GERTRUDE ATHERTON

SCRUTINY OF SOCIAL ISSUES

ESSENTIAL NOVELISTS

TACET BOOKS

ESSENTIAL NOVELISTS

Gertrude Atherton

EDITED BY

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The Author

Gertrude Franklin Horn Atherton was an American author. Many of her novels are set in her home state of California. Her bestseller Black Oxen (1923) was made into a silent movie of the same name. In addition to novels, she wrote short stories, essays, and articles for magazines and newspapers on such issues as feminism, politics, and war. She was strong-willed, independent-minded, and sometimes controversial, especially for her anti-communism and her white supremacist views.

Gertrude Franklin Horn was born on October 30, 1857, in San Francisco, California, to Thomas Ludovich Horn and his wife, the former Gertrude Franklin. Her parents separated in 1860 when she was two years old, and she was raised by her maternal grandfather, Stephen Franklin, a devout Presbyterian and a relative of Benjamin Franklin. Grandfather Franklin insisted she be well read, and this influenced her greatly. She attended St. Mary's Hall high school in Benicia, California, and, briefly, the Sayre School in Lexington, Kentucky.

Gertrude moved back to Kentucky to live with her grandfather and mother after her aunt refused to house her any longer because of her rebelliousness. There she met George H.B. Atherton, son of Faxon Atherton, who was courting her mother. He became more interested in daughter Gertrude, and after she accepted his sixth proposal, they eloped on February 15, 1876. She went to live with him and his domineering Chilean mother. Gertrude found life in the Atherton mansion in San Francisco and on their Fair Oaks estate, now Atherton, California, stultifying. As a result of her disappointment with the marriage she began to develop an independent life. Two tragedies

changed her life dramatically: Her son George died of diphtheria, and her husband died at sea. She was left alone with their daughter Muriel and needed to support herself. Her mother in law agreed to raise Muriel and give her the inheritance that would have gone to George.

Atherton later told an interviewer that the books that had influenced her the most were Hippolyte Taine's "History of English Literature" and the books of Herbert Spencer.

Atherton's first publication was "The Randolphs of Redwood: A Romance", serialized in The Argonaut in March 1882 under the pseudonym Asmodeus. When she revealed to her family that she was the author, it caused her to be ostracized. In 1888, she left for New York, leaving Muriel with her grandmother. She traveled to London, and eventually returned to California. Atherton's first novel, What Dreams May Come, was published in 1888 under the pseudonym Frank Lin.

In 1889, she went to Paris at the invitation of her sister-in-law Alejandra Rathbone (married to Major Jared Lawrence Rathbone). That year, she heard from British publisher G. Routledge and Sons that they would publish her first two books. William Sharp wrote in The Spectator praising her fiction and would later invite Atherton to stay with him and his wife, Elizabeth, in South Hampstead.

In London, she had the opportunity through Jane Wilde to meet her son, Oscar Wilde. She recalled in her memoir Adventures of a Novelist (1932) that she made an excuse to avoid the meeting because she thought he was physically repulsive. In an 1899 article for London's Bookman, Atherton wrote of Wilde's style and associated it with "the decadence, the loss of virility that must follow over-civilization."

She returned to California in 1890 at the death of her grandfather Franklin and her mother-in-law Dominga Atherton, and she resumed taking care of Muriel. In 1891, while writing a weekly column for The San Francisco Examiner, she met Ambrose Bierce, with whom she carried on a taunting, almost love-hate friendship.

When Kate Field remarked on California writers' neglect of the picturesque and romantic old Spanish life of the state, Atherton explored the history and culture of Spanish California in Monterey, San Juan Bautista, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara.

She wrote The Doomswoman in 1892, and it was published in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine before being published in book form in 1893. The story (set in the 1840s) focuses on Chonita Moncada y Iturbi and her love of Diego Estenega (modeled after Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo), as he dreams of modernizing California, retaining its Mexican character without sacrificing American economic vigor. Chonita is Catholic, and her faith stands in the way of Diego's political ambitions. The dramatic climax peaks when Diego kills Chonita's brother, Reynaldo, and she is forced to choose between her cultural loyalty or the love of her life. The plot of the novel closely resembles that of Romeo and Juliet. The book was successful with critics, some comparing it to Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona. Atherton was not pleased with this comparison because Jackson was not from California. However, she was satisfied when Bierce said of The Doomswoman that it was "in its class... superior to any that any Californian has done".

