

tracted or repelled in such a presence, no one could come away without an impression that he had met a man of strong character and personal force, whether he realized any individual preconception of the poet, the artist, and the craftsman, or not.

He was certainly all these, yet those who only knew him through his works would have but a partial and incomplete idea of his many-sided nature, his practi-

cality, personal force, sense of humor,* and all those side-lights which personal acquaintance throws upon the character of a man like William Morris.

* It is noteworthy that one who excluded humor from his own work, whether literary or artistic, had a keen appreciation of it in the work of others. Few who only knew Morris through his poems, romances, and designs would imagine that among his most favorite books were "Huckleberry Finn," by Mark Twain, and "Uncle Remus." I have often heard him recall passages of the former with immense enjoyment of the fun. He was, besides, always an admirer of Dickens.

THE STORY OF A PLAY

BY W. D. HOWELLS

XIV

DURING the week that passed before Maxwell heard from the manager concerning his play, he did another letter for the *Abstract*, and, with a journalistic acquaintance enlarged through certain Boston men who had found places on New York papers, familiarized himself with New York ways and means of getting news. He visited what is called the Coast, a series of points where the latest intelligence grows in hotel bars and lobbies of a favorable exposure, and is nurtured by clerks and bar-keepers skilled in its culture, and by inveterate gossips of their acquaintance; but he found this sort of stuff generally telegraphed on by the Associated Press before he reached it, and he preferred to make his letter a lively comment on events, rather than a report of them. The editor of the *Abstract* seemed to prefer this, too. He wrote Maxwell some excellent criticism, and invited him to appeal to the better rather than the worse curiosity of his readers, to remember that this was the principle of the *Abstract* in its home conduct. Maxwell showed the letter to his wife, and she approved of it all so heartily that she would have liked to answer it herself. "Of course, Brice," she said, "it's *you* he wants, more than your news. Any wretched reporter could give him that, but you are the one man in the world who can give him your mind about it."

"Why not say universe?" returned Maxwell, but though he mocked her he was glad to believe she was right, and he was proud of her faith in him.

In another way this was put to proof more than once during the week, for Louise seemed fated to meet Mrs. Harley on the common stairs now when she went out or came in. It was very strange that after living with her a whole month in the house and not seeing her, she should now be seeing her so much. Mostly she was alone, but sometimes she was with an elderly woman, whom Louise decided at one time to be her mother, and at another to be a professional companion. The first time she met them together she was sure that Mrs. Harley indicated her to the chaperon, and that she remembered her from Magnolia, but she never looked at Louise, any more than Louise looked at her, after that.

She wondered if Maxwell ever met her, but she was ashamed to ask him, and he did not mention her. Only once when they were together did they happen to encounter her, and then he said, quite simply, "I think she's certainly an actress. That public look of the eyes is unmistakable. Emotional parts, I should say."

Louise forced herself to suggest, "You might get her to let you do a play for her."

"I doubt if I could do anything unwholesome enough for her."

At last the summons they were expecting from Grayson came, just after they had made up their minds to wait another week for it.

Louise had taken the letter from the maid, and she handed it to Maxwell with a gasp at sight of the Argosy Theatre address printed in the corner of the envelope. "I know it's a refusal."

"If you think that will make it an acceptance," he had the hardihood to answer, "it won't. I've tried that sort of thing too often," and he tore open the letter.

It was neither a refusal nor an acceptance, and their hopes soared again, hers visibly, his secretly, to find it a friendly confession that the manager had not found time to read the play until the night before, and a request that Maxwell would drop in any day between twelve and one, which was rather a leisure time with him, and talk it over.

"Don't lose an instant, dear!" she adjured him.

"It's only nine o'clock," he answered, "and I shall have to lose several instants."

"That is so," she lamented; and then they began to canvass the probable intention of the manager's note. She held out passionately to the end for the most encouraging interpretation of it, but she did not feel that it would have any malign effect upon the fact for him to say, "Oh, it's just a way of letting me down easy," and it clearly gave him great heart to say so.

When he went off to meet his fate, she watched him, trembling, from the window; as she saw him mounting the elevated steps, she wondered at his courage; she had given him all her own.

The manager met him with "Ah, I'm glad you came soon. These things fade out of one's mind so, and I really want to talk about your play. I've been very much interested in it."

Maxwell could only bow his head, and murmur something about being very glad, very, very glad, with a stupid iteration.

"I suppose you know, as well as I do, that it's two plays, and that it's only half as good as if it were one."

The manager wheeled around from his table, and looked keenly at the author, who contrived to say, "I think I know what you mean."

"You've got the making of the prettiest kind of little comedy in it, and you've got the making of a very strong tragedy. But I don't think your oil and water mix, exactly," said Grayson.

"You think the interest of the love-business will detract from the interest of the homicide's fate?"

"And vice versa. Excuse me for asking something that I can very well understand your not wanting to tell till I had read your play. Isn't this the piece Godolphin has been trying out West?"

"Yes, it is," said Maxwell. "I thought it might prejudice you against it, if——"

"Oh, that's all right. Why have you taken it from him?"

Maxwell felt that he could make up for his want of earlier frankness now. "I didn't take it from him; he gave it back to me."

He sketched the history of his relation to the actor, and the manager said, with smiling relish, "Just like him, just like Godolphin." Then he added, "Well, now I'll tell you, and you mustn't take it amiss. Godolphin may not know just why he gave the piece up, and he probably thinks it's something altogether different, but you may depend upon it the trouble was your trying to ride two horses in it. Didn't you feel that it was a mistake yourself?"

"I felt it so strongly at one time that I decided to develop the love-business into a play by itself and let the other go for some other time. My wife and I talked it over very fully. We even discussed it with Godolphin. He wanted to do Atland. But we all backed out simultaneously, and went back to the play as it stood."

"Godolphin saw he couldn't make enough of Atland," said the manager, as if he were saying it to himself. "Well, you may be sure he feels now that the character which most appeals to the public in the play is Salome."

"He felt that before."

"And he was right. Now, I will tell you what you have got to do. You have either got to separate the love-business from the rest of the play and develop it into a comedy by itself——"

"That would mean a great deal of work, and I am rather sick of the whole thing."

"Or," the manager went on without minding Maxwell, "you have got to cut

the part of Salome, and subordinate it entirely to Haxard"—Maxwell made a movement of impatience and refusal, and the manager finished—"or else you have got to treat it frankly as the leading part in the piece, and get it into the hands of some leading actress."

"Do you mean," the author asked, "that you—or any manager—would take it if that were done?"

Grayson looked a little unhappy. "No, that isn't what I mean, exactly. I mean that as it stands, no manager would risk it, and that as soon as an actor had read it, he would see, as Godolphin must have seen from the start, that Haxard was a subordinate part. What you want to do is to get it in the hands of some woman who wants to star, and would take the road with it." The manager expatiated at some length on the point, and then he stopped, and sat silent, as if he had done with the subject.

Maxwell perceived that the time had come for him to get up and go away.

"I'm greatly obliged to you for all your kindness, Mr. Grayson, and I won't abuse your patience any further. You've been awfully good to me, and—" He faltered, in a dejection which he could not control. Against all reason, he had hoped that the manager would have taken his piece just as it stood, and apparently he would not have taken it in any event.

"You mustn't speak of that," said the manager. "I wish you would let me see anything else you do. There's a great deal that's good in this piece, and I believe that a woman who would make it her battle-horse could make it go."

Maxwell asked, with melancholy scorn, "But you don't happen to know any leading lady who is looking round for a battle-horse?"

The manager seemed trying to think. "Yes, I do. You wouldn't like her altogether, and I don't say she would be the ideal Salome, but she would be, in her way, effective; and I know that she wants very much to get a play. She hasn't been doing anything for a year or two but getting married and divorced, but she made a very good start. She used to call herself Yolande Havisham; I don't suppose it was her name; and she had a good deal of success in the West; I don't think she's

ever appeared in New York. I believe she was of quite a good Southern family; the Southerners all are; and I hear she has money."

"Godolphin mentioned a Southern girl for the part," said Maxwell. "I wonder if——"

"Very likely it's the same one. She does emotional leads. She and Godolphin played together in California, I believe. I was trying to think of her married name—or her unmarried name——"

Some one knocked at the door, and the young man put his head in, with what Maxwell fancied a preconcerted effect, and gave the manager a card. He said, "All right; bring him round," and he added to Maxwell, "Shall I send your play——"

"No, no, I will take it," and Maxwell carried it away with a heavier heart than he had even when he got it back from Godolphin. He did not know how to begin again, and he had to go home and take counsel with his wife as to the next step.

He could hardly bear to tell her of his disappointment, and it was harder still to tell her of the kind of hope the manager had held out to him. He revolved a compromise in his mind, and when they sat down together, he did not mean to conceal anything, but only to postpone something; he did not clearly know why. He told her the three alternatives with the play which the manager had suggested, and she agreed with him that they were all impossible.

"Besides," she said, "he doesn't promise to take the play, even if you do everything to a 't.' Did he ask you to lunch again?"

"No, that seemed a thing of the past."

"Well, let us have ours, and then we can go into the Park, and forget all about it for awhile, and perhaps something new will suggest itself."

That was what they did, but nothing new suggested itself. They came home fretted with their futile talk. There seemed nothing for Maxwell to do but to begin the next day with some other manager.

They found a note from Grayson waiting Maxwell. "Well, you open it," he said listlessly to his wife, and in fact he felt himself at that moment physically unable to cope with the task, and he dreaded any fluctuation of emotion that would follow, even if it were a joyous one.

