

"THE DELUGE" A Story of Modern Finance April, 1905, 15 Cts.

# AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



Drawn by  
John Cecil Clay

## APRIL CONTRIBUTORS

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR	EDITH MACVANE	LEONARD MERRICK
MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON	MARGARET HOUSTON	CHURCHILL WILLIAMS
DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS	ELEANOR H. PORTER	JOSEPH C. LINCOLN
JAMES BRANCH CABELL	FRANCES WILSON	TWENTY-ONE IN ALL

LONDON—AINSLEE MAGAZINE COMPANY, 156 Fifth Avenue, NEW YORK—PARIS

# SIMON'S HOUR

By James Branch Cabell

Author of "The Eagle's Shadow," Etc.

**N**OW, of a truth," said Simon Orts, "that is curious—distinctly curious."

He stood at the door for a moment, staring back into the ill-lit corridor. Presently he shut the door to, and came forward toward the fireplace.

Lady Allonby, half hidden in the depths of the big chair beside the chimney-piece, a book in her lap, looked up inquiringly. Lady Allonby did not rise, for she had no great liking for the vicar of Heriz Magna, and even scantier respect than most folk accorded him; and the circumstance that she had once considered the advisability of marrying him did not materially raise the clergyman in her estimation. Inevitably the discarded lover has his pedestal builded by the lapses and imperfections of the preferred one, and day by day, as the husband proves himself merely human, so trait by trait the other looms to superior proportions. Thus, to find the man who has aforesaid served as a standard for invidious comparisons—in the more voluble incidents of married life—to be out-at-elbows and very rarely sober is humiliating. Lady Allonby had seen a deal of Simon Orts during the two weeks she and her brother had been Lord Rokesle's guests at Stornoway; and every time she saw him, the less she cared to think of the fact that she had formerly liked him.

It was conceded by the most sedate that Sir Stephen Allonby's widow, in consideration of her liberal jointure, possessed a quite inordinate comeliness. She was tall for a woman. Her hair

had the color of amber and something, too, of its glow; her eyes, though not profound, were large and in hue varied, as the light fell or her emotions shifted, through a wide gamut of blue shades. But it was her mouth you remembered; the fullness and brevity of it, the deep indentation of its upper lip, the curve of it and its vivid crimson—these roused in you a wildish speculation as to its softness when she and fate were beyond ordinary lenient. Pink was the color most favorable to her complexion, and this she wore to-night; the gown was voluminous, with a profusion of lace about it, and afforded, as was the mode, ample opportunity to appraise her neck and shoulders. Lady Allonby had no reason to be ashamed of either, and the age was not prudish.

Her voice when she spoke now was carefully indifferent. "What is curious, Mr. Orts?" said Lady Allonby.

He stood warming his hands over the fire, diffusing a not overpleasant odor of tobacco and stale alcohol. "Faith, that damned rascal—I beg your pardon, Anastasia; our life on Usk is not conducive to a mincing nicety of speech. That rascal, Punshon, made some difficulty over admitting me; you might have taken him for a sentinel, with Stornoway in a state of siege. He ruffled me and—and I don't like it," Simon Orts said, reflectively, looking down upon her. "No, I don't like it. Where's your brother?" he demanded, on a sudden.

"Harry and Lord Rokesle are at cards, I believe. And Mrs. Morfit has retired to her apartments with one of her usual headaches, so that I have been alone these two hours. You visit

Stornoway somewhat late, Mr. Orts," Anastasia Allonby added, with point.

He jerked his thumb ceilingward. "The cloth is at any rascal's beck and call. Old Holles, my lord's man, is dying up yonder, and the whim seized him to have a clergyman in. God knows why, for it appears to me that one knave might very easily make his way to hell without having another knave to help him. And Holles?—eh, well, from what I myself know of him, the rogue is triply damned." His mouth puckered as he set about unbuttoning his long, rain-spattered coat, which, with his big hat, he flung aside upon a table. "Gad!" said Simon Orts, "we are most of us damned on Usk; and that is why I don't like it." He struck his hand against his thigh. "I don't like it, Anastasia."

"You will pardon me," she languidly retorted, "but I was never good at riddles."

Swiftly he turned and glanced about the hall, debating. Lady Allonby lazily regarded him, as she might have looked upon some slimy but harmless reptile; a small, slim, anxious man, she found him; always fidgeting, always placating some one, but never without a covert sneer. The fellow was venomous; his eyes only were honest, for even while his lips were about their wheedling, they flashed malice at you; and their shifting was so unremittent that afterward you recalled them as an absolute white, like the eyes of a statue. On Usk and thereabouts they said it was the glare from within of his damned soul, already at white heat; but they were a plain-spoken lot on Usk. Tonight Simon Orts was all in black; and his hair, too, and his gross eyebrows were black, and well-nigh to the cheek bones of his clean-shaven countenance the thick beard showed black through the skin.

Now he kept silence for a lengthy interval, his arms crossed on his breast, gnawing meanwhile at the finger nails of his left hand in an unattractive fashion he had of meditating. When words came it was in a torrent.

"I will read you my riddle, then.

You are a widow, rich; as women go, you are not as unpleasant to look at as most of 'em. If it became a clergyman to dwell upon such matters, I would say that your fleshly habitation is somewhat too fine for its tenant, since I know you to be a good-for-nothing jilt. However, you are God's handiwork, and doubtless He had His reasons for constructing you. My lord is poor; last summer at Tunbridge you declined to marry him. I am in his confidence, you observe. He took your decision in silence—'ware Rokesle when he is quiet! Eh, I know him—it is not for nothing that these ten years past I have studied his whims, pampered his vanity, lied to him, toadied him! You admire my candor?—faith, yes, I am very candid. I am Rokesle's hanger-on; he took me out of the gutter, and in my fashion I am grateful. And you? Anastasia, had you treated me more equitably fifteen years ago, I would have gone to the stake for you, singing; now I don't value you the beard of an onion. But, for old time's sake, I warn you. You and your brother are Rokesle's guests—on Usk! Harry Heleigh can handle a sword, I grant you—but you are on Usk! And Mrs. Morfit is here to play propriety—propriety on Usk, God save the mark! And besides, Rokesle can twist his sister about his little finger, as the phrase runs. And I find sentinels at the door! I don't like it, Anastasia. In his way, Rokesle loves you; more than that, you are one of the best matches in the kingdom, an ideal match to retrieve his battered fortunes; and my worthy patron, I regret to say, is not yet enregistered upon the Calendar of Saints." Simon Orts paused, with a short laugh.