In 1892, Atherton left for New York. There she wrote for the New York World. She also wrote letters to Bierce, confiding her loneliness, her dismay at the necessity to do freelance writing (in particular for the New York World), and her dislike of eastern literary circles. Her distaste came from their

belittlement of the West and its authors and the fact they did not accept Bierce's work.While in New York, she published another California novel, Before the Gringo Came (1894).

She next wrote Patience Sparhawk and Her Times, A Novel (1897), but it proved to be too controversial. Its rejection encouraged her to leave for London. It was 1898 and John Lane of The Bodley Head agreed to publish it, but not for two years. She continued to write, writing book reviews for Oliver Fry's Vanity Fair, and even completed a book-length version of "The Randolphs of Redwood" (retitled A Daughter of the Vine, 1899) while staying in Haworth. Max Pemberton asked her to write a 10,000 word essay for a series he was editing for Cassells Pocket Library, which she wrote as A Whirl Asunder (1895).

Once Patience Sparhawk and Her Times, A Novel was published, William Robertson Nicoll gave a review of it in the April 12, 1897 edition of The Bookman that said it was "crude" in its portrayal of a clever young woman with burning interest in life and identified it as a protest against the tame American novel. In the May 15 issue of The New York Times, the reviewer said that Atherton had "incontestable" ability and a "very original talent" while noting that the book offered a series of "fleshy" episodes in Patience's life that must have scared a sensitive reader. It was banned from the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute, and the San Francisco Call review said it represented Atherton's departure from her proper literary goal of treating early California themes romantically

In 1898, she completed The Californians, her first novel in set the post-Spanish era. Critics received this much more positively than Patience, and a review in The Spectator (October 1, 1898) said it "was by far more convincing and attractive in delineating California manners and morals....

The novel fairly establishes her claim to be considered as one of the most vivid and entertaining interpreters of the complex characters of emancipated American womanhood." The November 8 Bookman said it was her "most ambitious work," which has "a feeling of surety that only the consciousness of knowing one's ground can convey."

She traveled to Rouen and wrote American Wives and English Husbands (1898), set in contemporary time. In this novel, she contrasts English and American men, American and English civilizations, and comments on the relationships between men and women. She also completed The Valiant Runaways (1898), an adventure novel for boys that dealt with the Spanish Mexican attempt to civilize California. In 1899, she returned to the United States.

Her novel Senator North (1900) was based on Maine's senator Eugene Hale.

In a May 1904 article, Why Is American Literature Bourgeois? in the North American Review, Atherton critiqued William Dean Howells for the "littleism" or "thin" realism of his fiction. Atherton's novel, Julia France and Her Times (1912), has a strong feminist subtext, with the titular heroine being a woman needing to earn a living wage.

She is best remembered for her California Series, several novels and short stories dealing with the social history of California. The series includes The Splendid, Idle Forties (1902); The Conqueror (1902), which is a fictionalized biography of Alexander Hamilton; and her sensational, semi-autobiographical novel Black Oxen (1923), about an aging woman who miraculously becomes young again after glandular therapy. The novel names the areas of a woman's power as youth and vitality, examines the social expectations surrounding them, then prompts women to avoid these conventions. The latter was adapted into the

film Black Oxen in 1923. Atherton's earlier novel Mrs. Balfame (1916) was also adapted to film, as Mrs. Balfame in 1917. Atherton's The Immortal Marriage (1927) and The Jealous Gods (1928) are historical novels set in Ancient Greece.

Atherton wrote several stories of supernatural horror, including the ghost stories "Death and the Woman", and "Crowned with One Crest", as well as "The Foghorn", and the often anthologised "The Striding Place". "The Foghorn", written in 1933, is a psychological horror story that has been compared to "The Yellow Wallpaper". W. Somerset Maugham called it a powerful story in a 1943 publication of his, Great Modern Reading.

Atherton was an early feminist well acquainted with the plight of women. She knew "the pain of sexual repression, knew the cost of strength required to escape it (strength some women do not have to spend), knew its scars—the scars that made her wary of emotional commitment and relegated her, despite her splendid professional triumphs and her surpassing benefit to women, to largely an observer role in human relations. She knew the full cost of the destructive battle of the sexes, and urged that it end at last with true sexual equality." Her novels often feature strong heroines who pursue independent lives, undoubtedly a reaction to her stifling married life.

Atherton was often compared to contemporary authors such as Henry James and Edith Wharton. James assessed Atherton's work and claimed she had reduced the typical man/woman relationship to a personality clash.

