THE VALLEY OF THE MOON

BY

JACK LONDON

In Two Volumes. — Vol. 1

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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# Jack London
## In the Tauchnitz Edition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Vol.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burning Daylight</td>
<td>4273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Call of the Wild</td>
<td>4323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When God Laughs, and Other Stories</td>
<td>4352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sea-Wolf, 2 vols.</td>
<td>4373, 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sea Tales</td>
<td>4392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Eden, 2 vols.</td>
<td>4420, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Son of the Sun</td>
<td>4426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Son of the Wolf</td>
<td>4479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Valley of the Moon, 2 vols.</td>
<td>4493, 94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE VALLEY OF THE MOON

BY

JACK LONDON

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
“Up, horses, now!
And straight and true
Let every broken furrow run;
The strength you sweat
Shall blossom yet
In golden glory to the sun.”
THE VALLEY OF THE MOON.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

“You hear me, Saxon? Come on along. What if it is the Bricklayers'? I'll have gentlemen friends there, and so'll you. The Al Vista band'll be along, an' you know it plays heavenly. An' you just love dancin'—"

Twenty feet away, a stout, elderly woman interrupted the girl's persuasions. The elderly woman's back was turned, and the back—loose, bulging, and misshapen—began a convulsive heaving.

"Gawd!" she cried out. "O Gawd!"

She flung wild glances, like those of an entrapped animal, up and down the big whitewashed room that panted with heat and that was thickly humid with the steam that sizzled from the damp cloth under the irons of the many ironers. From the girls and women near her, all swinging irons steadily but at high pace, came quick glances, and labour efficiency suffered to the extent of a score of suspended or inadequate movements. The elderly
woman's cry had caused a tremour of money-loss to pass among the piece-work ironers of fancy starch.

She gripped herself and her iron with a visible effort, and dabbed futilely at the frail, frilled garment on the board under her hand.

"I thought she'd got 'em again—didn't you?" the girl said.

"It's a shame, a woman of her age, and . . . condition," Saxon answered, as she frilled a lace ruffle with a hot fluting-iron. Her movements were delicate, safe, and swift, and though her face was wan with fatigue and exhausting heat, there was no slackening in her pace.

"An' her with seven, an' two of 'em in reform school," the girl at the next board sniffed sympathetic agreement. "But you just got to come to Weasel Park to-morrow, Saxon. The Bricklayers' is always lively—tugs-of-war, fatman races, real Irish jiggin', an' . . . an' everything. An' the floor of the pavilion's swell."

But the elderly woman brought another interruption. She dropped her iron on the shirtwaist, clutched at the board, fumbled it, caved in at the knees and hips, and like a half-empty sack collapsed on the floor, her long shriek rising in the pent room to the acrid smell of scorching cloth. The women at the boards near to her scrambled, first, to the hot iron to save the cloth, and then to her, while the forewoman hurried belligerently down the aisle. The women farther away continued unsteadily at their work, losing movements to the extent of a minute's set-back to the totality of the efficiency of the fancy-starch room.

"Enough to kill a dog," the girl muttered, thumping her iron down on its rest with reckless determination.
“Workin’ girls’ life ain’t what it’s cracked up. Me to quit—that’s what I’m comin’ to.”

“Mary!” Saxon uttered the other’s name with a reproach so profound that she was compelled to rest her own iron for emphasis and so lose a dozen movements.

Mary flashed a half-frightened look across.

“I didn’t mean it, Saxon,” she whimpered. “Honest, I didn’t. I wouldn’t never go that way. But I leave it to you, if a day like this don’t get on anybody’s nerves. Listen to that!”

The stricken woman, on her back, drumming her heels on the floor, was shrieking persistently and monotonously, like a mechanical siren. Two women, clutching her under the arms, were dragging her down the aisle. She drummed and shrieked the length of it. The door opened, and a vast, muffled roar of machinery burst in; and in the roar of it the drumming and the shrieking were drowned ere the door swung shut. Remained of the episode only the scorch of cloth drifting ominously through the air.

“It’s sickenin’,” said Mary.

And thereafter, for a long time, the many irons rose and fell, the pace of the room in no wise diminished; while the forewoman strode the aisles with a threatening eye for incipient breakdown and hysteria. Occasionally an ironer lost the stride for an instant, gasped or sighed, then caught it up again with weary determination. The long summer day waned, but not the heat, and under the raw flare of electric light the work went on.

By nine o’clock the first women began to go home. The mountain of fancy starch had been demolished—all save the few remnants, here and there, on the boards, where the ironers still laboured.
Saxon finished ahead of Mary, at whose board she paused on the way out.

“Saturday night an’ another week gone,” Mary said mournfully, her young cheeks pallid and hollowed, her black eyes blue-shadowed and tired. “What d’you think you’ve made, Saxon?”

“Twelve and a quarter,” was the answer, just touched with pride. “And I’d a-made more if it wasn’t for that fake bunch of starchers.”

“My! I got to pass it to you,” Mary congratulated. “You’re a sure fierce hustler—just eat it up. Me—I’ve only ten an’ a half, an’ for a hard week.... See you on the nine-forty. Sure now. We can just fool around until the dancin’ begins. A lot of my gentlemen friends’ll be there in the afternoon.”

Two blocks from the laundry, where an arc-light showed a gang of toughs on the corner, Saxon quickened her pace. Unconsciously her face set and hardened as she passed. She did not catch the words of the muttered comment, but the rough laughter it raised made her guess and warmed her cheeks with resentful blood. Three blocks more, turning once to left and once to right, she walked on through the night that was already growing cool. On either side were workingmen’s houses, of weathered wood, the ancient paint grimed with the dust of years, conspicuous only for cheapness and ugliness.

Dark it was, but she made no mistake, the familiar sag and screeching reproach of the front gate welcome under her hand. She went along the narrow walk to the rear, avoided the missing step without thinking about it, and entered the kitchen, where a solitary gas-jet flickered. She turned it up to the best of its flame. It was a small room, not disorderly, because of lack of furnishings to
disorder it. The plaster, discoloured by the steam of many washdays, was crisscrossed with cracks from the big earthquake of the previous spring. The floor was ridged, wide-cracked, and uneven, and in front of the stove it was worn through and repaired with a five-gallon oil-can hammered flat and double. A sink, a dirty roller-towel, several chairs, and a wooden table completed the picture.

An apple-core crunched under her foot as she drew a chair to the table. On the frayed oilcloth, a supper waited. She attempted the cold beans, thick with grease, but gave them up, and buttered a slice of bread.

The rickety house shook to a heavy, prideless tread, and through the inner door came Sarah, middle-aged, lop-breasted, hair-tousled, her face lined with care and fat petulance.

"Huh, it's you," she grunted a greeting. "I just couldn't keep things warm. Such a day! I near died of the heat. An' little Henry cut his lip awful. The doctor had to put four stitches in it."

Sarah came over and stood mountainously by the table.

"What's the matter with them beans?" she challenged.

"Nothing, only . . ." Saxon caught her breath and avoided the threatened outburst. "Only I'm not hungry. It's been so hot all day. It was terrible in the laundry."

Recklessly she took a mouthful of the cold tea that had been steeped so long that it was like acid in her mouth, and recklessly, under the eye of her sister-in-law, she swallowed it and the rest of the cupful. She wiped her mouth on her handkerchief and got up.

"I guess I'll go to bed."

"Wonder you ain't out to a dance," Sarah sniffed.
"Funny, ain't it, you come home so dead tired every night, an' yet any night in the week you can get out an' dance unearthly hours."

Saxon started to speak, suppressed herself with tightened lips, then lost control and blazed out: "Wasn't you ever young?"

Without waiting for reply, she turned to her bedroom, which opened directly off the kitchen. It was a small room, eight by twelve, and the earthquake had left its marks upon the plaster. A bed and chair of cheap pine and a very ancient chest of drawers constituted the furniture. Saxon had known this chest of drawers all her life. The vision of it was woven into her earliest recollections. She knew it had crossed the plains with her people in a prairie schooner. It was of solid mahogany. One end was cracked and dented from the capsize of the waggon in Rock Canyon. A bullet-hole, plugged, in the face of the top drawer, told of the fight with the Indians at Little Meadow. Of these happenings her mother had told her; also had she told that the chest had come with the family originally from England in a day even earlier than the day on which George Washington was born.

Above the chest of drawers, on the wall, hung a small looking-glass. Thrust under the moulding were photographs of young men and women, and of picnic groups wherein the young men, with hats rakishly on the backs of their heads, encircled the girls with their arms. Farther along on the wall were a coloured calendar and numerous coloured advertisements and sketches torn out of magazines. Most of these sketches were of horses. From the gas-fixture hung a tangled bunch of well-scribbled dance programmes.

Saxon started to take off her hat, but suddenly sat
down on the bed. She sobbed softly, with considered repression, but the weak-latched door swung noiselessly open, and she was startled by her sister-in-law's voice.

"Now what's the matter with you? If you didn't like them beans—"

"No, no," Saxon explained hurriedly. "I'm just tired, that's all, and my feet hurt. I wasn't hungry, Sarah. I'm just beat out."

"If you took care of this house," came the retort, "an' cooked an' baked, an' washed, an' put up with what I put up, you'd have something to be beat out about. You've got a snap, you have. But just wait." Sarah broke off to cackle gloatingly. "Just wait, that's all, an' you'll be fool enough to get married some day, like me, an' then you'll get yours—an' it'll be brats, an' brats, an' brats, an' no more dancin', an' silk stockin's, an' three pairs of shoes at one time. You've got a cinch—nobody to think of but your own precious self—an' a lot of young hoodlums makin' eyes at you an' tellin' you how beautiful your eyes are. Huh! Some fine day you'll tie up to one of 'em, an' then, mebbe, on occasion, you'll wear black eyes for a change."

"Don't say that, Sarah," Saxon protested. "My brother never laid hands on you. You know that."

"No more he didn't. He never had the gumption. Just the same, he's better stock than that tough crowd you run with, if he can't make a livin' an' keep his wife in three pairs of shoes. Just the same he's oodles better'n your bunch of hoodlums that no decent woman'd wipe her one pair of shoes on. How you've missed trouble this long is beyond me. Mebbe the younger generation is wiser in such things—I don't know. But I do know that a young woman that has three pairs of shoes ain't
thinkin' of anything but her own enjoyment, an' she's goin' to get hers, I can tell her that much. When I was a girl there wasn't such doin's. My mother'd taken the hide off me if I done the things you do. An' she was right, just as everything in the world is wrong now. Look at your brother, a-runnin' around to socialist meetin's, an' chewin' hot air, an' diggin' up extra strike dues to the union that means so much bread out of the mouths of his children, instead of makin' good with his bosses. Why, the dues he pays would keep me in seventeen pairs of shoes if I was nannygoat enough to want 'em. Some day, mark my words, he'll get his time, an' then what'll we do? What'll I do, with five mouths to feed an' nothin' comin' in?"

She stopped, out of breath but seething with the tirade yet to come.

"Oh, Sarah, please won't you shut the door?" Saxon pleaded.

The door slammed violently, and Saxon, ere she fell to crying again, could hear her sister-in-law lumbering about the kitchen and talking loudly to herself.

CHAPTER II.

Each bought her own ticket at the entrance to Weasel Park. And each, as she laid her half-dollar down, was distinctly aware of how many pieces of fancy starch were represented by the coin. It was too early for the crowd, but bricklayers and their families, laden with huge lunch-baskets and armfuls of babies, were already going in—a healthy, husky race of workmen, well-paid and robustly fed. And with them, here and there, undisguised by their decent American clothing, smaller in bulk and stature,
weazened not alone by age but by the pinch of lean years and early hardship, were grandfathers and mothers who had patently first seen the light of day on old Irish soil. Their faces showed content and pride as they limped along with this lusty progeny of theirs that had fed on better food.

Not with these did Mary and Saxon belong. They knew them not, had no acquaintances among them. It did not matter whether the festival were Irish, German, or Slavonian; whether the picnic was the Bricklayers', the Brewers', or the Butchers'. They, the girls, were of the dancing crowd that swelled by a certain constant percentage the gate receipts of all the picnics.

They strolled about among the booths where peanuts were grinding and popcorn was roasting in preparation for the day, and went on and inspected the dance floor of the pavilion. Saxon, clinging to an imaginary partner, essayed a few steps of the dip-waltz. Mary clapped her hands.

"My!" she cried. "You're just swell! An' them stock-in's is peaches."

Saxon smiled with appreciation, pointed out her foot, velvet-slippered with high Cuban heels, and slightly lifted the tight black skirt, exposing a trim ankle and delicate swell of calf, the white flesh gleaming through the thinnest and flimsiest of fifty-cent black silk stockings. She was slender, not tall, yet the due round lines of womanhood were hers. On her white shirtwaist was a pleated jabot of cheap lace, caught with a large novelty pin of imitation coral. Over the shirtwaist was a natty jacket, elbow-sleeved, and to the elbows she wore gloves of imitation suède. The one essentially natural touch about her appearance was the few curls, strangers to curling-irons,
that escaped from under the little naughty hat of black velvet pulled low over the eyes.

Mary's dark eyes flashed with joy at the sight, and with a swift little run she caught the other girl in her arms and kissed her in a breast-crushing embrace. She released her, blushing at her own extravagance.

"You look good to me," she cried, in extenuation. "If I was a man I couldn't keep my hands off you. I'd eat you, I sure would."

They went out of the pavilion hand in hand, and on through the sunshine they strolled, swinging hands gaily, reacting exuberantly from the week of deadening toil. They hung over the railing of the bear-pit, shivering at the huge and lonely denizen, and passed quickly on to ten minutes of laughter at the monkey cage. Crossing the grounds, they looked down into the little race track on the bed of a natural amphitheatre where the early afternoon games were to take place. After that they explored the woods, threaded by countless paths, ever opening out in new surprises of green-painted rustic tables and benches in leafy nooks, many of which were already pre-empted by family parties. On a grassy slope, tree-surrounded, they spread a newspaper and sat down on the short grass already tawny-dry under the California sun. Half were they minded to do this because of the grateful indolence after six days of insistent motion, half in conservation for the hours of dancing to come.

"Bert Wanhope'll be sure to come," Mary chattered. "An' he said he was going to bring Billy Roberts—'Big Bill,' all the fellows call him. He's just a big boy, but he's awfully tough. He's a prizefighter, an' all the girls run after him. I'm afraid of him. He ain't quick in talkin'. He's more like that big bear we saw. Brr-rf!
Brr-rf!—bite your head off, just like that. He ain't really a prizefighter. He's a teamster—belongs to the union. Drives for Corberly and Morrison. But sometimes he fights in the clubs. Most of the fellows are scared of him. He's got a bad temper, an' he'd just as soon hit a fellow as eat, just like that. You won't like him, but he's a swell dancer. He's heavy, you know, an' he just slides and glides around. You wanta have a dance with 'm anyway. He's a good spender, too. Never pinches. But my!—he's got one temper.”

The talk wandered on, a monologue on Mary's part, that centered always on Bert Wanhope.

“You and he are pretty thick,” Saxon ventured.

“I'd marry 'm to-morrow,” Mary flashed out impulsively. Then her face went bleakly forlorn, hard almost in its helpless pathos. “Only, he never asks me. He's ...” Her pause was broken by sudden passion. “You watch out for him, Saxon, if he ever comes foolin' around you. He's no good. Just the same, I'd marry him to-morrow. He'll never get me any other way.” Her mouth opened, but instead of speaking she drew a long sigh. “It's a funny world, ain't it?” she added. “More like a scream. And all the stars are worlds, too. I wonder where God hides. Bert Wanhope says there ain't no God. But he's just terrible. He says the most terrible things. I believe in God. Don't you? What do you think about God, Saxon?”

Saxon shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

“But if we do wrong we get ours, don't we?” Mary persisted. “That's what they all say, except Bert. He says he don't care what he does, he'll never get his, because when he dies he's dead, an' when he's dead he'd like to see anyone put anything across on him that'd
wake him up. Ain’t he terrible, though? But it’s all so funny. Sometimes I get scared when I think God’s keepin’ an eye on me all the time. Do you think he knows what I’m sayin’ now? What do you think he looks like, anyway?”

“I don’t know,” Saxon answered. “He’s just a funny proposition.”

“Oh!” the other gasped.

“He is, just the same, from what all people say of him,” Saxon went on stoutly. “My brother thinks he looks like Abraham Lincoln. Sarah thinks he has whiskers.”

“An’ I never think of him with his hair parted,” Mary confessed, daring the thought and shivering with apprehension. “He just couldn’t have his hair parted. That’d be funny.”

“You know that little, wrinkly Mexican that sells wire puzzles?” Saxon queried. “Well, God somehow always reminds me of him.”

Mary laughed outright.

“Now that is funny. I never thought of him like that. How do you make it out?”

“Well, just like the little Mexican, he seems to spend his time peddling puzzles. He passes a puzzle out to everybody, and they spend all their lives tryin’ to work it out. They all get stuck. I can’t work mine out. I don’t know where to start. And look at the puzzle he passed Sarah. And she’s part of Tom’s puzzle, and she only makes his worse. And they all, an’ everybody I know—you, too—are part of my puzzle.”

“Mebbe the puzzles is all right,” Mary considered. “But God don’t look like that yellow little Greaser. That I won’t fall for. God don’t look like anybody. Don’t
you remember on the wall at the Salvation Army it says 'God is a spirit'?

"That's another one of his puzzles, I guess, because nobody knows what a spirit looks like."

"That's right, too." Mary shuddered with reminiscent fear. "Whenever I try to think of God as a spirit, I can see Hen Miller all wrapped up in a sheet an' runnin' us girls. We didn't know, an' it scared the life out of us. Little Maggie Murphy fainted dead away, and Beatrice Peralta fell an' scratched her face horrible. When I think of a spirit all I can see is a white sheet runnin' in the dark. Just the same, God don't look like a Mexican, an' he don't wear his hair parted."

A strain of music from the dancing-pavilion brought both girls scrambling to their feet.

"We can get a couple of dances in before we eat," Mary proposed. "An' then it'll be afternoon an' all the fellows'll be here. Most of them are pinchers—that's why they don't come early, so as to get out of taking the girls to dinner. But Bert's free with his money, an' so is Billy. If we can beat the other girls to it, they'll take us to the restaurant. Come on, hurry, Saxon."

There were few couples on the floor when they arrived at the pavilion, and the two girls essayed the first waltz together.

"There's Bert now," Saxon whispered, as they came around the second time.

"Don't take any notice of them," Mary whispered back. "We'll just keep on goin'. They needn't think we're chasin' after them."

But Saxon noted the heightened colour in the other's cheek, and felt her quicker breathing.

"Did you see that other one?" Mary asked, as she
backed Saxon in a long slide across the far end of the pavilion. "That was Billy Roberts. Bert said he'd come. He'll take you to dinner, and Bert'll take me. It's goin' to be a swell day, you'll see. My! I only wish the music'll hold out till we can get back to the other end."

Down the floor they danced, on man-trapping and dinner-getting intent, two fresh young things thatundeniably danced well and that were delightfully surprised when the music stranded them perilously near to their desire.

Bert and Mary addressed each other by their given names, but to Saxon Bert was "Mr. Wanhope," though he called her by her first name. The only introduction was of Saxon and Billy Roberts. Mary carried it off with a flurry of nervous carelessness.

"Mr. Roberts—Miss Brown. She's my best friend. Her first name's Saxon. Ain't it a scream of a name?"

"Sounds good to me," Billy retorted, hat off and hand extended. "Pleased to meet you, Miss Brown."

As their hands clasped and she felt the teamster callouses on his palm, her quick eyes saw a score of things. About all that he saw was her eyes, and then it was with a vague impression that they were blue. Not till later in the day did he realise that they were grey. She, on the contrary, saw his eyes as they really were—deep blue, wide, and handsome in a sullen-boyish way. She saw that they were straight-looking, and she liked them, as she had liked the glimpse she had caught of his hand, and as she liked the contact of his hand itself. Then, too, but not sharply, she had perceived the short, square-set nose, the rosiness of cheek, and the firm, short upper lip, ere delight centered her flash of gaze on the well-modeled, large clean mouth where red lips smiled clear
of the white, enviable teeth.—_A boy, a great big man-boy_, was her thought; and, as they smiled at each other and their hands slipped apart, she was startled by a glimpse of his hair—short and crisp and sandy, hinting almost of palest gold save that it was too flaxen to hint of gold at all.

So blond was he that she was reminded of stage-types she had seen, such as Ole Olson and Yon Yonson; but there resemblance ceased. It was a matter of colour only, for the eyes were dark-lashed and -browed, and were cloudy with temperament rather than staring a child-gaze of wonder, and the suit of smooth brown cloth had been made by a tailor. Saxon appraised the suit on the instant, and her secret judgment was _not a cent less than fifty dollars_. Further, he had none of the awkwardness of the Scandinavian immigrant. On the contrary, he was one of those rare individuals that radiate muscular grace through the ungraceful man-garments of civilisation. Every movement was supple, slow, and apparently considered. This she did not see nor analyse. She saw only a clothed man with grace of carriage and movement. She felt, rather than perceived, the calm and certitude of all the muscular play of him, and she felt, too, the promise of easement and rest that was especially grateful and craved-for by one who had incessantly, for six days and at top-speed, ironed fancy starch. As the touch of his hand had been good, so, to her, this subtler feel of all of him, body and mind, was good.

As he took her programme and skirmished and joked after the way of young men, she realised the immediacy of delight she had taken in him. Never in her life had she been so affected by any man. She wondered to herself: _Is this the man?_
He danced beautifully. The joy was hers that good dancers take when they have found a good dancer for a partner. The grace of those slow-moving, certain muscles of his accorded perfectly with the rhythm of the music. There was never doubt, never a betrayal of indecision. She glanced at Bert, dancing "tough" with Mary, caroming down the long floor with more than one collision with the increasing couples. Graceful himself in his slender, tall, lean-stomached way, Bert was accounted a good dancer; yet Saxon did not remember ever having danced with him with keen pleasure. Just a bit of a jerk spoiled his dancing—a jerk that did not occur, usually, but that always impended. There was something spasmodic in his mind. He was too quick, or he continually threatened to be too quick. He always seemed just on the verge of overrunning the time. It was disquieting. He made for unrest.

"You're a dream of a dancer," Billy Roberts was saying. "I've heard lots of the fellows talk about your dancing."

"I love it," she answered.

But from the way she said it he sensed her reluctance to speak, and danced on in silence, while she warmed with the appreciation of a woman for gentle consideration. Gentle consideration was a thing rarely encountered in the life she lived. *Is this the man?* She remembered Mary's "I'd marry him to-morrow," and caught herself speculating on marrying Billy Roberts by the next day—if he asked her.

With eyes that dreamily desired to close, she moved on in the arms of this masterful, guiding pressure. A *prizefighter!* She experienced a thrill of wickedness as
she thought of what Sarah would say could she see her now. Only he wasn't a prizefighter, but a teamster.

Came an abrupt lengthening of step, the guiding pressure grew more compelling, and she was caught up and carried along, though her velvet-shod feet never left the floor. Then came the sudden control down to the shorter step again, and she felt herself being held slightly from him so that he might look into her face and laugh with her in joy at the exploit. At the end, as the band slowed in the last bars, they, too, slowed, their dance fading with the music in a lengthening glide that ceased with the last lingering tone.

"We're sure cut out for each other when it comes to dancin'," he said, as they made their way to rejoin the other couple.

"It was a dream," she replied.

So low was her voice that he bent to hear, and saw the flush in her cheeks that seemed communicated to her eyes, which were softly warm and sensuous. He took the programme from her and gravely and gigantically wrote his name across all the length of it.

"An' now it's no good," he dared. "Ain't no need for it."

He tore it across and tossed it aside.

"Me for you, Saxon, for the next," was Bert's greeting, as they came up. "You take Mary for the next whirl, Bill."

"Nothin' doin', Bo," was the retort. "Me an' Saxon's framed up to last the day."

"Watch out for him, Saxon," Mary warned facetiously. "He's liable to get a crush on you."

"I guess I know a good thing when I see it," Billy responded gallantly.
“And so do I,” Saxon aided and abetted.
“I’d ’a’ known you if I’d seen you in the dark,” Billy added.
Mary regarded them with mock alarm, and Bert said good-naturedly:
“All I got to say is you ain’t wastin’ any time gettin’ together. Just the same, if you can spare a few minutes from each other after a couple more whirls, Mary an’ me’d be complimented to have your presence at dinner.”
“Just like that,” chimed Mary.
“Quit your kiddin’,” Billy laughed back, turning his head to look into Saxon’s eyes. “Don’t listen to ’em. They’re grouched because they got to dance together. Bert’s a rotten dancer, and Mary ain’t so much. Come on, there she goes. See you after two more dances.”

CHAPTER III.

They had dinner in the open-air, tree-walled dining-room, and Saxon noted that it was Billy who paid the reckoning for the four. They knew many of the young men and women at the other tables, and greetings and fun flew back and forth. Bert was very possessive with Mary, almost roughly so, resting his hand on hers, catching and holding it, and, once, forcibly slipping off her two rings and refusing to return them for a long while. At times, when he put his arm around her waist, Mary promptly disengaged it; and at other times, with elaborate obliviousness that deceived no one, she allowed it to remain.

And Saxon, talking little but studying Billy Roberts very intently, was satisfied that there would be an utter difference in the way he would do such things . . . if ever
he would do them. Anyway, he'd never paw a girl as Bert and lots of the other fellows did. She measured the breadth of Billy's heavy shoulders.

"Why do they call you 'Big' Bill?" she asked. "You're not so very tall."

"Nope," he agreed. "I'm only five feet eight an' three-quarters. I guess it must be my weight."

"He fights at a hundred an' eighty," Bert interjected.

"Oh, cut it," Billy said quickly, a cloud-rift of displeasure showing in his eyes. "I ain't a fighter. I ain't fought in six months. I've quit it. It don't pay."

"You got two hundred the night you put the Frisco Slasher to the bad," Bert urged proudly.

"Cut it. Cut it now. ——Say, Saxon, you ain't so big yourself, are you? But you're built just right if anybody should ask you. You're round an' slender at the same time. I bet I can guess your weight."

"Everybody guesses over it," she warned, while inwardly she was puzzled that she should at the same time be glad and regretful that he did not fight any more.

"Not me," he was saying. "I'm a wooz at weight-guessin'. Just you watch me." He regarded her critically, and it was patent that warm approval played its little rivalry with the judgment of his gaze. "Wait a minute."

He reached over to her and felt her arm at the biceps. The pressure of the encircling fingers was firm and honest, and Saxon thrilled to it. There was magic in this man-boy. She would have known only irritation had Bert or any other man felt her arm. But this man! Is he the man? she was questioning, when he voiced his conclusion.

"Your clothes don't weigh more'n seven pounds. And
seven from—hum—say one hundred an' twenty-three—one hundred an' sixteen is your stripped weight."

But at the penultimate word, Mary cried out with sharp reproof:

"Why, Billy Roberts, people don't talk about such things."

He looked at her with slow-growing, uncomprehending surprise.

"What things?" he demanded finally.

"There you go again! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Look! You've got Saxon blushing!"

"I am not," Saxon denied indignantly.

"An' if you keep on, Mary, you'll have me blushing," Billy growled. "I guess I know what's right an' what ain't. It ain't what a guy says, but what he thinks. An' I'm thinkin' right, an' Saxon knows it. An' she an' I ain't thinkin' what you're thinkin' at all."

"Oh! Oh!" Mary cried. "You're gettin' worse an' worse. I never think such things."

"Whoa, Mary! Back up!" Bert checked her peremptorily. "You're in the wrong stall. Billy never makes mistakes like that."

"But he needn't be so raw," she persisted.

"Come on, Mary, an' be good, an' cut that stuff," was Billy's dismissal of her, as he turned to Saxon. "How near did I come to it?"

"One hundred and twenty-two," she answered, looking deliberately at Mary. "One twenty two with my clothes."

Billy burst into hearty laughter, in which Bert joined.

"I don't care," Mary protested. "You're terrible, both of you—an' you, too, Saxon. I'd never a-thought it of you."
“Listen to me, kid,” Bert began soothingly, as his arm slipped around her waist.

But in the false excitement she had worked herself into, Mary rudely repulsed the arm, and then, fearing that she had wounded her lover’s feelings, she took advantage of the teasing and banter to recover her good humour. His arm was permitted to return, and with heads bent together, they talked in whispers.

Billy discreetly began to make conversation with Saxon.

“Say, you know, your name is a funny one. I never heard it tagged on anybody before. But it’s all right. I like it.”

“My mother gave it to me. She was educated, and knew all kinds of words. She was always reading books, almost until she died. And she wrote lots and lots. I’ve got some of her poetry published in a San Jose newspaper long ago. The Saxons were a race of people—she told me all about them when I was a little girl. They were wild, like Indians, only they were white. And they had blue eyes, and yellow hair, and they were awful fighters.”

As she talked, Billy followed her solemnly, his eyes steadily turned on hers.

“Never heard of them,” he confessed. “Did they live anywhere around here?”

She laughed.

“No. They lived in England. They were the first English, and you know the Americans came from the English. We’re Saxons, you an’ me, an’ Mary, an’ Bert, and all the Americans that are real Americans, you know, and not Dagoes and Japs and such.”

“My folks lived in America a long time,” Billy said slowly, digesting the information she had given and relat-
ing himself to it. "Anyway, my mother’s folks did. They crossed to Maine hundreds of years ago."

"My father was State of Maine," she broke in, with a little gurgle of joy. "And my mother was born in Ohio, or where Ohio is now. She used to call it the Great Western Reserve. What was your father?"

"Don’t know." Billy shrugged his shoulders. "He didn’t know himself. Nobody ever knew, though he was American, all right, all right."

"His name’s regular old American," Saxon suggested. "There’s a big English general right now whose name is Roberts. I’ve read it in the papers."

"But Roberts wasn’t my father’s name. He never knew what his name was. Roberts was the name of a gold-miner who adopted him. You see, it was this way. When they was Indian-fightin’ up there with the Modoc Indians, a lot of the miners an’ settlers took a hand. Roberts was captain of one outfit, and once, after a fight, they took a lot of prisoners—squaws, an’ kids an’ babies. An’ one of the kids was my father. They figured he was about five years old. He didn’t know nothin’ but Indian."

Saxon clapped her hands, and her eyes sparkled: "He’d been captured on an Indian raid!"

"That’s the way they figured it," Billy nodded. "They recollected a waggon-train of Oregon settlers that’d been killed by the Modocs four years before. Roberts adopted him, and that’s why I don’t know his real name. But you can bank on it, he crossed the plains just the same."

"So did my father," Saxon said proudly.

"An’ my mother, too," Billy added, pride touching his own voice. "Anyway, she came pretty close to crossin’ the plains, because she was born in a waggon on the River Platte on the way out."
“My mother, too,” said Saxon. “She was eight years old, an’ she walked most of the way after the oxen began to give out.”

Billy thrust out his hand.

“Put her there, kid,” he said. “We’re just like old friends, what with the same kind of folks behind us.”

With shining eyes, Saxon extended her hand to his, and gravely they shook.

“Isn’t it wonderful?” she murmured. “We’re both old American stock. And if you aren’t a Saxon there never was one—your hair, your eyes, your skin, everything. And you’re a fighter, too.”

“I guess all our old folks was fighters when it comes to that. It come natural to ’em, an’ dog-gone it, they just had to fight or they’d never come through.”

“What are you two talkin’ about?” Mary broke in upon them.

“They’re thicker’n mush in no time,” Bert girded. “You’d think they’d known each other a week already.”

“Oh, we knew each other longer than that,” Saxon returned. “Before ever we were born our folks were walkin’ across the plains together.”

“When your folks was waitin’ for the railroad to be built an’ all the Indians killed off before they dasted to start for California,” was Billy’s way of proclaiming the new alliance. “We’re the real goods, Saxon an’ me, if anybody should ride up on a buzz-waggon an’ ask you.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Mary boasted with quiet petulance. “My father stayed behind to fight in the Civil War. He was a drummer-boy. That’s why he didn’t come to California until afterward.”

“And my father went back to fight in the Civil War,” Saxon said.
“And mine, too,” said Billy.
They looked at each other gleefully. Again they had found a new contact.

“Well, they’re all dead, ain’t they?” was Bert’s saturnine comment. “There ain’t no difference dyin’ in battle or in the poorhouse. The thing is they’re deado. I wouldn’t care a rap if my father’d been hanged. It’s all the same in a thousand years. This braggin’ about folks makes me tired. Besides, my father couldn’t a-fought. He wasn’t born till two years after the war. Just the same, two of my uncles were killed at Gettysburg. Guess we done our share.”

“Just like that,” Mary applauded.
Bert’s arm went around her waist again.

“We’re here, ain’t we?” he said. “An’ that’s what counts. The dead are dead, an’ you can bet your sweet life they just keep on stayin’ dead.”

Mary put her hand over his mouth and began to chide him for his awfulness, whereupon he kissed the palm of her hand and put his head closer to hers.

The merry clatter of dishes was increasing as the dining-room filled up. Here and there voices were raised in snatches of song. There were shrill squeals and screams and bursts of heavier male laughter as the everlasting skirmishing between the young men and girls played on. Among some of the men the signs of drink were already manifest. At a near table girls were calling out to Billy. And Saxon, the sense of temporary possession already strong on her, noted with jealous eyes that he was a favourite and desired object to them.

“Ain’t they awful?” Mary voiced her disapproval. “They got a nerve. I know who they are. No respectable girl’d have a thing to do with them. Listen to that!”
"Oh, you Bill, you," one of them, a buxom young brunette, was calling. "Hope you ain't forgotten me, Bill."

"Oh, you chicken," he called back gallantly.

Saxon flattered herself that he showed vexation, and she conceived an immense dislike for the brunette.

"Goin' to dance?" the latter called.

"Mebbe," he answered, and turned abruptly to Saxon.

"Say, we old Americans oughta stick together, don't you think? They ain't many of us left. The country's fillin' up with all kinds of foreigners."

He talked on steadily, in a low, confidential voice, head close to hers, as advertisement to the other girl that he was occupied.

From the next table on the opposite side, a young man had singled out Saxon. His dress was tough. His companions, male and female, were tough. His face was inflamed, his eyes touched with wildness.

"Hey, you!" he called. "You with the velvet slippers. Me for you."

The girl beside him put her arm around his neck and tried to hush him, and through the mufflement of her embrace they could hear him gurgling:

"I tell you she's some goods. Watch me go across an' win her from them cheap skates."

"Butchertown hoodlums," Mary sniffed.

Saxon's eyes encountered the eyes of the girl, who glared hatred across at her. And in Billy's eyes she saw moody anger smouldering. The eyes were more sullen, more handsome than ever, and clouds and veils and lights and shadows shifted and deepened in the blue of them until they gave her a sense of unfathomable depth. He had stopped talking, and he made no effort to talk.
"Don't start a rough house, Bill," Bert cautioned. "They're from across the bay an' they don't know you, that's all."

Bert stood up suddenly, stepped over to the other table, whispered briefly, and came back. Every face at the table was turned on Billy. The offender arose brokenly, shook off the detaining hand of his girl, and came over. He was a large man, with a hard, malignant face and bitter eyes. Also, he was a subdued man.

"You're Big Bill Roberts," he said thickly, clinging to the table as he reeled. "I take my hat off to you. I apologise. I admire your taste in skirts, an' take it from me that's a compliment; but I didn't know who you was. If I'd knowed you was Bill Roberts there wouldn't been a peep from my fly-trap. D'ye get me? I apologise. Will you shake hands?"

Gruffly, Billy said, "It's all right—forget it, sport;" and sullenly he shook hands and with a slow, massive movement thrust the other back toward his own table.

Saxon was glowing. Here was a man, a protector, something to lean against, of whom even the Butcher-town toughs were afraid as soon as his name was mentioned.

CHAPTER IV.

After dinner there were two dances in the pavilion, and then the band led the way to the race track for the games. The dancers followed, and all through the grounds the picnic parties left their tables to join in. Five thousand packed the grassy slopes of the amphitheater and swarmed inside the race track. Here, first of the events, the men were lining up for a tug of war. The contest
was between the Oakland Bricklayers and the San Francisco Bricklayers, and the picked braves, huge and heavy, were taking their positions along the rope. They kicked heel-holds in the soft earth, rubbed their hands with the soil from underfoot, and laughed and joked with the crowd that surged about them.

The judges and watchers struggled vainly to keep back this crowd of relatives and friends. The Celtic blood was up, and the Celtic faction spirit ran high. The air was filled with cries of cheer, advice, warning, and threat. Many elected to leave the side of their own team and go to the side of the other team with the intention of circumventing foul play. There were as many women as men among the jostling supporters. The dust from the trampling, scuffling feet rose in the air, and Mary gasped and coughed and begged Bert to take her away. But he, the imp in him elated with the prospect of trouble, insisted on urging in closer. Saxon clung to Billy, who slowly and methodically elbowed and shouldered a way for her.

“No place for a girl,” he grumbled, looking down at her with a masked expression of absent-mindedness, while his elbow powerfully crushed on the ribs of a big Irishman who gave room. “Things’ll break loose when they start pullin’. They’s been too much drink, an’ you know what the Micks are for a rough house.”

Saxon was very much out of place among these large-bodied men and women. She seemed very small and childlike, delicate and fragile, a creature from another race. Only Billy’s skilled bulk and muscle saved her. He was continually glancing from face to face of the women and always returning to study her face, nor was she unaware of the contrast he was making.
Some excitement occurred a score of feet away from them, and to the sound of exclamations and blows a surge ran through the crowd. A large man, wedged sidewise in the jam, was shoved against Saxon, crushing her closely against Billy, who reached across to the man’s shoulder with a massive thrust that was not so slow as usual. An involuntary grunt came from the victim, who turned his head, showing sun-reddened blond skin and unmistakable angry Irish eyes.

“What’s eatin’ yeh?” he snarled.

“Get off your foot; you’re standin’ on it,” was Billy’s contemptuous reply, emphasised by an increase of thrust.

The Irishman grunted again and made a frantic struggle to twist his body around, but the wedging bodies on either side held him in a vise.

“I’ll break yer ugly face for yeh in a minute,” he announced in wrath-thick tones.

Then his own face underwent transformation. The snarl left the lips, and the angry eyes grew genial.

“An’ sure an’ it’s yerself,” he said. “I didn’t know it was yeh a-shovin’. I seen yeh lick the Terrible Swede, if yeh was robbed on the decision.”

“No, you didn’t, Bo,” Billy answered pleasantly. “You saw me take a good beatin’ that night. The decision was all right.”

The Irishman was now beaming. He had endeavoured to pay a compliment with a lie, and the prompt repudiation of the lie served only to increase his hero-worship.

“Sure, an’ a bad beatin’ it was,” he acknowledged, “but yeh showed the grit of a bunch of wildcats. Soon as I can get me arm free I’m goin’ to shake yeh by the hand an’ help yeh aise yer young lady.”

Frustrated in the struggle to get the crowd back, the
referee fired his revolver in the air, and the tug-of-war was on. Pandemonium broke loose. Saxon, protected by the two big men, was near enough to the front to see much that ensued. The men on the rope pulled and strained till their faces were red with effort and their joints crackled. The rope was new, and, as their hands slipped, their wives and daughters sprang in, scooping up the earth in double handfuls and pouring it on the rope and the hands of their men to give them better grip.

A stout, middle-aged woman, carried beyond herself by the passion of the contest, seized the rope and pulled beside her husband, encouraging him with loud cries. A watcher from the opposing team dragged her screaming away and was dropped like a steer by an ear-blow from a partisan from the woman’s team. He, in turn, went down, and brawny women joined with their men in the battle. Vainly the judges and watchers begged, pleaded, yelled, and swung with their fists. Men, as well as women, were springing in to the rope and pulling. No longer was it team against team, but all Oakland against all San Francisco, festooned with a free-for-all fight. Hands overlaid hands two and three deep in the struggle to grasp the rope. And hands that found no holds, doubled into bunches of knuckles that impacted on the jaws of the watchers who strove to tear hand-holds from the rope.

Bert yelped with joy, while Mary clung to him, mad with fear. Close to the rope the fighters were going down and being trampled. The dust arose in clouds, while from beyond, all around, unable to get into the battle, could be heard the shrill and impotent rage-screams and rage-yells of women and men.

“Dirty work, dirty work,” Billy muttered over and over; and, though he saw much that occurred, assisted by
the friendly Irishman he was coolly and safely working Saxon back out of the mêlée.

At last the break came. The losing team, accompanied by its host of volunteers, was dragged in a rush over the ground and disappeared under the avalanche of battling forms of the onlookers.

Leaving Saxon under the protection of the Irishman in an outer eddy of calm, Billy plunged back into the mix-up. Several minutes later he emerged with the missing couple—Bert bleeding from a blow on the ear, but hilarious, and Mary rumpled and hysterical.

“This ain’t sport,” she kept repeating. “It’s a shame, a dirty shame.”

“We got to get outa this,” Billy said. “The fun’s only commenced.”

“Aw, wait,” Bert begged. “It’s worth eight dollars. It’s cheap at any price. I ain’t seen so many black eyes and bloody noses in a month of Sundays.”

“Well, go on back an’ enjoy yourself,” Billy commended. “I’ll take the girls up there on the side hill where we can look on. But I won’t give much for your good looks if some of them Micks lands on you.”

The trouble was over in an amazingly short time, for from the judges’ stand beside the track the announcer was bellowing the start of the boys’ foot-race; and Bert, disappointed, joined Billy and the two girls on the hillside looking down upon the track.

There were boys’ races and girls’ races, races of young women and old women, of fat men and fat women, sack races and three-legged races, and the contestants strove around the small track through a Bedlam of cheering supporters. The tug-of-war was already forgotten, and good nature reigned again.
Five young men toed the mark, crouching with fingertips to the ground and waiting the starter's revolver-shot. Three were in their stocking-feet, and the remaining two wore spiked running-shoes.

"Young men's race," Bert read from the programme. "An' only one prize—twenty-five dollars. See the red-head with the spikes—the one next to the outside. San Francisco's set on him winning. He's their crack, an' there's a lot of bets up."

"Who's goin' to win?" Mary deferred to Billy's superior athletic knowledge.

"How can I tell?" he answered. "I never saw any of 'em before. But they all look good to me. May the best one win, that's all."

The revolver was fired, and the five runners were off and away. Three were outdistanced at the start. Red-head led, with a black-haired young man at his shoulder, and it was plain that the race lay between these two. Half-way around, the black-haired one took the lead in a spurt that was intended to last to the finish. Ten feet he gained, nor could Red-head cut it down an inch.

"The boy's a streak," Billy commented. "He ain't tryin' his hardest, an' Red-head's just bustin' himself."

Still ten feet in the lead, the black-haired one breasted the tape in a hubbub of cheers. Yet yells of disapproval could be distinguished. Bert hugged himself with joy.

"Mm-mm," he gloated. "Ain't Frisco sore? Watch out for fireworks now. See! He's bein' challenged. The judges ain't payin' him the money. An' he's got a gang behind him. Oh! Oh! Oh! Ain't had so much fun since my old woman broke her leg!"

"Why don't they pay him, Billy?" Saxon asked. "He won."
“The Frisco bunch is challengin' him for a professional,” Billy elucidated. “That's what they're all beefin' about. But it ain't right. They all ran for that money, so they're all professional.”

The crowd surged and argued and roared in front of the judges' stand. The stand was a rickety, two-storey affair, the second storey open at the front, and here the judges could be seen debating as heatedly as the crowd beneath them.

“There she starts!” Bert cried. “Oh, you roughhouse!”

The black-haired racer, backed by a dozen supporters, was climbing the outside stairs to the judges.

“The purse-holder's his friend,” Billy said. “See, he's paid him, an' some of the judges is willin' an' some are beefin'. An' now that other gang's going up—they're Red-head's.” He turned to Saxon with a reassuring smile. “We're well out of it this time. There's goin' to be rough stuff down there in a minute.”

“The judges are tryin' to make him give the money back,” Bert explained. “An' if he don't the other gang'll take it away from him. See! They're reachin' for it now.”

High above his head, the winner held the roll of paper containing the twenty-five silver dollars. His gang, around him, was shouldering back those who tried to seize the money. No blows had been struck yet, but the struggle increased until the frail structure shook and swayed. From the crowd beneath the winner was variously addressed: “Give it back, you dog!” “Hang on to it, Tim!” “You won fair, Timmy!” “Give it back, you dirty robber!” Abuse unprintable as well as friendly advice was hurled at him.
The struggle grew more violent. Tim's supporters strove to hold him off the floor so that his hand would still be above the grasping hands that shot up. Once, for an instant, his arm was jerked down. Again it went up. But evidently the paper had broken, and with a last desperate effort, before he went down, Tim flung the coin out in a silvery shower upon the heads of the crowd beneath. Then ensued a weary period of arguing and quarreling.

"I wish they'd finish, so as we could get back to the dancin'," Mary complained. "This ain't no fun."

Slowly and painfully the judges' stand was cleared, and an announcer, stepping to the front of the stand, spread his arms appealing for silence. The angry clamour died down.

"The judges have decided," he shouted, "that this day of good fellowship an' brotherhood——"

"Hear! Hear!" Many of the cooler heads applauded. "That's the stuff!" "No fightin'!" "No hard feelin's!"

"An' therefore," the announcer became audible again, "the judges have decided to put up another purse of twenty-five dollars an' run the race over again!"

"An' Tim?" bellowed scores of throats. "What about Tim?" "He's been robbed!" "The judges is rotten!"

Again the announcer stilled the tumult with his arm appeal.

"The judges have decided, for the sake of good feelin', that Timothy McManus will also run. If he wins, the money's his."

"Now wouldn't that jar you?" Billy grumbled disgustedly. "If Tim's eligible now, he was eligible the first time. An' if he was eligible the first time, then the money was his."
"Red-head'll bust himself wide open this time," Bert jubilated.

"An' so will Tim," Billy rejoined. "You can bet he's mad clean through, and he'll let out the links he was holdin' in last time."

Another quarter of an hour was spent in clearing the track of the excited crowd, and this time only Tim and Red-head toed the mark. The other three young men had abandoned the contest.

The leap of Tim, at the report of the revolver, put him a clean yard in the lead.

"I guess he's professional, all right, all right," Billy remarked. "An' just look at him go!"

Half-way around, Tim led by fifty feet, and, running swiftly, maintaining the same lead, he came down the home-stretch an easy winner. When directly beneath the group on the hillside, the incredible and unthinkable happened. Standing close to the inside edge of the track was a dapper young man with a light switch cane. He was distinctly out of place in such a gathering, for upon him was no earmark of the working class. Afterward, Bert was of the opinion that he looked like a swell dancing-master, while Billy called him "the dude."

So far as Timothy McManus was concerned, the dapper young man was destiny; for as Tim passed him, the young man, with utmost deliberation, thrust his cane between Tim's flying legs. Tim sailed through the air in a head-long pitch, struck spread-eagled on his face, and plowed along in a cloud of dust.

There was an instant of vast and gasping silence. The young man, too, seemed petrified by the ghastliness of his deed. It took an appreciable interval of time for him, as well as for the onlookers, to realise what he had done.
They recovered first, and from a thousand throats the wild Irish yell went up. Red-head won the race without a cheer. The storm center had shifted to the young man with the cane. After the yell, he had one moment of indecision; then he turned and darted up the track.

"Go it, sport!" Bert cheered, waving his hat in the air. "You're the goods for me! Who'd a-thought it? Who'd a-thought it? Say!—wouldn't it, now? Just wouldn't it?"

"Phew! He's a streak himself," Billy admired. "But what did he do it for? He's no bricklayer."

Like a frightened rabbit, the mad roar at his heels, the young man tore up the track to an open space on the hillside, up which he clawed and disappeared among the trees. Behind him toiled a hundred vengeful runners.

"It's too bad he's missing the rest of it," Billy said. "Look at 'em goin' to it."

Bert was beside himself. He leaped up and down and cried continuously:

"Look at 'em! Look at 'em! Look at 'em!"

The Oakland faction was outraged. Twice had its favourite runner been jobbed out of the race. This last was only another vile trick of the Frisco faction. So Oakland doubled its brawny fists and swung into San Francisco for blood. And San Francisco, consciously innocent, was no less willing to join issues. To be charged with such a crime was no less monstrous than the crime itself. Besides, for too many tedious hours had the Irish heroically suppressed themselves. Five thousands of them exploded into joyous battle. The women joined with them. The whole amphitheater was filled with the conflict. There were rallies, retreats, charges, and counter-charges. Weaker groups were forced fighting up the hillsides. Other groups, bested, fled among the trees to carry on
guerrilla warfare, emerging in sudden dashes to overwhelm isolated enemies. Half a dozen special policemen, hired by the Weasel Park management, received an impartial trouncing from both sides.

"Nobody's the friend of a policeman," Bert chortled, dabbing his handkerchief to his injured ear, which still bled.

The bushes crackled behind him, and he sprang aside to let the locked forms of two men go by, rolling over and over down the hill, each striking when uppermost, and followed by a screaming woman who rained blows on the one who was patently not of her clan.

The judges, in the second storey of the stand, valiantly withstood a fierce assault until the frail structure toppled to the ground in splinters.

"What's that woman doing?" Saxon asked, calling attention to an elderly woman beneath them on the track, who had sat down and was pulling from her foot an elastic-sided shoe of generous dimensions.

"Goin' swimming," Bert chuckled, as the stocking followed.

They watched, fascinated. The shoe was pulled on again over the bare foot. Then the woman slipped a rock the size of her fist into the stocking, and, brandishing this ancient and horrible weapon, lumbered into the nearest fray.

