CHAPTER ONE

Subway trains carry so many people, so many different people, to so many different places. And in a great city some of those very different places may happen to be located very strangely near each other.

But D. Randall MacRae was not thinking of that as he removed his panama and passed a soft handkerchief across his forehead for the third time in half an hour. He looked reflectively for a moment at the soil his motion had left on the white, letting the pungent underground wind run swift fingers through his damp hair, rumpling it.

He hated riding on the subway. He hated the deafening roar. He hated the repeated jerky stops. He hated the dank odor. Above all, he despised the people—the loose, cheap mixture of them: the gibbering, gesticulating Jews; the gabbling, garlic-smelling Italians; the dumb, ox-faced laborers; the flabby, white-faced businessmen; the loud-mouthed, loud-colored boys; the thin, anemic men; the fat men; the fatter, sloppy women; the squawking kids; the whole noisy, crowding, shuffling, hurrying, tired mass. The crowds varied in nature and type, according to the hour of day; but he disliked them all—perhaps because he did not know them. He did not know the things their loved ones knew about them. He thought nothing of the pathos, the humor, the love, contained in one hurtling car.

Very rarely it would happen that some slim and not un-

comely girl would be found among the insipid crowd, who could help to keep his eyes from taking in the sight of the rest. But even a pretty girl could not keep him from taking in the smell of cheap powder, and July sweat, and bad breaths. And on this particular evening, and on this particular car there happened to be no statuesque form so far as he could see, and he had looked carefully.

He cursed himself for not having brought something to read and began wearily to let his eyes wander again over the advertising cards which he had read numerous times, the long, gaudy row of them with their psychological gags and their high-toned illustrations. One in particular held his eye for a moment by its combination of simple honesty and suave logic. It seemed out of place up there.

The train screeched to a stop. He noticed the name of the station mechanically, half-heard the rattle and metallic clank of the turnstiles, noticed a few more push their way inside the door before it closed on one man's arm and another's foot, and then turned his eyes back to the posters.

He still believed that he had chosen the lesser of two evils. To drive a sports car in a milling herd of cars that seem to move for a brief moment and then lie still for three long moments; to sit impatiently behind the pulsing heart of a thing meant to leap and run into the wind, and never be able to give it rein for so much as a city block—this was to him an even greater strain than the cramped subway.

Ten hot minutes passed slowly in the swaying cattle car. The man next to him rose as the sound of the brakes went on again. MacRae shot him a contemptuous glance and remained seated. The car was full of such men, each one killing himself to get ahead of another, if only by inches.

It was his station also. When the train had stopped he

made for an exit. Most of the close-packed crowd charged the sluiceway at the same time. They were evidently all heading in his direction. A fat man with an unlighted cigar in his cheek began shoving him from the rear. A quick, back jab of his elbow, and MacRae smiled sardonically at the grunt that followed.

He noticed suddenly that a small elderly lady about four feet ahead of him was being crushed painfully by the pushing mob. He jerked back four men of varying sizes (but uniform tempers, judging from the expletives they used) and took her arm. Her eyes smiled her gratitude, but the words would not come at first. Spoken words require breath.

MacRae felt a little embarrassed. This was not the kind of thing he was given to doing. He did not relish it. It was distasteful. But there was something in his old Scottish blood that moved him involuntarily, and there was something in his training that made it the thing to do whether he cared to or not. They edged slowly along in the crowd. He thought he had better say something.

"Tough bunch!" he blurted out and looked at her hastily. At first sight he had noticed simply that she was short and dressed with quiet taste. Now he took in the glister of her lovely silver-gray hair and deeply set gray eyes and watched her lips as they spoke.

"A little." She smiled. "But I don't think they all mean to be rough. They're just careless."

He turned his eyes away from hers, from the look of veiled tragedy and patient suffering that did not leave them even when she smiled. He did not like that look. It made him feel helpless and foolish.

Together they climbed the crowded stairs to the street; men pushed past them with impatient and manifest contempt for their slowness. They were soon belched forth from the exit mouth and spilled down through the thick,

syruplike stream of humanity to a corner where three ways crossed. There they stopped at the curb as the traffic swept by, and he ventured to speak again, although he felt like dropping her arm and slipping off through the press unnoticed.