Atherton presided in her last years over the San Francisco branch of PEN. As her biographer Emily Wortis Leider notes in California's Daughter, however, "under her domination it became little more than a social club that might have been

called Friends of Atherton and (Senator) Phelan". A strong advocate of social reform, and the grande dame of California literature, she yet remained a strong force in the promotion of a California cultural identity. She was a personal friend of Senator James Duval Phelan and his nephew, the philanthropist Noel Sullivan, and often was a guest at Phelan's estate, Villa Montalvo. Among her celebrity friends was travel writer Richard Halliburton, who shared her interest in artists' rights, and whose disappearance at sea she lamented. Though she could be offensively assertive with her acerbic wit, notes Gerry Max, she truculently crusaded for many of the key intellectual freedom issues of her day, especially those involving women's rights, and remained, throughout a long creative life, a true friend to writers. In his autobiographical novel, Kenneth Rexroth speaks of her kindness to him and his wife when they arrived in San Francisco in the late 1920s.

Mariana Bertola, Carrie Jacobs-Bond, May Showler Groves, Minna McGauley, Maud Wilde, Jeanette Lawrence, Miriam Van Waters, Mrs. David Starr Jordan, Annie Florence Brown, Gertrude Atherton

Charlotte S. McClure in a Dictionary of Literary Biography essay said that Atherton "redefined women's potential and presented a psychological drama of a woman's quest for identity and for a life purpose and happiness within and beyond her procreative function". She also said that Patience Sparhawk was Atherton's "first significant novel".In an 1898 essay in Bookman, a critic stated:

"the amazing and memorable Patience Sparhawk may perhaps be referred to as the first foreshadowing of the good work that [Atherton] has done since. It seems to have been also generally conceded that no matter what the subject chanced to be . . . nothing from her pen would be commonplace or dull. that startling performance [in

Patience Sparhawk] introduced her to a different audience, one much larger and more seriously interested than she had had before."

Carl van Vechten said of Atherton in a Nation article: "Usually (not always, to be sure), the work of Mrs. Wharton seems to me to be scrupulous, clever and uninspiring, while that of Mrs. Atherton is often careless, sprawling, but inspired. Mrs. Wharton, with some difficulty, it would appear, has learned to write; Mrs. Atherton was born with a facility for telling stories."

In an essay for Bookman, Frederic Taber Cooper stated that in Senator North, the character Harriet "is practically a white woman but for a scarcely perceptible blueness at the base of her fingernails, this character of Harriet is perhaps the best bit of feminine analysis that Mrs. Atherton ever did."

Atherton was a suffragist who did not believe in the use of militancy to further the cause. In 1917 she wrote a letter to the editor of the New York Times to express her support for suffrage while voicing her opposition to militancy.

Atherton also advocated white supremacy. Atherton's novel Senator North describes a marriage between a "passing" woman of mixed white and African-American ancestry and a white man, which ends in tragedy. Senator North was intended by Atherton as a warning against Interracial marriages. In a 1922 The Bookman article, "The Alpine School of Fiction", Atherton praised the book The Passing of the Great Race by Madison Grant, describing it as a "remarkable work, with its warning of tremendous import to civilization". Atherton claimed that American civilization had been created by the "Nordic" or "Anglo-Saxon" race, and that this was now threatened by an influx of "Alpine" and "Mediterranean" immigrants, who Atherton regarded as inferior to Nordics. Atherton argued that "The old Nordic-

American stock is being rapidly bred out by the refuse of Europe." Atherton cited works such as Main Street by Sinclair Lewis and Three Soldiers by John Dos Passos as signs of a decline in American literature brought about by the rejection of "Nordic" themes. Atherton's views on race were praised by Thomas Dixon Jr., but strongly criticized by both H. L. Mencken and Horace Kallen.

Following the Russian Revolution, Atherton developed a hostility to Communism. In 1919, Atherton wrote an article for The New York Times, (entitled "Time as a cure for Bolshevism") which condemned both the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the Americans who sympathized with it. When asked by the League of American Writers which side she supported in the Spanish Civil War, she stated that she supported the Spanish Nationalists-the only author of the 418 the League surveyed who did. In the League pamphlet Writers Take Sides (collecting the authors' responses), Atherton stated that although she disliked both fascism and communism, she considered communism the greater evil and added, "Although I have no love for Franco, I hope he will mop up the Communists, and send home, with tails between legs, all those gullible Americans who enlisted to save Spanish 'Democracy'". In a poll carried out by the Saturday Review of Literature asking writers which Presidential candidate they endorsed in the 1940 election, Atherton was among the writers who endorsed Wendell Willkie.

Atherton's autobiography, Adventures of a Novelist (New York: Horace Liveright, 1932), is an account of her life and the people, including Ambrose Bierce and James Phelan, who filled it. It also features historical reminiscences of San Francisco in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

She is buried in Cypress Lawn cemetery in Colma, California. In 2009, The Library of America selected Atherton's story

"The Striding Place" for inclusion in its two-century retrospective of American Fantastic Tales.

