

down from her casement, and her eyes drew up towards themselves the eyes of the Player. Then a rose from her bosom fell at his feet, and so began the beginning of the end. Wherefore it was surely needless that so fair a maid should claim to hear the notes supernal, and thereby stain her soul with falsehood and deceit; yet was her question to the Player only whether he could teach her to sing, as well as hear, their wondrous cadences. But at this he shook his head and smiled; yet the beauty of the maiden had shone so long and deeply through his eyes into his heart that it bore fruit in a new song of rare and exquisite melody. And afterwards he took in his the fair hand of the singer and spake sweet words to her. For were it not well, he said, that they should wed; they to whom alone supernal Love and Truth had been revealed? And because his face was fair and his voice was passing sweet, also the clasp of his hand was warm and tender, the heart of the singer clave to him with a great love, and she became his wife.

But the people loved her not; and the words that they spake of her pride and falsehood, of her hardness of heart and bitter contentiousness, and of the lovers she had allured by her beauty to die for her sweet sake, were sad to hear; aye, even her one only sister, said they, had perished by her neglect. But the Player knew well that the sweet soul of the cripple had passed away in an ecstasy of joy, like a moth in the fire of his melody; and for the rest, the singer looked into his with radiant, loving eyes, and it sufficed him. Yet the people would not be content therewith, but cast them forth from the city, both her and her husband; believing not that the notes supernal might be heard by such as she; and even of the Player whom they had loved, they said, "If a voice like hers be Love and Truth for him, he hath deceived us. Away with him!"

Then these two went forth and dwelt in a cave by the seashore; and the winds and waves chanted their bridal song. Also there sounded in the strong, sweet soul of the Player many a harmony till then unheard of man; and the ears of the singer were filled with the ocean melody; wherefore she leaned her fair head upon her husband's bosom, and his arm was round her waist, and both were well content.

Now, in course of time, a child came to the ocean cave. His hair was like the clouds of a golden morning, and his eyes as the blue of the summer sky; moreover, his young voice had the sweetness of the magic flute; and as he grew apace, he learned the music of the waves and the song of the sea-shells. Therefore the heart of the father was glad within him; but the mother was sad and would not be comforted.

Now, at eventide, the Player—his work all done—would have pleased both her and himself by the strains of his magic flute, and he would also have had her sing a melody well known to both, where to the notes supernal her sweet voice bore a wondrous harmony. But when the silence—ah! to him so full, but to her empty save for her own voice—when such silence came between them, the heart of the woman could bear no more, and, falling at his feet, she told him all.

And the heart of the Player grew dull and cold within him, his cheek grew pale, and his dark eyes dull and glassy; but because he had loved her, he said no word, only, with a touch of his hand on her fair hair, he left her alone; and the woman wept all the night. And on the morrow she said: "My husband, canst thou not forgive?" Whereunto he answered, kindly: "Yea, thou art forgiven!" and left her alone that day also. And it so befell for many days.

But because she loved him tenderly, the heart of the woman grew strong for very misery, and a set purpose grew within her. And even when he was absent, casting the nets or selling fish in the city for their subsistence, then through the magic flute would she breathe her fine, sweet breath, striving to sound the notes that she had feigned to hear, and would call upon the boy to listen.

Thus it came to pass that as the Player returned to the cave one golden eventide, he heard from the magic flute those notes of Love and Truth sounded till then by his own

lips alone on earth, and in the face of his laughing boy he read that to the child also the silence was alive with melody. Then into the eventide there stole a third note, faint, sweet, tender, the note he had longed to hear; and, clasping his wife in his arms, he cried out for her Pardon.

And the west was golden with the glory of the dying sun; the sea glowed with opalescent radiance; the child was in their arms, and in each heart true and pardoning Love.

And beyond was Peace.



## His Humble Ambition

By George I. Putnam

The little clerk from the book-store was very happy while his affair with the tall music-teacher was on, principally from the augmented sense of complacency with which every young fellow is afflicted when he discovers, single-handed, the Nicest Girl in the World, and reflects that no other fellow has ever equaled him in sagacious discernment. But when it came to an end that admitted of no happy sequel, he was most miserable; and no more so from the disappointment than from the sympathy of his fellow-lodgers, which excited itself in his behalf. It was shown in eloquent glances and wordless movings of the lips on the part of the ladies; while the gentlemen slapped him between his narrow shoulders, shouted, "Brace up, old man!" in a tone of encouragement for an army corps, and claimed to be equally with himself at the heart of his sorrow. In the houseful of his friends he was quite alone, for their ready condolences appeared to veil ironical smiles (it seemed that each of the gentlemen had been through the experience more or less thoroughly several times), and he was driven back upon himself by the very force of their effusions.

