



The House of a Thousand Candles

Meredith Nicholson

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Chapter

1 THE WILL OF JOHN MARSHALL GLENARM

Pickering's letter bringing news of my grandfather's death found me at Naples early in October. John Marshall Glenarm had died in June. He had left a will which gave me his property conditionally, Pickering wrote, and it was necessary for me to return immediately to qualify as legatee. It was the merest luck that the letter came to my hands at all, for it had been sent to Constantinople, in care of the consul-general instead of my banker there. It was not Pickering's fault that the consul was a friend of mine who kept track of my wanderings and was able to hurry the executor's letter after me to Italy, where I had gone to meet an English financier who had, I was advised, unlimited money to spend on African railways. I am an engineer, a graduate of an American institution familiarly known as "Tech," and as my funds were running low, I naturally turned to my profession for employment.

But this letter changed my plans, and the following day I cabled Pickering of my departure and was outward bound on a steamer for New York. Fourteen days later I sat in Pickering's office in the Alexis Building and listened intently while he read, with much ponderous emphasis, the provisions of my grandfather's will. When he concluded, I laughed. Pickering was a serious man, and I was glad to see that my levity pained him. I had, for that matter, always been a source of annoyance to him, and his look of distrust and rebuke did not trouble me in the least.

I reached across the table for the paper, and he gave the sealed and beribboned copy of John Marshall Glenarm's will into my hands. I read it through for myself, feeling conscious meanwhile that Pickering's cool gaze was bent inquiringly upon me. These are the paragraphs that interested me most:

I give and bequeath unto my said grandson, John Glenarm, sometime a resident of the City and State of New York, and later a vagabond of parts unknown, a certain property known as Glenarm House, with the land thereunto pertaining and hereinafter more particularly described, and all personal property of whatsoever kind thereunto belonging and attached thereto,—the said realty lying in the County of Wabana in the State of Indiana,—upon this condition, faithfully and honestly performed:

That said John Glenarm shall remain for the period of one year an occupant of said Glenarm House and my lands attached thereto, demeaning himself meanwhile in an orderly and temperate manner. Should he fail at any time during said year to comply with this provision, said property shall revert to my general estate and become,

without reservation, and without necessity for any process of law, the property, absolutely, of Marian Devereux, of the County and State of New York.

“Well,” he demanded, striking his hands upon the arms of his chair, “what do you think of it?”

For the life of me I could not help laughing again. There was, in the first place, a delicious irony in the fact that I should learn through him of my grandfather’s wishes with respect to myself. Pickering and I had grown up in the same town in Vermont; we had attended the same preparatory school, but there had been from boyhood a certain antagonism between us. He had always succeeded where I had failed, which is to say, I must admit, that he had succeeded pretty frequently. When I refused to settle down to my profession, but chose to see something of the world first, Pickering gave himself seriously to the law, and there was, I knew from the beginning, no manner of chance that he would fail.

I am not more or less than human, and I remembered with joy that once I had thrashed him soundly at the prep school for bullying a smaller boy; but our score from school-days was not without tallies on his side. He was easily the better scholar—I grant him that; and he was shrewd and plausible. You never quite knew the extent of his powers and resources, and he had, I always maintained, the most amazing good luck,—as witness the fact that John Marshall Glenarm had taken a friendly interest in him. It was wholly like my grandfather, who was a man of many whims, to give his affairs into Pickering’s keeping; and I could not complain, for I had missed my own chance with him. It was, I knew readily enough, part of my punishment for having succeeded so signally in incurring my grandfather’s displeasure that he had made it necessary for me to treat with Arthur Pickering in this matter of the will; and Pickering was enjoying the situation to the full. He sank back in his chair with an air of complacency that had always been insufferable in him. I was quite willing to be patronized by a man of years and experience; but Pickering was my own age, and his experience of life seemed to me preposterously inadequate. To find him settled in New York, where he had been established through my grandfather’s generosity, and the executor of my grandfather’s estate, was hard to bear.

But there was something not wholly honest in my mirth, for my conduct during the three preceding years had been reprehensible. I had used my grandfather shabbily. My parents died when I was a child, and he had cared for me as far back as my memory ran. He had suffered me to spend without restraint the fortune left by my father; he had expected much of me, and I had grievously disappointed him. It was his hope that I should devote myself to architecture, a profession for which he had the greatest admiration, whereas I had insisted on engineering.

