

The Tragedy of a Snob

By Gertrude Atherton

I

The first twenty-three years of Andrew Webb's life were passed in that tranquillity of mind and body induced by regular work, love of exercise, and a good digestion. He lived in a little flat in Harlem, with his widowed mother and a younger sister who was ambitious to become an instructor of the young and to prove that woman may be financially independent of man. At that time Andrew's salary of thirty dollars a week, earned in a large savings bank of which he was one of many book-keepers, covered the family's needs. Mr. Webb had died when his son was sixteen, leaving something under two thousand dollars and a furnished flat in Harlem. For a time the outlook was gloomy. Andrew left school and went to work. Good at figures, stoically steady, he rose by degrees to command a fair remuneration. A brother of Mrs. Webb, currently known as 'Uncle Sandy Armstrong,' lived in miserly fashion on the old homestead in New Jersey. Occasionally he sent his sister a ten-dollar bill. Mrs. Webb, believing him to be as straitened as herself, albeit without a family, never applied to him for assistance. Twice a year she dutifully visited him and put his house in order. Her children rarely could be induced to accompany her. They detested their fat garrulous unkempt uncle, and only treated him civilly out of the goodness of their hearts and respect for their mother. On Christmas Day he invariably dined with them, and his meagre presents by no means atoned for his atrocious table manners.

The family in the flat was a happy one, despite the old carpets, the faded rep furniture, the general air of rigid economy, and the inevitable visits of Uncle Sandy. Mrs. Webb was sweet of temper, firm of character, sound of health. Her cheeks and eyes were faded, her black dress was always rusty, her general air that of a middle-class gentlewoman who bore her reverses bravely. Polly was a plump bright-eyed girl, with a fresh complexion and her mother's evenness of temper. In spite of her small allowance, she managed to dress in the prevailing style. She had barely emerged from short frocks when she took a course of lessons in dressmaking, she knew how to bargain, and spent the summer months replenishing her own and her mother's wardrobe. Mrs. Webb did the work of the flat, assisted by an Irish maiden who came in by the day: there was no place in the flat for her to sleep.

Andrew was the idol of the family. He supported them, and he was a thoroughly good fellow; he had no bad habits, and they had never seen him angry. His neighbours were regularly made acquainted with the proud fact that he walked home from his office in lower Broadway every afternoon in the year, 'except Sundays and during his vacation,' as his mother would add. She was a conscientious woman. Moreover, they thought him very handsome. He was five-feet-ten, lean, and athletic in appearance. It is true that his head was narrow and his face cast in a heavy mould; but there was no superfluous flesh in his cheeks, and his thick skin was clean. Like his sister, he managed to dress well. He was obliged to buy his clothes ready-made, but he had the gift of selection.

When the subtle change came, his mother and sister uneasily confided to each other the fear that he was in love. As the years passed, however, and he brought them no new demand upon their affections and resources, they ceased to worry, and finally to wonder. Andrew was not the old Andrew; but, if he did not choose to confide the reason, his reserve must be respected. And at

least it had affected neither his generosity nor his good-temper. He still spent his evenings at home, listened to his mother or Polly read aloud, and never missed the little supper of beer and crackers and cheese before retiring.

II

One morning, while Webb was still one with his little family, he read, as was usual with him on the long ride down town, his Harlem edition of one of the New York dailies. He finished the news, the editorials, the special articles: nothing was there to upset the equilibrium of his life. His attention was attracted, as he was about to close the paper, by a long leaded 'story' of a ball given the night before by some people named Webb. Their superior social importance was made manifest by the space and type allotted them, by the fact that their function was not held over for the Sunday issue, and by the imposing rhetoric of the headlines.

Andrew read the story with a feeling of personal interest. From that moment, unsuspected by himself, the readjustment of his mind to other interests began—the divorce of his inner life from the simple conditions of his youth.

Thereafter he searched the Society columns for accounts of the doings of the Webb folk. Thence, by a natural deflection, he became generally interested in the recreations of the great world: he acquired a habit, much to his sister's delight, of buying the weekly chronicles of Society, and all the Sunday issues of the important dailies.

At first the sparkle and splendour, the glamour and mystery of the world of fashion dazzled and delighted him. It was to him what fairy tales of prince and princess are to children. For even he, prosaic, phlegmatic, with nerves of iron and brain of shallows, had in him that germ of the picturesque which in some natures shoots to high and full-flowered ideals, in others to lofty or restless ambitions, coupled with a true love of art; and yet again develops a weed of tenacious root and coarse enduring fibre which a clever maker of words has named snobbery.

Gradually within Andrew's slow mind grew a dull resentment against Fate for having played him so sinister a trick as to give him the husk without the kernel, a title without a story that any one would ever care to read. Why, when one of those Webb babies was due,—the family appeared to be a large one,—could not his little wandering ego have found its way into that ugly but notable mansion on Fifth Avenue instead of having been spitefully guided to a New Jersey farm? Not that Andrew expressed himself in this wise. Had he put his thoughts into words, he would probably have queried in good terse English: 'Why in thunder can't I be Schuyler Churchill Webb instead of a nobody in Harlem? He's just my age, and I might as well have been he as not.'