"I do wish they wouldn't!" he despaired in his room, pacing its three long strides up and down, and rumpling his flat brown hair with his soft fingers. Ah! but they would. And so he forsook these lodgings in which he had learned to love and to dream, and moved to others further down town, where he was quite unknown. There was a practical advantage in this: he was so near his place of employment that he could save on car-fare. But in the sad light of his cruel disappointment he had no longer any reason for saving nickels—or even dimes!—he told himself in one wild burst of desperation when extravagance seemed his only road to a reconciliation with fate; and the reflection came upon him as a last cruel buffet, causing him to draw a long, regretful sigh.

The October days that followed fed his melancholy. The ripeness of summer was gone, and in rural places Nature's auction-flag was out; but the trees in the square through which he walked to his retail counter of late books got rid of their summer goods at an abominable sacrifice, scarce advertising the sale. They were like prisoners in the environment of walls, their roots covered with stone and asphalt to prevent escape; they observed the changing seasons perfunctorily and without joy; and the fall winds crying over the naked twigs voiced their lament. The little clerk understood these sighs and sobs, and was grateful in his heart for the sympathy they expressed. It was as his own voice wailing to him from afar; and he heard in it no promise of a future spring.

He came from the west through the square on a morning when early fall was laying a chill finger on the world. The elms had been among the first to give up the fight for summer's retention, and were strewing their brown, crumpled leaves thickly upon the asphalt. Men were sweeping them with rattan brooms into little heaps, and the dark water in the gutters was banked by them into cold, repellent pools. Green creeping vines were faded in places, and were taking on, in a subdued, listless way, the tint of the bricks they had striven to hide. Before him rose a white marble arch—local monument of a national pride; he saw it outlined through the baring branches. Away to his right, on the south of the square, a bright red cart

jigged merrily along a sunlit street, giving a welcome dash of color. In the shade men walked with brisk feet; where the sun broke through they stopped to buy a paper, or intentionally loitered; and on benches blessed by the sun they sat—swarthy men, undersized, with hollow cheeks, strange beards, and sharply suspicious eyes, reading the news of the day in local French and Italian papers. They were strangers, expatriated. The little clerk felt drawn to them; he would have been glad to gain their confidence, to conquer the distrustful glance with which they regarded him and all passers who were native. He was full of sympathy for them. Had they not known disappointment in their lands beyond the sea? experienced reverses that caused them to seek in exile the only balm? He reasoned thus in simple goodness of heart. He judged only by outward appearance, although in his deep sense of personal sorrow and bereavement he thought he penetrated to the very springs of action. Suppose, thought he, that he had taken his disappointed heart to France or Italy; would he not have blessed one who found a kindly interest in him there without seeking to know too much of his past? He had not cared so much for the world, in the days of his joy; but now that sorrow was come upon him, all men were his brothers. He thought that many might have failed of joy; but sorrow, he perceived, was the lot of all. He did not regard himself as permanently blighted—his happiness was simply passing through an eclipse; but he did not like to be reminded by others of the darkness, did not wish to dwell upon it to them. These people on the benches, lonely in the face of his ready friendship, their unaccustomed air often accented by garments of a foreign make, seemed to be like him in this; and he was sure that he could have sat by one of them and have been friends from the start, because of this similarity.

He was not always in this mood. When he was with the other clerks in the store—fellows who knew nothing of the music-teacher—he was as jolly as they, and laughed readily at their wit. Sometimes he would even venture on a joke himself, though often with no success. His fellows in the store were inclined to patronize him, and thought he was a little “soft.” Before them he was ashamed of his emotions, and tried to assume the Broadway ease of swagger that characterized them; but he had to force himself to it. The pleasures upon which they dilated in whispers when the chief was momentarily absent, seemed to him doubtful despite his effort to believe in them. He never spoke of his fancies about the people in the square; he would have expected to be laughed at.

He passed slowly through the square—he always allowed himself time for this—glancing mildly right and left at the people on the benches. For the greater part they were meanly garbed, and their hands were not pretty; they were workers. He knew the object of their work—happiness; he himself approximated to happiness when at work. He thought less about the pain in his heart then.

He reached the fountain in the center of the square and paused idly, looking at the plants that grew in the basin. They clustered about numbered stakes that referred the inquiring mind to a board whereon the names of the plants could be found, and he walked round the fountain till he came to it—a board taller than himself, covered with names longer than his own. *Nymphaea alba candidissima* was at the head of the list. He could make nothing of it; what could it be to these people around him, who lacked the literary training afforded him by his position in the book-store? *Nymphaea Martiacea chromatella*, *Nymphaea rubra*—a woman who had been standing near moved away, her curiosity satisfied. She had not seen the board, only the tall shrubs in the border. A broad-hipped, sloping-shouldered Italian mother, she awoke from a day-dream of a sunny land, where autumn brings no vain regrets as a condition of its being, and began to call a child she could no longer see. *Lymnocharis Humboldtii*, *Cyperus papyrus*—a chubby olive face was protruded cautiously from behind the board, on the line with his reading, and two beady black eyes snapped at him in infantile enjoyment of the mother’s discomfiture. She was crying for the child by the opposite rim of the

fountain, and he was concealed from her by the spreading bushes.

