

even to beat them. Progress by the death of the unit—if any man had invented it, it would be called murder and greed! But it was ordained by a power as much greater than our own as it is unknowable. All we can be sure of is that it is the only means by which the wise and strong survive. These are your father's ideas, and I count it an honour to be associated with him in realising them."

She glanced at him ruefully and shrugged her shoulders. "But there's always the question—just who are the units? I don't think you feel as fit as you did a month ago. The old look has come back into father's eyes. For myself, I feel as if I had hung up for weeks, like a suit of clothes in a Bowersy misfit-shop. What does it all mean?"

Pemrhyn's face became hard and set, but when he spoke it was with courage and conviction. "It looks now as if Wistar intended to join Minot in his fight against us. It will be a hard fight and a long one. But we are right, and we are stronger. In the end we shall win!"

"For father's sake, I hope so. But I am sorry, very sorry that you waited to tell me all this until matters had come to such a pass."

She started toward the house with the flowers, and was met at the door by Boyser.

"That man, in the kitchen," the old woman said, "he's drinking up the whole bottle and insultin' of Mary."

By this time Pemrhyn was not in a pleasant mood. "I'll settle him!" he said, between his teeth, striding toward the back door.

"Wait, Stanley!" Judith cried after him.

Pemrhyn stopped short. "Is it quite the place for you?"

"I am the mistress of the house," she said. "In this matter you might at least consult me." Then, as if to soften the rebuke, she added, "Don't you think it will be easier for me to blame him into behaving? If not, then you can use stronger measures."

XXXV.

It was the evening of the wedding rehearsal; but as Mr. Sears sat in the library sipping his coffee it became evident, even to the eager and light-hearted May, that he was in no cheerful mood. With the imperfect sympathy of girlhood, she endeavoured to gladden him by talking of the event that to her was all-important and all-joyful; but his response, she found, was not all the subject deserved. Even Onderdonk was glum. Slipping her arm into his, she led him out of doors.

"What is it all about?" she demanded. "If I had stayed in there another second I should have been stified!"

"A little business worry," he said evasively, fingering his unlighted cigar. She looked at him reproachfully. "Remember! We're to share everything, troubles as well as happiness, little and big!"

In their long engagement Billy had learned to play a good husband-like hand at affectionate dissimulation. "Stocks are down," he said, as if imparting a secret of state.

"But aren't they always going up and down? Isn't that what they're made for?"

"You're right there!" said Billy. "Well, then, you might be just a little cheerful for my wedding rehearsal!"

He laid his arm about her shoulder, and, with his head well above hers, risked a smile.

She slipped away from him, and, with an uncramped glance at the heavens, exclaimed, "What a perfectly lovely night for it! I do hope it'll be like this next month!"

Beyond the distant palisades the sun had set in clear splendour. Upon the verdure-covered crags beneath the western heavens a crimson mantle had fallen, like the bloom of a damask plum.

"It certainly is a corker!" said Billy, sitting on the bench beneath the tree.

May slapped a mosquito on her delicately modelled and athletic forearm.

"Come along," Billy said, starting toward an arbour on a knoll out beyond. "I'll smoke up and drive away the mosquitoes."

But May did not go, for just then the silken purr of a motor stole up through the gathering dusk from the sunken road beneath them, and presently Wistar mounted the stone steps. He wore a dinner-jacket and straw hat, and held a cream-white motor coat over his arm. May blew him a delighted kiss. "Now

we're all ready!" she exclaimed, and ran into the house.

"Any news from the Street?" asked May. Even when he had left the office to catch an early train everybody was talking Motor, and he had run a gauntlet of reporters.

The same, only more so. And they're having no end of trouble with it while it were off."

According to Wistar's reports from South America, Ryan and his associates were throwing down their hands in disgust. It is one thing to buy a Latin-American republic, and another to make it stay bought. Wistar had done his best to noise abroad the rumour of the proposed monopoly, and the effect was what he had planned. Already in two cases the very men who had profited by the sale of a concession had headed a revolution against their own government for the purpose of capturing it and selling the concession again. The great rivers of the rubber countries were bordered with quikstands for the sinking of American millions.

"If we keep to our plan," Wistar concluded, "we shall have to come out in the open to-morrow and sell to bust

pitiable. Two years ago he would have known that there was no need of such a pledge.

"Ad the more," Sears said, "I thank you for sparing her."

"Spring her?" Wistar cried. "Do you realise what it is costing her—what life was men to such a woman, married to such a man!"

A look of surprise came into the pale old face, and with it a look of terror. "She can't care for him!"

"She has told me that she does! I have no right to warn her. But you have. More than that, if you will permit me to say so, it is your duty!"

The old face became tense with pain, but at the same time set with obstinacy.

For a moment Wistar regarded him with unmingled scorn. Then he commanded himself, and delivered his ultimatum and Billy's. Another day would see the ruin of all Mr. Sears had hoped for, striven for.

"Billy would do that?"

"He insists on it. Once your sole aid was all we needed. I asked you for it, and you refused it."

In the pause that followed, May led Judith on. Pemrhyn out to join them.

From time to time the old man had



"But I am sorry, very sorry, that you waited to tell me all this until matters had come to such a pass."

them. Are you still game?"

"Still game. And you?"

"I should like to put it up to Mr. Sears once more."

The door opened, and May came out, leading her father by the hand, "Where do you think Juju is?" she cried. "In the kitchen, arguing and persuading with a tipsy tramp. Wait just a minute till I get her!" And she vanished into the house.