But the woman had risen to her feet, her eyes widening and a thought troubled, though her lips at least smiled contemptuously.

"I should have realized that this late in the evening you would scarcely be in a fit condition to converse with ladies. Believe me, Mr. Orts, I would be very heartily glad to credit your warning to a somewhat officious friend-

liness, were it not that the odor about your person compels me to attribute it to gin."

"Oh, I have been drinking," he conceded, quite unabashed; "I have been drinking with a most commendable perseverance for these fifteen years. But at present I am very far from drunk." Simon Orts took a short turn about the hall; in an instant he faced her with an odd, almost tender smile. "You adorable, empty-headed, pink-and-white fool," said Simon Orts, "what madness induced you to come to Usk? You know that Rokesle loves you; you know that you don't mean to marry him. Then why come to Usk? Do you know who is king here in this sea-washed scrap of earth? Rokesle. German George reigns yonder in England, but here in the Isle of Usk Vincent Floyer is king. And it is not precisely a convent that he directs. The men of Usk, I gather, after ten years' experience in administering spiritual consolation hereabouts" — his teeth made their appearance here in honor of the jest—"are part fisherman, part smuggler, part pirate and part devil—the latter ingredient predominating. They have no very unreasonable apprehension of hell, and would most assuredly storm it if Rokesle bade them do so. As I have pointed out, my worthy patron is subject to the frailties of the flesh. Oh, I am candid, for if you report me to his lordship I shall lie out of it. I have had practice enough to do it speciously. But Rokesle—do you know what Rokesle is, Anastasia?"

The vicar of Heriz Magna would have gone on, but Lady Allonby had interrupted him, her cheeks flaming. "Yes, yes," she cried; "I know him to be a worthy gentleman. It is true I could not find it in my heart to marry him, but I am proud to rank him among my friends." She waved her hand toward the chimney-piece, where hung—and still hangs—the sword of Aluric Floyer, the founder of the house of Rokesle. "Do you see that old sword, Mr. Orts? The man who wielded it long ago was a gallant gentleman and a stalwart captain. And my lord, as he

told me but yesterday, hung it there that he might always have in mind the fact that he bore the name of that man, and must bear it meritoriously. My lord is a gentleman. Oh, believe me, if you, too, were a gentleman, Mr. Orts, you would understand! But a gentleman is not a tale-bearer; a gentleman does not defame behind his back the man to whom he owes his daily bread."

"So he has been flattering you?" said Simon Orts; then, quite inconsequently: "I had not thought anything you could say would hurt me. I find I was wrong. Perhaps I am not a gentleman. Faith, no; I am only a shabby drunkard, a disgrace to my cloth, am I not, Anastasia? Accordingly, I fail to perceive what old Aluric Floyer has to do with the matter in hand. He was a decent enough fellow, I dare say; putting aside a disastrous appetite for fruit, so was Adam; but, viewing their descendants, I ruefully admit that in each case the strain has somewhat deteriorated."

There was a brief silence; then Lady Allonby indifferently observed: "Perhaps I was discourteous. I ask your forgiveness, Mr. Orts. And now, if you will pardon the suggestion, I think you had better go to your dying parishioner."

But she had touched the man to the quick. "I am a drunkard; who made me so? Who lured me on with soft words and kisses—yes, kisses, my lady!—till a wealthier man came a-wooing, and then flung me aside like an old shoe?" Simon Orts demanded of her, peering into her face.

This drenched her cheeks with crimson. "I think we had better not refer to that boy-and-girl affair. You cannot blame me for your debauched manner of living. I found before it was too late that I did not love you. I was only a girl, and it was natural that at first I should be mistaken in my feelings."

The vicar had caught her by each wrist. "You don't understand, of course," he said. "You never understood, for you have no more heart than one of those pink-and-white bisque figures that you resemble. 'You don't

love me, and therefore I will go to the devil,' may not be a logical deduction, but it is a very human one. You don't understand that, do you, Anastasia? You don't understand how when one is acutely miserable one remembers that at the bottom of a wineglass—or even at the bottom of a tumbler of gin—one may come upon happiness, or at least contented acquiescence to whatever the gods may send. You don't understand how one remembers when *the* woman is lost, that there are other women whose lips are equally red and whose hearts are tenderer and—yes, whose virtue is less exigent. No; women never understand these things; and in any event, you would not, because you are only an adorable pink-and-white fool."

"Oh, oh!" she cried, struggling. "How dare you? You insult me, you coward!"

"Perhaps I do; comfort yourself with the reflection that it scarcely matters what a sot like me may elect to say. And since you do not understand, Anastasia, I will tell you that the lover turned adrift may well profit by the example of his predecessors. Other lovers have been forsaken, both masculine and feminine; and I have heard that when Chryseis was reft away from Agamemnon, the *anax andron* made himself tolerably comfortable with Briseis; and that when Theseus sneaked off in the night, Ariadne, having wept for a decent period, managed to console herself with Thracian Bacchus—which I have always apprehended to be a courteous method of stating that the daughter of Minos took to drink. So the forsaken lover has his choice of consolations—wine or women. I have tried both, Anastasia. And I tell you——"

He dropped her hands as though they had been embers. Lord Rokesle had come quietly into the hall.

