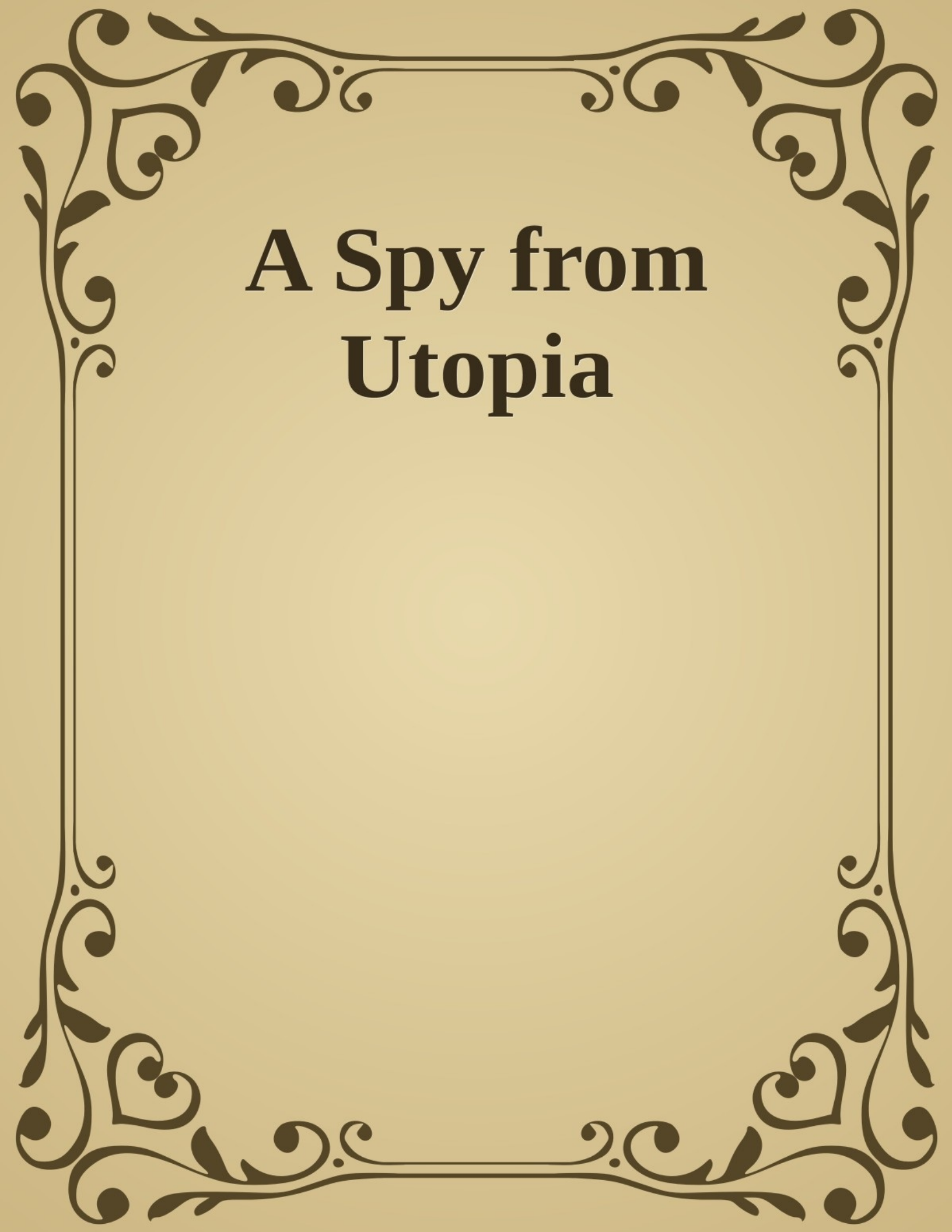




A Spy from Utopia

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By Wallace Irwin

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"Where did Sallie Holbrook pick up her foreigner?" inquired Patricia Wagstaff, casting her inquisitive cat's eyes across the rose-embowered ball-room, populous with little round tables, which Mrs. H. Morse Frothingay was this afternoon devoting to a teadance.

Had you followed her gaze, you would have beheld a slim, dark young man with the narrow face and high-set eyebrows commonly attributed to the aristocrat. He was what the romantic school would have called "faultlessly attired" in the regulation afternoon dress, correct as to number of buttons, shade of boutonnière, fold of cravat. His face, moreover, wore the none-too-anxious-to-please expression of politeness considered excellent form as he turned from the self-important dowager on his right and addressed a remark to the lovely young person who sat at his other elbow.

"His name's de Jastow," said Tommy Gibbons, who was getting fat and hated the exercise of dancing.

"De Jastow?" inquired Captain Novroska of the Russian Embassy. "There are plenty of them in Warsaw. Prince Alexander de Jastow died last year."

"This Johnny's poor as a crow," commented Gibbons.

"There are many de Jastows," replied the Russian, with a shrug that he had borrowed, without thanks, from the Parisians.

"I wonder,"—the woman with the cat's eyes appraised the group,— "is he a count or a socialist?"

"Socialists don't wear their heads like that," commented Tommy Gibbons.

"They wear a Beethoven-come-by-moon-light expression, and peek through their hair like lions through a hedge. This chap's on the ground."

"And dear little Sallie's heiress to—Oh, my word! why does Mrs. Whittlesea

permit her to pick up these things?”

Patricia Wagstaff purred commiseration, then turned an explanatory chin upon the bearded Russian.

“There always was a visionary streak in the Holbrookes. Sallie’s father was a poor clergyman until he accidentally inherited a railroad—and lucky it was for the estate that he died before he could give it away to a God-save-the-poor land colony in Nebraska.”

“And Sallie’s aunt’s about as bad,” echoed Tommy Gibbons.

“Oh—but with a difference!” cooed Patricia Wagstaff. “Mrs. Whittlesea always recognizes which side of her French pastry is glacé. Last year she suddenly turned socialist. Imagine! For why? Because the Government insisted on dredging a canal through a corner of her estate, Craggy Acres. So she declared that such a government ought to be overthrown and slapped hastily over the knuckles. Almost immediately afterward we were shocked to hear she had joined the Little Brotherhood of Universal Dawn, was organizing shirtwaist-makers’ strikes, lending *haut ton* to child-welfare committees, sending money to German gentlemen in Milwaukee, and what not. Don’t you *love* it?”

