

Cosmo Hamilton



Scandal

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A Novel



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"

"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear (believe the aged friend),
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,—
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is."
ROBERT BROWNING.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fraser immediately became the object of Beatrix' whole
attention . . . *Frontispiece*

"Don't you think we make a charming picture of
connubial felicity?"

"It won't be many days before we find scandal rearing its
head at us"

In this picture stood the vital figures of Beatrix and
Franklin, hand in hand

SCANDAL

"By Jove, there's Beatrix Vanderdyke!"

"Why not?"

"What on earth is she doing in New York at this time of year?"

There was a laugh and a shrug. "If it comes to that, my dear fellow, what on earth are we doing in New York at this time of year? Anyway, I'm not interested."

"I am. She's with that unpleasant brute, Sutherland York again. I wish to Heaven she wouldn't go about with a second-rate portrait painter who only gets commissions by licking people's boots, or any other man, for the matter of that, at this time of night."

Pelham Franklin laughed. "I'm sorry I can't squeeze up any interest in Miss Vanderdyke," he said. "I've seen her going into York's studio round about midnight several times, but it's her life. She has to lead it. There's no accounting for tastes, you know. You and I, for instance, have a penchant for the Ziegfeld Follies. I vote we walk, it's a little cooler now."

And as the only son of the famous millionaire Franklin, sauntered away with his friend, Sutherland York, the "unpleasant brute," followed Miss Vanderdyke into the elevator.

York had cultivated a peculiar habit of looking at a woman as though she were the only one alive, and by doing so had achieved a list of clients which made the mouth of every other portrait painter in New York water with envy. He

also had a way, which amounted to a gift, of running his eyes over women which made them feel that they had nothing on. It caused some to shudder, some to preen themselves, and some—the coarser, indelicate type—to feel a pleasant thrill of excitement. Like many men who paint portraits for a living, Sutherland York had discovered that in order to pay the rent of a very expensive apartment, keep a man, dress to perfection and dine frequently at Sherry's and the Ritz, it is necessary to know something more than how to paint. Women were his clients. They provided him with his butter as well as his bread, and he catered to them with artfulness rather than with art. Miss Vanderdyke came in for all this man's eye-play in the elevator, but without a flicker of a lash bore up against it.

The city had baked beneath a hot June sun that day. The night was airless and oppressive. Beatrix dropped her cloak and went over to one of the open windows and stood there with the discreet lights showing up the smooth whiteness of her shoulders, arms and back. Her dress was one of those so-called smart things that one sees in the windows of fashionable shops which affect French names. It left very little to the imagination and was as short as it was low. In between it was ugly and foolish, and required a very beautiful young body to live it down and put a check on the ribald laughter of sane people. On the other side of Fifth Avenue the Plaza, with its multitudinous windows all gleaming, reared its head up to the clear sky. Along the glistening street below intermittent automobiles glided like black beetles. The incessant hum of the city came like music

to the girl's ears. She preferred that sound to the God-sent quietude of the country from which she had just come.

While a bottle of champagne was opened and cigarettes were placed on the table, York stood with his back against a heavily carved oak armoire in an attitude of carefully considered gracefulness and watched the girl with a sense of extreme triumph. The fact that she was young—very young,—not very much more than twenty,—and was generally acknowledged as having been the most beautiful débutante who had come out in New York society in many years, did not matter. He had painted her portrait and had quieted his numerous trades-people with a certain portion of the very substantial cheque which he had received, but that also did not matter. What did matter was the fact that he, himself, had proved attractive to a Vanderdyke—to the only daughter of the man whose name was known all over the world as the head of one of the richest and certainly the most exclusive family in the United States, whose house on Fifth Avenue contained art treasures which made it more notable than the houses of European royalty, and whose country places with their racing stables, their kennels, their swimming pools and tennis courts, golf courses and polo grounds were the pride of all the little eager people who write society paragraphs. It meant a good deal to the son of the man who had kept a dusty-looking antique shop with dirty windows on Fourth Avenue to be able to assure himself that he exercised enough attraction over this girl to make her run the risk of gossip in order to spend a few stolen hours from time to time in his company alone. With the use of consummate tact, his well-practiced flattery, and at the

right moment a sudden outburst of passionate words culled from the works of Byron and Swinburne, what might he not achieve!