"What does this mean, Brice?" demanded his wife, with a terrible provisionality in her tone, as she stretched out the letter to him, and stood before him where he lounged in the cushioned window-seat.

Grayson had written: "If you care to submit your play to Yolande Havisham, you can easily do so. I find that her address is the same as yours. Her name is Harley. But I was mistaken about the divorce. It was a death."

Maxwell lay stupidly holding the note before him.

"Will you tell me what it means?" his wife repeated. "Or why you didn't tell me before, if you meant to give your play to that creature?"

"I don't mean to give it to her," said Maxwell, doggedly. "I never did, for an instant. As for not telling you that Grayson had suggested it—well, perhaps I wished to spare myself a scene like the present."

"Do you think I will believe you?"

"I don't think you will insult me. Why shouldn't you believe I am telling you the truth?"

"Because —because you didn't tell me at once."

"That is nonsense, and you know it. If I wanted to keep this from you, it was to spare you the annoyance I can't help now, and because the thing was settled in my mind as soon as Grayson proposed it."

"Then, why has he written to you about it?"

"I suppose I didn't say it was settled."

"Suppose? Didn't you *know* whether you did?"

"Come, now, Louise! I am not on the witness-stand, and I won't be cross-questioned. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What is the matter with you? Am I to blame because a man who doesn't imagine your dislike of a woman that you never spoke to suggests her taking part in a play that she probably wouldn't look at? You're preposterous! Try to have a little common sense!" These appeals seemed to have a certain effect with his wife; she looked daunted; but Maxwell had the misfortune to add, "One would think you were jealous of the woman."

"*Now* you are insulting *me*!" she cried.

"But it's a part of the vulgarity of the

whole business. Actors, authors, managers, you're all alike."

Maxwell got very pale. "Look out, Louise!" he warned her.

"I *won't* look out. If you had any delicacy, the least delicacy in the world, you could imagine how a woman who had given the most sacred feelings of her nature to you for your selfish art, would loathe to be represented by such a creature as that, and still not be jealous of her, as you call it! But I am justly punished! I might have expected it."

The maid appeared at the door and said something, which neither of them could make out at once, but which proved to be the question whether Mrs. Maxwell had ordered the dinner.

"No, I will go—I was just going out for it," said Louise. She had in fact not taken off her hat or gloves since she came in from her walk, and she now turned and swept out of the room without looking at her husband. He longed to detain her, to speak some kindly or clarifying word, to set himself right with her, to set her right with herself; but the rage was so hot in his heart that he could not. She came back to the door a moment, and looked in. "I will do *my* duty."

"It's rather late," he sneered, "but if you're very conscientious, I dare say we shall have dinner at the usual time."

He did not leave the window-seat, and it was as if the door had only just clashed to after her when there came a repeated and violent ringing at the bell, so that he jumped up himself, to answer it, without waiting for the maid.

"Your wife—your wife!" panted the bell-boy, who stood there. "She's hurt herself, and she's fainted."

"My wife? Where—how?" He ran down the stairs after the boy, and in the hallway on the ground floor he found Louise stretched upon the marble pavement, with her head in the lap of a woman, who was chafing her hands. He needed no look at this woman's face to be sure that it was the woman of his wife's abhorrence, and he felt quite as sure that it was the actress, Yolande Havisham, from the effective drama of her self-possession.

"Don't be frightened. Your wife turned her foot on the steps, here. I was coming into the house, and caught her from fall-

ing. It's only a swoon." She spoke with the pseudo-English accent of the stage, but with a Southern slip upon the vowels here and there. "Get some water, please."

The hall-boy came running up the back stairs with some that he had gone to get, and the woman bade Maxwell sprinkle his wife's face. But he said: "No—you," and he stooped and took his wife's head into his own hands, so that she might not come to in the lap of Mrs. Harley; in the midst of his dismay he reflected how much she would hate that. He could hardly keep himself from being repellant and resentful toward the woman. In his remorse for quarrelling with Louise, it was the least reparation he could offer her. Mrs. Harley, if it was she, seemed not to notice his rudeness. She sprinkled Louise's face, and wiped her forehead with the handkerchief she dipped in the water; but this did not bring her out of her faint, and Maxwell began to think she was dead, and to feel that he was a murderer. With a strange, æsthetic vigilance he took note of his sensations for use in revising Haxard.

The janitor of the building had somehow arrived, and Mrs. Harley said: "I will go for a doctor, if you can get her up to your apartment;" and she left Louise with the two men.

The janitor, a burly Irishman, lifted her in his arms, and carried her up the three flights of steps; Maxwell followed, haggardly, helplessly.

On her own bed, Louise revived, and said: "My shoe—Oh, get it off!"

The doctor came a few minutes later, but Mrs. Harley did not appear with him, as Maxwell had dreaded she would. He decided that Mrs. Maxwell had strained, not sprained, her ankle, and he explained how the difference was all the difference in the world, as he bound the ankle up with a long ribbon of india-rubber, and issued directions for care and quiet.

He left them there, and Maxwell heard him below in parley, apparently with the actress at her door. Louise lay with her head on her husband's arm, and held his other hand tight in hers, while he knelt by the bed. The bliss of repentance and mutual forgiveness filled both their hearts, while she told how she had hurt herself.

"I had got down to the last step, and I was putting my foot to the pavement, and

I thought, Now I am going to turn my ankle. Wasn't it strange? And I turned it. How did you get me upstairs?"

"The janitor carried you."

"How lucky he happened to be there! I suppose the hall-boy kept me from falling—poor little fellow! You must give him some money. How did you find out about me?"

"He ran up to tell," Maxwell said this, and then he hesitated. "I guess you had better know all about it. Can you bear something disagreeable, or would you rather wait——"

"No, no, tell me now! I can't bear to wait. What is it?"

"It wasn't the hall-boy that caught you. It was that—woman."

He felt her neck and hand grow rigid, but he went on, and told her all about it. At the end, some quiet tears came into her eyes. "Well, then, we must be civil to her. I am glad you told me at once, Brice." She pulled his head down and kissed him, and he was glad, too.

XV

LOUISE sent Maxwell down to Mrs. Harley's apartment to thank her, and tell her how slight the accident was; and while he was gone, she abandoned herself to an impassioned dramatization of her own death from blood-poisoning, and her husband's early marriage with the actress, who then appeared in all his plays, though they were not happy together. Her own spectre was always rising between them, and she got some fearful joy out of that. She counted his absence by her heart-beats, but he came back so soon that she was ashamed, and was afraid that he had behaved so as to give the woman a notion that he was not suffered to stay longer. He explained that he found her gloved and bonneted to go out, and that he had not stayed for fear of keeping her. She had introduced him to her mother, who was civil about Louise's accident, and they had both begged him to let them do anything they could for her. He made his observations, and, when Louise, after a moment, asked him about them, he said they affected him as severally typifying the Old South and the New South. They had a photograph over the

mantel, thrown up large, of an officer in Confederate uniform. Otherwise the room had nothing personal in it; he suspected the apartment of having been taken furnished, like their own. Louise asked if he should say they were ladies, and he answered that he thought they were.

"Of course," she said, and she added, with a wide sweep of censure: "They get engaged to four or five men at a time, down there. Well," she sighed, "you mustn't stay in here with me, dear. Go to your writing."

"I was thinking whether you couldn't come out and lie on the lounge. I hate to leave you alone in here."

"No, the doctor said to be perfectly quiet. Perhaps I can, to-morrow, if it doesn't swell up any worse."

She kept her hold of his hand, which he had laid in hers, and he sat down beside the bed, in the chair he had left there. He did not speak, and after awhile she asked, "What are you thinking of?"

"Oh, nothing. The confounded play, I suppose."

"You're disappointed at Grayson's not taking it."

"One is always a fool."

"Yes," said Louise, with a catching of the breath. She gripped his hand hard, and said, as well as she could in keeping back the tears, "Well, I will never stand in your way, Brice. You may do anything—*anything*—with it that you think best."

"I shall never do anything you don't like," he answered, and he leaned over and kissed her, and at this her passion burst in a violent sobbing, and when she could speak she made him solemnly promise that he would not regard her in the least, but would do whatever was wisest and best with the play, for otherwise she should never be happy again.

As she could not come out to join him at dinner, he brought a little table to the bedside, and put his plate on it, and ate his dinner, there, with her. She gave him some attractive morsels off her own plate, which he had first insisted on bestowing upon her. They had such a gay evening that the future brightened again, and they arranged for Maxwell to take his play down town the next day, and not lose a moment in trying to place it with some manager.

It all left him very wakeful, for his head began to work upon this scheme and that. When he went to lock the outer door for the night, the sight of his overcoat hanging in the hall made him think of a theatrical newspaper he had bought coming home, at a certain corner of Broadway, where numbers of smooth-shaven, handsomen, and women with dark eyes and champagne hair were lounging and passing. He had got it on the desperate chance that it might suggest something useful to him. He now took it out of his coat-pocket, and began to look its advertisements over in the light of his study lamp, partly because he was curious about it, and partly because he knew he should begin to revise his play, otherwise, and then he should not sleep all night.

