

kept a sharp watch for the moment when she should appear to offer her meed of praise to the hero of the hour. So, when he saw her coming toward him, with a smile of pride on her winsome face, he turned suddenly away, but not before he had seen the look of pained surprise caused by his manifest intention to ignore her.

Now, as he sat in the gathering darkness, he cursed himself for a fool in allowing himself to be influenced by the random, and mayhap inconsequential gossip of a pair of girls. But even his contrition did not restore his peace of mind. He was at a loss to know what to do to repair the breach he had so maliciously and intentionally made, and he would gladly have shirked the task if it had been possible. But since his hand had been the hand to break, his it must also be to make, and that before the gulf between them had widened to a hopeless breadth.

And then, too, the letter that he held in his hand opened up such a realm of possibilities, which, but a few hours before, might have been his to realize. It was not every graduate, he reflected that could step from the portals of his Alma Mater into a position bringing him a cool thousand a year at the start. He tore the letter into fine shreds and scattered them with a careless wave of his hand. As he did so, he became aware of a presence near him. Thinking it was but another belated congratulator, he resumed his mask of impassivity, and awaited the attack. But none came. Instead, there was wafted to his nostrils the faint odor of heliotrope, and to his ears came the faint frou—frou of skirts. In a second he was on his feet, facing the newcomer. For a moment there was unbroken silence. Each seemed anxious to say something, yet neither could find words on the instant. But at length the girl, being the more possessed of the two, made a sudden step forward.

"What have I done?" she said. There was neither reproach nor anger in her tone. The expression loosed Muirkirk's tongue.

"Don't say another word, please, Miss Kincaide, until I have spoken. Heaven knows that I have acted like the cad I am, with absolutely no reason for it but a passing whim. And I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am, if that could but make reparation. Forgive me for the rudeness of the afternoon, and the injury I have done you."

"It is easy to forgive, and I forgive you," she said. Then, before he could speak again, she went on hurriedly,