Black Oxen

The years like Great Black Oxen tread the world

And God the herdsman goads them on behind.

—W. B. Yeats.

I

"Talk. Talk. Talk.... Good lines and no action ... said all ... not even promising first act ... eighth failure and season more than half over ... rather be a playwright and fail than a critic compelled to listen to has-beens and would-bes trying to put over bad plays.... Oh, for just one more great first-night ... if there's a spirit world why don't the ghosts of dead artists get together and inhibit bad playwrights from tormenting first-nighters?... Astral board of Immortals sitting in Unconscious tweaking strings until gobbets and sclerotics become gibbering idiots every time they put pen to paper?... Fewer first-nights but more joy ... also joy of sending producers back to cigar stands.... Thank God, no longer a critic ... don't need to come to first-nights unless I want ... can't keep away ... habit too strong ... poor devil of a colyumist must forage ... why did I become a columnist? More money. Money! And I once a rubescent socialist ... best parlor type ... Lord! I wish some one would die and leave me a million!"

Clavering opened his weary eyes and glanced over the darkened auditorium, visualizing a mass of bored resentful disks: a few hopeful, perhaps, the greater number too educated in the theatre not to have recognized the heavy

note of incompetence that had boomed like a muffled fog-horn since the rise of the curtain.

It was a typical first-night audience, assembled to welcome a favorite actress in a new play. All the Sophisticates (as Clavering had named them, abandoning "Intellectuals" and "Intelligentsia" to the Parlor Socialists) were present: authors, playwrights, editors and young editors, columnists, dramatic critics, young publishers, the fashionable illustrators and cartoonists, a few actors, artists, sculptors, hostesses of the eminent, and a sprinkling of Greenwich Village to give a touch of old Bohemia to what was otherwise almost as brilliant and standardized as a Monday night at the opera. Twelve years ago, Clavering, impelled irresistibly from a dilapidated colonial mansion in Louisiana to the cerebrum of the Western World, had arrived in New York; and run the usual gamut of the high-powered man from reporter to special writer, although youth rose to eminence less rapidly then than now. Dramatic critic of his newspaper for three years (two years at the war), an envied, quoted and omniscient columnist since his return from France. Journalistically he could rise no higher, and none of the frequent distinguished parties given by the Sophisticates was complete without the long lounging body and saturnine countenance of Mr. Lee Clavering. As soon as he had set foot upon the ladder of prominence Mr. Clavering had realized the value of dramatizing himself, and although he was as active of body as of mind and of an amiable and genial disposition, as his friends sometimes angrily protested, his world, that world of increasing importance in New York, knew him as a cynical, morose, mysterious creature, who, at a party, transferred himself from one woman's side to another's by sheer effort of will spurred by boredom. The unmarried women had given him up as a confirmed bachelor, but a few still followed his dark face with longing eyes. (He sometimes wondered what rôle he

would have adopted if he had been a blond.) As a matter of fact, he was intensely romantic, even after ten years of newspaper work in New York and two of war; and when his steel-blue half-closed eyes roved over a gathering at the moment of entrance it was with the evergreen hope of discovering the consummate woman.

There was no affectation in his idealistic fastidiousness. Nor, of late, in his general boredom. Not that he did not still like his work, or possibly pontificating every morning over his famous name to an admiring public, but he was tired of "the crowd," the same old faces, tired of the steady grind, of bad plays—he, who had such a passionate love of the drama—somewhat tired of himself. He would have liked to tramp the world for a year. But although he had money enough saved he dared not drop out of New York. One was forgotten overnight, and fashions, especially since the war, changed so quickly and yet so subtly that he might be another year readjusting himself on his return. Or find himself supplanted by some man younger than himself whose cursed audacity and dramatized youthfulness would have accustomed the facile public to some new brand of pap flavored with red pepper. The world was marching to the tune of youth, damn it (Mr. Clavering was beginning to feel elderly at thirty-four), but it was hard to shake out the entrenched. He had his public hypnotized. He could sell ten copies of a book where a reviewer could sell one. His word on a play was final—or almost. Personal mention of any of the Sophisticates added a cubit to reputation. Three mentions made them household words. Neglect caused agonies and visions of extinction. Disparagement was preferable. By publicity shall ye know them. Even public men with rhinocerene hides had been seen to shiver. Cause women courted him. Prize fighters on the dour morn after a triumphant night had howled between fury and tears as Mr. Lee Clavering (once crack reporter of the gentle art) wrote sadly of greater warriors. Lenin had

mentioned him as an enemy of the new religion, who dealt not with the truth. Until he grew dull—no grinning skeleton as yet—his public, after hasty or solemn digestion of the news, would turn over to his column with a sigh of relief. But he must hang on, no doubt of that. Fatal to give the public even a hint that it might learn to do without him.

