"

Whereupon Emma went back to the curtains-- handkerchief to her eyes -- Sim grinning to Mr. Parker. "What's the matter, Emma?" then, "Oh, be mad as you like! -- resentfully. Then, jumping up: "I'll make you laugh! I'll make you laugh!" Emma shrieking: "Mrs. Maheffy!" Mrs. Maheffy: "If I leave this frying-pan across the two of

yez!" Emma: "You go away, now! Help me, Mrs. Maheffy!" Sim making friends again by tumbling her hair worse than Katie's.

"You just wait!" said Sim boastfully. "I'll have it out with McKicker. He'll regret ever making me his enemy. Emma, I know it's wrong of me, but I never forgive an injury."

"Indeed, Mr. Sim, you're very strong, you are, but you shouldn't use your strength on poor, defenseless girls, you shouldn't."

Sim nudging her and pointing toward Mr. Maheffy; both of them laughing-- Mr. Birtwhistle shaking his head warningly-- Mr. Parker leaning back, with his head against the wall.

"Would ye come to yer dinner!" snapped Mrs. Maheffy in the kitchen. "Come on, come on, and get that over with, for the devil himself wouldn't feed you-- Maheffy!"

"I must say, Mrs. Maheffy," said Emma, "I'm not accustomed to being called that way to dinner, but used to the best of everything and nothing warmed over, and if we're too much trouble to you-- and I speak for this one, too--"

"I'm persecuted! I'm persecuted with you, girl!" wailed Mrs. Maheffy. "Was I addressing myself to you or Maheffy? Faith, then, would your ladyship condescend so far as to be notified respectfully that dinner is served, ma'am?"

"Oh, I know! I'm not dense, ma'am!" But then she was taking Sim's arm, walking around the front-room table in pretended stateliness, pretending to hold up a train-- Katie crying: "Ho! ho! and are you going to leave me neglected, Mr. Parker? Go 'way, you're me uncle! What would I be doing going to dinner with a married man? Would you neglect me, Mr. Parker?" Mr. Parker pulling his arm away from her. Emma sighing: "Sure, all the best men is married."

"Oh, are they?" said Mr. Birtwhistle, clumsily holding the back of a chair, unable to take any part in playfulness and pretending.

Miss Maheffy, the Senator, Mrs. Maheffy, and Mr. Parker in the kitchen. Emma and Sim at the west side of the front-room table; Mr. Birtwhistle and Katie opposite; a chair for Mr. Maheffy at the doorway end of this table.

"Where'd your wife go, Birt?" asked Sim.

"Hey? Oh!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, sitting awkwardly, sitting straight, face as if pressed against an undertaker's window, stiffly taking, with his chair, little hops nearer the table. Mrs. Maheffy circulating from one room to the other.

"And isn't Mr. Maheffy coming to his dinner, ma'am?" asked Katie.

"He'll come when he feels like it."

"Oh, my gracious!"

Mr. Maheffy turning from the window, whistling sadly at the ceiling, going to his chair at the end of the table. "Oh, you waited for me, I see!" he said, speaking with

motionless lips. Fried fish on a plate before him, and sitting far under the table, he furiously slashed the fish into fine bits before eating.

"We're very short of knives," said Mrs. Maheffy, blundering like a bumblebee around the front-room table. "The old man uses them for stove-pokers."

"Sure, Mrs. Maheffy, ma'am," said Katie, "what do you make work for yourself for? We can eat the vegetables off of the same plates."

"Indeed!"-- haughtily-- "you find us as we always live; we always have separate dishes for the vegetables. Please don't say plates to me, Miss Dunphy. Call them dishes. I couldn't eat a thing, at the thought of plates to eat off of."

"I eats everything," said Katie, with half a knife blade in her mouth. Then, with a spoon handle, she violently stirred her cup of tea. "Ah, the fish is grand! And do you like eels? I put in a feed of them once, and they went back on me the night long. Does Mr. Maheffy like fish? 'Tis halibut steak; 'tis nice." Sim trying to catch Mr. Birtwhistle's glance to wink at him; Mr. Birtwhistle's eyes to the table.

"It ought to be," said Mrs. Maheffy; " 'tis dearer than beefsteak."

"How much was it, ma'am?"

"'Twas eighteen cents the pound; and steak is fifteen."

"And what do you pay for the tomatoes?"

"Maheffy!" shrieked Mrs. Maheffy; "well, Maheffy, if you're through with the tomatoes, pass them along."

"Oh, yes!" Mr. Maheffy's chin almost to the table. "If I'm through! How well you don't ask me if I want any first." He held a spoon poised and whistled sadly.

"'Tis grand! I'm enjoying every bit of it!" said Katie, speaking into her tea cup, which, drained, was like a white muzzle over her mouth and nose. "'Tis lovely! I enjoys what I gets here; I don't deny it, Mrs. Maheffy. Your fish is lovely, Mrs. Maheffy." Emma and Sim sportively putting too much sugar into each other's tea cups; Emma shrieking: "Make him stop, Mrs. Maheffy!" Mr. Birtwhistle as silent as Mr. Parker.

"'Tis like anybody else's fish, Miss Dunphy."

"No, but 'tis so soft and firm, 'tis! That's a beautiful wrapper you have on, ma'am. Did some one give it to you?"

"You may be so fortunate as to have things given to you. I bought this."

"And how much was it?"

"Maheffy!" screamed Mrs. Maheffy. "Well, Maheffy, sit up straight!" She seemed distracted, ran half way around the table, picked up her shield and her spear, and ran out in the hall:

"I'm Irish, am I? Then let me tell you that's the highest feather in my cap. And you? God knows what you sprung from! And your brother stole Mrs. Ramsay's clock before he was sent to the Protectory! I'm Irish? 'Tis me proud boast I am!"--

backing into the room, throwing her weapons toward the barrels.

"How much was it, ma'am?"

"Maheffy!" shrieked Mrs. Maheffy, "pass the bread, why don't you? I don't remember, Miss Dunphy; 'tis so long since I bought it. Maheffy, do you hear me?"

"Was it at a sale, ma'am? There's lots of bargains got by watching the advertisements. Was it over on the avenue?"

Sim joggling Emma's elbow so that she could not drink her tea. "Mrs. Maheffy! Make him stop, Mrs. Maheffy!"

Here Mrs. Maheffy, who had edged to the doorway behind Mr. Maheffy, having the bowl of a table spoon firm in her flat, drove the handle of the table spoon into the furrow between Mr. Maheffy's shoulder-blades. Mr. Maheffy's head shot up, and his pointed shoulders drooped. He looked around wrathfully, but then seemed to exclaim, "Oh!" and looked as if he understood something.

"Well, Miss Dunphy," he said-- Katie, like a squirrel with a nut, having a saucer of tea in both hands, both elbows on the table-- "what I would say is, did you get any encouragement at the office to-day?" Katie slid the saucerful of tea down her throat-- back of her hand across her mouth.

"'Tis the same old good home and kind treatment-- oh, my references!" springing up. 'Oh, yes, they're on the mantelpiece. I'd not like to lose them."

"No trouble," said Sim politely.

"He can write five different hands," said Katie, awed.

Mrs. Maheffy stood in the doorway; fist on her hip; spoon in the fist, thumb braced far up the handle-- a jab! Mr. Maheffy's head flying back; the back of his hand clapping against his tormented spine. "What the--" he scowled and he wriggled in his chair.

"Well"-- hesitatingly-- "I hope you'll soon get some encouragement. Nobody's happy unless they're working!"---scowling, wriggling and rubbing his back with the back of his hand.

"Good Christian homes, but no wages," said Katie morosely-- Emma holding her fork poised, studying Mr. Maheffy, finally deciding that he meant nothing, then smiling her jack-o'-lantern smile, and deftly turning the conversation to false teeth and granulated eyelids. Mr. Maheffy far under the table again; his head drooping; his pointed shoulders rising.

Having talked with Mr. Parker, Mrs. Maheffy was sitting, in the kitchen, beside the high-chaired infant; elbow on the table, little finger in her mouth; chewing tip of little finger.

"You must be prosperous, Mr. Rakes!" said Mrs. Maheffy bitterly, looking out at Sim, who was leaning back, lighting a cigar. "Maheffy smokes a pipe; Maheffy can't afford cigars."

"Can't he?" said Sim, stretching out a foot to kick Emma's chair, that she should look around and smile with him at this. Mr. Maheffy was smiling-- treacherously, as if to say: "If she's reminding you of anything, I'm not!"

"Are you in there?"-- some one pushing the hall door wide open. "Is Mrs. Maheffy in there?" asked Mrs. Tunnan. "How's the lot of ye? How are you, Mrs. Maheffy?"

"I'm failing," said gloomy Mrs. Maheffy, coming from the kitchen. "When I was in private life I was all right, but I'm failing."

Third-floor door slamming. Tunnan's shrill whistle.

"He don't like for me to come down here, though not on account of you, ma'am, for he's that sorry you're mad at him, and says he meant no harm, and is after me the day long to bring you down this and do that for you, and he'll share his next load of wood with you alone, if you won't be mad at him, and chop it for you, if you'll only speak to him on the stairs-- but at you, Mr. Birtwhistle. Mrs. Maheffy, I come down to see have you a cold boiled potato for my cat? Failing? You're strong as an ox; the big bones of you!"

"I'm in delicate health!" said Mrs. Maheffy stoutly. "People won't believe how delicate I am. Look at my bones! You have big bones, but not me. Look at my bones for yourself."

Shrill whistling; slamming door; cries of "Lizzie! Lizzie!" Then a shout: "No, they wouldn't accept nothing off of me, but will off of Mrs. Maheffy, but not meaning no harm against Mrs. Maheffy. No, not off of me, but will offer others in the house! Lizzie! Lizzie!" violent stamping and kicking on the stairs.

"He'll never forgive you, Mr. Birtwhistle. No, 'tis you have the big bones, Mrs. Maheffy. Then I'll just be taking up this potato with me in my fingers?"

"I can ill afford even one potato!" lamented Mrs. Maheffy. "Mrs. Tunnan, are you blind to say I have the big bones? My bones is as slender as a child's. You mustn't say big bones to me, Mrs. Tunnan. Yes, take the potato, though I can ill afford it. And where our own rent is coming from is past me-- indeed, and let them wait! Faith, that's the last thing on earth costs me a thought. They can just wait."

"She have the big bones!" said Mrs. Tunnan stolidly-- with the cold boiled potato she went away.

"The impudence to say I have-- oh, dear me, Mr. Rakes!"-- the high, affected voice-- "do put her cat out after her. Oh, dear me, I can't abide a cat around where I'm eating. I can't never respect any creature that eats without no knife or fork.

"But come on now, Katie and Emma," she added in her rough, hearty way; "if you're through, let the two of ye pile in and clear off them dishes. Up with ye, ye divils, and clear off them dishes!"-- scraping crumbs into a paper containing potato parings; singing, going to the front window, throwing paper, potato parings and all

into the street.

"What in blazes!"-- indignation down in the street.

"Yes, indeed," sighed Mrs. Maheffy, "when we was in private lift the table was well cleared by this time."

"Well, I must say, Mrs. Maheffy, if we're the cause of any trouble to you--"

"Mercy on us, hear the girl!"

"Let me speak, Mrs. Maheffy! If you don't want us here--"

"My dear girl, what could have put that into your head? You silly girl! What a notion! Katie, aren't you ashamed of your sister? Has Maheffy said aught to displease you? Upon me soul, if he did, he'll bear from me, but it must be a misunderstanding on your part. Indeed, Maheffy, you'd do better starting to your day's work, for 'tis long past your usual hour, than to cause ill feeling. even though I'm sure you didn't mean it. Silly, silly girl! You're as welcome as the flowers in May, the lot of you!"

"I never enjoyed anything more," said Katie, piling dishes. "Emma, I must write to Nellie about it. I did enjoy my dinner!"

Miss Dunphys piling dishes; Messrs. Rakes, Birtwhistle and Parker sitting in a row against the west wall; Mr. Maheffy at the east window, as if at a cell grating. Mrs. Maheffy looking at her guests; her hands on her hips.

"Well, I suppose we're through with that, at least. But I suppose you'll want to eat again, this evening. Sure, the devil himself wouldn't feed you--Maheffy, is your stomach never full, Maheffy? That man eats more than he earns, he do!"

Whereupon, Mr. Maheffy wheeled around, threw his head back, opened his mouth, snapped his teeth together, and hissed in torment. Then, after a pause:

"Well, Mr. Parker, you mustn't lose heart, you know. Did you get any encouragement this morning? We can't find everything right off at first, you know."

"Do you like the babies, Mr. Rakes?" asked Mrs. Maheffy-- the Senator having toddled from the kitchen, standing between Sim's knees.

"Sure! Hello, Bill!" Senator biting on a bunch of keys, then holding it out to Sim to bite.

"Well, that will stand you in good stead some day."

"Oh, yes, I like them-- go to mamma, now! I like to see them around; they look so home- like, you know-- there! mamma's calling!" Senator toddling to his mother; his big blue eyes staring down at his bulging cheeks. "Faith, you can't put him down a moment! I had to dress, this morning, with him on my arm." She took up the impressive-looking infant; tried a cap on his head, which was ridiculous; silk hat more fitting on one of such lofty, dignity. Mrs. Maheffy, her aproned sides slanting wide, was sitting opposite the three gentlemen against the wall, humming a lullaby-- "Da! da! da! just pile the dishes in the pan, Katie. La! la! la! can't you sit down, Maheffy? De! de! de!"-- looking wild-eyed at the three gentlemen,

comfortable against the wall. "Oh, but you have the gentleman's life of it-- Maheffy! Oh, but you know how to live without hurting your health!" Tormented Mr. Maheffy again wheeled around, threw his head back and hissed. He stepped toward Mr. Birtwhistle, but then returned, with arms spread out, to gaze down at the street.

Having piled the dishes, Katie and Emma were sitting on the table-- Miss Maheffy coming from the kitchen-- Miss Maheffy, with no eyebrows, and with ears fastened, with strips of plaster, to her head. "Look, mamma! they're sitting on the table, not doing anything!"

"Oh!" said Asbury Parker; "any encouragement?"

"Let's play school," said Miss Maheffy.

"Faith, and I'd say we don't feel much like playing, with the rent coming on, and no way to meet it-- indeed, and they can just wait! the impatience of them! the fret they're in! They can hold their impatience. Da! da! da! baby! go to sleep!" Mrs. Maheffy glancing at a table spoon, a burly, strong-handled table spoon, sticking out in the pan of dishes on the table, between her and a Miss Dunphy-- Miss Katie Dunphy-- her mouth open; her eyes dismally staring; her lips forming: "I enjoyed every bit of it."

Mrs. Maheffy saying forlornly: "Keep quiet, lambie; there's nobody here feels like playing. Playing, how are you! She's that fanciful, Mr. Birtwhistle. Ah, in the old days, when we was in private life, she was always playing. Maheffy, can't you sit down? Oh, but 'tis the gentleman's life you lead-- Maheffy, 'tis you I mean! If I hit you a clip alongside the head, miss, you'll keep quiet. Indeed, there's none here feels like playing!" Mrs. Maheffy's hand had been creeping toward the burly table spoon. Her fingers closed upon it. Mrs. Maheffy getting up; moving carelessly toward Mr. Maheffy's furrowed back.

"No, I didn't," said Asbury Parker.

"That's all right, Mr. Parker," said Mrs. Maheffy, turning to him. "You can stay here after there's others that's gone. Maheffy will get you hotel work. We consider like you're our own, Mr. Parker." She went on toward the furrowed back of Mr. Maheffy. Emma murmuring to her sister: "In the name of God, let us take anything that comes along to-morrow, for 'tis well taken out of you for the bit you eat here."

"Now we're playing!" cried Miss Maheffy, waving a ruler. "I'll call the roll, and youse must all say 'Present!' Now, are you ready? Gertie Ryan! Gertie Ryan! Ah, can't you make out? Gertie Ryan! Ah, can't you say 'Present?' Then you want to be taken in to Miss Riley's? You know what she'll do to you. Ah, Make out!"

"Present!" groaned Katie Dunphy. From Mr. Maheffy came a sharper groan. Mrs. Maheffy was unbending the strong handle of the table spoon. Mr. Maheffy turned from the window. Mrs. Maheffy nudged him, and he said laboriously:

"Mr. Birtwhistle!"

"Well?" asked melancholy Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Ah, no, You mustn't say that. None of youse must dare open your mouths, because I'm Miss Riley coming in, now."

