

A Penny Spent, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

The Ritz Grill in Paris is one of those places where things happen—like the first bench as you enter Central Park, South, or Morris Gest's office, or Herrin, Illinois. I have seen marriages broken up there at an ill-considered word and blows struck between a professional dancer and a British baron, and I know personally of at least two murders that would have been committed on the spot but for the fact that it was July and there was no room. Even murders require a certain amount of space, and in July the Ritz Grill has no room at all.

Go in at six o'clock of a summer evening, planting your feet lightly lest you tear some college boy bag from bag, and see if you don't find the actor who owes you a hundred dollars or the stranger who gave you a match once in Red Wing, Minnesota, or the man who won your girl away from you with silver phrases just ten years ago. One thing is certain—that before you melt out into the green-and-cream Paris twilight you will have the feel of standing for a moment at one of the predestined centers of the world.

At 7:30, walk to the center of the room and stand with your eyes shut for half an hour—this is a merely hypothetical suggestion—and then open them. The gray and blue and brown and slate have faded out of the scene and the prevailing note, as the haberdashers say, has become black and white. Another half hour and there is no note at all—the room is nearly empty. Those with dinner engagements have gone to keep them and those without any have gone to pretend they have. Even the two Americans who opened up the bar that morning have been led off by kind friends. The clock makes one of those quick little electric jumps to nine. We will too.

It is nine o'clock by Ritz time, which is just the same as any other time. Mr. Julius Bushmill; manufacturer; b. Canton, Ohio, 1 June 1876; m., 1899, Jessie Pepper; Mason; Republican; Congregationalist; Delegate M. A. of A. 1908; pres. 1909-12; director Grimes, Hansen Co. since 1911; director Midland R. R. of Indiana—all that and more—walks in, moving a silk handkerchief over a hot scarlet brow. It is his own brow. He wears a handsome dinner coat, but has no vest on because the hotel valet has sent both his vests to the dry-cleaners by mistake, a fact which has been volubly explained to Mr. Bushmill for half an hour. Needless to say, the prominent manufacturer is prey to a natural embarrassment at this discrepancy in his attire. He has left his devoted wife and attractive daughter in the lounge while he seeks something to fortify his entrance into the exclusive and palatial dining room.

The only other man in the bar was a tall, dark, grimly handsome young American, who slouched in a leather corner and stared at Mr. Bushmill's patent-leather shoes. Self-consciously Mr. Bushmill looked down at his shoes, wondering if the valet had deprived him of them too. Such was his relief to find them in place that he grinned at the young man and his hand went automatically to the business card in his coat pocket.

"Couldn't locate my vests," he said cordially. "That blamed valet took both my vests. See?"

He exposed the shameful overexpanse of his starched shirt.

"I beg your pardon?" said the young man, looking up with a start.

"My vests," repeated Mr. Bushmill with less gusto—"lost my vests."

The young man considered.

"I haven't seen them," he said.

"Oh, not here!" exclaimed Bushmill. "Upstairs."

"Ask Jack," suggested the young man, and waved his hand toward the bar.

Among our deficiencies as a race is the fact that we have no respect for the contemplative mood. Bushmill sat down, asked the young man to have a drink, obtained finally the grudging admission that he would have a milk shake; and after explaining the vest matter in detail, tossed his business card across the table. He was not the frock-coated and impressive type of millionaire which has become so frequent since the war. He was rather the 1910 model—a sort of cross between Henry VIII and "our Mr. Jones will be in Minneapolis on Friday." He was much louder and more provincial and warm-hearted than the new type.

He liked young men, and his own young man would have been about the age of this one, had it not been for the defiant stubbornness of the German machine gunners in the last days of the war.

"Here with my wife and daughter," he volunteered. "What's your name?"

"Corcoran," answered the young man pleasantly, but without enthusiasm.

"You American—or English?"

"American."

"What business you in?"

"None."

"Been here long?" continued Bushmill stubbornly.

The young man hesitated.

"I was born here," he said.

Bushmill blinked and his eyes roved involuntarily around the bar.

"Born here!" he repeated.

Corcoran smiled.

"Up on the fifth floor."

The waiter set the two drinks and a dish of Saratoga chips on the table. Immediately Bushmill became aware of an interesting phenomenon—Corcoran's hand commenced to flash up and down between the dish and his mouth, each journey transporting a thick layer of potatoes to the eager aperture, until the dish was empty.

"Sorry," said Corcoran, looking rather regretfully at the dish. He took out a handkerchief and wiped his fingers. "I didn't think what I was doing. I'm sure you can get some more."

A series of details now began to impress themselves on Bushmill—that there were hollows in this young man's cheeks that were not intended by the bone structure, hollows of undernourishment or ill health; that the fine flannel of his unmistakably Bond Street suit was shiny from many pressings—the elbows were fairly gleaming—and that his whole frame had suddenly collapsed a little as if the digestion of the potatoes and milk shake had begun immediately instead of waiting for the correct half hour.

"Born here, eh?" he said thoughtfully. "Lived a lot abroad, I guess."

"Yes."

"How long since you've had a square meal?"

The young man started.

"Why, I had lunch," he said. "About one o'clock I had lunch."

"One o'clock last Friday," commented Bushmill skeptically.

There was a long pause.

"Yes," admitted Corcoran, "about one o'clock last Friday."

"Are you broke? Or are you waiting for money from home?"