His twenty-third birthday cake, prepared by loving hands, had scarcely been eaten when the waves of snobbery first lapped his feet. At twenty-five they had broken high above his head, and the surge was ever in his ears. He was not acutely miserable: his health was too perfect, his appetite too good. But deeper and deeper each week did he bury his perplexed head in the social folklore of New York and Newport. Oftener and oftener during the city season did he promenade central Fifth Avenue from half-past four until half-past five in the afternoon of pleasant days. He lived for the hour which would find him sauntering from Forty-first Street to the Park and back again. He knew all the fashionable men and women by sight. There was no one to tell him their names, but the names themselves were more familiar than the rows of figures in his books down town. He fitted them to such presences as seemed to demand them as their right. He grew into a certain intimacy with the slender trimly-accounted girls who held themselves so erectly and wore

their hair with such maidenly severity. They were so different in appearance from all the women he had known or seen, and from the languishing creatures in his mother's cherished *Book of Beauty*, that he came to look upon them as a race apart, which they were; as something not quite human, which was a slander. As they stalked along so briskly in their tailor-made frocks, their cheeks and eyes brilliant with health, the average observer would have likened them to healthy high-bred young race-horses.

On the whole, however, Andrew gave the full measure of his admiration to the women who took their exercise less violently. When the spring came, and the park was green, he would stand in the plaza, surrounded by its great hotels, the deep rumble of the avenue behind him, forgetting even the phalanxes of tramping girls, with their accessories of boys and poodles. Before him were the wide gates of the park, the green wooded knolls rolling away—almost to his home in Harlem. Just beyond the gates was a bend in the driveway, and he never tired of watching the stream of carriages wind as from a cavern and roll out to the avenue. The vivid background claimed as its own those superb traps with their dainty burdens of women who held their heads so haughtily, whose plumage was so brilliant. The horses glittered and pranced. The parasols fluttered like butterflies above the flower-faces beneath. Webb would stand entranced, bitterly thankful that there was such a scene for him to look upon, choking back a sob that he had no part in it.

When summer came and society flitted to Newport, that paradise in which he only half believed, he was more lonely and glum than the loneliest and glummiest and most *blasé* clubman, who clung to his window because he hated Newport and could not afford London. Quite accidentally, when his infatuation was about three years old, he came into a singular compensation. In the summer, during his ten days' vacation, when he was tramping through the woods, he fell in with a party of Western people, who manifested much interest in New York. To Andrew there was only one New York, and with that his soul was identified. Insensibly, he began to talk of New York society as if it were part of his daily experience. His careful, if restricted, study of its habits had made him sufficiently familiar with it to enable him to deceive the wholly ignorant. He described the people, their brilliant 'functions,' the individualities of certain of its members. He talked freely of Ward McAllister, and imitated that gentleman's peculiarities of thought and speech, so familiar to the newspaper reader. For the time he deceived himself as well as his hearers; and so fascinating did he find this delusion, that he remained with the inquisitive and guileless party until the end of his vacation. After that he made it a point each year to attach himself to some party of tourists, and to tell them of New York Society, plus Andrew Webb. He was not a liar in the ordinary sense of the word. In his home and in the bank where he played his daily game of give-and-take, his reputation for veracity was enviable. Every mortal not an idiot has his daydreams. Webb merely dreamed his aloud to an audience. And these summers were the oases of his life.

He had one other pleasure equally keen. On the first day of each month he dined at Delmonico's. In the beginning it meant the forfeit of his usual stand-up luncheon, but he had decided that the cause was worthy of the sacrifice. One evening, however, he lingered on upper Fifth Avenue longer than usual, and entered late. The restaurant was crowded. He stood at the door, hesitating, knowing that he would not be permitted to seat himself at a table already occupied by even one person. Suddenly a small common-looking little man came forward and touched his arm.

'Won't you share my table?' he said, effusively. 'My name's Slocum, and I've seen you here

often. You mustn't go away. Come in.'

Andrew gratefully accepted, and followed Mr. Slocum over to the little table on the other side of the room.

'I say,' said Slocum, after Webb had ordered his dinner, 'I've hit on a plan. It's been in my head for some time. How often do you come here?'

'Once a month.'

'That's my game exactly. I'm a clerk on a small salary; but I must have one good dinner a month, if I don't have my hair cut. Now, suppose we dine together. One portion's enough for two, and the same dinner'll only cost each of us half what it does now. See?'

Andrew did not take kindly to Mr. Slocum: the vulgar young man was so different from the magnificent creatures about him. But the offer was not to be ignored, and he closed with it. For the following three years, until he was twenty-eight, he dined regularly at Delmonico's, and in that rarefied atmosphere his head gently swam. He forgot the flat in Harlem,—forgot that he was Andrew, not Schuyler Churchill Webb.

III

One day word came that 'Uncle Sandy Armstrong' was dead. Andrew could not get away, nor Polly, who was then a teacher; but Mrs. Webb hastily packed an old carpetbag and went over to superintend her brother's funeral. That evening the young people discussed the death of their relative in a businesslike manner, which their mother would have resented, but which was justifiable from their point of view.

'I suppose ma will have the farm,' remarked Polly, still a plump, rosy, and well-dressed Polly, albeit with an added air of importance and a slightly didactic enunciation. 'How much do you suppose it's worth?'

Andrew, who was lying on the sofa smoking a pipe, protruded his upper lip. 'Four thousand,—not a cent more. The orchard's all gone to seed, and the house too.'

'We might mortgage the land, and fit the house up for summer boarders.'

Andrew frowned heavily. His sister was absently tapping a pile of compositions on the table beside her, and did not see the frown. She would not have suspected the cause if she had.

'As well that as anything,' he replied, indifferently. 'No one will buy it, that's positive, with all that marsh.'

Two days later he returned home to find the very atmosphere of the place quivering with excitement. Bridget stood in the doorway of the kitchen, which faced the end of the narrow hallway personal to the Webb abode. Her round eyes glittered in a purple face. She waved her arms wildly.

