



# WESTWARD PASSAGE

BY  
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## CHAPTER I

### TUESDAY

RECLINING in her steamer chair, her pretty eyes fixed pensively on the blue horizon line just visible over the Atlanta's rail, Olivia was thinking of Harry. She was thinking that she had always known what Harry was like. She had know it for ten years. She had known it when she married him. It wasn't fair to blame him for it now. It was, indeed, just because Harry was like what he was that Olivia had fallen in love with him. For she *had* fallen in love with him. Whatever else might be charged against Olivia, she had fallen sincerely in love with both her husbands.

Yes, Olivia faced the fact honestly, incredible as it now seemed, she had fallen sincerely in love with Harry. Not, of course, at first sight, as she had with Nick. At first sight Olivia could remember thinking that Harry was — well — more fascinated than fascinating. He *had* been fascinated, however. That was strongly in his favour. The moment that he had met her at that dull Park Avenue dinner-party to which she had dragged Nick — Nick had always protested against the dull dinner-parties of his wife's Park Avenue friends — Harry's admiring interest in her had been flatteringly apparent. She had felt so despondent that evening, for

she had been quarrelling with Nick over household expenses all the way uptown in the conjugal taxi, and Harry's admiring interest had succeeded in making her feel attractive, amusing, even well-dressed again, in spite of her three-year-old, made-over, black satin evening gown and her shabby silver slippers, a little run-down at the heel.

The orchids that he had sent her the next morning had surprised her tremendously — too many bright lavender orchids. Laughing a little, Olivia had pinned them on the coat lapel of her threadbare blue suit and had glanced at herself in the mirror, and had thought that their florid exuberance made her look a trifle common and had wished that the eight orchids had been five gardenias. Nick, in the old days, had always sent gardenias, but only one, because he had never been able to afford any more. The sweet, penetrating perfume of a gardenia always recalled to Olivia the delirious rapture of the weeks of her secret engagement. Dispassionately pinning on Harry's orchids, Olivia had remembered just how her fingers had trembled and how her heart had faltered and fluttered — yes, her heart had actually physically faltered and fluttered — whenever she opened a tiny square florist's box and drew Nick's one gardenia from its protecting wrappings of pale green oiled paper. Ho-hum! She had been nineteen years old in the days of her secret engagement! And when she had met Harry, she had been twenty-nine and Nick had not sent her a gardenia for at least seven years.

Funny about life, reflected Olivia. Such trivial causes led to such important effects. If Nick had only continued to send her gardenias, Harry's orchids would

never have made the impression that they had. For they *had* made an impression. Even now, ten years later, reclining in her steamer chair, her pretty eyes fixed pensively on the blue horizon line just visible over the Atlanta's rail, Olivia could recall that impression very distinctly. She could see the reflection that had laughed back at her from her mirror — pretty and shabby and only twenty-nine — and she could remember the little thrill of excitement with which she had reflected that, though the brilliant orchids on the threadbare suit made her look a little like an erring stenographer, they also made her look young and gay and popular again, and her reckless sensation of worldly sophistication when she had resolved to forget, for an hour or two, that she was Nicholas Allen's indigent young wife and that she ought to stay at home and eat Hamburg steak with her eight-year-old daughter, and had opened the door of her Greenwich Village flat and had gone out to meet Harry for luncheon at Pierre's.

That luncheon! When she thought of it, Olivia laughed again, her eyes on the blue horizon line, just as she had laughed, ten years before, at the sight of the eight lavender orchids in the mirror of the Greenwich Village flat! Harry had been waiting for her under Pierre's awning, standing nervously beside the liveried doorman. He would not let the doorman open the door of her taxi. He had bounded to open it himself and he had ordered the kind of luncheon in advance that makes the head waiter precede you, bowing backward, to your corner table. It was all a little ridiculous, of course. Yet, before the luncheon was half over, Olivia was re-

flecting that she had not, at first sight, done justice to Harry. By the end of the luncheon, she had decided that he was really rather a dear. Not very exciting, certainly, but simple and timid and kindly, and only a little dull. By the end of the luncheon, Olivia had been inclined to be generous. For Harry's admiring interest had continued to be flattering. It had made Olivia remember that life is not over at twenty-nine.

