



Me

A Book of Remembrance

(Begun in April)

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MY type-writing was practised under difficulties, for girls kept coming in and out of my room, and Lolly, who was there nearly every evening, taught me. By this time I was getting acquainted with a great many of the girls in the house, and for some reason or other I was popular. The "good" girls wanted me to join this or that Christian Society or Endeavor Club, and the "bad" girls—alleged by the good ones to be bad—were always urging me to "come on out and have a good time."

In those days Lolly was my chum. We were always together, much to Estelle's disgust. Every evening Lolly would come into my room unless she had an engagement, and, heavens! men came after Lolly like flies to the honey-pot. With a box of cigarettes and a magazine or one of my own stories, all of which she was revising for me, she would curl up on my bed while I worked. Sometimes I practised till ten o'clock, when the lights would go out.

After a long, if not hard, day in the yards—and even if one did not work at all, the incessant movement and buzz of the great work factory was exhausting—and two or three hours of type-writing practice at night, you may be sure I was pretty tired when finally I crept into bed.

Then for some time thereafter I would lie wide awake. Like a kaleidoscopic panorama, the scenes of my day's work would slide in and out of my mind, then slowly pass away, like the figures in a strange dance. Visions would then come to me—the wavering, quaint persons and plots of the stories I would write. Dreams, too,

came of the days when I would be famous and rich, and all my dear people would be lifted up from want. My poems would be on every one's tongue, my books in every home. And I saw myself facing a great audience, and bowing in acknowledgment of their praise of my successful play.

A few years later, when the name of a play of mine flashed in electric letters on Broadway, and the city was papered with great posters of the play, I went up and down before that electric sign, just to see if I could call up even one of the fine thrills I had felt in anticipation. Alas! I was aware only of a sad excitement, a sense of disappointment and despair. I realized that what as an ignorant little girl I had thought was fame was something very different. What then I ardently believed to be the divine spark of genius, I now perceived to be nothing but a mediocre talent that could never carry me far. My success was founded upon a cheap and popular device, and that jumble of sentimental moonshine that they called my play seemed to me the pathetic stamp of my inefficiency. Oh, I had sold my birthright for a mess of pottage!

We arrive at a stage of philosophic despair when we calmly recognize our limitations; but long before we know them, what wild dreams are those that thrill, enthrall, and torment us! Well, the dreams at least were well worth while.

I was now part of a vast, moving world of work, and, strangely enough, I was, in a way, contented. It takes very little to make the average normal girl contented. Take the girls who worked as I

did. Given fair salaries and tolerable conditions under which to work, they were for the most part light-hearted and happy. You had only to look at groups of them about the Y. W. C. A. to realize that. Not that most of us did not have some little burden to carry; a few of us cherished wistful ambitions beyond our sphere, and all of us, I think, had our romances.

In the yards there was probably one girl to every three or four hundred men. They were obliged to pay good salaries, moreover, as many girls hesitated to go away out there to work, and the aristocrats of our profession balked at the sights and smells of the yards. Anyhow, the firm for which I worked treated us well. Special busses brought us to and from the yards. Excellent dressing-rooms and luncheon-rooms were assigned to us, and we were always treated with courtesy.

We girls were all appraised when we entered, and then assigned certain places in the estimation of the men of the yards. That is to say, a girl was "good," "bad," a "worker," a "frost," or a "peach."

The "good" girls were treated with respect; the "bad" girls made "dates" for dinners with the various "bosses," had fine clothes, jewels, were loud, and had privileges; the "frosts" were given a wide berth. They were the girls who were always on the defensive with the men, expecting and looking for insults and taking umbrage on the slightest provocation. The "workers" were of course the backbone of our profession. They received high salaries and rose to positions almost as good as the men's. Boys and men stepped lively for them, and took their orders unblinkingly. Finally, the title of "peach" was bestowed upon the girls whom the men decided were pretty and approved of in other ways. If one was in the "peach" class, she was persistently courted by all well-meaning or bad-meaning men who could get near her. She was a belle of the yards.

Under which head I came, I never knew. I think I was the strange gosling that had sprung up somehow in this nest,

and no one knew quite where I should be assigned. There was a wavering disposition at first to put me in the "peach" class, but I rather think I degenerated within a few weeks to the "worker" class, for Fred O'Brien early acquired the habit of leaving most of the details of our department entirely to me.

Twenty-four men asked me to "go out" with them the first week I was there. I kept a note of this, just to amuse myself and O'Brien, who was vastly interested in the sensation he fatuously believed I was creating. He took a comical pride in my "success"! Ah, dear Fred! No one, not even I, was ever prouder of my later success than he. Every day he would ask me, "Well, who's asking you out to-night?" and I would show him my "mash" notes, most of which he confiscated, later, I suspect, to torment their authors.

The men out here did not ask if they could call upon a girl. Their way of becoming better acquainted, or "going after" a girl, as they called it, was to invite her to "go out" with them, meaning for a ride, to the theaters, the parks, restaurants, or other places of amusement. I never "went out" with any of the men of the yards except O'Brien and Hermann, who had been acting like a clown for my special benefit by coming over to our department every day, and talking a lot of nonsense, telling jokes, and sending me countless foolish notes, until at last O'Brien took pity on him, and said they would call upon me one night.

That was an illuminating occasion. "Fellows" were few and far between who called at the Y. W. C. A., and every girl who possessed a "steady" was marked. Whenever a new "fellow" appeared there, he was the object of the united curiosity of a score of girls, who hung about the halls and the parlors to get a look at him.

Now, Hermann called upon me in great state. Much to my surprise and Lolly's hilarious joy, he came in silk hat and frock-coat, with a gold-topped cane. I hardly knew him when I descended in my own best, a white polka-dotted Swiss

dress, with a pink sash, and found him sitting erect and with evident discomfort on the edge of a sofa in the parlor, the admired target of a score of eyes, all feminine. He was making a manful effort to appear at his ease and as if unaware of the sensation he had made. Men with silk hats, you must know, do not call every day upon girls at the Y. W. C. A. It was plain to be seen that the poor fellow was suffering a species of delicious torture. In the hall, within direct sight of that sofa, Lolly was leaning against the wall, and looking her wickedest and prettiest.

Hermann rose gallantly as I entered, and he bowed, as I did not know he could bow, over my hand, shaking it in the then approved and fashionable high manner; but I could not resist a little giggle as I heard Lolly chokingly cough in the hall, and I knew she was taking it all in.

"O'Brien's waiting for us outside," said Hermann. "Would n't come in. Acted just like a man with a sore tooth. Ever seen a man with a sore tooth, Miss Ascough?"

No, I had never had that pleasure, I told him.

"Well," said Hermann, "the man with a sore tooth groans all day and night, and makes every one about him suffer. Then first thing in the A.M. he hikes off to the nearest dentist. He gives one look at the sign on the dentist's door, and that's enough for him: he's cured. Christian Science, you see. Now, that's how it is with O'Brien to-night. He was dead stuck on coming along, but got stage-fright when he saw the girls.

"You were n't afraid of us, were you, Mr. Hermann?" said I, admiringly and flatteringly.

"Me? What, me afraid of girls? Sa-ay, I like that!" and Hermann laughed at the idea as if it amused him vastly. "Tell you what you do. Get another girl; there's a peach looking in at us now—don't look up. She's the blonde, with the teeth. What do you say to our all going over to the S—— Gardens for a lobster supper, huh?"

Now, the peach, of course, was Lolly, who, with her dimples all at play and her fine white teeth showing, was plainly on view at the door, and had already worked havoc in the breast of the sentimental Hermann.

O'Brien did n't like the idea of the S—— Gardens. He said it was "too swift" for *me*, though he brutally averred it might do for Hermann and Lolly. Lolly and he sparred all the time, just as did Lolly and Estelle. He said, moreover, that it would not do at all for us to be seen together, and we would be sure to run across some yards people at the S—— Gardens. If he was seen out with his stenographer, every tongue in the office would be wagging about it next day.

So he suggested that we take a long car ride, and get off at L—— Park, where there was a good restaurant, and we could get something to eat and drink there. Fred and I paired off together, and Hermann, who had been utterly won away from me by Lolly, who was flirting with him and teasing him outrageously, brought up behind us as we started for the cars. After he had explained to me why we should not be seen together, O'Brien said, with an air of great carelessness:

"Now, look a-here, girl, I don't want you to get it into your head that I'm stuck on you, for I'm not; but I like you, and if you don't pull my leg too hard, I'll take you out with me all you want."

"Pull your leg!" I repeated, shocked. I had never heard that expression before. American slang was still a source of mystification, delight, and wonder to me. Lolly heard my horrified exclamation, and moved up, laughing her merriest.

"Limb's the polite term," she corrected Fred.