"Mr. Birtwhistle, you didn't find any work this morning?"

"I didn't find anything-- yet. I went in a couple of places, but--"

"Well?"

"They chased me out."

"How was that?"

"Dog."

"Oh!"-- Mr. Maheffy turning to his wife-- "They chased him out." Mr. Maheffy whistling.

"Da! da! da! lambikins, sleep!" Mrs. Maheffy doubled her fist upon the table spoon. "Almighty!" cried Mr. Maheffy, springing away from her.

"Ah, no, we're playing. Youse mustn't say all that; youse's little boys and girls. Now, I'm Miss Riley! I see the children are very quiet this morning-- but you! Isn't your name Gertie Ryan? Didn't your teacher tell me you're a bad girl? You come along with me," said Miss Maheffy to Katie. "Now cry; you must!"

"I could, easy," said Katie.

"I'll look for something else to-morrow," said Mr. Birtwhistle awkwardly.

Then Mrs. Maheffy's heel pressing upon Mr. Maheffy's toes. "Well, Mr. Birtwhistle, I don't care if you go looking somewheres else, now. Why don't you?" Every face turned toward him.

"But why can't you play with me? Don't you feel like playing with me? Say this after me: 'Over the hills and far away, to grandpa's house we go--'"

"Over the hills and far away---sure, child, dear, my heart is too heavy within me!"

I am going, to-morrow," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Why don't you go this second?" Mr. Maheffy having to laugh nervously-- repeating: "This second," having an air of jesting, having an air of not in the least jesting.

-- to grandpa's house we go. Here comes the horse to carry the sleigh--"

"Hush, child!" Emma getting down from the table-- Katie's hands to her eyes.

"This second?"-- sickly laugh from Mr. Birtwhistle. "I would, only I couldn't get up from this chair in a second, you know. It would take me more than a second to get up from this chair--"

Then Mrs. Maheffy's heel pressed most emphatically down.

"That chair was there long before you came; it's able to take care of itself. You don't have to stay to mind the chair for us, you know."

"Why," said Mr. Birtwhistle, looking at Sim, laughing his sickly laugh, "I believe

he's trying to get me."

"I never enjoyed anything more!" said Katie desperately.

"Be still, would you, Katie Dunphy!" said Emma. "If you had the spirit of a bug, you wouldn't talk that way. Do you want to be told in so many words to get out? A hint is as good as a word to me. I'm sorry I've been such a trouble to you, Mrs. Maheffy--"

"Why, girl, what do you mean? What have I said to you? Sure, you take us up wrong, Miss Dunphy!"

"A word to the wise, Mrs. Maheffy!"

"May I never stir, but I don't see what ails you!" cried Mrs. Maheffy. "And no one saying one word to you! If this isn't the silliest girl I ever heard of, to take people up so! You can't drop a word with her. If I hit you one clip with this spoon, you'll not be so wrong-headed with me, I'll bet you! Mercy, such a touchy one! And no one even looking at her! Why, the lot of yez-- the lot of yez, hear me"-- dropping the infant to throw her arms cordially wide-- "the lot of yez is as welcome as the flowers in May!"

CHAPTER X

IT WAS about ten o'clock at night. A returning excursion had paraded past the McKicker house. Up the street, the white caps of excursionists, rosy in red fire, were bobbing like apples in a torrent. Street like a canon through which a freshet had swept; in open windows fluttered ribbons and capes and fragments of shawls, like debris lodged in niches of canon walls; between railings of stoops were people, lined like wreckage caught on projections of a canon floor.

Mr. Birtwhistle and Sim standing on their stoop. "What's the trouble? Let's go down and see," said Sim.

A few doors away was a saloon. Through the swinging doors of the saloon shot a left-over excursionist in a baseball suit, stumbling to his knees, half rising, stumbling to his knees again, and falling with his face on the edge of the curbstone. A large man, in a vast, white apron-- enormous mustache, with ends twisted into dainty curls-- appeared between the swinging doors. Taking long, deliberate steps, but with his fat arms twitching up and down, he stepped to the curb, and stood, puffing, breathing hard, restraining himself from further attack-- the scattered crowd in the street concentrating like heads on suddenly crumpled cloth.

"What's the matter?" asked Sim, pushing his way into the crowd, helping the baseball player to rise-- a young, black-haired fellow-- blood trickling from a cut in his forehead.

"Oh, do you want some, too?" said the saloon-keeper, breathing hard, turning deliberately toward Sim, but his short, fat arms twitching up and down.

Sim pretending not to hear; steadying the baseball player, who, rising, was bending, examining the torn knee of his stocking.

"I say!"-- puffing and puffing, face crimson with some self-restraint-- "you're a pretty big bloke! You can have the same."

"That's all right, Sweeney," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "he's a friend of mine."

"Hello, Mr. Birtwhistle! Put a yachting cap on some of these blokes, and they think they can sail over you!"-- turning to the baseball player, puffing and puffing, to hold himself back; returning to his saloon; long, slow strides; short arms twitching nervously up and down.

"Wait till I tie this handkerchief around your head," said Sim. "Has anybody got a

plug of tobacco?"

A policeman edging into the crowd; not forcing his way; hovering and silent-- somebody asking him. "What's the matter, officer?" "That's what I'm trying to find out"-- policeman drawing back in the crowd, uneasily fingering his chin, pinching his chin.

Some one in the crowd suggesting: "They done you out of your watch, too, didn't they?"

Helpless-looking youth, feebly waving away Sim's handkerchief: "I must say I don't know."

"Well, they got your watch, all right!"

"I must say I don't know. If you say they did--"

Policeman stepping a little forward: "Be sure what you're saying."

"I must say I don't know."

Policeman backing away, walking down the street, flicking his club at boys, gazing up at windows, coming back to the swinging doors of the saloon, going into the saloon, coming right out, scratching his ear.

"Well, you'd better wash up your face. You can get this man any time. He does business here. No use doing anything to-night."

Said the policeman to Sim: "Take him up and wash his face before he goes home. Do you live around here? This man does business here, and can't run away."

"Come on with me," said Sim; "I'll fix you up."

"This is the limit! Say, this is the limit!"

The Maheffys' front room. Katie and Emma sitting on the table. Mrs. Maheffy and Mr. Parker talking, sitting in chairs against the west wall. Mr. Maheffy, with a flatiron, breaking slats of green-grocer's box on the stone window sill-- Mrs. Maheffy red and white striped, blue and white checked-- Mr. Maheffy's furrowed back.

"So," Mr. Maheffy was saying to Mr. Parker, "if you go over to the hotel with Maheffy in the morning, he will see you taken care of, and started with a good job. Oh, yes, he can get anything he wants. Emma, who's on the stairs? Ah, but I'm the one will keep to myself, if 'tis God's will I'm ever back again to private life and times of peace."

Emma, with eyes that seemed crossed, as she pondered this speech, went to the door, and opened it. A shriek from Mrs. Maheffy: "Mr. Rakes, what does this mean? Oh, my poor heart! What have you done? Don't, under any consideration, bring him in here!" Sim and Mr. Birtwhistle and the black-haired youth with his blood-stained face.

"Oh. Katie, I could never stand the sight of blood! I'm faint! Mr. Parker, I'm faint! If you but say blood to me, my poor heart jumps into my throat! Don't bring

him in here!"

Youth trying to withdraw from the doorway, but Sim holding him fast. "Mrs. Maheffy, let me explain--"

"More of it! oh, more of them, hey?" said Mr. Maheffy, turning around, looking, whistling, going on with his breaking of wood. Whereupon, Mrs. Maheffy was sitting up, far from faint, clutching handfuls of blue-and-white-checked apron.

"Don't bring him in here, I say! More of them? I should think there are enough of us here now. I should think, Mr. Birtwhistle, you'd have the sense to see there are quite enough of us here without bringing in another to share the bite we eat!"

Dazed youth mumbling: "Thank you, ma'am, but I've had my supper. It's this lad brought me up. I don't care about any supper, thank you, ma'am."

"Mrs. Maheffy, we're only bringing him here until--"

"As if 'twas not hard enough scraping as it is, without bringing no more mouths to feed!"

Youth shaking Sim's hand from his arm, advancing toward Mrs. Maheffy, holding out a ticket. "See! the dinner coupon's gone. I had my dinner, ma'am"-- then backing away from shrieking Mrs. Maheffy, who was clutching handfuls of apron and wrapper too-- "Well, this is the limit, for fair!"

"There's scarce room to move and breathe, as it is! And you have no more sense than to bring in another mouth to feed! Oh, then, and, oh, then, this is too much for mortal patience to bear! Was I Job herself this would be past mortal patience to bear! Then is the lot of yez here?"

"Mrs. Maheffy, you don't understand--"

"Is the hull of yez here, or are there more coming? Let me wait till the hull of yez is here! I'll bide my time till you're satisfied, Mr. Birtwhistle. Are you satisfied, now, and is this military man the last you'll bring, or do you want time to search the street for more mouths to bring in to feed? Bring them here till you're tired. Then is the hull of yez here? I want the lot of yez to be here, and mark me!"

"Mrs. Maheffy, don't get so excited! You're taking up the wrong meaning of this--"

"Excited, is it? And who'd not be excited, with, let alone, the whole neighborhood, but here the militia brought in, and Maheffy to work for a regiment to feed? I don't care what regiment he belongs to, nor was be the whole militia of the State of New York, he can't forage here-- no, he could not, was he the Sixty-ninth Regiment itself! Then out of me sight with the lot of yez, militia and manufacturers, too, and go laughing to yourselves of the fool you made of Mrs. Maheffy, up to her two eyes. The militia, how are you! The honor 'twould be, the whole United States army for Maheffy to feed!"

Mr. Parker coming back from an inner room, making a bundle of old letters and

perhaps a collar and necktie, but nothing more.

"Ah, Mrs. Maheffy!" said Katie.

Sim and Mr. Birtwhistle talking with the "militia" out in the hall.

"Daylight robbers! daylight robbers!"

"Ah, sure, Mrs. Maheffy--"

"Daylight robbers! midnight robbers, out of me sight!"

Emma coming from an inner room, piling clothing on the table: "Katie, I'll slip on the extra skirts, and you bundle up these things. Thank you! oh, thank you, Mrs. Maheffy!"

"Where's me provisions, laid away for the winter? Where's me rent coming from?"

"Consider yourself paid, Mrs. Maheffy," said Emma, slipping a brown skirt over her head; emerging, pointing to clothing that Katie should bundle up. Katie sighing, making a bundle, going to an inner room, and coming back with hats.

Mr. Maheffy, flatiron in one hand, a slat in the other hand, turning around: "There's plenty of newspaper"--whistling, turning around to break more wood.

"There out of me sight! out of me sight! Mr. Parker, you're a gentleman, and you may remain-- but the other fine gentleman, with his nose in the air, and too grand for this or that; but, Mr. Parker, you stay where you are."

Emma, slipping on a green skirt: "There's not much room here, but I guess I can manage"--then putting on her hat, and, indistinctly, because of a hatpin in her mouth: "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Maheffy, I am sure."

"Oh, stay?" said Mr. Parker; but with his little bundle under his arm he went to the hall--baseball player was saying: "Well, it's a hard case--you know what I mean! I'll give you another handkerchief for this. I'm sorry you're in any trouble on my amount--you know what I mean. But you come with me. That's me, all the way through. I got you in trouble, and you can stay at my place for the night."

"The ladies!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "We have ladies with us."

"Oh, are they? I don't know what my sister would say to that. Then I'll go with you. That's me, all the way through." Sim hesitating in the doorway, and then, with an effort, stepping back into the room, until the Miss Dunphys should be ready to leave.

"If there isn't enough newspaper, I can get plenty more," said Mr. Maheffy over a pointed shoulder.

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Maheffy!"--voices of the Miss Dunphys, both indistinct, both with hatpins in their mouths--"you're only showing your own ignorance, you with your old jail-bird of a husband, and yet you dare hold up your head!"

Sim imploring: "Oh, say, now, don't say any more, you know!"

"Where's me two pounds and a half of fine halibut? Yes, go on, after eating me

two pounds and a half of fine halibut, and every morning the poor child going off to school without enough to eat!"

"You have your audacity with you, anyway, Mrs. Maheffy-- yes, we're ready and only too glad to be ready to leave, Mr. Sim." Miss Dunphys to the stairs, calling back: "Was it me, I'd not dare open my mouth. Oh, thank you, and consider yourself paid!"

"Where's me bottle of relish that lasted the one meal-- that the devil had choked you with it! Who'll bring me back me bottle of relish, I say?"

Down the stairs to the front door, where Mrs. Tunnan greeted them with:

"You know, girls, I'd take you in, in a moment, but for bringing Mrs. Maheffy's tongue on to me--"

"Oh, indeed, and thank you, ma'am," said Emma; "but our cousin in Brooklyn is well able to take care of us."

Katie shouting her laugh of "Ho! ho!"

"Be still, Katie! Yes, indeed, our cousin in Brooklyn will be glad to have us, and the fools we were not to go there in the first place. Indeed, but they have a house of their own, and we'd gone, only was waiting till I've got our fall hats-- these are good enough for a few weeks yet."

"Where's me condensed milk, me sugar, me tea?"

"Don't mind that woman, Katie! Indeed, Mrs. Tunnan, and we did not stay there for nothing. How well you're not welcome when your money's gone; then you can be ready to clear. I wonder how long it will take us to get to Flatbush Avenue? Katie, say good-bye to Mrs. Tunnan; we must get there before the house is closed."

The outcast gentlemen waiting at the foot of the stoop: then the Miss Dunphys going with them down the street.

"She excited me something terrible!" said Katie.

"I consider who it's from," said Emma haughtily. "Where will we go?"

"Well, then, I'll go with you," said the "militia." "That's me, all the way through."

CHAPTER XI

THE outcasts of the Universal Manufacturing Company. Eastward along a street leading from lower Sixth Avenue. Mr. Parker walking steadily ahead; hands in side pockets; bundle of letters in an elbow crook against his side-- his trefoil head-- derby, too small, in a top leaflet; his bushy hair rounding out in lateral leaflets. Mr. Birtwhistle linked with his nieces. Then Messrs. Rakes and Sanguinetti-- Mr. Sanguinetti holding back, mumbling: "Let's go on the other side of the street." His baseball suit, and one white knee; no hat; stained handkerchief encircling his forehead, threads of tobacco hanging down from the handkerchief to his nose. He had been through somewhat lively experiences, but his coarse, black hair was neatly parted, exactly in the middle-- long, narrow head-- top view of it like the back of a little, long-coated, black dog.

On a corner Mr. Parker stopped and stood, arms to sides, legs crossed, body curved like the stem of a three-leaved clover. Mr. Birtwhistle, arm-in-arm with his nieces, walking briskly up to the corner. "Here," said Mr. Parker casually, "is where I generally come."

"Merciful heavens! where are we?"

"I cannot tell a lie; it's Washington Park."

Northwest corner of Washington Park. Round white lights in a mass of trees, like such perforations in darkness as would be seen by a bug in a pepper-box, looking up at the sky. A diagonal dark path bordered with shiny streaks, which were the seats and the backs of pale-light-reflecting benches.

Mr. Sanguinetti holding Mr. Rakes back, and both standing by a stoop, some distance from the corner.

"Let us go to a bench in the darkest part," Emma was saying; "I'd be that mortified if anybody, should see me spending a night in the park."

"That's here," said Mr. Parker, pointing to the diagonal path, dark, but banded with shiny streaks.

"My references!" cried Katie. "No, they're all right!"

"Faith," said Emma, "but your character is a terrible inconvenience to you, Miss Dunphy."

"If I lost it," said Katie simply, "I'd not like to trouble Mr. Rakes for another one."

"No trouble at all," called Sim, dragging along Mr. Sanguinetti, who tried to hold back. "I have my fountain-pen with me."

"Ah, 'tis grand to have a fountain-pen; then a body need never be without a character."

So, reassured, and holding her "character" tight in her hand, Katie was ready, without much concern, for a night in the park.

Then six dots in the shiny streaks. "It's too dark here," Mr. Birtwhistle worried, and feeling responsibility. Messrs. Parker and Sanguinetti sitting together. Mr. Birtwhistle sitting between Emma and Sim. "I think we'd better walk around a little," said Sim, jumping up and sitting beside Katie, laughing and pushing to push Mr. Birtwhistle off the bench. "Now, Sim, you've got to behave yourself, you know." Mr. Birtwhistle pushed off the bench, but motioning to Katie to move along so that he could sit between her and Sim. "Dear me. I think we'd better walk. Isn't it cold?" Sim laughing and jumping back to his place beside Emma. "Now, Sim, I won't have any carrying on."