"Oh!—Oh!—Oh!" Bert screamed, with every blow she struck. "Hey, old flannel-mouth! Watch out! You'll get yours in a second. Oh! Oh! A peach! Did you see it? Hurray for the old lady! Look at her tearin' into 'em! Watch out, old girl!... Ah-h-h."

His voice died away regretfully, as the one with the stocking, whose hair had been clutched from behind by another Amazon, was whirl...
Vainly Mary clung to his arm, shaking him back and forth and remonstrating.

"Can't you be sensible?" she cried. "It's awful! I tell you it's awful!"

But Bert was irrepressible.

"Go it, old girl!" he encouraged. "You win! Me for you every time! Now's your chance! Swat! Oh! My! A peach! A peach!"

"It's the biggest rough-house I ever saw," Billy confided to Saxon. "It sure takes the Micks to mix it. But what did that dude wanta do it for? That's what gets me. He wasn't a bricklayer—not even a workingman—just a regular sissy dude that didn't know a livin' soul in the grounds. But if he wanted to raise a rough-house he certainly done it. Look at 'em. They're fightin' everywhere."

He broke into sudden laughter, so hearty that the tears came into his eyes.

"What is it?" Saxon asked, anxious not to miss anything.

"It's that dude," Billy explained between gusts. "What did he wanta do it for? That's what gets my goat. What'd he wanta do it for?"

There was more crashing in the brush, and two women erupted upon the scene, one in flight, the other pursuing. Almost ere they could realise it, the little group found itself merged in the astounding conflict that covered, if not the face of creation, at least all the visible landscape of Weasel Park.

The fleeing woman stumbled in rounding the end of a picnic bench, and would have been caught had she not seized Mary's arm to recover balance, and then flung Mary full into the arms of the woman who pursued. This
woman, largely built, middle-aged, and too irate to comprehend, clutched Mary's hair by one hand and lifted the other to smack her. Before the blow could fall, Billy had seized both the woman's wrists.

"Come on, old girl, cut it out," he said appeasingly. "You're in wrong. She ain't done nothin'."

Then the woman did a strange thing. Making no resistance, but maintaining her hold on the girl's hair, she stood still and calmly began to scream. The scream was hideously compounded of fright and fear. Yet in her face was neither fright nor fear. She regarded Billy coolly and appraisingly, as if to see how he took it—her scream merely the cry to the clan for help.

"Aw, shut up, you battle-axe!" Bert vociferated, trying to drag her off by the shoulders.

The result was that the four rocked back and forth, while the woman calmly went on screaming. The scream became touched with triumph as more crashing was heard in the brush.

Saxon saw Billy's slow eyes glint suddenly to the hardness of steel, and at the same time she saw him put pressure on his wrist-holds. The woman released her grip on Mary and was shoved back and free. Then the first man of the rescue was upon them. He did not pause to enquire into the merits of the affair. It was sufficient that he saw the woman reeling away from Billy and screaming with pain that was largely feigned.

"It's all a mistake," Billy cried hurriedly. "We apologise, sport——"

The Irishman swung ponderously. Billy ducked, cutting his apology short, and as the sledge-like fist passed over his head, he drove his left to the other's jaw. The big Irishman toppled over sidewise and sprawled on the
edge of the slope. Half-scrambled back to his feet and out of balance, he was caught by Bert’s fist, and this time went clawing down the slope that was slippery with short, dry grass.

Bert was redoubtable. “That for you, old girl—my compliments,” was his cry, as he shoved the woman over the edge onto the treacherous slope. Three more men were emerging from the brush.

In the meantime, Billy had put Saxon in behind the protection of the picnic table. Mary, who was hysterical, had evinced a desire to cling to him, and he had sent her sliding across the top of the table to Saxon.

“Come on, you flannel-mouths!” Bert yelled at the new-comers, himself swept away by passion, his black eyes flashing wildly, his dark face inflamed by the too-ready blood. “Come on, you cheap skates! Talk about Gettysburg. We’ll show you all the Americans ain’t dead yet!”

“Shut your trap—we don’t want a scrap with the girls here,” Billy growled harshly, holding his position in front of the table. He turned to the three rescuers, who were bewildered by the lack of anything visible to rescue. “Go on, sports. We don’t want a row. You’re in wrong. They ain’t nothin’ doin’ in the fight line. We don’t want a fight—d’ye get me?”

They still hesitated, and Billy might have succeeded in avoiding trouble had not the man who had gone down the bank chosen that unfortunate moment to reappear, crawling groggily on hands and knees and showing a bleeding face. Again Bert reached him and sent him downslope, and the other three, with wild yells, sprang in on Billy, who punched, shifted position, ducked and punched, and shifted again ere he struck the third time.
His blows were clean and hard, scientifically delivered, with the weight of his body behind.

Saxon, looking on, saw his eyes and learned more about him. She was frightened, but clear-seeing, and she was startled by the disappearance of all depth of light and shadow in his eyes. They showed surface only—a hard, bright surface, almost glazed, devoid of all expression save deadly seriousness. Bert's eyes showed madness. The eyes of the Irishmen were angry and serious, and yet not all serious. There was a wayward gleam in them, as if they enjoyed the fracas. But in Billy's eyes was no enjoyment. It was as if he had certain work to do and had doggedly settled down to do it.

Scarcely more expression did she note in the face, though there was nothing in common between it and the one she had seen all day. The boyishness had vanished. This face was mature in a terrifying, ageless way. There was no anger in it. Nor was it even pitiless. It seemed to have glazed as hard and passionlessly as his eyes. Something came to her of her wonderful mother's tales of the ancient Saxons, and he seemed to her one of those Saxons, and she caught a glimpse, on the wall of her consciousness, of a long, dark boat, with a prow like the beak of a bird of prey, and of huge, half-naked men, wing-helmeted, and one of their faces, it seemed to her, was his face. She did not reason this. She felt it, and visioned it as by an unthinkable clairvoyance, and gasped, for the flurry of war was over. It had lasted only seconds. Bert was dancing on the edge of the slippery slope and mocking the vanquished who had slid impotently to the bottom. But Billy took charge.

"Come on, you girls," he commanded. "Get onto
yourself, Bert. We got to get outa this. We can't fight an army.

He led the retreat, holding Saxon's arm, and Bert, giggling and jubilant, brought up the rear with an indignant Mary who protested vainly in his unheeding ears.

For a hundred yards they ran and twisted through the trees, and then, no signs of pursuit appearing, they slowed down to a dignified saunter. Bert, the trouble-seeker, pricked his ears to the muffled sound of blows and sobs, and stepped aside to investigate.

"Oh!—look what I've found!" he called.

They joined him on the edge of a dry ditch and looked down. In the bottom were two men, strays from the fight, grappled together and still fighting. They were weeping out of sheer fatigue and helplessness, and the blows they only occasionally struck were open-handed and ineffectual.

"Hey, you, sport—throw sand in his eyes," Bert counselled. "That's it, blind him an' he's your'n."

"Stop that!" Billy shouted at the man, who was following instructions. "Or I'll come down there an' beat you up myself. It's all over—d'ye get me? It's all over an' everybody's friends. Shake an' make up. The drinks are on both of you. That's right—here, gimme your hand an' I'll pull you out."

They left them shaking hands and brushing each other's clothes.

"It soon will be over," Billy grinned to Saxon. "I know 'em. Fight's fun with them. An' this big scrap's made the day a howlin' success. What did I tell you?—look over at that table there."

A group of dishevelled men and women, still breathing heavily, were shaking hands all around.
“Come on, let’s dance,” Mary pleaded, urging them in the direction of the pavilion.

All over the park the warring bricklayers were shaking hands and making up, while the open-air bars were crowded with the drinkers.

Saxon walked very close to Billy. She was proud of him. He could fight, and he could avoid trouble. In all that had occurred he had striven to avoid trouble. And, also, consideration for her and Mary had been uppermost in his mind.

“You are brave,” she said to him.

“It’s like takin’ candy from a baby,” he disclaimed. “They only rough-house. They don’t know boxin’. They’re wide open, an’ all you gotta do is hit ’em. It ain’t real fightin’, you know.” With a troubled, boyish look in his eyes, he stared at his bruised knuckles. “An’ I’ll have to drive team to-morrow with ’em,” he lamented. “Which ain’t fun, I’m tellin’ you, when they stiffen up.”

CHAPTER V.

At eight o’clock the Al Vista band played “Home, Sweet Home,” and, following the hurried rush through the twilight to the picnic train, the four managed to get double seats facing each other. When the aisles and platforms were packed by the hilarious crowd, the train pulled out for the short run from the suburbs into Oakland. All the car was singing a score of songs at once, and Bert, his head pillowed on Mary’s breast with her arms around him, started “On the Banks of the Wabash.” And he sang the song through, undeterred by the bedlam of two general fights, one on the adjacent platform, the other at the opposite end of the car, both of which were finally
subdued by special policemen to the screams of women and the crash of glass.

Billy sang a lugubrious song of many stanzas about a cowboy, the refrain of which was, "Bury me out on the lone prairie."

"That's one you never heard before; my father used to sing it," he told Saxon, who was glad that it was ended.

She had discovered the first flaw in him. He was tone-deaf. Not once had he been on the key.

"I don't sing often," he added.

"You bet your sweet life he don't," Bert exclaimed. "His friends'd kill him if he did."

"They all make fun of my singin'," he complained to Saxon. "Honest, now, do you find it as rotten as all that?"

"It's... it's maybe flat a bit," she admitted reluctantly.

"It don't sound flat to me," he protested. "It's a regular josh on me. I'll bet Bert put you up to it. You sing something now, Saxon. I bet you sing good. I can tell it from lookin' at you."

She began "When the Harvest Days Are Over." Bert and Mary joined in; but when Billy attempted to add his voice he was dissuaded by a shin-kick from Bert. Saxon sang in a clear, true soprano, thin but sweet, and she was aware that she was singing to Billy.

"Now that is what singing is," he proclaimed, when she had finished. "Sing it again. Aw, go on. You do it just right. It's great."

His hand slipped to hers and gathered it in, and as she sang again she felt the tide of his strength flood warmly through her.
“Look at 'em holdin' hands,” Bert jeered. “Just a-holdin' hands like they was afraid. Look at Mary an' me. Come on an' kick in, you cold-feets. Get together. If you don't, it'll look suspicious. I got my suspicions already. You're framin' somethin' up.”

There was no mistaking his innuendo, and Saxon felt her cheeks flaming.

“Get onto yourself, Bert,” Billy reproofed.

“Shut up!” Mary added the weight of her indignation. “You're awfully raw, Bert Wanhope, an' I won't have anything more to do with you—there!”

She withdrew her arms and shoved him away, only to receive him forgivingly half a dozen seconds afterward.

“Come on, the four of us,” Bert went on irrepresibly. “The night's young. Let's make a time of it—Pabst's Café first, and then some. What you say, Bill? What you say, Saxon? Mary's game.”

Saxon waited and wondered, half sick with apprehension of this man beside her whom she had known so short a time.

“Nope,” he said slowly. “I gotta get up to a hard day's work to-morrow, and I guess the girls has got to, too.”

Saxon forgave him his tone-deafness. Here was the kind of man she always had known existed. It was for some such man that she had waited. She was twenty-two, and her first marriage offer had come when she was sixteen. The last had occurred only the month before, from the foreman of the washing-room, and he had been good and kind, but not young. But this one beside her—he was strong and kind and good, and young. She was too young herself not to desire youth. There would have been rest from fancy starch with the foreman, but
there would have been no warmth. But this man beside her. . . . She caught herself on the verge involuntarily of pressing his hand that held hers.

“No, Bert, don’t tease; he’s right,” Mary was saying. “We’ve got to get some sleep. It’s fancy starch to-morrow, and all day on our feet.”

It came to Saxon with a chill pang that she was surely older than Billy. She stole glances at the smoothness of his face, and the essential boyishness of him, so much desired, shocked her. Of course he would marry some girl years younger than himself, than herself. How old was he? Could it be that he was too young for her? As he seemed to grow inaccessible, she was drawn toward him more compellingly. He was so strong, so gentle. She lived over the events of the day. There was no flaw there. He had considered her and Mary, always. And he had torn the programme up and danced only with her. Surely he had liked her, or he would not have done it.

She slightly moved her hand in his and felt the harsh contact of his teamster callouses. The sensation was exquisite. He, too, moved his hand, to accommodate the shift of hers, and she waited fearfully. She did not want him to prove like other men, and she could have hated him had he dared to take advantage of that slight movement of her fingers and put his arm around her. He did not, and she flamed toward him. There was fineness in him. He was neither rattle-brained, like Bert, nor coarse like other men she had encountered. For she had had experiences, not nice, and she had been made to suffer by the lack of what was termed chivalry, though she, in turn, lacked that word to describe what she divined and desired.

And he was a prizefighter. The thought of it almost
made her gasp. Yet he answered not at all to her conception of a prizefighter. But, then, he wasn't a prizefighter. He had said he was not. She resolved to ask him about it some time if... if he took her out again. Yet there was little doubt of that, for when a man danced with one girl a whole day he did not drop her immediately. Almost she hoped that he was a prizefighter. There was a delicious tickle of wickedness about it. Prizefighters were such terrible and mysterious men. In so far as they were out of the ordinary and were not mere common workingmen such as carpenters and laundrymen, they represented romance. Power also they represented. They did not work for bosses, but spectacularly and magnificently, with their own might, grappled with the great world and wrung splendid living from its reluctant hands. Some of them even owned automobiles and travelled with a retinue of trainers and servants. Perhaps it had been only Billy's modesty that made him say he had quit fighting. And yet, there were the callouses on his hands. That showed he had quit.

CHAPTER VI.

They said good-bye at the gate. Billy betrayed awkwardness that was sweet to Saxon. He was not one of the take-it-for-granted young men. There was a pause, while she feigned desire to go into the house, yet waited in secret eagerness for the words she wanted him to say.

"When am I goin' to see you again?" he asked, holding her hand in his.

She laughed consentingly.

"I live 'way up in East Oakland," he explained. "You know there's where the stable is, an' most of our
teamimg is done in that section, so I don't knock around
don this way much. But, say—-" His hand tightened
on hers. "We just gotta dance together some more. I'll
tell you, the Orindore Club has its dance Wednesday.
If you haven't a date—have you?"
"No," she said.
"Then Wednesday. What time'll I come for you?"
And when they had arranged the details, and he had
agreed that she should dance some of the dances with
the other fellows, and said good night again, his hand
closed more tightly on hers and drew her toward him.
She resisted slightly, but honestly. It was the custom,
but she felt she ought not for fear he might misunder-
stand. And yet she wanted to kiss him as she had never
wanted to kiss a man. When it came, her face upturned
to his, she realised that on his part it was an honest kiss.
There hinted nothing behind it. Rugged and kind as
himself, it was virginal almost, and betrayed no long
practice in the art of saying good-bye. All men were
not brutes after all, was her thought.
"Good night," she murmured; the gate screeched
under her hand; and she hurried along the narrow walk
that led around to the corner of the house.
"Wednesday," he called softly.
"Wednesday," she answered.
But in the shadow of the narrow alley between the
two houses she stood still and pleased in the ring of his
footfalls down the cement sidewalk. Not until they had
quite died away did she go on. She crept up the back
stairs and across the kitchen to her room, registering her
thanksgiving that Sarah was asleep.
She lighted the gas, and, as she removed the little
velvet hat, she felt her lips still tingling with the kiss. Yet
it had meant nothing. It was the way of the young men. They all did it. But their good-night kisses had never tingled, while this one tingled in her brain as well as on her lips. What was it? What did it mean? With a sudden impulse she looked at herself in the glass. The eyes were happy and bright. The colour that tinted her cheeks so easily was in them and glowing. It was a pretty reflection, and she smiled, partly in joy, partly in appreciation, and the smile grew at sight of the even rows of strong white teeth. Why shouldn't Billy like that face? was her unvoiced query. Other men had liked it. Other men did like it. Even the other girls admitted she was a good-looker. Charley Long certainly liked it from the way he made life miserable for her.

She glanced aside to the rim of the looking-glass where his photograph was wedged, shuddered, and made a moue of distaste. There was cruelty in those eyes, and brutishness. He was a brute. For a year, now, he had bullied her. Other fellows were afraid to go with her. He warned them off. She had been forced into almost slavery to his attentions. She remembered the young bookkeeper at the laundry—not a workingman, but a soft-handed, soft-voiced gentleman—whom Charley had beaten up at the corner because he had been bold enough to come to take her to the theatre. And she had been helpless. For his own sake she had never dared accept another invitation to go out with him.

And now, Wednesday night, she was going with Billy. Billy! Her heart leaped. There would be trouble, but Billy would save her from him. She'd like to see him try and beat Billy up.

With a quick movement, she jerked the photograph from its niche and threw it face down upon the chest of
drawers. It fell beside a small square case of dark and tarnished leather. With a feeling as of profanation she again seized the offending photograph and flung it across the room into a corner. At the same time she picked up the leather case. Springing it open, she gazed at the daguerreotype of a worn little woman with steady grey eyes and a hopeful, pathetic mouth. Opposite, on the velvet lining, done in gold lettering, was, CARLTON FROM DAISY. She read it reverently, for it represented the father she had never known, and the mother she had so little known, though she could never forget that those wise sad eyes were grey.

Despite lack of conventional religion, Saxon's nature was deeply religious. Her thoughts of God were vague and nebulous, and there she was frankly puzzled. She could not vision God. Here, in the daguerreotype, was the concrete; much she had grasped from it, and always there seemed an infinite more to grasp. She did not go to church. This was her high altar and holy of holies. She came to it in trouble, in loneliness, for counsel, divination, and comfort. In so far as she found herself different from the girls of her acquaintance, she quested here to try to identify her characteristics in the pictured face. Her mother had been different from other women, too. This, forsooth, meant to her what God meant to others. To this she strove to be true, and not to hurt nor vex. And how little she really knew of her mother, and of how much was conjecture and surmise, she was unaware; for it was through many years she had erected this mother-myth.

Yet was it all myth? She resented the doubt with quick jealousy, and, opening the bottom drawer of the chest, drew forth a battered portfolio. Out rolled manu-
scripts, faded and worn, and arose a faint far scent of sweet-kept age. The writing was delicate and curled, with the quaint fineness of half a century before. She read a stanza to herself:

"Sweet as a wind-lute's airy strains
Your gentle muse has learned to sing,
And California's boundless plains
Prolong the soft notes echoing."

She wondered, for the thousandth time, what a wind-lute was; yet much of beauty, much of beyondness, she sensed of this dimly remembered beautiful mother of hers. She communed awhile, then unrolled a second manuscript. "To C. B.," it read. To Carlton Brown, she knew, to her father, a love-poem from her mother. Saxon pondered the opening lines:

"I have stolen away from the crowd in the groves,
Where the nude statues stand, and the leaves point and shiver
At ivy-crowned Bacchus, the Queen of the Loves,
Pandora and Psyche, struck voiceless forever."

This, too, was beyond her. But she breathed the beauty of it. Bacchus, and Pandora and Psyche—talismans to conjure with! But alas! the necromancy was her mother's. Strange, meaningless words that meant so much! Her marvellous mother had known their meaning. Saxon spelled the three words aloud, letter by letter, for she did not dare their pronunciation; and in her consciousness glimmered august connotations, profound and unthinkable. Her mind stumbled and halted on the star-bright and dazzling boundaries of a world beyond her world in which her mother had roamed at will. Again and again, solemnly, she went over the four lines. They were radiance and light to the world, haunted with phantoms of pain and unrest, in which she had her being.
There, hidden among those cryptic singing lines, was the clue. If she could only grasp it, all would be made clear. Of this she was sublimely confident. She would understand Sarah's sharp tongue, her unhappy brother, the cruelty of Charley Long, the justness of the bookkeeper's beating, the day-long, month-long, year-long toil at the ironing-board.

She skipped a stanza that she knew was hopelessly beyond her, and tried again:

"The dusk of the greenhouse is luminous yet
With quivers of opal and tremours of gold;
For the sun is at rest, and the light from the west,
Like delicate wine that is mellow and old,

"Flushes faintly the brow of a naiad that stands
In the spray of a fountain, whose seed-amethysts
Tremble lightly a moment on bosom and hands,
Then drip in their basin from bosom and wrists."

"It's beautiful, just beautiful," she sighed. And then, appalled at the length of all the poem, at the volume of the mystery, she rolled the manuscript and put it away. Again she dipped in the drawer, seeking the clue among the cherished fragments of her mother's hidden soul.

This time it was a small package, wrapped in tissue paper and tied with ribbon. She opened it carefully, with the deep gravity and circumstance of a priest before an altar. Appeared a little red satin Spanish girdle, whaleboned like a tiny corset, pointed, the pioneer finery of a frontier woman who had crossed the plains. It was hand-made after the California-Spanish model of forgotten days. The very whalebone had been home-shaped of the raw material from the whaleships traded for in hides and tallow. The black lace trimming her mother had made.
The triple edging of black velvet strips—her mother's hands had sewn the stitches.

Saxon dreamed over it in a maze of incoherent thought. This was concrete. This she understood. This she worshipped as man-created gods have been worshipped on less tangible evidence of their sojourn on earth.

Twenty-two inches it measured around. She knew it out of many verifications. She stood up and put it about her waist. This was part of the ritual. It almost met. In places it did meet. Without her dress it would meet everywhere as it had met on her mother. Closest of all, this survival of old California-Ventura days brought Saxon in touch. Hers was her mother's form. Physically, she was like her mother. Her grit, her ability to turn off work that was such an amazement to others, were her mother's. Just so had her mother been an amazement to her generation—her mother, the toy-like creature, the smallest and the youngest of the strapping pioneer brood, who nevertheless had mothered the brood. Always it had been her wisdom that was sought, even by the brothers and sisters a dozen years her senior. Daisy, it was, who had put her tiny foot down and commanded the removal from the fever flatlands of Colusa to the healthy mountains of Ventura; who had backed the savage old Indian-fighter of a father into a corner and fought the entire family that Vila might marry the man of her choice; who had flown in the face of the family and of community morality and demanded the divorce of Laura from her criminally weak husband; and who, on the other hand, had held the branches of the family together when only misunderstanding and weak humanness threatened to drive them apart.

The peacemaker and the warrior! All the old tales trooped before Saxon's eyes. They were sharp with detail,
for she had visioned them many times, though their content was of things she had never seen. So far as details were concerned, they were her own creation, for she had never seen an ox, a wild Indian, nor a prairie schooner. Yet, palpitating and real, shimmering in the sun-flashed dust of ten thousand hoofs, she saw pass, from East to West, across a continent, the great hegira of the land-hungry Anglo-Saxon. It was part and fibre of her. She had been nursed on its traditions and its facts from the lips of those who had taken part. Clearly she saw the long waggon-train, the lean, gaunt men who walked before, the youths goading the lowing oxen that fell and were goaded to their feet to fall again. And through it all, a flying shuttle, weaving the golden dazzling thread of personality, moved the form of her little, indomitable mother, eight years old, and nine ere the great traverse was ended, a necromancer and a law-giver, willing her way, and the way and the willing always good and right.

Saxon saw Punch, the little, rough-coated Skye-terrier with the honest eyes (who had plodded for weary months), gone lame and abandoned; she saw Daisy, the chit of a child, hide Punch in the waggon. She saw the savage old worried father discover the added burden of the several pounds to the dying oxen. She saw his wrath, as he held Punch by the scruff of the neck. And she saw Daisy, between the muzzle of the long-barrelled rifle and the little dog. And she saw Daisy thereafter, through days of alkali and heat, walking, stumbling, in the dust of the waggons, the little sick dog, like a baby, in her arms.

But most vivid of all, Saxon saw the fight at Little Meadow—and Daisy, dressed as for a gala day, in white, a ribbon sash about her waist, ribbons and a round-comb in her hair, in her hands small water-pails, step forth into
the sunshine on the flower-grown open ground from the waggon circle, wheels interlocked, where the wounded screamed their delirium and babbled of flowing fountains, and go on, through the sunshine and the wonder-inhibition of the bullet-dealing Indians, a hundred yards to the waterhole and back again.

Saxon kissed the little, red satin Spanish girdle passionately, and wrapped it up in haste, with dewy eyes, abandoning the mystery and godhead of mother and all the strange enigma of living.

In bed, she projected against her closed eyelids the few rich scenes of her mother that her child-memory retained. It was her favourite way of wooing sleep. She had done it all her life—sunk into the death-blackness of sleep with her mother limned to the last on her fading consciousness. But this mother was not the Daisy of the plains nor of the daguerreotype. They had been before Saxon's time. This that she saw nightly was an older mother, broken with insomnia and brave with sorrow, who crept, always crept, a pale, frail creature, gentle and unfaltering, dying from lack of sleep, living by will, and by will refraining from going mad, who, nevertheless, could not will sleep, and whom not even the whole tribe of doctors could make sleep. Crept—always she crept, about the house, from weary bed to weary chair and back again through long days and weeks of torment, never complaining, though her unfailing smile was twisted with pain, and the wise grey eyes, still wise and grey, were grown unutterably larger and profoundly deep.

But on this night Saxon did not win to sleep quickly; the little creeping mother came and went; and in the intervals the face of Billy, with the cloud-drifted, sullen, handsome eyes, burned against her eyelids. And once
again, as sleep welled up to smother her, she put to herself the question: *Is this the man?*

**CHAPTER VII.**

The work in the ironing-room slipped off, but the three days until Wednesday night were very long. She hummed over the fancy starch that flew under the iron at an astounding rate.

"I can't see how you do it," Mary admired. "You'll make thirteen or fourteen this week at that rate."

Saxon laughed, and in the steam from the iron she saw dancing golden letters that spelled *Wednesday*.

"What do you think of Billy?" Mary asked.

"I like him," was the frank answer.

"Well, don't let it go farther than that."

"I will if I want to," Saxon retorted gaily.

"Better not," came the warning. "You'll only make trouble for yourself. He ain't marryin'. Many a girl's found that out. They just throw themselves at his head, too."

"I'm not going to throw myself at him, or any other man."

"Just thought I'd tell you," Mary concluded. "A word to the wise."

Saxon had become grave.

"He's not . . . not . . ." she began, then looked the significance of the question she could not complete.

"Oh, nothin' like that—though there's nothin' to stop him. He's straight, all right, all right. But he just won't fall for anything in skirts. He dances, an' runs around, an' has a good time, an' beyond that—nitsky. A lot of 'em's got fooled on him. I bet you there's a dozen girls
in love with him right now. An' he just goes on turnin' 'em down. There was Lily Sanderson—you know her. You seen her at that Slavonic picnic last summer at Shellmound—that tall, nice-lookin' blonde that was with Butch Willows?"

"Yes, I remember her," Saxon said. "What about her?"

"Well, she'd been runnin' with Butch Willows pretty steady, an' just because she could dance, Billy dances a lot with her. Butch ain't afraid of nothin'. He wades right in for a showdown, an' nails Billy outside, before everybody, an' reads the riot act. An' Billy listens in that slow, sleepy way of his, an' Butch gets hotter an' hotter, an' everybody expects a scrap.

"An' then Billy says to Butch, 'Are you done?' 'Yes,' Butch says; 'I've said my say, an' what are you goin' to do about it?' An' Billy says—an' what d'ye think he said, with everybody lookin' on an' Butch with blood in his eye? Well, he said, 'I guess nothin', Butch.' Just like that. Butch was that surprised you could a' knocked him over with a feather. 'An' never dance with her no more?' he says. 'Not if you say I can't, Butch,' Billy says. Just like that.

"Well, you know, any other man to take water the way he did from Butch—why, everybody'd despise him. But not Billy. You see, he can afford to. He's got a rep as a fighter, an' when he just stood back an' let Butch have his way, everybody knew he wasn't scared, or backin' down, or anything. He didn't care a rap for Lily Sanderson, that was all, an' anybody could see she was just crazy after him."

The telling of this episode caused Saxon no little worry. Hers was the average woman's pride, but in the matter
of man-conquering prowess she was not unduly conceited. Billy had enjoyed her dancing, and she wondered if that were all. If Charley Long bullied up to him would he let her go as he had let Lily Sanderson go? He was not a marrying man; nor could Saxon blind her eyes to the fact that he was eminently marriageable. No wonder the girls ran after him. And he was a man-subduer as well as a woman-subduer. Men liked him. Bert Wanhope seemed actually to love him. She remembered the Butchertown tough in the dining-room at Weasel Park who had come over to the table to apologise, and the Irishman at the tug-of-war who had abandoned all thought of fighting with him the moment he learned his identity.

A very much spoiled young man was a thought that flitted frequently through Saxon’s mind; and each time she condemned it as ungenerous. He was gentle in that tantalising slow way of his. Despite his strength, he did not walk rough-shod over others. There was the affair with Lily Sanderson. Saxon analysed it again and again. He had not cared for the girl, and he had immediately stepped from between her and Butch. It was just the thing that Bert, out of sheer wickedness and love of trouble, would not have done. There would have been a fight, hard feelings, Butch turned into an enemy, and nothing profited to Lily. But Billy had done the right thing—done it slowly and imperturbably and with the least hurt to everybody. All of which made him more desirable to Saxon and less possible.

She bought another pair of silk stockings that she had hesitated at for weeks, and on Tuesday night sewed and drowsed wearily over a new shirtwaist and earned complaint from Sarah concerning her extravagant use of gas. Wednesday night, at the Orindore dance, was not all
undiluted pleasure. It was shameless the way the girls made up to Billy, and, at times, Saxon found his easy consideration for them almost irritating. Yet she was compelled to acknowledge to herself that he hurt none of the other fellows’ feelings in the way the girls hurt hers. They all but asked him outright to dance with them, and little of their open pursuit of him escaped her eyes. She resolved that she would not be guilty of throwing herself at him, and withheld dance after dance, and yet was secretly and thrillingly aware that she was pursuing the right tactics. She deliberately demonstrated that she was desirable to other men, as he involuntarily demonstrated his own desirableness to the women.

Her happiness came when he coolly overrode her objections and insisted on two dances more than she had allotted him. And she was pleased, as well as angered, when she chanced to overhear two of the strapping young cannery girls. ——“The way that little sawed-off is monopolisin’ him,” said one. And the other: “You’d think she might have the good taste to run after somebody of her own age.” “Cradle-snatcher,” was the final sting that sent the angry blood into Saxon’s cheeks as the two girls moved away, unaware that they had been overheard.

Billy saw her home, kissed her at the gate, and got her consent to go with him to the dance at Germania Hall on Friday night.

“I wasn’t thinkin’ of goin’,” he said. “But if you’ll say the word . . . Bert’s goin’ to be there.”

Next day, at the ironing boards, Mary told her that she and Bert were dated for Germania Hall.

“Are you goin’?” Mary asked.
Saxon nodded.

“Billy Roberts?”
The nod was repeated, and Mary, with suspended iron, gave her a long and curious look.
"Say, an' what if Charley Long butts in?"
Saxon shrugged her shoulders.
They ironed swiftly and silently for a quarter of an hour.
"Well," Mary decided, "if he does butt in maybe he'll get his. I'd like to see him get it—the big stiff! It all depends how Billy feels—about you, I mean."
"I'm no Lily Sanderson," Saxon answered indignantly. "I'll never give Billy Roberts a chance to turn me down."
"You will, if Charley Long butts in. Take it from me, Saxon, he ain't no gentleman. Look what he done to Mr. Moody. That was a awful beatin'. An' Mr. Moody only a quiet little man that wouldn't harm a fly. Well, he won't find Billy Roberts a sissy by a long shot."
That night, outside the laundry entrance, Saxon found Charley Long waiting. As he stepped forward to greet her and walk alongside, she felt the sickening palpitation that he had so thoroughly taught her to know. The blood ebbed from her face with the apprehension and fear his appearance caused. She was afraid of the rough bulk of the man; of the heavy brown eyes, dominant and confident; of the big blacksmith-hands and the thick strong fingers with the hair-pads on the backs to every first joint. He was unlovely to the eye, and he was unlovely to all her finer sensibilities. It was not his strength itself, but the quality of it and the misuse of it, that affronted her. The beating he had given the gentle Mr. Moody had meant half-hours of horror to her afterward. Always did the memory of it come to her accompanied by a shudder. And yet, without shock, she had seen Billy fight at Weasel Park in the same primitive man-animal way. But it had
been different. She recognised, but could not analyse, the difference. She was aware only of the brutishness of this man's hands and mind.

"You're lookin' white an' all beat to a frazzle," he was saying. "Why don't you cut the work? You got to some time, anyway. You can't lose me, kid."

"I wish I could," she replied.

He laughed with harsh joviality. "Nothin' to it, Saxon. You're just cut out to be Mrs. Long, an' you're sure goin' to be."

"I wish I was as certain about all things as you are," she said with mild sarcasm that missed.

"Take it from me," he went on, "there's just one thing you can be certain of—an' that is that I am certain." He was pleased with the cleverness of his idea and laughed approvingly. "When I go after anything I get it, an' if anything gets in between it gets hurt. D'ye get that? It's me for you, an' that's all there is to it, so you might as well make up your mind and go to workin' in my home instead of the laundry. Why, it's a snap. There wouldn't be much to do. I make good money, an' you wouldn't want for anything. You know, I just washed up from work an' skinned over here to tell it to you once more, so you wouldn't forget. I ain't ate yet, an' that shows how much I think of you."

"You'd better go and eat then," she advised, though she knew the futility of attempting to get rid of him.

She scarcely heard what he said. It had come upon her suddenly that she was very tired and very small and very weak alongside this colossus of a man. Would he dog her always? she asked despairingly, and seemed to glimpse a vision of all her future life stretched out before
her, with always the form and face of the burly blacksmith pursuing her.

"Come on, kid, an' kick in," he continued. "It's the good old summer time, an' that's the time to get married."

"But I'm not going to marry you," she protested. "I've told you a thousand times already."

"Aw, forget it. You want to get them ideas out of your think-box. Of course, you're goin' to marry me. It's a pipe. An' I'll tell you another pipe. You an' me's goin' acrost to Frisco Friday night. There's goin' to be big doin's with the Horseshoers."

"Only I'm not," she contradicted.

"Oh, yes, you are," he asserted with absolute assurance. "We'll catch the last boat back, an' you'll have one fine time. An' I'll put you next to some of the good dancers. Oh, I ain't a pincher, an' I know you like dancin'."

"But I tell you I can't," she reiterated.

He shot a glance of suspicion at her from under the black thatch of brows that met above his nose and were as one brow.

"Why can't you?"

"A date," she said.

"Who's the bloke?"

"None of your business, Charley Long. I've got a date, that's all."

"I'll make it my business. Remember that lah-de-dah bookkeeper rummy? Well, just keep on rememberin' him an' what he got."

"I wish you'd leave me alone," she pleaded resentfully. "Can't you be kind just for once?"

The blacksmith laughed unpleasantly.

The Valley of the Moon. I.
"If any rummy thinks he can butt in on you an' me, he'll learn different, an' I'm the little boy that'll learn 'm. ——Friday night, eh? Where?"

"I won't tell you."

"Where?" he repeated.

Her lips were drawn in tight silence, and in her cheeks were little angry spots of blood.

"Huh!—as if I couldn't guess! Germania Hall. Well, I'll be there, an' I'll take you home afterward. D'ye get that? An' you'd better tell the rummy to beat it unless you want to see 'm get his face hurt."

Saxon, hurt as a prideful woman can be hurt by cavalier treatment, was tempted to cry out the name and prowess of her new-found protector. And then came fear. This was a big man, and Billy was only a boy. That was the way he affected her. She remembered her first impression of his hands and glanced quickly at the hands of the man beside her. They seemed twice as large as Billy's, and the mats of hair seemed to advertise a terrible strength. No, Billy could not fight this big brute. He must not. And then to Saxon came a wicked little hope that by the mysterious and unthinkable ability that prize-fighters possessed, Billy might be able to whip this bully and rid her of him. With the next glance doubt came again, for her eye dwelt on the blacksmith's broad shoulders, the cloth of the coat muscle-wrinkled and the sleeves bulging above the biceps.

"If you lay a hand on anybody I'm going with again——" she began.

"Why, they'll get hurt, of course," Long grinned. "And they'll deserve it, too. Any rummy that comes between a fellow an' his girl ought to get hurt."
"But I'm not your girl, and all your saying so doesn't make it so."

"That's right, get mad," he approved. "I like you for that, too. You've got spunk an' fight. I like to see it. It's what a man needs in his wife—and not these fat cows of women. They're the dead ones. Now you're a live one, all wool, a yard long and a yard wide."

She stopped before the house and put her hand on the gate.

"Good-bye," she said. "I'm going in."

"Come on out afterward for a run to Idora Park," he suggested.

"No, I'm not feeling good, and I'm going straight to bed as soon as I eat supper."

"Huh!" he sneered. "Gettin' in shape for the fling to-morrow night, eh?"

With an impatient movement she opened the gate and stepped inside.

"I've given it to you straight," he went on. "If you don't go with me to-morrow night somebody'll get hurt."

"I hope it will be you," she cried vindictively.

He laughed as he threw his head back, stretched his big chest, and half-lifted his heavy arms. The action reminded her disgustingly of a great ape she had once seen in a circus.

"Well, good-bye," he said. "See you to-morrow night at Germania Hall."

"I haven't told you it was Germania Hall."

"And you haven't told me it wasn't. All the same, I'll be there. And I'll take you home, too. Be sure an' keep plenty of round dances open for me. That's right. Get mad. It makes you look fine."
CHAPTER VIII.

The music stopped at the end of the waltz, leaving Billy and Saxon at the big entrance doorway of the ballroom. Her hand rested lightly on his arm, and they were promenading on to find seats, when Charley Long, evidently just arrived, thrust his way in front of them.

"So you're the buttinsky, eh?" he demanded, his face malignant with passion and menace.

"Who?—me?" Billy queried gently. "Some mistake, sport. I never butt in."

"You're goin' to get your head beaten off if you don't make yourself scarce pretty lively."

"I wouldn't want that to happen for the world," Billy drawled. "Come on, Saxon. This neighbourhood's unhealthy for us."

He started to go on with her, but Long thrust in front again.

"You're too fresh to keep, young fellow," he snarled. "You need saltin' down. D'ye get me?"

Billy scratched his head, on his face exaggerated puzzlement.

"No, I don't get you," he said. "Now just what was it you said?"

But the big blacksmith turned contemptuously away from him to Saxon.

"Come here, you. Let's see your programme."

"Do you want to dance with him?" Billy asked. She shook her head.
“Sorry, sport, nothin’ doin’,” Billy said, again making to start on.

For the third time the blacksmith blocked the way.

“Get off your foot,” said Billy. “You’re standin’ on it.”

Long all but sprang upon him, his hands clenched, one arm just starting back for the punch while at the same instant shoulders and chest were coming forward. But he restrained himself at sight of Billy’s unstartled body and cold and cloudy eyes. He had made no move of mind or muscle. It was as if he were unaware of the threatened attack. All of which constituted a new thing in Long’s experience.

“Maybe you don’t know who I am,” he bullied.

“Yep, I do,” Billy answered airily. “You’re a record-breaker at rough-housin’.” (Here Long’s face showed pleasure.) “You ought to have the Police Gazette diamond belt for rough-housin’ baby buggies. I guess there ain’t a one you’re afraid to tackle.”

“Leave’em alone, Charley,” advised one of the young men who had crowded about them. “He’s Bill Roberts, the fighter. You know’em. Big Bill.”

“I don’t care if he’s Jim Jeffries. He can’t butt in on me this way.”

Nevertheless it was noticeable, even to Saxon, that the fire had gone out of his fierceness. Billy’s name seemed to have a quieting effect on obstreperous males.

“Do you know him?” Billy asked her.

She signified yes with her eyes, though it seemed she must cry out a thousand things against this man who so steadfastly persecuted her. Billy turned to the blacksmith.

“Look here, sport, you don’t want trouble with me. I’ve got your number. Besides, what do we want to fight for? Hasn’t she got a say so in the matter?”
"No, she hasn't. This is my affair an' yourn."
Billy shook his head slowly. "No; you're in wrong. I think she has a say in the matter."
"Well, say it then," Long snarled at Saxon. "Who're you goin' to go with?—me or him? Let's get it settled."
For reply, Saxon reached her free hand over to the hand that rested on Billy's arm.
"Nuff said," was Billy's remark.
Long glared at Saxon, then transferred the glare to her protector.
"I've a good mind to mix it with you anyway," Long gritted through his teeth.
Saxon was elated as they started to move away. Lily Sanderson's fate had not been hers, and her wonderful man-boy, without the threat of a blow, slow of speech and imperturbable, had conquered the big blacksmith.
"He's forced himself upon me all the time," she whispered to Billy. "He's tried to run me, and beaten up every man that came near me. I never want to see him again."
Billy halted immediately. Long, who was reluctantly moving to get out of the way, also halted.
"She says she don't want anything more to do with you," Billy said to him. "An' what she says goes. If I get a whisper any time that you've been botherin' her, I'll attend to your case. D'ye get that?"
Long glowered and remained silent.
"D'ye get that?" Billy repeated, more imperatively.
A growl of assent came from the blacksmith.
"All right, then. See you remember it. An' now get outa the way or I'll walk over you."
Long slunk back, muttering inarticulate threats, and Saxon moved on as in a dream. Charley Long had taken
water. He had been afraid of this smooth-skinned, blue-eyed boy. She was quit of him—something no other man had dared attempt for her. And Billy had liked her better than Lily Sanderson.

Twice Saxon tried to tell Billy the details of her acquaintance with Long, but each time was put off.

"I don't care a rap about it," Billy said the second time. "You're here, ain't you?"

But she insisted, and when, worked up and angry by the recital, she had finished, he patted her hand soothingly.

"It's all right, Saxon," he said. "He's just a big stiff. I took his measure as soon as I looked at him. He won't bother you again. I know his kind. He's a dog. Rough-house? He couldn't rough-house a milk waggon."

"But how do you do it?" she asked breathlessly. "Why are men so afraid of you? You're just wonderful."

He smiled in an embarrassed way and changed the subject.

"Say," he said, "I like your teeth. They're so white an' regular, an' not big, an' not dinky little baby's teeth either. They're... they're just right, an' they fit you. I never seen such fine teeth on a girl yet. D'ye know, honest, they kind of make me hungry when I look at 'em. They're good enough to eat."

At midnight, leaving the insatiable Bert and Mary still dancing, Billy and Saxon started for home. It was on his suggestion that they left early, and he felt called upon to explain.

"It's one thing the fightin' game's taught me," he said. "To take care of myself. A fellow can't work all day and dance all night and keep in condition. It's the same way with drinkin'—an' not that I'm a little tin angel. I
know what it is. I've been soused to the guards an' all the rest of it. I like my beer—big schooners of it; but I don't drink all I want of it. I've tried, but it don't pay. Take that big stiff to-night that butted in on us. He ought to had my number. He's a dog anyway, but besides he had beer bloat. I sized that up the first rattle, an' that's the difference about who takes the other fellow's number. Condition, that's what it is."

"But he is so big," Saxon protested. "Why, his fists are twice as big as yours."

"That don't mean anything. What counts is what's behind the fists. He'd turn loose like a buckin' bronco. If I couldn't drop him at the start, all I'd do is to keep away, smother up, an' wait. An' all of a sudden he'd blow up—go all to pieces, you know, wind, heart, everything, and then I'd have him where I wanted him. And the point is he knows it, too."

"You're the first prizefighter I ever knew," Saxon said, after a pause.

"I'm not any more," he disclaimed hastily. "That's one thing the fightin' game taught me—to leave it alone. It don't pay. A fellow trains as fine as silk—till he's all silk, his skin, everything, and he's fit to live for a hundred years; an' then he climbs through the ropes for a hard twenty rounds with some tough customer that's just as good as he is, and in those twenty rounds he frazzles out all his silk an' blows in a year of his life. Yes, sometimes he blows in five years of it, or cuts it in half, or uses up all of it. I've watched 'em. I've seen fellows strong as bulls fight a hard battle and die inside the year of consumption, or kidney disease, or anything else. Now what's the good of it? Money can't buy what they throw away.
That's why I quit the game and went back to drivin' team. I got my silk, an' I'm goin' to keep it, that's all."

"It must make you feel proud to know you are the master of other men," she said softly, aware herself of pride in the strength and skill of him.

"It does," he admitted frankly. "I'm glad I went into the game—just as glad as I am that I pulled out of it. . . . Yep, it's taught me a lot—to keep my eyes open an' my head cool. Oh, I've got a temper, a peach of a temper. I get scared of myself sometimes. I used to be always breakin' loose. But the fightin' taught me to keep down the steam an' not do things I'd be sorry for afterward."

"Why, you're the sweetest, easiest tempered man I know," she interjected.

"Don't you believe it. Just watch me, and sometime you'll see me break out that bad that I won't know what I'm doin' myself. Oh, I'm a holy terror when I get started!"

This tacit promise of continued acquaintance gave Saxon a little joy-thrill.

"Say," he said, as they neared her neighbourhood, "what are you doin' next Sunday?"

"Nothing. No plans at all."

"Well, suppose you an' me go buggy-riding all day out in the hills?"

She did not answer immediately, and for the moment she was seeing the nightmare vision of her last buggy-ride; of her fear and her leap from the buggy; and of the long miles and the stumbling through the darkness in thin-soled shoes that bruised her feet on every rock. And then it came to her with a great swell of joy that this man beside her was not such a man.
"I love horses," she said. "I almost love them better than I do dancing, only I don't know anything about them. My father rode a great roan war-horse. He was a captain of cavalry, you know. I never saw him, but somehow I always can see him on that big horse, with a sash around his waist and his sword at his side. My brother George has the sword now, but Tom—he's the brother I live with—says it is mine because it wasn't his father's. You see, they're only my half-brothers. I was the only child by my mother's second marriage. That was her real marriage—her love-marriage, I mean."

Saxon ceased abruptly, embarrassed by her own garrulity; and yet the impulse was strong to tell this young man all about herself, and it seemed to her that these far memories were a large part of her.

"Go on an' tell me about it," Billy urged. "I like to hear about the old people of the old days. My people was along in there, too, an' somehow I think it was a better world to live in than now. Things was more sensible and natural. I don't exactly say what I mean. But it's like this: I don't understand life to-day. There's the labour unions an' employers' associations, an' strikes, an' hard times, an' huntin' for jobs, an' all the rest. Things wasn't like that in the old days. Everybody farmed, an' shot their meat, an' got enough to eat, an' took care of their old folks. But now it's all a mix-up that I can't understand. Mebbe I'm a fool, I don't know. But, anyway, go ahead an' tell us about your mother."

"Well, you see, when she was only a young woman she and Captain Brown fell in love. He was a soldier then, before the war. And he was ordered East for the war when she was away nursing her sister Laura. And
then came the news that he was killed at Shiloh. And she married a man who had loved her for years and years. He was a boy in the same waggon-train coming across the plains. She liked him, but she didn’t love him. And afterward came the news that my father wasn’t killed after all. So it made her very sad, but it did not spoil her life. She was a good mother and a good wife and all that, but she was always sad, and sweet, and gentle, and I think her voice was the most beautiful in the world.”

“She was game, all right,” Billy approved.

“And my father never married. He loved her all the time. I’ve got a lovely poem home that she wrote to him. It’s just wonderful, and it sings like music. Well, long, long afterward her husband died, and then she and my father made their love marriage. They didn’t get married until 1882, and she was pretty well along.”

More she told him, as they stood by the gate, and Saxon tried to think that the good-bye kiss was a trifle longer than just ordinary.

“How about nine o’clock?” he queried across the gate. “Don’t bother about lunch or anything. I’ll fix all that up. You just be ready at nine.”

CHAPTER IX.

SUNDAY morning Saxon was beforehand in getting ready, and on her return to the kitchen from her second journey to peep through the front windows, Sarah began her customary attack.

“It’s a shame an’ a disgrace the way some people can afford silk stockings,” she began. “Look at me, a-toilin’ and a-stewin’ day an’ night, and I never get silk stockings —nor shoes, three pairs of them all at one time. But
there's a just God in heaven, and there'll be some mighty big surprises for some when the end comes and folks get passed out what's comin' to them.”

Tom, smoking his pipe and cuddling his youngest-born on his knees, dropped an eyelid surreptitiously on his cheek in token that Sarah was in a tantrum. Saxon devoted herself to tying a ribbon in the hair of one of the little girls. Sarah lumpered heavily about the kitchen, washing and putting away the breakfast dishes. She straightened her back from the sink with a groan and glared at Saxon with fresh hostility.

“You ain't sayin' anything, eh? An' why don't you? Because I guess you still got some natural shame in you—a-runnin' with a prizefighter. Oh, I've heard about your goings-on with Bill Roberts. A nice specimen he is. But just you wait till Charley Long gets his hands on him, that's all.”

“Oh, I don't know,” Tom intervened. “Bill Roberts is a pretty good boy from what I hear.”

Saxon smiled with superior knowledge, and Sarah, catching her, was infuriated.

“Why don't you marry Charley Long? He's crazy for you, and he ain't a drinkin' man.”

“I guess he gets outside his share of beer,” Saxon retorted.

“That's right,” her brother supplemented. “An' I know for a fact that he keeps a keg in the house all the time as well.”

“Maybe you've been guzzling from it,” Sarah snapped.

“Maybe I have,” Tom said, wiping his mouth reminiscently with the back of his hand.

“Well, he can afford to keep a keg in the house if he wants to,” she returned to the attack, which now was
directed at her husband as well. "He pays his bills, and he certainly makes good money—better than most men, anyway."