I am not writing an apology for my life, and I shall not attempt to extenuate my conduct in going abroad at the end of my course at Tech and, when I made Laurance Donovan's acquaintance, in setting off with him on a career of adventure. I do not regret, though possibly it would be more to my credit if I did, the months spent leisurely following the Danube east of the Iron Gate—Laurance Donovan always with me, while we urged the villagers and inn-loafers to all manner of sedition, acquitting ourselves so well that, when we came out into the Black Sea for further pleasure, Russia did us the honor to keep a spy at our heels. I should like, for my own satisfaction, at least, to set down an account of certain affairs in which we were concerned at Belgrad, but without Larry's consent I am not at liberty to do so. Nor shall I take time here to describe our travels in Africa, though our study of the Atlas Mountain dwarfs won us honorable mention by the British Ethnological Society.

These were my yesterdays; but to-day I sat in Arthur Pickering's office in the towering Alexis Building, conscious of the muffled roar of Broadway, discussing the terms of my Grandfather Glenarm's will with a man whom I disliked as heartily as it is safe for one man to dislike another. Pickering had asked me a question, and I was suddenly aware that his eyes were fixed upon me and that he awaited my answer.

"What do I think of it?" I repeated. "I don't know that it makes any difference what I think, but I'll tell you, if you want to know, that I call it infamous, outrageous, that a man should leave a ridiculous will of that sort behind him. All the old money-bags who pile up fortunes magnify the importance of their money. They imagine that every kindness, every ordinary courtesy shown them, is merely a bid for a slice of the cake. I'm disappointed in my grandfather. He was a splendid old man, though God knows he had his queer ways. I'll bet a thousand dollars, if I have so much money in the world, that this scheme is yours, Pickering, and not his. It smacks of your ancient vindictiveness, and John Marshall Glenarm had none of that in his blood. That stipulation about my residence out there is fantastic. I don't have to be a lawyer to know that; and no doubt I could break the will; I've a good notion to try it, anyhow."

"To be sure. You can tie up the estate for half a dozen years if you like," he replied coolly. He did not look upon me as likely to become a formidable litigant. My staying qualities had been proved weak long ago, as Pickering knew well enough.

"No doubt you would like that," I answered. "But I'm not going to give you the pleasure. I abide by the terms of the will. My grandfather was a fine old gentleman. I shan't drag his name through the courts, not even to please you, Arthur Pickering," I declared hotly.

"The sentiment is worthy of a good man, Glenarm," he rejoined.

"But this woman who is to succeed to my rights,—I don't seem to remember her."

"It is not surprising that you never heard of her."

“Then she’s not a connection of the family,—no long-lost cousin whom I ought to remember?”

“No; she was a late acquaintance of your grandfather’s. He met her through an old friend of his,— Miss Evans, known as Sister Theresa. Miss Devereux is Sister Theresa’s niece.”

I whistled. I had a dim recollection that during my grandfather’s long widowerhood there were occasional reports that he was about to marry. The name of Miss Evans had been mentioned in this connection. I had heard it spoken of in my family, and not, I remembered, with much kindness. Later, I heard of her joining a Sisterhood, and opening a school somewhere in the West.

“And Miss Devereux,—is she an elderly nun, too?”

“I don’t know how elderly she is, but she isn’t a nun at present. Still, she’s almost alone in the world, and she and Sister Theresa are very intimate.”

“Pass the will again, Pickering, while I make sure I grasp these diverting ideas. Sister Theresa isn’t the one I mustn’t marry, is she? It’s the other ecclesiastical embroidery artist,—the one with the x in her name, suggesting the algebra of my vanishing youth.”

I read aloud this paragraph:

Provided, further, that in the event of the marriage of said John Glenarm to the said Marian Devereux, or in the event of any promise or contract of marriage between said persons within five years from the date of said John Glenarm’s acceptance of the provisions of this will, the whole estate shall become the property absolutely of St. Agatha’s School, at Annandale, Wabana County, Indiana, a corporation under the laws of said state.

“For a touch of comedy commend me to my grandfather! Pickering, you always were a well-meaning fellow,—I’ll turn over to you all my right, interest and title in and to these angelic Sisters. Marry! I like the idea! I suppose some one will try to marry me for my money. Marriage, Pickering, is not embraced in my scheme of life!”

“I should hardly call you a marrying man,” he observed.