'Oh, Mr. Webb!' she began.

'Andrew, come here,' shrieked Polly from the other end of the hall. 'Come here, quick!'

It was not Webb's habit to move rapidly; but, fearing that his mother was ill, he walked briskly to the parlour. Mrs. Webb, trembling as from a recent nervous shock, her face flushed, a legal document in her lap, sat in an upright chair, apparently in the best of health. Polly was on the verge of hysterics.

'What do you think has happened?' she cried. 'Tell him, ma; I can't.' Then she flung herself face downward on the sofa and kicked her heels together.

'We are rich, Andrew,' said Mrs. Webb, with a desperate effort at calmness. 'Your Uncle Sandy has been investing and doubling money these twenty years. He has left one hundred and

fifty thousand dollars,—fifty thousand to each of us.’

Andrew’s knees gave way. He sat down suddenly. He had but one thought. A radiant future flashed the little room out of vision. That would be his which for five years he had desired with all the insidious force of a fixed idea.

‘Say something, Andrew, for heaven’s sake!’ cried Polly, ‘or I shall scream. Fifty thousand dollars all my own! No more school, no more dressmaking! We’ll all go to Europe. Ma says it’s well invested, and we shall have four thousand a year each. Goodness—goodness—goodness me!’

‘I should like to fit up the old house and live there,’ said Mrs. Webb. ‘But—yes—I should like to see Europe first. That was one of the dreams of my youth.’

‘And I’ll have a sealskin! At last! You shall have a magnificent black silk and a pair of diamond earrings—’

‘Polly!’ exclaimed her mother, ‘what should I do with diamonds? A new black silk—a rich one—yes, I shall like that. Poor Sandy!’

Andrew leaned forward and took the document and laid it on his knee. He stroked it as tenderly as if it had been a woman’s head and he another man. There was no sentiment in his nature, although he was an admirer of beauty—New York beauty. After a time he detached himself from his thoughts and talked the matter over with his mother and sister. When they asked him what he should do, he replied, confusedly, that he did not know. But the plans of neither were so well defined as his.

All that night he sat on the edge of his bed staring at the worn outlines of the boy and the dog on the rug under his feet. Fifty thousand dollars! It seemed a great fortune to him. Such a sum had been familiar enough in figures for many years. But that it might represent a concrete wad of bills was a fact which had never presented itself to his imagination before. Fifty thousand dollars! He did not know what the objects of his idolatry were worth, merely that they were idle and luxurious. These fifty thousand dollars would enable him to be idle and luxurious—and to meet society at last on its own ground.

IV

The interval between that night and the day upon which the estate was settled, Andrew passed in a sort of impatient dream. Never before had days, weeks, months seemed so long; never had he so dissociated himself from his little world and melted into that luminous circle of which he was to become a component part. How he was to obtain his passport into fashionable society was a question that did not concern him. Its portals were typified to him by the wide gates of Central Park, through which all might roll upon whom fortune smiled. One blessed fact possessed his mind: by the first of July he should be master of his future, liberated from his desk, free to go to Newport. When his foot actually pressed that reservation, all the rest would come about quite naturally. At this time he still preserved his self-respect. He felt quite the equal of the men he had brushed elbows with at Delmonico’s—the pink-faced youths with their butter-coloured tops, the affable elderly men with their bulbous stomachs and puffy eyes. And he had caught many of their little fads. He had risen in the night, and opening the door connecting the kitchen and dining-room, that he might have sufficient scope, he had practised the remarkable gait of the New York youth of fashion: that slight forward inclination of the shoulders, that slighter crab-like angle of the body, that ponderous thoughtful tread: the only difference from the walk of the ‘tough’ being in the length of the step. One hand was in a pocket, the other absently manipulated

a stick. He had also witnessed the handshake, and of his proficiency in this accomplishment he felt assured.

On the third day of July, one hour after the law had yielded up its temporary foundling, he ordered an elaborate outfit from the most fashionable tailor in New York. This order and others drilled a large hole in his first quarter's income, but he regarded that as a trifling detail. His mother and sister were meanwhile selling the homely necessities of their flat at auction, as the first step to a year abroad. They wondered at Andrew's desire to go to Newport, but had heard that it was a pretty place with a good bathing beach, and much visited by tourists. They spent the last night together in a hotel; and Mrs. Webb, in spite of a faint protest from Andrew, ordered beer and crackers and cheese. They had eaten this little supper for many years, and the women, who were very tearful, insisted that this last evening together must be as much like the dear old evenings as possible. It was a sad meal.

V

It was a profoundly hot August day when Andrew left the steamboat and actually stood upon Newport soil. More properly, he stood upon a plank wharf, and was not impressed with the dock. But as the omnibus rolled through the town his heart began to swell, his rather dull eyes to glow. The hour was two, and the city asleep under its ivy and flowers. After New York, it seemed deliciously quiet, and old, and aristocratic. The pounding of the horses' hoofs, the voices of the people in the omnibus, were desecrating. He had glimpses of long avenues, dark, green, dim; a flash of villa top or imposing gateway behind the stately trees. He felt that he was in paradise.

He was in a mood to admire the hotel, plain and unpretending structure as it was; it was so old and still and highly respectable. He descended from the omnibus nervously and went into the office. A clerk handed him a pen, and he registered his name in a clerkly hand, 'A. Armstrong Webb.' He had decided to acknowledge his debt to his uncle and add a cubit to his stature at the same time. The clerk wheeled the book round, glanced indifferently at the name, and handed a key to a bell-boy. Webb, conscious of a faint chill, followed the boy upstairs. The room to which he was conducted was an ordinary one overlooking the area. He had been treated as any commonplace and unknown traveller would be. The thought increased the chill; then he philosophically concluded that a nobleman travelling incognito would be treated in the same way, and went downstairs to the dining-room. There he was somewhat surprised to find that dinner was being served instead of luncheon. He had supposed that dinner in a Newport hotel would be served at eight o'clock.

