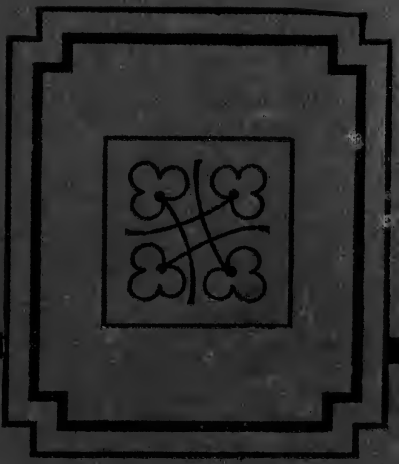
Another's Crime



ANOTHER'S CRIME

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FROM THE DIARY OF

INSPECTOR BYRNES

BY

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AUTHOR OF "A TRAGIC MYSTERY," "THE GREAT BANK ROBBERY," "AN AMERICAN PENMAN," "SECTION 558; OR, THE FATAL LETTER," ETC.

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED

104 & 106 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

Press W. L. Mershon & Co.,
Rahway, N. J.

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ANOTHER'S CRIME.

CHAPTER I.

THE NOLENS.

IF you could put on the cap of invisibility and sit for twenty-four hours in the private room of Inspector Byrnes at police headquarters, you would see many strange sights. Representatives of every grade of the community pass through those mysterious portals during the day. All sorts and conditions of men, from the depraved pickpocket to the cultured millionaire; all varieties of the daughters of Eve, from the poor vulgar trull to the refined and lovely queen of society. Here meet youth and age, virtue and vice, industry and idleness, wise and foolish, good and evil. Strange events are there brought to light; life-histories, fantastic, tragic, comic, pathetic, romantic; crimes startling or sordid; human passions are there unfolded of every species—love, hate, revenge, avarice, self-abnegation, ambition, and despair, which is the death of all passion, good or bad.

And what a gallery of faces follow one another, in endless succession, across the threshold—beautiful, hideous, sorrowful, joyful, contented, wretched, cultivated, degraded, spiritual, bestial. And all who come have some story to tell, some accusation to bring, some defense to oppose, some end to gain. Having said their say they disperse again—some to liberty, some to trial; some to death, some to victory; some to prisons, some to palaces. All the contrasts of human existence, all its lights and shadows, appear in the Inspector's room, and disappear again, while you look on in your cap of invisibility.

And there, at his desk, sits the Inspector, examining, weighing, deciding, investigating, advising, reproving, encouraging; cheerful or grave, as the case may be, even-tempered, firm, suave, stern, penetrating, impenetrable; the depository of all secrets, the revealer of none; the man who is never hurried, yet never behind-hand; never idle, yet never weary; always patient, and always prompt. No position under the municipal government requires more tact than his, more energy, more courage, more experience. He must be pliant, yet immovable; subtle, yet straightforward; keen, yet blunt. He must know all the frailties of human nature, and yet be not too cynical to comprehend its goodness; he must be an advocate, and at the same time a judge. In short, he must be a chief of New York detectives; and, whatever else his office may be, it is certainly no sinecure.

Of the countless dramas and episodes that come to his knowledge, many can not be told again ; and many, if told, would not be credited, so different from the strangeness of fiction is the strangeness of real life. On the other hand, not a few of these tales can be repeated without indiscretion, and, in all substantial respects, precisely as they actually came to pass. Such narratives have one advantage over the conceptions of the imagination, that they are a record of facts, not fancies, and carry the authority and impressiveness of fact. But they also labor under a disadvantage which, perhaps, more than balances the gain of reality ; for facts are stubborn, and accommodate themselves but awkwardly to the rules of artistic construction and symmetry. Like rocks in a New England farm, they are continually cropping up where they are least wanted. And yet, it will sometimes happen that nature so nearly accommodates herself to art that the story assumes a tolerable grace and proportion ; and such a one is contained in the pages that follow. But, although the sequence and character of the events has been adhered to, the names of the persons are changed ; for the affair took place but a short while since, and nearly all the actors in it are still alive, and several of them moving in the best society in New York.

