regular habits, his devotion to duty, were bound to preserve him from all perils; the club courses would do the rest.

ETTA'S mother took in boarders; the house offered but little of the seclusion dear to lovers. After many alarms suffered in the front parlor from boarders supposed to be in bed and who were not, Etta had fitted a small back hall room as the private family "sitting room." This the family was taught to evacuate as though it had been mined, promptly upon the striking of 9; after which Percy and Etta occupied it alone. They sat alone in the dimly lighted, silent, little place, on a plush sofa, side by side. Now and then one of them made some remark, seldom picked up by the other—for since they had come to a decision as to their marriage and its date, they had really little to say. At 9.30, Percy passed his arm around her waist and drew her closer. She remained a little stiff for five minutes longer, then yielded and dropped her head upon his shoulder with a sigh. Thereafter they spoke not at all, but remained immobile and mute, her fragrant little head against his cheek, while the clock slowly ticked. At 10.30 she rose and firmly sent him home. He made but little resistance. Just as well as she, he knew that his future and their happiness depended altogether upon Regular Habits.

On Sundays he took her to church. Her church was the Lutheran, but he was broad in matters of religion, and was quite willing to make hers his own. They sang out of a common hymnal, holding the book in their four hands, which now and then touched a little. On the way back after church he drew from his pocket a 25-cent box of caramels, such as he bought religiously every Sunday before starting for her house, and they munched gently as they walked.

He dined with the family at the boarding house. After dinner several young men called, attracted by Etta's younger sister, who was still unattached, and every one adjourned to the cracked piano in the front parlor to sing college songs. By 4, though, Percy and Etta slipped out and went to the Zoo to see the bears.

This was Percy Skinner's life, his hopes and his plans, till he met Miss Rose Salvador O'Flare. Miss Rosie O'Flare was a pretty brunette, with sparkling eyes and red lips that protruded a little under the most delicate umbrage and were most disturbing. She worked in the same emporium as Percy, across the aisle from him, and further down, in an atmosphere of snowy lingerie. His eyes sometimes strayed over there, but immediately withdrew chastely.

How the thing began Percy could never quite recall afterward. As near as he could remember—and somehow this did not seem sufficient to explain everything—he had been just on the point of entering "Vegetariana" for his dinner when she had come sailing along before the delicious little breeze of the late March day, her olive cheeks darkly flushed, her parted lips uncarmined and her eyes luminous. A red ribbon somewhere about her—he could never remember where—had completed the set of signals; he stopped, she stopped, and they said a few words of little consequence, ending with: "Well, so long!"

Everything, so far, was well. He was safe; they were just beginning to turn from each other. Then Fate, or an Imp, goaded him to add: "I gotta go to supper."

Her eyes passed swiftly over the pale front of Vegetariana, the pale show-window with the pale cereals; shaded a little by the long lashes, her eyes rose to him as she said: "You eat in that place?"

There was that in her tone which somehow made the admission difficult. "Well—yes—sometimes," he stammered.

She levelled at him a clear look that read all of the truth, and then with an impulsiveness which he had thought altogether charming, she cried gayly: "Oh, come eat with me—I'll show you the place for the eats!"

And he had gone—that he remembered clearly afterward—he had gone! Without further question, without hesitation, he took his place at her side, and striding swiftly, elbow to elbow like old comrades, they went down the street, turned, climbed down some steps—and were in the place.

It was of stone, low and arched. Tables were along the walls; they took one in a corner. In the centre of the table a singular object stood—a sort of scaffolding holding two long transparent vessels, each with a little spiggot at the lower end. One was red and the other yellow.

"Look not upon the wine when it is red," she said, and turned the spiggot of the yellow decanter. She passed the glass to Percy, and, fixing him commandingly, said: "Taste that!"

It was disappointing. It did not taste nearly as good as it looked pretty. It was sour. But in a minute he felt a pleasant warmth rise in him. It was a warmth such as he had never felt. It wasn't in any one place and wasn't too hot or not enough, but it was all over and just right.

It stole deliciously up from one's heels to one's head—and some stayed in the head. He tried another sip. The effect was repeated; a new wave of the pleasing warmth enveloped him, grateful as an extra suit of underwear on a very cold day.

"GOOD NIGHT, DEAR," HE SAID, "I HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO."

"There," she said, examining him approvingly across the table. "You look better already!

"That's just what you needed," she went on, her eyes still on him, her approbation still surer of itself and taking on a tinge of maternal tenderness. "In fact, that's what you've needed for a long, long time!"

The food she ordered added somehow to his well-being. Somehow everything was pleasantly warm this evening. Scientific mastication went under the table; it is to be recorded regretfully that he gulped. He ate red meat and long pastes that were hard to handle but which slipped down very obligingly when once conveyed to the mouth, and other little square pastes with mysterious stuffing between layers. For a while he was worrying a little, wondering how much money he had in his pocket. But she, who seemed to possess a singular ability to read his thought and yet while reading them, to make of them something natural and amusing rather than something to be ashamed of, said immediately: "It's Dutch treat to-night, you know. Yes, it is. You can treat me some other night—to-night's Dutch treat!"