"Indeed," said Katie, "and would I pass a night in a park, beside a married man?" jumping up and sitting beside Sim-- all three unruly ones pushing and pushing Mr. Birtwhistle off the bench. "Now, Sim, I won't tell you again!"

"Sure, sit ye here between us, uncle dear!" But Mr. Birtwhistle standing up, in front of the bench, looking worried with so much responsibility. "I think we'd better walk, or we'll catch cold."

Farther up the path, an illuminated face suddenly flaring yellow-- far away, another bright yellow face in the dark-homeless occupants of benches lighting their pipes.

"What are they doing here?" asked Katie resentfully, as if it were her park.

"They're sitting on the benches," said Sim.

"Oh, how bright! My, isn't he smart!"

The rustling of leaves in the mind; rustling like discreet laughter at a serious lecture; rustling beginning like uneasiness in seats, communicating, swelling, dying away.

"Indeed, Mrs. Maheffy!," Emma was saying, "but you're not so very particular yourself, in paying back. That's the very can of stove polish you borried off of Mrs. Birtwhistle a month ago. I ought to of flung that at her!"

"Birt why don't you sit down?" asked Sim. "I had to laugh, Emma, at those people, most of the time. I didn't have one speck of gratitude to them. And do you know why? They were keeping us there because they didn't dare turn us off; hadn't the courage, you know, and not hospitality at all. I don't know. It seemed creditable to me to force people to buy two pounds and a half of fine halibut for me. It seems strong to impose yourself upon people who don't want you. I do admire anything

that seems strong. Maybe I'll make my living as a swindler. It seems strong to impose upon your fellowmen and make them support you in luxury and ease."

"I likes a man of principle!" said Emma. "I likes principle above everything else. I wouldn't give two cents for you swindlers--"

"Beg my pardon!" cried Sim, seizing any opportunity to show his strength, clutching Emma's fingers, bending them back. "Beg!"

"I'd die first!"

"Beg!" and Emma shrieking to her Uncle Birt. "Sim! Sim! let her alone. What kind of a way is that to behave? Emma, you encourage him, you know you do. I'll go up to Madison Square or somewhere else."

"Oh, sit down!" said Sim, motioning to his right side.

"And the frying-pan," said Emma gloomily. "Mrs. Maheffy, you'd better give back Mrs. Tunnan's frying-pan, before you talk of others so much. Why didn't I think of the frying-pan? She's bringing up her children wrong; that impudent little girl will never be any good to her. I'm sure I don't wish her no harm, but she's not bringing up that child right. I was out with her yesterday, and the young one got on my side. Do you think she'd have it? The jealousy of her! 'Come over here, out of the people's way!' she says. 'Look at the dirt of yourself, after my spending nine-fifty for you on Easter!' I'd let her know if I only had to go through it again-- sure, what are you doing? Mr. Sim-- writing more characters?" Sim writing in a note-book.

"I'm taking notes for a letter to my uncle," said Sim. "I want to describe the Fifth Avenue club I belong to. I want to paralyze him with my luxury."

"Sure, you couldn't have any better luck!" said Emma, reaching in front of Mr. Birtwhistle and snatching the note-book---Sim jumping up to have a struggle---Mr. Birtwhistle exclaiming: "I'll go right up to Madison Square! If you can't behave yourselves, I won't stay here!"

"Sure, uncle, dear, if you did, we'd all go with you, and you'd be no better off," said Emma, handing back the note-book.

"Mercy!" screeched Katie, jumping up from the bench, slapping down at her ankles.

"Katie, what's the matter with you? Do you want to attract the attention of the whole park?"

"Mercy! there's something got me!"

Mr. Sanguinetti, on the next bench, awakened, mumbling: "Then I'll go with youse. That's me, all the way through."

Only a big leaf had edged across the path, crept stealthily under the bench, pounced upon Katie's ankle, and then darted away; only a playful, big dried leaf. The path, which, from the corner, had looked so dark, was quite light to eyes accustomed to it, path scattered with leaves, never so much alive as when they were dead;

creeping in the wind, two or three racing, then a whole regiment charging, with a commander-in-chief of a big, flat leaf, gallantly and noisily in the lead. Leaves like crawling crabs; tiny, scudding leaves; awkwardly flapping leaves. Leaves suddenly silent and motionless; then a big fellow heard crackling along a full minute before he appeared in sight, himself and his shadow like opening and shutting jaws, as he blundered along.

"With a peck of dirt swept under your bed, Mrs. Maheffy," said Emma, "you are indeed the good housekeeper! Katie and meself must indeed of been hard up to come to you for a night's lodgings! If I only had it to go through with again, wouldn't I give it to her! And last spring, Mrs. Maheffy, when you hung out blankets every day, I'll take my oath 'twas the same old blanket out, over and over again!"

"I cares nothing for her, nor what she says," said Katie, "so long as I have me own character; and what has a poor girl but that? And wish I had a roast of lamb with half a cup of blood flowing around on the platter!"-- sitting with the "character" of Mr. Rakes' invention tight in her hand.

"We're going to have company," whispered Emma.

"And what do they want here?" said Katie resentfully.

"We'd better take a little walk," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

A man with a bundle under each arm had come to an opposite bench, right after him, a drunker man, just able to reach the bench, fall on it, and lie, moaning curses, with knees high; and another drunken man, not only able to reach the bench, but to sit up, with legs stretched out, and hands in pockets, and hat-brim over eyes. Right after them a business man-- business-like man, who put bundles on a bench, gave them the pats a chambermaid gives to pillows, took off his coat, wound the coat about his head and shoulders, and lay down to sleep.

"And what do they want here?" said Katie resentfully.

"They come here because it's the darkest part, and they won't be seen so much," said Mr. Parker, moving away from Mr. Sanguinetti and toward Katie.

"Oh, no!" said Katie; "that's why we came here."

"Yes," agreed Sim; "that's why we came here. I wonder what brings all them."

A hiccoughing old man and a hiccoughing old woman; old woman hiccoughing: "I left him! He didn't put me out; I left him of me own accord!"

More forms coming down the path, dark, with light shining between legs and through elbow crooks. Forms on benches on both sides of the path; the two drunken men and a dozen sober men opposite the castaways of the Universal Manufacturing Company.

"But how does it happen they all come at once?" Sim whispered. Then he sat up straight and folded his arms and scowled, but at no particular man, across the path.

Hands of the man sitting opposite going into their pockets, breaking off pieces

of bread in their pockets.

"Birt," said Mr. Parker, "you're an old New Yorker. Don't you know where they come from?"

"I suppose the saloons are closing--"

"No, it's about twelve o'clock."

Electric light glistening on the cheeks of men munching bits of bread from their pockets.

"The bread line!" said Mr. Parker.

"Then why should I know? Do you think I'd ever accept anybody's bread? Oh, well, that's what you're coming to, Sim!"

But Sim was occupied with scowling and looking forbidding.

"Look at that one with his hat off," whispered Katie. "I does feel sorry for him. 'Tis sad to be in a park without no money nor home. I does feel sorry for that one."

"Why?" asked Sim, trying to seem unconscious of others, rather than forbidding.

"Why," said Katie vaguely, "because his hair is curly. I does feel sorry for that one."

"We'd better move on," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Yes," said Emma; "I'd not like to be seen in such company."

"Why not? why not?" cried Sim, excited. "I'd like to see anybody bother you! I'd just like to see them! Huh!"

Opposite men paying them no attention; paying each other no attention; sitting silent, staring up at rustling leaves; shadows, and gleams from electric light flickering on their munching jaws; hands crumbling off bits of bread in pockets. Prostrate drunken man, with knees high, moaning curses-- sitting drunken man swaying, staggering to his feet, reeling, but not taking his hands from his pockets to balance with.

"I wonder what has they in their bundles?" said Katie.

"Be quiet, Katie!" said Mr. Birtwhistle nervously.

"Shut up, you!"-- reeling drunken man to the prostrate drunken man. "Shut up, you! Do you want to be waking the boarders, boy? Let the boarders sleep, boy!"

Silent, staring, munching men spreading out on the benches, making room to lie down.

"Shut up, boy!"-- reeling to a tree, where he stood, with his back propped.

"There's ladies present. Boy, the boarders is complaining of you!"

"Come!" said Mr. Birtwhistle; "it's cold sitting here."

Sim grumbling: "I'd like to see anybody drive me away from here! but going down to the next bench, shaking Mr. Sanguinetti's shoulder.

"I don't see what you want to bring him along for!" said Emma. "If it wasn't for him we'd not be here."

"He have lovely hair," said Katie.

"All right; I'll go with you, then," said Mr. Sanguinetti, rising unsteadily.

Southwest corner of the park. A circle of pavement; brightly lighted circle blotched with the shadows of overhead leaves; each black leaf plain on the gray sidewalk, down to details of serrated edge, black and magnified to saucer size; an intermingling of black twigs.

"Emma, are you cold?" asked Mr. Parker-- outcasts again sitting down.

"Faith, I've got the family wardrobe on me. Is this one cold, I don't know?"

"The air is that penetrating," said Katie, "but 'tis fresh and fine, and I'm enjoying every bit of it."

"I'll be back in a minute," said Mr. Parker. "I'll show you what I generally do."

"Ah, yes," said Katie, "'tis fine to have along anybody who's experienced, along with you. Mr. Sim, would you jump up and come stand in front of me?"-- a prosperous-looking couple entering the park.

"Indeed!" said Emma, "we're as good as what they are!"

"Would ye stand in front of me, Mr. Sim?" Sim, laughing, jumping up, standing in front of her-- prosperous-looking couple approaching. "What will they think of me! Don't let them see me, Mr. Sim!" Sim pretending that he would sit down again. Emma saying: "Well, I do think it's about time for us to go home; we've seen enough of this!" "Yes." from Katie, "I'm enjoying every bit of it, but 'tis time to go home."; Sim laughing: "Go on! you didn't pay your rent you have no home!"-- Sim squealing-- Emma's hatpin and his arm-- Mr. Birtwhistle nervously: "You'll attract attention! Be quiet, Sim!" Emma asking: "Did I hurt you, Mr. Sim?" Sim crying: "If I don't take that from you and stick you, like a fly, on it!" Mr. Birtwhistle saying: "Sim, you let her alone!" and Mr. Sanguinetti fast asleep. Prosperous-looking couple passing on, then sitting on a bench, laughing and chatting and passing a bag of apples to each other.

"I should think she'd be ashamed of herself!" said Katie. "Thank God, I have me character; and what has a poor girl but that?" Sim saying: "If you lose it, come to me."

Great black leaves swaying gently in the circle of light; wind coming up, and commotion setting in; a tossing and a clashing of shadow leaves, looking so real that one would expect at least the shadow of rustling sound. Leaves crowded into compact black, masses, and then spots of light springing in, where leaves sprang apart.

Prosperous-looking couple, farther up the path, laughing and throwing apple cores at a creeping white cat-- white cat's legs twinkling like a paling fence seen from a car window.

Then Mr. Parker came back. His bundle of letters under one arm, and under the

other arm newspapers that had been tossed under the benches during the day; Mr. Parker calling blithely. "Uxtral Uxtra! frightful railroad accident!"-- taking cord front his pocket.

"I'll make you some jackets; this is what I generally do," said Mr. Parker, spreading newspapers on Emma's shoulders.

"Indeed, and not on your life!" cried Emma, jumping up and shaking the newspapers off.

"But they're very warm; you've no idea how warm newspapers are."

"It's not dignified, Asbury," said Mr. Birtwhistle; "the girls don't want to make shows of themselves."

"Not me, Mr. Parker! Tie them on Katie, if she's willing for to be a sight."

"Sure! I'm cold!" said Katie. "The air is that penetrating; but, like good lads, let ye jump up and stand in front of me, if there's anybody comes along."

Mr. Parker spreading Katie with newspapers, making a bundle of her, from her throat to her waist.

"But, Katie," said Emma, "we'll not leave New York."

"Faith, we'd never be happy anywheres but New York."

"At least our office fees is paid-- ah, Katie, will we ever learn sense? To see us like this, and out in a public park, at night, what would our old mother say?"

A fête of fairies in garments of black, playing and dancing in their plaza of light.

"Velvet gowns", said Katie, "were never more fashionable, and never worn for such di-- diverse occasions before--"

"Without a cent in our pockets, and not knowing where our next meal is coming from."

"For visiting and reception gowns, nothing is smarter, and for tea gowns, very effective--"

"Winter coming and not a suitable thread to our backs-- What are you talking about, Katie Dunphy?"

"The shot velvet costume made in velveteen or silk velvet, prefer--ably the former, is intended for morning wear-- 'tis the fashions, Emma!"-- holding up her newspaper-sleeved arm, from which she had been reading.

"Oh, the fashions!" said Emma, twisting the papered arm so that both could read. "One of the smartest models is the nine-gored skirt-- ah, but, sure, and everything is that delaborate, nowadays! The long reefer fastened with bone buttons, and with no trimmings of any kind-- well, there's some saving there!"

"But what are you going to do in the morning?" asked Sim.

"The bolero effect coming in again-- oh, do? Mark me," said Katie stoutly, "there'll be little picking and choosing, now, but I'd rather come sit here a year than--"

"--than go into a kind, Christian home!" Emma declared. "May the devil fly away with their kind, Christian homes!"

"But what are you going to do?"

"Among the figured velvets, the smartest are in different kinds of gray."

"Yes," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Listen, now, and we'll talk it all over."

"What if you don't get a place to-morrow?" asked Sim.

"How about breakfast?" asked Mr. Parker.

"In ball gowns, a broad band of lace on velvet, with the same style of embroidery, is a popular fashion. A smart afternoon gown is of white lace, cut princesse, and worn with a picture hat."

CHAPTER XII

THE pale gloom of Fifth Avenue at night. Fifth Avenue's nocturnal cloak buttoned with rows of round, bright lights.

A corner hotel, and cabs in a right angle-- cabmen sitting high, with arms folded; cab horses with heads sagging.

Mrs. Birtwhistle coming out of the hotel's side entrance, and standing, with her back turned to three gentlemen who were approaching Fifth Avenue-- Mrs. Birtwhistle wearing a flat, black hat, a rose dangling on the front of it, flat hat tipped down over her eyes; a long, black plush cape, trimmed with moth-eaten fur. Mrs. Birtwhistle seemed cold; arms hugging under her cape; two little teeth seeming to draw in as much of her lower lip as possible, to keep at least that much warm.

"Dear me, you scared me!"-- broad gentleman in a yellowish hat, tapping her on the shoulder. "Mercy sakes, you scared me!"-- her hand as if pushing aside folding-doors, emerging from between folds of the cape, to shake hands. "And Asbury, how's yourself? Sim, you've got a new hat, haven't you?"

"Such as it is," said Sim, taking off his hat, showing a newspaper band under the leather band of it.

"We might take a little walk?" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Yes; I can't stay long. I haven't a pass. You've got Margie, have you?"

"Don't you worry; everything's all right."

"She won't eat raw meat, you remember-- have you the furniture stored? Nothing may be of any value, but I don't want to lose one thing."

"Now, don't I tell you not to worry? Guess what we just heard?"

"What? But have the girls places yet?"

"Yes. And we're not in Mrs. Maheffy's any longer."

"You've left Mrs. Maheffy's? Then where are you?"

"Don't you worry. We met a young fellow, and we're stopping with his people-- for a time. It's rather difficult to stop in any particular place very long, but we're learning. We did get a little money. Some orders came in. I'm getting the mail at Maloney's. I'll fill those orders later."

"Oh, those high and honorable stands he takes!" said Sim contemptuously. "Oh, no, he'd send the money to McGuire's, and only take his commission; used very

good language in telling how big and honorable he'd be-- but, Birt, I don't see how you can keep on so with declaring how noble and good you'll be and then always fall down so meanly. Oh, my! he'd die before he'd take one cent not belonging to him-- then takes it."

"Don't taunt me, Sim-- upon my word, I feel that some day I shall do right, by the very practice of this falling down. And I know what that right is; nothing but going to work like a decent man-- guess, what we heard? That McKicker is going to run for leader of the district. He's always been more or less political, and he's got the money."

"May the devil defeat him!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle, tossing her head so that the dangling rose flapped to the back of her flat hat.