* * * * * * * *

Mr. Bartemus Nolen was a representative of a good New York family, and was possessed of com-

fortable means ; by profession he was a lawyer. He was a member of the Episcopalian Church, and he married, at the outset of his career, a lady of the same persuasion, a woman of excellent education and gentle and benevolent disposition. The first twenty years of their married life passed happily and prosperously; two sons were born to them ; and a few years later a daughter, Pauline. Mr. Nolen achieved honor and eminence in his profession ; the boys did well in school and afterward at college, and the daughter gave promise of singular intelligence and beauty—a promise which was afterward fulfilled.

But at length the current of luck took a turn, and began to set against the honest lawyer. He was affected with a cataract in one of his eyes, which had not proceeded far when the other also showed signs of being affected ; this misfortune was a serious drawback to his practice, and finally compelled him to abandon it almost entirely. Of course, practice meant money, and the cessation from it diminution of income. There was still enough left, however, to live upon with comfort, if not luxuriously ; but unfortunately Mr. Nolen, being deprived of his customary mental employment, took to thinking of other things ; and one of the subjects of his meditation was the feasibility of getting larger returns from his invested property. Among his acquaintance were many men whose trade was finance, and Bartemus got in the habit of counselling with them upon financial matters. No

doubt they gave him the best advice at their disposal ; but when one begins to buy stocks advice is of little use ; and Mr. Nolen, after several ups and downs, came down with somewhat of a thump, to the extent of about a third part of his total possessions. At this juncture he proved his exceptional good sense and self-control ; for he never risked another dollar in speculation. Neither did he reveal the fact of his losses, which was at least prudent. But these virtues could not save him from being and feeling a good deal poorer than he was before. He owned the house lived in, and continued to live in it ; but he curtailed his expenses, and by strict economy contrived to render them less than his income. His sons would soon be through college, and would then, it was to be supposed, take care of themselves. It was for his daughter that he was saving, and he hoped to leave her at least a decent fortune after his death.

But other misfortunes were in store for him. His oldest son, Jerrold Nolen, had graduated from college, and came to New York to study medicine, living, meanwhile, at his father's house. He was a young fellow of ability and agreeable manners, and was popular among his fellows. His father was proud of him, and treated him with partiality. It soon became apparent that Jerrold was rather inclined to dissipation ; his sociable nature had its detrimental side. This was the more unfortunate, inasmuch as he had a tendency to heart disease, and

was of an excitable temperament. As this matter will be dwelt on hereafter, it is enough to say here that Jerrold died under tragic circumstances in the second year of his medical studies. His death, besides bringing bitter grief to his father and mother, led to legal proceedings against a person supposed to have been instrumental in compassing his destruction—proceedings which led to no good results, and involved a large expense. Mr. Nolen never recovered from the shock and disappointment of his eldest son's sudden end ; and in little more than a year afterwards the morning papers contained respectful but brief notices of his decease.

His will was admitted to probate ; it devised twenty thousand dollars to his son Percy Nolen when the latter should come of age; the remainder was settled upon Mrs. Nolen, with certain provisos in the event of Pauline's marrying with her mother's approval. Percy's bequest was intended to start him in business, he having shown a tendency to take up mining engineering as a pursuit. He too was an intelligent boy, and left college in good standing as to scholarship, but his character resembled Jerrold's in its lack of firmness and persistent energy ; while, unlike Jerrold, he was of a selfish disposition. After graduating and coming into possession of his patrimony, he announced his intention of postponing for a while his professional studies and seeing a little of metropolitan life. This made his mother anxious, remembering

the unhappy career of her older son, but she interpreted Percy's design in the manner most favorable to him, as simply a wish to become practically familiar with the ways and manners of good society.