"This is home." Corcoran looked around abstractedly. "I've spent most of my life in the Ritz hotels of one city or another. I don't think they'd believe me upstairs if I told them I was broke. But I've got just enough left to pay my bill when I move out tomorrow."

Bushmill frowned.

"You could have lived a week at a small hotel for what it costs you here by the day," he remarked.

"I don't know the names of any other hotels."

Corcoran smiled apologetically. It was a singularly charming and somehow entirely confident smile, and Julius Bushmill was filled with a mixture of pity and awe. There was something of the snob in him, as there is in

all self-made men, and he realized that this young man was telling the defiant truth.

"Any plans?"

"No."

"Any abilities—or talents?"

Corcoran considered.

"I can speak most languages," he said. "But talents—I'm afraid the only one I have is for spending money."

"How do you know you've got that?"

"I can't very well help knowing it." Again he hesitated. "I've just finished running through a matter of half a million dollars."

Bushmill's exclamation died on its first syllable as a new voice, impatient, reproachful and cheerfully anxious, shattered the seclusion of the grill.

"Have you seen a man without a vest named Bushmill? A very old man about fifty? We've been waiting for him about two or three hours."

"Hallie," called Bushmill, with a groan of remorse, "here I am. I'd forgotten you were alive."

"Don't flatter yourself it's you we missed," said Hallie, coming up. "It's only your money. Mamma and I want food—and we must look it; two nice French gentlemen wanted to take us to dinner while we were waiting in the hall."

"This is Mr. Corcoran," said Bushmill. "My daughter."

Hallie Bushmill was young and vivid and light, with boy's hair and a brow that bulged just slightly, like a baby's brow, and under it small perfect features that danced up and down when she smiled. She was constantly repressing their tendency toward irresponsible gaiety, as if she feared that, once encouraged, they would never come back to kindergarten under that childish brow any more.

"Mr. Corcoran was born here in the Ritz," announced her father. "I'm sorry I kept you and your mother waiting, but to tell the truth we've been fixing up a little surprise." He looked at Corcoran and winked perceptibly. "As you know, I've got to go to England day after tomorrow and do some business in those ugly industrial towns. My plan was that you and your mother should make a month's tour of Belgium and Holland and end up at Amsterdam, where Hallie's—where Mr. Nosby will meet you."

"Yes, I know all that," said Hallie. "Go on. Let's have the surprise."

"I had planned to engage a courier," continued Mr. Bushmill, "but fortunately I ran into my friend Corcoran this evening and he's agreed to go instead."

"I haven't said a word—" interrupted Corcoran in amazement, but Bushmill continued with a decisive wave of his hand:

"Brought up in Europe, he knows it like a book; born in the Ritz, he understands hotels; taught by experience—here he looked significantly at Corcoran—'taught by experience, he can prevent you and your mother from being extravagant and show you how to observe the happy mean."

"Great!" Hallie looked at Corcoran with interest. "We'll have a regular loop, Mr.—"

She broke off. During the last few minutes a strange expression had come into Corcoran's face. It spread suddenly now into a sort of frightened pallor.

"Mr. Bushmill," he said with an effort, "I've got to speak to you alone—at once. It's very important. I—"

Hallie jumped to her feet.

"I'll wait with mother," she said with a curious glance. "Hurry—both of you."

As she left the bar, Bushmill turned to Corcoran anxiously.

"What is it?" he demanded. "What do you want to say?"

"I just wanted to tell you that I'm going to faint," said Corcoran.

And with remarkable promptitude he did.

II

In spite of the immediate liking that Bushmill had taken to young Corcoran, a certain corroboratory investigation was, of course, necessary. The Paris branch of the New York bank that had handled the last of the half million told him what he needed to know. Corcoran was not given to drink, heavy gambling or vice; he simply spent money—that was all. Various people, including certain officers of the bank who had known his family, had tried to argue with him at one time or another, but he was apparently an incurable spendthrift. A childhood and youth in Europe with a wildly indulgent mother had somehow robbed him of all sense of value or proportion.

Satisfied, Bushmill asked no more—no one knew what had become of the money and, even if they had, a certain delicacy would have prevented him from inquiring more deeply into Corcoran's short past. But he did take occasion to utter a few parting admonitions before the expedition boarded the train.

"I'm letting you hold the purse strings because I think you've learned your lesson," he said; "but remember that this time the money isn't your own. All that belongs to you is the seventy-five dollars a week that I pay you in salary. Every other expenditure is to be entered in that little book and shown to me."

"I understand."

"The first thing is to watch what you spend, and prove to me that you've got the common sense to profit by your mistake. The second and most important thing is that my wife and daughter are to have a good time."

With the first of his salary Corcoran supplied himself with histories and guidebooks of Holland and Belgium, and on the night before their departure, as well as on the night of their arrival in Brussels, he sat up late absorbing a mass of information that he had never in his travels with his mother been aware of before. They had not gone in for sight-seeing. His mother had considered it something which only school-teachers and vulgar tourists did, but Mr. Bushmill had impressed upon him that Hallie was to have all the advantages of travel; he must make it interesting for her by keeping ahead of her every day.

In Brussels they were to remain five days. The first morning Corcoran took three seats in a touring bus, and they inspected the guild halls and the palaces and the monuments and the parks, while he corrected the guide's historical slips in stage whispers and congratulated himself on doing so well.

