



"HER VOICE WAS UNFETTERED MUSIC"

# The Second Fiddle

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SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS I—XVI.—Professor Waring's family reacts to the war in characteristic ways. There are three daughters. Stella, the background to the other two, is employed as secretary in a town hall. Her best friend, Marian Young, is engaged to Sir Julian Verny. Julian has gone as a spy to Germany, and Marian is miserable about him. Stella Waring has recently quite upset Mr. Travers, her employer, in regard to her salary, but he is beginning to see her point of view very vividly. Lady Verny now writes the news to Marian that Julian is back in England, but "very much injured." He has been "winged" in the Tyrol. Marian gets Stella to go to the hospital with her. It now becomes plain to Marian, and blazingly plain to Julian, that what is holding her to a hopelessly broken man is only her sense of honorable compact, not her love. The chasm grows between them. They part really bewildered, without rancor. Meanwhile Mr. Travers has proposed to Stella Waring. He puts on a certain nobility with his declaration, but she cannot accept him. To avoid awkward contacts after that, she inserts Eurydice, her artistic sister, into the office, Mr. Travers being glad to serve by engaging her. He sees less and less of Stella, who suddenly comes down with pleurisy, from which attack her sister Cicely rescues her. Then comes a letter to Stella from Lady Verny, asking if she will not visit them for a few weeks to make an experiment at interesting Sir Julian in taking up some sort of "scientific work" or writing. Stella goes to Amberley feeling she must not fail.

## *Part III. Chapter XVII*

LADY VERNY and Julian were sitting in the hall when Stella joined them. It was n't in the least terrible meeting Julian; he had reduced his physical disabilities to the minimum of trouble for other people. He swung himself about on his crutches with an extraordinary ease, and he had taught himself to deal with his straitened powers so that he needed very little assistance; he had even controlled himself sufficiently to bear without apparent dislike the occasional help that he was forced to accept.

It was the Vernys' religion that one should n't make a fuss over anything larger than a broken boot-lace. Temper could be let loose over the trivial, but it must be kept if there was any grave cause for it.

Julian wished to disembarass the casual

eye of pity, partly because it was a nuisance to make people feel uncomfortable, and partly because it infuriated him to be the cause of compassion. Lady Verny had not pointed this out to Stella; she had left her to draw her own inferences from her own instincts. Lady Verny did not believe in either warnings or corrections after the days of infancy were passed.

She smiled across at Stella and said quietly:

"My son—Miss Waring."

Stella was for an instant aware of Julian's eyes dealing sharply and defensively with hers. He wanted to see if she was going to be such a fool as to pity him. She was n't such a fool. Without a protest she let him swing himself heavily to his feet before he held out his hand to her. Her eyes met his without shrinking and

without emphasis. She knew she must look rather wooden and stupid, but anything was better than looking too intelligent or too kind.

She realized that she had n't made any mistake from the fact that Lady Verny laid down her embroidery. She would have continued it steadily if anything had gone wrong.

There was no recognition in Julian's eyes except the recognition that his mother's new friend looked as if she was n't going to be a bother. Stella had n't mattered when he met her before, and she did n't matter now. She had the satisfaction of knowing that she owed his oblivion of her to her own insignificance.

"I 'm sure it 's awfully good of you," Julian said, "to come down here and enliven my mother when we 've nothing to offer you but some uncommonly bad weather."

"I find we have one thing," Lady Verny interposed. "Miss Waring is interested in Horsham. You must surely motor her over there. She wants to see Shelley's pond."

"Do you?" asked Julian. "I 'll take you with pleasure, but I must admit that I think Shelley was an uncommonly poor specimen; never been able to stand all that shrill, woolly prettiness of his. It sets my teeth on edge. I don't think much of a man, either, who breaks laws, and then wants his conduct to be swallowed like an angel's. Have you ever watched a dog that 's funk'd a scrap kick up the earth all round him and bark himself into thinking he 's no end of a fine fellow in spite of it?"

"I don't believe you 've read Shelley," cried Stella, stammering with eagerness. "I mean properly. You 've only skimmed the fanciest bits. And he never saw the sense of laws. They were n't his own; he did n't break them. The laws he broke were only the dreadful, muddled notions of respectable people who did n't want to be inconvenienced by facts. I dare say it did make him a little shrill and frightened flying in the face of the whole world. However stupid a face it has, it 's a mas-

sive one; but he did n't, for all the fright and the defiance, funk his fight."

"Let us settle Shelley at the dinner-table," said Lady Verny, drawing Stella's arm into hers and leaving Julian to follow. "Personally I do not agree with either of you. I do not think Shelley was a coward, and I do not think that as a man he was admirable. He has always seemed to me apart from his species, like his own skylark; 'Bird thou never wert.' He was an 'unpremeditated art,' a 'clear, keen joyance,' anything you like; but he had n't the rudiments of a man in him. He was neither tough nor tender, and he never looked a fact in the face."

"There are plenty of people to look at facts," objected Stella. "Surely we can spare one to live in clouds and light and give us, in return for a few immunities, their elemental spirit."

"People should n't expect to be given immunities," said Julian. "They should take 'em if they want 'em, and then be ready to pay for 'em; nobody is forced to run with the crowd. What I object to is their taking to their heels in the opposite direction, and then complaining of loneliness. Besides, start giving people immunities, and see what it leads to—a dozen Shelleys without poems and God knows how many Harriets. What you want in a poet is a man who has something to say and sticks to the path while he 's saying it."

"Oh, you might be talking about bish-ops!" cried Stella, indignantly. "How far would you have gone yourself on your Arctic explorations, Sir Julian, if you 'd stuck to paths? Why should a poet run on a given line, like an electric tram-car?"

"I think Miss Waring has rather got the better of you, Julian," said Lady Verny, smiling. "You chose an unfortunate metaphor."

"Not a bit of it," said Julian, with a gleam of amusement. "I chose a jolly good one, and she 's improved it. You can go some distance with a decent poet, but you can't with your man, Miss Waring. He twiddles up into the sky before you 've got your foot on the step."

"That 's a direct challenge," said Lady Verny. "I think after dinner we must produce something of Shelley's in contradiction. Can you think of anything solid enough to bear Julian?"

"Yes," said Stella. "All the way here in the train I was thinking of one of Shelley's poems. Have you read it—"The Ode to the West Wind"?"

"No," said Julian, smiling at her; "but it does n't sound at all substantial. You started your argument on a cloud, and you finish off with wind. The Lord has delivered you into my hand."

"Not yet, Julian," said Lady Verny. "Wait till you 've heard the poem."

It did not seem in the least surprising to Stella to find herself, half an hour later, sitting in a patch of candle-light, on a high-backed oak chair, saying aloud without effort or self-consciousness Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind."

Neither Lady Verny nor Julian ever made a guest feel strange. There was in them both an innate courtesy, which was there to protect the feelings of others. They did not seem to be protecting Stella. They left her alone, but in the act of doing so they set her free from criticism. Lady Verny took up her embroidery, and Julian, sitting in the shadow of an old oak settle, contentedly smoked a cigarette. He did not appear to be watching Stella, but neither her movements nor her expressions escaped him. She was quite different from any one he had seen before. She wore a curious little black dress, too high to be smart, but low enough to set in relief her white, slim throat. She carried her head badly, so that it was difficult to see at first the beauty of the lines from brow to chin. She had a curious, irregular face, like one of the more playful and less attentive angels in a group round a Botticelli Madonna. She had no color, and all the life of her face was concentrated in her gray, far-seeing eyes. Julian had never seen a pair of eyes in any face so alert and fiery. They were without hardness, and the fire in them melted easily into laughter. But they changed with the tones of her voice, with the rapid words

she said, so that to watch them was almost to know before she spoke what her swift spirit meant. Her voice was unfettered music, low, with quick changes of tone and intonation.

Stella was absorbed in her desire to give Julian a sense of Shelley. She wanted to make him see that beyond the world of fact, the ruthless, hampering world of which he was a victim, there was another, finer kingdom where no disabilities existed except those that a free spirit set upon itself.

She was frightened at the sound of her own voice; but after the first verse the thought and the wild music steadied her. She lost the sense of herself, and even the flickering firelight faded; she felt out once more in the warm, swinging wind, with its call through the senses to the soul. The first two parts of the poem, with their sustained and tremendous imagery, said themselves without effort or restraint. It was while she was in the halcyon third portion of

"The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,"

that it shot through Stella's mind how near she was to the tragic unfolding of a fettered spirit which might be the expression of Julian's own. She dared not stop; the color rushed over her face. By an enormous effort she kept her voice steady and flung into it all the unconsciousness she could muster. He should not dream she thought of him; and yet as she said:

"Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!  
A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bowed  
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud,"

it seemed to her that she was the voice of his inner soul stating his bitter secret to the world. A pulse beat in her throat and struggled with her breath, her knees shook under her; but the music of her low, grave voice went on unflinching:



"Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is.  
What if my leaves are falling, like its own!"

Lady Verny laid down her embroidery. Julian had not moved. There was no sound left in the world but Stella's voice.

She moved slowly toward the unconquerable end,

"Oh, Wind,  
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

All the force of her heart throbbed through Shelley's words. They were only words, but they had the universe behind them. Nobody spoke when she had finished.

She herself was the first to move. She gave a quick, impatient sigh, and threw out her hands with a little gesture of despair.

"I can't give it to you," she said, "but it's *there*. Read it for yourself! It's worth breaking laws for; I think it's worth being broken for."

Julian answered her. He spoke carefully and a little stiffly.

"I don't think I agree with you," he said. "Nothing is worth being broken for."

Stella bowed her head. She was aware of an absolute and appalling sense of exhaustion and of an inner failure more terrible than any physical collapse.

It was as if Julian had pushed aside her soul.

"Still, I think you must admit, Julian," Lady Verny said quietly, "that 'The Ode to the West Wind' is an admirable poem. I'm afraid, my dear, you have tired yourself in saying it for us. I know the poem very well, but I have never either understood or enjoyed it so much before. Do you not think you had better go to bed? Julian will excuse us. I find I am a little tired myself."