Percy's original purposes may, indeed, have contemplated no more than that; but that was far from being the limit of what he actually did. His advances towards the best society were neither considerable nor prolonged. For a few months he went to dinners and receptions and danced at balls; but it soon became evident that he was getting intimate with a class of people who, by no stretch of courtesy, could be counted among the upper ten. These were chiefly young men who dressed well, had dash and assurance of manner, and, were commonly to be met with on fashionable thoroughfares, in the corridors and billiard-rooms of the best hotels, on base-ball grounds and race-tracks, and, towards the small hours of the night, at certain restaurants and other places of resort more remarkable for brilliance and liveliness than for respectability, in which the company ceased to be exclusively masculine, and was yet not improved by the alteration. Percy had his choice, and this was the class with which he chose more and more to associate. They were, as a class, not wealthy; nevertheless to be with them was not necessarily to be economical; neither did it involve regular habits or early hours. Before long Percy was convinced that the sort of life he was leading

was not compatible with making a home under his mother's roof ; so he took bachelor rooms on the west side of the city, and went to bed and got up at what o'clock it best pleased him. He did not keep away from home altogether ; he would drop in now and then, when nothing else was going on, sometimes to lunch, sometimes to dinner, sometimes to accompany his sister to the opera or theatre; but he had cut loose from his mother's apron-strings, and showed no present signs of meaning to come back to them. He was living a fast life, and not the best kind of fast life either.

One of the executors of Mr. Bartemus Nolen's will was Judge Odin Ketelle, a gentleman who had at one period been a partner of Nolen's, and had always remained on intimate and friendly terms with the family. He was a man of position and influence, and was quietly and steadily amassing a large fortune. Mrs. Nolen, in her anxiety about Percy, naturally turned to this friend for counsel ; and probably she could not have done better, if she were to do any thing. The judge heard her timid and fond complaints, in which she tried to shield the son whose misdeeds she was forced to expose. When she had finished, he sat with his hands folded on the table, and his eyes under their thick eyebrows fixed in thoughtful contemplation, as he had been wont to sit on the bench, when considering some point of law advanced by counsel.

"If a boy wants to be a fool, he mostly succeeds in his wish," he remarked after a while. "Percy

has a good deal of untamed blood in his composition, and he will probably work it off in his own fashion. His father gave him his money without conditions or restrictions, hoping that the sense of responsibility would sober him; but it will need more than that. He will spend it—that is, throw it into the gutter—and then we may look for the dawning of reason in him."

"I am sure he is a good boy," said his mother. "He is only full of life, and thoughtless."

"There is no reason to suppose him actually vicious," the judge replied, "and, that being the case, we may expect that the want of money will bring him to terms. I do not look to see his father's son commit any act that will bring him under the cognizance of the law; he is, I take it, incapable of any dishonesty; consequently, when he becomes bankrupt, he must do one of three things: either he will sit down and starve like a gentleman, or he will find some employment that will give him a living, or he will come back to you, like his prodigal prototype in Holy Writ."

"Percy starve! Oh, Judge!" faltered Mrs. Nolen.

"Do not be uneasy; Percy will not starve," returned he with a slight flavor of irony in his tone. "He is not naturally disposed to asceticism, nor has he the kind of pride that would prompt him rather to die than to betray signs of human weakness. On the other hand, he is clever and quick, and could easily pick up an honest livelihood in other ways than by

pursuing his project of mining, should he find it necessary to forego that. But my own anticipation is, my dear Mary, that he is too lazy, and that his habits of application, such as they were, have become too much broken up to make that course likely. What I do expect is that he will come back to you and ask you to provide for him."

"That is all I ask!" Mrs. Nolen exclaimed.

"I have no doubt of it, my dear," answered the Judge with a smile. "But in this connection there is something that I wish to impress upon you very strongly. Do not, as you value his ultimate welfare, not to speak of your own, give him any money without first consulting me. If you fail to observe this precaution, depend upon it you will get into trouble. I know what young men are, and how they regard their mothers — as just so much indulgent soft-heartedness to be taken advantage of! No, it isn't cynicism; it's the truth; and so you will find it. Now, what Percy needs is the conviction that there is no choice for him but to work. So long as he thinks that he can be supported without working he will remain idle. It may be hard for you to refuse him, but unless you do you will only work him an ill turn. You are not a rich woman by any means. Bartemus—it is as well you should know it now—lost a large part of his fortune by injudicious investments; and when you take out of that the sum secured to Pauline as her dower—a sum which, fortunately, neither you nor she can touch for three years to

come—you will have left barely enough to live comfortably on. As for Percy's twenty thousand, we may look upon that as being as good as gone ; it is only a question of time, and no very long time. Until it is gone it is no use attempting to influence him. So much for that ! But now, my dear Mary," continued the Judge, changing his tone, " I wish to speak to you on another matter of no small moment to you, to myself—and to Pauline ! "

CHAPTER II.

