## CHAPTER II

### ENTER GINGER

I

SALLY was sitting with her back against a hillock of golden sand, watching with half-closed eyes the denizens of Roville-sur-Mer at their familiar morning occupations. At Roville, as at most French seashore resorts, the morning is the time when the visiting population assembles in force on the beach. Whiskered fathers of families made cheerful patches of colour in the foreground. Their female friends and relatives clustered in groups under gay parasols. Dogs roamed to and fro, and children dug industriously with spades, ever and anon suspending their labours in order to smite one another with these handy implements. One of the dogs, a poodle of military aspect, wandered up to Sally: and discovering that she was in possession of a box of sweets, decided to remain and await developments.

Few things are so pleasant as the anticipation of them, but Sally's vacation had proved an exception to this rule. It had been a magic month of lazy happiness. She had drifted luxuriously from one French town to another, till the charm of Roville, with its blue sky, its Casino, its snow-white hotels along

the Promenade, and its general glitter and gaiety, had brought her to a halt. Here she could have stayed indefinitely, but the voice of America was calling her back. Gerald had written to say that "The Primrose Way" was to be produced in Detroit, preliminary to its New York run, so soon that, if she wished to see the opening, she must return at once. A scrappy, hurried, unsatisfactory letter, the letter of a busy man: but one that Sally could not ignore. She was leaving Roville to-morrow.

To-day, however, was to-day: and she sat and watched the bathers with a familiar feeling of peace, revelling as usual in the still novel sensation of having nothing to do but bask in the warm sunshine and listen to the faint murmur of the little waves.

But, if there was one drawback, she had discovered, to a morning on the Roville *plage*, it was that you had a tendency to fall asleep: and this is a degrading thing to do so soon after breakfast, even if you are on a holiday. Usually Sally fought stoutly against the temptation, but to-day the sun was so warm and the whisper of the waves so insinuating that she had almost dozed off, when she was aroused by voices close at hand. There were many voices on the beach, both near and distant, but these were talking English, a novelty in Roville, and the sound of the familiar tongue jerked Sally back from the borders of sleep. A few feet away, two men had seated themselves on the sand.

From the first moment she had set out on her travels, it had been one of Sally's principal amusements to examine the strangers whom chance threw in her way and to try by the light of her intuition to fit them out with characters and occupations: nor

had she been discouraged by an almost consistent failure to guess right. Out of the corner of her eye she inspected these two men.

The first of the pair did not attract her. He was a tall, dark man whose tight, precise mouth and rather high cheek bones gave him an appearance vaguely sinister. He had the dusky look of the clean-shaven man whose life is a perpetual struggle with a determined beard. He certainly shaved twice a day, and just as certainly had the self-control not to swear when he cut himself. She could picture him smiling nastily when this happened.

"Hard," diagnosed Sally. "I shouldn't like him. A lawyer or something, I think."

She turned to the other and found herself looking into his eyes. This was because he had been staring at Sally with the utmost intentness ever since his arrival. His mouth had opened slightly. He had the air of a man who, after many disappointments, has at last found something worth looking at.

"Rather a dear," decided Sally.

He was a sturdy, thick-set young man with an amiable, freckled face and the reddest hair Sally had ever seen. He had a square chin, and at one angle of the chin a slight cut. And Sally was convinced that, however he had behaved on receipt of that wound, it had not been with superior self-control.

"A temper, I should think," she meditated. "Very quick, but soon over. Not very clever, I should say, but nice."

She looked away, finding his fascinated gaze a little embarrassing.

The dark man, who in the objectionably competent fashion which, one felt, characterized all his actions,

had just succeeded in lighting a cigarette in the teeth of a strong breeze, threw away the match and resumed the conversation, which had presumably been interrupted by the process of sitting down.

"And how *is* Scrymgeour?" he inquired.

"Oh, all right," replied the young man with red hair absently. Sally was looking straight in front of her, but she felt that his eyes were still busy.

"I was surprised at his being here. He told me he meant to stay in Paris."

There was a slight pause. Sally gave the attentive poodle a piece of nougat.

"I say," observed the red-haired young man in clear, penetrating tones that vibrated with intense feeling, "that's the prettiest girl I've seen in my life!"

II

At this frank revelation of the red-haired young man's personal opinions, Sally, though considerably startled, was not displeased. A broad-minded girl, the outburst seemed to her a legitimate comment on a matter of public interest. The young man's companion, on the other hand, was unmixedly shocked.

"My dear fellow!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, it's all right," said the red-haired young man, unmoved. "She can't understand. There isn't a bally soul in this dashed place that can speak a word of English. If I didn't happen to remember a few odd bits of French, I should have starved by this time. That girl," he went on, returning to the subject most imperatively occupying his mind, "is an absolute topper! I give you my solemn word

I've never seen anybody to touch her. Look at those hands and feet. You don't get them outside France. Of course, her mouth is a bit wide," he said reluctantly.