"Why, what's this?" Lord Rokesle demanded. "Simon, you aren't making love to Lady Allonby, I hope? Fie, man! remember your cloth."

It was strange how Simon Orts wheeled about—a different man, cringing. "Your lordship is pleased to be pleasant. Indeed, though, I fear that

your ears must burn, sir, for I was but now expatiating upon the manifold kindnesses your lordship has been so generous as to confer upon your unworthy vicar. I was admiring Lady Allonby's ruffle, sir—Valenciennes, I take it, and very choice."

Lord Rokesle laughed. "So I am to thank you for blowing my trumpet, am I?" said Lord Rokesle. "Well, you are not a bad fellow, Simon, so long as you are sober. And now be off with you to Holles—the rascal is dying, they tell me. My luck, Simon! He made up a cravat better than any man in the kingdom."

"The ways of Providence are inscrutable," said Simon Orts; "and if Providence has seen fit to chasten your lordship, doubtless it shall be, as anciently in the case of Job the Patriarch, repaid by a recompense, by a thousandfold recompense." And with a meaning glance toward Lady Allonby—a glance that said: "I, too, have a tongue"—he was mounting the stairway to the upper corridor when Lord Rokesle's voice stopped him halfway.

"Oh, I forgot," said Lord Rokesle; "don't leave Stornoway without seeing me again. I shall want you presently."

## II.

Lord Rokesle sat down beside the fire in silence. Neither spoke for a while.

In a somber way Lord Rokesle was a handsome man, and to-night, in brown and gold, very stately. His bearing savored faintly of the hidalgo; indeed, his mother was a foreign woman, cast ashore on Usk from a wrecked Spanish vessel, and incontinently married by the lord of the island. For her, Death had delayed his advent unmercifully; but her reason survived the marriage by two years only, and there were those familiar with the late Lord Rokesle's peculiarities who considered that in this, at least, the crazed lady was fortunate. Among these it was also esteemed a matter deserving comment that in the wrecks so frequent about the island the

women sometimes survived, but the men never; though, doubtless, this was merely a scrap of parochial backbiting.

Now Lord Rokesle regarded Lady Allonby, what time she displayed conspicuous interest in the play of the flames. But by and by: "Oh, vulgarity!" said Lady Allonby. "Pray endeavor to look a little more cheerful. Positively, you are glaring at me like one of those disagreeable beggars one so often sees staring at bakery windows."

He smiled, but with an odd hint of scorn about the nostrils. "Do you remember what the Frenchman wrote—*et pain ne voyent qu'aux fenêtres?* There is not an enormous difference between me and the tattered rascal of Chepe, for we both stare longingly at what we most desire. And were I minded to hunt the simile to the foot of the letter, I would liken your coquetry to the intervening window pane—not easily broken through, but very, very transparent, Anastasia."

"You are not overwhelmingly polite," she said, reflectively; "but, then, I suppose living in the country always spoils a man's manners. Orson, you smack too much of the forest."

"Anastasia," said Lord Rokesle, bending toward her, "will you always be thus cruel? Do you not understand that in this world you are the only thing I care for? You think me a boor; perhaps I am—but it rests with you, my lady, to make me what you will. For I love you, Anastasia."

"Why, how delightful of you!" said she, languidly.

"It is not a matter for jesting. I tell you that I love you." My lord's color was rising.

But Lady Allonby yawned with deliberate cruelty. "Eh, Lus!" said she, "you need not boast of it, as if falling in love with me were an uncommonly difficult achievement. That, too, is scarcely polite."

"For the tenth time I ask you will you marry me?" said Lord Rokesle, impatiently.

"Is it only the tenth time? Dear me, it seems like the thousandth. Of

course I couldn't think of it. Heavens, my lord, how can you expect me to marry a man who glares at me like that? Positively, you look as ferocious as the black man in the play—the fellow who smothered his wife because she misplaced a handkerchief, you remember."

Lord Rokesle had risen by this, and he paced the hall for a moment, fighting down his resentment. "I am no *Othello*," he said, at last, "though, indeed, I think that the love I bear you is of a sort that rarely stirs our calm English blood. It is not for nothing that I am half Spaniard. I warn you, Anastasia, my love is a consuming flame that will not pause for considerations of policy or even honor. And you madden me, Anastasia! To-day you hear my protestations with sighs and glances and faint denials; to-morrow you have only taunts for me. Sometimes I think it is hatred rather than love I bear you. Sometimes——" He clutched at his breast with a wild gesture. "I burn!" he cried hoarsely. "Woman, give me back a human heart in place of this flame you have kindled here, or I shall go mad! Last night I dreamed of hell—of the hell divines prate of, with its souls toasted on burning forks and fed with sops of fire—and you were there, Anastasia, where the flames leaped and curled like red-blazoned snakes about the poor damned. And I, too, was there. And through eternity I heard you cry to God in vain, O dear, wonderful, golden-haired woman; and we could see Him, somehow—see Him a great way off, with straight, white brows that frowned down upon you pitilessly. And I was glad, glad, glad! For I knew then that I hated you. And even now, when I think that I must go mad for love of you, I yet hate you with a fervor that shakes and thrills in every fiber of me. Oh, I burn, burn!" he cried, with that same frantic clutching at his breast.

Lady Allonby had risen, half afraid, for she saw that the man was dangerous. Swiftly she recalled blurred tales of his mother, legends of the foreign woman's monotonous wailings at full

moon—wailings for that unknown Manuel whose name she never spoke when her thoughts were lucid. She had waited for a long time, that foreign woman, to avenge her wrongs upon the house of Rokesle.

"Positively," Lady Allonby drawled, "I must ask you to open a window if you intend to continue in this strain. Do you mean to suffocate me, my lord, with your flames and your fire and your brimstone and so on? You breathe conflagrations, like a devil in a pantomime. I had as soon converse with a piece of fireworks. So, if you will pardon me, I would like to go to my brother."