“Perfectly right, my friend! Sister Theresa was considered a possible match for my grandfather in my youth. She and I are hardly contemporaries. And the other lady with the fascinating algebraic climax to her name,—she, too, is impossible; it seems that I can’t get the money by marrying her. I’d better let her take it. She’s as poor as the devil, I dare say.”

“I imagine not. The Evanses are a wealthy family, in spots, and she ought to have some money of her own if her aunt doesn’t coax it out of her for educational schemes.”

“And where on the map are these lovely creatures to be found?”

“Sister Theresa’s school adjoins your preserve; Miss Devereux has I think some of your own weakness for travel. Sister Theresa is her

nearest relative, and she occasionally visits St. Agatha's—that's the school."

"I suppose they embroider altar-cloths together and otherwise labor valiantly to bring confusion upon Satan and his cohorts. Just the people to pull the wool over the eyes of my grandfather!"

Pickering smiled at my resentment.

"You'd better give them a wide berth; they might catch you in their net. Sister Theresa is said to have quite a winning way. She certainly plucked your grandfather."

"Nuns in spectacles, the gentle educators of youth and that sort of thing, with a good-natured old man for their prey. None of them for me!"

"I rather thought so," remarked Pickering,—and he pulled his watch from his pocket and turned the stem with his heavy fingers. He was short, thick-set and sleek, with a square jaw, hair already thin and a close-clipped mustache. Age, I reflected, was not improving him.

I had no intention of allowing him to see that I was irritated. I drew out my cigarette case and passed it across the table,

"After you! They're made quite specially for me in Madrid."

"You forget that I never use tobacco in any form."

"You always did miss a good deal of the joy of living," I observed, throwing my smoking match into his waste-paper basket, to his obvious annoyance. "Well, I'm the bad boy of the story-books; but I'm really sorry my inheritance has a string tied to it. I'm about out of money. I suppose you wouldn't advance me a few thousands on my expectations —"

"Not a cent," he declared, with quite unnecessary vigor; and I laughed again, remembering that in my old appraisal of him, generosity had not been represented in large figures. "It's not in keeping with your grandfather's wishes that I should do so. You must have spent a good bit of money in your tiger-hunting exploits," he added.

"I have spent all I had," I replied amiably. "Thank God I'm not a clam! I've seen the world and paid for it. I don't want anything from you. You undoubtedly share my grandfather's idea of me that I'm a wild man who can't sit still or lead an orderly, decent life; but I'm going to give you a terrible disappointment. What's the size of the estate?"

Pickering eyed me—uneasily, I thought—and began playing with a pencil. I never liked Pickering's hands; they were thick and white and better kept than I like to see a man's hands.

"I fear it's going to be disappointing. In his trust-company boxes here I have been able to find only about ten thousand dollars' worth of securities. Possibly—quite possibly—we were all deceived in the amount of his fortune. Sister Theresa wheedled large sums out of him, and he spent, as you will see, a small fortune on the house at Annandale without finishing it. It wasn't a cheap proposition, and in its unfinished

condition it is practically valueless. You must know that Mr. Glenarm gave away a great deal of money in his lifetime. Moreover, he established your father. You know what he left,—it was not a small fortune as those things are reckoned.”

I was restless under this recital. My father’s estate had been of respectable size, and I had dissipated the whole of it. My conscience pricked me as I recalled an item of forty thousand dollars that I had spent—somewhat grandly—on an expedition that I led, with considerable satisfaction to myself, at least, through the Sudan. But Pickering’s words amazed me.

“Let me understand you,” I said, bending toward him. “My grandfather was supposed to be rich, and yet you tell me you find little property. Sister Theresa got money from him to help build a school. How much was that?”

“Fifty thousand dollars. It was an open account. His books show the advances, but he took no notes.”

“And that claim is worth—?”

“It is good as against her individually. But she contends—”

“Yes, go on!”

I had struck the right note. He was annoyed at my persistence and his apparent discomfort pleased me.

“She refuses to pay. She says Mr. Glenarm made her a gift of the money.”

“That’s possible, isn’t it? He was for ever making gifts to churches. Schools and theological seminaries were a sort of weakness with him.”

“That is quite true, but this account is among the assets of the estate. It’s my business as executor to collect it.”

“We’ll pass that. If you get this money, the estate is worth sixty thousand dollars, plus the value of the land out there at Annandale, and Glenarm House is worth—”

“There you have me!”