As these thoughts ran through his brain he turned to the oval glass in an Italian frame that hung on the wall and looked at himself with close examination. He certainly wore his forty-seven years admirably well. His dark, thick, wavy hair was all the more picturesque for its sprinkling of white. His high forehead lent him an air of intellectuality which was most misleading. His straight, black eyebrows and large, almond-shaped eyes gave him a Latin touch which seemed to indicate temperament. His nose, he told himself, was undoubtedly aristocratic, and his moustache—scrupulously lifted away from his lip—added to the effect of a well-shaped mouth and large white, regular teeth. There was a slit in his chin of which he had always been proud. Striking was the word that he applied to himself, and handsome was the one which he knew was generally used about him. The touch of humor which was his saving grace made him very well aware of the fact that with any clothes less well cut and carefully considered he might easily fall in line with the glossy villain of melodrama or with the conventional desperado so necessary to the producers of moving pictures.

With fingers as expert as those of a woman he smoothed his hair here and there, made a quick sign to his man to get out, and moved across the expensively rugged studio to the window. "I was on the point of going out to supper," he said, "when you called me up. It was very kind of you."

Beatrice turned towards him with the most disconcerting air of candor. Not for the first time he was astonished at her perfect finish, her audacious self-possession. This baby was a complete woman of the world. "No, it wasn't," she said. "I was bored. I only got to town at half-past eight and the mere thought of spending the evening with a garrulous companion—a sort of toothless watch-dog—in a house among Holland covers and the persistent smell of camphor was more than I could stand. I had no intention of being kind. Do we smoke?"

"Oh, please!" he said.

She followed him across the large, lofty room to the refectory table which had stood in the back room of the shop on Fourth Avenue for so many years, there acquiring all the age of which it could boast. A silver Jacobean box was open and in it there were Russian cigarettes upon which York's imaginary crest had been stamped. He had himself designed it.

"Thank you. How is it that you're here? The last time I saw you, you said you were going to Gloucester for the summer."

York put his face as near to the girl's round shoulder as he dared. "I went there," he said, "on the last of April, but I had to come back last week to see the architects of a new theatre. They've asked me to paint a series of panels for the foyer. It's a nuisance; but—although I dare say it's never occurred to you—there are some people in the world who must work to live." He raised his glass, adopted an expression of adoration in which there was a mixture of humbleness and confidence, and added: "I'd have come

from the ends of the earth for the pleasure of seeing you to-night."

Beatrix looked at him with a smile of amused appreciation. "How well you do that sort of thing," she said. "Better than any man I know. Was it born in you, or did you achieve it?"

York placed what purported to be a Wolsey chair just out of the line of light thrown by a lamp on the table, and metaphorically hauled himself up for having gone a little too far. This imperious girl, as spoiled as a Royal Princess, who had been brought up in the belief that all she had to do was to put her finger on a bell to bring the moon and the sun and the stars to her service, needed more careful handling than a thoroughbred yearling. So York, whose business had taught him far more than the rudiments of psychology, hastened to become general again. Like the filibuster who starts out on an expedition to find hidden treasure, he had always before him the vague, exciting hope that some day he might stand towards this girl in a very different relationship. "How long are you to be in the city?"

"I must go back the day after to-morrow," said Beatrix. "I've only come in to see about a costume for a Shakespeare Pastoral that mother has arranged to give in the Queen Anne gardens. It's going to be produced by one of the long-haired tribe, and the house-party's to be assisted by a sprinkling of professionals. As it'll break the monotony of country life I'm looking forward to it, especially as I'm going to play opposite,—I think that's the word,—to a matinée idol whose profile is Grecian, though his accent is Broadway. You must come and see us."

"I should love to," said York. His interest in pastorals was infinitesimal, but his desire to be included in one of Mrs. Vanderdyke's house-parties was as keen as that of any woman whose whole life is devoted to the difficult gymnastic feat of climbing into society. "When d'you begin rehearsing?"

"The day after to-morrow. The people who are at home at present scattered to-day and the new lot, or many of them, will probably go by train on Wednesday. Pelham Franklin is to be there. D'you know him?"

"Very slightly," said York. "He lives in the twin studio to this, on the other side, but as he is mostly away, either in Europe or big game hunting, there has been very little opportunity for us to meet. I caught sight of him just now leaving the house. He's a good-looking fellow, isn't he?"

