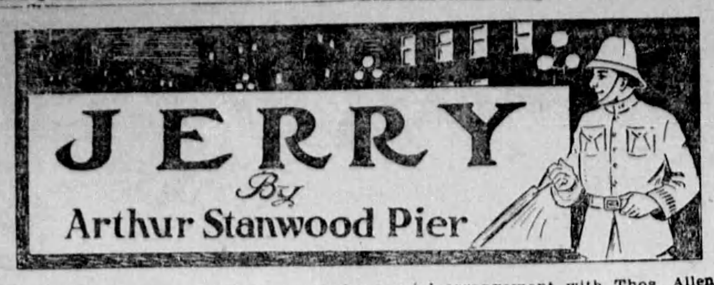

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CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd.)

While she was out of the room Corcoran addressed himself to her father. What did Mr. Scanlan think of the rumor that the Works were to be sold? Mr. Scanlan grunted his contempt for the rumor. The Purroy Steel Works were a family affair; they would never be sold.

"I'm sure I hope not," said Corcoran. "For of course if they were to be sold, there's no telling what might happen to all the men there. They might be laid off, they might be turned out of their jobs. A man is lucky in these days if he has a good business of his own, that can't be sold over his head."

"You don't need to do any worryin' on my account," Mr. Scanlan replied testily.

"Oh, certainly not; oh, I don't suppose there's any real danger," Corcoran made haste to say. "Only, as I look round and see the other young fellows, like Donohue here, I can't help feeling I'm pretty lucky, to be fixed as I am."

"Them that are satisfied with what they've got have a right to feel lucky," retorted the formidable Mr. Scanlan. "Them are the ones generally that have got more than they deserve."

Corcoran threw up one arm and pretended to dodge. "Never touched me. You and Mrs. Scanlan know I must have more than I've got if I'm to be satisfied. I hope you folks wish I may get it."

The severe and tight-lipped silence on the part of both Mr. Scanlan and his wife intimated no enthusiastic assurance that they would forward their visitor's desires. Corcoran was so little abashed, however, that he laughed indulgently and remarked, "I believe Donohue has got you all hypnotized."

Incensed beyond endurance by this charge, Mr. Scanlan brought his fist down on the arm of the conversation chair and vociferated, "No man can do that to me. No, sir. No man."

And Mrs. Scanlan looking malevolently over her shoulder admonished him, "It seems to me you'd better think what you're saying, Mr. Corcoran."

In Jerry, who was silent, disdain triumphed over anger. He walked to the table at one side of the room and, picking up the copy of "Ben Hur," bound in alligator skin, began to turn the pages.

Mrs. Scanlan, impartial in her favors, at once admonished him: "I always tell Dave to be careful how he handles that book."

Jerry put down "Ben Hur" and turned to the music rack. And then Nora entered, raidant and eager, with a gray cloak over her shoulders, new white gloves on her hands, and a scarf encircling her face.

"We're off," said Corcoran, stepping forward to meet her. 'By-by, people."

He took Nora's arm and steered her by the elbow in a manner that enraged Jerry. Nora, however, did not resent it; the sound of her gay laughter seemed to linger in the room even after she had gone.

Jerry felt obliged to linger also for what should be a decent interval. Mr. Scanlan, however, commanded him to sit down, so he took a chair in front of Mrs. Scanlan's section of the conversation chair, unwilling to receive any more of her Parthian glances. Mr. Scanlan, short-necked and stiff, screwed himself round to address the young man.

"I will have it understood," he said, "that Nora is not for no drug clerk."

Though encouraged by the statement, Jerry felt it unwise to offer any comment. After a brief pause Mr. Scanlan continued,—

"She is not for no mill-hand, either. She is not for the likes of any one around here. That is not what we have been raising her for."