But during the afternoon it drizzled as they drove through the streets and he grew tired of his own voice, of Hallie's conventional "Oh, isn't that interesting," echoed by her mother, and he wondered if five days wasn't too long to stay here after all. Still, he had impressed them, without doubt; he had made a good start as the serious and well-informed young man. Moreover, he had done well with the money. Resisting his first impulse to take a private limousine for the day, which would certainly have cost twelve dollars, he had only three bus tickets at one dollar each to enter in the little book. Before he began his nightly reading he put it down for Mr. Bushmill to see. But first of all he took a steaming hot bath—he had never ridden in a rubber-neck wagon with ordinary sight-seers before and he found the idea rather painful.

The next day the tour continued, but so did the drizzling rain, and that evening, to his dismay, Mrs. Bushmill came down with a cold. It was nothing serious, but it entailed two doctor's visits at American prices, together with the cost of the dozen remedies which European physicians order under any circumstances, and it was a discouraging note which he made in the back of his little book that night:

One ruined hat—she claimed it was an old hat, but it didn't look old to me

\$10.00

3 bus tickets for Monday

3.00

3 bus tickets for Tuesday

2.00

Tips to incompetent guide

1.50

2 doctor's visits

8.00

Medicines

2.25

Total for two days' sight-seeing

\$26.75

And, to balance that, Corcoran thought of the entry he might have made had he followed his first instinct:

One comfortable limousine for two days, including tip to chauffeur

\$26.00

Next morning Mrs. Bushmill remained in bed while he and Hallie took the excursion train to Waterloo. He had diligently mastered the strategy of the battle, and as he began his explanation of Napoleon's maneuvers, prefacing it with a short account of the political situation, he was rather disappointed at Hallie's indifference. Luncheon increased his uneasiness. He wished he had brought along the cold lobster luncheon, put up by the hotel, that he had extravagantly considered. The food at the local restaurant was execrable and Hallie stared desolately at the hard potatoes and vintage steak, and then out the window at the melancholy rain. Corcoran wasn't hungry, either, but he forced himself to eat with an affectation of relish. Two more days in Brussels! And then Antwerp! And Rotterdam! And The Hague! Twenty-five more days of history to get up in the still hours of the night, and all for an unresponsive young person who did not seem to appreciate the advantages of travel.

They were coming out of the restaurant, and Hallie's voice, with a new note in it, broke in on his meditations.

"Get a taxi; I want to go home."

He turned to her in consternation.

"What? You want to go back without seeing the famous indoor panorama, with paintings of all the actions and the life-size figures of the casualties in the foreground?"

"There's a taxi," she interrupted. "Quick!"

"A taxi!" he groaned, running after it through the mud. "And these taxis are robbers—we might have had a limousine out and back for the same price."

In silence they returned to the hotel. As Hallie entered the elevator she looked at him with suddenly determined eyes.

"Please wear your dinner coat tonight. I want to go out somewhere and dance—and please send flowers."

Corcoran wondered if this form of diversion had been included in Mr. Bushmill's intentions—especially since he had gathered that Hallie was practically engaged to the Mr. Nosby who was to meet them in Amsterdam.

Distraught with doubt, he went to a florist and priced orchids. But a corsage of three would come to twenty-four dollars, and this was not an item he cared to enter in the little book. Regretfully, he compromised on sweet peas and was relieved to find her wearing them when she stepped out of the elevator at seven, in a pink-petaled dress.

Corcoran was astounded and not a little disturbed by her loveliness—he had never seen her in full evening dress before. Her perfect features were dancing up and down in delighted anticipation, and he felt that Mr. Bushmill might have afforded the orchids after all.

"Thanks for the pretty flowers," she cried eagerly. "Where are we going?"

"There's a nice orchestra here in the hotel."

Her face fell a little.

"Well, we can start here—"

They went down to the almost-deserted grill, where a few scattered groups of diners swooned in midsummer languor, and only a half dozen Americans arose with the music and stalked defiantly around the floor. Hallie and Corcoran danced. She was surprised to find how well he danced, as all tall, slender men should, with such a delicacy of suggestion that she felt as though she were being turned here and there as a bright bouquet or a piece of precious cloth before five hundred eyes.

But when they had finished dancing she realized that there were only a score of eyes; after dinner even these began to melt apathetically away.

"We'd better be moving on to some gayer place," she suggested.

He frowned.

"Isn't this gay enough?" he asked anxiously. "I rather like the happy mean."

"That sounds good. Let's go there!"

"It isn't a cafe—it's a principle I'm trying to learn. I don't know whether your father would want—"

She flushed angrily.

"Can't you be a little human?" she demanded. "I thought when father said you were bom in the Ritz you'd know something about having a good time."

He had no answer ready. After all, why should a girl of her conspicuous loveliness be condemned to desolate hotel dances and public-bus excursions in the rain?

"Is this your idea of a riot?" she continued. "Do you ever think about anything except history and monuments? Don't you know anything about having fun?"

"Once I knew quite a lot."

"What?"

"In fact—once I used to be rather an expert at spending money."

"Spending money!" she broke out. "For these?"

She unpinned the corsage from her waist and flung it on the table. "Pay the check, please. I'm going upstairs to bed."

"All right," said Corcoran suddenly, "I've decided to give you a good time."

"How?" she demanded with frozen scorn. "Take me to the movies?"