“I adore it,” acknowledged the Russian appreciatively.

“And now I should like to know about that foreigner Sallie Holbrooke has in tow.”

“I’ll drag him to your side,” said Tommy Gibbons, humorously rising. “I’ll compel him, in a few brief, well chosen sentences, to relate to you the sad yet fascinating story of his hopes and fears, early struggles, and triumphant manhood —”

“You’ll not!” commanded Patricia Wagstaff. “You’ll come with me and dance the lame duck.”

The stout young man groaned and led her away.

Paul de Jastow, sitting rather stiffly between the lovely girl and the pompous matron her aunt, sipped cocktails, as temperately as possible, from a tall etched tumbler, and surveyed the scene. On closer view, you would have observed that

he was younger than you at first imagined; that his curiously blue-black eyes were full of dreams; that his mouth was too sensitive; and that he was not entirely comfortable in these surroundings.

“How many of these,” he inquired, indicating the tall glass, “does one take?”

“One—and slowly,” replied the girl, casting upon him a protecting look from her kind gray eyes. “And how do you like our Babylonish rites by this time?”

“Entirely pagan,” he returned, with a smile of scorn. “Pagan? No! Because dancing, among the heathen, always had some religious significance. But these wriggings and twistings and uncouth cavortings signify nothing but a vacant mind and wanton body—”

“S-s-sh!” Mrs. Whittlesea admonished, with a severe tap on his elbow. “Some one might hear you.”

“Ah, pardon! I thought I came here to be heard.”

He smiled coolly upon the stately lady.

“But it mustn’t be violent, you know, or loud,” Mrs. Whittlesea cautioned him. “You must take your time. Look around first—”

“In our world the truth must be sipped very slowly,” suggested Sallie Holbrooke, tactfully pushing away his cocktail-glass while his head was turned toward the dancers.

The orchestra had swung into one of those sensual strains, French in treatment, South American in origin, which Broadway all-night dancing cafés have given to the world of leisure. Many young women, in tiny hats, tight-fitting basques, and exaggerated collars, swayed against their partners in the manner approved of all roof-gardens. A young man of conceited carriage, and with the slim, dexterous legs of a spider-monkey, moved among the dancers, culling partners where he listed.

“He is what you call a ‘society leader,’ that gentleman?” de Jastow scornfully inquired of Mrs. Whittlesea.

“Heavens, no!” said that important lady in shocked tones. “He is a professional

dancer.”

“We socialists must recognize the difference,” he suggested. The point was blunted on Mrs. Whittlesea’s hard exterior.

“Don’t talk. Look around!” Sallie Holbrooke whispered to her protégé.

Already she was rising to join an anxious partner on the dancing floor. De Jastow obeyed her instructions and studied the scene for a long time with smiling lips and melancholy eyes.

“There’s a fascination—a sort of perfumed brutality -about it,” he told Mrs. Whittlesea at last.

“Bravo!” said she, giving him that firm vision of her teeth which passed with her as a tactful smile.

She leaned closer and addressed him earnestly:

“I am interested in our new paper, the *Conflagration*--in fact, I’ve bought the majority stock. How you could help me with the editorials! You have a remarkable gift of phrase-making, young man.”

Patricia Wagstaff, who was again dancing with Tommy Gibbons, swung very close to Mrs. Whittlesea’s table just as the great lady was delivering this remark.

“I haven’t seen the Grenadier so earnest for moons and moons,” she confided in Tommy’s ear. “Now, I wonder what kind of a Pole that is she’s picked up?”

II

The manner of Paul de Jastow's "picking up" might have satisfied, or at least thrilled, the gossip-bearing soul of Patricia Wagstaff, had she accompanied Mrs. Whittlesea's splendid limousine, a fortnight before the above bright revels, to a certain dingy hall in one of the Bowery's dimmest tributaries. These sudden descents from a bonded heaven into a shackled hell had become quite habitual to the fine lady since first she cast her lot under the red flag. But to Sallie Holbrooke, too broad-minded, enthusiastic, and simple-hearted for the gilt railings of convention which surrounded her girlhood, these gatherings of earnest, prophetic zealots, speaking in the voice of protest, constituted a new, inspiring light to which something seemed to call her. She didn't know it, but it was the soul of her visionary father working within, showing her the injustice of rags and grease and tragic faces, overcoming her natural scorn for the evil odors of the place as she sat among the huddled audience under German texts promising freedom and equality to the burdened many.

She occupied a chair in the front row, between Madame Semlin, the eager Jewess who had bidden them there, and her aunt. It was with a slight shock that Sallie heard Mrs. Whittlesea addressed as "comrade"; but at the same moment the girl noted the care with which Madame Semlin took in the details of her imported wrap. Many thunderous voices spoke uncouthly, some in English, some in German. The girl was thrilled by the idea of the thing, not by the words of the speakers, which seemed to her trained as she was in grace, mere volleys of abuse grotesquely delivered against the rich.

"You'd think we were monstrous growths absolutely without humanity," she whispered to Madame Semlin.

"Consider how we have suffered, comrade," answered that lady.

"They ought to know us better. The might understand then."

Madame Semlin favored her with an indulgent smile. A new speaker was mounting the platform, and Mrs. Whittlesea cocked her lorgnon.

"Who is he, c-comrade?" she inquired of Madame Semlin, rather stumbling over the word she could never grow quite accustomed to.

The man on the platform carried his shabby clothes with the bravery of a gentleman, and there was a graceful restraint in his voice and gestures—even though his words were vitriol—quite unusual in this quarter of New York. His earnest smooth-shaven, youthful face showed a high-arched nose and brow, and there was something in the glow of his dark eye, which shot fire to the imagination of Sallie Holbrooke, just turning twenty and a fresh man in Utopia.

“His name is Paul Jastow, comrade,” replied Madame Semlin. “He is a young prophet,” she added, and settled hugely back.