"Do you have far to go?"

"Not far, thank you, but a rather difficult trip, to that tent over there."

She nodded across the swarming intersection to a lot that was for sale at a cool quarter of a million—and so, for the present, remained vacant. On it there was a great gray heap of canvas that rose in a series of hilly peaks like a wind-swirled ridge of dark sand. While he was wondering what it could be, she was speaking again.

"I don't know how to thank you for your kindness, dear," she said quietly, using the last word as if she were addressing one of her intimate friends, and the whole sentence as if she expected him to leave her. It made Randall MacRae's embarrassment return.

"Why, I'll see you over. I'm going right past there."

He lost her reply in the sound of a traffic whistle and the screech of brakes. When the light changed, they set out across the intersection in the center of a moving mass.

As they approached the other side he began to comprehend more clearly the thing that was looming in front of them. A large sign stood at one of the numerous entrances to the tent. He could just make out the largest letters:

REVIVAL OF THE WORD OF GOD

and farther down, the name

Dr. A. Alfred Campbell

He began to smile almost unconsciously, but she was saying, "I'm afraid I'm a little late, and I would have been much later without your help. I can't tell you how grateful I am. I dread crossing these streets; I would sooner cross the Atlantic."

He mumbled something that was incoherent to himself as well as to her, but she continued, now in a tone of earnest invitation, "I wonder if you would come into the meeting. I'm sure you would enjoy it."

They were almost at one of the entrances now. Through the raised flap he could see the long rows of benches on the earth floor, which was covered with wood chips and shavings, and the wooden platform at the front. His smile returned, expanded, became a conscious smile.

"I'm sorry," he said; "I have another engagement."

"Well, you'll come tomorrow night then, won't you?" And without waiting for his answer, she asked, "And what is your name? I want to remember you. I have a boy about your age."

He thought the look of tragedy in her eyes deepened. They were misty an instant in spite of the smile on her lips.

"MacRae," he said, "Randall MacRae. And yours?"

"I'm Mrs. Wentworth. Perhaps you have heard of my husband. I lost him three years ago. He was a colonel in the Salvation Army." She spoke with a child-like naiveté. He had never heard the name, but said,

"Oh, yes, yes. So you are Mrs. Wentworth?"

She extended her hand gently. He took it quite as gently.

"Good-bye," he said with abrupt simplicity and began to walk away.

It was the hour of summer sunset. The sky was a flood of opalescent, shimmering light. Against it loomed the

black hulk of the stadium toward which he was heading. On the rim the lemon yellow sky flowed through the cut letters of the name EBBETS FIELD like pent water when floodgates are opened.

He had almost passed the end of the tent when pulsing chords from a grand piano shot into his soul and stuck there, quivering like barbed arrows. There was something different about the way those chords had been struck; and as the crowd began to sing he could hear that peculiar quality of the piano, sweet as the undertone of a deep bell, running, dancing through, and interweaving with the harmony.

If D. Randall MacRae loved anything deeply, that thing was music, music in all and in any of its forms. He paused. A group of men brushed past him on the sidewalk, and one voice was hoarsely prominent in their babble. He could hear a snatch of it. "Aw, that guy is never going to reach the third round!" MacRae glanced at his watch. Eight-fifteen. There was plenty of time before the main bout. He didn't care for the preliminaries anyhow.

With that thought he slipped into the tent by a side entrance and took a seat quickly. The people were seated as they sang. He began casually to take in his surroundings.

The tent was more massive than its outward appearance indicated. Three main poles supported it in the center, and a number of others were placed here and there. Above and in front of the speaker's desk hung a three-horn megaphone amplifier. A young man with sleek black hair and a mellow baritone voice led the singing. There was nothing but grace in his leadership. He had none of the cheerleader gyrations MacRae was accustomed to associate with such meetings as this: When he moved to the side of the desk, his voice faded into the congregational harmony. When he returned, the amplifiers would send it singing out above the rest, like an organ melody played on

an oboe stop above a muted-flute stop accompaniment. Behind him stood a curiously assorted choir, and at his left, the piano and three or four solo instruments. MacRae did not recognize the hymn they were singing. He knew only that the singing was good and the accompaniment wonderful. He could not see the pianist. A pole was directly in his line of vision. After his first cursory examination of the place he closed his eyes to listen. That was a habit of his.

