

ADDOLORATA'S INTERVENTION

By Henry B. Fuller

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

I

(FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARCELLUS BLAND)

PALERMO February 10, 1903.



ALBERT JORDAN has arrived. I was strolling this forenoon along the Marina when the launch from the Villa Rosalia came sputtering across the harbor and set down a number of people near the Porta Felice, Jordan among them. I recognized him at once, though he was somewhat changed; and he, though rather less promptly, recognized me. He did not detach himself from his little party, nor pause on his way into the town; so there was no exchange of verbal greetings. He appeared as composed, as self-centred, as ever, despite a certain effervescent hilarity among his associates. Indeed, I think I may say, without any imaginative excess, that he was even a bit subdued and chastened; something not to be wondered at after last autumn's *peripezia*—a change of fortune, if ever there was one. The sum total of his presence—a mere passing presence, true—was this: he seemed to be saying, with his odd air of quiet determination: "No, you shall never know me better; give up any such idea for once and for all."

The conduct of this young man begins to irritate me. He is just as baffling here in Sicily as he was on Broadway—and just as ungrateful. Ungrateful, I say; and here is my case. I was one of the first to welcome Jordan when, in all his rawness, he came to town from his haunts "up State." I was among the earliest to recognize the talent in those impromptu newspaper sketches which he afterward got together in book form. I perseveringly praised to the sceptical the first fruits of his acquaintance with the city, his "In the Crosstown Cars," though Heaven knows I am chary enough about giving approval to the ephemeral stuff of the daily

prints. When he adventurously invaded the theatre with a drama founded upon his rural observations and experiences, nobody was more friendly than I to "Fudgetown Folks." Later, I was one of the vociferous crowd at the Walpole that started "Boys Will Be Boys" on its two-year run; and when, last fall, the reaction came and "Youth Must Have Its Fling" was smiled pityingly from the boards and the gallant young career seemed over, I strained my credit to make the confident, half-studied thing appear at least a *succès d'estime*. Why, I have written reviews of the fellow's doings—a practice I rarely condescend to; and I have sent him congratulatory notes and telegrams which were not only enthusiastic but effusive. And what in return? I am snubbed. No, not snubbed; I retract the word, for no one has ever snubbed me, and no one ever can. But the sort of treatment meted out to me is only one degree better: I am held at arm's length; I get—when escape is impossible for him—a single perfunctory word; and I must content myself—here in foreign parts, where national consciousness and local ties sometimes turn even antipathies into attachments—with a cool nod and the present view of a highly indifferent back.

Does he not know who I am? Does he not realize what I stand for? Does he not comprehend what value a word of praise from me may have? Has he never read "Etrurian Byways"? Has he never heard of "The Grand Master" or of "Emir and Troubadour"? I am, indeed, no national celebrity, no household word, as he is; I have never seen my name lettered in fire before three Broadway theatres at once; nor have I a "farm" in Connecticut that has been celebrated by half the writers of "specials" in town; but I do enjoy, all the same, a reputation of my own among the few whose good opinion is worth the winning. Though I have nearly forgotten the meaning of the term "royalty," while his annual

income amounts to figures that are almost fabulous, I would not consider, for a moment, an exchange of place and fortune.

I say this despite the obvious failure of "The Grand Master." But why should I employ the words "obvious" and "failure"? For the book no more reached the public consciousness than a snowflake falling into Vesuvius reaches the earth. "Youth Must Have Its Fling," on the contrary, did fail—spectacularly, resonantly. After its first grand flare it flickered before diminishing hundreds for a fortnight, and then it flickered out. Its passing was notorious. They knew about it in Syracuse and Detroit and Atlanta and Denver. The daily papers had their gibes about it; weeklies with "theatrical departments" gave it a cut as it hastened down the dark corridor of failure; and long afterward belated monthlies were busily explaining why the wreck had come about and acutely speculating on the dazed young author's future. Never before such buffets on so confident and smiling a face. Our young author fled the country—to study, far from the scene, the cause and nature of his *débâcle* and to take counsel with himself as to his future. A moving situation for thirty-three.

I suppose his lighting upon quiet Palermo must be held to be purely fortuitous. Neither his tastes nor his traditions can have assisted him in making so luminous a choice of an asylum. I should have expected him to stop short at Naples or to go on to Cairo. In my own case, however, there seemed no great choice. Rome being ruined, and Naples detestable, and Algiers quite second rate, and Cairo both too far away and much too expensive, what other town was left for one who would be at once in the midst of things and yet somewhat aside from them? Such at least is my feeling at the Albergo della Marina; a little shabby, a trifle dingy, and altogether in the past tense, it is perhaps the best that an unsuccessful novelist may aspire to. How things may seem at the Grand Hotel Villa Rosalia I have no means of knowing; probably all the pomp and circumstance that enwraps the cosmopolitan tourist may help to make even a youth under the passing shade of failure feel that he is still in the world and of it. One can scarcely, I apprehend, sojourn at the Villa Rosalia and yet confess that the pride of life has been altogether renounced; whereas a man housed

in a cell at the Marina—but let me not abuse the roof that shelters me.

Yes, Albert at the landing-stage was cursory and nonchalant past all endurance. Why should it be so difficult for me to put myself *en rapport* with him? His life is public to a degree—thousands of Toms, Dicks, and Harrys share in it with all freedom. I have been kind, I have been interested, I have been enthusiastic, I have been articulate; and I am but nine years older—a gap that might easily be bridged, if any gap at all can be held to be made by so slight a difference.

