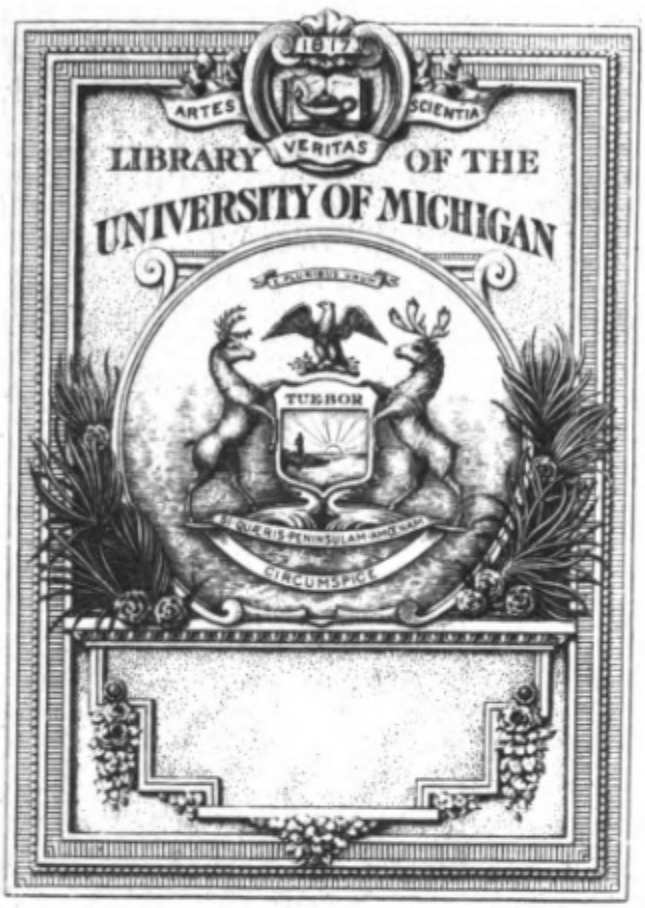
A 518514

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



THE GIFT OF
Henry S. Curtis

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

825
R58u.
1912

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Not—not *Dicky* Carter!" she cried.

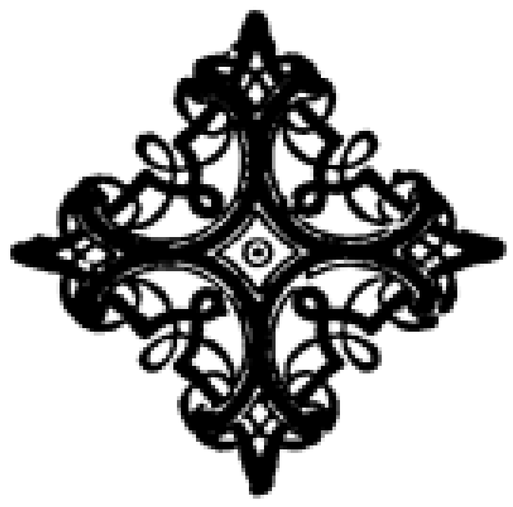
Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

BY MARY (ROBERTS) RINEHART

Author of "The Window at the White Cat," "The Man in Lower Ten," "When a Man Marries," etc.



A. L. BURT COMPANY

PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

COPYRIGHT 1912
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	I Have a Warning	1
II	Miss Patty Arrives	12
III	A Will	20
IV	And a Way	30
V	Wanted—An Owner	43
VI	The Conspiracy	54
VII	Mr. Pierce Acquires a Wife	62
VIII	And Mr. Moody Indigestion	77
IX	Dolly, How Could You?	96
X	Another Complication	115
XI	Miss Patty's Prince	126
XII	We Get a Doctor	140
XIII	The Prince—Principally	152
XIV	Pierce Disapproves	161
XV	The Prince, With Apologies	170
XVI	Stop, Thief!	177
XVII	A Bunch of Letters	187
XVIII	Miss Cobb's Burglar	198
XIX	No Marriage in Heaven	205
XX	Every Dog Has His Day	218
XXI	The Mutiny	228
XXII	Home to Roost	241
XXIII	Back to Nature	253
XXIV	Like Ducks to Water	265
XXV	The First Fruits	282
XXVI	Over the Fence Is Out	297
XXVII	A Cupboard Full of Rye	310
XXVIII	Love, Love, Love	321
XXIX	A Big Night To-night	330
XXX	Let Good Digestion	344

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

CHAPTER I

I HAVE A WARNING

WHEN it was all over Mr. Sam came out to the spring-house to say good-by to me before he and Mrs. Sam left. I hated to see him go, after all we had been through together, and I suppose he saw it in my face, for he came over close and stood looking down at me, and smiling. "You saved us, Minnie," he said, "and I needn't tell you we're grateful; but do you know what I think?" he asked, pointing his long forefinger at me. "I think you've enjoyed it even when you were suffering most. Red-haired women are born to intrigue, as the sparks fly upward."

"Enjoyed it!" I snapped. "I'm an old woman before my time, Mr. Sam. What with trailing back

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and forward through the snow to the shelter-house, and not getting to bed at all some nights, and my heart going by fits and starts, as you may say, and half the time my spinal marrow fairly chilled—not to mention putting on my overshoes every morning from force of habit and having to take them off again, I'm about all in."

"It's been the making of you, Minnie," he said, eying me, with his hands in his pockets. "Look at your cheeks! Look at your disposition! I don't believe you'd stab anybody in the back now!"

(Which was a joke, of course; I never stabbed anybody in the back.)

He sauntered over and dropped a quarter into the slot-machine by the door, but the thing was frozen up and refused to work. I've seen the time when Mr. Sam would have kicked it, but he merely looked at it and then at me.

"Turned virtuous, like everything else around the place. Not that I don't approve of virtue, Minnie, but I haven't got used to putting my foot on the brass rail of the bar and ordering a nut sundæ. Hook the money out with a hairpin, Minnie, and buy some shredded wheat in remembrance of me."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

He opened the door and a blast of February wind rattled the window-frames. Mr. Sam threw out his chest under his sweater and waved me another good-by.

"Well, I'm off, Minnie," he said. "Take care of yourself and don't sit too tight on the job; learn to rise a bit in the saddle."

"Good-by, Mr. Sam!" I called, putting down Miss Patty's doily and following him to the door; "good-by; better have something before you start to keep you warm."

He turned at the corner of the path and grinned back at me.

"All right," he called. "I'll go down to the bar and get a lettuce sandwich!"

Then he was gone, and happy as I was, I knew I would miss him terribly. I got a wire hairpin and went over to the slot-machine, but when I had finally dug out the money I could hardly see it for tears.

* * * * * * *

It began when the old doctor died. I suppose you have heard of Hope Sanatorium and the mineral spring that made it famous. Perhaps you have seen the blotter we got out, with a flash-light interior of

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

the spring-house on it, and me handing the old doctor a glass of mineral water, and wearing the embroidered linen waist that Miss Patty Jennings gave me that winter. The blotters were a great success. Below the picture it said, "Yours for health," and in the body of the blotter, in red lettering, "Your system absorbs the health-giving drugs in Hope Springs water as this blotter soaks up ink."

The "Yours for health" was my idea.

I have been spring-house girl at Hope Springs Sanatorium for fourteen years. My father had the position before me, but he took rheumatism, and as the old doctor said, it was bad business policy to spend thousands of dollars in advertising that Hope Springs water cured rheumatism, and then have father creaking like a rusty hinge every time he bent over to fill a glass with it.

Father gave me one piece of advice the day he turned the spring-house over to me.

"It's a difficult situation, my girl," he said. "Lots of people think it's simply a matter of filling a glass with water and handing it over the railing. Why, I tell you a barkeeper's a high-priced man mostly, and his job's a snap to this. I'd like to know how a

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

barkeeper would make out if his customers came back only once a year and he had to remember whether they wanted their drinks cold or hot or 'chill off'. And another thing: if a chap comes in with a tale of woe, does the barkeeper have to ask him what he's doing for it, and listen while he tells how much weight he lost in a blanket sweat? No, sir; he pushes him a bottle and lets it go at that."

Father passed away the following winter. He'd been a little bit delirious, and his last words were: "Yes, sir; hot, with a pinch of salt, sir?" Poor father! The spring had been his career, you may say, and I like to think that perhaps even now he is sitting by some everlasting spring measuring out water with a golden goblet instead of the old tin dipper. I said that to Mr. Sam once, and he said he felt quite sure that I was right, and that where father was the water would be appreciated. He had heard of father.

Well, for the first year or so I nearly went crazy. Then I found things were coming my way. I've got the kind of mind that never forgets a name or face and can combine them properly, which isn't common. And when folks came back I could call them at once. It would do your heart good to see some

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

politician, coming up to rest his stomach from the free bar in the state house at the capital, enter the spring-house where everybody is playing cards and drinking water and not caring a rap whether he's the man that cleans the windows or the secretary of the navy. If he's been there before, in sixty seconds I have his name on my tongue and a glass of water in his hand, and have asked him about the rheumatism in his right knee and how the children are. And in ten minutes he's sitting in a bridge game and trotting to the spring to have his glass refilled during his dummy hand, as if he'd grown up in the place. The old doctor used to say my memory was an asset to the sanatorium.

He depended on me a good bit—the old doctor did—and that winter he was pretty feeble. (He was only seventy, but he'd got in the habit of making it eighty to show that the mineral water kept him young. Finally he got to *being* eighty, from thinking it, and he died of senility in the end.)

He was in the habit of coming to the spring-house every day to get his morning glass of water and read the papers. For a good many years it had been his custom to sit there, in the winter by the wood fire

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and in the summer just inside the open door, and to read off the headings aloud while I cleaned around the spring and polished glasses.

"I see the president is going fishing, Minnie," he'd say, or "Airbrake is up to 133; I wish I'd bought it that time I dreamed about it. It was you who persuaded me not to, Minnie."

And all that winter, with the papers full of rumors that Miss Patty Jennings was going to marry a prince, we'd followed it by the spring-house fire, the old doctor and I, getting angry at the Austrian emperor for opposing it when we knew how much too good Miss Patty was for any foreigner, and then getting nervous and fussed when we read that the prince's mother was in favor of the match and it might go through. Miss Patty and her father came every winter to Hope Springs and I couldn't have been more anxious about it if she had been my own sister.

Well, as I say, it all began the very day the old doctor died. He stamped out to the spring-house with the morning paper about nine o'clock, and the wedding seemed to be all off. The paper said the emperor had definitely refused his consent and had

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

sent the prince, who was his cousin, for a Japanese cruise, while the Jennings family was going to Mexico in their private car. The old doctor was indignant, and I remember how he tramped up and down the spring-house, muttering that the girl had had a lucky escape, and what did the emperor expect if beauty and youth and wealth weren't enough. But he calmed down, and soon he was reading that the papers were predicting an early spring, and he said we'd better begin to increase our sulphur percentage in the water.

I hadn't seen anything strange in his manner, although we'd all noticed how feeble he was growing, but when he got up to go back to the sanatorium and I reached him his cane, it seemed to me he avoided looking at me. He went to the door and then turned and spoke to me over his shoulder.

"By the way," he remarked, "Mr. Richard will be along in a day or so, Minnie. You'd better break it to Mrs. Wiggins."

Since the summer before we'd had to break Mr. Dick's coming to Mrs. Wiggins the housekeeper, owing to his finding her false front where it had blown out of a window, having been hung up to dry,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and his wearing it to luncheon as whiskers. Mr. Dick was the old doctor's grandson.

"Humph!" I said, and he turned around and looked square at me.

"He's a good boy at heart, Minnie," he said. "We've had our troubles with him, you and I, but everything has been quiet lately."

When I didn't say anything he looked discouraged, but he had a fine way of keeping on until he gained his point, had the old doctor.

"It *has* been quiet, hasn't it?" he demanded.

"I don't know," I said; "I have been deaf since the last explosion!" And I went down the steps to the spring. I heard the tap of his cane as he came across the floor, and I knew he was angry.

"Confound you, Minnie," he exclaimed, "if I could get along without you I'd discharge you this minute."

"And if I paid any attention to your discharging me I'd have been gone a dozen times in the last year," I retorted. "I'm not objecting to Mr. Dick coming here, am I? Only don't expect me to burst into song about it. Shut the door behind you when you go out."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

But he didn't go at once. He stood watching me polish glasses and get the card-tables ready, and I knew he still had something on his mind.

"Minnie," he said at last, "you're a shrewd young woman—maybe more head than heart, but that's well enough. And with your temper under control, you're a *capable* young woman."

"What has Mr. Dick been up to now?" I asked, growing suspicious.

"Nothing. But I'm an old man, Minnie, a very old man."

"Stuff and nonsense," I exclaimed, alarmed. "You're only seventy. That's what comes of saying in the advertising that you are eighty—to show what the springs have done for you. It's enough to make a man die of senility to have ten years tacked to his age."