In several pages of the paper ladies with flowery and alliterative names and pseudonyms proclaimed themselves in large letters, and in smaller type the parts they were presently playing in different combinations; others gave their addresses and announced that they were At Liberty, or specified the kinds of rôles they were accustomed to fill, as Leads or Heavies, Dancing Soubrettes and Boys; Leads, Emotional and Juvenile; Heavy or Juvenile or Emotional Leads. There were gentlemen seeking engagements who were Artistic Whistling Soloists, Magicians, Leading Men, Leading Heavies, Singing and Dancing Comedians, and there were both ladies and gentlemen who were now Starring in this play or that, but were open to offers later. A teacher of stage dancing promised instruction in skirt and serpentine dancing, as well as high kicking, front and back, the backward bend, side practice, toe-practice, and all novelties. Dramatic authors had their cards among the rest, and one poor fellow, as if he had not the heart to name himself, advertised a play to be heard of at the office of the newspaper. Whatever related to the theatre was there, in a bizarre solidarity, which was droll enough to Maxwell in one way. But he hated to be mixed up with all that, and he perceived that he must be mixed up with it more and more, if he wrote for the theatre. Whether he liked it or not, he was part of the thing which in its entirety meant high-kicking and toe-practice, as well as the expression of the most mystical passions of the

heart. There was an austerity in him which the fact offended, and he did what he could to appease this austerity by reflecting that it was the drama and never the theatre that he loved; but for the time this was useless. He saw that if he wrote dramas he could not hold aloof from the theatre, nor from actors and actresses—heavies and juveniles, and emotionals and soubrettes. He must know them, and more intimately; and at first he must be subject to them, however he mastered them at last; he must flatter their oddities and indulge their caprices. His experience with Godolphin had taught him that, and his experience with Godolphin in the construction of his play could be nothing to what he must undergo at rehearsals and in the effort to adapt his work to a company. He reminded himself that Shakespeare even must have undergone all that. But this did not console him. He was himself, and what another, the greatest, had suffered, would not save him. Besides, it was not the drama merely that Maxwell loved; it was not making plays alone; it was causing the life that he had known to speak from the stage, and to teach there its serious and important lesson. In the last analysis he was a moralist, and more a moralist than he imagined. To enforce, in the vividest and most palpable form, what he had thought true, it might be worth while to endure all the trials that he must; but at that moment he did not think so; and he did not dare submit his misgiving to his wife.

They had now been six months married, and if he had allowed himself to face the fact he must have owned that, though they loved each other so truly, and he had known moments of exquisite, of incredible rapture, he had been as little happy as in any half year he had lived. He never formulated his wife's character, or defined the precise relation she bore to his life; if he could have been challenged to do so, he would have said that she was the whole of life to him, and that she was the most delightful woman in the world.

He tasted to its last sweetness the love of loving her and of being loved by her. At the same time there was an obscure stress upon him which he did not trace to her at once; a trouble in his thoughts which, if he could have seen it clearly,

he would have recognized for a lurking anxiety concerning how she would take the events of their life as they came. Without realizing it, for his mind was mostly on his work, and it was only in some dim recess of his spirit that the struggle took place, he was perpetually striving to adjust himself to the unexpected, or rather the impredicable.

But when he was most afraid of her harassing uncertainty of emotion or action he was aware of her fixed loyalty to him; and perhaps it was the final effect with himself that he dreaded. Should he always be able to bear and forbear, as he felt she would, with all her variableness and turning? The question did not put itself in words, and neither did his conviction that his relation to the theatre was doubled in difficulty through her. But he perceived that she had no love for the drama, and only a love for his love of it; and sometimes he vaguely suspected that if he had been in business she would have been as fond of business as she was of the drama. He never perhaps comprehended her ideal, and how it could include an explicit and somewhat noisy devotion to the aims of his ambition, because it was his, and a patronizing reservation in regard to the ambition itself. But this was quite possible with Louise, just as it was possible for her to have had a humble personal joy in giving herself to him, while she had a distinct social sense of the sacrifice she had made in marrying him. In herself she looked up to him; as her father's and mother's daughter, as the child of her circumstance, there is no doubt she looked down upon him. But neither of these attitudes held in their common life. Love may or may not level ranks, but marriage unquestionably does, and is the one form of absolute equality. The Maxwells did not take themselves or each other objectively; they loved and hated, they made war and made peace, without any sense of the difference or desert that might have been apparent to the spectators.

Maxwell had never been so near the standpoint of the impartial observer as now when he confronted the question of what he should do, with a heart twice burdened by the question whether his wife would not make it hard for him to do it, whatever it was. He thought, with dark fore-

boding, of the difficulties he should have to smooth out for her if it ever came to a production of the piece. The best thing that could happen, perhaps, would be its rejection, final and total, by all possible managers and actors ; for she would detest any one who took the part of Salome, and would hold him responsible for all she should suffer from it.

He recurred again to what he had felt so strongly himself, and what Grayson had suggested, and thought how he could free himself from fealty to her by cutting out the whole love-business from his play. But that would be very hard. The thing had now knitted itself in one texture in his mind, and though he could sever the ties that bound the parts together, it would take from the piece the great element of charm. It was not symmetrical as it stood, but it was not two distinct motives ; the motives had blended, and they really belonged to each other. He would have to invent some other love-business if he cut this out, but still it could be done. Then it suddenly flashed upon him that there was something easier yet, and that was to abandon the notion of getting his piece played at all, and to turn it into a novel. He could give it narrative form without much trouble, if any, beyond that of copying it, and it would be thought a very dramatic story. He saw instantly how he could keep and even enhance all the charm of the love-business as it stood, in a novel ; and in his revulsion of feeling he wished to tell his wife. He made a movement toward the door of her room, but he heard the even breathing of her sleep, and he stopped and flung himself on the lounge to think. It was such a happy solution of the whole affair ! He need not even cease trying with managers, for he could use the copy of the play that Godolphin had returned for that, and he could use the copy he had always kept for recasting it in narrative. By the time that he had got his play back from the last manager he would have his novel ready for the first publisher. In the meantime he should be writing his letters for the *Abstract*, and not consuming all his little savings.

The relief from the stress upon him was delicious. He lay at rest and heard the soft breathing of his wife from the other room, and an indescribable tenderness for

her filled his heart. Then he heard her voice saying, " Well, don't wake him, poor boy ! "

XVI

MAXWELL opened his eyes, and found the maid lightly escaping from the room. He perceived that he had slept all night on the lounge, and he sent a cheery hail into his wife's room, and then followed it to tell her how he had thought it all out. She was as glad as he was ; she applauded his plan to the ceiling ; and he might not have thought of her accident if he had not seen presently that she was eating her breakfast in bed.

Then he asked after her ankle, and she said, " Oh, that's perfectly well, or the same as perfectly. There's no pain at all, there, to speak of, and I shall get up to luncheon. You needn't mind me any more. If you haven't taken your death of cold sleeping there on the lounge—— "

" I haven't. "

" I want you to go down town to some manager with your play, and get some paper, the kind I like ; and then, after lunch, we'll begin turning it into a novel, from your copy. It will be so easy for you that you can dictate, and I'll do the writing, and we'll work it up together. Shall you like collaborating with me ? "

" Ah !—— "

" It will be our story, and I shall like it twice as well as if it were a play. We shall be independent of the theatre, that's one satisfaction ; they can take the play, if they like, but it will be perfectly indifferent to us. I shall help you get in all those nice touches that you said you could never get into a play, like that green light in the woods. I know just how we shall manage that love business, and we sha'n't have any horror of an actress interpreting our inspirations to the public. We'll play *Atland* and *Salome* ourselves. We'll—ow ! "

She had given her foot a twist in the excitement and she fell back on the pillow rather faint. But she instantly recovered herself with a laugh, and she hurried him away to his breakfast, and then away with his play. He would rather have stayed and begun turning it into a story at once. But she would not let him ; she said, it would be a loss of time, and she should

fret a good deal more to have him there with her, than to have him away, for she should know he was just staying to cheer her up.

When he was gone she sent for whatever papers the maid could find in the parlor, so that she need not think of him in the amusement she would get out of them. Among the rest was that dramatic newspaper which caught her eye first, with the effigy of a very dramatized young woman whose portrait filled the whole first page. Louise abhorred her, but with a novel sense of security in the fact that Maxwell's play was going so soon to be turned into a story; and she felt personally aloof from all the people who had dragged him down with a sense of complicity in their professional cards. She found them neither so droll nor so painful as he had, but she was very willing to turn from them, and she was giving the paper a parting glance before dropping it, when she was arrested by an advertisement which made her start:

WANTED.—A drama for prominent star; light comic and emotional; star part must embody situations for the display of intense effects. Address L. STERNE, this office.

A series of effects as intense as the advertiser could have desired in a drama followed one another in the mind of Louise. She now wildly reproached herself that she had, however unwittingly, sent her husband out of reach for four or five hours, when his whole future might depend upon his instantly answering this notice. Whether he had already seen the notice and rashly decided to ignore it, or had not seen it, he might involve himself with some manager irretrievably before he could be got at with a demand which seemed specifically framed to describe his play. She was in despair that there was no means of sending a messenger-boy after him with any chance of finding him. The light comic reliefs which the advertiser would have wished to give the dark phases of her mood were suggested by her reckless energy in whirling herself into her dressing-gown, and hopping out to Maxwell's desk in the other room, where she dashed off a note in reply to the advertisement in her husband's name, and then checked herself with the reflection that she had no right to sign his name: even in such a cause she

must not do anything wrong. Something must be done, however, right or wrong, and she decided that a very formal note in the third person would involve the least moral trespass. She fixed upon these terms, after several experiments, almost weeping at the time they cost her, when every moment was precious:

Mr. Brice Maxwell writes to Mr. L. Sterne and begs to inform him that he has a play which he believes will meet the requirements of Mr. Sterne, as stated in his advertisement in the "Professional Register" of November the tenth. Mr. Maxwell asks the favor of an interview with Mr. Sterne at any time and place that Mr. Sterne may appoint.

