would dare, that they would presume—"

"The people are not what they were. There hath come into Europe the leaven of the New World. I had looked there to see a nobler and a better France. It is too late for that, and surely it is too late for the old ways of this France which we see about us. You can not presume now upon the temper of these folk as you might have done fifty years ago. The Messasebe, that noble stream, it hath swept its purifying flood throughout the world! Look you, at this moment there is tumbling this house which we have built of bubbles, one bubble upon another, blowing each bubble bigger and thinner than the last. Mine is not the only fault, nor yet the greatest fault. I was sincere, where others cared naught for sincerity. Another day, another people, may yet say the world was better for my effort, and that therefore at the last I have not failed."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BREAKING OF THE BUBBLE.

It was the evening of the day following that on which John Law and the regent of France had met in their stormy interview. During the morning but little had transpired regarding the significant events of the previous day. In these vast and excited crowds, divided groups and cliques and factions, aided by no bulletins, counseled by no printed page, there was but little cohesion of purpose, since there was little unity of understanding. The price of shares at one kiosk might be certain thousands of livres, whereas a square away the price might vary by half as many livres; so impetuous was the advance of these continually rising prices and so frenzied and careless the temper of those who bargained for them.

Yet before noon of the day following the decree of the regent, which fixed the value of actions upon a descending scale, the news, after a fashion of its own, spread rapidly abroad, and all too swiftly the truth was generally known. The story started in a rumor that shares had been offered and declined at a price which had been current but a few moments before. This was something which had not been known in all these feverish months of the Messasebe. Then came the story that shares could not be counted upon to realize over 8000 livres. At that the price of all the actions dropped in a flash, as Law had prophesied. A sudden wave of sanity, a panic chill of sober understanding swept over this vast multitude of still unreasoning souls who had traded so long upon this impossible supposition of an ever-advancing market. Reason still lacked among them, yet fear and sudden suspicion were not wanting. Man after man hastened swiftly away to sell privately his shares before greater drop in the price might come. He met other upon the same errand.

Precisely the reverse of the old situation now obtained. As all Paris had fought to buy, so now all Paris fought to sell. The streets were filled with clamoring mobs. If earlier there had been confusion, now there was pandemonium. Never was such a scene witnessed. Never was there chronicled so swift and utter reversion of emotion in the minds of a great concourse of people. Bitter indeed was the wave of agony that swept over Paris. It began at the Messasebe, in the gardens of the Hotel de Soisson, at that focus hard by the temple of Fortuna. It spread and spread, edging out into all the remoter portions of the walled city. It reached ultimately the extreme confines of Paris. Into the crowded square which had been decreed as the trading place of the Messasebe System there crowded from the outer purlieus yet other thousands of excited human beings. The end had come. The bubble had burst. There was no longer any System of the Messasebe!

It was late in the day, in fact well on toward night, when the knowledge of the crash came into the neighborhood where dwelt the Lady Catharine Knollys. To her the news was brought by a servant, who excitedly burst unannounced into her mistress' presence.

"Madame! Madame!" she cried. "Prepare! 'Tis horrible! 'Tis impossible! All is at an end!"

"Stop! Enough of this, Marie!" said the Lady Catharine, sternly. "After this have better wisdom, and do not meddle in things which you do not understand."

Yet scarce had the girl departed before there appeared again the sound of running steps, and presently there broke, equally unannounced, into the presence of his mistress, the coachman, fresh from his stables and none too careful of his garb. Tears ran down his cheeks. He flung out his hands with gestures as of one demented.

"The news!" cried he. "The news, my lady! The horrible news! The System has vanished, the shares are going down!"

"Fellow, what do you here?" said Lady Catharine. "Why do you come with this same story which Marie has just brought to me? Can you not learn your place?"

"But, my lady, you do not understand!" reiterated the man, blankly. "'Tis all over. There is no Messasebe; there is no longer any System, no longer any company of the Indies. There is no longer wealth for the stretching out of the hand. 'Tis all over. I must go back to horses—I, madame, who should presently have associated with the nobility!"

"Well, and if so," replied his mistress, "I can say to you, as I have to Marie, that there will still be money for your wages."