At the sound of her high, crisp speech his frenzy fell from him like a mantle. "And you let me kiss you yesterday," he said, quite placidly, though his eyes were sparks. "Oh, I know you struggled, but you did not struggle very hard, did you, Anastasia?"

"Insolent!" she cried. "I—I scorn your insinuation. I repeat, my lord, I wish to go to my brother"—stamping a tiny foot.

"Egad!" Lord Rokesle retorted, "that reminds me I have been notably remiss. I bear you a message from Harry. He had to-night a letter from Job Nangle, who, it seems, has a purchaser for Halvergate at last. The fellow is with our excellent Nangle at Peniston Friars, and offers liberal terms if the sale be instant. The chance was too promising to let slip, so Harry left the island an hour ago. It happened by a rare chance that some of my fellows were on the point of setting out for the mainland—and he knew that he could safely intrust you to Mrs. Morfit's duennaship, he said."

"He should not have done so," Lady Allonby observed, in some contention of mind. "He—I will go to Mrs. Morfit—let me pass, my lord."

"Why, that is the unfortunate part of the whole affair," said Lord Rokesle. "The same boat brought Sabina a letter that summoned her to the bedside of her husband, who, it appears, lies desperately ill at Kuyper Manor. It happened by a rare chance that some of my

fellows were on the point of setting out for the mainland—from Heriz pier yonder, not from the end of the island whence Harry sailed—so she and her maid embarked instanter. Of course, there was your brother here to play propriety, she said. And by the oddest misfortune in the world," Lord Rokesle sighed, "I forgot to tell her that Harry Heleigh had left Usk a half hour before. My memory is lamentably treacherous."

Now she had become a hunted animal. "Oh, you coward! You planned this!"

"Candidly, yes. Nangle is my agent as well as Harry's, you may remember. I have any quantity of his letters, and of course an equal number of Archibald's. So I spent the morning in my own apartments, Anastasia—tracing letters against the window pane, which was, I dare say, a childish recreation, but then what would you have? As you very justly observe, country life invariably coarsens a man's tastes; and accordingly, as you may recall, I actually declined a game of *écarté* with you in order to indulge in this puerile amusement. Decidedly, my dear, you must train your husband's imagination for superior flights—when you shall be Lady Rokesle."

She was staring at him as though he had been a portent. "I am alone," she said. "Alone—in this place—with you! Alone! you devil!"

"The epithet is more remarkable for its force than for its justice. But, indeed, you are to all intent alone upon Usk, and upon Usk there are many devils. There are ten of them on guard yonder, by the way, in case your brother should return inopportunely, though that is scarcely probable. Obedient devils, you observe, Anastasia—devils who exert and check their deviltry as I bid them, for they esteem me Lucifer's lieutenant. And I grant the present situation outrages propriety, but that is not irremediable. Lady Allonby may not, if she value her reputation, spend this night at Stornoway; but here am I and upstairs is the parson. Believe me, Anastasia, the most vine-

garish prude could not object to Lady Rokesle's spending not only to-night at Stornoway, but all future nights."

"Let me think, let me think!" Lady Allonby said, and her hands feverishly plucked now at her hair, now at her dress. She appeared dazed. "I can't think!" she wailed, on a sudden. "I am afraid. I—oh, Vincent, Vincent, you cannot do this thing! I trusted you, Vincent. Ah, I know I let you make love to me, and I relished having you make love to me. Some women are like that. But I can't marry you, Vincent. There is a man yonder in England I love. He does not love me—he is in love with my stepdaughter. That is very amusing, is it not, Vincent? Some day I may be his mother-in-law. Why don't you laugh, Vincent? Come, let us both laugh—first at this and then at the jest you have just played on me. Do you know, for a moment I thought you were in earnest? But Harry went to sleep over the cards, didn't he? And Mrs. Morfit has gone to bed with one of her usual headaches? Of course; and you thought you would retaliate upon me for teasing you. You were quite right. It was a very good jest. Now let us laugh at it. Laugh, Vincent! Oh!" she cried, her voice rising to a scream, "for the love of God, laugh, laugh—or I shall go mad!"

But Lord Rokesle was a man of ice. "Matrimony is a serious matter, Anastasia; it does not befit those so soon to enter it to exhibit undue levity. I wonder what's keeping Simon?"

"Simon Orts!" she said, in a half whisper. "Oh, did fate ever play a more hideous jest upon a woman? I am at your mercy and Simon's—you, the two men I have always made my sport. You!" But now a trivial cunning woke in her face, and she came toward him smiling. "Why, of course, I teased you, Vincent, but there was never any hard feeling, was there? And now you really want me to marry you? Well, we must see, Vincent. But, as you say, matrimony is a serious matter. Do you know you say very sensible things, Vincent?—not at all like those silly fops yonder in London. I

dare say you and I would be very happy together. But you wouldn't have any respect for me if I married you on a sudden like this, would you? Of course not. So you will let me think it over. Come to me a month from now, say—is that too long to wait? Well, I think it is myself. Say a week, then. I must have my wedding finery, you know. We women are such vain creatures—not big and brave and sensible like you men. See, for example, how much bigger your hand is than mine—mine's quite lost in it, isn't it? So, since I am only a vain, chattering, tiny little thing, you are going to indulge me and let me go up to London for some new clothes, aren't you, Vincent? Of course, you will—and we will be married in a week. But you will let me go to London first, won't you?—away from this dreadful place, away—I didn't mean that. I dare say it is a very agreeable place when you get accustomed to it. And it is only for clothes—oh, I swear it is only for clothes, Vincent! And you *said* you would—yes, only a moment ago you distinctly said you would let me go. It is not as if I were not coming back—who said I would not come back? Of course I will. But you must give me time, Vincent, dear—you must, you *must*, I tell you! Oh, God!" she sobbed, and flung from her the loathed hand she was fondling, "it's no use!"