It was over suddenly, and the young song leader's voice came clearly, but with a somewhat distorted loudness, through the amplifiers. He was speaking:

"We will be favored at this time with a piano solo by Miss Thurston."

MacRae opened his eyes in time to see a young woman rise from her seat at the piano. She was now a little in front of the pole, and what he saw almost made him lose what she was saying; but the voice of sweet naturalness forced him to listen while he looked. She said,

"I shall play for you my interpretation of that hymn we all know and love, 'Jesus, Lover of My Soul.' Please think of the words as I play."

She sat down, and MacRae moved four seats to the left. A few seats were still vacant at the rear on each side of the main central section.

There was a movement of tense silence in which she rubbed white fingers meditatively with a gossamer wisp of handkerchief; then she slowly placed it at the right of the keyboard. MacRae was totally unprepared for what followed. He had often carelessly sung the hymn in chapel at Princeton. He knew the words quite well.

A crash, that began somewhere in the middle clef and rumbled down to the bass, came from the piano like a clap of approaching thunder. The rumble was still dying away when from the instrument seemed to come the cry of a

soul in sore distress. "Jesus, lover of my soul," cried the piano. Then another crash of thunder joined the first, and the cry was repeated. Holbrook's "Refuge" was evidently furnishing the theme. But here music was being created. MacRae felt that as he listened. Here was creative genius. Above the singing call of the piano voices could be heard the continuous roar of a storm, the surge of cruel waters—waters that roll nearer—the breaking crash of surf against riven rocks, the violence of tempests that still are high. And always, always, sweetly and strong as the voice of faith, those two persistent, harmonic melodies. Then came the gradual slackening of violence and finally the sudden cessation of it altogether, as if the storm-racked vessel had been safely guided into an unexpected haven. Quiet, peaceful wash of water, and voices of stricken faith now turned to praise, now supplication, and back again to praise, ending in a shout of glory, a chord of triumph that would seem to rise to all eternity.

Miss Thurston removed her foot from the pedal. The last vibration ceased. She reached again for the handkerchief she had laid down.

There was no applause. There could be none. The audience shook itself slowly back to time and place, and the voice of the song leader announced the number of the next hymn.

This time the crowd rose to sing. As they did so, MacRae walked deliberately around the rear of the tent to the right center aisle and strode down that until he found a seat just four rows from the platform. For the first time in his life he was voluntarily sitting in a front seat at a religious meeting. He was directly below the pianist. The woman next to him extended her hymn book. He took a corner of it in his left hand but never looked at the hymn.

He was fascinated. This was something new under the sun. Here was a young woman handling a piano with the

skill of a concert artist, filling in with the most delightful symmetry all those multiple harmonies that virbrate above and below every sung chord or melody. He had never heard hymns so played before. She seemed to play as a bird flies, instinctively, although behind that apparent ease there were undoubtedly long hours, years of hours, of patient, continuous practice.

He watched her with increasing interest and noticed that she was singing as she played. The electric bulb behind her head cast a halo through brown hair that rippled in waves which rainy weather would only make the more wavy. As she sang the light glistened on her moist red lips. MacRae found his pulse beating faster, and the hand that held the book began to tremble. He was glad when the hymn was finished. He could sit down.

During the singing of the last stanza a rather tall, thin man with a crown of snow-white hair had ascended the platform steps and crossed to the small table on the side opposite the piano. MacRae had scarcely noticed him. His eyes were now permanently fastened on Miss Thurston.