"Eh?" said he. Then as he saw I did not really understand, he explained to me what he meant.

"Oh," said I, "you need n't worry about me. If you don't believe that I care nothing about money, look at this."

There were a few coins in my pocket-book. I poured them into my hand, and

deliberately and impulsively I tossed them out into the road. I am sure I don't know why I did such a senseless thing as that. It was just the impulse of a silly moment.

The subjects we two girls and boys discussed were varied and many, but always by persistent degrees they seemed to swing back to the yards, wherein of course the interests of our escorts naturally centered. The boys entertained us with tales of the men and even cattle of this "city," as they called it. There was a black sheep called "Judas Iscariot" who led the other sheep to slaughter, and was always rewarded with a special bit or dainty. There was a big black pig that wandered about the offices of a neighboring firm, and was the mascot of that office.

There was a man who had been born in the yards, married in the yards, and whose heir had recently been born there. And so forth.

I got into trouble at the Y. W. C. A. for the first time that night. We had forgotten to ask permission to be out after ten, and it was after eleven by the time we got back. The door girl let us in, but took our names, and we were reported next day. I was let off with a reprimand from the secretary, but Lolly had a stormy time of it with this unpleasant personage, upon whom, I am happy to say, she never failed to inflict deserved punishment. It seems Lolly was an old offender, and she was accused of "leading Miss Ascough astray." I, by the way, was now in high favor with the secretary, though I never liked her, and I never forgave her for that first day. Also I had seen many girls turned away, sometimes because they did not have the money to pay in advance, and sometimes because they had no references. My heart used to go out to them, as with drooping shoulders these forlorn little waifs who had applied for shelter were turned from the very doors that should have opened for them.

That night as we felt our way in the dark through the unlighted halls to our rooms, Lolly swearing audibly and picturesquely, said she was "darned tired" of this "old pious prison," and as she

now had all the "dope" she wanted upon the place, she was going to get out, and she asked me to go with her. I said that I would.



XVI

I WORKED for five weeks in the stock-yards before I could make up the deficit in my hundred dollars caused by those first three weeks of idleness and the consequent expenses of my board. I am very bad at figures. I still calculate with my fingers. Every night, however, I counted my little hoard, and I had it all reckoned up on paper how soon I would have that hundred intact again.

Out of my fifteen a week I had to allow five dollars for my board and so much for luncheon, car-fare, and the little articles I added to my wardrobe. I used about eight dollars a week on myself and I sent home two. That left me only five a week, and as I had used twenty-five of the hundred before I got my position, it took me over five weeks to make it up. As each week my little pile grew larger, the more excited I became in anticipation of that moment when I could write.

I would lie awake composing the wonderful letter that would accompany that hundred dollars, but when the sixth Saturday (pay-day) actually came, and I had at last the money, I found myself unable to pen the glowing letter of my dreams. This was the letter I finally sent, and unless he read between the lines, goodness knows it was a model of businesslike brevity, showing the undoubted influence of the Smith & Co. approved type of correspondence:

Y. W. C. A.

Chicago, Ills., Aug. 8-19.

Roger Avery Hamilton, Esq.

Dear Sir:

I send you herewith inclosed the sum of one hundred dollars, being in full the amount recently lent by you to,

Very faithfully yours,

NORA ASCOUGH.

It was with a bursting heart that I folded that cold and brief epistle. Then I laid it on top of that eloquent pile of bills—"dirty money." Just before I did up the package, the ache within me grew so intense that I wrote on the envelop:

"Please come to see me now."

I made a tight little package of the money and letter, and I sent it off by registered mail. I knew nothing about post-office orders or checks. So the money went to him just like that.

Now my life really changed. On the surface things went on as ever. I progressed with my type-writing. I "made good" at the office. The routine of the daily work in the yards was brightened by various little humorous incidents that occurred there. For instance, one of the firm, a darling old man of seventy, took a great fancy to me, and every day he would come down the main aisle of the office with a fresh flower in his hand, and lay it on my desk as he passed. Not bad for an old "pork-packer," was it? Every one teased me about him, and so did he himself. He called me "black-eyes," and said I was his "girl." Other men gave me flowers, too, but I prized that one of Mr. Smith's more than the others. Also I had enough candy given to me, upon my word, to feed me, and I could have "gone out" every night in the week, had I wanted to; but, as I have said, this was only part of my life now—my outer life. The life that I conjured up within me was about to come to reality, and no one knew anything about it, not even Lolly.

She had been very much engaged in "educating" Hermann, who was madly in love with her. Lolly accepted his adoration with amused delight. She considered him a "character," but she never took him seriously.

As the days passed away, the fever within me never waned. Though I went about my work as ever, my mind was away, and I was like one whose ear is to the ground, waiting, waiting.

But he did not come, and the weeks rolled away, and two months passed.

One night a man from Lolly's home

came to call upon her. His name was Marshall Chambers. He was one of those big-shouldered, smooth-faced, athletic-looking men who make a powerful impression upon girls. According to Lolly, he was a wealthy banker whom she had known during her father's administration as mayor of her home town. I knew as soon as I saw them together that my poor Lolly was deeply in love with him, and I felt at once a sense of overwhelming antagonism and dislike toward him. I cannot explain this, for he was specially attentive to me, and although Lolly and he had not seen each other for some time, he insisted that I should accompany them to dinner at R——'s.

When we went to our rooms to dress, Lolly asked me what I thought of this man, and I said honestly:

"I like Hermann better. *He's* honest."

That remark in ordinary circumstances would have sent Lolly into one of her merry peals of laughter,—she always laughed about Hermann,—but she gave me a queer look now, her cigarette suspended in her hand. Her face was flushed, and her eyes were so brilliant they looked like turquoises.

"You 're dead right," she said solemnly.

But a moment later she was her old light self again. I was putting on a little white dress when Lolly swung me round and examined me.

"Here, you can't go to R——'s in duds like these," she said. "Wait a minute."

She disappeared into her own room, and came back with her arms full of dresses; Lolly had beautiful clothes. I suppose her tailored suits would have looked ludicrous, as she was much larger than I, but a little cream-colored chiffon frock, trimmed with pearl beads, was very becoming to me. She also lent me an evening cape, and a red rose (artificial) for my waist.

"Now look at yourself," said she, "and after this don't let me catch you mooning in your room at night. Get out and show yourself. You'll only be young once."

Lolly was in blue, the color of her eyes, and she looked, as always, "stunning." Beside her, I 'm afraid, I appeared very insignificant, for Lolly was a real beauty. I never went anywhere with her but people—men and women, too—would stare at her, and turn around for a second look. People stared at me, too, but in a different sort of way, as if I interested them or they were puzzled to know my nationality. I would have given anything to look less foreign. My darkness marked and crushed me, I who loved blondness like the sun.

Mr. Chambers did everything very splendidly. He had a carriage to take us to dinner, and he was extremely gallant in his manner to both Lolly and me, just as attentive, I thought wistfully, as if we were society girls, and not poor girls of the Y. W. C. A. Lolly and he talked a good deal in an undertone, and although they did not ignore me, I was left out of most of their conversation. I did not mind this. I was happy to lean back in that carriage, and indulge in my own fine dreams.

I should have enjoyed that dinner more if our host had been some one other than this man Chambers. He made me uncomfortable and secretly angry by looking at me in a meaning sort of way when Lolly did not see him. I felt as if he were trying to establish some sort of intimacy with me behind Lolly's back. He sat beside Lolly, and I opposite them, and he would lean back in his seat, inclined toward Lolly, and over her shoulder he would make his bold eyes at me. No, I did not like that Marshall Chambers, and I avoided his glances as much as I could. But Lolly, my poor Lolly, seemed infatuated with him, and all her pretty banter and chaff had departed. She scarcely ate anything, but played nervously with her food, and she would look at him in such a way that I wanted both to shake her and to cry for her.

But this is my story, not Lolly's, though hers perhaps would make a better tale than mine.

Chambers said he could tell one's for-

tune from one's palm, and that he would like to see mine. Lolly said:

"Nora carries her fortune in her head."

"And you," I said, "in your face."

He reached over the table for my hands, and Lolly said:

"Let him, Nora. Sometimes he makes pretty good guesses."

Chambers began to reel off a fine fairy-story, which he said was to be my fortune. We were all laughing, Lolly leaning over, and making merry and mocking interpolations, and I eagerly drinking in every word, and, though I laughed, believing most of it, when suddenly I had a queer, nervous feeling that some one other than ourselves was listening to us and was watching my face. There is something in telepathy. I was afraid to look up, and my heart began to beat in a frightened way, for I knew, even before I had turned my head, that *he* was somewhere there in the room with us. And then I saw him directly behind Marshall Chambers. Their chairs, back to back, were almost touching, but he had turned about in his seat, so that he was looking directly at me, and I shall never forget the expression of his face. It was as though he had made some discovery that aroused both his amusement and contempt.