"No," said Lord Rokesle, rather sadly. "I am not Samson, nor are you Delilah to cajole me. It's no use, Anastasia. I would have preferred that you came to me voluntarily, but since you cannot, I mean to take you unwillingly. Simon," he called, loudly, "does that rascal intend to spin out his dying interminably? Charon's waiting, man."

From above, "Coming, my lord," said Simon Orts.

### III.

The vicar of Heriz Magna descended the stairway with deliberation. His eyes twitched from the sobbing woman to Lord Rokesle, and then back again,



in that furtive way he had of glancing about a room without moving his head; he seemed to lie in ambush under his gross brows; and whatever his thoughts may have been, he gave them no utterance.

"Simon," said Lord Rokesle, "Lady Allonby is about to make me the happiest of men. Have you a prayer book about you, Master Parson?—for here's a loving couple desirous of entering the blessed state of matrimony."

"The match is somewhat of the suddenest," said Simon Orts. "But I have known these impromptu marriages to turn out very happily—very happily, indeed," he repeated, rubbing his hands together and smiling horribly. "I gather that Mr. Heleigh will not grace the ceremony with his presence?"

They understood one another, these two. Lord Rokesle grinned, and in a few words told him of his trick to insure the absence of his two guests; and Simon Orts also grinned, but respectfully—the grin of the true lackey wearing his master's emotions like his clothes, at second hand.

"A very pretty stratagem," said Simon Orts; "unconventional, I dare say, but it is proverbially known that all's fair in love."

At this Lady Allonby came to him, catching his hand in a frenzy of helplessness. "There is only you, Simon," she said. "Oh, there is no hope in that lustful devil yonder. But you are not all base, Simon. You are a man—ah, God, if I were only a man I would rip out that devil's heart—his defiled, infamous heart! I would trample upon it. I would feed it to dogs." She paused. Her impotent fury was jerking at every muscle, was choking her. "But I am only a woman. Simon, you used to love me. You cannot have forgotten, Simon. Oh, haven't you any pity on a woman? Remember, Simon—remember how happy we were. Don't you remember how the night-jars used to call to one another when we sat o' moonlit evenings under the elm tree?—*our* elm tree, Simon. Don't you remember the cottage we planned, Simon?—where we were going to live

on bread and cheese and kisses? And how we quarreled because I wanted to train vines over it? You said the rooms would be too dark. You said—oh, Simon, Simon, if only I had gone to live with you in that little cottage we planned and never built!" Lady Allonby was at his feet now. She fawned upon him like a spaniel expectant of a thrashing.

The vicar of Heriz Magna ran over the leaves of his prayer book dispassionately till he had found the marriage service, and then closed the book, his forefinger marking the place. Lord Rokesle stood a little apart, and with a meditative smile watched them.

"Your plea is a very remarkable one," said Simon Orts. "As I understand it, you appeal to me to meddle in your affairs on the ground that you once made a fool of me. I think the obligation is largely optional. I remember quite clearly the incidents to which you refer, and it shames even an old sot like me to think that I was ever so utterly at the mercy of a good-for-nothing jilt. I remember every vow you ever made to me, Anastasia, and I know they were all lies. I remember every kiss, every glance, every caress—all lies, Anastasia! And gad! the only emotion it rouses in me is a mild wonder as to why my worthy patron here should want to marry you. Of course you are very wealthy, but, personally, I would not put up with you for double the money. I must ask you to rise, Lady Rokesle—pardon me if I somewhat anticipate your title!"

Lady Allonby stumbled to her feet wearily. "Is there no manhood in the world?" she asked, in a puzzled voice. "Has neither of you ever heard of manhood, though but as distantly as men hear summer thunder? Had neither of you a woman for a mother—a woman, as I am—or a father who was not—oh, God!—not as you are?"

"These rhetorical passages," said Lord Rokesle, "while very elegantly expressed, are scarcely to the point. So you and Simon went a-philandering once? Egad, that lends quite a touch of romance to the affair. But dispatch,

Parson Simon—your lady's for your betters now."

"Dearly beloved——" said Simon Orts.

"Simon, you are not all base. I am helpless, Simon, utterly helpless. There was a Simon once would not have seen me weep. There was a Simon——"

"We are gathered together here in the sight of God——"

"You cannot do it, Simon—do I not know you to the marrow? Remember—not me—not the vain folly of my girlhood! Ah, no!—remember the man you have been, Simon Orts!" Lady Allonby caught him fiercely by the shoulder. "Ah, thank God! thank God!" she sobbed. "You do remember! You do remember, don't you, Simon?"

The vicar stared at her blankly. "The man I have been," said Simon Orts. "Ah, yes!—the man I have been!" Something clicked in his throat with sharp distinctness.

"Upon my word," said Lord Rokesle, yawning, "this getting married appears to be an uncommonly tedious business."

Then a curious thing happened. Simon Orts laid aside his prayer book and said: "I cannot do it, my lord. The woman's right."

She clapped her hands to her breast, and stood thus, reeling upon her feet. You would have thought her in the crisis of some physical agony; then she breathed again, deeply but with a flinching inhalation, as though the contact of the air scorched her lungs, and, swaying, fell to the floor limply.

"I beg your pardon?" said Lord Rokesle, scarcely noticing her. This was men's business now, and over it his brow began to pucker.

So it was Simon Orts who lifted the woman and bore her to a long settle. He passed behind it to arrange a cushion under her head with an awkward, grudging tenderness, and then rose to face Lord Rokesle across the disordered pink fripperies.