It seemed to her that this violated no law of man or God, or if it did the exigency was such that the action could be forgiven, if not justified. She ransacked Maxwell's desk for a special delivery stamp, and sent the letter out beyond recall; and then it occurred to her that its opening terms were too much those of a lady addressing a seamstress; but after a good deal of anguish on this point she comforted herself with the hope that a man would not know the form, or at least would not suspect another man of using it offensively.

She passed the time till Maxwell came back, in doubt whether to tell him what she had done. There was no reason why she should not, except that he might have seen the advertisement and decided not to answer it for some reason; but in that case it might be said that he ought to have spoken to her about it. She told him everything at once, but there were many things that he did not tell her till long afterward; it would be a good thing to let him realize how that felt; besides it would be a pleasure to keep it and let it burst upon him, if that L. Sterne, whoever he was, asked to see the play. In any case, it would not be a great while that she need keep from him what she had done, but at sight of him when he came in she could hardly be silent. He was gloomy and dispirited, and he confessed that his pleasant experience with Grayson had not been repeated with the other managers. They had all been civil enough, and he had

seen three or four of them, but only one had consented to let him even leave his play with him; the others said that it would be useless for them to look at it.

She could not forbear showing him the advertisement she had answered as they sat at lunch; but he glanced at it with disdain, and said there must be some sort of fake in it; if it was some irresponsible fellow getting up a combination he would not scruple to use the ideas of any manuscript submitted to him and work them over to suit himself. Louise could not speak. All heart went out of her; she wanted to cry, and she did not tell what she had done.

Neither of them ate much. He asked her if she was ready to begin on the story with him; she said, Oh, yes; and she hobbled off into the other room. Then he seemed to remember her hurt for the first time; he had been so full of his failure with the play before. He asked her how she was, and she said, much better; and then he stretched himself on the lounge and tried to dictate, and she took her place at his desk and tried to write. But she either ran ahead of him, and prompted him, which vexed him, or she lagged so far behind that he lost the thread of what he was saying and became angry. At last she put her head down on the paper and blotted it with her tears.

At that he said, "Oh, you'd better go back to bed," and then though he spoke harshly, he lifted her tenderly and half carried her to her room.

XVII

THEY did not try working the play into a story again together. Maxwell kept doggedly at it, though he said it was of no use; the thing had taken the dramatic form with inexorable fixity as it first came from his mind; it could be changed, of course, but it could only be changed for the worse, artistically. If he could sell it as a story, the work would not be lost; he would gain the skill that came from doing, in any event, and it would keep him alive under the ill-luck that now seemed to have set in.

None of the managers wanted his play. Some of them seemed to want it less than others; some wanted it less immediately

than others; some did not want it after reading; some refused it without reading it; some had their arrangements made for an indefinite time, others in the present uncertain state of affairs could not make any arrangements; some said it was an American play; others that it was un-American in its pessimistic spirit; some found it too literary; others, lacking in imagination. They were nearly all so kind that at first Maxwell was guilty of the folly of trying to persuade them against the reasons they gave; when he realized that these reasons were also excuses, he set his teeth and accepted them in silence.

For a number of days Louise suffered in momentary expectation of a reply from L. Sterne. She thought it would come by district messenger the day she wrote; and for several days afterwards she had the letters brought to her first, so that she could read them, and not disturb Maxwell with them at his work, if it were not necessary. He willingly agreed to that; he saw that it helped to pass the irksome time for her. She did not mean to conceal any answer she should have from L. Sterne, but she meant when the answer came to prepare her husband for it in such sort, that he would understand her motive, and though he condemned it, would easily forgive her. But the days went and no letter from L. Sterne came, and after a season of lively indignation at his rudeness, Louise began to forget him a little, though she still kept her surveillance of the mails.

It was always on her conscience, in the meantime, to give some of the first moments of her recovery to going with Maxwell and thanking Mrs. Harley for the kindness she had shown her in her accident. She was the more strenuous in this intention, because the duty was so distasteful, and she insisted upon Maxwell's company, though he argued that he had already done enough himself in thanking her preserver, because she wished to punish a certain reluctance of her own in having him go. She promised herself that she would do everything that was right by that creature; and perhaps she repaired to her presence in rather overwhelming virtue. If this was so, Mrs. Harley showed herself equal to the demand upon her, and was overwhelming in her kind. She not only made nothing of what she had done

for Louise, but she made nothing of Louise, and contrived with a few well directed strokes to give her distinctly the sense of being a chit, a thing Louise was not at all used to. She was apparently one of those women who have no use for persons of their own sex ; but few women, even of that sort, could have so promptly relegated Louise to the outside of their interest, or so frankly devoted themselves to Maxwell. The impartial spectator might easily have imagined that it was his ankle which had been strained, and that Louise was at best an intrusive sympathizer. Sometimes Mrs. Harley did not hear what she said ; at other times, if she began a response to her, she ended it in a question to him ; even when she talked to Louise, her eyes were smouldering upon Maxwell. If this had all or any of it been helpless or ignorant rudeness, it could have been borne and forgiven ; but Louise was aware of intention, of perfect intelligence in it ; she was sensible of being even more disliked than disliking, and of finally being put to flight with a patronizing benevolence for her complete recovery which was intolerable. What was worse was that, while the woman had been so offensive, she could not wholly rid herself of the feeling that her punishment was in a measure merited, though it was not justice that had dealt with her.

"Well, that is over," said Maxwell, when they were again by themselves.

"Yes, forever," sighed Louise, and for once she was not let have the last word.

"I hope you'll remember that I didn't want to go."

At least they had not misunderstood each other about Mrs. Harley.

Toward the end of the month, Louise's father and mother came on from Boston. They professed that they had been taken with that wish to see the autumn exhibition at the National Academy, which sometimes affects Bostonians, and that their visit had nothing to do with the little hurt that Louise wrote them of after she was quite well of it. They drove over from their hotel the morning they arrived, and she did not know anything of their coming till she heard their voices at the door ; her father's voice was rather husky from the climb to her apartment.

The apartment was looking somewhat

frowsy, for the Maxwells breakfasted late, and the housemaid had not had time to put it in order. Louise saw it through her father's and mother's eyes with the glance they gave it, and found the rooms ridiculously little, and furnished with cheap Fourteenth Street things ; but she bragged all the more noisily of it on that account, and made her mother look out of the windows, for the pretty view they had from their corner-room. Mrs. Hilary pulled her head back from the prospect of the railroad-ridden avenue with silent horror, and Louise burst into a wild laugh. "Well, it *isn't* Commonwealth Avenue, mamma ; I don't pretend that, you know."

"Where's Maxwell ?" asked Hilary, still puffing from the lounge he had sunk upon as soon as he got into the room.

"Oh, he's down town interviewing a manager about his play."

"I thought that fellow out West had his play. Or is this a new one ?"

"No," said Louise, very slowly and thoughtfully, "Brice has taken back his play from Mr. Godolphin." This was true ; he *had* taken it back in a sense. She added, as much to herself as to her father. "But he *has* got a new play—that he's working at."

"I hope he hasn't been rash with Godolphin ; though I always had an idea that it would have been better for him to deal with a manager. It seems more business-like."

"Oh, much," said Louise.

After a little while, they were more at home with each other ; she began to feel herself more their child, and less Maxwell's wife ; the barriers of reluctance against him, which she always knew were up with them, fell away from between them and herself. But her father said they had come to get her and Maxwell to lunch with them at their hotel, and then Louise felt herself on her husband's side of the fence again. She said, no, they must stay with her ; that she was sure Brice would be back for lunch ; and she wanted to show them her house-keeping. Mrs. Hilary cast her eye about the room, at the word, as if she had seen quite enough of it already, and this made Louise laugh again. She was no better in person than the room was, and she felt her mother's tacit censure apply to her slatternly dressing-gown.

"I know what you're thinking, mamma. But I got the habit of it when I had my strained ankle."

"Oh, I'm sure it must be very comfortable," Mrs. Hilary said, of the dressing-gown. "Is it entirely well, now?" she added, of the ankle; and she and Hilary both looked at Louise in a way that would have convinced her that their final anxiety concerning it had brought them to New York, if she had not guessed it already. "The doctor," and by this she meant their old family doctor, as if he were the only one, "said you couldn't be too careful."

"Well, I haven't been careful," said Louise, gayly, "but I'm quite well, and you can go back at once, if that's all, mamma."

Hilary laughed with her. "You haven't changed much, Louise."

Her mother said, in another sense, "I think you look a little pulled down," and that made her and her father laugh again. She got to playing with him, and poking him, and kissing him, in the way she had with him when she was a girl; it was not so very long ago.

Her mother bore with this for awhile, and then she rose to go.

"You're not going to stay!" Louise protested.

"Not to-day, my dear. I've got some shopping to do before lunch."

"Well," said Louise, "I didn't suppose you would stay the first time, such swells as you and papa. But I shall insist upon your coming to-morrow when you've recovered a little from the blow this home of virtuous poverty has given you, and I've had a chance to dust and prepare for you. And I'll tell you what, mamma; Brice and I will come to dinner with you, to-night, and we won't take any refusal. We'll be with you at seven. How will that do, papa?"

"That will do," said Hilary, with his arm round her waist, and they kissed each other to clinch the bargain.

"And don't you two old things go away and put your frosty paws together and say Brice and I are not happy. We do quarrel like cats and dogs every now and then, but the rest of the time we're the happiest couple in the universe; and an example to parents."