"Is he? Yes, I suppose he is. I've met him once or twice and danced with him, but it struck me that he needed some sort of crisis in his life to shake him into becoming a man. At present he's a sort of undergraduate, skimming through life with his feet above the earth. I believe mother entertains secret hopes that he'll one day ask me to marry him." She laughed. "I hear her talking about the union of the two families as though they were the only two families in the world. Aunt Honoria is all in favor of it, too. The question of my marriage seems to affect them as though I were the daughter of King George or someone. Who would suppose that we live in a democracy? It's a joke, isn't it? Probably I shall run away with a good-looking chauffeur with kinky hair, regular teeth, a straight nose and a vocabulary which would put even George Ade to shame. Or, I may fall in love with

the matinée idol and fly off with him in a motor-car at midnight, and so be in the fashion. My romantic-minded companion, Mrs. Lester Keene, who lives on novels, cherishes the idea that I'm going to elope with you."

"My God!" cried York. "If only such a thing could come true!"

The passion in the man's voice, the sudden flame in his eyes and the sort of picturesque hunger which suddenly pervaded him filled the girl with interest. She had always regarded him as a sort of Shaw play,—a mixture of easy cynicism, self-conscious cleverness and an obvious pose. She had been leading a quiet life since the season in town had ended, riding and playing tennis and swimming in the pool. She had had no opportunity of trying her powers upon any man who had been worth while. Her parents' friends were all rather pompous, responsible people who talked politics gravely and whose wealth had taken the sting of joy and effort out of life. It was good to be able to play with fire again. It exercised her wits. So she seized the opportunity of leading on this handsome person with whom so many married women had been in love, to see what he would do.

"Is that how you feel?" she asked, instinctively going into the light so that her slim triumphant beauty and bewitching youth should be in full challenging view.

York lost his head. His inherent conceit led him to believe that there was encouragement in the girl's voice and attitude. "You know it is. You know that ever since you came here to sit for me, from the very first instant that I caught sight of you I've been drunk with love. You've revolutionized my life—almost ruined me as painter—because to paint any

other woman is sacrilege." He caught her hands and kissed them hotly.

It was all very well done. His words carried most amazing sincerity. His attitude was extremely graceful, and his simulated passion lent a temporary youthfulness to his face and tall, tightly compressed figure. He managed to look the complete lover. The stage had lost a great actor in him.

Beatrix rescued her hands and stood up very straight. This transpontine outburst was foolish. She had merely hoped for a witty passage of arms. "My dear Mr. York," she said, "you and I are very good friends. Please don't run away with the idea that I'm a young married woman in search of adventure."

York was angry. He knew that he had made a fool of himself. He hated to look a fool at any time and he was not sufficiently master of himself to recover his ground by making a well-turned apology. "Women don't come here to be friends," he said thickly. "They certainly don't come alone at this time of night to talk ethics. You've no right to snub me—to lead me on and then cover me with ice-cold water. I'm not the man to stand that sort of thing."

"Your cigarettes are very nice," said Beatrix. "May I have another?"

He held out the box and struck a match. He stood so close to the girl that the fragrance of her hair and the gleam of her white flesh went to his brain. All the sensuality of the man was churned up and stirred and his veneer fell from him like dry plaster. He really did forget for the moment that she was the daughter of one of America's richest men and was not simply the most exquisite young thing that he had

ever seen during his long career. He bent down and put his lips on her shoulder, with a hoarse, inarticulate murmur. He had always been very successful in his love-making. The type of woman with whom he came most in contact couldn't resist the primeval. He must have imagined that this unbridled and daring outbreak would carry the girl off her feet. It had happened before.

He was mistaken. Beatrix was as completely mistress of herself as though she were talking to a hairdresser.

"That's a pity," she said. "I'm afraid it puts an end to my coming here. I'm sorry, because I liked the atmosphere of your studio and it broke the monotony of my gilded exclusiveness to indulge in this sort of mild Bohemianism, although I thought that you were clever. Will you please let me have my wrap?"

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

York obeyed. He saw that he had completely spoiled his very remote chance. Also it was obvious that his name would not now be included among Mrs. Vanderdyke's list of guests. "You fool!" he said to himself. "You damned infernal fool. This girl's an aristocrat—an autocrat—a hot-house plant. You've treated her like the wife of a Wall Street broker from the Middle West." He put the wrap about the girl's shoulders and stood back endeavoring to assume a dignity that he did not feel.