"Wages! My faith, what trifles, my Lady! This Monsieur L'as, the director general, he it is who has ruined us! Well enough it is that the square in front of his hotel is filled with people! Presently they will break down his doors. And then, pray God they punish him for this that he has done!"

The cheek of Lady Catharine paled and a sudden flood of contending emotions crossed her mind. "You do not tell me that Monsieur L'as is in danger, Pierre?" said she.

"Assuredly. Perhaps within the very hour they will tear down his doors and rend him limb from limb. There is no punishment which can serve him right—him who has ruined our pretty, pretty System. Mon Dieu! It was so beautiful!"

"Is this news certain?"

"Assuredly, most certain. Why should it not be? The entire square in front of the Hotel de Soisson is packed. Unless my Lady needs me, I myself must hasten thither to aid in the punishment of this Jean L'as!"

"You will stay here," said Lady Catharine. "Wait! There may be need! For the present, go!"

Left alone, Lady Catharine stood for a moment pale and motionless, in the center of the room. She strode then to the window and stood looking fixedly out. Her whole figure was tense, rigid. Yonder, over there, across the gabled roofs of Paris, they were clamoring at the door of him who had given back Paris to the King, and France again to its people. They were assailing him—this man so long unfaltering, so insistent on his ambitions, so—so steadfast! Could she call him steadfast? And they would seize him in spite of the courage which she knew would never fail. They would kill, they would rend, they would trample him! They would crush that glorious body, abase the lips that had spoke so well of love!

The clenched fingers of Lady Catharine broke apart, her arms were flung wide in a gesture of resolution. She turned from the window, looking here and there about the room. Unconsciously she stopped before the great cheval-glass that hung against the wall. She stood there, looking at her own image, keenly, deeply.

She saw indeed a woman fit for sweet usages of love, comely and rounded, deep-bosomed, her oval face framed in the piled masses of glorious red-brown hair. But her wide, blue eyes, scarce seeing this outward form, stared into the soul of that other whom she witnessed.

It was as though the Lady Catharine Knollys at last saw another self and recognized it! A quick, hard sob broke from her throat. In haste she flew, now to one part of the room, now to another, picking up first this article and then that which seemed of need. And so at last she hurried to the bell-cord.

"Quick," cried she, as the servant at length appeared. "Quick! Do not delay an instant! My carriage at once!"

CHAPTER XII.

THAT WHICH REMAINED.

As for John Law, all through that fatal day which meant for him the ruin of his ambitions, he continued in the icy calm which, for days past, had distinguished him. He discontinued his ordinary employments and spent some hours in sorting and destroying numbers of papers and documents. His faithful servant, the Swiss, Henri, he commanded to make ready his apparel for a journey.

"At 6 this evening," said he, "Henri, we shall be ready to depart. Let us be quite ready well before that time."

"Monsieur is leaving Paris?" asked the Swiss, respectfully.

"Quite so."

"Perhaps for a stay of some duration?"

"Quite so, indeed, Henri."

"Then, sir," expostulated the Swiss, "it would require a day or so for me to properly arrange your luggage."

"Not at all," replied Law. "Two valises will suffice, not more, and I shall perhaps not need even these."

"Not all the apparel, the many coats, the jewels——"

"Do not trouble over them."

"But what disposition shall I make——?"

"None at all. Leave all these things as they are. But stay—this package which I shall prepare for you—take it to the regent, and have it marked in his care and for the Parliament of France."

Law raised in his hands a bundle of parchments, which one by one he tore across, throwing the fragments into a basket as he did so.

"The seat of Tancarville," he said. "The estate of Berville; the Hotel Mazarin; the lands of Bourget; the Marquisat of Charleville; the lands of Orcher; the estate of Roissy — Gad! what a lot I find."

"But, Monsieur," expostulated the Swiss, "what is that that you do? Are these not your possessions?"

"Not so, mon ami, replied Law. "They once were mine. They are estates in France. Take back these deeds. Dead Sully may have his own again, and each of these late owners of the lands. I wished them for a purpose. That purpose is no longer possible, and now I wish them no more. Take back your deeds, my friends, and bear in your minds that John Law tore them in two, and thus canceled the obligation."

"But the moneys you have paid—they are enormous. Surely you will exact restitution?"