"And if," he went on, "if anything happens to me, Minnie, I'm counting on you to do what you can for the old place. You've been here a good many years, Minnie."

"Fourteen years I have been ladling out water at this spring," I said, trying to keep my lips from trembling. "I wouldn't be at home any place else,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

unless it would be in an aquarium. But don't ask me to stay here and help Mr. Dick sell the old place for a summer hotel. For that's what he'll do."

"He won't sell it," declared the old doctor grimly.

"All I want is for you to promise to stay."

"Oh, I'll stay," I said. "I won't promise to be agreeable, but I'll stay. Somebody'll have to look after the spring; I reckon Mr. Dick thinks it comes out of the earth just as we sell it, with the whole pharmacopœia in it."

Well, it made the old doctor happier, and I'm not sorry I promised, but I've got a joint on my right foot that throbs when it is going to rain or I am going to have bad luck, and it gave a jump then. I might have known there was trouble ahead.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER II

MISS PATTY ARRIVES

IT was pretty quiet in the spring-house that day after the old doctor left. It had started to snow and only the regulars came out. What with the old doctor talking about dying, and Miss Patty Jennings gone to Mexico, when I'd been looking forward to her and her cantankerous old father coming to Hope Springs for February, as they mostly did, I was depressed all day. I got to the point where Mr. Moody feeding nickels into the slot-machine with one hand and eating *zwieback* with the other made me nervous. After a while he went to sleep over it, and when he had slipped a nickel in his mouth and tried to put the *zwieback* in the machine he muttered something and went up to the house.

I was glad to be alone. I drew a chair in front of the fire and wondered what I would do if the old doctor died, and what a fool I'd been not to be a school-teacher, which is what I studied for. I was

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

thinking to myself bitterly that all that my experience in the spring fitted me for was to be a mermaid, when I heard something running down the path, and it turned out to be Tillie, the diet cook.

She slammed the door behind her and threw the Finleyville evening paper at me.

"There!" she said, "I've won a cake of toilet soap from Bath-house Mike. The emperor's consented."

"Nonsense!" I snapped, and snatched the paper. Tillie was right; the emperor *had!* I sat down and read it through, and there was Miss Patty's picture in an oval and the prince's in another, with a turned-up mustache and his hand on the handle of his sword, and between them both was the Austrian emperor. Tillie came and looked over my shoulder.

"I'm not keen on the mustache," she said, "but the sword's beautiful—and, oh, Minnie, isn't he aristocratic? Look at his nose!"

But I'm not one to make up my mind in a hurry, and I'd heard enough talk about foreign marriages in the years I'd been dipping out mineral water to make me a skeptic, so to speak.

"I'm not so sure," I said slowly. "You can't tell anything by that kind of a picture. If he was even

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

standing beside a chair I could get a line on him. He may be only four feet high."

"Then Miss Jennings wouldn't love him," declared Tillie. "How do you reckon he makes his mustache point up like that?"

"What's love got to do with it?" I demanded. "Don't be a fool, Tillie. It takes more than two people's pictures in a newspaper with a red heart around them and an overweight cupid above to make a love-match. Love's a word that's used to cover a good many sins and to excuse them all."

"She isn't that kind," said Tillie. "She's—she's as sweet as she's beautiful, and you're as excited as I am, Minnie Waters, and if you're not, what have you got the drinking glass she used last winter put on the top shelf out of reach for?" She went to the door and slammed it open. "Thank heaven I'm not a dried-up old maid," she called back over her shoulder, "and when you're through hugging that paper you can send it up to the house."

Well, I sat there and thought it over, Miss Patty, or Miss Patricia, being, so to speak, a friend of mine. They'd come to the Springs every winter for years. Many a time she'd slipped away from her

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

governess and come down to the spring-house for a chat with me, and we'd make pop-corn together by my open fire, and talk about love and clothes, and even the tariff, Miss Patty being for protection, which was natural, seeing that was the way her father made his money, and I for free trade, especially in the winter when my tips fall off considerable.

And when she was younger she would sit back from the fire, with the corn-popper on her lap and her cheeks as red as cranberries, and say: "I *don't* know why I tell you all these things, Minnie, but Aunt Honoria's funny, and I can't talk to Dorothy; she's too young, you know. Well, *he* said—" only every winter it was a different "he."

In my wash-stand drawer I'd kept all the clippings about her coming out and the winter she spent in Washington and was supposed to be engaged to the president's son, and the magazine article that told how Mr. Jennings had got his money by robbing widows and orphans, and showed the little frame house where Miss Patty was born—as if she's had anything to do with it. And so now I was cutting out the picture of her and the prince and the article underneath which told how many castles she'd have,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and I don't mind saying I was sniffling a little bit, for I couldn't get used to the idea. And suddenly the door closed softly and there was a rustle behind me. When I turned it was Miss Patty herself. She saw the clipping immediately, and stopped just inside the door.

"*You, too,*" she said. "And we've come all this distance to get away from just that."

"Well, I shan't talk about it," I replied, not holding out my hand, for with her, so to speak, next door to being a princess—but she leaned right over and kissed me. I could hardly believe it.

"Why won't you talk about it?" she insisted, catching me by the shoulders and holding me off. "Minnie, your eyes are as red as your hair!"

"I don't approve of it," I said. "You might as well know it now as later, Miss Patty. I don't believe in mixed marriages. I had a cousin that married a Jew, and what with him making the children promise to be good on the Talmud and her trying to raise them with the Bible, the poor things is that mixed up that it's pitiful."

She got a little red at that, but she sat down and took up the clipping.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"He's much better looking than that, Minnie," she said soberly, "and he's a good Catholic. But if that's the way you feel we'll not talk about it. I've had enough trouble at home as it is."

"I guess from that your father isn't crazy about it," I remarked, getting her a glass of spring water. The papers had been full of how Mr. Jennings had forbidden the prince the house when he had been in America the summer before.

"Certainly he's crazy about it—almost insane!" she said, and smiled at me in her old way over the top of the glass. Then she put down the glass and came over to me. "Minnie, Minnie," she said, "if you only knew how I've wanted to get away from the newspapers and the gossips and come to this smelly little spring-house and talk things over with a red-haired, sharp-tongued, mean-dispositioned spring-house girl—!"

And with that I began to blubber, and she came into my arms like a baby.

"You're all I've got," I declared, over and over, "and you're going to live in a country where they harness women with dogs, and you'll never hear an English word from morning to night."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Stuff!" She gave me a little shake. "He speaks as good English as I do. And now we're going to stop talking about him—you're worse than the newspapers." She took off her things and going into my closet began to rummage for the pop-corn. "Oh, how glad I am to get away," she sang out to me. "We're supposed to have gone to Mexico; even Dorothy doesn't know. Where's the pop-corner or the corn-popper or whatever you call it?"

She was as happy to have escaped the reporters and the people she knew as a child, and she sat down on the floor in front of the fire and began to shell the corn into the popper, as if she'd done it only the day before.

"I guess you're safe enough here," I said. "It's always slack in January—only a few chronics and the Saturday-to-Monday husbands, except a drummer now and then who drives up from Finleyville. It's too early for drooping society buds, and the chronic livers don't get around until late March, after the banquet season closes. It will be pretty quiet for a while."

And at that minute the door was flung open, and Bath-house Mike staggered in.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"The old doctor!" he gasped. "He's dead, Miss Minnie—died just now in the hot room in the bath-house! One minute he was givin' me the divil for something or other, and the next— I thought he was asleep."

Something that had been heavy in my breast all afternoon suddenly seemed to burst and made me feel faint all over. But I didn't lose my head.

"Does anybody know yet?" I asked quickly. He shook his head.

"Then he didn't die in the bath-house, Mike," I said firmly. "He died in his bed, and you know it. If it gets out that he died in the hot room I'll have the coroner on you."

Miss Patty was standing by the railing of the spring. I got my shawl and started out after Mike, and she followed.

"If the guests ever get hold of this they'll stampede. Start any excitement in a sanatorium," I said, "and one and all they'll dip their thermometers in hot water and swear they've got fever!"

And we hurried to the house together.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER III

A WILL

WELL, we got the poor old doctor moved back to his room, and had one of the chambermaids find him there, and I wired to Mrs. Van Alstyne, who was Mr. Dicky Carter's sister, and who was on her honeymoon in South Carolina. The Van Alstynes came back at once, in very bad tempers, and we had the funeral from the preacher's house in Finleyville so as not to harrow up the sanatorium people any more than necessary. Even as it was a few left, but about twenty of the chronics stayed, and it looked as if we might be able to keep going.

Miss Patty sent to town for a black veil for me, and even went to the funeral. It helped to take my mind off my troubles to think who it was that was holding my hand and comforting me, and when, toward the end of the service, she got out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes I was almost overcome,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

she being, so to speak, in the very shadow of a throne.

After it was all over the relatives gathered in the sun parlor of the sanatorium to hear the will—Mr. Van Alstyne and his wife and about twenty more who had come up from the city for the funeral and stayed over—on the house.

Well, the old doctor left me the buttons for his full dress waistcoat and his favorite copy of *Gray's Anatomy*. I couldn't exactly set up housekeeping with my share of the estate, but when the lawyer read that part of the will aloud and a grin went around the room I flounced out of my chair.

"Maybe you think I'm disappointed," I said, looking hard at the family, who weren't making any particular pretense at grief, and at the house people standing around the door. "Maybe you think it's funny to see an unmarried woman get a set of waistcoat buttons and a medical book. Well, that set of buttons was the set he bought in London on his wedding trip, and the book's the one he read himself to sleep with every night for twenty years. I'm proud to get them."

Mr. Van Alstyne touched me on the arm.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Everybody knows how loyal you've been, Minnie," he assured me. "Now sit down like a good girl and listen to the rest of the will."

"While I'm up I might as well get something else off my mind," I said. "I know what's in that will, but I hadn't anything to do with it, Mr. Van Alstyne. He took advantage of my being laid up with influenza last spring."

They thought that was funny, but a few minutes later they weren't so cheerful. You see the sanatorium was a mighty fine piece of property, with a deer park and golf links. We'd had plenty of offers to sell it for a summer hotel, but we'd both been dead against it. That was one of the reasons for the will.

The whole estate was left to Dicky Carter, who hadn't been able to come, owing to his being laid up with an attack of mumps. The family sat up and nodded at one another, or held up its hands, but when they heard there was a condition they breathed easier.

Beginning with one week after the reading of the will—and not a day later—Mr. Dick was to take charge of the sanatorium and to stay there for two

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

months without a day off. If at the end of that time the place was being successfully conducted and could show that it hadn't lost money, the entire property became his for keeps. If he failed it was to be sold and the money given to charity.

You would have to know Richard Carter to understand the excitement the will caused. Most of us, I reckon, like the sort of person we've never dared to be ourselves. The old doctor had gone to bed at ten o'clock all his life and got up at seven, and so he had a sneaking fondness for the one particular grandson who often didn't go to bed at all. Twice to my knowledge when he was in his teens did Dicky Carter run away from school, and twice his grandfather kept him for a week hidden in the shelter-house on the golf links. Naturally when Mr. Van Alstyne and I had to hide him again, which is further on in the story, he went to the old shelter-house like a dog to its kennel, only this time—but that's ahead, too.

Well, the family went back to town in a buzz of indignation, and I carried my waistcoat buttons and my *Anatomy* out to the spring-house and had a good cry. There was a man named Thoburn who was

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

crazy for the property as a summer hotel, and every time I shut my eyes I could see "Thoburn House" over the veranda and children sailing paper boats in the mineral spring.

Sure enough, the next afternoon Mr. Thoburn drove out from Finleyville with a suit case, and before he'd taken off his overcoat he came out to the spring-house.

"Hello, Minnie," he exclaimed. "Does the old man's ghost come back to dope the spring, or do you do it?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, Mr. Thoburn," I retorted sharply. "If you don't know that this spring has its origin in—"

"In Schmidt's drug store down in Finleyville!" he finished for me. "Oh, I know all about that spring, Minnie! Don't forget that my father's cows used to drink that water and liked it. I leave it to you," he said, sniffing, "if a self-respecting cow wouldn't die of thirst before she drank that stuff as it is now."

I'd been filling him a glass—it being a matter of habit with me—and he took it to the window and held it to the light.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"You're getting careless, Minnie," he said, squinting at it. "Some of those drugs ought to be dissolved first in hot water. There's a lump of lithia there that has Schmidt's pharmacy label on it."

"Where?" I demanded, and started for it. He laughed at that, and putting the glass down, he came over and stood smiling at me.

"As ingenuous as a child," he said in his mocking way, "a nice, little red-haired child! Minnie, how old is this young Carter?"

"Twenty-three."