After dinner he went out to the verandah, sat himself on one of the chairs by the railing, and smoked an expensive cigar. He was beginning to feel strangely lonely. There seemed to be very few people in the hotel, and he experienced his first pang of helplessness, of doubt. He had supposed that the hotel would be full of great people. As he glanced down the avenue, those big houses seemed like tombs, buried, themselves, under a rank growth of foliage. And it was so wondrous quiet!

His cigar cheered him somewhat, and he sauntered back to the office and entered into conversation with the clerk, a good-humoured little Englishman with cheeks like his own apples. The clerk knew at a glance that the stranger was neither a 'swell' nor a frequenter of Newport; but he liked his manly appearance, and readily met his advances. To his dismay, Webb learned that the 'swells' no longer went to the hotels; or, if obliged to do so for a short period, secluded themselves in their rooms. They lived in cottages. Oh yes! all those fine houses were called

cottages. It was a sort of fad—American modesty, the clerk supposed. There was not much run of any sort at the hotel until the fifteenth, when a good many tourists came. Oh yes! there were some people there, mostly old ones, who had come every season for twenty years, he believed. Rather depressing parties, these; they looked so old-fashioned, and didn't do much to brighten up things.

Webb, with growing dejection, left the hotel and strolled up the avenue. There his spirits revived. The avenue was so beautiful, so gloomy, so old! He drew in deep inhalations of its unmistakably aristocratic atmosphere. He felt its subtle possessing influence. Once more his imagination awakened. He leaned on a Gothic gateway and gazed upon a superb Queen Anne cottage with Tudor towers. Incongruities in architecture mattered nothing to him. He precipitated his astral part through the massive door and wandered, with ponderous thoughtful tread, over the deep carpets of the drawing-rooms and corridors. He drank tea on the back verandah with languid dames and with men who had never stood at desks. He threw himself into an armchair and listened to a slim-waisted smooth-haired girl coquetting with the piano. He sat with the haughty chatelaine and talked of—there his imagination failed him. He hardly knew what these people talked of, although he had read many society novels. As far as his memory served him, they talked of nothing in particular. He wandered down the avenue, dreaming his dream at many gateposts. He saw no one, but thereby was the illusion deepened. Newport for the hour was his.

He returned to the hotel verandah, lit another cigar. and was about to meditate upon some plan of campaign, when suddenly an odd and delightful thing happened. It was four and thirty of the clock. As if to the ringing of a bell and the rising of a curtain, Bellevue Avenue became suddenly alive with carriages. The big gates seemed to yawn simultaneously and discharge their expensive freight. It was as if these actors in the Newport drama would lose their weekly salary did they step on the boards a moment too late. The avenue, with its gay frocks and parasols, was like a long flower-bed in spring. Webb's cigar went out. He leaned forward eagerly, straining his eyes.

In some of the superb traps were decrepit old dowagers wagging their feeble heads, wondering, perhaps, how much longer their millions would keep them alive. Sometimes their young heirs were with them, patient and placid. Others were pitifully alone. Several men were on horseback, riding in the agonised fashion of the day. There were carriages full of girls with complexions of ivory and claret, air of ineffable daintiness. Now and then a victoria would roll by in which women lolled, heavily veiled with crape. Webb wondered if they really could sorrow like common folks. Mingling with the superb turn-outs were barouches unmistakably hired, occupied by people dressed with a certain cheap smartness. Here and there a girl, probably of the people, cantered half-defiantly down the line, a sailor hat on her head, her jacket open over a shirt and 'four-in-hand.' Once a yoke of oxen, driven by a bare-headed maid, straggled into the throng.

The avenue before the hotel became deserted once more. The upper end was blocked with carriages, all apparently bent in the same direction. Andrew ran down the steps, half inclined to follow, half fearing they would never return. A number of open hacks stood before the hotel. A driver immediately approached Andrew.

'Like a drive, sir.

'Yes,' said Webb. 'Go where the others are going.'

'Certainly, sir. And, if you be a stranger, I can tell you most of the names.'

Andrew could have tipped him on the spot. He should be able to identify those people at last! He felt that he had advanced another step!

'We'll drive slow and meet them on their return,' said the driver. He indicated with a gesture of contempt a passing carriage.

'You see them, sir? They be people that comes to the hotels and goes away and talks about spending the summer in Newport. But any one could tell that they're just hotel people, and that the hack is hired. They don't deceive nobody here.'

The words gave Andrew a hint for which he was thankful. He understood that he must not stay at the hotel. Where should he go, however? He must take a 'cottage,' he supposed.

They rolled down a thick-leaved avenue and out over the stubby sandhills by the sea. Here and there a large mansion crowned the heights, and Andrew was glad to see the traditional cottage in full relief. He paid it scant attention, however. The procession of carriages had already turned, and his faithful guide uttered many a name which sounded like old sweet music in his ears. Some of the younger faces were unfamiliar; but they, too, bore names that the newspapers had made famous.

'Now look with all your eyes,' cried the driver, suddenly. Here's Mrs. Johnny Belhaven. She's worth more millions than all the rest put together, and is an A1 whip.'