"An' he hasn't a wife an' children to watch out for," Tom said.

"Nor everlastin' dues to unions that don't do him no good."

"Oh, yes, he has," Tom urged genially. "Blamed little he'd work in that shop, or any other shop in Oakland, if he didn't keep in good standing with the Blacksmiths. You don't understand labour conditions, Sarah. The unions have got to stick, if the men aren't to starve to death."

"Oh, of course not," Sarah sniffed. "I don't understand anything. I ain't got a mind. I'm a fool, an' you tell me so right before the children." She turned savagely on her eldest, who startled and shrank away. "Willy, your mother is a fool. Do you get that? Your father says she's a fool—says it right before her face and yourn. She's just a plain fool. Next he'll be sayin' she's crazy an' puttin' her away in the asylum. An' how will you like that, Willie? How will you like to see your mother in a strait-jacket an' a padded cell, shut out from the light of the sun an' beaten like a nigger before the war, Willie, beaten an' clubbed like a regular black nigger? That's the kind of a father you've got, Willie. Think of it, Willie, in a padded cell, the mother that bore you, with the lunatics screechin' an' screamin' all around, an' the quick-lime eatin' into the dead bodies of them that's beaten to death by the cruel wardens—"

She continued tirelessly, painting with pessimistic strokes the growing black future her husband was meditating for her, while the boy, fearful of some vague, in-
comprehensible catastrophe, began to weep silently, with a pendulous, trembling underlip. Saxon, for the moment, lost control of herself.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, can't we be together five minutes without quarrelling?" she blazed.

Sarah broke off from asylum conjurations and turned upon her sister-in-law.

"Who's quarrelling? Can't I open my head without bein' jumped on by the two of you?"

Saxon shrugged her shoulders despairingly, and Sarah swung about on her husband.

"Seein' you love your sister so much better than your wife, why did you want to marry me, that's borne your children for you, an' slaved for you, an' toiled for you, an' worked her fingernails off for you, with no thanks, an' insultin' me before the children, an' sayin' I'm crazy to their faces. An' what have you ever did for me? That's what I want to know—me, that's cooked for you, an' washed your stinkin' clothes, and fixed your socks, an' sat up nights with your brats when they was ailin'. Look at that!"

She thrust out a shapeless, swollen foot, encased in a monstrous, untended shoe, the dry, raw leather of which showed white on the edges of bulging cracks.

"Look at that! That's what I say. Look at that!" Her voice was persistently rising and at the same time growing throaty. "The only shoes I got. Me. Your wife. Ain't you ashamed? Where are my three pairs? Look at that stockin'."

Speech failed her, and she sat down suddenly on a chair at the table, glaring unutterable malevolence and misery. She arose with the abrupt stiffness of an automaton, poured herself a cup of cold coffee, and in the
same jerky way sat down again. As if too hot for her lips, she filled her saucer with the greasy-looking, nondescript fluid, and continued her set glare, her breast rising and falling with staccato, mechanical movement.

"Now, Sarah, be c'am, be c'am," Tom pleaded anxiously.

In response, slowly, with utmost deliberation, as if the destiny of empires rested on the certitude of her act, she turned the saucer of coffee upside down on the table. She lifted her right hand, slowly, hugely, and in the same slow, huge way landed the open palm with a sounding slap on Tom's astounded cheek. Immediately thereafter she raised her voice in the shrill, hoarse, monotonous madness of hysteria, sat down on the floor, and rocked back and forth in the throes of an abysmal grief.

Willie's silent weeping turned to noise, and the two little girls, with the fresh ribbons in their hair, joined him. Tom's face was drawn and white, though the smitten cheek still blazed, and Saxon wanted to put her arms comfortably around him, yet dared not. He bent over his wife.

"Sarah, you ain't feelin' well. Let me put you to bed, and I'll finish tidying up."

"Don't touch me!—don't touch me!" she screamed, jerking violently away from him.

"Take the children out in the yard, Tom, for a walk, anything—get them away," Saxon said. She was sick, and white, and trembling. "Go, Tom, please, please. There's your hat. I'll take care of her. I know just how."

Left to herself, Saxon worked with frantic haste, assuming the calm she did not possess, but which she must impart to the screaming bedlamite upon the floor. The light frame-house leaked the noise hideously, and Saxon
knew that the houses on either side were hearing, and
the street itself and the houses across the street. Her fear
was that Billy should arrive in the midst of it. Further,
she was incensed, violated. Every fibre rebelled, almost
in a nausea; yet she maintained cool control and stroked
Sarah's forehead and hair with slow, soothing movements.
Soon, with one arm around her, she managed to win the
first diminution in the strident, atrocious, unceasing scream.
A few minutes later, sobbing heavily, the elder woman
lay in bed, across her forehead and eyes a wet-pack of
towel for easement of the headache she and Saxon tacitly
accepted as substitute for the brain-storm.

When a clatter of hoofs came down the street and
stopped, Saxon was able to slip to the front door and
wave her hand to Billy. In the kitchen she found Tom
waiting in sad anxiousness.

"It's all right," she said. "Billy Roberts has come,
and I've got to go. You go in and sit beside her for
awhile and maybe she'll go to sleep. But don't rush her.
Let her have her own way. If she'll let you take her
hand, why do it. Try it, anyway. But first of all, as an
opener and just as a matter of course, start wetting the
towel over her eyes."

He was a kindly, easy-going man; but, after the way
of a large percentage of the Western stock, he was un-
demonstrative. He nodded, turned toward the door to
obey, and paused irresolutely. The look he gave back to
Saxon was almost dog-like in gratitude and all-brotherly
in love. She felt it, and in spirit leapt toward it.

"It's all right—everything's all right," she cried hastily.
Tom shook his head.

"No, it ain't. It's a shame, a blamed shame, that's
what it is." He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, I don't care
for myself. But it's for you. You got your life before you yet, little kid sister. You'll get old, and all that means, fast enough. But it's a bad start for a day off. The thing for you to do is to forget all this, and skin out with your fellow, an' have a good time.” In the open door, his hand on the knob to close it after him, he halted a second time. A spasm contracted his brow. “Hell! Think of it! Sarah and I used to go buggy-riding once on a time. And I guess she had her three pairs of shoes, too. Can you beat it?”

In her bedroom Saxon completed her dressing, for an instant stepping upon a chair so as to glimpse critically in the small wall-mirror the hang of her ready-made linen skirt. This, and the jacket, she had altered to fit, and she had double-stitched the seams to achieve the coveted tailored effect. Still on the chair, all in the moment of quick clear-seeing, she drew the skirt tightly back and raised it. The sight was good to her, nor did she under-appraise the lines of the slender ankle above the low tan tie; nor did she under-appraise the delicate yet mature swell of calf outlined in the fresh brown of a new cotton stocking. Down from the chair, she pinned on a firm sailor hat of white straw with a brown ribbon around the crown that matched her ribbon belt. She rubbed her cheeks quickly and fiercely to bring back the colour Sarah had driven out of them, and delayed a moment longer to put on her tan lisle-thread gloves. Once, in the fashion-page of a Sunday supplement, she had read that no lady ever put on her gloves after she left the door.

With a resolute self-grip, as she crossed the parlour and passed the door to Sarah's bedroom, through the thin wood of which came elephantine moanings and low slubberings, she steeled herself to keep the colour in her
cheeks and the brightness in her eyes. And so well did she succeed that Billy never dreamed that the radiant, live young thing, tripping lightly down the steps to him, had just come from a bout with soul-sickening hysteria and madness.

To her, in the bright sun, Billy's blondness was startling. His cheeks, smooth as a girl's, were touched with colour. The blue eyes seemed more cloudily blue than usual, and the crisp, sandy hair hinted more than ever of the pale straw-gold that was not there. Never had she seen him quite so royally young. As he smiled to greet her, with a slow white flash of teeth from between red lips, she caught again the promise of easement and rest. Fresh from the shattering chaos of her sister-in-law's mind, Billy's tremendous calm was especially satisfying, and Saxon mentally laughed to scorn the terrible temper he had charged to himself.

She had been buggy-riding before, but always behind one horse, jaded, and livery, in a top-buggy, heavy and dingy, such as livery stables rent because of sturdy unbreakableness. But here stood two horses, head-tossing and restless, shouting in every high-light glint of their satin, golden-sorrel coats that they had never been rented out in all their glorious young lives. Between them was a pole inconceivably slender, on them were harnesses preposterously string-like and fragile. And Billy belonged here, by elemental right, a part of them and of it, a master-part and a component, along with the spidery-delicate, narrow-boxed, wide- and yellow-wheeled, rubber-tired rig, efficient and capable, as different as he was different from the other men who had taken her out behind stolid, lumbering horses. He held the reins in one hand, yet, with low, steady voice, confident and assuring, held the ner-
vous young animals more by the will and the spirit of him.

It was no time for lingering. With the quick glance and fore-knowledge of a woman, Saxon saw, not merely the curious children clustering about, but the peering of adult faces from open doors and windows, and past window-shades lifted up or held aside. With his free hand, Billy drew back the linen robe and helped her to a place beside him. The high-backed, luxuriously upholstered seat of brown leather gave her a sense of great comfort; yet even greater, it seemed to her, was the nearness and comfort of the man himself and of his body.

"How d'ye like 'em?" he asked, changing the reins to both hands and chirruping the horses, which went out with a jerk in an immediacy of action that was new to her. "They're the boss's, you know. Couldn't rent animals like them. He lets me take them out for exercise sometimes. If they ain't exercised regular they're a handful. ——Look at King, there, prancin'. Some style, eh? Some style! The other one's the real goods, though. Prince is his name. Got to have some bit on him to hold'm. ——Ah! Would you? ——Did you see'm, Saxon? Some horse! Some horse!"

From behind came the admiring cheer of the neighbourhood children, and Saxon, with a sigh of content, knew that the happy day had at last begun.

CHAPTER X.

"I DON'T know horses," Saxon said. "I've never been on one's back, and the only ones I've tried to drive were single, and lame, or almost falling down, or something. But I'm not afraid of horses. I just love them. I was born loving them, I guess."
Billy threw an admiring, appreciative glance at her.

"That's the stuff. That's what I like in a woman—grit. Some of the girls I've had out—well, take it from me, they made me sick. Oh, I'm hep to 'em. Nervous, an' trembly, an' screechy, an' wabbly. I reckon they come out on my account an' not for the ponies. But me for the brave kid that likes the ponies. You're the real goods, Saxon, honest to God you are. Why, I can talk like a streak with you. The rest of 'em make me sick. I'm like a clam. They don't know nothin', an' they're that scared all the time—well, I guess you get me."

"You have to be born to love horses, maybe," she answered. "Maybe it's because I always think of my father on his roan war-horse that makes me love horses. But, anyway, I do. When I was a little girl I was drawing horses all the time. My mother always encouraged me. I've a scrap-book mostly filled with horses I drew when I was little. Do you know, Billy, sometimes I dream I actually own a horse, all my own. And lots of times I dream I'm on a horse's back, or driving him."

"I'll let you drive 'em, after awhile, when they've worked their edge off. They're pullin' now. ——There, put your hands in front of mine—take hold tight. Feel that? Sure you feel it. An' you ain't feelin' it all by a long shot. I don't dast slack, you bein' such a lightweight."

Her eyes sparkled as she felt the apportioned pull of the mouths of the beautiful, live things; and he, looking at her, sparkled with her in her delight.

"What's the good of a woman if she can't keep up with a man?" he broke out enthusiastically.

"People that like the same things always get along best together," she answered, with a triteness that con-
sealed the joy that was hers at being so spontaneously in touch with him.

"Why, Saxon, I've fought battles, good ones, frazzlin' my silk away to beat the band before whisky-soaked, smokin' audiences of rotten fight-fans, that just made me sick clean through. An' them, that couldn't take just one stiff jolt or hook to jaw or stomach, a-cheerin' me an' yellin' for blood. Blood, mind you! An' them without the blood of a shrimp in their bodies. Why, honest, now, I'd sooner fight before an audience of one—you, for instance, or anybody I liked. It'd do me proud. But them sickenin', sap-headed stiffs, with the grit of rabbits and the silk of mangy ki-yi's, a-cheerin' me—me! Can you blame me for quittin' the dirty game? Why, I'd sooner fight before broke-down old plugs of work-horses that's candidates for chicken-meat, than before them rotten bunches of stiffs with nothin' thicker'n water in their veins, an' Contra Costa water at that when the rains is heavy on the hills."

"I... I didn't know prizefighting was like that," she faltered, as she released her hold on the lines and sank back again beside him.

"It ain't the fightin', it's the fight-crowds," he defended with instant jealousy. "Of course, fightin' hurts a young fellow because it frazzles the silk outa him an' all that. But it's the low-lifers in the audience that gets me. Why the good things they say to me, the praise an' that, is insulting. Do you get me? It makes me cheap. Think of it!—booze-guzzlin' stiffs that'd be afraid to mix it with a sick cat, not fit to hold the coat of any decent man, think of them a-standin' up on their hind legs an' yellin' an' cheerin'—me—me!——"
"Ha! ha! What d'ye think of that? Ain't he a rogue?"

A big bulldog, sliding obliquely and silently across the street, unconcerned with the team he was avoiding, had passed so close that Prince, baring his teeth like a stallion, plunged his head down against reins and check in an effort to seize the dog.

"Now he's some fighter, that Prince. An' he's natural. He didn't make that reach just for some low-lifer to yell'm on. He just done it outa pure cussedness and himself. That's clean. That's right. Because it's natural. But them fight-fans! Honest to God, Saxon. . . ."

And Saxon, glimpsing him sidewise, as he watched the horses and their way on the Sunday morning streets, checking them back suddenly and swerving to avoid two boys coasting across street on a toy waggon, saw in him deeps and intensities, all the magic connotations of temperament, the glimmer and hint of rages profound, bleaknesses as cold and far as the stars, savagery as keen as a wolf's and clean as a stallion's, wrath as implacable as a destroying angel's, and youth that was fire and life beyond time and place. She was awed and fascinated, with the hunger of woman bridging the vastness to him, daring to love him with arms and breast that ached to him, murmuring to herself and through all the halls of her soul, "You dear, you dear."

"Honest to God, Saxon," he took up the broken thread, "they's times when I've hated them, when I wanted to jump over the ropes and wade into them, knock-down and dragout, an' show'm what fightin' was. Take that night with Billy Murphy. Billy Murphy!—if you only knew him. My friend. As clean an' game a boy as ever jumped inside the ropes to take the decision.
Him! We went to the Durant School together. We grew up chums. His fight was my fight. My trouble was his trouble. We both took to the fightin' game. They matched us. Not the first time. Twice we'd fought draws. Once the decision was his; once it was mine. The fifth fight of two lovin' men that just loved each other. He's three years older'n me. He's a wife and two or three kids, an' I know them, too. And he's my friend. Get it?

"I'm ten pounds heavier—but with heavyweights that's all right. He can't time an' distance as good as me, an' I can keep set better, too. But he's cleverer an' quicker. I never was quick like him. We both can take punishment, an' we're both two-handed, a wallop in all our fists. I know the kick of his, an' he knows my kick, an we're both real respectful. And we're even-matched. Two draws, and a decision to each. Honest, I ain't any kind of a hunch who's goin' to win, we're that even.

"Now, the fight. ——You ain't squeamish, are you?"

"No, no," she cried. "I'd just love to hear—you are so wonderful."

He took the praise with a clear, unwavering look, and without hint of acknowledgment.

"We go along—six rounds—seven rounds—eight rounds: an' honours even. I've been timin' his rushes an' straight-leftin' him, an' meetin' his duck with a wicked little right upper-cut, an' he's shaken me on the jaw an' walloped my ears till my head's all singin' an' buzzin'. An' everything lovely with both of us, with a noise like a draw decision in sight. Twenty rounds is the distance, you know.

"An' then his bad luck comes. We're just mixin' into a clinch that ain't arrived yet, when he shoots a short hook to my head—his left, an' a real hay-maker if it reaches
my jaw. I make a forward duck, not quick enough, an' he lands bingo on the side of my head. Honest to God, Saxon, it's that heavy I see some stars. But it don't hurt an' ain't serious, that high up where the bone's thick. An' right there he finishes himself, for his bad thumb, which I've known since he first got it as a kid fightin' in the sandlot at Watts-Tract—he smashes that thumb right there, on my hard head, back into the socket with an out-twist, an' all the old cords that'd never got strong gets theirs again. I didn't mean it. A dirty trick, fair in the game, though, to make a guy smash his hand on your head. But not between friends. I couldn't a-done that to Bill Murphy for a million dollars. It was a accident, just because I was slow, because I was born slow.

"The hurt of it! Honest, Saxon, you don't know what hurt is till you've got a old hurt like that hurt again. What can Billy Murphy do but slow down? He's got to. He ain't fightin' two-handed any more. He know's it; I know it; the referee knows it; but nobody else. He goes on a-moving that left of his like it's all right. But it ain't. It's hurtin' him like a knife dug into him. He don't dast strike a real blow with that left of his. But it hurts, any-way. Just to move it or not move it hurts, an' every little dab-feint that I'm too wise to guard, knowin' there's no weight behind, why them little dab-touches on that poor thumb goes right to the heart of him, an' hurts worse than a thousand boils or a thousand knockouts—just hurts all over again, an' worse, each time an' touch.

"Now suppose he an' me was boxin' for fun, out in the back yard, an' he hurts his thumb that way, why we'd have the gloves off in a jiffy an' I'd be putting cold com-presses on that poor thumb of his an' bandagin' it that tight to keep the inflammation down. But no. This is a
fight for fight-fans that's paid their admission for blood, an' blood they're goin' to get. They ain't men. They're wolves.

"He has to go easy, now, an' I ain't a-forcin' him none. I'm all shot to pieces. I don't know what to do. So I slow down, an' the fans get hep to it. 'Why don't you fight?' they begin to yell; 'Fake! Fake!' 'Why don't you kiss'm?' 'Lovin' cup for yours, Bill Roberts!' an' that sort of bunk.

"'Fight!' says the referee to me, low an' savage. 'Fight, or I'll disqualify you—you, Bill, I mean you.' An' this to me, with a touch on the shoulder so they's no mistakin'.

"It ain't pretty. It ain't right. D'ye know what we was fightin' for? A hundred bucks. Think of it! An' the game is we got to do our best to put our man down for the count because of the fans has bet on us. Sweet, ain't it? Well, that's my last fight. It finishes me deado. Never again for yours truly.

"Quit," I says to Billy Murphy in a clinch; 'for the love of God, Bill, quit.' An' he says back, in a whisper, 'I can't, Bill—you know that.'

"An' then the referee drags us apart, an' a lot of the fans begins to hoot an' boo.

"'Now kick in, damn you, Bill Roberts, an' finish'm,' the referee says to me, an' I tell'm to go to hell as Bill an' me flop into the next clinch, not hittin', an' Bill touches his thumb again, an' I see the pain shoot across his face. Game? That good boy's the limit. An' to look into the eyes of a brave man that's sick with pain, an' love'm, an' see love in them eyes of his, an' then have to go on givin' 'm pain—call that sport? I can't see it. But the crowd's got its money on us. We don't count.
We've sold ourselves for a hundred bucks, an' we gotta deliver the goods.

"Let me tell you, Saxon, honest to God, that was one of the times I wanted to go through the ropes an' drop them fans a-yellin' for blood an' show 'em what blood is.

"'For God's sake finish me, Bill,' Bill says to me in that clinch; 'put her over an' I'll fall for it, but I can't lay down.'

"D'ye want to know? I cry there, right in the ring, in that clinch. The weeps for me. 'I can't do it, Bill,' I whisper back, hangin' onto'm like a brother an' the referee ragin' an draggin' at us to get us apart, an' all the wolves in the house snarlin'.

"'You got 'm!' the audience is yellin'. 'Go in an' finish 'm!' 'The hay for him, Bill; put her across to the jaw an' see 'm fall!'

"'You got to, Bill, or you're a dog,' Bill says, lookin' love at me in his eyes as the referee's grip untangles us clear.

"An' them wolves of fans yellin': 'Fake! Fake!! Fake!' like that, an' keepin' it up.

"Well, I done it. They's only that way out. I done it. By God, I done it. I had to. I feint for 'm, draw his left, duck to the right past it, takin' it across my shoulder, an' come up with my right to his jaw. An' he knows the trick. He's hep. He's beaten me to it an' blocked it with his shoulder a thousan' times. But this time he don't. He keeps himself wide open on purpose. Blim! It lands. He's dead in the air, an' he goes down sideways, strikin' his face first on the rosin-canvas an' then layin' dead, his head twisted under 'm till you'd a-thought his neck was broke. Me—I did that for a
hundred bucks an' a bunch of stiffs I'd be ashamed to wipe my feet on. An' then I pick Bill up in my arms an' carry'm to his corner, an' help bring'm around. Well, they ain't no kick comin'. They pay their money an' they get their blood, an' a knock-out. An' a better man than them, that I love, layin' there dead to the world with a skinned face on the mat."

For a moment he was still, gazing straight before him at the horses, his face hard and angry. He sighed, looked at Saxon, and smiled.

"An' I quit the game right there. An' Billy Murphy's laughed at me for it. He still follows it. A side-line, you know, because he works at a good trade. But once in a while, when the house needs paintin', or the doctor bills are up, or his oldest kid wants a bicycle, he jumps out an' makes fifty or a hundred bucks before some of the clubs. I want you to meet him when it comes handy. He's some boy I'm tellin' you. But it did make me sick that night."

Again the harshness and anger were in his face, and Saxon amazed herself by doing unconsciously what women higher in the social scale have done with deliberate sincerity. Her hand went out impulsively to his holding the lines, resting on top of it for a moment with quick, firm pressure. Her reward was a smile from lips and eyes, as his face turned toward her.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "I never talk a streak like this to anybody. I just hold my hush an' keep my thinks to myself. But, somehow, I guess it's funny, I kind of have a feelin' I want to make good with you. An' that's why I'm tellin' you my thinks. Anybody can dance."

The way led uptown, past the City Hall and the Fourteenth Street skyscrapers, and out Broadway to Moun-
tain View. Turning to the right at the cemetery, they climbed the Piedmont Heights to Blair Park and plunged into the green coolness of Jack Hayes Canyon. Saxon could not suppress her surprise and joy at the quickness with which they covered the ground.

"They are beautiful," she said. "I never dreamed I'd ever ride behind horses like them. I'm afraid I'll wake up now and find it's a dream. You know, I dream horses all the time. I'd give anything to own one some time."

"It's funny, ain't it?" Billy answered. "I like horses that way. The boss says I'm a wooz at horses. An' I know he's a dub. He don't know the first thing. An' yet he owns two hundred big heavy draughts besides this light drivin' pair, an' I don't own one."

"Yet God makes the horses," Saxon said.

"It's a sure thing the boss don't. Then how does he have so many?—two hundred of 'em, I'm tellin' you. He thinks he likes horses. Honest to God, Saxon, he don't like all his horses as much as I like the last hair on the last tail of the scrubbiest of the bunch. Yet they're his. Wouldn't it jar you?"

"Wouldn't it?" Saxon laughed appreciatively. "I just love fancy shirtwaists, an' I spend my life ironing some of the beautifullest I've ever seen. It's funny, an' it isn't fair."

Billy gritted his teeth in another of his rages.

"An' the way some of them women gets their shirtwaists. It makes me sick, thinkin' of you ironin' 'em. You know what I mean, Saxon. They ain't no use wastin' words over it. You know. I know. Everybody knows. An' it's a hell of a world if men an' women sometimes can't talk to each other about such things." His manner was almost apologetic, yet it was defiantly
and assertively right. "I never talk this way to other girls. They'd think I'm workin' up to designs on 'em. They make me sick the way they're always lookin' for them designs. But you're different. I can talk to you that way. I know I've got to. It's the square thing. You're like Billy Murphy, or any other man a man can talk to."

She sighed with a great happiness, and looked at him with unconscious, love-shining eyes.

"It's the same way with me," she said. "The fellows I've run with I've never dared let talk about such things, because I knew they'd take advantage of it. Why, all the time, with them, I've a feeling that we're cheating and lying to each other, playing a game like at a masquerade ball." She paused for a moment, hesitant and debating, then went on in a queer low voice. "I haven't been asleep. I've seen . . . and heard. I've had my chances, when I was that tired of the laundry I'd have done almost anything. I could have got those fancy shirt-waists . . . an' all the rest . . . and maybe a horse to ride. There was a bank cashier . . . married, too, if you please. He talked to me straight out. I didn't count, you know. I wasn't a girl, with a girl's feelings, or anything. I was nobody. It was just like a business talk. I learned about men from him. He told me what he'd do. He . . . ."

Her voice died away in sadness, and in the silence she could hear Billy grit his teeth.

"You can't tell me," he cried. "I know. It's a dirty world—an unfair, lousy world. I can't make it out. They's no squareness in it. —Women, with the best that's in 'em, bought an' sold like horses. I don't understand women that way. I don't understand men that way. I can't see how a man gets anything but cheated, when
he buys such things. It's funny, ain't it? Take my boss an' his horses. He owns women, too. He might a-owned you, just because he's got the price. An', Saxon, you was made for fancy shirtwaists an' all that, but, honest to God, I can't see you payin' for them that way. It'd be a crime——"

He broke off abruptly and reined in the horses. Around a sharp turn, speeding down the grade upon them, had appeared an automobile. With slamming of brakes it was brought to a stop, while the faces of the occupants took new lease of interest of life and stared at the young man and woman in the light rig that barred the way. Billy held up his hand.

"Take the outside, sport," he said to the chauffeur.

"Nothin' doin', kiddo," came the answer, as the chauffeur measured with hard, wise eyes the scrumbling edge of the road and the downfall of the outside bank.

"Then we camp," Billy announced cheerfully. "I know the rules of the road. These animals ain't automobile broke altogether, an' if you think I'm goin' to have 'em shy off the grade you got another guess comin'."

A confusion of injured protestation arose from those that sat in the car.

"You needn't be a road-hog because you're a Rube," said the chauffeur. "We ain't a goin' to hurt your horses. Pull out so we can pass. If you don't . . . ."

"That'll do you, sport," was Billy's retort. "You can't talk that way to yours truly. I got your number an' your tag, my son. You're standin' on your foot. Back up the grade an' get off of it. Stop on the outside at the first passin'-place an' we'll pass you. You've got the juice. Throw on the reverse."

After a nervous consultation, the chauffeur obeyed,
and the car backed up the hill and out of sight around the turn.

"Them cheap skates," Billy sneered to Saxon, "with a couple of gallons of gasoline an' the price of a machine a-thinkin' they own the roads your folks an' my folks made."

"Takin' all night about it?" came the chauffeur's voice from around the bend. "Get a move on. You can pass."

"Get off your foot," Billy retorted contemptuously.

"I'm a-comin' when I'm ready to come, an' if you ain't given room enough I'll go clean over you an' your load of chicken meat."

He slightly slacked the reins on the restless, head-tossing animals, and without need of chirrup they took the weight of the light vehicle and passed up the hill and apprehensively on the inside of the purring machine.

"Where was we?" Billy queried, as the clear road showed in front. "Yep, take my boss. Why should he own two hundred horses, an' women, an' the rest, an' you an' me own nothin'?"

"You own your silk, Billy," she said softly.

"An' you yours. Yet we sell it to 'em like it was cloth across the counter at so much a yard. I guess you're hep to what a few more years in the laundry'll do to you. Take me. I'm sellin' my silk slow every day I work. See that little finger?" He shifted the reins to one hand for a moment and held up the free hand for inspection. "I can't straighten it like the others, an' it's growin'. I never put it out fightin'. The teamin's done it. That's silk gone across the counter, that's all. Ever see a old four-horse teamster's hands? They look like claws they're that crippled an' twisted."
"Things weren't like that in the old days when our folks crossed the plains," she answered. "They might a-got their fingers twisted, but they owned the best goin' in the way of horses and such."

"Sure. They worked for themselves. They twisted their fingers for themselves. But I'm twistin' my fingers for my boss. Why, d'ye know, Saxon, his hands is soft as a woman's that's never done any work. Yet he owns the horses an' the stables, an' never does a tap of work, an' I manage to scratch my meal-ticket an' my clothes. It's got my goat the way things is run. An' who runs 'em that way? That's what I want to know. Times has changed. Who changed 'em?"

"God didn't."

"You bet your life he didn't. An' that's another thing that gets me. Who's God anyway? If he's runnin' things —an' what good is he if he ain't?—then why does he let my boss, an' men like that cashier you mentioned, why does he let them own the horses, an' buy the women, the nice little girls that oughta be lovin' their own husbands, an' havin' children they're not ashamed of, an' just bein' happy accordin' to their nature?"

CHAPTER XI.

The horses, resting frequently and lathered by the work, had climbed the steep grade of the old road to Moraga Valley, and on the divide of the Contra Costa hills the way descended sharply through the green and sunny stillness of Redwood Canyon.

"Say, ain't it swell?" Billy queried, with a wave of his hand indicating the circled tree-groups, the trickle of unseen water, and the summer hum of bees.
“I love it,” Saxon affirmed. “It makes me want to live in the country, and I never have.”

“Me, too, Saxon. I’ve never lived in the country in my life—an’ all my folks was country-folks.”

“No cities then. Everybody lived in the country.”

“I guess you’re right,” he nodded. “They just had to live in the country.”

There was no brake on the light carriage, and Billy became absorbed in managing his team down the steep, winding road. Saxon leaned back, eyes closed, with a feeling of ineffable rest. Time and again he shot glances at her closed eyes.

“What’s the matter?” he asked finally, in mild alarm. “You ain’t sick?”

“It’s so beautiful I’m afraid to look,” she answered. “It’s so brave it hurts.”

“Brave?—now that’s funny.”

“Isn’t it? But it just makes me feel that way. It’s brave. Now the houses and streets and things in the city aren’t brave. But this is. I don’t know why. It just is.”

“By golly, I think you’re right,” he exclaimed. “It strikes me that way, now you speak of it. They ain’t no games or tricks here, no cheatin’ an’ no lyin’. Them trees just stand up natural an’ strong an’ clean like young boys their first time in the ring before they’ve learned its rottenness an’ how to double-cross an’ lay down to the bettin’ odds an’ the fight-fans. Yep; it is brave. Say, Saxon, you see things, don’t you?” His pause was almost wistful, and he looked at her and studied her with a caressing softness that ran through her in resurgent thrills. “D’ye know, I’d just like you to see me fight some time—a real fight, with something doin’ every moment. I’d
be proud to death to do it for you. An' I'd sure fight some with you lookin' on an' understandin'. That'd be a fight what is, take it from me. An' that's funny, too. I never wanted to fight before a woman in my life. They squeal and screech an' don't understand. But you'd understand. It's dead open an' shut you would."

A little later, swinging along the flat of the valley, through the little clearings of the farmers and the ripe grain-stretches golden in the sunshine, Billy turned to Saxon again.

"Say, you've ben in love with fellows, lots of times. Tell me about it. What's it like?"

She shook her head slowly.

"I only thought I was in love—and not many times, either—"

"Many times!" he cried.

"Not really ever," she assured him, secretly exultant at his unconscious jealousy. "I never was really in love. If I had been I'd be married now. You see, I couldn't see anything else to it but to marry a man if I loved him."

"But suppose he didn't love you?"

"Oh, I don't know," she smiled, half with facetiousness and half with certainty and pride. "I think I could make him love me."

"I guess you sure could," Billy proclaimed enthusiastically.

"The trouble is," she went on, "the men that loved me I never cared for that way. —Oh, look!"

A cottontail rabbit had scuttled across the road, and a tiny dust cloud lingered like smoke, marking the way of his flight. At the next turn a dozen quail exploded into the air from under the noses of the horses. Billy and Saxon exclaimed in mutual delight.
"Gee," he muttered, "I almost wisht I'd ben born a farmer. Folks wasn't made to live in cities."

"Not our kind, at least," she agreed. Followed a pause and a long sigh. "It's all so beautiful. It would be a dream just to live all your life in it. I'd like to be an Indian squaw sometimes."

Several times Billy checked himself on the verge of speech.

"About those fellows you thought you was in love with," he said finally. "You ain't told me, yet."

"You want to know?" she asked. "They didn't amount to anything."

"Of course I want to know. Go ahead. Fire away."

"Well, first there was Al Stanley——"

"What did he do for a livin'?" Billy demanded, almost as with authority.

"He was a gambler."

Billy's face abruptly stiffened, and she could see his eyes cloudy with doubt in the quick glance he flung at her.

"Oh, it was all right," she laughed. "I was only eight years old. You see, I'm beginning at the beginning. It was after my mother died and when I was adopted by Cady. He kept a hotel and saloon. It was down in Los Angeles. Just a small hotel. Workingmen, just common labourers, mostly, and some railroad men, stopped at it, and I guess Al Stanley got his share of their wages. He was so handsome and so quiet and soft-spoken. And he had the nicest eyes and the softest, cleanest hands. I can see them now. He played with me sometimes, in the afternoon, and gave me candy and little presents. He used to sleep most of the day. I didn't know why, then. I thought he was a fairy prince in disguise. And
then he got killed, right in the bar-room, but first he killed the man that killed him. So that was the end of that love-affair.

"Next was after the asylum, when I was thirteen and living with my brother—I've lived with him ever since. He was a boy that drove a bakery waggon. Almost every morning, on the way to school, I used to pass him. He would come driving down Wood Street and turn in on Twelfth. Maybe it was because he drove a horse that attracted me. Anyway, I must have loved him for a couple of months. Then he lost his job, or something, for another boy drove the waggon. And we'd never even spoken to each other.

"Then there was a bookkeeper when I was sixteen. I seem to run to bookkeepers. It was a bookkeeper at the laundry that Charley Long beat up. This other one was when I was working in Hickmeyer's Cannery. He had soft hands, too. But I quickly got all I wanted of him. He was . . . well, anyway, he had ideas like your boss. And I never really did love him, truly and honest, Billy. I felt from the first that he wasn't just right. And when I was working in the paper-box factory I thought I loved a clerk in Kahn's Emporium—you know, on Eleventh and Washington. He was all right. That was the trouble with him. He was too much all right. He didn't have any life in him, any go. He wanted to marry me, though. But somehow I couldn't see it. That shows I didn't love him. He was narrow-chested and skinny, and his hands were always cold and fishy. But my! he could dress—just like he came out of a bandbox. He said he was going to drown himself, and all kinds of things, but I broke with him just the same.

"And after that . . . well, there isn't any after that. I
must have got particular, I guess, but I didn’t see anybody I could love. It seemed more like a game with the men I met, or a fight. And we never fought fair on either side. Seemed as if we always had cards up our sleeves. We weren’t honest or outspoken, but instead it seemed as if we were trying to take advantage of each other. Charley Long was honest, though. And so was that bank-cashier. And even they made me have the fight feeling harder than ever. All of them always made me feel I had to take care of myself. They wouldn’t. That was sure.”

She stopped and looked with interest at the clean profile of his face as he watched and guided the horses. He looked at her enquiringly, and her eyes laughed lazily into his as she stretched her arms.

“That’s all,” she concluded. “I’ve told you everything, which I’ve never done before to anyone. And it’s your turn now.”

“Not much of a turn, Saxon. I’ve never cared for girls—that is, not enough to want to marry ’em. I always liked men better—fellows like Billy Murphy. Besides, I guess I was too interested in trainin’ an’ fightin’ to bother with women much. Why, Saxon, honest, while I ain’t ben altogether good—you understand what I mean—just the same I ain’t never talked love to a girl in my life. They was no call to.”

“The girls have loved you just the same,” she teased, while in her heart was a curious elation at his virginal confession.

He devoted himself to the horses.

“Lots of them,” she urged.
Still he did not reply.
“Now, haven’t they?”
"Well, it wasn't my fault," he said slowly. "If they wanted to look sideways at me it was up to them. And it was up to me to sidestep if I wanted to, wasn't it? You've no idea, Saxon, how a prizefighter is run after. Why, sometimes it's seemed to me that girls an' women ain't got an ounce of natural shame in their make-up. Oh, I was never afraid of them, believe muh, but I didn't hanker after 'em. A man's a fool that'd let them kind get his goat."

"Maybe you haven't got love in you," she challenged.

"Maybe I haven't," was his discouraging reply. "Anyway, I don't see myself lovin' a girl that runs after me. It's all right for Charley-boys, but a man that is a man don't like bein' chased by women."

"My mother always said that love was the greatest thing in the world," Saxon argued. "She wrote poems about it, too. Some of them were published in the San Jose Mercury."

"What do you think about it?"

"Oh, I don't know," she baffled, meeting his eyes with another lazy smile. "All I know is it's pretty good to be alive a day like this."

"On a trip like this—you bet it is," he added promptly.

At one o'clock Billy turned off the road and drove into an open space among the trees.

"Here's where we eat," he announced. "I thought it'd be better to have a lunch by ourselves than stop at one of these roadside dinner counters. An' now, just to make everything safe an' comfortable, I'm goin' to unharness the horses. We got lots of time. You can get the lunch basket out an' spread it on the lap-robe."
As Saxon unpacked the basket she was appalled at his extravagance. She spread an amazing array of ham and chicken sandwiches, crab salad, hard-boiled eggs, pickled pigs' feet, ripe olives and dill pickles, Swiss cheese, salted almonds, oranges and bananas, and several pint bottles of beer. It was the quantity as well as the variety that bothered her. It had the appearance of a reckless attempt to buy out a whole delicatessen shop.

"You oughtn't to blow yourself that way," she reproved him as he sat down beside her. "Why it's enough for half a dozen bricklayers."

"It's all right, isn't it?"

"Yes," she acknowledged. "But that's the trouble. It's too much so."

"Then it's all right," he concluded. "I always believe in havin' plenty. Have some beer to wash the dust away before we begin? Watch out for the glasses. I gotta return them."

Later, the meal finished, he lay on his back, smoking a cigarette, and questioned her about her earlier history. She had been telling him of her life in her brother's house, where she paid four dollars and a half a week board. At fifteen she had graduated from grammar-school and gone to work in the jute mills for four dollars a week, three of which she had paid to Sarah.

"How about that saloonkeeper?" Billy asked, "How come it he adopted you?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know, except that all my relatives were hard up. It seemed they just couldn't get on. They managed to scratch a lean living for themselves, and that was all. Cady—he was the saloonkeeper—had been a soldier in my father's company, and he always swore by Captain Kit, which was..."
their nickname for him. My father had kept the surgeons from amputating his leg in the war, and he never forgot it. He was making money in the hotel and saloon, and I found out afterward he helped out a lot to pay the doctors and to bury my mother alongside of father. I was to go to Uncle Will—that was my mother’s wish; but there had been fighting up in the Ventura Mountains where his ranch was, and men had been killed. It was about fences and cattlemen or something, and anyway he was in jail a long time, and when he got his freedom the lawyers had got his ranch. He was an old man, then, and broken, and his wife took sick, and he got a job as night watchman for forty dollars a month. So he couldn’t do anything for me, and Cady adopted me.

“Cady was a good man, if he did run a saloon. His wife was a big, handsome-looking woman. I don’t think she was all right . . . and I’ve heard so since. But she was good to me. I don’t care what they say about her, or what she was. She was awful good to me. After he died, she went altogether bad, and so I went into the orphan asylum. It wasn’t any too good there, and I had three years of it. And then Tom had married and settled down to steady work, and he took me out to live with him. And—well, I’ve been working pretty steady ever since.”

She gazed sadly away across the fields until her eyes came to rest on a fence bright-splashed with poppies at its base. Billy, who from his supine position had been looking up at her, studying and pleasuring in the pointed oval of her woman’s face, reached his hand out slowly as he murmured:

“You poor little kid.”

His hand closed sympathetically on her bare forearm,
and as she looked down to greet his eyes she saw in them surprise and delight.

"Say, ain't your skin cool though," he said. "Now me, I'm always warm. Feel my hand."

It was warmly moist, and she noted microscopic beads of sweat on his forehead and clean-shaven upper lip.

"My, but you are sweaty."

She bent to him and with her handkerchief dabbed his lip and forehead dry, then dried his palms.

"I breathe through my skin, I guess," he explained. "The wise guys in the trainin' camps and gyms say it's a good sign for health. But somehow I'm sweatin' more than usual now. Funny, ain't it?"

She had been forced to unclasp his hand from her arm in order to dry it, and when she finished, it returned to its old position.

"But, say, ain't your skin cool," he repeated with renewed wonder. "Soft as velvet, too, an' smooth as silk. It feels great."

Gently explorative, he slid his hand from wrist to elbow and came to rest half-way back. Tired and languid from the morning in the sun, she found herself thrilling to his touch and half-dreamily deciding that here was a man she could love, hands and all.

"Now I've taken the cool all out of that spot." He did not look up to her, and she could see the roguish smile that curled on his lips. "So I guess I'll try another."

He shifted his hand along her arm with soft sensuousness, and she, looking down at his lips, remembered the long tingling they had given hers the first time they had met.

"Go on and talk," he urged, after a delicious five
minutes of silence. "I like to watch your lips talking. It's funny, but every move they make looks like a tickly kiss."

Greatly she wanted to stay where she was. Instead, she said:

"If I talk, you won't like what I say."

"Go on," he insisted. "You can't say anything I won't like."

"Well, there's some poppies over there by the fence I want to pick. And then it's time for us to be going."

"I lose," he laughed. "But you made twenty-five tickle kisses just the same. I counted 'em. I'll tell you what: you sing 'When the Harvest Days Are Over,' and let me have your other cool arm while you're doin' it, and then we'll go."

She sang looking down into his eyes, which were centred, not on hers, but on her lips. When she finished, she slipped his hands from her arms and got up. He was about to start for the horses, when she held her jacket out to him. Despite the independence natural to a girl who earned her own living, she had an innate love of the little services and finenesses; and, also, she remembered from her childhood the talk by the pioneer women of the courtesy and attendance of the caballeros of the Spanish-California days.

Sunset greeted them when, after a wide circle to the east and south, they cleared the divide of the Contra Costa hills and began dropping down the long grade that led past Redwood Peak to Fruitvale. Beneath them stretched the flatlands to the bay, checkerboarded into fields and broken by the towns of Elmhurst, San Leandro, and Haywards. The smoke of Oakland filled the western sky with haze and murk, while beyond, across the bay,
they could see the first winking lights of San Francisco.

Darkness was on them, and Billy had become curiously silent. For half an hour he had given no recognition of her existence save once, when the chill evening wind caused him to tuck the robe tightly about her and himself. Half a dozen times Saxon found herself on the verge of the remark, “What’s on your mind?” but each time let it remain unuttered. She sat very close to him. The warmth of their bodies intermingled, and she was aware of a great restfulness and content.

“Say, Saxon,” he began abruptly. “It’s no use my holdin’ it in any longer. It’s ben in my mouth all day, ever since lunch. What’s the matter with you an’ me gettin’ married?”

She knew, very quietly and very gladly, that he meant it. Instinctively she was impelled to hold off, to make him woo her, to make herself more desirably valuable ere she yielded. Further, her woman’s sensitiveness and pride were offended. She had never dreamed of so forthright and bald a proposal from the man to whom she would give herself. The simplicity and directness of Billy’s proposal constituted almost a hurt. On the other hand she wanted him so much—how much she had not realised until now, when he had so unexpectedly made himself accessible.

“Well, you gotta say something, Saxon. Hand it to me, good or bad; but anyway hand it to me. An’ just take into consideration that I love you. Why, I love you like the very devil, Saxon. I must, because I’m askin’ you to marry me, an’ I never asked any girl that before.”

Another silence fell, and Saxon found herself dwelling on the warmth, tingling now, under the lap robe. When
she realised whither her thoughts led, she blushed guiltily in the darkness.

"How old are you, Billy?" she questioned, with a suddenness and irrelevance as disconcerting as his first words had been.

"Twenty-two," he answered.

"I am twenty-four."

"As if I didn't know. When you left the orphan asylum and how old you were, how long you worked in the jute mills, the cannery, the paper-box factory, the laundry—maybe you think I can't do addition. I knew how old you was, even to your birthday."

"That doesn't change the fact that I'm two years older."

"What of it? If it counted for anything, I wouldn't be lovin' you, would I? Your mother was dead right. Love's the big stuff. It's what counts. Don't you see? I just love you, an' I gotta have you. It's natural, I guess; and I've always found with horses, dogs, and other folks, that what's natural is right. There's no gettin' away from it, Saxon; I gotta have you, an' I'm just hopin' hard you gotta have me. Maybe my hands ain't soft like bookkeepers' an' clerks', but they can work for you, an' fight like Sam Hill for you, and, Saxon, they can love you."

The old sex antagonism which she had always experienced with men seemed to have vanished. She had no sense of being on the defensive. This was no game. It was what she had been looking for and dreaming about. Before Billy she was defenceless, and there was an all-satisfaction in the knowledge. She could deny him nothing. Not even if he proved to be like the others. And out of the greatness of the thought arose a greater thought—he would not so prove himself.
She did not speak. Instead, in a glow of spirit and flesh, she reached out to his left hand and gently tried to remove it from the rein. He did not understand; but when she persisted he shifted the rein to his right and let her have her will with the other hand. Her head bent over it, and she kissed the teamster callouses.

For the moment he was stunned.

"You mean it?" he stammered.

For reply, she kissed the hand again and murmured:

"I love your hands, Billy. To me they are the most beautiful hands in the world, and it would take hours of talking to tell you all they mean to me."

"Whoa!" he called to the horses.

He pulled them in to a standstill, soothed them with his voice, and made the reins fast around the whip. Then he turned to her with arms around her and lips to lips.

"Oh, Billy, I'll make you a good wife," she sobbed, when the kiss was broken.

He kissed her wet eyes and found her lips again.

"Now you know what I was thinkin' and why I was sweatin' when we was eatin' lunch. Just seemed I couldn't hold in much longer from tellin' you. Why, you know, you looked good to me from the first moment I spotted you."

"And I think I loved you from that first day, too, Billy. And I was so proud of you all that day, you were so kind and gentle, and so strong, and the way the men all respected you and the girls all wanted you, and the way you fought those three Irishmen when I was behind the picnic-table. I couldn’t love or marry a man I wasn’t proud of, and I’m so proud of you, so proud."

"Not half as much as I am right now of myself," he
answered, "for having won you. It's too good to be true. Maybe the alarm clock'll go off and wake me up in a couple of minutes. Well, anyway, if it does, I'm goin' to make the best of them two minutes first. Watch out I don't eat you, I'm that hungry for you."

He smothered her in an embrace, holding her so tightly to him that it almost hurt. After what was to her an age-long period of bliss, his arms relaxed and he seemed to make an effort to draw himself together.

"An' the clock ain't gone off yet," he whispered against her cheek. "And it's a dark night, an' there's Fruitvale right ahead, an' if there ain't King and Prince standin' still in the middle of the road. I never thought the time'd come when I wouldn't want to take the ribbons on a fine pair of horses. But this is that time. I just can't let go of you, and I've gotta some time to-night. It hurts worse'n poison, but here goes."

He restored her to herself, tucked the disarranged robe about her, and chirruped to the impatient team.

Half an hour later he called "Whoa!"

"I know I'm awake now, but I don't know but maybe I dreamed all the rest, and I just want to make sure."

And again he made the reins fast and took her in his arms.

CHAPTER XII.

The days flew by for Saxon. She worked on steadily at the laundry, even doing more overtime than usual, and all her free waking hours were devoted to preparations for the great change and to Billy. He had proved himself God's own impetuous lover by insisting on getting married the next day after the proposal, and then by
resolutely refusing to compromise on more than a week's delay.

“Why wait?” he demanded. “We’re not gettin’ any younger so far as I can notice, an’ think of all we lose every day we wait.”

In the end, he gave in to a month, which was well, for in two weeks he was transferred, with half a dozen other drivers, to work from the big stables of Corberly and Morrison in West Oakland. House-hunting in the other end of town ceased, and on Pine Street, between Fifth and Fourth, and in immediate proximity to the great Southern Pacific railroad yards, Billy and Saxon rented a neat cottage of four small rooms for ten dollars a month.

“Dog-cheap is what I call it, when I think of the small rooms I’ve ben soaked for,” was Billy’s judgment. “Look at the one I got now, not as big as the smallest here, an’ me payin’ six dollars a month for it.”

“But it’s furnished,” Saxon reminded him. “You see, that makes a difference.”

But Billy didn’t see.

“I ain’t much of a scholar, Saxon, but I know simple arithmetic; I’ve soaked my watch when I was hard up, and I can calculate interest. How much do you figure it will cost to furnish the house, carpets on the floor, linoleum on the kitchen, and all?”

“We can do it nicely for three hundred dollars,” she answered. “I’ve been thinking it over and I’m sure we can do it for that.”

“Three hundred,” he muttered, wrinkling his brows with concentration. “Three hundred, say at six per cent. —that’d be six cents on the dollar, sixty cents on ten dollars, six dollars, on the hundred, on three hundred
eighteen dollars. Say—I'm a bear at multiplyin' by ten. Now divide eighteen by twelve, that'd be a dollar an' a half a month interest.” He stopped, satisfied that he had proved his contention. Then his face quickened with a fresh thought. “Hold on! That ain't all. That'd be the interest on the furniture for four rooms. Divide by four. What's a dollar an' a half divided by four?”

“Four into fifteen, three times and three to carry,” Saxon recited glibly. “Four into thirty is seven, twenty-eight, two to carry; and two-fourths is one-half. There you are.”

“Gee! You're the real bear at figures.” He hesitated. “I didn't follow you. How much did you say it was?”

“Thirty-seven and a half cents.”

