

CONTENTS

XXVI

In which Queed forces the Old Professor's Hand, and the Old Professor takes to his Bed 330

XXVII

Sharlee Weyland reads the Morning Post; of Rev. Mr. Dayne's Fight at Ephesus and the Telephone Message that never came; of the Editor's Comment upon the Assistant Editor's Resignation, which perhaps lacked Clarity; and of how Eight Men elect a Mayor 345

XXVIII

How Words can be like Blows, and Blue Eyes stab deep; how Queed sits by a Bedside and reviews his Life; and how a Thought leaps at him and will not down 363

XXIX

In which Queed's Shoulders can bear One Man's Roguery and Another's Dishonor, and of what these Fardels cost him: how for the Second Time in his Life he stays out of Bed to think . . . 375

XXX

Death of the Old Professor, and how Queed finds that his List of Friends has grown; a Last Will and Testament; Exchange of Letters among Prominent Attorneys, which unhappily proves futile 387

XXXI

God moves in a Mysterious Way: how the finished Miss Avery appears as the Instrument of Providence; how Sharlee sees her Idol of Many Years go toppling in the Dust, and how it is her Turn to meditate in the Still Watches 397

XXXII

Second Meeting between a Citizen and the Great Pleasure-Dog Behemoth, involving Plans for Two New Homes. 416

QUEED

QUEED

I

*First Meeting between a Citizen in Spectacles and the Great
Pleasure-Dog Behemoth; also of Charles Gardiner West, a
Personage at Thirty.*

IT was five of a November afternoon, crisp and sharp, and already running into dusk. Down the street came a girl and a dog, rather a small girl and quite a behemothian dog. If she had been a shade smaller, or he a shade more behemothian, the thing would have approached a parody on one's settled idea of a girl and a dog. She had enough height to save that, but it was the narrowest sort of squeak.

The dog was of the breed which are said to come trotting into Alpine monasteries of a winter's night with fat American travelers in their mouths, frozen stiff. He was extremely large for his age, whatever that was. On the other hand, the girl was small for her age, which was twenty-four next month; not so much short, you understand, for she was of a reasonable height, as of a dainty slimness, a certain exquisite reticence of the flesh. She had cares and duties and even sober-sided responsibilities in this world, beyond the usual run of girls. Yet her hat was decidedly of the mode that year; her suit was smartly and engagingly cut; her furs were glossy and black and big. Her face, it may be said here as well as later, had in its time given pleasure to the male sex, and some food for critical conversation to the female. A good many of the young men whom she met along the way this afternoon appeared distinctly pleased to speak to her.

The girl was Sharlee Weyland, and Sharlee was the short for Charlotte Lee, as invented by herself some score of years before. One baby-name in a hundred sticks through a lifetime, and hers was the one in that particular hundred. Of the young men along the way, one was so lucky as to catch her eye through a large plate-glass window. It was Semple and West's window, the ground-floor one in the great new Commonwealth Building, of which the town is rightly so proud, and the young man was no other than West, Charles Gardiner himself. A smile warmed his good-looking face when he met the eye of the girl and the dog; he waved a hand at them. That done, he immediately vanished from the window and reached for his hat and coat; gave hurried directions to a clerk and a stenographer; and sallying forth, overtook the pair before they had reached the next corner.

"Everything's topsy-turvy," said he, coming alongside. "Here you are frivolously walking downtown with a dog. Usually at this time you are most earnestly walking uptown, and not a sign of a dog as far as the eye can see. What on earth's happened?"

"Oh, how do you do?" said she, apparently not displeased to find herself thus surprised from the rear. "I too have a mad kind of feeling, as though the world had gone upside down. Don't be amazed if I suddenly clutch out at you to keep from falling. But the name of it — of this feeling — is having a holiday. Mr. Dayne went to New York at 12.20."

"Ah, I see. When the cat's away?"

"Not at all. I am taking this richly earned vacation by his express command."

"In that case, why might n't we turn about and go a real walk — cease picking our way through the noisome hum of commerce and set brisk evening faces toward the open road — and all that? You and I and the dog. What is his name? Rollo, I suppose?"