"Miss Bushmill," said Corcoran grimly, "I've had good times beyond the wildest flights of your very provincial, Middle-Western imagination. I've entertained from New York to Constantinople—given affairs that have made Indian rajahs weep with envy.

"I've had prima donnas break ten-thousand-dollar engagements to come to my smallest dinners. When you were still playing "who's got the button" back in Ohio I entertained on a cruising trip that was so much fun that I had to sink my yacht to make the guests go home."

"I don't believe it. I—" Hallie gasped.

"You're bored," he interrupted. "Very well, I'll do my stuff. I'll do what I know how to do. Between here and Amsterdam you're going to have the time of your life."

III

Corcoran worked quickly. That night, after taking Hallie to her room, he paid several calls—in fact, he was extraordinarily busy up to eleven o'clock next morning. At that hour he tapped briskly at the Bushmills' door.

"You are lunching at the Brussels Country Club," he said to Hallie directly, "with Prince Abrisini, Countess Perimont and Major Sir Reynolds Fitz-Hugh, the British attache. The Bolts-Ferrari landaulet will be ready at the door in half an hour."

"But I thought we were going to the culinary exhibit," objected Mrs. Bushmill in surprise. "We had planned—"

"You are going," said Corcoran politely, "with two nice ladies from Wisconsin. And afterward you are going to an American tea room and have an American luncheon with American food. At twelve o'clock, a dark conservative town car will be waiting downstairs for your use."

He turned to Hallie.

"Your new maid will arrive immediately to help you dress. She will oversee the removal of your things in your absence so that nothing will be mislaid. This afternoon you entertain at tea."

"Why, how can I entertain at tea?" cried Hallie. "I don't know a soul in the place."

"The invitations are already issued," said Corcoran.

Without waiting for further protests, he bowed slightly and retired through the door.

The next three hours passed in a whirl. There was the gorgeous landaulet with a silk-hatted, satin-breeched, plum-colored footman beside the chauffeur, and a wilderness of orchids flowering from the little jars inside. There were the impressive titles that she heard in a daze at the country club as she sat down at a rose-littered table; and out of nowhere a dozen other men appeared during luncheon and stopped to be introduced to her as they went by. Never in her two years as the belle of a small Ohio town had Hallie had such attention, so many compliments; her features danced up and down with delight. Returning to the hotel, she found that they had been moved dexterously to the royal suite, a huge salon and two sunny bedrooms overlooking a garden. Her capped maid—exactly like the French maid she had once impersonated in a play—was in attendance, and there was a new deference in the manner of all the servants in the hotel. She was bowed up the steps—other guests were

gently brushed aside for her—and bowed into the elevator, which clanged shut in the faces of two irate Englishwomen and whisked her straight to her floor.

Tea was a great success. Her mother, considerably encouraged by the pleasant two hours she had spent in congenial company, conversed with the clergyman of the American church, while Hallie moved enraptured through a swarm of charming and attentive men. She was surprised to learn that she was giving a dinner dance that night at the fashionable Cafe Royal, and even the afternoon faded before the glories of the night. She was not aware that two specially hired entertainers had left Paris for Brussels on the noon train until they bounced hilariously in upon the shining floor. But she knew that there were a dozen partners for every dance, and chatter that had nothing to do with monuments or battlefields. Had she not been so thoroughly and cheerfully tired, she would have protested frantically at midnight when Corcoran approached her and told her he was taking her home.

Only then, half asleep in the luxurious depths of the town car, did she have time to wonder.

"How on earth—how did you do it?"

"It was nothing—I had no time," said Corcoran disparagingly. "I knew a few young men around the embassies. Brussels isn't very gay, you know, and they're always glad to help stir things up. All the rest was—even simpler. Did you have a good time?"

No answer.

"Did you have a good time?" he repeated a little anxiously. "There's no use going on, you know, if you didn't have a—"

"The Battle of Wellington was won by Major Sir Corcoran Fitz-Hugh Abrisini," she muttered, decisively but indistinctly.

Hallie was asleep.

IV

After three more days, Hallie finally consented to being torn away from Brussels, and the tour continued through Antwerp, Rotterdam and The Hague. But it was not the same sort of tour that had left Paris a short week before. It traveled in two limousines, for there were always at least one pair of attentive cavaliers in attendance—not to mention a quartet of hirelings who made the jumps by train. Corcoran's guide-books and histories appeared no more. In Antwerp they did not stay at a mere hotel, but at a famous old shooting box on the outskirts of the city which Corcoran hired for six days, servants and all.

Before they left, Hallie's photograph appeared in the Antwerp papers over a paragraph which spoke of her as the beautiful American heiress who had taken Brabant Lodge and entertained so delightfully that a certain royal personage had been several times in evidence there.

In Rotterdam, Hallie saw neither the Boompjes nor the Groote Kerk—they were both obscured by a stream of pleasant young Dutchmen who looked at her with soft blue eyes. But when they reached The Hague and the tour neared its end, she was aware of a growing sadness—it had been such a good time and now it would be over and put away. Already Amsterdam and a certain Ohio gentleman, who didn't understand entertaining on the grand scale, were sweeping toward her, and though she tried to be glad she wasn't glad at all. It depressed her, too, that Corcoran seemed to be avoiding her—he had scarcely spoken to her or danced with her since they left Antwerp. She was thinking chiefly of that on the last afternoon, as they rode through the twilight toward Amsterdam and her mother drowsed sleepily in a corner of the car.