“Ah, ha! Now we'll see how much I've ben gouged for my one room. Ten dollars a month for four rooms is two an' a half for one. Add thirty-seven an' a half cents interest on furniture, an' that makes two dollars an' eighty-seven an' a half cents. Subtract from six dollars . . .”

“Three dollars and twelve and a half cents,” she supplied quickly.

“There we are! Three dollars an' twelve an' a half cents I'm jiggered out of on the room I'm rentin'. Say! Bein' married is like savin' money, ain't it?”

“But furniture wears out, Billy.”

“By golly, I never thought of that. It ought to be figured, too. Anyway, we've got a snap here, and next Saturday afternoon you've gotta get off from the laundry so as we can go an' buy our furniture. I saw Salinger's last night. I give'm fifty down, and the rest instalment plan, ten dollars a month. In twenty-five months the furniture's ourn. An' remember, Saxon, you wanta buy
everything you want, no matter how much it costs. No scrimpin' on what's for you an' me. Get me?"

"She nodded, with no betrayal on her face of the myriad secret economies that filled her mind. A hint of moisture glistened in her eyes.

"You're so good to me, Billy," she murmured, as she came to him and was met inside his arms.

"So you've gone an' done it," Mary commented, one morning in the laundry. They had not been at work ten minutes ere her eye had glimpsed the topaz ring on the third finger of Saxon's left hand. "Who's the lucky one? Charley Long or Billy Roberts?"

"Billy," was the answer.

"Huh! Takin' a young boy to raise, eh?"

Saxon showed that the stab had gone home, and Mary was all contrition.

"Can't you take a josh? I'm glad to death at the news. Billy's a awful good man, and I'm glad to see you get him. There ain't many like him knockin' 'round, an' they ain't to be had for the askin'. An' you're both lucky. You was just made for each other, an' you'll make him a better wife than any girl I know. When is it to be?"

Going home from the laundry a few days later, Saxon encountered Charley Long. He blocked the sidewalk, and compelled speech with her.

"So you're runnin' with a prizefighter," he sneered. "A blind man can see your finish."

For the first time she was unafraid of this big-bodied, black-browed man with the hairy-matted hands and fingers. She held up her left hand.

"See that? It's something, with all your strength, that you could never put on my finger. Billy Roberts"
put it on inside a week. He got your number, Charley Long, and at the same time he got me."

"Skiddoo for you," Long retorted. "Twenty-three's your number."

"He's not like you," Saxon went on. "He's a man, every bit of him, a fine, clean man."

Long laughed hoarsely.

"He's got your goat all right."

"And yours," she flashed back.

"I could tell you things about him. Saxon, straight, he ain't no good. If I was to tell you——"

"You'd better get out of my way," she interrupted, "or I'll tell him, and you know what you'll get, you great big bully."

Long shuffled uneasily, then reluctantly stepped aside.

"You're a caution," he said, half admiringly.

"So's Billy Roberts," she laughed, and continued on her way. After half a dozen steps she stopped. "Say," she called.

The big blacksmith turned toward her with eagerness.

"About a block back," she said, "I saw a man with hip disease. You might go and beat him up."

Of one extravagance Saxon was guilty in the course of the brief engagement period. A full day's wages she spent in the purchase of half a dozen cabinet photographs of herself. Billy had insisted that life was unendurable could he not look upon her semblance the last thing when he went to bed at night and the first thing when he got up in the morning. In return, his photographs, one conventional and one in the stripped fighting costume of the ring, ornamented her looking glass. It was while gazing at the latter that she was reminded of her wonderful mother's tales of the ancient Saxons and sea-foragers of
the English coasts. From the chest of drawers that had crossed the plains she drew forth another of her several precious heirlooms—a scrap-book of her mother’s in which was pasted much of the fugitive newspaper verse of pioneer California days. Also, there were copies of paintings and old wood engravings from the magazines of a generation and more before.

Saxon ran the pages with familiar fingers and stopped at the picture she was seeking. Between bold headlands of rock and under a grey cloud-blown sky, a dozen boats, long and lean and dark, beaked like monstrous birds, were landing on a foam-whitened beach of sand. The men in the boats, half naked, huge-muscled and fair-haired, wore winged helmets. In their hands were swords and spears, and they were leaping, waist-deep, into the sea-wash and wading ashore. Opposed to them, contesting the landing, were skin-clad savages, unlike Indians, however, who clustered on the beach or waded into the water to their knees. The first blows were being struck, and here and there the bodies of the dead and wounded rolled in the surf. One fair-haired invader lay across the gunwale of a boat, the manner of his death told by the arrow that transfixed his breast. In the air, leaping past him into the water, sword in hand, was Billy. There was no mistaking it. The striking blondness, the face, the eyes, the mouth were the same. The very expression on the face was what had been on Billy’s the day of the picnic when he faced the three wild Irishmen.

Somewhere out of the ruck of those warring races had emerged Billy’s ancestors, and hers, was her afterthought, as she closed the book and put it back in the drawer. And some of those ancestors had made this ancient and battered chest of drawers which had crossed the salt
ocean and the plains and been pierced by a bullet in the fight with the Indians at Little Meadow. Almost, it seemed, she could visualise the women who had kept their pretties and their family homespun in its drawers—the women of those wandering generations who were grandmothers and greater great grandmothers of her own mother. Well, she sighed, it was a good stock to be born of, a hard-working, hard-fighting stock. She fell to wondering what her life would have been like had she been born a Chinese woman, or an Italian woman like those she saw, head-shawled or bareheaded, squat, ungainly and swarthy, who carried great loads of driftwood on their heads up from the beach. Then she laughed at her foolishness, remembered Billy and the four-roomed cottage on Pine Street, and went to bed with her mind filled for the hundredth time with the details of the furniture.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Our cattle were all played out," Saxon was saying, "and winter was so near that we couldn't dare try to cross the Great American Desert, so our train stopped in Salt Lake City that winter. The Mormons hadn't got bad yet, and they were good to us."

"You talk as though you were there," Bert commented. "My mother was," Saxon answered proudly. "She was nine years old that winter."

They were seated around the table in the kitchen of the little Pine Street cottage, making a cold lunch of sandwiches, tamales, and bottled beer. It being Sunday, the four were free from work, and they had come early, to work harder than on any week day, washing walls and windows, scrubbing floors, laying carpets and linoleum,
THE VALLEY OF THE MOON.

I 7

hanging curtains, setting up the stove, putting the kitchen utensils and dishes away, and placing the furniture.

"Go on with the story, Saxon," Mary begged. "I'm just dyin' to hear. And Bert, you just shut up and listen."

"Well, that winter was when Del Hancock showed up. He was Kentucky born, but he'd been in the West for years. He was a scout, like Kit Carson, and he knew him well. Many's a time Kit Carson and he slept under the same blankets. They were together to California and Oregon with General Fremont. Well, Del Hancock was passing on his way through Salt Lake, going I don't know where to raise a company of Rocky Mountain trappers to go after beaver some new place he knew about. He was a handsome man. He wore his hair long like in pictures, and had a silk sash around his waist he'd learned to wear in California from the Spanish, and two revolvers in his belt. Any woman'd fall in love with him first sight. Well, he saw Sadie, who was my mother's oldest sister, and I guess she looked good to him, for he stopped right there in Salt Lake and didn't go a step. He was a great Indian fighter, too, and I heard my Aunt Villa say, when I was a little girl, that he had the blackest, brightest eyes, and that the way he looked was like an eagle. He'd fought duels, too, the way they did in those days, and he wasn't afraid of anything.

"Sadie was a beauty, and she flirted with him and drove him crazy. Maybe she wasn't sure of her own mind, I don't know. But I do know that she didn't give in as easy as I did to Billy. Finally, he couldn't stand it any more. He rode up that night on horseback, wild as could be. 'Sadie,' he said, 'if you don't promise to marry me to-morrow, I'll shoot myself to-night right back
of the corral.' And he'd have done it, too, and Sadie knew it, and said she would. Didn't they make love fast in those days?"

"Oh, I don't know," Mary sniffed. "A week after you first laid eyes on Billy you was engaged. Did Billy say he was going to shoot himself back of the laundry if you turned him down?"

"I didn't give him a chance," Saxon confessed. "Anyway Del Hancock and Aunt Sadie got married next day. And they were very happy afterward, only she died. And after that he was killed, with General Custer and all the rest, by the Indians. He was an old man by then, but I guess he got his share of Indians before they got him. Men like him always died fighting, and they took their dead with them. I used to know Al Stanley when I was a little girl. He was a gambler, but he was game. A railroad man shot him in the back when he was sitting at a table. That shot killed him, too. He died in about two seconds. But before he died he'd pulled his gun and put three bullets into the man that killed him."

"I don't like fightin'," Mary protested. "It makes me nervous. Bert gives me the willies the way he's always lookin' for trouble. There ain't no sense in it."

"And I wouldn't give a snap of my fingers for a man without fighting spirit," Saxon answered. "Why, we wouldn't be here to-day if it wasn't for the fighting spirit of our people before us."

"You've got the real goods of a fighter in Billy," Bert assured her; "a yard long and a yard wide and genuine A Number One, long-fleeced wool. Billy's a Mohegan with a scalp-lock, that's what he is. And when he gets his mad up it's a case of get out from under or something will fall on you—hard."
"Just like that," Mary added.

Billy, who had taken no part in the conversation, got up, glanced into the bedroom off the kitchen, went into the parlour and the bedroom off the parlour, then returned and stood gazing with puzzled brows into the kitchen bedroom.

"What's eatin' you, old man," Bertie queried. "You look as though you'd lost something or was markin' a three-way ticket. What you got on your chest? Cough it up."

"Why, I'm just thinkin' where in Sam Hill's the bed an' stuff for the back bedroom."

"There isn't any," Saxon explained. "We didn't order any."

"Then I'll see about it to-morrow."

"What d'ye want another bed for?" asked Bert. "Ain't one bed enough for the two of you?"

"You shut up, Bert!" Mary cried. "Don't get raw."

"Whoa, Mary!" Bert grinned. "Back up. You're in the wrong stall as usual."

"We don't need that room," Saxon was saying to Billy. "And so I didn't plan any furniture. That money went to buy better carpets and a better stove."

Billy came over to her, lifted her from the chair, and seated himself with her on his knees.

"That's right, little girl. I'm glad you did. The best for us every time. And to-morrow night I want you to run up with me to Salinger's an' pick out a good bedroom set an' carpet for that room. And it must be good. Nothin' snide."

"It will cost fifty dollars," she objected.

"That's right," he nodded. "Make it cost fifty dollars
and not a cent less. We're goin' to have the best. And what's the good of an empty room? It'd make the house look cheap. Why, I go around now, seein' this little nest just as it grows an' softens, day by day, from the day we paid the cash money down an' nailed the keys. Why, almost every moment I'm drivin' the horses, all day long, I just keep on seein' this nest. And when we're married, I'll go on seein' it. And I want to see it complete. If that room'd be bare-floored an' empty, I'd see nothin' but it and its bare floor all day long. I'd be cheated. The house'd be a lie. Look at them curtains you put up in it, Saxon. That's to make believe to the neighbours that it's furnished. Saxon, them curtains are lyin' about that room, makin' a noise for everyone to hear that that room's furnished. Nitsky for us. I'm goin' to see that them curtains tell the truth."

"You might rent it," Bert suggested. "You're close to the railroad yards, and it's only two blocks to a restaurant."

"Not on your life. I ain't marryin' Saxon to take in lodgers. If I can't take care of her, d'ye know what I'll do?—Go down to Long Wharf, say 'Here goes nothin','' an' jump into the bay with a stone tied to my neck. Ain't I right, Saxon?"

It was contrary to her prudent judgment, but it fanned her pride. She threw her arms around her lover's neck, and said, ere she kissed him:

"You're the boss, Billy. What you say goes, and always will go."

"Listen to that!" Bert gibed to Mary. "That's the stuff. Saxon's onto her job."

"I guess we'll talk things over together first before ever I do anything," Billy was saying to Saxon.
"Listen to that," Mary triumphed. "You bet the man that marries me'll have to talk things over first."

"Billy's only givin' her hot air," Bert plagued. "They all do it before they're married."

Mary sniffed contemptuously.

"I'll bet Saxon leads him around by the nose. And I'm goin' to say, loud an' strong, that I'll lead the man around by the nose that marries me."

"Not if you love him," Saxon interposed.

"All the more reason," Mary pursued.

Bert assumed an expression and attitude of mournful dejection.

"Now you see why me an' Mary don't get married," he said. "I'm some big Indian myself, an' I'll be everlastingly jiggeroosed if I put up for a wigwam I can't be boss of."

"And I'm no squaw," Mary retaliated, "an' I wouldn't marry a big buck Indian if all the rest of the men in the world was dead."

"Well this big buck Indian ain't asked you yet."

"He knows what he'd get if he did."

"And after that maybe he'll think twice before he does ask you."

Saxon, intent on diverting the conversation into pleasanter channels, clapped her hands as if with sudden recollection.

"Oh! I forgot! I want to show you something." From her purse she drew a slender ring of plain gold and passed it around. "My mother's wedding ring. I've worn it around my neck always, like a locket. I cried for it so in the orphan asylum that the matron gave it back for me to wear. And now, just to think, after next Tuesday I'll
be wearing it on my finger. Look, Billy, see the engraving on the inside."

"C to D, 1879," he read.

"Carlton to Daisy—Carlton was my father's first name. And now, Billy, you've got to get it engraved for you and me."

Mary was all eagerness and delight.

"Oh, it's fine," she cried. "W to S, 1907."

Billy considered a moment.

"No, that wouldn't be right, because I'm not giving it to Saxon."

"I'll tell you what," Saxon said. "W and S."

"Nope," Billy shook his head. "S and W, because you come first with me."

"If I come first with you, you come first with us. Billy, dear, I insist on W and S."

"You see," Mary said to Bert. "Having her own way and leading him by the nose already."

Saxon acknowledged the sting.

"Anyway you want, Billy," she surrendered.

His arms tightened about her.

"We'll talk it over first, I guess."

### CHAPTER XIV.

Sarah was conservative. Worse, she had crystallised at the end of her love-time with the coming of her first child. After that she was as set in her ways as plaster in a mould. Her mould was the prejudices and notions of her girlhood and the house she lived in. So habitual was she that any change in the customary round assumed the proportions of a revolution. Tom had gone through many of these revolutions, three of them when he moved
house. Then his stamina broke, and he never moved house again.

So it was that Saxon had held back the announcement of her approaching marriage until it was unavoidable. She expected a scene, and she got it.

"A prizefighter, a hoodlum, a plug-ugly," Sarah sneered, after she had exhausted herself of all calamitous forecasts of her own future and the future of her children in the absence of Saxon's weekly four dollars and a half.

"I don't know what your mother'd thought if she lived to see the day when you took up with a tough like Bill Roberts. Bill! Why, your mother was too refined to associate with a man that was called Bill. And all I can say is you can say good-bye to silk stockings and your three pair of shoes. It won't be long before you'll think yourself lucky to go sloppin' around in Congress gaiters and cotton stockin's two pair for a quarter."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of Billy not being able to keep me in all kinds of shoes," Saxon retorted with a proud toss of her head.

"You don't know what you're talkin' about." Sarah paused to laugh in mirthless discordance. "Watch for the babies to come. They come faster than wages raise these days."

"But we're not going to have any babies . . . that is, at first. Not until after the furniture is all paid for anyway."

"Wise in your generation, eh? In my days girls were more modest than to know anything about disgraceful subjects."

"As babies?" Saxon queried, with a touch of gentle malice.

"Yes, as babies."
"The first I knew that babies were disgraceful. Why, Sarah, you, with your five, how disgraceful you have been. Billy and I have decided not to be half as disgraceful. We're only going to have two—a boy and a girl."

Tom chuckled, but held the peace by hiding his face in his coffee cup. Sarah, though checked by this flank attack, was herself an old hand in the art. So temporary was the set-back that she scarcely paused ere hurling her assault from a new angle.

"An' marryin' so quick, all of a sudden, eh? If that ain't suspicious, nothin' is. I don't know what young women's comin' to. They ain't decent, I tell you. They ain't decent. That's what comes of Sunday dancin' an' all the rest. Young women nowadays are like a lot of animals. Such fast an' looseness I never saw . . . ."

Saxon was white with anger, but while Sarah wandered on in her diatribe, Tom managed to wink privily and prodigiously at his sister and to implore her to help in keeping the peace.

"It's all right, kid sister," he comforted Saxon when they were alone. "There's no use talkin' to Sarah. Bill Roberts is a good boy. I know a lot about him. It does you proud to get him for a husband. You're bound to be happy with him . . . ." His voice sank, and his face seemed suddenly to be very old and tired as he went on anxiously. "Take warning from Sarah. Don't nag. Whatever you do, don't nag. Don't give him a perpetual-motion line of chin. Kind of let him talk once in awhile. Men have some horse sense, though Sarah don't know it. Why, Sarah actually loves me, though she don't make a noise like it. The thing for you is to love your husband, and, by thunder, to make a noise of lovin' him, too. And then you can kid him into doing 'most anything you want."
Let him have his way once in awhile, and he'll let you have youn'. But you just go on lovin' him, and leanin' on his judgment—he's no fool—and you'll be all hunky-dory. I'm scared from goin' wrong, what of Sarah. But I'd sooner be loved into not going wrong."

"Oh, I'll do it, Tom," Saxon nodded, smiling through the tears his sympathy had brought into her eyes. "And on top of it I'm going to do something else. I'm going to make Billy love me and just keep on loving me. And then I won't have to kid him into doing some of the things I want. He'll do them because he loves me, you see."

"You got the right idea, Saxon. Stick with it, an' you'll win out."

Later, when she had put on her hat to start for the laundry, she found Tom waiting for her at the corner.

"An', Saxon," he said, hastily and haltingly, "you won't take anything I've said . . . you know . . . about Sarah . . . as bein' in any way disloyal to her? She's a good woman, an' faithful. An' her life ain't so easy by a long shot. I'd bite out my tongue before I'd say anything against her. I guess all folks have their troubles. It's hell to be poor, ain't it?"

"You've been awful good to me, Tom. I can never forget it. And I know Sarah means sight. She does do her best."

"I won't be able to give you a wedding present," her brother ventured apologetically. "Sarah won't hear of it. Says we didn't get none from my folks when we got married. But I got something for you just the same. A surprise. You'd never guess it."

Saxon waited.

"When you told me you was goin' to get married, I
just happened to think of it, an’ wrote to brother George, askin’ him for it for you. An’ by thunder he sent it by express. I didn’t tell you because I didn’t know but maybe he’d sold it. He did sell the silver spurs. He needed the money, I guess. But the other, I had it sent to the shop so as not to bother Sarah, an’ I sneaked it in last night an’ hid it in the woodshed.”

“Oh, it is something of my father’s! What is it? Oh, what is it?”

“His army sword.”

“The one he wore on his roan war horse! Oh, Tom, you couldn’t give me a better present. Let’s go back now. I want to see it. We can slip in the back way. Sarah’s washing in the kitchen, and she won’t begin hanging out for an hour.”

“I spoke to Sarah about lettin’ you take the old chest of drawers that was your mother’s,” Tom whispered, as they stole along the narrow alley between the houses. “Only she got on her high horse. Said that Daisy was as much my mother as yours, even if we did have different fathers, and that the chest had always belonged in Daisy’s family and not Captain Kit’s, an’ that it was mine, an’ what was mine she had some say-so about.”

“It’s all right,” Saxon reassured him. “She sold it to me last night. She was waiting up for me when I got home with fire in her eye.”

“Yep, she was on the warpath all day after I mentioned it. How much did you give her for it?”

“Six dollars.”

“Robbery—it ain’t worth it,” Tom groaned. “It’s all cracked at one end and as old as the hills.”

“I’d have given ten dollars for it. I’d have given ’most anything for it, Tom. It was mother’s, you
know. I remember it in her room when she was still alive."

In the woodshed Tom resurrected the hidden treasure and took off the wrapping paper. Appeared a rusty, steel-scabbarded sabre of the heavy type carried by cavalry officers in Civil War days. It was attached to a moth-eaten sash of thick-woven crimson silk from which hung heavy silk tassels. Saxon almost seized it from her brother in her eagerness. She drew forth the blade and pressed her lips to the steel.

It was her last day at the laundry. She was to quit work that evening for good. And the next afternoon, at five, she and Billy were to go before a justice of the peace and be married. Bert and Mary were to be the witnesses, and after that the four were to go to a private room in Barnum's Restaurant for the wedding supper. That over, Bert and Mary would proceed to a dance at Myrtle Hall, while Billy and Saxon would take the Eighth Street car to Seventh and Pine. Honeymoons are infrequent in the working class. The next morning Billy must be at the stable at his regular hour to drive his team out.

All the women in the fancy starch room knew it was Saxon's last day. Many exulted for her, and not a few were envious of her, in that she had won a husband and to freedom from the suffocating slavery of the ironing board. Much of bantering she endured; such was the fate of every girl who married out of the fancy starch room. But Saxon was too happy to be hurt by the teasing, a great deal of which was gross, but all of which was good-natured.

In the steam that arose from under her iron, and on
the surfaces of the dainty lawns and muslins that flew under her hands, she kept visioning herself in the Pine Street cottage; and steadily she hummed under her breath her paraphrase of the latest popular song:

"And when I work, and when I work,
I'll always work for Billy."

By three in the afternoon the strain of the piece-workers in the humid, heated room grew tense. Elderly women gasped and sighed; the colour went out of the cheeks of the young women, their faces became drawn and dark circles formed under their eyes; but all held on with weary, unabated speed. The tireless, vigilant forewoman kept a sharp lookout for incipient hysteria, and once led a narrow-chested, stoop-shouldered young thing out of the place in time to prevent a collapse.

Saxon was startled by the wildest scream of terror she had ever heard. The tense thread of human resolution snapped; wills and nerves broke down, and a hundred women suspended their irons or dropped them. It was Mary who had screamed so terribly, and Saxon saw a strange black animal flapping great claw-like wings and nestling on Mary's shoulder. With the scream, Mary crouched down, and the strange creature, darting into the air, fluttered full into the startled face of a woman at the next board. This woman promptly screamed and fainted. Into the air again, the flying thing darted hither and thither, while the shrieking, shrinking women threw up their arms, tried to run away along the aisles, or cowered under their ironing boards.

"It's only a bat!" the forewoman shouted. She was furious. "Ain't you ever seen a bat? It won't eat you!"

But they were ghetto people, and were not to be
quieted. Some woman who could not see the cause of the uproar, out of her overwrought apprehension raised the cry of fire and precipitated the panic rush for the doors. All of them were screaming the stupid, soul-sickening high note of terror, drowning the forewoman’s voice. Saxon had been merely startled at first, but the screaming panic broke her grip on herself and swept her away. Though she did not scream, she fled with the rest. When this horde of crazed women debouched on the next department, those who worked there joined in the stampede to escape from they knew not what danger. In ten minutes the laundry was deserted, save for a few men wandering about with hand grenades in futile search for the cause of the disturbance.

The forewoman was stout, but indomitable. Swept along half the length of an aisle by the terror-stricken women, she had broken her way back through the rout and quickly caught the light-blinded visitant in a clothes basket.

"Maybe I don’t know what God looks like, but take it from me I’ve seen a tintype of the devil," Mary gurgled, emotionally fluttering back and forth between laughter and tears.

But Saxon was angry with herself, for she had been as frightened as the rest in that wild flight for out-of-doors.

"We’re a lot of fools," she said. "It was only a bat. I’ve heard about them. They live in the country. They wouldn’t hurt a fly. They can’t see in the daytime. That was what was the matter with this one. It was only a bat."

"Huh, you can’t string me," Mary replied. "It was the devil." She sobbed a moment, and then laughed hysterically again. "Did you see Mrs. Bergstrom faint?"
And it only touched her in the face. Why, it was on my shoulder and touching my bare neck like the hand of a corpse. And I didn’t faint.” She laughed again. “I guess, maybe, I was too scared to faint.”

“Come on back,” Saxon urged. “We’ve lost half an hour.”

“Not me. I’m goin’ home after that, if they fire me. I couldn’t iron for sour apples now, I’m that shaky.”

One woman had broken a leg, another an arm, and a number nursed milder bruises and bruises. No bullying nor entreating of the forewoman could persuade the women to return to work. They were too upset and nervous, and only here and there could one be found brave enough to re-enter the building for the hats and lunch baskets of the others. Saxon was one of the handful that returned and worked till six o’clock.

CHAPTER XV.

“Why, Bert!—you’re squiffed!” Mary cried reproachfully.

The four were at the table in the private room at Barnum’s. The wedding supper, simple enough, but seemingly too expensive to Saxon, had been eaten. Bert, in his hand a glass of California red wine, which the management supplied for fifty cents a bottle, was on his feet endeavouring a speech. His face was flushed; his black eyes were feverishly bright.

“You’ve ben drinkin’ before you met me,” Mary continued. “I can see it stickin’ out all over you.”

“Consult an oculist, my dear,” he replied. “Bertram is himself to-night. An’ he is here, arisin’ to his feet to
give the glad hand to his old pal. ——Bill, old man, here's to you. It's how-de-do an' good-bye, I guess. You're a married man now, Bill, an' you got to keep regular hours. No more runnin' around with the boys. You gotta take care of yourself, an' get your life insured, an' take out an accident policy, an' join a buildin' an' loan society, an' a buryin' association—"

"Now you shut up, Bert," Mary broke in. "You don't talk about buryin's at weddings. You oughta be ashamed of yourself."

"Whoa, Mary! Back up! I said what I said because I meant it. I ain't thinkin' what Mary thinks. What I was thinkin' . . . Let me tell you what I was thinkin'. I said buryin' association, didn't I? Well, it was not with the idea of castin' gloom over this merry gatherin'. Far be it. . . ."

He was so evidently seeking a way out of his predicament, that Mary tossed her head triumphantly. This acted as a spur to his reeling wits.

"Let me tell you why," he went on. "Because, Bill, you got such an all-fired pretty wife, that's why. All the fellows is crazy over her, an' when they get to runnin' after her, what'll you be doin'? You'll be gettin' busy. And then won't you need a buryin' association to bury 'em? I just guess yes. That was the compliment to your good taste in skirts I was tryin' to come across with when Mary butted in."

His glittering eyes rested for a moment in bantering triumph on Mary.

"Who says I'm squiffed? Me? Not on your life. I'm seein' all things in a clear white light. An' I see Bill there, my old friend Bill. An' I don't see two Bills."
I see only one. Bill was never two-faced in his life. Bill, old man, when I look at you there in the married harness, I'm sorry—" He ceased abruptly and turned on Mary. "Now don't go up in the air, old girl. I'm onto my job. My grandfather was a state senator, and he could spiel graceful an' pleasin' till the cows come home. So can I. —Bill, when I look at you, I'm sorry. I repeat, I'm sorry." He glared challengingly at Mary. "For myself when I look at you an' know all the happiness you got a hammerlock on. Take it from me, you're a wise guy, bless the women. You've started well. Keep it up. Marry 'em all, bless 'em. Bill, here's to you. You're a Mohegan with a scalplock. An' you got a squaw that is some squaw, take it from me. Minnehaha, here's to you —to the two of you—an' to the papooses, too, gosh-dang them!"

He drained the glass suddenly and collapsed in his chair, blinking his eyes across at the wedded couple while tears trickled unheeded down his cheeks. Mary's hand went out soothingly to his, completing his break-down.

"By God, I got a right to cry," he sobbed. "I'm losin' my best friend, ain't I? It'll never be the same again . . . never. When I think of the fun, an' scrapes, an' good times Bill an' me has had together, I could darn near hate you, Saxon, sittin' there with your hand in his."

"Cheer up, Bert," she laughed gently. "Look at whose hand you are holding."

"Aw, it's only one of his cryin' jags," Mary said, with a harshness that her free hand belied as it caressed his hair with soothing strokes. "Buck up, Bert. Everything's all right. And now it's up to Bill to say something after your dandy spiel."
Bert recovered himself quickly with another glass of wine.

"Kick in, Bill," he cried. "It's your turn now."

"I'm no hot-air artist," Billy grumbled. "What'll I say, Saxon? They ain't no use tellin' 'em how happy we are. They know that."

"Tell them we're always going to be happy," she said. "And thank them for all their good wishes, and we both wish them the same. And we're always going to be together, like old times, the four of us. And tell them they're invited down to 507 Pine Street next Sunday for Sunday dinner. ——And, Mary, if you want to come Saturday night you can sleep in the spare bedroom."

"You've told'm yourself, better'n I could." Billy clapped his hands. "You did yourself proud, an' I guess they ain't much to add to it, but just the same I'm goin' to pass them a hot one."

He stood up, his hand on his glass. His clear blue eyes, under the dark brows and framed by the dark lashes, seemed a deeper blue, and accentuated the blondness of hair and skin. The smooth cheeks were rosy—not with wine, for it was only his second glass—but with health and joy. Saxon, looking up at him, thrilled with pride in him, he was so well-dressed, so strong, so handsome, so clean-looking—her man-boy. And she was aware of pride in herself, in her woman's desirableness that had won for her so wonderful a lover.

"Well, Bert an' Mary, here you are at Saxon's and my wedding supper. We're just goin' to take all your good wishes to heart, we wish you the same back, and when we say it we mean more than you think we mean.
Saxon an' I believe in tit for tat. So we're wishin' for the day when the table is turned clear around an' we're sittin' as guests at your weddin' supper. And then, when you come to Sunday dinner, you can both stop Saturday night in the spare bedroom. I guess I was wised up when I furnished it, eh?"

"I never thought it of you, Billy!" Mary exclaimed. "You're every bit as raw as Bert. But just the same . . ."

There was a rush of moisture to her eyes. Her voice faltered and broke. She smiled through her tears at them, then turned to look at Bert, who put his arm around her and gathered her onto his knees.

When they left the restaurant, the four walked to Eighth and Broadway, where they stopped beside the electric car. Bert and Billy were awkward and silent, oppressed by a strange aloofness. But Mary embraced Saxon with fond anxiousness.

"It's all right, dear," Mary whispered. "Don't be scared. It's all right. Think of all the other women in the world."

The conductor clanged the gong, and the two couples separated in a sudden hubbub of farewell.

"Oh, you Mohegan!" Bert called after, as the car got under way. "Oh, you Minnehaha!"

"Remember what I said," was Mary's parting to Saxon.

The car stopped at Seventh and Pine, the terminus of the line. It was only a little over two blocks to the cottage. On the front steps Billy took the key from his pocket.

"Funny, isn't it?" he said, as the key turned in the lock. "You an' me. Just you an' me."
While he lighted the lamp in the parlour, Saxon was taking off her hat. He went into the bedroom and lighted the lamp there, then turned back and stood in the doorway. Saxon, still unaccountably fumbling with her hatpins, stole a glance at him. He held out his arms.

"Now," he said.

She came to him, and in his arms he could feel her trembling.
CHAPTER I

The first evening after the marriage night Saxon met Billy at the door as he came up the front steps. After their embrace, and as they crossed the parlour hand in hand toward the kitchen, he filled his lungs through his nostrils with audible satisfaction.

"My, but this house smells good, Saxon! It ain't the coffee—I can smell that, too. It's the whole house. It smells . . . well, it just smells good to me, that's all."

He washed and dried himself at the sink, while she heated the frying pan on the front hole of the stove with the lid off. As he wiped his hands he watched her keenly, and cried out with approbation as she dropped the steak in the frying pan.

"Where'd you learn to cook steak on a dry, hot pan? It's the only way, but darn few women seem to know about it."

As she took the cover off a second frying pan and stirred the savory contents with a kitchen knife, he came behind her, passed his arms under her arm-pits with down-drooping hands upon her breasts, and bent his head over her shoulder till cheek touched cheek.

"Um—um—um-m-m! Fried potatoes with onions like mother used to make. Me for them. Don't they smell good, though! Um—um—m-m-m!"
The pressure of his hands relaxed, and his cheek slid caressingly past hers as he started to release her. Then his hands closed down again. She felt his lips on her hair and heard his advertised inhalation of delight.

"Um—um—m-m-m! Don’t you smell good yourself, though! I never understood what they meant when they said a girl was sweet. I know, now. And you’re the sweetest I ever knew."

His joy was boundless. When he returned from combing his hair in the bedroom and sat down at the small table opposite her, he paused with knife and fork in hand.

"Say, bein’ married is a whole lott more than it’s cracked up to be by most married folks. Honest to God, Saxon, we can show ’em a few. We can give ’em cards and spades an’ little casino an’ win out on big casino and the aces. I’ve got but one kick comin’.”

The instant apprehension in her eyes provoked a chuckle from him.

"An’ that is that we didn’t get married quick enough. Just think. I’ve lost a whole week of this.”

Her eyes shone with gratitude and happiness, and in her heart she solemnly pledged herself that never in all their married life would it be otherwise.

Supper finished, she cleared the table and began washing the dishes at the sink. When he evinced the intention of wiping them, she caught him by the lapels of the coat and backed him into a chair.

"You’ll sit right there, if you know what’s good for you. Now be good and mind what I say. Also, you will smoke a cigarette. ——No; you’re not going to watch me. There’s the morning paper beside you. And if you don’t hurry to read it, I’ll be through these dishes before you’ve started.”
As he smoked and read, she continually glanced across at him from her work. One thing more, she thought—slippers; and then the picture of comfort and content would be complete.

Several minutes later Billy put the paper aside with a sigh.

"It's no use," he complained. "I can't read."

"What's the matter?" she teased. "Eyes weak?"

"Nope. They're sore, and there's only one thing to do 'em any good, an' that's lookin' at you."

"All right, then, baby Billy; I'll be through in a jiffy."

When she had washed the dish towel and scalded out the sink, she took off her kitchen apron, came to him, and kissed first one eye and then the other.

"How are they now. Cured?"

"They feel some better already."

She repeated the treatment.

"And now?"

"Still better."

"And now?"

"Almost well."

After he had adjudged them well, he ouched and informed her that there was still some hurt in the right eye.

In the course of treating it, she cried out as in pain. Billy was all alarm.

"What is it? What hurt you?"

"My eyes. They're hurting like sixty."

And Billy became physician for awhile and she the patient. When the cure was accomplished, she led him into the parlour, where, by the open window, they succeeded in occupying the same Morris chair. It was the most expensive comfort in the house. It had cost seven dollars and a half, and, though it was grander than any-
thing she had dreamed of possessing, the extravagance of it had worried her in a half-guilty way all day.

The salt chill of the air that is the blessing of all the bay cities after the sun goes down crept in about them. They heard the switch engines puffing in the railroad yards, and the rumbling thunder of the Seventh Street local slowing down in its run from the Mole to stop at West Oakland station. From the street came the noise of children playing in the summer night, and from the steps of the house next door the low voices of gossiping housewives.

"Can you beat it?" Billy murmured. "When I think of that six-dollar furnished room of mine, it makes me sick to think what I was missin’ all the time. But there’s one satisfaction. If I’d changed it sooner I wouldn’t a-had you. You see, I didn’t know you existed only until a couple of weeks ago."

His hand crept along her bare forearm and up and partly under the elbow-sleeve.

"Your skin’s so cool," he said. "It ain’t cold; it’s cool. It feels good to the hand."

"Pretty soon you’ll be calling me your cold-storage baby," she laughed.

"And your voice is cool," he went on. "It gives me the feeling just as your hand does when you rest it on my forehead. It’s funny. I can’t explain it. But your voice just goes all through me, cool and fine. It’s like a wind of coolness—just right. It’s like the first of the sea-breeze settin’ in in the afternoon after a scorchin’ hot morning. An’ sometimes, when you talk low, it sounds round and sweet like the ’cello in the Macdonough Theatre orchestra. And it never goes high up, or sharp, or squeaky, or scratchy, like some women’s voices when they’re mad, or
fresh, or excited, till they remind me of a bum phonograph record. Why, your voice, it just goes through me till I'm all trembling—like with the everlastin' cool of it. It's—it's straight delicious. I guess angels in heaven, if they is any, must have voices like that."

After a few minutes, in which, so inexpressible was her happiness that she could only pass her hand through his hair and cling to him, he broke out again.

"I'll tell you what you remind me of. ——Did you ever see a thoroughbred mare, all shinin' in the sun, with hair like satin an' skin so thin an' tender that the least touch of the whip leaves a mark—all fine nerves, an' delicate an' sensitive, that'll kill the toughest bronco when it comes to endurance an' that can strain a tendon in a flash or catch death-of-cold without a blanket for a night? I wanta tell you they ain't many beautifuller sights in this world. An' they're that fine-strung, an' sensitive, an' delicate. You gotta handle 'em right-side up, glass, with care. Well, that's what you remind me of. And I'm goin' to make it my job to see you get handled an' gentled in the same way. You're as different from other women as that kind of a mare is from scrub work-horse mares. You're a thoroughbred. You're clean-cut an' spirited, an' your lines . . .

"Say, d'ye know you've got some figure? Well, you have. Talk about Annette Kellerman. You can give her cards and spades. She's Australian, an' you're American, only your figure ain't. You're different. You're nifty—I don't know how to explain it. Other women ain't built like you. You belong in some other country. You're Frenchy, that's what. You're built like a French woman, an' more than that—the way you walk, move, stand up or sit down, or don't do anything."
And he, who had never been out of California, or, for that matter, had never slept a night away from his birth-town of Oakland, was right in his judgment. She was a flower of Anglo-Saxon stock, a rarity in the exceptional smallness and fineness of hand and foot and bone and grace of flesh and carriage—some throw-back across the face of time to the foraying Norman-French that had intermingled with the sturdy Saxon breed.

"And in the way you carry your clothes. They belong to you. They seem just as much part of you as the cool of your voice and skin. They're always all right an' couldn't be better. An' you know, a fellow kind of likes to be seen taggin' around with a woman like you, that wears her clothes like a dream, an' hear the other fellows say: 'Who's Bill's new skirt? She's a peach, ain't she? Wouldn't I like to win her, though.' And all that sort of talk."

And Saxon, her cheek pressed to his, knew that she was paid in full for all her midnight sewings and the torturing hours of drowsy stitching when her head nodded with the weariness of the day's toil, while she recreated for herself filched ideas from the dainty garments that had steamed under her passing iron.

"Say, Saxon, I got a new name for you. You're my Tonic Kid. That's what you are, the Tonic Kid."

"And you'll never get tired of me?" she queried.

"Tired? Why, we was made for each other."

"Isn't it wonderful, our meeting, Billy? We might never have met. It was just by accident that we did."

"We was born lucky," he proclaimed. "That's a cinch."

"Maybe it was more than luck," she ventured.
"Sure. It just had to be. It was fate. Nothing could a-kept us apart."

They sat on in a silence that was quick with unuttered love, till she felt him slowly draw her more closely and his lips come near to her ear as they whispered: "What do you say we go to bed?"

Many evenings they spent like this, varied with an occasional dance, with trips to the Orpheum and to Bell's Theatre, or to the moving picture shows, or to the Friday night band concerts in City Hall Park. Often, on Sunday, she prepared a lunch, and he drove her out into the hills behind Prince and King, whom Billy's employer was still glad to have him exercise.

Each morning Saxon was called by the alarm clock. The first morning he had insisted upon getting up with her and building the fire in the kitchen stove. She gave in the first morning, but after that she laid the fire in the evening, so that all that was required was the touching of a match to it. And in bed she compelled him to remain for a last little doze ere she called him for breakfast. For the first several weeks she prepared his lunch for him. Then, for a week, he came down to dinner. After that he was compelled to take his lunch with him. It depended on how far distant the teaming was done.

"You're not starting right with a man," Mary cautioned. "You wait on him hand and foot. You'll spoil him if you don't watch out. It's him that ought to be waitin' on you."

"He's the bread-winner," Saxon replied. "He works harder than I, and I've got more time than I know what to do with—time to burn. Besides, I want to wait on
him because I love to, and because... well, anyway, I want to."

CHAPTER II.

Despite the fastidiousness of her housekeeping, Saxon, once she had systematised it, found time and to spare on her hands. Especially during the periods in which her husband carried his lunch and there was no midday meal to prepare, she had a number of hours each day to herself. Trained for years to the routine of factory and laundry work, she could not abide this unaccustomed idleness. She could not bear to sit and do nothing, while she could not pay calls on her girlhood friends, for they still worked in factory and laundry. Nor was she acquainted with the wives of the neighbourhood, save for one strange old woman who lived in the house next door and with whom Saxon had exchanged snatches of conversation over the back yard division fence.

One time-consuming diversion of which Saxon took advantage was free and unlimited baths. In the orphan asylum and in Sarah’s house she had been used to but one bath a week. As she grew to womanhood she had attempted more frequent baths. But the effort proved disastrous, arousing, first, Sarah’s derision, and next, her wrath. Sarah had crystallised in the era of the weekly Saturday night bath, and any increase in this cleansing function was regarded by her as putting on airs and as an insinuation against her own cleanliness. Also, it was an extravagant misuse of fuel, and occasioned extra towels in the family wash. But now, in Billy’s house, with her own stove, her own tub and towels and soap, and no one to say her nay, Saxon was guilty of a daily
orgy. True, it was only a common washtub that she placed on the kitchen floor and filled by hand; but it was a luxury that had taken her twenty-four years to achieve. It was from the strange woman next door that Saxon received a hint, dropped in casual conversation, of what proved the culminating joy of bathing. A simple thing—a few drops of druggist's ammonia in the water; but Saxon had never heard of it before.

She was destined to learn much from the strange woman. The acquaintance had begun one day when Saxon, in the back yard, was hanging out a couple of corset covers and several pieces of her finest undergarments. The woman, leaning on the rail of her back porch, had caught her eye, and nodded, as it seemed to Saxon, half to her and half to the underlinen on the line.

"You're newly married, aren't you?" the woman asked. "I'm Mrs. Higgins. I prefer my first name, which is Mercedes."

"And I'm Mrs. Roberts," Saxon replied, thrilling to the newness of the designation on her tongue. "My first name is Saxon."

"Strange name for a Yankee woman," the other commented.

"Oh, but I'm not Yankee," Saxon exclaimed. "I'm Californian."

"La la," laughed Mercedes Higgins. "I forgot I was in America. In other lands all Americans are called Yankees. It is true that you are newly married?"

Saxon nodded with a happy sigh. Mercedes sighed, too.

"Oh, you happy, soft, beautiful young thing. I could envy you to hatred—you with all the man-world ripe to be twisted about your pretty little fingers. And you
don't realise your fortune. No one does until it's too late."

Saxon was puzzled and disturbed, though she answered readily:

"Oh, but I do know how lucky I am. I have the finest man in the world."

Mercedes Higgins sighed again and changed the subject. She nodded her head at the garments.

"I see you like pretty things. It is good judgment for a young woman. They're the bait for men—half the weapons in the battle. They win men, and they hold men—" She broke off to demand almost fiercely: "And you, you would keep your husband?—always, always—if you can?"

"I intend to. I will make him love me always and always."

Saxon ceased, troubled and surprised that she should be so intimate with a stranger.

"'Tis a queer thing, this love of men," Mercedes said. "And a failing of all women is it to believe they know men like books. And with breaking hearts, die they do, most women, out of their ignorance of men and still foolishly believing they know all about them. Oh, la la, the little fools. And so you say, little new-married woman, that you will make your man love you always and always? And so they all say it, knowing men and the queerness of men's love the way they think they do. Easier it is to win the capital prize in the little Louisiana, but the little new-married women never know it until too late. But you—you have begun well. Stay by your pretties and your looks. 'Twas so you won your man, 'tis so you'll hold him. But that is not all. Some time I will talk with you and tell what few women trouble to know, what

The Valley of the Moon. I.
few women ever come to know. ——Saxon!—’tis a strong, handsome name for a woman. But you don’t look it. Oh, I’ve watched you. French you are, with a Frenchiness beyond dispute. Tell Mr. Roberts I congratulate him on his good taste.”

She paused, her hand on the knob of her kitchen door. “And come and see me some time. You will never be sorry. I can teach you much. Come in the afternoon. My man is night watchman in the yards and sleeps of mornings. He’s sleeping now.”

Saxon went into the house puzzling and pondering. Anything but ordinary was this lean, dark-skinned woman, with the face withered as if scorched in great heats, and the eyes, large and black, that flashed and flamed with advertisement of an unquenched inner conflagration. Old she was—Saxon caught herself debating anywhere between fifty and seventy; and her hair, which had once been blackest black, was streaked plentifully with grey. Especially noteworthy to Saxon was her speech. Good English it was, better than that to which Saxon was accustomed. Yet the woman was not American. On the other hand, she had no perceptible accent. Rather were her words touched by a foreignness so elusive that Saxon could not analyse nor place it.

“Uh, huh,” Billy said, when she had told him that evening of the day’s event. “So she’s Mrs. Higgins? He’s a watchman. He’s got only one arm. Old Higgins an’ her—a funny bunch, the two of them. The people’s scared of her—some of ’em. The Dagoes an’ some of the old Irish dames thinks she’s a witch. Won’t have a thing to do with her. Bert was tellin’ me about it. Why, Saxon, d’ye know, some of ’em believe if she was to get mad at ’em, or didn’t like their mugs, or anything, that all she’s
got to do is look at 'em an' they'll curl up their toes an' croak. One of the fellows that works at the stable—you've seen 'm—Henderson—he lives around the corner on Fifth—he says she's bughouse."

"Oh, I don't know," Saxon defended her new acquaintance. "She may be crazy, but she says the same thing you're always saying. She says my form is not American but French."

"Then I take my hat off to her," Billy responded. "No wheels in her head if she says that. Take it from me, she's a wise gazabo."

"And she speaks good English, Billy, like a schoolteacher, like what I guess my mother used to speak. She's educated."

"She ain't no fool, or she wouldn't a-sized you up the way she did."

"She told me to congratulate you on your good taste in marrying me," Saxon laughed.

"She did, eh? Then give her my love. Me for her, because she knows a good thing when she sees it, an' she ought to be congratulating you on your good taste in me."

It was on another day that Mercedes Higgins nodded, half to Saxon, and half to the dainty women's things Saxon was hanging on the line.

"I've been worrying over your washing, little new-wife," was her greeting.

"Oh, but I've worked in the laundry for years," Saxon said quickly.

Mercedes sneered scornfully.

"Steam laundry. That's business, and it's stupid. Only common things should go to a steam laundry. That is their punishment for being common. But the pretties!"
the dainties! the flimsies!—la la, my dear, their washing is an art. It requires wisdom, genius, and discretion fine as the clothes are fine. I will give you a recipe for home-made soap. It will not harden the texture. It will give whiteness, and softness, and life. You can wear them long, and fine white clothes are to be loved a long time. Oh, fine washing is a refinement, an art. It is to be done as an artist paints a picture, or writes a poem, with love, holily, a true sacrament of beauty.

"I shall teach you better ways, my dear, better ways than you Yankees know. I shall teach you new pretties." She nodded her head to Saxon's underlinen on the line. "I see you make little laces. I know all laces—the Belgian, the Maltese, the Mechlin—oh, the many, many loves of laces! I shall teach you some of the simpler ones so that you can make them for yourself, for your brave man you are to make love you always and always."

On her first visit to Mercedes Higgins, Saxon received the recipe for home-made soap and her head was filled with a minutiae of instruction in the art of fine washing. Further, she was fascinated and excited by all the newness and strangeness of the withered old woman who blew upon her the breath of wider lands and seas beyond the horizon.

"You are Spanish?" Saxon ventured.

"No, and yes, and neither, and more. My father was Irish, my mother Peruvian-Spanish. 'Tis after her I took, in colour and looks. In other ways after my father, the blue-eyed Celt with the fairy song on his tongue and the restless feet that stole the rest of him away to far-wandering. And the feet of him that he lent me have led me away on as wide far roads as ever his led him."

Saxon remembered her school geography, and with her
mind's eye she saw a certain outline map of a continent with jiggly wavering parallel lines that denoted coast.

"Oh," she cried, "then you are South American."

Mercedes shrugged her shoulders.

"I had to be born somewhere. It was a great ranch, my mother's. You could put all Oakland in one of its smallest pastures."

Mercedes Higgins sighed cheerfully and for the time was lost in retrospection. Saxon was curious to hear more about this woman who must have lived much as the Spanish-Californians had lived in the old days.

"You received a good education," she said tentatively. "Your English is perfect."

"Ah, the English came afterward, and not in school. But, as it goes, yes, a good education in all things but the most important—men. That, too, came afterward. And little my mother dreamed—she was a grand lady, what you call a cattle-queen—little she dreamed my fine education was to fit me in the end for a night watchman's wife." She laughed genuinely at the grotesqueness of the idea. "Night watchman, labourers, why, we had hundreds, yes, thousands that toiled for us. The peons—they are like what you call slaves, almost, and the cowboys, who could ride two hundred miles between side and side of the ranch. And in the big house servants beyond remembering or counting. La la, in my mother's house were many servants."

Mercedes Higgins was voluble as a Greek, and wandered on in reminiscence.

"But our servants were lazy and dirty. The Chinese are the servants par excellence. So are the Japanese, when you find a good one, but not so good as the Chinese. The Japanese maidservants are pretty and merry, but you
never know the moment they'll leave you. The Hindoos are not strong, but very obedient. They look upon sahibs and memsahibs as gods! I was a memsahib— which means woman. I once had a Russian cook who always spat in the soup for luck. It was very funny. But we put up with it. It was the custom."

"How you must have travelled to have such strange servants!" Saxon encouraged.

The old woman laughed corroboration.