Hilary would have manifestly liked to

stay and have her go on with her nonsense, but his wife took him away.

When Maxwell came in, she was so full of their visit, that she did not ask him what luck he had with his play, but told him at once they were going to dine with her father and mother. "And I want you to brace up, my dear, and not let them imagine anything."

"How, anything?" he asked, listlessly.

"Oh, nothing. About your play not going perfectly. I didn't think it necessary to go into particulars with them, and you needn't. Just pass it over lightly if they ask you anything about it. But they won't."

Maxwell did not look so happy as he might at the prospect of dining with his wife's father and mother, but he did not say anything disagreeable, and after an instant of silent resentment, Louise did not say anything disagreeable either. In fact, she devoted herself to avoiding any displeasures with him, and she arrived with him at the Hilarys' hotel on perfectly good terms, and as far as he was concerned, in rather good spirits.

Upon the whole, they had a very good time. Hilary made occasion to speak to Maxwell of his letters to the *Abstract*, and told him they were considered by far the best letters of the kind published anywhere, which meant, anywhere in Boston.

"You do that sort of thing so well, newspaper writing," he continued, with a slyness that was not lost upon Louise, though Maxwell was ignorant of his drift, "that I wonder you don't sometimes want to take it up again."

"It's well enough," said Maxwell, who was gratified by his praise.

"By the way," said Hilary, "I met your friend, Mr. Ricker, the other day, and he spoke most cordially about you. I fancy he would be very glad to have you back."

"In the old way? I would rather be excused."

"No, from what he said, I thought he would like your writing in the editorial page."

Maxwell looked pleased. "Ricker's always been very good, but he has very little influence on the *Abstract*. He has no money interest in the paper."

Hilary said, with the greatest artfulness,

"I wonder he doesn't buy in. I hear it can be done."

"Not by Ricker, for the best of all possible reasons," said Maxwell, with a laugh.

Louise could hardly wait till she had parted from her father and mother before she began on her husband: "You goose! Didn't you see that papa was hinting at buying *you* a share in the *Abstract*?"

"He was very modest about it, then; I didn't see anything of the kind."

"Oh, do you think *you* are the only modest man? Papa is *very* modest, and he wouldn't make you an offer outright, unless he saw that you would like it. But I know that was what he was coming to, and if you'll let me——"

A sentiment of a reluctance rather than refusal was what made itself perceptible from his arm to hers, as they hurried along the street together, and Louise would not press the question till he spoke again.

He did not speak till they were in the train on their way home. Then he said, "I shouldn't care to have a money interest in a newspaper. It would tie me up to it, and load me down with cares I should hate. It wouldn't be my real life."

"Yes," said his wife, but when they got into their little apartment, she cast an eye opened to its meanness and narrowness over the common belongings, and wondered if he would ever ask himself whether this was her real life. But she did not speak, though she was apt to speak out most things that she thought.

XVIII

SOME people began to call, old friends of her mother's, whose visit to New York seemed to have betrayed to them the fact of Louise's presence for the first time, and some friends of her own, who had married, and come to New York to live, and who said they had just got back to town long enough to learn that she was there. These all reproached her for not having let them know sooner where she was, and they all more or less followed up their reproaches with the invitations which she dreaded because of Maxwell's aversion for them. But she submitted them to him, and submitted to his refusal to go with her, and declined them. In her heart she thought he was rather ungracious, but she did not say so,

though in two or three cases of people whom she liked, she coaxed him a little to go with her. Meeting her mother, and talking over the life she used to lead in Boston, and the life so many people were leading there still, made her a little hungry for society; she would have liked well enough to find herself at a dinner again, and she would have felt a little dancing after the dinner no hardship; but she remembered the promise she had made herself not to tease Maxwell about such things. So she merely coaxed him, and he so far relented as to ask her why she could not go without him, and that hurt her, and she said she never would go without him. All the same, when there came an invitation for lunch, from a particularly nice friend of her girlhood, she hesitated and was lost. She had expected, somehow, that it was going to be a very little lunch, but she found it a very large one, in the number of people, and after the stress of accounting for her husband's failure to come with her, she was not sorry to have it so. She inhaled with joy the atmosphere of the flower-scented rooms; her eye dwelt with delight on their luxurious and tasteful appointments, the belongings of her former life, which seemed to emerge in them from the past, and claim her again; the women in their chic New York costumes and their miracles of early winter hats, hailed her a long-lost sister by every graceful movement and cultivated tone; the correctly tailored and agreeably mannered men had polite intelligence of a world that Maxwell never would and never could be part of; the talk of the little amusing, unvital things that began at once, was more precious to her than the problems which the austere imagination of her husband dealt with; it suddenly fatigued her to think how hard she had tried to sympathize with his interest in them. Her heart leapt at sight of the long, rose-heaped table, with its glitter of glass and silver, and the solemn perfection of the serving-men; a spectacle not important in itself was dear to her from association with gayeties, which now, for a wicked moment, seemed to her better than love.

There were all sorts of people: artists and actors, as well as people of fashion. Her friend had given her some society notable to go out with, but she had appointed for the chair next her on the other hand, a

young man in a pretty pointed beard, whom she introduced across from the head of the table, as soon as she could civilly take the notable to herself. Louise did not catch his name, and it seemed presently that he had not heard hers, but their acquaintance prospered without this knowledge. He made some little jokes, which she promptly responded to, and then they talked awhile as if they were both New Yorkers, till she said, at some remark of his, "But I am not a New Yorker," and then he said, "Well, neither am I," and offered to tell her what he was if she would tell him what she was.

"Oh, I'm from Boston, of course," she answered, but then, instead of saying where he was from, he broke out :

"Now I will fulfil my vow !"

"Your vow? What is your vow?"

"To ask the first Boston person I met if that Boston person knew anything about another Boston person, who wrote a most remarkable play I saw in the fall out at home."

"A play," said Louise, with total loss of interest in the gentleman's city or country.

"Yes, by a Boston man named Maxwell——"

Louise stared at him, and if their acquaintance had been a little older, she might have asked him to come off. As it was she could not speak, and she let him go on.

"I don't know when I've ever had a stronger impression in the theatre than I had from that play. Perfectly modern, and perfectly American." He briefly sketched it. "It was like a terrible experience on the tragic side, and on the other side, it was a rapture. I never saw love-making on the stage before that made me wish to be a lover——"

A fire-red flew over Louise's face, and she said, almost snubbingly, as if he had made some unwarrantable advance: "I think I had better not let you go on. It was my husband who wrote that play. I am Mrs. Maxwell."

"Mrs. Maxwell! You are Mrs. Maxwell?" he gasped, and she could not doubt the honesty of his amazement. His confusion was so charming that she instantly relented. "Of course I should like to have you go on all day, as you've begun, but there's no telling what exceptions you might have been going to make later. Where did you see my husband's play?"

"In Midland——"

"What! You are not—you can't be—Mr. Ray?"

"I am—I can," he returned, gleefully, and now Louise impulsively gave him her hand under the table-cloth.

The manœuvre caught the eye of the hostess. "A bet?" she asked.

"Better," cried Louise, not knowing her pun, "a thousand times," and she turned without further explanation to the gentleman: "When I tell Mr. Maxwell of this he will suffer as he ought, and that's saying a great deal, for not coming with me to-day. To think of it's being *you*!"

"Ah, but to think of it's being *he*! You acquit me of the poor taste of putting up a job?"

"Oh, of anything you want to be acquitted of! What crime would you prefer? There are whole deluges of mercy for you. But now, go on, and tell me everything you thought about the play."

"I'd rather you'd tell me what you know about the playwright."

"Everything, of course, and nothing." She added the last words from a sudden, poignant conviction. "Isn't that the way with the wives of you men of genius?"

"Am I a man of genius?"

"You're literary."

"Oh, literary, yes. But I'm not married."

"You're determined to get out of it, somehow. Tell me about Midland. It has filled such a space in our imagination! You can't think what a comfort and stay you have been to us! But why in Midland? Is it a large place?"

"Would it take such a very big one to hold me? It's the place I brought myself up in, and it's very good to me, and so I live there. I don't think it has any vast intellectual or æsthetic interests, but there are very nice people there, very cultivated, some of them, and very well read. After all, you don't need a great many people; three or four will do."

"And have you always lived there?"

"I lived a year or so in New York, and I manage to get on here some time every winter. The rest of the year, Midland is quite enough for me. It's gay at times; there's a good deal going on; and I can write there as well as anywhere, and bet-

ter than in New York. Then, you know, in a small way I'm a prophet in my own country, perhaps because I was away from it for awhile. It's very pretty. But it's very base of you to make me talk about myself when I'm so anxious to hear about Mr. Maxwell."

"And do you spend all your time in writing Ibsen criticisms of Ibsen plays?" Louise pursued against his protest.

"I do some other kind of writing."

"As?"

"Oh, no! I'm not here to interview myself."

"Oh, but you ought. I know you've written something—some novel. Your name is so familiar—and was from the first." Mr. Ray laughed and shook his head in mockery of her cheap device. "You mustn't be vexed because I'm so vague about it. I'm very ignorant."

"You said you were from Boston."

"But there are Bostons and Bostons. The Boston that I belonged to never hears of American books till they are forgotten."

"Ah, how immortal I must be there!"

"I see you are determined to be bad. But I remember now; it was a play. Haven't you written a play?" He held up three fingers. "I knew it! What was it?"