A plump but distinguished-looking woman bore down on them in what appeared to be a chariot. Andrew had never seen anything so high on wheels before. Mrs. Belhaven looked down upon her 'Order' as from a throne, and wore a slightly supercilious expression.

And there's Ward McAllister,' continued the driver, excitedly; 'him as is the leader of the Four Hundred, you know.'

Andrew almost raised himself from his seat. He stared with bulging eyes at the tired carelessly-dressed elderly man with whom he had been intimate so many years.

He returned to the hotel. His spirits were normal again. He had taken his part in a fragment of the daily life of Newport. As he passed through the office on his way to the elevator, the clerk beckoned to him.

'As you seem a stranger, sir,' he said, apologetically, 'I thought I would introduce you to Mr. Chapman. He's the correspondent of several New York papers, and could tell you how to amuse yourself.'

A short thick-set amiable young man shook Andrew's hand heartily. Mr. Chapman was not the sort of person Andrew had gone to Newport to meet, but he was glad of any friendship, temporarily.

The two young men went out to the verandah. Andrew proffered his new cigar-case. The other accepted gratefully. He was the free-lance correspondent of several New York weekly papers, and his salary was not large. He tipped his chair back, put his feet on the railing, and confided to Webb that he hated Newport.

'I wouldn't have come here this summer if I could have got out of it,' he said, gloomily. 'It's my third year, and the place gets worse every season. These people are so stuck-up there's no approaching them for news. Even Lancaster, who has a sort of *entrée* because he is connected with a swagger family, admits that it's as much as his life is worth to get anything out of them. He's the correspondent of the New York *Eye*. What's worse, they don't do anything. Here it is the 3rd of August, and not a ball has been given—just little things among themselves that you can't get at. It's enough to drive a fellow to drink. I've faked till my poor imagination is worn to a thread; the papers have to have news. But I've done one big thing this summer,—a corking beat. Did you notice halfway down the avenue a new house surrounded by a big stone wall? That's the new Belhaven house. They'd sworn that no reporter should so much as pass the gates, no paper should ever show an eager world the interior of that marble mausoleum. The newspapers were wild. Even Lancaster had no show. I was bound that I'd get into that house, if I had to go as a burglar. And I did, but not that way. I bribed their butcher to let me dress up as his

boy; took a camera, and photographed the house and grounds from the seclusion of the meat waggon. I flirted with the cook and got her to show me the drawing-rooms. It was early, and the family wasn't up. I dodged the butler and took snap-shots. The other newspaper men were ready to brain me. I felt sorry for some of them, but I had joy over Lancaster. He'd bribed the caterer and florist to keep their best bits of news for him. A low trick that; not but what I'd do it myself if I had his salary. He got a scoop last year, and you couldn't speak to him for a month after. Mrs. Foster,—she's one of the biggest guns, you know, a regular cannon,—refurnished her house last summer, and all the New York papers wanted photographs. She went cranky, and said they shouldn't have them. Wouldn't even listen to Lancaster's pleadings. But he hadn't jollied the butler for nothing. She didn't stop here last summer,—only came down every two weeks and rearranged every stick of the furniture. The butler was nearly distracted. It was as much as his place was worth to have her find any of the chairs out of place, and the rooms had to be swept. So he hit on a plan. He bought a camera and photographed the rooms every time Mrs. Foster came down. One day he met Lancaster on the avenue and confided his method of keeping up with the old lady. You may be sure Lancaster was not long getting a set of those photos. It cost the newspaper a pot of money, for the butler was no fool. But there they were next Sunday. And Mrs. Foster doesn't know to this day how it was done.'

Webb listened with mingled amusement and dismay. He was slowly beginning to realise the determined segregation, from the common herd, of these people, to whom he had come so confidently to offer homage. He changed the subject.

'I don't want to stay here, don't you know,' he said, glancing scornfully over his shoulder at the hotel which in its day had housed the most distinguished in the land. 'What would you advise? Take a cottage?'

'Take a cottage!' Mr. Chapman fairly gasped. 'Are you a millionaire in disguise? If you were, I don't believe you could get one. The swells shut up theirs when they don't come, or let them to their friends. The others are mostly taken year after year by the same people. No; I'll tell you what you want—a bachelor's apartment. They are not so easy to get either, but I happen to know of one. It was rented four years ago by Jack Delancy, but he blew in most of his money, and then tried to recuperate on cordage. The bottom fell out of that, and now goodness knows where he is. At all events, his apartment is to let. Suppose we go now and see it. There's no time to lose.'

Andrew assented willingly, profoundly thankful that he had met Mr. Chapman. The apartment was near the hotel. They found it still vacant, furnished with a certain bold distinction. The rent was high, but Andrew stifled the economic promptings of his nature, and manfully signed a cheque. That night there was nothing to be seen in Newport, not even a moon. The city was like a necropolis. Andrew gratefully employed his leisure hunting for servants. The following day he was comfortably installed and had invited the fortunate Mr. Chapman to dinner. He found that gentleman next morning on the beach, taking snap-shots at the bathers.

'This sort of thing goes,' Chapman said, 'although these people are just plain tourists. I label them "the beautiful Miss Brown," or "the famous Miss Jones," and the average reader swallows it, to say nothing of the fact that it makes the paper look well. The swells won't go in with the common herd, and want the ocean fenced in too, as it were. There are some of them over there in their carriages, taking a languid interest in the scene because they've nothing better to do. But they'd no more think of getting out and sitting on this balcony, as they do at Narragansett, than they'd ride in a street car. Want to go up to the Casino and see the stage go off? That's one of the sights.'