Privately—very privately—I fear that Jordan looks upon me as an amateur, and that in his clear young gray eyes the opinion of an amateur has no value whatever. He regards me as a *dilettante*; so, always, to the trained craftsman must appear one who follows an art on the basis of some private competency, however small. Jordan, on the contrary, has his "trade," and has used it to fight his way up to his present position. Those years in the Herkimer County newspaper office must have been of the greatest service to him. To recognize the idea when it comes; to realize its values and its possibilities; to deal with it competently, cleanly, unfalteringly, and at the first essay—all this is very fine; and all this, with more, is plain on every page of "From the Back Counties," and is none the less apparent in his intimate studies of middle-class realism in the life of the metropolis itself. Fluency and precision show in the very preparation of his manuscripts. Once, in the *Recorder* building, I passed his door; a few pages of "copy" for the morrow's sketch lay in plain sight on his desk. Trim, clean-cut, unblotted, they represented well the craftsman in his absence. Does anyone imagine that the author of "Etrurian Byways" would dare leave exposed a sheet or two of his manuscript for the inspection of the casual passer-by? Never! Yes, I see: Albert Jordan looks upon me as an amateur, and of my reiterated compliments and congratulations he makes no account whatever.

Another thought. Jordan cannot but be proudly aware of his firm grip on present-day actualities. To him, ever welcoming the stinging impact of life as it is lived, my doings must appear tenuous, derivative, remote. Of course those character illustrations of Snow's helped his first book greatly; still,



Drawn by James Montgomery Flagg.

. I was with a troupe of roistering young Yanks.—Page 718.

it would have stood without them—the rustic oddities of Herkimer County could have been depended upon to speak shrilly and shrewdly for themselves. To one who is so surefooted both on the old Pike Road and in East Fourteenth Street, of what possible interest are loiterings through the byways of Etruria or the back lanes of Malta? No; Jordan taxes me for my lack of vividness and vitality and properly scorns me.

Yet again. What are a few thin and inconspicuous books compared with a reverberating succession of plays? I have timidly looked over the hedge, while he has boldly held the highway. I have scotched my dozens, while he has slain his thousands. He has battled for big stakes in one of the great arenas of the world, and scoffs at me for a faint-hearted slinker through unregarded by-paths. But why proceed? He can care nothing for my opinion, nothing for my approval. Drop, my pen; close, my little book; I have answered my own weak question over and over again.

II

(FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALBERT JORDAN)

GRAND HOTEL VILLA ROSALIA, PALERMO,
February 11, 1903.

. . . I am well enough placed here and shall probably remain until along into March. I might have chosen Florence or Cairo, perhaps; but at present—as you can very well understand, my dear Arthur—I am in no mood to encounter the Anglo-Saxon world wholesale. In Sicily the cosmopolitan blend seems a little more perfect; one is not trampled down by a mob composed of one's fellow-countrymen exclusively.

Let us dispense with description; I cannot endure to pen it, nor you to read it. For an idea of my present surroundings consult my letter-head. The Villa supplies a better class of stationery, without any Earthly Paradise above the date-line; but sometimes one's second-class manner is more graphic and successful than one's first.

Is it, though? That is precisely the point I have settled down to consider. But no more of that just now.

Well, gather in for yourself, old fellow, the mountains and the sea and the sub-

tropical flora. And add, if you like, a tennis-court, something of a golf-course, a steam-yacht, an electric omnibus, an orchestra for dinner, and St. Rosalia herself somewhere up in the mountain behind.

Am sorry to hear so unfavorably from the sheep. I thought sheep, if anything, could be depended upon to pick up their living from those Connecticut boulders. Let us worry them through the winter as best we may, and next year I will try Holsteins or Jerseys. Thanks for your good report about the beaver dam. There's one fad, at least, that is self-supporting.

Beaton's last week's check came yesterday; also the Thespian for the 25th. Ask B. if he hasn't overlooked those two dates at Terre Haute.

If old Murdock is ready to part with that twenty-acre tract to the north-east, don't let me lose it. Stanhope may go on enlarging the terrace, but any more nonsense about foundations is quite superfluous in such a rock-ribbed region. Am glad to hear that that fly-by-night company down in Kentucky has been nipped. But I want an example made of them—have them followed up sharp. Forgive all these particulars; you understand that the most I ask you to do is to pass on the word to the right quarter.

Marcellus Bland is here; I think I heard you praising one of his books last spring. I passed him yesterday in the town. He looked as if his foot was on its native heath indeed. I was with a troupe of roistering young Yanks, male and female; they attend me in all my walks and treat me like a fellow-kid. If they want to be disagreeable they treat me like a fellow-kid that has just slipped up on the ice. Well, no more of that; a man may rise again, I hope. I never realized before how uproarious my younger compatriots abroad may be, nor how disadvantageous it might turn out to have made myself the public limner and apologist of and for—oh, mercy, prepositions *are* tough!—their antics. Bland looked a shade scornful, and I don't blame him.

Still, I should have clapped on a few more years and broken from the ranks to greet him if he had been alone, for he has been rather civil to me (in his own peculiar lofty way) on more occasions than one. But he wasn't alone. An intense young woman with large dark eyes and a considerable overplus of "soul" was with him,

and she looked immensely like one I met at your musicale in November, where she was busily watching out for chances to frown distressfully at the slips of your performers. If she is the seemingly slender creature of good height with whom I sat for a few moments in your dusky bower, and if she is as intense in Palermo as she was in West Eightieth Street, I shall hesitate about meeting her a second time. For in answer to my simple inquiry as to what she thought of Filkins's "Lady Rosamund Risks It," the success of the season, she affected not to know who I was and coolly replied that she had no money to squander on the commercial drama! That ended Little Bertie.

Well, she may appreciate Bland. Indeed, I saw at a glance that she was an "admirer"; nay, more—as we say in real literature—a "worshipper." H'm! you know what I think of admirers and worshippers: the art-life—do you get that, my boy?—the art-life, I say, would be much more comfortable without them. When the admirers are arranged by the hundreds in the orchestra-chairs at two dollars per, it isn't so bad; but to have a single admirer come up softly and touch your coat-sleeve with her fore-finger, and say, "You're it!" might test the nerve of the strongest.