Sally's immobility, added to the other's assurance concerning the linguistic deficiencies of the inhabitants of Roville, seemed to reassure the dark man. He breathed again. At no period of his life had he ever behaved with anything but the most scrupulous correctness himself, but he had quailed at the idea of being associated even remotely with incorrectness in another. It had been a black moment for him when the red-haired young man had uttered those few kind words.

"Still you ought to be careful," he said austerely.

He looked at Sally, who was now dividing her attention between the poodle and a raffish-looking mongrel, who had joined the party, and returned to the topic of the mysterious Scrymgeour.

"How is Scrymgeour's dyspepsia?"

The red-haired young man seemed but faintly interested in the vicissitudes of Scrymgeour's interior.

"Do you notice the way her hair sort of curls over her ears?" he said. "Eh? Oh, pretty much the same, I think."

"What hotel are you staying at?"

"The Normandie."

Sally, dipping into the box for another chocolate cream, gave an imperceptible start. She, too, was staying at the Normandie. She presumed that her admirer was a recent arrival, for she had seen nothing of him at the hotel.

"The Normandie?" The dark man looked

puzzled. "I know Roville pretty well by report, but I've never heard of any Hote Normandie. Where is it?"

"It's a little shanty down near the station. Not much of a place. Still, it's cheap, and the cooking's all right."

His companion's bewilderment increased.

"What on earth is a man like Scrymgeour doing there?" he said. Sally was conscious of an urgent desire to know more and more about the absent Scrymgeour. Constant repetition of his name had made him seem almost like an old friend. "If there's one thing he's fussy about . . ."

"There are at least eleven thousand things he's fussy about," interrupted the red-haired young man disapprovingly. "Jumpy old blighter!"

"If there's one thing he's particular about, it's the sort of hotel he goes to. Ever since I've known him he has always wanted the best. I should have thought he would have gone to the Splendide." He mused on this problem in a dissatisfied sort of way for a moment, then seemed to reconcile himself to the fact that a rich man's eccentricities must be humoured. "I'd like to see him again. Ask him if he will dine with me at the Splendide to-night. Say eight sharp."

Sally, occupied with her dogs, whose numbers had now been augmented by a white terrier with a black patch over its left eye, could not see the young man's face: but his voice, when he replied, told her that something was wrong. There was a false airiness in it.

"Oh, Scrymgeour isn't in Roville."

"No? Where is he?"

"Paris, I believe."

"What!" The dark man's voice sharpened. He sounded as though he were cross-examining a reluctant witness. "Then why aren't you there? What are you doing here? Did he give you a holiday?"

"Yes, he did."

"When do you rejoin him?"

"I don't."

"What!"

The red-haired young man's manner was not unmistakably dogged.

"Well, if you want to know," he said, "the old blighter fired me the day before yesterday."

III

There was a shuffling of sand as the dark man sprang up. Sally, intent on the drama which was unfolding itself beside her, absent-mindedly gave the poodle a piece of nougat which should by rights have gone to the terrier. She shot a swift glance sideways, and saw the dark man standing in an attitude rather reminiscent of the stern father of melodrama about to drive his erring daughter out into the snow. The red-haired young man, outwardly stolid, was gazing before him down the beach at a fat bather in an orange suit who, after six false starts, was now actually in the water, floating with the dignity of a wrecked balloon.

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded the dark man, "that, after all the trouble the family took to get you what was practically a sinecure with endless possibilities if you only behaved yourself, you have deliberately thrown away . . ." A despairing

gesture completed the sentence. "Good God, you're hopeless!"

The red-haired young man made no reply. He continued to gaze down the beach. Of all outdoor sports, few are more stimulating than watching middle-aged Frenchmen bathe. Drama, action, suspense, all are here. From the first stealthy testing of the water with an apprehensive toe to the final seal-like plunge, there is never a dull moment. And apart from the excitement of the thing, judging it from a purely æsthetic standpoint, his must be a dull soul who can fail to be uplifted by the spectacle of a series of very stout men with whiskers, seen in tight bathing suits against a background of brightest blue. Yet the young man with red hair, recently in the employment of Mr. Scrymgeour, eyed this free circus without any enjoyment whatever.

"It's maddening! What are you going to do? What do you expect us to do? Are we to spend our whole lives getting you positions which you won't keep? I can tell you we're . . . it's monstrous! it's sickening! Good God!"

And with these words the dark man, apparently feeling, as Sally had sometimes felt in the society of her brother Fillmore, the futility of mere language, turned sharply and stalked away up the beach, the dignity of his exit somewhat marred a moment later by the fact of his straw hat blowing off and being trodden on by a passing child.

He left behind him the sort of electric calm which follows the falling of a thunderbolt; that stunned calm through which the air seems still to quiver protestingly. How long this would have lasted one cannot say: for towards the end of the first minute

it was shattered by a purely terrestrial uproar. With an abruptness heralded only by one short, low gurgling snarl, there sprang into being the prettiest dog fight that Roville had seen that season.