"No. Leave it for him who may be first to find it. These dear people without, these same people whom I have enriched, and who now will claim that I have impoverished them—these people will demand of me everything that I have. As a man of honor I cannot deny them. They shall have every jot and stiver of the property of John Law, even the million or so of good coin which he brought here to Paris with him. The coat on my back, the wheels beneath me, gold enough to pay for the charges of the inns through France—that is all that John Law will take away with him."

The arms of the old servant fell helpless at his side. "Sir, this is madness," he expostulated.

"Not so, Henri," replied Law, leniently. "Madness enough there has been in Paris, it is true, but madness not mine nor of my making. For madness, look you yonder."

He pointed a finger through the window where the stately edifice of the Palais Royal rose.

"My good friend the regent—it is he who hath been mad," continued Law. "He, holding France in trust, has ruined France forever."

"Monsieur, I grieve for you," said the Swiss. "I have seen your success in these years and, as you may imagine, have understood something of your affairs as time went on."

"And have you not profited by your knowledge in these times?"

"I have had the salary your Honor has agreed to pay me," replied the Swiss.

"And no more?"

"No more."

"Why, there are serving folks in France by the hundreds who have grown millionaires by the knowledge of their employers' affairs these last two years in Paris. Never was such a time in all the world for making money. Have you been more blind than they? Why did you not tell me? Why did you not ask?"

"I was content with your employment, Monsieur L'as. I would ask no better master."

"It is not so with certain others. They think me a hard master enough, and having displaced me will do all they can to punish me. But now, Henri, you will perhaps need to look elsewhere for a master. I am going far away—perhaps across the seas. It may be—but I know not where and care not where my foot may wander hereafter, nor will I seek now to plan for it. As for you, Henri, since you admit you have been thus blind to your own interests, let us look to that. Go to the desk again. Take out the drawer—that one on the left hand. So—bring it to me."

The servant obeyed. Law took from his hand the receptacle, and with a sweep of his hand poured out on the table its contents. A mass of glittering gems, diamonds, sapphires, pearls, emeralds, fell and spread over the table top. The light cast out by their thousand facets lit up the surroundings with shimmering, many colored gleams. The wealth of a kingdom might have been here in the careless possession of this man, whose resources had been absolutely without measure.

"Help yourself, Henri," said Law, calmly, and turned about to his employment among the papers. A moment later he turned again to see his servant still standing motionless.

"Well?" said Law.

"I do not understand," said the Swiss.

"Take what you like," said Law. "I have said it, and I mean it. It is for your pay, because you have been honest, because I understand you as a faithful man."

"But, Monsieur, these things have very great value," said the Swiss. "Let me ask how is it that you yourself take so little gold along? Does Monsieur purpose to take with him his fortune in gems and jewels instead?"

"By no means. I purpose taking but 50 louis, as I have said."

"Monsieur would have me replace the drawer?"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, I want none of them."

"Why?"

"Because Monsieur wants none of them."

"Fie! Your case is quite different from mine."

"Perhaps, but I want none of them."

"Are you afraid?"

"Monsieur!"

"Do you not think them genuine stones?"

"Assuredly," said the Swiss, "else why should we have cared for them among our gems?"

"Well, then, I command you as your master, to take forth some of these jewels and keep them for your own."

"But no," replied the Swiss. "It is only after Monsieur."

"What? Myself?"

"Assuredly."

"Then, for the sake of precedent," said Law, "let me see. Well, then, I will take one gem, only one. Here, Henri, is the diamond which I brought with me when I came to Paris years ago. It was the sole jewel owned then by my brother and myself, though we had somewhat of gold between us, thanks to this same diamond. It was once my sole capital, in years gone by. Perhaps we may need a carriage through France, and this may serve to pay the hire of a vehicle from one of my late dukes or marquises. Or perhaps at best I may send this same stone across the channel to my brother Will, who has wisely gone to Scotland, or should have departed before this. So, very well, Henri, to oblige you I will take this single stone. Now, do you help yourself."

"Since monsieur limits himself to so little," said the Swiss, sturdily, "I shall not want more. This little pin will serve me, and I shall wear it long in memory of your many kindnesses."

Law rose to his feet and caught the good fellow by the hand.