"An—er—earnest youth? Willing to buckle down to work and make the old place go? Ready to pat the old ladies on the shoulder and squeeze the young ones' hands?"

"He's young," I said, "but if you're counting on his being a fool—"

"Not at all," he broke in hastily. "If he hasn't too much character he'll probably succeed. I hope he isn't a fool. If he isn't, oh, friend Minnie, he'll stand the atmosphere of this Garden of Souls for about a week, and then he'll kill some of them and escape. Where is he now?"

"He's been sick," I said. "Mumps!"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Mumps! Oh, my aunt!" he exclaimed, and fell to laughing. He was still laughing when he got to the door.

"Mumps!" he repeated, with his hand on the knob. "Minnie, the old place will be under the hammer in three weeks, and if you know what's good for you, you'll sign in under the new management while there's a vacancy. You've been the whole show here for so long that it will be hard for you to line up in the back row of the chorus."

"If I were you," I said, looking him straight in the eye, "I wouldn't pick out any new carpets yet, Mr. Thoburn. I promised the old doctor I'd help Mr. Dick, and I will."

"So you're actually going to fight it out," he said, grinning. "Well, the odds are in your favor. You are two to my one."

"I think it's pretty even," I retorted. "We will be hindered, so to speak, by having certain principles of honor and honesty. You have no handicap."

He tried to think of a retort, and not finding one he slammed out of the spring-house in a rage.

Mr. Van Alstyne and his wife came in that same day, just before dinner, and we played three-handed

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

bridge for half an hour. As I've said, they'd been on their honeymoon, and they were both sulky at having to stay at the Springs. It was particularly hard on Mrs. Van Alstyne, because, with seven trunks of trousseau with her, she had to put on black. But she used to shut herself up in her room in the evenings and deck out for Mr. Sam in her best things. We found it out one evening when Mrs. Biggs set fire to her bureau cover with her alcohol curling-iron heater, and Mrs. Sam, who had been going around in a black crêpe dress all day, rushed out in pink satin with crystal trimming, and slippers with cut-glass heels.

After the first rubber Mrs. Van Alstyne threw her cards on the floor and said another day like this would finish her.

"Surely Dick is able to come now," she said, like a peevish child. "Didn't he say the swelling was all gone?"

"Do you expect me to pick up those cards?" Mr. Sam asked angrily, looking at her.

Mrs. Sam yawned and looked up at him.

"Of course I do," she answered. "If it wasn't for you I'd not have stayed a moment after the fu-

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

neral. Isn't it bad enough to have seven trunks full of clothes I've never worn, and to have to put on poky old black, without keeping me here in this old ladies' home?"

Mr. Sam looked at the cards and then at her.

"I'm not going to pick them up," he declared. "And as to our staying here, don't you realize that if we don't your precious brother will never show up here at all, or stay if he does come? And don't you also realize that this is probably the only chance he'll ever have in the world to become financially independent of us?"

"You needn't be brutal," she said sharply. "And it isn't so bad for you here as it is for me. You spend every waking minute admiring Miss Jennings, while I—there isn't a man in the place who'll talk anything but his joints or his stomach."

She got up and went to the window, and Mr. Sam followed her. Nobody pays any attention to me in the spring-house; I'm a part of it, like the brass rail around the spring, or the clock.

"I'm not admiring Miss Jennings," he corrected, "I'm sympathizing, dear. She looks too nice a girl to have been stung by the title bee, that's all."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

She turned her back to him, but he pretended to tuck the hair at the back of her neck up under her comb, and she let him do it. As I stooped to gather up the cards he kissed the tip of her ear.

"Listen," he said, "there's a scream of a play down at Finleyville to-night called *Sweet Peas*. Senator Biggs and the bishop went down last night, and they say it's the worst in twenty years. Put on a black veil and let's slip away and see it."

I think she agreed to do it, but that night after dinner, Amanda King, who has charge of the news stand, told me the sheriff had closed the opera-house and that the leading woman was sick at the hotel.

"They say she looked funny last night," Amanda finished, "and I guess she's got the mumps."

Mumps!

My joint gave a throb at that minute.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER IV

AND A WAY

MR. SAM wasn't taking any chances, for the next day he went to the city himself to bring Mr. Dick up. Everything was quiet that day and the day after, except that on the second day I had a difference of opinion with the house doctor and he left.

The story of the will had got out, of course, and the guests were waiting to see Mr. Dick come and take charge. I got a good bit of gossip from Miss Cobb, who had had her hair cut short after a fever and used to come out early in the morning and curl it all over her head, heating the curler on the fire log. I never smell burnt hair that I don't think of Miss Cobb trying to do the back of her neck. She was one of our regulars, and every winter for ten years she'd read me the letters she had got from an insurance agent who'd run away with a married

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

woman the day before the wedding. She kept them in a bundle, tied with lavender ribbon.

It was on the third day, I think, that Miss Cobb told me that Miss Patty and her father had had a quarrel the day before. She got it from one of the chambermaids. Mr. Jennings was a liver case and not pleasant at any time, but he had been worse than usual. Annie, the chambermaid, told Miss Cobb that the trouble was about settlements, and that the more Miss Patty tried to tell him it was the European custom the worse he got. Miss Patty hadn't come down to breakfast that day, and Mr. Moody and Senator Biggs made a wager in the Turkish bath—according to Miss Cobb—Mr. Moody betting the wedding wouldn't come off at all.

"Of course," Miss Cobb said, wetting her finger and trying the iron to see if it was hot, "of course, Minnie, they're not married yet, and if Father Jennings gets ugly and makes any sort of scandal it's all off. A scandal just now would be fatal. These royalties are very touchy about other people's reputations."

Well, I heard that often enough in the next few days.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Mr. Sam hadn't come back by the morning of the sixth day, but he wired his wife the day before that Mr. Dick was on the way. But we met every train with a sleigh, and he didn't come. I was uneasy, knowing Mr. Dick, and Mrs. Sam was worried, too.

By that time everybody was waiting and watching, and on the early train on the sixth day came the lawyer, a Mr. Stitt. Mr. Thoburn was going around with a sort of greasy smile, and if I could have poisoned him safely I'd have done it.

It had been snowing hard for a day or so, and at eleven o'clock that day I saw Miss Cobb and Mrs. Biggs coming down the path to the spring-house, Mrs. Biggs with her crocheting-bag hanging to the handle of her umbrella. I opened the door, but they wouldn't come in.

"We won't track up your clean floor, Minnie," Mrs. Biggs said—she was a little woman, almost fifty, who'd gone through life convinced she'd only lived so long by the care she took of herself—"but I thought I'd better come and speak to you. Please don't irritate Mr. Biggs to-day. He's been reading that article of Upton Sinclair's about fasting, and hasn't had a bite to eat since noon yesterday."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I noticed then that she looked pale. She was a nervous creature, although she could drink more spring water than any human being I ever saw, except one man, and he was a German.

Well, I promised to be careful. I've seen them fast before, and when a fat man starts to live on his own fat, like a bear, he gets about the same disposition.

Mrs. Biggs started back, but Miss Cobb waited a moment at the foot of the steps.

"Mr. Van Alstyne is back," she said, "but he came alone."

"Alone!" I repeated, staring at her in a sort of daze.

"Alone," she said solemnly, "and I heard him ask for Mr. Carter. It seems he started for here yesterday."

But I'd had time to get myself in hand, and if I had a chill up my spine she never knew it. As she started after Mrs. Biggs I saw Mr. Sam hurrying down the path toward the spring-house, and I knew my joint hadn't throbbed for nothing.

Mr. Sam came in and slammed the door behind him.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"What's this about Mr. Dick not being here?" he shouted.

"Well, he isn't. That's all there is to it, Mr. Van Alstyne," I said calmly. I am always calm when other people get excited. For that reason some people think my red hair is a false alarm, but they soon find out.

"But he *must* be here," said Mr. Van Alstyne. "I put him on the train myself yesterday, and waited until it started to be sure he was off."

"The only way to get Mr. Richard anywhere you want him to go," I said dryly, "is to have him nailed in a crate and labeled."

"Damned young scamp!" said Mr. Van Alstyne, although I have a sign in the spring-house, "Profanity not allowed."

"*Exactly* what was he doing when you last laid eyes on him?" I asked.

"He was on the train—"

"Was he alone?"

"Yes."

"Sitting?"

"No, standing. What the deuce, Minnie—"

"Waving out the window to you?"

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Of course not!" exclaimed Mr. Van Alstyne testily. "He was raising the window for a girl in the next seat."

"Precisely!" I said. "Would you know the girl well enough to trace her?"

"That's ridiculous, you know," he said trying to be polite. "Out of a thousand and one things that may have detained him—"

"Only one thing ever detains Mr. Dick, and that always detains him," I said solemnly. "That's a girl. You're a newcomer in the family, Mr. Van Alstyne; you don't remember the time he went down here to the station to see his Aunt Agnes off to the city, and we found him three weeks later in Oklahoma trying to marry a widow with five children."

Mr. Van Alstyne dropped into a chair, and through force of habit I gave him a glass of spring water.

"This was a pretty girl, too," he said dismally.

I sat down on the other side of the fireplace, and it seemed to me that father's crayon enlargement over the mantel shook its head at me.

After a minute Mr. Van Alstyne drank the water and got up.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I'll have to tell my wife," he said. "Who's running the place, anyhow? You?"

"Not—exactly," I explained, "but, of course, when anything comes up they consult me. The housekeeper is a fool, and now that the house doctor's gone—"

"Gone! Who's looking after the patients?"

"Well, most of them have been here before," I explained, "and I know their treatment—the kind of baths and all that."

"Oh, *you* know the treatment!" he said, eying me. "And why did the house doctor go?"

"He ordered Mr. Moody to take his spring water hot. Mr. Moody's spring water has been ordered cold for eleven years, and I refused to change. It was between the doctor and me, Mr. Van Alstyne."

"Oh, of course," he said, "if it was a matter of principle—" He stopped, and then something seemed to strike him. "I say," he said; "about the doctor—that's all right, you know; lots of doctors and all that. But for heaven's sake, Minnie, don't discharge the cook."

Now that was queer, for it had been running in my head all morning that in the slack season it

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

would be cheaper to get a good woman instead of the chef and let Tillie, the diet cook, make the pastry.

Mr. Sam picked up his hat and looked at his watch.

"Eleven thirty," he said, "and no sign of that puppy yet. I guess it's up to the police."

"If there was only something to do," I said, with a lump in my throat, "but to have to sit and do nothing while the old place dies, it's—it's awful, Mr. Van Alstyne."

"We're not dead yet," he replied from the door, "and maybe we'll need you before the day's over. If anybody can sail the old bark to shore, you can do it, Minnie. You've been steering it for years. The old doctor was no navigator, and you and I know it."

It was blowing a blizzard by that time, and Miss Patty was the only one who came out to the spring-house until after three o'clock. She shook the snow off her furs and stood by the fire, looking at me and not saying anything for fully a minute.

"Well," she said finally, "aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Why?" I asked, and swallowed hard.

"To be in all this trouble and not let me know. I've just this minute heard about it. Can't we get the police?"

"Mr. Van Alstyne is trying," I said, "but I don't hope much. Like as not Mr. Dick will turn up to-morrow and say his calendar was a day slow."

I gave her a glass of water, and I noticed when she took it how pale she was. But she held it up and smiled over it at me.

"Here's to everything turning out better than we expect!" she said, and made a face as she drank the water. I thought that she was thinking of her own troubles as well as mine, for she put down the glass and stood looking at her engagement ring, a square red ruby in an old-fashioned setting. It was a very large ruby, but I've seen showier rings.

"There isn't anything wrong, Miss Patty, is there?" I asked, and she dropped her hand and looked at me.

"Oh, no," she said. "That is, nothing much, Minnie. Father is—I think he's rather ridiculous about some things, but I dare say he'll come around. I don't mind his fussing with me, but—if it should

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

get in the papers, Minnie! A breath of unpleasant notoriety now would be fatal!"

"I don't see why," I said sharply. "The royal families of Europe have a good bit of unpleasant notoriety themselves occasionally. I should think they'd fall over themselves to get some good red American blood. Blue blood's bad blood; you can ask any doctor."

But she only smiled.

"You're like father, Minnie," she said. "You'll never understand."

"I'm not sure I want to," I snapped, and fell to polishing glasses.

The storm stopped a little at three and most of the guests waded down through the snow for bridge and spring water. By that time the afternoon train was in, and no Mr. Dick. Mr. Sam was keeping the lawyer, Mr. Stitt, in the billiard room, and by four o'clock they'd had everything that was in the bar and were inventing new combinations of their own. And Mrs. Sam had gone to bed with a nervous headache.

Senator Biggs brought the mail down to the spring-house at four, but there was nothing for me except a note from Mr. Sam, rather shaky, which

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

said he'd no word yet and that Mr. Stitt had mixed all the cordials in the bar in a beer glass and had had to go to bed.