He sighed and closed his eyes again. It was not unpleasant to feel himself a slave, a slave who had forged his own gilded chains. But he sighed again for his lost simplicities, for his day-dreams under the magnolias when he had believed that if women of his class were not obliged to do their own housework they would all be young and beautiful and talk only of romance; when he had thought upon the intellectual woman and the woman who "did things" as an anomaly and a horror. Well, the reality was more companionable, he would say that for them.... Then he grinned as he recalled the days of his passionate socialism, when he had taken pains, like every socialist he had ever met, to let it be understood that he had been born in the best society. Well, so he had, and he was glad of it, even if the best society of his small southern town had little to live on but its vanished past. He never alluded to his distinguished ancestry now that he was eminent and comfortable, and he looked back with uneasy scorn upon his former breaches of taste, but he never quite forgot it. No Southerner ever does.

The play droned on to the end of the interminable first act. Talk. Talk. Talk. He'd go to sleep, but would be sure to get a crick in his neck. Then he remembered a woman who had come down the aisle just as the lights were lowering and passed his seat. He had not seen her face, but her graceful figure had attracted his attention, and the peculiar shade of her hair: the color of warm ashes. There was no woman of his acquaintance with that rare shade of blonde hair.

He opened his eyes. She was sitting two seats ahead of him and the lights of the stage gave a faint halo to a small well-shaped head defined by the low coil of hair. She had a long throat apparently, but although she had dropped her wrap over the back of the seat he had no more than a glimpse of a white neck and a suggestion of sloping shoulders. Rather rare those, nowadays. They reminded him, together with the haughty poise of the head, of the family portraits in the old gallery at home. Being dark himself, he admired fair women, although since they had taken to bobbing their hair they looked as much alike as magazine covers. This woman wore her hair in no particular fashion. It was soft and abundant, brushed back from her face, and drawn merely over the tips of the ears. At least so he inferred. He had not seen even her profile as she passed. Profiles were out of date, but in an old-fashioned corner of his soul he admired them, and he was idly convinced that a woman with so perfectly shaped a head, long and narrow, but not too narrow, must have a profile. Probably her full face would not be so attractive. Women with *cendré* hair generally had light brows and lashes, and her eyes might be a washed-out blue. Or prominent. Or her mouth too small. He would bet on the profile, however, and instead of rushing out when that blessed curtain went down he would wait and look for it.

Then he closed his eyes again and forgot her until he was roused by the clapping of many hands. First-nighters always applaud, no matter how perfunctorily. Noblesse oblige. But the difference between the applause of the bored but loyal and that of the enchanted and quickened is as the difference between a rising breeze and a hurricane.

The actors bowed en masse, in threes, in twos, singly. The curtain descended, the lights rose, the audience heaved. Men hurried up the aisle and climbed over patient women.

People began to visit. And then the woman two seats ahead of Clavering did a singular thing.

She rose slowly to her feet, turned her back to the stage, raised her opera glasses and leisurely surveyed the audience.

"I knew it!" Clavering's tongue clicked. "European. No American woman ever did that—unless, to be sure, she has lived too long abroad to remember our customs."

He gazed at her eagerly, and felt a slight sensation of annoyance that the entire house was following his example. The opera glasses concealed her eyes, but they rested upon the bridge of an indubitably straight nose. Her forehead was perhaps too high, but it was full, and the thick hair was brushed back from a sharp point. Her eyebrows, thank Heaven, were many shades darker than her hair. They were also narrow and glossy. Decidedly they received attention. Possibly they were plucked and darkened—life had made him skeptical of "points." However, Clavering was no lover of unamended nature, holding nature, except in rare moments of inspiration, a bungler of the first water.

In spite of its smooth white skin and rounded contours above an undamaged throat, it was, subtly, not a young face. The mouth, rather large, although fresh and red (possibly they had lip sticks in Europe that approximated nature) had none of the girl's soft flexibility. It was full in the center and the red of the underlip was more than a visible line, but it was straight at the corners, ending in an almost abrupt sternness. Once she smiled, but it was little more than an amused flicker; the mouth did not relax. The shape of the face bore out the promise of the head, but deflected from its oval at the chin, which was almost square, and indented. The figure was very slight, but as subtly mature as the face, possibly because she held it uncompromisingly

erect; apparently she had made no concession to the democratic absence of "carriage," the indifferent almost apologetic mien that had succeeded the limp curves of a few years ago.