"And the strangest of all, down in the South Seas, black slaves, little kinky-haired cannibals with bones through their noses. When they did not mind, or when they stole, they were tied up to a cocoanut palm behind the compound and lashed with whips of rhinoceros hide. They were from an island of cannibals and head-hunters, and they never cried out. It was their pride. There was little Vibi, only twelve years old—he waited on me—and when his back was cut in shreds and I wept over him, he would only laugh and say, 'Short time little bit I take 'm head belong big fella white marster.' ——That was Bruce Anstey, the Englishman who whipped him. But little Vibi never got the head. He ran away and the bushmen cut off his own head and ate every bit of him."

Saxon chilled, and her face was grave; but Mercedes Higgins rattled on.

"Ah, those were wild, gay, savage days. Would you believe it, my dear, in three years those Englishmen of the plantation drank up oceans of champagne and Scotch whisky and dropped thirty thousand pounds on the adventure. Not dollars—pounds, which means one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. They were princes while it lasted. It was splendid, glorious. It was mad, mad. I
sold half my beautiful jewels in New Zealand before I got started again. Bruce Anstey blew out his brains at the end. Roger went mate on a trader with a black crew, for eight pounds a month. And Jack Gilbraith—he was the rarest of them all. His people were wealthy and titled, and he went home to England and sold cat's meat all around their big house till they gave him more money to start a rubber plantation in the East Indies somewhere, on Sumatra, I think—or was it New Guinea?"

And Saxon, back in her own kitchen and preparing supper for Billy, wondered what lusts and rapacities had led the old, burnt-faced woman from the big Peruvian ranch, through all the world, to West Oakland and Barry Higgins. Old Barry was not the sort who would fling away his share of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, much less ever attain to such opulence. Besides, she had mentioned the names of other men, but not his.

Much more Mercedes had talked, in snatches and fragments. There seemed no great country nor city of the old world or the new in which she had not been. She had even been in Klondike, ten years before, in a half-dozen flashing sentences picturing the fur-clad, be-moccasined miners sowing the bar-room floors with thousands of dollars' worth of gold dust. Always, so it seemed to Saxon, Mrs. Higgins had been with men to whom money was as water.

**Chapter III.**

Saxon, brooding over her problem of retaining Billy's love, of never staling the freshness of their feeling for each other and of never descending from the heights which at present they were treading, felt herself impelled toward
Mrs. Higgins. She knew; surely she must know. Had she not hinted knowledge beyond ordinary women's knowledge?

Several weeks went by, during which Saxon was often with her. But Mrs. Higgins talked of all other matters, taught Saxon the making of certain simple laces, and instructed her in the arts of washing and of marketing. And then, one afternoon, Saxon found Mrs. Higgins more voluble than usual, with words, clean-uttered, that rippled and tripped in their haste to escape. Her eyes were flaming. So flamed her face. Her words were flames. There was a smell of liquor in the air and Saxon knew that the old woman had been drinking. Nervous and frightened, at the same time fascinated, Saxon hemstitched a linen handkerchief intended for Billy and listened to Mercedes' wild flow of speech.

"Listen, my dear. I shall tell you about the world of men. Do not be stupid like all your people, who think me foolish and a witch with the evil eye. Ha! ha! When I think of silly Maggie Donahue pulling the shawl across her baby's face when we pass each other on the sidewalk! A witch I have been, 'tis true, but my witchery was with men. Oh, I am wise, very wise, my dear. I shall tell you of women's ways with men, and of men's ways with women, the best of them and the worst of them. Of the brute that is in all men, of the queerness of them that breaks the hearts of stupid women who do not understand. And all women are stupid. I am not stupid. La la, listen.

"I am an old woman. And like a woman, I'll not tell you how old I am. Yet can I hold men. Yet would I hold men, toothless and a hundred, my nose touching my chin. Not the young men. They were mine in my young
days. But the old men, as befits my years. And well for me the power is mine. In all this world I am without kin or cash. Only have I wisdom and memories—memories that are ashes, but royal ashes, jewelled ashes. Old women, such as I, starve and shiver, or accept the pauper's dole and the pauper's shroud. Not I. I hold my man. True, 'tis only Barry Higgins—old Barry, heavy, an ox, but a male man, my dear, and queer as all men are queer. 'Tis true, he has one arm." She shrugged her shoulders. "A compensation. He cannot beat me, and old bones are tender when the round flesh thins to strings.

"But when I think of my wild young lovers, princes, mad with the madness of youth! I have lived. It is enough. I regret nothing. And with old Barry I have my surety of a bite to eat and a place by the fire. And why? Because I know men, and shall never lose my cunning to hold them. 'Tis bitter sweet, the knowledge of them, more sweet than bitter—men and men and men! Not stupid dolts, nor fat bourgeois swine of business men, but men of temperament, of flame and fire; madmen, maybe, but a lawless, royal race of madmen.

"Little wife-woman, you must learn. Variety! There lies the magic. 'Tis the golden key. 'Tis the toy that amuses. Without it in the wife, the man is a Turk; with it, he is her slave, and faithful. A wife must be many wives. If you would have your husband's love you must be all women to him. You must be ever new, with the dew of newness ever sparkling, a flower that never blooms to the fulness that fades. You must be a garden of flowers, ever new, ever fresh, ever different. And in your garden the man must never pluck the last of your posies.

"Listen, little wife-woman. In the garden of love is
a snake. It is the commonplace. Stamp on its head, or it will destroy the garden. Remember the name. Commonplace. Never be too intimate. Men only seem gross. Women are more gross than men. ——No, do not argue, little new-wife. You are an infant woman. Women are less delicate than men. Do I not know? Of their own husbands they will relate the most intimate love-secrets to other women. Men never do this of their wives. Explain it. There is only one way. In all things of love women are less delicate. It is their mistake. It is the father and the mother of the commonplace, and it is the commonplace, like a loathsome slug, that beslimes and destroys love.

"Be delicate, little wife-woman. Never be without your veil, without many veils. Veil yourself in a thousand veils, all shimmering and glittering with costly textures and precious jewels. Never let the last veil be drawn. Against the morrow array yourself with more veils, ever more veils, veils without end. Yet the many veils must not seem many. Each veil must seem the only one between you and your hungry lover who will have nothing less than all of you. Each time he must seem to get all, to tear aside the last veil that hides you. He must think so. It must not be so. Then there will be no satiety, for on the morrow he will find another last veil that has escaped him.

"Remember, each veil must seem the last and only one. Always you must seem to abandon all to his arms; always you must reserve more that on the morrow and on all the morrows you may abandon. Of such is variety, surprise, so that your man's pursuit will be everlasting, so that his eyes will look to you for newness, and not to other women. It was the freshness and the newness of your
beauty and you, the mystery of you, that won your man. When a man has plucked and smelled all the sweetness of a flower, he looks for other flowers. It is his queerness. You must ever remain a flower almost plucked yet never plucked, stored with vats of sweet unbroached though ever broached.

"Stupid women, and all are stupid, think the first winning of the man the final victory. Then they settle down and grow fat, and stale, and dead, and heartbroken. Alas, they are so stupid. But you, little infant-woman with your first victory, you must make your love-life an unending chain of victories. Each day you must win your man again. And when you have won the last victory, when you can find no more to win, then ends love. Finis is written, and your man wanders in strange gardens. Remember, love must be kept insatiable. It must have an appetite knife-edged and never satisfied. You must feed your lover well, ah, very well, most well; give, give, yet send him away hungry to come back to you for more."

Mrs. Higgins stood up suddenly and crossed out of the room. Saxon had not failed to note the litheness and grace in that lean and withered body. She watched for Mrs. Higgins' return, and knew that the litheness and grace had not been imagined.

"Scarcely have I told you the first letter in love's alphabet," said Mercedes Higgins, as she reseated herself.

In her hands was a tiny instrument, beautifully grained and richly brown, which resembled a guitar save that it bore four strings. She swept them back and forth with rhythmic forefinger and lifted a voice, thin and mellow, in a fashion of melody that was strange, and in a foreign tongue, warm-vowelled, all-vowelled, and love-exciting.
Softly throbbing, voice and strings arose on sensuous crests of song, died away to whisperings and caresses, drifted through love-dusks and twilights, or swelled again to love-cries barbarically imperious in which were woven plaintive calls and madesses of invitation and promise. It went through Saxon until she was as this instrument, swept with passional strains. It seemed to her a dream, and almost was she dizzy, when Mercedes Higgins ceased.

"If your man had clasped the last of you, and if all of you were known to him as an old story, yet, did you sing that one song, as I have sung it, yet would his arms again go out to you and his eyes grow warm with the old mad lights. Do you see? Do you understand, little wife-woman?"

Saxon could only nod, her lips too dry for speech.

"The golden *koa*, the king of woods," Mercedes was crooning over the instrument. "The *ukulelé*—that is what the Hawaiians call it, which means, my dear, the jumping flea. They are golden-fleshed, the Hawaiians, a race of lovers, all in the warm cool of the tropic night where the trade winds blow."

Again she struck the strings. She sang in another language, which Saxon deemed must be French. It was a gayly-devilish lilt, tripping and tickling. Her large eyes at times grew larger and wilder, and again narrowed in enticement and wickedness. When she ended, she looked to Saxon for a verdict.

"I don't like that one so well," Saxon said.

Mercedes shrugged her shoulders.

"They all have their worth, little infant-woman with so much to learn. There are times when men may be won with wine. There are times when men may be won with the wine of song, so queer they are. La la, so many
ways, so many ways. There are your pretties, my dear, your dainties. They are magic nets. No fisherman upon
the sea ever tangled fish more successfully than we women
with our flimsies. You are on the right path. I have
seen men enmeshed by a corset cover no prettier, no
daintier, than those of yours I have seen on the line.

“I have called the washing of fine linen an art. But
it is not for itself alone. The greatest of the arts is the
conquering of men. Love is the sum of all the arts, as
it is the reason for their existence. Listen. In all times
and ages have been women, great wise women. They did
not need to be beautiful. Greater than all woman’s beauty
was their wisdom. Princes and potentates bowed down
before them. Nations battled over them. Empires crashed
because of them. Religions were founded on them.
Aphrodite, Astarte, the worships of the night—listen, in-
fant-woman, of the great women who conquered worlds
of men.”

And thereafter Saxon listened, in a maze, to what
almost seemed a wild farrago, save that the strange mean-
ingless phrases were fraught with dim, mysterious signi-
ficance. She caught glimmerings of profundks inexpress-
sible and unthinkable that hinted connotations lawless and
terrible. The woman’s speech was a lava rush, scorching
and searing; and Saxon’s cheeks, and forehead, and neck
burned with a blush that continuously increased. She
trembled with fear, suffered qualms of nausea, thought
sometimes that she would faint, so madly reeled her
brain; yet she could not tear herself away, and sat on
and on, her sewing forgotten on her lap, staring with
inward sight upon a nightmare vision beyond all imagin-
ing. At last, when it seemed she could endure no more.
and while she was wetting her dry lips to cry out in protest, Mercedes ceased.

"And here endeth the first lesson," she said quite calmly, then laughed with a laughter that was tantalising and tormenting. "What is the matter? You are not shocked?"

"I am frightened," Saxon quavered huskily, with a half-sob of nervousness. "You frighten me. I am very foolish, and I know so little, that I had never dreamed... that."

Mercedes nodded her head comprehendingly.

"It is indeed to be frightened at," she said. "It is solemn; it is terrible; it is magnificent!"

CHAPTER IV.

Saxon had been clear-eyed all her days, though her field of vision had been restricted. Clear-eyed, from her childhood days with the saloonkeeper Cady and Cady's good-natured but unmoral spouse, she had observed, and, later, generalised much upon sex. She knew the post-nuptial problem of retaining a husband's love, as few wives of any class knew it, just as she knew the pre-nuptial problem of selecting a husband, as few girls of the working class knew it.

She had of herself developed an eminently rational philosophy of love. Instinctively, and consciously, too, she had made toward delicacy, and shunned the perils of the habitual and commonplace. Thoroughly aware she was that as she cheapened herself so did she cheapen love. Never, in the weeks of their married life, had Billy found her dowdy, or harshly irritable, or lethargic. And she had deliberately permeated her house with her personal
atmosphere of coolness, and freshness, and equableness. Nor had she been ignorant of such assets as surprise and charm. Her imagination had not been asleep, and she had been born with wisdom. In Billy she had won a prize, and she knew it. She appreciated his lover's ardour and was proud. His open-handed liberality, his desire for everything of the best, his own personal cleanliness and care of himself she recognised as far beyond the average. He was never coarse. He met delicacy with delicacy, though it was obvious to her that the initiative in all such matters lay with her and must lie with her always. He was largely unconscious of what he did and why. But she knew in all full clarity of judgment. And he was such a prize among men.

Despite her clear sight of her problem of keeping Billy a lover, and despite the considerable knowledge and experience arrayed before her mental vision, Mercedes Higgins had spread before her a vastly wider panorama. The old woman had verified her own conclusions, given her new ideas, clinched old ones, and even savagely emphasised the tragic importance of the whole problem. Much Saxon remembered of that mad preachment, much she guessed and felt, and much had been beyond her experience and understanding. But the metaphors of the veils and the flowers, and the rules of giving to abandonment with always more to abandon, she grasped thoroughly, and she was enabled to formulate a bigger and stronger love-philosophy. In the light of the revelation she re-examined the married lives of all she had ever known, and, with sharp definiteness as never before, she saw where and why so many of them had failed.

With renewed ardour Saxon devoted herself to her household, to her pretties, and to her charms. She
marketed with a keener desire for the best, though never ignoring the need for economy. From the women’s pages of the Sunday supplements, and from the women’s magazines in the free reading-room two blocks away, she gleaned many ideas for the preservation of her looks. In a systematic way she exercised the various parts of her body, and a certain period of time each day she employed in facial exercises and massage for the purpose of retaining the roundness and freshness, and firmness and colour. Billy did not know. These intimacies of the toilette were not for him. The results, only, were his. She drew books from the Carnegie Library and studied physiology and hygiene, and learned a myriad of things about herself and the ways of woman’s health that she had never been taught by Sarah, the women of the orphan asylum, nor by Mrs. Cady.

After long debate she subscribed to a woman’s magazine, the patterns and lessons of which she decided were the best suited to her taste and purse. The other women’s magazines she had access to in the free reading-room, and more than one pattern of lace and embroidery she copied by means of tracing paper. Before the lingerie windows of the uptown shops she often stood and studied; nor was she above taking advantage, when small purchases were made, of looking over the goods at the hand-embroidered underwear counters. Once, she even considered taking up with hand-painted china, but gave over the idea when she learned its expensiveness.

She slowly replaced all her simple maiden underlinen with garments which, while still simple, were wrought with beautiful French embroidery, tucks, and drawn-work. She crocheted fine edgings on the inexpensive knitted underwear she wore in winter. She made little
corset covers and chemises of fine but fairly inexpensive lawns, and, with simple flowered designs and perfect laundering, her nightgowns were always sweetly fresh and dainty. In some publication she ran across a brief printed note to the effect that French women were just beginning to wear fascinating beruffled caps at the breakfast-table. It meant nothing to her that in her case she must first prepare the breakfast. Promptly appeared in the house a yard of dotted Swiss muslin, and Saxon was deep in experimenting on patterns for herself, and in sorting her bits of laces for suitable trimmings. The resultant dainty creation won Mercedes Higgins' enthusiastic approval.

Saxon made for herself simple house slips of pretty gingham, with neat low collars turned back from her fresh round throat. She crocheted yards of laces for her underwear, and made Battenberg in abundance for her table and for the bureau. A great achievement, that aroused Billy's applause, was an Afghan for the bed. She even ventured a rag carpet, which, the women's magazines informed her, had newly returned into fashion. As a matter of course she hemstitched the best table linen and bed linen they could afford.

As the happy months went by she was never idle. Nor was Billy forgotten. When the cold weather came on she knitted him wristlets, which he always religiously wore from the house and pocketed immediately thereafter. The two sweaters she made for him, however, received a better fate, as did the slippers which she insisted on his slipping into, on the evenings they remained at home.

The hard practical wisdom of Mercedes Higgins proved of immense help, for Saxon strove with a fervour almost religious to have everything of the best and at the same
time to be saving. Here she faced the financial and economic problem of keeping house in a society where the cost of living rose faster than the wages of industry. And here the old woman taught her the science of marketing so thoroughly that she made a dollar of Billy's go half as far again as the wives of the neighbourhood made the dollars of their men go.

Invariably, on Saturday night, Billy poured his total wages into her lap. He never asked for an accounting of what she did with it, though he continually reiterated that he had never fed so well in his life. And always, the wages still untouched in her lap, she had him take out what he estimated he would need for spending money for the week to come. Not only did she bid him take plenty, but she insisted on his taking any amount extra that he might desire at any time through the week. And, further, she insisted he should not tell her what it was for.

"You've always had money in your pocket," she reminded him, "and there's no reason marriage should change that. If it did, I'd wish I'd never married you. Oh, I know about men when they get together. First one treats and then another, and it takes money. Now if you can't treat just as freely as the rest of them, why I know you so well that I know you'd stay away from them. And that wouldn't be right... to you, I mean. I want you to be together with men. It's good for a man."

And Billy buried her in his arms and swore she was the greatest little bit of woman that ever came down the pike.

"Why," he jubilated; "not only do I feed better, and live more comfortable, and hold up my end with the fellows; but I'm actually saving money—or you are for
me. Here I am, with furniture being paid for regular every month, and a little woman I'm mad over, and on top of it money in the bank. How much is it now?"

"Sixty-two dollars," she told him. "Not so bad for a rainy day. You might get sick, or hurt, or something happen."

It was in mid-winter, when Billy, with quite a deal of obvious reluctance, broached a money matter to Saxon. His old friend, Billy Murphy, was laid up with la grippe, and one of his children, playing in the street, had been seriously injured by a passing waggon. Billy Murphy, still feeble after two weeks in bed, had asked Billy for the loan of fifty dollars.

"It's perfectly safe," Billy concluded to Saxon. "I've known him since we was kids at the Durant School together. He's straight as a die."

"That's got nothing to do with it," Saxon chided. "If you were single you'd have lent it to him immediately, wouldn't you?"

Billy nodded.

"Then it's no different because you're married. It's your money, Billy."

"Not by a damn sight," he cried. "It ain't mine. It's ourn. And I wouldn't think of lettin' anybody have it without seein' you first."

"I hope you didn't tell him that," she said with quick concern.

"Nope," Billy laughed. "I knew, if I did, you'd be madder'n a hatter. I just told him I'd try an' figure it out. After all, I was sure you'd stand for it if you had it."

"Oh, Billy," she murmured, her voice rich and low with love; "maybe you don't know it, but that's one of
the sweetest things you've said since we got married.'"

The more Saxon saw of Mercedes Higgins the less did she understand her. That the old woman was a close-fisted miser, Saxon soon learned. And this trait she found hard to reconcile with her tales of squandering. On the other hand, Saxon was bewildered by Mercedes' extravagance in personal matters. Her underlinen, handmade of course, was very costly. The table she set for Barry was good, but the table for herself was vastly better. Yet both tables were set on the same table. While Barry contented himself with solid round steak, Mercedes ate tender-loin. A huge, tough muttonchop on Barry's plate would be balanced by tiny French chops on Mercedes' plate. Tea was brewed in separate pots. So was coffee. While Barry gulped twenty-five cent tea from a large and heavy mug, Mercedes sipped three-dollar tea from a tiny cup of Belleek, rose-tinted, fragile as an egg-shell. In the same manner, his twenty-five cent coffee was diluted with milk, her eighty cent Turkish with cream.

"'Tis good enough for the old man," she told Saxon. "He knows no better, and it would be a wicked sin to waste it on him."

Little traffickings began between the two women. After Mercedes had freely taught Saxon the loose-wristed facility of playing accompaniments on the ukuléle, she proposed an exchange. Her time was past, she said, for such frivolities, and she offered the instrument for the breakfast cap of which Saxon had made so good a success.

"It's worth a few dollars," Mercedes said. "It cost me twenty, though that was years ago. Yet it is well worth the value of the cap."
"But wouldn't the cap be frivolous, too?" Saxon queried, though herself well pleased with the bargain.

"'Tis not for my greying hair," Mercedes frankly disclaimed. "I shall sell it for the money. Much that I do, when the rheumatism is not maddening my fingers, I sell. La la, my dear, 'tis not old Barry's fifty a month that'll satisfy all my expensive tastes. 'Tis I that make up the difference. And old age needs money as never youth needs it. Some day you will learn for yourself."

"I am well satisfied with the trade," Saxon said. "And I shall make me another cap when I can lay aside enough for the material."

"Make several," Mercedes advised. "I'll sell them for you, keeping, of course, a small commission for my services. I can give you six dollars apiece for them. We will consult about them. The profit will more than provide material for your own."

CHAPTER V.

Four eventful things happened in the course of the winter. Bert and Mary got married and rented a cottage in the neighbourhood three blocks away. Billy's wages were cut, along with the wages of all the teamsters in Oakland. Billy took up shaving with a safety razor. And, finally, Saxon was proven a false prophet and Sarah a true one.

Saxon made up her mind, beyond any doubt, ere she confided the news to Billy. At first, while still suspecting, she had felt a frightened sinking of the heart and fear of the unknown and unexperienced. Then had come economic fear, as she contemplated the increased expense entailed. But by the time she had made surety
doubly sure, all was swept away before a wave of passionate gladness. *Hers and Billy’s!* The phrase was continually in her mind, and each recurrent thought of it brought an actual physical pleasure-pang to her heart.

The night she told the news to Billy, he withheld his own news of the wage-cut, and joined with her in welcoming the little one.

“What'll we do? ——Go to the theatre to celebrate?” he asked, relaxing the pressure of his embrace so that she might speak. “Or suppose we stay in, just you and me, and . . . and the three of us?”

“Stay in,” was her verdict. “I just want you to hold me, and hold me, and hold me.”

“That's what I wanted, too, only I wasn’t sure, after bein' in the house all day, maybe you’d want to go out.”

There was frost in the air, and Billy brought the Morris chair in by the kitchen stove. She lay cuddled in his arms, her head on his shoulder, his cheek against her hair.

“We didn't make no mistake in our lightning marriage with only a week's courtin',” he reflected aloud. “Why, Saxon, we've been courtin' ever since just the same. And now . . . my God, Saxon, it's too wonderful to be true. Think of it! Ourn! The three of us! The little rascal! I bet he's goin' to be a boy. An' won't I learn 'm to put up his fists an' take care of himself! An' swimmin', too. If he don't know how to swim by the time he's six. . . .”

“And if he's a girl?”

“*She's* goin' to be a boy,” Billy retorted, joining in the playful misuse of pronouns.

And both laughed and kissed, and sighed with content. “I'm goin' to turn pincher, now,” he announced, after
quite an interval of meditation. "No more drinks with the boys. It's me for the water waggon. And I'm goin' to ease down on smokes. Huh! Don't see why I can't roll my own cigarettes. They're ten times cheaper'n tailor-mades. An' I can grow a beard. The amount of money the barbers get out of a fellow in a year would keep a baby."

"Just you let your beard grow, Mister Roberts, and I'll get a divorce," Saxon threatened. "You're just too handsome and strong with a smooth face. I love your face too much to have it covered up. —-Oh, you dear! you dear! Billy, I never knew what happiness was until I came to live with you."

"Nor me neither."

"And it's always going to be so?"

"You can just bet," he assured her.

"I thought I was going to be happy married," she went on; "but I never dreamed it would be like this." She turned her head on his shoulder and kissed his cheek.

"Billy, it isn't happiness. It's heaven."

And Billy resolutely kept undivulged the cut in wages. Not until two weeks later, when it went into effect, and he poured the diminished sum into her lap, did he break it to her. The next day, Bert and Mary, already a month married, had Sunday dinner with them, and the matter came up for discussion. Bert was particularly pessimistic, and muttered dark hints of an impending strike in the railroad shops.

"If you'd all shut your traps, it'd be all right," Mary criticised. "These union agitators get the railroad sore. They give me the cramp, the way they butt in an' stir up trouble. If I was boss I'd cut the wages of any man that listened to them."
"Yet you belonged to the laundry workers' union," Saxon rebuked gently.

"Because I had to or I wouldn't a-got work. An' much good it ever done me."

"But look at Billy," Bert argued. "The teamsters ain't ben sayin' a word, not a peep, an' everything lovely, and then, bang, right in the neck, a ten per cent. cut. Oh, hell, what chance have we got? We lose. There's nothin' left for us in this country we've made and our fathers an' mothers before us. We're all shot to pieces. We can see our finish—we, the old stock, the children of the white people that broke away from England an' licked the tar outa her, that freed the slaves, an' fought the Indians, an' made the West! Any gink with half an eye can see it comin'."

"But what are we going to do about it?" Saxon questioned anxiously.

"Fight. That's all. The country's in the hands of a gang of robbers. Look at the Southern Pacific. It runs California."

"Aw, rats, Bert," Billy interrupted. "You're talkin' through your lid. No railroad can run the government of California."

"You're a bonehead," Bert sneered. "And some day, when it's too late, you an' all the other boneheads'll realise the fact. Rotten? I tell you it stinks. Why, there ain't a man who wants to go to state legislature but has to make a trip to San Francisco, an' go into the S. P. offices, an' take his hat off, an' humbly ask permission. Why, the governors of California has been railroad governors since before you and I was born. Huh! You can't tell me. We're finished. We're licked to a frazzle. But it'd do my heart good to help string up some of the
dirty thieves before I passed out. D'ye know what we are?—we old white stock that fought in the wars, an' broke the land, an' made all this? I'll tell you. We're the last of the Mohegans."

"He scares me to death, he's so violent," Mary said with unconcealed hostility. "If he don't quit shootin' off his mouth he'll get fired from the shops. And then what'll we do? He don't consider me. But I can tell you one thing all right, all right. I'll not go back to the laundry." She held her right hand up and spoke with the solemnity of an oath. "Not so's you can see it. Never again for yours truly."

"Oh, I know what you're drivin' at," Bert said with asperity. "An' all I can tell you is, livin' or dead, in a job or out, no matter what happens to me, if you will lead that way, you will, an' there's nothin' else to it."

"I guess I kept straight before I met you," she came back with a toss of the head. "And I kept straight after I met you, which is going some if anybody should ask you."

Hot words were on Bert's tongue, but Saxon intervened and brought about peace. She was concerned over the outcome of their marriage. Both were high-strung, both were quick and irritable, and their continual clashes did not augur well for their future.

The safety razor was a great achievement for Saxon. Privily she conferred with a clerk she knew in Pierce's hardware store and made the purchase. On Sunday morning, after breakfast, when Billy was starting to go to the barber shop, she led him into the bedroom, whisked a towel aside, and revealed the razor box, shaving mug, soap, brush, and lather all ready. Billy recoiled, then
came back to make curious investigation. He gazed pity-
ingly at the safety razor.

"Huh! Call that a man's tool!"

"It'll do the work," she said. "It does it for thousands of men every day."

But Billy shook his head and backed away.

"You shave three times a week," she urged. "That's forty-five cents. Call it half a dollar, and there are fifty-two weeks in the year. Twenty-six dollars a year just for shaving. Come on, dear, and try it. Lots of men swear by it."

He shook his head mutinously, and the cloudy deeps of his eyes grew more cloudy. She loved that sullen handsomeness that made him look so boyish, and, laughing and kissing him, she forced him into a chair, got off his coat, and unbuttoned shirt and undershirt and turned them in.

Threatening him with, "If you open your mouth to kick I'll shove it in," she coated his face with lather.

"Wait a minute," she checked him, as he reached desperately for the razor. "I've been watching the barbers from the sidewalk. This is what they do after the lather is on."

And thereupon she proceeded to rub the lather in with her fingers.

"There," she said, when she had coated his face a second time. "You're ready to begin. Only remember, I'm not always going to do this for you. I'm just breaking you in, you see."

With great outward show of rebellion, half genuine, half facetious, he made several tentative scrapes with the razor. He winced violently, and violently exclaimed:

"Holy jumping Jehosaphat!"
He examined his face in the glass, and a streak of blood showed in the midst of the lather.

"Cut!—by a safety razor, by God! Sure, men swear by it. Can't blame 'em. Cut! By a safety!"

"But wait a second," Saxon pleaded. "They have to be regulated. The clerk told me. See those little screws. There . . . that's it . . . turn them around."

Again Billy applied the blade to his face. After a couple of scrapes, he looked at himself closely in the mirror, grinned, and went on shaving. With swiftness and dexterity he scraped his face clean of lather. Saxon clapped her hands.

"Fine," Billy approved. "Great! Here. Give me your hand. See what a good job it made."

He started to rub her hand against his cheek. Saxon jerked away with a little cry of disappointment, then examined him closely.

"It hasn't shaved at all," she said.

"It's a fake, that's what it is. It cuts the hide, but not the hair. Me for the barber."

But Saxon was persistent.

"You haven't given it a fair trial yet. It was regulated too much. Let me try my hand at it. There, that's it, betwixt and between. Now, lather again and try it."

This time the unmistakable sand-papery sound of hair-severing could be heard.

"How is it?" she fluttered anxiously.

"It gets the—ouch!—hair," Billy grunted, frowning and making faces. "But it—gee!—say!—ouch!—pulls like Sam Hill."

"Stay with it," she encouraged. "Don't give up the ship, big Injun with a scalplock. Remember what Bert says and be the last of the Mohegans."
At the end of fifteen minutes he rinsed his face and dried it, sighing with relief.

"It's a shave, in a fashion, Saxon, but I can't say I'm stuck on it. It takes out the nerve. I'm as weak as a cat."

He groaned with sudden discovery of fresh misfortune.

"What's the matter now?" she asked.

"The back of my neck—how can I shave the back of my neck? I'll have to pay a barber to do it."

Saxon's consternation was tragic, but it only lasted a moment. She took the brush in her hand.

"Sit down, Billy."

"What?—you?" he demanded indignantly.

"Yes; me. If any barber is good enough to shave your neck, then I am, too."

Billy moaned and groaned in the abjectness of humility and surrender, and let her have her way.

"There, and a good job," she informed him when she had finished. "As easy as falling off a log. And besides, it means twenty-six dollars a year. And you'll buy the crib, the baby buggy, the pinning blankets, and lots and lots of things with it. Now sit still a minute longer."

She rinsed and dried the back of his neck and dusted it with talcum powder.

"You're as sweet as a clean little baby, Billy Boy."

The unexpected and lingering impact of her lips on the back of his neck made him writhe with mingled feelings not all unpleasant.

Two days later, though vowing in the intervening time to have nothing further to do with the instrument of the devil, he permitted Saxon to assist him to a second shave. This time it went easier.

"It ain't so bad," he admitted. "I'm gettin' the hang
of it. It’s all in the regulating. You can shave as close as you want an’ no more close than you want. Barbers can’t do that. Every once an’ awhile they get my face sore.”

The third shave was an unqualified success, and the culminating bliss was reached when Saxon presented him with a bottle of witch hazel. After that he began active proselyting. He could not wait a visit from Bert, but carried the paraphernalia to the latter’s house to demonstrate.

“We’ve ben boobs all these years, Bert, runnin’ the chances of barber’s itch an’ everything. Look at this, eh? See her take hold. Smooth as silk. Just as easy ... There! Six minutes by the clock. Can you beat it? When I get my hand in, I can do it in three. It works in the dark. It works under water. You couldn’t cut yourself if you tried. And it saves twenty-six dollars a year. Saxon figured it out, and she’s a wonder, I tell you.”

CHAPTER VI.

The trafficking between Saxon and Mercedes increased. The latter commanded a ready market for all the fine work Saxon could supply, while Saxon was eager and happy in the work. The expected babe and the cut in Billy’s wages had caused her to regard the economic phase of existence more seriously than ever. Too little money was being laid away in the bank, and her conscience pricked her as she considered how much she was laying out on the pretty necessaries for the household and herself. Also, for the first time in her life she was spending another’s earnings. Since a young girl she had
been used to spending her own, and now, thanks to Mercedes, she was doing it again, and, out of her profits, essaying more expensive and delightful adventures in lingerie.

Mercedes suggested, and Saxon carried out and even bettered, the dainty things of thread and texture. She made ruffled chemises of sheer linen, with her own fine edgings and French embroidery on breast and shoulders; linen hand-made combination undersuits; and nightgowns, fairy and cobwebby, embroidered, trimmed with Irish lace. On Mercedes’ instigation she executed an ambitious and wonderful breakfast cap for which the old woman returned her twelve dollars after deducting commission.

She was happy and busy every waking moment, nor was preparation for the little one neglected. The only ready made garments she bought were three fine little knit shirts. As for the rest, every bit was made by her own hands—featherstitched pinning blankets, a crocheted jacket and cap, knitted mittens, embroidered bonnets; slim little princess slips of sensible length; underskirts on absurd Lilliputian yokes; silk-embroidered white flannel petticoats; stockings and crocheted boots, seeming to burgeon before her eyes with wriggly pink toes and plump little calves; and last, but not least, many deliciously soft squares of bird’s-eye linen. A little later, as a crowning masterpiece, she was guilty of a dress coat of white silk, embroidered. And into all the tiny garments, with every stitch, she sewed love. Yet this love, so unceasingly sewn, she knew when she came to consider and marvel, was more of Billy than of the nebulous, ungraspable new bit of life that eluded her fondest attempts at visioning.
"Huh," was Billy's comment, as he went over the mite's wardrobe and came back to centre on the little knit shirts, "they look more like a real kid than the whole kit an' caboodle. Why, I can see him in them regular man-shirts."

Saxon, with a sudden rush of happy, unshed tears, held one of the little shirts up to his lips. He kissed it solemnly, his eyes resting on Saxon's.

"That's some for the boy," he said, "but a whole lot for you."

But Saxon's money-earning was doomed to cease ignominiously and tragically. One day, to take advantage of a department store bargain sale, she crossed the bay to San Francisco. Passing along Sutter Street, her eye was attracted by a display in the small window of a small shop. At first she could not believe it; yet there, in the honoured place of the window, was the wonderful breakfast cap for which she had received twelve dollars from Mercedes. It was marked twenty-eight dollars. Saxon went in and interviewed the shopkeeper, an emaciated, shrewd-eyed and middle-aged woman of foreign extraction.

"Oh, I don't want to buy anything," Saxon said. "I make nice things like you have here, and I wanted to know what you pay for them—for that breakfast cap in the window, for instance."

The woman darted a keen glance to Saxon's left hand, noted the innumerable tiny punctures in the ends of the first and second fingers, then appraised her clothing and her face.

"Can you do work like that?"
Saxon nodded.

"I paid twenty dollars to the woman that made that."
Saxon repressed an almost spasmodic gasp, and thought coolly for a space. Mercedes had given her twelve. Then Mercedes had pocketed eight, while she, Saxon, had furnished the material and labour.

"Would you please show me other hand-made things—nightgowns, chemises, and such things, and tell me the prices you pay?"

"Can you do such work?"

"Yes."

"And will you sell to me?"

"Certainly," Saxon answered. "That is why I am here."

"We add only a small amount when we sell," the woman went on; "you see, light and rent and such things, as well as a profit or else we could not be here."

"It's only fair," Saxon agreed.

Amongst the beautiful stuff Saxon went over, she found a nightgown and a combination undersuit of her own manufacture. For the former she had received eight dollars from Mercedes, it was marked eighteen, and the woman had paid fourteen; for the latter Saxon received six, it was marked fifteen, and the woman had paid eleven.

"Thank you," Saxon said, as she drew on her gloves. "I should like to bring you some of my work at those prices."

"And I shall be glad to buy it... if it is up to the mark." The woman looked at her severely. "Mind you, it must be as good as this. And if it is, I often get special orders, and I'll give you a chance at them."

Mercedes was unblushingly candid when Saxon reproached her.

"You told me you took only a commission," was Saxon's accusation.
"So I did; and so I have."
"But I did all the work and bought all the materials, yet you actually cleared more out of it than I did. You got the lion's share."
"And why shouldn't I, my dear? I was the middleman. It's the way of the world. 'Tis the middlemen that get the lion's share."
"It seems to me most unfair," Saxon reflected, more in sadness than anger.
"That is your quarrel with the world, not with me," Mercedes rejoined sharply, then immediately softened with one of her quick changes. "We mustn't quarrel, my dear. I like you so much. La la, it is nothing to you, who are young and strong with a man young and strong. Listen, I am an old woman. And old Barry can do little for me. He is on his last legs. His kidneys are 'most gone. Remember, 'tis I must bury him. And I do him honour, for beside me he'll have his last long sleep. A stupid, dull old man, heavy, an ox, 'tis true; but a good old fool with no trace of evil in him. The plot is bought and paid for—the final instalment was made up, in part, out of my commissions from you. Then there are the funeral expenses. It must be done nicely. I have still much to save. And Barry may turn up his toes any day."
Saxon sniffed the air carefully, and knew the old woman had been drinking again.
"Come, my dear, let me show you." Leading Saxon to a large sea chest in the bedroom, Mercedes lifted the lid. A faint perfume, as of rose-petals, floated up. "Behold, my burial trousseau. Thus I shall wed the dust."
Saxon's amazement increased, as, article by article, the old woman displayed the airiest, the daintiest, the most
delicious and most complete of bridal outfits. Mercedes held up an ivory fan.

"In Venice 'twas given me, my dear. ——See, this comb, turtle shell; Bruce Anstey made it for me the week before he drank his last bottle and scattered his brave mad brains with a Colt's 44. ——This scarf. La, la, a Liberty scarf——"

"And all that will be buried with you," Saxon mused. "Oh, the extravagance of it!"

Mercedes laughed.

"Why not? I shall die as I have lived. It is my pleasure. I go to the dust as a bride. No cold and narrow bed for me. I would it were a couch, covered with the soft things of the East, and pillows, pillows, without end."

"It would buy you twenty funerals and twenty plots," Saxon protested, shocked by this blasphemy of conventional death. "It is downright wicked."

"'Twill be as I have lived," Mercedes said complacently. "And it's a fine bride old Barry'll have to come and lie beside him." She closed the lid and sighed "Though I wish it were Bruce Anstey, or any of the pick of my young men to lie with me in the great dark and to crumble with me to the dust that is the real death."

She gazed at Saxon with eyes heated by alcohol and at the same time cool with the coolness of content.

"In the old days the great of earth were buried with their live slaves with them. I but take my flimsies, my dear."

"Then you aren't afraid of death? . . . in the least?"

Mercedes shook her head emphatically.

"Death is brave, and good, and kind. I do not fear death. 'Tis of men I am afraid when I am dead. So I prepare. They shall not have me when I am dead."
Saxon was puzzled.

"They would not want you then," she said.

"Many are wanted," was the answer. "Do you know what becomes of the aged poor who have no money for burial? They are not buried. Let me tell you. We stood before great doors. He was a queer man, a professor who ought to have been a pirate, a man who lectured in class rooms when he ought to have been storming walled cities or robbing banks. He was slender, like Don Juan. His hands were strong as steel. So was his spirit. And he was mad, a bit mad, as all my young men have been. 'Come, Mercedes,' he said; 'we will inspect our brethren and become humble, and glad that we are not as they—as yet not yet. And afterward, to-night, we will dine with a more devilish taste, and we will drink to them in golden wine that will be the more golden for having seen them. Come, Mercedes.'"

"He thrust the great doors open, and by the hand led me in. It was a sad company. Twenty-four, that lay on marble slabs, or sat, half erect and propped, while many young men, bright of eye, bright little knives in their hands, glanced curiously at me from their work."

"They were dead?" Saxon interrupted to gasp.

"They were the pauper dead, my dear. 'Come, Mercedes,' said he. 'There is more to show you that will make us glad we are alive.' And he took me down, down to the vats. The salt vats, my dear. I was not afraid. But it was in my mind, then, as I looked, how it would be with me when I was dead. And there they were, so many lumps of pork. And the order came, 'A woman; an old woman.' And the man who worked there fished in the vats. The first was a man he drew to see. Again he fished and stirred. Again a man. He was impatient,
and grumbled at his luck. And then, up through the brine, he drew a woman, and by the face of her she was old, and he was satisfied."

"It is not true!" Saxon cried out.

"I have seen, my dear, I know. And I tell you fear not the wrath of God when you are dead. Fear only the salt vats. And as I stood and looked, and as he who led me there looked at me and smiled and questioned and bedevilled me with those mad, black, tired-scholar's eyes of his, I knew that that was no way for my dear clay. Dear it is, my clay to me; dear it has been to others. La la, the salt vat is no place for my kissed lips and love-lavished body." Mercedes lifted the lid of the chest and gazed fondly at her burial pretties. "So I have made my bed. So I shall lie in it. Some old philosopher said: we know we must die; we do not believe it. But the old do believe. I believe.

"My dear, remember the salt vats, and do not be angry with me because my commissions have been heavy. To escape the vats I would stop at nothing—steal the widow's mite, the orphan's crust, and pennies from a dead man's eyes."

"Do you believe in God?" Saxon asked abruptly, holding herself together despite cold horror.

Mercedes dropped the lid and shrugged her shoulders.

"Who knows? I shall rest well."

"And punishment?" Saxon probed, remembering the unthinkable tale of the other's life.

"Impossible, my dear. As some old poet said, 'God's a good fellow.' Some time I shall talk to you about God. Never be afraid of him. Be afraid only of the salt vats and the things men may do with your pretty flesh after you are dead."
CHAPTER VII.

Billy quarrelled with good fortune. He suspected he was too prosperous on the wages he received. What with the accumulating savings account, the paying of the monthly furniture instalment and the house rent, the spending money in pocket, and the good fare he was eating, he was puzzled as to how Saxon managed to pay for the goods used in her fancy work. Several times he had suggested his inability to see how she did it, and been baffled each time by Saxon's mysterious laugh.

"I can't see how you do it on the money," he was contending one evening.

He opened his mouth to speak further, then closed it and for five minutes thought with knitted brows.

"Say," he said, "what's become of that frilly breakfast cap you was workin' on so hard? I ain't never seen you wear it, and it was sure too big for the kid."

Saxon hesitated, with pursed lips and teasing eyes. With her, untruthfulness had always been a difficult matter. To Billy it was impossible. She could see the cloud-drift in his eyes deepening and his face hardening in the way she knew so well when he was vexed.

"Say, Saxon, you ain't ... you ain't ... sellin' your work?"

And thereat she related everything, not omitting Mercedes Higgins' part in the transaction, nor Mercedes Higgins' remarkable burial trousseau. But Billy was not to be led aside by the latter. In terms anything but uncertain he told Saxon that she was not to work for money.
"But I have so much spare time, Billy, dear," she pleaded.

He shook his head.

"Nothing doing. I won't listen to it. I married you, and I'll take care of you. Nobody can say Bill Roberts' wife has to work. And I don't want to think it myself. Besides, it ain't necessary."

"But Billy——" she began again.

"Nope. That's one thing I won't stand for, Saxon. Not that I don't like fancy work. I do. I like it like hell, every bit you make, but I like it on you. Go ahead and make all you want of it, for yourself, an' I'll put up for the goods. Why, I'm just whistlin' an' happy all day long, thinkin' of the boy an' seein' you at home here workin' away on all them nice things. Because I know how happy you are a-doin' it. But honest to God, Saxon, it'd all be spoiled if I knew you was doin' it to sell. You see, Bill Roberts' wife don't have to work. That's my brag—to myself, mind you. An' besides, it ain't right."

"You're a dear," she whispered, happy despite her disappointment.

"I want you to have all you want," he continued. "An' you're goin' to get it as long as I got two hands stickin' on the ends of my arms. I guess I know how good the things are you wear—good to me, I mean, too. I'm dry behind the ears, an' maybe I've learned a few things I oughtn't to before I knew you. But I know what I'm talkin' about, and I want to say that outside the clothes down underneath, an' the clothes down underneath the outside ones, I never saw a woman like you. Oh——"

He threw up his hands as if despairing of ability to
express what he thought and felt, then essayed a further attempt.

"It's not a matter of bein' only clean, though that's a whole lot. Lots of women are clean. It ain't that. It's something more, an' different. It's . . . well, it's the look of it, so white, an' pretty, an' tasty. It gets on the imagination. It's something I can't get out of my thoughts of you. I want to tell you lots of men can't strip to advantage, an' lots of women, too. But you—well, you're a wonder, that's all, and you can't get too many of them nice things to suit me, and you can't get them too nice.

"For that matter, Saxon, you can just blow yourself. There's lots of easy money layin' around. I'm in great condition. Billy Murphy pulled down seventy-five round iron dollars only last week for puttin' away the Pride of North Beach. That's what he paid us the fifty back out of."

But this time it was Saxon who rebelled.

"There's Carl Hensen," Billy argued. "The second Sharkey, the alfalfa sportin' writers are callin' him. An' he calls himself Champion of the United States Navy. Well, I got his number. He's just a big stiff. I've seen 'm fight, an' I can pass him the sleep medicine just as easy. The Secretary of the Sportin' Life Club offered to match me. An' a hundred iron dollars in it for the winner. And it'll all be yours to blow any way you want. What d'ye say?"

"If I can't work for money, you can't fight," was Saxon's ultimatum, immediately withdrawn. "But you and I don't drive bargains. Even if you'd let me work for money, I wouldn't let you fight. I've never forgotten what you told me about how prizefighters lose their silk.
Well, you're not going to lose yours. It's half my silk, you know. And if you won't fight, I won't work—there. And more, I'll never do anything you don't want me to, Billy."

"Same here," Billy agreed. "Though just the same I'd like most to death to have just one go at that square-head Hensen." He smiled with pleasure at the thought. "Say, let's forget it all now, an' you sing me 'Harvest Days' on that dinky what-you-may-call-it."

When she had complied, accompanying herself on the ukulelé, she suggested his weird "Cowboy's Lament." In some inexplicable way of love, she had come to like her husband's one song, Because he sang it, she liked its inanity and monotonousness; and most of all, it seemed to her, she loved his hopeless and adorable flatting of every note. She could even sing with him, flatting as accurately and deliciously as he. Nor did she undeceive him in his sublime faith.

"I guess Bert an' the rest have joshed me all the time," he said.

"You and I get along together with it fine," she equivocated; for in such matters she did not deem the untruth a wrong.

Spring was on when the strike came in the railroad shops. The Sunday before it was called, Saxon and Billy had dinner at Bert's house. Saxon's brother came, though he had found it impossible to bring Sarah, who refused to budge from her household rut. Bert was blackly pessimistic, and they found him singing with sardonic glee:

"Nobody loves a mil-yunaire.
Nobody likes his looks.
Nobody'll share his slightest care,
He classes with thugs and crooks."
Thriftiness has become a crime,
So spend everything you earn;
We’re living now in a funny time,
When money is made to burn.”

Mary went about the dinner preparation, flaunting unmistakable signals of rebellion; and Saxon, rolling up her sleeves and tying on an apron, washed the breakfast dishes. Bert fetched a pitcher of steaming beer from the corner saloon, and the three men smoked and talked about the coming strike.

“It oughta come years ago,” was Bert’s dictum. “It can’t come any too quick now to suit me, but it’s too late. We’re beaten thumbs down. Here’s where the last of the Mohegans gets theirs, in the neck, ker-whop!”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Tom, who had been smoking his pipe gravely, began to counsel. “Organised labour’s gettin’ stronger every day. Why, I can remember when there wasn’t any unions in California. Look at us now—wages, an’ hours, an’ everything.”

“You talk like an organiser,” Bert sneered, “shovin’ the bull con on the boneheads. But we know different. Organised wages won’t buy as much now as unorganised wages used to buy. They’ve got us whipsawed. Look at Frisco, the labour leaders doin’ dirtier politics than the old parties, pawin’ an’ squabblin’ over graft, an’ goin’ to San Quentin, while—what are the Frisco carpenters doin’? Let me tell you one thing, Tom Brown, if you listen to all you hear you’ll hear that every Frisco carpenter is union an’ gettin’ full union wages. Do you believe it? It’s a damn lie. There ain’t a carpenter that don’t rebate his wages Saturday night to the contractor. An’ that’s your buildin’ trades in San Francisco, while the leaders are makin’ trips to Europe on the earnings of the tender-
loin—when they ain’t coughing it up to the lawyers to get out of wearin’ stripes.”

“That’s all right,” Tom concurred. “Nobody’s denyin’ it. The trouble is labour ain’t quite got its eyes open. It ought to play politics, but the politics ought to be the right kind.”

“Socialism, eh?” Bert caught him up with scorn. “Wouldn’t they sell us out just as the Ruefs and Schmidts have?”

“Get men that are honest,” Billy said. “That’s the whole trouble. ——Not that I stand for socialism. I don’t. All our folks was a long time in America, an’ I for one won’t stand for a lot of fat Germans an’ greasy Russian Jews tellin’ me how to run my country when they can’t speak English yet.”

“Your country!” Bert cried. “Why, you bonehead, you ain’t got a country. That’s a fairy story the grafters shove at you every time they want to rob you some more.”

“But don’t vote for the grafters,” Billy contended. “If we selected honest men we’d get honest treatment.”

“I wish you’d come to some of our meetings, Billy,” Tom said wistfully. “If you would, you’d get your eyes open an’ vote the socialist ticket next election.”

“Not on your life,” Billy declined. “When you catch me in a socialist meeting’ll be when they can talk like white men.”

Bert was humming:

“We’re living now in a funny time,
When money is made to burn.”

Mary was too angry with her husband, because of the impending strike and his incendiary utterances, to hold conversation with Saxon, and the latter, bepuzzled, listened to the conflicting opinions of the men.
“Where are we at?” she asked them, with a merriness that concealed her anxiety at heart.

“We ain’t at,” Bert snarled. “We’re gone.”