Stella rose to her feet uncertainly. She was afraid that Julian would get up again and light their candles; but for a moment he did not move. He was looking at her reconsideringly, as if something in his mind was recognizing something in hers;

then he dragged himself up, as she had feared he would, and punctiliously lighted their candles.

"It's rather absurd not having electric light here, is n't it?" he observed, handing Stella her candle. "But we can't make up our minds to it. We like candle-light with old oak. I'm not prepared to give in about your fellow Shelley; but I confess I liked that poem better than the others I have read. You must put me up to some more another time."

If she had made one of her frightful blunders, he was n't going to let her see it. His smile was perfectly kind, perfectly impenetrable. She felt as if he were treating her like an intrusive child. Lady Verny said nothing more about the poem; but as she paused outside Stella's door she leaned over her and very lightly kissed her cheek.

It was as if she said: "Yes, I know you made a mistake; but go on making them. I can't. I'm too like him; so that the only thing for me to do is to leave him alone. But perhaps one day one of your mistakes may reach him; and if they can't, nothing can."

Stella shivered as she stood alone before the firelight. Everything in the room was beautiful, the chintz covers, the thick, warm carpet, the gleam of the heavy silver candlesticks. The furniture was not chosen because it had been suitable. It was suitable because it had been chosen long ago. It had grown like its surroundings into a complete harmony, and all this beauty, all this warm, old, shining polish of inanimate objects and generations of good manners, covered an ache like a hollow tooth. Nobody could get down to what was wrong because they were too well bred; and was it very likely that they were going to let Stella? She would annoy Julian, she had probably annoyed him to-night; but would she ever reach him? In her mind she had been able to think of him as near her; but now that she was in the same house, she felt as if she were on the other side of unbridged space. He was frightening, too; he was so much handsomer than she remembered, and so

much more alive. It was inconceivable that he should ever want to work with her.

She sat down before an oval silver mirror and looked at her face. It seemed to her that she was confronted by an empty little slab without light. She gave it a wintry smile before she turned away from it.

"I don't suppose he 'll ever want anything of you," she said to herself, "except to go away."

## CHAPTER XVIII

LATER Stella wrote:

Eurydice dearest:

It's the strangest household, or else, perhaps, everybody else's is. You never see anybody doing anything, and yet everything gets done. It's all ease and velvet and bells; and yet in spite of nothing being a minute late, you never notice the slightest hurry. It is n't clockwork; it's more like the stars in their courses. I always thought being properly waited on made people helpless; it would me in ten minutes. I can see myself sinking into a cream-fed cushion, but the Vernys sit bolt upright, and no servant they possess can do any given thing as well for them as they can do it for themselves.

I have breakfast in my room, with a robin, and the window open—oh, open on to the sharpest paradise!

While I lie in bed I can see an old, moss-covered barn which always manages to have a piece of pink sky behind it and a black elm bough in front. It's a wonderful barn, as old as any hill, and with all the colors of the rainbow subservient to it. That's one window; the other two look over the garden.

There's a terrace, and a lawn out of which little glens and valleys wander down the hillside into the water-meadows, and there's a lake drowned out by the water, with swans more or less kept in it by a hedge of willows.

The water-meadows are more beautiful than all the little shiny clouds that race across the valley. Sometimes they're like a silver tray, with green islands and wet,

brown trees on them; and sometimes they are a traveling mist; and then the sun starts out (I have n't seen it full yet), and everything's blue—the frailest, pearliest blue.

Yesterday was quite empty, with only its own light, and when evening came the water-meadows and the little hills were lost in amethyst.

I have n't said anything about the downs. I can't. We walk on them in the afternoon. At least we walk along the lane that goes through the village (it's full of mud; but one gets quite fond of mud), and then when you feel the short turf under you, and the fields drop down, you go up into the sky and float.

One begins so well, too. At breakfast there's such beautiful china, butter in a lordly dish, always honey, and often mushrooms. Everything tastes as if it came fresh out of the sky.

I can do exactly as I like all day. Nobody's plans conflict with any one else's. That's partly being rich and partly being sensible; it's quite wonderful how easy life is if you're both. There's a special room given to me, with a piano and books; and if I want Lady Verny, I can find her in the garden.

I can see her out of my window now; she's wearing a garment that's a cross between a bathing-dress and a dressing-gown, enormous gauntlets, and one of Sir Julian's old caps. There *are* gardeners, especially one called Potter. (Whenever anything goes wrong, Lady Verny shakes her head and says, "Ah, that's the Potter's thumb!") But you never see them. She's always doing something in the garden. Half the time I can't discover what; but she just smiles at me and says, "Nature's so untidy," or, "The men need looking after." Both Lady Verny and Sir Julian are very serious over their servants. In a way they're incredibly nice to them, they seem to have them so much on their minds. They're always discussing their relatives or their sore throats, and they give very polite, plain orders; but then just when you're thinking how heavenly it must be to work for them, they say something that chills you to the bone. One of the housemaids broke a china

bowled yesterday, and came to Lady Verny, saying:

"If you please, m' Lady, I did n't mean to do it."

"I should hope not," Lady Verny said in a voice like marble. "If you had *meant* to do it, I should hardly keep you in the house; but your not having criminal tendencies is hardly an excuse for culpable carelessness."

Sir Julian's worse, because his eyes are harder; he must have caught them from one of his icebergs. But the servants stay with them forever, and when one of the grooms had pneumonia in the winter, Sir Julian sat up with him for three nights because the man was afraid of dying, and it quieted him to have his master in the room.

I'm beginning to work in the garden myself, the smells are so nice, and the dogs like it. Lady Verny has a spaniel and two fox-terriers, and Sir Julian a very fierce, unpleasant arctic monster, with a blunt nose like a Chow, and eyes red with temper and a thirst for blood.

He's always locked up when he is n't with Sir Julian. If he was n't, I'm sure he'd take the other three dogs as hors-d'œuvre, and follow them up with the gardeners.

I don't know what he does all day. Sir Julian I mean; the arctic dog growls. They never turn up till tea-time; then they disappear again, and come back at dinner. At least Sir Julian does. The arctic dog (his name is Ostrog) is not allowed at meals, because he thinks everything in the room ought to be killed first.

After dinner I play chess with Sir Julian. He's been quite different to me since he found I could; before he seemed to think I was something convenient for his mother, like a pocket-handkerchief. He was ready to pick me up and give me back to her if I fell about, but I did n't have a life of my own.

Now he often speaks to me as if I were really there. They're both immensely kind and good to everybody in the neighborhood, but they see as little of people as possible.

They're not a bit religious, though they

always go to church, and Lady Verny reads Montaigne—beautifully bound, like Sir Thomas à Kempis—during the sermon. A great deal of the land belongs to them, and I suppose they could use a lot of influence if they chose. I always dislike people having power over other human beings; but the Vernys never use it to their own advantage. In nine cases out of ten they don't use it at all. I heard the vicar imploring Sir Julian to turn a drunken tenant out of a cottage; as his example was bad for the village. But Sir Julian would n't even agree to speak to him. "I always believe in letting people go to the devil in their own way," he said. "If you try to stop 'em, they only go to him in yours. Of course I don't mean you, Parson. It's your profession to give people a lead. But I could n't speak about his morals to a man who owed me three years' rent."

I expect I shall have to come back next week to the town hall. Thank Mr. Travers so much for saying I may stay on longer, but I really could n't go on taking my salary when I'm bursting with health and doing nothing. I'll wait two more days before writing to him, but I must confess I'd rather have all my teeth extracted than mention Professor Paulson to Sir Julian.

I have n't seen the slightest desire for work in him; but, then, I have n't seen any desire in him at all except a suicidal fancy for driving a dangerous mare in a high dog-cart. He never speaks of himself or of the war, and he is about as personal as a mahogany sideboard.

Lady Verny is n't much easier to know, though she seems to like talking to me. I asked her to call me Stella the other day, and she put down her trowel and looked at me as if she thought it was n't my place to make such a suggestion; then she said, "Well, perhaps I will." I wish we'd been taught whose place things are; it would be so much simpler when you are with people who have places. But Lady Verny does n't dislike me, because I've seen her with people she dislikes. She's much more polite then, and never goes on with anything. Last night when I was playing chess with Sir Julian (it was an awful fight, for he's

rather better than I am, though I can't let him know it) she said to him, "I hope you are not tiring Stella."

He looked up sharply, as if he was awfully surprised to hear her saying my name, and then he gave me a queer little smile as if he were pleased with me. I believe they're fond of each other, but I've never seen them show any sign of affection.

But, O Eurydice, though they're awfully charming and interesting and dear, they're terribly unhappy. You feel it all the time—a dumb, blind pain that they can't get over or understand, and that nothing will ever induce them to show. They are n't a bit like the arctic dog, who is always disagreeable unless he has a bone and Sir Julian. You know where you are with the arctic dog.

Tell Mr. Travers I'll write directly I have fixed a date for my return.

Your ever-loving, disheveled, enthralled, perturbed, unfinished

Stella.

p.s. I suppose as a family we all talk too much; we over-say things, and that makes them seem shallow. If you say very little, it comes out in chunks and sounds solid. You remember those dreadful old early-Saxon people we read once who never used adjectives? I think we ought to look them up.

## CHAPTER XIX

STELLA found Lady Verny weeding. She drew the weeds up very gracefully and thoroughly, with a little final shake.

It was a hard, shivering March morning. Next to the bed upon which Lady Verny was working was a sheet of snow-drops under a dark yew-hedge. They trembled and shook in the light air like a drift of wind-blown snow.

