

"Not everybody who stops to think is so generous. . . ."

This thought, too, Mr. West abolished by 'a word.

"But you will like the work, won't you!" continued Sharlee, still self-reproachful. "I do hope you will."

"I shall like it immensely," said West, above pretending, as some regents would have done, that he was martyring himself for his friend, the king. "Where can you find any bigger or nobler work? At Blaines College of blessed memory, the best I could hope for was to reach and influence a handful of lumpish boys. How tremendously broader is the opportunity on the *Post!* Think of having a following of a hundred thousand readers a day! (You allow three or four readers to a copy, you know.) Think of talking every morning to such an audience as that, preaching progress and high ideals, courage and honesty and kindness and faith — moulding their opinions and beliefs, their ambitions, their very habits of thought, as I think they ought to be moulded. . . ."

He talked in about this vein till eleven o'clock, and Sharlee listened with sincere admiration. Nevertheless, he left her still troubled by a faint doubt as to how Mr. Queed himself felt about what had been done for his larger good. But when she next saw Queed, only a few days later, this doubt instantly dissolved and vanished. She had never seen him less inclined to indict the world and his fortune.

XXI

Queed sits on the Steps with Sharlee, and sees Some Old Soldiers go marching by.

FAR as the eye could see, either way, the street was two parallels of packed humanity. Both sidewalks, up and down, were loaded to capacity and spilling off surplus down the side-streets. Navigation was next to impossible; as for crossing you were a madman to think of such a thing. At the sidewalks' edge policemen patrolled up and down in the street with their incessant cry of "Back there!" — pausing now and then to dislodge small boys from trees, whither they had climbed at enormous peril to themselves and innocent by-standers. Bunting, flags, streamers were everywhere; now and then a floral arch bearing words of welcome spanned the roadway; circus day in a small town was not a dot upon the atmosphere of thrilled expectancy so all-pervasive here. It was, in fact, the crowning occasion of the Confederate Reunion, and the fading remnants of Lee's armies were about to pass in annual parade and review.

Mrs. Weyland's house stood full on the line of march. It was the house she had come to as a bride; she owned it; and because it could not easily be converted over her head into negotiable funds, it had escaped the predacious clutches of Henry G. Surface. After the crash, it would doubtless have been sensible to sell it and take something cheaper; but sentiment made her cling to this house, and her daughter, in time, went to work to uphold sentiment's hands. It was not a large house, or a fine one, but it did have a very comfortable little porch. To-day this porch was beautifully decorated, like the whole town, with the colors of two countries, one living and one dead; and the decorations for the dead were three times greater than the decorations for the

living. And why not? Yet, at that, Sharlee was liberal-minded and a thorough-going nationalist. On some houses, the decorations for the dead were five times greater, like Benjamin's mess; on others, ten times; on yet others, no colors at all floated but the beloved Stars and Bars.

Upon the steps of Mrs. Weyland's porch sat Mr. Queed, come by special invitation of Mrs. Weyland's daughter to witness the parade.

The porch, being so convenient for seeing things, was hospitably taxed to its limits. New people kept turning in at the gate, mostly ladies, mostly white-haired ladies wearing black, and Sharlee was incessantly springing up to greet them. However, Queed, feeling that the proceedings might be instructive to him, had had the foresight to come early, before the sidewalks solidified with spectators; and at first, and spasmodically thereafter, he had some talk with Sharlee.

"So you did n't forget?" she said, in greeting him.

He eyed her reflectively. "When I was seven years old," he began, "Tim once asked me to attend to something for him while he went out for a minute. It was to mind some bacon that he had put on to broil for supper. I became absorbed in a book I was reading, and Tim came back to find the bacon a crisp. I believe I have never forgotten anything from that day to this. You have a holiday at the Department?"

"Why, do you suppose we'd work *to-day!*" said Sharlee, and introduced him to her mother, who, having attentively overheard his story of Tim and the bacon, proceeded to look him over with some care.

Sharlee left them for a moment, and came back bearing a flag about the size of a man's visiting card.

"You are one of us, are n't you? I have brought you," she said, "your colors."

Queed looked and recognized the flag that was everywhere in predominance that day. "And what will it mean if I wear it?"

"Only," said Sharlee, "that you love the South."

Vaguely Queed saw in her blue-spar eyes the same kind of softness that he noticed in people's voices this afternoon, a softness which somehow reminded him of a funeral, Fifi's or Colonel Cowles's.

"Oh, very well, if you like."