At half past four Mr. Thoburn came out for a minute. He said there was only one other train from town that night and the chances were it would be snowed up at the junction.

"Better get on the band wagon before the parade's gone past," he said in an undertone. But I went into my pantry and shut the door with a slam, and when I came out he was gone.

I nearly went crazy that afternoon. I put salt in Miss Cobb's glass when she always drank the water plain. Once I put the broom in the fire and started to sweep the porch with a fire log. Luckily they were busy with their letters and it went unnoticed, the smell of burning straw not rising, so to speak, above the sulphur in the spring.

Senator Biggs went from one table to another telling how well he felt since he stopped eating, and trying to coax the other men to starve with him.

It's funny how a man with a theory about his stomach isn't happy until he has made some other fellow swallow it.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Well," he said, standing in front of the fire with a glass of water in his hand, "it's worth while to feel like this. My head's as clear as a bell. I don't care to eat; I don't want to eat. The 'fast' is the solution."

"Two stages to that solution, Senator," said the bishop; "first, resolution; last, dissolution."

Then they all began at once. If you have ever heard twenty people airing their theories on diet you know all about it. One shouts for Horace Fletcher, and another one swears by the scraped-beef treatment, and somebody else never touches a thing but raw eggs and milk, and pretty soon there is a riot of calories and carbohydrates. It always ends the same way: the man with the loudest voice wins, and the defeated ones limp over to the spring and tell their theories to me. They know I'm being paid to listen.

On this particular afternoon the bishop stopped the riot by rising and holding up his hand. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "let us not be rancorous. If each of us has a theory, and that theory works out to his satisfaction, then—why are we all here?"

"Merely to tell one another the good news!" Mr. Jennings said sourly from his corner.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Honest, it was funny. If some folks were healthy they'd be lonesome.

But when things had got quiet—except Mr. Moody dropping nickels into the slot-machine—I happened to look over at Miss Patty, and I saw there was something wrong. She had a letter open in her lap—not one of the blue ones with the black and gold seal that every one in the house knew came from the prince—but a white one, and she was staring at it as if she'd seen a ghost.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER V

WANTED—AN OWNER

I HAVE never reproached Miss Patty, but if she had only given me the letter to read or had told me the whole truth instead of a part of it, I would have understood, and things would all have been different. It is all very well for her to say that I looked worried enough already, and that anyhow it was a family affair. *I should have been told.*

All she did was to come up to me as I stood in the spring, with her face perfectly white, and ask me if my Dicky Carter was the Richard Carter who stayed at the Grosvenor in town.

"He doesn't stay anywhere," I said, with my feet getting cold, "but that's where he has apartments. What has he been doing now?"

"You're expecting him on the evening train, aren't you?" she asked. "Don't stare like that: my father's watching."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"He ought to be on the evening train," I said. I wasn't going to say I expected him. I didn't.

"Listen, Minnie," she said, "you'll have to send him away again the moment he comes. He must not go into the house."

I stood looking at her, with my mouth open.

"Not go into the house," I repeated, "with everybody waiting for him for the last six days, and Mr. Stitt here to turn things over to him!"

She stood tapping her foot, with her pretty brows knitted.

"The wretch!" she cried, "the hateful creature—as if things weren't bad enough! I suppose he'll have to come, Minnie, but I must see him before he sees any one else."

Just then the bishop brought his glass over to the spring.

"Hot this time, Minnie," he said. "Do you know, I'm getting the mineral-water habit, Patty! I'm afraid plain water will have no attraction for me after this."

He put his hand over hers on the rail. They were old friends, the bishop and the Jenningses.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Well, how goes it to-day with the father?" he said in a low tone, and smiling.

Miss Patty shrugged her shoulders. "Worse, if possible."

"I thought so," he said cheerfully. "If state of mind is any criterion I should think he has had a relapse. A little salt, Minnie." Miss Patty stood watching him while he tasted it.

"Bishop," she said suddenly, "will you do something for me?"

"I always have, Patty." He was very fond of Miss Patty, was the bishop.

"Then—to-night, not later than eight o'clock, get father to play cribbage, will you? And keep him in the card-room until nine."

"Another escapade!" he said, pretending to be very serious. "Patty, Patty, you'll be the death of me yet. Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"

"Certainly *not*," said Miss Patty. "Just a dear, slightly bald, but still very distinguished slave!"

The bishop picked up her left hand and looked at the ring and from that to her face.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"There will be plenty of slaves to kiss this little hand where you are going, my child," he said. "Sometimes I wish that some nice red-blooded boy here at home—but I dare say it will turn out surprisingly well as it is."

"Bishop, Bishop!" Mrs. Moody called. "How naughty of you, and with your bridge hand waiting to be held!"

He carried his glass back to the table, stopping for a moment beside Mr. Jennings.

"If Patty becomes any more beautiful," he said, "I shall be in favor of having her wear a mask. How are we young men to protect ourselves?"

"Pretty is as pretty does!" declared Mr. Jennings from behind his newspaper, and Miss Patty went out with her chin up.

Well, I knew Mr. Dick had been up to some mischief; I had suspected it all along. But Miss Patty went to bed, and old Mrs. Hutchins, who's a sort of lady's-maid-companion of hers, said she mustn't be disturbed. I was pretty nearly sick myself. And when Mr. Sam came out at five o'clock and said he'd been in the long-distance telephone booth for an hour and had called everybody who had ever known

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Mr. Dick, and that he had dropped right off the earth, I just about gave up. He had got some detectives, he said, and there was some sort of a story about his having kept right on the train to Salem, Ohio, but if he had they'd lost the trail there, and anyhow, with the railroad service tied up by the storm there wasn't much chance of his getting to Finleyville in time.

Luckily Mr. Stitt was in bed with a mustard leaf over his stomach and ice on his head, and didn't know whether it was night or morning. But Thoburn was going around with a watch in his hand, and Mr. Sam was for killing him and burying the body in the snow.

At half past five I just about gave up. I was sitting in front of the fire wondering why I'd taken influenza the spring before from getting my feet wet in a shower, when I had been standing in a mineral spring for so many years that it's a wonder I'm not web-footed. It was when I had influenza that the old doctor made the will, you remember. Maybe I was crying, I don't recall.

It was dark outside, and nothing inside but firelight. Suddenly I seemed to feel somebody look-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ing at the back of my neck and I turned around. There was a man standing outside one of the windows, staring in.

My first thought, of course, was that it was Mr. Dick, but just as the face vanished I saw that it wasn't. It was older by three or four years than Mr. Dick's and a bit fuller.

I'm not nervous. I've had to hold my own against chronic grouches too long to have nerves, so I went to the door and looked out. The man came around the corner just then and I could see him plainly in the firelight. He was covered with snow, and he wore a sweater and no overcoat, but he looked like a gentleman.

"I beg your pardon for spying," he said, "but the fire looked so snug! I've been trying to get to the hotel over there, but in the dark I've lost the path."

"That's not a hotel," I snapped, for that touched me on the raw. "That's Hope Springs Sanatorium, and this is one of the Springs."

"Oh, Hope Springs, internal instead of eternal!" he said. "That's awfully bad, isn't it? To tell you the truth, I think I'd better come in and get some; I'm short on hope just now."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I thought that was likely enough, for although his voice was cheerful and his eyes smiled, there was a drawn look around his mouth, and he hadn't shaved that day. I wish I had had as much experience in learning what's right with folks as I have had in learning what's wrong with them.

"You'd better come in and get warm, anyhow," I told him, "only don't spring any more gags. I've been 'Hebe' for fourteen years and I've served all the fancy drinks you can name over the brass railing of that spring. Nowadays, when a fellow gets smart and asks for a Mamie Taylor, I charge him a Mamie Taylor price."

He shut the door behind him and came over to the fire.

"I'm pretty well frozen," he said. "Don't be astonished if I melt before your eyes; I've been walking for hours."

Now that I had a better chance to see him I'd sized up that drawn look around his mouth.

"Missed your luncheon, I suppose," I said, poking the fire log. He grinned rather sheepishly.

"Well, I haven't had any, and I've certainly missed it," he said. "Fasting's healthy, you know."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I thought of Senator Biggs, who carried enough fat to nourish him for months, and then I looked at my visitor, who hadn't an ounce of extra flesh on him.

"Nothing's healthy that isn't natural," I declared.

"If you'd care for a dish of buttered and salted pop-corn, there's some on the mantel. It's pretty salty; the idea is to make folks thirsty so they'll enjoy the mineral water."

"Think of raising a real thirst only to drown it with spring water!" he said. But he got the pop-corn and he ate it all. If he hadn't had any luncheon he hadn't had much breakfast. The queer part was—he was a gentleman; his clothes were the right sort, but he had on patent leather shoes in all that snow and an automobile cap.

I put away the glasses while he ate. Pretty soon he looked up and the drawn lines were gone. He wasn't like Mr. Dick, but he was the same type, only taller and heavier built.

"And so it isn't a hotel," he remarked. "Well, I'm sorry. The caravansary in the village is not to my liking, and I had thought of engaging a suite up here. My secretary usually attends to these

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

To the best woman I have met in many days.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

UNIV. OF MICH.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

things, but—don't take away all the glasses, Heb—I beg your pardon—but the thirst is coming."

He filled the glass himself and then he came up and stood in front of me, with the glass held up in the air.

"To the best woman I have met in many days," he said, not mocking but serious. "I was about to lie down and let the little birds cover me with leaves." Then he glanced at the empty dish and smiled. "To buttered pop-corn! Long may it wave!" he said, and emptied the glass.

Well, I found a couple of apples in my pantry and brought them out, and after he ate them he told me what had happened to him. He had been a little of everything since he left college—he was about twenty-five—had crossed the Atlantic in a catboat and gone with somebody or other into some part of Africa—they got lost and had to eat each other or lizards, or something like that—and then he went to the Philippines, and got stuck there and had to sell books to get home. He had a little money, "enough for a grub-stake," he said, and all his folks were dead. Then a college friend of his wrote a rural play called *Sweet Peas*— "Great title, don't

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

you think?" he asked—and he put up all the money. It would have been a hit, he said, but the kid in the play—the one that unites its parents in the last act just before he dies of tuberculosis—the kid took the mumps and looked as if, instead of fading away, he was going to blow up. Everybody was so afraid of him that they let him die alone for three nights in the middle of the stage. Then the leading woman took the mumps, and the sheriff took everything else.

"You city folks seem to know so much," I said, "and yet you bring a country play to the country! Why don't you bring out a play with women in low-necked gowns, and champagne suppers, and a scandal or two? They packed Pike's Opera-House three years ago with a play called *Why Women Sin.*"

Well, of course, the thing failed, and he lost every dollar he'd put into it, which was all he had, including what he had in his pockets.

"They seized my trunks," he explained, "and I sold my fur-lined overcoat for eight dollars, which took one of the girls back home. It's hard for the women. A fellow can always get some sort of a job—I was coming up here to see if they needed an extra clerk or a waiter, or chauffeur, or anything

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

that meant a roof and something to eat—but I suppose they don't need a jack-of-all-trades."

"No," I answered, "but I'll tell you what I think they're going to need. And that's an owner!"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER VI

THE CONSPIRACY

I'M not making any excuses. I did it for the best. In any sort of crisis there are always folks who stand around and wring their hands and say, "What shall we do?" And then if it's a fire and somebody has had enough sense to send for the engines, they say: "Just look at what the water did!" Although as far as I can see I'm the only one that suffered any damage.

If Mr. Thoburn had not been there, sitting by to see the old sanatorium die so it could sprout wings and fly as a summer hotel, I'd never have thought of it. But I was in despair.

I got up and opened the door, but the snow came in in a cloud, and the path was half a foot deep again. It shows on what little threads big things hang, for when I saw the storm I gave up the idea

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

of bringing Mr. Sam down to see the young man, and the breath of fresh air in my face brought me to my senses.

But the angel of providence appeared in the shape of Mike, the bath man, coming down through the snow in a tearing rage. The instant I saw Mike I knew it was settled.

"Am I or am I not to give Mr. Moody a needle shower?" he shouted, almost beside himself. And I saw he had his overcoat over his bath costume, which is a Turkish towel.

"A needle shower followed by a salt rub," said I. "He's been having them for eleven years. What's the matter?"

"That fool of a young doctor," shouted Mike, "he told him before he left that if he'd been taking them for eleven years and wasn't any better it was time to stop. Ain't business bad enough—only four people in the house takin' baths regular—without his buttin' in!"

"Where's Mr. Moody?"

"In the bath. I've locked up his clothes."

"You give him a needle shower and a salt rub," I ordered, "and if he makes a fuss just send for me.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

And, Mike," I said, as he started out, "ask Mr. Van Alstyne to come out here immediately."