While the offering was being taken he was torn between the necessity of watching her and of listening to her playing. He could not do both well. She was accompanying the baritone in an offertory solo, which was simply a hymn, but a hymn sung and played in a new way. He had never heard such accompaniment before. Her fingers seemed to drip melodic sweetness, exquisite as the oil of spikenard. It was soft, full of little hurried runs, and flights of pure fancy; full of deep, single notes held for a period—vibrant, rich; full of eloquent, silent pauses. It was the essence of distilled beauty. Never were two stanzas the same.

Her soul seemed one with the singer's. She anticipated, accompanied, followed his every note with the most fitting of sounds, or the most impressive stillness. Until the

song ended, his sense of hearing won the struggle over sight. He listened and thrilled to every vibrant chord.

However, there was more than music in this thrill. He knew that when it stopped and he found himself able once more to yield to his visual impressions. The girl was beautiful, with the beauty of naturalness. He began to tell himself so, and tried to analyze the particular touches which made the whole picture so delightfully pleasing.

He took the five minutes while other heads were bowed in prayer to make his analysis. Her head was bowed too. It was a lovely head, crowned with long hair, whose soft knot seemed to balance perfectly the smooth forehead, sensitive nose, and chin that curved into the slightest suggestion of the masculine prominence that speaks of determination. Her neck was bent with a most pleasing grace, and her shoulders had the solid firmness of muscle that could come only from healthful exercise. He was thinking how beautiful those shoulders would be in an evening gown. Now they were covered by a loose dress of a tan sand color made of a dreamily soft material. He did not know a thing about women's dresses, but he thought he had never seen one more becoming to the athletic form it draped and followed smoothly. He was just completing the examination, had reached the curved ankle and the petite shoe, when he heard "Amen" and felt conscious of the rustle of a crowd's back straightening, and heard the clearing of a crowd's throat.

Out of the corner of his eye he noticed the tall, thin man rise and approach the pulpit, but he was watching Miss Thurston as she quietly and interestedly scanned for an instant the audience that now almost filled the tent. Something of the love of people was in her look. She did not settle it on any individual. Her eyes crossed his once and passed on. He thrilled again curiously. But the noted Bible teacher who had drawn the crowd was speaking. He

was forced to listen, and he followed her eyes to the front of the platform.

Dr. Campbell's rich, perfectly modulated voice was saying something about the hymn he wished the people to sing before his address. MacRae was glad. He would hear her play again. They remained seated. He started to sing but stopped to listen and marvel at the grace and ease with which Miss Thurston interpreted the hymn. She did not look at the music after an initial glance. It was over too soon.

Then the deep, clear voice began again. Miss Thurston took a chair and opened her Bible to the passage which was to be the basis of the speaker's exposition. There was nothing ostentatious about her attitude of attentive eagerness. If she were affecting interest it was the best piece of acting MacRae had ever seen. But what would be the advantage in acting? The violinist sat and looked about the tent with a complacent, self-satisfied air. She was apparently wondering if there were any new people to admire the white smoothness of her skin and the delicate grace of her fingers. To MacRae the contrast was astonishing.

With an almost audible sigh of relief he turned back to Miss Thurston, and there he stayed for approximately half an hour. He had never before manifested such continuous attention on one subject, not even at the theater. Here he was studying a girl in a tan dress in bold relief against the black sheen of a grand piano. It was a study that constantly presented new angles of beauty as he studied it. He began to appreciate some of the truths he had half-learned in that course in masterpieces of art which he had taken the previous year as a snap elective. So complete was his absorption in the subject of his study that the exquisite speaking voice scarcely obtruded into his intelligence and seldom even into his consciousness. It was like the charm-

ing sound of a sonorous radio to one whose attention is gripped by the enchanting scenes in a book he is reading. He knew it was there. He heard it, and he did not hear it.

Only twice did he actually hear any of the words. At the beginning of the address, when the speaker announced his text, MacRae had been forced to look at him a moment. The man was transfigured. His face was rugged, nose and mouth were prominent. It was a sheet of old parchment upon which had been indelibly written vigorous strength, high emotion, quick, vivid imagination. The glasses he wore could not dim the flash of dark eyes. With the thin, sensitive hand of an artist, almost effeminate in its grace but overwhelmingly masculine in its strength, he pushed back a falling lock of white hair that was as thick and wavy as a youth's. He had stood for a second, eloquent in silence, dramatic. Then the parchment-like face was illumined with emotion, the right hand pointed to the Bible, and he spoke:

"There you have Paul's autobiography in one sentence. There you have his estimate of life: 'To me to live is Christ.'"