What had I done that he should look at me like that? I wanted to go to him, to beg him to speak to me; but some one with him—a woman, I think, for curiously enough, I was capable of seeing only him, and noted not at all his companions—said something to him, and he moved his chair till his back was turned toward me. I felt like some dumb thing unjustly punished.

Lolly said:

"What 's the matter, Nora? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

I suppose my face had blanched, for I was shivering, and I wanted to cover my face with my hands and to cry and cry.

"Oh, Lolly," I said, "I want to go home!"

Chambers took me by the arm, and we passed, like people in a dream, between the tables—ah! past where he was sit-

ting, and out into the street and then home!

THE following morning I was passing languidly by the secretary's desk, in the main office, when she called to me:

"Miss Ascough, you will have to ask your men visitors to call earlier in the evening if they wish to see you. You know our rules."

"My men visitors?" I repeated stupidly.

"Yes," she returned sharply; "a gentleman called here last night at nearly nine-thirty. Of course we refused to permit him to see you."

"Oh," I said faintly, for before I had looked at that little card I knew who had at last come to see me. I went out with his card held blindly in my hand, and all that day, whenever my work paused or slackened, I found myself vaguely wondering why he had called so late, and I felt a dumb sense of helpless rage toward that hateful secretary who had turned him away.



XVII

LOLLY came flying into my room just a little while before eight that evening, with her cheeks red and her eyes sparkling. She had dined down town with Marshall Chambers, and they had come back to get me to go to the theater with them.

"Hurry up, Nora!" she cried. "Get dressed! Marshall has seats for Sothern and Harned in 'The Sunken Bell.'"

Up to this time I had never been inside a theater. I had come to America in late May. It was now the beginning of September, and the theaters were just opening. Of course I had never been to a play of any sort at home, except some little church affairs. So, unhappy as I was, I dressed in Lolly's pretty chiffon dress, and we went down to join Mr. Chambers, who was waiting for us in the parlor. On the way down in the elevator, Lolly had handed me a number of advertisements of rooms and flats that she had cut

from the papers, and while she was drawing on her gloves in the lower hall and I was glancing through these, a page called my name, and said a gentleman was waiting for me inside.

As I went into the parlor, Marshall Chambers stood up, held out his hand, and said something to me; but I scarcely saw him, and I know I did not answer him. I saw, in fact, nothing in the world save Roger Hamilton, who had come across the room to me, and, with an odd air almost of proprietorship, had taken me quietly from Chambers.

Without saying a word to each other, we sat there in the Y. W. C. A. parlor, with girls coming and going. I glanced only once at his face, and then I looked away, for I could not bear his expression. It was like that of the previous night. It was as if he examined me critically, cruelly, not only my face, but even my clothes and my gloved hands. Presently he said in a low voice:

"There are too many people here. We shall have to go out somewhere."

I found myself walking with him down Michigan Avenue. We said nothing as we walked, but presently we came to a little park, and found a bench facing the lake, and there we sat, I staring out at the water, and he looking at me. After a while he said:

"Who was your friend of last night?"

I said:

"Her name is Lolly Hope."

"I mean the *man*."

"He is her friend," I said. "I never met him till last night."

It was pretty dark, and I could not see his face, but insensibly I felt him lean toward me to look at mine; and then he said in a low voice:

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why, yes," I said. "I don't know the man at all. Did you think that I did?" He did not answer me, and I added, "Was it because of *him* you did not speak to me last night?"

"I did bow to you," he said, and then added reluctantly, "though I can't say I admired the looks of your party."

I said:

"I did n't even see the people with *you*, and it would n't have made any difference to me who they were."

He put his arm along the back of the bench behind me, but not touching me.

"Where did you get the clothes you had on—the dress you're wearing now?" he asked in a strained voice.

"Lolly lent them to me," I said. "She said mine were not fine enough."

After a pause he moved nearer to me, and I thought he was going to put his arm about me, but he did not. He said in a low voice:

"You can have all the fine clothes you want."

"I wish I could," I returned, sighing; "but one can't dress very beautifully on the salary I get."

"What do you get?" he asked, and I told him. Then he wanted me to tell him all about myself—just what I had been doing, whom I had met, what men, and to leave out nothing. I don't know why, but he seemed to think something extraordinary had happened to me, for he repeated several times:

"Tell me *everything*, every detail. I want to know."

So I did.

I told him of the Y. W. C. A. woman who had met me; of my failure with the newspaper offices; of my long hunt for work; of the insults and propositions men had made me; of my work at the yards; and of O'Brien, my "boss," who had taken me on trust and had been so good to me.

He never interrupted me once, nor asked me a single question, but let me tell him everything in my own way. Then when I was through, he took his arm down, put his hands together, and leaned over, with his elbows on his knees, staring out before him. After a while he said:

"Do you mean to tell me you *like* living at this—er—Y. W. C. A.?"

I nodded.

"And you are contented to work at the Union Stock Yards?"

"No, I don't say that; but it's a stepping-stone to better things, don't you see? It's a living for me for the present, and perhaps by and by I'll sell some of my poems and stories, and then I'll be able to leave the yards."

He turned sharply in his seat, and I felt him staring at me.

"When on earth do you get *time* to write, if you work all day from nine till five-thirty?"

"Sometimes I get up very early," I said, "at five or six, and then I write a bit; and unless the girls bother me at night, I have a chance then, too, though I wish the lights did n't go out at ten."

"But you will kill yourself working in that way."

"No, I won't," I declared eagerly. "I'm awfully strong, and, then, writing is n't work, don't you see? It's a real pleasure; after what I've had to do all day, really it is, a sort of balm almost."

"But you can't keep that up. I don't want you to. I want you to go to school, to begin all over again. If you can, you must forget these days. I want you to blot them out from your mind altogether."

I thought of that question he had asked me on the train when I had read to him my poem: "Would n't you like to go to school?" Now, indeed, neither my pride nor my vanity was piqued. I could even smile at his tone of authority. He was so sure I would obey him; but I was not going to let him do anything in the world for me unless he could say to me what I was able to say to him.

"Well?" after a moment he prompted me.

"No, Mr. Hamilton," I said, "I am not going to school. I cannot afford to."

"I will send you," he said.

"You cannot do that if I refuse to go."

"Why should you refuse?" he said.

"Because it would cost you money—dirty money," I said.

"Nonsense!" He said that angrily now. "I want you to go."

"Thank you; but, nevertheless, I am not going."

He sat up stiffly, and I could feel his frown upon me. He shot out his words at me as if he wished each one to hit me hard:

"You are an ignorant, untrained, undisciplined girl. If you wish to accomplish the big things you plan, you will have to be educated. Here is your chance."

"I'm sorry, but I'll have to get along the best way I can."

"You are stubborn, pig-headed, foolish. Don't you *want* to be educated? Are you satisfied with your present illiterate condition?"

"I can't afford to be," I said.

"But if I am willing—"

I broke in:

"I took nearly six weeks to earn the money to pay you back. I told you I'd never take another cent from you, and I never will."

"Why not?"

"Because I want you to know that I care nothing, nothing at all—nothing, nothing, about your money, that you said every one else wanted. I only care for *you*. I do."

I had run along headlong with my speech, and now I was afraid of what I had said.

He did not say a word after that, and presently I added shakily:

"Don't you see that I can't let you help me again unless you care for me as I do for you? Don't you see that?"

He poked at the gravel with his cane, and after a moment he said very gently:

"I see that you are a very foolish little girl."

"You mean because I—care for you?" I asked.

"Because you've made yourself believe you do," he said.

"I *do*," I said earnestly. "I have n't thought of anything else except you."

"Nonsense! You must n't get sentimental about me. Let's talk of something else. Have you been writing anything lately?"

I told him of the stories I was writing about my mother's land, and he said:

"But you've never been there, child."

"I know," I said; "but, then, I have an instinctive feeling about that country. A blind man can find his way over paths that he intuitively feels. And so with me. I feel as if I knew everything about that land, and when I sit down to write—why, things just come pouring to me, and I can write *anything* then."

I could feel his slow smile, and then he said:

"I believe you can. I don't doubt that you will accomplish all that you hope to. You are a *wonderful* girl."

He stood up, and held out his hand to help me, saying we had better be returning now, as he expected to take a train at eleven. My heart sank to think that his visit was to be so short, and I felt a passionate regret that there was nothing I could do or say that would keep him longer.

As we were walking down the avenue, he put the hand nearest me behind his back, and with the other swung his cane slightly. He seemed to be thinking all the time.