That's the way it was all the time. Everybody brought their troubles to me, and I guess I thought I was a little tin god on wheels and the place couldn't get along without me. But it did; it does. We all think we'll leave a big hole behind us when we go, but it's just like taking your thumb out of a bowl of soup. There isn't even a dent.

Mr. Van Alstyne came out on the run, and when he saw Mr. Pierce by the fire—that was his name, Alan Pierce—he stopped and stared. Then he said:

"You infernal young scamp!" And with that Mr. Pierce jumped up, surprised and pretty mad, and Mr. Van Alstyne saw his mistake.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon!" he said. "The fact is, I was expecting somebody else, and in the firelight—"

"You surprised me, that's all," said Mr. Pierce. "Under the circumstances, I'm glad I'm not the other chap."

"You may be," assured Mr. Sam grimly. "You're not unlike him, by the way. A little taller and heavier, but—"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Now it's all very well for Mr. Sam to say I originated the idea and all that, but as truly as I am writing this, as I watched his face I saw the same thought come into it. He looked Mr. Pierce up and down, and then he stared into the fire and puckered his mouth to whistle, but he didn't. And finally he glanced at me, but I was looking into the fire, too.

"Just come, haven't you?" he asked. "How did you get up the hill?"

"Walked," said Mr. Pierce, smiling. "It took some digging, too. But I didn't come for my health, unless you think three meals a day are necessary for health."

Mr. Sam turned and stared at him. "By Jove! you don't mean it!"

"I wish I didn't," Mr. Pierce replied. "One of the hardest things I've had to remember for the last ten hours was that for two years I voluntarily ate only two meals a day. A man's a fool to do a thing like that! It's reckless."

Mr. Sam got up and began to walk the floor, his hands in his pockets. He tried to get my eye, but still I looked in the fire.

"All traffic's held up, Minnie," he said. "The

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

eight o'clock train is stalled beyond the junction, in a drift. I've wired the conductor, and Carter isn't on it."

"Well?" said I.

"If we could only get past to-day," Mr. Sam went on; "if Thoburn would only choke to death, or—if there was somebody around who looked like Dick. I dare say, by to-morrow—" He looked at Mr. Pierce, who smiled and looked at him.

"And I resemble Dick!" said Mr. Pierce. "Well, if he's a moral and upright young man—"

"He isn't!" Mr. Sam broke in savagely. And then and there he sat down and told Mr. Pierce the trouble we were in, and what sort of cheerful idiot Dicky Carter was, and how everybody liked him, but wished he would grow up before the family good name was gone, and that now he had a chance to make good and be self-supporting, and he wasn't around, and if Mr. Sam ever got his hands on him he'd choke a little sense down his throat.

And then Mr. Pierce told about the play and the mumps, and how he was stranded. When Mr. Sam asked him outright if he'd take Mr. Dick's place overnight he agreed at once.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I haven't anything to lose," he said, "and anyhow I've been on a diet of *Sweet Peas* so long that a sanatorium is about what I need."

"It's like this," explained Mr. Sam, "Old Stitt is pretty thoroughly jingled—excuse me, Minnie, but it's the fact. I'll take you to his room, with the lights low, and all you'll need to do is to shake hands with him. He's going on the early train to-morrow. Then you needn't mix around much with the guests until to-morrow, and by that time I hope to have Dick within thrashing distance."

Just as they'd got it arranged that Mr. Pierce was to put on Mr. Sam's overcoat and walk down to the village so that he could come up in a sleigh, as if he had driven over from Yorkton—he was only to walk across the hall in front of the office, with his collar up, just enough to show himself and then go to his room with a chill—just as it was all arranged, Mr. Sam thought of something.

"The house people are waiting for Dick," he said to me, "and about forty women are crocheting in the lobby, so they'll be sure to see him. Won't some of them know it isn't Dick?"

I thought pretty fast.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"He hasn't been around much lately," I said. "Nobody would know except Mrs. Wiggins. She'll never forget him; the last time he was here he put on her false front like a beard and wore it down to dinner."

"Then it's all off," he groaned. "She's got as many eyes as a potato."

"And about as much sense," said I. "Fiddlesticks! She's not so good we can't replace her, and what's the use of swallowing a camel and then sticking at a housekeeper?"

"You can't get her out of the house in an hour," he objected, but in a weak voice.

"I can!" I said firmly.

(I did. Inside of an hour she went to the clerk, Mr. Slocum, and handed in her resignation. She was a touchy person, but I did *not* say all that was quoted. I did *not* say the kitchen was filthy; I only said it took away my appetite to look in at the door. But she left, which is the point.)

Well, I stood in the doorway and watched them disappear in the darkness, and I felt better than I had all day. It's great to be able to *do* something, even if that something is wrong. But as I put on

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

my shawl and turned out the lights, I suddenly remembered. Miss Patty would be waiting in the lobby for Mr. Dick, and she would not be crocheting!

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER VII.

WHOEVER has charge of the spring-house at Hope Springs takes the news stand in the evening. That's an old rule. The news stand includes tobacco and a circulating library, and is close to the office, and if I missed any human nature at the spring I got it there. If you can't tell all about a man by the way he asks for mineral water and drinks it, by the time you've supplied his literature and his tobacco and heard him grumbling over his bill at the office, you've got a line on him and a hook in it.

After I ate my supper I relieved Amanda King, who runs the news stand in the daytime, when she isn't laid off with the toothache. Mr. Sam was right. All the women had on their puffs, and they were sitting in a half-circle on each side of the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

door. Mrs. Sam was there, looking frightened and anxious, and standing near the card-room door was Miss Patty. She was all in white, with two red spots on her cheeks, and I thought if her prince could have seen her then he would pretty nearly have eaten her up. Mr. Thoburn was there, of course, pretending to read the paper, but every now and then he looked at his watch, and once he got up and paced off the lobby, putting down the length in his note-book. I didn't need a mind-reader to tell me he was figuring the cost of a new hardwood floor and four new rugs.

Mr. Sam came to the news stand, and he was so nervous he could hardly light a cigarette.

"I've had a message from one of the detectives," he said. "They've traced him to Salem, Ohio, but they lost him there. If we can only hold on this evening—! Look at that first-night audience!"

"Mr. Pierce is due in three minutes," I told him. "I hope you told him to kiss his sister."

"Nothing of the sort," he objected. "Why should he kiss her? Mrs. Van Alstyne is afraid of the whole thing: she won't stand for that."

"I guess she could endure it," I remarked dryly.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"It's astonishing how much of that sort of thing a woman can bear."

He looked at me and grinned.

"By gad," he said, "I wouldn't be as sophisticated as you are for a good deal. Isn't that the sleigh?"

Everybody had heard it. The women sat up and craned forward to look at the door: Mrs. Sam was clutching the arms of her chair. She was in white, having laid off her black for that evening, with a red rose pinned on her so Mr. Pierce would know her. Miss Patty heard the sleigh-bells also, and she turned and came toward the door. Her mouth was set hard, and she was twisting the ruby ring as she always did when she was nervous. And at the same moment Mr. Sam and I both saw it; she was in white, too, and she had a red rose tucked in her belt!

Mr. Sam muttered something and rushed at her, but he was too late. Just as he got to her the door opened and in came Mr. Pierce, with Mr. Sam's fur coat turned up around his ears and Mr. Sam's fur cap drawn well down on his head. He stood for an instant blinking in the light, and Mrs. Van Alstyne got up nervously. He never even saw her.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

His eyes lighted on Miss Patty's face and stayed there. Mr. Sam was there, but what could he do? Mr. Pierce walked over to Miss Patty, took her hand, said, "Hello there!" and *kissed her*. It was awful.

Most women will do anything to save a scene, and that helped us, for she never turned a hair. But when Mr. Sam got him by the arm and led him toward the stairs, she turned so that the old cats sitting around could not see her and her face was scarlet. She went over to the wood fire—our lobby is a sort of big room with chairs and tables and palms, and an open fire in winter—and sat down. I don't think she knew herself whether she was most astonished or angry.

Mrs. Biggs gave a nasty little laugh.

"Your brother didn't see you," she said to Mrs. Van Alstyne. "I dare say a sister doesn't count much when a future princess is around!"

Mrs. Van Alstyne was still staring up the staircase, but she came to herself at that. She had some grit in her, if she did look like a French doll.

"My brother and Miss Jennings are very old friends," she remarked quietly. I believe that was

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

what she thought, too. I don't think she had seen the other red rose, and what was she to think but that Mr. Pierce had known Miss Jennings somewhere? She was dazed, Mrs. Sam was. But she carried off the situation anyhow, and gave us time to breathe. We needed it.

"If I were his highness," said Miss Cobb, spreading the Irish lace collar she was making over her knee and squinting at it, "I should wish my fianceé to be more—er—dignified. Those old Austrian families are very haughty. They would not understand our American habit of osculation."

I was pretty mad at that, for anybody could have seen Miss Patty didn't kiss him.

"If by osculation you mean kissing, Miss Cobb," I said, going over to her, "I guess you don't remember the Austrian count who was a head waiter here. If there was anything in the way of osculation that that member of an old Austrian family didn't know, I've got to find it out. He could kiss all around any American I ever saw!"

I went back to my news stand. I was shaking so my knees would hardly hold me. All I could think of was that they had swallowed Mr. Pierce,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

bait and hook, and that for a time we were saved, although in the electric light Mr. Pierce was a good bit less like Dicky Carter than he had seemed to be in the spring-house by the fire.

Well, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Everybody went to bed early. Mr. Thoburn came over and bought a cigar on his way up-stairs, and he was as gloomy as he had been cheerful before.

"Well," I said, "I guess you won't put a dancing floor in the dining-room just yet, Mr. Thoburn."

"I'm not in a hurry," he snapped. "It's only January, and I don't want the place until May. I'll get it when I'm ready for it. I had a good look at young Carter, and he's got too square a jaw to run a successful neurasthenics' home."

I went to the pantry myself at ten o'clock and fixed a tray of supper for Mr. Pierce. He would need all his strength the next day, and a man can't travel far on buttered pop-corn. I found some chicken and got a bottle of the old doctor's wine—I had kept the key of his wine-cellar since he died

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

—and carried the tray up to Mr. Pierce's sitting-room. He had the old doctor's suite.

The door was open an inch or so, and as I was about to knock I heard a girl's voice. It was Miss Patty!

"How can you deny it?" she was saying angrily. "I dare say you will even deny that you ever saw this letter before!"

There was a minute's pause while I suppose he looked at the letter.

"I never did!" he said solemnly.

There had been a queer sound all along, but now I made it out. Some one else was in the room, sniveling and crying.

"My poor lamb!" it whimpered. And I knew it was Mrs. Hutchins, Miss Patty's old nurse.

"Perhaps," said Miss Patty, "you also deny that you were in Ohio the day before yesterday."

"I was in Ohio, but I positively assert—"

"I'll send for the police, that's what I'll do!" Mrs. Hutchins said, with a burst of rage, and her chair creaked. "How can I ever tell your father?"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Miss Patty. "Do you want the whole story in the papers? Isn't

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

it awful enough as it is? Mr. Carter, I have asked my question twice now and I am waiting for an answer."

"But I don't know the answer!" he said miserably. "I—I assure you, I'm absolutely in the dark. I don't know what's in the letter. I—I haven't always done what I should, I dare say, but my conduct in the state of Ohio during the last few weeks has been without stain—unless I've forgotten—but if it had been anything very heinous, I'd remember, don't you think?"

Somebody crossed the room, and a paper rustled.

"Read that!" said Miss Patty's voice. And then silence for a minute.

"Good lord!" exclaimed Mr. Pierce.

"Do you deny that?"

"Absolutely!" he said firmly. "I—I have never even heard of the Reverend Dwight Johnstone—"

There was a scream from Mrs. Hutchins, and a creak as she fell into her chair again.

"Your father!" she said, over and over. "What can we say to your father?"

"And that is all you will say?" demanded Miss Patty scornfully. "'You don't know;' 'there's a

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

mistake;' 'you never saw the letter before!' Oh, if I were only a man!"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Mr. Pierce said, with something like hope in his voice. "We'll send for Mr. Van Alstyne! That's the thing, of course. I'll send for—er—Jim."

Mr. Van Alstyne's name is Sam, but nobody noticed.

"Mr. Van Alstyne!" repeated Miss Patty in a dazed way.

I guessed it was about time to make a diversion, so I knocked and walked in with the tray, and they all glared at me. Mrs. Hutchins was collapsed in a chair, holding a wet handkerchief to her eyes and one side of her cap was loose and hanging down. Miss Patty was standing by a table, white and angry, and Mr. Pierce was about a yard from her, with the letter in his hands. But he was looking at her.

"I've brought your supper, Mr. Carter," I began. Then I stopped and stared at Miss Patty and Mrs. Hutchins. "Oh," I said.