It was the terrier with the black patch who began it. That was Sally's opinion: and such, one feels, will be the verdict of history. His best friend, anxious to make out a case for him, could not have denied that he fired the first gun of the campaign. But we must be just. The fault was really Sally's. Absorbed in the scene which had just concluded and acutely inquisitive as to why the shadowy Scrymgeour had seen fit to dispense with the red-haired young man's services, she had thrice in succession helped the poodle out of his turn. The third occasion was too much for the terrier.

There is about any dog fight a wild, gusty fury which affects the average mortal with something of the helplessness induced by some vast clashing of the elements. It seems so outside one's jurisdiction. One is oppressed with a sense of the futility of interference. And this was no ordinary dog fight. It was a stunning mêlée, which would have excited favourable comment even among the blasé residents of a negro quarter or the not easily-pleased critics of a Lancashire mining-village. From all over the beach dogs of every size, breed, and colour were racing to the scene: and while some of these merely remained in the ringside seats and barked, a considerable proportion immediately started fighting one another on general principles, well content to be in action without bothering about first causes. The terrier had got the poodle by the left hind-leg and was restating his war-aims. The raffish mongrel

was apparently endeavouring to fletcherize a complete stranger of the Sealyham family.

Sally was frankly unequal to the situation, as were the entire crowd of spectators who had come galloping up from the water's edge. She had been paralysed from the start. Snarling bundles bumped against her legs and bounced away again, but she made no move. Advice in fluent French rent the air. Arms waved, and well-filled bathing suits leaped up and down. But nobody did anything practical until in the centre of the theatre of war there suddenly appeared the red-haired young man.

The only reason why dog fights do not go on for ever is that Providence has decided that on each such occasion there shall always be among those present one Master Mind; one wizard who, whatever his shortcomings in other battles of life, is in this single particular sphere competent and dominating. At Roville-sur-Mer it was the red-haired young man. His dark companion might have turned from him in disgust: his services might not have seemed worth retaining by the haughty Scrymgeour: he might be a pain in the neck to "the family"; but he did know how to stop a dog fight. From the first moment of his intervention calm began to steal over the scene. He had the same effect on the almost inextricably entwined belligerents as, in mediæval legend, the Holy Grail, sliding down the sunbeam, used to have on battling knights. He did not look like a dove of peace, but the most captious could not have denied that he brought home the goods. There was a magic in his soothing hands, a spell in his voice: and in a shorter time than one would have believed possible

dog after dog had been sorted out and calmed down; until presently all that was left of Armageddon was one solitary small Scotch terrier, thoughtfully licking a chewed leg. The rest of the combatants, once more in their right mind and wondering what all the fuss was about, had been captured and haled away in a whirl of recrimination by voluble owners.

Having achieved this miracle, the young man turned to Sally. Gallant, one might say reckless, as he had been a moment before, he now gave indications of a rather pleasing shyness. He braced himself with that painful air of effort which announces to the world that an Englishman is about to speak a language other than his own.

"*J'espère,*" he said, having swallowed once or twice to brace himself up for the journey through the jungle of a foreign tongue, "*J'espère que vous n'êtes pas*—oh, dammit, what's the word—*j'espère que vous n'êtes pas blessée?*"

"*Blessée?*"

"Yes, *blessée*. Wounded. Hurt, don't you know. Bitten. Oh, dash it. *J'espère . . .*"

"Oh, bitten!" said Sally, dimpling. "Oh, no, thanks very much. I wasn't bitten. And I think it was awfully brave of you to save all our lives."

The compliment seemed to pass over the young man's head. He stared at Sally with horrified eyes. Over his amiable face there swept a vivid blush. His jaw dropped.

"Oh, my sainted aunt!" he ejaculated.

Then, as if the situation was too much for him and flight the only possible solution, he spun round and disappeared at a walk so rapid that it was almost a run. Sally watched him go and was sorry that he

had torn himself away. She still wanted to know why Scrymgeour had fired him

## IV

Bedtime at Roville is an hour that seems to vary according to one's proximity to the sea. The gilded palaces along the front keep deplorable hours, polluting the night air till dawn with indefatigable jazz: but at the *pensions* of the economical like the Normandie, early to bed is the rule. True, Jules, the stout young native who combined the offices of night-clerk and lift-attendant at that establishment, was on duty in the hall throughout the night, but few of the Normandie's patrons made use of his services.

Sally, entering shortly before twelve o'clock on the night of the day on which the dark man, the red-haired young man, and their friend Scrymgeour had come into her life, found the little hall dim and silent. Through the iron cage of the lift a single faint bulb glowed: another, over the desk in the far corner, illuminated the upper half of Jules, slumbering in a chair. Jules seemed to Sally to be on duty in some capacity or other all the time. His work, like women's, was never done. He was now restoring his tissues with a few winks of much-needed beauty sleep. Sally, who had been to the Casino to hear the band and afterwards had strolled on the moonlit promenade, had a guilty sense of intrusion.

