

THE MIDLANDER



BOOTH TARKINGTON

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BY

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Chapter I

People used to say of the two Oliphant brothers that Harlan Oliphant looked as if he lived in the Oliphants' house, but Dan didn't. This was a poor sort of information to any one who had never seen the house, but of course the supposition was that everybody had seen it and was familiar with its significance. It stood in a great, fine yard, in that row of great, fine yards at the upper end of National Avenue, before the avenue swung off obliquely and changed its name to Amberson Boulevard. The houses in the long row were such houses as are built no more; bricklayers worked for a dollar a day and the workman's day was ten hours long when National Avenue grew into its glory. Those houses were of a big-walled solidity to withstand time, fire, and tornado, but they found another assailant not to be resisted by anything: this conqueror, called Progress, being the growth of the city. Until the growth came they were indomitable and fit for the centuries.

Moreover, they were of a dignified spaciousness not now to be accomplished except by millionaires with wives content to spend their days getting new servants. The New Yorker, admitted to these interiors upon a visit westward, discovered an amplitude with which he had little familiarity at home, where the brownstone fronts and squeezed apartments showed him no such suites of big rooms; for, of all the million people in New York, only a dozen families could have houses comparable in size or stateliness. "Stately" was the word, though here some little care must be taken, of course, with an eye to those who will not admit that anything short of Blenheim or the Luxembourg is stately. The stateliness of the Oliphants' house was precisely the point in that popular discrimination between the two young men who lived there: Harlan Oliphant, like the house, was supposed to partake of this high quality, but stateliness was the last thing any one ever thought of in connection with Dan.

The youth of the brothers, in the happy and comfortable nineties of the last century, is well remembered in their city, where the Christmas holidays could

never be thought really begun till the two Oliphants had arrived from college and their broad-shouldered, long-tailed coats and incredibly high white collars were seen officially moving in the figures of a cotillion. They usually arrived on the same day, though often not by the same train; but this was the mark of no disagreement or avoidance of each other, yet bore some significance upon the difference between them. It was the fashion to say of them that never were two brothers so alike yet so unlike; and although both were tall, with blue eyes, brown hair, and features of pleasant contour decisively outlined in what is called a family likeness, people who knew them well found it a satisfying and insoluble puzzle that they were the offspring of the same father and mother.

The contrast appeared in childhood and was manifest to even the casual onlooker when Dan Oliphant was eleven or twelve years old and Harlan ten or eleven. At that age Harlan was already an aristocrat, and, what is more remarkable, kept himself always immaculate. If his collar ruffled or was soiled he went immediately to his room and got a fresh one; he washed his hands three or four times a day without parental suggestion and he brushed his hair almost every time he washed his hands. He was fastidious in his choice of companions, had no taste for chance acquaintances, and on a school holiday could most frequently be found in the library at home, reading a book beyond his years. The lively Daniel, on the contrary, disported himself about the neighbourhood--or about other neighbourhoods, for that matter--in whatever society offered him any prospect of gayety. He played marbles "for keeps" with ragtag and bobtail on every vacant lot in town; he never washed his hands or face, or brushed his hair, except upon repeated command, yet loved water well enough to "run off swimming" and dive through a film of ice upon an early Saturday in March. He regaled himself with horseplay up and down the alleys and had long talks with negro coachmen in their stables, acquiring strange wisdom of them; he learned how to swear with some intricacy, how to smoke almost anything not fireproof, how to "inhale," how to gamble with implements more sophisticated than marbles, and how to keep all these accomplishments from the knowledge of his parents. He kept them from Harlan's knowledge, also, though not out of any fear that Harlan would "tell."

At some time in their early childhood the brothers had made the discovery

that they were uncongenial. This is not to say that they were unamiable together, but that they had assumed a relation not wholly unknown among brothers. They spoke to each other when it was necessary; but usually, if they happened to find themselves together, they were silent, each apparently unconscious of the other's presence. Sometimes, though rarely, they had a short argument, seldom upon a subject of great importance; and only once did a difference between them attain the dimensions of a quarrel.

This was on a summer day of feverish temperature, and the heat may have had something to do with the emotion displayed by young Daniel, then aged twelve. He was engaged, that afternoon, with a business friend, Master Sam Kohn, and they were importantly busy in a latticed summer-house, an ornament of the commodious lawn. They had entered into a partnership for the sale of "Fancy Brackets and Fittings," which they manufactured out of old cigar boxes, with the aid of glue, a jig-saw, and blue paint. The computed profits were already enormous, though no sales had been attempted, since the glue was slow to harden on such a hot day; and the partners worked diligently, glad to shed their perspiration for the steadily increasing means to obtain riches.

At five o'clock Harlan dropped lightly from the big stone-trimmed bay window of the library, crossed the lawn, where the grass was being gilded now by the westering sun, and halted before the entrance of the summer-house. He was the picture of a cool young gentleman, perfect in white linen; his coat and trousers of this pleasant material were unflawed by wrinkle or stain; his patent-leather pumps, unmarred by the slightest crack, glittered among the short green blades of grass; his small black satin tie was as smooth as his brown hair.