Sallie, untrained in progressive philosophy, was satisfied that this man’s English was unusually pure, that he wore his hair properly short, that he walked on the ball of the foot, not heel-flat, as the other exhorters had done. He carried himself like a dancing man, she reflected, and thought the more of him for it.

Gradually she came to realize what he was saying. She was vaguely sorry, at first that so fine a thing as he should be committed to these blood-and-thunder doctrines. Then his words began to sting—to sting her personally, it seemed; for she could scarcely restrain a reply, and the red flowers of anger bloomed on her cheeks.

“This must be my crusade and yours.” He was speaking without effort, in a voice that seemed to charge the air with little flashes. “Gethsemane was no garden of pleasant dreams. Blood is the salvation of any cause whose heart is in the uplifting of man. The heights must be won in the glory of sorrow, for the flux of progress must always be this: human blood falling upon inhuman blood. If true brotherhood shall ever be won for mankind, comrades, then the human race, the workers, must obliterate the inhuman race, the idlers. Our ideal commonwealth must know no war between two alien animals, wealth and poverty. Since the Egyptian bondage, the tragedy of mankind has been the enslavement of the many by the few. Humanity thus lies prostrate, because wealth is not human; Moloch is not human. His eyes are of gold, his heart of stone, his bowels of fire. How, then, comrades, shall the monster be thrown from his pedestal and man come to his estate?”

Tragic faces were upturned, smoldering eyes focused on one delicate outstretched hand.

“The inhuman race must be destroyed by the human race—methodically,

thoroughly, without passion, just as we burn the rats of pestilence with the house that sheltered them. This is my crusade, and I hope to preach it to the end. Let us carry the torch to the palaces along Fifth Avenue. Let us not palter with words. Let us use dynamite—”

Madame Semlin, her broad face perfectly white, murmured something about “de police.” Mrs. Whittlesea sat with a calm smile upon her self-satisfied features.

“May I speak?”

Sallie Holbrooke was on her feet and her voice was as penetrating as a silver reed. From the smoothness of her neck a cloak of mandarin blue had fallen away. Her fine gray eyes were flashing, now at the platform, now at the audience around her. Mrs. Whittlesea tugged vainly at her elbow.

“Set down!” howled a guttural chorus. But the good-looking agitator ceased to harangue and stepped to the edge of the platform, where he commanded silence.

“Free speech!” he called out. “Let the lady talk.”

“I’m not an orator,” she began,—and her father had given her a voice that carried,—“but I think here is a chance for one of the inhuman race, as you call it, to correct an error. I come here as a friend of the people, although I have the misfortune of inherited wealth. In spite of this drawback, my heart is with your struggle and I want to help. But let me say this. You can accomplish nothing for your cause, for equality, for justice, so long as you overlook one primitive fact. There is no essential difference between the rich and the poor. We are of the same blood, the same clay, the same vices and virtues. I often think—I always think—that if we could meet together in some way where we would understand —”

The sentence was never finished, for an enormous man at her elbow bellowed: “How aboutt Kishinef?” There was a distracting roar. Chairs were overturned. A woman threw an orange, which missed Mrs. Whittlesea’s modish head by the shadow of an inch.

“Must git out!” screamed Madame Semlin in Mrs. Whittlesea’s ear. But a mob was already crushing around them. Then it was that the two frightened women felt strong hands tugging, tugging them forward toward the empty orchestra-pit in front of the platform. Confusedly, Sallie remembered how they followed pell-

mell down a flight of steps, how a door was hastily snap-locked behind them, how somebody conducted them along an underground gallery beneath cobwebby beams, how the sickly gas-light of a tributary street off the Bowery suddenly fell upon them as another door opened and they stood together in the ill-smelling night.

Involuntarily the women clasped hands under the dull street lamp. A policeman passed, and noted them without curiosity. The man who had guided them thus far stood at a polite distance, wiping perspiration from his smooth forehead.

“May I call you a taxi—or have you your own carriage?” he inquired. “I’m awfully sorry—what happened. My people haven’t had a chance, you see, to learn tolerance.”

“So we discovered,” laughed Sallie rather hysterically. And for the first time she recognized in her deliverer Paul Jastow, the exhorter. It was to a German restaurant in Fourteenth Street, where they had appointed to sup with Madame Semlin after the meeting, that they repaired under the guardianship of the young man. There Madame Semlin appeared, eloquent with apologies for and invectives against the Apaches of the cause who had done violence to free speech. A Bavarian orchestra played from “The Deluge”; and, appropriately, they drank German beer from prodigious steins.

While Mrs. Whittlesea, forgiving to the last, outlined campaigns and programs with the good Madame, the two young people admired each other across the gulf of circumstances. He marveled at her transparent loveliness, wondering how anyone wearing the uniform of plutocracy could be so kind and fair-minded. She remarked the fine workmanship of his nose and chin, and was pleased to see that his teeth were white and his linen clean.

“This mustn’t get in the papers,” Mrs. Whittlesea was cautioning the dark woman. There had been a plague of publicity following her.

“No, comrade,” Madame Semlin reassured her. “There were no reporters.”

“You can’t imagine how sorry I am—for what occurred,” Jastow was saying to Sallie. “But it goes to illustrate my point. You represented wealth talking to poverty—and you see how you got along. Poverty threw oranges at you.”

“But what a pity! If you aim to teach the proletariat, as you say you do, why

can't you educate them in justice?"

"They distrust you."

"Why? I came there with my heart bleeding for their wrongs. I'm not a plutocrat through any fault of my own. I'd gladly give my fortune to humanity, if I knew how it would do any good."

"I believe you would," replied the young socialist impulsively; and his eyes held hers an instant too long. "But wealth is not yours to give—don't you see? Therefore it must flow back to the soil where it belongs."

She saw no reason for taking issue with this sweeping statement. The man's way of saying it was without offense. In fact, there was something delicate about him. His poise, his features, his manners were all fineness.

"You come of a good family," she found herself saying with crude abruptness.

"Good? Yes, in the worldly sense, where good families number a great many bad people. We were called 'de Jastow,' I think, in Poland. My father, who runs a haberdasher shop in Grand Street, never talks about that. My mother was a servant. I am—excuse the term—illegitimate. My mother is dead."