Such, I thought, was the situation in front of the Porta Felice, or whatever they call it; so I moved steadily past, with my whole train of coeducational hoodlums—*quorum pars fui*. I know that much Latin, even if I didn't get more'n two-thirds through high school. I say I should have liked—I mean, I should like to have—no, I should have liked, just as I had it at first. I should have liked, I say, to stop and do the civil with Bland; but though I say it, I don't quite mean it. You were always urging me to be friendly with him, you incorrigible "genial," but there was one thing about him you never realized, and that's this:

The fellow has two standards—one for himself and the other for me. When he wrings my hand and tells me how clever my last sketch is, or when he despatches a note to assure me how magnificently I have done on the boards, there is always present that damnable thing called styled, and entitled the *arriere pensée*—more high school. Everything is all very clever and magnificent and racy and redolent and characterful

and *patati* and *patata* (oh, how I am swimming along!)—considering. Considering what? Considering that I am an up-State jay whose only *alma mater* was a country newspaper office; considering that I never lingered for several years, as he did, in some academic New England grove and never had, as he had, any of the further advantages of travel and study abroad; considering that I couldn't distinguish Pontormo from pudding-stone or tell a biography of Guidarello Guidarelli from a treatise on double-entry bookkeeping. Yes, the warm pressure of Bland's palm, or the warmer imprint of his device on a small dab of sealing-wax, may assure me that I am racy, sincere, authentic, national, realistic, what you will—but a rail-fence hayseed, all the same. Now, am I going to thank a man very heartily for such praise as that? Let him judge me by his own standards, as applied to himself, and I will reciprocate as warmly as you please.

One more point while I am wound up. Such gilt-edged encomiums from a man who is only seven or eight years my senior savor of patronage. The circumstances don't justify them. True, he got in on the ground-floor of the Temple of Art—do you get the capitals, dear old man?—a little before I did, but not so very long before; just about long enough to thrust his arms out and seem to be helping me in. Why, I was climbing in all right *without* any help! I was sweeping along and getting a thousand hands where he was getting one.

The proportion hasn't changed much since then—that's another point to remember. If I went about boasting of the good opinion of Marcellus Bland, dozens of fellows would say, "Who the deuce *is* Marcellus Bland?" How far would Bland's name carry on upper Broadway? Half across the sidewalk? Well, perhaps so; but not much farther. Whereas, mine—but you have read it there by the month, and you shall read it there again, be sure.

Well, let's dispense with shop—at least, with that particular kind of shop. This hotel is full of all sorts of human odds and ends. I can't make much of them, but Bland could. The town itself, too, seems packed with every variety of interesting stuff. I can't make much of that, either, but Bland is doubtless putting it all to good use. Among other rarities at our Villa

here we have little Maribel Blennerhassett, some of whose people you met at Ardsley. Maribel is *my* admirer—every man has his cross. Maribel broke out of school last June, but she is still at the college-pin stage, and she is always harrying me about the sole college man I ever allowed to get before the footlights. Two or three of the genus are at large in Santa Rosalia's domain, and now and then we catch one for purposes of comparison. Maribel is always trying to make "Squab' Madison" square with them, and when he won't then they have to square with him. Maribel is loyal but wearing. If she doesn't soon go to Tunis, as she talks of doing, I shall have to switch her off on to somebody else.

If you meet the Prestons—either Senior or Junior—tell them I find the "Back Counties" everywhere, and remind them—gently—that they are getting more out of its last old frame than I am. There, now, is a book the world will not willingly let die. I found a copy in the hotel at Brussels, and one at Cannes, and one at Perugia, and there are two here. (I say nothing about the Vallombrosan effect they produced on the promenade-deck of the *Cyclonic*.) Little Maribel loves the "Back Counties" as much as anybody else does. Only yesterday I saw her offering one of the Santa Rosalia copies to an elderly Florentine and explaining to him in her own sweet way (or so I guessed) what a great man I was. He restored the volume early this morning with the sole remark that it was "curious." Once or twice during the day he has looked at me, oh, so dubiously!—as if he thought that I were curious, too. Not a bit pleasant, my dear Arthur. You see one may have a vast currency in a particular field and none whatever outside it. Bland, I fancy, might have fared better at the elderly student's hands. But of course our up-State dialect was never meant for the Tuscans.

However, I must not run on indefinitely. If I write long letters it is because I am not yet in the mood for any other kind of writing. I have had a bad jolt, I acknowledge, and I haven't quite yet begun to find myself. Try to let me know, when you reply, just how I stand with regard to club dues—a subject that has grown much too complicated for me to keep in my head. I have written Belden that positively not more than twenty-five thousand must go into

those Iowa farm mortgages. Above all, be sure that everything is done to exact a penalty from those pirates in Kentucky.

Yours, as ever,

A. J.

III

(FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARCELLUS BLAND)

PALERMO, February 13th.

I RESUME my diary. The reading public may have conspired to immure me in the Tower of Silence, but between the covers of this faithful repository I shall be as articulate as I please. After all, the best things are often accomplished in quiet and with no thought of fame.

To-day I walked out again with Miss Matthews—this time in the Villa Giulia and the Botanical Garden. An intense young person who takes her Italy in the most poignant fashion; it was all quite like a visit from one's earlier self. Miss Matthews, as I make it out, comes from somewhere up the river—from Peekskill or Newburgh; being, in some sense, a suburbanite, she is even more metropolitan than the metropolis. And having put much of her abundant and eventless leisure into study, she is more cultivated than Culture in Culture's most cultivated moments. She seems devoted, heart and soul, to the Peninsula; she is so completely Italianate as to call herself "Addolorata." If she has pushed her devotion too far she has not gone unpunished. For there is often at her elbow an elderly commonplace person, with thin hair and a plaid shawl, who plaintively calls her "Addie."

Miss Matthews's attitude toward me is most appreciative and deferential. I am certain, therefore, that she hails from the background. The sincerest worshippers are ever those simple folk who stand just within the church doorway. The "quality," whom the luxurious *prie-dieu* draws nearer to the chancel, take a calmer and more worldly view; while for a perfectly hardened and cynical estimate of the whole situation commend me to those practised creatures who serve the altar itself. Yes, Addolorata Matthews is doubtless from Peekskill.