To this perfection the busy partners within the summer-house were a sufficient contrast. Soiled blue upon every available surface, they continued their labours, paying no visible attention to the cold-eyed young observer, but consulting each other perhaps the more importantly because of the presence of an audience, however skeptical. Master Kohn, swarthy, bow-legged, and somewhat undersized for his thirteen years, was in fact pleased to be associated with the superior Harlan, even so tenuously. He was pleased, also, to be a partner of Dan's, though this was no great distinction, because Dan, as the boys' world knew, would willingly be friendly (or even intimate) with

anybody, and consequently no social advancement was to be obtained through him. That commodity is to be had of only those who decline to deal in it, and thus Sam Kohn felt that he was becoming imbued with a certain amount of superiority because Harlan Oliphant had come to look on at the work.

Sam decided to make a suggestion. "Look at your brother," he said to Dan. "Maybe he'd like to git into our partnership. We could give him a share, if he starts in fresh and works hard."

"Thanks!" Harlan said with cold sarcasm, and addressed his brother: "Do you know what time it is and what the family is supposed to do this evening?"

"Yes," Dan answered, not looking up from his jig-saw. "We're goin' to dinner at grandma Savage's."

"Mother sent me to tell you it's time for you to come in and wash yourself and dress up," said Harlan. "The mess you've got yourself in, it'll take you till after six o'clock, and we're supposed to be there then."

"Sam and I got some pretty important jobs to finish," Dan returned carelessly. "I got plenty time to change my clo'es and get washed up."

"No, you haven't. You quit playing with that boy and those dirty things and go in the house."

Upon this, Dan stopped the operation of the jig-saw and looked at his brother in a puzzled way. "What you mean callin' our brackets and fittin's 'dirty things?'" he inquired. "I expect you don't hardly realize Sam Kohn and I got a regular factory here, Harlan."

"A 'factory,' is it?" said Harlan, and laughed in the manner of a contemptuous adult. "Well, you close up your old factory and come in the house and get ready."

"I can't for a while," Dan returned, beginning his work with the jig-saw again. "I told you we got lots to do before we quit to-night."

"You stop playing with that silly little saw," Harlan said sharply, for he had begun to feel some irritation. "You come in the house right this instant."

"No; I can't yet, Harlan. Sam and I got to----"

"Never mind!" Harlan interrupted. "You come in the house and let this boy

go home."

There was a frosty sharpness in his way of saying "let this boy go home" that caused Dan to stop his work again and stare at his brother challengingly. "Here!" he exclaimed. "This is as much my father and mother's yard as it is yours, and you got no business hintin' at any friend of mine to go home."

"Haven't I?" Harlan inquired, adopting a light mockery. "So this is a friend of yours, is it?"

"Yes, it is."

"Oh, a *friend*?" Harlan mocked. "Oh, *excuse* me! I didn't understand!"

This proved to be intolerably provocative;--Dan abandoned the jig-saw and stepped out of the summer-house to confront his brother frowningly. "You shut up, Harlan Oliphant," he said. "This is Sam Kohn's and my factory, and he's got a right here. You quit your talkin' so much around here."

"You quit your own talking," Harlan retorted. "You do what mother sent me to tell you to, and let that dirty little Jew go home!"

"What?" Dan cried.

"You better!" Harlan said, standing his ground, though Dan lifted his hand threateningly. "We don't want any dirty little Jews on our premises."

Dan gulped. "It isn't his fault he's a Jew. You take that back!"

"I won't," said Harlan. "He *is* little and he *is* dirty and he's a Jew. How you going to deny it?"

Flushed with anger and greatly perplexed, Dan glanced over his shoulder at Master Kohn, who looked on with an inscrutable expression. "Well, what if I can't?" Dan said desperately, after this glance at his guest and partner. "You got no right to insult him."

"It isn't an insult if it's true, is it?"

"Yes, it is; and you ought to be ashamed of yourself. I got a notion--I got a notion----"

"What notion have you got?" Harlan asked scornfully, as his brother paused, swallowing heavily.

"I got a notion to make you ashamed!"

"How would you do it?"

"'How?' I'll show you how!" And again Dan's clenched right hand lowered threateningly. The brothers stood eye to eye, and both faces were red.

"Go on," said Harlan. "Hit me!"

Dan's fist, like his expression, wavered for a moment, then he said: "Well, I wish you weren't my brother; but you are, and I won't hit you."

"I thought you wouldn't," Harlan retorted, turning toward the house. "I guess I'll have to tell mother you won't wash yourself and dress until she comes and sends this dirty little Jew out of our yard."

Thus, having discovered the tender spot in his opponent's sensibilities, he avenged himself for the threat, and went on. His brother moved impulsively, as if to follow and punish, but Mrs. Oliphant had long ago impressed her sons heavily with the story of Cain and Abel, and he halted, while Harlan went on coolly and disappeared into the house by a side entrance.