"By heaven, I find you of good blood!" said he. "My friend, I thank you. And now put up the box. I shall not counsel you to take more than this. We shall leave the rest for those who will presently come to claim it."

For some time silence reigned in the great room, as Law, deeply engaged in the affairs before him, buried himself in the mass of scattered books and papers. Hour after hour wore on, and at last he turned from his employment. His face showed calm, pale, and furrowed with a sadness which till now had been foreign to it. He arose at last, and with a sweep of his arm pushed back the papers which lay before him.

"There," said he. "This should conclude it all. It should all be plain enough now to those who follow."

"Monsieur is weary," mentioned the faithful attendant. "He would have some refreshment."

"Presently, but I think not here, Henri. The servant departed, and Law, left alone, sat silent and motionless, buried in thought. Now and again his head sank forward, like that of one who has received a deep hurt. But again he drew himself up sternly, and so remained, not leaving his seat nor turning toward the window, beyond which could now be heard the sound of shouting, and cries whose confused and threatening tones might have given ground for the gravest apprehension. At length the Swiss again reported, much agitated and shaken from his ordinary self-control.

"Monsieur," said he, "come. I have at last the coach at the door. Hasten, monsieur; a crowd is gathering. Indeed, we may meet violence."

Law seemed not to hear him, but sat for a time, his head still bowed, his eyes gazing straight before him.

"But, monsieur," again broke in the Swiss, anxiously, "if I may interrupt, there is need to hasten. There will be a mob. Our guard is gone."

"So," said Law. "They were afraid."

"Surely. They fled forthwith when they heard the people below crying out at the house. They are, indeed, threatening death to yourself. They cry that they will burn the house—that should you appear they will have your blood at once."

"And are you not afraid?" asked Law.

"I am here. Does not monsieur fear for himself?"

Law shrugged his shoulders. "There are many of them, and we are but two," said he. "For yourself, go you down the back way and care for your own safety. I will go out the front and meet these good people. Are we quite ready for the journey?"

"Quite ready, as you have directed."

"Have you the two valises, with the one change of clothing?"

"They are here."

"And have you the fifty louis, as I stated?"

"Here in the purse."

"And I think you have also the single diamond?"

"It is here."

"Then," said Law, "let us go."

He rose, and scarce looking behind him even to see that his orders to the servant had been obeyed, he strode down the vast stairway of the great hotel, past many precious works of art, between walls hung with richest tapestries and noble paintings. The click of his heel on a chance bit of exposed marble here and there echoed hollow, as though indeed the master of the palace had been abandoned by all his people. The great building was silent, empty.

"What! Are you, then, here?" he said, seeing the servant had disobeyed his instructions and was followed close behind him. He alone out of those scores of servants, those hundreds of fawning nobles, those thousands of sycophant souls who had but lately cringed before him, now accompanied the late master of France as he turned to leave the house in which he no longer held authority.

Without, but the door's thickness from where he stood, there arose a tumult of sound, shouts, cries, imprecations, entreaties, as though the walls of some asylum for the unfortunate had broken away and allowed its inmates to escape unrestrained, irreclaimable, impossible to control.

"Down with Jean L'as! Down with Jean L'as!" rose a cadenced, rhythmic shout, the accord of a mob of Paris beating into its tones. And this steady burden was broken by the cries of "Enter! Enter! Break down the door! Kill the monster! Assassin! Thief! Traitor!" No word of the vocabulary of scorn and loathing was wanting in their cries.

Hearing these cries, the face of this fighting man now grew hot with anger, and now it paled with grief and sorrow. Yet he faltered not, but stepped on, confidently. The Swiss opened the door and stood at the head of the flight of stairs. Tall, calm, pale, fearless, John Law stood facing the angry mob, his eyes shining brightly. He laid his hand for an instant upon his sword, yet it was but to unbuckle the belt. The weapon he left leaning against the wall, and so stepped on down toward the crowd.

He was met by a rush of excited men and women, screaming, cursing, giving vent to inarticulate and indistinguishable speech. A man laid his hand upon his shoulder. Law caught the hand and with a swift wrench of the wrist threw the owner of it to the ground. At this the others gave back, and for half a moment silence ensued. The mob lacked just the touch of rage to hurl themselves upon him. He raised his hand and motioned the maside.