As we sauntered down the avenue of date-palms she began to quote the "Etru-

rian Byways" to me, and she told me that she had selected a passage from it to preface a book of travel written by a very intimate friend of hers.

"Dear, dear!" I said, half in dismay.

"You are not displeased?" she asked, opening her brown eyes to their widest.

"N—no," I replied; "only I am pretty certain it was some passage that would have been improved by a recasting and by a closer study of its punctuation."

"I found no fault in it," she returned promptly. "It was that beautiful page about Cervetri and Castel d'Asso and the Fanum Voltumnæ. Cervetri," she went on, "that is one of the places I have longed to see for years. Heaven knows when I shall finally reach it. Those tombs! oh, those tombs!"

"I remember," I said gloomily. "It would have been better if I had used dashes instead of parentheses."

"When were you there?" she demanded eagerly.

"At Cervetri?"

"Yes."

"Why, I have never been there at all—as yet."

"Never been there at all? And Castel d'Asso, then? And Norchia? And Toscanella? And——"

"Well, some of them I have visited, and some of them I haven't. Intuition, my dear young woman—invention—imagination."

But my dear young woman looked at me very doubtfully. Therefore——

"If I have a *feeling* for a place," I asked, "must I visit that place and have my feeling compromised by facts?"

She made no reply, but bowed over the waxy red blossoms of a thorny euphorbia. I saw that she was disappointed and grieved. I had also given away quite unnecessarily the secrets of the shop. Therefore——

"Drop the 'Etrurian Byways,'" I said, a bit tartly, "and read 'From the Back Counties.'"

"What!" she cried, with some sharpness; "that thing by Albert What's-his-name?"

"Albert Jordan—precisely. That 'thing' is a good thing, and I'm glad you know it."

"I don't. I have found it lying about in every hotel I have visited, but I haven't once looked inside its covers. I make it a matter of principle never to read such stuff!"

"Stuff? Let me assure you that Jordan's 'stuff' is every bit as good, in its own way, as mine. And you might visit many and many a hotel, even in Italy itself, without finding a single copy of the 'Byways.'"

"I don't need to find a copy. I have my own. And I have given away a dozen others. Only—it disappoints me—to——"

"To find me describing what I don't know anything about? Well, you won't find that weakness in Jordan. He is genuine throughout. Come, read him. There is a copy of the 'Back Counties' in the *sala* of the Marina itself."

"No doubt—no doubt!"

"Nothing can beat him in the rendering of familiar things observed at first hand. Nobody can surpass him in the qualities that appeal to the normal man. He is so sane and hearty; he is so fully documented, so completely in sympathy with all the humors and oddities of his native region——"

"And doubtless as scraggly and formless as the society he depicts."

"Not at all. That's the wonder of it. He's as trim as you please. He's as clear as a bell, as clean-cut as a diamond, as exact and rigorous in form—as anybody I know. His forms are of his own devising, true, but they suit his matter to a 't.' In fact, I often read him *for* his form after my interest in the mere matter has become rather dulled."

"Is his form any more clear-cut than the form of 'The Grand Master'?"

"Why, have you read 'The Grand Master'?" I cried in amaze. Nobody had referred to the fated book in my hearing for fully six months.

"I have read it three times. Or rather, I carry it about with me everywhere and read in it habitually. But tell me, why did you go to the Tyrol for your hero?"

"To put him in contrast with my Sicilian heroine. Besides, all the recent grand masters have come from the Tyrol—or, to be more exact, from the Trentino." A fact, that—if fact were wanted.

"But his name was Italian."

"In part—as many of the names of the south Austrians are."

"Guido Camillo——" she began.

"Yes," I cried; "Frà Guido Camillo Fürst von Hochwald und Hohenberg—what a splendid assemblage of syllables!" Oh, if

you *will* talk to a man about his books select his latest—whether it be a success or a failure—his latest!

"And what a fine idea that Guido should have taken the vows! A man of mature age and devoted, by his very office, to celibacy; yet he falls in love with that charming little Contessina——"

"Contrast on contrast!" I cried enthusiastically. "He an Austrian; she an Italian. He middle-aged; she in her first youth. He bound by his vows; she free to choose and to adore—— Oh, what theme could more deliciously invite a light decorative treatment that——"

"H'm!" she said, as she thoughtfully worked her foot once or twice over the gravel path. "A treatment less light and decorative might perhaps have been justified." Her tone had a tinge of discontent.

"Tell me," she asked again, after having smoothed down the gravel with a shining black toe, "have you visited the palace of the Order in Rome?"

"In the Via Condotti? Yes."

"And the church of the Order on the Aventine?"

"Santa Maria del Priorato? Well, I have paced off the ilex-path there and have seen the dome of St. Peter's through the key-hole of their garden gate, but I have never been inside the church itself."

"I have," she said reproachfully. "I attended there the funeral of the late grand master."

Wonderful creature! Going everywhere, knowing everything, exacting as much from others as from herself! To be the idol of such a worshipper must certainly be no sinecure. Might I but help her to find some other saint standing in some other niche!

She paused, and during the pause she looked at me most intently. Finally she spoke.

"Have you ever—have you ever——?" she began, and braced herself for a blow.

I knew what was coming. "Have you ever been to Malta?"—that was the question she was trying to ask, and the question she presently did ask.

"No," I was obliged to answer, and felt like an assassin.

"But Valetta," she faltered, "is full of their old 'auberges,' I hear; and the palace of the governor is hung with portraits of the grand masters; and the cathedral is

set thick with their monuments; and the streets and ramparts are wrapped in memories of the old days when knight and Turk fought for mastery; and—and—I was going there next week, and——"

"And all on your account!" her eyes plainly said.

"Oh, heavens!" I groaned inwardly. This was worship, indeed—worship of the most exigent description. Now, the saint—oh, nothing is truer!—ought to maintain the level of the faith itself, and I, alas, was pitifully falling far below it. What to do? I jumped down from my niche and rushed forth from the fane.