"Doggone you!" Dan muttered; then turned back to the factory, where Master Kohn, his head down and his hands in his pockets, was scuffing sawdust meditatively with the soles of his shoes. Dan likewise scuffed sawdust for a time.

"Well," Sam Kohn said finally, "I guess I better go on home before your mamma comes to turn me out."

"I don't guess she would," Dan said, not looking at him, but keeping his gaze upon his own scuffing shoe. "She's got a good deal o' politeness about her, and I don't guess she would. You got a right to stay here long as you want, Sammy. It's half your factory."

"Not if your family puts me out, it ain't."

"He had no business to call you that, Sammy."

"To call me which?"

"A--a Jew," said Dan, still keeping his eyes upon the ground.

"Why, I am a Jew."

"Well, maybe; but----" Dan paused uncomfortably, then continued: "Well, he didn't have any right to call you one."

"Yes, he had," Sam returned, to his friend's surprise. "He could call me a Jew just the same I could call you English."

"English? I'm not English."

"Well, you're *from* English."

"No," Dan protested mildly. "Not for a couple o' hundred years, anyway."

"Well, I ain't from Jews a couple thousand years, maybe."

"But I'm full-blooded American," said Dan.

"So'm I," Sam insisted. "You're American from English, and I'm American from Jews. He's got a right to call me a Jew."

Dan stared at him incredulously. "Don't you mind it?"

"Yes," Sam admitted, "I do when he says it for a insult. He's got a right to call me a Jew, but he hasn't got no right to call me a Jew for a insult."

"Well, he did," Dan remarked gloomily. "He meant it the way you might call somebody 'Irish' or 'Dutchy' or 'Nigger.'"

"I know it. He called me dirty and little, too. Well, I am little, but I ain't no dirtier than what you are, Dan, and you're his own brother."

"Well, then, you oughtn't to mind his callin' you dirty, Sam."

"He wouldn't call you dirty the same way he would me," Sam returned shrewdly; and then, after a momentary pause, he sighed and turned to go.

But that sigh of his, which had in it the quality of patience, strongly affected Dan's sympathies, for a reason he could not have explained. "Don't go, Sammy," he said. "You don't have to go just because he----"

"Yeh, I better," Sam said, not looking back, but continuing to move toward the distant gate. "I better go before your mamma comes to put me out."

Dan protested again, but Sam shook his head and went on across the lawn, his hands in his pockets, his head down. The high iron fence, painted white, culminated in an elaborate gateway, and, when Sam passed out to the sidewalk there, the iron gateposts rose far above him. Plodding out between these high white posts, the shabby little figure did not lack pathos; nor was pathos absent from it as it went doggedly down the street in the thinning gold

of the late afternoon sunshine. Sam looked back not once; but Dan watched him until he was out of sight, then returned to the interior of the summer-house, sat down, and stared broodingly at the littered floor. The floor was not what he saw, however, for his actual eyes were without vision just then, and it was his mind's eye that was busy. It dwelt upon the picture of the exiled Sam Kohn departing forlornly, and the longer it thus dwelt the warmer and more threatening grew a painful feeling that seemed to locate itself in Dan's upper chest, not far below his collar bone.

This feeling remained there while he dressed; and it was still there when he sat down at his grandmother's table for dinner. In fact, it so increased in poignancy that he could not eat with his customary heartiness; and his lack of appetite, though he made play with seemingly busy fork and spoon to cover it, fell under the sharp eye of the lady at the head of the table. She was a handsome, dominant old woman, with high colour in her cheeks at seventy-eight, and thick hair, darker than it was gray, under her lace cap. She sat straight upright in her stiff chair, for she detested easy-chairs and had never in all her life lounged in one or sat with her knees crossed; such things were done not by ladies, but by hoodlums, she said. Her husband, a gentle, submissive old man, was frail and bent with his years, though they had brought him great worldly prosperity; and the grandchildren of this couple never spoke of the house as "Grandpa Savage's," but always as "Grandma Savage's," an intuitive discrimination that revealed the rulership. Mrs. Savage ruled by means of a talent she had for destructive criticism, which several times prevented her optimistic husband from venturing into ruin, and had established her as the voice of wisdom.

"Daniel," she said presently;--"you're not eating."

"Yes, I am, grandma."

"No. Ever since you came to the table, you've been sitting there with your head bent down like that and moving your hands to pretend you're eating, but not eating. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothin'," he muttered, not lifting his head. "I'm all right."

"Adelaide," Mrs. Savage said to his mother;--"has his appetite been failing lately?"

"Why, no, mamma," Mrs. Oliphant answered. She was a pretty woman, quietly cheerful and little given to alarms or anxieties. "Not seriously," she added, smiling. "He did very well at lunch, at least."