I asked him whether he was going to come and see me again, and he said quickly:

"If you do what I tell you."

"You mean about the school?" I asked.

"No-o. We'll let that go for the present; but you've got to get out of both that er—institution—"

"The Y. W. C. A.?" I queried, surprised.

"Yes, your precious Y. W. C. A."

He was talking in a low and rather guarded voice, as if anxious that no one passing should hear us.

"I want you to get bright, pretty rooms. You'll feel better and work better in attractive surroundings."

"I did intend to move, anyway," I said. "Lolly and I were planning to look for rooms to-morrow."

He said quickly:

"I would n't go with her. Get a place of your own."

"Well, but, you see, together we can get a better room for less money," I explained.

He made an impatient sound, as if the discussion of expense provoked him.

"Get as nice a place as you can, child," he said, and added growlingly, "if you don't, I 'll not come to see you at all."

"All right," I said; "I 'll get a nice place."

"And now about your position—"

"It 's not bad," I asseverated. "Fred 's awfully good to me."

"Fred?"

"Yes; he 's my boss—Fred O'Brien."

"You call him Fred?"

"Yes; every one does at the yards."

"Humph! I think it would be an excellent plan for you to leave those yards just about as expeditiously as you can."

"But I can't. Why, I might not be able to get another position. Just look how I tramped about for weeks before I got that."

He stopped abruptly in the street.

"Don't you know, if you stay in a place like that, every bit of poetry and—er—charm—and fineness in you, and every other worth-while quality that you possess, will be literally beaten out of you? Why, that is no place for a girl like you. Now you get a pretty room—several, if you wish—and then go to work and write—write your poetry and stories and anything you want."

"But, Mr. Hamilton, I can't afford to do that."

He switched his cane with a sort of savage impatience.

"Nonsense!" he said. "You can afford to have anything you want. I 'll give you anything—anything you want."

He repeated this sweepingly, almost angrily, and after a moment I said:

"Well, why should you do this for me?"

I was saying to myself that I would let him do anything for me if he did it because he cared for me. If not, I could take nothing from him. I waited in a sort of agony for his answer. It came slowly, as if he were carefully choosing his words:

"I want to do it," he said, "because I am interested in you; because it pleases me

to help a girl like you; because I believe you are, as I have said, a wonderful girl, an exceptionally gifted girl, and I want to give you a chance to prove it."

"Oh!" I tried to speak lightly, but I wanted to sob. His belief in my talent gave me no pride. I vastly preferred him to care for me personally. "Thank you," I said, "but I can't let you give me a room and support me any more than I can let you send me to school."

We had now reached the Y. W. C. A. I could see the door girl watching us through the glass. It was after ten, and I had to go in. I held out my hand, and he took it reluctantly and immediately let it go. His manner plainly showed that I had offended him.

"Don't think," I said, "because I can't let you help me that I 'm not grateful to you, for I am."

"Gratitude be damned!" he said.

Estelle and I had a little stock of candles, and when the lights went out before we were in bed, we used to light one. I had trouble finding one in the dark that night, and I tripped over the rocking-chair and hurt my ankle. Estelle sat up in petulant wrath.

"Say, what 's biting you lately, anyhow?" she demanded. "Getting gay in your old age, are you?" she inquired.

"You shut up!" I said crossly, nursing my ankle. "I believe you hide those candles, anyway."

"I sure do," retorted Estelle. "If you think I 'm going to let your swell friend burn my little glimmers, you 've got one more guess coming."

By my "swell friend" she meant Lolly.

She got out of bed, however, felt under the bureau, and produced and lighted a candle. Then she examined and rubbed my ankle, and, grumbling and muttering things about Lolly, helped me undress and into bed. When I supposed she had dropped off asleep, she sat up suddenly in bed.

"Say, I 'd like to ask you something. Have you got a steady?" she said.

"No, Estelle; I wish I had," I replied mournfully.

"Well," said Estelle, "you sure are going the way about *nit* to get one. You let them swell guys alone that come nosing around you. Say, do you know I thought you were in for a nice, steady fellow for fair when I seen Pop-eyes"—Pop-eyes was her term for Hermann—"hanging round here. Then I seen *Miss Hope*"—with a sneer—"had cut you out. Say, I 'd 'a' like to have handed her one for that. Who was the swell took you out last night?"

"His name 's Chambers. He 's Lolly's friend."

"And who was the man to see you to-night? Looked to me as if *he* were stuck on you."

I sat up in bed excitedly.

"Oh, Estelle, did it?"

"Humph! I was right there next to you, on the next sofa with Albert, but, gee! you did n't see nothing but him, and he was looking at you like he 'd eat you up if you give him half a chance."

I sighed.

"I gave him a chance all right," I said mournfully.

"And nothing doing?" asked Estelle, sympathetically.

"No—nothing doing, Estelle," I said.

"Well, what do you care?" said my room-mate, determined to comfort me. "Say, what does any girl want with an old grand-pop like him, anyway?"

I laughed, I don't know why. Somehow, I was *glad* that Mr. Hamilton was old. Oh, yes, forty seems old to seventeen.



XVIII

I DON'T know whether it was the effect of Mr. Hamilton's visit or not, but I was not so contented after that. Things about the Y. W. C. A. that I had not noticed before now irritated me.

A great many unjust requirements were made of the girls. It was not fair to make us attend certain sermons. Goodness knows, we were tired enough when we got home, and most of us just wanted to go to our rooms; and if we did desire

entertainment or relaxation, we wanted to choose it for ourselves. I believe some of these old rules are not enforced to-day.

Then that ten o'clock rule! Really it *was* a shame! Just fancy writing feverishly upon some beautiful (to me it was beautiful) story or poem, and all of a sudden the lights going out! That was maddening, and sometimes I swore as Lolly did, and I cried once when I had reached a place in my story that I simply *had* to finish, and I tried to do it in the dark.

So I was determined to move, and Lolly went about looking for rooms for us. I told her I 'd like anything she got.

Meanwhile life in the yards began to "get upon my nerves." I never before knew that I *had* nerves; but I knew it now. No one, not even a girl of the abounding health and spirits I then enjoyed, could work eight hours a day at a type-writer and two or three hours writing at night, and be in love besides, and not feel some sort of strain.

And I *was* in love. I don't suppose any girl was ever more utterly and hopelessly in love than I was then. No matter what I was doing or where I was,—even when I wrote my stories,—he was always back there in my mind. It was almost as though he had hypnotized me.

Loving is, I suppose, a sort of bliss. One can get a certain amount of real joy and excitement out of loving; but it 's pretty woeful when one must love alone, and that was my case. You see, though I knew I had made a kind of impression upon Mr. Hamilton, or, as he himself put it, he was "interested" in me, still, he certainly was not in love with me, and I had little or no hope now of making him care for me.

I realized that he belonged to a different social sphere. He was a rich, powerful man, of one of the greatest families in America, and I—I was a working-girl, a stenographer of the stock-yards. Only in novels or a few sensational newspaper stories did millionaires fall in love with and marry poor, ignorant working-girls, and then the working-girl was sure to be

a beauty. I was not a beauty. Some people said I was pretty, but I don't think I was even that. I had simply the fresh prettiness that goes hand in hand with youth, and youth gallops away from us like a race-horse, eager to reach the final goal. No, I was not pretty. I looked odd, and when I began to wear fine clothes, I must have appeared very well, for I had all sorts of compliments paid to me. I was told that I looked picturesque, interesting, fascinating, distinguished, lovely, and even more flattering things that were not true. It showed what clothes will do.

I was not, however, wearing fine clothes at this time. My clothes were of the simplest—sailor shirt-waist, navy-blue cloth skirt, and a blue sailor hat with a rolled-up brim. That was how I dressed until the night Lolly lent me some of her finery.

My only hope lay in pulling myself up by my talent. If I achieved fame, that, perhaps, I felt, would put me on a level with this man. But fame seemed as elusive and as far away as the stars above me.

Then, his insistence that I should be educated and his statement that I was illiterate made me pause in my thought to take reckoning of myself. If, indeed, my ignorance was so patent that it was revealed in my mere speech, how, then, could I hope to achieve anything? I felt very badly about that, and when I read over some of my beloved poems, instead of their giving me the former pride and delight, I felt, instead, a deep-seated grief and dissatisfaction, so that I tore them up, and then wept just as if I had destroyed some living thing.

Yes, I was very unhappy. I kept at my work, doing it efficiently; but the place now appeared hideous and abhorrent to me, and every day I asked myself:

"How much longer can I bear it?"

I remember leaving my desk one day, going to the girls' dressing-room, and just sitting down alone and crying, without knowing just what I was crying about—I who cried so little!

I suppose things would have gone from bad to worse for me but for two things that happened to distract me.