"No," asserted Mrs. Scanlan with dyspeptic vigor, "it is not. Would I have raised her like a little lady just for that? Twenty she was last month, and her two hands still that white soft that she might have been raised in a big house with a large lawn around it and an automobile to take her riding whenever she wished. Never a thing about the house have I let her do with them hands, neither cooking nor scrubbing nor washing nor ironing; 't is my own I have worked all these years, and without complaining. No fit wife would she be for a poor man, Jerry; mind that."

"I guess if she fell in love with a poor man she'd be a good wife to him," Jerry ventured to say.

"She understands she is not to fall in love with a poor man," replied Mrs. Scanlan.

"How is she by way of meeting the rich?"

"By means of her talent. If she doesn't be singing before long in grand opera, she will be singing anyway in grand houses. I said to her only this very night, 'Nora,' I said, 'you'll be a millionaire's wife before you die.'"

"Well," said Jerry, "you needn't try to discourage me by telling me that, Mrs. Scanlan. Maybe one of these days I'll be that millionaire."

He rose, and Mr. Scanlan rose also.

"Jerry," he said, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder and speaking not unkindly, "you'd better be putting the notion clean out of your head. I'm wishing you well, but my girl is not for you, and that's the fact. Instead of laying up money for my old age I've spent it giving her the best I could—she's had her piano and her clothes and her lessons in music and singing, and I've been glad to give them to her, for I want her to better herself in the world. Now you understand how we feel."

"Yes, but of course it can't alter my feelings, Mr. Scanlan. And if I found that Nora cared for me, you couldn't expect me to hold off, just for the sake of obliging you and Mrs. Scanlan."

"I'd like to know where you get your impudence," Mrs. Scanlan exclaimed. "Not from your ma; she never would talk back like that. And your pa, he was a mild, quiet kind of man."

"Of course I don't mean to be impudent, Mrs. Scanlan." Jerry's voice was as placating as he could make it. "If ever I can get Nora to consent, I hope I can get you and Mrs. Scanlan to do the same. I should feel badly if I couldn't."

"Well, you can't," snapped Mrs. Scanlan. "And anyway Nora has too much sense to listen to you."

Jerry flushed. "I'll say good-night," he remarked, and he left the room.

Mr. Scanlan followed him apologetically, hospitably, into the hall and opened the door for him.

"We can't back you up on this, Jerry," he said, "but you're a good boy, you are, and if I had another daughter you could have her and welcome. But not Nora—no, not Nora."

He strode briskly on to the mill gates, swung off for half a mile through the lower part of the town, ascended the hill until he reached the main street, and then struck off along it towards home. But as he passed McCabe's, the sound of dance music from the upper windows came to him; after he had gone by a few steps he stopped, turned back, and mounted the stairs. He paid twenty-five cents for a ticket and entered the hall.

It was crowded with dancers, bumping one another, shrilly exclaiming, shrilly laughing, above the sound of the tinny piano and the two raucous violins. Naked gasjets flared from brackets high along the walls; those more distant were encircled by a dim effulgence, owing to the dust that swam thick above the dancers' heads. The more rowdy of the young men of the town, the more brazen of the young women, were conspicuously present, pushing, shoving, dancing boisterously, wooing and responding to advances with flagrant publicity. Jerry stood watching for Nora to make her appearance, fair as a lily among the blowzy, loud, robust young women; he saw her presently, her slim, white figure and sweet, flushed face emerged for one shining instant, and then the profaning mob shut her again from view. From time to time he had glimpses of her, twice she passed near him but without seeing him; Corcoran, holding her close, was laughing, and talking in her ear with an effect that was to Jerry of odious intimacy. And she seemed to be enjoying it, to be responsive; Jerry saw her swing her head round and look into her partner's face and laugh gayly.