"You've been so good to me," she said. "If you're still angry about that evening in Brussels, please try to forgive me now."

"I've forgiven you long ago."

They rode into the city in silence, and Hallie looked out the window in a sort of panic. What would she do now with no one to take care of her, to take care of that part of her that wanted to be young and gay forever? Just before they drew up at the hotel, she turned again to Corcoran and their eyes met in a strange, disquieting glance. Her hand reached out for his and pressed it gently, as if this was their real good-by.

Mr. Claude Nosby was a stiff, dark, glossy man, leaning hard toward forty, whose eyes rested for a hostile moment upon Corcoran almost as he helped Hallie from the car.

"Your father arrives tomorrow," he said portentously. "His attention has been called to your picture in the Antwerp papers and he is hurrying over from London."

"Why shouldn't my picture be in the Antwerp papers, Claude?" inquired Hallie innocently.

"It seems a bit unusual."

Mr. Nosby had had a letter from Mr. Bushmill which told him of the arrangement. He looked upon it with profound disapproval. All through dinner he listened without enthusiasm to the account which Hallie, rather spiritedly assisted by her mother, gave of the adventure; and afterward when Hallie and her mother went to bed he informed Corcoran that he would like to speak to him alone.

"Ah—Mr. Corcoran," he began, "would you be kind enough to let me see the little account book you are keeping for Mr. Bushmill?"

"I'd rather not," answered Corcoran pleasantly. "I think that's a matter between Mr. Bushmill and me."

"It's the same thing," said Nosby impatiently. "Perhaps you are not aware that Miss Bushmill and I are engaged."

"I had gathered as much."

"Perhaps you can gather, too, that I am not particularly pleased at the sort of good time you chose to give her."

"It was just an ordinary good time."

"That is a matter of opinion. Will you give me the notebook?"

"Tomorrow," said Corcoran, still pleasantly, "and only to Mr. Bushmill. Good night."

Corcoran slept late. He was awakened at eleven by the telephone, through which Nosby's voice informed him coldly that Mr. Bushmill had arrived and would see him at once. When he rapped at his employer's door ten minutes later, he found Hallie and her mother also there, sitting rather sulkily on a sofa. Mr. Bushmill nodded at him coolly, but made no motion to shake hands.

"Let's see that account book," he said immediately.

Corcoran handed it to him, together with a bulky packet of vouchers and receipts.

"I hear you've all been out raising hell," said Bushmill.

"No," said Hallie, "only mamma and me."

"You wait outside, Corcoran. I'll let you know when I want you."

Corcoran descended to the lobby and found out from the porter that a train left for Paris at noon. Then he bought a New York Herald and stared at the headlines for half an hour. At the end of that time he was summoned upstairs.

Evidently a heated discussion had gone on in his absence. Mr. Nosby was staring out the window with a look of patient resignation. Mrs. Bushmill had been crying, and Hallie, with a triumphant frown on her childish brow, was making a camp stool out of her father's knee.

"Sit down," she said sternly.

Corcoran sat down.

"What do you mean by giving us such a good time?"

"Oh, drop it, Hallie!" said her father impatiently. He turned to Corcoran: "Did I give you any authority to lay out twelve thousand dollars in six weeks? Did I?"

"You're going to Italy with us," interrupted Hallie reassuringly. "We—"

"Will you be quiet?" exploded Bushmill. "It may be funny to you, but I don't like to make bad bets, and I'm pretty sore."

"What nonsense!" remarked Hallie cheerfully. "Why, you were laughing a minute ago!"

"Laughing! You mean at that idiotic account book? Who wouldn't laugh? Four titles at five hundred francs a head! One baptismal font to American church for presence of clergyman at tea. It's like the log book of a lunatic asylum!"

"Never mind," said Hallie. "You can charge the baptismal font off your income tax."

"That's consoling," said her father grimly. "Nevertheless, this young man will spend no more of my money for me."

"But still he's a wonderful guide. He knows everything—don't you? All about the monuments and catacombs and the Battle of Waterloo."

"Will you please let me talk to Mr. Corcoran?" Hallie was silent. "Mrs Bushmill and my daughter and Mr. Nosby are going to take a trip through Italy as far as Sicily, where Mr. Nosby has some business, and they want you—that is, Hallie and her mother think they would get more out of it if you went along. Understand—it isn't going to be any royal fandango this time. You'll get your salary and your expenses and that's all you'll get. Do you want to go?"

"No, thanks, Mr. Bushmill," said Corcoran quietly. "I'm going back to Paris at noon."

"You're not!" cried Hallie indignantly. "Why—why how am I going to know which is the Forum and the—the Acropolis and all that?" She rose from her father's knee. "Look here, daddy, I can persuade him." Before they guessed her intentions she had seized Corcoran's arm, dragged him into the hall and closed the door behind her.

"You've got to come," she said intensely. "Don't you understand? I've seen Claude in a new light and I can't marry him and I don't dare tell father, and I'll go mad if we have to go away with him alone."

The door opened and Mr. Nosby peered suspiciously out into the hall.

"It's all right," cried Hallie. "He'll come. It was just a question of more salary and he was too shy to say anything about it."

As they went back in Bushmill looked from one to the other.

"Why do you think you ought to get more salary?"

"So he can spend it, of course," explained Hallie triumphantly. "He's got to keep his hand in, hasn't he?"