That kiss on her shoulder was like the touch of a slug on the petal of a rose. Beatrix resented it from the bottom of her soul, but her training, her breeding and her inherent pluck gave her the power to hide her feelings and maintain

an air of undisturbed indifference. Her knowledge of men, already great, made her very well aware of the fact that the least show of temper might bring about a most unpleasant scuffle. She dropped her cigarette into a silver bowl. "I shall look forward to seeing your panels in the new theatre with great interest," she said. "Will you come down with me to the car?"

Realizing that he was no match for this young privileged person and cowed by her superbly unconscious sense of quality, York led the way across his elaborate studio in which suits of armor gleamed dully and massive pieces of oak reflected the light, to the door. He rang the bell of the elevator and stood silently waiting for it to come up. Nothing else was said, except by Beatrix, who gave him the one cool word "Good-bye," as he shut the door of the limousine.

York's man-servant, of whom he was so inordinately proud, had gone to bed. Otherwise, he would have been astonished to hear the sound of smashing china. The portrait painter took it out on a Dresden bowl which, in his impotent rage, he dashed with a characteristically coarse oath to the polished floor of the room in which most of his love episodes had ended with peculiar success.

II

The Vanderdyke house on Fifth Avenue faced the Park.

It aroused the admiration of most people not because it was an accurate reproduction of the famous De la Rochefoucauld mansion in Paris, but because on one side of it enough space upon which to build a high apartment house was given up to a stilted garden behind a high arrangement of wrought iron. It did not require a trained real-estate mind to know how valuable was such "waste" ground.

The suite of rooms belonging to Beatrix overlooked this large, square patch, with its well-nursed lawn, its elaborate stonework and its particular sparrows. In the spring, what appeared to be the same tulips suddenly and regularly appeared, standing erect in exact circles, and lilacs broke into almost regal bloom every year about the time that the family left town. A line of balloon-shaped bay trees always stood on the terrace and, whatever the weather, a nude maiden of mature charms watched over a marble fountain in an attitude of resentful modesty.

When her windows were open, as they mostly were, Beatrix and her English companion could hear the pathetic whimpers of the poor caged beasts in the Zoo in front of the house, and the raucous cries of the Semitic-looking parrots above the ceaseless cantata of motor traffic.

The morning after her lucky escape from York's studio, Beatrix slept late. Mrs. Lester Keene had breakfasted alone with the *Times*, saving *Town Topics* for her final cup of coffee. She had heard her charge, whom she made no effort to manage, return comparatively early the night before, and could hardly contain her curiosity to know what had happened. It was obvious that something had taken place, because, as a rule, Beatrix came back anywhere between

one and two from her visits to the portrait painter. From a sense of duty and a fear of losing her comfortable position, Mrs. Lester Keene forced herself to remain awake on these occasions, sitting over a novel in a Jaeger dressing-gown or writing a long, rambling letter to a friend in London, in which, with tearful pride in her former independence, she wallowed in reminiscence.

Mrs. Lester Keene was the widow of a man of excellent family who had devoted all the best years of his life to the easy and too-well-paid pursuit of winding and unwinding "red tape" in a government office in London. He had died of it before he could retire to a stucco house at Brighton on a pension, and Amelia Keene had found herself in the tragic position of being alone in the world in the middle forties with nothing to bless herself with but an aged pomeranian, her undisputed respectability and the small sum paid to her on her husband's life policy. This, with the laudable and optimistic idea of placing herself forever out of the reach of the lean hand of penury, she had entrusted to the care of a glib city shark whom she had met in a boarding-house and who guaranteed that he would get her in on the ground floor of a new company exploiting the Eldorado Copper Mine and bring her in a regular three hundred and fifty-five per cent. on her capital. With this neat sum and others, however, the expert philanthropist with the waxed moustache and white spats paid his first-class fare to the Argentine and set up a matrimonial bureau for temperamental South Americans. Poor Amelia Keene sold her modest jewels and applied for work at the Employment Agency for Impoverished Gentlewomen, in George Street, Hanover Square.