"Are you not Jean L'as?" cried one dame, excitedly, waving in his face a handful of the paper shares of the latest issue in the Company of the Indies. "Are you not Jean L'as? Tell me, then, where is my money for these things? What shall I get for this rotten paper?"

"You are Jean L'as, the director general!" cried a man, pushing up to his "'Twas you that ruined the company. See! Here is all that I have!" He wept as he shook his bunch of paper in John Law's face. "Last week I was worth half a million!" He wept, and tore across, with impotent rage, the bundle of worthless paper.

"Down with Jean L'as! Down with Jean L'as!" came the recurrent. A rush followed. The carriage, towering above the ring of the surrounding crowd, showed its coat of arms, and thus was recognized. A paving stone crashed through its heavy window. A knife ripped up the velvets of the cushions.

The coachman was pulled from his box. The horses, plunging with terror, were cut loose from the pole and led away. With shouts and cries of rage and busy zeal, one madman vied with another in tearing, cutting and destroying the vehicle, until it stood there ruined, without means of locomotion, defaced and useless. And still the ring of desperate humanity closed around him who had late been master of all France.

"What do you want, my friends?" asked he, calmly, as for an instant there came a lull in the tumult. He stood looking at them curiously now, his dulling eyes regarding them as though they presented some new and interesting study.

"What is it that you desire?" he repeated.

"We want our money?" cried a score of voices. "We want back that which you have stolen."

"You are not exact," replied John Law, calmly. "I have not your money, nor yet have I stolen it. If you have suffered by this foolish panic, you do not mend matters by thus treating me. By heaven, you go the wrong way to get anything from me! Out of the way, you canaille! Do you think to frighten me? I made your city. I made you all. Now, do you think to frighten me, John Law?"

"Oh! You would go away, you want to escape!" cried the voices of those near at hand. "We will see as to that!"

Again they fell upon the carriage, and still they hemmed him in closer.

"True, I am going away," said Law. "But you cannot say that I tried to steal away without your knowing it. There, up the stairs, are my papers. You will see in time that I have concealed nothing. Now I am going to leave Paris, it is true; but not because I am afraid to stay here. 'Tis for other reason, and reason of mine own."

"'Twas you who ruined Paris—this city which you now seek to leave!" shrieked the dame who had spoken before, still shaking her useless bank notes in her hand.

"Oh, very well, my friend. For the argument, let us agree upon that," said Law.

"You ruined our company, our beautiful company!" cried another.

"Certainly. Since I was the originator of it, that follows as matter of reason," replied Law.

"Ah, he admits it! He admits it!" cried yet another. "Don't let him escape. Kill him! Down with Jean L'as!"

"We are going to kill you precisely here!" cried a huge fellow, brandishing a paving-stone before his eyes. "You are not fit to live."

"As to that," said Law, "I agree with you perfectly. My hand upon it; I am not fit to live. I have found that I made mistakes. I have found that there is nothing left to desire. I have found out that all this money is not worth the having. I have found out so many things, my very dear friends, that I quite agree with you. For if one must want to live before he is fit to live, then indeed I am not fit. But what then?"

"Kill him! Kill him! Strike him down!" cried out a voice back of the giant with the menacing paving-stone.

"Oh, very well, my friends," resumed the object of their fury, flicking again with his old, careless gesture at the deep cuff of his wrist. "As you like in regard to that. More than one man has offered me that happiness in the past, yet it was many a long year since any man could trouble me by announcing that he was about to kill me."

Something in the attitude of the man stayed the hands of the most dangerous members of the mob. Yet ever there came the cry from back of them, "Down with Jean L'as! He has ruined everything!"

"Friends," responded Law to this cry, bitterly, "you little know how true you speak. It was indeed John Law who brought ruin to everything. It was indeed he who threw away what was worth more than all the gold in France. It is indeed he who has failed, and failed most utterly. You can not frighten John Law, but you may do as you like with him, for surely he has failed!"