Andrew had spent a half-hour the evening before gazing at the graceful brown building which

had long been a part of his dreams. He welcomed the prospect of seeing a phase of its brilliant life.

They reached the Casino a few minutes before the coach started. A large round-shouldered man, with face and frame of phlegmatic mould, occupied the seat and swung his whip with a bored and absent air. Two or three girls, clad in apotheosised organdie, and close hats, were already on top of the coach. An elderly beau was assiduously attending upon a young woman who was about to mount the ladder. She was a plain girl, with an air of refined health, and simply clad in white.

‘She’s worth sixteen million dollars in her own right,’ said Chapman, with a groan.

On the sidewalk, between the Casino and the coach, were two groups of girls. One group gazed up at their friends on the coach, wishing them good fortune; the other gazed upon the first, eagerly and enviously. Andrew looked from one to the other. The girls who talked to those on the coach wore organdie frocks of simple but marvellous construction. Shading their young pellucid eyes, their bare polished brows, were large Leghorn hats covered with expensive feathers or flowers. Air, carriage, complexion, manner, each was a part of the unmistakable uniform of the New York girl of fashion. But the others? Andrew put the question to Chapman.

‘Oh, they’re natives. We call them that to distinguish them from the cottagers. They get close whenever they get a chance, and copy the cottagers’ clothes and manners. But it doesn’t take a magnifying glass to see the difference.’

Andrew looked with a pity he did not admit was fellow-feeling at the pretty girls with their bright complexions, their merely stylish clothes—which reminded him of Polly’s—the inferior feathers in their chip hats. The sharp contrast between the two groups of girls was almost painful.

‘I’ve got to leave you,’ said Chapman; ‘but I’ll see you later. Take care of yourself.’

The horn tooted, the whip cracked, the coach started. The men on the club balcony above the Casino watched it lazily. The street between the coach and the green wall opposite had been blocked with carriages that now rolled away.

Webb turned his attention to the group of cottagers. One of the girls wore a yellow organdie trimmed with black velvet ribbons, a large Leghorn covered with yellow feathers and black velvet. She was not pretty, but she had ‘an air,’ and that was supremest beauty in Andrew’s eyes. Another was in lilac, another in pink. Each had the same sleek brown hair, the same ivory complexion. In attendance was a tall clumsily-built but very imposing young man with sleepy blue eyes and a mighty moustache. The girls paid him marked attention.

They chatted for a few moments, then walked through the entrance of the Casino, over the lawn, toward the lower balcony of the horseshoe surrounding it. Andrew followed, fascinated. The young man in attendance walked after the manner of his kind, and Andrew, unconsciously imitating him, ascended the steps, seated himself with an air of elaborate indifference opposite the party in the narrow semicircle, and composed his face into an expression of blank abstraction. His trouble was wasted: they did not see him. They had an air of seeing no one in the world but their kind. One of the girls, to Andrew’s horror, crossed her knees and swung her foot airily. The young man sank into a slouching position. Another girl joined the group, but he did not rise when introduced, nor offer to get her a chair. She was obliged to perform that office, at some difficulty, for herself.

The band began to play. Andrew leaned forward, gazing at the floor, intent upon hearing these people actually converse. But their talk only came to him in snatches between the rise and fall of the music. Like many other New Yorkers, he had a deaf ear.

‘My things disappear so’—(from the yellow girl) . . . ‘I suspect my maid wears them. . . . Don’t

really know what I have. . . . Don't dare say anything.' This was said with a languid drawl which Andrew thought delicious.

All laughed.

'Shall you go to Paris this year?'

'I don't know . . . till time comes. . . . Then we keep four servants up all night packing. . . . Must have some new gowns. . . . You know how you have to talk to Ducet and Paquin yourself.'

The young man went to sleep. The girls put their heads together and whispered. After a time they arose with a little capricious air, which completed Andrew's subjugation, and strolled away.

VI

That evening, as he sat with Chapman over the coffee in the stately little dining-room of the victim of cordage, the journalist remarked suddenly—'I say, old fellow, you don't seem to be in it. Don't you know anybody here at all?'

Andrew shook his head gloomily.

'Well, you'll have a stupid time, I'm afraid. There are only three classes of people that come to Newport—the swells, the people who want to see the swells, and the correspondents whose unhappy fate it is to report the doings of the swells. Now, what on earth did you come here for?'

Andrew had not a confiding nature, but he could not repress a dark flush. The astute little journalist understood it.

'It's too bad you didn't bring a letter or two. One would have made it easy work. You look as well as any of them, and you've got the boodle. Where did you come from, anyway?'

'New York.'

Chapman puckered his lips about his cigar. 'That's bad. It's harder for a non-commissioned New Yorker to get into society than for a district attorney to get into heaven. Didn't you make any swagger friends at college?'

'I never went to college.'

'Too bad! A man should always strain a point to get to college. If he's clever he can make friends there that he can "work" for the rest of his life.'

Little by little, with adroit use of the detective faculty of the modern reporter, he extracted from Webb the tale of his years—even the extent of his fortune. The young aspirant's ingenuousness made him gasp more than once; but he had too kindly a nature to state to Webb the hopelessness of his case. His new friend was manly and generous, and had won from him a sincere liking, tempered with pity. Better let him find out for himself how things stood; then, when his eyes were open, steer him out of his difficulties.

He rose in a few moments. 'Well,' he said, cheerily, 'I wish I were Lancaster. I might be able to do something for you; but I'm not in it—not for a cent. You may as well take in the passing show, however. The first Casino hop is on to-night. Put on your togs and go.'

'Anybody there?' asked Andrew, loftily.