"He looks sickish," said Mrs. Savage grimly. "He looks as if he were beginning a serious illness. Well people don't sit with their heads down like that. What is the matter with you, Daniel?"

"Nothin'," he said. "I told you I'm all right."

"He isn't though," Mrs. Savage insisted, addressing the others. "Do you know what's the matter with him, Harlan?"

"Too much glue, I expect."

"What?"

"Too much glue," Harlan repeated. "He was playing with a lot of nasty glue and paint all afternoon, and I expect the smell's made him sick. Too much glue and too much Jew."

"Jew?" his grandmother inquired. "What do you mean by 'too much Jew,' Harlan?"

"He had a dirty little bow-legged Jew playing with him."

"See here!" Dan said huskily, but he did not look up. "You be careful!"

"Careful of what?" Harlan inquired scornfully.

"Careful of what you say."

"Daniel, were you playing with a Jew?" his grandmother asked.

"Yes, I was."

He still did not look up, but his voice had a tone, plaintive and badgered, that attracted the attention of his grandfather, and the old gentleman interposed soothingly: "Don't let 'em fret you, Dannie. It wasn't particularly wicked of you to play with a Jew, I expect."

"No," said Dan's father. "I don't believe I'd let myself be much worried over that, if I were you, Dan."

"No?" said Mrs. Savage, and inquired further, somewhat formidably: "You don't prefer your sons to choose companions from their own circle, Henry

Oliphant?"

"Oh, yes, I do, ma'am," he returned amiably. "As a general thing I believe it's better for them to be intimate with the children of their mother's and father's old family friends; but at the same time I hope Dan and Harlan won't forget that we live in a country founded on democratic principles. The population seems to me to begin to show signs of altering with emigration from Europe; and it's no harm for the boys to know something of the new elements, though for that matter we've always had Jews, and they're certainly not bad citizens. I don't see any great harm in Dan's playing a little with a Jewish boy, if he wants to."

"I wasn't playin'," Dan said.

"Weren't you?" his father asked. "What were you doing?"

"We were--we were manufacturing. We were manufacturing useful articles."

"What were they?"

"Ornamental brackets to nail on walls and put things on. We were goin' to make good money out of it."

"Well, that was all right," Mr. Oliphant said genially. "Not a bad idea at all. You're all right, Dannie."

Unfortunately, a word of sympathy often undermines the composure of the recipient; and upon this Dan's lower lip began to quiver, though he inclined his head still farther to conceal the new tokens of his agitation.

He was not aided by his coolly observant young brother. "Going to cry about it?" Harlan asked, quietly amused.

"You let Dannie alone," said the grandfather; whereupon Harlan laughed. "You ought to see what he and his little Jew partner called brackets!" he said. "Dan's always thinking he's making something, and it's always something just awful. What he and that Sam Kohn were really making to-day was a horrible mess of our summer-house. It'll take a week's work for somebody to get it cleaned up, and he got mad at me and was going to hit me because mamma sent me to tell him to come in the house and get ready for dinner."

"I did not," Dan muttered.

"You didn't? Didn't you act like you were going to hit me?"

"Yes," Dan said. "But it wasn't because what you say. It was because you called Sam names."

"I didn't."

"You did!" And now Dan looked up, showing eyes that glistened along the lower lids. "You--you hurt his feelings."

Harlan had the air of a self-contained person who begins to be exasperated by a persistent injustice, and he appealed to the company. "I told him time and again mamma wanted him to come in and get ready to come here for dinner, and he simply wouldn't do it."

Mrs. Savage shook her head. "I've always told you," she said to her daughter, "you'll repent bitterly some day for your lack of discipline with your children. You're not raising them the way I raised mine, and some day----"

But Harlan had not finished his explanation. "So, after I waited and waited," he continued, "and they just went on messing up our summer-house, I told him he'd better come in and let the dirty little Jew boy go home. That's all I said, and he was going to hit me for it."

"You--you hurt his fuf-feelings," Dan stammered, as his emotion increased. "I told you, you hurt his *feelings*!"

"Pooh!" Harlan returned lightly. "What feelings has he got? He wouldn't be around where he doesn't belong if he had any."

"I asked him there," Dan said, the tears in his eyes overflowing as he spoke; and he began to grope hurriedly through his various pockets for a handkerchief. "He had a right to be where he was invited, didn't he? You--you called him----"

"I said he was just exactly what he is, and if he ever comes around our yard again, I'll say it again."

"No, you won't!"

"Oh, yes, I will," Harlan said with perfect composure; and this evidence that he believed himself in the right and would certainly carry out his promise was too much for the suffering Dan, who startled his relatives by unexpectedly sobbing aloud.

"You dog-gone old *thing!*" he cried, his shoulders heaving and his voice choked with the half-swallowed tears in his throat. "I *will* hit you now!" He rose, making blind sweeps with both arms in the direction of Harlan, and, in a kind of anguish, gurgling out imprecations and epithets that shocked his family; but Mr. Oliphant caught the flailing hands, took the boy by the shoulders and impelled him from the room, going with him. A moment or two later the passionate voice ceased to be coherent; plaintive sounds were heard, growing fainter with increasing distance; and Mr. Oliphant, slightly flushed, returned to finish his dinner.