MacRae heard those words, heard them better than he knew. He would remember them. He did not know that at the time. He turned back to Miss Thurston. She was taking notes.

The only other interruption to his fascinating half-hour study did not come until near the close of the address. This man believed in a conclusion; he believed in driving home the truth about which he was speaking; in driving it straight home to the hearts of his hearers. If they heard nothing else, they were to hear this—and they did. MacRae heard him; he could not shut the words out; they were too full of force, too earnestly uttered; and they simply refused to be ignored. He listened.

"Imagine," Dr. Campbell was saying, "that you have in your hand a clean piece of paper and are writing on it for yourself—God help you! Take your pencil and write! Write the story of your life, honestly, faithfully, truly, in as brief a sentence as Paul wrote the story of his. Now, write:

" 'To me to live is—money.'

"Now be honest, in God's name. If you have played the hypocrite before, do not do it now. Write it down; not for man's eyes, but for God's. 'To me to live is money.' If that is true, put it down.

" 'To me to live is pleasure.'

" 'To me to live is fame.'

"Oh, fill them in for yourself!

"Now, you have it written, your life's story. You never looked it squarely in the face before. There it is, right in front of you, the self-evident truth, the inner meaning of all your life.

"Now finish it. Write under it—as Paul did—your estimate of life. Now, add Paul's estimate of death:

" 'To me to live is money; to die is'—I cannot write 'gain' after that! To die is loss. I shall leave it all. 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb; naked shall I return thither.'

" 'To me to live is pleasure; to die'—oh! do not talk to me about death! It is the last thing I want to think about. I want my pleasure, my laughter, this hollow crackling of thorns under a pot; 'tis all I have! Let me have it; but in God's name do not talk to me about death. Why, man, I do not like to walk down the street in the dark, because I think of death. I cannot write that.

" 'To me to live is fame—' Now, finish it. 'And to die'—no, I cannot. For if they put my name on a marble monument, directly it is erected, Nature, with mossy

fingers, will begin to pull it down. I cannot write that. To die is to perish; to be forgotten! What is fame when I am gone? I cannot write it.

"No, beloved, and you cannot write Paul's estimate of death after anything except Paul's estimate of life."

The voice went on for a moment or two with the pleading sincerity of a passionate lover of souls; but MacRae lost the rest. He had heard too much. He was uncomfortable. He suddenly realized that he had missed a good fight. He had five hundred on the Irishman. He was chagrined, disgruntled, angry with himself. A piece of music had led him to listen to this. This tommyrot! This religious nonsense! This fool asceticism! This ethical oratory! This effeminate mollycoddle, milksop stuff that your grandmother is always talking about! He was getting more angry. He was nervous. He wanted to get out.

He bent his head stiffly as the people bowed in the closing prayer. His eyes were at the piano.

When they rose to sing the last hymn, he slipped out and down the aisle. Outside the tent he paused to listen. It was still there, the pulsing music of the piano, the joyous accompaniment. That girl! He felt he would like to know her. He felt that he did know her. He wanted to tell her so. He would never do it, of course. He smiled to himself.

It was over. Through the door of the tent he watched her rise and pick up her belongings. The cornetist was talking to her. It made him feel funny. He wished he had his trumpet there. He could show that chap how to lip a horn. Awful the way he blared out most of the time, spoiling the perfect effect of her music. Her music! It was a part of her and he loved it.

The crowd was filtering toward the various exits. He turned to go.

Against the black night sky he noticed the vague outline

of a square tower and on each face there glowed in letters of red fire the single word:

BOND

He had often seen it before on his way to Ebbets Field. He had never noticed it before. Now he did, and again he smiled as he walked toward the subway. He shrugged his shoulders:

"What have bonds to do with me! I'll forget her tomorrow."