Sharlee put the flag in his buttonhole under her mother's watchful gaze. Then she got cushions and straw-mats, and explained their uses in connection with steps. Next, she gave a practical demonstration of the same by seating the young man, and sitting down beside him.

"One thing I have noticed about loving the South. Everybody does it, who takes the trouble to know us. Look at the people! — millions and millions. . . ."

"Colonel Cowles would have liked this."

"Yes — dear old man." Sharlee paused a moment, and then went on. "He was in the parade last year — on the beautifullest black horse — You never saw anything so handsome as he looked that day. It was in Savannah, and I went. I was a maid of honor, but my real duties were to keep him from marching around in the hot sun all day. And now this year . . . You see, that is what makes it so sad. When these old men go tramping by, everybody is thinking: 'Hundreds of them won't be here next year, and hundreds more the next year, and soon will come a year when there won't be any parade at all.'"

She sprang up to welcome a new arrival, whom she greeted as either Aunt Mary or Cousin Maria, we really cannot undertake to say which.

Queed glanced over the group on the porch, to most of whom he had been introduced, superfluously, as it seemed to him. There must have been twenty or twenty-five of them; some seated, some standing at the rail, some sitting near him on the steps; but all, regardless of age and sex, wearing the Confederate colors. He noticed particularly the white-haired old ladies, and somehow their faces, also, put him in mind of Fifi's or Colonel Cowles's funeral.

Sharlee came and sat down by him again. "Mr. Queed,"

said she, "I don't know whether you expect sympathy about what the *Post* directors did, or congratulations."

"Oh, congratulations," he answered at once. "Considering that they wanted to discharge me a year ago, I should say that the testimonial they gave me represented a rather large change of front."

"Personally, I think it is splendid. But the important thing is: does it satisfy *you*?"

"Oh, quite." He added: "If they had gone outside for a man, I might have felt slighted. It is very different with a man like West. I am perfectly willing to wait. You may remember that I did not promise to be editor in any particular year."

"I know. And when they do elect you — you see I say when, and not if — shall you pitch it in their faces, as you said?"

"No — I have decided to keep it — for a time at any rate."

Sharlee smiled, but it was an inward smile and he never knew anything about it. "Have you gotten really interested in the work — personally interested, I mean?"

He hesitated. "I hardly like to say how much."

"The more you become interested in it — and I believe it will be progressive — the less you will mind saying so."

"It is a strange interest — utterly unlike me —"

"How do you know it is n't more like you than anything you ever did in your life?"

That struck him to silence; he gave her a quick inquiring glance, and looked away at once; and Sharlee, for the moment entirely oblivious of the noise and the throng all about her, went on.

"I called that a magnificent boast once — about your being editor of the *Post*. Do you remember? Is n't it time I was confessing that you have got the better of me?"

"I think it is too soon," he answered, in his quietest voice, "to say whether I have got the better of you, or you have got the better of me."

Sharlee looked off down the street. "But you certainly will be editor of the *Post* some day."

"As I recall it, we did not speak only of editorial writing that night."

"Oh, listen . . . !"

From far away floated the strains of "Dixie," crashed out by forty bands. The crowd on the sidewalks stirred; prolonged shouts went up; and now all those who were seated on the porch arose at one motion and came forward.

Sharlee had to spring up to greet still another relative. She came back in a moment, sincerely hoping that Mr. Queed would resume the conversation which her exclamation had interrupted. But he spoke of quite a different matter, a faint cloud on his intelligent brow.

"You should hear Professor Nicolovius on these veterans of yours."

"What does he say about them? Something hateful, I'm sure."

"Among other things, that they are a lot of professional beggars who have lived for forty years on their gray uniforms, and can best serve their country by dying with all possible speed. Do you know," he mused, "if you could hear him, I believe you would be tempted to guess that he is a former Union officer — who got into trouble, perhaps, and was cashiered."

"But of course you know all about him?"

"No," said he, honest, but looking rather annoyed at having given her such an opening, "I know only what he told me."

"Sharlee," came her mother's voice from the rear, "are you sitting on the cold stone?"

"No, mother. Two mats and a cushion."

"Well, he is not a Union officer," said Sharlee to Queed, "for if he were, he would not be bitter. All the bitterness nowadays comes from the non-combatants, the camp-followers, the sutlers, and the cowards. Look, Mr. Queed! *Look!*"

The street had become a tumult, the shouting grew into a

roar. Two squares away the head of the parade swept into view, and drew steadily nearer. Mr. Queed looked, and felt a thrill in despite of himself.