It so happened that Mr. and Mrs. Vanderdyke were in London at that time and in need of a refined companion for their only daughter. Mrs. Lester Keene was one of the several dozen applicants and had the great good fortune to secure the much coveted post owing to the fact that her hair was grey, her complexion her own and her accent irreproachably Kensington. As Mrs. Vanderdyke intended to be the only made-up woman in any of her numerous houses, the other applicants were naturally turned down.

Like most English people the new companion had never been farther away from her native land than Boulogne. She thrilled with excitement, fright and the spirit of adventure when she joined the Vanderdyke entourage on board the *Olympic*. To be five or six days at sea was in itself an almost unbelievable exploit, full of hidden dangers and obvious terrors. The mere thought of shipwreck and the possibility of floating for days on a raft, in perhaps most unconventional attire, appalled her. But the thing that filled her nightly dreams with phantasmagoria was the knowledge that she was, God and the elements willing, to live in the United States,—a great wild country in which, she had been led to believe, men shot each other in the fashionable restaurants, broncho busters galloped madly along the principal streets of the big cities and lassoed helpless virgins, murderers in masks held up trains, black men were hanged to lamp-posts, as a matter of course, and comic creatures with large feet hammered people on the head with mallets. She had arrived at this point of view from several visits to the moving picture theatres in London, where American films do much to prejudice untravelled Europeans against the United

States. Her astonishment when finally she arrived in New York and found herself in what she described to her friends at home as the Vanderdyke Palace, was almost childish.

In no sense of the word was she a companion to Beatrix. Her narrow and insular point of view, her characteristic English method of clinging to shibboleths and rococo ideas, and her complete and triumphant ignorance of all fundamental things made her, to Beatrix, more of a curiosity, like an early Victorian stuffed canary in a glass case, than a useful and helpful person. Beatrix had been born sophisticated. As a child and a young girl her arresting and palpable beauty had made her an irresistible mark for boys and young men, and one or two only of her early episodes, nearly all of which began well enough but ended in sometimes very rough attempts at seduction, would have crowded out of Mrs. Lester Keene's whole humdrum, drone-like life every incident that she could recall. Beatrix at once became her companion's guide, philosopher, friend and guardian, and derived constant amusement from the little garrulous, plump, hen-like woman, who knew no more about life than the average dramatist knows about people, and who, though completely dazzled by the hard, almost casual magnificence of her present surroundings, delighted to live in the past, telling long and pointless stories of "my house in Clanricarde Gardens, you know," "Mrs. Billings, my cook," "The summer when Algernon and I took the Edward Jones's house at Bognor," "My drawing-room was always crowded every second and fourth Thursday, quite a Salon, in fact," and so on, in a glorification of the commonplace that was as pathetic as it was tiresome.

Before Mrs. Keene had waded through the first few pages of her favorite weekly paper, a maid disturbed her. "Miss Vanderdyke would be glad to see you," she said, conveying the kindly but nevertheless royal command with full appreciation.

Mrs. Lester Keene was glad to obey. Even if dear Beatrix had nothing exciting to tell her, she had a very curious piece of news to impart to dear Beatrix. So she gathered herself together, rather in the same way as her prototype, the barnyard hen rising from a bath of sun-baked earth, and made her way along a wide passage hung with the priceless old prints which had overflowed from the lower rooms, to the bedroom of the daughter of the house.

Beatrix was sitting on the edge of a four-post bed, in a pink, transparent nightgown, her little feet in heelless slippers. On a table at her elbow there was a just placed breakfast tray and a new copy of *Town and Country*. Fresh from sleep, with her fair hair all about her shoulders, Beatrix, the one alive and exquisite thing in that too-large, too-lofty, pompous room, looked like a single rosebud in a geometrically designed garden.

"Come along, Brownie," she said, stretching herself with catlike grace, "and talk to me while I feed."

"You'll put something on, dear, won't you?"

"No, dear Brownie, I won't. No one can spy into the room and there isn't a single portrait of a man on the walls. So please don't fuss. It's far too hot for a dressing-gown and in my case why should I hide my charms from you?" She laughed at her wholly justified conceit, gave herself a very

friendly nod in a pier-glass in the distance and poured out a cup of coffee.