"Read Jordan!" I cried. "He knows every street in Fudgeville, and every house at Tompkins' Corners, and every pike throughout the length and breadth of good old Herkimer! Encourage him. He is a 'native author' as much as I am—more so, in fact. Do homage—for he is in position to accept it; he is in Palermo, too."

She looked at me in some bewilderment; partly, too, as if she were about to tax me with ingratitude.

"Yes," she said slowly; "I had an idea that that man at the Porta Felice might perhaps be he. I met him once, I think, in a half-lighted drawing-room. So," she went on, "that tall, slender young man with the cool blue-gray eyes and the broad square shoulders and the nice light-gray suit was Albert Jordan. Well, he looked civilized enough."

"He *is* civilized. Yes, his are the cool blue-gray eyes and the broad square shoulders"—my own shoulders, I acknowledge, have become somewhat rounded and humpy. "Herkimer County is full of such youths. They grow tall and slender and broad-shouldered and cool-eyed. And when they come down to town the light-gray suit is added unto them. Then, if a final perfection is required, a white camellia is added unto the button-hole of the light-gray suit. As in that case!"

And I waved my hand toward a cross-path, where a tall, slender young man with cool eyes and broad shoulders and a light-gray suit with a white camellia in the button-hole, was tiptoeing along with a cautious outlook over the adjacent shrubbery—Albert Jordan in his own person.

He was alone. There was no reason why he should not stop to speak as he

reached us, and he did. He was perfectly civil, though not very cordial; and he referred whimsically to the retinue that had attended his steps on the occasion of our other encounter.

"I have escaped from the kindergarten—for a little," he said; "and if we don't speak too loud perhaps they won't catch me again." A juvenile clamor made itself heard from an adjoining alley, and we felt that he might be recaptured at any moment. "I am not a kid," he went on, "however much appearances may be against me. Try to regard me as a grown-up, please."

He straightened himself till he was half a head above either of us, and drew on the slow, sweet smile that he always wears for his first-night curtain speeches. That smile never fails, and I saw that it was not to fail now. It immediately became clear that Addolorata Matthews was prepared at least to "endure." I felt that I should never again be taxed for my failure to visit Malta and blessed myself for my lavish praise of Jordan and all his works.

Fragments of a college cry now broke on our ears—a college cry of the most "fresh-water" character—and Jordan was presently claimed by his own. It was the same band of young people that had swarmed about him on the Marina—two or three youths pausing between Academe and Business, and a brace of tousle-headed young girls. The more vociferous of the latter was presented to me as Miss Blennerhassett.

"How do?" she half gasped, half panted, in an excessively cursory fashion, and at once turned back her attention to her youths—to Jordan himself first and foremost. It seemed to count for nothing with her untrained consciousness that it was she who had been presented to me, and not I to her. But there are those with whom no one—not even the best—can expect to stand as a personage.

Now there is a freemasonry among men, just as there is among women. Jordan gave me a glance. "Take this insufferable child off my hands," his eyes plainly said. I liked that of Jordan. I felt that now at last the barriers had been swept away and that he was about to admit me as a friend—the inner chamber after the vestibule.

During our few remaining moments in

the garden I did what I could to favor him, though the girl evidently had no knowledge of me or of my works, and no faintest shade of deference for me—nor, as it would appear, for anybody or anything else. However, I annexed Miss Maribel Blennerhassett and her young associates, while Jordan and Addolorata Matthews strolled along in our rear.

Is he disposed to render me a *quid pro quo*? That fine action would make us friends, indeed!

IV

(FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALBERT JORDAN)

PALERMO, February 19, 1903.

Stanhope may take his time over the plans for the enlarged terrace, but everything must be right. That south-east angle, my dear Arthur, should not fail to give me the best possible outlook on the Sound and to bring in the Long Island hills to the greatest advantage. The place is costing me big money, and I want all the landscape I can appropriate.

I went up to Monreale yesterday, on the track (though I talk like a fly) of a certain carved and painted ceiling. I found the thing rather mediocre both in design and execution, but it is old and authentic, and is touched with just a bit of Saracenic wildness, and I imagine I shall end by having it sent over for the drawing-room at Cobblestone Corners. I suppose I must trust to you to find somebody capable of putting it up.

While at Monreale I looked into the cathedral. It had to be done one time or another, and I thought I might as well do it and have it over with. Some sort of fête happened to be going on, and the big cool place was trimmed sparsely with crimson hangings. Two or three of them would make first-rate curtains for my den. A few people were strolling about—among them that Miss Matthews you are always trying to have me appreciate. "Addolorata Matthews"—it doesn't sound quite right, does it? The two names don't seem to go together. Sometime, when we get a little better acquainted, I'm going to ask her what her name really is. There's a good deal to the girl, I am ready to acknowledge; and that

story-book appellation of hers must be just a bit of whimsey. But one may be guilty of almost any monkey-shine in this romantic region.

There was a parade of priests and choristers and acolytes and all, and their reds gave the chill old cavern quite a touch of color; but somehow or other Miss Matthews and I got to talking and a good deal of the function went for nothing. She told me lots about the tremendous layout of mosaics overhead—a well-posted young woman, Arthur, if ever there was one. Left to myself, I never should have made head or tail of them, and I don't quite see even yet how I could use any of them in Connecticut; but she made it all mighty interesting and I came away a wiser and a better man. She also told me something about the music, which has a form and a procedure that a poor farm-hand from Herkimer could hardly have suspected. And then she did a little literature for me—oh, she put the daughter of Herodias nowhere! She talked about *my* literature—at last, at last! And her tone was the winsome tone of apology.

"My dear Mr. Jordan," she said, just as earnestly as you can think, "I am going to beg your pardon a hundred times over. I have been very unfair to you, and very prejudiced. But I have just finished reading 'From the Back Counties,' and I want to tell you how much I think of it. It is all so real, so honest, so earnest; yes, and so touching. I know you don't expect people to be very much affected by that christening in the Methodist meeting-house, but along toward the end I couldn't quite hold in a sob——"

However, you must know about what she said—so many others have said it. I just mention the sob because that part was sort o' new and different. I guess she meant it, too; anyway, she had a kind of little twitch to her mouth and a suspicion of moisture in her eye. And to think that I should have always considered her a piece of pure intellect!

