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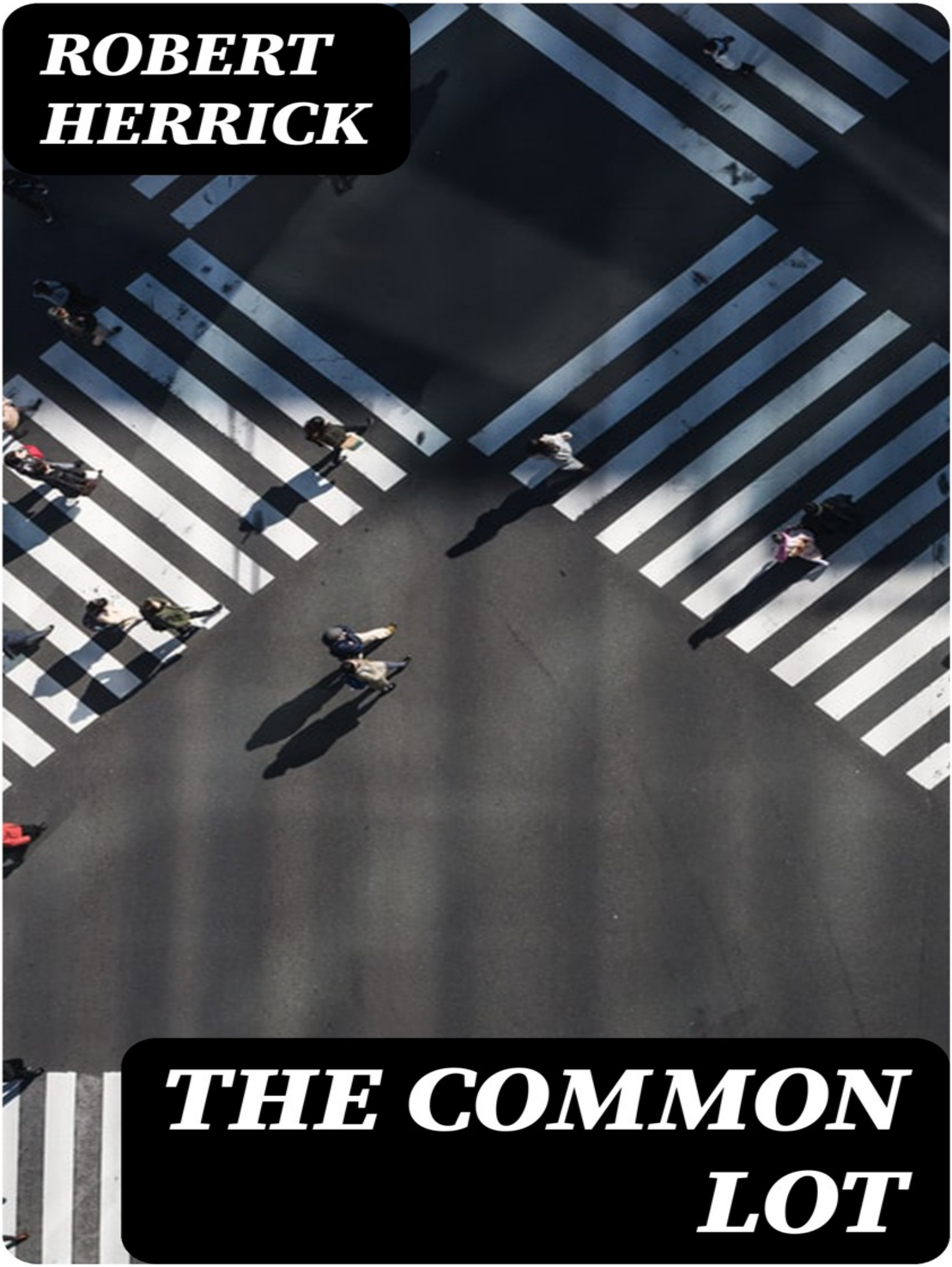

THE COMMON LOT

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The Common Lot

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Table of Contents

PART I
THE WILL

Table of Contents

THE COMMON LOT

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

From time to time the door opened to admit some tardy person. Then the May sunlight without flooded the dim, long hall with a sudden radiance, even to the arched recess in the rear, where the coffin was placed. The late-comers sank into the crowd of black-coated men, who filled the hall to the broad stairs. Most of these were plainly dressed, with thick, grizzled beards and lined faces: they were old hands from the Bridge Works on the West Side, where they had worked many years for Powers Jackson. In the parlors at the left of the hall there were more women than men, and more fashionable clothes than in the hall. But the faces were scarcely less rugged and lined; for these friends of the old man who lay in the coffin were mostly life-worn and gnarled, like himself. Their luxuries had not sufficed to hide the scars of the battles they had waged with fortune.

When the minister ceased praying, the men and the women in the warm, flower-scented rooms moved gratefully, trying to get easier positions for their cramped

bodies. Some members of a church choir, stationed at the landing on the stairs, began to sing. Once more the door opened silently in the stealthy hands of the undertaker, and this time it remained open for several seconds. A woman entered, dressed in fashionable widow's mourning. She moved deliberately, as if she realized exactly the full effect of her entrance at that moment among all these heated, tired people. The men crowded in the hall made way for her instinctively, so that she might enter the dining-room, to the right of the coffin, where the family and a few intimate friends of the dead man were seated. Here, a young man, the nephew of Powers Jackson, rose and surrendered his chair to the pretty widow, whispering:—

"Take this, Mrs. Phillips! I am afraid there is nothing inside."

She took his place by the door with a little deprecatory smile, which said many things at the same time: "I am very late, I know; but I really couldn't help it! You will forgive me, won't you?"

And also: "You have come to be a handsome young man! When I saw you last you were only a raw boy, just out of college! Now we must reckon with you, as the old man's heir,—the heir of so much money!"

Then again: "It is a long time since we met over there across the sea. And I have had my sorrows, too!"

All this her face seemed to speak swiftly, especially to the young man, whose attention she had quite distracted, as indeed she had disturbed every one in the other rooms by her progress through the hall. By the time she had settled herself, and made a first survey of the scene, the

hymn had come to an end, and the minister's deep voice broke forth in the words of ancient promise, "I am the Resurrection and the Life"...

At this note of triumph the pretty widow's interruption was forgotten. Something new stirred in the weary faces of those standing in the hall, touching each one according to his soul, vibrating in his heart with a meaning personal to him, to her, quite apart from any feeling that they might have for their old friend, in the hope for whose immortality it had been spoken....

"I am the Resurrection and the Life" ... "yet in my flesh shall I see God"...

The words fell fatefully into the close rooms. The young man who had given his chair to Mrs. Phillips unconsciously threw back his head and raised his eyes from the floor, as though he were following some point of light which had burst into sight above his head. His gaze swept over his mother's large, inexpressive countenance, his cousin Everett's sharp features, the solemn, blank faces of the other mourners in the room. It rested on the face of a young woman, who was seated on the other side of the little room, almost hidden by the roses and the lilies that were banked on the table between them. She, too, had raised her face at the triumphant prophecy, and was seeing something beyond the walls of the room, beyond the reach of the man's eyes. Her lips had parted in a little sigh of wonder; her blue eyes were filled with unwept tears. The young man's attention was arrested by those eyes and trembling lips, and he forgot the feeling that the minister's words had roused, in sudden apprehension of the girl's beauty and

tenderness. He had discovered the face in a moment of its finest illumination, excited by a vague yet pure emotion, so that it became all at once more than it had ever promised.

The tears trembled at the eyelids, then dropped unnoticed to the face. The young man looked away hastily, with an uncomfortable feeling in beholding all this emotion. He could not see why Helen Spellman should take his uncle's death so much to heart, although the old man had always been kind to her and to her mother. She had come to the house a great deal, for her mother and his uncle had been life-long friends, and the old man loved to have the girl about his home. Yet he did not feel his uncle's death that way; he wondered whether he ought to be affected by it as Helen was. He was certainly much nearer to the dead man than she,—his nephew, the son of his sister Amelia, who had kept his house all the many years of her widowhood. And—he was aware that people were in the habit of saying it—he was his favorite relative, the one who would inherit the better part of the property. This last reflection set his mind to speculating on the impending change in his own world,—that new future which he pleasantly dreamed might bring him nearer to her. For the last few days, ever since the doctors had given up all hope of the old man's recovery, he had not been able to keep his imagination from wandering in the fields of this strange, delightful change in his affairs, which was so near at hand....

"There is a natural body," so the minister was saying solemnly, "and there is a spiritual body.... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."....

The young man tried to curb his imagination, to feel the significance of the fact before him in some other way than as it might affect his own material fate. His eyes rested on the great coffin with its load of cut flowers, and he thought of the silent face that lay therein, and wondered. But the state of death was inexplicable to him.

When the minister began his remarks about the dead man's personality, the tired people roused themselves and their wandering thoughts came back to their common earth. What could he say on this delicate theme? The subject was full of thorns! Powers Jackson had not been a bad man, take his life all in all, but he had been accused, justly, of some ruthless, selfish acts. He had forced his way, and he had not been nice about it. His private morality, also, had never quite satisfied the ideals of his neighbors, and he could not be called, in any sense of the word known to the officiating minister, a religious man.

Yet there was scarcely a person present to whom Powers Jackson had not done in the course of his life some kind and generous act. Each one in his heart knew the dead man to have been good and human, and forgave him his sins, public and private. What did it matter to old Jim Ryan, the office porter, who was standing in the corner with his son and grandson, whether Powers Jackson had or had not conspired with certain other men to secure illegally a large grant of Texas land! He and his family had lived in the sun of the dead man's kindness. So it went with the others.

While the minister was saying what every one agreed to in his heart,—that their dead friend was a man of large stature, big in heart as in deed, strong for good as for evil,—

his nephew's thoughts kept returning to that glowing, personal matter,—what did it all mean to him? Of course, his uncle had been good to him, had given him the best kind of an education and training in his profession; his mother's comfort and his own nurture were due to this uncle. But now the old man was about to give him the largest gift of all,—freedom for his whole lifetime, freedom to do with himself what he pleased, freedom first of all to leave this dull, dirty city, to flee to those other more sympathetic parts of the earth which he knew so well how to enjoy!...

The pretty widow in the chair beside him fidgeted. She was exceedingly uncomfortable in the close, stuffy room, and the minister's skilful words roused merely a wicked sense of irony in her. She could have told the reverend doctor a thing or two about old Powers! There were current in her set stories about the man which would not have tallied altogether with his appreciative remarks. She had seen him at close range, and he was a man, like the others. She threw back her jacket, revealing an attractive neck and bust. During the service she had already scanned the faces of most of those in the rooms, and, with great rapidity, had cast up mentally their score with the dead. This handsome young nephew was the only one of them all that counted in her own estimation. What would he do with the old fellow's money? She threw a speculative, appreciative look at him.

Across the room the girl's face had settled into sober thought, the tears drying on her cheeks where they had fallen. With that glorious promise of Life Everlasting still reverberating in her soul, she felt that the only real Life which poor human beings might know was that life of the

"spiritual body," the life of the good, which is all one and alike! To her, Powers Jackson was simply a good man, the best of men. For she had known him all her life, and had seen nothing but good in him. She loved him, and she knew that he could not be evil!

Finally, the minister rounded out his thought and came to the end of his remarks. The singers on the stairs began to chant softly, "Now, O Lord, let thy servant depart in peace!" And the tired faces of the mourners relaxed from their tense seriousness. Somehow, the crisis of their emotion had been reached and passed. Comforted and reassured, they were about to leave this house of mourning. An old man, childless, a widower of many years, who had done his work successfully in this world, and reaped the rewards of it,—what can any one feel for his death but a solemn sense of mystery and peace! Perhaps to one only, the girl hidden behind the lilies and the roses in the dining-room, was it a matter of keen, personal grief. He had left her world,—he who had stroked her head and kissed her, who had loved her as a father might love her, who had always smiled when she had touched him.

On the sidewalk outside the people gathered in little knots, speaking in subdued tones to one another, yet luxuriating in the riotous spring air. Then they moved away slowly. After the house was nearly emptied, those mourners who had been in the dining-room appeared, to take carriages for the cemetery. Mrs. Phillips came first, talking to young Jackson Hart. She was saying:—

"The service was beautiful. It was all quite what the dear old gentleman would have liked, and such good taste,—that

was your part, I know!"

He murmured a protest to her compliment as he handed her into her carriage. She leaned toward him, with a very personal air:—

"It is so different from the last time we met! Do you remember? You must come and see me, soon. Don't forget!"

As the young man turned away from her, he met Helen Spellman descending the long flight of steps. The girl was carrying in her arms a great mass of loose flowers, and his cousin Everett who followed her was similarly burdened.

"Are you going on ahead of us?" Jackson asked anxiously.

"Yes. I want to put these flowers there first; so that it won't seem so bare and lonely when he comes. See! I have taken those he liked to have in his library, and yours and your mother's, too!"

She smiled over the flowers, but her eyes were still dull with tears. Again she brought his thoughts back from self, from his futile, worldly preoccupations, back to her love for the dead man, which seemed so much greater, so much purer than his.

"That will be very nice," he said, taking the flowers from her hands and placing them in a carriage that had driven up to the curb. "I am sure he would have liked your thought for him. He was always so fond of what you did, of you!"

"Dear uncle," she murmured to herself.

Although the dead man was not connected with her by any ties of blood, she had grown into the habit of calling him uncle, first as a joke, then in affection.

"He always had me select the flowers when he wanted to give a really truly dinner!" she added, a smile coming to her

face. "I know he will like to have me take these out to him there now."

She spoke of the dead in the present tense, with a strong feeling for the still living part of the one gone.

"I should like to drive out with you!" the young man exclaimed impulsively. "May I?"

"Oh, no! You mustn't," she replied quickly. "There's your mother, who is expecting you to go with her, and then,"—she blushed and stepped away from him a little space,—"I had rather be alone, please!"

When the heavy gates of the vault in Rose Hill had closed upon Powers Jackson forever, the little group of intimate friends, who had come with him to his grave, descended silently the granite steps to their carriages. Insensibly a wave of relief stole over the spirit of the young nephew, as he turned his back upon the ugly tomb, in the American-Greek style, with heavy capitals and squat pillars. It was not a selfish or heartless desire to get away from the dead man, to forget him now that he no longer counted in this world; it was merely the reaction from a day of gloom and sober thoughts. He felt stifled in his tall silk hat, long frock coat, patent-leather shoes, and black gloves. His spirit shrank from the chill of the tomb, to which the day had brought him near.

"Let's send all the women back together, Everett," he suggested to his cousin, "and then we can smoke. I am pretty nearly dead!"

As the three men of the party got into their carriage, Jackson took out his cigarette-case and offered it to his

cousin; but Everett shook his head rather contemptuously and drew a cigar from his breast pocket.

"I never got in the habit of smoking those things," he remarked slowly. There was an implication in his cool tone that no grown man indulged himself in that boyish habit.

"*He* never liked cigarettes either,—wouldn't have one in the house," Jackson commented lightly.

The other man, Hollister, had taken one of Everett's cigars, and the three smoked in silence while the carriage bumped at a rapid pace over the uneven streets that led through the suburbs of Chicago. Hart wondered what the two men opposite him were thinking about. Hollister, so he reflected, must know what was in the will. He had been the old man's confidential business agent for a good many years, and was one of the executors. Everett Wheeler, who was a lawyer with a large and very highly paid practice, was another.

Perhaps this second cousin of his was to get a good slice of the property after all, though his uncle had never displayed any great fondness for Everett. Yet the lawyer had always done the best that was expected of him. He had entered a Chicago law office from the high school in Michigan, preferring to skip the intermediate years of college training which Powers Jackson had offered him, and he never ceased referring to his success in his profession as partly due to the fact he had "fooled no time away at college." So far as his business went, which was to patch together crazy corporations, he had no immediate use for a liberal education. He had no tastes whatsoever outside of this business and a certain quiet interest in politics. His dull

white features, sharpened to a vulpine point at the nose and chin, betrayed his temperament. He was a silent, cool-blooded, unpassionate American man of affairs, and it would be safe to say that he would die rich. Thus far he had not had enough emotion, apparently, to get married. No! his cousin reflected, Everett was not a man after Powers Jackson's heart! The old man was not cold, passionless....

Those two men opposite him knew what was the fact in this matter so momentous to him. They smoked, wrapped in their own thoughts.

"I wonder who was the joker who put up that monstrous Greek temple out there in the cemetery?" Jackson finally observed, in a nervous desire to say something.

"You mean the family mausoleum?" Everett asked severely, removing his cigar from his lips and spitting carefully out of the half-opened window. "That was done by a fellow named Roly, and it was considered a very fine piece of work. It was built the time aunt Frankie died."

"It's a spooky sort of place to put a man into!"

"I think the funeral was what your uncle would have liked," Hollister remarked, as if to correct this irrelevant talk. "He hated to be eccentric, and yet he despised pretentious ceremonies. Everything was simple and dignified. The parson was good, too, in what he said. And the old men turned out in great numbers. I was glad of that! But I was surprised. It's nearly two years since he gave up the Works, and memories are short between master and man."

"That's a fact. But he knew every man Jack about the place in the old days," Everett observed, removing his silk hat as if it were an ornamental incumbrance.

"Yes," said Hollister, taking up the theme. "I remember how he would come into the front office on pay days, and stand behind the grating while the men were signing off. He could call every one by a first name. It was Pete and Dave and Jerry and Steve,—there wasn't so much of that European garbage, then,—these Hungarians and Slavs."

"But he was stiff with 'em in the strike, though," the lawyer put in, a smile wrinkling his thin, pallid lips. "He fired every one who went out with the union,—never'd let 'em back, no matter what they said or did. Those there to-day were mostly the old ones that didn't strike."

The two older men began to exchange stories about the dead man, of things they had seen while they were working for him,—his tricks of temper, whims of mind. Hollister spoke gently, almost tenderly, of the one he had worked with, as of one whose faults were flaws in a great stone. The lawyer spoke literally, impassively, as of some phenomenon of nature which he had seen often and had thoroughly observed.

Young Hart lit another cigarette, and as he listened to the stories he thought of the girl's face just as he had seen it that day, utterly moved and transfixed with a strange emotion of tender sorrow that was half happiness. The expression puzzled him, and he ended by saying to himself that she was religious, meaning by that word that she was moved by certain feelings other than those which affected him or Everett or his mother even. And this new thought of her made her more precious in his eyes. He looked for her when they reached the sombre old house on Ohio Street, but she had already gone home.

As Hollister was leaving the house, he said to the young man:—

"Can you come over to Wheeler's office to-morrow about four? Judge Phillips will be there, the other executor. We are to open the will. They have suggested that I ask you to join us," he added hastily, with an effort to be matter of fact.

"All right, Hollister," the young man answered, with an equal effort to appear unconcerned. "I'll be over!"

But his heart thumped strangely.

CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

"Get all ready before you start," Powers Jackson had said, when his nephew, after four years at Cornell and three years at a famous technical school in the East, had suggested the propriety of finishing his professional training in architecture by additional study in Paris. "Get all ready,—then let us have results."

He had taken his time to get ready. He had chosen to go to Cornell in the first place rather than to a larger university, because some of the boys of his high school class were going there. With us in America such matters are often settled in this childish way. The reason why he chose the profession of architecture was, apparently, scarcely less frivolous. A "fraternity brother" at Cornell, just home from Paris, fired the college boy's imagination for "the Quarter." But, once started in the course of architecture at the

technical school, he found that he had stumbled into something which really interested him. For the first time in his life he worked seriously.

At the Beaux Arts he worked, also, though he did not forget the amenities of life. The two years first talked of expanded into two and a half, then rounded to a full three. Meanwhile the generous checks from the office of the Bridge Works came with pleasant regularity. His mother wrote, "Powers hopes that you are deriving benefit from your studies in Paris." What the old man had said was, "How's Jackie doing these days, Amelia?" And young Hart was "doing" well. There were many benefits, not always orthodox, which the young American, established cosily on the Rue de l'Université, was deriving from Paris.

The day of preparation came to an end, however. During those last weeks of his stay in Europe he was joined by his mother and Helen Spellman. Powers Jackson had taken this occasion to send them both abroad; Mrs. Spellman being too much of an invalid to take the journey, Mrs. Amelia Hart had been very glad to have the girl's companionship. Jackson met them in Naples. After he had kissed his mother and taken her handbag, to which she was clinging in miserable suspicion of the entire foreign world, he turned to the girl, whose presence he had been conscious of all the time. Helen was not noticeably pretty or well dressed; but she had an air of race, a fineness of feature, a certain personal delicacy, to which the young man had long been unaccustomed. Perhaps three years of student life in Paris had prepared him to think very well of a young American woman.

They had spent most of their time in Rome, where Mrs. Hart could be made happy with many American comforts. She was much given to writing letters to her friends; they formed a kind of journal wherein she recorded her impressions of the places she visited and the facts she culled from the guide-books and the *valets de place* whom they employed. She wrote a round, firm hand, and this was her style of entry:—

"This morning with Helen and Jackson to the Palatine Hill. The Palatine was one of the Seven Hills of Rome. It was anciently the home of the Cæsars. That is, they had their palaces there, some remains of which exist to this day.... It is a pretty sort of place now, where there are stone benches, from which may be obtained a good view of the Forum and the best ruins of Ancient Rome."

Jackson liked to tease his mother about her literal method of sight-seeing. In her way, also, Helen was laborious and conscientious, trying to solve the complex impressions of the foreign world. The young architect was content to wave his hand toward a mass of picturesque ruins as they flitted past in a cab. "Somebody or other Metellus put up that arch," he would remark gayly. "Good color, isn't it?" The women would insist upon stopping the cab, and would get out. Then, guide-book in hand, they would peer up at the gray remnant of an ancient order of things. So with the Palatine,—Helen insisted upon studying out on the plan the House of Livia, and puzzled much over the exact situation of the Golden House of Nero, although Jackson assured her that no remains of the huge palace could be identified. She had a conscience about seeing as

much as she could, and seeing it honestly, justifying to herself the careless architect's flippancy on the ground that he had been so long in Europe he knew what to avoid.

While Mrs. Hart was laboriously filling her letters with incontestable facts, the two young people went about alone, in that perfectly normal and healthy manner which remains an everlasting puzzle to the European eye. The architect took keen pleasure in teaching the girl to recognize the beauty in a Palladian façade and the majestic grandiosity of a Santa Maria degli Angeli. In matters of color and line the girl was as sensitive as he, but he found that she lacked the masculine sense of construction, the builder's instinct for proportion and plan.

Their friendship was quite simple, untouched by any hectic excitement, or even sentiment. The architect was twenty-seven years old, and he had seen enough of Parisian manners to remove any superficial virtue which might have survived his four years at Cornell. But this American girl, the old friend of his family, his mother's companion—she seemed to him merely the pleasantest being he had seen in months.

So their six weeks in Italy had been very happy ones for all three,—six golden weeks of May and early June, when the beautiful land smiled at them from every field and wall. Each fresh scene in the panorama of their little journeys was another joy, a new excitement that brought a flush of heightened color to the girl's face. One of their last days they spent at the little village of Ravello, on the hilltop above Amalfi, and there in the clear twilight of a warm June day, with gold-tipped clouds brooding over the Bay of

Salerno, they came for the first time upon the personal note. They were leaning over the railing of the terrace in the Palumbo, listening to the bells in the churches of Vetri below them.

"Wouldn't this be good for always!" he murmured.

He was touched with sentimental self-pity at the thought of leaving all this,—the beauty, the wonder, the joy of Europe! In another short month instead of these golden hours of full sensation there would be Chicago, whose harsh picture a three years' absence had not softened.

"I don't know," the girl replied, with a long sigh for remembered joy. "One could not be as happy as this for months and years."

"I'd like to try!" he said lightly.

"No! Not you!" she retorted with sudden warmth. "What could a man do here?"

"There are a lot of fellows in Europe who manage to answer that question somehow. Most of the men I knew in Paris don't expect to go back yet, and not to Chicago anyway."

Her lips compressed quickly. Evidently they were not the kind of men she thought well of.

"Why!" she stammered, words crowding tempestuously to her tongue. "How could you stay, and not work out your own life, not make your own place in the world like uncle Powers? How it would trouble him to hear you say that!"

She made him a trifle ashamed of his desire to keep out of the fight any longer. Hers, he judged, was a militant, ambitious nature, and he was quick to feel what she expected of him.

After they had sat there a long time without speaking, she said gently, as if she wished to be just to him:—

"It might be different, if one were an artist; but even then I should think a man would want to carry back what he had received here to the place he was born in,—shouldn't you?"

"Well, perhaps," he admitted, "if the place weren't just—Chicago! It wouldn't seem much use to carry this back there. The best thing for a man would be to forget it," he concluded rather bitterly.

They never came back to this topic. Nevertheless those simple words which the girl had spoken in that garden of Ravello became a tonic for him at other moments of shrinking or regret. He felt what was in her eyes a man's part.

They made the long voyage homewards through the Mediterranean, touching at Gibraltar for a last, faint glimpse of romance. It was a placid journey in a slow steamer, with a small company of dull, middle-aged Americans, and the two young people were left much to themselves. In the isolation of the sunny, windless sea, their acquaintance took on imperceptibly a personal character. After the fashion of the egotistic male, he told her, bit by bit, all that he knew about himself,—his college days, his friends, and his work at the Beaux Arts. From the past,—his past,—they slid to the future that lay before him on the other shore of the Atlantic. He sketched for her in colored words the ideals of his majestic art. Tucked up on deck those long, cloudless nights, they reached the higher themes,—what a man could do, as

Richardson and Atwood had shown the glorious way, toward expressing the character and spirit of a fresh race in brick and stone and steel!

Such thoughts as these touched the girl's imagination, just as the sweet fragments of a civilization finer than ours had stirred her heart in Italy. All these ideas which the young man poured forth, she took to be the architect's original possessions, not being familiar with the froth of Paris studios, the wisdom of long *déjeuners*. And she was doubly eager whenever he mentioned his plans for the future. For something earnest and large was the first craving of her soul, something that had in it service and beauty in life.

At the time of the great exposition in Chicago she had had such matters first brought to her attention. Powers Jackson, as one of the directors of the enterprise, had entertained many of the artists and distinguished men who came to the city, and at his dinner-table she had heard men talk whose vital ideals were being worked into the beautiful buildings beside the lake. Their words she had hoarded in her schoolgirl's memory, and now in her sympathy for the young architect she began to see what could be done with an awakened feeling for art, for social life, to make our strong young cities memorable. This, she imagined shyly, would be the work of the man beside her!

He was handsome and strong, vigorously built, though inclined to heaviness of body. His brown hair waved under his straw hat, and a thick mustache turned stiffly upwards in the style of the German Emperor, which was then just coming into fashion. This method of wearing the mustache, and also a habit of dressing rather too well, troubled the girl;

for she knew that uncle Powers would at once note such trivial aspects of his nephew. The keen old man might say nothing, but he would think contemptuous thoughts. The young architect's complexion was ruddy, healthily bronzed; his features were regular and large, as a man's should be. Altogether he was a handsome, alert, modern American. Too handsome, perhaps! She thought apprehensively of the rough-looking, rude old man at home, his face tanned and beaten, knobby and hard, like the gnarled stump of an oak!

She was very anxious that the architect should make a good impression on his uncle, not simply for his own sake, but for the lonely old man's comfort. She felt that she knew Powers Jackson better than his nephew did; knew what he liked and what he despised. She wanted him to love this nephew, and several times she talked to Jackson about his uncle. The young man listened with an amused smile, as if he had already a good formula for the old man.

"Mother can't get him out of that brick Mansard roost on Ohio Street, where he has lived since the fire. All his friends have moved away from the neighborhood. But he thinks the black-walnut rooms, the stamped leather on the walls, and the rest of it, is the best going yet. That buffet, as he calls it! It's early Victorian, a regular *chef-d'oeuvre* of ugliness. That house!"

"It's always been his home," she protested, finding something trivial in this comic emphasis on sideboards and bookcases. "He cares about good things too. Lately he's taken to buying engravings. Mr. Pemberton interested him in them. And I think he would like to buy pictures, if he wasn't afraid of being cheated, of making a fool of himself."

"You'll make him out a patron of the fine arts!"

Jackson laughed merrily at the picture of Powers Jackson as a connoisseur in art.

"Perhaps he will be yet!" she retorted stoutly. "At any rate, he is a very dear old man."

He would not have described his uncle Powers in the same simple words. Still he had the kindest feelings toward him, mixed with a latent anxiety as to what the old man might do about his allowance, now that his school days had come definitely to a close....

Thus in the long hours of that voyage, with the sound of the gurgling, dripping water all about them, soothed by the rhythm of pounding engines, the man and the woman came to a sort of knowledge of each other. At least there was created in the heart of each a vision of the other. The girl's vision was glorified by the warmth of her imagination, which transformed all her simple experiences. In her heart, if she had looked there, she would have seen an image of youth and power, very handsome, with great masculine hopes, and aspirations after unwrought deeds. Unconsciously she had given to that image something which she could never take back all the years of her life, let her marry whom she might!

And he could remember her, if hereafter he should come to love her, as she was these last days. The shadow of the end of the romance was upon her, and it left her subdued, pensive, but more lovely than ever before. To the artist's eye in the architect her head was too large, the brow not smooth enough, the hair two shades too dark, the full face too broad. The blue eyes and the trembling, small mouth

gave a certain childishness to her expression that the young man could not understand. It was only when she spoke that he was much moved; for her voice was very sweet, uncertain in its accents, tremulous. She seemed to breathe into commonplace words some revelation of herself....

On the morning of their arrival the lofty buildings of the great city loomed through the mist. The architect said:—

"There are the hills of the New World! Here endeth the first chapter."

"I cannot believe it has ended," she replied slowly. "Nothing ends!"

Powers Jackson and Mrs. Spellman met the travellers in New York. It was just at the time that Jackson was negotiating with the promoters of a large trust for the sale of his Bridge Works. This fact his nephew did not learn until some months later, for the old man never talked about his deeds and intentions. At any rate, he did sell the Works one morning in the lobby of his hotel and for his own price, which was an outrageous one, as the stockholders of the new trust came to know in time to their chagrin.

He shook hands with his sister, kissed Helen on the forehead, and nodded to his nephew.

"How's the Pope, Amelia?" he asked gravely.

"You needn't ask me! Did you think, Powers, I'd be one to go over to the Vatican and kiss that old man's hand? I hope I'm too good a Christian to do that!"

"Oh, don't be too hard on the poor feller," Jackson said, continuing his joke. "I hoped you'd pay your respects to the

Pope. Why, he's the smartest one in the whole bunch over there, I guess!"

He looked to Helen for sympathy. It should be said that Powers Jackson regarded his sister Amelia as a fool, but that he never allowed himself to take advantage of the fact except in such trifling ways as this.

When the two men were alone in the private parlor at the hotel, the uncle said:—

"So you've finished up now? You're all through over there?"

"Yes, sir," Hart answered, not feeling quite at his ease with this calm old man. "I guess I am ready to begin building, as soon as any one will have me!"

"I see there's plenty doing in your line, all over."

"I am glad to hear that."

The architect fidgeted before he could think what to say next. Then he managed to express his sense of gratitude for the great opportunities his uncle had given him in Paris. Jackson listened, but said nothing. The architect was conscious that the old man had taken in with one sweep of those sharp little eyes his complete appearance. He suspected that the part in the middle of his brown hair, the pert lift to the ends of his mustache, the soft stock about his neck, the lavender colored silk shirt in which he had prepared to meet the pitiless glare of the June sun in the city,—that all these items had been noted and disapproved. He reflected somewhat resentfully that he was not obliged to make a guy of himself to please his uncle. He found his uncle's clothes very bad. Powers Jackson was a large man, and his clothes, though made by one of the best tailors in

Chicago, usually had a draggled appearance, as if he had forgotten to take them off when he went to bed. However, when the old man next spoke, he made no reference to his nephew's attire.

"I was talking to Wright about you the other day. Ever heard of him?"

"Of Walker, Post, and Wright?" Hart asked, naming one of the best-known firms of architects in the country.

"Yes. They've been doing something for me lately. If you haven't made any plans, you might start in their Chicago office. That'll teach you the ropes over here."

Nothing was said about an allowance or a continuation of those generous and gratefully acknowledged checks which had made life at Cornell and at Paris so joyous. And nothing more was ever said about them! Jackson Hart had taken the position that his uncle had secured for him in Wright's Chicago office, and within a fortnight of the day he landed at New York he was making his daily pilgrimage to the twelfth floor of the Maramanoc Building, where under the bulkheads worked a company of young gentlemen in their shirt-sleeves.

That was two years ago, and by this time he was eager for almost any kind of change.

CHAPTER III

Table of Contents

The morning after the funeral Francis Jackson Hart resumed his work on the plans of a large hotel that Walker, Post, and Wright were to build in Denver. This was in all probability the last piece of work that he should be called upon to do for that firm, and the thought was pleasant to him. He had not spent an altogether happy two years in that office. It was a large firm, with other offices in St. Paul and New York, and work under construction in a dozen different states. Wright was the only member of the firm who came often to Chicago; he dropped into the office nearly every month, arriving from somewhere south or east, and bound for somewhere north or west, with only a few days to spare. During these brief visits he was always tremendously rushed —plans under way in the office had to be looked over and criticised; the construction in the immediate neighborhood examined; new business to be discussed with the firm's clients, and much else. He was a tall, thin man, with harassed, near-sighted eyes,—a gentleman well trained in his profession and having good taste according to the standards of a generation ago. But he had fallen upon a commercial age, and had not been large enough to sway it. He made decent compromises between his own taste and that of his clients, and took pride in the honest construction of his buildings.

Wright had hurt Hart's susceptibilities almost at the start, when he remarked about a sketch that the young architect had made for a new telephone exchange:—

"All you want, my boy, is the figure of a good fat woman flopping over that door!"

For the next few months Hart had been kept busy drawing spandrels. From this he was promoted to designing stables for country houses of rich clients. He resented the implied criticism of his judgment, and he put Wright down as a mere Philistine, who had got all his training in an American office.

Now, he said to himself, as he took down his street coat and adjusted his cuffs before going over to his cousin's office to hear the will, he should leave Wright's "department store," and "show the old man" what he thought of the kind of buildings the firm was putting up for rich and common people. He, at least, would not be obliged to be mercenary. His two years' experience in Chicago had taught him something about the fierceness of the struggle to exist in one of the professions, especially in a profession where there is an element of fine art. And his appetite to succeed, to be some one of note in this hurly-burly of Chicago, had grown very fast. For he had found himself less of a person in his native city than he had thought it possible over in Paris, —even with the help of his rich uncle, with whom he had continued to live.

So, as the elevator of the Dearborn Building bore him upwards that afternoon, his heart beat exultantly: he was to hear in a few moments the full measure of that advantage which he had been given over all the toiling, sweating humanity here in the elevator, out there on the street! By the right of fortunate birth he was to be spared the common lot of man, to be placed high up on the long, long ladder of human fate....