Amelia Keene could never at any time, even in her isolated spinster days in the heart of the country, have brought herself to wear such an excuse for a nightgown. Flannel was her wear. She was, as usual, more than a little uneasy at the all-conquering individualism and supreme naturalness of the girl to whom she utterly subjected herself. With the slightest shrug of her shoulders,—she dared to do nothing further,—she put the dressing-gown that she had offered back in its place, and sat down. At any rate she could assure herself that she had endeavored to do her duty.

"You came in earlier than I expected last night, dear," she said, throwing the obvious bait of her insatiable curiosity.

Beatrix laughed again. "Why don't you say that you're dying to know what happened and lay awake all night making up exciting stories, Brownie?"

Mrs. Keene almost succeeded in looking dignified. "You know that I'm very, very much against these late visits to bachelor rooms," she said, "and have always done my best to dissuade you from making them. Therefore I can truly say that I'm far from being curious and am unable to feel any sort of excitement."

Beatrix bent forward and touched her companion's cheek with an affectionate hand. "Good for you, dear old wise-acre. *You'll* never have to take any blame for my blazing indiscretions, so don't worry, and as you don't feel any interest in my adventures I won't bother you with them."

Keen disappointment took the place of dignity. "I hope the time will never come," said Mrs. Keene, "when you'll cease to make me your confidante, dear."

Feeling that she had teased the little, naïve, narrow-minded, well-meaning and very human woman enough, Beatrix finished her coffee and lit a cigarette. "Last night, Sutherland York dropped his pose," she said. "I hadn't ever taken the trouble to analyze the reason why I went to his studio, but thinking it over now I see that it was because I knew that sooner or later his assumption of super-refined Bohemianism would break down and I wanted to be there to see the smash. Well, dear Brownie, I saw it. I also heard it and, to go into the exact details, I felt it,—on my shoulder." She put her right hand on the spot as though the touch of his sensual lips still stung her.

Amelia Keene gasped. "You don't mean that he kissed ——"

"Yes, I do. Just here. I think of consulting a specialist on the matter."

"My dear!"

Beatrix got up, walked across the wide room and stood in front of the pier-glass. Through her thin, clinging nightgown she could see the lines of her slim, lithe, deliciously young form. For a moment she stood in frank and open admiration of it. She had a keenly appreciative eye for beautiful things. Then she walked about the room, like a young Diana, her heels rapping as she went. "It wasn't so amusing as I hoped it might be," she added. "Scratch a gentleman and you find the man. Break the veneer of a cad and you discover the

beast. D'you think that Pond's Extract is strong enough to cleanse the spot?"

"He dared to kiss *you!*— I can hardly believe it." Mrs. Keene looked like a pricked balloon. "Surely you'll never go near him again now."

"Only if I can get a policeman to go with me, or an inspector of nuisances. Brownie, dear, my occasional evenings with art and old armor are over. I must find some other excuse for breaking all the rules that hedge round the life of an ex-débutante."

"Thank Heaven!" said Mrs. Keene. "I've only seen that man once and he reminded me of a person who used to go down the area of my London house and try and persuade the maids to buy imitation jewelry on the instalment plan."

Beatrix burst into a ripple of laughter. "Well done, Brownie. That's perfect,—perfect." But again her hand went up to her shoulder.

And then the hen-like lady gathered her scattered wits together and came up to her own little surprise. "It's quite time that episode is at an end, my dear," she said. "Only about ten minutes after you drove away last night,—I was having a sandwich and a glass of port wine before going to my room,—your Aunt Honoria bore down upon me. May I say that without giving offense?"

Beatrix drew up short. "Aunt Honoria!"

"Yes; she came straight up to these apartments, looking more like a beautiful eagle than ever,—my heart fell straight into my boots,—and asked, or rather demanded to see you."

"Aunt Honoria! But yesterday she was staying with the Mordens at Morristown."

Mrs. Keene was delighted to find that she held a full hand. "I said that you were out. My dear, she didn't take my word for it. She marched, or rather sailed along the passage to your room and stabbed your empty bed with her long, thin fingers. Of course I followed. Then she turned to me and said: 'Where is she?' I'm sure she didn't add 'woman,' but she as good as did. She always does. I was terrified. I felt like a shop-lifter before the Lord Chief Justice. She always reminds me of a great legal dignitary with her snow-white hair and aquiline nose and the cold, direct gaze."