We moved, Lolly and I. I can't say that our rooms were as attractive and clean-looking as the ones we had at the Y. W. C. A., and of course they cost more. Still, they were not bad. We had two small rooms. Originally one large room, a partition had made it into two. By putting a couch in the outer room, we made a sitting-room, and were allowed to have our company there. Whichever one was up the last with company was to sleep on the couch.

Lolly made the rooms very attractive by putting pretty covers over the couch and table, and college flags that some men gave her on the wall, with a lot of pictures and photographs. The place looked very cozy, especially at night, but somehow I missed the cleanly order of my room of the Y. W. C. A.

I wrote a letter to Mr. Hamilton and gave him our new address. I could not resist telling him that I had been very unhappy; that I realized he was right, and that I could never go very far when my equipment in life was so pitifully small. However, I added hopefully that I intended to read a lot that winter, and Lolly and I were going to join the library. I could take a book with me to work. There were many intervals during the day when I could read if I wished to; in the luncheon hour, for instance, and on the cars going to and from work. One could always snatch a moment. Did n't he think I would improve myself much by reading?

He did not answer me, but a few days later three large boxes of books came to the house for me.

Lolly and I were overjoyed. We had a great time getting shelves for the books and setting them up. We had Balzac, Dumas, Flaubert, Gautier, Maupassant, Carlyle's "French Revolution," and the standard works of the English authors. Also we had the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. I was so happy about those books that my depression dropped from me in a mo-

ment. I felt that if my little arms could have embraced the world, I should have encircled it. It was not merely the delight of possessing books for the first time in my life, but because *he* had chosen and sent them to me.

The second thing that came up to divert me from a tendency to melancholia at this time happened at the yards immediately after that.

One day O'Brien did not come to work till about five in the afternoon. As soon as he came in I noticed that there was something wrong with him. His hat was tipped over one eye, and his mouth had a crooked slant as he moved his cigar from side to side. Without noticing me, he took his seat, and slightly turned his back toward me. I chanced just then to catch Hermann's eye. He made a sign to me. I could not understand at first what he meant till he lifted an empty glass from his desk, held it to his lips, and then pretended to drain it. Then I knew: Fred had been drinking.

I suppose I ought not to have spoken to a man in his condition, but I think for the first time in my life there swept over me a great wave of maternal feeling toward this big uncouth boy who had been so good to me. I said:

"Fred!"

He turned around slightly, and looked at me through bleary eyes. His lips were dirty and stained with tobacco, and the odor that came from him made me feel ill. His voice, however, was steady, and he had it under control.

"Nora," he said, "I 'm soused."

"You 'd better go home," I whispered, for I was afraid he would get into trouble if one of the firm was to see him. "I 'll finish your work for you. I know just how."

"I 'm not going home till *you* do," said Fred. "I 'm going with you. You 'll take care of me, won't you, Nora?"

"O Fred," I said, "please do go home!"

"I tell you I 'm going with you. I want to tell you all about myself. I never told you before. Got to tell you to-night."

"I 'd rather hear it to-morrow night."

"Don't care what you 'd rather. I 'm going to tell you to-night," persisted Fred, with the irritable querulousness of a child.

"But I go out on the bus with the girls," I said.

"Tha' 's true," said Fred. "Tell you what I 'll do. I 'll start off now, and I 'll meet you at the end of the yards when the bus comes out. See?"

I nodded. Fred settled his hat more crookedly on his head, and, with an unlighted cigar twisting loosely in his mouth, went staggering down the aisle.

Hermann came over to my desk, and when I told him what Fred had said, he advised me to slip off the bus quickly and make a run for the nearest car. He said if Fred "got a grip" on me, he 'd never let go "till he had sobered up."

I asked Hermann how long that would take, and he said:

"Well, sometimes he goes on a long drunk, for weeks at a time. It depends on who is with him. If he can get any one to drink with him, he 'll keep on and on, once he 's started. Once a prize-fighter just got a hold of him and punched him into sensibility, and he did n't touch a drop for a year afterward. He can, if he tries, sober up in a few hours. He goes months without touching a thing, and then all of a sudden he reverts."

Hermann then told me that Fred had once been jilted by a girl in Milwaukee, and that that had started him drinking.

As the bus took us through the yards, I thought how terrible and sad it was for a man who was in such a condition to be left to his own devices. It was just as if one left a helpless baby to mind himself, or threw a poor sick person out upon the street, expecting him to be cured without treatment. What was drink but a disease, anyhow? And I said to myself that I wished I were a prize-fighter. Fred had been good to me. I come of a race, on my mother's side, which does not easily forget kindnesses, and somehow I could think of nothing save how Fred had treated me that first day, and had given me a chance when no one else would.

So when I stepped from the bus, and Fred came lurching toward me, I simply had not the heart to break away from him. All the girls were watching us, and some of the men tried to draw Fred aside by the arm.

He became wildly excited, and said he could "lick any son of a gun in the Union Stock-Yards."

One of the men told me to "beat it" while they took care of Fred; but Fred did look so helpless and so inexpressibly childish as he cried out his defiance, and I was so mortally afraid that they might get fighting among themselves, and, anyhow, though drunk, he was not offensive, that I said:

"I'll take him home. I'm not afraid of him."

Some of them laughed, and some protested; but I did n't care anything about any of them except Fred, and I helped him on an open car that went near our house.

I took him to our rooms, and there Lolly tried to sober him by making him black coffee, and Hermann, who came, too,—he had kept right up with Fred and me,—said he'd take care of Fred while Lolly and I got our dinner. We took our meals out.

When we got back,—it was about eight then,—there was Fred sitting on the doorstep. Hermann was trying to drag him to his feet, but he would n't move, and he kept saying: "Nora's going to take care of me. S-she's m' stenographer, you know."

Hermann explained that our landlady had ordered them out, as Fred had begun to sing after we went. Hermann wanted Lolly and me to go into the house, and he said he'd take care of Fred, even if he had to "land him in a cell" to do it. He said that in such a nasty way that poor Fred began to cry that he had n't a friend in the world, and that made me feel so badly that I told him that I was his friend, and that I'd take good care that Hermann did n't put him in a cell. Then I had an inspiration.

I suggested that we ~~all~~ take a long

street-car ride and that the open air might clear his head, and if it did n't, we could get off at some park and walk around. Fred exclaimed that walking was the one thing that always "woke" him up.

Lolly said:

"Not for mine!" and went into the house.

So Hermann and I, with Fred between us, made for the nearest car. I got in first, then Fred, and then as Hermann was getting on, Fred seized his hat and threw it out into the road. A wind caught it, and Hermann had to chase after it. While he was doing this, Fred pulled the bell-rope, and the car started.

We rode to the end of the line, Fred behaving very well. Here we got off, and we went into the park. I asked Fred how he was feeling, and he said "tip-top," and that he would be all right after walking about a bit.

We walked!

At first Fred was garrulous in a wandering sort of way, and he tried to tell me about the girl who had jilted him. He said he had never liked a girl since except me, and then he pulled himself up abruptly and said:

"But don't think I'm stuck on you, because I ain't. I got stuck on one girl in my life, and that was enough for mine."

"Of course you're not," I said soothingly, "and I'm not stuck on you, either. We're just good pals, are n't we?"

"Best ever," said Fred, drowsily.

Then for a long time—my! it seemed hours and hours—we just tramped about the park. Curiously enough, I did n't feel a bit tired; but by and by I could tell by the way he walked that Fred was just about ready to drop from exhaustion. He had been up drinking all the previous night and all the day. So presently I found a bench under a big tree, and I tried to make him sit down; but nothing would do but that he must lie down at full length on the bench, with his head on my lap. He dropped off almost immediately into a sound sleep or stupor, breathing heavily and noisily.

I don't know how long we were there.

I grew numb with the weight of his heavy head upon my knee. A policeman came along and asked me what we were doing. I told him truthfully that Fred had been drinking, and was now asleep, and I asked him please not to wake him. He called Fred my "man," and said we could stay there. We did stay there. Nothing I believe could have awakened Fred. As for me, well, I made up my mind that I was "in for it." I thought of trying to go to sleep with my head against the back of the seat, but it was too low. So I had to sit up straight.

It was a still, warm night in September, with scarcely a breeze stirring. I could see the giant branches of the trees on all sides of us. They shot up like ghostly sentinels. Even the whispering leaves seemed scarcely to stir.

I saw the stars in a wide silver sky, staring and winking down upon us all through that long night. I looked up at them, and thought of my father, and I thought of that great ancestor of mine who had been an astronomer, and had given to the world some of its chief knowledge of the heavens above us. It would be strange, I whimsically thought, if somewhere up there among the stars he was peering down at me now on this microscopic earth; for it was microscopic in the great scheme of the universe, my father had once said.

