

Korpusová část LEFNAC

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There had been a war fought and won and the great city of the conquering people was crossed with triumphal arches and vivid with thrown flowers of white, red, and rose. All through the long spring days the returning soldiers marched up the chief highway behind the strump of drums and the joyous,
5 resonant wind of the brasses, while merchants and clerks left their bickerings and figurings and, crowding to the windows, turned their white-bunched faces gravely upon the passing battalions.

Never had there been such splendor in the great city, for the victorious war had brought plenty in its train, and the merchants had flocked thither from the South
10 and West with their households to taste of all the luscious feasts and witness the lavish entertainments prepared—and to buy for their women furs against the next winter and bags of golden mesh and varicolored slippers of silk and silver and rose satin and cloth of gold.

So gaily and noisily were the peace and prosperity impending hymned by the
15 scribes and poets of the conquering people that more and more spenders had gathered from the provinces to drink the wine of excitement, and faster and faster did the merchants dispose of their trinkets and slippers until they sent up a mighty cry for more trinkets and more slippers in order that they might give in barter what was demanded of them. Some even of them flung up their hands
20 helplessly, shouting:

“Alas! I have no more slippers! and alas! I have no more trinkets! May heaven help me for I know not what I shall do!”

But no one listened to their great outcry, for the throngs were far too busy—day
by day, the foot-soldiers trod jauntily the highway and all exulted because the
25 young men returning were pure and brave, sound of tooth and pink of cheek,
and the young women of the land were virgins and comely both of face and of
figure.

So during all this time there were many adventures that happened in the great
city, and, of these, several—or perhaps one—are here set down.

30 I

At nine o'clock on the morning of the first of May, 1919, a young man spoke to
the room clerk at the Biltmore Hotel, asking if Mr. Philip Dean were registered
there, and if so, could he be connected with Mr. Dean's rooms. The inquirer was
dressed in a well-cut, shabby suit. He was small, slender, and darkly handsome;
35 his eyes were framed above with unusually long eyelashes and below with the
blue semicircle of ill health, this latter effect heightened by an unnatural glow
which colored his face like a low, incessant fever.

Mr. Dean was staying there. The young man was directed to a telephone at the
side.

40 After a second his connection was made; a sleepy voice hello'd from somewhere
above.

"Mr. Dean?"—this very eagerly—"it's Gordon, Phil. It's Gordon Sterrett. I'm
down-stairs. I heard you were in New York and I had a hunch you'd be here."
The sleepy voice became gradually enthusiastic. Well, how was Gordy, old boy!

45 Well, he certainly was surprised and tickled! Would Gordy come right up, for
Pete's sake!

A few minutes later Philip Dean, dressed in blue silk pajamas, opened his door
and the two young men greeted each other with a half-embarrassed exuberance.

They were both about twenty-four, Yale graduates of the year before the war; but there the resemblance stopped abruptly. Dean was blond, ruddy, and rugged under his thin pajamas. Everything about him radiated fitness and bodily comfort. He smiled frequently, showing large and prominent teeth.

“I was going to look you up,” he cried enthusiastically. “I’m taking a couple of weeks off. If you’ll sit down a sec I’ll be right with you. Going to take a shower.”

As he vanished into the bathroom his visitor’s dark eyes roved nervously around the room, resting for a moment on a great English travelling bag in the corner and on a family of thick silk shirts littered on the chairs amid impressive neckties and soft woollen socks.

Gordon rose and, picking up one of the shirts, gave it a minute examination.

It was of very heavy silk, yellow, with a pale blue stripe—and there were nearly a dozen of them. He stared involuntarily at his own shirt-cuffs—they were ragged and linty at the edges and soiled to a faint gray. Dropping the silk shirt, he held his coat-sleeves down and worked the frayed shirt-cuffs up till they were out of sight. Then he went to the mirror and looked at himself with listless, unhappy interest. His tie, of former glory, was faded and thumb-creased—it served no longer to hide the jagged buttonholes of his collar. He thought, quite without amusement, that only three years before he had received a scattering vote in the senior elections at college for being the best-dressed man in his class. Dean emerged from the bathroom polishing his body.

“Saw an old friend of yours last night,” he remarked. “Passed her in the lobby and couldn’t think of her name to save my neck. That girl you brought up to New Haven senior year.”

Gordon started.

“Edith Bradin? That whom you mean?”

- 75 “At’s the one. Damn good looking. She’s still sort of a pretty doll—you know what I mean: as if you touched her she’d smear.”
He surveyed his shining self complacently in the mirror, smiled faintly, exposing a section of teeth.
“She must be twenty-three anyway,” he continued.
- 80 “Twenty-two last month,” said Gordon absently.
“What? Oh, last month. Well, I imagine she’s down for the Gamma Psi dance. Did you know we’re having a Yale Gamma Psi dance to-night at Delmonico’s? You better come up, Gordy. Half of New Haven’ll probably be there. I can get you an invitation.”
- 85 Draping himself reluctantly in fresh underwear, Dean lit a cigarette and sat down by the open window, inspecting his calves and knees under the morning sunshine which poured into the room.