Stella hovered irresolutely above them; then she said:

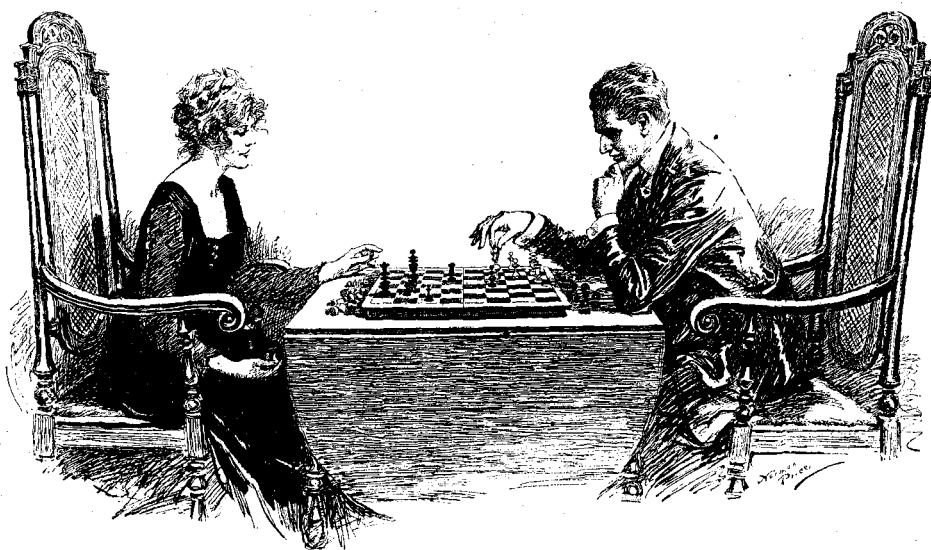
"Lady Verny, I am afraid I must go back to the town hall next week. I have n't been of any use."

Lady Verny elaborately coaxed out a low-growing weed, and then, with a twist, threw it into the basket beside her.

"Why don't you go and talk to Julian?" she asked. "He can't be expected to jump a five-barred gate if he does n't know it's there."

Stella hesitated before she spoke; then she said with a little rush:

"What I feel now is that I'm not the person to tell him—to tell him it's there, I mean. I don't know why I ever thought I was. The person to tell him that would be some one he could notice like a light, not a person who behaves like a candle caught in a draft whenever he speaks to her."



"AFTER DINNER I PLAY CHESS WITH SIR JULIAN"



"My dear," said Lady Verny, ruthlessly exposing, and one by one exterminating, a family of wireworms, "I fear you have no feminine sense. You have a great many other kinds—of the mind, and no doubt of the soul. You should try to please Julian. You don't; you leave him alone, and in consequence he thinks he's a failure with you. Women with the feminine sense please a man without appearing to make the effort. The result is that the man thinks he's pleasing *them*, and a man who thinks that he has succeeded in pleasing an agreeable woman is not unaware of her."

"But I'm so afraid of him," pleaded Stella. "I don't believe you know how frightening he is."

"Yes," said Lady Verny; "he has lost his inner security. That makes a person very frightening, I know. He has become aggressive because he feels that something he has always counted on as a weapon has been withdrawn from him. It's like living on your wits; people who do that are always hard. I think you can give him the weapon back; but to do that you must use all your own. You must go into a room as if it belonged to you. It's astonishing how this place suits you; but you must hold your head up, and lay claim to your kingdom."

"But I've never had a kingdom," objected Stella, "and I only want him to be interested in the idea of writing a book."

"Well, that's what I mean," said Lady Verny, decently interring the corpses of the worms. "At least it's part of what I mean. The only way to get Julian to write a book just now is to charm him. Men whose nerves and hearts are broken don't respond readily to the abstract. You can do what I can't, because I'm his mother. He's made all the concessions he could or ought to make to me. He's promised not to take his life. Sometimes in these last few months I've felt like giving him his promise back. Now are you going to be afraid of trying to please Julian?"

"O Lady Verny," Stella cried, "you make me hate myself! I'll do anything in

the world to please him; I'd play like a brass band, or cover myself with bangles like Cleopatra! Don't, *don't* think I'll ever be a coward again!"

"You need n't go as far as the bangles," said Lady Verny, smiling grimly. "Do it your own way, but don't be afraid to let Julian think you like him. He finds all that kind of thing rather hard to believe just now."

"He's been frozen up. Remember, if he is n't nice to you, that thawing is always rather a painful process. Now run along, and leave me in peace with my worms."

It cannot be said that Stella ran, but she went. She passed through the hall and a green-baize door, and wondered, if she had been an early-Christian martyr about to step into the arena, whether she would n't on the whole have preferred a tiger to Julian.

The green-baize door opened on a short passage at the end of which was an old oak doorway heavily studded with nails. She knew this must be Julian's room, because she heard Ostrog growling ominously from inside it. Julian presumably threw something at him which hit him, for there was the sound of a short snap, and then silence.

"Please come in," said Julian in a voice of controlled exasperation. Stella stepped quickly into the room, closing the door behind her.

It was a long, wide room with a low ceiling. There were several polar-bear skins on the floor, and a row of stuffed penguins on a shelf behind Julian's chair. Three of the walls were covered with bookcases; the fourth was bare except for an extraordinarily vivid French painting of a girl seated in a café. She had red hair and a desperate, laughing face, and was probably a little drunk. There was a famous artist's signature beneath her figure, but Stella had a feeling that Julian had known the girl and had not bought the picture for the sake of the signature.

Ostrog stood in front of her, growling, with every separate hair on his back erect.

"Keep quite still for a moment," said

Julian, quickly. "Ostrog, lie down!" The dog very slowly settled himself on his haunches, with his red, savage eyes still fixed on Stella.

"Now I think you can pass him safely," Julian added. "He has a peculiar dislike to human proximity, especially in this room. You can't write him down as one who loves his fellow-man, and I fear he carries his unsociability even further in respect to his fellow-woman."

"It must be nice for you," said Stella, "to have some one who expresses for you what you are too polite to say for yourself."

Julian gave her a quick, challenging look.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Why should you suppose any such thing?"

"I expect because it is true," said Stella, quietly. "Of course you don't growl or show your teeth, and your eyes are n't red; but nobody could suppose when you said 'Come in' just now that you wanted anything to come in."

"The chances were all in favor of its being somebody that I did n't want," explained Julian, politely. "For once they misled me. I apologize."

Stella smiled; her eyes held his for a moment. She did not contradict him, but she let him see that she did n't believe him. "If he was ever really sorry," she thought, "he would n't apologize. When he's polite, it's because he really is n't anything else."

"I came," she explained, "to ask you to lend me Professor Paulson's book on reindeer-moss. Will you tell me where it is and let me get it for myself, if Ostrog does n't mind?"

To her surprise, Julian allowed her to find it for herself. Ostrog continued to growl, but without immediate menace. When she had found it, she took it across to Julian.

"Please don't run away," he said quickly, "unless you want to. Tell me what you intend to look up about the moss. I had a little tussle with Paulson over it once. He was an awfully able fellow, but he had n't the health to get at his facts

at first hand. That was unfortunate; second-hand accuracy leaks."

Stella sat down near him, and in a minute they were launched into an eager discussion. She had typed the book herself, and had its facts at her fingers' end. She presented a dozen facets to her questions, with a light in them from her dancing mind.

Julian differed, defended himself, and explained, till he found himself at length in the middle of an account of his last expedition. He pulled himself up abruptly.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "what a dark horse you are! Do tell me how you come to know anything about such a subject. Did you smuggle yourself into an arctic expedition as a stowaway, or have you been prospecting gold in the Klondike with a six-shooter and a sleeping-sack? It's amazing what you know about the North."

"It is not so uncanny as you think," said Stella, quietly. "I was Professor Paulson's secretary. For five years I studied the fauna and flora of arctic regions. I used to help him examine the tests brought back by explorers. He taught me how to understand and check climate and weather charts. All the collected specimens went through my hands. I did the drawings for this book, for instance. You know, a secretary is a kind of second fiddle. Give him a lead, and he catches up the music and carries it through as thoroughly, though not so loudly, as the first violin. I like being a second fiddle and I like the North."

"That's odd," said Julian, drawing his heavy eyebrows together. "I had an idea I had met Professor Paulson's secretary before."

"You are quite right," said Stella; "you did meet her before."

Julian stared at her; his eyes hardened.

"Do you mean that it was you I met at Sir Francis Young's?" he asked her. "You are Miss Young's great friend, then, are you not?"

Stella turned her eyes away from him. She hated to see him guarding himself against her.

"I was her friend," she said in a low voice; "but I have not seen her or heard from her for six months, nor have I written."

Sir Julian still looked at her, but the sternness of his eyes decreased.

She sat meekly beside him, with her drooping head, like the snowdrops she had brought in with her from the March morning. She did not look like a woman who could be set, or would set herself, to spy upon him. He acquitted her of his worst suspicions, but his pride was up in arms against her knowledge.

"It's too stupid of me," he said, "not to have recognized you immediately; for I have n't in the least forgotten you or our talk. You said some charming things, Miss Waring; but fate, a little unkindly, has proved them not to be true."

Stella turned her eyes back to his. She no longer felt any fear of him. She was too sorry for him to be afraid.

"No," she said eagerly, "I was perfectly right. I said you were strong. Things have happened to you,—horrible things,—but you're there; you're there as well as the things—in control of them. Why, look at what you've been telling me—the story of your last expedition! It's so fearfully exciting, and it's all, as you say, first-hand knowledge. You brought back with you the fruits of experience. Why don't you select and sort them and give them to the world?"

He looked at her questioningly.

"Do you mean these old arctic scraps?" he said slowly. "They might have mattered once, but they're all ancient history now. The flood and the fire have come on us since then. All that's as dead—as dead and useless as a crippled man. Besides, no one can write a book unless it interests him. I'm not even interested."

Stella's eyes fell; her breath came quickly.

"But don't you think," she said, "you could be made a little interested again? You were interested, were n't you, when you were talking to me a few minutes ago?"

Sir Julian laughed good-naturedly.

"I dare say I was interested talking to you," he said. "You're such a changeling: you play chess like a wizard and know the North like a witch. I'm afraid, Miss Waring, that interest in your conversation is n't in itself sufficient to turn a man into an author."