Still, a very little moisture is enough—you know my theory about overdoing it. So, to secure the floodgates, I said:

"This is a sudden conversion. Who brought it about?"

"Mr. Bland. He insisted that I should read you."

"Very friendly of him," I replied cautiously. "Very decent indeed."

"He *is* friendly to you. He has followed everything you have done, and has nothing but praise for all."

"My plays, too?"

"Yes."

"And when are you going to do justice to *them*? Oh, I forgot; you don't encourage the 'commercial drama.'"

Was that a mean dig? Well, she passed it over grandly.

"I don't believe your plays can be 'commercial,' and I am going to begin to 'encourage' them as soon as I get back."

Rather nice and high-minded of her, wasn't it?

"Well," I said, "you will generally find some one or other of them running on Broadway. And the rest can be picked up—more or less mangled—in Michigan or Utah."

"I shall pick them up," she declared. Then, "Have you read anything of Mr. Bland's?" she asked me.

"Why, no, not exactly," I acknowledged. "But I have met a press notice now and then. I don't think I should quite fancy his things. Aren't they like the parade in this church—a small fire in a very large, cold room?"

"There's the 'Etrurian Byways,'" she submitted.

"They're a long way from here," I objected.

"There's 'The Grand Master,'" she proceeded. "That's nearer. At Malta."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Must I skip along to still another island?"

"Well, there's 'Emir and Troubadour.' That isn't his best book, but the scene is partly laid right here in Palermo. It's an historical romance, at the court of the Emperor Frederick the Second."

"I might look into this last, I suppose, if it's as instructive as that."

"A lady at my hotel has a copy, and I think I could borrow it for you."

She spoke with no particular enthusiasm, and I surmised that what principally prompted her was a sense of fairness.

"Do so, by all means," I rejoined. "I am willing to do the right thing by Bland, since he has been so decent to me."

But you understand, dear Arthur, that I am not abroad for the purpose of plodding

through historical novels. However, I disposed of the book in my best reviewing style—I read the opening chapter, and the closing one, and another from the middle. Then I turned it over to little Maribel Blennerhassett. Maribel isn't beyond the age for learning, and a trifle more knowledge won't do her a bit of harm. She is busy on the book now; she sits with it in the sun-parlor and hasn't made a pass at me for twenty-four hours. Bland is a pretty good sort, after all.

Upon leaving the cathedral we strolled about for a time. Noble views whichever way we turned—and you know I save the word “noble” for deserving occasions. The almond-trees were coming out, and from the hill-slope below the apse of the church—the apse, Arthur, is the round part at the back—the perfume of the orange-blossoms surged up tremendously. I don't generally care much for orange-blossoms, as you know; in fact, when I acted as usher for Johnny Frazer I should have stamped if you hadn't tied me to the chancel-rail with a length of that white satin ribbon. To-day, however, the odor was less disconcerting—perhaps our being in the open air made some difference.

“Addolorata” Matthews!—no, such an accordion-plaited name doesn't do. And the aged crone who circled about us at a discreet distance once came up and called her “Addie!”—and neither does that. Oh me! oh, my! there must be some golden mean. What is it? You needn't take the trouble to cable, but don't forget that point next time you write.

Say, it was awfully fine of her to sob, wasn't it?

I am glad I am going to have all that extra room at Cobblestones. I begin to feel that I shall be able, before long, to rehabilitate myself in the public eye, and a thumping big house-party about Thanksgiving time is coming to loom up pretty large in my own.

Yours, as ever,

A. J.

V

(THE MEDITATIONS OF ADDOLORATA MATTHEWS)

PALERMO, February 24, 1903.

No, I cannot look upon myself as a Puritan, else why should I have abandoned my-

self so completely to the ever-delightful South? Yet I have never so far let go my hold upon the more serious realities as to accept grace for thoroughness or mere attractiveness for solidity. A work of art is best, no doubt, when it rises effortlessly from its conditions; yet it should rise, not as an exhalation from the water, but rather as a flower from the soil. And the soil, for us strayed revellers, lies no doubt in another part of the world; we are far from home. With every passing day I come to feel surer that, after all, I still view the great fundamentals through the atmosphere of my native Poughkeepsie. It is well, I apprehend, that this should be so, and better that it should continue to be so. A woman who is approaching twenty-eight may becomingly devote some thought to the solid actualities of life; it is proper that she should begin to feel for firm ground beneath her feet—and the firmest of all ground is that offered by the land of her birth.

We drove to-day to Bagheria and Solunto. Aunt Juliana easily persuaded herself that the excursion would overtax her powers, and decided to remain behind. In any event, Mr. Jordan could not have been expected, as one of a party of five, to sit beside the driver. Mr. Bland has an immense feeling for villas, and I for classical remains; and Albert Jordan (despite his curious way of expressing—or, of withholding—himself) cherishes as pronounced a passion for the mountains and the sea; so all three of us had cause for gratification, and the 24th of February, for me, at least, will ever remain a red-letter day.

The little Blennerhassett girl begged very prettily, yet pertinaciously, to go with us; and although Mr. Jordan insisted that I could in no degree fill the place of chaperon, Mr. Bland thought a point might be stretched. I rather dreaded the child, but really she behaved very well. A change has come over her—she has entered upon a new phase. Somebody or something has caught her at the psychological moment and she is transforming before our eyes. She is rising from a conception of her little college world to a conception of the world at large. To-day, for the first time since I have been meeting her she left her college-pin aside, and she has learned to move among the beauties of art and of nature without the emission of a single war-cry.