As she stood there, reluctant to break in on Jules' rest—for her sympathetic heart, always at the disposal of the oppressed, had long ached for this overworked peon—she was relieved to hear footsteps in the street outside, followed by the opening of the

front door. If Jules would have had to wake up anyway, she felt her sense of responsibility lessened. The door, having opened, closed again with a bang. Jules stirred, gurgled, blinked, and sat up, and Sally, turning, perceived that the new arrival was the red-haired young man.

"Oh, good evening," said Sally welcomingly.

The young man stopped, and shuffled uncomfortably. The morning's happenings were obviously still green in his memory. He had either not ceased blushing since their last meeting or he was celebrating their reunion by beginning to blush again: for his face was a familiar scarlet.

"Er—good evening," he said, disentangling his feet, which, in the embarrassment of the moment, had somehow got coiled up together.

"Or *bon soir*, I suppose *you* would say," murmured Sally.

The young man acknowledged receipt of this thrust by dropping his hat and tripping over it as he stooped to pick it up.

Jules, meanwhile, who had been navigating in a sort of somnambulistic trance in the neighbourhood of the lift, now threw back the cage with a rattle.

"It's a shame to have woken you up," said Sally, commiseratingly, stepping in.

Jules did not reply, for the excellent reason that he had not been woken up. Constant practice enabled him to do this sort of work without breaking his slumber. His brain, if you could call it that, was working automatically. He had shut up the gate with a clang and was tugging sluggishly at the correct rope, so that the lift was going slowly up instead of retiring down into the basement, but he was not awake.

Sally and the red-haired young man sat side by side on the small seat, watching their conductor's efforts. After the first spurt, conversation had languished. Sally had nothing of immediate interest to say, and her companion seemed to be one of these strong, silent men you read about. Only a slight snore from Jules broke the silence.

At the third floor Sally leaned forward and prodded Jules in the lower ribs. All through her stay at Roville, she had found in dealing with the native population that actions spoke louder than words. If she wanted anything in a restaurant or at a shop, she pointed; and, when she wished the lift to stop, she prodded the man in charge. It was a system worth a dozen French conversation books.

Jules brought the machine to a halt: and it was at this point that he should have done the one thing connected with his professional activities which he did really well—the opening, to wit, of the iron cage. There are ways of doing this. Jules' was the right way. He was accustomed to do it with a flourish, and generally remarked "V'la!" in a modest but self-congratulatory voice as though he would have liked to see another man who could have put through a job like that. Jules' opinion was that he might not be much to look at, but that he could open a lift door.

To-night, however, it seemed as if even this not very exacting feat was beyond his powers. Instead of inserting his key in the lock, he stood staring in an attitude of frozen horror. He was a man who took most things in life pretty seriously, and whatever was the little difficulty just now seemed to have broken him all up.

"There appears," said Sally, turning to her com-

panion, "to be a hitch. Would you mind asking what's the matter? I don't know any French myself except 'oo la la!'"

The young man, thus appealed to, nerved himself to the task. He eyed the melancholy Jules doubtfully, and coughed in a strangled sort of way.

"Oh, *esker . . . esker vous . . .*"

"Don't weaken," said Sally. "I think you've got him going."

"*Esker vous . . . Pourquoi vous ne . . .* I mean *ne vous . . .* that's to say, *quel est le raison . . .*"

He broke off here, because at this point Jules began to explain. He explained very rapidly and at considerable length. The fact that neither of his hearers understood a word of what he was saying appeared not to have impressed itself upon him. Or, if he gave a thought to it, he dismissed the objection as trifling. He wanted to explain, and he explained. Words rushed from him like water from a geyser. Sounds which you felt you would have been able to put a meaning to if he had detached them from the main body and repeated them slowly, went swirling down the stream and were lost for ever.

"Stop him!" said Sally firmly.

The red-haired young man looked as a native of Johnstown might have looked on being requested to stop that city's celebrated flood.

"Stop him?"

"Yes. Blow a whistle or something."

Out of the depths of the young man's memory there swam to the surface a single word—a word which he must have heard somewhere or read somewhere: a legacy, perhaps, from long-vanished school-days.

"*Zut!*" he barked, and instantaneously Jules

turned himself off at the main. There was a moment of dazed silence, such as might occur in a boiler-factory if the works suddenly shut down.

"Quick! Now you've got him!" cried Sally. "Ask him what he's talking about—if he knows, which I doubt—and tell him to speak slowly. Then we shall get somewhere."

The young man nodded intelligently. The advice was good.

"*Lentement,*" he said. "*Parlez lentement. Pas si*—you know what I mean—*pas si* dashed *vite*!"