The bitterness of despair was in his tones. Then, perhaps, the sullen, savage crowd had wrought their last act of anger and revenge on him, had it not been for a sudden change in that tide of ill fortune that now seemed to carry him forward to his doom. There came a sound of far-off cries, a distant clacking of hoofs, the clatter of steel, many shouts, entreaties and commands. The close-packed crowd which filled the open space in front of the hotel writhed, twisted, turned and would have sought to resolve itself into groups and individuals. Some cried out that the troops were coming. A detachment of the king's household, sent out to disperse these dangerous gatherings, came full front down the street, as had so often come the arm of the military in this turbulent old city of Paris. Remorselessly they rode over through the mob, driving them, dispersing them. A moment later, and Law stood alone at the steps of his own house. The squadron wheeled, headed by an officer, who rode upon him with sword uplifted as though to cut him down. Law raised his hand at this new menace.

"Stop!" he cried. "I am the cause of this rioting. I am John Law."

"What! Monsieur L'as?" cried the lieutenant. "So the people have found you, have they?"

"It would seem. They have destroyed my carriage, and they would have killed me," replied Law. "But I perceive it is Captain Mirabee. 'Twas I who got you your commission, as you may remember."

"Is it so?" replied the other, with a grin. "I have no recollection. Since you are Jean L'as, the late director general, the pity is I did not let the people kill you. You are the cause of the ruin of us all, the cause of my own ruin. Three days more, and I had been a major general. I had nearly the sum in actions ready to pay over at the right place. By our Lady of Grace, I am minded to run you through myself, for a greater villain never set foot in France!"

"Monsieur, I am about to leave France," said Law.

"Oh, you would leave us? You would run away?"

"As you like. But most of oll, I am now very weary. I would not remain here longer talking. Henri, where are you?"

The faithful Swiss, who had remained close to his employer all the time, and who had been not far from his side during the scenes just concluded, was in a moment at his side. He hardly reached his master too soon, for as he passed his arm about him, the head of Law sank wearily forward. He might, perhaps, have sunk to the ground had he lacked a supporting arm.

At this moment there came again the sound of hoofs upon the pavement. There was the rush of a mounted outrider, and hard after him sped the horses of a carriage, whose driver pulled up close at the curb and scarce clear of the little group gathered there. The door of the coach was opened, and at it appeared the figure of a woman, who quickly descended from the step.

"What is it?" she cried. "Is not this the residence of Monsieur Law?" The officer saluted, and the few loiterers gave back and made room, as she stepped fully into the street and advanced with decision toward those whom she saw.

"Madam," replied the Swiss, "this is the residence of Monsieur L'as, and this is Monsieur L'as himself. I fear he is taken suddenly ill."

The lady stepped quickly to his side. As she did so, Law, as one not fully hearing, half raised his head. He looked full into her face, and releasing himself from the arms of his servant, stood thus, staring directly at the visitor, his face haggard, his fixed eyes bearing no sign of actual recognition.

"Catharine! Catharine!" he exclaimed. "Oh, God, how cruel of you, too, to mock me! Catharine!"

The unspeakable yearning of the cry went to the heart of her who heard it. She put out a hand and laid it on his forehead. The Swiss motioned toward the house. And even as the officer wheeled his troop to depart, these two again ascended the steps, half carrying between them a stumbling man, who but repeated to himself the same words:

"Mockery! Mockery!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE QUALITY OF MERCY.

Within the great house there was silence, for the vistas of the wide interior led far back from the street and its tumult; nor did there arise within the walls any sound of voice or footfall. Of the entire household there was but one left to do the master service.

They entered the great hall, passed the foot of the wide stairway, and turned at the first entresol, where were seats and couches. The servant paused for a moment and looked inquiringly at the lady with whom he now found himself in company.

"The times are serious," he began. "I would not intrude, madame, yet perhaps you are aware——"

"I am a friend of monsieur," replied Lady Catharine. "He is ill. See, he is not himself. Tell me, what is this illness?"

"Madame," said the Swiss gravely, "his illness is that of grief. Monsieur's failure sits heavily upon him."

"How long is it since he slept?" asked the lady, for she noted the drooping head of the man now reclining upon the couch.

"Not for many days and nights," replied the Swiss. "He has for the last few days been under much strain. But shall I not assist you, madame? You are, perhaps—pardon me, since I do not know your relationship with monsieur——"

"A friend of years ago. I knew Mr. Law when he lived in England."

"I perceive. Perhaps madame would be alone for a time? If you please, I will seek aid."