"My plays," said the young fellow, with a mock of superiority, "have never been played. I've been told that they are above the heads of an audience. It's a great consolation. But now, really, about Mr. Maxwell's. When is it to be given here? I hoped very much I might happen on the very time."

Louise hesitated a moment, and then she said: "You know he has taken it back from Godolphin." It was not so hard to say this as it was at first, but it still required resolution.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Mr. Ray. "I never thought he appreciated it. He was so anxious to make his part all in all that he would have been willing to damage the rest of it irretrievably. I could see, from the way he talked of it, that he was mortally jealous of Salome; and the girl who did that did it very sweetly and prettily. Who has got the play now?"

"Well," said Louise, with rather a painful smile, "nobody has it at present. We're trying to stir up strife for it among managers."

"What play is that?" asked her friend, the hostess, and all that end of the table became attentive, as any fashionable company will at the mention of a play; books may be more or less out of the range of society, but plays never at all.

"My husband's," said Louise, meekly.

"Why, does *your* husband write *plays*?" cried the lady.

"What did you suppose he did?" returned Louise, resentfully; she did not in the least know what her friend's husband did, and he was no more there to speak for himself than her own.

"He's written a very *great* play," Mr. Ray spoke up with generous courage; "the very greatest American play I have seen. I don't say ever written, for I've written some myself that I haven't seen yet," he added, and everyone laughed at his bit of self-sacrifice. "But Mr. Maxwell's play is just such a play as I would have written if I could—large, and serious, and charming."

He went on about it finely, and Louise's heart swelled with pride. She wished Maxwell could have been there, but if he had been, of course Mr. Ray would not have spoken so freely.

The hostess asked him where he had seen it, and he said in Midland. Then she said, "We must all go," and she had the effect of rising to do so, but it was only to leave the men to their tobacco.

Louise laid hold of her in the drawing-room: "Who is he? What is he?"

"A little dear, isn't he?"

"Yes, of course. But what has he done?"

"Why he wrote a novel—I forget the name, but I have it somewhere. It made a great sensation. But surely *you* must know what it was?"

"No, no," Louise lamented. "I am ashamed to say I don't."

When the men joined the ladies, she lingered long enough to thank Mr. Ray, and try to make him tell her the name of his novel. She at least made him promise to let them know the next time he was in New York, and she believed all he said in regret that he was going home that night. He sent many sweet messages to Maxwell, whom he wanted to talk with about his play, and tell him all he had thought about it. He felt sure that some manager would take it and bring it out in New York, and again he exulted that it was out of the actor's hands.

A manager might not have an artistic interest in it; an actor could only have a personal interest in it.

XIX

LOUISE came home in high spirits. The world seemed to have begun to move again. It was full of all sorts of gay hopes, or at least she was, and she was impatient to impart them to Maxwell. Now she decided that her great office in his life must be to cheer him up, to supply that spring of joyousness which was so lacking in him, and which he never could do any sort of work without. She meant to make him go into society with her. It would do him good, and he would shine. He could talk as well as Mr. Ray, and if he would let himself go, he could be as charming.

She rushed in to speak with him, and was vexed to find a strange man sitting in the parlor alone. The stranger rose at her onset, and then, when she confusedly retreated, he sank into his chair again. She had seen him black against the window, and had not made out any feature or expression of his face.

The maid explained that it was a gentleman who had called to see Mr. Maxwell earlier in the day, and the last time had asked if he might sit down and wait for him. He had been waiting only a few minutes.

"But who is he?" demanded Louise, with a provisional indignation in case it should be a liberty on some unauthorized person's part. "Didn't he give you a card?"

He had given the girl a card, and she now gave it to Mrs. Maxwell. It bore the name Mr. Lawrence Sterne, which Louise read with much the same emotion as if it had been Mr. William Shakespeare. She suspected what her husband would have called a fake of some sort, and she felt a little afraid. She did not like the notion of the man's sitting there in her parlor while she had nobody with her but the girl. He might be all right, and he might even be a gentleman, but the dark bulk which had risen up against the window and stood holding a hat in its hand was not somehow a gentlemanly bulk, the hat was not definitively a gentleman's hat, and the baldness which

had shone against the light was not exactly what you would have called a gentleman's baldness. Clearly, however, the only thing to do was to treat the event as one of entire fitness till it proved itself otherwise, and Louise returned to the parlor with an air of ladylike inquiry, expressed in her look and movement; if this effect was not wholly unmixed with patronage, it still was kind.

"I am sorry," she said, "that my husband is out, and I am sorry to say that I don't know just when he will be at home." She stood and the man had risen again, with his portly frame and his invisible face between her and the light again. "If I could be of any use in giving him a message—" She stopped; it was really sending the man out of the house, and she could not do that; it was not decent. She added, "Or if you don't mind waiting a few minutes longer——"

She sat down, but the man did not. He said: "I can't wait any longer just now; but if Mr. Maxwell would like to see me, I am at the Coleman House." She looked at him as if she did not understand, and he went on: "If he doesn't recall my name he'll remember answering my advertisement some weeks ago in the *Theatrical Register*, for a play."

"Oh, yes!" said Louise. This was the actor whom she had written to in behalf of Maxwell. With electrical suddenness and distinctness, she now recalled the name, L. Sterne, along with all the rest, though the card of Mr. Lawrence Sterne had not stirred her sleeping consciousness. She had always meant to tell Maxwell what she had done, but she was always waiting for something to come of it, and when nothing came of it, she did not tell; she had been so disgusted at the mere notion of answering the man's advertisement. Now, here was the man himself, and he had to be answered, and that would probably be worse than answering his advertisement. "I remember," she said, provisionally, but with the resolution to speak exactly the truth; "I wrote to you *for* Mr. Maxwell," which did not satisfy her as the truth ought to have done.

"Well, then, I wish you would please tell him that I didn't reply to his letter because it kept following me from place to place, and I only got it at the *Register* office this morning."

"I will tell Mr. Maxwell," said Louise.
"I should be glad to see his play, if he still has it to dispose of. From what Mr. Grayson has told me of it, I think it might—I think I should like to see it. It might suit the—the party I am acting for," he added, letting himself go.

"Then you are not the—the—star?"

"I am the manager for the star."

"Oh," said Louise, with relief. The fact seemed to put another complexion on the affair. A distaste which she had formed for Mr. Sterne personally began to cede to other feelings. If he was manager for the star, he must be like other managers, such as Maxwell was willing to deal with, and if he knew Mr. Grayson he must be all right. "I will tell Mr. Maxwell," she said, with no provisionality this time.

Mr. Sterne prepared to go, so far as buttoning his overcoat and making some paces toward the door gave token of his intention. Louise followed him with a politeness which was almost gratitude to him for reinstating her in her own esteem. He seemed to have atmospheric intelligence of her better will toward him, for he said, as if it were something she might feel an interest in: "If I can get a play that will suit, I shall take the road with a combination immediately after New Year's. I don't know whether you have ever seen the lady I want the play for."

"The lady?" gasped Louise.

"She isn't very well-known in the East yet, but she will be. She wants a play of her own. As I understand Mr. Grayson, there is a part in Mr. Maxwell's play that would fit her to a T, or could be fitted to her; these things always need some little adaptation." Mr. Sterne's manner became easier and easier. "Curious thing about it is that you are next door—or next floor—neighbors, here. Mrs. Harley."

"We—we have met her," said Louise in a hollow murmur.

"Well, you can't have any idea what Yolande Havisham is from Mrs. Harley. I shall be at the Coleman the whole evening, if Mr. Maxwell would like to call. Well, good-morning," said Mr. Sterne, and he got himself away before Louise could tell him that Maxwell would never give his play to a woman; before she could say that it was already as good as accepted by another manager; before she could declare

that if no manager ever wanted it, still, as far as Mrs. Harley was concerned, with her smouldering eyes, it would always be in negotiation; before she could perform or express any utter and final refusal and denial of his abominable hopes.

It remained for her either to walk quietly down to the North River and drown herself or to wait her husband's return and tell him everything and throw herself on his mercy, implore him, adjure him, not to give that woman his play; and then to go into a decline that would soon rid him of the clog and hindrance she had always been to him. It flashed through her turmoil of emotion that it was already dark, in spite of Mr. Sterne's good-morning at parting, and that some one might speak to her on the way to the river; and then she thought how Maxwell would laugh when she told him the fear of being spoken to had kept her from suicide; and she sat waiting for him to come, with such an inward haggardness that she was astonished at sight of herself in the glass, to find that she was looking very much as usual. Maxwell certainly noticed no difference when he came in and flung himself wearily on the lounge, and made no attempt to break the silence of their meeting; they had kissed, of course, but not spoken.

She was by no means sure what she was going to do; she had hoped that there would be some leading on his part that would make it easy for her to do right, whatever the right was, but her heart sank at sight of him. He looked defeated and harassed. But there was no help for it. She must speak, and speak unaided; the only question was whether she had better speak before dinner or after. She decided to speak after dinner, and then all at once she was saying: "Brice, I have brought something dreadful on myself."

"At the lunch?" he asked, wearily, and she saw that he thought she had been making some silly speech she was ashamed of.

"Oh, if it had only been at the lunch!" she cried. "No, it was here—here in this very room."

"I don't know what's the matter with you, Louise," he said, lying back and shutting his eyes.

"Then I must tell you!" And she came out with the whole story, which she had to repeat in parts before he could understand it. When he did understand that she had answered that advertisement in the *Register*, in his name, he opened his eyes and sat up.

"Well?" he said.

"Well, don't you see how wrong and wicked that was?"