Olivia stirred restlessly in the luxurious folds of her new mink coat, recrossed her slender ankles under her Scotch plaid rug, and leaned her head wearily on the little brown taffeta cushion on the back of her steamer chair. There was nothing like a man and his flattery, she reflected with a little pensive sigh, to make a woman remember that life is not over at whatever age she happened to be. Not that she had ever really gone in for philandering. Why hadn't she? — when her life with Nick had proved so unhappy and her life with Harry was proving so dull and she had come so increasingly to feel that she had never really lived and never really *would* live before she died. Olivia would be forty on her next birthday. She shivered when she thought of it. You couldn't laugh off forty. Forty was middle-aged.

The Atlanta was steaming steadily, on an even keel, over a turquoise sea. It had left Cherbourg harbour an hour before. Olivia's maid was unpacking Olivia's steamer trunk in the cabin. Half an hour earlier, she had established Olivia in the steamer chair, with seven farewell telegrams and two new English biographies and three French novels — *vient de paraître* — on her lap and the five gardenias sent by that amusing boy in the Paris embassy pinned to the lapel of her new mink coat.

Then Olivia had sent her down to fold her chiffon *négligée* on the pillows of her little brass bedstead and arrange her perfumes and bath salts in her white-tiled bathroom and converse with the steward on the distribution among the steerage of the votive offerings of hothouse fruit and Rumpelmayer candy that had been sent to Olivia on the steamer.

Olivia had not opened the books. She had glanced at the telegrams and had sniffed the gardenias and thought instantly of Nick and briefly of the boy in the embassy, who was obviously a darling but could not be a day over twenty-nine, and had wondered whom she might know among her fellow travellers on the Atlanta and had wished vaguely that she had a passenger list to look over, and then had settled down to think gloomy thoughts of the winter that lay before her with Harry in Chicago. Just like the ten winters that had preceded it, of course, except that this winter she *would* be forty and little Olivia was 'coming out,' and she would have to adjust herself to the fact that that trivial event placed her definitely in the older generation. No longer Olivia — but Olivia's mother. That was how her world would come gradually to think of her. That was how the amusing boys, in and out of embassies, would come gradually to think of her. The amusing boys with whom she had never really philandered, but who had sent her gardenias and asked her to dance, and had sometimes grown a little desperate and difficult over a teacup or a cocktail when Olivia had pointed out that they really must be sensible.

Childless women, Olivia reflected, slipped gracefully into middle age. There was no one particular awkward

moment when they climbed up on the shelf. Harry professed not to mind the shelf. Of course he was used to it. He had been on it, really, for years. From the day that he married Olivia, Harry had never *looked* at another woman. Harry was anticipating the début of little Olivia with step-paternal delight. The bond between Harry and his wife's daughter was a very close one.

Olivia sighed, recrossed her slender ankles under her Scotch plaid rug, and hoped against hope that something might happen to make this crossing amusing. It was a lovely late October day. The mellow afternoon sunshine sparkled on waves that looked only as large as ripples from the height of the promenade-deck. Olivia's fellow travellers had unpacked their luggage by this time and had read their telegrams. They were appearing on deck in groups of two and three, with new English biographies and French novels — *vient de paraître* — in hand. They were settling themselves on steamer chairs and looking over the rail and beginning to promenade. Olivia had seen three other new mink coats, and none of them as good as hers, and a man who looked as if he might prove to be rather delightful until he was joined by his cheerful wife and two inquisitive small sons; and another man who did not look as if he would prove to be delightful at all, but who had rather obviously and a trifle annoyingly thought Olivia would prove so. He had no wife and no small sons and he had all the earmarks of a nuisance. But Olivia had seen no one whom she knew as yet, and no one whose face was familiar from the rotogravure sections of the Sunday papers. Not Greta Garbo, nor Irving Berlin, nor Bobby Jones,

nor Mary Garden, nor Otto Kahn, nor even a travelling congressman of sufficient distinction to make his features familiar. Six boring days at sea stretched barrenly ahead of Olivia, a curtain-raiser to the boring winter that would follow them at home.

Was life *always* going to be boring, Olivia wondered, her eyes on the blue horizon line? Why had both her marriages turned out as they had? Failures. Or was failure too strong a term? Had not both her marriages turned out to be merely — marriage? Romance died. Glamour faded. That was what every woman knew. Nevertheless, when Olivia thought of the girl she had been twenty years ago, that soft, silly, wistful, idealistic young creature who had breathlessly, confidingly embarked on that secret engagement with Nick, she really felt defrauded. Life had owed that soft, silly, wistful, idealistic young creature more than she had ever been able to get out of it. Nineteen-year-old Olivia had deserved a better fate than that of turning into the kind of woman that Olivia, who saw life steadily and saw it whole, clearly recognized herself, at thirty-nine, to be.