"Can you leave us just a minute?" Wistar said in a low voice to Billy.

Billy started to follow May, but with a glance at his cigar he lighted it, and, thrusting his hands in the pockets of his dinner-jacket, turned on his heel toward the arbour.

The two men faced each other in silence. The lines about the old man's clear-cut and delicate lips were drawn and haggard. The soft wrinkle that once had pleasantly framed his refined and pointed chin had become a furrow, and his mild blue eyes were without expression.

But it was he who spoke first. "Your promise not to tell Judith," he said, in a dry, metallic voice—"you have kept it, and I thank you. You have fought hard, but you have fought fair."

"Did I promise?" Wistar asked. "I'd forgotten." The fact that Mr. Sears had treasured such a promise would have seemed contemptible if it had not been

been mechanically brushing the mosquitoes from their attacks on his delicate skin—a gesture which, to Wistar's mind, had lent a not inappropriate touch of triviality to his figure. Now he made an excuse of the pests to go indoors, and with a low-spoken word bade Pemrhyn to follow. Wistar could not help hoping that his words had had weight.

"Poor father!" said Judith, as she gave Wistar her hand. "He's got all the people in the country round to combine in a trust against the mosquitoes. But there's one obstinate farmer won't let us put a drop of kerosene on his marsh. Our neighbours over on the Pocantico Hills—Standard Oil, you know—they've tried to bully him into selling his land, and he's using the mosquitoes from his marsh to get even. Another of father's poor syndicates bust!"

They laughed, with wonted gaiety they could command.

"It's worse than pigs in clover," May complained, "to get you all together. Now, where's the Bishop to stand?" She took up a garden rake, and stuck it upright in the bed of roses. "There," she said, "that's the Bishop!"

"That!" laughed Wistar. "The good Bishop a rake! You slander the lawn sleeves!" Taking his oversuit from the bench, he draped it over the head of the rake, and then paused, a smile beaming in the hollows of his cheeks. Yet we

need just a soupcon of the rake!" He spread the collar so that the teeth were visible. "There!" he said. "No! Wait!" He picked up a flower-pot and perched it on top. There you have the Bishop to the life! Now we shall be married!"

"First," said Judith, looking mysteriously at a card in her hand. "I think we'd better be invited! The engravers have just sent this back to know if it's all right."

May looked at the card with a critical eye. "Stupid!" she said. "Of course it's all right. I wrote it out myself! The wedding of his daughter, May Honoria Rhinelander, at Suncliff, Ardsley-on-Hudson—I think it reads beautifully!"

Judith looked over her shoulder. "Is it your idea that at a wedding a groom is superfluous?"

A look of horror came into the girl's face. "I clean forgot to put Billy in! That's why they sent it back!" She took a pencil Wistar offered her and scribbled in, "to William Van Rensselaer Onderdonk." Then she cried, "Well, now everything's ready!" She ran up the steps and called, "Come, father! Come, Mr. Pemrhyn!"

"Is everything ready?" asked Wistar. "Except the cup, and Boyser is mixing that!"

"And the music—I brought it from town with me; it will be here in a minute. And is that everything?"

"Music?" she cried. "How sweet of you! It's more than I dreamed! You regular lanukin pie!" She leaped lightly up on her toes and kissed him on the lips.

With his two hands on her shoulders, he held her on tiptoe a moment. "Now I agree with you," he said. "At a wedding a groom is superfluous!"

She sank to the ground in consternation. "Billy? Isn't he here? I know Donkey will spoil my wedding! Where did he go?"

"He seems to be aware how superfluous he is," Wistar laughed. "Perhaps you'll find him out in the arbour, smoking."

She stood still, half afraid to leave them. "Until I come back, don't you dare stir from this spot!" Then, with her lithe, girlish stride, she fled toward the arbour.

"We'll call you," Wistar cried after her, "when the music comes!"

Then he turned to Judith, and in the moment his mask of gay spirits fell from him.

XXXVI.

Judith smiled at him a little sadly. "It pleases my Lord to be merry. Very soon, now, they say, you will stand alone again, your own master, and fighting against us, as you were before we came meddling by. Don't you expect to win?"

"Unfortunately, I do!"

"Unfortunately?"

"Times have changed—and I with them. Oh, I have learned something. The things I have been able to do, and the vastly greater things I have come to hope for—they make my old ambitions seem petty enough. I have known the strength and security of well-regulated industry, and I have to go back to the old, haphazard conditions. Worse than that, I am driven to violence—to slaughter! Day and night I think of you—in poverty!—of myself, when I have brought you there."

The crimson of the sunset had deepened to purple, and now the twilight was rising from the valleys like a mist, dim and mysterious, in the increasing effulgence of the moon.

From the road below them came low, guttural voices, and presently the musicians panted up the steps toward them, carrying their instruments beneath their arms.

"A little mooseek, poss?" asked the leader, puffing.

Wistar distrusted German bands. "Yes," he said, "but don't make a racket."

"Racket! And sooth an effening! He disposed his men at a distance in the shrubbery, and struck up an old, soft evening song—so poetically, so exquisitely attuned to the moment that it seemed like the very atmosphere transmuted to sound.

Judith had passed to the bed of roses, and her long, agile fingers were busy among them. The perfume from them seemed to Wistar the perfect attar of the hour, and of her.

"What would you think," he said, "if to spare you I were to join them in ruining Minot?"