"The woman's right, my lord. There is such a thing as manhood in the

world. Manhood!" Simon Orts repeated, with a sort of wonder. "I might have boasted it once. Then this woman came into my life to trick me into a fool's paradise—to trick me into happiness, till Stephen Allonby, a lord's son, came a-wooing, and then to fling me aside. May God forgive me, I forgot I was His servant then! I set out to go to the devil, but I went further than that; for I went to you, Vincent Floyer. You gave me bread when I was starving—true, but it was at a price. Ay, the price was that I dance attendance on you—to aid and applaud your knaveries, to be your pander, your lackey, your confederate, as occasion might serve—to puff out, in effect, the last spark of manhood in my sot's body. Oh, I am, indeed, beholden to you two—to her for making me a sot, and to you for making me a lackey. But I will save her from you, Vincent Floyer. Not for her sake"—he looked down upon the prostrate woman and snarled. "God, no! But I'll do it for the sake of the boy I have been. For I owe that boy some reparation; I have ruined his nimble body, I have dulled the wits he gloried in, I have made his name a foul thing that honesty spits out of her mouth; but as God reigns in heaven," Simon Orts cried, in a great voice, "I will cleanse that name to-night!"

"Indeed," Lord Rokesle observed, "I begin to fear that heroics are contagious. Possibly I, too, shall begin to rant in a moment. Meanwhile, as I understand it, you decline to perform the ceremony. I have had to warn you before this, Simon, that you mustn't take too much gin when I am apt to need you. You are very pitifully drunk, man. You defy me! Why, you are my chattel, bought and paid for; the devil may consider that he owns your soul, but I hold a prior mortgage. You defy me!"—he laughed, genially, for the notion amused him. "Wine is a mocker, Simon. Come, dispatch, Parson Lickspittle, and let's have no more of these lofty sentiments."

"I cannot do it. I—oh, my lord, my lord! You wouldn't kill an unarmed man!" Simon Orts whined, with a sud-

den alteration of tone; for Lord Rokesle had composedly drawn his sword, and its point was now not far from the vicar's breast.

"I trust that I shall not be compelled to. Egad, it is a very ludicrous business when the bridegroom is forced to hold a sword to the parson's bosom all during the ceremony; but a ceremony we must have, Simon, for Lady Allonby's jointure is considerable. Otherwise—man, man, don't be an ass! There are my fellows yonder, anyone of whom would twist your neck at a word from me. And do you think I would boggle at a word? Gad, Simon, I thought you knew me better!"

The vicar of Heriz Magna kept silence for a moment, his eyes twitching about the hall in that stealthy way of his. Finally, "It is no use," said he. "A poor knave cannot afford the luxury of honesty. My life is not a valuable one, perhaps, but even vermin have an aversion to death. I return to my lackeyship, Lord Rokesle. Perhaps it was only the gin. Perhaps—in any event, I am once more at your service. And in earnest of this I warn you that you are exhibiting in the affair scant forethought. Mr. Heleigh is but three miles distant. If he, by any chance, gets wind of this business, Trevor will find a boat for him readily enough—ay, and men, too, for he is at feud with you. Many of your people visit the mainland every night, and in their cups the men of Usk are not taciturn. An idle word spoken over an inn table may bring an armed company thundering about your gates. You should have set sentinels, my lord."

"I have already done so," Rokesle said; "there are ten of them yonder. Still, there is something in what you say. We will make this affair certain."

Lord Rokesle crossed the hall to the foot of the stairway and struck thrice upon the gong hanging there. Presently the door leading to the corridor opened and a man came into the hall.

"Punshon," said Lord Rokesle, "have any boats left the island to-night?"

"No, my lord."

"You will see that none do. Also, no man is to leave Stornoway to-night, either to visit Heriz Magna or the mainland; and no man is to enter Stornoway. Do you understand, Punshon?"

"Yes, my lord."

"If you will pardon me," said Simon Orts, with a grin, "I have an appointment to-night. You would not have me break faith with a lady?"

"You are a lecherous rascal, Simon. But do as you are bid and I indulge you. I am not afraid of your going to Harry Heleigh—after performing the ceremony. No, faith, for you are thereby *particeps criminis*. You will pass Mr. Orts, Punshon. No one else."

Simon Orts waved his hand toward Lady Allonby. "It were only kindness to warn Mr. Punshon there may be some disturbance shortly. A lamentation or so."

At this Lord Rokesle clapped him upon the shoulder and heartily laughed. "That's the old Simon—always on the alert. Punshon, no one is to enter this wing of the castle, whatever happens—no one, you understand. Whatever noises you may hear, you will pay no attention to them. Now go."

He went toward Lady Allonby and took her hand. "Come, Anastasia!" said he. "Gad, she has really swooned! Why, what the devil, Simon——!"

Simon Orts had tranquilly flung the gong into the fire. "She will be sounding that when she comes to," said Simon Orts. "You don't want a rumpus fit to vex the dead yonder in the chapel." Simon Orts stood before the fire turning over the leaves of his prayer book, listening. The outer door of the corridor closed. Then he dropped the book and, springing into the armchair, wrested Aluric Floyer's sword from its fastening. "Tricked, tricked!" said Simon Orts. "You always were a fool, Vincent Floyer."

Lord Rokesle blinked at him, as dazzled by an unexpected light. "What do you mean?"

"I have the honor to repeat—you are a fool. I did not know the place was guarded—you told me. I needed privacy—by your orders no one is to enter here to-night. I needed a sword—you had it hanging here, ready for the first comer. Oh, beyond doubt, you are a fool, Vincent Floyer!" Standing in the armchair, Simon Orts bowed fantastically, and then leaped to the ground with the agility of an imp.

"You have tricked me neatly," Lord Rokesle conceded, and his tone did not lack a certain admiration. "By gad, I have even given them orders to pass you—after you have murdered me! Very clever, Simon—but one thing you overlooked. You are very far from my match at fencing. So I shall presently kill you. And after that, ceremony or no ceremony, the woman's mine."