"Ah-a-ah!" cried Jules, catching the idea on the fly "*Lentement. Ah, oui, lentement.*"

There followed a lengthy conversation which, while conveying nothing to Sally, seemed intelligible to the red-haired linguist.

"The silly ass," he was able to announce some few minutes later, "has made a bloomer. Apparently he was half asleep when we came in, and he shoved us into the lift and slammed the door, forgetting that he had left the keys on the desk."

"I see," said Sally. "So we're shut in?"

"I'm afraid so. I wish to goodness," said the young man, "I knew French well. I'd curse him with some vim and not a little animation, the chump! I wonder what 'blighter' is in French," he said, meditating.

"It's the merest suggestion," said Sally, "but oughtn't we to *do* something?"

"What could we do?"

"Well, for one thing, we might all utter a loud yell. It would scare most of the people in the hotel to death, but there might be a survivor or two who would come and investigate and let us out."

"What a ripping idea!" said the young man, impressed.

"I'm glad you like it. Now tell him the main outline, or he'll think we've gone mad."

The young man searched for words, and eventually found some which expressed his meaning lamely but well enough to cause Jules to nod in a depressed sort of way.

"Fine!" said Sally. "Now, all together at the word 'three.' One—two—Oh, poor darling!" she broke off. "Look at him!"

In the far corner of the lift, the emotional Jules was sobbing silently into the bunch of cotton-waste which served him in the office of a pocket-handkerchief. His broken-hearted gulps echoed hollowly down the shaft.

## V

In these days of cheap books of instruction on every subject under the sun, we most of us know how to behave in the majority of life's little crises. We have only ourselves to blame if we are ignorant of what to do before the doctor comes, of how to make a dainty winter coat for baby out of father's last year's undervest and of the best method of coping with the cold mutton. But nobody yet has come forward with practical advice as to the correct method of behaviour to be adopted when a lift-attendant starts crying. And Sally and her companion, as a consequence, for a few moments merely stared at each other helplessly.

"Poor darling!" said Sally, finding speech. "Ask him what's the matter."

The young man looked at her doubtfully.

"You know," he said, "I don't enjoy chatting with this blighter. I mean to say, it's a bit of an effort. I don't know why it is, but talking French always makes me feel as if my nose were coming off. Couldn't we just leave him to have his cry out by himself?"

"The idea!" said Sally. "Have you no heart? Are you one of those fiends in human shape?"

He turned reluctantly to Jules, and paused to overhaul his vocabulary.

"You ought to be thankful for this chance," said Sally. "It's the only real way of learning French, and you're getting a lesson for nothing. What did he say then?"

"Something about losing something, it seemed to me. I thought I caught the word *perdu*."

"But that means a partridge, doesn't it? I'm sure I've seen it on the menus."

"Would he talk about partridges at a time like this?"

"He might. The French are extraordinary people."

"Well, I'll have another go at him. But he's a difficult chap to chat with. If you give him the least encouragement, he sort of goes off like a rocket." He addressed another question to the sufferer, and listened attentively to the voluble reply.

"Oh!" he said with sudden enlightenment. "Your *job?*" He turned to Sally. "I got it that time," he said. "The trouble is, he says, that if we yell and rouse the house, we'll get out all right, but he will lose his job, because this is the second time this sort of thing has happened, and they warned him last time that once more would mean the push."

"Then we mustn't dream of yelling," said Sally, decidedly.

"It means a pretty long wait, you know. As far as I can gather, there's just a chance of somebody else coming in later, in which case he could let us out. But it's doubtful. He rather thinks that everybody has gone to roost."

"Well, we must try it. I wouldn't think of losing the poor man his job. Tell him to take the car down to the ground-floor, and then we'll just sit and amuse ourselves till something happens. We've lots to talk about. We can tell each other the story of our lives."

Jules, cheered by his victims' kindly forbearance, lowered the car to the ground floor, where, after a glance of infinite longing at the keys on the distant desk, the sort of glance which Moses must have cast at the Promised Land from the summit of Mount Pisgah, he sagged down in a heap and resumed his slumbers. Sally settled herself as comfortably as possible in her corner.

"You'd better smoke," she said. "It will be something to do."

"Thanks awfully."

"And now," said Sally, "tell me why Scrymgeour fired you."

Little by little, under the stimulating influence of this nocturnal adventure, the red-haired young man had lost that shy confusion which had rendered him so ill at ease when he had encountered Sally in the hall of the hotel; but at this question embarrassment gripped him once more. Another of those comprehensive blushes of his raced over his face, and he stammered.

"I say, I'm . . . I'm fearfully sorry about that, you know!"

"About Scrymgeour?"

"You know what I mean. I mean, about making such a most ghastly ass of myself this morning. I . . . I never dreamed you understood English."

"Why, I didn't object. I thought you were very nice and complimentary. Of course, I don't know how many girls you've seen in your life, but . . ."

"No, I say, don't! It makes me feel such a chump."