"Well, don't let's stand here; let's be walking."

Four abreast, going up wide Fifth Avenue-- the clicking of heels and the squeaking of soles of others who were going up or coming down Fifth Avenue-- but an almost noiseless four going tip Fifth Avenue, their feet in the faintest of pattering, feet with worn-out shoes on them. Brisk clicking and squeaking; four with the tread of panthers.

"How are you making out?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Birt, we're not paid till the tenth, and then they hold back ten days' pay--"

"Say, never mind that. By the tenth of the month I may have a thousand dollars; it's only a temporary shelter for you. A month from now you'll be laughing at any of these troubles-- ah, you don't believe that, do you."

"No; but never mind."

"You won't believe in me, will you?"

"No; but that's all right."

"You won't even listen to my plans, and what I hope, will you?"

"What's the use? We're tired of that. We're sick and tired of your plans and dreams. All that's worrying me is how you're going to live in the meantime. You haven't got the slightest bit of ability of any kind, but what's the use of going over that again?"

"None, I suppose."

"You needn't snap at me."

"I'm not; I'm too sad and hopeless. I haven't a chance in the world, if you won't have faith in me. Where's that yellow dog?"-- laughing and looking around. "I must have something that'll believe in me!"

"I'm only saying, Birt, that I did expect to have a little money for you---"

"For God's sake, cut that out, will you?"

"Very well, but I was only saying. I was only thinking of you, Birt--"

"If you thought more of me, in the first place," picking his way carefully among

puddles of a crossing, "we wouldn't be here now." To step in a puddle would be a calamity.

"What a dog you are! How the low cur in you comes out!"-- equally cautious and in fear of puddles. "Blame a woman for it all! You can't help that."

Messrs. Rakes and Parker holding back; Mr. and Mrs. Birtwhistle in a front rank of surliness and glaring-- Mrs. Birtwhistle seizing Mr. Birtwhistle's arm and dragging him toward a lighted window with millinery on display. "Sure, Birt, dear, buy me one of them Paris hats?"

"Now, my dear," pretending to hold back, "with all the jewels I bought you yesterday, and the expenses of our new home on Riverside Drive--"

"Ah, Birt, dear, do buy me one of them Paris hats; this one is out of style; I've had it 'most a week now."

Four abreast again. Mr. Birtwhistle grimacing at millinery as if a glass door had been shut against his flat face-- Mrs. Birtwhistle's two little teeth, like two little pillows out airing on the window sill of a doll's house-- the dangling rose swinging in front of her eyes as she walked-- Asbury Parker stepping a little in advance of Sim, to look beyond him and say: "Good-evening, Mrs. Birtwhistle!"

"He's just come to life! Whereabouts in the past are you now, Asbury? Do you know that, like enough, we'll be dispossessed soon?"

"I think," said Sim, "Mrs. Maheffy is turning against us, Asbury!"

Mrs. Birtwhistle pushing Mr. Birtwhistle toward the curb, to say to him:

"Whatever you do, see that Asbury is taken care of. I never did understand him, but I'm sure he's had some great sorrow. You must promise me to look after Asbury."

"That's a strange thing!" mused Mr. Birtwhistle; "all the women seem moved to be good to Asbury."

"I pity him," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Lazy, good-for-nothing, and drunken!"

"I'm sure he's had some great sorrow. That's what's the matter with him. I pity him."

"How about Sim, then, to say nothing of myself?"

"Don't you be too great with Sim. A man of your age shouldn't be running around with a boy like that; Sim's got a lot to learn, yet"-- pulling back toward Sim, saying: "I suppose you'll be writing to your uncle, Sim, that you spent this evening somewhere grand on Fifth Avenue?"

"I don't know," said Sim seriously. "Do you know, I'm sort of changing my opinion about lying so. I don't mean to tell him the truth, of course, but when I see how hard it would be to tell him, I sort of begin to admire truth-telling."

"You'd better tell him everything."

"Impossible!" declared Sim. "He'd never forgive me for causing him to write me such respectful letters."

"You must do what you think fit, I suppose. Then, Sim, he hasn't met any blonde ladies, then?"

"No," said Sim; "Angie's dark?"

"Angie! Who's Angie? Oh, ho! you didn't tell me that! How well everything comes out! Angie, is it?"

"You ought to see her," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Sim means the aunt of the young fellow we're stopping with. She's about seventy --"

"Got one eye and walks with a cane," said Sim. "Oh, no! that's her mother. She's about eighteen, and the very first thing, asked Birt if he was married, and he said he wasn't."

"Oh, well, you keep me posted, Sim. I guess you miss my housekeeping, don't you?"

"Haven't had a decent meal since."

"Fierce!" said Mr. Parker. "Mrs. Maheffy didn't know the first thing about cooking."

"Indeed, she does not!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle, excited, dragging on Mr. Birtwhistle's arm, stopping everybody, everybody having to stand still. "She never makes gravy for no kind of meat, because she doesn't know how. Not the first thing about it! Never saw dumplings for a fricassee till I showed her how, and then-- oh, my! then what sinkers! For a pot roast-- I'm telling you God's truth, Mr. Rakes-- she fills the pot with water, she does indeed, for the pot roast, mind you! Asbury, you know she does! And wasteful! I don't see how Mr. Maheffy stands the expense; she never saves drippings, but buys lard always. Mr. Rakes-- and was I to be struck dead this minute I couldn't tell you different-- the roast beef we always had so lovely and rare, she puts on the back of the stove. She does, indeed-- stews it! If it was my dying breath I couldn't say different!"

"Shall we walk on now?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle.

"I'm only saying about Mrs. Maheffy. Yes, we'll go on, but you mustn't keep me out too late; I haven't a pass, so you mustn't. What about leaving Mrs. Maheffy? You never were any good for news. Sim, tell me."

"As I remember it," said Sim, "we simply told her that, having been accustomed to Mrs. Birtwhistle's housekeeping, we wouldn't put up with her inferior cooking any longer."

"Go on, you! You never had more than a meal or two in my house. You tell me, Asbury."

"Oh!" said Asbury, Mimicking his own drawling, belated way; "don't give the cat raw meat, you say?"

"That will do from all of you! The girls will tell me."

High white lights and the tall yellow beacons of the Waldorf-Astoria. Crossing Thirty-fourth Street-- Mrs. Birtwhistle and Sim each taking Asbury Parker by an elbow so that he should not be run over-- all walking daintily on heels or where heels had been, avoiding wet places as would a troop of cats.

"Here are some handkerchiefs, that came down in the wash, for you," said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Sim and Asbury, here are handkerchiefs for you"-- handkerchiefs appearing between the edges of her cape, like little ghosts parting folding-doors. "Birt, here's some ham in this napkin--"

"That's all right! Now, never mind about us. Don't you bother about us."

"I couldn't bring out any more; the steward in the help's hall and the timekeeper's apt to stop you. The cheek of them! I saw a girl stopped. He said to her: 'Running a boarding-house, Margaret? You've got enough there for ten men.' I'd have died! You put this ham in your pocket, Birt, and get a loaf of bread, and make some sandwiches. Here! I borried a quarter from Mrs. Kilgore. I've loaned her often enough!"

"No, no! I couldn't! I couldn't!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, shaking her arm from his, stepping back, walking behind her.

"You needn't be too proud to take a quarter from me, Birt."

"I couldn't! I know it's kind of you-- I couldn't! Never mind us; we're all right. Don't be talking so much."

"Talking! I never talked enough. If I could have talked you out of going to Coney Island, we might have pulled through. But, no!-- hooray, boys! off to Coney Island, and leave wives sweltering at home, for all we care! Make a big fellow of yourself. Come on; everybody to Coney Island! You don't know me? I'm the big Mister President Birtwhistle!"

"You can go on, or go back; I'll not walk with you!" said Mr. Birtwhistle roughly.

"No! you'll go back to Angie! Yes, let me catch Angie! Go back to your Angie, and see how long she'll cook and wash and iron and slave for nothing for you!"

"You never hurt yourself with your slaving. Walk with Sim. I'll not walk with you; you're too common for me. I was thinking of going to Chicago. I will, and don't care what becomes of you."

"He'd leave me! and I'd cry and cry, and put on a little cap, and be a poor little widow-- and there'd be another in his place before he was half way to Chicago! Oh, I got my eye on a rich old buck, as it is. I'd soon be the consoled widow. There's a rich old buck I've had my eye on some time now."

Mr. Birtwhistle laughing patting her shoulder, drawing the collar of the old cape up around her neck: "So you wouldn't mind in the least if I went away and left you?"

"I'd cry and cry and pine away and couldn't eat, and I don't think I'd last very

long." Then Mrs. Birtwhistle was wrinkling her nose and folding her arms high under her cape, mockingly calling attention to a stately, fashionably dressed woman passing.

"Drum-major!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle venomously. "Will we get off of this street, Birt? Faith, when I have the clothes, I can hold up my head anywheres; but I haven't, and must go stinking through back streets"-- looking behind her, tossing the dangling, faded rose out of her eyes-- "Drum-major!" and, "Will we? We'll walk down the next street; will we?"

"Huh!" said Sim; "what do I care for anybody? I'll walk Fifth Avenue all I want to. I'm as good as anybody, even if my hat doesn't fit me." But he turned-- all turning down a side street. A street where a vista of high-stoop railings made an embankment odd to the eyes of tenement dwellers.

"You seem pretty lively this evening," said Mr. Birtwhistle, who was surly. "You must be having an easy life of it."

"Yes! go down and try it! 'Tis easy to imagine. Work twelve hours a day without a rest, all day long-- we did get a few minutes off this afternoon."

"How was that?" asked Sim.

"We did get a few minutes off to go up and see the corpse of a millionaire, upstairs. He shot himself. But there's not a millionaire corpse every day-- far from it.

"But," continued Mrs. Birtwhistle, "are you saving the evening paper for me? I want to know how the love story comes out. Save every, number for me.

"Easy, is it? Down forty feet below the sidewalk, standing all day on a little box, shaking linen, and, if you step down, burn your feet on the steam pipes, when your shoes is bad. Not but what some of the old hands has it easy. Like Margaret, who tries on the bell-boys' gloves; just sits and shapes them on her hands so they can make quick changes. It isn't the world, but the rotten people you meet. At dinner, all of them grabbing at a loaf of bread, tearing out inside clunks and leaving the crust; and the girl on the waiting! You ask her to pass something, and she hollers: 'Will you have it now or wait till you get it?' and you going to another table, where the girl says: 'You dare take anything from here, and I'll smash you in the puss!' and nothing for dinner but the heads and tails of herrings, the middles gone to the officers' tables; or the necks and gizzards of chickens, boiled to rags, for soup. The nasty hogs! Once there was chow- chow, which you're only supposed to want a little of, and those nearest filling saucers full that they couldn't eat, and the rest getting none. Or when you try to sleep, to be up at six in the morning, and the late watch comes in, laughing and carrying on, and won't let you sleep, because they don't have to report till eleven next day. Or some beast you sleep with! She comes in late, soused; she comes into bed with you, in silk waist, hat and shoes-- 'Get up, woman, and have some decency about you!'-- she snores. 'Woman, get up; your hatpins is

sticking me!' She says: 'I'll have to sleep, with all me clothes on; I must be up for mass at six in the morning.'

"Did she?" said Mr. Birtwhistle feebly.

"And if you complain--"

"Then don't complain," said Mr. Birtwhistle uneasily. "Yes, I'll save the evening papers for you."

"It's enough to make anybody complain--"

"Don't harp on anything so! You talk as if you were in for life, instead of just a flitting experience till I can get started again."

"Sure, I'm only saying! But do you tell Angie to shut up, when she says a word? I'll warrant not! But I'd not come out to fight with you, but to know how you're getting along. I've worried so I couldn't sleep one night, whether there was noise or not. I can't enjoy a meal, whether it's fit to eat or not, wondering if my poor Birt is starving--"

"We're making out all right; don't mind us. Yes, I'll save the evening papers."

"You are all right? Then you don't miss me the least bit? Oh, you get along just as well, whether I'm there or not? Yes, I guess you do. That's not a woman's way. I'm worried sick about you. I guess if I was dead to-morrow there'd be never another thought for me."

Street becoming a tenement region; rows of dark narrow slits slashing the fronts of houses, in perspective, widening into lighted windows as they were approached. Mrs. Birtwhistle pausing to look into uncurtained rooms. "They've all got homes," said Mrs. Birtwhistle mournfully. She laughed when a drunken man staggered by. "What a nagging he'll get!"-- clapping her hands-- "what a nagging he'll get when he goes home!-- but he's got a home."

"But trying to sleep with hatpins sticking you, and then some old biddy saying: 'This room only belongs to the ironers, anyway, by rights!' because the ironers get twenty a month, and consider themselves above us shakers, on sixteen, sleep in or sleep out."

"Will you shut up about your beastly, vulgar hotel help, and their degraded ways, or won't you? Always remember that you are Mrs. Birtwhistle, my dear!"

"I'm only saying, Birt-- I smell corned beef and cabbage! Upon my soul, I smell corned beef and cabbage!"

"What of it?"-- Sim and Mr. Birtwhistle laughing. "Nothing. We used to have corned beef and cabbage. It reminds me-- nothing!"

"The work isn't hard. More fun! two at a time sharing a big tablecloth, that goes-- pop!-- sounds like cannons all around you. That is corned beef and cabbage, isn't it, Sim? I wonder who's having it? I hope she put it in the pot while the water was cold. We'll have it again, some day. Oh, but there are lazy ones, though! I like to be

in the thick of it. Once through, on the dry mangling, and things coming so fast you haven't no time to know whether you're working hard or not-- but here's Margaret!" Mrs. Birtwhistle stopping, and motioning to the others to stand still. "Here's Margaret!"-- languidly folding an imaginary tablecloth, then wiping her face with it; dismally looking up at the sky, then wiping her eyes with the imaginary tablecloth, and again slowly folding it. "Oh, I couldn't work that way!"-- resuming walking.

Then, in genuine melancholy, herself:

"I wonder what that woman has in her bundles? She's been doing her bit of marketing. There's a loaf of bread-- you can't be mistaken in that-- and butter, I think-- butters gone up frightful! She ought to be the happiest woman in the world. I'd be the happiest woman in the world, if I was only doing my bit of marketing.

"Oh, I tell you"-- animated again-- "you've got to hold your own with them. You mustn't keep me out too long, Birt, you know-- but there's 'Pug,' who's been there so long she thinks she owns you. She says: 'You can go an the shaking, now,' and no more authority than I got! 'Oh, thank you!' I says. 'Oh, thank you for the information, but I thought we had a forelady for that.' Then, with things just springing from the mangle, she says: 'You go on the carrying as well as the receiving.' 'Who are you!' I says to her. 'Who are you with your nasty little pug nose?'"

"I tell you!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "If you-- well, you see, if you have a quarter to spare--"

"Yes; didn't I borry it from Mrs. Kilgore? I'm sorry I couldn't raise any more."

"I suppose"-- ungraciously-- "we can get a drink on it."

"Yes; and get some free lunch. You haven't told me a thing about Mrs. Maheffy. Have you nightshirts? Are your socks good? But wait!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Just wait a minute!" She stood on the curbstone looking across the street at an uncurtained second-story window.

A man was sitting by a table with a lamp on it. A woman was fiercely shaking her fist at him. "She's giving it to him-- wait!" laughed Mrs. Birtwhistle. The woman slapping a palm with a fist-- the man feebly waving a hand out at her. Woman turning her back to him, turning and running back, screeching at him; man with his head on his arms.

"We don't want to stand here all night, do we?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Just wait! Let's watch them!" said fascinated Mrs. Birtwhistle.

Man looking up, and his hands moving in weak, apologetic gestures. Woman stamping and pounding her fist upon the table, then pointing at him and shaking a fierce forefinger at him, throwing arms wide to express scorn and contempt for him, and then again shaking her fist at him.

"Oh, I'm homesick! I'm as homesick as I can be!" wept Mrs. Birtwhistle.

CHAPTER XIII

"TO WORK!" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

The yellow river, combing itself against a series of piers. Tugboats daubing smoke against the Palisades. Men piling lumber in Twelfth Avenue; women on the roofs of scow cabins, hanging out clothes; men bending up and down over windlasses; an idle old street-sweeper, in white, sauntering, trailing a broom behind him; men asleep on stringpieces of piers, hats over their faces, their coats wrapped around paving-stones for pillows; coal barges and brisk scows unloading; brick-dust in the air, on shirts, on faces; brick-dust on a cargo of coal, like rouge on the cheek of a negress.