"Thank you, Brownie, dear, for your very charming literary touch, but please go on." Beatrix was really interested and curious. Her Aunt Honoria Vanderdyke, the outstanding figure in New York's most exclusive society, at whose entrance into her box at the opera the whole house very nearly rose to its feet, did nothing without a very strong motive.

"I tried to tell a lie—I did indeed—but somehow it stuck in my throat. Under those two mind-searching eyes I *had* to say that you had driven away with Mr. Sutherland York."

"Well, this is interesting!"

"'Ah!' she said. 'Indeed! And how often has Miss Vanderdyke stained herself with the paint of that mountebank?' 'I really do not know,' I replied. 'Thank you,' she said. 'That will do,' and went, or rather floated out of your bedroom and along the passage. I watched her from the gallery as she went down-stairs and through the door and away. A wonderful woman! If only Queen Elizabeth had been a lady she might have looked like her. I honestly confess, my dear——"

Beatrix held up one pink-nailed finger. "Brownie," she said, "I feel in my bones that there is going to be a row in the family. I've been seen going into York's studio, Aunt Honoria has been informed! She heard that I had come to town,—came to spy——"

"Oh, not spy, dear. She could never spy!"

"No, that's true. Inquire first hand, then,—and has now gone home to——"

The telephone bell rang. Beatrix's eyes gleamed with fun and a sort of impish amusement. "Brownie, I'll bet you any money you like that that's mother!"

Mrs. Keene rose. "Oh, no, my dear. Why should it be? It's the dressmaker, of course." All the same she hesitated apprehensively.

"Well, I'll bet you. The row is simmering."

Mrs. Keene nearly dropped the receiver. "It is your mother," she said. "She asks for you. And, oh dear me, how icy her voice is!"

Before going to the telephone, Beatrix lit another cigarette, gave a tilt to a comfortable arm-chair that stood near the little table, sat down, crossed one round leg over the other in a most leisurely way and took up the instrument. She looked like a water-color by Van Beers come to life.

"Good morning, Mamma! How sweet of you to call me up—I shall be glad to get away from the glare of the streets and reek of gasoline, but I can't leave until to-morrow. I must try on my costume twice before then—I'm very sorry, Mamma, darling, but—Well, give father my love and tell him that he simply must curb his impatience to see me, because

it's absolutely necessary—Aunt Honoria! Is Aunt Honoria there?" She shot a wink at Amelia Keene, who stood in an attitude of piteous trepidation. "My very best love to Aunt Honoria. But it will be impossible for me to leave town at once. Well, then, expect to see me at tea to-morrow. Au revoir, Mamma. I wish I could stay for a longer chat, but I'm just on my way out, with so much to do."

She rang off and burst out laughing. "A very good thing you were not betting, Brownie."

"Did Mrs. Vanderdyke sound——?"

"Angry? Yes, in a white heat. Every word was like a grain of Cayenne pepper."

"And is it about last night?"

"Yes, obviously, and probably the others. There has been a family council, that's easy to guess. Scandal has been at work. Isn't it absurd?"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Keene, who dreaded disturbances, would do anything in her power to keep trouble away from her charge, to whom she was genuinely attached, and saw starvation facing her if she were to lose her position. "How very unfortunate and distressing all this is! And, oh, my dear, how *could* you talk to your mother like that?"

"My dear good Brownie," said Beatrix, tipping off the end of her cigarette, "what's the use of belonging to this generation if I can't keep my parents in their place?"

She was just the least little bit disappointed that her companion failed to catch her touch of satirical humor.

III

At the moment when her maid was getting a bath ready for Beatrix and was waiting in a white marble room filled with the pleasant aroma of scented bath salts, Pelham Franklin wandered into the dining room of his studio apartment with his friend, Malcolm Fraser. Both men were in pajamas, and even then welcomed the occasional soft puff of air that came through the open window. Another hot day had fallen upon the city and a blistering sun was already high in a cloudless sky.