"I sent him home," he explained. "He'll probably feel better, out in the dark alone."

"And may I inquire, Henry Oliphant," said the old lady at the head of the table;--"is that all you intend to do about it?"

"Well, I might talk to him after he cools off a little."

"Yes, I suppose that will be all!" Mrs. Savage returned with a short laugh, emphatically one of disapproval. "It's a fine generation you modern people are raising. When I was fifteen I was supposed to be a woman, but my father whipped me for a slight expression of irreverence on Sunday."

"I'm sorry to hear it, ma'am," her son-in-law said genially.

"I'm not sorry it happened," she informed him, not relaxing. "Such things were part of a discipline that made a strong people."

"Yes, ma'am; I've no doubt it's to your generation we owe what the country is to-day."

"And it's your generation that's going to let it go to the dogs!" the old lady retorted sharply. "May I ask what you intend to do to protect Harlan when you go home and his brother attacks him?"

But at this Oliphant laughed. "Dan won't attack him. By the time we get home Dan will probably be in bed."

"Then he'll attack Harlan to-morrow."

"No, he won't, ma'am. I don't say Dan won't sleep on a damp pillow to-night, the way he was going on, but by to-morrow he'll have forgotten all about it."

"He won't," she declared. "A child can't have a passion like that, with its

parents doing nothing to discipline it, and then just forget. Harlan only did his duty, but Dan will attack him again the first chance he gets. You'll see!"

Oliphant was content to let her have the last word--perhaps because he knew she would have it in any event--so he laughed again, placatively, and began to talk with his father-in-law of Mr. Blaine's chances at the approaching national convention; while Mrs. Savage shook her gloomy, handsome head and made evident her strong opinion that the episode was anything but closed. There would always henceforth be hatred between the two brothers, she declared to her daughter, whom she succeeded in somewhat depressing.

But as a prophet she appeared before long to have failed, at least in regard to the predicted feeling between her two grandsons. Dan may have slept on his wrath, but he did not cherish it; and the next day his relations with Harlan were as usual. The unarmed neutrality, which was not precisely a mutual ignoring, was resumed and continued. It continued, indeed, throughout the youth of the brothers; and prevailed with them during their attendance at the university at New Haven, whither they went in imitation of their father before them. The studious Harlan matriculated in company with his older brother; they were classmates, though not roommates; and peace was still prevalent between them when they graduated. Nevertheless, in considering and comprehending the career of a man like Daniel Oliphant, certain boyhood episodes appear to shed a light, and the conflict over little Sammy Kohn bears some significance.

Chapter II

It was not altogether without difficulty that the older of the brothers graduated. Harlan obtained a diploma inscribed with a special bit of classic praise, for he was an "Honour Man"; but Daniel trod the primrose way a little too gayly as a junior and as a senior. Anxiety had sometimes been felt at home, though knowledge of this was kept from old Mrs. Savage; and Mr. and Mrs. Oliphant were relieved of a strain when Dan was granted his degree at a most reluctant eleventh hour, and telegraphed them:

Last prof to hold out gave up after I talked to him all afternoon and said I could have diploma, if I would quit arguing.

Thus the two young bachelors of arts came forth together into a pleasant world, of which they already knew somewhat less than they supposed they did.

The world for them, in that day, which the newspapers were beginning to call *fin de siècle*, included rather sketchily London, Paris, Florence, and a part of the Alps, for they had spent two vacations abroad with their parents; but in the main the field of action to which they emerged from the campus consisted of their own city and New York. No sooner were they out of the university than they began the series of returns eastward that was part of the life of every affluent young midland graduate. They went back for the football games, for class dinners, for baseball and boat races, and commencement. New York was their playground as they went and came; and they remained there to play for months at a time.

It was a pleasanter playground in those days than it is now, when even the honeycombed ground under foot has its massacres, and the roaring surface congests with multitude on multitude till fires must burn and patients must die, since neither firemen nor doctors may pass. For the growth came upon New York as it came upon the midland cities, and it produced a glutton monster, able to roar and heave and mangle, but not to digest or even to

swallow the swarms that came begging to be devoured. In the change there perished something romantic and charming, something that a true poet used to call Bagdad.

So far as it concerned Mr. Daniel Oliphant, aged twenty-six, New York was romantic Bagdad enough when the jingling harness began to glitter in the park and on the Avenue in the afternoon, and he would go out from the Holland House to see the pretty women, all beautifully dressed, he thought, and wearing clumps of violets, or orchids, as they reclined in their victorias drawn by high-stepping horses. Dan liked to watch, too, the handsome grooms and coachmen in their liveries, with cockaded silk hats, white breeches, top boots, and blue coats; for they were the best-dressed men in the town, he thought, and he often wished he knew whether they were really as haughty as the horses they drove or only affected to be so proud professionally.