It was the first lightness he had shown, and it put me on guard.

“I should like an idea of its value. Even an unfinished house is worth something.”

“Land out there is worth from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars an acre. There’s an even hundred acres. I’ll be glad to have your appraisal of the house when you get there.”

“Humph! You flatter my judgment, Pickering. The loose stuff there is worth how much?”

“It’s all in the library. Your grandfather’s weakness was architecture —”

“So I remember!” I interposed, recalling my stormy interviews with John Marshall Glenarm over my choice of a profession.

“In his last years he turned more and more to his books. He placed out there what is, I suppose, the finest collection of books relating to

architecture to be found in this country. That was his chief hobby, after church affairs, as you may remember, and he rode it hard. But he derived a great deal of satisfaction from his studies.”

I laughed again; it was better to laugh than to cry over the situation.

“I suppose he wanted me to sit down there, surrounded by works on architecture, with the idea that a study of the subject would be my only resource. The scheme is eminently Glenarmian! And all I get is a worthless house, a hundred acres of land, ten thousand dollars, and a doubtful claim against a Protestant nun who hoodwinked my grandfather into setting up a school for her. Bless your heart, man, so far as my inheritance is concerned it would have been money in my pocket to have stayed in Africa.”

“That’s about the size of it.”

“But the personal property is all mine,—anything that’s loose on the place. Perhaps my grandfather planted old plate and government bonds just to pique the curiosity of his heirs, successors and assigns. It would be in keeping!”

I had walked to the window and looked out across the city. As I turned suddenly I found Pickering’s eyes bent upon me with curious intentness. I had never liked his eyes; they were too steady. When a man always meets your gaze tranquilly and readily, it is just as well to be wary of him.

“Yes; no doubt you will find the place literally packed with treasure,” he said, and laughed. “When you find anything you might wire me.”

He smiled; the idea seemed to give him pleasure.

“Are you sure there’s nothing else?” I asked. “No substitute,—no codicil?”

“If you know of anything of the kind it’s your duty to produce it. We have exhausted the possibilities. I’ll admit that the provisions of the will are unusual; your grandfather was a peculiar man in many respects; but he was thoroughly sane and his faculties were all sound to the last.”

“He treated me a lot better than I deserved,” I said, with a heartache that I had not known often in my irresponsible life; but I could not afford to show feeling before Arthur Pickering.

I picked up the copy of the will and examined it. It was undoubtedly authentic; it bore the certificate of the clerk of Wabana County, Indiana. The witnesses were Thomas Bates and Arthur Pickering.

“Who is Bates?” I asked, pointing to the man’s signature.

“One of your grandfather’s discoveries. He’s in charge of the house out there, and a trustworthy fellow. He’s a fair cook, among other things. I don’t know where Mr. Glenarm got Bates, but he had every confidence in him. The man was with him at the end.”

A picture of my grandfather dying, alone with a servant, while I, his only kinsman, wandered in strange lands, was not one that I could contemplate with much satisfaction. My grandfather had been an odd

little figure of a man, who always wore a long black coat and a silk hat, and carried a curious silver-headed staff, and said puzzling things at which everybody was afraid either to laugh or to cry. He refused to be thanked for favors, though he was generous and helpful and constantly performing kind deeds. His whimsical philanthropies were often described in the newspapers. He had once given a considerable sum of money to a fashionable church in Boston with the express stipulation, which he safeguarded legally, that if the congregation ever intrusted its spiritual welfare to a minister named Reginald, Harold or Claude, an amount equal to his gift, with interest, should be paid to the Massachusetts Humane Society.

The thought of him touched me now. I was glad to feel that his money had never been a lure to me; it did not matter whether his estate was great or small, I could, at least, ease my conscience by obeying the behest of the old man whose name I bore, and whose interest in the finer things of life and art had given him an undeniable distinction.

"I should like to know something of Mr. Glenarm's last days," I said abruptly.

"He wished to visit the village where he was born, and Bates, his companion and servant, went to Vermont with him. He died quite suddenly, and was buried beside his father in the old village cemetery. I saw him last early in the summer. I was away from home and did not know of his death until it was all over. Bates came to report it to me, and to sign the necessary papers in probating the will. It had to be done in the place of the decedent's residence, and we went together to Wabana, the seat of the county in which Annandale lies."