SUITORS.

MRS. NOLEN'S face, which had assumed an expression of pensive and brooding sadness, brightened at her daughter's name, and she looked up at the judge with an expectant air.

"Pauline is now eighteen years old," the latter observed. "As I look back, it seems impossible, but so it is. I remember her as an infant lying in your arms; and it does not seem to me that I have changed much since then. And yet, Pauline is a woman, and has more character and substance, too, than many a woman of twice her age. What miracles time works!"

"She is the best girl in the world!" said the mother tenderly.

"I am much inclined to agree with you," responded the judge.

"She is so strong, so clear-sighted, so faithful and upright," pursued Mrs. Nolen. "And yet there is nothing cold or unsympathetic about her. When her emotions are touched, she seems all fire and spirit. I am sure no sister ever loved her brother, nor any daughter her mother, as Pauline loves Percy and me."

"I can well believe it. And have you ever seen

signs in her of another sort of love—not that of the daughter or the sister?"

"Oh, I am afraid to think of that!" returned Mrs. Nolen, pressing her white hands nervously together. "It is so easy for a girl to make a mistake; and for her a mistake would be fatal!"

"I think she has good sense enough not to fall into any serious error," said the judge, "though I am no less persuaded that, if she loved a man who in himself was worthy of her, she would allow no considerations of merely selfish prudence to prevent her union with him. But I was going to ask you," he added, with a certain subdued anxiety in his deep-toned voice, "whether it has come to your knowledge—whether you have any reason to think that she has already met any one who—whom she would be likely to prefer to any one else?"

"I have not thought of it—it has not occurred to me!" said Mrs. Nolen, with an accent of apprehension, looking at the judge with wide-open eyes.

"It is hardly too soon to take such a possibility into consideration," he returned. "Pauline is mature for her age; and it is not too much to say that she is one of the most beautiful young women in New York. You take her a good deal into society: she can hardly fail to meet with admiration."

"Yes, yes, you are right," said the mother. "Now that you speak of it, I see that such a thing may happen. But she has spoken to me of no one; and I am sure she would have spoken, if—"

"Do not trust too much to that," he interposed. "A young girl, with a mind as healthy and pure as hers, does not readily ask herself if she be in love; she may become so before she is aware of it, and only the avowal of her lover will open her eyes. Till then, you cannot expect her to speak of it to you. And then, if she have made up her mind, it would be too late to speak."

"But would you advise me to question her? Might it not suggest to her something which she otherwise would not have thought of?"

"That is not improbable. But why not approach the matter from the other side? Is there no one among the young men who know her who have shown signs of any particular interest in her?"

"They all seem to admire her," said Mrs. Nolen. "But I can think of no one in particular—unless it be Percy's friend, Mr. Martin."

"Valentine Martin—the young Englishman?"

"Yes. Percy sometimes brings him here. But his being a friend of Percy makes a difference between him and the others."

"How so?"

"In the fact of his being here oftener. I mean, if it were not for that I should think his visits had some further significance."

"I am not altogether convinced that his being a friend of Percy would deprive his visits of significance," said the judge. "It is conceivable, at any rate, that he might have made a friend of Percy in order to facilitate his access to Pauline."

"He seemed a frank, straightforward young man, not one you would suspect of doing any thing underhand."

The judge laughed; a very low, pleasant laugh he had, which made those who heard it disposed at once to like him. "You are more like a nun, in your unsuspiciousness and unworldliness, than like a married woman who goes in New York society," said he. "Let me assure you, my dear, that a man in love is not to be held a criminal, or even a hypocrite, if he uses some strategy to get near the object of his affection. I should forgive Mr. Martin even if he went so far as to pretend a cordiality for Percy that he did not really feel, if so he might induce Percy to admit him to the intimacy of your household. No, if we are to take exceptions to him, it must be from another standpoint. What do you know about his personal history and his social standing in his own country?"

"I suppose it must be good," said Mrs. Nolen. "I think he said that his family owned a large estate in Cumberland."

"Is he the eldest son?"

"The next to the eldest, I believe."