In New York, this Daniel took some thought to his own tailoring and haberdashing; he would even add a camellia to the lapel of his frock coat when he strolled down to lounge in the doorway of the great Fifth Avenue Hotel and stare at the procession of lovely girls from everywhere in the country, their faces rosy in the wind, as they walked up Broadway after an autumn matinée. Then he would join the procession, a friend accoutred like himself being usually with him, and they would accompany the procession sedately in its swing up the Avenue; sometimes leaving it, however, at the magnificent new Waldorf, where the men's café offered them refreshment among lively companions. In truth, this congenial resort had too great an attraction for the amiable Dan, and so did the room with the big mirror behind the office at the Holland House. Moreover, when he spoke of Daly's, he did not always mean Mr. Augustin Daly's theatre, though he preferred it to the other theatres; sometimes he meant a Daly's where adventure was to be obtained by any one who cared to bet he could guess when a marble would stop rolling upon a painted disk.

Of course he made excursions into the Bowery, waltzed and two-stepped at the Haymarket after long dinners at clubs, fell asleep in hansom cabs at sunrise, and conducted himself in general about as did any other "rather wild young man," native or alien, in the metropolis. There were droves of such young men, and, like most of the others, Dan frequently became respectable,

and went to a dinner or a dance at the house of a classmate; he was even seen at church in the pew of a Madison Avenue family of known severity. However, no one was puzzled by this act of devotion, for Lena McMillan, the daughter of the severe house, was pretty enough to be the explanation for anything.

Her brother George, lacking the severity of other McMillans, and as unobtrusive as possible in advertising that lack, was one of Dan's chance acquaintances during a Bagdadian night. At the conclusion of many festivities, the chance acquaintance murmured his address, but Dan comprehended the unwisdom of a sunrise return of so flaccid a young gentleman into a house as formidable as the McMillans' appeared to be, when the night-hawk hansom stopped before it; and the driver was instructed to go on to the Holland House. Young McMillan woke at noon in Dan's room there; shuddered to think that but for a Good Samaritan this waking might have taken place at home, and proved himself first grateful, then devoted. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship; and he took Dan to tea in Madison Avenue that afternoon.

Something withholding about the McMillans reminded their guest of his brother Harlan; and probably Dan would have defined this as "an air of reserve"; but it was more than reserve, deeper than reserve, as in time he discovered. George McMillan alone seemed to have none of it; on the contrary, his air was habitually friendly and apologetic--possibly because of what he knew about himself and what his family didn't. Mrs. McMillan and her daughters found it unnecessary either to smile or offer their hands when George presented the good-looking young Midlander, nor did they seem to believe themselves committed to any effort to make the stranger feel at home in their long, dark drawing-room.

They gave him a cup of tea and a bit of toast, and that appeared to be the end of their obligation to a stray guest, for they at once continued a conversation begun before his arrival, not addressing themselves to him or even looking at him. Mrs. McMillan's cousin's husband, named Oliver, he gathered, was about to be offered a position in the cabinet at Washington, and Mrs. McMillan hoped Oliver wouldn't accept, because Milly and Anna and Charlotte, persons unknown to Dan, would have to give up so much if they went to live in Washington instead of Boston. If it were an ambassadorship

the President wanted Oliver for, that would be better, especially on Charlotte's account.

The guest began to have an uncomfortable feeling that he must be invisible;--no one seemed to know that he was present, not even the grateful George, who was feeble that afternoon and looked distrustfully at his tea, of which he partook with an air of foreboding. Dan could not help meditating upon what a difference there would have been if the position were reversed, with George as the guest and himself as the host. Dan thought of it: how heartily his mother and father would have shaken hands with the young Easterner, welcoming him, doing every reassuring thing they could to make him feel at home, talking cordial generalities until they could get better acquainted and find what interested him. But although Dan felt awkward and even a little resentful, it was not the first time he had been exposed to this type of hospitality, and he was able to accept it as the custom of the country. He made the best of it and was philosophic, thinking that the McMillans had given tea to a great many stray young men of whom they knew nothing, and saw once but usually never again. Also, it was a pleasure to look at Lena McMillan, even though she was so genuinely unaware of him.

Outwardly, at least, she was unlike her mother and older sister. Mrs. McMillan was a large woman, shapely, but rather stony--or so she appeared to Dan--and her hair rose above her broad pink forehead as a small dome of trim gray curls, not to be imagined as ever being disarranged or uncurled or otherwise than as they were. She and her older daughter, who resembled her, both wore black of an austere fashionableness; but the younger Miss McMillan had alleviated her own dark gown with touches of blue--not an impertinent blue, but a blue darkly effective; and, with what seemed almost levity in this heavy old drawing-room, she wore Italian earrings of gold and lapis lazuli. Her mother did not approve of these; no one except opera singers wore earrings, Mrs. McMillan had told her before the arrival of the two young men.