"I am not so sure of that," the vicar observed. "It is true I am no swordsman; but there are behind my sword forces superior to any that skill might muster. The sword of your fathers fights against you, my lord—against you that are their disgrace. They loved honor and truth; you betrayed honor, you knew not truth. They revered womanhood; you reverence nothing, and your life smirches your mother's memory. Ah, believe me, they all fight against you! Can you not see them, my lord?—old Aluric Floyer and all those other honest gentlemen, whose blood now blushes in your body—blushes to be confined in a vessel so ignoble? They fight against you, these gallant phantoms. And my hatred, too, fights against you—the cur's bitter hatred against the mastering hand it dare not bite. I dare now. You made me your pander, you slew my manhood; in return, body and soul, I demolish you. Even my hatred for that woman fights against you; she robbed me of my honor—is it not a tragical revenge to save her honor, to hold it in my hand, mine, to dispose of as I elect—and then fling it to her as a thing contemptible? Between you, you have ruined me; but it is Simon's hour to-night. I shame you both past the reach of thought, for presently I shall take your life—in

the high tide of your iniquity, praise God!—and presently I shall give my life for hers. Ah, I am fey, my lord! You are a dead man, Vincent Floyer, for the powers of good and the powers of evil alike contend against you."

He spoke rather sadly than otherwise; and there was a vague trouble in Lord Rokesle's face, though he shook his head impatiently. "You are no better than I. You are the paltriest knave unchanged in England."

"Great ends may be attained by petty instruments, my lord; a filthy turtle quenched the genius of Æschylus, and they were only common soldiers who shed the blood that redeemed the world."

Lord Rokesle pished at this. But he was strangely quiet. He saluted gravely, as equal to equal, and the two crossed blades.

Simon Orts fought clumsily but steadily. From the first he pressed his opponent with a contained resolution. The vicar seemed a man fighting in a dream—with a dogged obstinacy, unswerving. Lord Rokesle wounded him in the arm, but he did not seem aware of it. He crowded upon him. Now there were little beads of sweat upon Lord Rokesle's brow, and his tongue protruded from his mouth, licking at it ravenously. Step by step Lord Rokesle drew back; there was no withstanding this dumb fanatic, who did not know when he was wounded, who scarcely parried attack.

"Even on earth you shall have a taste of hell," said Simon Orts. "There is terror in your eyes, my worthy patron."

Lord Rokesle flung up his arms as the sword passed through his breast. "I am afraid! I am afraid!" he wailed, childishly. Then he coughed, and seemed with his straining hands to push a great weight from him as the blood frothed about his lips and nostrils. "Oh, Simon, I am afraid! Help me, Simon!"

Old custom spoke there. Followed silence, and presently the empty body sprawled upon the floor. Vincent Floyer had done with it.

## IV.

Simon Orts knelt, abstractedly wiping Aluric Floyer's sword upon the corner of a rug. He derived an odd comfort from this manual employment that necessitated attention but without demanding that he concentrate his mind upon it; it enabled him to forget how solitary the place was, how viciously his garments rustled when he moved; so over and over again he cleansed the sword, rehearsing meanwhile the ensuing action.

His wits were by ordinary keen; but now, adjusting point by point, they moved with a mechanical surety that roused even in him an incurious wonder. It was ludicrously simple; he saw the future like a page of clean print, decipherable at a glance.

Then a scraping of silks made his quickened faculties wince. Turning, he found Lady Allonby half erect upon the settle. She stared about her with a kind of infantile wonder; presently her glance swept over Lord Rokesle's body, without to all appearance finding it an object of remarkable interest. "Is he dead?"

"Yes," said Simon Orts; "get up!" His voice had a rasp; she might from his tone have been a refractory dog. But Lady Allonby obeyed him.

"We are in a devil of a mess," said Simon Orts; "but I see a way out of it—if you can keep your head. Can you?"

"I am past fear," she said, dully. "I drown in a sea of feathers, Simon. I can get no foothold, I clutch nothing that is steadfast, and I smother. I have been like this in dreams. I am very tired, Simon."

He took her hand, collectedly appraising her pulse. He put his own hand upon her heart. "No," said Simon Orts, "you are not afraid. Now, listen: You have not time to drown in a sea of feathers. You are upon Usk, among men who differ from beasts by being a thought more cruel, and from devils by being a little more bestial; it is my opinion that the earlier you get away the better, especially as

the news of Lord Rokesle's death will not tend to ameliorate their dispositions. Punshon has orders to pass Simon Orts. Very well; put on that cloak."

He caught up his long cloak and wrapped it about her. Lady Allonby stood rigid. But immediately he frowned and removed the garment from her shoulders.

"That won't do. Your skirts are too big. Take 'em off."

Submissively she did so, and presently stood before him in her petticoat. In contrast to the immaculate white of it, the pink bodice glared a tawdry thing.

"You cut just now a very ludicrous figure, Anastasia. I dare say that the nobleman who formerly inhabited yonder carcass would still be its tenant if he had known how greatly the beauty he went mad for was beholden to the haberdasher and the mantua-maker, and quite possibly the chemist. *Persicos odi*, Anastasia; it is a humiliating reflection that the hair of a dead woman artfully disposed about a living head should have power to set men squabbling, and murder be engendered in a paint pot. However, wrap yourself in the cloak. Now turn up the collar—so. Now pull down the hatbrim. Um—pretty well. Chance favors us quite unblushingly. You may thank your stars it is a rainy night and that I am a little man. You detest little men, don't you? Yes, I remember." Simon Orts now gave his orders, emphasizing each one with a not over-clean forefinger. "When I open this door you will go out into the corridor. Punshon or one of the others will be on guard at the further door. Pay no attention to him. There is only one light—on the left. Keep to the right in the shadow. Stagger as you go; if you can manage a hiccup, the imitation will be all the more lifelike. He will expect something of the sort, and he will not trouble you, for he knows that when I am fuddled I am quarrelsome. This is a diverting world, Anastasia; you perceive that habitual drunkenness and an unbridled temper may

sometimes prove commendable—as tonight, when they rescue persecuted innocence!" Here Simon Orts gave an unpleasant laugh.