She told me, as we were bowling along the seashore, that only yesterday she had persuaded her parents—or her guardians—to take her out to La Favara, the remains of which, lying a mile or so inland, she enthusiastically indicated. All this is due, I suppose, to her reading of Marcellus Bland's story, which devotes several rather good chapters to the brilliant doings of the Emperor Frederick's court. If it be really Mr. Bland who has caught and tamed and transmogrified this young hoyden, all that he needs is a little more currency to rank with Schiller and Scott as a benefactor of youth. Her whole attitude toward him has changed most amusingly; the deference and the apologetic remorse she displays set very well upon her, and have not yet begun to annoy him.

Of course the villas at Bagheria, from one point of view, are quite preposterous. I hope it was an amelioration of taste, rather than anything else, which caused their owners to abandon them. But Mr. Jordan was greatly taken by their fantastic sculptures, and I soon saw that he viewed all pleasure-seats, as well as many things besides, from the standpoint of his own fine new place in New England. He let fall many descriptive hints of this notable estate—the result, as it appears, of but three or four years of his own unaided efforts. Mr. Bland, in so far as I am able to learn, has no landed property and would find the care of such possessions irksome. His treasures are elsewhere. He enjoyed all the villas most heartily, however—as the possessions and responsibilities of others. I think our enthusiasm rose highest at the Villa Valguarnera, upon the terrace of which Mr. Jordan—who is vastly taken up with terraces—became quite lyrical. It was a moment of the most precious self-revelation, and I liked and admired him as never before. Mr. Bland, who made some references to his native Hartford, was far from being vivid or convincing.

Then we drove up the hill-slope to Solunto, where the compact brown ruins of the little old Roman town were awaiting us with all composure. And on this height the sunset found us. Here, through the golden-purple haze, Cape Zaffarano called across the bay to Monte Pellegrino, and Palermo, la Felice—the Happy City—rose from the shining cincture of the Conca

d'Oro. Little Maribel looked out over the wide prospect with eyes that seemed to say, "Why have I never seen the world before?" And at a certain angle of one of those straight and narrow little streets Albert Jordan laid his long slim hand upon one of those immemorial brown blocks and looked me in the face very calmly, and told me that he had had an idea.

"I see a new play," he said. "It will be no kid thing; and it will be no home-spun thing, either. It will treat of grown men and women out in the big world." He smiled a crooked, whimsical smile, but there was a little tremor in his voice.

I apprehended a moment of exaltation, and did not ask him the source and nature of his sudden idea. I cannot credit the foolish old pleasaunces of Bagheria with it, nor can I relate it to the long-dead stones of Solunto. Ah, well, the alchemy of genius—and Albert Jordan is probably a genius, in his way—must ever elude all our little tests and formulæ.

February 26.

This afternoon the Battle of Flowers in the grounds of La Favorita, at the base of Monte Pellegrino. Albert Jordan asked me to drive with him, and as I had the proper frock and hat, I accepted without compunction. He had had the light vehicle very tastefully decorated and had provided plenty of flowers, and he handled the ribbons over a strange horse with much skill and composure. He had picked up—I know not how—all the vocabulary needed to urge or to restrain the creature; he would have found it hard, he explained facetiously, to sit still and "just be driv'." The day was lovely and the occasion perfect of its kind. Admission to the enclosure was by ticket, and there was no bandying of bedraggled flowers that had been forced back into service by street gamins clinging to the steps of one's carriage, as at Nice or Monaco.

"It isn't hilarious; it isn't overcrowded!" said Albert Jordan through his twisted lips, as the two lines of equipages drove back and forth decorously. "But it is choice."

He appreciated the quality of it all most acutely. Why should I have assumed that he would give the preference to quantity—to the measure, pressed down and running over, of a rabble rout in a wide metropolitan avenue?

Maribel Blennerhassett, forced down a peg or two from her recent lofty stand by the festal nature of the occasion and its opportunities for unconventional merriment, appeared in a large and elaborately decorated conveyance with a party of her young friends. Mr. Bland was among them. He threw flowers with a carefully calculated abandon, but seemed out of place and rather unhappy.

The Corso was not crowded, neither was the pace rapid; and presently Albert Jordan began to talk about his play. I, meanwhile, sped a few perfunctory flowers at attentive passers-by, tossing a nosegay to Mr. Bland, who looked rather foolish (whatever the admiring gaze of Maribel Blennerhassett might say) in a neck-chain of anemones. The first act of the new drama was already sketched out. "And later on," the author declared, waving his beribboned whip over the shifting assemblage, "there shall be something like this—only much more so, of course."

"You are going to let me have your idea?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; presently, presently; not in this madding crowd. Later on; when the hurly-burly's done. In fact, there will be several points where you can help me, if you will."

If I will! Well, I have seen something of the world, fortunately; and so, by this time, has he. It is a rich, complicated place, and I shall watch with interest his gallant endeavor to make something of it. Simply to save him from mistakes would be a service. Here, no doubt, are the "several points"; but we shall be clever and wary enough to weather them.

The idea, then, remains, thus far, undeclared. But as we ambled along he imagined for me a Battle of Flowers at Beaver Falls, with Uncle Jed Parsons, the hero of forty Fourth-of-July parades and of innumerable county fairs, as chief marshal. It was very exhilarating, but I should be quite willing for him to fit his instrument with new strings. I think he means to.

It is unlikely that I shall try for Malta. The steamer from Syracuse is very small, I am told, and the passage most trying. Mr. Bland, I must confess, has rather disappointed me, and, in any event, "The Grand Master" is a thing of the past. I find myself in close touch with the tingling actuali-

ties of the present, and feel that I shall do better service by remaining here.

VI

(FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALBERT JORDAN)

PALERMO, March 3, 1903.

THE blow, dear Arthur, has fallen. At last the single "admirer" has come up and touched my coat-sleeve with her forefinger and called me "It." The forefinger belongs to Miss Matthews—if you ever thought me backward about coming forward, think so no more. I don't know what she sees in me; but it is there, and she sees it. I must take her word for it. Our engagement is an accomplished fact, and our marriage will follow presently.