"Thank you," said Mr. Pierce, very uncomfortable. "Just put it down anywhere."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I stalked across the room and put it on the table. Then I turned and looked at Mrs. Hutchins.

"I'm sorry," I said, "but it's one of the rules of this house that guests don't come to these rooms. They're strictly private. It isn't *my* rule, ladies, but if you will step down to the parlor—"

Mrs. Hutchins' face turned purple. She got up in a hurry.

"I'm here with Miss Jennings on a purely personal matter," she said furiously. "How dare you turn us out?"

"Nonsense, Minnie!" said Miss Patty. "I'll go when I'm ready."

"Rule of the house," I remarked, and going over to the door I stood holding it open. There wasn't any such rule, but I had to get them out; they had Mr. Pierce driven into a corner and yelling for help.

"There is no such rule and you know it, Minnie!" Miss Patty said angrily. "Come, Nana! We're not learning anything, and there's nothing to be done until morning, anyhow. My head's whirling."

Mrs. Hutchins went out first.

"The first thing *I'd* do if I owned this place, I'd

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

get rid of that red-haired girl," she snapped to Mr. Pierce. "If you want to know why there are fewer guests here every year, I'll tell you. *She's* the reason!" Then she flounced out with her head up.

(That was pure piffle. The real reason, as every thinking person knows, is Christian Science. It's cheaper and more handy. And now that it isn't heresy to say it, the spring being floored over, I reckon that most mineral springs cure by suggestion. Also, of course, if a man's drinking four gallons of lithia water a day, he's so saturated that if he does throw in anything alcoholic or indigestible, it's too busy swimming for its life to do any harm.)

Mr. Pierce took a quick step toward Miss Patty and looked down at her.

"About—what happened down-stairs to-night," he stammered, with the unhappiest face I ever saw on a man, "I—I've been ready to knock my fool head off ever since. It was a mistake—a—"

"My letter, please," said Miss Patty coolly, looking back at him without a blink.

"Please don't look like that!" he begged. "I came in suddenly out of the darkness, and you—"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"My letter, please!" she said again, raising her eyebrows.

He gave up trying then. He held out the letter and she took it and went out with her head up and scorn in the very way she trailed her skirt over the door-sill. But I'm no fool; it didn't need the way he touched the door-knob where she had been holding it, when he closed the door after her, to tell me what ailed him. He was crazy about her from the minute he saw her, and he hadn't a change of linen or a cent to his name. And she, as you might say, on the ragged edge of royalty, with queens and princes sending her stomachers and tiaras until she'd hardly need clothes! Well, a cat may look at a king.

He went over to the fireplace, where I was putting his coffee to keep it hot, and looked down at me.

"I've a suspicion, Minnie," he said, "that, to use a vulgar expression, I've bitten off more than I can chew in this little undertaking, and that I'm in imminent danger of choking to death. Do you know anybody, a friend of Miss—er—Jennings, named Dorothy?"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"She's got a younger sister of that name," I said, with a sort of chill going over me. "She's in boarding-school now."

"Oh, no, she's not!" he remarked, picking up the coffee-pot. "It seems that I met her on the train somewhere or other the day before yesterday, and ran off with her and married her!"

I sat back on the rug speechless.

"You should have warned me, Minnie," he went on, growing more cheerful over his chicken and coffee. "I came up here to-night, the proud possessor of a bunch of keys, a patent folding corkscrew and a pocket automobile road map. Inside two hours I have a sanatorium and a wife. At this rate, Minnie, before morning I may reasonably hope to have a family."

I sat where I was on the floor and stared into the fire. Don't tell me the way of the wicked is hard; the wicked get all the fun there is out of life, and as far as I can see, it's the respectable "in at ten o'clock and up at seven" part of the wicked's family that has all the trouble and does the worrying.

"If we could only keep it hidden for a few days!"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I said. "But, of course, the papers will get it, and just now, with columns every day about Miss Patty's clothes—"

"Her what?"

"And all the princes of the blood sending presents, and the king not favoring it very much—"

"What are you talking about?"

"About Miss Jennings' wedding. Don't you read the newspaper?"

He hadn't really known who she was up to that minute. He put down the tray and got up.

"I—I hadn't connected her with the—the newspaper Miss Jennings," he said, and lighted a cigarette over the lamp. Something in his face startled me, I must say.

"You're not going to give up now?" I asked. I got up and put my hand on his arm, and I think he was shaking. "If you do, I'll—I'll go out and drown myself, head down, in the spring."

He had been going to run away—I saw it then—but he put a hand over mine. Then he looked at the door where Miss Patty had gone out and gave himself a shake.

"I'll stay," he said. "We'll fight it out on this

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

line if it takes all summer, Minnie." He stood looking into the fire, and although I'm not fond of men, knowing, as I have explained, a great deal about their stomachs and livers and very little about their hearts, there was something about Mr. Pierce that made me want to go up and pat him on the head like a little boy. "After all," he said, "what's blue blood to good red blood?"

Which was almost what the bishop had said!

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER VIII

AND MR. MOODY INDIGESTION

MR. MOODY took indigestion that night—not but that he always had it, but this was worse—and Mrs. Moody came to my room about two o'clock and knocked at the door.

"You'd better come," she said. "There's no doctor, and he's awful bad. Blames you, too; he says you made him take a salt rub."

"My land," I snapped, trying to find my bedroom slippers, "I didn't make him take clam chowder for supper, and that's what's the matter with him. He's going on a strained rice diet, that's what he's going to do. I've got to have my sleep."

She was waiting in the hall in her kimono, and holding a candle. Anybody could see she'd been crying. As she often said to me, of course she was grateful that Mr. Moody didn't drink—no one knew his virtues better than she did. But her sis-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ter married a man who went on a terrible bat twice a year, and all the rest of the time he was humble and affable trying to make up for it. And sometimes she thought if Mr. Moody would only take a little whisky when he had these attacks—! I'd rather be the wife of a cheerful drunkard any time than have to live with a cantankerous saint. Miss Cobb and I had had many a fight over it, but at that time there wasn't much likelihood of either of us being called on to choose.

Well, we went down to Mr. Moody's room, and he was sitting up in bed with his knees drawn up to his chin and a hot-water bottle held to him.

"Look at your work, woman," he said to me when I opened the door. "I'm dying!"

"You look sick," I said, going over to the bed. It never does to cross them when they get to the water-bottle stage. "The pharmacy clerk's gone to a dance over at Trimble's, but I guess I can find you some whisky."

"Do have some whisky, George," begged Mrs. Moody, remembering her brother-in-law.

"I never touch the stuff and you both know it," he snarled. He had a fresh pain just then and

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

stopped, clutching up the bottle. "Besides," he finished, when it was over, "I haven't got any whisky."

Well, to make a long story short, we got him to agree to some whisky from the pharmacy, with a drop of peppermint in it, if he could wash it down with spring water so it wouldn't do him any harm.

"There isn't any spring water in the house," I said, losing my temper a little, "and I'm not going out there in my bedroom slippers, Mr. Moody. I don't see why your eating what you shouldn't needs to give me pneumonia."

Mrs. Moody was standing beside the bed, and I saw her double chin begin to work. If you have ever seen a fat woman, in a short red kimono holding a candle by a bed, and crying, you know how helpless she looks.

"Don't go, Minnie," she sniffled. "It would be too awful. If you are afraid you could take the poker."

"I'm not going!" I declared firmly. "It's—it's dratted idiocy, that's all. Plain water would do well enough. There's a lot of people think whisky is poison with water, anyhow. Where's the pitcher?"

Oh, yes, I went. I put on some stockings of Mrs.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Moody's and a petticoat and a shawl and started. It was when I was in the pharmacy looking for the peppermint that I first noticed my joint again. A joint like that's a blessing or a curse, the way you look at it.

I found the peppermint and some whisky and put them on the stairs. Then I took my pitcher and lantern and started for the spring-house. It was still snowing, and part of the time Mrs. Moody's stockings were up to their knees. The wind was blowing hard, and when I rounded the corner of the house my lantern went out. I stood there in the storm, with the shawl flapping, thanking heaven I was a single woman, and about ready to go back and tell Mr. Moody what I thought of him when I looked toward the spring-house.

At first I thought it was afire, then I saw that the light was coming from the windows. Somebody was inside, with a big fire and all the lights going.

I'd had tramps sleep all night in the spring-house before, and once they left a card by the spring: "Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink!" So I started out through the snow on a half run. By the bridge over Hope Springs Creek I slipped

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and fell, and I heard the pitcher smash to bits on the ice below. But as soon as I could move I went on again. That spring-house had been my home for a good many years, and the tramp didn't live who could spend the night there if I knew it.

I realized then that I should have taken the poker. I went over cautiously to one of the windows, wading in deep snow to get there—and if you have ever done that in a pair of bedroom slippers you can realize the state of my mind—and looked in.

There were three chairs drawn up in a row in front of the fire, with my bearskin hearth-rug on them to make a couch, and my shepherd's plaid shawl folded at one end for a pillow. And stretched on that with her long sealskin coat laid over her was Dorothy Jennings, Miss Patty's younger sister! She was alone, as far as I could see, and she was leaning on her elbow with her cheek in her hand, staring at the fire. Just then the door into the pantry opened and out came Mr. Dick himself.

"Were you calling, honey?" he said, coming over and looking down at her.

"You were such a long time!" says she, glancing up under her lashes at him. "I—I was lonely!"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Bless you," says Mr. Dick, stooping over her. "What did I ever do without you?"

I could have told her a few things he did, but by that time it was coming over me pretty strong that here was the real Dicky Carter and that I had an extra one on my hands. The minute I looked at this one I knew that nobody but a blind man would mistake one for the other, and Mr. Thoburn wasn't blind. I tell you I stood out in that snow-bank and perspired!

When I looked again Mr. Dick was on his knees by the row of chairs, and Miss Dorothy—Mrs. Dicky, of course—was running her fingers through his hair.

"Minnie used to keep apples and things in the pantry," he said, "but she must be growing stingy in her old age; there's not a bite there."

"I'm not so very hungry when I have you!" cooed Mrs. Dicky.

"But you can't eat me." He brought her hand down from his hair—I may be stingy in my old age, but I've learned a few things, and one is that a man feels like a fool with his hair rumpled, and I can tell the degree of a woman's experience by the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

way she lets his top hair alone—and pretended to bite it, her hand, of course. "Although I could eat you," he said. "I'd like to take a bite out of your throat right there."

Well, it was no place for me unless they knew I was around. I waded around to the door and walked in, and there was a grand upsetting of the sealskin coat and my shepherd's plaid shawl. Mr. Dick jumped to his feet and Mrs. Dick sat bolt upright and stared at me over the backs of the chairs.

"Minnie!" cried Mr. Dick. "As I'm a married man, it's Minnie herself; Minnie, the guardian angel! The spirit of the place! Dorothy, don't you remember Minnie?"

She came toward me with her hand out. She was a pretty little thing, not so beautiful as Miss Patty, but with a nice way about her.

"I'm awfully glad to see you again," she said. "Of course I remember—why you are hardly dressed at all! You must be frozen!"

I went over to the fire and emptied my bedroom slippers of snow. Then I sat down and looked at them both.

"Frozen!" repeated I; "I'm in a hot sweat. If

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

you two children meant to come, why in creation didn't you come in time?"

"We did," replied Mr. Dick, promptly. "We crawled under the wire fence into the deer park at five minutes to twelve. The will said 'Be on the ground,' and I was—flat on the ground!"

"We've had the police," I said, drearily enough. "I wouldn't live through another day like yesterday for a hundred dollars."

"We were held up by the snow," he explained. "We got a sleigh to come over in, but we walked up the hill and came here. I don't mind saying that my wife's people don't know about this yet, and we're going to lay low until we've cooked up some sort of a scheme to tell them." Then he came over and put his hand on my shoulder.

"Poor old Minnie!" he said; "honest, I'm sorry. I've been a hard child to raise, haven't I? But that's all over, Minnie. I've got an incentive now, and it's 'steady, old boy,' for me from now. You and I will run the place and run it right."

"I don't want to!" I retorted, holding my bedroom slippers to steam before the fire. "I'm going

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to buy out Timmon's candy store and live a quiet life, Mr. Dick. This place is making me old."

"Nonsense! We're going to work together, and we'll make this the busiest spot in seven counties. Dorothy and I have got it all planned out and we've got some corking good ideas." He put his hands in his pockets and strutted up and down. "It's the day of advertising, you know, Minnie," he said. "You've got to have the goods, and then you've got to let people know you've got the goods. What would you say to a shooting-gallery in the basement, under the reading-room?"

"Fine!" I said, with sarcasm, turning my slippers. "If things got too quiet that would wake them up a bit, and we could have a balloon ascension on Saturdays!"