To sit up all night long in a quiet, beautiful park, under a star-spotted sky, with a drunken man asleep on your lap, after all, that is not the worst of fates. I know, because I have done it, and I tell you there have been less happy nights than that in my life.

As we rush along in the whirligig of life, we girls who must work so hard for our daily bread, we get so little time in which to *think*. For one cannot think, save disjointedly, while working. Now I had a long chance for all my thoughts, and they came crowding upon me. I thought of my little brothers and sisters, and I wistfully longed that I might see them again while they were still little. I thought of my sister Marion, whom I

had left in Boston. Had she fared as well as I? She had written me two or three times, and her letters were cheerful enough, but just as I told her in my letters nothing of my struggles, so she told me nothing of hers. Yet I read between the lines, and I *knew*—it made my heart ache, that knowledge—that Marion was having an even more grim combat with Fate than I; I was better equipped than she to earn my living. For one's mere physical beauty is, after all, a poor and dangerous asset. And Marion was earning her living by her beauty. She was a professional model, getting fifty cents an hour.

I thought of other sisters, one of whom had passed through a tragic experience, and another—the eldest, a girl with more real talent than I—who had been a pitiful invalid all her days. She is dead now, that dear big sister of mine, and a monument marks her grave in commemoration of work she did for my mother's country.

It seemed as if our heritage had been all struggle. None of us had yet attained what the world calls success. We were all straining and leaping up frantically at the stars of our ancestor; but they still stared aloofly at us, like the impenetrable Sphinx.

It seemed a great pity that I was not, after all, to be the savior of the family, and that my dreams of the fame and fortune that not alone should lift me up, but all my people, were built upon a substance as shifting as sand and as shadowy as mist. For, if what Mr. Hamilton had said was true, there was, alas! no hope in me. Perhaps I was doomed to be the wife of a man like the fat, blond clerk at the yards, or even of Fred. To think now of Mr. Hamilton as a possible husband was to do so with a cynical jeer at my own past ingenuousness. Since that visit of his, I had been awakened, as it were, to the clear knowledge that this man could never be to me what I had so fondly dreamed. Well!

I don't know when the stars began to fade. They just seemed to wink out one by one in the sky, and it grew gray and

haggard, as it does just before the dawn. Even in the dark the birds began to call to one another, and when the first pale streak from the slowly rising sun crept stealthily out of the east, these winged little creatures dropped to earth in search of food, and a small, soft, inquiring-eyed squirrel jumped right in the path before me, and stood with uplifted tail and pricked-up head, as if to question my presence there.

Perhaps it was the whistling chatter of the birds that awoke Fred. He said I called to him, but he was mistaken.

He was lying on his back, his head upturned on my lap, and suddenly he opened his eyes and stared up at me. Then slowly he sat up, and he leaned forward on the bench and covered his face with his hands. I thought he was crying, but presently he said to me in a low, husky voice:

"How long have we been here?"

"All night, Fred," I said.

"Nora Ascough, you 're a dead-game sport!" he answered.



XIX

It may sound strange, but I really felt very little the worse for that long night's vigil. I went home, took a cold bath, had breakfast in a near-by restaurant (one of those ten, twenty, twenty-five-cent places), and went to work just the same as ever. What is more, I had a specially hard day at the yards, for of course Fred was not there, and I had to do a good part of his work.

Frank Hermann wanted to know just how I got away from Fred, and I told him just what had happened. He said admiringly:

"Gee! you 're one corker, Nora!"

"Fred gave me my job," I said, but I may as well add that I felt rather proud. Not every girl can be called a "dead-game sport" and a "corker."

Hermann said he had told the men about the place who had seen me go home with Fred that he had joined us, and

later had himself taken Fred home. I felt grateful to Hermann for that. Personally I cared very little what these stock-yard people thought of me. Still, it was good of Frank to undertake to protect me. He was a good sort, I must say.

One of the girls in the bus said as we were going home that evening that I looked "fagged out," so I suppose I had begun to show the effects of the night; but I was not aware of any great fatigue until I got on the street car. All the seats were taken, and I had to stand in a crush all the way home, holding to a strap. I was glad enough to get home, I can tell you.

I thought Lolly was in when I saw the light in my room, and that surprised me, because her hours were very irregular. She seldom came home for dinner, and often worked at night.

I suppose it was the surprise and shock of finding him there, and, of course, my real state of weakness, but I nearly fainted when I saw Mr. Hamilton in my room. His back was turned to the door when I went in, as he was looking at the books he had sent me. Then he turned around and said:

"Well, how 's the wonderful girl?"

I could n't answer him, and I must have looked very badly, for he came over to me quickly, took both my hands, and drew me down to the couch beside him. Then he said roughly:

"You see, you can't stand work like this. You 're all trembling and pale."

I said hysterically:

"I 'm trembling because you are here, and I 'm pale because I 'm tired, and I 'm tired because I 've been up all night long."

"What!" he exclaimed.

I nodded.

"Oh, yes. Fred was drunk, and he wanted me with him; so I walked with him in L—— Park, and then he fell asleep on a bench with his head on my lap."

He jumped to his feet, and looking up, I saw his face. It was so black with astounded fury that I thought he was go-

ing to strike me; but I was not afraid of him. I felt only a sudden sense of wonder and pain. His voice, though low, had a curious sound of suppressed rage.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have been out all night with that man?"

I looked into his face, and then I nodded, without speaking. He gave me a hard look, and then he laughed shortly, brutally.

"So you are *that* sort, are you?" he said.

"Yes," I returned defiantly, "I am that sort. Fred was good to me. He took me on trust. If I had left him last night, he might have gone on drinking, or a policeman would have arrested him. You can't imagine the state he was in—just like a helpless child."

While I was speaking he kept staring at me. It made me so nervous that I wrenched my hands together. And then I saw his face change, just as if it were broken, and in place of that hard, sneering expression there came that beautiful look that I had seen on his face that day on the train when he had asked me if I would like to go to school.

He came over and sat down again beside me on the couch. He took my hands in his, and held them as if he were warming them. Then I put my face against his arm and began to cry. He did n't say a word to me for the longest time. Then he asked me very gently to tell him all over again just what happened. So I did. He wanted to know if Fred had said anything offensive to me, or if he had been familiar or tried to kiss me. I said, "No; Fred is not that kind." If he had been, he asked me, what would I have done? I did n't know, I told him.

"You 'd have permitted him to?" he demanded sharply, and I said I did n't think I would; but then, of course, one could n't tell what a drunken man might do. He said that that was the whole point of the matter, and that I could see for myself that I had done a very foolish and dangerous thing.

By this time he was walking up and down. After a while, when he had got

ten over his excitement and wrath about Fred, he shook up all the sofa pillows on the couch, and made me lie down. When I sat up, he lifted up my feet, and put them on the couch, too. So I had to lie down, and I was so tired and happy that he was there, and *cared*, that I would have done anything he ordered me to. Then he drew up a chair beside me, and began to talk again on the subject of my going to school. Goodness! I had thought that matter was settled. But, no; he had the persistency of a bull-dog in matters about which he cared.

He said it was nonsense for me to be expending my strength like this, when I ought to be studying and developing myself. He said association at my age meant everything; that I had the impressionable temperament of the artist, and was bound either to be benefited or hurt by the people with whom I associated.

I let him go on, because I loved to hear him talk, anyway, even though he was so cross about it. He kept frowning at me, as if he were administering a scolding, and driving the fist of his right hand into the palm of his left in a way he had when talking. When he was through, I said:

"If I go to school, will you come to see me, like this?"

"Of course I 'll come to see you," he said. "Not—like this exactly; but I shall make it a point of coming to see you."

"Well, would I be alone with you ever?" I asked.

He said yes, sometimes, but that I ought to know what boarding-schools were like. I smiled up at him at that, and he frowned down at me, and I said:

"I 'd rather live like this, with all my besotted ignorance, and have you come to see me, and be with me all alone, just like this, than go to the finest boarding-school in the world."

He said, "Nonsense!" but he was touched, for he did n't say anything more about my going to school then. Instead, he began to urge me to leave my position at the yards. When I said I could n't do that, he grew really angry with me. I think he would have gone then, for he

picked up his hat; but I told him I had n't had any dinner. Neither, of course, had he, as I had come in about six-thirty. So then I made him wait while I dressed, and he took me out to dinner.

There were a number of restaurants near where I lived, but he knew of a better place down-town; so we went there, by carriage, instead. On the way he asked me where I got the suit I had on, and I told him. Then he wanted to know what I paid for it, and I told him \$12. It was a good little blue serge suit, and I had a smart hat to go with it. In fact, I was beginning to dress better, and more like American girls. I asked him if he liked my suit. He said roughly:

"No," and then he added, "it 's too thin." After a moment he said:

"I 'm going to buy you decent clothes first of all."