Stella rose slowly to her feet. She opened her lips as if to speak to Julian, but he was looking past her out of the window, with a little bitter smile that took away her hopefulness. Ostrog escorted her, growling less and less menacingly, to the door. Stella did not look back at Julian, and she forgot to hold her head up as she went out of the room. After she had gone Julian discovered that she had dropped two of her snowdrops on the floor. He picked them up carefully and laid them on his desk.

"A curious, interesting girl," he said to himself; "an incredible friend for Marian to have had. I wonder what made my mother take her up?"

## CHAPTER XX

LADY VERNY finished her weeding. It took her an hour and a half to do what she wanted to the bed; then she rose from her cramped position, and went into Julian's library by one of the French windows. She guessed that Stella had failed.

Julian was lying on a long couch, with his hands behind the back of his head and his eyes fixed on the ceiling. Lady Verny knew that, when he was alone, he was in the habit of lying like this for hours. He had told her that since his accident it amused him more than anything else.

She came in without speaking, and, drawing off her long gauntlets, folded them neatly together, and sat down, facing him.

Julian's eyes moved toward her as she entered; but he gave her no further greeting, and after a speculative glance his eyes returned to the ceiling.

"It's a pity," said Lady Verny, thoughtfully, "that poor child has to go back to

the town hall next week, a dreadful, drafty place, and be made love to by a common little town clerk."

Julian's eyes flickered for a moment, but did not change their position.

"But town clerks," he observed, "are, I feel sure, distinguished persons who confine their passions to rates and taxes."

"That must make it all the more trying," said Lady Verny. "But I don't mind the town clerk as much as I mind the drafts. Stella had pleurisy be-

fore she came here; and you know what girls who do that kind of work eat—ghastly little messes, slopped on to marble tables, and tasting like last week's wash."

"Well, why the devil does n't she look for another job?" Julian asked irritably. "She has brains enough for twenty. That's what I dislike about women: they get stuck anywhere. No dash in 'em, no initiative, no judgment." It was not what he disliked about women.

"She has tried," said Lady Verny. "The man she hoped to get a job from would n't have her. She tried this morning."

Julian's eyes moved now; they shot like a hawk's on to his mother's, while his body lay as still as a stone figure on a tomb.

"Then it was a trap," he said coldly. "I wondered. I thought we'd settled you were going to leave me alone."

"Yes," said Lady Verny in a gentle, even voice, "I know we had, Julian; but I can't bear it."

Julian's eyes changed and softened. He put his hand on her knee and let it rest there for a moment.

"I can, if it's only you," he said; "but I can't stand a lot of sympathetic women. One's a lot."

"You don't like her, then?" his mother asked. "I'm sorry; I always did from the first day I saw her. I don't know why; she has n't any behavior."

"I don't dislike her," said Julian. "I don't think her behavior matters. She is n't at all a bother. I rather like her being so awfully little a woman; it's restful. Half the time I don't notice whether she's

in the room or not. She does n't obtrude."

"And the other half of the time?" Lady Verny asked, with apparent carelessness.

"Oh, the other half of the time," said Julian, with a little, twisted smile, "I quite appreciate the fact that she is. Especially when you've taken the trouble to dress her as you did last night."

"I had to see what she looked like," Lady Verny explained defensively.

"I think, if you want her to stay in this house," said Julian, dryly, "you'd better let her look as little like that again as possible. I might have tolerated a secretary if I had wanted to write a book; but I'd tolerate no approach to a picture. She can go and be picturesque at the town hall. My artistic sense has already been satisfied up to the brim. How did you get her to take the clothes she had on last night?"

"I told her," said Lady Verny, blushing, "that I had the materials by me, and could n't possibly use them, as I was too old for light colors, and Girton could make her a simple little dress. And then



"JULIAN'S EYES FLICKERED FOR A MOMENT, BUT DID NOT CHANGE THEIR POSITION"



I stood over Girton. As a matter of fact, I *did* send for the green jade comb and the shoes and stockings."

"You seem to me," said Julian, "to have entered most light-heartedly upon a career of crime and deceit unusual at your age. I don't wonder that you blush for it."

"It was n't only you, Julian," Lady Verny pleaded. "I did want to help the girl. I can't bear public offices for gentlewomen. It's so unsuitable!"

"Most," agreed Julian. "But, my dear Mother, this is a world in which the unsuitable holds an almost perfect sway, a fact which your usual good sense seldom overlooks."

"You don't know," said Lady Verny, earnestly, "how even a bad patch of ground facing north *can* improve with cultivation."

"Do what you like with the north side of the garden," replied Julian, "do even what you like with the apparently maleable Miss Waring; but please don't try the gardening habit any more on me."

Lady Verny sighed. Julian looked as inexpressive and immovable as a stone crusader.

Lady Verny was a patient woman, and she knew that, once seed is dropped, you must leave it alone.

She had learned to abstain from all the little labors of love which are its only consolations. From the first she had realized that the things she longed to do for Julian he preferred to have done for him by a servant.

She had accepted his preferences as the only outlet of her emotions; but when she saw he was fast approaching the place where nothing is left but dislikes, she made an effort to dislodge him. She was not sure, but she thought that she had failed. Without speaking again, she went back to the garden and did a little more digging before lunch. The earth was more maleable than Julian; digging altered it.

If you have never been able to buy any clothes except those which you could afford, none of them having any direct relation to the other, but merely replacing garments incapable of further use, to

be dressed exactly as you should be is to obtain a new consciousness. It was not really Stella who looked with curious eyes at herself in a long mirror beneath the skilful hands of Girton. It was some hidden creature of triumphant youth with a curious, heady thirst for admiration. She gazed at herself with alien eyes.

"It's like an olive-tree," she said dreamily to Girton, "a silvery gray olive-tree growing in the South."

"I dare say, Miss," said Girton; "but if you was to remember when you sit down just to bring your skirts a trifle forward, it would sit better."

"Yes, Girton," said Stella, submissively. But the submission was only skin-deep. She knew that whatever she did, she could n't go far wrong; her dress would n't let her. It gave her a freedom beyond the range of conduct. People whose clothes fit them, as its sheath of green fits a lily of the valley, become independent of their souls.

Julian's eyes had met hers last night with a perfectly different expression in them. He was too polite to look surprised, but he looked again as soon as it was convenient.

Usually he looked at Stella as if he wanted to be nice to her, but last night for the first time he had looked as if he wished Stella to think him nice. She had had to hold her head up because of the jade comb.

It would n't matter how either of them looked now, as she was going away so soon; but she was glad that for once he had noticed her, even if his notice was inspired only by the dress.

Julian did not appear at dinner; it was the first time since Stella's arrival that this had happened.

"He's had a bad day," Lady Verny explained. "He will get about more than he ought. It's a great strain on him, and then he suffers from fatigue and misery—not pain, exactly. I don't think he would mind that so much, but it makes him feel very helpless. He wants his chess, though, if you don't mind going into his library and playing with him."

Julian was sitting up in his arm-chair when Stella joined him. His back was to the light, and the chess-board in front of him.

His face was gray and haggard, but there was a dogged spark of light in his eyes, as if he was amused at something.

"Thanks tremendously for coming in to cheer me up," he said quickly. "You see, I've dispensed with Ostrog for the evening, to prevent further comparison between us. D' you mind telling me why you did n't let me know this morning that, if I wrote a book, you'd work for me?"

Stella flushed, and let her jade comb sink beneath its level.

"If you did n't want to write the book," she said, "why should you want a secretary?"

"It did n't occur to you, I suppose," Sir Julian asked, "that if I wanted the secretary, I might wish to write the book?"

"What has Lady Verny said to you?" Stella demanded, lifting her head suddenly, and looking straight across at him.

"Nothing that need make you at all fierce," Julian replied, with amusement. "She said you were going back to the town hall next week, and I said I thought it was a pity. You don't seem to me in the least fitted for a town hall. I've no doubt you can do incredible things with drains, but I fear I have a selfish preference for your playing chess with me. My mother added that it was my fault; you were prepared, if I wished to write a book, to see me through it."

"Yes," said Stella, defensively, "I was prepared, if I thought you really wanted it."

"I suppose you and my mother thought it would be good for me, did n't you?" asked Julian, suavely. "I have an idea that you had concocted a treacherous, underground plot."

"We—I—well, if you'd *liked* it, it might have been good for you," Stella admitted.

"Most immoral," said Julian, dryly, "to try to do good to me behind my back,

was n't it? You see, I dislike being done good to; I happen very particularly to dislike it, and above all things I dislike it being done without my knowledge."

"Yes," said Stella, humbly. "So do I; I see that now. It was silly and interfering. Only, if you *had* been interested—"

"I was n't in the least interested," said Julian, implacably, "but I'm glad you agree about your moral obliquity. My mother, of course, was worse; but there is no criminal so deep seated in her career as a woman under the sway of the maternal instinct. One allows for that. And now, Miss Waring, since neither of us likes being done good to, and since it's bad for you to go back to the town hall, and worse for me to remain unemployed, shall we pool this shocking state of things and write the book together?"

"Oh!" cried Stella with a little gasp. "But are you sure you want to?"

Julian laughed.

"I may be politer than Ostrog," he said, "but I assure you that, like him, unless reduced by force, I never do what I don't want to."

"And you have n't been reduced?" Stella asked a little doubtfully.

"Well," said Julian, beginning to place his chessmen, "I don't think so; do you? Where was the force?"

Stella could not answer this question, and Lady Verny, who might have been capable of answering it, was up-stairs.

## CHAPTER XXI

STELLA found that there were several Julians. The first one she knew quite well; he wanted only to be left alone. She dealt quite simply with him, as if he were Mr. Travers before Mr. Travers was human.

She came into his library every morning at ten o'clock, and this Julian, looking out of the window or at Ostrog or at the ceiling, dictated to her in a dry voice, slowly and distinctly, the first draft of a chapter.