"And I'm sorry about my mouth. It *is* wide. But I know you're a fair-minded man and realize that it isn't my fault."

"Don rub it in," pleaded the young man. "As a matter of fact, if you want to know, I think your mouth is absolutely perfect. I think," he proceeded, a little feverishly, "that you are the most indescribable topper that ever . . ."

"You were going to tell me about Scrymgeour," said Sally.

The young man blinked as if he had collided with some hard object while sleep-walking. Eloquence had carried him away.

"Scrymgeour?" he said. "Oh, that would bore you."

"Don't be silly," said Sally reprovingly. "Can't you realize that we're practically castaways on a desert island? There's nothing to do till to-morrow but talk about ourselves. I want to hear all about you, and then I'll tell you all about myself. If you feel diffident about starting the revelations, I'll begin. Better start with names. Mine is Sally Nicholas. What's yours?"

"Mine? Oh, ah, yes, I see what you mean."

"I thought you would. I put it as clearly as I could. Well, what is it?"

"Kemp."

"And the first name?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," said the young man, "I've always rather hushed up my first name, because when I was christened they worked a low-down trick on me!"

"You can't shock *me*," said Sally, encouragingly. "My father's name was Ezekiel, and I've a brother who was christened Fillmore."

Mr. Kemp brightened. "Well, mine isn't as bad as that . . . No, I don't mean that," he broke off apologetically. "Both awfully jolly names, of course . . ."

"Get on," said Sally.

"Well, they called me Lancelot. And, of course, the thing is that I don't look like a Lancelot and never shall. My pals," he added in a more cheerful strain, "call me Ginger."

"I don't blame them," said Sally.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind thinking of me as Ginger?" suggested the young man diffidently.

"Certainly."

"That's awfully good of you."

"Not at all."

Jules stirred in his sleep and grunted. No other sound came to disturb the stillness of the night.

"You were going to tell me about yourself?" said Mr. Lancelot (Ginger) Kemp.

"I'm going to tell you *all* about myself," said Sally, "not because I think it will interest you . . ."

"Oh, it will!"

"Not, I say, because I think it will interest you . . ."

" It will, really."

Sally looked at him coldly.

" Is this a duet? " she inquired, " or have I the floor?"

" I'm awfully sorry."

"Not, I repeat for the third time, because I think it will interest you, but because if I do you won't have any excuse for not telling me your life-history, and you wouldn't believe how inquisitive I am. Well, in the first place, I live in America. I'm over here on a holiday. And it's the first real holiday I've had in three years—since I left home, in fact." Sally paused. " I ran away from home," she said.

" Good egg! " said Ginger Kemp.

" I beg your pardon? "

" I mean, quite right. I bet you were quite right."

" When I say home," Sally went on, " it was only a sort of imitation home, you know. One of those just-as-good homes which are never as satisfactory as the real kind. My father and mother both died a good many years ago. My brother and I were dumped down on the reluctant doorstep of an uncle."

" Uncles," said Ginger Kemp, feelingly, " are the devil. I've got an . . . but I'm interrupting you."

" My uncle was our trustee. He had control of all my brother's money and mine till I was twenty-one. My brother was to get his when he was twenty-five. My poor father trusted him blindly, and what do you think happened? "

" Good Lord! The blighter embezzled the lot? "

" No, not a cent. Wasn't it extraordinary! Have you ever heard of a blindly trusted uncle who was perfectly honest? Well, mine was. But the trouble was

that, while an excellent man to have looking after one's money, he wasn't a very lovable character. He was very hard. Hard! He was as hard as—well, nearly as hard as this seat. He hated poor Fill . . ."

"Phil?"

"I broke it to you just now that my brother's name was Fillmore."

"Oh, your brother. Oh, ah, yes."

"He was always picking on poor Fill. And I'm bound to say that Fill rather laid himself out as what you might call a pickee. He was always getting into trouble. One day, about three years ago, he was expelled from Harvard, and my uncle vowed he would have nothing more to do with him. So I said, if Fill left, I would leave. And, as this seemed to be my uncle's idea of a large evening, no objection was raised, and Fill and I departed. We went to New York, and there we've been ever since. About six month's ago Fill passed the twenty-five mark and collected his money, and last month I marched past the given point and got mine. So it all ends happily, you see. Now tell me about yourself."

"But, I say, you know, dash it, you've skipped a lot. I mean to say, you must have had an awful time in New York, didn't you? How on earth did you get along?"

"Oh, we found work. My brother tried one or two things, and finally became an assistant stage-manager with some theatre people. The only thing I could do, having been raised in enervating luxury, was ball-room dancing, so I ball-room danced. I got a job at a place in Broadway called 'The Flower Garden' as what is humorously called an 'instructress,' as if

anybody could 'instruct' the men who came there. One was lucky if one saved one's life and wasn't quashed to death."

"How perfectly foul!"