"Oh." Her eyes glanced away for an instant. "You speak perfect English."

"I might," he responded quietly. "I am a Harvard graduate—the most obscure one living, I suppose. I washed dishes a club of wealthy idlers at Cambridge, where I was humiliated for four years. But the time will come when the soup will be dished with a new ladle."

"What splendid phrases you make!" gushed Mrs. Whittlesea, momentarily diverted from Madame Semlin. "You must write for us!"

"It seems too bad," Sallie persisted, as soon as her aunt turned away, "that so much of your talk—you socialists—wasted among yourselves. You spend your really fine eloquence haranguing people who are already convinced. If you have a crusade—"

"I have!" he interrupted earnestly.

“—then why can’t you talk to our class?”

“Who would listen?”

“You couldn’t harangue us from the tail of a cart. You’d have to live as one of us—learn to know our ways. You couldn’t show your colors—at least, not all at once. Crusades, with us, have to be preached *en tête-à-tête*. _But I’d like you to know how human we all are, up there in the Pine Harbor Colony. I want you to get over the notion that we’re all brazen bogies and swollen spiders of plutocracy.”

“Then I suppose I could lead you, one at a time, out of the wilderness?”

His air was amusedly unconvinced; but, as the two elderly women reveled in competitive statistics, the younger people talked on and on. Sallie was doing most of the talking now, while Paul de Jastow ceased to smile as he listened intently, watching the play of her glowing eyes, alive with an idea.

“Good night, Mr. Jastow,” said Mrs. Whittlesea sweetly, as they parted. “I hope next time we can teach each other without throwing things.”

“I’ll try to arrange it,” he answered enigmatically, as he helped them into their limousine.

“What were you two chatting about so long?” _ _asked her aunt of Sallie, as they rolled uptown.

“He’s promised to come up to Pine Harbor to preach his crusade,” Sallie replied.

“What! To hire a hall in the midst of the colony? Absurd, child!”

“No. He’s coming to live with us.” Sallie said it in the most casual way.

“As butler, you mean?” gasped the dignified matron.

“No; as guest. I’ve offered him, out of my allowance, a sufficient fee to keep him in funds while he’s with us. He’s too proud to accept our charity, but he’ll come as a—as a sort of professional paid observer. I want him really to know us and to teach our world things about his. It will help us all.”

“I think he’s interesting,” said the woman who, in every Sunday journal in America, had been heralded as the richest radical in the world.

“I think he’s magnificent,” replied the girl.

III

It was the morning after the affair of Mrs. H. Morse Frothingay's teadance. De Jastow, attired in a suit of blue flannel, sat facing Sallie in the attitude of a small boy being scolded after school.

"Paul," she began,—she called him "Paul" because it seemed to make frankness easier,—“you will never, never, never get on with my people if you go everywhere to criticize—to ‘knock,’ as they say.”

"I hope I didn't behave like a boor," he pleaded humbly. "But I never could understand why people want to dance when they might just as well be talking."

"That's what you're here to study," she reminded him kindly. "I want you to learn their ways first before you begin trying to reform them. No; I don't mean by that that I want you to show the white feather. You're too fine, courageous a prophet to do that. Some day some great giant of plutocracy will rise up and defy you here. Then I want you to be there with your sling. Or I want you to gather facts and write a book about us. But get to know us first."

"But what an exhibition that was!" Paul persisted. "A teadance, you call it? Tea composed of gin and French vermouth. Women wriggling like Congo eels to Congo music."

"There's a very fine art and skill involved in that wriggling," replied Sallie.

"And every time you start to say something, up strikes the music, and everybody begins making arms and legs go like this—umpty-tum-tum, tweedle-dee-dee!"

He arose and, with unexpected cleverness, executed a caricature of what he had seen.

"Paul," said Sallie, rising, a look of resolution upon her young and rosy face, "come on!"

"Excuse me. Where?" His eyes followed her bashfully.

"There's a phonograph behind the piano in the ball-room. I'm going to teach

you.”

“Mademoiselle—my dear lady!”

Paul de Jastow retreated one dignified step, but already she was leading him by a lapel of his coat toward the great stretch of oaken floor.

“If you’re going to get within touching distance of anybody hereabouts, you’ve just got to dance. And the time to learn is now.”

Already she had set the machine belching forth the strains of “By the Sea.” ·Paul de Jastow stood like a manikin, offering his timid embrace.

“Hold me this way,” she commanded, “and _don’t _hop on your toes. Skate! Keep your feet down! Foolish boy, you’re trying to polka. Go like this.”

In solo she illustrated the _a b c _of primitive turkey-trotting. Paul de Jastow’s face was a puzzle in embarrassment, admiration, disapproval.

“But, Miss Sallie, I didn’t come here to—”

“You came to live here. This is living,” she cut him short. “Now wind up the phonograph again and follow me.”

It was rather surprising, the way de Jastow got on. The following Thursday he occupied a place next Sallie at Mrs. Selden Bohler’s dinner-dance. Sallie breathed encouragement and advice as, course after course, he depleted the arsenal of strange forks, working methodically from left to right. A great deal of wine was poured out into a forest of glassware, and the earnest young Pole’s eyes snapped ever more brightly as casual couples arose at whim from their places and began swaying to the music in a large open space cleared for dancing in the center of the big room. There was a great deal of humorous dialogue, mostly hinging on automobiles, scandals, stock-gambling, or all these elements jumbled together. Patricia Wagstaff, straight-backed and rather haggard, sat at his left; and after she had given up her efforts to fix his position in society, she galvanized Paul with the sort of anecdotes commonly attributed to traveling salesmen. He felt a strange, desolate feeling because Sallie, who had insisted he should sit by her, seemed to devote her entire attention to a pop-eyed youth who whinnied. Finally she noticed his silence and turned to him.

“You haven’t begun crusading, have you?” she whispered.

“You’re joking like the rest,” he responded, hurt.

“No.” She grew suddenly earnest. “I shouldn’t have brought you here—if I were joking. I believe in you, Paul.”

“You can make me do anything,” he replied softly.

And, for the first time, she saw. She turned away to the youth on the other side.