Julian had never worked with an effi-

cient woman before, and Stella's promptness and prevision surprised him; but this Julian never showed any surprise. He did the work he had set himself to do from the notes he had prepared before she came. If there were any facts of which he was doubtful, he asked her to look them up, telling her where she would be likely to find references to them. Stella went to the right bookcase by a kind of instinct, placed a careful hand on the book, and found the index with flying fingers. She never asked this Julian questions or troubled him with her own opinions. She carried off her notes without comment, and returned them to him carefully typed for his final inspection next morning. It was like the town hall, only quieter.

The second Julian was almost like a friend. He was a mischievous, challenging Julian, who would n't at any price have an impersonal, carefully drilled secretary beside him, but who insisted upon Stella's active coöperation. They discussed the chapter from every point before they wrote it. This Julian demanded her opinions; he dragged out her criticisms and fought them. He made their work together a perilous, inspiriting tug-of-war. The chapters that resulted from this coöperation were by far the most interesting in the book. Indeed, they even interested Julian.

But these were rare days, and what was most curious to Stella was that Julian, who seemed at least to enjoy them as much as she did, should appear to want to suppress and curtail them. He was obviously reluctant to let the second Julian have his fling.

Stella saw the third Julian only in the evenings. He was a polite and courteous host, stranger to Stella than either of the others. He was always on his guard, as if he feared that either of the watchful women who wanted to see him happy might think he was happy or might, more fatally still, treat him as if he were unhappy.

While Stella and Lady Verny were anxiously watching the transformations of Julian, spring came to Amberley. It came

very quietly, in a cold, green visibility, clothing the chilly, shivering trees in splendor. The hedges shone with a green as light as water, and out of their dried, brown grasses the fields sprang into emerald. The streams that ran through the valley fed myriads of primroses. Stella found them everywhere, in lonely copses, in high-shouldered lanes, or growing like pale sunshine underneath the willows.

The spring was young and fugitive at Amberley; it fled before its own promises, and hid behind a cloak of winter. Dull, gray days, cold showers, and nipping, raw down winds defied it, and for weeks the earth looked as hard as any stone; but still the green leaves unsheathed themselves, and the birds sang their truculent, triumphant songs, certain of victory.

Lady Verny spent all her time in the garden now, watching against dangers, preparing for new births, protecting the helpless, and leaving things alone. The bulbs were up and out already; crocus and daffodil, hyacinth and narcissus, flooded the glades and glens. Crocuses ran like a flock of small gold flames under the dark yew-hedges; daffodils streamed down the hillside to the lakes, looking as if they meant to overtake the sailing swans. The willows in the valley had apricot and pale-gold stems. They hung shivering over the lake like a race of phantom lovers searching for their lost brides.

Stella never saw Julian outdoors. He was always interested and polite about the garden, but he was never in it. He did not seem to want to see things grow. She did not know how far he could drag himself upon his crutches, and it gave her a little shock of surprise to find him one day in one of her favorite haunts.

It was outside the garden altogether, behind the village street. A sunk lane under high hedges led to a solitary farm. One of the fields on the way to it overlooked a sheltered copse of silver birches. Julian was stretched at full length under the hedge, looking down into the wood; his crutches lay beside him. Under the silver birches the ground was as blue as if the sky had sprung up out of the earth.

There was no space at all for anything but bluebells. Far away in the valley a cuckoo called its first compelling notes.

Julian's face was set. He looked

'died at their posts,' misleading. There are n't any posts, for one thing, and, then, dying—well, you don't die quickly from gas. If you're fairly strong, it's a solid



"FINALLY HE TOOK HER OUT FOR WALKS"

through the silver-and-blue copse as if it were not there; his eyes held a tortured universe.

Stella would have slipped away from him unseen, but his voice checked her.

"Is that you, Stella?" he asked quietly. "Won't you come and sit down here and look at this damned pretty world with me?"

His voice was startlingly bitter; it was the first time that he had used her name.

She came to him quickly, and sat down beside him, motionless and alert. She knew that this was yet another Julian, and an instinct told her that this was probably the real one.

He, too, said nothing for a moment; then he began to speak with little jerks between his sentences.

"What do you suppose," he said, "is the idea? You know what I mean? You saw the papers this morning? Have you ever seen a man gassed? I did once, in Wales—a mine explosion. We got to the fellows. One of them was dead, and one was mad, and one would have liked to be mad or dead. I rather gather that about two or three thousand Canadians were gassed near Ypres. They stood, you know,—stood as long as you can stand,—gassed. I always thought that phrase,

performance, and takes at the least several hours.

"I beg your pardon. I ought n't to talk to you like that. Please forgive me for being such a brute. On such a lovely morning, too! Are there any new bulbs up? I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"Julian—" said Stella.

He turned his head quickly and looked at her.

"Yes," he said; "what is it?"

"You ought to be ashamed *not* to talk to me," Stella said, with sudden fierceness. "Does n't it make any difference to you that we're friends?"

He put his hand over hers.

"Yes," he said, smiling; "but I happen to be rather afraid of differences."

He took his hand away as quickly as he had touched her.

"Do you know," she asked in a low voice, "what was the saddest thing I ever saw—the saddest and the most terrible?"

"No," he said, turning his eyes carefully back to the silver birches; "but I have an idea that it was something that happened to somebody else."

"Yes," said Stella; "it happened to a sea-gull. It was the only time I ever went to the sea. Eurydice had been ill, and I went away with her. I think I was



fourteen. I had gone out alone after tea on to the cliffs when I saw a motionless sea-gull at the very edge. I walked close up to it. It was as still as a stone, and when I came up, O Julian, one of its wings was broken! It could not fly again. Its eyes were searching the sea with such despair in them; it knew it could not fly again. I picked it up and carried it home. We did everything we could for it, but it died—like that, without ever changing the despair in its eyes—because it could not fly.”

“Lucky brute to be able to die!” said Julian under his breath. Stella said nothing. “Why did you tell me?” he asked after a pause. “Any lesson attached to it?”

She shook her head.

“You’re not crying?” he asked suspiciously. Then he looked at her. She was sitting very still, biting her lips to keep her tears back.

“You really must n’t, Stella!” he urged in a queer, soft voice she had never heard him use before. “I’m not a sea-gull and I’m not dying and I’m not even a stone.”

“No,” she whispered, “but you’re just like the sea-gull: you won’t share your pain.”

“Look here,” said Julian, “I—you—Would you mind sitting on that log over there,—it’s quite dry,—just opposite? Thanks. Now I can talk easier. I want you to remember that I’m a million times better off than most people. What troubles me is n’t what the vicar calls my affliction. I’m rather proud of what I’m able to do with a pair of crutches in six months. It’s being out of it; that’s what set me off on those Canadian chaps. I miss the idea that I might be in that kind of thing, rather. You see, I feel quite well. I’ll settle down to it in time, and I won’t shut you out, if you’ll remember not to let me—you’re most awfully innocent, are n’t you? D’you mind telling me how old you are?”

“Twenty-eight,” said Stella. “But I’m not really innocent. I think I know all the horrible things.”

Julian laughed ruefully. “You would

n’t see them coming though,” he said; “and, besides, the things that are n’t innocent are by no means always horrible. However, that’s not what I was going to say. If we’re to be friends at all, and it’s not particularly easy even for me to live in the same house with you and not be friends, you’ll have to help me pretty considerably.”

“How shall I help you?” Stella asked eagerly. “I have wanted to, you know. I mean that I did sometimes think you wanted to be friends—as Mr. Travers did when he tried to become human because his cat died. I have n’t told you about that; it made him see how important it was. And when you did n’t want to be friendly, I tried not to bother you; I just went on with the work. That *was* the best way, was n’t it?”

“Yes,” said Julian, carefully. “You did the work uncommonly well, my dear, and you never bothered me in that way. I’m afraid I don’t quite follow Mr. Travers. I suppose he is the town clerk, is n’t he? He may have meant the same thing that I do; but I should have thought it would have been—well—simpler for him. I don’t know how to explain to you what I mean. You remember Marian?” Stella nodded. “I came a cropper over Marian,” Julian explained. “She behaved extraordinarily well. No one could possibly blame her; but she was n’t exactly the kind of woman I’d banked on, and I had banked on her pretty heavily. When I saw my mistake, I understood that I was n’t fit for marriage, and I became reconciled to it. I mean I accepted the idea thoroughly. It would be tying a woman to a log. But I don’t want to start feeling just yet—any kind of feeling. Even nice, mild, pitying friendship like yours stings. D’you understand?”

“I’m not mild and I’m not pitying,” said Stella, quietly. “And you don’t only shut me out; you shut out everybody. Why, you won’t even let yourself go over your old polar bears in the book!”

“I can’t afford to let myself go,” said Julian, “even to the extent of a polar bear—with you.”

"Just because I 'm a woman?" asked Stella, regretfully.

"If you like, you may put it that way," agreed Julian; "and as to the rest of the world, it 's very busy just at present fighting Germans. All the men I like are either dead or will be soon. What 's the use of getting 'em down here to look at a broken sign-post? I 'd rather keep to myself till I 've got going. I will get going again, and you 'll help me, if you 'll try to remember what I 've just told you."

"Oh, I shall *remember* it," replied Stella, hurriedly; "only I don't quite know what it is. Still, I dare say, if I think it over, I shall find out. At any rate, I 'm *very, very* glad you 'll let me help you. Of course I think you 're all wrong about the other men. You think too much of the outside of things. I dare say it 's better than thinking too little, as we do in our family. Besides, you have such a lovely house and live so tidily. Still, I think it 's a mistake. The men would n't see your crutches half as much as they 'd see *you*. The things that matter most are always behind what anybody sees. Even all this beauty is n't half as beautiful as what 's behind it—the spirit of the life that creates it, and brings it back again."

"And the ugliness," asked Julian, steadily,—“the ugliness we 've just been talking about over there, that long line of it cutting through France like a mortal wound, drawing the life-blood of Europe, —what 's behind that?"