'Oh, rather. All the cottagers will be there, or a goodly number of them. And it's a pretty sight.'

'But how can I get in?'

'By paying the sum of one dollar, old man.'

Andrew's cigar dropped from his mouth.

'Do you mean to say that *they* go to a place and dance—in full dress—on the floor—with everybody? Why, any one can pay a dollar.'

Chapman laughed. 'Oh!—well—go and see how it is for yourself. Meet me in the gallery at ten, and I'll tell you who's who. *Au revoir.*'

At half- past nine Andrew stood before his mirror and regarded himself meditatively. Without vanity, he could admit that so far as appearance counted he would be an ornament to any ballroom. His strong young figure carried its evening clothes with the air of a gentleman, not of a waiter. He had seen fashionable men in Delmonico's who needed their facial tresses to avoid confusion. Chapman had that day pointed out to him two scions of distinguished name whose 'sideboards' had caused him to mistake them for coachmen. He stroked his own moustache. It had never been cut, and was as silken as the hair of the ladies he worshipped. His head had been cropped by the most fashionable barber in New York. He wore no jewels. In a word, he was correct, and he assured himself of the fact with proud humility. Nevertheless, his heart was heavy behind his irreproachable waistcoat.

From his apartment it was but a few steps to the Casino. He walked there without injury to his pumps, bought his ticket at the office, half fearing that it would be refused him, and sauntered across the lawn to the inner door of the ballroom. The horseshoe was brilliantly lighted, and, with its airy architecture, looked as if awaiting a revel of the fairies. The cottagers, Andrew understood, would alight at an outside door. They were subscribers, and the office was not for them.

He went up to the gallery to await his friend. It was less than a fourth occupied by pretty girls—'natives,' he recognised at once. Some wore hats, others were in local substitute for full dress—a muslin or Indian silk turned away at the throat, a flower in the hair. He took a chair before the railing. The one beside him was occupied by a handsome dark-eyed girl, who had made a brave attempt to be smart. She wore a red silk frock and a red rose in her rough abundant hair. Round her white throat she had gracefully arranged some silk lace. Andrew paid that tribute to her charms of one whose eyes have been too long accustomed to great works of art to take any interest in the chromo. Nevertheless, he was young and she was young. They flirted mildly until Chapman came in and introduced them.

'Miss Leslie is an old friend of mine, Webb,' he said in his hearty way. 'I hope you will be friends too.'

Miss Leslie bowed and beamed and flashed her pretty teeth. Andrew made some vague remark, wondering at the spite of fate, then forgot her utterly. Chapman had whispered to him that the cottagers were coming.

He leaned eagerly over the rail. A number of buxom dames, accompanied by slender girls, were filing in. Some of the old women were in white satin, with many jewels on their platitudinous bosoms. The slim sisterhood, with their deerlike movements, their curried hair arranged to simulate a walnut on the crown of their little heads, their tiny waists and white necks and arms, riveted Andrew's gaze as ever. Some looked like Easter lilies in their pure white gowns, others like delicate orchids. One beautiful young woman, evidently a matron, wore a gown of black gauze, with a row of sparkling crescents, stars, and clusters about the low line of the corsage.

'Isn't she lovely?' whispered Miss Leslie. '*She* got a French Duke. But she deserved her luck. She's sweet.'

All were very *décolletée*.

'Reminds one of the days when slaves were put up on sale at the mart, not far from this very spot,' murmured Chapman.

One sprightly matron entered with an imperious air, and was immediately surrounded.

‘Who’s she?’ inquired Andrew, scornfully. ‘Why, her frock and gloves are soiled, and her hair’s dyed.’

‘Oh, she’s out of sight, my boy! Once in a while they do look like that. She’s going to lead things this summer. Wish she’d hurry up!’ Then he named a number of people to Webb.

The band on the platform facing the triple row of seats at the far end began a waltz. Most of the men were elderly and well preserved. They danced with the girls. The half-dozen youths improved their chances by assiduous attentions to the unwieldy dames. Andrew thought that his princesses danced very badly. Many of them were taller than the men, and looked about to go head first over the shoulders whose support they seemed to disdain. The little ones bounded like rubber balls. The old women formed groups and gossiped. A number sat about a plethoric lady, whose diamonds made her look like a crystal chandelier. Chapman informed Webb that she was a duchess.

‘You see that fellow over there!’ he exclaimed suddenly, indicating with the point of his lead pencil a young man with a vulgar, vacuous face and a clumsy assumption of the grand air; ‘well, he was nobody a year ago,—a distant connection of the Webbs; but they never recognised his existence until he came into some money. Then they took him up, and now he’s out of sight. It’s too bad you didn’t happen to be that kind of Webb. You look a long sight more of a gentleman than he does.’

‘Are any of the Webbs here?’ asked Andrew, choking with bitterness.

‘There’s the old girl over there. Regular old ice-chest.’

‘Is—is—Schuyler Churchill Webb here?’

‘He’s just come in. He is talking to the duchess—the French one.’

Andrew gazed with dull hatred at the plain amiable-looking young man, whose air of indefinable elegance seemed to reach forth and smite him in the face. The gulf, which had been a gradually widening rift, seemed suddenly to yawn.

‘Well, I must go,’ said Chapman. ‘I have to get my stuff off, you know. Will see you in the morning.’

As he left, Miss Leslie renewed her pleasantries, hoping that Andrew would ask her to go down and dance. She was terribly afraid of the great folk, poor little soul, but she felt that this strong self-reliant young man would protect her. Andrew excused himself in a few moments, however, and went downstairs. He had bought the right to be in the same room with those people, and he would claim it.