Lena was sometimes defined as a "*petite brunette*," and sometimes as a "perfectly beautiful French doll"; for she had to perfection a doll's complexion and eyelashes; but beyond this point the latter definition was unfair, since dolls are usually thought wanting in animation, a quality she indeed possessed. Dan Oliphant, watching her, thought he had never before

met so sparkling a creature; and a glamour stole over him. He began to think she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

Possibly she became aware of the favour with which he was regarding her, for although her shoulder and profile were toward him, and for twenty minutes and more she seemed to be as unconscious of his presence as her mother and older sister really were, she finally gave him a glance and spoke to him. "George tells me you're from the West," she said.

"No. Not very," he returned.

"Not very west?"

"I mean not from the Far West," Dan explained. "Out there they'd call me an Easterner, of course."

"Gracious!" she cried incredulously. "Would they, really?"

Already he thought her a wonderful being, but at this he showed some spirit. "I'm afraid so," he said.

She laughed, not offended, and exclaimed: "Oh, so you don't *mind* being a Westerner! I only meant you people are so funny about rubbing in the letter *R* and overdoing the short *A* that no one can ever make a mistake about which of the provinces you belong in. I've been in the West, myself--rather west, that is. I didn't care for it much."

"Where was it?"

"Rochester. I believe you're from farther out, aren't you? Perhaps you can tell me if it's true, what we hear things are like beyond Rochester."

"Things beyond Rochester?" he asked, mystified. "What sort of things do you mean?"

"All sorts," she answered. "I've always heard that when you get west of Rochester every house has a room you people call a 'sitting-room', and you always keep a sewing-machine in it and apples on a centre table, and all the men keep tobacco in their cheeks and say, 'Wa'al, no, ma'am,' and 'Why, certainly, ma'am,' and 'Yes, *ma'am!*' Isn't that what it's like?"

"Who told you so?"

"Oh, I had a cousin who used to visit people out there. She said it was funny

but dreadful. Isn't it?"

"I wish you'd come and see," he said earnestly. "I wish you and your brother'd come and let me show you."

"Good heavens," she cried;--"but you're hospitable! Do you always ask everybody to visit you after they've said two words to you?"

"No, not everybody," he returned, and on the impulse continued: "I'd ask *you*, though, after you'd said *one* word to me." And because he meant it, he instantly became red.

"Good heavens!" she cried again, and stared at him thoughtfully, perceiving without difficulty his heightened colour. "Is that the way they talk in the West, Mr.--uh----"

"Oliphant," he said.

"What?"

"My name's Oliphant," he informed her apologetically. "You called me Mister Uh."

"I see," she said, and as her attention was caught just then by something her sister was saying about Milly and Anna and Charlotte and Oliver, she turned from him to say something more, herself, about Milly and Anna and Charlotte and Oliver. Then, having turned away from him, she turned not back again, but seemed to have forgotten him.

The son of the house presently took him away, the mother and her older daughter murmuring carelessly as the two young men rose to go, while Lena said more distinctly, "Good afternoon, Mister Uh." But the unfortunate Daniel carried with him a picture that remained tauntingly before his mind's eye; and he decided to stay in New York a little longer, though he had written his father that he would leave for home the next day. He had been stricken at first sight.

He could not flatter himself that she had bestowed a thought upon him. On the contrary, he told himself that his impetuosity had made headway backwards; and he was as greatly astonished as he was delighted when George McMillan came to see him two afternoons later, at the Holland House, and brought him a card for a charity ball at the Metropolitan. "We had

some extra ones," George said. "Lena thought you might like to come."

"She did? Why, I--I----" Dan was breathless at once.

"What?"

"Why, I didn't think she noticed I was on earth. This is perfectly beautiful of her!"

"Why, no," George assured him; "it's nothing at all. We had four or five cards we really didn't know what to do with. There'll be an awful crowd there, all kinds of people."

"Yes, I know; but it was just beautiful of her to think of me." And Dan added solemnly: "That sister of yours reminds me of a flower."

"She does?" George said, visibly surprised. "You mean Lena?"

"Yes, I do. She's like the most perfect flower that ever blossomed."

"That's strange news to me," said George. "Then maybe you'd be willing to come to the house to dinner and go to this show with the family. Heaven knows I'd like to have you; it might help me to sneak out after we get 'em there. You sure you could stand it?"

"I should consider it the greatest privilege of my life," said Dan.

"Heavens, but you're solemn!" his caller exclaimed. "You make me feel at home--I mean, as if I were at home with my solemn family. Wait till you meet some of the others--and my father. He's the solemnest. In fact, they're all solemn except Lena. There's only one trouble with Lena."

"What is it?"

"The poor thing hasn't got any sense," Lena's brother said lightly. "Never did. Never will have. Otherwise she's charming--when she's in a mood to be!"