"Rollo! No! Or Tray or Fido, either! His name is Bee, short for Behemoth — and I think that a very captivating

little name, don't you? His old name, the one I bought him by, was Fred — *Fred!* — but already he answers to the pretty name of Bee as though he were born to it. Watch." She pursed her lips and gave a whistle, unexpectedly loud and clear. "Here, Bee, here! Here, sir! Look, look. He turned around *right away!*"

West laughed. "Wonderfully gifted dog. But I believe you mentioned taking a walk in the November air. I can only say that physicians strongly recommend it, valetudinarians swear by it —"

"Oh — if I only could! — but I simply cannot think of it. Do you know, I never have a holiday without wondering how on earth I could have gotten on another day without it. You can't imagine what loads of things I've done since two o'clock, and loads remain. The very worst job of them all still hangs by a hair over my head. I must cross here."

West said that evidently her conception of a holiday was badly mixed. As they walked he paid for her society by incessantly taking off his hat; nearly everybody they met spoke to them, many more to him than to her. Though both of them had been born in that city and grown up with it, the girl had only lately come to know West well, and she did not know him very well now. All the years hitherto she had joined in the general admiration of him shyly and from a distance, the pretty waiting-lady's attitude toward the dazzling young crown prince. She was observant, and so she could not fail to observe now the cordiality with which people of all sorts saluted him, the touch of deference in the greeting of not a few. He was scarcely thirty, but it would have been clear to a duller eye that he was already something of a personage. Yet he held no public office, nor were his daily walks the walks of philanthropic labor for the common good. In fact Semple & West's was merely a brokerage establishment, which was understood to be cleaning up a tolerable lot of money per annum.

They stood on the corner, waiting for a convenient chance to cross, and West looked at her as at one whom it was

pleasant to rest one's eyes upon. She drew his attention to their humming environment. For a city of that size the life and bustle here were, indeed, such as to take the eye. Trolley cars clanged by in a tireless procession; trucks were rounding up for stable and for bed; delivery wagons whizzed corners and bumped on among them; now and then a chauffeur honked by, grim eyes roving for the unwary pedestrian. On both sides of the street the homeward march of tired humans was already forming and quickening.

"Heigho! We're living in an interesting time, you and I," said West. "It isn't every generation that can watch its old town change into a metropolis right under its eyes."

"I remember," said she, "when it was an exciting thing to see anybody on the street you did n't know. You went home and told the family about it, and very likely counted the spoons next morning. The city seemed to belong to *us* then. And now — look. Everywhere new kings that know not Joseph. Bee!"

"It's the law of life; the old order changeth." He turned and looked along the street, into the many faces of the homeward bound. "The eternal mystery of the people. . . . Don't you like to look at their faces and wonder what they're all doing and thinking and hoping and dreaming to make out of their lives?"

"Don't you think they're all hoping and dreaming just one thing? — how to make more money than they're making at present? All over the world," said Miss Weyland, "bright young men lie awake at night, thinking up odd, ingenious ways to take other people's money away from them. These young men are the spirit of America. We're having an irruption of them here now . . . the Goths sacking the sacred city."

"Clever rascals they are too. I," said West, "belong to the other group. I sleep of nights and wake up in the morning to have your bright young Goths take my money away from me."

He laughed and continued: "Little Bobby Smythe, who used to live here, was in my office the other day. I was complimenting him on the prosperity of the plumbers' supply manufacture — for such is his mundane occupation, in Schenectady, N. Y. Bobby said that plumbers' supplies were all well enough, but he made his real money from an interesting device of his own. There is a lot of building going on in his neighborhood, it seems, and it occurred to him to send around to the various owners and offer his private watchman to guard the loose building materials at night. This for the very reasonable price of \$3.50 a week. It went like hot cakes. 'But,' said I, 'surely your one watchman can't look after thirty-seven different places.' 'No,' said Bobby, 'but they think he does.' I laughed and commended his ingenuity. 'But the best part of the joke,' said he, 'is that *I have n't got any watchman at all.*'"

Sharlee Weyland laughed gayly. "Bobby could stand for the portrait of young America."

"You've been sitting at the feet of a staunch old Tory Gamaliel named Colonel Cowles. I can see that. Ah, me! My garrulity has cost us a splendid chance to cross. What are all these dreadful things you have still left to do on your so-called holiday?"

"Well," said she, "first I'm going to Saltman's to buy stationery. Boxes and boxes of it, for the Department. Bee! Come here, sir! Look how fat this purse is. I'm going to spend all of that. Bee! I wish I had put him to leash. He's going to hurt himself in a minute — you see! —"

"Don't you think he's much more likely to hurt somebody else? For a guess, that queer-looking little citizen in spectacles over the way, who so evidently does n't know where he is at."

"Oh, do you think so? — Bee! . . . Then, after stationery, comes the disagreeable thing, and yet interesting too. I have to go to my Aunt Jennie's, dunning."