They approached the side of the couch. Law's head lay back upon the cushions. His breath came deeply and slowly, not stertorously nor labored.

"How strange," whispered the Swiss, "he sleeps!"

The Swiss looked still hesitatingly at the lady who had thus strangely come upon the scene, noticing her sweet and tender mouth, her cheeks just faintly tinged with pink, her eyes shining with a soft, mysterious radiance. She approached the couch and laid both her hands upon the face of the unconscious man. Tears sprang within her eyes and fell from her dark lashes. The old servant looked up at her simply.

"Madame would be alone with monsieur?" asked he. "It will better."

Lady Catharine Knollys, left alone, gazed upon the sleeper. John Law, the failure, lay there, supine, abased, cast-down, undone, shorn utterly of his old arrogance of mind and mien. Fortune, wealth, even the boon of physical well-being—all had fled from him. The pride of a superb manhood had departed from the lines of this limp figure. The cheeks were lined and sunken, the eye, even had the lid not covered it, lacked the late convincing fire. No longer commanding, no longer strong, no longer gay and debonair, he lay, a man whose fate was failure, as he himself had said.

The woman who stood with clasped hands, gazing at him, tears welling in her eyes—she, so closely linked to his every thought for these many years — well enough she knew the story of his boundless ambitions, now so swiftly ended. Well enough, too, she knew the shortcomings of this mortal man before her. Even as she had in her mirror looked into her own soul, so now she saw deep into his heart as he lay there, helpless, making no further plea for himself, urging no claim, making no explanations nor denials, no asseverations, no promises. Did she indeed see and recognize again, as sometimes gloriously happens in this poor life of ours, that other and inner man, the only one fit to touch a woman's hand—the man who might have been? Did she see this, and greet again the friend of long ago? God, who hath given mercy, remedy alone sufficing for the ill that men may do, he alone may know these things.

Could John Law failing be John Law succeeding, and in his most sublime success? Upon the wreck and ruin of the old nature could there grow another and a better man? Mayhap the answer to this was what the eye of woman saw. How else could there have come into this great room, so late the scene of turbulent activities, this vast and soothing calm? How else could this man's breath come now so deep and regular and content? The angels of God may know, they who drop down the gentle dew of heaven.

An hour passed by. A soft tread came to the door, but Henri heard no sound, and saw only the prone figure of the sleeper, and beside it the form of the woman, who still held his hand in her own. Still the hours wore on, and still the watch continued, there under the mysteries of Life and of Love, of Mercy and of Forgiveness. And so at last the gray dawn broke again. The panes of the high mullioned windows were tinged with splashes of color. The pale light crept into the room, slowly revealing and lighting up its splendors.

With the dawn there came into the heart of Catharine Knollys a flood of light and joy. Why, she knew not; how, she cared not; yet she knew that the shadows were gone. The same tide of peace and calm might have swept into the bosom of the man before her. He stirred, moved. His eyes opened wide, in their gaze wonder and disbelief, yet hope and longing.

"Catharine," he murmured, "Catharine! Is it you? Catharine! Dear Kate!"

She bent over and softly kissed his face. "Dear heart," she whispered, "I have loved you always. Awake. The day has come. There is another world before us. See, I have come to you, dear heart, for Faith, and for Love, and for Hope!"

THE END.

THE BANNER EDITION OF THE YEAR

Sunday CALL'S Summer Fiction Number Out Next Sunday, June 28

It's a Startler. You'll Buy This. It's a Pictorial Gem.

"BETWEEN TWO FIRES"

By MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON.

Author of "The Mystery Box," "Tainted Gold," Etc., both Published in the Sunday Call.

It's a thrilling mystery story in the author's best vein, told in a positively unique way by five different star characters in the book. You get it complete in two installments.

Three Full Illuminated Pages of Short Stories.

"The King of the Foxes" By A. Conan Doyle. "The Siwash" By Jack London. "The Wiper's Story" By Frank H. Spearman.

A Full Page of "Half-Hour Storiettes" by World Famous Writers.

The Etiquette of the Summer Hammock, Shown in a Full Page of Photographs.

BEST OF ALL---THE NEW COMIC SUPPLEMENT IN COLORS

A Gurgling Laugh to Every Square Inch of Every Page.