I had a queer feeling that so long as I took nothing from this man, I should retain his respect. It was a stubborn, persistent idea. I could not efface from my mind his bitter words of that day on the train, and I wanted above all things to prove to him that I cared for him only for himself and not for the things I knew he could give me and wanted to give me. I never knew a man so anxious to give a woman things as was Mr. Hamilton to do things for me from the very first. So now I told him that I could n't let him get clothes for me. That made him angrier than ever, and he would n't speak to me all the rest of the way. While we were having dinner (he had ordered the meal without reference to me at all, but just as if he knew what I should like), he said in that rough way he often assumed to me when he was bent upon having his way about something:

"You want me to take you with me when I come to Chicago, don't you—to dinner, theaters, and other places?"

I nodded. I *did* want to go with him, and I was tremendously proud to think that he wanted to take me.

"Very well, then," he said; "you 'll have to dress properly."

I could n't find any answer to that,

but I inwardly vowed that I would spend every cent I made above my board on clothes.

I think he was sorry for having spoken unkindly to me, because he ceased to urge me about the school, my position, my lodgings, which he did not like at all, and now my clothes. He made me tell him all over again for the third or fourth time about last night. He kept asking me about Fred, almost as if he were trying to trap me with questions, till finally I grew so hurt by some of his questions that I would n't answer him. Then again he changed the subject, and wanted to know what I had been writing. That was a subject on which he knew I would chatter fluently, and I told him how I had actually dared to submit my latest to a mighty magazine in New York City. He said he wished he were the editor. I said:

"Would you take my stories?"

"You better believe I would," he said.

"Why?"

"Well, why do you suppose?"

"Because you think my stories are good or because you like me—which?"

He laughed, and told me to finish my coffee.

I said:

"You must like me *some*, else you would n't have cared about Fred."

He tried to frown at me for that, but instead laughed outright, and said if it gave me any satisfaction to believe that, to go on believing it.

My happiness was dashed when he said he had to return to Richmond on the eleven o'clock train. I had been secretly hoping he would remain in Chicago a few days. When I faltered out this hope, he said rather shortly:

"I can run down here only occasionally for a day or a few hours at a time. My affairs keep me in Richmond."

Little things exhilarate me and make me happy, and little things depress me and make me sad. So while I was light-hearted a moment before, I felt blue at the thought of his going. I said to myself that this was how it would always be. He would always come, and he would

always go, and I wondered if a day would ever come when he would ask me to go with him.

He saw that I was depressed, and began to talk teasingly:

"Do you know," he said—we were now at the steps of my boarding-house—"that you are a very fickle little person?"

"I? Why I 'm foolishly faithful," I declared.

"I say you are fickle," he asserted with mock seriousness. "Now I know one chap that you used to think the world and all about, but whom you have completely forgotten. The poor little fellow came to me, and told me all about it himself."

I could n't think whom in the world he could mean, and thought he was just joking, when he said:

"So you 've forgotten all about your little dog, have you?"

"Verley!"

"Yes, Verley."

"Oh, you 've seen him?"

I think it gave him all kinds of satisfaction to answer me as he did.

"I 've got him. He 's mine now—ours, shall we say?"

"Oh, did Dr. Manning give him to you?"

He laughed.

"Not much. He *sold* him to me."

"He had no right to do that. Verley was my dog."

"But you owed Dr. Manning for your fare from Boston."

"That 's true. Did he tell you that?"

"No, but I knew it, and I did n't like the idea of your owing anything to any one except—me," and he gave me one of his warmest smiles when he said that. "I did not see the doctor myself, but a friend arranged the matter for me. By the way; he owes you a considerable little sum over the amount he paid for your fare from Boston, though we are not going to bother collecting it. We 'll let it go."

"What do you mean?"

"It seems he considered the dog a very expensive article. I paid him three hun-

dred dollars for Verley, whose high-bred ancestry I very much doubt."

"Three hundred dollars! Oh, what a shame! He was n't worth anything like that," I cried.

He said after a moment, during which he looked at me very steadily:

"Yes, he was worth that to me: he was —*yours*."

I caught my breath, I was so happy when he said that.

"Now I know you do like me," I said, "else you would n't say things like that."

"Nonsense!" he said.

"Why do you bother about me at all, then?" I asked.

He had put the key in the lock now. He did n't look up when he answered that, but kept twisting the key.

"I told you why. I 'm interested in you—that 's all," he said.

"Is that—*really*—all?" I asked tremulously.

"Yes," he said in a rough whisper; "that is really all, little girl."

"Well, anyway," I said, "even if you don't love me, I love you. You don't mind my doing that, do you?"

I could *feel* his smile in the darkness of that little porch as he said:

"No, don't stop doing *that*, whatever happens. That would be a calamity hard to bear—now."

It 's not much to have permission to love a person who does n't love you, but it was a happy girl who slept on the couch that night. Lolly came in after I did, but I made her sleep inside. She wanted to know why on earth I had all the pillows on the couch. I did n't answer. How could I tell her that I wanted them about me because *he* had put them there?

In the morning, on the table, I found half a cigar that he had smoked. I rolled it up in tissue-paper and put it in the drawer where I kept only my most cherished treasures.



Now that the lights no longer went out at ten, I did considerable writing at night.

I had to work, however, under difficulties, for Lolly had no end of men callers. She had discouraged men calling on her at the Y. W. C. A., but now that we had a place of our own, she liked them to come. As she gaily put it to me one day: "Beaux make great meal-tickets, Nora."

And then, too, she liked men. She told me once I was the only girl chum she had ever had, though she had had scores of men chums who were not necessarily her admirers as well.

Lolly was a born flirt. Hermann was her slave and her shadow now, and so were several newspaper men and editors who seemed entirely devoted to her. There was only one man, however, for whom she cared a button, so she told me, and that was Marshall Chambers; and yet she quarreled with him constantly, and never trusted him.

Lolly's men friends were kind to me, too. They tried many devices to entrap me to go with them. It was all I could do to work at night, for even when I shut myself into the inner room, Lolly was always coming in with this or that message and joke, and to urge me to "come on out, like a good fellow, just for to-night." Though, to do Lolly justice, many a time, when she thought the story I was working on was worth while, she would try to protect me from being disturbed, and sometimes she 'd say:

"Clear out, the whole bunch of you! Nora's in the throes of creation again."

However, I really don't know how I managed to write at all there. Hermann came nearly every night in those days, and even when Lolly was out he used to sit in that outer room and wait, poor fellow, for her to return. He never reproached Lolly, though he certainly knew she did not return his love. Hermann just waited, with a sort of untiring German patience and determination to win in the end. He was no longer the gay and flippant "lady-killer." In a way I was glad to have Hermann there at night, for I was afraid of Chambers. Whenever he found me alone, he would try to make love to me, and tell me he

was mad about me, and other foolish things.

I asked him once what he would do if I told Lolly. He replied, with an ugly smile, that he guessed Lolly would take his word before mine.

That marked him as unprincipled, and I hated him more than ever. Of course I never told him I disliked him. On the contrary, I was always very civil and joking with him. It's queer, but I have a good streak of the "Dr. Fell" feeling in me. It's hard to explain. Hermann and I once talked over Marshall Chambers and his efforts to make love to me. Hermann said that that was one of the reasons he was going to be there when he could. He said that some day Lolly was going to find out, and he (Hermann) wanted to be there to take care of her when that day came. Such was his dog-like affection for Lolly, that, although he knew she loved this man, he was prepared to take her when she was done with the other.

Occasionally Fred, too, came to see me in the evening, but if I was writing, he would go away at once. My writing to Fred loomed as something very important. He believed in me. Hamilton had called me a wonderful girl, but Fred believed I was an inspired genius. He let me copy all my stories on the type-writer at the office, and would literally steal time for me in which to do it, making Red Top do work I should have done.

Fred was "in bad" at the yards. It seems that his last "drunk" had completely exasperated certain heads of the firm, and there was a general opinion, so Hermann told me, that Fred's head might "come off" any day now.

I was so worried about this that I tried to warn him. He stuck his tongue in one cheek and winked at me. Then he said:

"Nora, I have an A No. 1 pull with old man Smith, and there ain't nobody going to get my job here; but I'm working them for the New York job. I want to go east."

That made me feel just as badly, for, if Fred was transferred to the New York

branch, what would become of me? I could not go, too, and I disliked the thought of working under another.

I felt so badly about it that I wrote to Mr. Hamilton, who had not been to see me for three weeks. I suppose if I had not been working so hard, I should have felt worse about that, because I had thought he would be sure to come and see me again soon. But he did not; nor did he even write to me, though I wrote him four letters. My first letter was a very foolish one. It was this: "I know you do not love me, but I do you."

