The captain replied in a dull tone. "Well, the truth is, sir, he said to the man who delivered it. An instant later the hoarse voice of the boat's whistle roared out their warning. Churning the sluggish waters into foam with her great paddles, the Mount Vernon presently swung slowly out into the narrow stream.

"Now, Captain Rogers," went on Captain Carlisle, tersely, "tell me who's aboard," and presently he began to ponder the names which, in loose fashion, the clerk assembled from his memory and his personal acquaintance.

"Hm, hm!" commented the listener, "very few whom I know. Judge Clay too from the other side, below Cairo State Senator Jones, from Belmont—

"You know Mr. Jones? Old 'Decline and Fall' Jones. He never reads any book excepting Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.' Always declines a drink when offered, but he's sure to fall a moment later!" This the smiling clerk.

Even as Carlisle left the captain's room to descend the stair he met face to face the very man whose presence he least desired. "Dunwody!" he exclaimed.

"I changed my mind at the last moment. It is far more comfortable going down by boat than it is by stage." Then the thought of the pleasure of your society on the journey—" He was smiling rather maliciously.

"Yes, yes, of course!" somewhat dismally.

"But now, to be frank with you, you don't seem altogether happy. Why do you want to be rid of me? What harm have I done? What are you going to introduce me as you should to that extremely beautiful young lady who is with you?"

"My very dear sir!"

"You are not 'my dear sir' at all so long as you try to hoodwink me," persisted Dunwody, still smiling. "Come, now, what are you doing here week-bound with a young and charming person who is not your wife, widow, mother, daughter, fiancee or sister; who is not—"

"It is within a man's rights to choose his own company and his own ways. I am not accountable, except as I choose."

The other man was studying him closely, noting his flush, his irritation, his uneasiness. "But what I am saying now is that it is cruel, unusual, inhuman and unconstitutional to be so selfish about it."

"The lady has expressed a desire to remain quite alone, my dear sir. I must bow to her will. It is her privilege to come and go as she likes."

"She may come and go as she likes?" queried Dunwody, still smiling. There was a look on his face which caused Carlisle suddenly to turn and examine him sharply

"Why should she have sent me this message?"

"Absolutely so."

"Then why should she have sent me this little message?" demanded Dunwody suddenly.

A still-deeper flush spread over the young officer's telltale face. He opened and read: "If you care to aid a woman who is in trouble, come to me at room 19 when you can."

"When did you receive this?" he demanded.

"Within the moment. Her maid brought it."

"You didn't have this before you came on board; but, of course, that wasn't possible."

Dunwody looked at him keenly. "You have just heard me," he said. "No; I don't deny there are some things here which I can't understand. Come, let's be frank about it. You may trust me, of course. But—neither sister, wife nor servant—could you blame any man, especially any man who had a direct message like this, for wanting or, say, even demanding a meeting? Haven't I the right? Come, now!"

"Very good, then. To show how little you know me and how much you wrong both this lady and myself you shall meet her. Not that you have earned the right."

The Mount Vernon, favored by a good stage of water, soon cleared the narrow Monongahela channel, passed the confluence and headed down un-

were coming out of the various pictures of the receding shores. Nor did Carlisle. With eyes cast down he meditated on the long pickings up and down shore. Yet it was not an irresistible soul which responed beneath the half-frigid exterior. He presently arrived upon a plan of action.

The palette, too, had its rights, he concluded, and the woman as a woman had her rights also to her good fame. He must not harm her name. Best, then, to disarm suspicion by playing the game wholly in the open. The midday meal now being announced by loud proclamation of the boat's gong, he turned and soon rapped at the door of room 19.

Jeanne, the tearful but faithful maid who shared her mistress' fortunes, by this time had done what she could to mend her lady's appearance. Good health and youth as well as good courage fought for Josephine St. Auban's as well as good sense and a philosophy of travel learned by experience in other lands. Her habilitments were such as to cause most of the feminine occupants of the boat to make careful note when she had accepted Carlisle's escort and entered the dining room. The hum of the busy tables slackened and ceased. A score of women frowned at a score of men whose glances wandered undutifully. Who was she, and what? Meantime Josephine St. Auban's own eyes were not unregardful.

"I see that my guess was quite correct," she said at length, smiling full at her guardian.

"At once he caught her thought. "Oh, about Mr. Dunwody," he assented, assuming a carelessness which she read through at once. "Yes, I met him a while ago. He has been eyes! has he not?" he added resentfully.

"That is to say—"

"So hard hit that he threatens a duel or worse if I do not at once further his desire to pursue his acquaintance."

"Indeed?" She kept her eyes fixed on her plate. "Is that all?" she asked at length.

"Madam, you yourself could best answer your own question." He looked at her keenly, not showing his case, not telling her that Dunwody had shown him her hasty note. Not the flicker of an eyelash betrayed her own thought. Surely, she the bold courage. Surely, she meant trouble.

"How delightful!" she resumed at length calmly. "Not that I weary of your company, sir, but I told you my parole was ended when we reached the boat. I told you fairly. I should try to escape, and so I shall."

"Our game is somewhat desperate, madam, I admit," said he. "I scarcely

know whether you are to be envied or pitied. Yet I wish you success, at least, in your venture, for, if you shall leave the boat at Louisville or Cincinnati, your errand is already sufficiently well done. You have got me out of Washington. Suppose we disembark at the last point of our common journey?"

"But what then for you, madam?"

"Ah to that I cannot tell. You have brought me into this situation. I must escape from it in my own way."

"You sting me deeply. A thousand times you yourself have made me ashamed. Come, when we part, shall it not be as friends? You have won my respect my admiration. I wish I were entitled to your own. You've been perfect. You've been splendid.

"Look," she said without raising her eyelids.

He turned. Dunwody was making his way toward them among the tables.

"My dear senator," said Carlisle, choking down his wrath as the Mississippian reached them and bowed his salutations. "I have the greatest pleasure in the world in keeping my promise to you. I am delighted to have you join our little party at this time. You remember the countess—I would say, Miss Barron?"

"I have not so soon forgotten," answered Dunwody. His commanding eyes still sought her face. Beyond a slight bow and one upward glance she did not display interest, yet in truth a sudden shiver of apprehension came into her heart. This was a different sort of man she now must endeavor to handle.

That she had asked the aid of this newcomer was a fact known to all three of them. Yet of the three, none knew precisely the extent of the others' knowledge. Dunwody at least was polite. If insistent, in his wish to learn more of her.

"I am sure the fatigue of the journey across the mountains must have left you quite weary," he ventured, addressing her.

Josephine St Alban showed no sign of perturbation as she answered—"Not so weary as many. The duties of an amanuensis leave one small time for recreation." Her face was demure ness itself.

Carlisle caught his cue, with alertness fairly to be called brilliant "Yes," said he, "the young lady is of foreign education and family, and is most skilful in these respects. I should find it difficult to carry forward my literary work without her able assistance."

He virtually sat erect, with a fine air, presently pushing back his chair.

Dunwody looked from one to the other in perplexity. His face flushed. Meantime Josephine St. Auban arose, bowed and left them.

When the two man found themselves alone Dunwody, for a time lost in moody silence at length broke out—

"Well, sir, I suppose I owe you an apology. I was—I am—madly in love with the woman. I—I—I—