She was a hard woman. No, she wasn't! She had fallen sincerely in love with both her husbands! Of course she had fallen sincerely out of love with them, too. But wasn't that because instead of being hard she had been soft? Too soft to accept and dismiss as unimportant the inevitable disillusion and adjustments and compromises of marriage, too soft to accept life on any other basis than the romantic one which had betrayed that soft, silly, wistful, idealistic young creature into that secret engagement with Nick.

Her parents had been right about that engagement.

It pained Olivia a little to admit that her parents had ever been right on any question on God's green earth. But they really *had* been right about that engagement. Nicholas Allen at twenty-five, budding novelist and impoverished New-Englander, eager, uncompromising, and inexperienced, had proved an impossible husband for Olivia Van Tyne. And Olivia Van Tyne, budding beauty and impoverished New-Yorker, eager, uncompromising, and inexperienced, had proved an impossible wife for Nicholas Allen.

The rightness of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Van Tyne of Gramercy Park, to be sure, had been founded on no sounder basis than the shifting sands of worldly wisdom. Victims of their own love marriage that had been consecrated in Trinity Church in the late eighties, uniting in impecunious matrimony the scions of two of the oldest families on Manhattan Island, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Van Tyne had adopted an attitude toward life that was distinctly practical. It was as if their every impulse toward romance had been satisfied by their own improvident union. From the three pretty daughters who had blessed their marriage they demanded better things. They recognized in them their most valuable pieces of property. From the days of her babyhood, Olivia had been bleakly familiar with this point of view. Until she had met Nick, indeed, it had never occurred to her to question it. Three pretty daughters, if rightly handled, can bring in a more remunerative return than three corner lots of downtown real estate. So Mr. Peter Van Tyne had argued and his wife had earnestly agreed with him.

The meagre capital of the Peter Van Tynes had been

boldly invested in Olivia, Ruth, and Diana. They had saved and skimped and lavished and expended in exactly the right directions to display their valuable pieces of property to the best possible advantage in the markets of the world. But Olivia had betrayed them. The prettiest of the three pretty Van Tynes had proved a very bad investment. At the end of her débutante winter, she had met Nicholas Allen at a studio tea on Tenth Street and had fallen sincerely in love with him before she had finished her second cup of chocolate.

Two months afterward, old Peter Van Tyne had sternly dismissed the eager, uncompromising, inexperienced young novelist from his library on Gramercy Park. But Olivia, heavily veiled, was waiting for him under Booth's statue in the centre of the square and had tearfully plighted her troth there, to the rumble of the Lexington Avenue street-cars and Nick's breathless vows of eternal fidelity. In six weeks' time the thrills of her secret engagement had culminated in a midnight elopement and a two-column news item on the front page of the *New York Times* — 'Olivia Van Tyne Defies Parents to Wed.'

It had all been very romantic, but old Peter Van Tyne had not felt the lure of that romance. Old Peter Van Tyne had felt exactly as if a trusted bank had failed him. Next spring, however, when Ruth married Hendriks Bleecker in Saint George's Church and moved out to Long Island to rule over an extensive estate at Oyster Bay, his confidence in daughters as objects of investment had been somewhat restored. Four years later, it was completely reestablished when Diana became the Princess Arezzo at a magnificent wedding ceremony in

Saint Patrick's Cathedral and sailed to Italy to adorn the first circles of Roman society as a lady-in-waiting to the Queen of Italy and the mother of three chocolate-eyed princelings.

By that time Olivia's sad fate had almost ceased to trouble him. He encouraged no confidences on the stormy vicissitudes of her life with Nick. Her moments of rapture, her hours of disillusion, were all one to him. Quite simply, he hated her queer husband and he ignored her little daughter, and he never darkened the door of her Greenwich Village flat. He had written Olivia philosophically off the books of life. Some securities, unfortunately, must be so dealt with. Six years later, when her marriage with Nick had crashed in the divorce court and she had married Harry Ottendorf, the only son of a Milwaukee brewer, then respectably established selling bonds in Chicago, old Peter Van Tyne had had the incredulous feeling that an investment which had long ceased to pay dividends had suddenly sent him a check for his accrued losses.

Not that an alliance with the Ottendorfs of Milwaukee could be regarded in Gramercy Park as a brilliant alliance. But Olivia was damaged goods — spotted and torn by the folly of her first mad marriage — and prohibition had closed the disgraceful doors of the Ottendorf brewery, and Harry had made a sound place for himself in the financial world of Chicago and could do for Olivia, on the income from gilt-edged securities which had no connection with anything so shameful as beer, quite as much as Hendriks Bleecker had ever been able to do for Ruth and much more than old Guido Arezzo had ever felt called upon to do for Diana.