“But meat and oil have gone up again,” she chafed. “And Billy’s wages have been cut, and the shop men’s were cut last year. Something must be done.”

“The only thing to do is fight like hell,” Bert answered. “Fight, an’ go down fightin’. That’s all. We’re licked anyhow, but we can have a last run for our money.”

“That’s no way to talk,” Tom rebuked.

“The time for talkin’ ’s past, old cock. The time for fightin’ ’s come.”

“A hell of a chance you’d have against regular troops and machine guns,” Billy retorted.

“Oh, not that way. There’s such things as greasy sticks that go up with a loud noise and leave holes. There’s such things as emery powder——”

“Oh, ho!” Mary burst out upon him, arms akimbo. “So that’s what it means. That’s what the emery in your vest pocket meant.”

Her husband ignored her. Tom smoked with a troubled air. Billy was hurt. It showed plainly in his face.

“You ain’t ben doin’ that, Bert?” he asked, his manner showing his expectancy of his friend’s denial.

“Sure thing, if you want to know. I’d see’em all in hell if I could, before I go.”

“He’s a bloody-minded anarchist,” Mary complained. “Men like him killed McKinley, and Garfield, an’—an’—an’ all the rest. He’ll be hung. You’ll see. Mark my words. I’m glad there’s no children in sight, that’s all.”

“It’s hot air,” Billy comforted her.

“He’s just teasing you,” Saxon soothed. “He always was a joshier.”
But Mary shook her head.

"I know. I hear him talkin' in his sleep. He swears and curses something awful, an' grits his teeth. Listen to him now."

Bert, his handsome face bitter and devil-may-care, had tilted his chair back against the wall and was singing:

"Nobody loves a mil-yun-aire,
Nobody likes his looks,
Nobody'll share his slightest care,
He classes with thugs and crooks."

Tom was saying something about reasonableness and justice, and Bert ceased from singing to catch him up.

"Justice, eh? Another pipe-dream. I'll show you where the working class gets justice. You remember Forbes—J. Alliston Forbes—wrecked the Alta California Trust Company an' salted down two cold millions. I saw him yesterday, in a big hell-bent automobile. What'd he get? Eight years' sentence. How long did he serve? Less'n two years. Pardoned out on account of ill health. Ill hell! We'll be dead an' rotten before he kicks the bucket. Here. Look out this window. You see the back of that house with the broken porch rail. Mrs. Danaker lives there. She takes in washin'. Her old man was killed on the railroad. Nitsky on damages—contributory negligence, or fellow-servant-something-or-other flimflam. That's what the courts handed her. Her boy, Archie, was sixteen. He was on the road, a regular road-kid. He blew into Fresno an' rolled a drunk. Do you want to know how much he got? Two dollars and eighty cents. Get that? — Two-eighty. And what did the alfalfa judge hand'm? Fifty years. He's served eight of it already in San Quentin. And he'll go on serving it till he croaks. Mrs. Danaker says he's bad with consumption—caught it
inside, but she ain’t got the pull to get’em pardoned. Archie the Kid steals two dollars an’ eighty cents from a drunk and gets fifty years. J. Alliston Forbes sticks up the Alta Trust for two millions an’ gets less’n two years. Who’s country is this anyway? Yourn an’ Archie the Kid’s? Guess again. It’s J. Alliston Forbes’—Oh:

“Nobody likes a mil-yun-aire,
Nobody likes his looks,
Nobody’ll share his slightest care,
He classes with thugs and crooks.”

Mary, at the sink, where Saxon was just finishing the last dish, untied Saxon’s apron and kissed her with the sympathy that women alone feel for each other under the shadow of maternity.

“Now you sit down, dear. You mustn’t tire yourself, and it’s a long way to go yet. I’ll get your sewing for you, and you can listen to the men talk. But don’t listen to Bert. He’s crazy.”

Saxon sewed and listened, and Bert’s face grew bleak and bitter as he contemplated the baby clothes in her lap.

“There you go,” he blurted out, “bringin’ kids into the world when you ain’t got any guarantee you can feed ’em.”

“You must a-had a souse last night,” Tom grinned. Bert shook his head.

“Aw, what’s the use of gettin’ groused?” Billy cheered. “It’s a pretty good country.”

“It was a pretty good country,” Bert replied, “when we was all Mohegans. But not now. We’re jiggerooed. We’re hornswogged. We’re backed to a standstill. We’re double-crossed to a fare-you-well. My folks fought for this country. So did yourn, all of you. We freed the niggers, killed the Indians, an’ starved, an’ froze, an’
sweat, an' fought. This land looked good to us. We cleared it, an' broke it, an' made the roads, an' built the cities. And there was plenty for everybody. And we went on fightin' for it. I had two uncles killed at Gettysburg. All of us was mixed up in that war. Listen to Saxon talk any time what her folks went through to get out here an' get ranches, an' horses, an' cattle, an' everything. And they got 'em. All our folks got 'em, Mary's, too—"

"And if they'd ben smart they'd a-held on to them," she interpolated.

"Sure thing," Bert continued. "That's the very point. We're the losers. We've ben robbed. We couldn't mark cards, deal from the bottom, an' ring in cold decks like the others. We're the white folks that failed. You see, times changed, and there was two kinds of us, the lions and the plugs. The plugs only worked, the lions only gobbled. They gobbled the farms, the mines, the factories, an' now they've gobbled the government. We're the white folks an' the children of white folks, that was too busy being good to be smart. We're the white folks that lost out. We're the ones that's ben skinned. D'ye get me?"

"You'd make a good soap-boxer," Tom commended, "if only you'd get the kinks straightened out in your reasoning."

"It sounds all right, Bert," Billy said, "only it ain't. Any man can get rich to-day—"

"Or be president of the United States," Bert snapped. "Sure thing—if he's got it in him. Just the same I ain't heard you makin' a noise like a millionaire or a president. Why? You ain't got it in you. You're a bone-

At the table, while they ate, Tom talked of the joys of farm-life he had known as a boy and as a young man, and confided that it was his dream to go and take up government land somewhere as his people had done before him. Unfortunately, as he explained, Sarah was set, so that the dream must remain a dream.

"It's all in the game," Billy sighed. "It's played to rules. Someone has to get knocked out, I suppose."

A little later, while Bert was off on a fresh diatribe, Billy became aware that he was making comparisons. This house was not like his house. Here was no satisfying atmosphere. Things seemed to run with a jar. He recollected that when they arrived the breakfast dishes had not yet been washed. With a man's general obliviousness of household affairs, he had not noted details; yet it had been borne in on him, all morning, in a myriad ways, that Mary was not the housekeeper Saxon was. He glanced proudly across at her, and felt the spur of an impulse to leave his seat, go around, and embrace her. She was a wife. He remembered her dainty undergarmenting, and on the instant, into his brain, leaped the image of her so apparelled, only to be shattered by Bert.

"Hey, Bill, you seem to think I've got a grouch. Sure thing. I have. You ain't had my experiences. You've always done teamin' an' pulled down easy money prize-fightin'. You ain't known hard times. You ain't ben through strikes. You ain't had to take care of an old mother an' swallow dirt on her account. It wasn't until after she died that I could rip loose an' take or leave as I felt like it.
"Take that time I tackled the Niles Electric an' see what a work-plug gets handed out to him. The Head Cheese sizes me up, pumps me a lot of questions, an' gives me an application blank. I make it out, payin' a dollar to a doctor they sent me to for a health certificate. Then I got to go to a picture garage an' get my mug taken—for the Niles Electric rogues' gallery. And I coughed up another dollar for the mug. The Head Squirt takes the blank, the health certificate, and the mug, an' fires more questions. *Did I belong to a labour union?* ——*ME?* Of course I told 'm the truth. I guess nit. I needed the job. The grocery wouldn't give me any more tick, and there was my mother.

"Huh, thinks I, here's where I'm a real carman. Back platform for me, where I can pick up the fancy skirts. Nitsky. Two dollars, please. Me—my two dollars. All for a pewter badge. Then there was the uniform—nineteen fifty, and get it anywhere else for fifteen. Only that was to be paid out of my first month. And then five dollars in change in my pocket, my own money. That was the rule. ——*I* borrowed that five from Tom Donovan, the policeman. Then what? They worked me for two weeks without pay, breakin' me in."

"Did you pick up any fancy skirts?" Saxon queried teasingly.

Bert shook his head glumly.

"I only worked a month. Then we organised, and they busted our union higher'n a kite."

"And you boobs in the shops will be busted the same way if you go out on strike," Mary informed him.

"That's what I've ben tellin' you all along," Bert replied. "We ain't got a chance to win."

"Then why go out?" was Saxon's question.
He looked at her with lack-lustre eyes for a moment, then answered:
“Why did my two uncles get killed at Gettysburg?”

CHAPTER VIII.

Saxon went about her housework greatly troubled. She no longer devoted herself to the making of pretties. The materials cost money, and she did not dare. Bert’s thrust had sunk home. It remained in her quivering consciousness like a shaft of steel that ever turned and rankled. She and Billy were responsible for this coming young life. Could they be sure, after all, that they could adequately feed and clothe it and prepare it for its way in the world? Where was the guaranty? She remembered, dimly, the blight of hard times in the past, and the plaints of fathers and mothers in those days returned to her with a new significance. Almost could she understand Sarah’s chronic complaining.

Hard times were already in the neighbourhood, where lived the families of the shopmen who had gone out on strike. Among the small storekeepers, Saxon, in the course of the daily marketing, could sense the air of despondency. Light and geniality seemed to have vanished. Gloom pervaded everywhere. The mothers of the children that played in the streets showed the gloom plainly in their faces. When they gossiped in the evenings, over front gates and on door stoops, their voices were subdued and less of laughter rang out.

Mary Donahue, who had taken three pints from the milkman, now took one pint. There were no more family trips to the moving picture shows. Scrap-meat was harder to get from the butcher. Nora Delaney, in the third
house, no longer bought fresh fish for Friday. Salted codfish, not of the best quality, was now on her table. The sturdy children that ran out upon the street between meals with huge slices of bread and butter and sugar now came out with no sugar and with thinner slices spread more thinly with butter. The very custom was dying out, and some children already had desisted from piecing between meals.

Everywhere was manifest a pinching and scraping, a tightening and shortening down of expenditure. And everywhere was more irritation. Women became angered with one another, and with the children, more quickly than of yore; and Saxon knew that Bert and Mary bickered incessantly.

“If she'd only realise I've got troubles of my own,” Bert complained to Saxon.

She looked at him closely, and felt fear for him in a vague, numb way. His black eyes seemed to burn with a continuous madness. The brown face was leaner, the skin drawn tightly across the cheekbones. A slight twist had come to the mouth, which seemed frozen into bitterness. The very carriage of his body and the way he wore his hat advertised a recklessness more intense than had been his in the past.

Sometimes, in the long afternoons, sitting by the window with idle hands, she caught herself reconstructing in her vision that folk-migration of her people across the plains and mountains and deserts to the sunset land by the Western sea. And often she found herself dreaming of the arcadian days of her people, when they had not lived in cities nor been vexed with labour unions and employers’ associations. She would remember the old people's tales of self-sufficingness, when they shot or raised
their own meat, grew their own vegetables, were their own blacksmiths and carpenters, made their own shoes—yes, and spun the cloth of the clothes they wore. And something of the wistfulness in Tom’s face she could see as she recollected it when he talked of his dream of taking up government land.

A farmer’s life must be fine, she thought. Why was it that people had to live in cities? Why had times changed? If there had been enough in the old days, why was there not enough now? Why was it necessary for men to quarrel and jangle, and strike and fight, all about the matter of getting work? Why wasn’t there work for all? ——Only that morning, and she shuddered with the recollection, she had seen two scabs, on their way to work, beaten up by the strikers, by men she knew by sight, and some by name, who lived in the neighbourhood. It had happened directly across the street. It had been cruel, terrible—a dozen men on two. The children had begun it by throwing rocks at the scabs and cursing them in ways children should not know. Policemen had run upon the scene with drawn revolvers, and the strikers had retreated into the houses and through the narrow alleys between the houses. One of the scabs, unconscious, had been carried away in an ambulance; the other, assisted by special railroad police, had been taken away to the shops. At him, Mary Donahue, standing on her front stoop, her child in her arms, had hurled such vile abuse that it had brought the blush of shame to Saxon’s cheeks. On the stoop of the house on the other side, Saxon had noted Mercedes, in the height of the beating up, looking on with a queer smile. She had seemed very eager to witness, her nostrils dilated and swelling like the beat of pulses as she watched. It had struck Saxon at the time
that the old woman was quite unalarmed and only curious to see.

To Mercedes, who was so wise in love, Saxon went for explanation of what was the matter with the world. But the old woman's wisdom in affairs industrial and economic was cryptic and unpalatable.

"La la, my dear, it is so simple. Most men are born stupid. They are the slaves. A few are born clever. They are the masters. God made men so, I suppose."

"Then how about God and that terrible beating across the street this morning?"

"I'm afraid he was not interested," Mercedes smiled. "I doubt he even knows that it happened."

"I was frightened to death," Saxon declared. "I was made sick by it. And yet you—I saw you—you looked on as cool as you please, as if it was a show."

"It was a show, my dear."

"Oh, how could you?"

"La la, I have seen men killed. It is nothing strange. All men die. The stupid ones die like oxen, they know not why. It is quite funny to see. They strike each other with fists and clubs, and break each other's heads. It is gross. They are like a lot of animals. They are like dogs wrangling over bones. Jobs are bones, you know. Now, if they fought for women, or ideas, or bars of gold, or fabulous diamonds, it would be splendid. But no; they are only hungry, and fight over scraps for their stomach."

"Oh, if I could only understand!" Saxon murmured, her hands tightly clasped in anguish of incomprehension and vital need to know.

"There is nothing to understand. It is clear as print. There have always been the stupid and the clever, the
slave and the master, the peasant and the prince. There always will be."

"But why?"

"Why is a peasant a peasant, my dear? Because he is a peasant. Why is a flea a flea?"

Saxon tossed her head fretfully.

"Oh, but my dear, I have answered. The philosophies of the world can give no better answer. Why do you like your man for a husband rather than any other man? Because you like him that way, that is all. Why do you like? Because you like. Why does fire burn and frost bite? Why are there clever men and stupid men? masters and slaves? employers and workingmen? Why is black black? Answer that and you answer everything."

"But it is not right that men should go hungry and without work when they want to work if only they can get a square deal," Saxon protested.

"Oh, but it is right, just as it is right that stone won't burn like wood, that sea sand isn't sugar, that thorns prick, that water is wet, that smoke rises, that things fall down and not up."

But such doctrine of reality made no impression on Saxon. Frankly, she could not comprehend. It seemed like so much nonsense.

"Then we have no liberty and independence," she cried passionately. "One man is not as good as another. My child has not the right to live that a rich mother's child has."

"Certainly not," Mercedes answered.

"Yet all my people fought for these things," Saxon urged, remembering her school history and the sword of her father.
“Democracy—the dream of the stupid peoples. Oh, la la, my dear, democracy is a lie, an enchantment to keep the work brutes content, just as religion used to keep them content. When they groaned in their misery and toil, they were persuaded to keep on in their misery and toil by pretty tales of a land beyond the skies where they would live famously and fat while the clever ones roasted in everlasting fire. Ah, how the clever ones must have chuckled! And when that lie wore out, and democracy was dreamed, the clever ones saw to it that it should be in truth a dream, nothing but a dream. The world belongs to the great and clever.”

“But you are of the working people,” Saxon charged. The old woman drew herself up, and almost was angry.

“I? Of the working people? My dear, because I had misfortune with moneys invested, because I am old and can no longer win the brave young men, because I have outlived the men of my youth and there is no one to go to, because I live here in the ghetto with Barry Higgins and prepare to die—why, my dear, I was born with the masters, and have trod all my days on the necks of the stupid. I have drunk rare wines and sat at feasts that would have supported this neighbourhood for a lifetime. Dick Golden and I—it was Dickie’s money, but I could have had it—Dick Golden and I dropped four hundred thousand francs in a week’s play at Monte Carlo. He was a Jew, but he was a spender. In India I have worn jewels that could have saved the lives of ten thousand families dying before my eyes.”

“You saw them die? . . . and did nothing?” Saxon asked aghast.

“I kept my jewels—la la, and was robbed of them by a brute of a Russian officer within the year.”
“And you let them die,” Saxon reiterated.

“They were cheap spawn. They fester and multiply like maggots. They meant nothing—nothing, my dear, nothing. No more than your workpeople mean here, whose crowning stupidity is their continuing to beget more stupid spawn for the slavery of the masters.”

So it was that while Saxon could get little glimmering of commonsense from others, from the terrible old woman she got none at all. Nor could Saxon bring herself to believe much of what she considered Mercedes’ romancing. As the weeks passed, the strike in the railroad shops grew bitter and deadly. Billy shook his head and confessed his inability to make head or tail of the troubles that were looming on the labour horizon.

“I don’t get the hang of it,” he told Saxon. “It’s a mix-up. It’s like a roughhouse with the lights out. Look at us teamsters. Here we are, the talk just starting of going out on sympathetic strike for the mill-workers. They’ve ben out a week, most of their places is filled, an’ if us teamsters keep on haulin’ the mill-work the strike’s lost.”

“Yet you didn’t consider striking for yourselves when your wages were cut,” Saxon said with a frown.

“Oh, we wasn’t in position then. But now the Frisco teamsters and the whole Frisco Water Front Confederation is liable to back us up. Anyway, we’re just talkin’ about it, that’s all. But if we do go out, we’ll try to get back that ten per cent. cut.”

“It’s rotten politics,” he said another time. “Everybody’s rotten. If we’d only wise up and agree to pick out honest men——”

“But if you, and Bert, and Tom can’t agree, how do you expect all the rest to agree?” Saxon asked.
"It gets me," he admitted. "It's enough to give a guy the willies thinkin' about it. And yet it's plain as the nose on your face. Get honest men for politics, an' the whole thing's straightened out. Honest men'd make honest laws, an' then honest men'd get their dues. But Bert wants to smash things, an' Tom smokes his pipe and dreams pipe dreams about by-an'-by when everybody votes the way he thinks. But this by-an'-by ain't the point. We want things now. Tom says we can't get them now, an' Bert says we ain't never goin' to get them. What can a fellow do when everybody's of different minds? Look at the socialists themselves. They're always disagreeing, splittin' up, an' firin' each other out of the party. The whole thing's bughouse, that's what, an' I almost get dippy myself thinkin' about it. The point I can't get out of my mind is that we want things now."

He broke off abruptly and stared at Saxon.

"What is it?" he asked, his voice husky with anxiety.

"You ain't sick . . . or . . . or anything?"

One hand she had pressed to her heart; but the startle and fright in her eyes was changing into a pleased intentness, while on her mouth was a little mysterious smile. She seemed oblivious to her husband, as if listening to some message from afar and not for his ears. Then wonder and joy transfused her face, and she looked at Billy, and her hand went out to his.

"It's life," she whispered. "I felt life. I am so glad, so glad."

The next evening when Billy came home from work, Saxon caused him to know and undertake more of the responsibilities of fatherhood.

"I've been thinking it over, Billy," she began, "and I'm such a healthy, strong woman that it won't have to
be very expensive. There's Martha Skelton—she's a good midwife.”

But Billy shook his head.

“Nothin' doin' in that line, Saxon. You're goin' to have Doc Hentley. He's Bill Murphy's doc, an' Bill swears by him. He's an old cuss, but he's a wooz.”

“She confined Maggie Donahue,” Saxon argued; “and look at her and her baby.”

“Well, she won't confine you—not so as you can notice it.”

“But the doctor will charge twenty dollars,” Saxon pursued, “and make me get a nurse because I haven't any womenfolk to come in. But Martha Skelton would do everything, and it would be so much cheaper.”

But Billy gathered her tenderly in his arms and laid down the law.

“Listen to me, little wife. The Roberts family ain't on the cheap. Never forget that. You've gotta have the baby. That's your business, an' it's enough for you. My business is to get the money an' take care of you. An' the best ain't none too good for you. Why, I wouldn't run the chance of the teeniest accident happenin' to you for a million dollars. It's you that counts. An' dollars is dirt. Maybe you think I like that kid some. I do. Why, I can't get him outa my head. I'm thinkin' about'm all day long. If I get fired, it'll be his fault. I'm clean dotty over him. But just the same, Saxon, honest to God, before I'd have anything happen to you, break your little finger, even, I'd see him dead an' buried first. That'll give you something of an idea what you mean to me.

“Why, Saxon, I had the idea that when folks got married they just settled down, and after awhile their business was to get along with each other. Maybe it's the
way it is with other people; but it ain’t that way with you an’ me. I love you more’n more every day. Right now I love you more’n when I began talkin’ to you five minutes ago. An’ you won’t have to get a nurse. Doc Hentley’ll come every day, an’ Mary’ll come in an’ do the housework, an’ take care of you an’ all that, just as you’ll do for her if she ever needs it.”

As the days and weeks passed, Saxon was possessed by a conscious feeling of proud motherhood in her swelling breasts. So essentially a normal woman was she, that motherhood was a satisfying and passionate happiness. It was true that she had her moments of apprehension, but they were so momentary and faint that they tended, if anything, to give zest to her happiness.

Only one thing troubled her, and that was the puzzling and perilous situation of labour which no one seemed to understand, herself least of all.

“They’re always talking about how much more is made by machinery than by the old ways,” she told her brother Tom. “Then, with all the machinery we’ve got now, why don’t we get more?”

“Now you’re talkin’,” he answered. “It wouldn’t take you long to understand socialism.”

But Saxon had a mind to the immediate need of things.

“Tom, how long have you been a socialist?”

“Eight years.”

“And you haven’t got anything by it?”

“But we will . . . in time.”

“At that rate you’ll be dead first,” she challenged.

Tom sighed.

“I’m afraid so. Things move so slow.”

Again he sighed. She noted the weary, patient look
in his face, the bent shoulders, the labour-gnarled hands, and it all seemed to symbolise the futility of his social creed.

CHAPTER IX.

It began quietly, as the fateful unexpected so often begins. Children, of all ages and sizes, were playing in the street, and Saxon, by the open front window, was watching them and dreaming day dreams of her child soon to be. The sunshine mellowed peacefully down, and a light wind from the bay cooled the air and gave to it a tang of salt. One of the children pointed up Pine Street toward Seventh. All the children ceased playing, and stared and pointed. They formed into groups, the larger boys, of from ten to twelve, by themselves, the older girls anxiously clutching the small children by the hands or gathering them into their arms.

Saxon could not see the cause of all this, but she could guess when she saw the larger boys rush to the gutter, pick up stones, and sneak into the alleys between the houses. Smaller boys tried to imitate them. The girls, dragging the tots by the arms, banged gates and clattered up the front steps of the small houses. The doors slammed behind them, and the street was deserted, though here and there front shades were drawn aside so that anxious-faced women might peer forth. Saxon heard the uptown train puffing and snorting as it pulled out from Centre Street. Then, from the direction of Seventh, came a hoarse, throaty manroar. Still, she could see nothing, and she remembered Mercedes Higgins' words: "They are like dogs wrangling over bones. Jobs are bones, you know."

The roar came closer, and Saxon, leaning out, saw a
dozen scabs, conveyed by as many special police and Pinkertons, coming down the sidewalk on her side of the street. They came compactly, as if with discipline, while behind, disorderly, yelling confusedly, stooping to pick up rocks, were seventy-five or a hundred of the striking shopmen. Saxon discovered herself trembling with apprehension, knew that she must not, and controlled herself. She was helped in this by the conduct of Mercedes Higgins. The old woman came out of her front door, dragging a chair, on which she coolly seated herself on the tiny stoop at the top of the steps.

In the hands of the special police were clubs. The Pinkertons carried no visible weapons. The strikers, urging on from behind, seemed content with yelling their rage and threats, and it remained for the children to precipitate the conflict. From across the street, between the Olsen and the Isham houses, came a shower of stones. Most of these fell short, though one struck a scab on the head. The man was no more than twenty feet away from Saxon. He reeled toward her front picket fence, drawing a revolver. With one hand he brushed the blood from his eyes and with the other he discharged the revolver into the Isham house. A Pinkerton seized his arm to prevent a second shot, and dragged him along. At the same instant a wilder roar went up from the strikers, while a volley of stones came from between Saxon's house and Maggie Donahue's. The scabs and their protectors made a stand, drawing revolvers. From their hard, determined faces—fighting men by profession—Saxon could augur nothing but bloodshed and death. An elderly man, evidently the leader, lifted a soft felt hat and mopped the perspiration from the bald top of his head. He was a large man, very rotund of belly and helpless looking.
His grey beard was stained with streaks of tobacco juice, and he was smoking a cigar. He was stoop-shouldered, and Saxon noted the dandruff on the collar of his coat.

One of the men pointed into the street, and several of his companions laughed. The cause of it was the little Olsen boy, barely four years old, escaped somehow from his mother and toddling toward his economic enemies. In his right he bore a rock so heavy that he could scarcely lift it. With this he feebly threatened them. His rosy little face was convulsed with rage, and he was screaming over and over: "Dam scabs! Dam scabs! Dam scabs!" The laughter with which they greeted him only increased his fury. He toddled closer, and with a mighty exertion threw the rock. It fell a scant six feet beyond his hand.

This much Saxon saw, and also Mrs. Olsen rushing into the street for her child. A rattling of revolver-shots from the strikers drew Saxon's attention to the men beneath her. One of them cursed sharply and examined the biceps of his left arm, which hung limply by his side. Down the hand she saw the blood beginning to drip. She knew she ought not remain and watch, but the memory of her fighting forefathers was with her, while she possessed no more than normal human fear—if anything, less. She forgot her child in the eruption of battle that had broken upon her quiet street. And she forgot the strikers, and everything else, in amazement at what had happened to the round-bellied, cigar-smoking leader. In some strange way, she knew not how, his head had become wedged at the neck between the tops of the pickets of her fence. His body hung down outside, the knees not quite touching the ground. His hat had fallen off, and the sun was making an astounding high light on his
bald spot. The cigar, too, was gone. She saw he was looking at her. One hand, between the pickets, seemed waving at her, and almost he seemed to wink at her jocosely, though she knew it to be the contortion of deadly pain.

Possibly a second, or, at most, two seconds, she gazed at this, when she was aroused by Bert’s voice. He was running along the sidewalk, in front of her house, and behind him charged several more strikers, while he shouted: “Come on, you Mohegans! We got ’em nailed to the cross!”

In his left hand he carried a pick-handle, in his right a revolver, already empty, for he clicked the cylinder vainly around as he ran. With an abrupt stop, dropping the pick-handle, he whirled half about, facing Saxon’s gate. He was sinking down, when he straightened himself to throw the revolver into the face of a scab who was jumping toward him. Then he began swaying, at the same time sagging at the knees and waist. Slowly, with infinite effort, he caught a gate picket in his right hand, and, still slowly, as if lowering himself, sank down, while past him leaped the crowd of strikers he had led.

It was battle without quarter—a massacre. The scabs and their protectors, surrounded, backed against Saxon’s fence, fought like cornered rats, but could not withstand the rush of a hundred men. Clubs and pick-handles were swinging, revolvers were exploding, and cobblestones were flung with crushing effect at arm’s distance. Saxon saw young Frank Davis, a friend of Bert’s and a father of several months’ standing, press the muzzle of his revolver against a scab’s stomach and fire. There were curses and snarls of rage, wild cries of terror and pain. Mercedes was right. These things were not men.
They were beasts, fighting over bones, destroying one another for bones.

Jobs are bones; jobs are bones. The phrase was an incessant iteration in Saxon’s brain. Much as she might have wished it, she was powerless now to withdraw from the window. It was as if she were paralysed. Her brain no longer worked. She sat numb, staring, incapable of anything save seeing the rapid horror before her eyes that flashed along like a moving picture film gone mad. She saw Pinkertons, special police, and strikers go down. One scab, terribly wounded, on his knees and begging for mercy, was kicked in the face. As he sprawled backward, another striker, standing over him, fired a revolver into his chest, quickly and deliberately, again and again, until the weapon was empty. Another scab, backed over the pickets by a hand clutching his throat, had his face pulped by a revolver butt. Again and again, continually, the revolver rose and fell, and Saxon knew the man who wielded it—Chester Johnson. She had met him at dances and danced with him in the days before she was married. He had always been kind and good-natured. She remembered the Friday night, after a City Hall band concert, when he had taken her and two other girls to Tony’s Tamale Grotto on Thirteenth street. And after that they had all gone to Pabst’s Café and drunk a glass of beer before they went home. It was impossible that this could be the same Chester Johnson. And as she looked, she saw the round-bellied leader, still wedged by the neck between the pickets, draw a revolver with his free hand, and, squinting horribly sidewise, press the muzzle against Chester’s side. She tried to scream a warning. She did scream, and Chester looked up and saw her. At that moment the revolver went off, and he collapsed prone upon
the body of the scab. And the bodies of three men hung on her picket fence.

Anything could happen now. Quite without surprise, she saw the strikers leaping the fence, trampling her few little geraniums and pansies into the earth as they fled between Mercedes' house and hers. Up Pine street, from the railroad yards, was coming a rush of railroad police and Pinkertons, firing as they ran. While down Pine street, gongs clanging, horses at a gallop, came three patrol waggons packed with police. The strikers were in a trap. The only way out was between the houses and over the back yard fences. The jam in the narrow alley prevented them all from escaping. A dozen were cornered in the angle between the front of her house and the steps. And as they had done, so were they done by. No effort was made to arrest. They were clubbed down and shot down to the last man by the guardians of the peace who were infuriated by what had been wreaked on their brethren.

It was all over, and Saxon, moving as in a dream, clutching the banister tightly, came down the front steps. The round-bellied leader still leered at her and fluttered one hand, though two big policemen were just bending to extricate him. The gate was off its hinges, which seemed strange, for she had been watching all the time and had not seen it happen.

Bert's eyes were closed. His lips were blood-flecked, and there was a gurgling in his throat as if he were trying to say something. As she stooped above him, with her handkerchief brushing the blood from his cheek where someone had stepped on him, his eyes opened. The old defiant light was in them. He did not know her. The lips moved, and faintly, almost reminiscently, he mur-
mured, "The last of the Mohegans, the last of the Mohegans." Then he groaned, and the eyelids drooped down again. He was not dead. She knew that. The chest still rose and fell, and the gurgling still continued in his throat.

She looked up. Mercedes stood beside her. The old woman's eyes were very bright, her withered cheeks flushed.

"Will you help me carry him into the house?" Saxon asked.

Mercedes nodded, turned to a sergeant of police, and made the request to him. The sergeant gave a swift glance at Bert, and his eyes were bitter and ferocious as he refused:

"To hell with 'm. We'll care for our own."

"Maybe you and I can do it," Saxon said.

"Don't be a fool." Mercedes was beckoning to Mrs. Olsen across the street. "You go into the house, little mother that is to be. This is bad for you. We'll carry him in. Mrs. Olsen is coming, and we'll get Maggie Donahue."

Saxon led the way into the back bedroom which Billy had insisted on furnishing. As she opened the door, the carpet seemed to fly up into her face as with the force of a blow, for she remembered Bert had laid that carpet. And as the women placed him on the bed she recalled that it was Bert and she, between them, who had set the bed up one Sunday morning.

And then she felt very queer, and was surprised to see Mercedes regarding her with questioning, searching eyes. After that her queerness came on very fast, and she descended into the hell of pain that it is given to women alone to know. She was supported, half-carried, to the
front bedroom. Many faces were about her—Mercedes, Mrs. Olsen, Maggie Donahue. It seemed she must ask Mrs. Olsen if she had saved little Emil from the street, but Mercedes cleared Mrs. Olsen out to look after Bert, and Maggie Donahue went to answer a knock at the front door. From the street came a loud hum of voices, punctuated by shouts and commands, and from time to time there was a clanging of the gongs of ambulances and patrol waggons. Then appeared the fat, comfortable face of Martha Skelton, and, later, Doctor Hentley came. Once, in a clear interval, through the thin wall Saxon heard the high opening notes of Mary's hysteria. And, another time, she heard Mary repeating over and over: "I'll never go back to the laundry. Never. Never."

CHAPTER X.

Billy could never get over the shock, during that period, of Saxon's appearance. Morning after morning, and evening after evening when he came home from work, he would enter the room where she lay and fight a royal battle to hide his feelings and make a show of cheerfulness and geniality. She looked so small lying there, so small and shrunken and weary, and yet so child-like in her smallness. Tenderly, as he sat beside her, he would take up her pale hand and stroke the slim, transparent arm, marvelling at the smallness and delicacy of the bones.

One of her first questions, puzzling alike to Billy and Mary, was:

"Did they save little Emil Olsen?"

And when she told them how he had attacked, single-handed, the whole twenty-four fighting men, Billy's face glowed with appreciation.
"The little cuss!" he said. "That's the kind of a kid to be proud of."
He halted awkwardly, and his very evident fear that he had hurt her touched Saxon. She put her hand out to his.

"Billy," she began; then waited till Mary left the room.
"I never asked before—not that it matters . . . now. But I waited for you to tell me. Was it . . . ?"
He shook his head.

"No; it was a girl. A perfect little girl. Only . . . it was too soon."
She pressed his hand, and almost it was she that sympathised with him in his affliction.

"I never told you, Billy—you were so set on a boy; but I planned, just the same, if it was a girl, to call her Daisy. You remember, that was my mother's name."
He nodded his approbation.

"Say, Saxon, you know I did want a boy like the very dickens . . . well, I don't care now. I think I'm set just as hard on a girl, an', well, here's hopin' the next will be called . . . you wouldn't mind, would you?"
"What?"
"If we called it the same name, Daisy?"
"Oh, Billy! I was thinking the very same thing."
Then his face grew stern, as he went on.

"Only there ain't goin' to be a next. I didn't know what havin' children was like before. You can't run any more risks like that."
"Hear the big, strong, afraid-man talk!" she jeered, with a wan smile. "You don't know anything about it. How can a man? I am a healthy, natural woman. Everything would have been all right this time if . . . if all that fighting hadn't happened. Where did they bury Bert?"
"You knew?"
"All the time. And where is Mercedes? She hasn't been in for two days."
"Old Barry's sick. She's with him."
He did not tell her that the old night watchman was dying, two thin walls and half a dozen feet away.
Saxon's lips were trembling, and she began to cry weakly, clinging to Billy's hand with both of hers.
"I—I can't help it," she sobbed. "I'll be all right in a minute... Our little girl, Billy. Think of it! And I never saw her!"

She was still lying on her bed, when, one evening, Mary saw fit to break out in bitter thanksgiving that she had escaped, and was destined to escape, what Saxon had gone through.
"Aw, what are you talkin' about?" Billy demanded. "You'll get married some time again as sure as beans is beans."
"Not to the best man living," she proclaimed. "And there ain't no call for it. There's too many people in the world now, else why are there two or three men for every job? And, besides, havin' children is too terrible."
Saxon, with a look of patient wisdom in her face that became glorified as she spoke, made answer:
"I ought to know what it means. I've been through it, and I'm still in the thick of it, and I want to say to you right now, out of all the pain and the ache and the sorrow, that it is the most beautiful, wonderful thing in the world."

As Saxon's strength came back to her (and when Doctor Hentley had privily assured Billy that she was
sound as a dollar), she herself took up the matter of the industrial tragedy that had taken place before her door. The militia had been called out immediately, Billy informed her, and was encamped then at the foot of Pine street on the waste ground next to the railroad yards. As for the strikers, fifteen of them were in jail. A house to house search had been made in the neighbourhood by the police, and in this way nearly the whole fifteen, all wounded, had been captured. It would go hard with them, Billy foreboded gloomily. The newspapers were demanding blood for blood, and all the ministers in Oakland had preached fierce sermons against the strikers. The railroad had filled every place, and it was well known that the striking shopmen not only would never get their old jobs back but were blacklisted in every railroad in the United States. Already they were beginning to scatter. A number had gone to Panama, and four were talking of going to Ecuador to work in the shops of the railroad that ran over the Andes to Quito.

With anxiety keenly concealed, she tried to feel out Billy's opinion on what had happened.

"That shows what Bert's violent methods come to," she said.

He shook his head slowly and gravely.

"They'll hang Chester Johnson, anyway," he answered indirectly. "You know him. You told me you used to dance with him. He was caught red-handed, lyin' on the body of a scab he beat to death. Old Jelly Belly's got three bullet holes in him, but he ain't goin' to die, and he's got Chester's number. They'll hang 'm on Jelly Belly's evidence. It was all in the papers. Jelly Belly shot him, too, a-hangin' by the neck on our pickets."
Saxon shuddered. Jelly Belly must be the man with
the bald spot and the tobacco-stained whiskers.

"Yes," she said. "I saw it all. It seemed he must
have hung there for hours."

"It was all over, from first to last, in five minutes."

"It seemed ages and ages."

"I guess that's the way it seemed to Jelly Belly, stuck
on the pickets," Billy smiled grimly. "But he's a hard
one to kill. He's been shot an' cut up a dozen different
times. But they say now he'll be crippled for life—have
to go around on crutches, or in a wheel-chair. That'll
stop him from doin' any more dirty work for the railroad.
He was one of their top gun-fighters—always up to his
ears in the thick of any fightin' that was goin' on. He
never was leary of anything on two feet, I'll say that much
for 'm."

"Where does he live?" Saxon enquired.

"Up on Adeline, near Tenth—fine neighbourhood an'
fine two-storeyed house. He must pay thirty dollars a
month rent. I guess the railroad paid him pretty well."

"Then he must be married?"

"Yep. I never seen his wife, but he's got one son,
Jack, a passenger engineer. I used to know him. He
was a nifty boxer, though he never went into the ring.
An' he's got another son that's teacher in the high school.
His name's Paul. We're about the same age. He was
great at baseball. I knew him when we was kids. He
pitched me out three times hand-runnin' once, when the
Durant played the Cole School."

Saxon sat back in the Morris chair, resting and think-
ing. The problem was growing more complicated than
ever. This elderly, round-bellied, and bald-headed gun-
fighter, too, had a wife and family. And there was Frank
Davis, married barely a year and with a baby boy. Perhaps the scab he shot in the stomach had a wife and children. All seemed to be acquainted, members of a very large family, and yet, because of their particular families, they battered and killed each other. She had seen Chester Johnson kill a scab, and now they were going to hang Chester Johnson, who had married Kittie Brady out of the cannery, and she and Kittie Brady had worked together years before in the paper box factory.

Vainly Saxon waited for Billy to say something that would show he did not countenance the killing of the scabs.

"It was wrong," she ventured finally.

"They killed Bert," he countered. "An' a lot of others. An' Frank Davis. Did you know he was dead? Had his whole lower jaw shot away—died in the ambulance before they could get him to the receiving hospital. There was never so much killin' at one time in Oakland before."

"But it was their fault," she contended. "They began it. It was murder."

Billy did not reply, but she heard him mutter hoarsely. She knew he said "God damn them;" but when she asked, "What?" he made no answer. His eyes were deep with troubled clouds, while the mouth had hardened, and all his face was bleak.

To her it was a heart-stab. Was he, too, like the rest? Would he kill other men who had families, like Bert, and Frank Davis, and Chester Johnson had killed? Was he, too, a wild beast, a dog that would snarl over a bone?

She sighed. Life was a strange puzzle. Perhaps Mercedes Higgins was right in her cruel statement of the terms of existence.
“What of it?” Billy laughed harshly, as if in answer to her unuttered questions. “It's dog eat dog, I guess, and it's always ben that way. Take that scrap outside there. They killed each other just like the North an' South did in the Civil War.”

“But workingmen can't win that way, Billy. You say yourself that it spoiled their chance of winning.”

“I suppose not,” he admitted reluctantly. “But what other chance they've got to win I don't see. Look at us. We'll be up against it next.”

“Not the teamsters?” she cried.

He nodded gloomily.

“The bosses are cuttin' loose all along the line for a high old time. Say they're goin' to beat us to our knees till we come crawlin' back a-beggin' for our jobs. They've bucked up real high an' mighty what of all that killin' the other day. Havin' the troops out is half the fight, along with havin' the preachers an' the papers an' the public behind 'em. They're shootin' off their mouths already about what they're goin' to do. They're sure gunning for trouble. First, they're goin' to hang Chester Johnson an' as many more of the fifteen as they can. They say that flat. The Tribune, an' the Enquirer, an' the Times keep sayin' it over an' over every day. They're all union-bustin' to beat the band. No more closed shop. To hell with organised labour. Why, the dirty little Intelligencer come out this morning an' said that every union official in Oakland ought to be run outa town or stretched up. Fine, eh? You bet it's fine.

“Look at us. It ain't a case any more of sympathetic strike for the mill-workers. We got our own troubles. They've fired our four best men—the ones that was always on the conference committees. Did it without cause.
They're lookin' for trouble, as I told you, an' they'll get it, too, if they don't watch out. We got our tip from the Frisco Water Front Confederation. With them backin' us we'll go some."

"You mean you'll . . . strike?" Saxon asked.

He bent his head.

"But isn't that what they want you to do?—from the way they're acting?"

"What's the difference?" Billy shrugged his shoulders, then continued. "It's better to strike than to get fired. We beat 'em to it, that's all, an' we catch 'em before they're ready. Don't we know what they're doin'? They're collectin' gradin'-camp drivers an' mule-skinners all up an' down the state. They got forty of 'em, feedin' 'em in a hotel in Stockton right now, an' ready to rush 'em in on us, an' hundreds more like 'em. So this Saturday's the last wages I'll likely bring home for some time."

Saxon closed her eyes and thought quietly for five minutes. It was not her way to take things excitedly. The coolness of poise that Billy so admired never deserted her in time of emergency. She realised that she herself was no more than a mote caught up in this tangled, non-understandable conflict of many motes.

"We'll have to draw from our savings to pay for this month's rent," she said brightly.

Billy's face fell.

"We ain't got as much in the bank as you think," he confessed. "Bert had to be buried, you know, an' I coughed up what the others couldn't raise."

"How much was it?"

"Forty dollars. I was goin' to stand off the butcher an' the rest for awhile. They knew I was good pay."
But they put it to me straight. They'd ben carryin' the shopmen right along an' was up against it themselves. An' now, with that strike smashed they're pretty much smashed themselves. So I took it all out of the bank. I knew you wouldn't mind. You don't, do you?"

She smiled bravely, and bravely overcame the sinking feeling at her heart.

"It was the only right thing to do, Billy. I would have done it if you were lying sick, and Bert would have done it for you an' me if it had been the other way around."

His face was glowing.

"Gee, Saxon, a fellow can always count on you. You're like my right hand. That's why I say no more babies. If I lose you I'm crippled for life."

"We've got to economise," she mused, nodding her appreciation. "How much is in bank?"

"Just about thirty dollars. You see, I had to pay Martha Skelton an' for the . . . a few other little things. An' the union took time by the neck and levied a four dollar emergency assessment on every member just to be ready if the strike was pulled off. But Doc Hentley can wait. He said as much. He's the goods, if anybody should ask you. How'd you like 'm?"

"I liked him. But I don't know about doctors. He's the first I ever had—except when I was vaccinated once, and then the city did that."

"Looks like the street-car men are goin' out, too. Dan Fallon's come to town. Came all the way from New York. Tried to sneak in on the quiet, but the fellows knew when he left New York, an' kept track of him all the way acrost. They have to. He's Johnny-on-the-Spot whenever street-car men are licked into shape. He's
won lots of street-car strikes for the bosses. Keeps an army of strike breakers an’ ships them all over the country on special trains wherever they’re needed. Oakland’s never seen labour troubles like she’s got and is goin’ to get. All hell’s goin’ to break loose from the looks of it.”

“Watch out for yourself, then, Billy. I don’t want to lose you either.”

“Aw, that’s all right. I can take care of myself. An’ besides, it ain’t as though we was licked. We got a good chance.”

“But you’ll lose if there is any killing.”

“Yep; we gotta keep an eye out against that.”

“No violence.”

“No gun-fighting or dynamite,” he assented. “But a heap of scabs’ll get their heads broke. That has to be.”

“But you won’t do any of that, Billy.”

“Not so as any slob can testify before a court to havin’ seen me.” Then, with a quick shift, he changed the subject. “Old Barry Higgins is dead. I didn’t want to tell you till you was outa bed. Buried ’m a week ago. An’ the old woman’s movin’ to Frisco. She told me she’d be in to say good-bye. She stuck by you pretty well them first couple of days, an’ she showed Martha Skelton a few that made her hair curl. She got Martha’s goat from the jump.”

CHAPTER XI.

With Billy on strike and away doing picket duty, and with the departure of Mercedes and the death of Bert, Saxon was left much to herself in a loneliness that even in one as healthy-minded as she could not fail to produce
morbidness. Mary, too, had left, having spoken vaguely of taking a job at housework in Piedmont.

Billy could help Saxon little in her trouble. He dimly sensed her suffering, without comprehending the scope and intensity of it. He was too man-practical, and, by his very sex, too remote from the intimate tragedy that was hers. He was an outsider at the best, a friendly onlooker who saw little. To her the baby had been quick and real. It was still quick and real. That was her trouble. By no deliberate effort of will could she fill the aching void of its absence. Its reality became, at times, an hallucination. Somewhere it still was, and she must find it. She would catch herself, on occasion, listening with strained ears for the cry she had never heard, yet which, in fancy, she had heard a thousand times in the happy months before the end. Twice she left her bed in her sleep and went searching—each time coming to herself beside her mother's chest of drawers in which were the tiny garments. To herself, at such moments, she would say, "I had a baby once." And she would say it, aloud, as she watched the children playing in the street.

One day, on the Eighth street-cars, a young mother sat beside her, a crowing infant in her arms. And Saxon said to her:

"I had a baby once. It died."

The mother looked at her, startled, half-drew the baby tighter in her arms, jealously, or as if in fear; then she softened as she said:

"You poor thing."

"Yes," Saxon nodded. "It died."

Tears welled into her eyes, and the telling of her grief seemed to have brought relief. But all the day she
suffered from an almost overwhelming desire to recite her sorrow to the world—to the paying teller at the bank, to the elderly floor-walker in Salinger’s, to the blind woman, guided by a little boy, who played on the concertina—to everyone save the policeman. The police were new and terrible creatures to her now. She had seen them kill the strikers as mercilessly as the strikers had killed the scabs. And, unlike the strikers, the police were professional killers. They were not fighting for jobs. They did it as a business. They could have taken prisoners that day, in the angle of her front steps and the house. But they had not. Unconsciously, whenever approaching one, she edged across the sidewalk so as to get as far as possible away from him. She did not reason it out, but deeper than consciousness was the feeling that they were typical of something inimical to her and hers.

At Eighth and Broadway, waiting for her car to return home, the policeman on the corner recognised her and greeted her. She turned white to the lips, and her heart fluttered painfully. It was only Ned Hermanmann, fatter, broader-faced, jollier looking than ever. He had sat across the aisle from her for three terms at school. He and she had been monitors together of the composition books for one term. The day the powder works blew up at Pinole, breaking every window in the school, he and she had not joined in the panic rush for out-of-doors. Both had remained in the room, and the irate principal had exhibited them, from room to room, to the cowardly classes, and then rewarded them with a month’s holiday from school. And after that Ned Hermanmann had become a policeman, and married Lena Highland, and Saxon had heard they had five children.

But, in spite of all that, he was now a policeman, and
Billy was now a striker. Might not Ned Hermanmann some day club and shoot Billy just as those other policemen clubbed and shot the strikers by her front steps?

“What’s the matter, Saxon?” he asked. “Sick?”

She nodded and choked, unable to speak, and started to move toward her car which was coming to a stop.

“I’ll help you,” he offered.

She shrank away from his hand.

“No; I’m all right,” she gasped hurriedly. “I’m not going to take it. I’ve forgotten something.”

“She turned away dizzily, up Broadway to Ninth. Two blocks along Ninth, she turned down Clay and back to Eighth street, where she waited for another car.

As the summer months dragged along, the industrial situation in Oakland grew steadily worse. Capital everywhere seemed to have selected this city for the battle with organised labour. So many men in Oakland were out on strike, or were locked out, or were unable to work because of the dependence of their trades on the other tied-up trades, that odd jobs at common labour were hard to obtain. Billy occasionally got a day’s work to do, but did not earn enough to make both ends meet, despite the small strike wages received at first, and despite the rigid economy he and Saxon practiced.

The table she set had scarcely anything in common with that of their first married year. Not alone was every item of cheaper quality, but many items had disappeared. Meat, and the poorest, was very seldom on the table. Cow’s milk had given place to condensed milk, and even the sparing use of the latter had ceased. A roll of butter, when they had it, lasted half a dozen times as long as formerly. Where Billy had been used to drinking
three cups of coffee for breakfast, he now drank one. Saxon boiled this coffee an atrocious length of time, and she paid twenty cents a pound for it.

The blight of hard times was on all the neighbourhood. The families not involved in one strike were touched by some other strike or by the cessation of work in some dependent trade. Many single young men who were lodgers had drifted away, thus increasing the house rent of the families which had sheltered them.

"Gott!" said the butcher to Saxon. "We working class all suffer together. My wife she cannot get her teeth fixed now. Pretty soon I go smash broke maybe."

Once, when Billy was preparing to pawn his watch, Saxon suggested his borrowing the money from Billy Murphy.