"I've heard of worse things."

"Oh, don't say so, dearest! It was living a lie, don't you see? And I've been living a lie ever since, and now I'm justly punished for not telling you long ago."

She told him of the visit she had just had, and who the man was, and whom he wanted the play for; and now a strange thing happened with her. She did not beseech him not to give his play to that woman; on the contrary she said: "And now, Brice, I want you to let her have it. I know she will play *Salome* magnificently, and that will make the fortune of the piece, and it will give you such a name that anything you write after this will get accepted; and you can satisfy your utmost ambition, and you needn't mind me—no—or think of me at all any more than if I were the dust of the earth; and I am! Will you?"

He got up from the lounge and began to walk the floor, as he always did when he was perplexed; and she let him walk up and down in silence as long as she could bear it. At last she said: "I am in earnest, Brice, I am indeed, and if you don't do it, if you let me or my feelings stand in your way, in the slightest degree, I will never forgive you. Will you go straight down to the Coleman House, as soon as you've had your dinner, and tell that man he can have your play for that woman?"

"No," said Maxwell, stopping in his walk, and looking at her in a dazed way.

Her heart seemed to leap into her throat. "Why?" she choked.

"Because Godolphin is here."

"Godo——" she began; and she cast herself on the lounge that Maxwell had vacated, and plunged her face in the pillow and sobbed, "Oh, cruel, cruel, *cruel*! Oh, *cruel*, cruel, cruel, cruel!"

XX

MAXWELL stood looking at his wife with the cold disgust which hysterics are apt to inspire in men after they have seen them more than once. "I suppose that when you are ready you will tell me what is the matter with you."

"To let me suffer so, when you knew all the time that Godolphin was here, and you needn't give your play to that creature at all," wailed Louise.

"How did I know you were suffering?" he retorted. "And how do I know that I can do anything with Godolphin?"

"Oh, I *know* you can!" She sprang up with the greatest energy, and ran into the bed-room to put in order her tumbled hair; she kept talking to him from there. "I want you to go down and see him the instant you have had dinner; and don't let him escape you. Tell him he can have the play on any terms. I believe he is the only one who can make it go. He was the first to appreciate the idea, and—Frida!" she called into the hall toward the kitchen, "we will have dinner at once, now, please—he always talked so intelligently about it; and now if he's where you can superintend the rehearsals, it can be the greatest success. How in the world did you find out he was here?"

She came out of her room, in surprising repair, with this question, and the rest of their talk went on through dinner.

It appeared that Maxwell had heard of Godolphin's presence from Grayson, whom he met in the street, and who told him that Godolphin had made a complete failure of his venture. His combination had gone to pieces at Cleveland, and his company were straggling back to New York as they could. Godolphin was deeply in debt to them all, and to everybody else; and yet the manager spoke cordially of him, and with no sort of disrespect, as if his insolvency were only an affair of the moment, which he would put right. Louise took the same view of it, and she urged Maxwell to consider how Godolphin had promptly paid him, and would always do so.

"Probably I got the pay of some poor devil who needed it worse," said Maxwell.

She said, "Nonsense! The other act—"

ors will take care of all that. They are so good to each other," and she blamed Maxwell for not going to see Godolphin at once.

"That was what I did," he answered, "but he wasn't at home. He was to be at home after dinner."

"Well, that makes it all the more providential," said Louise; her piety always awoke in view of favorable chances. "You mustn't lose any time. Better not wait for the coffee."

"I think I'll wait for the coffee," said Maxwell. "It's no use going there before eight."

"No," she consented. "Where is he stopping?"

"At the Coleman House."

"The Coleman House? Then if that wretch should see you?" She meant the manager of Mrs. Harley.

"He wouldn't know me, probably," Maxwell returned, scornfully. "But if you think there's any danger of his laying hold of me, and getting the play away before Godolphin has a chance of refusing it, I'll go masked. I'm tired of thinking about it. What sort of lunch did you have?"

"I had the best time in the world. You ought to have come with me, Brice. I shall make you, the next one. Oh, and guess who was there! Mr. Ray!"

"Our Mr. Ray?"

"There is no other, and he's the sweetest little dear in the world. He isn't so big as you are, even, and he's such a merry spirit, he hasn't the bulk your gloom gives you. I want you to be like him, Brice. I don't see why you shouldn't go into society, too."

"If I'd gone into society to-day, I should have missed seeing Grayson, and shouldn't have known Godolphin was in town."

"Well, that is true, of course. But if you get your play into Godolphin's hands, you'll have to show yourself a little, so that nice people will be interested in it. You ought to have heard Mr. Ray celebrate it. He piped up before the whole table."

Louise remembered what Ray said very well, and she repeated it, to a profound joy in Maxwell. It gave him an exquisite pleasure, and it flattered him to believe

that, as the hostess had said in response, they, the nice people, must see it, though he had his own opinion of nice people, apart from their usefulness in seeing his play. To reward his wife for it all, he rose as soon as he had drunk his coffee, and went out to put on his hat and coat. She went with him, and saw that he put them on properly and did not go off with half his coat-collar turned up. After he got his hat on, she took it off to see whether his cow-lick was worse than usual.

"Why, good heavens! Godolphin's seen me before, and besides I'm not going to propose marriage to him," he protested.

"Oh, it's much more serious than that!" she sighed. "Anybody would take *you*, dear, but it's your play we want him to take—or take back."

When Maxwell reached the hotel, he did not find Godolphin there. He came back twice, at intervals of half an hour. Then, as something in his manner seemed to give him authority to see him, the clerk volunteered to say that he thought likely he might find the actor at the Players' Club. In this hope he walked across to Gramercy Park. Godolphin had been dining there, and when he got Maxwell's name, he came half way down the stairs to meet him. He put his arm round him to return with him to the library.

There happened to be no one else there, and he made Maxwell sit down in an arm-chair fronting his own, and give an account of himself since they parted. He asked after Mrs. Maxwell's health, and as far as Maxwell could make out he was sincere in the quest. He did not stop till he had asked, with the most winning and radiant smile. "And the play, what have you done with the play?"

He was so buoyant that Maxwell could not be heavy about it, and he answered as gaily: "Oh, I fancy I have been waiting for you to come on and take it."

Godolphin did not become serious, but he became if possible more sincere. "Do you really think I could do anything with it?"

"If you can't nobody can."

"Why, that is very good of you, very good indeed, Maxwell. Do you know, I have been thinking about that play. You see, the trouble was with the Salome. The girl I had for the part was a thoroughly

nice girl, but she hadn't the weight for it. She did the comic touches charmingly, but when it came to the tragedy she wasn't there. I never had any doubt that I could create the part of Haxard. It's a noble part. It's the greatest rôle on the modern stage. It went magnificently in Chicago—with the best people. You saw what the critics said of it?"

"No; you didn't send me the Chicago papers." Maxwell did not say that all this was wholly different from what Godolphin had written him when he renounced the play. Yet he felt that Godolphin was honest then and was honest now. It was another point of view; that was all.

"Ah, I thought I sent them. There was some adverse criticism of the play as a whole, but there was only one opinion of Haxard. And you haven't done anything with the piece yet?"

"No, nothing."

"And you think I could do Haxard? You still have faith in me?"

"As much faith as I ever had," said Maxwell; and Godolphin found nothing ambiguous in a thing certainly susceptible of two interpretations.

"That is very good of you, Maxwell; very good." He lifted his fine head and gazed absently a moment at the wall before him. "Well, then I will tell you what I will do, Mr. Maxwell; I will take the play."

"You will!"

"Yes; that is if you think I can do the part."

"Why, of course!"

"And if—if there could be some changes—very slight changes—made in the part of Salome. It needs subduing." Godolphin said this as if he had never suggested anything of the kind before; as if the notion were newly evolved from his experience.

"I will do what I can, Mr. Godolphin," Maxwell promised, while he knitted his brows in perplexity. "But I do think that the very strength of Salome gives relief to Haxard—gives him greater importance."

"It *may* do so, dramatically. But theatrically, it detracts from him. Haxard must be the central figure in the eye of the audience from first to last."

Maxwell mused for a moment of discouragement. They were always coming back to that; very likely Godolphin was

right; but Maxwell did not know just how to subdue the character of Salome so as to make her less interesting. "Do you think that was what gave you bad houses in Chicago—the double interest, or the weakened interest in Haxard?"

"I think so," said Godolphin.

"Were the houses bad—comparatively?"

Godolphin took a little note-book out of his breast-pocket. "Here are my dates. I opened the first night, the tenth of November, with Haxard, but we papered the house thoroughly, and we made a good show to the public and the press. There were four hundred and fifty dollars in it. The next night there were three hundred; the next night, two eighty; Wednesday matinée, less than two hundred. That night we put on 'Virginius,' and played to eight hundred dollars; Thursday night, with the 'Lady of Lyons,' we had eleven hundred; Friday night, we gave the 'Lady' to twelve hundred; Saturday afternoon with the same piece, we took in eleven hundred and fifty; Saturday night, with 'Ingomar,' we had fifteen hundred dollars in the house, and a hundred people standing." Maxwell listened with a drooping head; he was bitterly mortified. "But it was too late then," said Godolphin, with a sigh, as he shut his book.

"Do you mean," demanded Maxwell, "that my piece had crippled you so that—that—"

"I didn't say that, Mr. Maxwell. I never meant to let you see the figures. But you asked me."

"Oh, you're quite right," said Maxwell. He thought how he had blamed the actor, in his impatience with him, for not playing his piece oftener—and called him fool and thought him knave for not doing it all the time, as Godolphin had so lavishly promised to do. He caught at a straw to save himself from sinking with shame. "But the houses, were they so bad everywhere?"