I was silent after this, looking out toward the sea that had lured me since my earliest dreams of the world that lay beyond it.

"It's a poor stake, Glenarm," remarked Pickering consolingly, and I wheeled upon him.

"I suppose you think it a poor stake! I suppose you can't see anything in that old man's life beyond his money; but I don't care a curse what my inheritance is! I never obeyed any of my grandfather's wishes in his lifetime, but now that he's dead his last wish is mandatory. I'm going out there to spend a year if I die for it. Do you get my idea?"

"Humph! You always were a stormy petrel," he sneered. "I fancy it will be safer to keep our most agreeable acquaintance on a strictly business basis. If you accept the terms of the will—"

"Of course I accept them! Do you think I am going to make a row, refuse to fulfil that old man's last wish! I gave him enough trouble in his life without disappointing him in his grave. I suppose you'd like to have me fight the will; but I'm going to disappoint you."

He said nothing, but played with his pencil. I had never disliked him so heartily; he was so smug and comfortable. His office breathed the very spirit of prosperity. I wished to finish my business and get away.

"I suppose the region out there has a high death-rate. How's the malaria?"

"Not alarmingly prevalent, I understand. There's a summer resort over on one side of Lake Annandale. The place is really supposed to be wholesome. I don't believe your grandfather had homicide in mind in sending you there."

"No, he probably thought the rustication would make a man of me. Must I do my own victualing? I suppose I'll be allowed to eat."

"Bates can cook for you. He'll supply the necessities. I'll instruct him to obey your orders. I assume you'll not have many guests,—in fact,"—he studied the back of his hand intently,—“while that isn't stipulated, I doubt whether it was your grandfather's intention that you should surround yourself—”

"With boisterous companions!" I supplied the words in my cheerfullest tone. "No; my conduct shall be exemplary, Mr. Pickering," I added, with affable irony.

He picked up a single sheet of thin type-written paper and passed it across the table. It was a formal acquiescence in the provisions of the will. Pickering had prepared it in advance of my coming, and this assumption that I would accept the terms irritated me. Assumptions as to what I should do under given conditions had always irritated me, and accounted, in a large measure, for my proneness to surprise and disappoint people. Pickering summoned a clerk to witness my signature.

"How soon shall you take possession?" he asked. "I have to make a record of that."

"I shall start for Indiana to-morrow," I answered.

"You are prompt," he replied, deliberately folding in quarters the paper I had just signed. "I hoped you might dine with me before going out; but I fancy New York is pretty tame after the cafés and bazaars of the East."

His reference to my wanderings angered me again; for here was the point at which I was most sensitive. I was twenty-seven and had spent my patrimony; I had tasted the bread of many lands, and I was doomed to spend a year qualifying myself for my grandfather's legacy by settling down on an abandoned and lonely Indiana farm that I had never seen and had no interest in whatever.

As I rose to go Pickering said:

"It will be sufficient if you drop me a line, say once a month, to let me know you are there. The post-office is Annandale."

"I suppose I might file a supply of postal cards in the village and arrange for the mailing of one every month."

"It might be done that way," he answered evenly.

"We may perhaps meet again, if I don't die of starvation or ennui. Good-by."

We shook hands stiffly and I left him, going down in an elevator filled with eager-eyed, anxious men. I, at least, had no cares of business. It made no difference to me whether the market rose or fell. Something of the spirit of adventure that had been my curse quickened in my heart as I walked through crowded Broadway past Trinity Church to a bank and drew the balance remaining on my letter of credit. I received in currency slightly less than one thousand dollars.

As I turned from the teller's window I ran into the arms of the last man in the world I expected to see.

This, let it be remembered, was in October of the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and one.

Chapter

2 A FACE AT SHERRY'S

"Don't mention my name an thou lovest me!" said Laurance Donovan, and he drew me aside, ignored my hand and otherwise threw into our meeting a casual quality that was somewhat amazing in view of the fact that we had met last at Cairo.

"Allah il Allah!"

It was undoubtedly Larry. I felt the heat of the desert and heard the camel-drivers cursing and our Sudanese guides plotting mischief under a window far away.

"Well!" we both exclaimed interrogatively.

He rocked gently back and forth, with his hands in his pockets, on the tile floor of the banking-house. I had seen him stand thus once on a time when we had eaten nothing in four days—it was in Abyssinia, and our guides had lost us in the worst possible place—with the same untroubled look in his eyes.