You may ask how the event occurred, and you are entitled to know. It took place yesterday within a certain old Saracenic pavilion on the edge of the town. There was a floor mosaicked in peacocks, and a fountain in good running order, and a series of mottoes which, Her Divine Intelligence said, were in the old Cufic text. I am not a bit versed in Cufic, but a clairvoyant flash helped me to read all those mottoes on the instant. The first one said, "Faint Heart never won Fair Lady." The second said, "Bachelors are the Poorest Sort of Horned Cattle." The third said, "Be Prompt and you will be Happy." The fountain, too, was babbling rather foolishly, and I babbled along with it. My observations, halting as they were, had the good fortune to please my only auditor, and the trick was done.

"And now, my dear girl," I said immediately after—"and now, my dear girl"—yes, sir; just as bold as that—"what is your really-truly name?"

She hesitated for a moment and blushed a little, and then told me what you probably know perfectly well already. Her name is not "Addolorata"; neither is it "Addie." It's Dora.

Dora. There! "Good," said I. "I like 'Dora' extremely. There's no letter I enjoy writing more than capital D. So 'Dora' it stands."

She shrugged slightly. "My pose is over. Let us banish the exotic. Henceforth we will rest upon the realities."

I dined last night at her hotel, taking the realities in six courses. Marcellus Bland hailed us befittingly. The dowdy old lady at Dora's other elbow broke out quite bravely in dinner dress and found the right things to say. It may be, after all, that I am on the edge of "society." You are acquainted in Poughkeepsie, and may know as well as I do; perhaps better.

We shall probably be married toward the end of the month, in Rome. With regard to the terrace at Cobblestone Corners, Stanhope will have to work in a few more pedestals; Dora will see about the statues as we pass through Florence. Relative to a herd of cattle, I shall do nothing hasty; Dora may prefer a bunch of longhorns from the Roman Campagna. Please contract at once with some reliable nurseryman for a dozen stone-pines, to be placed in carefully arranged disorder—they are her favorite tree. Also kindly communicate with the chief of the U. S. Coast Survey and tell him to raise the Long Island hills four or five hundred feet. At the same time he may change the waters of the Sound to a blue about three shades deeper.

One word more. I am up to my neck in a new play. It will be a winner. The idea is immense, and we have the first act blocked out, and all the notions for the second. I mean to show the world that I am no longer a juvenile, nor a hayseed. This time we tackle good society—New York society, as being the only sort that the American public much cares for. There will be costumes and furnishings, never fear; we shall try to be discreetly swell without being tawdry. The "upper classes," my boy, have hearts and feelings, and we must try to find our way to them, both on the stage and off.

As one means of preparation, we shall try to see some society on the way home. We shall reach Florence about the middle of April for what Dora calls the "stagione brillante," and we shall try later to do justice to Paris and London. I shall land at New York with the thing as good as written; it will be pulled off in November, and Cobblestone Hall (as Dora may prefer to call it) will be a very jolly spot, believe me, about next Christmas.

For our wedding at the embassy in Rome I should naturally have preferred you as best man; but you are many miles away and cumbered with many cares—mine, as

well as your own. Bland, whom you admire, and to whom we may conceive ourselves as under obligations, will be asked to take your place. He has lost an old disciple, but he has gained a new one. Little Miss Blennerhassett is taking him up like a sponge that has just learned of the existence of water. Under cover of her attentions and exactions the defection of Miss Dora Matthews passes almost unnoticed. Have I done Bland a kindness? Or have I played the poor fellow something of a trick? If the latter, all the more reason for asking his participation in the little affair at the embassy.

Dora joins with me in best regards.

Yours, as ever,

A. J.

VII

(FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARCELLUS BLAND)

NAPLES, March 12, 1903.

How sweet is obscurity! How charming, after all, is neglect! How odious, on the contrary, is adulation grown rampant! How calamitous to have pressed an electric buzzer that will not cease even when one's finger is removed. Miss Blennerhassett, in brief, has been too much for me. She showed no sign of leaving Palermo, so I left instead. Jordan tells me I "awoke her mind." But it was a mind like the bottomless pit. Nothing could fill it. The ravenous young creature seized on everything I wrote. She was bent on an instant assimilation of everything I knew. She took all my time and all my knowledge. I fled; now let me rest in peace.

Miss Matthews writes to me pleasantly from Taormina about the play. Jordan is there, too, of course—and adds a postscript. I gather that she is to initiate him into the mysteries of "society." Well, the acute consciousness of a comparative outsider will perhaps be of more service to him than the dulled perceptions of one to the manner born. Still—to avoid any injustice—she *may* be that *lusus nature*, a social personage with some concern for the things of the mind.

I go to Rome on the 28th for their wedding. It is sudden, but Jordan is a man of decision. At one time I fancied that he slighted me, but now all difficulties are re-



"Read Jordan!" I cried.—Page 722.

moved and no understanding could be more complete.

As for his bride to be, she will think more highly of me when she learns that I have spent a week to the southward and have finally seen Malta. It is quite what I expected, and substantially as I described it.

My intuitions are never at fault. As regards their own affair, I divined its whole course at the moment of their first meeting in the Villa Giulia. When one's intuitions are in such satisfactory working order what need to indulge in the laborious accumulation of mere facts?



A Ballad of Messengers

BY LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVE RUSH

THE priest was in his room;
One taper pricked the gloom
Past midnight: it and he
Flames burning weariedly.
Now sleep was needed sore,
But a knock came at the door.

Said the old servant then:
"Sir, little gentlemen
Await below, who plead
Some dying creature's need.
There's a London mile to go
In starshine and hard snow."

Out to the Church he went
For the saving Sacrament,
Aware, even as he pressed
The pyx against his breast,
That beautiful, elate,
Beside the chancel gate

Was one not seven years old,
And one of mien less bold,
With torches, on their knees,
In decent surplices.
Blown lilies of one stem,
They rose; he followed them.

How ghostly, in the dark,
The frozen streets! A park,
An empty square; again
Streets; and a twisted lane,
And down the lane a door.
The bright, bare heads before

Entered in turn, and shone
The rotten stair upon.
Close was the priest behind,
When both the lights went blind!
And, sudden as the light,
Both children vanished quite.