

Arlene, my dear, you never can be bad. You have only striven for the light of the sun. I hope you'll be happy. You are closer to her now, and she gives you a smile of recognition. And you smile back. Her smile was a plea, and you smile back acquiescence. Can't be stern with a kitten, though naughty, who wants to play in the sunshine. The groom's face is wreathed in a smile of possessiveness; an ethereal something lights up the not so coarse features, and their assumed grossness is chiseled into heroic proportions. And a hero he is. He came, he saw, and conquered. He conquered the tides that swept against his mighty breast. He has her now by his side despite all the inuendos, chitterings and chatterings about him. He marched a straight line to his goal, without the slightest deviation, right or left, no matter the obstacles. Yes, there almost is a spiritual quality to his countenance, large and noble, chiseled in heroic granite. And the face is young and masterful - oh, ever so young!

Right or wrong, Hobo - unseen, unrecognized - you there!

Kinships, you must remember, old friend! And that kinship between your brother and Old Mr. Forrest. Right or wrong!

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Forrest Has Compulsions.

Mr. Foster Forrest, despite his flint-like nature and the New England-Yankee-hard-exterior, had inner compulsions. But compulsions are not always good ones, and the good not often succeeded penetrating the tough mold of generations of his own particular bias and his own special status-quo that formed the bulwark and mode of life for him. A wall surrounding his little world so complete that outside influences were forever barred! A life so sheltered that it grew in archaic vastness, and was cradled in the eccentricities of the years. And what was truly

archaic was to his type and exclusive personal world solemn and solid. What was old and moth-eaten and stultifying took on the quality of tradition and virtue. The sanctity of an old chair in which an ancestor, perhaps insipid and doddering, might have sat! His "heroic" (Couldn't have been ruthless?) act glorified in family tradition, even though the act was not heroic at all; or not accomplished at all - bruited about through a peculiar ingenuity; or accomplished through connivance and trickery that would cause the blush of shame to bloom in the faces of other denizens of his ^{DWN} estate. But an act of glory it was, prim and well rounded, or so it went down in the genesis, genealogy and chronology of the family. A play for great stakes - not a childish play at all! And now he may well lay claim to the waters in the channels; canals; even, yea, even the broad lakes and rivers and the seas; and the fishes that swim and gulp air through their gills, since the days of Chaucer, he of the ~~Santerbury~~ Canterbury Tales, or King John of the ^a Magna Carta, even Shakespeare and Milton. Truly a great array of Titans. And be there one to claim priority - even he who traces his days to Abraham, Moses and the prophets!

Not you, Solomon!

But perhaps the archetypal (his own image, his own class) Forrest can best be defined by what he is not than by what he is. He cannot be accused of being a dreamer, or of having truck with anyone suspected of having vision. As a corollary, it may be assumed that had he not a Constitution which guarantees life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness he would have been apt to cut corners in these fundamentals, pillars of human behaviour. Certainly, he is not the tolerant one to welcome the stranger, if at all his self-importance is in danger of being impugned. A lesser relationship, of the Brahmin looking down his nose upon one of lower caste, would not be anathema to him. To him all men are not created equal. And how could they? Is he not the man of fate and privilege

who carved for himself a special niche in life before his birth - through scions, heirs and inheritors before him? And by the same token, of this "virtue" (the virtue of being born), may he not look down from his high pedestal, untrammled and untouched, upon those less fortunate who swarm the surface of the earth? The ungodly ones! And he being so unlike them, doesn't it follow that something of godliness is within him, and is a virtue in him? It being so, doesn't it also follow that god created the earth and all therein for his exclusive domain, and for his privilege and pleasure. He is so much unlike his pilgrim-fathers who travailed and crossed the seas dangerously to seek for freedom of conscience and uncoerced religion. It was a fait-accomplie before he had had any say, and now he was sitting on the pot of flesh. He had become fat and he kicked over his traces. He is so unlike Washington who had dreams of a mighty republic that would be a beacon to the oppressed in all lands; and Jefferson who had the same vision, and who inscribed ^{it} in the immortal words that became the Constitution of the United States, and the creed and belief of all the lands - and the shining symbol of power and greatness. And oh, horror of horrors, certainly not he of the lowly birth, the rail-splitter, the man of tragedy and understanding, the man, the prophet of his time, who proclaimed those simple sad, heart-warming truths:

"Four Score and.....