At the head of the column came the escort, with the three regimental bands, mounted and bicycle police, city officials, visiting military, sons of veterans, and the militia, including the resplendent Light Infantry Blues of Richmond, a crack drill regiment with an honorable history dating from 1789, and the handsomest uniforms ever seen. Behind the escort rode the honored commander-in-chief of the veterans, and staff, the grand marshal and staff, and a detachment of mounted veterans. The general commanding rode a dashing white horse, which he sat superbly despite his years, and received an ovation all along the line. An even greater ovation went to two festooned carriages which rolled behind the general staff: they contained four black-clad women, no longer young, who bore names that had been dear to the hearts of the Confederacy. After these came the veterans afoot, stepping like youngsters, for that was their pride, in faded equipments which contrasted sharply with the shining trappings of the militia. They marched by state divisions, each division marshaled into brigades, each brigade subdivided again into camps. At the head of each division rode the major-general and staff, and behind each staff came a carriage containing the state's sponsor and maids of honor. And everywhere there were bands, bands playing "Dixie," and the effect would have been even more glorious, if only any two of them had played the same part of it at the same time.

Everybody was standing. It is doubtful if in all the city there was anybody sitting now, save those restrained by physical disabilities. Conversation on the Weyland piazza became exceedingly disjointed. Everybody was excitedly calling everybody else's attention to things that seemed particularly important in the passing spectacle. To Queed the amount these people appeared to know about it all was amazing. All during the afternoon he heard Sharlee identi-

fying fragments of regiments with a sureness of knowledge that he, an authority on knowledge, marveled at.

The escort passed, and the officers and staffs drew on. The fine-figured old commander-in-chief, when he came abreast, turned and looked full at the Weyland piazza, seemed to search it for a face, and swept his plumed hat to his stirrup in a profound bow. The salute was greeted on the porch with a burst of hand-clapping and a great waving of flags.

"That was for my grandmother. He was in love with her in 1850," said Sharlee to Queed, and immediately whisked away to tell something else to somebody else.

One of the first groups of veterans in the line, heading the Virginia Division, was the popular R. E. Lee Camp of Richmond. All afternoon they trod to the continual accompaniment of cheers. No exclusive "show" company ever marched in better time than these septuagenarians, and this was everywhere the subject of comment. A Grand Army man stood in the press on the sidewalk, and, struck by the gallant step of the old fellows, yelled out good-naturedly:—

"You boys been drillin' to learn to march like that, have n't you?"

Instantly a white-beard in the ranks called back: "No, sir! *We never have forgot!*"

Other camps were not so rhythmic in their tread. Some of the lines were very dragging and straggly; the old feet shuffled and faltered in a way which showed that their march was nearly over. Not fifty yards away from Queed, one veteran pitched out of the ranks; he was lifted up and received into the house opposite which he fell. Sadder than the men were the old battle-flags, soiled wisps that the aged hands held aloft with the most solicitous care. The flag-poles were heavy and the men's arms weaker than once they were; sometimes two or even three men acted jointly as standard-bearer.

These old flags, mere unrecognizable fragments as many of them were, were popular with the onlookers. Each as it marched by, was hailed with a new roar. Of course there were many tears. There was hardly anybody in all that crowd,

over fifty years old, in whom the sight of these fast dwindling ranks did not stir memories of some personal bereavement. The old ladies on the porch no longer used their handkerchiefs chiefly for waving. Queed saw one of them wave hers frantically toward a drooping little knot of passing gray-coats, and then fall back into a chair, the same handkerchief at her eyes. Sharlee, who was explaining everything that anybody wanted to know, happened to be standing near him; she followed his glance and whispered gently:—

“Her husband and two of her brothers were killed at Gettysburg. Her husband was in Pickett’s Division. Those were Pickett’s men that just passed—about all there are left now.”

A little while afterwards, she added: “It is not so gay as one of your Grand Army Days, is it? You see . . . it all comes home very close to us. Those old men that can’t be with us much longer are our mothers’ brothers, and sweethearts, and uncles, and fathers. They went out so young—so brave and full of hope—they poured out by hundreds of thousands. Down this very street they marched, no more than boys, and our mothers stood here where we are standing, to bid them godspeed. And now look at what is left of them, straggling by. There is nobody on this porch—but you—who did not lose somebody that was dear to them. . . . And then there was our pride . . . for we were proud. So that is why our old ladies cry to-day.”

“And why your young ladies cry, too?”

“Oh, . . . I am not crying.”