"I was plannin' that," Billy answered, "only I can't now. I didn't tell you what happened Tuesday night at the Sporting Life Club. You remember that squarehead Champion of the United States Navy? Bill was matched with him, an' it was sure easy money. Bill had 'm goin' south by the end of the sixth round, an' at the seventh went in to finish 'm. And then—just his luck, for his trade's idle now—he snaps his right forearm. Of course the squarehead comes back at 'm on the jump, an' it's good night for Bill. ———Gee! Us Mohegans are gettin' our bad luck handed to us in chunks these days."

"Don't!" Saxon cried, shuddering involuntarily.

"What?" Billy asked with open mouth of surprise.

"Don't say that word again. Bert was always say- ing it."

"Oh, Mohegans. All right, I won't. You ain't super-stitious, are you?"

"No; but just the same there's too much truth in the
word for me to like it. Sometimes it seems as though he was right. Times have changed. They've changed even since I was a little girl. We crossed the plains and opened up this country, and now we're losing even the chance to work for a living in it. And it's not my fault, it's not your fault. We've got to live well or bad just by luck, it seems. There's no other way to explain it."

"It beats me," Billy concurred. "Look at the way I worked last year. Never missed a day. I'd want to never miss a day this year, an' here I haven't done a tap for weeks an' weeks an' weeks. Say! Who runs this country anyway?"

Saxon had stopped the morning paper, but frequently Maggie Donahue's boy, who served a Tribune route, tossed an "extra" on her steps. From its editorials Saxon gleaned that organised labour was trying to run the country and that it was making a mess of it. It was all the fault of domineering labour—so ran the editorials, column by column, day by day; and Saxon was convinced, yet remained unconvinced. The social puzzle of living was too intricate.

The teamsters' strike, backed financially by the teamsters of San Francisco and by the allied unions of the San Francisco Water Front Confederation, promised to be long-drawn, whether or not it was successful. The Oakland harness-washers and stablemen, with few exceptions, had gone out with the teamsters. The teaming firms were not half-filling their contracts, but the employers' association was helping them. In fact, half the employers' associations of the Pacific Coast were helping the Oakland Employers' Association.

Saxon was behind a month's rent, which, when it is considered that rent was paid in advance, was equivalent
to two months. Likewise, she was two months behind in the instalments on the furniture. Yet she was not pressed very hard by Salinger's, the furniture dealers.

"We're givin' you all the rope we can," said their collector. "My orders is to make you dig up every cent I can and at the same time not to be too hard. Salinger's are trying to do the right thing, but they're up against it, too. You've no idea how many accounts like yours they're carrying along. Sooner or later they'll have to call a halt or get it in the neck themselves. And in the meantime just see if you can't scrape up five dollars by next week—just to cheer them along, you know."

One of the stablemen who had not gone out, Henderson by name, worked at Billy's stables. Despite the urging of the bosses to eat and sleep in the stable like the other men, Henderson had persisted in coming home each morning to his little house around the corner from Saxon's on Fifth street. Several times she had seen him swinging along defiantly, his dinner pail in his hand, while the neighbourhood boys dogged his heels at a safe distance and informed him in yapping chorus that he was a scab and no good. But one evening, on his way to work, in a spirit of bravado he went into the Pile-Drivers' Home, the saloon at Seventh and Pine. There it was his mortal mischance to encounter Otto Frank, a striker who drove from the same stable. Not many minutes later an ambulance was hurrying Henderson to the receiving hospital with a fractured skull, while a patrol waggon was no less swiftly carrying Otto Frank to the city prison.

Maggie Donahue it was, eyes shining with gladness, who told Saxon of the happening.

"Served him right, too, the dirty scab," Maggie concluded.

The Valley of the Moon. I.
"But his poor wife!" was Saxon's cry. "She's not strong. And then the children. She'll never be able to take care of them if her husband dies."

"An' serve her right, the damned slut!"

Saxon was both shocked and hurt by the Irishwoman's brutality. But Maggie was implacable.

"'Tis all she or anny woman deserves that'll put up an' live with a scab. What about her children? Let 'm starve, an' her man a-takin' the food out of other children's mouths."

Mrs. Olsen's attitude was different. Beyond passive sentimental pity for Henderson's wife and children, she gave them no thought, her chief concern being for Otto Frank and Otto Frank's wife and children—herself and Mrs. Frank being full sisters.

"If he dies, they will hang Otto," she said. "And then what will poor Hilda do? She has varicose veins in both legs, and she never can stand on her feet all day an' work for wages. And me, I cannot help. Ain't Carl out of work, too?"

Billy had still another point of view.

"It will give the strike a black eye, especially if Henderson croaks," he worried, when he came home. "They'll hang Frank on record time. Besides, we'll have to put up a defense, an' lawyers charge like Sam Hill. They'll eat a hole in our treasury you could drive every team in Oakland through. An' if Frank hadn't ben screwed up with whisky he'd never a-done it. He's the mildest, good-naturedest man sober you ever seen."

Twice that evening Billy left the house to find out if Henderson was dead yet. In the morning the papers gave little hope, and the evening papers published his
death. Otto Frank lay in jail without bail. The Tribune demanded a quick trial and summary execution, calling on the prospective jury manfully to do its duty and dwelling at length on the moral effect that would be so produced upon the lawless working class. It went further, emphasising the salutary effect machine guns would have on the mob that had taken the fair city of Oakland by the throat.

And all such occurrences struck at Saxon personally. Practically alone in the world, save for Billy, it was her life, and his, and their mutual love-life, that was menaced. From the moment he left the house to the moment of his return she knew no peace of mind. Rough work was afoot, of which he told her nothing, and she knew he was playing his part in it. On more than one occasion she noticed fresh-broken skin on his knuckles. At such times he was remarkably taciturn, and would sit in brooding silence or go almost immediately to bed. She was afraid to have this habit of reticence grow on him, and bravely she bid for his confidence. She climbed into his lap and inside his arms, one of her arms around his neck, and with the free hand she caressed his hair back from the forehead and smoothed out the moody brows.

"Now listen to me, Billy Boy," she began lightly. "You haven’t been playing fair, and I won’t have it. No!" She pressed his lips shut with her fingers. "I’m doing the talking now, and because you haven’t been doing your share of the talking for some time. You remember we agreed at the start to always talk things over. I was the first to break this, when I sold my fancy work to Mrs. Higgins without speaking to you about it. And I was very sorry. I am still sorry. And I’ve never done it since. Now it’s your turn. You’re not talking.
things over with me. You are doing things you don't tell me about.

"Billy, you're dearer to me than anything else in the world. You know that. We're sharing each other's lives, only, just now, there's something you're not sharing. Every time your knuckles are sore, there's something you don't share. If you can't trust me, you can't trust anybody. And, besides, I love you so that no matter what you do I'll go on loving you just the same."

Billy gazed at her with fond incredulity.

"Don't be a pincher," she teased. "Remember, I stand for whatever you do."

"And you won't buck against me?" he queried.

"How can I? I'm not your boss, Billy. I wouldn't boss you for anything in the world. And if you'd let me boss you, I wouldn't love you half as much."

He digested this slowly, and finally nodded.

"An' you won't be mad?"

"With you? You've never seen me mad yet. Now come on and be generous and tell me how you hurt your knuckles. It's fresh to-day. Anybody can see that."

"All right. I'll tell you how it happened." He stopped and giggled with genuine boyish glee at some recollection. "It's like this. —— You won't be mad, now? We gotta do these sort of things to hold our own. Well, here's the show, a regular movin' picture except for the talkin'. Here's a big rube comin' along, hayseed stickin' out all over, hands like hams an' feet like Mississippi gunboats. He'd make half as much again as me in size, an' he's young, too. Only he ain't lookin' for trouble, an' he's as innocent as . . . well, he's the innocentest scab that ever come down the pike an' bumped into a couple of pickets. Not a regular strike-breaker, you see, just a
big rube that's read the bosses' ads an' come a-humpin' to town for the big wages.

"An' here's Bud Strothers an' me comin' along. We always go in pairs that way, an' sometimes bigger bunches. I flag the rube. 'Hello,' says I, 'lookin' for a job?' 'You bet,' says he. 'Can you drive?' 'Yep.' 'Four horses?' 'Show me to 'em,' says he. 'No josh, now,' says I; 'you're sure wantin' to drive?' 'That's what I come to town for,' he says. 'You're the man we're lookin' for,' says I. 'Come along, an' we'll have you busy in no time.'

"You see, Saxon, we can't pull it off there, because there's Tom Scanlon—you know, the red-headed cop—only a couple of blocks away an' pipin' us off though not recognisin' us. So away we go, the three of us, Bud an' me leadin' that boob to take our jobs away from us I guess nit. We turn into the alley back of Campwell's grocery. Nobody in sight. Bud stops short, and the rube an' me stop.

"'I don't think he wants to drive,' Bud says, considerin'. An' the rube says quick, 'You betcher life I do.' 'You're dead sure you want that job?' I says. Yes, he's dead sure. Nothin's goin' to keep him away from that job. Why, that job's what he come to town for, an' we can't lead him to it too quick.

"'Well, my friend,' says I, 'it's my sad duty to inform you that you've made a mistake.' 'How's that?' he says. 'Go on,' I says; 'you're standin' on your foot.' And, honest to God, Saxon, that gink looks down at his feet to see. 'I don't understand,' says he. 'We're goin' to show you,' says I.

It don't take long when you're scientific an' trained to tandem work. Of course it's hard on the knuckles. But say, Saxon, if you'd seen that rube before an' after you'd thought he was a lightnin' change artist. Laugh? You'd a-busted."

Billy halted to give vent to his own mirth. Saxon forced herself to join with him, but down in her heart was horror. Mercedes was right. The stupid workers wrangled and snarled over jobs. The clever masters rode in automobiles and did not wrangle and snarl. They hired other stupid ones to do the wrangling and snarling for them. It was men like Bert and Frank Davis, like Chester Johnson and Otto Frank, like Jelly Belly and the Pinkertons, like Henderson and all the rest of the scabs, who were beaten up, shot, clubbed, or hanged. Ah, the clever ones were very clever. Nothing happened to them. They only rode in their automobiles.

"'You big stiffs,' the rube snivels as he crawls to his feet at the end," Billy was continuing. "'You think you still want that job?' I ask. He shakes his head. Then I read 'm the riot act: 'They's only one thing for you to do, old hoss, an' that's beat it. D'ye get me? Beat it. Back to the farm for you. An' if you come monkeyin' around town again, we'll be real mad at you. We was only foolin' this time. But next time we catch you your own mother won't know you when we get done with you.'

"An'—say!—you oughta seen 'm beat it. I bet he's goin' yet. An' when he gets back to Milpitas, or Sleepy Hollow, or wherever he hangs out, an' tells how the boys does things in Oakland, it's dollars to doughnuts they won't be a rube in his district tnat'â come to town to drive if they offered ten dollars an hour.'
“It was awful,” Saxon said, then laughed well-simulated appreciation.

“But that was nothin’,” Billy went on. “A bunch of the boys caught another one this morning. They didn’t do a thing to him. My goodness gracious, no. In less’n two minutes he was the worst wreck they ever hauled to the receivin’ hospital. The evenin’ papers gave the score: nose broken, three bad scalp wounds, front teeth out, a broken collarbone, an’ two broken ribs. Gee! He certainly got all that was comin’ to him. But that’s nothin’. D’ye want to know what the Frisco teamsters did in the big strike before the Earthquake? They took every scab they caught an’ broke both his arms with a crowbar. That was so he couldn’t drive, you see. Say, the hospitals was filled with ’em. An’ the teamsters won that strike, too.”

“But is it necessary, Billy, to be so terrible? I know they’re scabs, and that they’re taking the bread out of the strikers’ children’s mouths to put in their own children’s mouths, and that it isn’t fair and all that; but just the same is it necessary to be so . . . terrible?”

“Sure thing,” Billy answered confidently. “We just gotta throw the fear of God into them—when we can do it without bein’ caught.”

“And if you’re caught.”

“Then the union hires the lawyers to defend us, though that ain’t much good now, for the judges are pretty hostile, an’ the papers keep hammerin’ away at them to give stiffer an’ stiffer sentences. Just the same, before this strike’s over there’ll be a whole lot of guys a-wishin’ they’d never gone scabbin’.”

Very cautiously, in the next half hour, Saxon tried to feel out her husband’s attitude, to find if he doubted the
rightness of the violence he and his brother teamsters committed. But Billy’s ethical sanction was rock-bedded and profound. It never entered his head that he was not absolutely right. It was the game. Caught in its tangled meshes, he could see no other way to play it than the way all men played it. He did not stand for dynamite and murder, however. But then the unions did not stand for such. Quite naïve was his explanation that dynamite and murder did not pay; that such actions always brought down the condemnation of the public and broke the strikes. But the healthy beating up of a scab, he contended—the “throwing of the fear of God into a scab,” as he expressed it—was the only right and proper thing to do.

“Our folks never had to do such things,” Saxon said finally. “They never had strikes nor scabs in those times.”

“You bet they didn’t,” Billy agreed. “Them was the good old days. I’d liked to a-lived then.” He drew a long breath and sighed. “But them times will never come again.”

“Would you have liked living in the country?” Saxon asked.

“Sure thing.”

“There’s lots of men living in the country now,” she suggested.

“Just the same I notice them a-hikin’ to town to get our jobs,” was his reply.

CHAPTER XII.

A gleam of light came, when Billy got a job driving a grading team for the contractors of the big bridge then building at Niles. Before he went he made certain that it was a union job. And a union job it was for two
days, when the concrete workers threw down their tools. The contractors, evidently prepared for such happening, immediately filled the places of the concrete men with non-union Italians. Whereupon the carpenters, structural ironworkers and teamsters walked out; and Billy, lacking train fare, spent the rest of the day in walking home.

"I couldn't work as a scab," he concluded his tale.

"No," Saxon said; "you couldn't work as a scab."

But she wondered why it was that when men wanted to work, and there was work to do, yet they were unable to work because their unions said no. Why were there unions? And, if unions had to be, why were not all working-men in them? Then there would be no scabs, and Billy could work every day. Also, she wondered where she was to get a sack of flour, for she had long since ceased the extravagance of baker's bread. And so many other of the neighbourhood women had done this, that the little Welsh baker had closed up shop and gone away, taking his wife and two little daughters with him. Look where she would, everybody was being hurt by the industrial strife.

One afternoon came a caller at her door, and that evening came Billy with dubious news. He had been approached that day. All he had to do, he told Saxon, was to say the word, and he could go into the stable as foreman at one hundred dollars a month.

The nearness of such a sum, the possibility of it, was almost stunning to Saxon, sitting at a supper which consisted of boiled potatoes, warmed-over beans, and a small dry onion which they were eating raw. There was neither bread, coffee, nor butter. The onion Billy had pulled from his pocket, having picked it up in the street. *One hundred dollars a month!* She moistened her lips and fought for control.

"What made them offer it to you?" she questioned.
"That's easy," was his answer. "They got a dozen reasons. The guy the boss has had exercisin' Prince and King is a dub. King has gone lame in the shoulders. Then they're guessin' pretty strong that I'm the party that's put a lot of their scabs outa commission. Macklin's ben their foreman for years an' years—why I was in knee pants when he was foreman. Well, he's sick an' all in. They gotta have somebody to take his place. Then, too, I've been with 'em a long time. An' on top of that, I'm the man for the job. They know I know horses from the ground up. Hell, it's all I'm good for, except sluggin'.'"

"Think of it, Billy!" she breathed. "A hundred dollars a month! A hundred dollars a month!"

"An' throw the fellows down," he said.

It was not a question. Nor was it a statement. It was anything Saxon chose to make of it. They looked at each other. She waited for him to speak; but he continued merely to look. It came to her that she was facing one of the decisive moments of her life, and she gripped herself to face it in all coolness. Nor would Billy proffer her the slightest help. Whatever his own judgment might be, he masked it with an expressionless face. His eyes betrayed nothing. He looked and waited.

"You . . . you can't do that, Billy," she said finally. "You can't throw the fellows down."

His hand shot out to hers, and his face was a sudden, radiant dawn.

"Put her there!" he cried, their hands meeting and clasping. "You're the truest true blue wife a man ever had. If all the other fellows' wives was like you, we could win any strike we tackled."

"What would you have done if you weren't married, Billy?"
“Seen ’em in hell first.”

“Then it doesn’t make any difference being married. I’ve got to stand by you in everything you stand for. I’d be a nice wife if I didn’t.”

She remembered her caller of the afternoon, and knew the moment was too propitious to let pass.

“There was a man here this afternoon, Billy. He wanted a room. I told him I’d speak to you. He said he would pay six dollars a month for the back bedroom. That would pay half a month’s instalment on the furniture and buy a sack of flour, and we’re all out of flour.”

Billy’s old hostility to the idea was instantly uppermost, and Saxon watched him anxiously.

“Some scab in the shops, I suppose?”

“No; he’s firing on the freight run to San José. Harmon, he said his name was, James Harmon. They’ve just transferred him from the Truckee division. He’ll sleep days mostly, he said; and that’s why he wanted a quiet house without children in it.”

In the end, with much misgiving, and only after Saxon had insistently pointed out how little work it entailed on her, Billy consented, though he continued to protest, as an afterthought:

“But I don’t want you makin’ beds for any man. It ain’t right, Saxon. I oughta take care of you.”

“And you would,” she flashed back at him, “if you’d take the foremanship. Only you can’t. It wouldn’t be right. And if I’m to stand by you it’s only fair to let me do what I can.”

James Harmon proved even less a bother than Saxon had anticipated. For a fireman he was scrupulously clean, always washing up in the roundhouse before he came home. He used the key to the kitchen door, coming and
going by the back steps. To Saxon he barely said how-do-you-do or good day; and, sleeping in the day time and working at night, he was in the house a week before Billy laid eyes on him.

Billy had taken to coming home later and later, and to going out after supper by himself. He did not offer to tell Saxon where he went. Nor did she ask. For that matter, it required little shrewdness on her part to guess. The fumes of whisky were on his lips at such times. His slow, deliberate ways were even slower, even more deliberate. Liquor did not affect his legs. He walked as soberly as any man. There was no hesitancy, no faltering, in his muscular movements. The whisky went to his brain, making his eyes heavy-lidded and the cloudiness of them more cloudy. Not that he was flighty, nor quick, nor irritable. On the contrary, the liquor imparted to his mental processes a deep gravity and brooding solemnity. He talked little, but that little was ominous and oracular. At such times there was no appeal from his judgment, no discussion. He knew, as God knew. And when he chose to speak a harsh thought, it was tenfold harsher than ordinarily, because it seemed to proceed out of such profundity of cogitation, because it was as prodigiously deliberate in its incubation as it was in its enunciation.

It was not a nice side he was showing to Saxon. It was, almost, as if a stranger had come to live with her. Despite herself, she found herself beginning to shrink from him. And little could she comfort herself with the thought that it was not his real self, for she remembered his gentleness and considerateness, all his finenesses of the past. Then, he had made a continual effort to avoid trouble and fighting. Now he enjoyed it, exulted in it,
went looking for it. All this showed in his face. No longer was he the smiling, pleasant-faced boy. He smiled infrequently now. His face was a man’s face. The lips, the eyes, the lines were harsh as his thoughts were harsh.

He was rarely unkind to Saxon; but, on the other hand, he was rarely kind. His attitude toward her was growing negative. He was disinterested. Despite the fight for the union she was enduring with him, putting up with him shoulder to shoulder, she occupied but little space in his mind. When he acted toward her gently, she could see that it was merely mechanical, just as she was well aware that the endearing terms he used, the endearing caresses he gave, were only habitual. The spontaneity and warmth had gone out. Often, when he was not in liquor, flashes of the old Billy came back, but even such flashes dwindled in frequency. He was growing preoccupied, moody. Hard times and the bitter stresses of industrial conflict strained him. Especially was this apparent in his sleep, when he suffered paroxysms of lawless dreams, groaning and muttering, clenching his fists, grinding his teeth, twisting with muscular tensions, his face writhing with passions and violences, his throat guttering with terrible curses that rasped and aborted on his lips. And Saxon, lying beside him, afraid of this visitor to her bed whom she did not know, remembered what Mary had told her of Bert. He, too, had cursed and clenched his fists, in his nights fought out the battles of his days.

One thing, however, Saxon saw clearly. By no deliberate act of Billy’s was he becoming this other and unlovely Billy. Were there no strike, no snarling and wrangling over jobs, there would be only the old Billy she had loved in all absoluteness. This sleeping terror in him would have lain asleep. It was something that
was being awakened in him, an image incarnate of outward conditions, as cruel, as ugly, as maleficent as were those outward conditions. But if the strike continued, then, she feared, with reason, would this other and grisly self of Billy strengthen to fuller and more forbidding stature. And this, she knew, would mean the wreck of their love-life. Such a Billy she could not love; in its nature such a Billy was not lovable nor capable of love. And then, at the thought of offspring, she shuddered. It was too terrible. And at such moments of contemplation, from her soul the inevitable plaint of the human went up: Why? Why? Why?

Billy, too, had his unanswerable queries.

"Why won't the building trades come out?" he demanded wrathfully of the obscurity that veiled the ways of living and the world. "But no; O'Brien won't stand for a strike, and he has the Building Trades Council under his thumb. But why don't they chuck him and come out anyway? We'd win hands down all along the line. But no, O'Brien's got their goat, an' him up to his dirty neck in politics an' graft! An' damn the Federation of Labour! If all the railroad boys had come out, wouldn't the shop men have won instead of bein' licked to a frazzle? ——Lord, I ain't had a smoke of decent tobacco or a cup of decent coffee in a coon's age. I've forgotten what a square meal tastes like. I weighed myself yesterday. Fifteen pounds lighter than when the strike begun. If it keeps on much more I can fight middleweight. An' this is what I get after payin' dues into the union for years and years. I can't get a square meal, an' my wife has to make other men's beds. It makes my tired ache. Some day I'll get real huffy an' chuck that lodger out."

"But it's not his fault, Billy," Saxon protested.
“Who said it was?” Billy snapped roughly. “Can’t I kick in general if I want to? Just the same it makes me sick. What’s the good of organised labour if it don’t stand together? For two cents I’d chuck the whole thing up an’ go over to the employers. Only I wouldn’t, God damn them! If they think they can beat us down to our knees, let ’em go ahead an’ try it, that’s all. But it gets me just the same. The whole world’s clean dippy. They ain’t no sense in anything. What’s the good of supportin’ a union that can’t win a strike? What’s the good of knockin’ the blocks off of scabs when they keep a-comin’ thick as ever? The whole thing’s bughouse, an’ I guess I am, too.”

Such an outburst on Billy’s part was so unusual that it was the only time Saxon knew it to occur. Always he was sullen, and dogged, and unwhipped; while whisky only served to set the maggots of certitude crawling in his brain.

One night Billy did not get home till after twelve. Saxon’s anxiety was increased by the fact that police fighting and head breaking had been reported to have occurred. When Billy came, his appearance verified the report. His coatsleeves were half torn off. The Windsor tie had disappeared from under his soft turned-down collar, and every button had been ripped off the front of the shirt. When he took his hat off, Saxon was frightened by a lump on his head the size of an apple.

“D’ye know who did that? ——That Dutch slob Hermanmann, with a riot club. An’ I’ll get ’m for it some day, good an’ plenty. An’ there’s another fellow I got staked out that’ll be my meat when this strike’s over an’ things is settled down. Blanchard’s his name, Roy Blanchard.”

“Not of Blanchard, Perkins and Company?” Saxon
asked, busy washing Billy's hurt and making her usual fight to keep him calm.

"Yep; except he's the son of the old man. What's he do, that ain't done a tap of work in all his life except to blow the old man's money? He goes strike-breakin'. Grandstand play, that's what I call it. Gets his name in the papers an' makes all the skirts he runs with fluster up an' say: 'My! Some bear, that Roy Blanchard, some bear.' Some bear—the gazabo! He'll be bear-meat for me some day. I never itched so hard to lick a man in my life.

"And—oh, I guess I'll pass that Dutch cop up. He got his already. Somebody broke his head with a lump of coal the size of a water bucket. That was when the waggons was turnin' into Franklin, just off Eighth, by the old Galindo Hotel. They was hard fightin' there, an' some guy in the hotel lams that coal down from the second story window.

"They was fightin' every block of the way—bricks, cobblestones, an' police-clubs to beat the band. They don't dast call out the troops. An' they was afraid to shoot. Why, we tore holes through the police force, an' the ambulances and patrol waggons worked overtime. But say, we got the procession blocked at Fourteenth and Broadway, right under the nose of the City Hall, rushed the rear end, cut out the horses of five waggons, an' handed them college guys a few love-pats in passin'. All that saved 'em from hospital was the police reserves. Just the same we had 'em jammed an hour there. You oughta seen the street-cars blocked, too—Broadway, Fourteenth, San Pablo, as far as you could see."

"But what did Blanchard do?" Saxon called him back.

"He led the procession, an' he drove my team. All the teams was from my stable. He rounded up a lot of
them college fellows—fraternity guys, they’re called—yaps that live off their fathers’ money. They come to the stable in big tourin’ cars an’ drove out the waggons with half the police of Oakland to help them. Say, it was sure some day. The sky rained cobblestones. An’ you oughta heard the clubs on our heads—rat-tat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat-tat! An’ say, the chief of police, in a police auto, sittin’ up like God Almighty—just before we got to Peralta street they was a block an’ the police chargin’, an’ an old woman, right from her front gate, lammed the chief of police full in the face with a dead cat. Phew! You could hear it. ‘Arrest that woman!’ he yells, with his handkerchief out. But the boys beat the cops to her an’ got her away. Some day? I guess yes. The receivin’ hospital went out a commission on the jump, an’ the overflow was spilled into St. Mary’s Hospital, an’ Fabiola, an’ I don’t know where else. Eight of our men was pulled, an’ a dozen of the Frisco teamsters that’s come over to help. They’re holy terrors, them Frisco teamsters. It seemed half the work- ingmen of Oakland was helpin’ us, an’ they must be an army of them in jail. Our lawyers’ll have to take their cases, too.

“But take it from me, it’s the last we’ll see of Roy Blanchard an’ yaps of his kidney buttin’ into our affairs. I guess we showed ’em some football. You know that brick buildin’ they’re puttin’ up on Bay street? That’s where we loaded up first, an’, say, you couldn’t see the waggon-seats for bricks when they started from the stables. Blanchard drove the first waggon, an’ he was knocked clean off the seat once, but he stayed with it.”

“He must have been brave,” Saxon commented.

“Brave?” Billy flared. “With the police, an’ the army an’ navy behind him? I suppose you’ll be takin’ their
part next. Brave? A-takin’ the food outa the mouths of our women an’ children. Didn’t Curley Jones’s little kid die last night? Mother’s milk not nourishin’, that’s what it was, because she didn’t have the right stuff to eat. An’ I know, an’ you know, a dozen old aunts, an’ sister-in-laws, an’ such, that’s had to hike to the poorhouse because their folks couldn’t take care of ’em in these times.”

In the morning paper Saxon read the exciting account of the futile attempt to break the teamsters’ strike. Roy Blanchard was hailed a hero and held up as a model of wealthy citizenship. And to save herself she could not help glowing with appreciation of his courage. There was something fine in his going out to face the snarling pack. A brigadier general of the regular army was quoted as lamenting the fact that the troops had not been called out to take the mob by the throat and shake law and order into it. “This is the time for a little healthful blood-letting,” was the conclusion of his remarks, after deploring the pacific methods of the police. “For not until the mob has been thoroughly beaten and cowed will tranquil industrial conditions obtain.”

That evening Saxon and Billy went up town. Returning home and finding nothing to eat, he had taken her on one arm, his overcoat on the other. The overcoat he had pawned at Uncle Sam’s, and he and Saxon had eaten drearily at a Japanese restaurant which in some miraculous way managed to set a semi-satisfying meal for ten cents. After eating, they started on their way to spend an additional five cents each on a moving picture show.

At the Central Bank Building, two striking teamsters accosted Billy and took him away with them. Saxon waited on the corner, and when he returned, three quarters of an hour later, she knew he had been drinking.
Half a block on, passing the Forum Café, he stopped suddenly. A limousine stood at the curb, and into it a young man was helping several wonderfully gowned women. A chauffeur sat in the driver's seat. Billy touched the young man on the arm. He was as broad-shouldered as Billy and slightly taller. Blue-eyed, strong-featured, in Saxon's opinion he was undeniably handsome.

"Just a word, sport," Billy said, in a low, slow voice. The young man glanced quickly at Billy and Saxon, and asked impatiently:

"Well, what is it?"

"You're Blanchard," Billy began. "I seen you yesterday lead out that bunch of teams."

"Didn't I do it all right?" Blanchard asked gaily, with a flash of glance to Saxon and back again.

"Sure. But that ain't what I want to talk about."

"Who are you?" the other demanded with sudden suspicion.

"A striker. It just happens you drove my team, that's all. ——No; don't move for a gun." (As Blanchard half reached toward his hip pocket.) "I ain't startin' anythin' here. But I just want to tell you something."

"Be quick, then."

Blanchard lifted one foot to step into the machine.

"Sure," Billy went on without any diminution of his exasperating slowness. "What I want to tell you is that I'm after you. Not now, when the strike's on, but some time later I'm goin' to get you an' give you the beatin' of your life."

Blanchard looked Billy over with new interest and measuring eyes that sparkled with appreciation.

"You are a husky yourself," he said. "But do you think you can do it?"
"Sure. You're my meat."
"All right, then, my friend. Look me up after the strike is settled, and I'll give you a chance at me."
"Remember," Billy added, "I got you staked out."

Blanchard nodded, smiled genially to both of them, raised his hat to Saxon, and stepped into the machine.

CHAPTER XIII.

From now on, to Saxon, life seemed bereft of its last reason and rhyme. It had become senseless, nightmarish. Anything irrational was possible. There was nothing stable in the anarchic flux of affairs that swept her on she knew not to what catastrophic end. Had Billy been dependable, all would still have been well. With him to cling to she would have faced everything fearlessly. But he had been whirled away from her in the prevailing madness. So radical was the change in him that he seemed almost an intruder in the house. Spiritually he was such an intruder. Another man looked out of his eyes—a man whose thoughts were of violence and hatred; a man to whom there was no good in anything, and who had become an ardent protagonist of the evil that was rampant and universal. This man no longer condemned Bert, himself muttering vaguely of dynamite, and sabotage, and revolution.

Saxon strove to maintain that sweetness and coolness of flesh and spirit that Billy had praised in the old days. Once, only, she lost control. He had been in a particularly ugly mood, and a final harshness and unfairness cut her to the quick.

"Who are you speaking to?" she flamed out at him.

He was speechless and abashed. and could only stare at her face, which was white with anger.
“Don’t you ever speak to me like that again, Billy,” she commanded.

“Aw, can’t you put up with a piece of bad temper?” he muttered, half apologetically, yet half defiantly. “God knows I got enough to make me cranky.”

After he left the house she flung herself on the bed and cried heart-brokenly. For she, who knew so thoroughly the humility of love, was a proud woman. Only the proud can be truly humble, as only the strong may know the fullness of gentleness. But what was the use, she demanded, of being proud and game, when the only person in the world who mattered to her lost his own pride and gameness and fairness and gave her the worse share of their mutual trouble?

And now, as she had faced alone the deeper, organic hurt of the loss of her baby, she faced alone another, and, in a way, an even greater personal trouble. Perhaps she loved Billy none the less, but her love was changing into something less proud, less confident, less trusting; it was becoming shot through with pity—with the pity that is parent to contempt. Her own loyalty was threatening to weaken, and she shuddered and shrank from the contempt she could see creeping in.

She struggled to steel herself to face the situation. Forgiveness stole into her heart, and she knew relief until the thought came that in the truest, highest love forgiveness should have no place. And again she cried, and continued her battle. After all, one thing was incontestable: This Billy was not the Billy she had loved. This Billy was another man, a sick man, and no more to be held responsible than a fever-patient in the ravings of delirium. She must be Billy’s nurse, without pride, without contempt, with nothing to forgive. Besides, he
was really bearing the brunt of the fight, was in the thick of it, dizzy with the striking of blows and the blows he received. If fault there was, it lay elsewhere, somewhere in the tangled scheme of things that made men snarl over jobs like dogs over bones.

So Saxon arose and buckled on her armour again for the hardest fight of all in the world’s arena—the woman’s fight. She ejected from her thought all doubting and distrust. She forgave nothing, for there was nothing requiring forgiveness. She pledged herself to an absolute-ness of belief that her love and Billy’s was unsullied, unperturbed—serene as it had always been, as it would be when it came back again after the world settled down once more to rational ways.

That night, when he came home, she proposed, as an emergency measure, that she should resume her needle-work and help keep the pot boiling until the strike was over. But Billy would hear nothing of it.

"It’s all right," he assured her repeatedly. "They ain’t no call for you to work. I’m goin’ to get some money before the week is out. An’ I’ll turn it over to you. An’ Saturday night we’ll go to the show—a real show, no movin’ pictures. Harvey’s nigger minstrels is comin’ to town. We’ll go Saturday night. I’ll have the money before that, as sure as beans is beans."

Friday evening he did not come home to supper, which Saxon regretted, for Maggie Donahue had returned a pan of potatoes and two quarts of flour (borrowed the week before), and it was a hearty meal that awaited him. Saxon kept the stove going till nine o’clock, when, despite her reluctance, she went to bed. Her preference would have been to wait up, but she did not dare, knowing full well what the effect would be on him did he come home in liquor.
The clock had just struck one, when she heard the click of the gate. Slowly, heavily, ominously, she heard him come up the steps and fumble with his key at the door. He entered the bedroom, and she heard him sigh as he sat down. She remained quiet, for she had learned the hypersensitiveness induced by drink and was fastidiously careful not to hurt him even with the knowledge that she had lain awake for him. It was not easy. Her hands were clenched till the nails dented the palms, and her body was rigid in her passionate effort for control. Never had he come home as bad as this.

"Saxon," he called thickly. "Saxon."

She stirred and yawned.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Won't you strike a light? My fingers is all thumbs."

Without looking at him, she complied; but so violent was the nervous trembling of her hands that the glass chimney tinkled against the globe and the match went out.

"I ain't drunk, Saxon," he said in the darkness, a hint of amusement in his thick voice. "I've only had two or three jolts... of that sort."

On her second attempt with the lamp she succeeded. When she turned to look at him she screamed with fright. Though she had heard his voice and knew him to be Billy, for the instant she did not recognise him. His face was a face she had never known. Swollen, bruised, discoloured, every feature had been beaten out of all semblance of familiarity. One eye was entirely closed, the other showed through a narrow slit of blood-congested flesh. One ear seemed to have lost most of its skin. The whole face was a swollen pulp. His right jaw, in particular, was twice the size of the left. No wonder his speech had been thick, was her thought, as she regarded
the fearfully cut and swollen lips that still bled. She was sickened by the sight, and her heart went out to him in a great wave of tenderness. She wanted to put her arms around him, and cuddle and soothe him; but her practical judgment bade otherwise.

"You poor, poor boy," she cried. "Tell me what you want me to do first. I don't know about such things."

"If you could help me get my clothes off," he suggested meekly and thickly. "I got 'em on before I stiffened up."

"And then hot water—that will be good," she said, as she began gently drawing his coat sleeve over a puffed and helpless hand.

"I told you they was all thumbs," he grimaced, holding up his hand and squinting at it with the fraction of sight remaining to him.

"You sit and wait," she said, "till I start the fire and get the hot water going. I won't be a minute. Then I'll finish getting your clothes off."

From the kitchen she could hear him mumbling to himself, and when she returned he was repeating over and over:

"We needed the money, Saxon. We needed the money."

Drunken he was not, she could see that, and from his babbling she knew he was partly delirious.

"He was a surprise box," he wandered on, while she proceeded to undress him; and bit by bit she was able to piece together what had happened. "He was an unknown from Chicago. They sprang him on me. The secretary of the Acme Club warned me I'd have my hands full. An' I'd a-won if I'd been in condition. But fifteen pounds off without trainin' ain't condition. Then I'd been drinkin' pretty regular, an' I didn't have my wind."

But Saxon, stripping his undershirt, no longer heard him. As with his face, she could not recognise his splen-
didly muscled back. The white sheath of silken skin was torn and bloody. The lacerations occurred oftenest in horizontal lines, though there were perpendicular lines as well.

"How did you get all that?" she asked.

"The ropes. I was up against 'em more times than I like to remember. Gee! He certainly gave me mine. But I fooled 'm. He couldn't put me out. I lasted the twenty rounds, an' I wanta tell you he's got some marks to remember me by. If he ain't got a couple of knuckles broke in the left hand I'm a geezer. ——Here, feel my head here. Swollen, eh? Sure thing. He hit that more times than he's wishin' he had right now. ——But, oh, what a lacin'! What a lacin'! I never had anything like it before. The Chicago Terror, they call 'm. I take my hat off to 'm. He's some bear. But I could a-made 'm take the count if I'd ben in condition an' had my wind. ——Oh! Ouch! Watch out! It's like a boil!"

Fumbling at his waistband, Saxon's hand had come in contact with a brightly inflamed surface larger than a soup plate.

"That's from the kidney blows," Billy explained. "He was a regular devil at it. 'Most every clench, like clock work, down he'd chop one on me. It got so sore I was wincin' . . . until I got groggy an' didn't know much of anything. It ain't a knockout blow, you know, but it's awful wearin' in a long fight. It takes the starch out of you."

When his knees were bared, Saxon could see the skin across the knee-caps was broken and gone.

"The skin ain't made to stand a heavy fellow like me on the knees," he volunteered. "An' the rosin in the canvas cuts like Sam Hill."

The tears were in Saxon's eyes, and she could have cried over the manhandled body of her beautiful sick boy.
As she carried his pants across the room to hang them up, a jingle of money came from them. He called her back, and from the pocket drew forth a handful of silver.

"We needed the money, we needed the money," he kept muttering, as he vainly tried to count the coins; and Saxon knew that his mind was wandering again.

It cut her to the heart, for she could not but remember the harsh thoughts that had threatened her loyalty during the week past. After all, Billy, the splendid physical man, was only a boy, her boy. And he had faced and endured all this terrible punishment for her, for the house and the furniture that were their house and furniture. He said so, now, when he scarcely knew what he said. He said "We needed the money." She was not so absent from his thoughts as she had fancied. Here, down to the naked tie-ribs of his soul, when he was half unconscious, the thought of her persisted, was uppermost.

We needed the money. We!

The tears were trickling down her cheeks as she bent over him, and it seemed she had never loved him so much as now.

"Here; you count," he said, abandoning the effort and handing the money to her. "... How much do you make it?"

"Nineteen dollars and thirty-five cents."

"That's right ... the loser's end ... twenty dollars. I had some drinks, an' treated a couple of the boys, an' then there was carfare. If I'd a-won, I'd a-got a hundred. That's what I fought for. It'd a-put us on Easy street for awhile. You take it an' keep it. It's better'n nothin'!"

In bed, he could not sleep because of his pain, and hour by hour she worked over him, renewing the hot compresses over his bruises, soothing the lacerations with
witch hazel and cold cream and the tenderest of finger tips. And all the while, with broken intervals of groaning, he babbled on, living over the fight, seeking relief in telling her his trouble, voicing regret at loss of the money, and crying out the hurt to his pride. Far worse than the sum of his physical hurts was his hurt pride.

"He couldn't put me out, anyway. He had full swing at me in the times when I was too much in to get my hands up. The crowd was crazy. I showed 'em some stamina. They was times when he only rocked me, for I'd evaporated plenty of his steam for him in the openin' rounds. I don't know how many times he dropped me. Things was gettin' too dreamy.

"Sometimes, toward the end, I could see three of him in the ring at once, an' I wouldn't know which to hit an' which to duck.

"But I fooled 'm. When I couldn't see, or feel, an' when my knees was shakin' an' my head goin' like a merry-go-round, I'd fall safe into clenches just the same. I bet the referee's arms is tired from draggin' us apart....

"But what a lacin'! What a lacin'! ——Say, Saxon... where are you? Oh, there, eh? I guess I was dreamin'. But, say, let this be a lesson to you. I broke my word an' went fightin', an' see what I got. Look at me, an' take warnin' so you won't make the same mistake an' go to makin' an' sellin' fancy work again....

"But I fooled 'em—everybody. At the beginnin' the bettin' was even. By the sixth round the wise gazabos was offerin' two to one against me. I was licked from the first drop outa the box—anybody could see that; but he couldn't put me down for the count. By the tenth round they was offerin' even that I wouldn't last the round. At the eleventh they was offerin' I wouldn't last the fif-
teenth. An' I lasted the whole twenty. But some punishment, I want to tell you, some punishment. . . .

"Why, they was four rounds I was in dreamland all the time . . . only I kept on my feet an' fought, or took the count to eight an' got up, an' stalled an' covered an' whanged away. I don't know what I done, except I must a-done like that, because I wasn't there. I don't know a thing from the thirteenth, when he sent me to the mat on my head, till the eighteenth . . . .

"Where was I? Oh, yes. I opened my eyes, or one eye, because I had only one that would open. An' there I was, in my corner, with the towels goin' an' ammonia in my nose an' Bill Murphy with a chunk of ice at the back of my neck. An' there, across the ring, I could see the Chicago Terror, an' I had to do some thinkin' to remember I was fightin' him. It was like I'd been away somewhere an' just got back. 'What round's this comin'?' I ask Bill. 'The eighteenth,' says he. 'The hell,' I says. 'What's come of all the other rounds? The last I was fightin' in was the thirteenth.' 'You're a wonder,' says Bill. 'You've ben out four rounds, only nobody knows it except me. I've ben tryin' to get you to quit all the time.' Just then the gong sounds, an' I can see the Terror startin' for me. 'Quit,' says Bill, makin' a move to throw in the towel. 'Not on your life,' I says. 'Drop it, Bill.' But he went on wantin' me to quit. By that time the Terror had come across to my corner an' was standin' with his hands down, lookin' at me. The referee was lookin', too, an' the house was that quiet, lookin', you could hear a pin drop. An' my head was gettin' some clearer, but not much.

"'You can't win,' Bill says.

"'Watch me,' says I. An' with that I make a rush for the Terror, catchin' him unexpected. I'm that groggy
I can't stand, but I just keep a-goin', wallopin' the Terror clear across the ring to his corner, where he slips an' falls, an' I fall on top of 'm. Say, that crowd goes crazy. . . .

"Where was I? ——My head's still goin' round I guess. It's buzzin' like a swarm of bees."

"You'd just fallen on top of him in his corner," Saxon prompted.

"Oh, yes. Well, no sooner are we on our feet—an' I can't stand—I rush 'm the same way back across to my corner an' fall on 'm. That was luck. We got up, an' I'd a-fallen, only I clenched an' held myself up by him.

"'I got your goat,' I says to him. 'An' now I'm goin' to eat you up.'

"I hadn't his goat, but I was playin' to get a piece of it, an' I got it, rushin' 'm as soon as the referee drags us apart an' fetchin' 'm a lucky wallop in the stomach that steadied 'm an' made him almighty careful. Too almighty careful. He was afraid to chance a mix with me. He thought I had more fight left in me than I had. So you see I got that much of his goat anyway.

"An' he couldn't get me. He didn't get me. An' in the twentieth we stood in the middle of the ring an' exchanged wallops even. Of course, I'd made a fine showin' for a licked man, but he got the decision, which was right. But I fooled 'm. He couldn't get me. An' I fooled the gazabos that was bettin' he would on short order."

At last, as dawn came on, Billy slept. He groaned and moaned, his face twisting with pain, his body vainly moving and tossing in quest of easement.

So this was prizefighting, Saxon thought. It was much worse than she had dreamed. She had had no idea that such damage could be wrought with padded gloves. He must never fight again. Street rioting was preferable.
She was wondering how much of his silk had been lost, when he mumbled and opened his eyes.

“What is it?” she asked, ere it came to her that his eyes were unseeing and that he was in dilirium.

“Saxon! . . . Saxon!” he called.

“Yes, Billy. What is it?”

His hand fumbled over the bed where ordinarily it would have encountered her.

Again he called her, and she cried her presence loudly in his ear. He sighed with relief and muttered brokenly:

“I had to do it. . . . We needed the money.”

His eyes closed, and he slept more soundly, though his muttering continued. She had heard of congestion of the brain, and was frightened. Then she remembered his telling her of the ice Billy Murphy had held against his head.

Throwing a shawl over her head, she ran to the Pile Drivers' Home on Seventh street. The barkeeper had just opened, and was sweeping out. From the refrigerator he gave her all the ice she wished to carry, breaking it into convenient pieces for her. Back in the house, she applied the ice to the base of Billy's brain, placed hot irons to his feet, and bathed his head with witch hazel made cold by resting on the ice.

He slept in the darkened room until late afternoon, when, to Saxon's dismay, he insisted on getting up.

“Gotta make a showin',” he explained. “They ain't goin' to have the laugh on me.”

In torment he was helped by her to dress, and in torment he went forth from the house so that his world should have ocular evidence that the beating he had received did not keep him in bed.

It was another kind of pride, different from a woman's, and Saxon wondered if it were the less admirable for that.
CHAPTER XIV.

In the days that followed Billy's swellings went down and the bruises passed away with surprising rapidity. The quick healing of the lacerations attested the healthiness of his blood. Only remained the black eyes, unduly conspicuous on a face as blond as his. The discoloration was stubborn, persisting half a month, in which time happened divers events of importance.

Otto Frank's trial had been expeditious. Found guilty by a jury notable for the business and professional men on it, the death sentence was passed upon him and he was removed to San Quentin for execution.

The case of Chester Johnson and the fourteen others had taken longer, but within the same week, it, too, was finished. Chester Johnson was sentenced to be hanged. Two got life; three, twenty years. Only two were acquitted. The remaining seven received terms of from two to ten years.

The effect on Saxon was to throw her into deep depression. Billy was made gloomy, but his fighting spirit was not subdued.

"Always some men killed in battle," he said. "That's to be expected. But the way of sentencin' 'em gets me. All found guilty was responsible for the killin'; or none was responsible. If all was, then they should get the same sentence. They oughta hang like Chester Johnson, or else he oughtn't to hang. I'd just like to know how the judge makes up his mind. It must be like markin' China lottery tickets. He plays hunches. He looks at a guy
an' waits for a spot or a number to come into his head. How else could he give Johnny Black four years an' Cal Hutchins twenty years? He played the hunches as they came into his head, an' it might just as easy ben the other way around an' Cal Hutchins got four years an' Johnny Black twenty.

"I know both them boys. They hung out with the Tenth an' Kirkham gang mostly, though sometimes they ran with my gang. We used to go swimmin' after school down to Sandy Beach on the marsh, an' in the Transit slip where they said the water was sixty feet deep, only it wasn't. An' once, on a Thursday, we dug a lot of clams together, an' played hookey Friday to peddle them. An' we used to go out on the Rock Wall an' catch pogies an' rock cod. One day—the day of the eclipse—Cal caught a perch half as big as a door. I never seen such a fish. An' now he's got to wear the stripes for twenty years. Lucky he wasn't married. If he don't get the consumption he'll be an old man when he comes out. Cal's mother wouldn't let 'm go swimmin', an' whenever she suspected she always licked his hair with her tongue. If it tasted salty, he got a beltin'. But he was onto himself. Comin' home, he'd jump somebody's front fence an' hold his head under a faucet."

"I used to dance with Chester Johnson," Saxon said. "And I knew his wife, Kittie Brady, long and long ago. She had next place at the table to me in the paper-box factory. She's gone to San Francisco to her married sister's. She's going to have a baby, too. She was awfully pretty, and there was always a string of fellows after her."

The effect of the conviction and severe sentences was a bad one on the union men. Instead of being disheartening, it intensified the bitterness. Billy's repentance for
having fought and the sweetness and affection which had flashed up in the days of Saxon's nursing of him were blotted out. At home, he scowled and brooded, while his talk took on the tone of Bert's in the last days ere that Mohegan died. Also, Billy stayed away from home longer hours, and was again steadily drinking.

Saxon well-nigh abandoned hope. Almost was she steeled to the inevitable tragedy which her morbid fancy painted in a thousand guises. Oftenest, it was of Billy being brought home on a stretcher. Sometimes it was a call to the telephone in the corner grocery and the curt information by a strange voice that her husband was lying in the receiving hospital or the morgue. And when the mysterious horse-poisoning cases occurred, and when the residence of one of the teeming magnates was half destroyed by dynamite, she saw Billy in prison, or wearing stripes, or mounting to the scaffold at San Quentin; while at the same time she could see the little cottage on Pine street besieged by newspaper reporters and photographers.

Yet her lively imagination failed altogether to anticipate the real catastrophe. Harmon, the fireman lodger, passing through the kitchen on his way out to work, had paused to tell Saxon about the previous day's train-wreck in the Alviso marshes, and of how the engineer, imprisoned under the overturned engine and unhurt, being drowned by the rising tide, had begged to be shot. Billy came in at the end of the narrative, and from the sombre light in his heavy-lidded eyes Saxon knew he had been drinking. He glowered at Harmon, and, without greeting to him or Saxon, leaned his shoulder against the wall.

Harmon felt the awkwardness of the situation, and did his best to appear oblivious.

The Valley of the Moon. I.
"I was just telling your wife—" he began, but was savagely interrupted.

"I don't care what you was tellin' her. But I got something to tell you, Mister Man. My wife's made up your bed too many times to suit me."

"Billy!" Saxon cried, her face scarlet with resentment, and hurt, and shame.

Billy ignored her. Harmon was saying:

"I don't understand—"


"I don't know what's got into him," Saxon gasped hurriedly to the fireman. "He's not himself. Oh, I am so ashamed, so ashamed."

Billy turned on her.

"You shut your mouth an' keep outa this."

"But, Billy," she remonstrated.