The music ceased, the dancers swarmed in search of seats, Jerry held his tenaciously. The length of the room away Nora and Corcoran established themselves; Jerry kept his eyes upon them until the music began again and they again were lost in the throng. They reappeared, they came circling down the room, they passed within a few feet of Jerry; three times he watched them pass him thus and did not move. But when they made their fourth approach, he sprang up, shouldered his way among the other dancers, and confronted Nora. "My turn," he said; and Nora, with a little cry of surprise and pleasure, slipped from Corcoran's arms into his. "Look here!" cried Corcoran, stupefied; but Jerry whirled her away and laughed exultingly.

"He kissed me," she suddenly murmured in his ear. "I didn't like it, Jerry."

"I'll pound his face." Jerry stopped dancing, to sweep the room with angry eyes.

"No; it wasn't bad enough for that." She tugged gently at his arm. "Dance with me a moment and then take me home, Jerry."

He held her more closely, more firmly, in the proud consciousness that she was seeking his protection. And soon Corcoran appeared in their path, with the smile of one who had been good-naturedly tolerant. He spread out his arms and shouted, "That's right, Donohue, bring that ship into port."

"I feel you've had me on your hands enough this evening, Charley," she said. "Jerry's promised to see me home."

"I thought I asked you to this dance."

"Yes, and it was nice of you. But Jerry's asked to take me home, and I was sure you wouldn't mind."

"Oh, sure; I don't mind who takes you home."

(To be continued.)

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Just now the wheat situation is especially critical. We must reduce our consumption one-third. Use only two-thirds or one-half wheat in breads, pie, muffins, cakes, and the like. Substitute in place of the wheat whatever you can get—potatoes, barley, oatmeal, buckwheat, cornmeal, etc. Use your own recipes, changing them to suit present conditions. Use less sugar and less shortening. Substitute one-half barley flour, corn flour or cornmeal, for one-half the wheat flour.

Here are some suggestive recipes.

Baking Powder Biscuits.—Two cups barley flour, two tablespoons fat, half teaspoon of salt, four teaspoons of baking powder, two-thirds of a cup of milk. Sift the dry ingredients together, rub in the fat, and add the liquid until a soft dough is formed. Roll to about three-fourths of an inch thick, cut with a cookie cutter and bake in hot oven.

Cornmeal Bread.—One and a quarter cups of liquid, one and a half teaspoons of salt, two-thirds of a cup of cornmeal, one-quarter of a yeast cake, dry or compressed, in one-quarter of a cup of lukewarm water, two and a half cups of flour. Pour the liquid over the cornmeal and salt and heat to the boiling point. Cook twenty minutes in the double boiler or over hot water. Cool, add yeast and flour. Knead, let rise until double in bulk. Knead again, shape into loaf, and let rise in the pan until the bulk has again doubled. Bake for fifty minutes.

Potato Bread.—One and two-thirds cups of mashed potato, one teaspoon of salt, one-quarter of a yeast cake in two tablespoons of lukewarm water, three cups of flour.

Clean the potatoes, boil, pare, and mash thoroughly, add salt, and when cool add the yeast. Add part of the flour and let rise until very light. Add the remainder of the flour and knead thoroughly, making a very stiff dough. Let rise until treble in bulk and let rise in pan till double in bulk. Bake forty-five to fifty minutes. All the flour may be added at once, but the dough is difficult to handle.

Oatmeal Bread.—One cup of liquid, one teaspoon of salt, one cup of rolled oats, one-quarter of a yeast cake in one-quarter of a cup of lukewarm water, two and one-quarter cups of rye flour, two and one-quarter cups of white flour.

Scald the liquid, cook till lukewarm, add salt, yeast and sifted flour, mix thoroughly, knead, let rise till double in bulk. Knead again, shape into loaf, and let rise in the pan until the bulk has again doubled. Bake fifty minutes.

Note.—If you have a good rule for bread use it, but in place of one-quarter of the bulk of white flour use one of the other grains. This amount will not greatly change either the texture or the flour of the bread. The sponge may be set with white flour and the mixed flour worked in later. If potato is used as a substitute, allowance must be made for the extra water content, and enough flour added to make a very stiff loaf.

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