"But I do not understand——" she began.

"You understand very little except coquetry and the proper disposition of a ruffle. But this is simple. My horse is tied at the postern. Mount—astride, mind. You know the way to the vicarage, so does the horse; you will find my brother there. Tell Dick what has happened. Tell him to row you to the mainland; tell him to conduct you to Colonel Trevor's. Then you must shift for yourself; but Trevor is a gentleman, and Trevor would protect Beelzebub if he came to him a fugitive from Vincent Floyer. Now do you understand?"

"Yes," said Lady Allonby, and seated herself before the fire, "yes, I understand. I am to slip away in the darkness and leave you here to answer for Lord Rokesle's death—to those devils. Do you think I would do that?"

Simon Orts caught his breath swiftly. Now he was kneeling beside her. The black cloak enveloped her from head to foot, and the turned-up collar screened her sunny hair; in the shadow of the broad hat brim he could see only her eyes, resplendent and defiant, and in them the reflection of the vaulting flames. "You would stay, Anastasia?"

"I will not purchase my life at the price of yours. I will owe you nothing, Simon Orts."

The vicar chuckled. "Nor appeared less that archangel ruined," he said. "No, faith, not a whit less! We are much of a piece, Anastasia. Do you know—if affairs had fallen out differently—I think I might have been a man and you a woman? As it is——" Kneeling still, his glance devoured her for a while. "Yes, you would stay. And you know what staying signifies. It is pride, your damnable pride, that moves you—but I rejoice, for it proves you a brave woman. Courage, at least, you possess, and that is the first virtue I have discovered in you for a long time. However, there is no necessity

for your staying. The men of Usk will not hurt Simon Orts."

A jeweled hand broke from the cloak folds as though to grasp at the sheltered life of yesterday. Lady Allonby had found the world a very pleasant place since her widowhood. "They will not hurt you? You swear it, Simon?"

"Why, the man was their tyrant. They obeyed him—yes, through fear. They will hail me as their deliverer, Anastasia. But if they found a woman here—a woman not ill-looking——" Simon Orts snapped his fingers. "Why, I leave you to conjecture," said he.

They had both risen, he smiling, the woman with a turbulence of hope and terror astir in her breast. "Swear it, Simon!"

"Anastasia, were affairs as you suppose them, I would have but a little while to live. As it is, I anticipate for to-morrow not death, but a crown of laurels—and yes, unlimited gin. Were affairs as you suppose them, I would stand now at the threshold of eternity. And I swear to you upon my soul's salvation, that I am safe. They will not harm me."

"No, you would not dare to lie in the moment of death," she said, after a considerable pause. "I believe you. I will go. Good-by, Simon." Lady Allonby went toward the door opening into the corridor, but turned there and came back to him. "I shall never see you again. I do not love you. I think that I rather hate you than otherwise, for you remind me of things I would willingly forget. But, oh, Simon, Simon, I wish we had gone to live in that little cottage we planned, and quarreled over, and never built! I think we would have been happy."

Simon Orts raised her hand to his lips. "Yes," said he, "we would have been happy. I would have been by this a man doing a man's work in the world, and you a matron, grizzling, perhaps, but rich in content, and in love opulent. As it is, you have your flatterers, your gossip and your cards, and I have my gin. Good-by, Anastasia."

"Why have you done—this, Simon?" The vicar of Heriz Magna flung out

his hands in a gesture of impotence. "I dare confess now what even to myself I have never dared confess. I love you. I have loved you all my life."

"I am sorry. I am not worthy, Simon."

"No, you are not worthy. But one does not justify love by a mathematical demonstration. I love you. Good-by, Anastasia."

Holding the door ajar, the vicar of Heriz Magna heard the horse's hoofs slap their leisurely way down the hillside. Presently the sound died and he turned back into the hall.

"A brave woman, that! Oh, a trifling, shallow-hearted jilt, but a brave one!"

"I had to lie to her. She would have stayed else. And now to put her out of your mind, Simon Orts—after all these years, to put her quite out of your mind. Faith, she might wheedle me now to her heart's content, and my pulse would never budge; for I must devote what little time there is to hoping they will kill me quickly. He was their god, that man!"

Simon Orts went toward the dead body, looking down into the distorted

face unflinchingly. "And I, too, loved him. Yes, such as he was, he was the only friend I ever had. And I think he liked me," Simon Orts said aloud, with a touch of shy pride. "Yes, you liked me, didn't you, Vincent? Wait for me, then, my lord—I shall not be long. And I will serve you faithfully now. I had to play the man's part, you know—you mustn't grudge poor old Simon his one hour of manhood. You wouldn't, I think. And in any event, I shall be with you presently, and you can cuff me if you like—just as you used to do."

He covered the dead face with his handkerchief, but in the instant he drew it away. "No, not this coarse cambric. You were too much of a fop, Vincent. I will use yours—the finest linen, my lord. You see old Simon knows your tastes."

He drew himself erect, exultantly.

"They will come at dawn to kill me; but I have had my hour. God, the man I might have been! And now—well, perhaps He would not be offended if I said a bit of a prayer for Vincent."

So the vicar of Heriz Magna knelt down beside the flesh that had been Lord Rokesle; and there they found him in the morning.



## HOLY SATURDAY

IT is the twilight day  
Wherein the Light  
Among the Shadows gray  
Was veiled from sight,

Where disembodied Life,  
A prisoner,  
Awaited long the strife  
Accomplished here;

To see, with bated breath,  
A paler Shade—  
The Soul of God—by Death  
A captive made.

Till, suddenly, the veil  
Of night withdrawn,  
The host expectant hail  
The deathless dawn.

JOHN B. TABB.