She wore a dress of white jet made with the long lines of the present fashion—in dress she was evidently a stickler. The neck was cut in a low square, showing the rise of the bust. Her own lines were long, the arms and hands very slender in the long white gloves. Probably she was the only woman in the house who wore gloves. Life was freer since the war. She wore a triple string of pearls.

He waited eagerly until she should drop her glasses.... He heard two girls gasping and muttering behind him.... There was a titter across the house.

She lowered the opera glasses and glanced over the rows of upturned faces immediately before her, scrutinizing them casually, as if they were fish in an aquarium. She had dropped her lids slightly before her eyes came to rest on Clavering. He was leaning forward, his eyes hard and focal, doing his best to compel her notice. Her glance did linger on his for a moment before it moved on indifferently, but in that brief interval he experienced a curious ripple along his nerves ... almost a note of warning.... They were very dark gray eyes, Greek in the curve of the lid, and inconceivably wise, cold, disillusioned. She did not look a day over twenty-eight. There were no marks of dissipation on her face. But for its cold regularity she would have looked younger—with her eyes closed. The eyes seemed to gaze down out of an infinitely remote past.

Suddenly she seemed to sense the concentrated attention of the audience. She swept it with a hasty glance, evidently appreciated the fact that she alone was standing and facing it, colored slightly and sat down. But her repose was

absolute. She made no little embarrassed gestures as another woman would have done. She did not even affect to read her program.

II

Clavering left his chair and wandered up the aisle. He felt none of his usual impatience for the beneficent cigarette. Was he hit? Hardly. Inquisitive, certainly. But he had seen so many provocative shells. Vile trick of nature, that—poverty-stricken unoriginal creature that she was.

He glanced over the rows of people as he passed. It was not the play that was animating them. The woman was a godsend.

His gaze paused abruptly on the face of Mr. Charles Dinwiddie. Clavering's grand-aunt had married Mr. Dinwiddie's father and the two men, so far apart in years, were more or less intimate; the older man's inexhaustible gossip of New York Society amused Clavering, who in turn had initiated Mr. Dinwiddie into new and strange pleasures, including literary parties and first nights—ignored by the world of fashion.

All New York men of the old régime, no matter what their individuality may have been twenty years earlier, look so much alike as they approach sixty, and more particularly after they have passed it, that they might be brothers in blood as in caste. Their moustaches and what little hair they have left turns the same shade of well-bred white. Their fine old Nordic faces are generally lean and flat of cheek, their expression calm, assured, not always smug. They are impeccably groomed and erect. Stout they may be, but seldom fat, and if not always handsome, they are polished,

distinguished, aloof. They no longer wear side-whiskers and look younger than their fathers did at the same age.

Mr. Dinwiddie's countenance as a rule was as formal and politely expressionless as became his dignified status, but tonight it was not. It was pallid. The rather prominent eyes were staring, the mouth was relaxed. He was seated next the aisle and Clavering hastened toward him in alarm.

"Ill, old chap?" he asked. "Better come out."

Mr. Dinwiddie focussed his eyes, then stumbled to his feet and caught Clavering by the arm. "Yes," he muttered. "Get me out of this and take me where I can get a drink. Seen a ghost."

Clavering guided him up the aisle, then out of a side exit into an alley and produced a flask from his hip-pocket. Mr. Dinwiddie without ceremony raised it to his lips and swallowed twice, gasping a little. He had reached the age of the mild whiskey and soda. Then he stood erect and passed his hand over the shining curve of his head.

"Ever seen a ghost, Lee?" he asked. "That woman was there, wasn't she?"

"She was there, all right." Clavering's face was no longer cynical and mysterious; it was alive with curiosity. "D'you know who she is?"

"Thirty-odd years ago any one of us old chaps would have told you she was Mary Ogden, and like as not raised his hat. She was the beauty and the belle of her day. But she married a Hungarian diplomat, Count Zattiany, when she was twenty-four, and deserted us. Never been in the country since. I never wanted to see her again. Too hard hit. But I caught a glimpse of her at the opera in Paris about ten years ago—faded! Always striking of course with that style,

but withered, changed, skinny where she had been slim, her throat concealed by a dog collar a yard long—her expression sad and apathetic—the dethroned idol of men. God! Mary Ogden! I left the house."