Evidently Lena was in a mood to be charming that night; she sat next to Dan at the solemn dinner and chattered to him gayly, though in a lowered voice, for George had not exaggerated when he spoke of his father. If she was a French doll, she was at least a radiant one in her ball gown of heavy ivory silk, and it was a thrilled young Midlander indeed who took her lightly in his arms for a two-step when they came out upon the dancing floor that had been laid over the chairs at the opera house. "It was nice of you to send me these

flowers," she said, as he dexterously moved her through the crowd of other two-steppers. "They'd tell anybody you're Western, if nothing else would. Western men always send orchids. But then, of course, nobody'd need to be told you're from out there. You tell them yourself."

"You mean I always mention it?"

"No," she laughed;--"your dialect does. The way you pronounce *R* and *A*, and slide your words together."

"I've got a brother that doesn't," said Dan. "He talks the way you and your family do; he says 'lahst' and 'fahst' and calls father 'fathuh' and New York 'New Yawk,' and keeps all his words separated. He began it when he was about fifteen and he's stuck to it ever since. Says he doesn't do it to be English, but because it's correct pronunciation. I expect you'd like him."

At that she looked up at him suddenly, and he was shown an inscrutable depth of dark blue glance that shook his heart. "I like *you!*" she said.

"Do you?" he gasped. "You didn't seem to, that day I met you."

She laughed. "I didn't decide I liked you till after you'd gone. You aren't quite cut to the pattern of most of the men I know. There's something hearty about your looks; and I like your broad shoulders and your not seeming to have put a sleek surface over you. At least it's pleasant for a change."

"Is that all?" he asked, a little disappointed. "Just for a change?"

"Never mind. Is there anybody else in your family besides your brother?"

"Heavens, yes! To begin with, I've got a grand old grandmother; she's over ninety, but she's the head of the family all right! Then there's my father and mother----"

"What are they like?"

"My mother's beautiful," Dan said. "She's just the loveliest, kindest person in the world, and so's my father. He's a lawyer."

"What are you?"

"I'm nothin' at all yet. So far, I've just been helpin' my grandmother settle up my grandfather's estate. Somebody had to, and my brother's in my father's office."

"And do your grandmother and your mother have sitting-rooms with sewing-machines in them?"

"I wish you'd come and see."

"Do you?" She had continued to look at him, and now her eyes almost deliberately became dreamy. "I might--if you keep on asking me," she said gravely. "I'm sure I'd hate the West, though."

"Yet, you might come?"

"Ask me again to-morrow."

He was but too glad to be obedient, and asked her again the next day. This was over a table for two at a restaurant on Lafayette Place, where she met him as a surreptitious adventure, suggested by herself and undertaken without notifying her mother. It was a Lochinvar courtship, she said afterward, thus implying that her share in it was passive, though there were indeed days when the young man out of the West found her not merely passive, but dreamily indifferent. And once or twice she was more than that, puzzling and grieving him by an inexplicable coldness almost like anger, so that he consulted George McMillan to find out what could be the matter.

"Moods," George told him. "She's nothing but moods. Just has 'em; that's all. It doesn't matter how you are to her; sometimes she'll treat you like an angel and sometimes like the dickens. It doesn't depend on anything you do."

Dan thought her all the more fascinating, and put off his return home another month, to the increasing mystification of his family, for this month included the Christmas holidays, and Mrs. Oliphant wrote that they all missed him, and that Mrs. Savage really needed him. The McMillans, on the other hand, were not mystified, and Lena appeared to be able to control them. The manner of her parents and her sister toward the suitor was one of endurance--an endurance that intended to be as thoroughbred as it could, but was nevertheless evident. It had no discouraging effect on the ardent young man, who took it as a privilege to be endured by beings so close to her. Besides, George McMillan was helpful with the exalted family, for he showed both tact and sympathy, though the latter sometimes appeared to consist of a compassionate amusement; and once he went so far as to ask Dan, laughingly, if he were quite sure he knew what he was doing.

"Am I *sure*?" Dan repeated incredulously. "I don't know what you mean."

"I mean about Lena."

"To me," Dan said, with the solemnity he had come to use in speaking of her, "your sister Lena is the finest flower of womanhood ever created!"

Upon that, his friend stared at him and saw that his eyes were bright with a welling moisture, so deep was his worship; and George was himself affected.

"Oh, all right, if you feel that way about it," he said, "I guess it'll be all right. I'm sure it will. You're a mighty right chap, I think."

"I?" Dan exclaimed. "I'm nothin' at all! And when I think that your sister could stoop--could *stoop* to--to *me*--why, I----"

He was overcome and could not go on.

The end of it was that when he went home in February it was to acquaint his family with the fact of his engagement; and in spite of his happiness he was a little uneasy. He did not fear the interview with his father and mother; and though he disliked the prospect of talking about Lena with Harlan, who was sure to be critical and superior, he had learned to get along without Harlan's approval. What made him uneasy was his anticipation of the invincible pessimism of that iron old lady, his grandmother.