“Don’t you suppose I know when people are crying and when they are n’t?—Why do you do it?”

Sharlee lowered her eyes. “Well . . . it’s all pretty sad, you know . . . pretty sad.”

She turned away, leaving him to his own devices. From his place on the top step, Queed turned and let his frank glance run over the ladies on the porch. The sadness of face that he had noticed earlier had dissolved and precipitated now: there was hardly a dry eye on that porch but his own.

What were they all crying for? Miss Weyland’s explanation did not seem very convincing. The war had ended a generation ago. The whole thing had been over and done with many years before she was born.

He turned again, and looked out with unseeing eyes over the thick street, with the thin strip of parade moving down the middle of it. He guessed that these ladies on the porch were not crying for definite brothers, or fathers, or sweethearts they had lost. People did n’t do that after forty years; here was Fifi only dead a year, and he never saw anybody crying for her. No, they were weeping over an idea; it was sentiment, and a vague, misty, unreasonable sentiment at that. And yet he could not say that Miss Weyland appeared simply foolish with those tears in her eyes. No, the girl somehow managed to give the effect of seeing farther into things than he himself. . . . Her tears evidently were in the nature of a tribute: she was paying them to an idea. Doubtless there was a certain largeness about that. But obviously the paying of such a tribute could do no possible good—unless—to the payer. Was there anything in that?—in the theory. . . .

Unusual bursts of cheering broke their way into his consciousness, and he recalled himself to see a squad of negro soldiers, all very old men, hobbling by. These were of the faithful, whom no number of proclamations could shake from allegiance to Old Marster. One of them declared himself to be Stonewall Jackson’s cook. Very likely Stonewall Jackson’s cooks are as numerous as once were ladies who had been kissed by LaFayette, but at any rate this old negro was the object of lively interest all along the line. He was covered with reunion badges, and carried two live chickens under his arm.

Queed went down to the bottom step, the better to hear the comments of the onlookers, for this was what interested him most. He found himself standing next to an exceptionally clean-cut young fellow of about his own age. This youth appeared a fine specimen of the sane, wholesome, successful

young American business man. Yet he was behaving like a madman, yelling like Bedlam, wildly flaunting his hat — a splendid-looking Panama — now and then savagely brandishing his fists at an unseen foe. Queed heard him saying fiercely, apparently to the world at large: "They could n't lick us now. By the Lord, they could n't lick us now!"

Queed said to him: "You were badly outnumbered when they licked you."

Flaunting his hat passionately at the thin columns, the young man shouted into space: "Outnumbered — outarmed — outequipped — outrated — but not outgeneraled, sir, not outsoldiered, not outmanned!"

"You seem a little excited about it. Yet you've had forty years to get used to it."

"Ah," brandished the young man at the soldiers, a glad battlenote breaking into his voice, "I'm being addressed by a Yankee, am I?"

"No," said Queed, "you are being addressed by an American."

"That's a fair reply," said the young man; and consented to take his eyes from the parade a second to glance at the author of it. "Hello! You're Doc — Mr. Queed, are n't you?"

Queed, surprised, admitted his identity.

"Ye-a-a-a!" said the young man, in a mighty voice. This time he shouted it directly at a tall old gentleman whose horse was just then dancing by. The gentleman smiled, and waved his hand at the flaunted Panama.

"A fine-looking man," said Queed.

"My father," said the young man. "God bless his heart!"

"Was your father in the war?"

"Was he in the war? My dear sir, you might say that he *was* the war. But you could scrape this town with a fine-tooth comb without finding anybody of his age that was n't in the war."

The necessity for a new demonstration checked his speech for a moment.

Queed said: "Who are these veterans? What sort of people are they?"

"The finest fellows in the world," said the young man. "An occasional dead-beat among them, of course, but it's amazing how high an average of character they strike, considering that they came out of four years of war — war's demoralizing, you know! — with only their shirts to their backs, and often those were only borrowed. You'll find some mighty solid business men in the ranks out there, and then on down to the humblest occupations. Look! See that little one-legged man with the beard that everybody's cheering! That's Corporal Henkel of Petersburg, commended I don't know how many times for bravery, and they would have given him the town for a keepsake when it was all over, if he had wanted it. Well, Henkel's a cobbler — been one since '65 — and let me tell you he's a blamed good one, and if you're ever in Petersburg and want any half-soleing done, let me tell you — Yea-a-a! See that trim-looking one with the little mustache — saluting now? He tried to save Stonewall Jackson's life on the 2d of May, 1863, — threw himself in front of him and got badly potted. He's a D. D. now. Yea-a-a-a!"