This unanswerable argument closed the discussion. Corcoran was to go to Italy with them as courier and guide at three hundred and fifty dollars a month, an advance of some fifty dollars over what he had received before. From Sicily they were to proceed by boat to Marseilles, where Mr. Bushmill would meet them. After that Mr. Corcoran's services would be no longer required—the Bushmills and Mr. Nosby would sail immediately for home.

They left next morning. It was evident even before they reached Italy that Mr. Nosby had determined to run the expedition in his own way. He was aware that Hallie was less docile and less responsive than she had been before she came abroad, and when he spoke of the wedding a curious vagueness seemed to come over her, but he knew that she adored her father and that in the end she would do whatever her father liked. It was only a question of getting her back to America before any silly young men, such as this unbalanced spendthrift, had the opportunity of infecting her with any nonsense. Once in the factory town and in the little circle where she had grown up, she would slip gently back into the attitude she had held before.

So for the first four weeks of the tour he was never a foot from her side, and at the same time he managed to send Corcoran on a series of useless errands which occupied much of his time. He would get up early in the morning, arrange that Corcoran should take Mrs. Bushmill on a day's excursion and say nothing to Hallie until they were safely away. For the opera in Milan, the concerts in Rome, he bought tickets for three, and on all automobile trips he made it plain to Corcoran that he was to sit with the chauffeur outside.

In Naples they were to stop for a day and take the boat trip to the Island of Capri in order to visit the celebrated Blue Grotto. Then, returning to Naples, they would motor south and cross to Sicily. In Naples Mr. Nosby received a telegram from Mr. Bushmill, in Paris, which he did not read to the others, but folded up and put into his pocket. He told them, however, that on their way to the Capri steamer he must stop for a moment at an Italian bank.

Mrs. Bushmill had not come along that morning, and Hallie and Corcoran waited outside in the cab. It was the first time in four weeks that they had been together without Mr. Nosby's stiff, glossy presence hovering near.

"I've got to talk to you," said Hallie in low voice. "I've tried so many times, but it's almost impossible. He got father to say that if you molested me, or even were attentive to me, he could send you immediately home."

"I shouldn't have come," answered Corcoran despairingly. "It was a terrible mistake. But I want to see you alone just once—if only to say good-by."

As Nosby hurried out of the bank, he broke off and bent his glance casually down the street, pretending to be absorbed in some interesting phenomenon that was taking place there. And suddenly, as if life were

playing up to his subterfuge, an interesting phenomenon did immediately take place on the corner in front of the bank. A man in his shirt sleeves rushed suddenly out of the side street, seized the shoulder of a small, swarthy hunchback standing there and, swinging him quickly around, pointed at their taxicab. The man in his shirt sleeves had not even looked at them—it was as if he had known that they would be there.

The hunchback nodded and instantly both of them disappeared, the first man into the side street which had yielded him up, the hunchback into nowhere at all. The incident took place so quickly that it made only an odd visual impression upon Corcoran—he did not have occasion to think of it again until they returned from Capri eight hours later.

The Bay of Naples was rough as they set out that morning, and the little steamer staggered like a drunken man through the persistent waves. Before long Mr. Nosby's complexion was running through a gamut of yellows, pale creams and ghostly whites, but he insisted that he scarcely noticed the motion and forced Hallie to accompany him in an incessant promenade up and down the deck.

When the steamer reached the coast of the rocky, cheerful little island, dozens of boats put out from shore and swarmed about dizzily in the waves as they waited for passengers to the Blue Grotto. The constant "Saint Vitus" dance which they performed in the surf turned Mr. Nosby from a respectable white to a bizarre and indecent blue and compelled him to a sudden decision.

"It's too rough," he announced. "We won't go."

Hallie, watching fascinated from the rail, paid no attention. Seductive cries were floating up from below:

"Theesa a good boat, lady an' ge'man!"

"I spik American—been America two year!"

"Fine sunny day for go to see Blue Grotte!"

The first passengers had already floated off, two to a boat, and now Hallie was drifting with the next batch down the gangway.

"Where are you going, Hallie?" shouted Mr. Nosby. "It's too dangerous today. We're going to stay on board."

Hallie, half down the gangway, looked back over her shoulder.

"Of course I'm going!" she cried. "Do you think I'd come all the way to Capri and miss the Blue Grotto?"

Nosby took one more look at the sea, then he turned hurriedly away. Already Hallie, followed by Corcoran, had stepped into one of the small boats and was waving him a cheerful good-by.

They approached the shore, heading for a small dark opening in the rocks. When they arrived, the boatman ordered them to sit on the floor of the boat to keep from being bumped against the low entrance. A momentary passage through darkness, then a vast space opened up around them and they were in a bright paradise of ultramarine, a cathedral cave where the water and air and the high-vaulted roof were of the most radiant and opalescent blue.

"Ver" pret'," singsonged the boatman. He ran his oar through the water and they watched it turn to an incredible silver.

"I'm going to put my hand in!" said Hallie, enraptured. They were both kneeling now, and as she leaned forward to plunge her hand under the surface the strange light enveloped them like a spell and their lips touched—then all the world turned to blue and silver, or else this was not the world, but a delightful enchantment in which they would dwell forever.

"Ver" beaut'ful," sang the boatman. "Come back see Blue Grotte tomorrow, next day. Ask for Frederico, fine man for Blue Grotte. Oh, chawming!"