In brief, old Peter Van Tyne liked Harry Ottendorf. And Harry Ottendorf sincerely respected old Peter Van Tyne. Harry's instinctive, humble respect for all of his wife's exalted New York connections had been a pleasant change for Olivia from Nick's contemptuous comment on a social scene that had merely struck him as annoying, uninteresting, and unimportant.

It was curious that Olivia, who had always disliked her father and disagreed with her mother and quarrelled with her two sisters, should have experienced that warm, clannish instinct to defend their peculiarities under the attack of Nick's contemptuous comment. Nick had frequently reminded her, in the heat of argument, that without a pang of compunction she had deserted them all for his arms. 'Out of the frying-pan into the fire!' Olivia had retorted. For God knew, with all their faults they were no more peculiar than Nick's mother! Nick's mother — grim, restrained daughter of New England! How Olivia had hated her! And how she had hated Olivia! No — not hated. Hate was too warm, too impulsive a name for any emotion that could animate the breast of Mrs. Seth Allen. How she had disliked and distrusted Olivia! How she had immediately and dispassionately disapproved of the soft, silly, wistful, idealistic young creature whose bright eyes and curly hair and willowy figure had trapped her only son into the bondage of a premature and ill-advised marriage!

Ah, well! Mrs. Seth Allen had not been Olivia's mother-in-law for ten years and she had been dead for three. Nevertheless, the evil that she had done lived after her. Olivia had always felt that if the ecstasy of

her first absurd honeymoon — the rapture of that walking trip with Nick through the Green Mountains — had not ended in the drastic disillusion of a three weeks' visit with Mrs. Seth Allen in her Vermont farmhouse, her marriage with Nick might have turned out quite differently. Mrs. Seth Allen's slim, angular figure, her straight, snow-white hair, and level, ice-green eyes, the delicate, thin-lipped contour of her sensitive New England features, together with the immaculate neatness of her black alpaca gown, the spotless austerity of her Vermont farmhouse, and the cold, uncompromising dignity of the granite hills that surrounded it, became instantly for Olivia, and remained for her down the years, a caricature of the qualities she liked least in Nick. 'Oh, Nick! That's Vermont coming out in you!' How often, in the throes of domestic discussion, she had said that! And Nick had invariably retorted...

Even now, after all the years, Olivia recrossed her slender ankles under the Scotch plaid rug and fluttered her small white chamois-gloved hands in a little involuntary gesture of irritation as she recalled the kind of thing that Nick had invariably retorted! Her slight, involuntary movement stirred the gardenias that were pinned to her coat lapel. Their sweet, penetrating perfume drifted momentarily across the salt sea breeze. Olivia instantly recalled the delirious rapture of the weeks of her secret engagement and felt her heart softening a trifle. In spite of the fiasco of their life together, she would never quite get over Nick. He had been an irascible, exasperating — but a very exciting — husband. And of course — extenuating fact — he had been a genius. Not that Olivia had suspected that extenuat-

ing fact ten years ago. Ten years ago no one had suspected it — except Mrs. Seth Allen. It was the first novel that he had written after his divorce from Olivia that had brought him instant recognition.

Olivia had not seen Nick since the day that they parted in her lawyer's office, but she knew a great deal about his life. She was always reading about him in the newspapers. Every other month or so there was a headline or a picture. If he wasn't being awarded the Pulitzer Prize, he was refusing an offer from Hollywood. If he wasn't declining a lectureship at Columbia, he was accepting an honorary degree from Yale. He seemed to be continually sailing for Europe, to visit John Galsworthy in England, or join Eugene O'Neill in Italy, or meet Ernest Hemingway in France. In *Vogue*, in *Vanity Fair*, in *Town and Country*, Olivia was constantly catching glimpses of his long, lean figure, of his amused and amusing twinkle, of his candid smile. He might be rallying Yvonne Printemps at Longchamps, or chatting with Lady Astor at Ascot, or laughing with Alice Longworth on the steps of the Chevy Chase Country Club. He seemed always to be succeeding in diverting these ladies. Sometimes he was merely evading the advances of the inquiring reporter who had boarded an ocean liner to ask him how it felt to have written the Book of the Month and what he thought about Prohibition and the Surtax on earned incomes, and whether he considered Edith Wharton or Willa Cather the Dean of American Letters. Olivia had read everything about him in the newspapers except one thing. She was always expecting to have to read that.

Why *hadn't* Nick married again? Olivia wondered,