"You are compelled to dun your Aunt Jennie?"

She laughed. "No — dun *for* her, because she's too

tender-hearted to do it herself. There's a man there who won't pay his board. Bee! Bee! — BEE! — O heavens — It's happened!"

And, too quick for West, she was gone into the mêlée, which immediately closed in behind her, barricading him away.

What had happened was a small tragedy in its way. The little citizen in spectacles, who had been standing on the opposite corner vacantly eating an apple out of a paper bag, had unwisely chosen his moment to try the crossing. He was evidently an indoors sort of man and no shakes at crossing streets, owing to the introspective nature of his mind. A grocery wagon shaved him by an inch. It was doing things to the speed-limit, this wagon, because a dashing police patrol was close behind, treading on its tail and indignantly clanging it to turn out, which it could not possibly do. To avoid erasing the little citizen, the patrol man had to pull sharply out; and this manœuvre, as Fate had written it, brought him full upon the great dog Behemoth, who, having slipped across the tracks, stood gravely waiting for the flying wagon to pass. Thus it became a clear case of *sauve qui peut*, and the devil take the hindmost. There was nothing in the world for Behemoth to do but wildly leap under the hoofs for his life. This he did successfully. But on the other side he met the spectacled citizen full and fair, and down they went together with a thud.

The little man came promptly to a sitting posture and took stock of the wreck. His hat he could not see anywhere, the reason being that he was sitting on it. The paper bag, of course, had burst; some of the apples had rolled to amazing distances, and newsboys, entire strangers to the fallen gentleman, were eating them with cries of pleasure. This he saw in one pained glance. But on the very heels of the dog, it seemed, came hurrying a girl with marks of great anxiety on her face.

"Can you possibly forgive him? That fire-alarm thing scared him crazy — he's usually so good! You are n't hurt, are you? I do hope so much that you are n't?"

The young man, sitting calmly in the street, glanced up at Miss Weyland with no sign of interest.

"I have no complaint to make," he answered, precisely; "though the loss of my fruit seems unfortunate, to say the least of it."

"I know! The way they fell on them," she answered, as self-unconscious as he — "quite as though you had offered to treat! I'm very much mortified — But — *are* you hurt? I thought for a minute that the coal cart was going right over you."

A crowd had sprung up in a wink; a circle of interested faces watching the unembarrassed girl apologizing to the studious-looking little man who sat so calmly upon his hat in the middle of the street. Meantime all traffic on that side was hopelessly blocked. Swearing truck drivers stood up on their seats from a block away to see what had halted the procession.

"But what is the object of a dog like that?" inquired the man ruminatively. "What good is he? What is he for?"

"Why — why — why," said she, looking ready to laugh — "he's not a *utilitarian* dog at all, you see! He's a pleasure-dog, you know — just a big, beautiful dog to give pleasure! —"

"The pleasure he has given me," said the man, gravely producing his derby from beneath him and methodically undenting it, "is negligible. I may say non-existent."

From somewhere rose a hoarse titter. The girl glanced up, and for the first time became aware that her position was somewhat unconventional. A very faint color sprang into her cheeks, but she was not the kind to retreat in disorder. West dodged through the blockade in time to hear her say with a final, smiling bow:

"I'm so glad you are n't hurt, believe me . . . And if my dog has given you no pleasure, you may like to think that you have given him a great deal."

A little flushed but not defeated, her gloved hand knotted in Behemoth's gigantic scruff, she moved away, resigning the

situation to West. West handled it in his best manner, civilly assisting the little man to rise, and bowing himself off with the most graceful expressions of regret for the mishap.

Miss Weyland was walking slowly, waiting for him, and he fell in beside her on the sidewalk.

"Don't speak to me suddenly," said she, in rather a muffled voice. "I don't want to scream on a public street."

"Scratch a professor and you find a Tartar," said West, laughing too. "When I finally caught you, laggard that I was, you looked as if he were being rude."

Miss Weyland questioned the rudeness; she said that the man was only superbly natural. "Thoughts came to him and he blabbed them out artlessly. The only things that he seemed in the least interested in were his apples and Bee. Don't you think from this that he must be a floral and faunal naturalist?"

"No Goth, at any rate. Did you happen to notice the tome sticking out of his coat pocket? It was *The Religion of Humanity*, unless my old eyes deceived me. Who under heaven reads Comte nowadays?"

"Not me," said Miss Weyland.