Again their lips sought each other, and blue and silver seemed to soar like rockets above them, burst and shower down about their shoulders in protective atoms of color, screening them from time, from sight. They kissed again. The voices of tourists were seeking echoes here and there about the cave. A brown naked boy dived from a high rock, cleaving the water like a silver fish, and starting a thousand platinum bubbles to churn up through the blue light.

"I love you with all my heart," she whispered. "What shall we do? Oh, my dear, if you only had a little common sense about money!"

The cavern was emptying, the small boats were feeling their way out, one by one, to the glittering restless sea.

"Good-by, Blue Grotte!" sang the boatman. "Come again soo-oon!"

Blinded by the sunshine, they sat back apart and looked at each other. But though the blue and silver was left behind, the radiance about her face remained.

"I love you," rang as true here under the blue sky.

Mr. Nosby was waiting on the deck, but he said not a word—only looked at them sharply and sat between them all the way back to Naples. But for all his tangible body, they were no longer apart. He had best be quick and interpose his four thousand miles.

It was not until they had docked and were walking from the pier that Corcoran was jerked sharply from his mood of rapture and despair by something that sharply recalled to him the incident of the morning. Directly in their path, as if waiting for them, stood the swarthy hunchback to whom the man in the shirt sleeves had pointed out their taxi. No sooner did he see them, however, than he stepped quickly aside

and melted into a crowd. When they had passed, Corcoran turned back, as if for a last look at the boat, and saw in the sweep of his eye that the hunchback was pointing them out in his turn to still another man.

As they got into a taxi Mr. Nosby broke the silence.

"You'd better pack immediately," he said. "We're leaving by motor for Palermo right after dinner."

"We can't make it tonight," objected Hallie.

"We'll stop at Cosenza. That's halfway."

It was plain that he wanted to bring the trip to an end at the first possible moment. After dinner he asked Corcoran to come to the hotel garage with him while he engaged an automobile for the trip, and Corcoran understood that this was because Hallie and he were not to be left together. Nosby, in an ill-humor, insisted that the garage price was too high; finally he walked out and up to a dilapidated taxi in the street.

The taxi agreed to make the trip for twenty-five dollars.

"I don't believe this old thing will make the grade," ventured Corcoran. "Don't you think it would be wiser to pay the difference and take the other car?"

Nosby stared at him, his anger just under the surface.

"We're not all like you," he said dryly. "We can't all afford to throw it away."

Corcoran took the snub with a cool nod.

"Another thing," he said. "Did you get money from the bank this morning—or anything that would make you likely to be followed?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Nosby quickly.

"Somebody's been keeping pretty close track of our movements all day."

Nosby eyed him shrewdly.

"You'd like us to stay here in Naples a day or so more, wouldn't you?" he said. "Unfortunately, you're not running this party. If you stay, you can stay alone."

"And you won't take the other car?"

"I'm getting a little weary of your suggestions."

At the hotel, as the porters piled the bags into the high old-fashioned car, Corcoran was again possessed by a feeling of being watched. With an effort, he resisted the impulse to turn his head and look behind. If this

was a product of his imagination, it was better to put it immediately from his mind.

It was already eight o'clock when they drove off into a windy twilight. The sun had gone behind Naples, leaving a sky of pigeon's-blood and gold, and as they rounded the bay and climbed slowly toward Torre Annunziata, the Mediterranean momentarily toasted the fading splendor in pink wine. Above them loomed Vesuvius and from its crater a small persistent fountain of smoke contributed darkness to the gathering night.

"We ought to reach Cosenza about twelve," said Nosby.

No one answered. The city had disappeared behind a rise of ground, and now they were alone, tracing down the hot mysterious shin of the Italian boot where the Mafia sprang out of rank human weeds and the Black Hand rose to throw its ominous shadow across two continents. There was something eerie in the sough of the wind over these gray mountains, crowned with the decayed castles. Hallie suddenly shivered.

"I'm glad I'm American," she said. "Here in Italy I feel that everybody's dead. So many people dead and all watching from up on those hills—Carthaginians and old Romans and Moorish pirates and medieval princes with poisoned rings—"

The solemn gloom of the countryside communicated itself to all of them. The wind had come up stronger and was groaning through the dark-massed trees along the way. The engine labored painfully up the incessant slopes and then coasted down winding spiral roads until the brakes gave out a burning smell. In the dark little village of Eboli they stopped for gasoline, and while they waited for their change another car came quickly out of the darkness and drew up behind.

Corcoran looked at it closely, but the lights were in his face and he could distinguish only the pale blots of four faces which returned his insistent stare. When the taxi had driven off and toiled a mile uphill in the face of the sweeping wind, he saw the lamps of the other car emerge from the village and follow. In a low voice he called Nosby's attention to the fact whereupon Nosby leaned forward nervously and tapped on the front glass.

"Piu presto!" he commanded. "Il sera sono troppo tarde!"

Corcoran translated the mutilated Italian and then fell into conversation with the chauffeur. Hallie had dozed off to sleep with her head on her mother's shoulder. It might have been twenty minutes later when she awoke with a start to find that the car had stopped. The chauffeur was peering into the engine with a lighted match, while Corcoran and Mr. Nosby were talking quickly in the road.

"What is it?" she cried.

"He's broken down," said Corcoran, "and he hasn't got the proper tools to make the repair. The best thing is for all of you to start out on foot for Agropoli. That's the next village—it's about two miles away."