"An' get outa here. You go into the other room."

"Here, now," Harmon broke in. "This is a fine way to treat a fellow."

"I've given you too much rope as it is," was Billy's answer.

"I've paid my rent regularly, haven't I?"

"An' I oughta knock your block off for you. Don't see any reason I shouldn't, for that matter."

"If you do anything like that, Billy—" Saxon began.

"You here still? Well, if you won't go into the other room, I'll see that you do."

His hand clutched her arm. For one instant she resisted his strength; and in that instant, the flesh crushed under his fingers, she realised the fullness of his strength. In the front room she could only lie back in the
Morris chair sobbing, and listen to what occurred in the kitchen.

"I'll stay to the end of the week," the fireman was saying. "I've paid in advance."

"Don't make no mistake," came Billy's voice, so slow that it was almost a drawl, yet quivering with rage. "You can't get out too quick if you wanta stay healthy—you an' your traps with you. I'm likely to start something any moment."

"Oh, I know you're a slugger——" the fireman's voice began.

Then came the unmistakable impact of a blow; the crash of glass; a scuffle on the back porch; and, finally, the heavy bumps of a body down the steps. She heard Billy re-enter the kitchen, move about, and knew he was sweeping up the broken glass of the kitchen door. Then he washed himself at the sink, whistling while he dried his face and hands, and walked into the front room. She did not look at him. She was too sick and sad. He paused irresolutely, seeming to make up his mind.

"I'm goin' up town," he stated. "They's a meeting of the union. If I don't come back it'll be because that geezer's sworn out a warrant."

He opened the front door and paused. She knew he was looking at her. Then the door closed and she heard him go down the steps.

Saxon was stunned. She did not think. She did not know what to think. The whole thing was incomprehensible, incredible. She lay back in the chair, her eyes closed, her mind almost a blank, crushed by a leaden feeling that the end had come to everything.

The voices of children playing in the street aroused her. Night had fallen. She groped her way to a lamp
and lighted it. In the kitchen she stared, lips trembling, at the pitiful, half prepared meal. The fire had gone out. The water had boiled away from the potatoes. When she lifted the lid, a burnt smell arose. Methodically she scraped and cleaned the pot, put things in order, and peeled and sliced the potatoes for next day's frying. And just as methodically she went to bed. Her lack of nervousness, her placidity, was abnormal, so abnormal that she closed her eyes and was almost immediately asleep. Nor did she awaken till the sunshine was streaming into the room.

It was the first night she and Billy had slept apart. She was amazed that she had not lain awake worrying about him. She lay with eyes wide open, scarcely thinking, until pain in her arm attracted her attention. It was where Billy had gripped her. On examination she found the bruised flesh fearfully black and blue. She was astonished, not by the spiritual fact that such bruise had been administered by the one she loved most in the world, but by the sheer physical fact that an instant's pressure had inflicted so much damage. The strength of a man was a terrible thing. Quite impersonally, she found herself wondering if Charley Long were as strong as Billy.

It was not until she dressed and built the fire that she began to think about more immediate things. Billy had not returned. Then he was arrested. What was she to do?—leave him in jail, go away, and start life afresh? Of course it was impossible to go on living with a man who had behaved as he had. But then, came another thought, was it impossible? After all, he was her husband. For better or worse—the phrase reiterated itself, a monotonous accompaniment to her thoughts, at the back of her consciousness. To leave him was to
surrender. She carried the matter before the tribunal of her mother's memory. No; Daisy would never have surrendered. Daisy was a fighter. Then she, Saxon, must fight. Besides—and she acknowledged it readily, though in a cold, dead way—besides, Billy was better than most husbands. Better than any other husband she had heard of, she concluded, as she remembered many of his earlier nicenesses and finenesses, and especially his eternal chant: Nothing is too good for us. The Robertses ain't on the cheap.

At eleven o'clock she had a caller. It was Bud Strothers, Billy's mate on strike duty. Billy, he told her, had refused bail, refused a lawyer, had asked to be tried by the Court, had pleaded guilty, and had received a sentence of sixty dollars or thirty days. Also, he had refused to let the boys pay his fine.

"He's clean looney," Strothers summed up. "Won't listen to reason. Says he'll serve the time out. He's ben tankin' up too regular, I guess. His wheels are buzzin'. Here, he give me this note for you. Any time you want anything send for me. The boys'll all stand by Bill's wife. You belong to us, you know. How are you off for money?"

Proudly she disclaimed any need for money, and not until her visitor departed did she read Billy's note:

Dear Saxon—Bud Strothers is going to give you this. Don't worry about me. I am going to take my medicine. I deserve it—you know that. I guess I am gone bughouse. Just the same, I am sorry for what I done. Don't come to see me. I don't want you to. If you need money, the union will give you some. The business agent is all right. I will be out in a month. Now, Saxon, you know I love you, and just say to yourself that you forgive me this time, and you won't never have to do it again.

Billy.
Bud Strothers was followed by Maggie Donahue, and Mrs. Olsen, who paid neighbourly calls of cheer and were tactful in their offers of help and in studiously avoiding more reference than was necessary to Billy's predicament.

In the afternoon James Harmon arrived. He limped slightly, and Saxon divined that he was doing his best to minimise that evidence of hurt. She tried to apologise to him, but he would not listen.

"I don't blame you, Mrs. Roberts," he said. "I know it wasn't your doing. But your husband wasn't just himself, I guess. He was fightin' mad on general principles, and it was just my luck to get in the way, that was all."

"But just the same——"

The fireman shook his head.

"I know all about it. I used to punish the drink myself, and I done some funny things in them days. And I'm sorry I swore that warrant out and testified. But I was hot in the collar. I'm cooled down now, an' I'm sorry I done it."

"You're awfully good and kind," she said, and then began hesitantly on what was bothering her. "You... you can't stay now, with him... away, you know."

"Yes; that wouldn't do, would it? I'll tell you: I'll pack up right now, and skin out, and then, before six o'clock, I'll send a waggon for my things. Here's the key to the kitchen door."

Much as he demurred, she compelled him to receive back the unexpired portion of his rent. He shook her hand heartily at leaving, and tried to get her to promise to call upon him for a loan any time she might be in need.

"It's all right," he assured her. "I'm married, and got two boys. One of them's got his lungs touched, and
she's with 'em down in Arizona campin' out. The railroad helped with passes."

And as he went down the steps she wondered that so kind a man should be in so madly cruel a world.

The Donahue boy threw in a spare evening paper, and Saxon found half a column devoted to Billy. It was not nice. The fact that he had stood up in the police court with his eyes blacked from some other fray was noted. He was described as a bully, a hoodlum, a roughneck, a professional slugger whose presence in the ranks was a disgrace to organised labour. The assault he had pleaded guilty of was atrocious and unprovoked, and if he were a fair sample of a striking teamster, the only wise thing for Oakland to do was to break up the union and drive every member from the city. And, finally, the paper complained at the mildness of the sentence. It should have been six months at least. The judge was quoted as expressing regret that he had been unable to impose a six months' sentence, this inability being due to the condition of the jails, already crowded beyond capacity by the many cases of assault committed in the course of the various strikes.

That night, in bed, Saxon experienced her first loneliness. Her brain seemed in a whirl, and her sleep was broken by vain gropings for the form of Billy she imagined at her side. At last, she lighted the lamp and lay staring at the ceiling, wide-eyed, conning over and over the details of the disaster that had overwhelmed her. She could forgive, and she could not forgive. The blow to her love-life had been too savage, too brutal. Her pride was too lacerated to permit her wholly to return in memory to the other Billy whom she loved. Wine in, wit out, she repeated to herself; but the phrase could not absolve the man who had slept by her side, and to whom
she had consecrated herself. She wept in the loneliness of the all-too-spacious bed, strove to forget Billy's incomprehensible cruelty, even pillowed her cheek with numb fondness against the bruise of her arm; but still resentment burned within her, a steady flame of protest against Billy and all that Billy had done. Her throat was parched, a dull ache never ceased in her breast, and she was oppressed by a feeling of goneness. Why? Why?
—And from the puzzle of the world came no solution.

In the morning she received a visit from Sarah—the second in all the period of her marriage; and she could easily guess her sister-in-law's ghoulish errand. No exertion was required for the assertion of all of Saxon's pride. She refused to be in the slightest on the defensive. There was nothing to defend, nothing to explain. Everything was all right, and it was nobody's business anyway. This attitude but served to vex Sarah.

"I warned you, and you can't say I didn't," her diatribe ran. "I always knew he was no good, a jailbird, a hoodlum, a slugger. My heart sank into my boots when I heard you was runnin' with a prizefighter. I told you so at the time. But no; you wouldn't listen, you with your highfalutin' notions an' more pairs of shoes than any decent woman should have. You knew better'n me. An' I said then, to Tom, I said, 'It's all up with Saxon now.' Them was my very words. Them that touches pitch is defiled. If you'd only a-married Charley Long! Then the family wouldn't a-ben disgraced. An' this is only the beginnin', mark me, only the beginnin'. Where it'll end, God knows. He'll kill somebody yet, that plug-ugly of yourn, an' be hanged for it. You wait an' see, that's all, an' then you'll remember my words. As you make your bed, so you will lay in it——"
"Best bed I ever had," Saxon commented.
"So you can say, so you can say," Sarah snorted.
"I wouldn't trade it for a queen's bed," Saxon added.
"A jailbird's bed," Sarah rejoined witheringly.
"Oh, it's the style," Saxon retorted airily. "Everybody's getting a taste of jail. Wasn't Tom arrested at some street meeting of the socialists? Everybody goes to jail these days."

The barb had struck home.
"But Tom was acquitted," Sarah hastened to proclaim.
"Just the same he lay in jail all night without bail."
This was unanswerable, and Sarah executed her favourite tactic of attack in flank.
"A nice come-down for you, I must say, that was raised straight an' right, a-cuttin' up didoes with a lodger."
"Who says so?" Saxon blazed with an indignation quickly mastered.
"Oh, a blind man can read between the lines. A lodger, a young married woman with no self-respect, an' a prizefighter for a husband—what else would they fight about?"

"Just like any family quarrel, wasn't it?" Saxon smiled placidly.
Sarah was shocked into momentary speechlessness.
"And I want you to understand it," Saxon continued.
"It makes a woman proud to have men fight over her. I am proud. Do you hear? I am proud. I want you to tell them so. I want you to tell all your neighbours. Tell everybody. I am no cow. Men like me. Men fight for me. Men go to jail for me. What is a woman in the world for, if it isn't to have men like her? Now, go, Sarah; go at once, and tell everybody what you've read between the lines. Tell them Billy is a jailbird and that
I am a bad woman whom all men desire. Shout it out, and good luck to you. And get out of my house. And never put your feet in it again. You are too decent a woman to come here. You might lose your reputation. And think of your children. Now get out. Go.”

Not until Sarah had taken an amazed and horrified departure did Saxon fling herself on the bed in a convulsion of tears. She had been ashamed, before, merely of Billy’s inhospitality, and surliness, and unfairness. But she could see, now, the light in which others looked on the affair. It had not entered Saxon’s head. She was confident that it had not entered Billy’s. She knew his attitude from the first. Always he had opposed taking a lodger because of his proud faith that his wife should not work. Only hard times had compelled his consent, and, now that she looked back, almost had she inveigled him into consenting.

But all this did not alter the viewpoint the neighbourhood must hold, that everyone who had ever known her must hold. And for this, too, Billy was responsible. It was more terrible than all the other things he had been guilty of put together. She could never look anyone in the face again. Maggie Donahue and Mrs. Olsen had been very kind, but of what must they have been thinking all the time they talked with her? And what must they have said to each other? What was everybody saying? —over front gates and back fences?—the men standing on the corners or talking in saloons?

Later, exhausted by her grief, when the tears no longer fell, she grew more impersonal, and dwelt on the disasters that had befallen so many women since the strike troubles began—Otto Frank’s wife, Henderson’s widow, pretty Kittie Brady, Mary, all the womenfolk of the other
workmen who were now wearing the stripes in San Quentin. Her world was crashing about her ears. No one was exempt. Not only had she not escaped, but hers was the worst disgrace of all. Desperately she tried to hug the delusion that she was asleep, that it was all a nightmare, and that soon the alarm would go off and she would get up and cook Billy's breakfast so that he could go to work.

She did not leave the bed that day. Nor did she sleep. Her brain whirled on and on, now dwelling at insistent length upon her misfortunes, now pursuing the most fantastic ramifications of what she considered her disgrace, and, again, going back to her childhood and wandering through endless trivial detail. She worked at all the tasks she had ever done, performing, in fancy, the myriads of mechanical movements peculiar to each occupation—shaping and pasting in the paper box factory, ironing in the laundry, weaving in the jute mill, peeling fruit in the cannery and countless boxes of scalded tomatoes. She attended all her dances and all her picnics over again; went through her school-days, recalling the face and name and seat of every schoolmate; endured the grey bleakness of the years in the orphan asylum; revisioned every memory of her mother, every tale; and relived all her life with Billy. But ever—and here the torment lay—she was drawn back from these far-wanderings to her present trouble, with its parch in the throat, its ache in the breast, and its gnawing, vacant goneness.

CHAPTER XV.

All that night Saxon lay, unsleeping, without taking off her clothes, and when she arose in the morning and washed her face and dressed her hair she was aware of
a strange numbness, of a feeling of constriction about her head as if it were bound by a heavy band of iron. It seemed like a dull pressure upon her brain. It was the beginning of an illness that she did not know as illness. All she knew was that she felt queer. It was not fever. It was not cold. Her bodily health was as it should be, and, when she thought about it, she put her condition down to nerves—nerves, according to her ideas and the ideas of her class, being unconnected with disease.

She had a strange feeling of loss of self, of being a stranger to herself, and the world in which she moved seemed a vague and shrouded world. It lacked sharpness of definition. Its customary vividness was gone. She had lapses of memory, and was continually finding herself doing unplanned things. Thus, to her astonishment, she came to in the back yard hanging up the week's wash. She had no recollection of having done it, yet it had been done precisely as it should have been done. She had boiled the sheets and pillowslips and the table linen. Billy's woollens had been washed in warm water only, with the home-made soap, the recipe of which Mercedes had given her. On investigation, she found she had eaten a mutton chop for breakfast. This meant that she had been to the butcher shop, yet she had no memory of having gone. Curiously, she went into the bedroom. The bed was made up and everything in order.

At twilight she came upon herself in the front room, seated by the window, crying in an ecstasy of joy. At first she did not know what this joy was; then it came to her that it was because she had lost her baby. "A blessing, a blessing," she was chanting aloud, wringing her hands, but with joy, she knew it was with joy that she wrung her hands.
The days came and went. She had little notion of time. Sometimes, centuries ago, it seemed to her it was since Billy had gone to jail. At other times it was no more than the night before. But through it all two ideas persisted: she must not go to see Billy in jail; it was a blessing she had lost her baby.

Once, Bud Strothers came to see her. She sat in the front room and talked with him, noting with fascination that there were fringes to the heels of his trousers. Another day, the business agent of the union called. She told him, as she had told Bud Strothers, that everything was all right, that she needed nothing, that she could get along comfortably until Billy came out.

A fear began to haunt her. *When he came out.* No; it must not be. There must not be another baby. It might *live.* No, no, a thousand times no. It must not be. She would run away first. She would never see Billy again. Anything but that. Anything but that.

This fear persisted. In her nightmare-ridden sleep it became an accomplished fact, so that she would awake, trembling, in a cold sweat, crying out. Her sleep had become wretched. Sometimes she was convinced that she did not sleep at all, and she knew that she had insomnia, and remembered that it was of insomnia her mother had died.

She came to herself one day, sitting in Doctor Hentley's office. He was looking at her in a puzzled way.

"Got plenty to eat?" he was asking.

She nodded.

"Any serious trouble?"

She shook her head.

"Everything's all right, Doctor . . . except . . ."

"Yes, yes," he encouraged.
And then she knew why she had come. Simply, explicitly, she told him. He shook his head slowly. "It can't be done, little woman," he said. "Oh, but it can!" she cried. "I know it can."

"I don't mean that," he answered. "I mean I can't tell you. I dare not. It is against the law. There is a doctor in Leavenworth prison right now for that."

In vain she pleaded with him. He instanced his own wife and children whose existence forbade his imperilling himself. "Besides, there is no likelihood now," he told her. "But there will be, there is sure to be," she urged.

But he could only shake his head sadly. "Why do you want to know?" he questioned finally.

Saxon poured her heart out to him. She told of her first year of happiness with Billy, of the hard times caused by the labour troubles, of the change in Billy so that there was no love-life left, of her own deep horror. Not if it died, she concluded. She could go through that again. But if it should live. Billy would soon be out of jail, and then the danger would begin. It was only a few words. She would never tell any one. Wild horses could not drag it out of her.

But Doctor Hentley continued to shake his head. "I can't tell you, little woman. It's a shame, but I can't take the risk. My hands are tied. Our laws are all wrong. I have to consider those who are dear to me."

It was when she got up to go that he faltered. "Come here," he said. "Sit closer."

He prepared to whisper in her ear, then, with a sudden excess of caution, crossed the room swiftly, opened the door, and looked out. When he sat down again he
drew his chair so close to hers that the arms touched, and when he whispered his beard tickled her ear.

"No, no," he shut her off when she tried to voice her gratitude. "I have told you nothing. You were here to consult me about your general health. You are run down, out of condition—"

As he talked he moved her toward the door. When he opened it, a patient for the dentist in the adjoining office was standing in the hall. Doctor Hentley lifted his voice.

"What you need is that tonic I prescribed. Remember that. And don't pamper your appetite when it comes back. Eat strong, nourishing food, and beefsteak, plenty of beefsteak. And don't cook it to a cinder. Good day."

At times the silent cottage became unendurable, and Saxon would throw a shawl about her head and walk out the Oakland Mole, or cross the railroad yards and the marshes to Sandy Beach where Billy had said he used to swim. Also, by going out the Transit slip, by climbing down the piles on a precarious ladder of iron spikes, and by crossing a boom of logs, she won access to the Rock Wall that extended far out into the bay and that served as a barrier between the mudflats and the tide-scoured channel of Oakland Estuary. Here the fresh sea breezes blew and Oakland sank down to a smudge of smoke behind her, while across the bay she could see the smudge that represented San Francisco. Ocean steamships passed up and down the estuary, and lofty-masted ships, towed by red-stacked tugs.

She gazed at the sailors on the ships, wondered on what far voyages and to what far lands they went, won-
dered what freedoms were theirs. Or were they girt in
by as remorseless and cruel a world as the dwellers in
Oakland were? Were they as unfair, as unjust, as brutal,
in their dealings with their fellows as were the city dwellers?
It did not seem so, and sometimes she wished herself on
board, out-bound, going anywhere, she cared not where,
so long as it was away from the world to which she had
given her best and which had trampled her in return.

She did not know always when she left the house,
nor where her feet took her. Once, she came to herself
in a strange part of Oakland. The street was wide and
lined with rows of shade trees. Velvet lawns, broken
only by cement sidewalks, ran down to the gutters. The
houses stood apart and were large. In her vocabulary
they were mansions. What had shocked her to con-
sciousness of herself was a young man in the driver's
seat of a touring car standing at the curb. He was look-
ing at her curiously, and she recognised him as Roy
Blanchard, whom, in front of the Forum, Billy had
threatened to whip. Beside the car, bareheaded, stood
another young man. Him, too, she remembered. He it
was, at the Sunday picnic where she first met Billy, who
had thrust his cane between the legs of the flying foot-
racer and precipitated the free-for-all fight. Like Blanchard,
he was looking at her curiously, and she became aware
that she had been talking to herself. The babble of her
lips still beat in her ears. She blushed, a rising tide
of shame heating her face, and quickened her pace.
Blanchard sprang out of the car and came to her with
lifted hat.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked.

She shook her head, and, though she had stopped,
she evinced her desire to go on.
"I know you," he said, studying her face. "You were with the striker who promised me a licking."

"He is my husband," she said.

"Oh! Good for him." He regarded her pleasantly and frankly. "But about yourself? Isn't there anything I can do for you? Something is the matter."

"No, I'm all right," she answered. "I have been sick," she lied; for she never dreamed of connecting her queerness with sickness.

"You look tired," he pressed her. "I can take you in the machine and run you anywhere you want. It won't be any trouble. I've plenty of time."

Saxon shook her head.

"If . . . if you would tell me where I can catch the Eighth street-cars. I don't often come to this part of town."

He told her where to find an electric car and what transfers to make, and she was surprised at the distance she had wandered.

"Thank you," she said. "And good-bye."

"Sure I can't do anything now?"

"Sure."

"Well, good-bye," he smiled good-humouredly. "And tell that husband of yours to keep in good condition. I'm likely to make him need it all when he tangles up with me."

"Oh, but you can't fight with him," she warned. "You mustn't. You haven't got a show."

"Good for you," he admired. "That's the way for a woman to stand up for her man. Now the average woman would be so afraid he was going to get licked——"

"But I'm not afraid . . . for him. It's for you. He's a terrible fighter. You wouldn't have any chance. It would be like . . . like . . . ."

_The Valley of the Moon. I._
"Like taking candy from a baby?" Blanchard finished for her.

"Yes," she nodded. "That's just what he would call it. And whenever he tells you you are standing on your foot watch out for him. Now I must go. Good-bye, and thank you again."

She went on down the sidewalk, his cheery good-bye ringing in her ears. He was kind—she admitted it honestly; yet he was one of the clever ones, one of the masters, who, according to Billy, were responsible for all the cruelty to labour, for the hardships of the women, for the punishment of the labour men who were wearing stripes in San Quentin or were in the death cells awaiting the scaffold. Yet he was kind, sweet natured, clean, good. She could read his character in his face. But how could this be, if he were responsible for so much evil? She shook her head wearily. There was no explanation, no understanding of this world which destroyed little babes and bruised women's breasts.

As for her having strayed into that neighbourhood of fine residences, she was unsurprised. It was in line with her queerness. She did so many things without knowing that she did them. But she must be careful. It was better to wander on the marshes and the Rock Wall.

Especially she liked the Rock Wall. There was a freedom about it, a wide spaciousness that she found herself instinctively trying to breathe, holding her arms out to embrace and make part of herself. It was a more natural world, a more rational world. She could understand it—understand the green crabs with white-bleached claws that scuttled before her and which she could see pasturing on green-weeded rocks when the tide was low. Here, hopelessly man-made as the great wall was, nothing seemed
artificial. There were no men there, no laws nor conflicts of men. The tide flowed and ebbed; the sun rose and set; regularly each afternoon the brave west wind came romping in through the Golden Gate, darkening the water, cresting tiny wavelets, making the sailboats fly. Everything ran with frictionless order. Everything was free. Firewood lay about for the taking. No man sold it by the sack. Small boys fished with poles from the rocks, with no one to drive them away for trespass, catching fish as Billy had caught fish, as Cal Hutchins had caught fish. Billy had told her of the great perch Cal Hutchins caught on the day of the eclipse, when he had little dreamed the heart of his manhood would be spent in convict's garb.

And here was food, food that was free. She watched the small boys on a day when she had eaten nothing, and emulated them, gathering mussels from the rocks at low water, cooking them by placing them among the coals of a fire she built on top of the wall. They tasted particularly good. She learned to knock the small oysters from the rocks, and once she found a string of fresh-caught fish some small boy had forgotten to take home with him.

Here drifted evidences of man's sinister handiwork—from a distance, from the cities. One flood tide she found the water covered with musk-melons. They bobbed and bumped along up the estuary in countless thousands. Where they stranded against the rocks she was able to get them. But each and every melon—and she patiently tried scores of them—had been spoiled by a sharp gash that let in the salt water. She could not understand. She asked an old Portuguese woman gathering drift-wood.
"They do it, the people who have too much," the old woman explained, straightening her labour-stiffened back with such an effort that almost Saxon could hear it creak. The old woman's black eyes flashed angrily, and her wrinkled lips, drawn tightly across toothless gums, wry with bitterness. "The people that have too much. It is to keep up the price. They throw them overboard in San Francisco."

"But why don't they give them away to the poor people?" Saxon asked.

"They must keep up the price."

"But the poor people cannot buy them anyway," Saxon objected. "It would not hurt the price."

The old woman shrugged her shoulders.

"I do not know. It is their way. They chop each melon so that the poor people cannot fish them out and eat anyway. They do the same with the oranges, with the apples. Ah, the fishermen! There is a trust. When the boats catch too much fish, the trust throws them overboard from Fisherman Wharf, boat-loads, and boat-loads, and boat-loads of the beautiful fish. And the beautiful good fish sink and are gone. And no one gets them. Yet they are dead and only good to eat. Fish are very good to eat."

And Saxon could not understand a world that did such things—a world in which some men possessed so much food that they threw it away, paying men for their labour of spoiling it before they threw it away; and in the same world so many people who did not have enough food, whose babies died because their mothers' milk was not nourishing, whose young men fought and killed one another for the chance to work, whose old men and women went to the poorhouse because there was no food
for them in the little shacks they wept at leaving. She wondered if all the world were that way, and remembered Mercedes' tales. Yes; all the world was that way. Had not Mercedes seen ten thousand families starve to death in that far away India, when, as she had said, her own jewels that she wore would have fed and saved them all? It was the poorhouse and the salt vats for the stupid, jewels and automobiles for the clever ones.

She was one of the stupid. She must be. The evidence all pointed that way. Yet Saxon refused to accept it. She was not stupid. Her mother had not been stupid, nor had the pioneer stock before her. Still it must be so. Here she sat, nothing to eat at home, her love-husband changed to a brute beast and lying in jail, her arms and heart empty of the babe that would have been there if only the stupid ones had not made a shambles of her front yard in their wrangling over jobs.

She sat there, racking her brain, the smudge of Oakland at her back, staring across the bay at the smudge of San Francisco. Yet the sun was good; the wind was good, as was the keen salt air in her nostrils; the blue sky, flecked with clouds, was good. All the natural world was right, and sensible, and beneficent. It was the man-world that was wrong, and mad, and horrible. Why were the stupid stupid? Was it a law of God? No; it could not be. God had made the wind, and air, and sun. The man-world was made by man, and a rotten job it was. Yet, and she remembered it well, the teaching in the orphan asylum, God had made everything. Her mother, too, had believed this, had believed in this God. Things could not be different. It was ordained.

For a time Saxon sat crushed, helpless. Then smouldered protest, revolt. Vainly she asked why God had
it in for her. What had she done to deserve such fate? She briefly reviewed her life in quest of deadly sins committed, and found them not. She had obeyed her mother; obeyed Cady, the saloon-keeper, and Cady's wife; obeyed the matron and the other women in the orphan asylum; obeyed Tom when she came to live in his house, and never run in the streets because he didn't wish her to. At school she had always been honourably promoted, and never had her deportment report varied from one hundred per cent. She had worked from the day she left school to the day of her marriage. She had been a good worker, too. The little Jew who ran the paper box factory had almost wept when she quit. It was the same at the cannery. She was among the high-line weavers when the jute mills closed down. And she had kept straight. It was not as if she had been ugly or unattractive. She had known her temptations and encountered her dangers. The fellows had been crazy about her. They had run after her, fought over her, in a way to turn most girls' heads. But she had kept straight. And then had come Billy, her reward. She had devoted herself to him, to his house, to all that would nourish his love; and now she and Billy were sinking down into this senseless vortex of misery and heartbreak of the man-made world.

No, God was not responsible. She could have made a better world herself—a finer, squarer world. This being so, then there was no God. God could not make a botch. The matron had been wrong, her mother had been wrong. Then there was no immortality, and Bert, wild and crazy Bert, falling at her front gate with his foolish death-cry, was right. One was a long time dead.

Looking thus at life, shorn of its superrational sanc-
tions, Saxon floundered into the morass of pessimism. There was no justification for right conduct in the universe, no square deal for her who had earned reward, for the millions who worked like animals, died like animals, and were a long time and forever dead. Like the hosts of more learned thinkers before her, she concluded that the universe was unmoral and without concern for men.

And now she sat crushed in greater helplessness than when she had included God in the scheme of injustice. As long as God was, there was always chance for a miracle, for some supernatural intervention, some rewarding with ineffable bliss. With God missing, the world was a trap. Life was a trap. She was like a linnet, caught by small boys and imprisoned in a cage. That was because the linnet was stupid. But she rebelled. She fluttered and beat her soul against the hard face of things as did the linnet against the bars of wire. She was not stupid. She did not belong in the trap. She would fight her way out of the trap. There must be such a way out. When canal boys and rail-splitters, the lowliest of the stupid lowly, as she had read in her school history, could find their way out and become presidents of the nation and rule over even the clever ones in their automobiles, then could she find her way out and win to the tiny reward she craved—Billy, a little love, a little happiness. She would not mind that the universe was unmoral, that there was no God, no immortality. She was willing to go into the black grave and remain in its blackness forever, to go into the salt vats and let the young men cut her dead flesh to sausage-meat, if—if only she could get her small meed of happiness first.

How she would work for that happiness! How she would appreciate it, make the most of each least particle
of it! But how was she to do it? Where was the path? She could not vision it. Her eyes showed her only the smudge of San Francisco, the smudge of Oakland, where men were breaking heads and killing one another, where babies were dying, born and unborn, and where women were weeping with bruised breasts.

CHAPTER XVI.

Her vague, unreal existence continued. It seemed in some previous lifetime that Billy had gone away, that another lifetime would have to come before he returned. She still suffered from insomnia. Long nights passed in succession, during which she never closed her eyes. At other times she slept through long stupors, waking stunned and numbed, scarcely able to open her heavy eyes, to move her weary limbs. The pressure of the iron band on her head never relaxed. She was poorly nourished. Nor had she a cent of money. She often went a whole day without eating. Once, seventy-two hours elapsed without food passing her lips. She dug clams in the marsh, knocked the tiny oysters from the rocks, and gathered mussels.

And yet, when Bud Strothers came to see how she was getting along, she convinced him that all was well. One evening after work, Tom came, and forced two dollars upon her. He was terribly worried. He would like to help more, but Sarah was expecting another baby. There had been slack times in his trade because of the strikes in the other trades. He did not know what the country was coming to. And it was all so simple. All they had to do was see things in his way and vote the
way he voted. Then everybody would get a square deal. Christ was a Socialist, he told her.

"Christ died two thousand years ago," Saxon said.

"Well?" Tom queried, not catching her implication.

"Think," she said, "think of all the men and women who died in those two thousand years, and socialism has not come yet. And in two thousand years more it may be as far away as ever. Tom, your socialism never did you any good. It is a dream."

"It wouldn't be if——" he began with a flash of resentment.

"If they believed as you do. Only they don't. You don't succeed in making them."

"But we are increasing every year," he argued.

"Two thousand years is an awfully long time," she said quietly.

Her brother's tired face saddened as he nodded. Then he sighed:

"Well, Saxon, if it's a dream, it is a good dream."

"I don't want to dream," was her reply. "I want things real. I want them now."

And before her fancy passed the countless generations of the stupid lowly, the Billys and Saxons, the Berts and Marys, the Toms and Sarahs. And to what end? The salt vats and the grave. Mercedes was a hard and wicked woman, but Mercedes was right. The stupid must always be under the heels of the clever ones. Only she, Saxon, daughter of Daisy who had written wonderful poems and of a soldier-father on a roan war-horse, daughter of the strong generations who had won half a world from wild nature and the savage Indian—no, she was not stupid. It was as if she suffered false imprisonment. There was some mistake. She would find the way out.
With the two dollars she bought a sack of flour and half a sack of potatoes. This relieved the monotony of her clams and mussels. Like the Italian and Portuguese women, she gathered driftwood and carried it home, though always she did it with shamed pride, timing her arrival so that it would be after dark. One day, on the mud-flat side of the Rock Wall, an Italian fishing boat hauled up on the sand dredged from the channel. From the top of the wall Saxon watched the men grouped about the charcoal brazier, eating crusty Italian bread and a stew of meat and vegetables, washed down with long draughts of thin red wine. She envied them their freedom that advertised itself in the heartiness of their meal, in the tones of their chatter and laughter, in the very boat itself that was not tied always to one place and that carried them wherever they willed. Afterward, they dragged a seine across the mud-flats and up on the sand, selecting for themselves only the larger kinds of fish. Many thousands of small fish, like sardines, they left dying on the sand when they sailed away. Saxon got a sackful of the fish, and was compelled to make two trips in order to carry them home, where she salted them down in a wooden washtub.

Her lapses of consciousness continued. The strangest thing she did while in such condition was on Sandy Beach. There she discovered herself, one windy afternoon, lying in a hole she had dug, with sacks for blankets. She had even roofed the hole in rough fashion by means of driftwood and marsh-grass. On top of the grass she had piled sand.

Another time she came to herself walking across the marshes, a bundle of drift-wood, tied with bale-rope, on her shoulder. Charley Long was walking beside her. She
could see his face in the starlight. She wondered dully how long he had been talking, what he had said. Then she was curious to hear what he was saying. She was not afraid, despite his strength, his wicked nature, and the loneliness and darkness of the marsh.

"It's a shame for a girl like you to have to do this," he was saying, apparently in repetition of what he had already urged. "Come on an' say the word, Saxon. Come on an' say the word."

Saxon stopped and quietly faced him.

"Listen, Charley Long. Billy's only doing thirty days, and his time is almost up. When he gets out your life won't be worth a pinch of salt if I tell him you've been bothering me. Now listen. If you go right now away from here, and stay away, I won't tell him. That's all I've got to say."

The big blacksmith stood in scowling indecision, his face pathetic in its fierce yearning, his hands making unconscious, clutching contractions.

"Why, you little, small thing," he said desperately, "I could break you in one hand. I could—why, I could do anything I wanted. I don't want to hurt you, Saxon. You know that. Just say the word——"

"I've said the only word I'm going to say."

"God!" he muttered in involuntary admiration. "You ain't afraid. You ain't afraid."

They faced each other for long silent minutes.

"Why ain't you afraid?" he demanded at last, after peering into the surrounding darkness as if searching for her hidden allies.

"Because I married a man," Saxon said briefly. "And now you'd better go."

When he had gone she shifted the load of wood to
her other shoulder and started on, in her breast a quiet thrill of pride in Billy. Though behind prison bars, still she leaned against his strength. The mere naming of him was sufficient to drive away a brute like Charley Long.

On the day that Otto Frank was hanged she remained indoors. The evening papers published the account. There had been no reprieve. In Sacramento was a railroad Governor who might reprieve or even pardon bank-wreckers and grafters, but who dared not lift his finger for a workingman. All this was the talk of the neighbourhood. It had been Billy's talk. It had been Bert's talk.

The next day Saxon started out the Rock Wall, and the spectre of Otto Frank walked by her side. And with him was a dimmer, mistier spectre that she recognised as Billy. Was he, too, destined to tread his way to Otto Frank's dark end? Surely so, if the blood and strife continued. He was a fighter. He felt he was right in fighting. It was easy to kill a man. Even if he did not intend it, some time, when he was slugging a scab, the scab would fracture his skull on a stone curbing or a cement sidewalk. And then Billy would hang. That was why Otto Frank hanged. He had not intended to kill Henderson. It was only by accident that Henderson's skull was fractured. Yet Otto Frank had been hanged for it just the same.

She wrung her hands and wept loudly as she stumbled among the windy rocks. The hours passed, and she was lost to herself and her grief. When she came to she found herself on the far end of the wall where it jutted into the bay between the Oakland and Alameda Moles. But she could see no wall. It was the time of the full moon, and the unusual high tide covered the rocks. She
was knee-deep in the water, and about her knees swam scores of big rock rats, squeaking and fighting, scrambling to climb upon her out of the flood. She screamed with fright and horror, and kicked at them. Some dived and swam away under water; others circled about her warily at a distance; and one big fellow laid his teeth into her shoe. Him she stepped on and crushed with her free foot. By this time, though still trembling, she was able coolly to consider the situation. She waded to a stout stick of drift-wood a few feet away, and with this quickly cleared a space about herself.

A grinning small boy, in a small, bright-painted and half-decked skiff, sailed close in to the wall and let go his sheet to spill the wind.

"Want to get aboard?" he called.

"Yes," she answered. "There are thousands of big rats here. I'm afraid of them."

He nodded, ran close in, spilled the wind from his sail, the boat's way carrying it gently to her.

"Shove out its bow," he commanded. "That's right. I don't want to break my centreboard. . . . An' then jump aboard in the stern—quick!—alongside of me."

She obeyed, stepping in lightly beside him. He held the tiller up with his elbow, pulled in on the sheet, and as the sail filled the boat sprang away over the rippling water.

"You know boats," the boy said approvingly.

He was a slender, almost frail lad, of twelve or thirteen years, though healthy enough, with sunburned freckled face and large grey eyes that were clear and wistful. Despite his possession of the pretty boat, Saxon was quick to sense that he was one of them, a child of the people.
“First boat I was ever in, except ferryboats,” Saxon laughed.

He looked at her keenly. “Well, you take to it like a duck to water is all I can say about it. Where d’ye want me to land you?”

“Anywhere.”

He opened his mouth to speak, gave her another long look, considered for a space, then asked suddenly:

“Got plenty of time?”

She nodded.

“All day?”

Again she nodded.

“Say—I’ll tell you, I’m goin’ out on this ebb to Goat Island for rockcod, an’ I’ll come in on the flood this evening. I got plenty of lines an’ bait. Want to come along? We can both fish. And what you catch you can have.”

Saxon hesitated. The freedom and motion of the small boat appealed to her. Like the ships she had envied, it was outbound.

“Maybe you’ll drown me,” she parleyed.

The boy threw back his head with pride.

“I guess I’ve been sailin’ many a long day by myself, an’ I ain’t drowned yet.”

“All right,” she consented. “Though remember, I don’t know anything about boats.”

“Aw, that’s all right. ——Now I’m goin’ to go about. When I say ‘Hard a-lee!’ like that, you duck your head so the boom don’t hit you, an’ shift over to the other side.”

He executed the manoeuvre, Saxon obeyed, and found herself sitting beside him on the opposite side of the boat, while the boat itself, on the other tack, was heading
toward Long Wharf where the coal-bunkers were. She was aglow with admiration, the more so because the mechanics of boat-sailing was to her a complex and mysterious thing.

"Where did you learn it all?" she enquired.

"Taught myself, just naturally taught myself. I liked it, you see, an' what a fellow likes he's likeliest to do. This is my second boat. My first didn't have a centre-board. I bought it for two dollars an' learned a lot, though it never stopped leaking. What d'ye think I paid for this one? It's worth twenty-five dollars right now. What d'ye think I paid for it?"

"I give up," Saxon said. "How much?"

"Six dollars. Think of it! A boat like this! Of course I done a lot of work, an' the sail cost two dollars, the oars one forty, an' the paint one seventy-five. But just the same eleven dollars and fifteen cents is a real bargain. It took me a long time saving for it, though. I carry papers morning and evening—there's a boy taking my route for me this afternoon—I give 'm ten cents, an' all the extras he sells is his; and I'd a-got the boat sooner only I had to pay for my shorthand lessons. My mother wants me to become a court reporter. They get sometimes as much as twenty dollars a day. Gee! But I don't want it. It's a shame to waste the money on the lessons."

"What do you want?" she asked, partly from idleness, and yet with genuine curiosity; for she felt drawn to this boy in knee pants who was so confident and at the same time so wistful.

"What do I want?" he repeated after her.

Turning his head slowly, he followed the sky-line, pausing especially when his eyes rested landward on the
brown Contra Costa hills, and seaward, past Alcatraz, on the Golden Gate. The wistfulness in his eyes was overwhelming and went to her heart.

"That," he said, sweeping the circle of the world with a wave of his arm.

"That?" she queried.

He looked at her, perplexed in that he had not made his meaning clear.

"Don't you ever feel that way?" he asked, bidding for sympathy with his dream. "Don't you sometimes feel you'd die if you didn't know what's beyond them hills an' what's beyond the other hills behind them hills? An' the Golden Gate! There's the Pacific Ocean beyond, and China, an' Japan, an' India, an' . . . an' all the coral islands. You can go anywhere out through the Golden Gate—to Australia, to Africa, to the seal islands, to the North Pole, to Cape Horn. Why, all them places are just waitin' for me to come an' see 'em. I've lived in Oakland all my life, but I'm not going to live in Oakland the rest of my life, not by a long shot. I'm goin' to get away . . . away . . ."

Again, as words failed to express the vastness of his desire, the wave of his arm swept the circle of the world.

Saxon thrilled with him. She too, save for her earlier childhood, had lived in Oakland all her life. And it had been a good place in which to live . . . until now. And now, in all its nightmare horror, it was a place to get away from, as with her people the East had been a place to get away from. And why not? The world tugged at her, and she felt in touch with the lad's desire. Now that she thought of it, her race had never been given to staying long in one place. Always it had been on the move. She remembered back to her mother's tales, and
to the wood engraving in her scrapbook where her half-clad forebears, sword in hand, leaped from their lean beaked boats to do battle on the blood-drenched sands of England.

"Did you ever hear about the Anglo-Saxons?" she asked the boy.

"You bet!" His eyes glistened, and he looked at her with new interest. "I'm an Anglo-Saxon, every inch of me. Look at the colour of my eyes, my skin. I'm awful white where I ain't sunburned. An' my hair was yellow when I was a baby. My mother says it'll be dark-brown by the time I'm grown up, worse luck. Just the same, I'm Anglo-Saxon. I am of a fighting race. We ain't afraid of nothin'. This bay—think I'm afraid of it!" He looked out over the water with flashing eye of scorn. "Why, I've crossed it when it was howlin' an' when the scow schooner sailors said I lied an' that I didn't. Huh! They were only squareheads. Why, we licked their kind thousands of years ago. We lick everything we go up against. We've wandered all over the world, licking the world. On the sea, on the land, it's all the same. Look at Lord Nelson, look at Davy Crockett, look at Paul Jones, look at Clive, an' Kitchener, an' Fremont, an' Kit Carson, an' all of 'em."

Saxon nodded, while he continued, her own eyes shining, and it came to her what a glory it would be to be the mother of a man-child like this. Her body ached with the fancied quickening of unborn life. A good stock, a good stock, she thought to herself. Then she thought of herself and Billy, healthy shoots of that same stock, yet condemned to childlessness because of the trap of the man-made world and the curse of being herded with the stupid ones.

*The Valley of the Moon. I.*
She came back to the boy.

"My father was a soldier in the Civil War," he was telling her, "a scout an' a spy. The rebels were going to hang him twice for a spy. At the battle of Wilson's Creek he ran half a mile with his captain wounded on his back. He's got a bullet in his leg right now, just above the knee. It's ben there all these years. He let me feel it once. He was a buffalo hunter and a trapper before the war. He was sheriff of his county when he was twenty years old. An' after the war, when he was marshal of Silver City, he cleaned out the bad men an' gun-fighters. He's ben in almost every state in the Union. He could wrestle any man at the raisings in his day, an' he was bully of the raftsmen of the Susquehanna when he was only a youngster. His father killed a man in a stand-up fight with a blow of his fist when he was sixty years old. An' when he was seventy-four, his second wife had twins, an' he died when he was plowing in the field with oxen when he was ninety-nine years old. He just unyoked the oxen, an' sat down under a tree, an' died there sitting up. An' my father's just like him. He's pretty old now, but he ain't afraid of nothing. He's a regular Anglo-Saxon, you see. He's a special policeman, an' he didn't do a thing to the strikers in some of the fightin'. He had his face all cut up with a rock, but he broke his club short off over some hoodlum's head."

He paused breathlessly and looked at her.

"Gee!" he said. "I'd hate to a-ben that hoodlum."

"My name is Saxon," she said.

"Your name?"

"My first name."

"Gee!" he cried. "You're lucky. Now if mine had
ben only Erling—you know, Erling the Bold—or Wolf, or Swen, or Jarl!"

"What is it?" she asked.

"Only John," he admitted sadly. "But I don't let 'em call me John. Everybody's got to call me Jack. I've scrapped with a dozen fellows that tried to call me John, or Johnnie—wouldn't that make you sick? ——Johnnie!"

They were now off the coal-bunkers of Long Wharf, and the boy put the skiff about, heading toward San Francisco. They were well out in the open bay. The west wind had strengthened and was whitecapping the strong ebb tide. The boat drove merrily along. When splashes of spray flew aboard, wetting them, Saxon laughed, and the boy surveyed her with approval. They passed a ferryboat, and the passengers on the upper deck crowded to one side to watch them. In the swell of the steamer's wake, the skiff shipped quarter-full of water. Saxon picked up an empty can and looked at the boy.

"That's right," he said. "Go ahead an' bale out." And, when she had finished: "We'll fetch Goat Island next tack. Right there off the Torpedo Station is where we fish, in fifty feet of water an' the tide runnin' to beat the band. You're wringing wet, ain't you? Gee! You're like your name. You're a Saxon, all right. Are you married?"

Saxon nodded, and the boy frowned.

"What'd you want to do that for? Now you can't wander over the world like I'm going to. You're tied down. You're anchored for keeps."

"It's pretty good to be married, though," she smiled.

"Sure, everybody gets married. But that's no reason to be in a rush about it. Why couldn't you wait awhile,
like me? I'm goin' to get married, too, but not until I'm an old man an' have ben everywheres."

Under the lee of Goat Island, Saxon obediently sitting still, he took in the sail, and, when the boat had drifted to a position to suit him, he dropped a tiny anchor. He got out the fishlines and showed Saxon how to bait her hooks with salted minnows. Then they dropped the lines to bottom, where they vibrated in the swift tide, and waited for bites.

"They'll bite pretty soon," he encouraged. "I've never failed but twice to catch a mess here. What d'ye say we eat while we're waiting?"

Vainly she protested she was not hungry. He shared his lunch with her with a boy's rigid equity, even to the half of a hard-boiled egg and the half of a big red apple.

Still the rockcod did not bite. From under the stern-sheets he drew out a cloth-bound book.

"Free Library," he vouchsafed, as he began to read, with one hand holding the place while with the other he waited for the tug on the fishline that would announce rockcod.

Saxon read the title. It was "Afloat in the Forest."

"Listen to this," he said after a few minutes, and he read several pages descriptive of a great flooded tropical forest being navigated by boys on a raft.

"Think of that!" he concluded. "That's the Amazon river in flood time in South America. And the world's full of places like that—everywhere, most likely, except Oakland. Oakland's just a place to start from, I guess. Now that's adventure, I want to tell you. Just think of the luck of them boys! All the same, some day I'm going to go over the Andes to the headwaters of the Amazon, all through the rubber country, an' canoe down the Ama-
zon thousands of miles to its mouth where it's that wide you can't see one bank from the other an' where you can scoop up perfectly fresh water out of the ocean a hundred miles from land."

But Saxon was not listening. One pregnant sentence had caught her fancy. *Oakland is just a place to start from.* She had never viewed the city in that light. She had accepted it as a place to live in, as an end in itself. But a place to start from! Why not? Why not like any railroad-station or ferry depot? Certainly, as things were going, Oakland was not a place to stop in. The boy was right. It was a place to start from. But to go where? Here she was halted, and she was driven from the train of thought by a strong pull and a series of jerks on the line. She began to haul in, hand under hand, rapidly and deftly, the boy encouraging her, until hooks, sinker, and a big gasping rockcod tumbled into the bottom of the boat. The fish was free of the hook, and she baited afresh and dropped the line over. The boy marked his place and closed the book.

"They'll be biting soon as fast as we can haul 'em in," he said.

But the rush of fish did not come immediately.

"Did you ever read Captain Mayne Reid?" he asked.
"Or Captain Marryatt? Or Ballantyne?"

She shook her head.

"And you an Anglo-Saxon!" he cried derisively. "Why, there's stacks of 'em in the Free Library. I have two cards, my mother's an' mine, an' I draw 'em out all the time, after school, before I have to carry my papers. I stick the books inside my shirt, in front, under the suspenders. That holds 'em. One time, deliverin' papers at Second an' Market—there's an awful tough gang of kids
hang out there—I got into a fight with the leader. He hauled off to knock my wind out, an’ he landed square on a book. You ought to seen his face. An’ then I landed on him. An’ then his whole gang was goin’ to jump on me, only a couple of iron-moulders stepped in an’ saw fair play. I gave ’em the books to hold.”

“Who won?” Saxon asked.

“Nobody,” the boy confessed reluctantly. “I think I was lickin’ him, but the moulders called it a draw because the policemen on the beat stopped us when we’d only ben fightin’ half an hour. But you ought to seen the crowd. I bet there was five hundred—”

He broke off abruptly and began hauling in his line. Saxon, too, was hauling in. And in the next couple of hours they caught twenty pounds of fish between them.

That night, long after dark, the little, half-decked skiff sailed up the Oakland Estuary. The wind was fair but light, and the boat moved slowly, towing a long pile which the boy had picked up adrift and announced as worth three dollars anywhere for the wood that was in it. The tide flooded smoothly under the full moon, and Saxon recognised the points they passed—the Transit slip, Sandy Beach, the shipyards, the nail works, Market street wharf. The boy took the skiff in to a dilapidated boat-wharf at the foot of Castro street, where the scow schooners, laden with sand and gravel, lay hauled to the shore in a long row. He insisted upon an equal division of the fish, because Saxon had helped catch them, though he explained at length the ethics of flotsam to show her that the pile was wholly his.

At Seventh and Poplar they separated, Saxon walking on alone to Pine street with her load of fish. Tired
though she was from the long day, she had a strange feeling of well-being, and, after cleaning the fish, she fell asleep wondering, when good times came again, if she could persuade Billy to get a boat and go out with her on Sundays as she had gone out that day.

END OF VOL. I.