"Not an ascension," said he, with my bitterness going right over his head. "Nothing sensational, Minnie. That's the way with women; they're always theatrical. But what's the matter with a captive balloon, and letting fresh-air cranks sleep in a big basket bed—say, at five hundred feet? Or a thousand—a thousand would be better. The air's purer."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"With a net below," says I, "in case they should turn over and fall out of bed! It's funny nobody ever thought of it before!"

"Isn't it?" exclaimed Mrs. Dick. "And we've all sorts of ideas. Dick—Mr. Carter has learned of a brand new cocktail for the men—"

"A lulu!" he broke in.

"And I'm going around to read to the old ladies and hold their hands—"

"You'll have to chloroform them first," I put in. "Perhaps it would be better to give the women the cocktail and hold the men's hands."

"Oh, if you're going to be funny!" Mr. Dick said savagely, "we'll not tell you any more. I've been counting on you, Minnie. You've been here so long. You know," he said to his wife, "when I was a little shaver I thought Minnie had webbed-feet—she was always on the bank, like a duck. You *are* a duck, Minnie," he says to me; "a nice red-headed duck! Now don't be quirky and spoil everything."

I couldn't be light-hearted to save my life.

"Your sister's been wild all day," I told Mrs. Dick. "She got your letter to-day—yesterday—but I don't think she's told your father yet."

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"What!" she screeched, and caught at the mantelpiece to hold herself. "Not Pat!" she said, horrified, "and father! Here!"

Well, I listened while they told me. They hadn't had the faintest idea that Mr. Jennings and Miss Patty were there at the sanatorium. The girl had been making a round of visits in the Christmas holidays, and instead of going back to school she'd sent a forged excuse and got a month off—she hadn't had any letters, of course. The plan had been not to tell anybody but her sister until Mr. Dick had made good at the sanatorium.

"The idea was this, Minnie," said Mr. Dick. "Old —I mean Mr. Jennings is—is not well; he has a chronic indisposition—"

"Disposition, I call it," put in Mr. Jennings' daughter.

"And he's apt to regard my running away with Dorothy when I haven't a penny as more of an embezzlement than an elopement."

"Fiddle!" exclaimed Mrs. Dick. "I asked you to marry me, and now they're here and have to spoil it all."

The thought of her father and his disposition sud-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

denly overpowered her and she put her yellow head on the back of a chair and began to cry.

"I—I can't tell him!" she sobbed. "I wrote to Pat,—why doesn't Pat tell him? I'm going back to school."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. You're a married woman now, and where I go you go. My country is your country, and my sanatorium is your sanatorium." He was in a great rage.

But she got up and began trying to pull on her fur coat, and her jaw was set. She looked like her father for a minute.

"Where are you going?" he asked, looking scared.

"Anywhere. I'll go down to the station and take the first train, it doesn't matter where to." She picked up her muff, but he went over and stood against the door.

"Not a step without me!" he declared. "I'll go with you, of course; you know that. I'm not afraid of your father: I'd as soon as not go in and wake him now and tell him the whole thing—that you've married a chap who isn't worth the butter on his bread, who can't buy you kid gloves—"

"But you will, as soon as the sanatorium suc-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ceeds!" she put in bravely. She put down her muff. "Don't tell him to-night, anyhow. Maybe Pat will think of some way to break it to him. She can do a lot with father."

"I hope she can think of some way to break another Richard Carter to the people in the house," I said tartly.

"Another Richard Carter!" they said together, and then I told them about how we had waited and got desperate, and how we'd brought in Mr. Pierce at the last minute and that he was asleep now at the house. They roared. To save my life I couldn't see that it was funny. But when I came to the part about Thoburn being there, and his having had a good look at Mr. Pierce, and that he was waiting around with his jaws open to snap up the place when it fell under the hammer, Mr. Dick stopped laughing and looked serious.

"Lord deliver us from our friends!" he said. "Between you and Sam, you've got things in a lovely mess, Minnie. What are you going to do about it now?"

"It's possible we can get by Thoburn," I said. "You can slip in to-night, we can get Mr. Pierce out

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

—Lord knows he'll be glad to go—and Miss Dorothy can go back to school. Then, later, when you've got things running and are making good—"

"I'm not going back to school," she declared, "but I'll go away; I'll not stand in your way, Dicky." She took two steps toward the door and waited for him to stop her.

"Nonsense, Minnie," he exclaimed angrily and put his arm around her, "I won't be separated from my wife. You got me into this scrape, and—"

"I didn't marry you!" I retorted. "And I'm not responsible for your father-in-law's disposition."

"You'll have to help us out," he finished.

"What shall I do? Murder Mr. Jennings?" I asked bitterly. "If you expect me to suggest that you both go to the house, and your wife can hide in your rooms—"

"Why not?" asked Mr. Dick.

Well, I sat down again and explained patiently that it would get out among the servants and cause a scandal, and that even if it didn't I wasn't going to have any more deception: I had enough already. And after a while they saw it as I did, and agreed to wait and see Miss Patty before they decided.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

They wanted to have her wakened at once, but I refused, although I agreed to bring her out first thing in the morning.

"But you can't stay here," I said. "There'll be Miss Cobb at nine o'clock, and the man comes to light the fire at eight."

"We could go to the old shelter-house on the golf links," suggested Mr. Dick, looking me square in the eye. (I took the hint, and Mrs. Dicky never knew he had been hidden there before.) "Nobody ever goes near it in winter." So I put on my slippers again and we started through the snow across the golf links, Mr. Dick carrying a bundle of firewood, and I leading the way with my lantern. Twice I went into a drift to my waist, and once a rabbit bunted into me head on, and would have scared me into a chill if I hadn't been shaking already. The two behind me were cheerful enough. Mr. Dick pointed out the general direction of the deer park which hides the shelter-house from the sanatorium, and if you'll believe it, with snow so thick I had to scrape it off the lantern every minute or so, those children planned to give something called *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the deer

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

park among the trees in the spring, to entertain the patients.

"I wish to heaven I'd wake up and find all *this* a dream," I called back over my shoulder. But they were busy with costumes and getting some folks they knew from town to take the different parts and they never even heard me. The last few yards they snowballed each other and me. I tell you I felt a hundred years old.

We got into the shelter-house by my crawling through a window, and when we had lighted the fire and hung up the lantern, it didn't seem so bad. The place had been closed since summer, and it seemed colder than outside, but those two did the barn dance then and there. There were two rooms, and Mr. Dick had always used the back one to hide in. It's a good thing Mrs. Dick was not a suspicious person. Many a woman would have wondered when she saw him lift a board in the floor and take out a rusty tin basin, a cake of soap, a moldy towel, a can of sardines, a tooth-brush and a rubber carriage robe to lay over the rafters under the hole in the roof. But it's been my experience that the first few days of married life women are blind because

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

they want to be and after that because they have to be.

It was about four when I left them, sitting on a soap box in front of the fire toasting sardines on the end of Mr. Dick's walking-stick. Mrs. Dick made me put on her sealskin coat, and I took the lantern, leaving them in the firelight. They'd gone back to the captive balloon idea and were wondering if they couldn't get it copyrighted!

I took a short cut home, crawling through the barbed-wire fence and going through the deer park. I was too tired and cold to think. I stumbled down the hill to the house, and just before I got to the corner I heard voices, and the shuffling of feet through the snow. The next instant a lantern came around the corner of the house. Mr. Thoburn was carrying it, and behind him were the bishop, Mike the bath man, and Mr. Pierce.

"It's like that man Moody," the bishop was saying angrily, "to send the girl—"

"Piffle!" snarled Mr. Thoburn. "If ever a woman was able to take care of herself—" And then they saw me, and they all stopped and stared.

"Good gracious, girl!" said the bishop, with his

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

dressing-gown blowing out straight behind him in the wind. "We thought you'd been buried in a drift!"

"I don't see why!" I retorted defiantly. "Can't I go out to my own spring-house without having a posse after me to bring me back?"

"Ordinarily," said Mr. Thoburn, with his snaky eyes on me, "I think I may say that you might go almost anywhere without my turning out to recover you. But Mrs. Moody is having hysterics."

Mrs. Moody! I'd forgotten the Moodys!

"She is convinced that you have drowned yourself, head down, in the spring," Mr. Pierce said in his pleasant way. "You've been gone two hours, you know."

He took my arm and turned me toward the house. I was dazed.

"In answer to your urgent inquiry," Mr. Thoburn called after me, disagreeably, "Mr. Moody has not died. He is asleep. But, by the way, where's the spring water?"

I didn't answer him; I couldn't. We went into the house; Mrs. Moody and Miss Cobb were sitting on the stairs. Mrs. Moody had been crying,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and Miss Cobb was feeding her the whisky I had left, with a teaspoon. She had had a half tumbler-ful already and was quite maudlin. She ran to me and put her arms around me.

"I thought I was a murderess!" she cried. "Oh, the thought! Blood on my soul! Why, Minnie Waters, wherever did you get that sealskin coat!"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER IX

DOLLY, HOW COULD YOU?

I LAY down across my bed at six o'clock that morning, but I was too tired and worried to sleep, so at seven I got up and dressed. I was frightened when I saw myself in the glass. My eyes looked like burnt holes in a blanket. I put on two pairs of stockings and heavy shoes, for I knew I was going to do the Eskimo act again that day and goodness knows how many days more, and then I went down and knocked at the door of Miss Patty's room. She hadn't been sleeping either. She called to me in an undertone to come in, and she was lying propped up with pillows, with something pink around her shoulders and the night lamp burning beside the bed. She had a book in her hand, but all over the covers and on the table at her elbow were letters in the blue foreign envelopes with the red and black and gold seal.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I walked over to the foot of the bed.

"They're here," I said.

She sat up, and some letters slid to the floor.

"*They're* here!" she repeated. "Do you mean Dorothy?"

"She and her husband. They came last night at five minutes to twelve. Their train was held up by the blizzard and they won't come in until they see you. They're hiding in the shelter-house on the golf links."

I think she thought I was crazy: I looked it. She hopped out of bed and closed the door into her sitting-room—Mrs. Hutchins' room opened off it—and then she came over and put her hand on my arm.

"Will you sit down and try to tell me just what you mean?" she said. "How can my sister and her—her wretch of a husband have come last night at midnight when I saw Mr. Carter myself not later than ten o'clock?"

Well, I had to tell her then about who Mr. Pierce was and why I had to get him, and she understood almost at once. She was the most understanding girl I ever met. She saw at once what Mr. Sam wouldn't have known in a thousand years—that I

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

wanted to save the old place—not to keep my position—but because I'd been there so long, and my father before me, and had helped to make it what it was and all that. And she stood there in her nightgown—she who was almost a princess—and listened to me, and patted me on the shoulder when I broke down, telling her about Thoburn and the summer hotel.

"But here I am," I finished, "telling you about my troubles and forgetting what I came for. You'll have to go out to the shelter-house, Miss Patty. And I guess you're expected to fix it up with your father."

She stopped unfastening her long braids of hair.

"Certainly I'll go to the shelter-house," she said, "and I'll shake a little sense into Dorothy Jennings—the abominable little idiot! But they needn't think I'm going to help them with father; I wouldn't if I could, and I can't. He won't speak to me. I'm in disgrace, Minnie." She gave her hair a shake, twisted it into a rope and then a knot, and stuck a pin in it. It was lovely: I wish Miss Cobb could have seen her. "You've known father for years, Minnie: have you ever known him to be so—so—"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Devilish" was the word she meant, but I finished for her.

"Unreasonable?" I said. "Well, once before when you were a little girl, he put his cane through a window in the spring-house, because he thought it needed air. The spring-house, of course, not the cane."

"Exactly," she said, looking around the room, "and now he's putting a cane through every plan I have made. Do you see my heavy boots?"

"It's like this," I remarked, bringing the boots from outside the door, "if he's swallowed the prince and is choking on the settlement question he might as well get over it. All those foreigners expect pay for taking a wife. Didn't the chef here want to marry Tillie, the diet cook, and didn't he want her to turn over the three hundred dollars she had in the bank, and her real estate, which was a sixth interest in a cemetery lot? But Tillie stuck it out and he wouldn't take her without."

"It isn't quite the same, Minnie," she said, sitting down on the floor to put on her stockings.

"The principle's the same," I retorted, "and if you ask me—"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I haven't," she said disagreeably, "and when you begin to argue, Minnie, you make my head ache."

"I have had a heartache for a week," I snapped, "let alone heartburn, and I'll be glad when the Jennings family is safely married and I can sleep at night."

I was hurt. I went out and shut the door behind me, but I stopped in the hall and went back.

"I forgot to say," I began, and stopped. She was still sitting on the floor, trying to put her heavy boots on, and crying all over them.

"Stop that instantly," I said, and jerked her shoes from her. "Get into a chair and let me put them on. And if you will wait a jiffy I'll bring you a cup of coffee. I'm not even a Christian in the morning until I've had my coffee."