"Oh, I don't know. It was rather fun for a while. Still," said Sally, meditatively, "I'm not saying I could have held out much longer: I was beginning to give. I suppose I've been trampled underfoot by more fat men than any other girl of my age in America. I don't know why it was, but every man who came in who was a bit overweight seemed to make for me by instinct. That's why I like to sit on the sands here and watch these Frenchmen bathing. It's just heavenly to lie back and watch a two hundred and fifty pound man coming along and feel that he isn't going to dance with me."

"But, I say! How absolutely rotten it must have been for you!"

"Well, I'll tell you one thing. It's going to make me a very domesticated wife one of these days. You won't find *me* gadding about in gilded jazz-palaces! For me, a little place in the country somewhere, with my knitting and an Elsie book, and bed at half-past-nine! And now tell me the story of *your* life. And make it long because I'm perfectly certain there's going to be no relief-expedition. I'm sure the last dweller under this roof came in years ago. We shall be here till morning."

"I really think we had better shout, you know."

"And lose Jules his job? Never!"

"Well, of course, I'm sorry for poor old Jules' troubles, but I hate to think of you having to . . ."

"Now get on with the story," said Sally.

## VI

Ginger Kemp exhibited some of the symptoms of a young bridegroom called upon at a wedding-breakfast to respond to the toast. He moved his feet restlessly and twisted his fingers.

"I hate talking about myself, you know," he said.

"So I supposed," said Sally. "That's why I gave you my autobiography first, to give you no chance of backing out. Don't be such a shrinking violet. We're all shipwrecked mariners here. I am intensely interested in your narrative. And, even if I wasn't, I'd much rather listen to it than to Jules' snoring."

"He *is* snoring a bit, what? Does it annoy you? Shall I stir him?"

"You seem to have an extraordinary brutal streak in your nature," said Sally. "You appear to think of nothing else but schemes for harrassing poor Jules. Leave him alone for a second, and start telling me about yourself."

"Where shall I start?"

"Well, not with your childhood, I think. We'll skip that."

"Well . . ." Ginger Kemp knitted his brow, searching for a dramatic opening. "Well, I'm more or less what you might call an orphan, like you. I mean to say, both my people are dead and all that sort of thing."

"Thanks for explaining. That has made it quite clear."

"I can't remember my mother. My father died when I was in my last year at Cambridge. I'd been having a most awfully good time at the 'varsity,'" said Ginger, warming to his theme. "Not thick, you

know, but good. I'd got my rugger and boxing blues and I'd just been picked for scrum-half for England against the North in the first trial match, and between ourselves it really did look as if I was more or less of a snip for my international."

Sally gazed at him wide eyed.

"Is that good or bad?" she asked.

"Eh?"

"Are you reciting a catalogue of your crimes, or do you expect me to get up and cheer? What is a rugger blue, to start with?"

"Well, it's . . . it's a rugger blue, you know."

"Oh, I see," said Sally. "You mean a rugger blue."

"I mean to say, I played rugger—footer—that's to say, football — Rugby football — for Cambridge, against Oxford. I was scrum-half."

"And what is a scrum-half?" asked Sally, patiently. "Yes, I know you're going to say it's a scrum-half, but can't you make it easier?"

"The scrum-half," said Ginger, "is the half who works the scrum. He slings the pill out to the fly-half, who starts the three-quarters going. I don't know if you understand?"

"I don't."

"It's dashed hard to explain," said Ginger Kemp, unhappily. "I mean, I don't think I've ever met anyone before who didn't know what a scrum-half was."

"Well, I can see that it has something to do with football, so we'll leave it at that. I suppose it's something like our quarter-back. And what's an international?"

"It's called getting your international when you

play for England, you know. England plays Wales, France, Ireland, and Scotland. If it hadn't been for the smash, I think I should have played for England against Wales."

"I see at last. What you're trying to tell me is that you were very good at football."

Ginger Kemp blushed warmly.

"Oh, I don't say that. England was pretty short of scrum-halves that year."

"What a horrible thing to happen to a country! Still, you were likely to be picked on the All-England team when the smash came? What was the smash?"

"Well, it turned out that the poor old pater hadn't left a penny. I never understood the process exactly, but I'd always supposed that we were pretty well off; and then it turned out that I hadn't anything at all. I'm bound to say it was a bit of a jar. I had to come down from Cambridge and go to work in my uncle's office. Of course, I made an absolute hash of it."

"Why, of course?"

"Well, I'm not a very clever sort of chap, you see. I somehow didn't seem able to grasp the workings. After about a year, my uncle, getting a bit fed, hoofed me out and got me a mastership at a school, and I made a hash of that. He got me one or two other jobs, and I made a hash of those."

"You certainly do seem to be one of our most prominent young hashers!" gasped Sally.

"I am," said Ginger, modestly.

There was a silence.

"And what about Scrymgeour?" Sally asked.