A victoria containing two lovely young girls, sponsor and maid of honor for South Carolina, dressed just alike, with parasols and enormous hats, rolled by. The girls smiled kindly at the young man, and he went through a very proper salute.

"Watch the people!" he dashed on eagerly. "Wonderful how they love these old soldiers, is n't it? — they'd give 'em anything! And what a fine thing that is for them! — for the people, not the soldiers, I mean. I tell you we all give too much time to practical things — business — making money — taking things away from each other. It's a fine thing to have a day now and then which appeals to just the other side of us — a regular sentimental spree. Do you see what I mean? Maybe I'm talking like an ass. . . . But when you talk about Americans, Mr. Queed — let me tell you that

there is n't a State in the country that is raising better Americans than we are raising right here in this city. We're as solid for the Union as Boston. But that is n't saying that we have forgotten all about the biggest happening in our history — the thing that threw over our civilization, wiped out our property, and turned our State into a graveyard. If we forgot that, we would n't be Americans, because we would n't be men."

He went on fragmentarily, ever and anon interrupting himself to give individual ovations to his heroes and his gods: —

"Through the North and West you may have one old soldier to a village; here we have one to a house. For you it was a foreign war, which meant only dispatches in the newspapers. For us it was a war on our own front lawns, and the way we followed it was by the hearses backing up to the door. You can hardly walk a mile in any direction out of this city without stumbling upon an old breastworks. And in the city — well, you know all the great old landmarks, all around us as we stand here now. On this porch behind us sits a lady who knew Lee well. Many's the talk she had with him after the war. My mother, a bride then, sat in the pew behind Davis that Sunday he got the message which meant that the war was over. History! Why this old town drips with it. Do you think we should forget our heroes, Mr. Queed? Up there in Massachusetts, if you have a place where John Samuel Quincy Adams once stopped for a cup of tea, you fence it off, put a brass plate on the front door, and charge a nickel to go in. Which will history say is the greater man, Sam Adams or Robert E. Lee? If these were Washington's armies going by, you would probably feel a little excited, though you have had a hundred and twenty years to get used to Yorktown and the Philadelphia Congress. Well, Washington is no more to the nation than Lee is to the South.

"But don't let anybody get concerned about our patriotism. We're better Americans, not worse, because of days like these, the reason being, as I say, that we are better

men. And if your old Uncle Sammy gets into trouble some day, never fear but we'll be on hand to pull him out, with the best troops that ever stepped, and another Lee to lead them."

Somewhere during the afternoon there had returned to Queed the words in which Sharlee Weyland had pointed out to him — quite unnecessarily — that he was standing here between two civilizations. On the porch now sat Miss Weyland's grandmother, representative of the dead aristocracy. By his side stood, clearly, a representative of the rising democracy — one of those "splendid young men" who, the girl thought, would soon be beating the young men of the North at every turn. It was valuable professionally to catch the point of view of these new democrats; and now he had grasped the fact that whatever the changes in outward form, it had an unbroken sentimental continuity with the type which it was replacing.

"Did you ever hear Ben Hill's tribute to Lee?" inquired the young man presently.

Queed happened to know it very well. However, the other could not be restrained from reciting it for his own satisfaction.

"It is good — a good piece of writing and a fine tribute," said Queed. "However, I read a shorter and in some ways an even better one in *Harper's Weekly* the other day."

"*Harper's Weekly!* Good Heavens! They'll find out that William Lloyd Garrison was for us next. What'd it say?"

"It was in answer to some correspondents who called Lee a traitor. The editor wrote five lines to say that, while it would be exceedingly difficult ever to make 'traitor' a word of honorable distinction, it would be done if people kept on applying it to Lee. In that case, he said, we should have to find a new word to mean what traitor means now."

The young man thought this over until its full meaning sank into him. "I don't know how you could say anything finer of a man," he remarked presently, "than that applying a disgraceful epithet to him left him entirely untouched, but

changed the whole meaning of the epithet. By George, that's pretty fine!"

"My only criticism on the character, or rather on the greatness, of Lee," said Queed, introspectively, "is that, so far as I have ever read, he never got angry. One feels that a hero should be a man of terrible passions, so strong that once or twice in his life they get away from him. Washington always seems a bigger man because of his blast at Charles Lee."

The young man seemed interested by this point of view. He said that he would ask Mrs. Beauregard about it.

Not much later he said with a sigh: "Well! — It's about over. And now I must pay for my fun — duck back to the office for a special night session."