Messrs. Rakes, Parker and Birtwhistle standing on a pier, looking about them.

"To work!" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Don't!" said Sim; "there's bad luck in that."

"My heart's broken!" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"I wonder," said Sim, "how long we'll last in the next place?"

"No," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "I wonder where the next place will be?"

Running toward them was a well-grown boy, chased by a stiff-jointed man in a dirty shirt-- boy looking back, laughing, waving his hand, imitating the man's stiff-jointed way of running-- finally permitting himself to be caught: "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"I'll show you what I'll do about it!"-- not very fiercely.

"Let him go," advised Mr. Birtwhistle.

"You only make it worse by paying any attention to them." Boy released, and walking away, stiff-legged, looking back, laughing and mocking.

A man with a round face tanned as brown as a pancake; a little yellow mustache and yellow eyebrows-- syrup splashed on a well-done pancake.

"I'd broken his head wasn't it for you! They jump on my cargo, and spill it into the river. That's my boat over there"-- pointing up the pier to a gravel scow.

"You only get yourself in trouble by noticing them," said melancholy Mr. Birtwhistle with little interest in anything.

"They jump on the cargo and run over the decks, so I can't take a nap," said the pancake man, stamping up and down to indicate the noise that he had to endure.

"Yes?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle, having no conversational impulses.

"Yes; I been laying here a week now. I work for Mr. Wolver. Maybe, you know him?"

"Me!"

"He's a very fine man, and gives me lines and brooms whenever I ask for them. I thought maybe you knew him. He's a millionaire fifteen times over."

"Ho, Sim!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle, laughing. "Do I know any millionaires fifteen times over?"

"I didn't know but what you might be here inspecting the scows, sir."

"Well, well, Sim! I-- ah-- still have my appearance left, it seems!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, folding his arms, looking broad and imposing-- battered yellowish hat; coat faded green-- broad and imposing.

"Excuse me, sir!"

"Not at all-- Captain--"

"Anderson."

"Ah, Captain Anderson! My name is Birtwhistle, late of-- ah, well! Captain, this is Mr. Rakes, a young man from the rural districts. What would New York be without its influx from the rural districts?" Sim rubbing his face with one hand, languidly holding out the other hand.

"Mr. Parker, Captain Anderson."

"What?" said Mr. Parker.

Captain Anderson, folding his arms, rubbing his hands on the sides of his shirt: "Excuse me! my hands are dirty."

"My dear fellow! would you apologize for that? The wealth of our nation depends upon the hands that are not in parlor condition. Honest toil, Captain! honest toil! Shall we have a little drink? Boys, anything the matter with a little drink?"

"My shirt; it's pretty dirty. Yes, only my shirt's pretty dirty."

"Why my son, that's honest toil again! Tut! tut! nothing to be ashamed of!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, turning and walking down the pier, with the air of one confident that where he led others would follow.

The rear room of a Twelfth Avenue saloon-- large, round tallies, each spread with white oilcloth. Captain Anderson-- straw hat, dirty shirt, stiff knees-- coming into the room, holding the door open for Mr. Birtwhistle coming in-- broadly-- hand waving, as if meaning: "I'm accustomed to having doors held open for me; nevertheless I make it a rule to acknowledge all courtesies." Captain letting the door slam upon Messrs. Rakes and Parker, running ahead to a white table, to draw out a chair for Mr. Birtwhistle, taking an opposite chair himself, half sitting, half rising, shuffling, then standing, waiting for Mr. Birtwhistle to sit-- Mr. Birtwhistle, with knuckles on hips, looking around, mildly interested in this resort of the common

people.

"Be one of us, Captain"-- the band wave. "Young man! oh, young man!" calling to the bartender-- barroom in front. All four around the table; Messrs. Rakes and Parker sitting opposite-- Mr. Birtwhistle broadly occupying one chair, drawing a chair from the other white table to his right side, drawing up another chair to his left side-- leaning back, arms spread out on the backs of chairs. "Well, young man, the Captain and myself will have whisky-- full-grown man's drink, Captain! These young men will have beer." Sim rubbing his face; Asbury Parker lolling, his back to the barroom, his bundle of letters on the table in front of him.

Then Mr. Birtwhistle's arms were to his sides-- he had noticed the frayed ends of his greenish sleeves-- very much subdued, he was answering a call from the bartender: "Oh, anything will do for us. We're not particular"-- chin down in his dirty collar.

Bartender in a white shirt and white apron and violet suspenders, coming in from the bar, leaning far back, swinging two glasses in each hand, in jaunty, little spirals, smartly putting down the glasses-- Mr. Birtwhistle sitting close to the table, paying him, trying to have only his hand show above the table. Bartender going away, swinging the money in a jaunty little spiral.

"What was you saying, mister?" asked the Captain.

"You've got me"-- gloomily, sleeve ends under the table. "Nothing worth listening to, I guess." Mumbling: "Nothing much, I guess."

"I like to hear him talk," said the Captain to Sim. "I like to hear anybody talk that knows what they're talking about. I could listen for hours and not a word out of me when I meet any one that does know something."

"Oh. Captain!"

Captain to Asbury: "He's been to college. You can see that." Asbury lolling, twitching his fingers to a cat.

"Really, I'm not a college man, you know," said Mr. Birtwhistle, sitting up. "Of course, the little colleges out West don't count--"

"Now, now, Birt!" said Sim; "you know you're not a college man!"

"My young friend"--the waving renewing-- "did I say I was? Merely in passing--"

"*En passant!*" said Sim jealously.

"Don't be interrupting him! Let him talk."

"Exactly! *En passant*, I merely remarked that the little colleges out West are not very important. An education is nothing to boast of, but an advantage to be grateful for--"

"Birt!" said Sim, dipping his finger in the circle of moisture under his glass, and marking moisture on the table, "can you prove that the sum of the angles of a triangle equals two right angles?"

"Don't be interrupting him so!" said the Captain, leaning on both elbows, listening to Mr. Birtwhistle eagerly. "Can't you let him talk? I could listen all day. It's not once in five years I have a chance."

"Oh, rats!" said Sim, pushing back in his chair. "Asbury, you're fearfully particular of those old letters of yours. Throw them away." Asbury having picked up his little bundle when Sim drew angles.

"What? Oh, these? They're from my wife."

"What! Birt, did you hear--"

"Can't you let him talk!"

"Oh, talk! talk! He'll talk, all right. Asbury, you are the closest fellow I ever knew. First I ever knew you were married."

"Is it?" said Asbury.

"Hi! bring us a drink!" the Captain was calling. The white bartender, with his violet stripes.

"Take your time, Captain! We've hardly downed this."

"And cigars! bring us cigars!"-- excitedly.

"Wolvers! let me see," Mr. Birtwhistle was saying-- right hand between buttons of his coat, like the statue of a statesman. "One meets so many people about town. Sim, do I know anybody named Wolvers?"

"I don't know who you know," answered Sim sulkily.

"This"-- a wave to Sim-- "is a young man who was in my employ once. I found him a very efficient young man; he was manager of one of my departments-- ah, well!"

"Don't be a fool, Birt!" said Sim, kicking the legs of Mr. Birtwhistle's chair-- bartender leaning far back in his walking-- a box of cigars rotating in front of him.

Captain's hand fluttering over the box, fingers twitching and withdrawn, hand painting that Mr. Birtwhistle should be served first.

"Smoke up, captain," said Sim. "You must consider yourself one of us---"

"I'll take care of myself!"

Sim's hand drooping in its imitation wave. Sim looking discomfited: "No! is that right, Asbury, what you told me?"

"What?"

"And have another drink. I've got the money, Mr. Birtwhistle. Have anything you want."

"My dear fellow!"

"Have anything you want, Mr. Birtwhistle."

"But, my dear fellow, you are crowding us. What's your hurry?"

"If it wasn't for the boat, I'd make a day of it, but maybe they're jumping on my cargo. I haven't got no deck cabin or I'd invite you around. I live down in the hold."

"And why not? You've got all the more room there. I've been making some observations along the river front-- along with these young friends of mine-- I believe I mentioned that Mr. Rakes was formerly one of my department managers? I have observed some of the scow cabins, and in those on deck don't see how the people have room even to move around."

"Yes!"-- eagerly. "In the hold I have more room, anyway. Can I ask what business you was in, mister?"

"I was a manufacturer!" said Mr. Birtwhistle-- thumb in lapel buttonhole; cigar between fingers-- both hands suddenly going under the table; shoulders drooping-- the frayed coat sleeves.

"You wasn't! Excuse me, I didn't mean that, mister. But a manufacturer!"

"Not worth talking about"-- mumbling; "but Mr. Rakes will tell you the same. Won't you, Sim? You know I'm entitled to call myself a manufacturer. Now, can you deny it, Sim? You can ask him, there, and he'll tell you the same."

"Oh, go on talk! You're doing all the talking," said Sim.

"Hi! bring us some cigars!"

"Really, Captain, you're too generous, you know," said Mr. Birtwhistle, groveling. "Yes, it's much better in a hold and having so much room to yourself. Isn't that so, Sim? Room is everything."

"But perhaps it isn't as healthy."

"I wish I was tanned like you, Captain. Indeed, I guess you needn't complain on the score of health. I'm far from a strong man, myself. Oh, yes, you're healthy."

Cigar box again approaching in a spiral. Mr. Birtwhistle reaching out hand fluttering-- unsteady hand; humble Mr. Birtwhistle, unworthy of precedence. Sim reaching toward the box; Captain taking the box and holding it out to Mr. Birtwhistle-- Mr. Birtwhistle sitting straight again. "I hope they're good cigars," said the Captain. "I wouldn't want to offer you any but the best, mister."

"Oh, I'm not particular as all that"-- affably. Captain holding the box to Sim. "I've got one," sulkily from Sim. "Have another?" "No, I don't want another"-- peevishly. "I don't want one, I tell you!" Then Sim laughing and amiable. "All right! here's to you, old man!"

"Hi! bring us a drink!"

"Put that one in your pocket," said Mr. Birtwhistle paternally-- Captain smoking one cigar, holding the other.

"Yes-- I haven't no pockets"-- slapping his trouser pockets to indicate that a cigar would be crushed in them.

"Put it behind your ear, then"-- Mr. Birtwhistle's arms out on the backs of chairs.

Captain putting the cigar behind his ear, but then taking off his hat; cigar in the hat; hat on his head again. "Yes, maybe it's not so healthy, but, as you say, there's

more room below. I'm thinking of having the kids with me; they're over to my sister's, in Brooklyn. I hope you'll excuse me, but I must get back to my cargo." All rising; four glasses again in jaunty spirals and tapped down on the table smartly.

"Well, my son-- Anderson, you say your name is? Anderson, glad to have met you."

"Yes, I'm glad to have met you," said the Captain, taking off his hat-- cigar falling.

"Ah, good catch!" Mr. Birtwhistle restoring the cigar-- Captain murmuring and bowing himself away, overcome with so much affability from one of such superiority; and, "Oh, good-by!" remembering Sim and Asbury.

"What?" said Asbury.

All three walking up the avenue; Captain Anderson running back to his cargo.

"Asbury," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "what were you saying to Sim? You're married? You never told me that."

"If he isn't the close one!" said Sim.

"When night comes," said Asbury, "we must buy a can of corned beef and go see the Captain again. That's the way we'll get lodgings."

"Why didn't you stay?" asked Sim. "That little devil of an Angie-- what a temper-- said you were welcome to stay."

"Me? What do I care?"

"Upon my word," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "I believe he carries that bundle of letters around with him to sort of suggest a kind of sentiment that makes people sorry for him. Sim and I are put out everywhere, but that's what I believe about you, Asbury."

"Do you?"

"Oh, here!" said Sim.

"Forgive me, Asbury," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "It's your own fault; you're so close and keep within yourself so much I never can regard you as having feelings."

"Can't you?"

"I'm sorry I said that, Asbury."

"Are you?"

"Oh, my! my!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Well," said Sim, "we have lodgings for to-night, anyway; don't for one minute drop that manufacturer's manner of yours, Birt; that will be all we have to depend upon."

CHAPTER XIV

"TO WORK!" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

Early morning. A foggy morning. The drab waterfront; the river as smooth and gray as a field of sun-dried clay, except where the current furrowed it blue-black like a fresh-ploughed clay field.

There was a good deal of gray in Mr. Birtwhistle's face; Mr. Parker looked old; Sim had aged, his clothes were gray. All three had been persuaded to accept Captain Anderson's hospitality, and, all night, fine stone-powder had sifted upon them from the cargo overhead.

"I'm not strong," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "This is a frightful moment, Sim. If we get a job, the other laborers will taunt me for not doing my share. I can hear their jeers now, Sim."

"I wish I had a whole worm," said Asbury Parker. "I've only got half a worm to fish with."

By the watchman's shanty, on the Forty-seventh Street pier, five men were standing.

"To work!" said Mr. Birtwhistle feebly. From the avenue came a little old man; face tanned the color of a baked potato, and face potato-shaped-- a squeezed baked potato, cheeks indented as if squeezed in-- white eye-brows and white mustache, like a squeezing-- out of a baked potato's white tissue.

"He's the foreman," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "I seem to see him standing over me, with a long, cruel whip, like Legree in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' "

"Do you think they'd pay us enough?" asked Sim.

One of the men-- tall man, with a lumber-handler's stiff apron of sole leather, was saying:

"Hello, Pete!" to the little old baked potato.

"Hello, T. Chambers!"-- rubbing his cold hands, up by his throat. "I've got orders to begin."

"Well, then, you'd better take us."

"That's all right."

"Didn't bring no tools with us."

"That's all right, T. Chambers."

"Shall we beat it?" Sim was saying.

"I don't know, Sim. It would be tough to suffer here all day, and then find letters with fifty dollars' worth of orders waiting for us."

Sim biting his finger-nails, looking out at the river, looking landward. "Birt, I hate this!"-- looking at his feet---Sim suddenly crossing the pier, and saying in business-like briskness, so abrupt and ferocious that the little old man stepped away from him:

"Good-morning! We're looking for a job! Anything doing?"

"That's all right"-- pad and pencil from his pocket. "What's the names? I want men not afraid of a little mud, mind!"-- pointing down at the shore. Sim returning to Mr. Birtwhistle. Mr. Parker baiting a fish hook. Messrs. Rakes and Birtwhistle standing on the string-piece, looking down at mud strewn with old hats and fruit baskets and coal scuttles; cabbage leaves, strips of matting, oil cans, vegetable cans, garbage and ashes.

Little old man writing on his pad, repeating aloud: "L. B. O'Rourke, T. Chambers, G. Harris--"

"I. Birtwhistle!"

"S. Rakes!"

Then Asbury Parker was shaking hands with I. Birtwhistle and S. Rakes. "Good-by!" said Asbury Parker. Sim laughing, hands in pockets, beating Mr. Birtwhistle's side with his elbow, meaning: "It's hard for me, too, but there's compensation in having you along!"

Seven laboring gentlemen taking off their coats, looking down at the muddy shore, north side of the pier, and rolling up their trousers.

Back on the bank, beyond the mud, had been built a flooring, which was the butt end of another pier that was to be built, side by side with the Forty-seventh Street pier. On this platform were a pile-driver and a stationary engine-- mud and the river in front. A Dock Department scow was moored to the old pier-- men boarding the scow, coming back with hatchets, saws and axes.

"On the job, now, I. Birtwhistle!" Mr. Legree taking by the arm I. Birtwhistle, who seemed to shrink from the hand on his arm. "All right, T. Chambers! On the job, S. Rakes!" His seven slaves went down the bank to the mud, where they laid boards to walk on.

An engineer had appeared upon the platform, an engineer, in jumpers, who put on spectacles, sat on a backless chair, and spread a morning paper in front of him. Mr. Legree standing on the edge of the platform, looking down at his slaves, having no cruel long whip to shake, but shaking his pencil. "On the job, now!"-- then, on another backless chair, sitting beside the engineer.

The sandy strip between mud and bank was strewn with short, thick timbers, of

small trunk size-- men taking hold of these blocks, and starting to roll them; I. Birtwhistle and S. Rakes not knowing why logs should be rolled through mud, but helping to roll-- rolling logs through mud, seemingly aimlessly.