"Please don't appear surprised, or scared or anything, Jack," he said, with his delicious intonation. "I saw a fellow looking for me an hour or so ago. He's been at it for several months; hence my presence on these shores of the brave and the free. He's probably still looking, as he's a persistent devil. I'm here, as we may say, quite incog. Staying at an East-side lodging-house, where I shan't invite you to call on me. But I must see you."

"Dine with me to-night, at Sherry's—"

"Too big, too many people—"

"Therein lies security, if you're in trouble. I'm about to go into exile, and I want to eat one more civilized dinner before I go."

"Perhaps it's just as well. Where are you off for,—not Africa again?"

"No. Just Indiana,—one of the sovereign American states, as you ought to know."

"Indians?"

"No; warranted all dead."

"Pack-train—balloon—automobile—camels,—how do you get there?"

"Varnished ears. It's easy. It's not the getting there; it's the not dying of ennui after you're on the spot."

"Humph! What hour did you say for the dinner?"

"Seven o'clock. Meet me at the entrance."

"If I'm at large! Allow me to precede you through the door, and don't follow me on the street please!"

He walked away, his gloved hands clasped lazily behind him, lounged out upon Broadway and turned toward the Battery. I waited until he

disappeared, then took an up-town car.

My first meeting with Laurance Donovan was in Constantinople, at a café where I was dining. He got into a row with an Englishman and knocked him down. It was not my affair, but I liked the ease and definiteness with which Larry put his foe out of commission. I learned later that it was a way he had. The Englishman meant well enough, but he could not, of course, know the intensity of Larry's feeling about the unhappy lot of Ireland. In the beginning of my own acquaintance with Donovan I sometimes argued with him, but I soon learned better manners. He quite converted me to his own notion of Irish affairs, and I was as hot an advocate as he of head-smashing as a means of restoring Ireland's lost prestige.

My friend, the American consul-general at Constantinople, was not without a sense of humor, and I easily enlisted him in Larry's behalf. The Englishman thirsted for vengeance and invoked all the powers. He insisted, with reason, that Larry was a British subject and that the American consul had no right to give him asylum,—a point that was, I understand, thoroughly well-grounded in law and fact. Larry maintained, on the other hand, that he was not English but Irish, and that, as his country maintained no representative in Turkey, it was his privilege to find refuge wherever it was offered. Larry was always the most plausible of human beings, and between us,—he, the American consul and I,—we made an impression, and got him off.

I did not realize until later that the real joke lay in the fact that Larry was English-born, and that his devotion to Ireland was purely sentimental and quixotic. His family had, to be sure, come out of Ireland some time in the dim past, and settled in England; but when Larry reached years of knowledge, if not of discretion, he cut Oxford and insisted on taking his degree at Dublin. He even believed,—or thought he believed,—in banshees. He allied himself during his university days with the most radical and turbulent advocates of a separate national existence for Ireland, and occasionally spent a month in jail for rioting. But Larry's instincts were scholarly; he made a brilliant record at the University; then, at twenty-two, he came forth to look at the world, and liked it exceedingly well. His father was a busy man, and he had other sons; he granted Larry an allowance and told him to keep away from home until he got ready to be respectable. So, from Constantinople, after a tour of Europe, we together crossed the Mediterranean in search of the flesh-pots of lost kingdoms, spending three years in the pursuit. We parted at Cairo on excellent terms. He returned to England and later to his beloved Ireland, for he had blithely sung the wildest Gaelic songs in the darkest days of our adventures, and never lost his love for The Sod, as he apostrophized—and capitalized—his adopted country.

Larry had the habit of immaculateness. He emerged from his East-side lodging-house that night clothed properly, and wearing the gentlemanly

air of peace and reserve that is so wholly incompatible with his disposition to breed discord and indulge in riot. When we sat down for a leisurely dinner at Sherry's we were not, I modestly maintain, a forbidding pair. We—if I may drag myself into the matter—are both a trifle under the average height, sinewy, nervous, and, just then, trained fine. Our lean, clean-shaven faces were well-browned—mine wearing a fresh coat from my days on the steamer's deck.

Larry had never been in America before, and the scene had for both of us the charm of a gay and novel spectacle. I have always maintained, in talking to Larry of nations and races, that the Americans are the handsomest and best put-up people in the world, and I believe he was persuaded of it that night as we gazed with eyes long unaccustomed to splendor upon the great company assembled in the restaurant. The lights, the music, the variety and richness of the costumes of the women, the many unmistakably foreign faces, wrought a welcome spell on senses inured to hardship in the waste and dreary places of earth.