As for Paul, he seemed to see all this scene now through a sympathetic glass. There was a human spirit, a high emotion, in all this capering to wild music. Two professionals from the New York Eden Garden were brought in, and Paul found himself joining in with the attentive, worshipful silence that greeted their graceful twists and poses. And, when they ceased, his hands went up among the first in applause. Patricia Wagstaff looked round and smiled as if she expected him to say something.

“In Babylon.” he volunteered by way of light conversation, “they are always dancing.”

“Don’t you *love* it!” she lisped sweetly, and rose to join her puffy partner.

“Come on!” Paul de Jastow’s reverie was broken by the voice of Sallie speaking at his shoulder.

“What—dance? Here? I’d make you ridiculous,” he protested.

“At my risk—come on!” She motioned him to rise. “Don’t look scared, and don’t hop on your toes. Remember, we’re in Babylon, and you’re just playing among the other Babs.”

When the music ceased and they returned to their places, his dark cheeks were flushed to the color of a ripe apricot, and his long Tartar eyes were bright with the excitement of it.

“How is it you throw the foot back—like this?” he asked, with all his native intensity.

“You’d rather dance than talk, then?” she bantered, motioning him to the seat beside her.

“No,” he replied seriously. “I want to stand up and shout to these people: ‘Be warned! While you dance, we starve!’ But you say they would not see the handwriting on the wall.”

“The Assyrian warning must be passed to them on a calling-card,” she said, but her look was one of frank admiration. “I know you are full of courage and power. Be a little patient, and we’ll find a time when you can give your message to them.”

“It’s a drug,” he whispered, almost to himself, as a new, teasing strain called many swaying couples to the floor. “It’s a cocktail you drink through your heels.”

“You get on amazingly well,” she complimented him. “You’re already quite graceful on your feet.”

“Am I?” he asked.

She was puzzled at his eagerness. But he amended the question hastily, as if ashamed to be caught in a disgraceful admission:

“It’s a poor way to filter out your life—this. And yet—” Again he eyed the wizards who piped and scraped the infectious tunes. “Oh, well, my ancestors must have been a light-heeled lot!”

He sat for a long time, resting on his elbow, his gaze set upon vague distances.

“Paul,” said she at last, quietly, “you’re not going to forget?”

“To forget?”

“Your crusade.”

“Can a man forget his God?” he asked, and his eyes seemed to burn her.

“Yes—when he remembers his appetites,” she responded sadly.

The pop-eyed youth on her other side emptied his glass with a noisy whinny.

“I’m not a shirk,” Paul de Jastow said, and a peculiar thrill of pride went through the girl. Why should she feel pride in this alien enthusiast?

“Have you been preaching your theories—here?” she asked him.

“A little. I told the lady to my left that they are always dancing in Babylon.”

“You told Patty Wagstaff that!” She could not restrain a giggle. “What did she say?”

“She said, ‘Don’t you *love* it!’” Paul imitated her affected tone.

And the humorous, understanding look they exchanged was deeper than convention requires.

IV

Paul de Jastow was frequently a house guest at Craggy Acres that summer and fall. The colony discussed him as a refugee anarchist, a fortune-hunter, a grand duke in disguise; and that social chatterbox _Town Scandal _referred in a veiled paragraph to a certain bold adventurer who was being financed by a marriage syndicate in Paris. For de Jastow never lacked pocket-money, became a gambler in a small way, and paid his dues promptly in the country and city clubs to which he had been admitted.

As a matter of fact, the experimental Mrs. Whittlesea paid his bills and charged them up to the account of her annual__charities. She was, as she often admitted, “heart and soul” in the movement, and it pleased her vanity to note the prodigious social adroitness of Sallie’s pupil. Sallie, however, was not so sure. She found herself in the position of the hen who hatched the swan. For her protégé, less than a month habituated to the summer colony, was now riding everywhere lightly on the froth, wherever the tide swept that downy mixture. And he was being mostly sought after because of his skill as a dancing man!

“He danced his new humoresque—on a bet—last night at the Godfrey Tellers’.

He danced with a professional. Don’t you *love* it!” Patricia Wagstaff announced at a morning call.

“I didn’t go,” said Sallie briefly.

She detested the Godfrey Tellers, who had divorced themselves toward the gaudy fringe of the colony.

Vaguely she resented the fact that de Jastow was being asked to places which he never mentioned to her.

“It’s seldom you find a foreigner who dances our steps so well,” Patricia hung to the subject. “And he’s really tremendously amusing. He does tell the most dreadful oh-oh stories.”

“I haven’t heard them,” replied Sallie, still without enthusiasm.

“Where _did _you acquire such a prodigy?”

“The de Jastows are a well known family in Warsaw.”

Sallie, who was in the act of being dressed, scolded her maid for pulling her hair.

“Imagine! At first I thought he was a socialist!” Patricia rippled sweetly.

“So? What are you going to wear at the Omar Khayyám Ball?”

And the dialogue became sufficiently general.

Paul called, as he often did, before luncheon, and they sat under the poplars in the Italian garden. This had been the place of their serious talks. There had always been a sort of noble naïveté about him, she thought, and she loved his confidences. She relished the human side of him, away from his theories—his contacts with the people of his world in the little haberdasher shop in Grand Street.

“I want to see it. Take me there some day,” she pleaded this morning, after he had told her the anecdote of Mr. Tony Sanguinetti, the local sport who squandered his birthright for a mess of striped shirts.

“It’s a hole—an awful hole!” he announced suddenly, stroking his forehead—a trick of his. “It’s my life, and my work’s there; and of course I’ll go back there—soon.”

“Of course. It’s the scene of your great battle and your leadership,” she assured him firmly.

“I have a headache,” he told her wearily.

“There was a great deal of drinking at the Godfrey Tellers’ last night?” she suggested.

“They serve very good wine.”

The remark, unreasonably, struck chill to her heart.

“Sallie—Miss Sallie,” he went on, looking steadily at her averted cheek, “I see this can’t go on. I came here full of my idea. I wanted to bring a message to your people, or to take one away. You thought it would improve me, bringing me here

—that I might get closer to my wealthy brethren. Well, I have gotten closer,” he added whimsically, again stroking his aching temples.