"Easy, easy. I. Birtwhistle," said T. Chambers, he of the stiff leather apron in front, and a red bandanna hanging from his hip pocket-- having made a log roll several times, he stood erect on a plank and lighted his pipe-- I. Birtwhistle, left alone, going on with the rolling-- two other slaves rolling a log up to where T. Chambers was standing-- they pausing and standing on a plank with him-- I. Birtwhistle pushing and pushing, his muddy hands slipping and slipping.

"Yes," said T. Chambers, "I'll be married a year to-morrow, and not one fight yet."

"Go on!" said the two men standing beside him.

"A year to-morrow, and not one fight yet."

"That right? That's something to say, all right Must give the old woman credit, then"-- all three laughing and jumping-- two other slaves had splashed them with a log in the mud-- the two other slaves laughing, looking down at their log-- they, too, standing on the plank, causing it to sink slowly.

"Sure! I do give the old woman credit. I don't allow none of the relatives inside the door."

"That's what causes most of the trouble; the relatives--" Board sinking-- a slave jumping upon a log.

S. Rakes and another slave coming along with a log, which they were rolling longitudinally-- end up, end falling-- splash-- slaves on the plank laughing and jumping. S. Rakes' companion slave standing on a stone to light his pipe; S. Rakes struggling on alone with his log-- I. Birtwhistle laboriously rolling and rolling, not knowing where he was going.

"Yes, sir! A year to-morrow. She brings me in thirty-one dollars a month; eighteen she gets as rent free and gas and coal, and thirteen on rooms let out. See another woman do that! Where's that guy going? Hey, I. Birtwhistle!" I. Birtwhistle having rolled his log to the piles of the old pier.

"See another woman do that-- no, but out spending your money on you!"

"That's right about keeping the relatives out, all right." Slaves picking their way from plank to plank, to roll again-- S. Rakes and I. Birtwhistle back to the hard ground of the shore, to roll another log through the mud.

"Well, Jimmie, how do you like married life?" asked T. Chambers jokingly of S. Rakes.

"Me?" S. Rakes embarrassed and looking down at his log. "Never again!" S. Rakes standing erect-- I. Birtwhistle laboriously going on with his rolling, glancing up at the platform, as it fearful of the long, black whip of his imaginings.

Mr. Legree sitting beside the engineer, was talking with a woman, tall and lean as a lamp-post, a large muff, hung by a cord around her neck, like a letter-box, in front of her. A hat-less woman with a muff. The woman had come down to the river for fresh air, with her infant, but had forgotten something; and Mr. Legree was holding out his short arms to hold the baby, while she went home for something.

Slaves standing down on the planks, several playfully struggling to push one another off into the mud.

"When's she's in the wrong," said T. Chambers, "she comes right up and says so-- there's a woman! It cost me about a hundred the day I was married!"

"Me, too," said S. Rakes jokingly.

"Are you married, Jimmie?"

"Sure!"

I. Birtwhistle slightly raising one arm and springing erect, hearing the dreaded voice of Overseer Legree:

"Oh, my God! oh, my God!"

Mr. Legree springing up from his chair, clutching the infant to his legs, where his lap had been: "Thank God! Thank God!" Engineer looking up over his spectacles.

"Thank God I didn't break it! I thought sure I broke it!" Mr. Legree picking up a milk bottle, examining it, turning it over and over. "All right!" he said, holding the infant, stepping to the edge of the platform. "You can start piling now." He was shaking the long, white milk bottle at I. Birtwhistle. L. B. O'Rourke, a young slave, peak of his cap over one eye, heavy lock of hair brushed over the other eye, explaining to I. Birtwhistle: "We're to build supports to run out the pile-driver."

"Hey, I. Birtwhistle," from T. Chambers, standing on a plank, rubbing muddy hands on his stiff, wide apron, "are you sweating?"

"It takes more than this to make me sweat. I've worked too many years to have this bother me."

"Good boy! Jimmie, it's a sure thing you're not sweating."

"Nor you, I guess!"

"Guess not. We'd better go on with the rolling; there's not enough for piling yet." Seven slaves rolling logs in one direction, and then relaying the planks to roll logs in another direction. L. B. O'Rourke finding things in the mud, and amusing himself; filling a battered can with mud, placing it on a rusty tray, offering refreshments to the others.

"But I don't do no work to-morrow," said T. Chambers, standing on shore, digging his axe into a log-- G. Harris, who wore a policeman's old helmet, digging his axe into the log-- both slaves sauntering down a plank, having found it easier to pull a log over the mud. "I'm going to play checkers all day to-morrow. There's a guy will back me for fifty dollars any day."

"Yes, but did he ever?" A slave with his axe over his shoulder coming down the plank from the other end of it-- I. Birtwhistle alone in the mud, rolling and splashing.

"Oh, he will, all right! And there's chess, too. My old man don't do a thing but sit all day, and all night, playing chess."

Six slaves gathering on the planks. "I've heard tell of that game. It takes considerable time, don't it?"

"Tain't what you could call a game, so far as any playing is concerned at all. Tain't play, but study; a good player sees nine moves ahead. I don't know so much about chess, but my old man makes his living at it. The players differ so; one can look a dozen moves ahead, and another not more than a couple."

"Sure! you'll see that in every kind of work-- you want to look out, Harry, or your friend'll be sweating."

T. Chambers and G. Harris, edging past the slave with his axe over his shoulder, and going on, leisurely pulling their log after them; this other slave remarking:

"That's the way to catch cold, sweating is."

"Did you ever catch cold?" asked S. Rakes, laughing.

"Not that way!"-- slave laughing and then daintily picking his way from plank to plank to help I. Birtwhistle.

Mr. Legree coming to the edge of the platform, toddling infant's hand in his hand, calling down to L. B. O'Rourke:

"When a man's married, his son ain't no more good to him-- oh, don't you cry, baby! your mamma's only gone back for some sewing. I'm married forty-eight years. I'm seventy years old. I'm a tailor by trade. I live number 90 Adams Street."

"You ought to be past your labor, popper!"

"Yes, I'm past my labor, but when your son's married, he's no more good to you."

When noon came-- the abrupt whistles of factories and whistles of tugboats, women coming out of scow cabins and ringing dinner bells.

"Sim," said Mr. Birtwhistle-- he and Sim climbing up the river bank-- Mr. Parker standing on the bank waiting for them-- Mr. Parker with his little hat on one side of his head, so that he looked like a four-leafed clover with one leaf missing.

"Go 'way!" Sim was saying; "you're all mud; you're a sight!"

"But, Sim, I've pulled through this morning, anyway, haven't I?"

"How about dinner?" Sim was saying.

"Oh, dinner?" said Mr. Parker, buttons gone from his threadbare coat, buttonholes tied together with bits of shoestring-- no necktie-- collar ends held together with a tack stuck into a bit of flat wood. "Here!" taking bread and cheese from his pocket.

"Where'd you get that, Asbury?"

"Where would I get it? Here!"-- taking a cigar from his pocket, breaking the cigar in halves.

"And how'd you get that?"

"How would I get it?"

"Oh, my! my! but Asbury, I've pulled through."

"He's a horse!" said Sim. "I've been trembling at thoughts of falling-outs I've had with him, and didn't even know it was Samson I was getting gay with."

"Who, Birt? I never knew anybody stronger."

"No, no, Sim! I may be somewhat burly, but no one could be really strong and at the same time so terrified by the thought of working. I can barely hope I'll pull through the afternoon. See! I have no muscular development"-- fist drawn up to his shoulder. "No muscle there, Sim."

"Asbury, he's got an arm like a fair-sized leg."

"Who, Birt? I've told you before, Sim, that Birt could easily stand off you and me and McKicker all together."

"No, no! all my power has gone to give me business ability. I have that, but of physical strength I have very little. If I can only pull through the afternoon!" added Mr. Birtwhistle timidly. "The first day will be the worst, I know."

Then, after a while, the one o'clock whistles; stern one o'clock whistles, having none of the joyousness and celebration of twelve o'clock whistles.

Work again. I. Birtwhistle standing down in the mud, looking at one of the logs that he had pushed and tugged all morning-- I. Birtwhistle bending over, hands in mud, arm around the log-- log rising to his shoulder, dripping mud down his back-- seemed only to shrug his shoulder-- log lying not up on a pile of logs, but clear over the pile-- great splash-- four or five men jumping.

"Hey, don't be towing about them half-ton weights so careless, I. Birtwhistle!"

"See here, young man, we don't care for any advice from you!"

"I was only saying!"-- L. B. O'Rourke retreating.

"Come back here. Two of you take that log there."

"Listen to who's talking! Since when have you been boss here?"

"Come, come! Altogether too much talk here; we'll never accomplish anything."

I. Birtwhistle going to the shore, sinking an axe into a log, and walking off with it, leaving the axe for T. Chambers to tug at, stare at, swear at-- I. Birtwhistle stepping back-- wrist twitching-- axe flying out.

"That's a powerful guy, Jimmie," said T. Chambers to S. Rakes. "All right, Pete!"-- to Mr. Legree; "we'll go on the sawing"-- calling to a little yellow dog that was sitting in an old market basket: "Hi, Jack! Sic 'em, Jack!" I. Birtwhistle sinking his axe into a log, and walking off with it-- the others throwing sticks into the water,

calling: "Sic 'em, Jack!" patting the dog, rolling it in the mud, most of which was covered in the rising water, throwing it to shake its mud off upon one another.

"Come, boys!" said I. Birtwhistle, "we'll go on the sawing now."

"What's the matter with you! Hi, Jack! Here, Jack! What's the matter, old boy? Yes, the trusts is ruining the country."

"Sim, come here and I'll show you how to handle these logs, S. Rakes scraping mud from his shoes. Sauntering down a long plank, one end of which was floating, to see what T. Chambers was doing-- S. Rakes and T. Chambers sauntering to find out what G. Harris was doing. G. Harris was lighting his pipe. T. Chambers and S. Rakes lighting their pipes, S. Rakes with half a cigar crushed into his pipe.

I. Birtwhistle and G. Harris then sitting on logs, on shore, each at the end of a two-handled saw, making blocks of a long beam-- G. Harris, in his policeman's helmet, leisurely pulling the saw toward him-- I. Birtwhistle ripping it back-- G. Harris yawning, arms stretching up over his head. "Made a night of it, last night." "Come, now, G. Harris; we'll never get anything accomplished." "Here, Jack! here, Jack!" Then sawing a little-- T. Chambers and S. Rakes leaning on their axe handles, thoughtfully watching the sawing.

Five o'clock. Mr. Legree, from the platform, calling I. Birtwhistle.

I. Birtwhistle saying to S. Rakes:

"I wonder what he wants? You don't think he'll tell me I'm incompetent, do you?"

"Well, hardly!" Very little mud on S. Rakes. "Are you tired?"

"Sim, if my shoes weren't so bad-- they're ruined altogether now--"

"Mine, too."

"I'd really have to take a long walk to be able to sleep to-night. This has been mere child's play for me. I'll go up and see what he wants."

The engineer was asleep, with his back against a beam of the pile-driver.

"I. Birtwhistle," said Mr. Legree-- taking off his hat.

I. Birtwhistle bowing and taking off his hat.

"Here!"-- Mr. Legree taking a slip of paper from inside his hat-- "here's your check."

"You discharge me!"

"You're altogether too strong; you're too powerful!" said the little old man fretfully. "There's been complaints from the men. You'd wear out any ordinary gang in a week's time."

"Well, I must say--"

"Off the job! off the job!" cried the little old man angrily. "Go be a strong man! It's traveling with a circus where You ought to be. How long would a job last with the likes of you on it?"-- bending his knees forward and his neck backward to look

up wrathfully at I. Birtwhistle, who, himself, was not tall.

"Well, all I can say--"

"Off the job! off the job! you're too powerful!"

CHAPTER XV

THE hold of a gravel scow. Captain Anderson lying on a cot by the foot of steps leading up to a hatchway, through which early morning stars could be seen. A board flooring, cracks of it wet with bilge water, table in the center of the flooring, a lamp with a moon-like globe on the table; on the walls of the hold, white-painted squares, each with a bat tacked upon it. Sim sitting on a barrel by the table with writing materials before him.

"I'm the most astonished person in New York City," Mr. Birtwhistle was saying to Asbury Parker, who was sitting on the steps leading up to the hatch. "Did you notice the way I handled those logs, Asbury?"

"Let me write, will you?" said Sim.

"Let him write, will you?" said the Captain. "I never seen such a blather as you, Birtwhistle. I hope your uncle won't bear you no ill-will, Mr. Rakes."

Sim waving his pen-holding hand.

"Talk about tossing around your half-ton weights!" said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Can't you be quiet and let Mr. Rakes alone, Birtwhistle?" said the Captain, lying on back, kicking impatiently. "Mr. Rakes, it must come hard to you to live in a place like this." Sim waving his pen. "I wish I was brought up wealthy. I always got that respect for anybody brought up wealthy; they got something about them that can't be gained unless born to it. I guess you never got no meals like here in your uncle's house, Mr. Rakes." Pen signifying: "Don't mention it."

"Upon my word, I never dreamed I strong I am."

"Birtwhistle, you're all blather! Why don't you let Mr. Rakes alone?"

"Oh, he's all right, Anderson."

"Yes, Mr. Rakes, but I don't like to see you annoyed so, when you're trying to write. What kind of carpet has your uncle on dining-room floor, sir?"

"Just like yours here-- hardwood, you know-- polished-- and rugs."

"I guess when you go back, you won't remember anybody you used to knock around with."

"Sim--"

"Let Mr. Rakes talk, will you?"

"Oh, he'll talk!"

"Yes, if you'll let him? And what is it you're talking about? Strength! What's strength? I've got that, so has everybody along the river. Birtwhistle, you only make yourself common when you have what everybody's got. I ain't got no respect, Mr. Rakes, for what everybody's got."

Sim, pushing paper and pen away from him, said: "I've got myself tangled up in lies so I don't know how I'll extricate myself."

"Extricate, hey? He can use as good words as you, Birtwhistle."

"Well, Birt, I'm going down to the pier again. You say you're not going to work--"

"Sim, I said that as to-day is Saturday and only a half-day, I've another plan. I've got to get money somewhere. I'm going to start in working at anything I can get Monday morning."

"Well, what's your proposition?"

"Strength!" said the Captain contemptuously.

"I've got to get something to sell; pocket-knives, I don't care what, anything so I can get enough money to start up again; the McGuires will trust me. I don't like to go near them looking the way I do-- I'll not let anything interfere I must get something I can sell from them."

In the early afternoon, Mr. Birtwhistle was returning from downtown. He was walking along the Fifty-second Street pier, toward a crowd of fishermen-- trousers bagged at the knees, and too short, but Mr. Birtwhistle with a clean collar and Sim's black hat band around his yellowish slouch hat; a satchel at his side, hung from a strap over his shoulder.

Sim running down the pier to meet Mr. Birtwhistle, his black hat pressed down to his eyebrows, his sleepy eyelids winking, like tapping fingernails, in the wind.

"How'd you make out, Birt?"

"Didn't expect much, Sim, you know. Did you finish your letter?"

"I'll have to take Sunday for that, Birt. I don't know how to extricate myself. How'd you make out?"

"What's the Captain doing with that pole?"

"He's spearing driftwood. He's a fool."

"What! tiring of his admiration?"

"He's a fool!"

"I had to cut him short, myself. Getting tired, hey?"

"He'd make you sick. But what success?"

"Well, what did you expect Sim?" Both walking toward the head of the pier, which was strewn with fish baskets, newspaper bundles, here a bottle of cold tea, there a box of sand worms-- fishermen standing on the stringpiece, their trousers

shivering in the wind.

"Oh, yes-- pocket-knives!"

"That wouldn't do, then?"

"They said they were glad to meet me, Sim. They said they didn't do business that way, but were glad to meet me personally."

"What's in the satchel?"

"I was desperate, Sim; I had to take anything. After all our business relations, this is the best they would do. I'm going to be a street fakir."

"Oh, you like that better than working?"

"Sim, Monday morning I'm going to start at any job I can get, but I must have enough money, this very night, to hire a furnished room somewhere. I'm going to work for my living; I'm going to sell these things to hire a furnished room with."

"Show us! What is it you're going to sell?"

"It's the best I could do, Sim. They were very pleasant, and said they were glad to meet me personally, but these are the only goods they'd let me have without a deposit."

"It must be something you're ashamed of," said Sim, lifting the satchel and opening it.

"It's the best I could do, Sim."

Sim drawing out a red and green and orange and purple paper bird on a stick, wing tips connected with a ring that worked up and down the stick. Sim working the wings up and down; bird whistling.