"There's nothing to it. As a wealthy old friend of mine once remarked, people who read that sort of books never make over eighteen hundred a year."

On that they turned into Saltman's. There much stationery and collateral stuff was bought for cash paid down, and all for the use of the Department. Next, at a harness-store, a leash was bargained for and obtained, and Behemoth bowled over no more young men that day. Thereafter, the two set their faces westerly till they came to the girl's home, where the dog was delivered to the cook, and Miss Weyland went upstairs to kiss her mother. Still later they set out northward through the lamp-lit night for the older part of town, where resided the aunt on whose behalf there was dunning to be done that night.

Charles Gardiner West asserted that he had not a thing in all this world to do, and that erranding was only another

way of taking a walk, when you came to think of it. She was frankly glad of his company; to be otherwise was to be fantastic; and now as they strolled she led him to talk of his work, which was never difficult. For West, despite his rising prosperity, was dissatisfied with his calling, the reason being, as he himself sometimes put it, that his heart did not abide with the money changers.

"Sometimes at night," he said seriously, "I look back over the busy day and ask myself what it has all amounted to. Suppose I did all the world's stock-jobbing, what would I really have accomplished? You may say that I could take all the money I made and spend it for free hospitals, but would I do it? No. The more I made, the more I'd want for myself, the more all my interest and ambition would twine themselves around the counting-room. You can't serve two masters, can you, Miss Weyland? Uplifting those who need uplifting is a separate business, all by itself."

"You could make the money," laughed she, "and let me spend it for you. I know this minute where I could put a million to glorious advantage."

"I'm going to get out of it," said West. "I've told Semple so—though perhaps it ought not to go further just yet. I'd enjoy," said he, "just such work as yours. There's none finer. You'd like me immensely as your royal master, I suppose? Want nothing better than to curtsy and kowtow when I flung out a gracious order?—as, for instance, to shut up shop and go and take a holiday?"

"Delicious! Though I doubt if anybody in the world could improve on Mr. Dayne." Suddenly a new thought struck her, and she made a faint grimace. "There's nothing so very fine about my present work—oh me! I'll give you that if you want it."

"I see I must look this gift horse over very closely. What is it?"

"They call it dunning."

"I forgot. You started to tell me, and then your dog ran

amuck and began butting perfect strangers all over the place."

"Oh," said she, "it's the commonest little story in the world. All landladies can tell them to you by the hour. This man has been at Aunt Jennie's nearly a month, and what's the color of his money she has n't the faintest idea. Such is the way our bright young men carve out their fortunes — the true Gothic architecture! Possibly Aunt Jennie has thrown out one or two delicate hints, carefully insulated to avoid hurting his feelings. You know the way our ladies of the old school do — the worst collectors the world has ever seen. So she telephoned me this morning — I'm her business woman, you see — asking me to come and advise her, and I'm coming, and after supper—"

"Well, what'll you do?"

"I'm going to talk with him, with the man. I'm simply going to *collect that money*. Or if I can't —"

"What's the horrid alternative?"

"I'm going to *fire* him!"

West laughed merrily. His face always looked most charming when he smiled. "Upon my word I believe you can do it."

"I *have* done it, lots of times."

"Ah! And is the ceremony ever attended by scenes of storm and violence?"

"Never. They march like little lambs when I say the word. Hay-foot — straw-foot!"

"But then your aunt loses their arrears of board, I suppose."

"Yes, and for that reason I never fire except as a last desperate resort. Signs of penitence, earnest resolves to lead a better life, are always noted and carefully considered."

"If you *should* need help with this customer to-night — not that I think you will, oh no! — telephone me. I'm amazingly good at handling bright young men. This is your aunt's, is n't it?"

"No, no — next to the corner over there. O heavens! Look — *look!*"

West looked. Up the front steps of Miss Weyland's

Aunt Jennie's a man was going, a smallish man in a suit of dusty clothes, who limped as he walked. The electric light at the corner illumined him perfectly — glinted upon the spectacles, touched up the stout volume in the coat-pocket, beat full upon the swaybacked derby, whereon its owner had sat what time Charlotte Lee Weyland apologized for the gaucherie of Behemoth. And as they watched, this man pushed open Aunt Jennie's front door, with never so much as a glance at the door-bell, and stepped as of right inside.

Involuntarily West and Miss Weyland had halted; and now they stared at each other with a kind of wild surmise which rapidly yielded to ludicrous certainty. West broke into a laugh.

"Well, do you think you'll have the nerve to fire *him?*"