"Don't you see?" she cried, leaning toward him eagerly. "Exactly the same thing—life! All this quietness that reproduces what it takes away, only always more beautifully. Don't you think, while we see here the passing of the great procession of spring, behind in the invisible, where their poured-out souls have rushed to, is a greater procession still, forming for us to join? That even the ugliness is only an awful way out into untouched beauty, like a winter storm that breaks the ground up for the seed to grow?" She continued to look at him eagerly.

"I can see that *you* see it," said Julian,

gently. "I can't see anything else just now. You 'd better cut along back to the house; you 'll be late for lunch. Tell my mother I 'm not coming—and—and try not to think I 'm horrid if I 'm not always friendly with you. I sha'n't be so unfriendly as I sound."

"I don't believe you know," said Stella, consideringly, "how very nice I always think you—"

"That," said Julian, "happens to be exactly one of the things you 'd better refrain from telling me. Good-by."

## CHAPTER XXII

It is always hard to return in the character of a captive to a scene in which you have played the part of victor, and Julian had told the truth to Stella when he said that what stung him most was his new relation to women. Men knew what he had done; many of them were facing the same odds. They had a common experience and a common language to fall back upon. They were his mates, but they did not come near enough to him to hurt him; they had no wish to understand or help his sufferings. It was sufficient for them to say, "Hard luck!" and leave that side of it alone. Women were different: he had pursued women.

Julian had a good average reputation. Very few women attracted him beyond a certain point; but all his experiences had been successes.

He had loved Marian with the best love his heart had known; but it had been the love of Marian as a creature to possess. It had not been an invasion of his personality. He would have given anything to possess Marian; he had not been for a moment possessed by her. It did not seem to Julian that a woman could ever do more than charm a man.

She could charm you, if you let her, to distraction; but if you had any strength, you remained intact. Nothing in you returned to meet her charm. You simply, not to put too fine a point upon it, took what you could get. Naturally, if you could no longer let a woman charm you,

she became, if she was n't merely a nuisance, a menace.

Julian acquiesced in Stella's remaining as his secretary only because he had a theory that she did not charm him. He could not make head or tail of her. He recognized that she had a mind, but it was a perplexing and unchallenging mind, a private enjoyment of her own. She never attempted to attract Julian by it. If he stirred her, she ran off like a poet or a bird upon her subject. She did not, as Julian supposed all women did, put Julian himself at the other end of her subject.

She had attractions: sympathy, wit, a charming, fugitive smile. She arranged them no better than she arranged her hair; and it was lamentable how she arranged her hair.

Julian could not have borne her constant presence if she had not effaced herself; his bitter self-consciousness would have been up in arms against an effective personality at his elbow. Nevertheless, he was obscurely annoyed that Stella made no attempt to impress him. She would sit there morning after morning without looking at him, without noticing him, without the lift of an eyelid to make him feel that he was anything to her but the supply of copy for his chapter. She was as inhuman and unpretentious as a piece of moss on a wall.

But her voice haunted him; he would catch snatches of her talk with Lady Verny in the garden. His mother had no scruple against intimacy with Stella, and Stella was not docile with Lady Verny; she was enchanting. She had a tantalizing voice full of music, with little gusts of mischief and revolt in it.

Julian told himself that he must put up with Stella for his mother's sake. Lady Verny did not make friends easily, and liked bookworms. He dismissed Stella as a bookworm. She had ways that, he told himself, were intensely annoying. She came punctually to her work,—probably the poor town clerk had taught her that much,—but she had no other punctualities. Bells, meals, the passage of time, had no landmarks for her. She seemed

to drift along the hours like a leaf upon a stream.

She was disorderly: she left things about; books face downward, scraps of paper, flowers. She was always saying that she had lost her fountain-pen. She did n't say this to Julian, but he heard her say it to Ostrog, whom she accused outrageously of having eaten it, to all the servants, and to his mother. None of them seemed to mind, not even Ostrog.

Ostrog's growls had ceased. He slept in Stella's presence, uneasily, with half a red eye upon her; but he slept.

After a few days he chose a position close to her feet and slept solidly, with snores; finally he took her out for walks. Julian approved of this, since she would go all over the place by herself, hatless, and looking like a tramp; it was as well she should be accompanied by Ostrog.

Ostrog had never before been known to go for walks with any one except Julian. He took plenty of exercise independently of human control in the direction of rabbits.

Stella was extremely wasteful with writing-paper. Over and over again Julian saw her throw half a sheet, white and untouched, into the waste-paper basket; and she cut string. It was curious how little Julian felt annoyed by these depredations, considering how much he wished to be annoyed. He was not by nature economical, but he lashed himself into imaginary rages with Stella, and told her that she must once for all turn over a new leaf. She was quite meek about it, and next time she lost her fountain-pen she went into the village and bought a new one which would n't write. She paid for it with her own money, and Julian wanted to box her ears. He subsequently found the other one on the rack where he kept his pipes.

For some time he believed that she was not provocative because she was negligible. She was one of those clever, neutral women who have n't the wit to be attractive.

Then one day it flashed across him that for all her mild agreement with his wishes,



“ONE OF ITS WINGS WAS BROKEN.”

her spirit never for one instant surrendered to him. It did not even think of escaping; it was free.

This startled Julian. He liked evasive women, but he had thought Stella extraordinarily the opposite. She was as frank as a boy. But was this frankness merely because she was dealing with what was non-essential to her? He tried to make her talk; he succeeded perfectly.

Stella would talk about anything he liked. She enjoyed talking. She made Julian enjoy it; and then he found that he had arrived nowhere. She gave him her talk, as she gave him her attention, exactly as she would have got up and handed him a book if he had asked for it. There was no more of herself in it than in the simplest of her services.

Julian was not sure when it was that he discovered that he had a new feeling about her, which was even more disconcerting than her independence; it was anxiety.

Perhaps it was during the extremely slow and tiresome week-end on which Stella paid a visit to her family. She

went without her umbrella,—not that it would have done much good if she had taken it, for Julian found, to his extreme vexation, that it was full of holes,—the weather was atrocious, and she came back with a cold.

It might have been gathered that no one at Amberley had ever had a cold before. As far as Julian was concerned nobody ever had.

Julian possessed a sane imagination, and generally treated the subject of health with a mixture of common sense and indifference. But this cold of Stella's!

It was no good Stella's saying it was a slight cold; he forced her to take a list of remedies suitable for severe bronchitis. He quarreled with his mother for saying that people had been known to recover from colds, and finally he sent for the doctor.

The doctor, being a wise man with a poor country practice, agreed with Julian that you could not be too careful about colds, and thought that priceless old port taken with her meals would not do Miss Waring any harm.



Stella disliked port very much, but she drank it submissively for a week.

"Nobody can call me fussy," Julian announced sternly, "but I will not have a neglected cold in the house."

He was not contradicted, though everybody knew that for weeks the cook and two housemaids had been sneezing about the passages.

It was a strange feeling, this sharp compulsion of fear. It taught Julian something. It taught him that what happened to Stella happened to himself. He no longer thought of pursuit in connection with her. He had found her at his heart.

It was an extremely awkward fact, but he accepted it. After all, he had crushed passions before which had gone against his code. He had iron self-control, and he thought it would be quite possible to stamp out this fancy before it got dangerous, even while he retained her presence.

He could n't remain friendly to her, but he could be civil enough. He tried this process. For nine days it worked splendidly. Of course Stella did n't like it, but it worked. She had too much sense to ask him what was the matter, but she looked wistful. On the tenth she cut her finger sharpening a pencil, and Julian called her "Darling." Fortunately she did n't hear him, and he managed to bandage her finger up without losing his head; but he knew that it had been an uncommonly near shave, and if she hurt herself again, he was n't at all sure how he would stand it.

Love flooded him like a rising tide; all his landmarks became submerged. He could not tell how far the tide would spread. He clung to Stella's faults with positive vindictiveness despite the fact that he had surprised himself smiling over them. He dared not let himself think about her qualities. The one support left to him was her own unconsciousness. He need n't tell her, and she would n't guess; and as long as she did n't know, he could keep her. If she did know, she would have to go away; even if she did n't want to go, as she most probably would, he would have to send her away. He became

as watchful of himself as he had been when his life depended on every word he said; but he could not help his eyes. When other people were there he did not look at Stella at all.

It was the first day Stella had been late for her work, and Julian had prepared to be extremely angry until he saw her face. She came slowly toward the open window out of the garden, looking oddly drawn and white. The pain in her eyes hurt Julian intolerably.

"Hullo!" he said quickly, "what's wrong?"

She did not answer at once; her hands trembled. She was holding a letter, face downward, as if she hated holding it.

"Your mother asked me to tell you myself," she began. "I am afraid to tell you; but she seemed to think you would rather—"

"Yes," said Julian, quickly. "Are you going away?"

"Oh, no," whispered Stella. "If it was only that!"

Julian said, "Ah!" It was an exclamation that sounded like relief. He leaned back in his chair, and did nothing further to help her.

Stella moved restlessly about the room. She had curious, graceful movements like a wild creature; she became awkward only when she knew she was expected to behave properly. Finally she paused, facing a bookcase, with her back to Julian.

"Well?" asked Julian, encouragingly. "Better get it over, had n't we? World come to pieces worse than usual this morning?"

"I don't know how to tell you," she said wretchedly. "For you perhaps it has—I have heard from Marian."

Julian picked up his pipe, which he had allowed to go out when Stella came in, relit it, and smiled at the back of her head. He looked extraordinarily amused and cheerful.

"She had n't written to me," Stella went on without turning round, "for ages and ages,—you remember I told you?—and now she has."

"She was always an uncertain cor-

respondent," said Julian, smoothly. "Am I to see this letter? Message for me, perhaps? Or does n't she know you 're here?"

"Oh, no!" cried Stella, quickly. "I mean there 's nothing in it you could n't see, of course. There is a kind of message; still, she did n't mean you actually to see it. She heard somehow that I was here, and she wanted me to tell you—" Stella's voice broke, but she picked herself up and went on, jerking out the cruel words that shook her to the heart,—“she wanted me to tell you that she 's—she 's going to be married.”