"Now tell me the story," I said. "Have you done murder? Is the offense treasonable?"

"It was a tenants' row in Galway, and I smashed a constable. I smashed him pretty hard, I dare say, from the row they kicked up in the newspapers. I lay low for a couple of weeks, caught a boat to Queenstown, and here I am, waiting for a chance to get back to The Sod without going in irons."

"You were certainly born to be hanged, Larry. You'd better stay in America. There's more room here than anywhere else, and it's not easy to kidnap a man in America and carry him off."

"Possibly not; and yet the situation isn't wholly tranquil," he said, transfixing a bit of pompano with his fork. "Kindly note the florid gentleman at your right—at the table with four—he's next the lady in pink. It may interest you to know that he's the British consul."

"Interesting, but not important. You don't for a moment suppose—"

"That he's looking for me? Not at all. But he undoubtedly has my name on his tablets. The detective that's here following me around is pretty dull. He lost me this morning while I was talking to you in the bank. Later on I had the pleasure of trailing him for an hour or so until he finally brought up at the British consul's office. Thanks; no more of the fish. Let us banish care. I wasn't born to be hanged; and as I'm a political offender, I doubt whether I can be deported if they lay hands on me."

He watched the bubbles in his glass dreamily, holding it up in his slim well-kept fingers.

"Tell me something of your own immediate present and future," he said.

I made the story of my Grandfather Glenarm's legacy as brief as possible, for brevity was a definite law of our intercourse.

“A year, you say, with nothing to do but fold your hands and wait. It doesn’t sound awfully attractive to me. I’d rather do without the money.”

“But I intend to do some work. I owe it to my grandfather’s memory to make good, if there’s any good in me.”

“The sentiment is worthy of you, Glenarm,” he said mockingly. “What do you see—a ghost?”

I must have started slightly at espying suddenly Arthur Pickering not twenty feet away. A party of half a dozen or more had risen, and Pickering and a girl were detached from the others for a moment.

She was young,—quite the youngest in the group about Pickering’s table. A certain girlishness of height and outline may have been emphasized by her juxtaposition to Pickering’s heavy figure. She was in black, with white showing at neck and wrists,—a somber contrast to the other women of the party, who were arrayed with a degree of splendor. She had dropped her fan, and Pickering stooped to pick it up. In the second that she waited she turned carelessly toward me, and our eyes met for an instant. Very likely she was Pickering’s sister, and I tried to reconstruct his family, which I had known in my youth; but I could not place her. As she walked out before him my eyes followed her,—the erect figure, free and graceful, but with a charming dignity and poise, and the gold of her fair hair glinting under her black toque.

Her eyes, as she turned them full upon me, were the saddest, loveliest eyes I had ever seen, and even in that brilliant, crowded room I felt their spell. They were fixed in my memory indelibly,—mournful, dreamy and wistful. In my absorption I forgot Larry.

“You’re taking unfair advantage,” he observed quietly. “Friends of yours?”

“The big chap in the lead is my friend Pickering,” I answered; and Larry turned his head slightly.

“Yes, I supposed you weren’t looking at the women,” he observed dryly. “I’m sorry I couldn’t see the object of your interest. Bah! these men!”

I laughed carelessly enough, but I was already summoning from my memory the grave face of the girl in black,—her mournful eyes, the glint of gold in her hair. Pickering was certainly finding the pleasant places in this vale of tears, and I felt my heart hot against him. It hurts, this seeing a man you have never liked succeeding where you have failed!

“Why didn’t you present me? I’d like to make the acquaintance of a few representative Americans,—I may need them to go bail for me.”

“Pickering didn’t see me, for one thing; and for another he wouldn’t go bail for you or me if he did. He isn’t built that way.”

Larry smiled quizzically.

“You needn’t explain further. The sight of the lady has shaken you. She reminds me of Tennyson:

“ ‘The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes—’

and the rest of it ought to be a solemn warning to you, —many ‘drew swords and died,’ and calamity followed in her train. Bah! these women! I thought you were past all that!”

“I don’t know why a man should be past it at twenty-seven! Besides, Pickering’s friends are strangers to me. But what became of that Irish colleen you used to moon over? Her distinguishing feature, as I remember her photograph, was a short upper lip. You used to force her upon me frequently when we were in Africa.”