"It is her daughter, of course——"

"Never had a child—positive of it. Zattiany title went to a nephew who was killed in the war.... No ... it must be ... must be ..." His eyes began to glitter. Clavering knew the symptom. His relative was about to impart interesting gossip.

"Well?" he asked impatiently.

"There were many stories about Mary Ogden—Mary Zattiany—always a notable figure in the capitals of Europe. Her husband was in the diplomatic service until he died—some years before I saw her in Paris. She was far too clever—damnably clever, Mary Ogden, and had a reputation for it in European Society as well as for beauty—to get herself compromised. But there were stories—that must be it! She had a daughter and stowed her away somewhere. No two women could be as alike as that except mother and daughter—don't see it too often at that. Why, the very way she carries her head—her *style* ... wonder where she kept her? That girl has been educated and has all the air of the best society. Must have got friends to adopt her. Gad! What a secret chapter. But why on earth does she let the girl run round loose?"

"I shouldn't say she was a day under twenty-eight. No doubt she looked younger from where you were sitting."

"Twenty-eight! Mary must have begun sooner than we heard. But—well, we never felt that we knew Mary—that was one of her charms. She kept us guessing, as you young fellows say, and she had the devil's own light in her eyes

sometimes." His own orb lit up again. "Wonder if Mary is here? No doubt she's come over to get her property back—she never transferred her investments and of course it was alienated during the war. But not a soul has heard from her. I am sure of that. We were discussing her the other night at dinner and wondering if her fortune had been turned over. It was at Jane Oglethorpe's. Jane and a good many of the other women have seen her from time to time abroad—stayed at her castle in Hungary during the first years of her marriage; but they drifted apart as friends do.... She must be a wreck, poor thing. She ran a hospital during the war and was in Buda Pesth for some time after the revolution broke out. I hope she had the girl well hidden away."

"Perhaps she sent the girl over to look after her affairs."

"That's it. Beyond a doubt. And I'll find out. Trent is Mary's attorney and trustee. I'll make him open up."

"And you'll call on her?"

"Won't I? That is, I'll make Trent take me. I never want to look at poor Mary again, but I'd feel young—— Hello! I believe you're hit!" Mr. Dinwiddie, having solved his problems, was quite himself again and alert for one of the little dramas that savored his rather tasteless days. "I'd like that. I'll introduce you and give you my blessing. Wrong side of the blanket, though."

"Don't care a hang."

"That's right. Who cares about anything these days? And you can only be young once." He sighed. "And if she's like her mother—only halfway like her inside—she'll be worth it."

"Is that a promise?"

"We'll shake on it. I'll see Trent in the morning. Dine with me at the club at eight?"

"Rather!"

III

The critics left after the second act to damn the play at leisure. Clavering remained in his seat. Forty minutes later, while the performers were responding to faint calls and amiable friends were demanding the author of the doomed play, the lady of mystery (who, Clavering reflected cynically, was doubtless merely an unusual looking person with a commonplace history—most explanations after wild guesses were common-place) left her seat and passed up the aisle. Irresistibly, Clavering followed her. As she stood for a moment under the glare of the electric lights at the entrance he observed her critically. She survived the test. A small car drew up to the curb. She entered it, and he stood in the softly falling snow feeling somewhat of a fool. As he walked slowly to his rooms in Madison Square he came definitely to the conclusion that it was merely his old reporter's instinct that burned so fiercely, even when he had prodded Dinwiddie and shaken hands in a glow of anticipation. Certainly there was no fire in his blood. His imagination had not toyed for a moment with the hope that here at last ... He did not feel in the least romantic. But what man, especially after Dinwiddie's revelations, wouldn't feel a bit curious, a bit excited? Thank Heaven he was young enough for that. He must know who she was. Certainly, he would like to talk to her. She knew the world, no doubt of it—with those eyes! European women, given the opportunity, could cram more of life into ten years than an American woman into forty. She had had her experiences in spite of

that madonna face; he'd bet on it. Well, he wasn't falling in love with a woman who had too heavily underscored in the book of life. But he enjoyed talking to European women of the world. New York had been overrun of late with Russian princesses and other ladies of title come over in the hope of milking the good old American cow, and when he could divert them from their grievances he found them clever, subtle and interesting. It was unlikely that this woman had a grievance of that sort or was looking for a chance to get at the generous but elusive udder. Her pearls might not be real, but her gown was superlatively expensive, her evening wrap of mauve velvet lined with ermine, and her little car perfectly turned out. He'd look like a fortune-hunter with his salary of fifteen thousand a year and a few thousands in bonds ... not if he knew it! But find out who she was, know her, talk to her, learn what he felt was an interesting history —quite another matter.