The appearance of the head, thrust out by inches, had given the little clerk a start; but after that he enjoyed being taken into confidence and made a party to the maternal anxiety. He even liked it because it added to his sense of regretful retrospect. Children, and especially little children, had now this power over him—that the sight of them introduced an element of complication into his brooding over the What Might Have Been. This child, he saw, was dark indeed, with black eyes; and it was with resentful embarrassment that he remembered that the Nicest Girl in the World was also dark, and that her black eyes had in their depths as much innocent tenderness as any babe’s.

The head was thrust out and drawn back a half-dozen times. The eyes blinked with delightful solemnity in his direction. Half in reproach, half in playfulness, the little clerk raised a finger and enchained the child’s attention; and then the mother, swooping around the circle, came upon him unawares.

What she said the little clerk never knew, but he was astounded at her volubility. His acquaintance had never been extended to include people with emotional tongues. She spoke with a vigor that strained even the flexible Italian expressions, imploring the child by every hope of joy, every fear of pain, to come forth before the policeman should discover it on the forbidden ground. There was yet time, for the policeman’s back was turned, and hot peanuts were in his immediate front. She cajoled, she threatened, she promised, and all in vain. The child was pleased to find himself in the midst of vines and bushes; and, perceiving that the mother dared not follow, he scrambled to his feet and backed away from her, starting on a tour of exploration.

“I—I—sha’n’t I get it for you—that baby?” stammered the little clerk, seeing the futility of the mother’s endeavor. It was like him to offer his services hastily, and afterwards to cut a pitifully ridiculous figure in well-meant attempts at assistance. He had no plan for capture; he did not think of trespassing on that soil which it was the policeman’s duty to protect from profanation of foot. He made his offer from a vague general desire to be helpful to any he saw in trouble. She seemed not to have heard him—his voice and manner were quiet and ladylike—and she would not have understood his words, although she might have divined his motive. She threw herself upon the granite coping and made a desperate grasp at the child. He, gurgling at his success in escape, stumbled back over a tenacious creeping vine, and fell into the water of the basin.

The scream of the mother rent heaven, and even diverted the attention of the policeman from the peanuts. But the little clerk, quite forgetful, in his excitement, of the legal dangers he incurred, sprang into the shrubbery, dropped upon the delved soil, lay forward, and, reaching into the basin with one arm, lifted the unfortunate child out and restored him to his mother.

“Here’s your baby—the water was cold, do you know? You’d better change its clothes quickly,” he said, in his small, even tones. He extended the child at arm’s length toward the mother, and cast a disapproving glance over his own soiled raiment. “I can never go to the store like this,” he thought. The policeman came up, but he said nothing of arrest. He even nodded his helmet at the little clerk with evident approval.

“You done noble, young feller,” said he, hoarsely. “That was first-rate. I wouldn’t have thought it of you, seeing you go by every day.”

“But what else could I have done?” asked the little clerk, finely, in honest surprise.

The policeman eyed him narrowly, fearful of being made a butt.

“Well, nothing else, *you* couldn’t, I guess,” he said at length.

The mother fawned upon him extravagantly. She would have embraced him had he not fended her off. And when he finally escaped her bodily presence, she followed him



with loudly fervent protestations of her gratitude. He could not get her literal meaning, but the circumstances enabled him to make a free translation; and he knew that he had overstepped his confining bounds and made an entry into the heart of one of these timid-seeming, sad-faced people. More: he had demonstrated that between heart and heart there is neither national nor linguistic frontier. And he was glad.

He hurried back to his room and made a hasty change of attire, and walked to the store as fast as he could. But he was not in season to avoid the displeasure of the chief.

"You are late this morning," said he, sharply.

"It was an accident—" the little clerk began, apologetically, quite ready to clear himself with an explanation.

"*Accident!*" sneered the chief, interrupting; and he added, significantly, "That sort of accident don't happen more than once."

The little clerk turned to his counter. His fellow-clerks smiled unpleasantly at the reproof. As he saw this he threw up his head, as though he would reply to the chief at length—then walked away meekly.

"No, sir," said he, simply.



## Justus

By Arthur Chamberlain

Justus the scribe, whom knowledge cannot sate,  
Yet lacking still in deeper wisdom, sends  
This scroll to Phavey, learned in the Law,  
Wishing him health and joys and large increase.

The camels have been purchased; mighty bales  
Are heaped within the storehouse; all things move  
As we have purposed—nothing lacks save tents;  
Once those are ready, speedily we meet  
To fare forth, in the gladness of the spring,  
Across the desert with our caravan.  
Oh, joy! to leave behind these dusty scrolls,  
And feel the free air blowing in the face!