"Look!" said Nosby uneasily. The lights of another car had breasted a rise less than a mile behind.

"Perhaps they'll pick us up?" asked Hallie.

"We're taking no such chances," answered Corcoran. "This is the special beat of one of the roughest gangs of holdup men in Southern Italy. What's more, we're being followed. When I asked the chauffeur if he knew that car that drove up behind us in Eboli, he shut right up. He's afraid to say."

As he spoke, he was helping Hallie and her mother from the car. Now he turned authoritatively to Nosby.

"You better tell me what you got in that Naples bank."

"It was ten thousand dollars in English bank notes," admitted Nosby in a frightened voice.

"I thought so. Some clerk tipped them off. Hand over those notes to me!"

"Why should I?" demanded Nosby. "What are you going to do with them?"

"I'm going to throw them away," said Corcoran. His head went up alertly. The complaint of a motor car taking a hill in second speed was borne toward them clearly on the night. "Hallie, you and your mother start on with the chauffeur. Run as fast as you can for a hundred yards or so, and then keep going. If I don't show up, notify the carabinieri in Agropoli." His voice sank lower. "Don't worry, I'm going to fix this thing. Good-by."

As they started off he turned again to Nosby.

"Hand over that money," he said.

"You're going to—"

"I'm going to keep them here while you get Hallie away. Don't you see that if they got her up in these hills they could ask any amount of money they wanted?"

Nosby paused irresolute. Then he pulled out a thick packet of fifty-pound notes and began to peel half a dozen from the top.

"I want all of it," snapped Corcoran. With a quick movement he wrested the packet violently from Nosby's hand. "Now go on!"

Less than half a mile away, the lights of the car dipped into sight. With a broken cry Nosby turned and stumbled off down the road.

Corcoran took a pencil and an envelope from his pocket and worked quickly for a few minutes by the glow of the headlights. Then he wet one finger and held it up tentatively in the air as if he were making an experiment.

The result seemed to satisfy him. He waited, ruffling the large thin notes—there were forty of them—in his hands.

The lights of the other car came nearer, slowed up, came to a stop twenty feet away.

Leaving the engine running idle, four men got out and walked toward him.

"Buona sera!" he called, and then continued in Italian. "We have broken down."

"Where are the rest of your people?" demanded one of the men quickly.

"They were picked up by another car. It turned around and took them back to Agropoli," Corcoran said politely. He was aware that he was covered by two revolvers, but he waited an instant longer, straining to hear the flurry in the trees which would announce a gust of wind. The men drew nearer.

"But I have something here that may interest you." Slowly, his heart thumping, he raised his hand, bringing the packet of notes into the glare of the headlight. Suddenly out of the valley swept the wind, louder and nearer; he waited a moment longer until he felt the first cold freshness on his face. "Here are two hundred thousand lire in English bank notes!" He raised the sheaf of paper higher as if to hand it to the nearest man. Then he released it with a light upward flick and immediately the wind seized upon it and whirled the notes in forty directions through the air.

The nearest man cursed and made a lunge for the closest piece. Then they were all scurrying here and there about the road while the frail bills sailed and flickered in the gale, pirouetting like elves along the grass, bouncing and skipping from side to side in mad perversity.

From one side to the other they ran, Corcoran with them, crumpling the captured money into their pockets, then scattering always farther and farther apart in wild pursuit of the elusive beckoning symbols of gold.

Suddenly Corcoran saw his opportunity. Bending low, as if he had spotted a stray bill beneath the car, he ran toward it, vaulted over the side and hitched into the driver's seat. As he plunged the lever into first, he heard a cursing cry and then a sharp report, but the warmed car had jumped forward safely and the shot went wide.

In a moment, his teeth locked and muscles tense against the fusillade, he had passed the stalled taxi and was racing along into the darkness. There was another report close at hand and he ducked wildly, afraid for an instant that one of them had clung to the running board; then he realized that one of their shots had blown out a tire.

After three-quarters of a mile he stopped, cut off his motor and listened. There wasn't a sound, only the drip from his radiator onto the road.

"Hallie!" he called. "Hallie!"

A figure emerged from the shadows not ten feet away, then another figure and another.

"Hallie!" he said.

She clambered into the front seat with him; her arms went about him.

"You're safe!" she sobbed. "We heard the shots and wanted to go back."

Mr. Nosby, very cool now, stood in the road.

"I don't suppose you brought back any of that money," he said.

Corcoran took three crumpled bank notes from his pocket.

"That's all," he said. "But they're liable to be along here any minute and you can argue with them about the rest."

Mr. Nosby, followed by Mrs. Bushmill and the chauffeur, stepped quickly into the car.

"Nevertheless," he insisted shrilly, as they moved off, "this has been a pretty expensive business. You've flung away ten thousand dollars that was to have bought goods in Sicily."

"Those are English bank notes," said Corcoran. "Big notes too. Every bank in England and Italy will be watching for those numbers."

"But we don't know the numbers!"

"I took all the numbers," said Corcoran.

The rumor that Mr. Julius Bushmill's purchasing department keeps him awake nights is absolutely unfounded. There are those who say that a once conservative business is expanding in a way that is more sensational than sound, but they are probably small, malevolent rivals with a congenital disgust for the grand scale. To all gratuitous advice, Mr. Bushmill replies that even when his son-in-law seems to be throwing it away, it all comes back. His theory is that the young idiot really has a talent for spending money.