"And what is his business in America?"

"I don't know. But a great many English people come here nowadays, you know. It is a part of their education."

"Yes; but some of them are pretty well educated before they get here," remarked the judge drily, "and occasionally they manage to teach us some-

thing before they leave. There is, in England, the same difference between an eldest son and the other sons that there is between a rich man and a pauper. By the law of primogeniture the estates, and generally the bulk of the money, goes to the first-born; the other boys get positions, if they can, in the army, the civil service, or the church. They, are seldom fitted to enter the learned professions; and it is not considered good form for a gentleman's son to go into trade. Of course the army and the church don't afford accommodation for all applicants; and the consequence is that every year a number of young Englishmen are thrown on the world, who by training and inclination are good for nothing but to be idle and ornamental, and who nevertheless have no means for honestly leading such a life. They form a class of gentleman adventurers. They are men of agreeable manners and culture, talk well, look well, are excellent at cards and billiards, and live no one knows how. Some of them come over here, for reasons known only to themselves; they are very pleasant acquaintances; but it is well not to trust them too far. They have no fixed place in the world, and no responsibility."

"You don't mean that Mr. Martin is—an adventurer?" demanded Mrs. Nolen, in a voice of faint consternation.

"So far as I know, he may be the best fellow in England. But I know nothing about him, one way or the other. How did Percy become acquainted with him?"

"He met him somewhere,—at some club, I imagine."

"That may be all right, or it may not. At all events, you will see that you should proceed with some circumspection. The rules that apply to our young men do not necessarily apply to foreigners. Mr. Martin may be much better educated, and have more polished and quiet manners, than nine out of ten of your American acquaintances; and yet it might be better that Pauline should marry the least attractive of the latter than Mr. Martin."

"I wish you would see him, and find out whether he is nice," said Mrs. Nolen, with anxious earnestness.

"I would willingly do so, but for one reason," the judge replied, "and that is that the peculiar circumstances might disqualify me from forming an unbiassed opinion."

"Oh, I am not afraid of that. My husband used to say that there could be no one more impartial and just than you."

"Even assuming that judgment of his to have been impartial, I should nevertheless be disqualified from presiding at a trial where, for instance, the prisoner was charged with the murder of some friend of my own."

"I do not understand. Mr. Martin has surely not murdered any one?"

"Bless me, no! I was only using an extreme illustration. But Mr. Martin might wish to obtain

something which I had set my own heart on possessing."

There was a manifest embarrassment in the judge's manner. Mrs. Nolen looked puzzled. She began to suspect there was something behind all this, but she could not divine what it was.

"I began life pretty early, as you know," continued he, after a pause. "Since the age of fourteen, I believe, I have supported myself. Measuring my existence by that standard, I might be called an old man. But though, in the matter of years, I am not exactly a boy, yet I am but forty-three years old, and you will admit, my dear, that men have been known to live a good deal longer than that."

"I am sure you will live to be twice forty-three," put in Mrs. Nolen kindly.

"Half that is all I would ask, if I might realize the happiness that I hope for," returned the judge, with a faint smile.

"And is this happiness any thing that I can help to insure you?"

"I can hardly say that. In fact, it is essential, in one way, that it should come, if it come at all, as freely and spontaneously as the sunshine from heaven. Nevertheless, I am under obligation to speak to you of my hopes, that you may appreciate my position and understand my conduct." He stopped, and the color mounted to his face. "I love Pauline," he said, a strong emotion vibrating

in his voice. "I hope to make her love me and to accept me for her husband."

"Oh, Judge!" exclaimed Mrs. Nolen, taken wholly by surprise. She looked at him intently for a few moments, and then the startled look in her face softened, and she began to smile. She left her chair, and, coming to where he sat, put a hand upon his shoulder; and as he looked up at her she bent down and kissed him upon the forehead. She was still smiling, but there were tears in her eyes.

"Do you think me absurd?" said the judge.

"I think you are right," was her reply. "At first I could not believe—I had always looked up to you as to a sort of elder brother—I could not imagine you as the husband of my little daughter—my own son-in-law. But I think you are right. Pauline is a little girl no longer; in almost every thing but years she is older than I; she is fitted to be the wife of a man even so much older than herself as you are. No one of her own age would suit her as well."