“You’ve been in our world more than two months.” She tried to look severe. “Haven’t you tried—yet—to teach us anything?”

“A new dance step,” he confessed, but without a smile.

“My boy, must I send you back?” She laid her delicate hand over his.

“To my father’s store, selling collars, ‘seconds’ we call them, six for a quarter? Yes; it’s the scene of my work. Those poor people love debate, they love philosophy. With all their rags and grease, they’re the intellectual class. I can preach to them in their language and mine.”

“Paul!” She had not lifted her hand from his. “I don’t want you to go back like that—in bitterness and failure. It isn’t your fault that you’ve been silent among us. I brought you here under false colors, and restrained you from speaking—at first. Don’t think I’ve ceased to believe in you. You have prophecy and courage and a vision so big that these people can not see you because they never lift up their eyes. I know how hard it is for any voice to penetrate our hard walls. What, for instance, does Patricia Wagstaff care for anything besides dressmaking?” she asked with a bitterness of her own. “To talk ideals to her would be like preaching Christ in a puppet show.”

“So you understand—”

“But there are people among us who _will _talk. You know Justinian Kyle?”

“General Kyle, the corporation lawyer?”

To name him was to mention one of the most terrifying figures in American law.

“He dines with us to-morrow night. He’s the mouthpiece of plutocracy, and that mouth is nearly always open. Aunt has an awfully serious atmosphere when he is here. I want you to come, because you can answer him.”

“The Utopian spy will suddenly appear under his true colors?” de Jastow asked without levity.

“He has a way with him that challenges debate,” she assured him.

“May I sit next to you?” Paul spoke eagerly.

“Yes; I’ll arrange that.”

“And you—you still believe in me?”

“I’ve always believed in you, Paul,” she answered impulsively. “I think you have courage—the courage of a prophet.”

V

Paul de Jastow, as he entered the immense oval dining-room, with its brazen ornaments over the lintels, its Gobelin tapestries, its Elizabethan carvings, its cut-glass candelabra, its old Russian rugs, its forest of crystal on the Cluny tablecloth, its gaudy and punctilious footmen, suddenly entertained a vision of the Jesuit missionary, tortured of body, entering the court of France and attempting to breathe his agonizing story into the ear of a frivolous Louis who divided his time, during the interview, between a trained parrot and a demi-mondaine.

The analogy, however, was not perfect; for Mrs. Whittlesea always regarded her dinner to Mr. and Mrs. Justinian Kyle as a sort of annual religious rite. She made the function small, limiting the places to twelve, and asked solid, middle-aged persons of a pronounced Tory stripe, who would sympathize with the great jurist's intellectual ideals. It was noticeable at these Kyle dinners that Mrs. Whittlesea sang very low on the topic of the cause; for the awful Justinian, although her employee in a way (in the capacity of general counsel for the Sagabrodie Coal and Iron Company), managed to browbeat her into submission after the first sentence.

Paul de Jastow, obscurely seated at mid-table, was able to study the lawyer as he crouched at the scat of honor. A yellow, smooth-shaven, seamy-faced old man with the red eyes and drooping jowls of a bloodhound, he barked defiance in every phrase, and bulldozed his hearers without the slightest regard for social usage. He bantered Mrs. Whittlesea ponderously on her socialism.

"Last year, Madam, it was Teddy bears, was it not?" he inquired, with his throaty laugh. "There aren't many fads that are good for more than a season."

Paul marked the smirk of solemn appreciation on the faces of the middle-aged guests, and felt a sort of alarm for the professed faith of the good lady who spoke so redly radical in the dim halls off the Bowery. Mrs. Justinian Kyle, dripping jewels, cast upon her husband the faithful eyes of a Boston terrier, and seemed to beam a sort of defiance upon the company.

There were few tête-a-têtes at this dinner, because General Kyle advocated "the good, old-fashioned custom of general conversation"—which, in his case, meant a rumbling monologue conducted by General Kyle himself, with occasional

pauses for agreeable replies. "Don't you think so?" he would suddenly inquire, fastening a red eye upon his prey, the expected reply being, "Most decidedly, General."

"Aunt makes me tired," the candid Sallie whispered to Paul. "In the slums she encourages the proletariat; and when she entertains General Kyle you'd think she was planning their massacre."

The criticism was a trifle hasty, however; for, even now, the lady was making a feeble stand for her soul.

"After all," she was suggesting mildly, "the people must have their rights."

"Rights, Madam, yes," barked the great man. "But first they must learn the difference between right and wrong. Uprising against proper authority is not right. The banded desperadoes who call themselves unions have no right to interfere by force and intimidation with the wheels of legitimate industry, the sanctity of property. Nor have they the right to say whether or not a workman shall take an honest dollar from a corporation."

Sallie nudged Paul softly. Her signal was unheeded, for he was leaning forward, his nostrils dilated, his sensitive mouth pressed tight.

"Suppose the dollar you mention is not sufficient payment for the honest work?" Mrs. Whittlesea gallantly chirped.

"Who is to say whether payment is insufficient, the employer or the employed?" the arch-Tory thundered. His red eyes swept the board for a reply. "The man who owns the land owns the dollar; the dollar owns the laborer until that dollar is honestly earned. Possession is right. Isn't that so, Mr. Ellsworth?"

Old Ned Ellsworth, so gallant of yore upon the polo-field, drew his florid face to a complacent smile.

"Very well put, General," he agreed.

"Why don't you speak?" whispered Sallie distinctly in Paul de Jastow's ear.

The latter sat very stiff, a trifle paler than before. His blue-black eyes held the look of one hypnotized by some power without. He cleared his throat.

“There has been a good deal of twaddle in the papers.”

General Kyle’s voice was harsh with scorn. He lubricated his overworked throat from a glass at his elbow.

“I am not a cruel man, or inhumane, but I refuse to sympathize with maudlin sentimentality. If the common people insist upon attacking property with violence, let us answer in kind. There has been more ink than blood shed over the alleged outrages in Colorado. A tentful of women and children was fired upon by State troops in the commission of their duty. Was this act criminal? I, for one, can not see it in that light. If women and children insist on aiding and abetting desperadoes in the destruction of property, then no law-abiding troops can be held culpable for shooting them down.”