The dining room, like the studio and the passages, was filled with antlered heads and stuffed tarpon, and the skins of bear and tiger and wild-cat. There was something finely and healthily inartistic about the whole place, which more nearly resembled the work-rooms of a naturalist than anything else. The same note was struck by Franklin, who, with his broad shoulders and deep chest, his six feet of wiry body and small head, was obviously nothing but a man and not one who had ever been accused of being handsome either. He shuddered at the word except when it was applied to the royal mate of a fallow deer. All the same, he caught all discriminating eyes for the shortness of his thick, dark hair, the cleanness and humor of his grey, deep-set eyes, the rather aggressive squareness of his jaw, the small, soldierly moustache that covered a short upper lip and the strong, white teeth that gleamed beneath it when he laughed or was very angry. He had the look, too, of a man who mostly sleeps out under the sky, and the sun-baked

skin of one who is not chained to a city or doomed to the petty slavery of the social push.

"This damned city," he said. "This time eight days ago we were well out to sea. If I hadn't been ass enough to put the yacht back for another stock of tobacco the mail would have waited and grown stale. Rotten bad luck, eh?"

Fraser grinned ironically. "If it was a question of my having to chuck a few fish and give up two or three weeks of the open sea to come to the city to see about adding a million or two to my capital, d'you think I'd grumble?"

"But you're such a mercenary brute. You think of nothing but money."

"Yes, and the only reason you're not mercenary is that you don't have to think about it. Thanks, I'll have a sausage. What are you going to do to-day?"

Franklin groaned. "Sign deeds and things most of the morning at the lawyer's, having tried to make out what the devil they mean, and after lunch I'm going to buy a Rolls Royce. Say why?"

"I was going to say why."

"Well, I say why not?"

"But you've got five cars already. You don't want another."

"My dear chap, don't rub it in. I can't help being one of those unlucky beggars who's got so much, through no fault of his own, that he doesn't want anything else. Don't heave bricks at me when I wake up with a mild desire for something I don't need. Encourage me. Help me to work up an interest in an expensive toy. Tempt me into getting rid of some of my superfluous cash. It helps some other feller,

y'know, and anyway the only thing I've never done is to desire a Rolls Royce, and I dreamt about it all night. Will you come and let me see if I can break your neck?"

"All right! A good way of getting it in shape for tomorrow. You'll drive out to Greenwich, won't you?"

Franklin looked up quickly from the plate which had been occupying his close attention. "Greenwich? Why Greenwich?"

Fraser grinned again. He seemed to find a lot of grim amusement in Franklin. "You read me a telegram that you sent off from the yacht accepting Mrs. Vanderdyke's invitation for the Pastoral house-party."

"Oh, my God, yes!"

"But perhaps you'll have to undergo a slight operation or sit by the bedside of a sick relative, or something."

"No; I shall go. I promised Ida Larpent I'd meet her there."

"Oh!" said Fraser, dryly. "I see." He hoped to draw further details.

But Franklin let it go. There were so many far more vital things to talk about than women.

"By Jove!" said Fraser, going off at a tangent. "I envy you this house-party. You'll be able to talk to Beatrix."

"Well, that won't worry me much." Franklin had passed from sausages to Virginia ham and was still going strong.

"Maybe not. Your attention is occupied. It would worry me a whole lot, though. That girl has a strange effect on me. Always has, ever since I met her. That was before she left this country to be put to school in England. I only have to

catch her eyes to begin to tremble at the knees. Ever had that queer sensation?"

"Twice," said Franklin, taking another cup of coffee.

"Who were they?"

"One was a tiger in the Indian bush, and the other a crazy Chinaman running amuck in San Francisco. They both made my knees waggle."

Fraser lit a cigarette, inhaled a mouthful of smoke and let it dribble through his nostrils. The first cigarette is worth going through breakfast to achieve. "Well," he said, without any of the self-consciousness that generally goes with the pulling down of the fourth wall, "I don't mind telling you, Pel, old man, but I'd give ten years of my life to marry Beatrix Vanderdyke."

"An expensive hobby," said Franklin.

"Yes, quite. But I knew her when she was a little bit of a slip of a thing, before she realized what it meant to bear that dollar-weighted name. She was the sweetest kid I ever saw. She might have been left behind by the fairies. I watched the gradual change take place in her and the disastrous effect of governesses who licked the blacking off her boots and the army of servants who treated her as though she were the First National Bank come to life. I was one of the people, almost unnoticed, who stood on the pier and watched her sail for England with her mother and father and their retinue. Since her return and during the time that she was a débutante and every newspaper in the country knelt at her feet I have met her perhaps a dozen times—the opera, the horse show, the races, and so on. She has given me two fingers and half a smile. She has been utterly and