The Constitution he inherited, and he will ^{stand} stand by it. And that's one of his virtues. He is steadfast, and this is a virtue when coupled with his bent for fair play. But it also makes him relentless and cold, and at times unreasonable. He is stiff-necked like the Hebrews of old, but in his strictures he is not always unreasonable.

True to form, he is typically New England-Yankee material - even to his nasal twang - even though the latter may be attributed, at least twenty-five percent, to a deviation of his prominent nose leftward, all the way down to the very bottom of his nostrils; or a force of habit and training.

Mr. Forrest was kindly to a degree, but when crossed he would tighten up in a ^rfreeze (facial muscles so taut they'd claw the bones), and crawl into his Yankee armor. Not a word would escape the thin line of cramped lips, and not a move of a single crimped muscle on the immobile face. When the image did relax, it would speak in monosyllables, with the obsequious "sir" suffixed, thus: "No, sir", "yes, sir", even of those he was most contemptuous. For ever he must be the courteous gentleman. It's tradition! You'd look at him, and finally fall silent, never knowing whether he ever heard what you ^{have}said.

Mr. Forrest was fastidiously correct in his dress as well as in his manner, though veering in both to the sombre. Vanity of dignity, decorum and conformity was inbred in him, and had to be maintained at all costs.

The priest of an odd sanctity, of false gods.

Lena was a witch. She had bewitched his son.

Hunt the witch!

But he remembered Flora, his deceased wife, how she was repulsed by his austerity, the sterility of his nature, and he relented. Dead, Flora meant more to him than when she was alive. He sensed and felt her presence. Curious, now in his declining years he leaned on her ethereal presence more than on her physical being in his younger years.

His good compulsion had caused him to take little Foster to his bosom. It was not of the depth of love, but a certain emotion akin to it. Perhaps he needed the little ^{le}one's nearness to fill a void that was consuming him in his daily living.

The incident of Lena in the arms of his grandson in the public eye, on the eventful night of the fire, threatened to break the bonds of his reserve and patience. He'd deny his grandson any further visits or communication with his mother, but again lovely Flora (her spirit) intervened. And Clara's felicitous ⁿness not to be forgotten!

But that Dreen fellow with his girl-show, what influence would he have on Foster? This George seems to ^{be} well taken up with that foreigner and he was sure to take his grandson along with him.

There was nothing personal in Mr. Forrest's dislike of Solomon Dreen. If Solomon had not married Lena, or had not owned the ~~the~~ girl-show, he would have ignored him (and his type) if ever he had crossed his path. There could be no conflict between two personalities so far apart as the distant poles, living in eternally different worlds. He would ^{bait} a bear if it annoyed him, or destroy a rat because it was repulsive to him - by remote control as it were. But George was something else, for he threatened to invade his personal world, his own world. George was more formidable because he was of his world. And George couldn't be ignored even though he claimed not any of the Mayflower Pilgrims as an ancestor.

And through the welter of conflict of thought and emotion one path, one avenue of attack, lay clear before him - the path that led to the editorial room of the Eventide.

CHAPTER V

Mr. Black and Mr. Forrest

The prevailing conciliatory mood of the night before toward bride and groom was still with George the following morning on his way to the Eventide to write his report. Reaching the Square where he was to enter the City Room of the Eventide he decided to continue to the Library to write his report there. The hour was early but he found the massive doors of the old Library slightly ajar - ~~just been~~ opened. Mounting the one flight of flagstone steps he entered the stillness and coolness of the quadrangular reading room.

Miss Taylor had obviously just put on her workaday frock and was reaching out for the duster when she saw George entering. She nodded a smile to him and took up her task of dusting (recovering quickly from the surprise