The treble row of seats was evidently reserved for strangers; no cottagers were at that end of the room. They sat about the other three sides with an air of being on their own ground. Andrew walked resolutely into the room, and took possession of one of the chairs reserved for his kind. He had only three or four neighbours; most of the tourists had gone upstairs, and were darkly surveying the scene. There were no decorations, but the dowagers were a jewelled dado, the girls an animated bed of blossoms.

VII

For one hour Andrew sat there, and at its end he comprehended why the cottagers did not concern themselves about the tickets sold. Not one icy glance had been directed at the treble row of seats, not one inquiring stare bent upon the occasional tourist-couple who summoned courage to take a whirl. He and his companions might have been invisible intruders on a foreign planet,

for all the notice the elect took of them. There was nothing overt, nothing unkind, but the stranger was as effectually frozen out as if he had fled from the room before a battery of lorgnettes. The cottagers were like one large family. There was no more reserve among the young people than if they had been a party of happy well-trained school children. What wonder that the stranger within their gates felt his remoteness! During the 'Lancers' they almost romped. They might have been on the lawn of one of their own cottages and these outsiders hanging on the fence. To any and all without their world they were unaffectedly oblivious.

At the end of the hour Andrew rose heavily and left his seat. His face was gray, his knees shook a little. He understood.

But his cup of bitterness was not yet full. As he made his way down the passage behind one of the rows of chairs reserved for the cottagers, he beheld a girl who had just entered. He stood still and stared at her, wondering that he had ever thought other women beautiful. If those he had worshipped were princesses, this was a goddess. Only New York could give her that nameless distinction, so curiously unlike the graceful breeding of older lands,—the difference between the hothouse orchid and the lily of ancient parks. This girl's figure was more Junoesque than was usual with her kind, her waist larger. She was very tall. Her carriage was one of regal simplicity, as if she were wont to walk on stars. Her shining brown hair was gathered into a knot at the base of her classic head. Her brow and chin and throat were perfect in their modelling. Her skin, of a marvellous whiteness, seemed to shed a light of its own; one might surely examine it with a microscope and find no flaw. Her mouth and nose were irregular, but her large blue-gray eyes shone triumphant, and she had beautiful ears. She wore a simple gown of pale blue organdie, clinging to her faultless figure, even at the throat and wrists. At her right was the new-found relative of the Webbs, half a head too short to reach that exquisite ear with his mumblings. About her were several other men.

Andrew's capacity for love may not have been very profound, but he loved this woman at once and finally. It was a love that would have delighted the cynical Schopenhauer and the philosophical Darwin. The instinct of selection had never been more spontaneously and unerringly exercised. He was conscious of neither passion nor sentiment, however. She hovered in his visions as a companion at great functions—his possession whom all the world would envy. It was not so much her he loved as what she represented.

His attention was momentarily distracted by the remarkable antics of an elderly man. This person was bowing and genuflecting before the goddess, rolling his eyes upward, throwing out his hands, clasping and wringing them—a pantomime of speechless admiration. To Andrew he looked like an elderly billy-goat with a thorn in its hoof. The goddess looked down upon him with an expression of good-natured contempt. The men applauded heartily. Andrew once more riveted his gaze on the face which had completed his undoing. In a moment the girl's clear eyes met his, then moved past as indifferently as if she had gazed upon space. Andrew turned, forgetting his hat, and almost ran from the house, down the street, and up the stairs to his apartment. He flung himself into a chair, buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud. The hopelessness of his case surged through his brain with pitiless reiteration. He might as well attempt to fly to one of the cold stars above his casement as to besiege the society of New York. There was literally no human being out of earth's millions to give him the line that would pass him through those open invincible portals. Had he been a baboon from Central Africa, his chances would have been better; he would have compelled their attention for a moment.

There were heavy *portières* over his door; no one could hear his groans, and he afforded himself that measure of relief. The tears ran down his cheeks; he twisted his strong hands

together. Those whose hearts have been convulsed by the bitterness of love, by the loss of children, by the downfall of great hopes, may read with scorn this suffering of a snob. It may seem a mean and trivial emotion. But he has had scant opportunity to study his kind who knows nothing of the power of the snob to suffer. An artist may toil on unrecognised, yet with the deep delight of his art as compensation. A man in public life may be stung with a thousand bitter defeats, but he has the joy of the fight, the self-respect of legitimate ambition. But for the repeated defeats of even the successful snob, what compensation? Step by step he climbs, to find another still to mount, each bristling with obstacles, to which he yields the shreds and patches of his self-respect. The bitter knowledge that he is on tolerance is ever with him—that no matter how high he rises, he can never reach his goal, for at the goal are only those who have never known the need to strive. 'Tis a constant battle for a soap-bubble, an ambition without soul.

And Andrew? He had not even planted his foot on the first step. For five years he had lived in a fool's paradise, a corroding dream. There was literally nothing else on earth that he wanted. His money had come to him as the very irony of Fate. It could not give him the one thing he wished, and he had no other use for it. His dream was over. He felt like an aged man set free from an asylum for the demented after a period of incarceration which had devoured the good years of his life. He looked at what still seemed wealth to him as such a man would look at all the joys of light and liberty and taste, offered to his paralysed senses.

When the sun rose it shone down with an air of personal sympathy upon the fleet of white yachts in the bay, upon the grand old avenues, upon the relics of an historic past no cottager ever thinks of, upon the splendid houses of those who have made Newport's younger fame. And it straggled through one pair of heavy curtains and gleamed upon the white face of a young man who had joined the ranks of those that proclaim the world their conqueror.