Again the lawyer’s inflamed gaze swept the board. There was something so coolly heartless in the statement that the customary chorus of approval was markedly lacking. At last his eyes caught the glance of Paul de Jastow and rested there.

“Don’t you agree with me, Mr. de Jastow?” he asked, as if issuing a challenge.

It seemed to Sallie an hour before her champion spoke. She saw him shuffle in his seat, and heard him clear his throat as he looked into the face of the strong man confronting him. Finally his voice came, faint and thin.

“I dare say you’re quite right, General,” he responded at last.

He did not look at the girl beside him, but instinctively he could feel her shrinking away. Justinian Kyle, apparently somewhat regretful that he, so eminent a lawyer, should have permitted himself so sweeping an opinion, ceased his bombardment, and Mrs. Whittlesea turned the tide of conversation into more graceful channels.

VI

As soon as the distinguished guest and his conservative following had departed, Paul came into the little rose-colored reception-room, and found her sitting there, a spot of soft blue in all that glory. He sat beside her; but it was a long time before he dared study her expression and see how much sorrow and pity was there.

“You see, I’ve had my chance,” he began huskily. “All these months I’ve been taking your perfumed drug into my veins, and I didn’t realize what it was doing to me until you threw me there into a man-sized battle.”

“He challenged you to show your colors and you couldn’t reply. Oh, Paul—were you afraid?” The question came in a heartbroken quaver.

“I don’t know. I was dumb. Something seems to have gone out of me. I knew what to say—I wanted to say it; but my voice died when I tried to face that great stone Moloch with his bloodshot eyes. What is it terrifies me here? It’s the deafness of your people, I think. It’s like standing alone in some abominable temple, shouting truth to graven images, some of them frightfully big, others hideously little. You have no hearts—”

“No hearts” she whispered, and he saw the tears.

“Sallie,” he called, with that gift of emotional change peculiar to his race, “before I go,—and I’m going to-night,—tell me. Could you have cared for me?”

“I could,” she said simply, looking up. And neither could tell how they drifted suddenly so close, locked in each other’s arms.

“You must go away,” she commanded gently, pushing him from her. “You see how impossible it is for you and me. Go now, Paul.”

“Do you doubt my courage? Do you think I was afraid to-night?”

“I don’t know. No, Paul. You are still a wonderful thing to me. It wasn’t fair, my bringing you here, one man against society. But understand me, dear. All this goes to show the gulf between us. We are, as you at first said, two alien races.”

“Could you love me, dear, if this gulf, this difference, were removed?”

They were now standing a few feet apart, and his fine head drooped thoughtfully.

“Yes,” she answered in a small voice.

“And you haven’t ceased to think my cause is right—the equality of all human beings?”

“I believe it earnestly, Paul!”

“I’m so glad. I’m not going away and leave you thinking of me as a fortune-hunter. But my life, my work, seems to depend on my having you with me always. I want you to come with me and be poor, where we can create our happiness in our ideas.”

She went over to a window, and stood looking through an opening in the great curtains. In her evening gown she seemed a filmy blue cloud among the splendid hangings. It was then that Habit came and spoke in her ear. All the guardianship lavished upon her childhood, the conventional creeds fitted to her soul like fashionable garments, she could feel them holding her now.

“What will they say?” she asked, as if indicating all the marble façades of the surrounding summer colony.

“Nothing that can hurt us in our life,” he assured her.

“What will my aunt say?” She still looked off through the high curtains.

“Her religion is ours,” he replied simply. “She could never object to our practicing the equality she preaches.”

The girl was perfectly silent.

“Sallie!” he pleaded; and, receiving no response, he took one limp hand and repeated her name.

“Will you leave it to her decision? Will you let your aunt decide this for us?”

“Yes.” She did not look around.

He was admitted by a servant to Mrs. Whittlesea's library, where that lady, _always a late worker, sat among her papers, serious horn-rimmed eye-glasses above her frivolous negligee, dictating to the patient Miss Spink.

"As no employer has the right to humiliate or intimidate an employee (now, Miss Spink, why _will _you insist on making me repeat every other word? Keep awake! Haven't you common sense?)—as no employer has the right to humiliate _"

She looked up severely, and beheld the graceful man in evening clothes standing in the doorway.

"Oh, it's you, Paul! Come in. Sit down. No, not away, over there. Here."

Her tone was full of the patronage which marked her cordiality toward the proletariat.

"The Brotherhood of Equality is compelling me to write all their editorials."

"Yes?" said Paul Jastow. "May I talk with you?"

"You may go, Miss Spink," commanded Mrs. Whittlesea.

He waited until that slave's departure, then addressed the world's wealthiest radical.

"I'm going back to work in my father's store," he began. "I can't tell you how good you've been."

"Must you?" she inquired without emotion. "I hope this visit has enriched your experience, strengthened you in your fight for equality."

"It's about equality I wanted to talk," he volunteered. She questioned him with eyes which demanded explanation.

"First, I want your assurance that you are sincere in what you preach to us down on the East Side—brotherhood of men and women."

"I'm heart and soul in the work!" she cried.

“I want to marry your niece, Mrs. Whittlesea,” he announced abruptly.

She permitted her eye-glasses to fall upon her broad bosom.

“To m—to _marry _her—Sallie Holbrooke?”

“I didn’t think it would surprise you,” he pursued. “Your niece and I have learned to care for each other in the past few months. We are of the same tastes, we understand each other, we are both enthusiastic—”

“Mr. de Jastow,” she cut in, resuming her glasses. Her mouth went down into the form of an inverted crescent. “You have taken a most impertinent advantage of my hospitality. I asked you here in the kindest spirit in the world, little imagining you would make the occasion an excuse for—for furthering your worldly ambition.”

“Please understand me,” pleaded Paul, already cowed by her manner.

“Perhaps you are not aware,” she went on ruthlessly, “that my niece is heiress to eleven millions of dollars.”

“I have already considered that.”

“Indeed!”

Her eyebrows went up to the turn of her pompadour, and her glasses again relinquished their hold on her rather short nose.