“Humph! When I got back to Dublin I found that she had married a brewer’s son,—think of it!”

“Put not your faith in a short upper lip! Her face never inspired any confidence in me.”

“That will do, thank you. I’ll have a bit more of that mayonnaise if the waiter isn’t dead. I think you said your grandfather died in June. A letter advising you of the fact reached you at Naples in October. Has it occurred to you that there was quite an interim there? What, may I ask, was the executor doing all that time? You may be sure he was taking advantage of the opportunity to look for the red, red gold. I suppose you didn’t give him a sound drubbing for not keeping the cables hot with inquiries for you?”

He eyed me in that disdain for my stupidity which I have never suffered from any other man.

“Well, no; to tell the truth, I was thinking of other things during the interview.”

“Your grandfather should have provided a guardian for you, lad. You oughtn’t to be trusted with money. Is that bottle empty? Well, if that person with the fat neck was your friend Pickering, I’d have a care of what’s coming to me. I’d be quite sure that Mr. Pickering hadn’t made away with the old gentleman’s boodle, or that it didn’t get lost on the way from him to me.”

“The time’s running now, and I’m in for the year. My grandfather was a fine old gentleman, and I treated him like a dog. I’m going to do what he directs in that will no matter what the size of the reward may be.”

“Certainly; that’s the eminently proper thing for you to do. But,—but keep your wits about you. If a fellow with that neck can’t find money where money has been known to exist, it must be buried pretty deep. Your grandfather was a trifle eccentric, I judge, but not a fool by any manner of means. The situation appeals to my imagination, Jack. I like the idea of it,— the lost treasure and the whole business. Lord, what a salad that is! Cheer up, comrade! You’re as grim as an owl!”

Whereupon we fell to talking of people and places we had known in other lands.

We spent the next day together, and in the evening, at my hotel, he criticized my effects while I packed, in his usual ironical vein.

“You’re not going to take those things with you, I hope!” He indicated the rifles and several revolvers which I brought from the closet and threw upon the bed. “They make me homesick for the jungle.”

He drew from its cover the heavy rifle I had used last on a leopard hunt and tested its weight.

“Precious little use you’ll have for this! Better let me take it back to The Sod to use on the landlords. I say, Jack, are we never to seek our fortunes together again? We hit it off pretty well, old man, come to think of it,—I don’t like to lose you.”

He bent over the straps of the rifle-case with unnecessary care, but there was a quaver in his voice that was not like Larry Donovan.

“Come with me now!” I exclaimed, wheeling upon him.

“I’d rather be with you than with any other living man, Jack Glenarm, but I can’t think of it. I have my own troubles; and, moreover, you’ve got to stick it out there alone. It’s part of the game the old gentleman set up for you, as I understand it. Go ahead, collect your fortune, and then, if I haven’t been hanged in the meantime, we’ll join forces later. There’s no chap anywhere with a pleasanter knack at spending money than your old friend L. D.”

He grinned, and I smiled ruefully, knowing that we must soon part again, for Larry was one of the few men I had ever called friend, and this meeting had only quickened my old affection for him.

“I suppose,” he continued, “you accept as gospel truth what that fellow tells you about the estate. I should be a little wary if I were you. Now, I’ve been kicking around here for a couple of weeks, dodging the detectives, and incidentally reading the newspapers. Perhaps you don’t understand that this estate of John Marshall Glenarm has been talked about a good bit.”

“I didn’t know it,” I admitted lamely. Larry had always been able to instruct me about most matters; it was wholly possible that he could speak wisely about my inheritance.

“You couldn’t know, when you were coming from the Mediterranean on a steamer. But the house out there and the mysterious disappearance of the property have been duly discussed. You’re evidently an object of some public interest,”—and he drew from his pocket a newspaper cutting. “Here’s a sample item.” He read:

“John Glenarm, the grandson of John Marshall Glenarm, the eccentric millionaire who died suddenly in Vermont last summer, arrived on the Maxinkuckee from Naples yesterday. Under the terms of his grandfather’s will, Glenarm is required to reside for a year at a curious house established by John Marshall Glenarm near Lake Annandale, Indiana.

This provision was made, according to friends of the family, to test young Glenarm’s staying qualities, as he has, since his graduation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology five years ago, distributed a