"What do you call this? Asbury!" Asbury sat on the corner of the pier, hands in his pockets, the end of a fish line in his teeth. Beside him stood the Captain, with a boat book.

"Let Mr. Parker alone, Rakes," said the Captain. "Youse two are always bothering him."

Mr. Birtwhistle was snatching the whistle bird. "Don't go showing that around, Sim!"

"You're ashamed of it yourself," said Sim. He sat on the stringpiece, with his legs hanging over, beside Mr. Parker-- Mr. Birtwhistle sitting beside him-- Captain, a halberdier, with his twelve-foot boat hook, standing behind them-- mustache and eyebrows bright yellow on his sunburned face, like punctures in a rusty pie-plate, held up to lamplight. All four of them cringing and bobbing and jumping, as reckless fishermen, behind them, beside them, and stepping excitedly on them, whirled four hook lines around their heads and one another's heads to cast out in the water.

"How'd he make out?" asked Asbury Parker.

"Asbury, he's got down to peddling-- shall I?" Sim gripping the satchel, trying to unbuckle it, motioning to throw it into the river.

"Don't make it harder for me, Sim. I'm afraid you're a pretty heartless fellow; you don't see why I'm doing this, and what a tremendous effort it will be for me to do it. I think, after all, Asbury has more sentiment than you have." Asbury, with hands in his pockets, end of fish line between his teeth, his bundle of letters between his knees.

Sim staring at houses atop the Palisades; a green house, vase-shaped; pink houses like little Swiss matchboxes-- Palisade houses like mantelpiece ornaments. "Captain," he said, "my uncle's house is like one of those."

Captain, not at all impressed, but watching the river for driftwood: "Everybody over there has one of those!"

"Or not like one of those, but bigger, and with grounds around, Captain."

"Yeh? And has your uncle a piano?"

"Of course; everybody has a piano."

"Can you play?"

"You know I can't; so why go over that again? I never bothered."

"Then everybody can have a piano? Then that's nothing for your uncle to have. But everybody can't play the piano? I should say not. Lord! Lord! how Mr. Parker can play! I can hear him yet. I guess it isn't everybody who can do what Mr. Parker can do, Rakes."

"Do you understand music, Asbury?" Mr. Birtwhistle asked, bending to look past him. "I've known you-- or have looked at you, rather, for some time now, but never knew that! You never told us that you play, Asbury."

"Can he!" declared the Captain. "Did we go in Riley's and did he play with all his fingers and his elbows, as well!"

"My uncle's piano--" began Sim.

"Was like everybody's!" interrupted the Captain contemptuously.

"I can't stand that fellow!" mumbled Sim. "Birt, throw those things away. I thought you had some pride."

"You let it alone, Sim!"

"All right! I thought you had some pride. Don't ever again mention your pride to me."

"That's all broken down! Oh, everything's all broken down. Sim, I'm going down to the hotel to-night, and I must have money enough to say-- I shall say-- 'Come home!'"

"You don't need to make a peddler of yourself, Birt. I've got a couple of dollars--"

"Of course. I figure on having them, anyway."

"First I heard of that. You're welcome."

"I need more so as to be able to go on, if I don't get a job Monday-- yes, thanks, Sim; I'll make a note of this."

"Throw that stuff away, Birt. I don't mind manufacturers, but I won't associate with peddlers."

"I can't make you understand," said Mr. Birtwhistle despairingly. "No one believes in me; no one has faith in me; no one has sympathy-- and yet, away down in you, somewhere, Asbury, there is sentiment. You hide yourself, but away down and covered over you have sentiment somewhere. If I could only feel that you; that I had some one to understand the struggle I'm going through to do, to-night, what Sim derides so!"

"It's not creditable," mumbled Sim, "to want sympathy and faith and belief so. My admiration is for one who wouldn't give two cents--" Captain digging him in the back with the end of the boat hook, for Mr. Parker was about to speak-- Mr. Parker taking the fish line from between his teeth: "Oh, me?"-- fish line between his teeth, hands in pockets again.

"Mr. Parker don't say much," declared the Captain, "but what he does say is worth listening to."

"Yes, Asbury, you must have sentiment, or you wouldn't carry that bundle of old letters around with you so."

Fish line in fingers again: "These are all I got in the world, Birt."

"It isn't everybody who'd carry around old letters so."

"But these are from my wife, Birt."

"Sometimes I feel sorry for you, Asbury."

"They're not all letters; most of them are postal cards. Yes, Birt--"

"Go ahead, Asbury."

"Yes, Birt, if she ever sues me for non-support, I'll come back at her for sending me these defamatory postal cards."

"Don't I tell you!" cried the admiring Captain. "Mr. Parker don't speak often, but when he does, he's worth listening to!"

CHAPTER XVI

PADDY'S MARKET! Every Saturday, though not fully epileptic with writhing and squirming, groan and convulsion, until evening, Ninth Avenue, from Forty-second Street to Thirty-eighth Street, is a market place. Wagons and stands, each wagon and each stand with a torch, or with several torches, so that, from a distance. Paddy's Market looks like a torchlight parade going up one side of the avenue and down the other side-- a night parade of flagellants shrieking with self-inflicted torture.

Then, heard in the market itself, confused lamentation disintegrates into distinct and mercantile cries-- flagellants scourging themselves only with their arms, beating their breasts only to keep warm-- to rid themselves not of sin, but of cauliflowers and beets.

Crowd on the sidewalk marching down the avenue, eight abreast-- ranks of fours tripping down, and fours struggling up-- bold front of nine sweeping up-- single files penetrating down; individuals filtering down-- up current again dominating, surging and thrusting back.

Mr. Birtwhistle, with his satchel, was slowly walking down the east side of the avenue, stepping to one side to avoid a blind man who was singing, tapping with a cane-- Mr. Birtwhistle's own breaking off the bowl of a clay pipe in a man's mouth-- some one stepping on the toes of Mr. Birtwhistle, causing him to hop on the train of a woman's skirt, whipping around, face to face with him, just such a visage as such clumsiness would create.

On the southeast corner of Forty-first Street Mr. Birtwhistle stood, uneasily playing with the satchel that hung from a strap around his neck.

Mr. Birtwhistle opening the satchel, and opening his mouth. Nothing heard from Mr. Birtwhistle-- but frantic cries, hoarse cries, feeble and aggressive and mechanical cries from others:

"Pick 'em out now; only a few more left! Try them before you buy them! Everything cheap!"

Mr. Birtwhistle again opening his mouth-- his hand going to his mouth, fingers upon a tooth, as it he had opened his mouth to rub an aching tooth.

"Twenty oranges for a quarter! All alive! Sell 'em out! Sell 'em out! Culleyflowwuz! culleyflowwuz!" A solid babel with overhead roars from elevated

trains for a top.

"Here you go!" remarked Mr. Birtwhistle-- glancing down, sorting over paper birds in the satchel.

"Here you go!" cried Mr. Birtwhistle in a shrill, cracked voice.

"Here you go!"-- in a deep bass.

Mr. Birtwhistle sorting over, sorting over his red and green and orange and purple birds-- taking one from the satchel-- putting it back-- sorting over, sorting over-- taking one out and making it whistle. "Only two cents!"

A young man and a young woman stopping-- Mr. Birtwhistle making a bird flutter and whistle. "Come on, you!"-- young woman laughing, shaking the young man's arm-- "we ain't got no babies!"

"Two cents! three for five!" shouted Mr. Birtwhistle.

Four or five youths coming along, eating stolen oranges-- a flattering, whistling bird-- a youth drawing back a rubber-band and shooting the head off the fluttering, whistling bird.

Mr. Birtwhistle glaring the feeblest of glares-- stepping to the gutter, throwing away the headless bird-- returning to his place in front of the corner-saloon window. "What do you think of that?" he said to a chicken peddler, an old man with a white mustache like the hind legs of a little rabbit-- chicken peddler smiling sympathetically, shoulders huddling, dancing to keep warm, taking from his pocket a tomato can with a stone in it-- rattling the tomato can, shrieking: "Chickens, two shillings the pair!"-- pointing to his wagon, where lean and wretched chickens hung, long necks dangling-- "Chickens, two shillings apiece!"

"Two cents! three for five!" remarked Mr. Birtwhistle-- people looking at his sample bird; laughing, calling one another's attention to it, going on-- an Italian coal-man, empty coal-bag under his arm, stopping, holding out two cents-- going away, coal-bag hugged high under his arm, grinning, holding up a bird, making it whistle.

Peddlers crying: "Tabull celler-ee! No false bottoms! Everything cheap!"-- hands at the sides of their mouths; bending to shriek over folded arms; bending backward, shrieking, with backs braced by arm crossed behind; standing on toes to shriek.

Small boys stopping in front of Mr. Birtwhistle. "Ain't that cute!"-- satirically-- hands nervously fluttering, to snatch. "Ain't that nice!"-- mockingly-- Mr. Birtwhistle turning his back to them and walking away-- coming back, smiling faintly to the chicken peddler, who said, sympathetically: "I wish I was home sleeping"-- running to his cart, holding up half a dozen miserable chickens by their legs, in one hand, holding them high. "Thirty cents a pair! They're beautes for thirty cents the pair!"

A woman with a spool of thread in one hand, and a wash basket in the other

hand, stopping-- Mr. Birtwhistle holding tip two fingers to her-- woman, to a child invisible in the crowd: "Want a birdie, Robbie?" A woman carrying artificial flowers and hard-shell crabs saying to her: "Go on! the house is full of such things." "Want a birdie, Robbie? Are they all good? Give me three. They're all good, are they?" Mr. Birtwhistle mumbling, keeping his eyes down to the satchel, putting three birds in an envelope.

And some one else: "How much?" and: "Oh, two cents?" Going on, looking back, stepping on, stopping to look back, stepping and stopping until lost to sight.

The veering torches. A hundred torches streaming in a north wind, then all flaming erect, then all slanting back.

Youths gathering around Mr. Birtwhistle: "Oh, ain't that lovely!"-- affecting feminine voices-- Mr. Birtwhistle turning his back to them and walking away-- a youth running after him and tilting his hat over his eyes-- Mr. Birtwhistle standing face toward the saloon window-- a youth creeping behind him, knocking off his hat-- Mr. Birtwhistle silent, picking up his hat-- youths walking on, one running back and pushing Mr. Birtwhistle against the window-- Mr. Birtwhistle turning around-- smiling faintly to the chicken peddler, who said, sympathetically: "I wish it was twelve o'clock"; then vociferating: "Twenty cents apiece! we've got to sell 'em! we must sell 'em!" His white mustache, with hanging ends leaping up and down, like the hind legs of a running rabbit.

A woman, with a child's cape over her head, saying to Mr. Birtwhistle: "Did they hurt you?"

"Who? Oh, no, no!"

"They ought to be ashamed to hurt you!"

Mr. Birtwhistle edging away: "Oh, no, ma'am! not at all!"

"Did they hurt you?"

Mr. Birtwhistle closing his satchel, closing his eyes: "Oh, no, ma'am; not at all!"

"They're the fresh things to hit you so!"

Mr. Birtwhistle holding his satchel closed, his hand running up the strap, lifting the strap from his shoulder.

"What's the matter? Bum graft here?" asked the chicken peddler.

Mr. Birtwhistle opening his satchel and holding up two fingers again.

"Give me one of them jumping-jacks" said a woman to Mr. Birtwhistle-- a scrawny woman, wearing a man's straw hat, trimmed with an old black veil. "I wants it for my old man"-- to the chicken peddler. "He's a big child, and 'tis any toy would please him"-- to anybody who cared to listen to her. "Sure, he'd sit and play with a jumping-jack, like that, by the hour. Give him a ball with a string to it and he'll play with the kitten the night long. But"-- to Mr. Birtwhistle-- "I always say 'tis better to have him that way than out, the Lord knows where, by night."

"Yes, ma'am," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Then give me one of them jumping-jacks; 'twill keep him at home."

Stands and carts loaded with oranges and cocoanuts; potatoes, socks, oilcloth, dolls, St. John's bread-- phonographs and automatic pianos playing in butcher shops.

"Mr. Birtwhistle!" Mr. McKicker stood with his hand upon Mr. Birtwhistle's arm-- Mr. Birtwhistle snapping shut his satchel-- opening his satchel, as if defiantly.

"Shall we walk?" said Mr. McKicker, with his hand upon Mr. Birtwhistle's arm, firmly leading him down the side street--Mr. McKicker walking in silence, his head thrust forward, for half a block; and then:

"Mr. Birtwhistle, you'd better come back to your rooms. I've been looking all over for you. If you've lost your furniture, I'll replace it. You'd better come back to your rooms.

"No, don't thank me!"-- walking with his hand raised to the side of his face. Silent; hand raised; then:

"I'll be frank with you, and then you do as I wish. I expect to be elected leader of this district-- no, let me get through! Between ourselves, suppose a leader sells out the interest of his people, betrays them, defeats their measures, sells out their franchises--"

"Lots of them do."

"Only lots? You'd think they'd all do such a safe and easy thing as that. But suppose a leader has it on his record that he dispossessed poor tenants of his? Mr. Birtwhistle, you'd better come back to your rooms."

CHAPTER XVII

"ASBURY," said Mr. Birtwhistle, "I'm worried about your future."

Room that, had been the office of the Universal Manufacturing Company; blue ingrain carpet on the floor; a roll-top desk by the east window; walls covered with paper, white paper with little gilt stars; Mr. Birtwhistle lying on a leather lounge against the west wall, feet in slippers with pink and purple eagles on them, one pink and purple eagle out on the carpet. Evening.

Stove in the second room, behind portières, and Mrs. Birtwhistle coming from the stove, intent upon something in a pan, touching it with a finger tip, finger tip going to her mouth-- Mrs. Birtwhistle in a black skirt and a blue silk waist-- her two little teeth like two little glasses of milk on a pantry shelf.

Sim, coatless, coming from an inner room, rubbing his face with a towel, throwing the towel on the floor.

"Sim, pick that towel right up. You mustn't think, Sim, just because you're working that you can have everything your own way-- and you, too! if you're going to keep things nice, do so!" Mr. Birtwhistle's pink and purple eagles had moved to a newspaper on the floor. "Move your feet!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle, seizing a corner of the newspaper; Mr. Birtwhistle groaning and not moving. "May the devil pull the hoofs off of you!"-- paper parting, a fragment of it still under the slippers; Mrs. Birtwhistle setting down the pan and lifting the foot, causing groans, and: "Get me a match!"

"Match!" moaned Mr. Birtwhistle, making a tent with his forefingers, building an encampment with his other fingers. "Many!"-- to Sim, who handed him a match.

"Want me to strike it for you?"

"If so kind!"

"Don't you do it, Sim!"

"I'd see myself!"

"He's got to wait on himself. It's not a woman's place to be picking after him all day. I wish they hadn't given us that couch. Our own was no good, but I'd rather have what belongs to me. There's not one thing belonging to us we'd lost if I'd been here. I don't want new tables and new chairs; I want my own. But no, and no reasoning with you! Come, Sim; come, everybody, except your wife! Yes, go to Coney Island, but I guess you know the consequences now!"

"If you don't stop that!"

"You!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle contemptuously-- Mrs. Birtwhistle, then looking at something in a pan held in her left hand-- right forefinger tip dipping into it. "After supper I must sprinkle down my wash so I can iron to-morrow. Such washes as I see

here! Some of the woman never use a bit of blueing. Such washes! most or them yellow from soda."

"But, Birt," said Sim, "all these new plans aren't clear to me yet. You must have known what you were talking about to get Mr. McKicker to put up money for you. That desk alone must have cost more than I'd think anybody, would invest with you. There wasn't any desk here when I went away this morning."

"It's a good scheme, with money in it, Sim."

"Yes," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "I believe in him this time, Sim-- Mr. McKicker does."

"I'll succeed this time, Sim. I will, because at last I have a wife who has faith in me."

"Yes, I know all that-- but go on."

"To-morrow I shall take the first step toward starting my course of teaching by correspondence."

"Yes! Teaching?"

"How to succeed in the mail-order business."

"As you said before-- but, Birt, you failed in the mail-order business--"

"Exactly! I'm going to be a teacher of it."

"He's bound to succeed," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"I hope so, of course. Why are you so sure?"

"Mr. McKicker says so."

"Yes!" Mr. Birtwhistle getting up from the sofa-- going to a chair behind the desk-- waving toward the sofa-- Sim and Asbury and Mrs. Birtwhistle sitting on the sofa. "But make it short," said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I have all kinds of work, and the girls may be here any moment."