I felt ashamed of that letter after I mailed it. So then I sent another to say I did n't mean it, and then I sent another immediately to say that I did.

Then for a time, as I received no answers, I did n't write to him, but tried to forget him in my writing. It's a fact that I was fairly successful. Once I started upon a story, my mind centered upon nothing else; but as soon as I was through with it, I would begin to think about him again, and I suppose he really was in my mind all the time.

But to get back to Fred. I wrote Mr. Hamilton that Fred was likely to be transferred to the New York office, and in that event he would take me with him. Of course it would be a fine opportunity for me, as all the best publishing houses and magazines were in New York, and I would have a chance to submit my work directly to the editors. Then, too, if Fred was placed in charge of the New York offices, it would be much pleasanter than in the stock-yards, since there would be merely a handful of clerks. He never answered that letter, either. I wondered why he never wrote to me. His silence made me blue and then reckless.

Lolly, who by this time knew all about Mr. Hamilton, offered me her usual consolation and advice. The consolation was a cigarette, but I did n't care for it at all. Cigarettes choked me every time I tried to smoke them, and I could n't for the life of me understand why she liked them. She must have smoked a dozen packages a day, for she smoked constantly. Her

pretty fingers were nicotine-stained, and I've known her even in the night to get up and smoke. So I could not accept Lolly's consolatory cigarette. I did, however, follow her advice in a way. She said:

"Nora, the only way to forget one man is to interest yourself in another—or many others."

So toward the end of the month I began to go about with some of Lolly's friends.

They took me to dinners, theaters, and some social and Bohemian clubs and dances. At one of these clubs I met Margaret Kingston, a woman lawyer, who became my lifelong friend. I don't know how old she was, but to me then she seemed very "grown-up." I dare say she was no more than forty or forty-five, though her hair was gray. She was a big woman physically, mentally, and of heart. Good-humored, full of sentiment, and with a fine, clear brain, I could not but be attracted to her at once. She was talented, too. She wrote, she painted, she was a fine musician, and a good orator. She was a socialist, and when very much excited, declared she was also an anarchist. With all her talents, possibly because of a certain impractical and sort of vagabond streak in her, she was always poor, hard up, and scraping about to make both ends meet.

She came over to the table where I was sitting with Lolly and Hermann and a newspaper man, and she said she wanted to know the "little girl with the black eyes." That was I. We liked each other at once, just as Lolly and I had liked each other. I form attachments that way, quickly and instinctively, and I told her much about myself, my writing, etc., so that she became at once interested in me and invited me to her house. She said she "kept house" with another "old girl."

I went to see her the very next night. They had a pretty house on Groveland Avenue. She took me through the place. I suppose I looked so longingly at those lovely rooms that she asked me if I would n't like to come and live with them. She

said she needed a couple of "roomers" to help with the expenses, and offered me a dear little room—so dainty and cozy!—for only seven dollars a week, with board. There were to be no other boarders, so she said; but there was a suite of two rooms and a bath in front, and these she intended to rent without board. She laughingly said that as these rooms were so specially fine, she 'd "soak the affluent person who took them" enough to carry our expenses. I wanted badly to move in at once, but I was afraid Lolly would be offended, so I said I 'd see about it.

On that very first visit to Mrs. Kingston, who asked me, by the way, to call her "Margaret,"—she said she felt younger when people called her that; and if it did n't sound so ugly, she would even like to be called "Mag,"—I met Dick Laurence, a newspaper reporter. He was an Ohioan whose father had once owned a Cincinnati paper.

One never knows why one person falls in love with another. See how I loved Hamilton despite his frankly telling me he was only "interested" in me. Dick Laurence fell in love with me, and just as Hermann was Lolly's shadow, so Dick became mine. He was as ambitious as I, and quite as impractical and visionary. He wrote astonishingly clever things, but never stuck at anything long enough to succeed finally. He was a born wanderer, just like my father, and although still in his early twenties, had been well over the world. At this time the woes of Cuba occupied the attention of the American press, and Laurence was trying to get out there to investigate conditions. This was just prior to the war.

I never really thought he would go, and was much astonished when only two weeks after I met him he turned up one night for "two purposes," as he said. The first was to tell me that he loved me, and the second to bid me good-by. Some newspaper syndicate was sending him to Cuba. Dick asked me if I would marry him. I liked him much; he carried me away with his eloquent stories of what he was going to do. Then I was so sorry to think

of his going out to hot and fever-wracked Cuba, among those supposedly fiendish Spaniards, and he also reminded me of Verley Marchmont, that I could not help accepting him. You see, I had given up all hope of hearing from Mr. Hamilton again. He had not answered my letters. I was terribly lonesome and hungry for some one to care for me. Dick was a big, wholesome, splendid-looking boy, and his tastes were similar to mine. Then he said he 'd "move mountains," if only I 'd become engaged to him. He appeared to me a romantic figure as I pictured him starting upon that perilous journey.

The long and short of it is that I said, "All right." Whereupon Dick gave me a ring—not a costly one, for he was not rich—and then, yes, he kissed me several times. I won't deny that I liked those kisses. I would have given anything in the world to have Mr. Hamilton kiss me; but, as I said, I had reached a reckless stage, where I believed I should not see him again, and next to being kissed by the man you love, it 's pleasant to be kissed by a man who loves you. However, with his strong young arms about me and his fervent declaration that he loved me, I felt comforted and important.

Meanwhile Lolly came in soon after we were engaged, and she had a party of men with her. Dick made me promise to tell no one. He sailed the next morning for Cuba. I never saw him again.

When I told Lolly about my engagement she laughed, and told me to "forget it." She said Dick had been on her paper a while, and she knew him well. She said he never took girls seriously, and although he did seem "hard hit" by me, he 'd soon get over it once he got among the pretty Cuban and Spanish *señoritas*. That was a dubious outlook for me, I must say. Just the same, I liked to wear his ring, and I felt a new dignity.

It 's queer, but in thinking of Mr. Hamilton at this time I felt a vindictive sort of satisfaction that I was now engaged. It was good to know that even if he did n't love me enough to answer my letters, some one did.

One day Fred came in very late from luncheon. I thought at first from something strange in his attitude that he had been drinking again, but he suddenly swung around in his seat and said:

"Do you know Mott?"

"No. Who is he?"

"Manager of the —— Department."

"I don't know him by name," I said.

"Point him out to me."

Fred said ominously:

"That 's him; but he 's not looking quite his usual handsome self."

I saw a man several departments off who even from that distance looked as if his face and nose were swollen and cut.

"Then you never went out with him?" demanded Fred.

"Why, of course not," I declared.

"I 've never been out with any yards men except you and Hermann. You know that."

"I thought so. Now look a-here," and he showed me his fists. The skin was off the knuckles, and they had an otherwise battered look.

"That son of a blank," said Fred, "boasted that you had been out with him. I knew that he lied, for no decent girl would be seen with the likes of him; so I soaked him such a swig in the nose that he 'll not blow it again for a month."

I tell this incident because it seems to be a characteristic example of what certain contemptible men say about girls whom they do not even know. I have heard of men who deliberately boasted of favors from girls who despised them, and who assailed the character of girls who

had snubbed them. This was my first experience, and my only one of this kind. That a man I had never known existed would talk lightly about me in a bar-room full of men seemed to me a shameful and cruel thing. That a man who did know me had defended me with his fists thrilled and moved me. At that moment I almost loved Fred.

This incident, however, thoroughly disgusted me with everything connected with the yards. I made up my mind that I would go with Fred to New York. We talked it over, and he said that even if the firm would not send me, he himself would engage me after he was settled there. So I began to plan to leave Chicago, though when I paused to think of Mr. Hamilton I grew miserable. Still, the thought of the change excited me. Lolly said I 'd soon forget him—I knew I would n't—and that there was nothing like a change of scene to cure one of an infatuation of that kind. She always called my love for Hamilton "infatuation," and pretended never to regard it as anything serious. She said I was a hero-worshiper, and made idols of unworthy clay and endowed them with impossible attributes and virtues. She said girls like me never really loved a man at all. We loved an image that we ourselves created.

I knew better. In my love I was simply a woman and nothing else, and as a woman, not an idealist, I loved Hamilton. I never pretended he was perfect. Indeed, I saw his faults from the first, but despite his faults, not because of them, I loved him.

(To be continued)

Actors

By AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR

THE play is over. Still they stand embraced,
Lips upon lips and fingers interlaced;
Against her shaken bosom beats his heart.
Yet each unto the other's face is blind:
Their passion is a madness of the mind,
Drunken with Dionysiac grapes of art.