Godolphin checked himself in a movement to take out his note-book again; Maxwell had given him such an imploring look. "They were pretty poor everywhere. But it's been a bad season with a good many people."

"No, no," cried Maxwell. "You did very well with the other plays, Godolphin. Why do you want to touch the thing again?"

It's been ruinous to you so far. Give it up ! Come ! I can't let you have it !”

Godolphin laughed, and all his beautiful white teeth shone. There was a rich, wholesome red in his smoothly shaven cheeks ; he was a real pleasure to the eye. “I believe it would go better in New York. I'm not afraid to try it. You mustn't take away my last chance of retrieving the season. Hair of the dog, you know. Have you seen Grayson lately ?”

“Yes, I saw him this afternoon. It was he that told me you were in town.”

“Ah, yes.”

“And Godolphin, I've got it on my conscience, if you do take the play, to tell you that I offered it to Grayson, and he refused it. I think you ought to know that ; it's only fair ; and for the matter of that, it's been kicking round all the theatres in New York.”

“Dear boy !” said Godolphin, caressingly, and with a smile that was like a benediction, “that doesn't make the least difference.”

“Well, I wished you to know,” said Maxwell, with a great load off his mind.

“Yes, I understand that. Will you drink anything, or smoke anything ? Or—I forgot ! I hate all that, too. But you'll join me in a cup of tea downstairs ?” They descended to the smoking-room below, and Godolphin ordered the tea, and went on talking with a gay irrelevance till it came. Then he said, as he poured out the two cups of it: “The fact is, Grayson is going in with me, if I do your piece.” This was news to Maxwell, and yet he was somehow not surprised at it. “I dare say he told you ?”

“No, he didn't give me any hint of it. He simply told me that you were in town, and where you were.”

“Ah, that was like Grayson. Queer fish.”

“But I'm mighty glad to know it. You can make it go, together, if any power on earth can do it ; and if it fails,” Maxwell added, “I shall have the satisfaction of ruining some one else this time.”

“Well, Grayson has made nearly as bad a mess of it as I have, this season,” said Godolphin. “He's got to take off that thing he has going now, and it's a question of what he shall put on. It will be an experiment with Haxard, but I believe it will

be a successful experiment. I have every confidence in that play.” Godolphin looked up, his lips set convincingly, and with the air of a man who had stood unfalteringly by his opinion from the first. “Now, if you will excuse me, I will tell you what I think ought to be done to it.”

“By all means,” said Maxwell ; “I shall be glad to do anything you wish, or that I can.”

Godolphin poured out a cloudy volume of suggestion, with nothing clear in it but the belief that the part of Haxard ought to be fattened. He recurred to all the structural impossibilities that he had ever desired, and there was hardly a point in the piece that he did not want changed. At the end he said : “But all these things are of no consequence, comparatively speaking. What we need is a woman who can take the part of Salome, and play it with all the feminine charm that you've given it, and yet keep it strictly in the background, or thoroughly subordinated to the interest in Haxard.”

For all that Godolphin seemed to have learned from his experience with the play, Maxwell might well have thought they were still talking of it at Magnolia. It was a great relief to his prepossessions in the form of conclusions to have Grayson appear, with the air of looking for some one, and of finding the object of his search in Godolphin. He said he was glad to see Maxwell, too, and they went on talking of the play. From the talk of the other two Maxwell perceived that the purpose of doing his play had already gone far with them ; but they still spoke of it as something that would be very good if the interest could be unified in it. Suddenly the manager broke out : “Look here, Godolphin ! I have an idea ! Why not frankly accept the inevitable ? I don't believe Mr. Maxwell can make the play different from what it is, structurally, and I don't believe the character of Salome can be subdued or subordinated. Then why not play Salome as strongly as possible, and trust to her strength to enhance Haxard's effect, instead of weakening it ?”

Godolphin smiled toward Maxwell : “That was your idea.”

“Yes,” said Maxwell, and he kept himself from falling on Grayson's neck for joy.

"It might do," the actor assented with smiling eagerness and tolerant superiority. "But whom could you get for such a Salome as that?"

"Well, there's only one woman for it," said Grayson.

"Yolande Havisham?"

The name made Maxwell's heart stop. He started forward to say that Mrs. Harley could not have the part, when the manager said: "And we couldn't get her. Sterne has engaged her to star in his combination. By the way, he was looking for you to-day, Mr. Maxwell."

"I missed him," answered Maxwell, with immense relief. "But I should not have let him have the piece while I had the slightest hope of your taking it."

Neither the manager nor the actor was perhaps greatly moved by his generous preference, though they both politely professed to be so. They went on to canvass the qualities and reputations of all the other actresses attainable, and always came back to Yolande Havisham, who was unattainable; Sterne would never give her up in the world, even if she were willing to give up the chance he was offering her. But she was the one woman who could do Salome.

They decided that they must try to get Miss Pettrell, who had played the part with Godolphin, and who had done it with refinement, if not with any great force. When they had talked to this conclusion, Grayson proposed getting something to eat, and the others refused, but they went into the dining-room with him, where he showed Maxwell the tankards of the members hanging on the wall over their tables—

Booth's tankard, Salvini's, Irving's, Jefferson's. He was surprised that Maxwell was not a member of the Players, and said that he must be; it was the only club for him, if he was going to write for the stage. He came out with them and pointed out several artists whose fame Maxwell knew, and half a dozen literary men, among them certain playwrights; they were all smoking and the place was blue with the fume of their cigars. The actors were coming in from the theatres for supper, and Maxwell found himself with his friends in a group with a charming old comedian who was telling brief, vivid little stories, and sketching character, with illustrations from his delightful art. He was not swagger, like some of the younger men who stood about with their bell-crowned hats on, before they went into supper; and two or three other elderly actors who sat round him and took their turn in the anecdote and mimicry, looked, with their smooth-shaven faces, like old-fashioned ministers. Godolphin, who was like a youthful priest, began to tell stories, too; and he told very good ones admirably, but without appearing to feel their quality, though he laughed loudly at them with the rest.

When Maxwell refused everyone's wish to have him eat or drink something, and said good-night, Grayson had already gone in to his supper and Godolphin rose and smiled so fondly upon him that Maxwell felt as if the actor had blessed him. But he was less sure than in the beginning of the evening that the play was again in Godolphin's hands; and he had to confirm himself from his wife's acceptance of the facts in the belief that it was really so.

(To be concluded in August.)

WHIST FADS

By "Cavendish"

WHEN several thousand thoughtful people take up a science—or, what comes to the same thing, a scientific amusement—it is morally certain they will not rest content to leave it as they found it. Some of them will be trying experiments. Now, if these experiments are conducted on a sound basis, they deserve to be welcomed; if, on the other hand, they are mere hap-hazard leaps in the dark, they are only worthy of condemnation. It is the object of the present paper to examine critically some recent whist experiments, and to point out their true character. Even "fads" should not be condemned unheard.

Experimental whist commenced its career in America by the practice of leading nine, instead of fourth-best, from king, knave, nine, and one or more small cards. The lead of nine was to show absolutely the possession of king, knave, etc. It was not to be led from any other combination. It was, consequently, necessary to alter the received lead of nine, from ace, queen, ten, nine, and from ace, knave, ten, nine. This was seen and provided for, by recommending the lead of ace from those combinations.

Now, if any special advantage is to be gained by showing king, knave in hand, the nine lead might be submitted to as an irregular opening, with a particular object. But the reverse is the case. If the adversaries hold any high cards in the suit, the lead of nine, on this system, instructs them how to take the best chance of making tricks. Moreover, it gives less information than the lead of nine from the recognized combinations, as well as compelling unusual leads from them. Deeper analysis of this fad would be waste of space. It has been tried, and is now generally given up.

Simultaneously with this, or soon after, it was seriously announced that the discard of an eight (or higher), second hand, is a call for trumps.

The theory is that when second hand declines to trump a doubtful card, he is strong in trumps, and that, if he throws away a card at least as high as an eight,

his other plain cards must be read eight or better.

Those who deem such play a call can hardly have realized what a call for trumps means. When a player throws away an unnecessarily high card before a low one, or calls, he says in effect, "Partner, blindly abandon your own game, lead me a trump, and I will answer for a great score." Many hands could be constructed in which a refusal to accept a force, accompanied by the discard of a high card has no such meaning.

It is true that a brainy player, finding strength in trumps, and strong, plain suits with his partner, might often be induced to lead a trump in consequence of a high discard, when otherwise he would not. That is a point of judgment. The exercise of judgment is quite different from blind abandonment. There are still a number of high-class players who regard a discard of eight or better as a call. It is, however, more consistent with reason for players before answering the supposed call to consult their hands with the object of determining whether under the circumstances a trump lead is in their opinion advisable.

Next, probably, in chronological order is the four signal. This is a deferred call. When an unnecessarily high card is followed at the first opportunity by a low one, the lead of a trump is commanded. Thus, North leads king; South (his partner) plays three. North next leads ace of the same suit; South plays two. South has unequivocally demanded an immediate trump lead. But suppose that to the first trick South plays three, and to the second plays four, and to the third plays two, deferring the completion of the call to the third round of the suit. It is evident he is not in a desperate hurry for a trump lead, or he would have completed the call on the second round. He has said, in whist language, "I have four trumps; I do not ask you to abandon your game to mine, as I am not strong enough to have trumps out whether it suits your hand or not. But, if