"Oh, yes, cut it short! cut it short! There's one thing I don't like, Delia. There's one side to all this that doesn't please me."

"Would you like ham and eggs, Sim?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Upon my soul, it's enough to drive one distracted thinking what to get for breakfast."

"At least I am worthy of attention, when I speak," said

Mr. Birtwhistle, sitting up so straight that his shirt bosom, coat off, and his flat face were in an unbroken line. "At least let there be common politeness when I am speaking."

"Oh, yes, the big Mogul, now, Sim! The professor now, Sim! I'm a professor's wife now, Sim."

"I knew him in my youth," said Sim.

"I don't think we care for any more such vulgar badinage"-- the straight line of face and shirt front. "Delia, the only reason you believe in me is because some one else does. How many years is it, in which, at least once a day, I have told you I have great ability? It's not from any lack of my telling you that you never discovered that for yourself. You can't accuse me of withholding any such information. Then some one else comes along, and, in your hearing, says: 'Behold! Mr. Birtwhistle is a man of marked abilities!' Whereupon-- behold! you believe in him. Then"-- swelling bosom variegating the line of face and shirt front-- "Mr. Birtwhistle wants no such belief in him. There's no value nor support in such belief in him."

"Birt--"

"No!"-- expression of stern pitilessness-- "don't interrupt me! I've started now. All day I have repressed this feeling, but I have started now!" Mr. Birtwhistle rising. "This may be our parting of the ways, Delia--"

"Birt, I only want to say--"

"I am just. I hold justice high. You shall have every opportunity to defend yourself, but now I shall be heard first. Delia, this is the parting of the ways. Delia"-- Birtwhistle impressively folding his arms-- "there have been dark times in my life-- I have wanted some little dog, some miserable little dog from the streets to look at me and believe in me. You never had faith and you never had belief, when most sorely I needed faith and belief--"

"Birt--" implored Mrs. Birtwhistle. But Mr. Birtwhistle held up a hand, flat palm toward her.

"Birt", said Sim, scowling, wriggling a finger around on his knee, "what's faith and belief but a picturing of rewards to come? Mrs. Birtwhistle may not have had such beautiful, blind belief in you-- and I don't see that you've done anything so remarkable, at that!-- may not have--"

"Birt--" Mrs. Birtwhistle was imploring.

"There'll be justice!" Mr. Birtwhistle coldly assured her. "Delia, though this be the parting of the ways, you shall have justice, and shall be heard in your defense. But, Sim? But what?"

"But," said Asbury Parker, looking vacantly in front of him, "she stood by you, just the same."

"Oh, dear me!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. He sat down. He played with a paper-cutter. "Oh, dear me! Well, yes--" Sitting straight again; magisterially again:

"Delia, you may speak. What is it you've been trying to say?"

"Birt, I must get to my roast pork! It hasn't been basted in half an hour now."

"Oh, dear me! yes, the roast pork-- Delia--"

"Well! well! well I you know I can't stop another moment now."

"No, but I will be just. I hope if I said anything--"

"Man alive, no one was paying any attention to you. We all know you too well. Asbury, you'll have to go out and get me five cents' worth of cinnamon to put in the apple-sauce."

"Oh, dear me!" said Mr. Birtwhistle. "Asbury, what you say is very true. I wonder how you came to say anything very true. I wonder how you happened to say anything at all. Asbury, your future worries me--"

The postman's whistle out on the front stoop. Sim jumping toward the door-- standing still, affecting indifference.

Postman whistling; shouting: "Rakes! Anybody know Rakes? S. D. Rakes?"

"Run, Sim! it's your letter."

"Oh, there's no such hurry."

Mrs. Birtwhistle running out to the stoop; running back with a letter.

"Thanks!" said Sim, tossing the letter on a table.

"Read it, Sim! I'm dying to learn did you-- extricate-- did you extricate

yourself." Then Mrs. Birtwhistle was crying: "It's the girls!" and Mrs. Birtwhistle was exclaiming: "Heavens above us, what style! 'Tis quality comes to see us!"

"How do you do, Uncle Isaac? You are looking well, Aunt Delia. Pleased to see you again, Mr. Rakes."

Katie was smooth-haired, tall and slender. Emma's complexion was rosy, and her face was neither big nor round. Each with arms in long, black gloves; black-gloved hands held together, waist high, fingers closed upon tiny handkerchiefs-- broad hats with coiled feather-boas that looked like big, curled-up Angora cats, with fluffy tails hanging down behind; each cat with two big-headed hatpins, close together, in front, for monstrous eyes.

The Miss Dunphys said nothing, but they meant: "Yes, we've been a little longer in New York; that's all!"

"Haven't you made a mistake?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle, cordial and joking. "Surely such fine ladies don't know anybody in this lowly tenement house."

"What's the matter?" said Katie, standing, laughing awkwardly, but hands held together upon the bit of handkerchief.

"The style of us?" said Emma languidly. "You can get anything on the instalment plan nowadays." Emma rustling to the table, by the curtains, where she sat down, putting down her handkerchief, upon which to rest her elbow. Asbury winking to Sim, and sitting beside Sim on the sofa. Katie grinning and awkward, then running to the chair opposite Emma's, sitting with her elbow on her handkerchief.

"And how's Mr. Rakes?" languidly from Emma-- a long black forefinger against her cheek. "You are fixed up."

"A little bit," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, in decreasing cordiality. "Sim, read your letter. Don't let us prevent you." She taking Mr. Birtwhistle's chair behind the roll-top desk-- Mr. Birtwhistle sauntering toward her-- seeming to hesitate-- patting the top of her head.

"I'll get a pint of beer," said Mr. Birtwhistle, putting on his coat-- very good coat.

"Oswald and me," said Emma, taking off her black jacket-- white waist and yards of chain about her neck-- folding the jacket on her knee so as to have the silk lining out-- "don't intend having no pails come in the house. Of course, we will always have something on the ice. How've you been, Mr. Rakes."

Sim, handing his letter to Asbury: "Who, me? All right."

"They'll be good and cold before anybody comes and drinks them for you, Emma Dunphy," said Mrs. Birtwhistle-- Mr. Birtwhistle, with the tin pail, leaving the room-- turning to look warningly at her.

"Is it Oswald?" asked Mrs. Birtwhistle, laughing unpleasantly. "'Tis news Oswald is to us."

"Conscience sakes alive! I didn't tell you-- I must really break myself of that habit! I'm always saying 'conscience sakes alive.'"

"Yes?" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I've often heard you say a bloody sight worse, Emmaline Josephine Dunphy."

"Oh, Oswald?" asked Emma, confused with this charge. "He's my gentleman friend-- oh, no, nothing's really settled."

"Only the flat picked out," said Katie, "and the day set, and the wedding dress bought, and you and me's to stand up with them."

"Are we? I hadn't heard," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, glancing at papers in the desk, playing with a paper-cutter.

"My conscience, Katie, if Oswald ever seen us in this street"

"What's the matter with this street, Emmaline Josephine? I've seen many the time when you were glad to come to it."

"Yes, you're as good as gold, Aunt Delia. Katie, ain't I always saying Aunt Delia is as good as gold? But this part of the city!"

Mrs. Birtwhistle's two white teeth far down on her lower lip. Asbury Parker handing back Sim's letter-- Sim handing him a folded blue paper that had come with the letter. Mr. Birtwhistle returning, laughing and joking. Mrs. Birtwhistle rising and silently pouring out beer. The Miss Dunphys daintily holding their handkerchiefs around their glasses, sipping, glasses held far out from them.

"I'm as good as gold?" said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"Sure, you're not quarreling with us?" asked Katie.

"Small bit I cares if she is," said Emma. Mr. Birtwhistle standing in front of the sofa, waving his hands up and down, as if to beat time.

"Emma, of course you cares!"

"I'm very sarcastic," sighed Emma; "I'm always being taken up wrong. Oswald is always advising me not to be-- oh, no, nothing is settled yet. I was only saying, Uncle Isaac, that this street has such a bad name--"

"Emma, ye devil don't be putting your foot in it so!" cried Katie.

"That's no lie," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"I hate airs!" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Emma can take that any way she likes."

"Oh, tut! tut!" said Mr. Birtwhistle, going behind his desk, sitting on Mrs. Birtwhistle. "If you don't keep quiet, I'll smother you."

Mrs. Birtwhistle half smothered, but repeating brokenly: "I hate airs, I do!" Mr. Birtwhistle, rising: "Stop it now!"

"My sister don't mean a word of it, Birt, dear," pleaded Katie. "Sure, the two of you is all we have in the world. Oswald, is it? Faith, Emma, there was those knew you long before Oswald was ever heard of."

"I was only saying," said Emma lamely.

"Have you a nice place?" Mrs. Birtwhistle asked primly, sitting erect.

Emma and Katie looking at each other and laughing. "Will we tell them?"

"Don't be angry with us, Birt, dear!" pleaded Katie. "Sum, Emma's only trying to grig you. You know you said 'good as gold' about us."

"Indeed, and I never said one word I wouldn't say to your faces. Indeed, Katie, that wasn't never my way."

"Tra-la-la!" sang Mr. Birtwhistle; "all together, Sim and Asbury!"

"Have you nice places?" repeated Mrs. Birtwhistle. "'Tis very nice; 'tis very grand; small family and three in help"-- Emma looking at her sister and laughing.

"'Tis a judgment on us for not wanting kind, Christian homes," cried Katie. Elbow down from table; hands on knees. "Ho! ho! Emma!"

"We're sun worshipers at present," said Emma casually.

"Mercy on us!" cried Katie. "It our old mother at home ever knew that!"

"Yes," said Emma; "we're sun worshipers."

"Find it satisfying?" Sim asked.

"I'm not saying we're sun worshipers ourselves, Mr. Rakes, but the family is-- bad luck to us that we ever turned up our noses at Christian homeses! Still, 'tis all very nice and grand, and three in help, though. Still, 'tis only a fad, I suppose. There's styles in religions, like everything else. There's an old Indian-- is it Indian, Katie? 'Tis an old Indian come here, and our family is converts. Maybe you've heard of him? He's His Highness, the Reverend Doctor Pie Tamish Ramakatta--"

"Hamish Manthra--" interrupted Katie.

"Maja Ottman-- is it, Katie?"

"Prince of Persia-- "

"Math-el-Kharman."

"Yes," said Katie; "that's part of his name."

"You'll never have a day's luck," said Mrs. Birtwhistle.

"I suppose not," sighed Emma; "but the pay's good."

"We had no picking nor choosing," said Katie. "It was take the first thing that come along, with us. I'm expecting the ceiling to fall any minute-- but the pay's good. We must breathe like this"-- deep breaths-- "'tis part of the religion. He's three hundred and forty thousand years old."

"No! no! 'Tis the Mazdazmas is!"

"Yes; the Mazdazmas is."

"What's it all about? Anything in particular?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle.

"The sun," said Emma learnedly, "do be the manifested expression of divine life-- divine life, Katie?"

"Divine life, Emma; and do stand in the relation to the physical world as your physical body does to your spiritual entity, but you mustn't eat meat."

"That's right" said Emma. "Mr. Rakes, ideas and actions are controlled according to breathing and diet."

"I felt so damn mad!" declared Mrs. Birtwhistle. "I paid sixteen cents a pound for pork, on the avenue, and here it was twelve on our own block. I felt so damn mad!"

Mr. Birtwhistle strolling to her and rubbing her nose.

"And," said Katie sagely, "wheat being the standard of life-- building tissue-- 'tis tissue, Emma?"

"'Tis tissue, Katie."

"--tissue, a meal must be in proportion to the elements found in wheat."

"I wonder if I dare put the vegetables out?" said Mrs. Birtwhistle. "Do you think it is coming up frost? And do you believe all that, Emma?"

"They're very grand and refined people believes it," said Emma. "'Tis very wrong to eat meat; six ounces of wheat, two of oil. and four of fruit is the perfect daily meal."

"Yes," declared Katie; "they're very grand folks! Sure, you know, if you eats meat, you're in no condition for to polarize your being through concentration."

"Heavens above us, what is the girl trying to say?"

"Or," demanded Emma, "where is your spiritual discernment for the transmission of ideals?"

"True for you!" Katie agreed.

"Then," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, "I couldn't be offering you a bit of meat-- the roast pork?"

"Six ounces a day," said Emma sternly. "Inhale and count seven; exhale and count eight!"

"We should feed on spiritual thoughts," said Katie. "Is it roast pork, you say?"

"Shame on you, Kate Dunphy! For where's your spirituality flown to? They're the grand, refined people that lives on the six ounces a day, and ought to know, and all the money they got--"

"And telepathic realization!" suggested Katie.

"To be sure, telepathic realization. And-- "

"And I'm starved with the hunger!" Katie burst out. "Emma Dunphy, and the foolish girls we were to be the sun worshipers on their six ounces of wheat. 'Tis the hand of judgment I see in this. No, no, but kind, Christian homes wouldn't do us, so now we're sun worshipers, on their six ounces of wheat. Birt, dear, seeing you spoke of the roast pork, would you give me a bit of it-- not bothering with no sangwitch, but a bit in my fingers, which I'm fairly licking in advance."

"I'm famished for food!" cried Emma. "If you'd only cut me the smallest little bit!"

Others laughing; Mrs. Birtwhistle saying: "Faith, you'll wait ten minutes longer, and we'll all sit down together. Sim, are you through keeping your letter to yourself? That isn't very nice."

"You don't want to hear that, do you?"

"You don't want any supper, do you?"

"Oh, me? I've got money!"-- Sim standing up, then pretending to swagger, flourishing a piece of folded paper.

"He's got a money-order, anyway," said Mr. Birtwhistle.

"What is it?"-- Emma and Katie wanting to know.

Sim holding the letter in one hand-- holding up the other hand in an exaggerated demand for silence--reading:

"'Dear Simmy'-- that's me; I'm Simmy-- 'yours of no date received, and contents noted with surprise. Though I can't remember ever having said anything definite to you upon the subject, you are quite right in supposing there was an understanding between us--'"

"Oh, I'm afraid he's going to be severe with you, Sim!"

"--between us. You write me that you have started out in life, and have failed, which is about what you were expected to do."

"Here comes the nice part," said Sim.

"Simmy, don't try to deceive yourself and me; you have not failed. You started out deliberately to fail-- a thing I never dreamed of any young man attempting-- and, from your own account, you have certainly succeeded. No, no, you have not

failed, you seem to have made a great success.'

"Got a light, Birt?" asked Sim. "There's a little more about my not writing again till I have honestly been a failure, and a money-order for just one week's board. I'm thrown down, all right."

"His own uncle, too!" cried Mrs. Birtwhistle. "The mean, miserly old skinflint-- not speaking disrespectfully of your uncle, Sim-- how could he!"

"What on earth did you write him, Sim?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle.

"Why, you can see for yourself, can't you? I was willing to abide by what would follow, and I'm just as willing now. Mrs. Birtwhistle, you can have your alarm-clock back; I'll get one for myself now."

Emma was saying: "Of course he's no beauty-- I'm sure I'm so sorry for you, Mr. Rakes-- of course he's no beauty."

"No, he's no beauty," said Katie.

"He's not a bad-looking fellow!" said Emma quickly. "You'd never be ashamed to be seen out with him. Birt, what do you think? Him and me went last week to have our fortunes told. 'You'll have odd numbers in children,' she told us. I thought I'd dropped. He said he hoped it wouldn't be eleven. Of course nothing's really settled. The wedding dress is bought, though. Guess what I paid for it."

"But, Emma, how can I tell without seeing it?"

"Well, say something. How much?"

"I couldn't possibly, without seeing it."

"Say something. Can't you say something?"

"Two hundred dollars?" said Sim.

"Go'long! Where would I get two hundred dollars? It's eighteen-seventy-five, but I hope no one'll ask me, because I didn't want to tell a lie."

"The really important matter--" said Mr. Birtwhistle thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Emma, "I think Geraldine is a pretty name."

"And do you know a nice young feeler, without no bad habits, for me!" Katie asked.

"No," said Sim, "there's no important matter left; my letter settled all that."

"What?" said Asbury Parker. "My future, Birt? Yes, I suppose somebody's got to worry about that."

"To get my pupils will not be so hard," said Mr. Birtwhistle. "The really important matter--"

"Yes! Yes! yes!" called Mrs. Birtwhistle; "just keep quiet and it'll be ready in ten minutes, now!"

THE END