Stella heard a curious sound from Julian, incredibly like a chuckle. She flinched, and held herself away from him. He would not want her to see how he suffered. There was a long silence.

"Stella," said Julian at last in that singular, soft, new voice of his that he occasionally used when they were alone together, "the ravages of pain are now hidden. You can turn round."

She came back to him uncertainly, and sat down by the window at his feet. He had a tender, teasing look that she could not quite understand. His eyes themselves never wavered as they met hers, but the eagerness in them wavered; his tenderness seemed to hold it back.

She thought that Julian's eyes had grown curiously friendly lately. Despite his pain, they were very friendly now.

"Any details?" Julian asked. "Don't be afraid to tell me. I 'm not—I mean I 'm quite prepared for it."

"It 's to be next month," she said hurriedly. "She did n't want you to see it first in the papers."

"Awfully considerate of her, was n't it?" interrupted Julian. "By the by, tell her when you write that she could n't have chosen anybody better to break it to me than you."

"O Julian," Stella pleaded, "please don't laugh at me! Do if it makes you any easier, of course; only I—I mind so horribly!"

"Do you?" asked Julian, carefully. "I think I 'm rather glad you mind, but you

must n't mind horribly; only as much as a friend should mind for another friend."

"That is the way I mind," said Stella.

She had a large interpretation of friendship.

"Oh, all right," said Julian, rather crossly. "Go on!"

"She says it 's a Captain Edmund Stanley, and he 's a D.S.O. They 're to be married very quietly while he 's on leave."

"Lucky man!" said Julian. "Any money?"

"Oh, I think so," murmured Stella, anxiously skipping the letter in her lap. "She says he 's fairly well off."

"I think," observed Julian, "that we may take it that if Marian says Captain Stanley is fairly well off, his means need give us no anxiety. What?"

"Julian, must you talk like that?" Stella pleaded. "You 'll make it so hard for yourself if you 're bitter."

"On the whole, I think I must," replied Julian, reflectively. "If I talked differently, you might n't like it; and, anyhow, I dare n't run the risk. I might break down, you know, and you would n't like that, would you? Shall we get to work?"

"Oh, not this morning!" Stella cried. "I 'm going out; I knew you would n't want me."

"Did you, though?" asked Julian. "But I happen to want you most particularly. What are you going to do about it?"

She looked at him in surprise. He had a peculiarly teasing expression which did not seem appropriate to extreme grief.

"I 'll stay, of course, if you want me," she said quietly.

"You 're a very kind little elf," said Julian, "but I don't think you must make a precedent of my wanting you, or else—look here, d' you mind telling me a few things about your—your friendship with Marian?"

Stella's face cleared. She saw now why he wanted her to stay. She turned her eyes back to the garden.

"I 'll tell you anything you like to know," she answered.

"You liked her?" asked Julian.

"She was so different from everybody else in my world," Stella explained. "I don't think I judged her; I just admired her. She was awfully good to me. I did n't see her very often, but it was all the brightness of my life."

"Stella, you 've never told me about your life," Julian said irrelevantly. "Will you some day? I want to know about the town hall and that town clerk fellow."

"There is n't anything to tell you," said Stella. "I mean about that, and Marian was never in my life. She could n't have been, you know; but she was my special dream. I used to love to hear about all her experiences and her friends; and then—do you remember the night of Chaliapine's opera? It was the only opera I ever went to, so of course I remember; but perhaps you don't. You were there with Marian. I think I knew then—"

"Knew what?" asked Julian, leaning forward a little. "You seem awfully interested in that gravel path, Stella?"

"Knew," she said, without turning her head, "what you meant to her."

"Where were you?" Julian inquired. "Looking down from the ceiling or up from a hole in the ground, where the good people come from? I never saw you."

"Ah, you would n't," said Stella. "I was in the gallery. Do you remember the music?"

"Russian stuff," Julian said. "Pack of people going into a fire, yes. Funnily enough, I 've thought of it since, more than once, too; but I did n't know you were there."

"And then when you were hurt," Stella went on in a low voice, "Marian told me. Julian, she did mind *frightfully*. I always wanted you to know that she *did* mind."

"It altered her plans, did n't it," said Julian, "quite considerably?"

"You 've no business to talk like that!" said Stella, angrily. "It 's not fair—or kind."

"And does it matter to you whether I 'm fair or kind?" Julian asked, with deadly coolness.

"I beg your pardon," said Stella, quickly. "Of course it has nothing to do with me. I have no right to—to mind what you say."

"I 'm glad you recognized that," said Julian, quietly. "It facilitates our future intercourse. And you agreed with Marian that she only did her duty in painstakingly adhering to her given word? Perhaps you encouraged her to do it? The inspiration sounds quite like yours."

She looked at him now.

"Julian," she said, "am I all wrong? Would you rather that we were n't friends at all? You are speaking as if you hated me."

"No, I 'm not," he said quickly, "you little goose! How could I keep you here if I hated you? Have a little sense. No, don't put your hand there, because, if you do, I shall take it, and I 'm rather anxious just now not to. You shall go directly you 've answered me this. Did you agree with Marian's point of view about me? You know what it was, don't you? She did n't love me any more; she wished I had been killed, and she decided to stick to me. She thought I 'd be grateful. Do you think I ought to have been grateful?"

"You know I don't! You know I don't!" cried Stella. "But why do you make me say it? I simply hated it—hated her not seeing, not caring enough to see, not caring enough to make you see. There! Is that all you wanted me to say?"

"Practically," said Julian, "but I don't see why you should fly into a rage over it. In your case, then, if it had been your case, you would simply have broken off the engagement at once, like a sensible girl?"

"I can't imagine myself in such a situation," said Stella, getting up indignantly.

"Naturally," interposed Julian, smoothly. "But, still, if you had happened, by some dreadful mischance, to find yourself engaged to me—"

"I should have broken it off directly," said Stella, trying to go—"directly I found out—"

"Found out what?" asked Julian.

"That you were nothing but a cold-

blooded tease!" cried Stella over her shoulder.

"You perfect darling!" said Julian under his breath. "By Jove! that was a narrow squeak!"

### CHAPTER XXIII

IT puzzled Stella extremely that she found herself unable to say, "What is it that you want, Julian?" She knew that there was something that he wanted, and there was nothing that she would dream of denying him. What, therefore, could be simpler than asking him? And yet she did not want to ask him.

She began by trying hard to understand what it was that he had told her above the bluebell wood, because she thought that if she discovered what he wanted then, the rest would follow. He had wanted a particular kind of help from her; that was plain. It had something to do with her being a woman; that was plainer. But was it to his advantage or to his disadvantage that she was a woman? Ought she to suppress the fact or build on it? And how could she build on it or suppress it when she never felt in the least like anything else but a woman?

Cicely used to say that the only safe way with men was never to be nice to them; but Stella had always thought any risk was better than such a surly plan. Besides, Julian could n't mean that. He liked her to be nice to him. She saw that he quite plainly liked her to be nice to him.

Unfortunately, Julian had taken for granted in Stella a certain experience of life, and Stella had never had any such experience. She had never once recognized fancy in the eyes of any man. As for love, it belonged solely to her dreams; and the dreams of a woman of twenty-eight, unharassed by fact, are singularly unreliable. She thought of Mr. Travers, but he did not count. She had never been able to realize what he had felt for her. Her relation to him was as formal, despite his one singular lapse, as that of a passenger to a ticket-collector. She had nothing to go on but her dreams.

In her very early youth she had selected for heroes two or three characters from real life. They were Cardinal Newman, Shelley, and General Gordon. Later, on account of a difference in her religious opinions, she had replaced the cardinal by Charles Lamb. None of these characters was in the least like Julian.

One had apparently no experience of women, the other two had sisters, and Shelley's expression of love was vague and might be said to be misleading.

She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,  
That I beheld her not.

Life had unfortunately refused to meet Shelley on the same terms, and difficulties had ensued, but it was this impracticable side of him that Stella had accepted. She had skipped Harriet, and landed on "Epipsychidion." Love was to her "a green and golden immortality." She was not disturbed by it, because the deepest experiences of life do not disturb us. What disturbs us is that which calls us away from them.

It made it easier to wait to find out what Julian wanted that he was happier with her. He was hardly ever impersonal or cold now, and he sometimes made reasons to be with her that had nothing to do with their work.

It was June, and the daffodils had gone, but there were harebells and blue butterflies upon the downs, and in the hedges wild roses and Star of Bethlehem. Lady Verny spent all her time in the garden. She said the slugs alone took hours. They were supposed by the uninitiated to be slow, but express trains could hardly do more damage in less time. So Stella and Ostrog took their walks alone, and were frequently intercepted by Julian on their return.

Julian, who ought to have known better, thought that the situation might go on indefinitely, and Stella did not know that there was any situation; she knew only that she was in a new world. There was sorrow outside it, there was sorrow even in her heart for those outside it; but through all sorrow was this unswerving,



direct experience of joy. She would have liked to share it with Julian, but she thought it was all her own; and that what he liked about her—since he liked something—was her ability to live beyond the margin of her personal delight. The color of it was in her eyes, and the strength of it at her heart; but she never let it interfere with Julian. She was simply a companion with a hidden treasure. She sometimes thought that having it made her a better companion; but even of this she was not sure.

It made her a little nervous taking Ostrog out alone, but she always took the lead with him, and slipped it on him if a living creature appeared on the horizon. There were some living creatures he did n't mind, but you could n't be sure which.

One evening she was tired and forgot him. There was a wonderful sunset. She stood to watch it in a hollow of the downs where she was waiting for Julian. The soft, gray lines rose up on each side of her, immemorial, inalterable lines of gentle land. The air was as transparently clear as water, and hushed with evening. Far below her, where the small church steeple sprang, she saw the swallows cutting V-shaped figures to and fro above the shining elms.