Queed had taken a vague fancy to this youth, whose enviously pleasant manners reminded him somehow of Charles Gardiner West. "I supposed that it was only in newspaper offices that work went on without regard to holidays."

The young man laughed, and held out his hand. "I'm very industrious, if you please. I'm delighted to have met you, Mr. Queed — I've known of you for a long time. My name's Byrd — Beverley Byrd — and I wish you'd come and see me some time. Good-by. I hope I have n't bored you with all my war-talk. I lost a grandfather and three uncles in it, and I can't help being interested."

The last of the parade went by; the dense crowd broke and overran the street; and Queed stood upon the bottom step taking his leave of Miss Weyland. Much interested, he had lingered till the other guests were gone; and now there was nobody upon the porch but Miss Weyland's mother and grandmother, who sat at the further end of it, the eyes of both, did Mr. Queed but know it, upon him.

"Why don't you come to see me sometimes?" the daughter and granddaughter was saying sweetly. "I think you will have to come now, for this was a party, and a party calls for a party-call. Oh, can you make as clever a pun as that?"

"Thank you — but I never pay calls."

"Oh, but you are beginning to do a good many things that you never did before."

"Yes," he answered with curious depression. "I am."

"Well, don't look so glum about it. You must n't think that any change in your ways of doing is necessarily for the worse!"

He refused to take up the cudgels; an uncanny thing from him. "Well! I am obliged to you for inviting me here to-day. It has been interesting and — instructive."

"And now you have got us all neatly docketed on your sociological operating table, I suppose?"

"I am inclined to think," he said slowly, "that it is you who have got me on the operating table again."

He gave her a quick glance, at once the unhappiest and the most human look that she had ever seen upon his face.

"No," said she, gently, — "if you are on the table, you have put yourself there this time."

"Well, good-by —"

"And are you coming to see me — to pay your party-call?"

"Why should I? What is the point of these conventions — these little rules —?"

"Don't you *like* being with me? Don't you get a *great deal* of pleasure from my society?"

"I have never asked myself such a question."

He was gazing at her for a third time; and a startled look sprang suddenly into his eyes. It was plain that he was asking himself such a question now. A curious change passed over his face; a kind of dawning consciousness which, it was obvious, embarrassed him to the point of torture, while he resolutely declined to flinch at it.

"Yes — I get pleasure from your society."

The admission turned him rather white, but he saved himself by instantly flinging at her: "However, *I am no hedonist.*"

Sharlee retired to look up hedonist in the dictionary.

Later that evening, Mrs. Weyland and her daughter being together upstairs, the former said: —

"Sharlee, who is this Mr. Queed that you paid so much attention to on the porch this evening?"

"Why, don't you know, mother? He is the assistant editor of the *Post*, and is going to be editor just the minute Mr. West retires. For you see, mother, everybody says that he writes the most wonderful articles, although I assure you, a year ago —"

"Yes, but who is he? Where does he come from? Who are his people?"

"Oh, I see. That is what you mean. Well, he comes from New York, where he led the most interesting literary sort of life, studying all the time, except when he was doing articles for the great reviews, or helping a lady up there to write a thesaurus. You see, he was fitting himself to compose a great work —"

"Who are his people?"

"Oh, that!" said Sharlee. "Well, that question is not so easy to answer as you might think. It opens up a peculiar situation: to begin with, he is a sort of an orphan, and —"

"How do you mean, a sort of an orphan?"

"You see, that is just where the peculiar part comes in. There is the heart of the whole mystery, and yet right there is the place where I must be reticent with you, mother, for though I know all about it, it was told to me confidentially — professionally, as my aunt's agent — and therefore —"

"Do you mean that you know nothing about his people?"

"I suppose it might be stated, crudely, in that way, but —"

"And knowing nothing about who or what he was, you simply picked him up at the boarding-house, and admitted him to your friendship?"

"Picking-up is not the word that the most careful mothers employ, in reference to their daughters' attitude toward young men. Mother, don't you understand? I'm a democrat."

"It is not a thing," said Mrs. Weyland, with some asperity, "for a lady to be."

Sharlee, fixing her hair in the back before the mirror, laughed long and merrily. "Do you dare — do you *dare* look your own daughter in the eye and say she is no lady?"

"Do you like this young man?" Mrs. Weyland continued.

"He interests me, heaps and heaps."

Mrs. Weyland sighed. "I can only say," she observed, sinking into a chair and picking up her book, "that such goings on were never heard of in my day."