"You haven't had it yet, have you?" she asked, and we laughed together, rather shaky. But as I buttoned her shoes I saw her eyes going toward the blue letters on the bed.

"Oh, Minnie," she said, "if you only knew how peculiar they are in Europe! They'll never allow a sanatorium in the family!"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I guess a good many would be the better for having one close," I said.

Well, I left her to get dressed and went to the kitchens. Tillie was there getting the beef tea ready for the day, but none of the rest was around. They knew the housekeeper was gone, but I guess they'd forgotten that *I* was still on hand. I put a kettle against the electric bell that rings in the chef's room so it would keep on ringing and went on into the diet kitchen.

"Tillie," I said, "can you trust me?"

She looked up from her beef.

"Whether I can or not, I always have," she answered.

"Well, can I trust you? That's more to the point."

She put down her knife and came over to me, with her hands on her hips.

"I don't know what you're up to, Minnie," she said, "and I don't know that I care. But if you've forgotten the time I went to the city and brought you sulphur and the Lord only knows what for your old spring when you'd run short and were laid up with influenza—"

"Hush!" I exclaimed. "You needn't shout it.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Tillie, I don't want you to ask me any questions, but I want four raw eggs in a basket, a pot of coffee and cream, some fruit if you can get it when the chef unlocks the refrigerator room, and bread and butter. They can make their own toast."

"They?" she said, with her mouth open.

But I didn't explain any more. I had found Tillie about a year before, frying sausages at the railroad station, and made her diet cook at the sanatorium. Mrs. Wiggins hadn't wanted her, but, as I told the old doctor at the time, we needed somebody in the kitchen to keep an eye on things for us. It was through Tillie that we discovered that the help were having egg-nog twice a day, with eggs as scarce as hens' teeth, and the pharmacy clerk putting in a requisition for more whisky every week.

Well, I scribbled a note to Mr. Van Alstyne, telling what had happened, and put it under his door, and then I met Miss Patty in the hall by the billiard room and I gave her some coffee from the basket, in the sun parlor. It was still dark, although it was nearly eight o'clock, and nobody saw us go out together. Just as we left I heard the chef in the kitchen bawling out that he'd murder whoever

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

put the kettle against the bell, and Tillie saying it must have dropped off the hook and landed there.

We went to the spring-house first, to avoid suspicion, and then across back of the deer park to the shelter-house. It was still snowing, but not so much, and the tracks we had made early in the morning were still there, mine off to one side alone, and the others close together and side by side. There was a whole history in those snow tracks, mine alone and kind of offish, and the others cuddling together. It made me lonely to look at them. I remember wishing I'd taught school, as I was educated to; woman wasn't made to live alone, and most school-teachers get married.

Miss Patty did not say much. She was holding her chin high and looking rather angry and determined. At the spring-house I gave her the basket and took an armful of fire-wood myself. I knew Mr. Dick would never think of it until the fire was out.

They were both asleep in the shelter-house. He was propped up against the wall on a box, with the rubber carriage robe around him, and she was lying by the fire, with Mrs. Moody's shawl over her and

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

her muff under her head. Miss Patty stood in the doorway for an instant. Then she walked over and, leaning down, shook her sister by the arm.

"Dorothy!" she said. "Wake up, you wretched child!" And shook her again.

Mrs. Dicky groaned and yawned, and opened her eyes one at a time. But when she saw it was Miss Patty she sat up at once, looking dazed and frightened.

"You needn't pinch me, Pat!" she said, and at that Mr. Dick wakened and jumped up, with the carriage robe still around him.

"Oh, Dolly, Dolly!" said Miss Patty suddenly, dropping on her knees beside Mrs. Dicky, "what a bad little girl you are! What a thing for you to do! Think of father and Aunt Honoria!"

"I shan't," retorted Mrs. Dicky decidedly. "I'm not going to spoil my honeymoon like that. For heaven's sake, Pat, don't cry. I'm not dead. Dick, this is my sister, Patricia."

Miss Pat looked at him, but she didn't bow. She gave him one look, from his head to his heels.

"Dolly, how *could* you!" she said, and got up.

It wasn't very comfortable for Mr. Dick, but he

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

took it much better than I expected. He went over and gave his wife a hand to help her up, and still holding hers, he turned to Miss Patty.

"You are perfectly right," he said, "I don't see how she could myself. The more you know of me the more you'll wonder. But she did; we're up against that."

He grinned at Miss Patty, and after a minute Miss Patty smiled back. But it wasn't much of a smile. I was unpacking the breakfast, putting the coffee-pot on the fire and getting ready to cook the eggs and make toast. But I was watching, too. Suddenly Mrs. Dick made a dive for Miss Patty and threw her arms around her.

"You darling!" she cried. "I'm so glad to see you again—Pat, you'll tell father, won't you? He'll take it from you. If I tell him he'll have apoplexy or something."

But Miss Patty set her pretty mouth—both those girls have their father's mouth—and held her sister out at arm's length and looked at her.

"Listen," she said. "Do you know what you have done to me? Do you know that when father knows this he's going to annul the marriage or have

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Mr. Carter arrested for kidnaping or abduction?—whatever it is." Mrs. Dick puckered her face to cry, and Mr. Dick took a step forward, but Miss Patty waved him off. "You know father as well as I do, Dolly. You know what he is, and lately he's been awful. He's not well—it's his liver again—and he won't listen to anything. Why, the Austrian ambassador came up here, all this distance, to talk about the etiquette of the—of my wedding, something about precedence, and he wouldn't even see him."

"He can't annul it," said Mr. Dick angrily. "I'm of age. And I can support my wife, too, or will be able—soon."

"Dolly's not of age," said Miss Patty wearily. "I've sat up all night figuring it out. He's going to annul the marriage, or he'll make a scandal anyhow, and that's just as bad. Dolly,"—she turned to her sister imploringly—"Dolly, I can't have a scandal now. You know how Oskar's people have taken this, anyhow; they've given in, because he insisted, but they don't want me, and if there's a lot of notoriety now the emperor will send him to Africa or some place, and—"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I wish they would!" Mrs. Carter burst out suddenly. "I hate the whole thing. They only tolerate you—us—for our money. You needn't look at me like that; Oskar may be all right, but his mother and sisters are hateful—simply hateful!"

"I'll not be with them."

"No, but they'll be with you." Mrs. Dicky walked over to the window and looked out, dabbing her eyes. "You've been everything to me, Pat, and I'm so happy now—I'd rather be here on a soap box with Dick than on a throne or a dais or whatever you'll have to sit on over there, with Oskar. I want to be happy—and you won't. Look at Alice Thorne and her duke!"

"If you really want me to be happy," Miss Patty said, going over to her, "you'll go back to school until the wedding is over."

"I won't leave Dicky." She swung around and gave Mr. Dick an adoring glance, and Miss Patty looked discouraged.

"Take him with you," she said. "Isn't there some place near where he could stay, and telephone you now and then?"

"Telephone!" said Mrs. Dick scornfully.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Can't leave," Mr. Dick objected. "Got to be on the property."

Miss Patty shrugged her shoulders and turned to go. "You're both perfectly hopeless," she said. "I'll go and tell father, Dorothy, but you know what will happen. You'll be back in school at Greenwich by to-night, and your—husband will probably be under arrest." She opened the door, but I dropped the toast I was making and ran after her.

"If he is arrested," I said, "they'll have to keep him on the place. He can't leave."

She didn't say anything; she lifted her hand and looked at the ruby ring, and then she glanced back into the room where Mr. Dick and his wife were whispering together, and turned up her coat collar.

"I'm going," she said, and stepped into the snow. But they called her back in a hurry.

"Look here, Miss—Miss Patricia," Mr. Dick said, "why can't we stay here, where we are? It's very comfortable—that is, it's livable. There's plenty of fresh air, anyhow, and everybody's shouting for fresh air nowadays. They've got somebody to take my place in the house."

"And father needn't know a thing—you can fix

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

that," broke in Mrs. Dick. "And after your wedding he will be in a better humor; he'll know it's over and not up to him any more."

Miss Patty came back to the shelter-house again and sat down on the soap box.

"We *might* carry it off," she said. "If I could only go back to town! But father is in one of his tantrums, and he won't go, or let me go. The idea! —with Aunt Honoria on the long-distance wire every day, having hysterics, and my clothes waiting to be tried on and everything. I'm desperate."

"And all sorts of things being arranged for you!" put in Mrs. Dick enviously. "And the family jewels being reset in Vienna for you and all that! It would be great—if you only didn't have to take Oskar with the jewels!"

Miss Patty frowned.

"You are not going to marry him," she said, with a glance at Mr. Dick, who, with his coat off, was lying flat on the floor, one arm down in the hole where the things had been hidden, trying to hook up a can of baked beans. "If it doesn't turn out well, you and father have certainly done your part in the way of warning. It's just as Aunt Honoria

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

said; the family will make a tremendous row beforehand, but afterward, when it all turns out well, they'll take the credit."

Mr. Dick was busy with the beans and I was turning the eggs. Mrs. Dick went over to her sister and put her arm around her.

"That's right, Patty," she said, "you're more like mother than I am. I'm a Jennings all over—except that, heavens be praised, I've got the Sherwood liver. I guess I'm common plebeian, like dad, too. I'm plebeian enough, anyhow, to think there's been a lot too much about marriage settlements and the consent of the emperor in all this, and not enough about love."

I could have patted Mrs. Dicky on the back for that, and I almost upset the eggs into the fire. I'm an advocate of marrying for love every time, although a title and a bunch of family jewels thrown in wouldn't worry me.

"Do you want me to protest that the man who has asked me to marry him cares about me?" Miss Patty replied in an angry undertone. "Couldn't he have married a thousand other girls! Hadn't a

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

marriage been arranged between him and the cousin—"

"I know all that," Mrs. Dicky said, and her voice sounded older than Miss Patty's, and motherly. "But—are you in love with him, Pat?"

"Certainly," Miss Patty said indignantly. "Don't be silly, Dolly."

At that instant Mr. Dick found the beans, and got up shouting that we'd have a meal fit for a prince—if princes ate anything so every day as baked beans. I put the eggs on a platter and poured the coffee, and we all sat around the soap box and ate. I wished that Miss Cobb could have seen me there—how they insisted on my having a second egg, and was my coffee cold, and wasn't I too close to the fire? It was Minnie here and Minnie there, and me next to Miss Patty on the floor, and she, as you may say, right next to royalty. I wished it could have been in the spring-house, with father's crayon enlargement looking down on us.

Everybody felt better for the meal, and we were sitting there laughing and talking and very cheerful when Mr. Van Alstyne opened the door and looked

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

in. His face was stern, but when he saw us, with Miss Patty on her knees toasting a piece of bread and Mr. Dicky passing the tin basin as a finger-bowl, he stopped scowling and looked amused.

"They're here, Sallie," he called to his wife, and they both came in, covered with snow, and we had coffee and eggs all over again.

Well, they stayed for an hour, and Mr. Sam talked himself black in the face and couldn't get anywhere. For the Dickys refused to be separated, and Mrs. Dick wouldn't tell her father, and Miss Patty wouldn't do it for her, and the minute Mr. Sam made a suggestion that sounded rational Mrs. Dick would cry and say she didn't care to live, anyhow, and she wished she had died of ptomaine poisoning the time she ate the bad oyster at school.

So finally Mr. Sam gave up and said he washed his hands of the whole affair, and that he was going to make another start on his wedding journey, and if they wanted to be a pair of fools it wasn't up to him—only for heaven's sake not to cry about it. And then he wiped Mrs. Dicky's eyes and kissed her, she being, as he explained, his sister-in-law now and much too pretty for him to scold.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

And when the Dickys found they were not going to be separated we had more coffee all around and everybody grew more cheerful.

Oh, we were very cheerful! I look back now and think how cheerful we were, and I shudder. It was strange that we hadn't been warned by Mr. Pierce's square jaw, but we were not. We sat around the fire and ate and laughed, and Mr. Dick arranged that Mr. Pierce should come out to him every evening for orders about the place—if he accepted, and everybody felt he would—and I was to come at the same time and bring a basket of provisions for the next day. Of course, the instant Mr. Jennings left the young couple could go into the sanatorium as guests under another name and be comfortable. And as soon as the time limit was up, and the place was still running smoothly, they could declare the truth, claim the sanatorium, having fulfilled the conditions of the will, and confess to Mr. Jennings —over the long-distance wire.

Well, it promised well, I must say. Mr. Stitt left on the ten train that morning, looking lemon-colored and mottled. He insisted that he wasn't able to go,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

but Mr. Sam gave him a headache powder and put him on the train, anyhow.

Yes, as I say, it promised well. But we made two mistakes: we didn't count on Mr. Thoburn, and we didn't know Mr. Pierce. And who could have imagined that Mike the bath man would do as he did?

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN