

with one of her old decisive gestures. On her way to the oriental alcove she passed Professor Rosenberg's open door. The old man was sitting within, bent over a book, his white beard stirring in the autumn breeze from an open window.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "you're back, are you? *So am I!*"

When she reached her alcove she looked about its book-lined walls with a sigh of content, and began walking about, pulling down her reference-books

and piling them on the little table. When she had finished, she sat down behind the barricade, her blue eyes shining.

There was a long, long silence as she turned over the pages of her books. It was broken by the appearance of the old attendant who had always been a part of the library. To him Miss Harriman spoke, without raising her head.

"Oh, Wilson," she said in an absent tone, "just hand me that Zhukovski's Persian grammar, will you?"



THE STAGE-MANAGER WAS PRANCING WITH THE CHORUS MEN

VALLOMBROSA TERRACE

BY LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE WRIGHT

MARY GAYLORD was wasting valuable moments. She was primping, woman-like, lingering before the cracked mirror of her bureau, to distribute here and there on hair and gown deft, sure pats of the hand—remedying defects that would have seemed quite negligible to a masculine understanding. And so employed—clear, brown eyes busied

upon the reflection of the young figure, slim and neat in her sole seasonable dress—instinctively she nodded satisfaction. She had rendered herself presentable: there was nothing in her appearance to suggest the straightened means that inevitably assorted with the top-floor-back hall-bedroom in Mrs. Maxwell's boarding-house. And if the purse, which presently she extracted from its

hiding-place between the springs and the thin old mattress of her bed was lean, it retained enough of its pristine elegance to aid and abet both hat and gown in their negative deception.

Miss Gaylord went out hurriedly, dismayed by the discovery that her eccentric tin alarm-clock had raced its hands to twenty minutes after nine. She turned to lock her door in a hallway whose pent and musty atmosphere was quite as potent as fear lest she be late to send her small feet pattering rapidly down four flights of stairs. And as she descended, air and shadows alike seemed to grow more dense. An unsavory gloom inhabited the lower hall, so thick that not even Miss Gaylord's intuition warned her of a hostile presence there before, with fingers on the front-door latch, she was halted by the voice of her landlady.

Sepulchral, husky, deep, it issued from the obscurity in astonishing volume. Beneath the six simple syllables of Mrs. Maxwell's greeting, drawled with measured deliberation—"Good mo-ornin', Miss Gay-lord!"—there lurked a world of meaning. She could no more clearly by the articulated words have conveyed to her lodger's sensitive intelligence a variety of suggestions. "Why do you hurry? Did you not see me? Did you think to ignore me? Do you know that for four weeks your rent has not been paid? Do you underestimate my generosity and forbearance? How much longer am I to be kept waiting?"—these, with a dozen other demands, Miss Gaylord could not but divine beneath that salutation. And she faltered, knowing the futility of argument.

In vain she might have pleaded: "Be patient with me yet a little time, Mrs. Maxwell, as I myself must be patient. I have an engagement: a fortnight and we open on the roof-garden. Then I shall have money and can pay you. It is true that I know not how to live through the interval, rehearsing twelve hours a day on insufficient food, or on none at all. After to-day I shall have no money whatever—but—patience!"

So she might have spoken; but the threadbare phrases choked, with a sob, in her throat, and in sudden, speechless panic she turned and fled out into the bland brilliance of the perfumed morning.

A silly apprehension lest her long-suffering landlady should give chase, with voluble lamentation and upbraiding, kept her overwrought nerves in a flutter until she had rounded the avenue corner; but even in calmer mood she held on across town at a brisk pace, hoping against hope that her clock might have been fast, for once in a blue moon.

The rehearsal was called for half past nine, and Torrance, the stage-manager, was notoriously quick-tempered. Although at first he had been inclined to use Miss Gaylord gently, differentiating her from the rank and file of her sister "ladies of the chorus," of late his tongue had spared her no more than another. And his displeasure was something to be dreaded no less than the inevitable encounter with the affronted Mrs. Maxwell in the evening.

Breathless and spent, she reached the fifth landing fully twenty minutes late. Torrance was busy drilling "the boys" at the moment; by his sardonic eye, at least, her arrival passed unregarded. Coatless and collarless, an old felt hat pulled down over his brows, the stage-manager was prancing with the chorus men, a rakish score of youths who perspiringly marched and countermarched, emulating his antics with bored abandon, deaf to his profane appeals to inject into the "business" some of that quality which he seemed to possess in such abounding store—to wit, "ginger."

Over at the piano the boyish composer, who likewise served as "musical director," was laboring mightily, a brown-paper cigarette drooping, unlighted, from his tired, petulant lips. Round the walls and at the open windows the women loitered, wearily awaiting their turn to be schooled in steps already grown disgustingly familiar. Toward the nearer group of these Miss Gaylord furtively made her way, removing her hat and pinning up her skirts to clear her slim ankles. Two or three thoughtless acquaintances turned to greet her gaily, thereby encompassing her detection.

"Stop that talking!" Torrance's voice rasped angrily through the piano's clatter. And his gaze, seeking the offenders, was arrested by Miss Gaylord's shrinking figure. He lifted a hand, and the rehearsal paused. "Ah, Miss Gay!"

Thus was her name abbreviated for footlight uses, plain Mary Gaylord becoming "Marie Gay." The girl halted, and there fell a hush, cut scathingly by Torrance's irony. "Ah, Miss Gay! It is a pleasure, indeed, to have our principals set a good example to the ladies and gentlemen of the chorus. The principals, Miss Gay, are not called until eleven. Did you mistake the hour, or is this pure enthusiasm for your work?"

Miss Gaylord's face burned with the sting of his satire. "I am sorry, Mr. Torrance," she told him in a voice steady, but so low that he misunderstood.

"You overslept? Your clock was slow? Or was it a block on the Subway? What amazing originality! That will do, Miss Gay; don't try my temper again this morning—I warn you. Come now, girls, step lively—opening chorus, first act. And for Heaven's sake try to dance like human beings, not wooden dolls!"

Torrance's lean face was unnaturally red, his features puffy, his eyes swollen. As the rehearsal proceeded he seemed to make less and less effort to control his temper. The chorus, hating him heartily to a unit, worked ever less willingly, more sullenly.

And Miss Gaylord? She tripped through her paces mechanically, despite it all. Torrance's hazing passed over her head.

In heart and spirit she was far from that superheated, reeking hall. On her cross-town walk every breath she inhaled had been saturated with the heady essence of the world's immortal youth, and now spring was tugging at her heart-strings, loosing a surge of memories poignantly dear—of home; of the elm-arched village street; of lush meadow and purling brook; of long, still days dream-like in the hot hush of summer; of youth—her youth that lay such a little way behind her, yet so irrevocably far; of Peter Holly, her Peter of the honest eyes, who so valiantly had combated her determination to win a livelihood of the world, offering her his name and such a home as his slender means would purchase, if she would but forego her dream of independence. Dear Peter! How mad she had been! Her eyes filled, her heart melting in penitence.

"Miss Gay!"

Automatically she stopped in the middle of a step, and became conscious that she had been dancing alone, the rest of the chorus having withdrawn.

"That will be about all, Miss Gay. I regret we cannot humor your appetite for the middle of the stage. Your impression that you are a principal grows too strong for tolerance. We shall not need your services from now on. You may go."

Aghast, her eyes sought Torrance's in dumb pleading. He turned away with a shrug and an air of bravado. "We'll go on with your solo, Mr. Classon," he told the comedian. "now that Miss Gay permits."

Blindly she found her hat, adjusting it with fumbling fingers, then made her way to the door. The principals ignored the incident, the chorus accepting it with relief that a scapegoat had been singled out to suffer for the sins of the majority. But one warm-hearted girl followed Miss Gaylord into the corridor, stopping her there and kneeling to unpin the skirts which she had forgotten.

"Don't take it hard, dear," she comforted her. "That Torrance's a nasty brute! You go right straight up to Norris. I heard last night he was gettin' up a snap comp'ny for the beaches—"

"Thank you," stammered Miss Gaylord. But she shook her head. The bare thought of going the round of theatrical agencies, begging for the work that was nowhere to be had in the slack season, seemed infinitely repugnant to her, just then. She must find some other way to keep body and soul together until autumn.

Out of doors, she wandered aimlessly through the hot, glaring streets. Where to go and what to do, immediately, she had no notion. To return to Mrs. Maxwell's before nightfall was out of the question; her only hope of retaining her room lay in keeping up the fiction of daily rehearsals until she found something else.

II

How, in the final decision, she brought herself to do anything so daring she never knew. But, in fact, it was the longing, fierce and keen, for the open country, where spring was not a mock-



MISS GAYLORD COLLAPSED ON ONE OF THE NEWLY PAINTED PLATFORM BENCHES, WHILE PETER SPEEDED THE DEPARTING TRAIN WITH A MELODRAMATIC FIST

ery and a delusion, that impelled her to folly—that, and a fortuitous recognition of the Grand Central Station, its wide portals in themselves a pressing invitation to one in whom the *wanderlust* was strong.

An inspiration to adventure colored her mood and her cheeks alike with a flush of excitement, and before she knew it she was inside the building, waiting her turn at the ticket-grating, slender gloved fingers nervously extracting a coin from the cavernous depths of her poverty-stricken purse. Twenty-five cents! She would have thought twice ere spending as much for a meal, but as the price of a day of freedom in the country, it seemed all too insignificant.

A machine in human shape, on the farther side of the barred window, received the coin without question; and, "Where to?" it demanded brusksly.

"To—as far as that will take me," she faltered, placating the mechanism with a faint, deprecating smile. And a moment later she was passing through the rotunda to the train-shed, happy in the possession of a slip of pasteboard.

A uniformed giant condescended to enlighten her, bending low to examine the ticket. "Creston, ma'am? Track six, to the right. Your train starts in two minutes."

Thanking him, she hurried through the gates, wondering where Creston might be, and wholly unconscious of the fact that a tall young man had stopped short at sight of her, had pursued as far as the gates, and there had been turned back for want of credentials. He looked up at the bulletin over track six, caught the name of the first stop, and dashed into the waiting-room, wherefrom he as hastily popped out, some seconds later—with a ticket; and in the nick of time. The platform gates closed behind his coat-tails as he sped after the moving train, already half out of the shed.

He caught it. Very likely he would have caught it had his handicap been twice as heavy. He was a young man of an alert, determined, sanguine habit, with much of the air of one who generally gets what he wants.

Miss Gaylord had settled herself comfortably with an elbow on the window-sill, her small, round chin cuddled in a

firm and rosy palm, her eyes turned in dreaming to the shifting and spreading web of tracks in the train-yard. When the young man shouldered down the aisle and paused beside her, his voice was the first warning she had of him.

"Beg pardon—this seat is not reserved, I trust?"

It was an ordinary, every-day query, rendered euphonious by courtesy; none the less, Miss Gaylord frowned with annoyance. Why that seat? The car was not half filled; he could as easily have left her in peace. She looked up resentfully; and, "Mary!" supplemented the young man plaintively.

Miss Gaylord thought no more of the contemplated snubbing. She sat forward abruptly, as if to rise; and immediately sat back. Her cheeks became as swiftly pale. Before her eyes the young man's homely, honest features blurred ridiculously. She laughed with an uncertain note. "Peter!" breathed Miss Gaylord.

Whereupon Peter Holly slid himself quietly into the unengaged seat. "I have," he announced—the practical soul!—"worn out three pairs of shoes looking for you in New York, Mary."

After some time, the train paused at a meek suburban station, deposited a few passengers, took on others, and resumed its headlong flight through a smiling countryside. The two young people were only vaguely conscious of the incident. In truth, they were but hazily conscious of anything in the world but their two selves—and this, although fifteen minutes' talk had brought Mary Gaylord to the verge of tears and plunged Peter Holly into a humor half sulky and half exasperated.

"I should think you'd try to be reasonable, Mary," he complained. "I don't see what earthly difference it makes."

"It makes every possible difference," declared Miss Gaylord with a manner of finality that would have been more convincing had her tone been less tremulous.

"How?" demanded Peter, openly mutinous.

"Why, Peter, can't you see that if I refused to marry you when you were p-poor, I just e-can't, now you're rich."

"No, I can't see it. What's more, I won't."

"Well—that's the way of it, Peter."

Peter's mind diverged at a tangent somewhat startling. "Hang an uncle who's got to go and die and leave a fellow money!" grumbled the ungrateful cub.

If Miss Gaylord replied, her words were drowned by the banging of the door, as it opened to admit a puff of smoke, a shower of cinders, and somebody in a blue uniform.

"Tickets, please!"

"It isn't," Peter mourned, "it isn't as if I didn't love you with all my heart, Mary—"

"Peter!"

"—Nor as if you didn't love me. I dare you to say you don't love me."

"Tickets, please!"

"What's the odds what people think?" reasoned Peter rebelliously.

"You're you and—"

"Tickets, please!"

An official index finger tapped Peter's shoulder. The young man turned sharply and transfixed the conductor with a frigid glare. "We're going to Creston," he announced.

"No, you ain't," retorted the conductor with spirit. "You're going away from it."

"Wha-at?"

"Creston was the last stop. Next-stop Montmorency—hour farther on."

"Oh!" commented Peter, crestfallen.

"And you'll have to pay the extra fares—sixty-five cents each," volunteered the functionary.

"Oh, Peter!" interpolated Miss Gaylord, with a depth of dismay in her tone which caused the young man to turn to her in instant solicitude.

"Why, what's the matter, Mary?"

There was everything the matter, judging from Mary's expression and demeanor. She was turning and twisting about in the greatest agitation, evidently looking for something that was neither on the seat beside her, nor on the window-sill, nor yet on the floor of the car. But Peter was more immediately concerned for the doleful down-droop of her sweet red lips, for the glint of moisture in the dear brown eyes.

"I—I've lost my purse, Peter!"

"Lost it!" repeated the young man stupidly.

The conductor's face hardened. "You'll have to pay up or get off," he said grimly. "There ain't no two ways about *that*."

"That's all right," snapped Peter. He stood up and thrust a hand into one trouser-pocket, hesitated, with an uneasy look in his eyes, withdrew the hand, empty, and began to search his remaining pockets in sudden anxiety.

Watching him, the conductor smiled the incredulous, pitying smile of one to whom such symptoms are as a tale that is told. "What's become of it, d'you s'pose?" he asked, not without humor. "Left your roll at home on the piano—what?"

Peter chose to ignore this. "Mary," he advanced in embarrassment, "you're sure your pocketbook's gone? I—er—haven't a red cent."

The girl turned to him eyes blank with consternation. "I can't understand where I could have dropped it, Peter. What *shall* we do?"

"Huh!" commented the conductor. "I'd think you'd know better'n to try that game—"

"Game!" cried Peter, swinging toward him so furiously that the man repented hastily.

"Well, anyway," he declared sullenly. "I ain't got any choice in the matter. 'F I let you ride free and get caught I lose my job. Which'll you have? Pay up, or get put off?"

Peter sat down and intentionally placed a strong, firm, capable hand over Mary's. "Never mind, dear," he said gently; and to the conductor, curtly, "Put us off."

The official hand moved hesitantly toward the signal-cord. "I don't like to do it," vacillated the conductor.

"Put us off, I say!" snapped Peter with heated defiance.

"Well, suit yourself."

And the cord was pulled.

III

WITH a final, hoarse, derisive *Hoot-too-oot!* the locomotive whisked the last car round a bend, and vanished precipitately into the fringe of scrub-oak that belted the landscape.

Miss Gaylord, collapsing limply on one of the newly painted platform benches, regarded Peter with an expression wherein laughter was curiously blended with tears. Peter speeded the departing train with a melodramatic fist, then turned to view the prospect with a darkling eye. The outlook was scarcely encouraging.

In the middle of a level plain, enclosed by the ragged barrier of timber, sat the railroad station, spruce and trig and—to all appearances—fresh from the builders' hands. Behind it a broad tract of cleared earth set it apart from a huge and upstanding bill-board. To right and left, on either side of the bisecting rows of railway track, the face of the earth presented a checker-board effect, thanks to a severely regular system of cross-hatching roads, all neatly bordered with rows of thin, tall, wooden wands with the bark on.

In the middle distance, at the approximate geographical center of the checker-board, three large, ostentatious, and aggressively Queen Anne cottages stood cheek by jowl, having obviously foregathered in a forlorn attempt to mitigate their excessive loneliness. One was yawning pardonably, with its front door wide open. Another seemed to be inhabited, though its tenants remained invisible. The third was quite palpably empty, swept and garnished, and miserable about it. All wore an air of wanting to come over by the station and be sociable, but not daring to on account of their superior social standing.

And that was all, if one excepts the high-arching, clear-blue sky, the showered sunshine, and the good smell of the earth.

"Mary," said Peter solemnly, "I know just precisely how Adam felt when first he met Eve in the garden. This is undoubtedly the loneliest spot on the footstool." He added, somewhat cryptically, "I hadn't counted on this." He noticed that Miss Gaylord was not paying strict attention to him, and seemed put out. "Mary," he demanded severely, "what are you thinking about?"

"There's some one coming," replied Mary.

She was staring at that portion of the scenery which lay behind Peter. He

turned about, to discover a brisk and showy motor-car in the act of hurdling the tracks. Peter's jaw dropped. From what quarter of the skies could it have fallen? A second sweeping scrutiny revealed to him the existence of a small building decorated with a large sign which bore the single word "Office." Behind this, he concluded, the motor-car must have been hiding.

Meanwhile, the car, making a prodigious fuss about it, reached the station side of the tracks, swung sharply on its near hind wheel, and dashed madly for Peter. At the edge of the platform, however, it changed its mind, pulled up smartly with a snort, and ejected a young man about twenty-eight years of age, with a square-hewn, red face, red hair, red necktie, brown derby hat clinging precariously to the back of his head, wonderfully creased trousers, and a winning smile. He strode swiftly across the platform and incontinently seized Peter's hand.

"Why-how-do-you-do?" he said rapidly. "Welcome, my dear sir, to Vallobrosia Terrace! Welcome to the Homeseeker's Paradise! Welcome to New York's most prosperous, healthful, and rapidly growing suburb, within forty-five minutes of City Hall, commutation less than twelve and a half cents *per diem*, sewers, electric-lighting system, and public schools already contracted for, all home sites rigidly restricted—"

"I've read all that," Peter inserted edgewise, motioning to the sign-board behind the station, upon whose ample surface the substance of the young man's remarks was succinctly and startlingly limned in gigantic red and yellow letters against a black background.

"To be sure you have." The red-headed man laughed frankly. "Of course. You see, I've been working up an ad. for next Sunday's paper, and I must have kind of forgot. But I am glad to see you. To tell the truth, I hardly expected any one by that train; it's an express, not scheduled to stop here, and— By the way, how did it happen to stop?"

"I have some little influence with the company," hinted Peter diplomatically.

"I see. Er—pardon me. And may

I venture to introduce myself? Permit me—my business card: Herbert Hanks, as you see, resident agent for the Vallombrosa Real Estate, Building Loan, Title Guarantee and Trust Company, Incorporated. And this is—”

“My name is Peter Holly and—”

“This is Mrs. Holly? Charmed. I assure you.”

Miss Gaylord looked up quickly with a protest already formed upon her lips, but Mr. Hanks swept along so briskly that she hardly found a chance to interrupt and correct him. And Peter did not appear to have noticed the mistake.

“It is,” declared the agent fervently, “a sincere pleasure to find people of the right stamp so soon attracted to our little but rapidly developing community. May I ask why—”

“I wanted to see the Terrace,” replied Peter simply, looking round for it.

“Oh, the Terrace—” stammered Mr. Hanks.

“And the shady valley—”

“I beg pardon—”

“The shady valley—Vallombrosa, you know,” interpreted Peter. “The combination seemed peculiarly felicitous, an incitement to the imagination—”

“Sir, you delight me beyond expression. You honor me beyond my deserts. D’you know, I *thought* that Vallombrosa Terrace would catch ’em!”

“You are the inventor—”

Mr. Hanks bowed modestly. “And now,” he proceeded with unabated enthusiasm, “now that you are here, I trust that you will not deny me the pleasure of showing you over our young but progressive residence suburb—you see I can’t forget the ads.—in my automobile. You will find the ride a pleasant one, and afterward I hope you’ll honor me by lunching in one of our model cottages—the three over there on the corner of Broadway and Hudson Boulevard. Such a home, sir and madam, we will build you on a site of your own choosing—price of the lot, of course, depending on the desirability of the location—for the absurdly small sum of—”

As he talked, this extraordinary and energetic person fairly swept them before him into the motor-car. His gesture of invitation to the girl had been irresistible; she had risen in auto-

matic and unquestioning obedience to it. Once, indeed, her eyes sought Peter’s in the mute protest: Was it right?

At the moment they were comparatively alone. Mr. Hanks was tinkering with something occult beneath the hood of the machine. His tongue ran on in futile opposition to the throbbing of the engines. Peter could defend himself without being overheard.

“Please, Mary!” he begged. “I’m ravenous, and there’s a lunch coming—”

“But, Peter—”

“Aren’t you hungry?”

“Yes; but Peter—”

“And I’ll make it all right with him—I’ll buy the Terrace,” laughed Peter.

Miss Gaylord abandoned her position as untenable. Besides, the afternoon drew on, and she *was* hungry. Dazed by the swift swing of events, happy to be with Peter and pleasantly frightened by that very happiness, she rested luxuriously in the cushioned seat, content to let the Fates weave out her destiny as they would.

IV

PRESENTLY the car stopped. Mr. Hanks shut off the power, jumped out, and opened the door with a Chesterfieldian bow, offering her his hand.

“Our model cottage, Mrs. Holly.” It was the house with the yawning front door. “I trust that you will be pleased with it. Mr. Holly seems very favorably impressed. Mind the step. Of course, if you do not care to build, we can let you have this splendid and completely appointed residence.”

Persuasive, glib, ready, a stranger to fatigue, he marshaled them into the structure and through it, from cellar to attic, from drawing-room to kitchen. The tide of his amazing eloquence flowed on, carrying all before it. Not until eventually they had returned to the main hall did he draw rein. Promptly Peter improved the opportunity which, reckoning by precedent, might occur never again in their association with this remarkable and agreeable personality.

“I will buy it,” stated Peter calmly.

Mr. Hanks gasped, for a single breath dumfounded. An expression of unspeakable bliss spread itself over his rubicund countenance.

"Sir," he said with emotion, impulsively seizing Peter's hand, "permit me to congratulate you on a decision which shall stand forever a monument to your judgment and taste. A man of your caliber, Mr. Holly, is a credit even to Vallombrosa Terrace, the Queen City of Suburbia—as I shall say in my next ad. And," he added, turning in unquenchable enthusiasm to Miss Gaylord, "you, Mrs. Holly—"

"I am not Mrs. Holly," interjected the girl, abruptly desperate.

"I beg pardon." A second time Mr. Hanks permitted it to become known that he was thunderstruck. "Not Mrs. Holly!" he cried, stepping back and glancing from Peter to Miss Gaylord.

Peter, crushed, sheepishly hung his head. Mary held hers a shade higher.

"We are not married," she affirmed—

"Yet," amended Peter, lifting his chin and meeting her glance squarely. And Miss Gaylord's was the first to waver and to fall.

"Not yet," continued Peter, with a ring of returning confidence. "But we are going to be just as soon as I can persuade Miss Gaylord—"

An inspiration electrified Mr. Hanks. Without ceremony, in uncontrollable delight, he interrupted. "And why not here and now?" he demanded. "This very hour, in this very house, your future home? Why not make yours the first wedding in Vallombrosa Terrace, Garden Spot of the Residential Center—and-so-forth-and-so-forth? Believe me, you have in your grasp an opportunity such as is given to few people in these piping times o' peace—an opportunity to make history, sir and madam—I beg pardon, Miss—"

"But—" Peter managed to begin.

"But how?" Mr. Hanks took the query out of his mouth. "How? You ask me how? How but by a circumstance due to the foresight and intelligence of that public-spirited body of men, the Board of Directors of the Vallombrosa Terrace R. E., B. L., T. G. and T. Co., Inc.—who, in laying their plans for the promotion and development of this lovely residential section, wisely and generously made a free gift of one of their model cottages to the first minister of the Gospel who could

be induced to take up his residence here and care for the moral welfare of our steadily increasing population: I mean the Rev. Jeremiah Hanks, my respected uncle, whose cottage adjoins this. Permit me," clattered Mr. Hanks jubilantly, edging toward the front door, "to go at once and make arrangements."

He disappeared, his progress across lots marked by a diminishing gush of syllables. Presently that died, and for a little time a peaceful silence reigned in Vallombrosa Terrace. In the main hall of the model cottage two young people stared at each other across a splash of sunlight that lay like a pool of molten gold upon the imitation parquetry of the floor: a young woman in whose eyes indignation blazed in competition with an all but overpowering impulse to give way to laughter, and a young man with a sober expression and eyes in which dwelt repentance and longing. For a little, neither spoke; and it was Peter who finally broke the tension of constraint.

"Mary," he said as timidly as a child; "Mary. I—didn't mean to take advantage of you this way. It isn't a square deal to you, dear. I've got to own up to deceiving you. I had plenty of cash in my pocket all the time, but when that glorified idiot threatened to put us off, I thought maybe we'd land at some quiet little country station and wouldn't be able to get another train for a good while, and so I'd have a chance to see a little more of you and induce you to change your mind, and—"

Her expression, as she stared at him across the golden shaft of light, perplexed him. He stammered and was still for an instant.

"Heaven knows," he declared abruptly, "that I stand justified if anything I've done or can do will serve to make you change your mind, Mary. I don't want anything but the right to take care of you."

Abruptly the girl lifted both hands and held them out to him. "Peter," she said with a broken, happy laugh, "it's the most absurd, the most unutterably ridiculous thing that ever happened, but—I have changed my mind, Peter."

And Peter went to her, across the pool of sunlight.

LIGHT VERSE

BELINDA'S FRECKLES

LET misers count their stores of gold,
And silver metal hard and cold;
I vex me not with drossy pelf
So great it piles up of itself,
And gives me but a passing chill
Instead of some responsive thrill
To cheer the soul and warm the heart,
And make the dormant pulses start.

But, oh, the gold that I can see
When my Belinda sits by me
Out on the rock-bound coast, in days
Made glorious by the summer's haze,
Or by some spray-bespattered nook
We turn the pages of a book,
With but the blue and sea alone
To act for us the chaperon!

For on Belinda's brow recline
Ten thousand sequins, eighteen fine,
And half a million on her cheek
I find whenever I do seek;
While on her dainty, dimpled chin,
And on that hand that I would win,
I count my dollars, rows on rows—
With what reserve upon her nose!

Belinda's freckles—past all doubt
The gold within her coming out—
Are all the wealth of which I boast,
The Midas stores I care for most;
And if for one small, slightest piece
Of that vast store you'd seek release,
You could not get it, not from me,
For all the wealth of Kimberley!

John Kendrick Bangs

A SEARCH FOR REST

I NEEDED rest; I sauntered forth
To see a friend whose office I
Was sometimes wont to stop in when
I happened to be passing by.
Alack, my hope was soon dispelled,
For, from the wall a motto yelled:
"This is my busy day."

Distressed, I went another way—
A quiet sort of place, I thought,
Where energy did not appear
To be so badly overwrought.
Yet when I sat me down inside,
A rude, insistent motto cried:
"Play ball!"

Next day I made another call
Among my friends, where I could stop
And into some secure retreat
Might, as a weary plodder, drop.
But here, as elsewhere, urgently
A motto shrilly shrieked at me:
"Get busy there!"

Once more I sought a little share
Of rest; and passing friends I knew,
I went among the strangers, where
There might be something less to do.
But on the wall a motto gleamed
In restless red, and at me screamed:
"Do it now!"

That's what I wished to do. But how?
A graveyard seemed to be the place
Best fitted for the weariness
Of this unending, hopeless race;
But there, above the gate that led
To consecrated ground, I read:
"No admission except on business!"

W. J. Lampton

ON COMMON GROUND

SOME people admire modern fiction,
And some are attracted by facts
Of reform of our birth-rate, or spelling,
Or corrupt Senatorial acts;
But there's a unique fascination
To which every interest leans,
Which makes us all read advertisements
At the backs of our best magazines.

Our studies, enthralled and hypnotic,
Of these wonderful pages reveal
Pianolas, hair- tonic, hams, autos,
And ladies in chaste dishabille;
For art that would stump the old masters,
And tales that would charm the marines,
Just scan the well-known advertisements
At the backs of our best magazines!

They surely are kin to Aladdin,
For they build, at a few dollars' charge,
A palace of granite and shingles
With hothouse, steam-heat, and garage;
The days of the dullest suburban
May bask in luxurious scenes,
If he heeds the complete advertisements
At the backs of our best magazines!

Each pleasure and want of our lifetime
Their promises plead to fulfil;
They will beautify, educate, gladden,
Cure mental and physical ill;