“I would marry her only under the condition that she renounce her fortune and come to live with me under the conditions of poverty which would be best for both of us,” Paul persisted bravely. “I knew I could speak to you reasonably in this matter, because you are one of our leaders of radical thought and—”

“You are sure of too many things,” she cut in icily. “The unusual kindness which we have shown one of your—class—has turned your head. You had better return to your life as quickly as possible. Good night, Mr. Jastow.”

Her elision of the aristocratic “de” was a deliberate thrust that was not wasted.

“But may I ask—”

“I am too busy with my work to be interrupted, if you don’t mind,” she announced, touching a bell.

A maid appeared at the door.

“Marie,” said Mrs. Whittlesea, “have Rodgers pack Mr. de Jastow’s bags. O’Donnell will drive him to the midnight train. Good night, sir.”

On the way down, he saw the girl in filmy blue still standing by the high curtains.

“You’re going?” she cried faintly, reading defeat in his eyes.

“Yes. Alone,” he replied humbly.

“What will you do?”

The question came like a cry as she drew one of his hands to her bosom.

“Back to my father’s store—selling rags to the poor. Good-by.”

He lifted her hands to his lips. That was all.

“Paul, you’ll not lose faith—you’ll not forget!” she tried to call after him. But the only figure she could see, when vision returned to her tear-dimmed eyes, was a footman discreetly turning out the lights in the hall.

VII

It was a summer later. Sallie had been abroad and had married since then. They came back to America late in August, and an automobile party of youthful couples—Sallie with her husband, the Jack Seeleys, and the Connie Paines—stopped at Boardwalk Beach, as Jack Seeley said, “to change their brand of froth.” The Boardwalk is, as all know, a delightfully disreputable place where one should register at the hotel under a false name in order to be *en rapport*. Sallie’s husband, being of a family of crafty financiers, decreed there should be no registering done, but that they should dine and dance at the Palace Casino and motor back to New York by moonlight.

It was Saturday night, and it required Jack Seeley’s dearest bribe to obtain a table next the rail overlooking the dancing floor with its eye-defying barber-pole pillars supporting fiercely insistent balconies of Turkish blue and Indian red, garbled into a nightmare of Moorish post-impressionism. While Connie Paine wrangled with the head waiter over high tariff and low cooking, the others gave the assemblage the patronizing stare of amusement.

“Awful joint!” Jack Seeley reassured them. .. Nothing respectable here—including us.”

“Zowie!” exclaimed Sallie’s husband. “Remark the Pearl of the Boardwalk popping out of her corsage.”

“Oh, see Johnnie Breeze! Who’s his friend?”

These comments went with the cocktails, for the floor was already awhirl with dancers in every variety of exaggerated style current in night-life society.

“We’re safe!” said Sallie’s good-humored husband. “I see we have a social director.” He handed Sallie a menu card whose cover bore an announcement in display type:

We Beg to Announce

DANCING

Under the Social Direction of

MR. H. MONTAGUE FORREST

Late of Newport

“How late of Newport?” asked Jack Seeley. “Who wants dams?”

Sallie’s attention was fixed on the short stairway leading down to the dancing-floor. Down this way there sauntered a young man wearing the overdone elegance of the professional dancer: white pumps, flannel trousers of a violent pencil stripe, a Norfolk jacket of enormously magnified pin-check. His small black mustache was nicely waxed at the ends. He permitted his gold-tipped cigarette to droop chinward as he slouched, one hand in his coat pocket, surveying the throng with an air of weary appraisal.

“This is your—professional dancer?” Sallie asked of a waiter.

“Yes, Madame. Mr. Forrest,” the man replied.

“What’s wrong, dear? You’re not eating,” her husband asked.

“No,” she said abstractedly, and continued to look.

The professional dancer leaned over a table and seized upon a young woman with dead-white make-up and the attire of a dressmaker’s mannequin. They danced, admiringly observed, nicely obeying the punctilios for which they were employed.

“That’s a great crab-step he’s got on!” crowed a fat man at the next table. “Come on, dearie; let’s try it.”

It was late in the evening when the professional came so close to the place where Sallie sat that their eyes met in mid-air like two flying things. He hesitated and would have gone on, but her will compelled his.

“Would you care to dance, Madame?” he inquired politely, leaning over her.

“Go ahead, Sallie!” said her husband, indulgent to her inquiring look.

Sallie was a good dancer, but never yet had she yielded herself to a partner so instinctively rhythmic. They had danced to the opposite side of the floor before she spoke.

“Paul,” she said, “how long have you been here?”

“Just this summer,” he replied. His voice was harsher than she had remembered it. “Is he—is he your husband?”

“Yes. Why didn’t you return to your life with your father?”

He stopped dancing, and they stood by a pillar at a less frequented side of the hall. “I tried it,” he replied, without looking at her. “It smelled bad and tasted bad—after what I’d learned to like.”

“I’m so sorry!”

She wanted to reach out and help him, but they both stood stiffly against the post.

“It’s a nice time to be sorry now, isn’t it?” he returned rudely. “But I don’t blame you people for teaching me a craving for this drug. It’s in my blood, inherited. I didn’t know until you people brought it out. I was like a cat that had robbed its first nest—wild for more.”

“Are you—are you happy?” she asked timidly.

“Happy—huh! Let’s dance!”

Without another word, he took her in his arms.

“How that darling child can dance!” exclaimed her husband to Jack Seeley, as the couple swung closer and closer.

At last the professional released her, and was about to bow her to her table when she found breath for one more word.

“Paul,” she whispered, “coming here isn’t what’s meant for you.”

“Nor you, perhaps, Sallie,” he responded, with melancholy gaze.

“Yes. But in your case it seems such a pity. You who were meant for the big thing.”

“I’m meant for nothing,” he replied through set teeth. “I’ve got enough ancestral snobbery to make me despise the poor people where I belong, and I haven’t got anything to put me where I want to be. I’m Nothing, bound for Nowhere, to the latest dancing step. Here’s your husband’s table.”

“But, Paul!” Something tightened her throat so it was hard to say it. “What about—your crusade?”

“Oh, *that* bunk!” He laughed unpleasantly as he showed her to her place beside the man who possessed her.