An orchestra struck up. Couples left the tables and glided up and down. This had an extraordinary effect on Miss Rosie. Her eyes danced, her body would not keep still. "Don't you rag?" she asked.

He said, "No, I don't."

IN truth, he should have said, "I can't." But "I don't" could be spoken in a tone suggestive of delicate and ethical choice which it is difficult to give to "I can't."

After a while a young man sitting alone at a table across the aisle came over and asked her to dance. With a glance at Percy which half begged permission, she rose smoothly to the waiting coxcomb, and instantly in rhythm to the music slid away in his arms. Percy immediately felt lonely. He did not seem seated before a small table, but before a desert stretching emptily for miles. He watched the two. She danced wondrously—and ardently. It hurt him to see her, yet he could not keep his eyes off. When she returned, breathing a little fast between her parted lips, a sudden savage desire to hurt her took possession of him. But the best he could do was to say, in an ill-humored tone: "Well, let's be going."

She went readily enough, with a quick submission that made him sorry for his brutality, and they got into a car a little sadly.

"I get off at Fifty-eighth," he said. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, I go clear up to One Hundred and Seventh."

He got off at Fifty-eighth. He reached the sidewalk, then turned and watched the car as it clanged cumbrously on its way. The street looked as long and empty as the table had done while she had danced.

In Etta's small parlor he soon lost that desolation, sitting there with her in the half light, her head against his cheek. And the following morning, thinking it over, he decided that if he met Rosie O'Flare in the evening he would not go with her. Yet at noon he slipped to the bank and drew $20 from his savings account—just so as not to be caught without ammunition if anything did happen, though he was still determined nothing should happen. At 7 when she came sailing along as if part of the lively breeze and said with a slight, disapproving look at Vegetariana, "You're not going to eat in that place, are you?" he answered, "N-n-n-n-no—let's go to the place where we went last night, eh? I like that place!" And they went.

This time he danced. When first she said: "Really, don't you dance?" he answered with derision, "No, I don't dance." When a little later she said, "Don't you, really? Gee, you look like you'd make a swell dancer!" he answered once more with a decision he did not feel at all within himself, where as a matter of fact he was all wishful: "Naw—I don't care for dancing."

He noticed that the lone young man of the night before was again here, that he was sending longing looks at Rosie. Panic seized him, and when she whispered urgently, "Oh, come 'and try; it's easy; I'll show you," he mumbled a refusal which was not quite a refusal. "It's a one-step," she went on eagerly. "One two, one two—hear it? Just like walking—all you have to do is walk—one two—one two—oh, come on!"

THEY had half risen; the light of her eyes cascaded upon him; it seemed a shame not to meet half way such gaiety and such joy—especially with that impertinent pirate stationed over there across the aisle. Percy could see the man had just made up his mind to come over. "All right," he murmured hastily. "I'll try; you steer me!"

So this was dancing! Gee! No wonder people liked to dance! And what a fool he had been! The realization came to him before he had taken one step—the realization of the beauty of the proceeding; the beauty of holding her thus in his arms, so soft, so delicate, so warm, so fragrant; they two the heart of the music, whelmed in its iridescence. His soul expanded exquisitely; to his hot head there rushed a whirling composite vision of all the beautiful things he had known—the rose, the lark, a sealskin coat, the phonograph record of "Ave Maria;" if he had been a poet he would have sung. It came to him that this was enough; that from nothing further could be expected a heightening of this supreme bliss; that he needn't take one step; this was enough—merely to stand still and hold her to music.

But she murmured, "Come on," and drew him gently. He stepped out and the attention he now placed on doing well dulled what there was of altogether too exquisite in his sensations. At first, not daring to do else, he merely walked forward in measure, pressing her back before him rather as a man pushes a wheelbarrow. Presently his step became less stiff, and adopted, beside the hard one-two beat, the intermediary vibrations of the music; his body relaxed. Suddenly, with great daring, he began to walk backward, letting her now come toward him, and for this gallant deed was heavenly rewarded by a small pressure upon his biceps. This altogether maddened him; he essayed a pirouette—and succeeded. The secret pressure, this time, was accompanied by a low chuckle of delight.

When they sat down, his pale blue eyes were shining almost as brightly as her black ones, and happy dewdrops were on his brow. As for her, she was a-thrill. "You did just grand!" she declared. "Just grand—oh, I knew you'd make a swell dancer!"

They danced again, and then again and again, taking small hurried pecks at their food between times, and he, aware of improving from minute to minute, certain now that he was just made for this, that for years he had

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