"That was the last of the jobs," said Ginger. "Scrymgeour is a pompous old ass who thinks he's going to be Prime Minister some day. He's a big bug

at the Bar and has just got into Parliament. My cousin used to devil for him. That's how I got mixed up with the blighter."

"Your cousin used . . . ? I wish you would talk English."

"That was my cousin who was with me on the beach this morning."

"And what did you say he used to do for Mr. Scrymgeour?"

"Oh, it's called devilling. My cousin's at the Bar, too—one of our rising nibs, as a matter of fact . . ."

"I thought he was a lawyer of some kind."

"He's got a long way beyond it now, but when he started he used to devil for Scrymgeour—assist him, don't you know. His name's Carmyle, you know. Perhaps you've heard of him? He's rather a prominent johnny in his way. Bruce Carmyle, you know."

"I haven't."

"Well, he got me this job of secretary to Scrymgeour."

"And why did Mr. Scrymgeour fire you?"

Ginger Kemp's face darkened. He frowned. Sally, watching him, felt that she had been right when she had guessed that he had a temper. She liked him none the worse for it. Mild men did not appeal to her.

"I don't know if you're fond of dogs?" said Ginger.

"I used to be before this morning," said Sally. "And I suppose I shall be again in time. For the moment I've had what you might call rather a surfeit of dogs. But aren't you straying from the point? I asked you why Mr. Scrymgeour dismissed you."

"I'm telling you."

"I'm glad of that. I didn't know."

"The old brute," said Ginger, frowning again, "has a dog. A very jolly little spaniel. Great pal of mine. And Scrymgeour is the sort of fool who oughtn't to be allowed to own a dog. He's one of those asses who isn't fit to own a dog. As a matter of fact, of all the blighted, pompous, bullying, shrivelled-souled old devils . . ."

"One moment," said Sally. "I'm getting an impression that you don't like Mr. Scrymgeour. Am I right?"

"Yes!"

"I thought so. Womanly intuition! Go on."

"He used to insist on the poor animal doing tricks. I hate seeing a dog do tricks. Dogs loathe it, you know. They're frightfully sensitive. Well, Scrymgeour used to make this spaniel of his do tricks—fool-things that no self-respecting dogs would do: and eventually poor old Billy got fed up and jibbed. He was too polite to bite, but he sort of shook his head and crawled under a chair. You'd have thought anyone would have let it go at that, but would old Scrymgeour? Not a bit of it! Of all the poisonous . . ."

"Yes, I know. Go on."

"Well, the thing ended in the blighter hauling him out from under the chair and getting more and more shirty, until finally he laid into him with a stick. That is to say," said Ginger, coldly accurate, "he *started* laying into him with a stick." He brooded for a moment with knit brows. "A spaniel, mind you! Can you imagine anyone beating a spaniel? It's like hitting a little girl. Well, he's

a fairly oldish man, you know, and that hampered me a bit: but I got hold of the stick and broke it into about eleven pieces, and by great good luck it was a stick he happened to value rather highly. It had a gold knob and had been presented to him by his constituents or something. I minced it up a goodish bit, and then I told him a fair amount about himself. And then—well, after that he shot me out, and I came here."

Sally did not speak for a moment.

"You were quite right," she said at last, in a sober voice that had nothing in it of her customary flippancy. She paused again. "And what are you going to do now?" she said.

"I don't know."

"You'll get something?"

"Oh, yes, I shall get something, I suppose. The family will be pretty sick, of course."

"For goodness' sake! Why do you bother about the family?" Sally burst out. She could not reconcile this young man's flabby dependence on his family with the enterprise and vigour which he had shown in his dealings with the unspeakable Scrymgeour. Of course, he had been brought up to look on himself as a rich man's son and appeared to have drifted as such young men are wont to do; but even so . . . "The whole trouble with you," she said, embarking on a subject on which she held strong views, "is that . . ."

Her harangue was interrupted by what—at the Normandie, at one o'clock in the morning—practically amounted to a miracle. The front door of the hotel opened, and there entered a young man in evening dress. Such persons were sufficiently rare at the

Normandie, which catered principally for the staid and middle-aged, and this youth's presence was due, if one must pause to explain it, to the fact that, in the middle of his stay at Roville, a disastrous evening at the Casino had so diminished his funds that he had been obliged to make a hurried shift from the Hotel Splendide to the humbler Normandie. His late appearance to-night was caused by the fact that he had been attending a dance at the Splendide, principally in the hope of finding there some kind-hearted friend of his prosperity from whom he might borrow.

A rapid-fire dialogue having taken place between Jules and the newcomer, the keys were handed through the cage, the door opened and the lift was set once more in motion. And a few minutes later, Sally, suddenly aware of an overpowering sleepiness, had switched off her light and jumped into bed. Her last waking thought was a regret that she had not been able to speak at length to Mr. Ginger Kemp on the subject of enterprise, and resolve that the address should be delivered at the earliest opportunity.