I said the tents are lacking:—a strange thing  
Befell me when I hunted up the man,  
The maker of those tents—ah, pardon me  
A long digression. You may yet recall  
That Teacher (crucified, I think, since then;  
So runs the rumor) whom I tried to pose,  
But fared but second-best with; whom I asked,  
"Who is my neighbor?" and was told a tale  
That left no choice of answer saving, "He  
Who showed the mercy"—all unwilling, I,  
Compelled to own a good Samaritan  
And leave both priest and Levite self-condemned.  
Far worse, compelled to take the outcast's deed  
To be my own example: thou dost know  
We questioned what this teaching might portend.

Aye, here comes in the maker of our tents!  
I found him, short in stature, wizened up,  
Low bent above his needle. Hastily  
I flung a rough speech at him: "Come! The tents?  
How long am I to wait thy pleasure, pray?"

He raised his face; there was no look of fear.  
No, nor of anger: peaceful as a man  
Who hears the call that bids him cease from work  
And turn him to our holy Sabbath rest,  
He answered: "Brother, 'tis not long to wait.  
My work, be it my pleasure or my pain,  
Shall end in God's good time; 'tis time enough."  
"Brother"! I see your smile, its tolerance  
At such presumption mingling with its scorn.  
Yet—I will bide your jest—those calm, deep eyes  
Fixed upon mine; that steady, gracious voice—  
It was as if some great and mighty lord  
Had hailed me, "Brother!"—raised me, by that word,

To his high state and royal dignity.  
I felt abashed and honored. You will smile  
At my confession; I have been at pains  
To learn what moved this man to answer thus.  
It seems—you will not credit it—he saw  
Something; he heard, yet scarcely may express—  
A tangle truly! Yet, when sifted out,  
It comes to this: that Teacher whom we met  
Appeared to him, though crucified and dead;  
Yet living, so this man avers; and he,  
One Saul (though now called Paul), a Pharisee  
Zealous for our religion, beating down  
The handful who were walking in the Way—  
So calleth he that Teacher's doctrine—turned  
To walk that Way with them; and all his lore  
(For he is deeply learned in our Law)  
He counts mere chaff and emptiness; proclaims  
An universal message that completes  
The sacred Law of Moses which we hold,  
Aye, and the teaching of the Prophets, too.  
This Way is one in which all men may walk,  
No secret doctrine for a hidden shrine,  
No weighing of the letter—grave disputes  
As to the proper breathing of the God;  
No subtleties, praised in the Academe;  
Simple, and yet audacious past all guess:  
One God, and all mankind his children—sons  
(So Paul affirms) of one great Fatherhood,  
And brothers, therefore, in one brotherhood;  
This is the Way that Teacher did reveal—  
The Christ (so Paul declares) who came to us  
Coming to all men—Greek, barbarian, Jew—  
Proclaiming, not a new theocracy  
Administered by priest and Levite—Rome  
Meanwhile o'erthrown, Jerusalem upraised  
To be the Holy City of the world—  
No worship of the Temple; but its shrine,  
Holy of Holies, in the hearts of men;  
One kingdom of one family divine  
Walking the Way in which the Christ hath walked,  
Himself the perfect Son, Lord, Leader, Friend,  
Great Elder Brother of humanity,  
Living in perfect love to God and man,  
Dying that man might know that perfect love  
And find at once its power and its peace.

Strange doctrine! And its issue, who can tell?  
The common people throng to hear him preach.  
"We, friend, are wiser," do I hear you say?  
Oh, I admit it: Cæsar wears the crown;  
No king but Cæsar! That's a loyal cry.  
Why, were this teaching followed to its end  
In very deed, 'twould topple Cæsar down,  
Discredit rank, o'erthrow authority,  
Make riches vanity, and leave to man  
Naught save his naked manhood: 'tis a dream,  
A not ignoble dream, but still—a dream.  
What this world is, we know; what it has been  
So 'twill remain: the dream will fade and pass.

Yet—so fantastic have I grown of late—  
What if, when our long line of camels sways  
Across the desert under those first stars  
That twinkle in the cool of evening's sky,  
We were to abdicate, as Paul has done,  
Put off our state, count all our learning null,  
Call camel-drivers brothers, share their toil,  
Munch their dry dates, break bread with them, and drink  
Not wine, but water from the common store?  
Methinks we might draw closer each to each,  
Thrill with a larger life, speak heart to heart,  
And in this wider sympathy with men  
Gain deeper knowledge of Jehovah—God  
(So this new Way affirms) of all mankind!  
What say you? Shall we put it to the test  
In our long marches o'er the wilderness,  
With the blue sky above us, the glad earth  
Beneath us, and the free wind in the face?