For a long time she heard no sound, and then, out of the stillness, came a faint and hollow boom. Far away across the placid shapes of little hills, over the threatened seas, the guns sounded from France—the dim, intolerable ghosts of war.

Ostrog, impatient of her stillness, bounded to the edge of the hollow and challenged the strange murmur to the echo. He was answered immediately. A sheep-dog shot up over the curve of the down. Ostrog was at his throat in an instant.

There was a momentary recoil for a fresh onslaught, and then the shrieks of the preliminary tussle changed into the full-throated growl of combat. There was every prospect that one or other of them would be dead before their jaws unlocked.

Stella hovered above them in frantic uncertainty. She was helpless till she saw that there was no other help. The sheep-dog had had enough; a sudden scream of pain stung her into action. She seized Ostrog's hind leg and twisted it sharply from under him.

At the moment she did so she heard Julian's voice:

"Wait! For God's sake, let go!"

But she could not wait; the sheep-dog was having the life squeezed out of him. She tugged and twisted again. Ostrog's grip slackened, he flung a snap at her across his shoulder, and then, losing his balance, turned on her in a flash. She guarded her head, but his teeth struck at her shoulder. She felt herself thrust back by his weight, saw his red jaws open for a fresh spring, and then Julian's crutch descended sharply on Ostrog's head. Ostrog dropped like a stone, the bohtailed sheep-dog crawled safely away, and Stella found herself in Julian's arms.

"Dearest, sure you 're not hurt? Sure?" he implored breathlessly, and then she knew what his eyes asked her, they were so near her own and so intent; and while her lips said, "Sure, Julian," she knew her own eyes answered them.

He drew her close to his heart and kissed her again and again.

The idea of making any resistance to him never occurred to Stella. Nothing that Julian asked of her could seem strange. She only wondered, if that was what he wanted, why he had not done it before.

He put her away from him almost roughly.

"There," he said, "I swore I 'd never touch you! And I have! I 'm a brute and a blackguard. Try and believe I 'll never do it again. Promise you won't leave me? Promise you 'll forgive me? I was scared out of my wits, and that 's a fact. D' you think you can forgive me, Stella?"

"But what have I to forgive?" Stella asked. "I let you kiss me."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Julian, half laughing, "you are an honest woman!"



"SHE TUGGED AND TWISTED AGAIN"

Well, if you did, you must n't 'let me' again, that 's all! Ostrog, you wretch, lie down! You ought to have a sound thrashing. I 'd have shot you if you 'd hurt her; but as I 've rather scored over the transaction, I 'll let you off."

Stella looked at Julian thoughtfully.

"Why must n't I let you again?" she inquired, "if that is what you want?"

Julian, still laughing, but half vexed, looked at her.

"Look here," he said, "did n't I tell you you 'd got to help me? I can't very well keep you here and behave to you like that, can I?"

Stella considered for a moment, then she said quietly, "Were you flirting with me, Julian?"

"I wish to God I was!" said Julian, savagely. "If I could get out of it as easily as that, d' you suppose I should have been such a fool as not to have tried?"

"I don't think you would have liked me to despise you," said Stella, gently. "You see, if you had given me nothing when I was giving you all I had, I should have despised you."

Julian stared at her. She was obviously speaking the truth, but in his heart he knew that if she had loved him and he had flirted with her, he would have expected her to be the one to be despised.

He put out his hand to her and then drew it back sharply.

"No, I 'm hanged if I 'll touch you," he said under his breath. "I love you all right,—you need n't despise me for that,—but telling you of it 's different. I was deadly afraid you 'd see; any other woman would have seen. I 've held on to myself for all I was worth, but it has n't been the least good, really. I suppose I 've got to be honest about it: I can't keep you with me, darling; you 'll have to go. It makes it a million times worse your caring, but it makes it better, too."

"I don't see why it should be worse at all," said Stella, calmly. "If we both care, and care really, I don't see that anything can be even bad."

Julian pulled up pieces of the turf with his hand. He frowned at her sternly.

"You must n't tempt me," he said; "I told you once I can't marry."

"You told me once, when you did n't know I cared," agreed Stella. "I understand your feeling that about a woman who did n't care or who only cared a little, but not about a woman who really cares."

"But, my dear child," said Julian, "that 's what just makes it utterly impossible. I can't understand how I ever was such a selfish brute as to dream of taking Marian. I was ill at the time, and had n't sized it up; but if you think I 'm going to let *you* make such a sacrifice, you 're mistaken. I 'd see you dead before I married you!"

Stella's eyebrows lifted, but she did not seem impressed.

"I think," she said gently, "you talk far too much as if it had only got to do with you. Suppose I don't wish to see myself dead?"

"Well, you must try to see the sense of it," Julian urged. "You 're young and strong; you ought to have a life. I 'm sure you love children. You like to be with me, and all that; you 're the dearest companion a man ever had. It is n't easy, Stella, to say I won't keep you; don't make it any harder for me. I 've looked at this thing steadily for months. I don't mind owning that I thought you might get to care if I tried hard enough to make you; but, darling, I honestly did n't try. You can't say I was n't awfully disagreeable and cross. I knew I was done for long ago, but I thought you were all right. You were n't like a girl in love, you were so quiet and—and sisterly and all that. If I 'd once felt you were beginning to care in that way, I 'd have made some excuse; I would n't have let it come to this. I 'd rather die than hurt you."

"Well, but you need n't hurt me," said Stella, "and neither of us need die. It 's not your love that wants to get rid of me, Julian; it 's your pride. But I have n't any pride in that sense, and I 'm not going to let you do it."

"By Jove! you won't!" cried Julian. His eyes shot a gleam of amusement at her. It struck him that the still little figure by



his side was extraordinarily formidable. He had never thought her formidable before. He had thought her brilliant, intelligent, and enchanting, not formidable; but he had no intention of giving way to her. Formidable or not, he felt quite sure of himself. He could n't let her down.

"The sacrifice is all the other way," Stella went on. "You would be sacrificing me hopelessly to your pride if you refused to marry me simply because some one of all the things you want to give me you can't give me. Do you suppose I don't mind,—mind for you, I mean, hideously,—mind so much that if I were sure marrying you would make you feel the loss more, I'd go away from you this minute and never come near you again? But I do not think it will make it worse for you. You will have me; you will have my love and my companionship, and they are—valuable to you, are n't they, Julian?"

Julian's eyes softened and filled.

"Yes," he muttered, turning his head away from her; "they're valuable."

"Then," she said, "if you are like that to me, if I want you always, and never anybody else, have you a right to rob me of yourself, Julian?"

"If I could believe," he said, his voice shaking, "that you'd never be sorry, never say to yourself, 'Why did I do it?' But, oh, my dear, you know so little about the ordinary kind of love! You don't realize a bit, and I do. It must make it all so confoundingly hard for you, and I'm such an impatient chap. I might n't be able to help you. And you're right: I'm proud. If I once thought you cared less or regretted marrying me, it would clean put the finish on it. But you're not right about not loving you, Stella, that's worse than pride; loving you makes it impossible. I can't take the risk for you. I'll do any other thing you want, but not that!"

"Julian," said Stella in a low voice, "do you think I am a human being?"

"Well, no!" said Julian. "Since you ask me, more like a fairy or an elf or something. Why?"

"Because you're not treating me as if I

were," said Stella, steadily. "Human beings have a right to their own risks. They know their own minds, they share the dangers of love."

"Then one of 'em must n't take them all," said Julian, quickly.

"How could one take them all?" said Stella. "I have to risk your pride, and you have to risk my regret. As a matter of fact, your pride is more of a certainty than a risk, and my regret is a wholly imaginary idea, founded upon your ignorance of my character. Still, I'm willing to put it like that to please you. You have every right to sacrifice yourself to your own theories, but what about sacrificing me? I give you no such right."

For the first time Julian saw what loving Stella would be like; he would never be able to get to the end of it. Marriage would be only the beginning. She had given him her heart without an effort, and he found that she was as inaccessible as ever. His soul leaped toward this new, ungovernable citadel. He held himself in hand with a great effort.

"What you don't realize," he said, "is that our knowledge of life is not equal. If I take you at your word, you will make discoveries which it will be too late for you to act upon. You cannot wish me to do what is not fair to you."

"I want my life to be with you," said Stella. "Whatever discoveries I make, I shall not want them to be anywhere else. You do not understand, but if you send me away, you will take from me the future which we might have used together. You will not be giving me anything in its place but disappointment and utter uselessness. You'll make me morally a cripple. Do you still wish me to go away?"

Julian winced as if she had struck him.

"No, I'll marry you," he said; "but you've made me furiously angry. Please go home by yourself. I wonder you dare use such an illustration to me."

Stella slipped over the verge of the hollow. She, too, wondered how she had dared; but she knew that if she had n't dared, Julian would have sent her away.

(To be concluded)

## A Day of Rain

By DOROTHY LEONARD

ACROSS an ocean waste of busy days  
We sailed within a quiet bay of rain:  
Silent for once the factory's clattering drays;  
Strangely subdued the hid, occasional train.  
Silver the meadow shone, a silver bath,  
Bereft of all its dipping bobolinks;  
Prostrate upon the furrowed garden path  
Lay the disheveled larkspurs, poppies, pinks.  
Low on the hills the confidential clouds  
Rested their veils; and in an upper room,  
Unvisited, remote from friendly crowds  
That feed and rattle momentarily the loom  
Of life, we stitched all day in happy thrall.  
Precious the freight from this brief port of call!



## Whistle Fantasy

By MARGARET WIDDEMER

OUT in the dark the train passes,  
And the whistle calls to the child,  
Desolate, piercing, wild,  
From the track in the meadow-grasses.  
"Far, far away," it screams,  
"Far, far, away,  
Out in the distance are dreams—  
Dreams you shall follow some day  
Far through the endless wild;  
Distance, dreams."  
Backward the faint call streams;  
Far in the dark the train passes,  
And the whistle calls to the child.