IV

The next evening when he arrived at the club he found Mr. Dinwiddie fuming.

"What do you think!" he exclaimed as he led his guest to his favorite table in the corner. "That old rascal bluffed me! Bluffed me. Said there was no relative of Countess Zattiany in the country that he knew of. Looked blank as a post when I told him of the extraordinary resemblance of that girl to Mary Ogden. Said he never heard of her. Laughed at the idea of a sub-rosa daughter. Pretended to be angry at such an aspersion on Mary's fair fame—was in love with her himself like the rest of us. But he was lying and he knew that I knew he was lying. What'll you have?"

"Anything. Go ahead. I know by the glitter of your eye that you haven't finished."

"You're right, I haven't." He gave his order and leaned forward. "I've done a little prospecting on my own account. Mary inherited the old Ogden house over on Murray Hill. I happen to know that the lease ran out last year and that it hasn't been rented since. Well, I walked past there today, and some one is living in it. Boarding off. Windows open. Fresh curtains. A servant receiving a parcel at the area door. She's there, mark my words."

"Not a doubt of it. Why didn't you walk boldly up and send in your card?"

"Hadn't the courage. Besides, that girl never heard of me. I hadn't the ghost of an excuse."

"Why not put Mrs. Oglethorpe on the scent? She could call. Women are always fertile in excuses."

"I can't see what pretext she could trump up. She'd be keen enough, all right, but she hardly could tell this haughty creature with the unmistakable stamp of the great world on her that she knows she must be the left-handed daughter of Mary Ogden. Even Jane hasn't assurance enough for that."

"She might assume that this young woman is a member of the Countess Zattiany's family—daughter of a cousin or something—those extraordinary resemblances do recur in families.... That indeed may be the explanation."

"Not a bit of it. That girl is Mary's daughter."

"I'm inclined to agree with you. But it is understood that you can't hurl it at her. Mrs. Oglethorpe, however, could invent a pretty pretence—saw her at the theatre—struck by her

likeness to her old friend—discovered she was living in the family mansion—felt that she must seek her out——"

"Um. That's not quite the sort of thing the New York woman does, and you know it. True, the war has upset them as it has every one else. They are still restless. I have met two opera singers, two actresses, three of these juvenile editors and columnists at dinners and musical evenings during the last month alone. I believe they'd lionize Charley Chaplin if he'd let them, but I understand he's more exclusive than we are. God! What is New York Society coming to?"

"You like straying outside the sacred preserves yourself occasionally."

"I do. But I'm a man. We always did stray a bit. But when I think of the exclusiveness of only a few years ago! Why, New York Society was a Club. The most exclusive club in the world. London Society was Bohemia compared to it. It's the democratic flu, that's what! Aristocracy's done for."

"I'm not so sure. The reaction may be devastating. But it's a sign of grace that they've at last discovered sufficient intelligence to be bored with their somewhat monotonous selves. And Mrs. Oglethorpe always does exactly as she pleases. Better drop her a hint."

"Well, I'll try it. But while Jane may be high-handed, she has certain rigid ideas when it comes to Society and who shall enter its gates. So far she's made no concessions. She and a few others still keep a tight rein. Their daughters though! And granddaughters! Jane's girls are replicas of herself with every atom of her personality left out—but Jim's daughter, Janet, is her grandmother over again plus modern bad manners, bad habits, and a defiance of every known convention. Wretched little flapper. Gad! What are we coming to!"

"Never mind Janet——"

"Why don't you suggest it to Jane? She thinks more of you than of any one else. I doubt if you could ask her anything ——"

"Not much. She'd twig at once. I've had several hints lately that she has her eye on somebody she wants me to marry. You must do it yourself—and you *must*!"

"Well! If she won't, Mrs. Jim might. The younger women would know this girl like a shot if they thought there was any fun in it—then drop her if she didn't measure up. I don't know that I care to place her in such a position."

"I've an idea the fair unknown can take care of herself. I don't see her picked up and dropped. Probably it would be the deuce and all to meet her. I think my plan is best. You can rouse any woman's curiosity, and no one has more than Mrs. Oglethorpe. That would be the wedge. You'd meet her and then you could give her a dinner and invite me."

"All right. I'll try it. Something must happen soon. My arteries won't stand the strain."

V

"Madam is not at home, ma'am."

"Is she not? Then I'll wait for her."

Mrs. Oglethorpe swept by the butler and he had the sensation of chaff scattering before a strong wind. In truth Mrs. Oglethorpe was an impressive figure and quite two inches taller than himself. He could only stare at her in helpless awe, the more so as he had recognized her at once.