"Then you will not be against me?" he said, starting up.

"Indeed, I will not. All that I do shall be done for you." She put her hands in his, and he grasped them warmly. "It is more than half selfishness in me," she added. "It would give me some right to rely on you. I should not feel so lonely."

"However this may turn out, always know that you may rely on me," the judge returned, with

deep feeling. "Our friendship began long ago, Mary, and doesn't need any other tie to bind it. If Pauline, when the question is put before her, decides against me—and I am fully aware how easily that may be her verdict—I shall accept it like a man, and you will remember that, so far as I am concerned, it will involve not the slightest change in my devotion to you and yours. I shall leave no honorable means untried to win her; but, above all things, I desire to avoid forcing her inclination, either by any act of my own, or through you. That you should approve of my purpose is all I ask. Leave the rest to Providence, and to her."

"I understand," said Mrs. Nolen, "and, indeed, if I wished to help you, I should not do it by singing your praises to her. You being what you are, the best thing to do is to leave her to find you out for herself."

"If Mr. Martin be my rival," resumed the judge, let him have his chance, and defeat me if he can. If he be the better man, it will appear; and God forbid that I should make her my wife, knowing that she would have been happier with another. But if love go for any thing, I love her well, and in all my life she is the first and only woman I have loved."

"You might have rivals more dangerous than Mr. Martin," returned the mother, with another smile; and so the interview came to a close.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. CUTHBERT TUNSTALL.

EVENTS were shaping themselves for disaster; but, for the time being, they seemed to go smoothly enough.

Percy Nolen maintained his brilliant career, and attained a certain distinction among the persons with whom he associated. He was a big, handsome youth, with broad shoulders and sturdy limbs, a clever boxer, a good whip, a fair billiard player; his spirits were exuberant, and he had more mental resources and ideas than are vouchsafed to the generality of young gentlemen of his kind. Thus he assumed, to some extent, the position of a leader among them; and, as he was uniformly good-natured and yet not to be imposed upon, he was liked and not laughed at.

But his favorite companion and friend was Valentine Martin. The two men were nearly the same age, Martin being a little the elder, and were a good deal alike in size and personal appearance. Martin, being English, wore side-whiskers, and Percy, being American, wore a mustache. Martin was inclined to be fair, and Percy to be dark; but they might have been taken to be brothers.

The Englishman, however, was of a somewhat gloomier temperament than the American; more reticent, and more given to moods and inequalities of temper. He had brought with him several good letters of introduction, and had duly delivered them; but he had availed himself but sparingly of the social courtesies extended to him, seeming to prefer a less formal and regular life. He made no pretense of large wealth, but, on the other hand, he never seemed to be cramped for means, and no one could be found from whom he had borrowed money. If he were a trifle mysterious, nobody was concerned to fathom his mystery, for it was no one's interest to do so. Valentine Martin had not come to America to speculate, to organize a company, to raise capital, or to do any of those things that are apt to render engaging foreigners suspicious in our eyes. He had apparently come to amuse himself, and mind his own affairs; and after a time he was permitted to follow this innocent inclination. The upper ten, whom he neglected, ceased to take an active interest in him, and those with whom he associated relinquished the vain effort to persuade him to reveal his secret, and came to the sensible conclusion that there was probably no secret to reveal.

The acquaintance and subsequent friendship between Martin and Percy Nolen had sprung up spontaneously, without any formal introduction. They had tastes and ideas in common, and they mutually pleased one another. Martin's was per-

haps the stronger character, but Percy's was the more enterprising and lively; so that they were upon fairly even terms. One day the Englishman accepted an invitation to come and take afternoon tea at the Nolens'; he met Pauline on that occasion, and it was not afterwards necessary to urge him to repeat his visit. Pauline was interested in him as an Englishman, and after discussing his native country with him admitted him to a certain degree of friendship, partly on her brother's recommendation, partly on his own account. He seemed gloomy at times, and she was sorry for him, without knowing, or even caring to inquire, what made her so. At other times he conversed in a manner that interested her and stimulated her to talk in return; and, though Pauline was but a girl, she had a mind that was worth coming in contact with. The Englishman never made any direct demand upon her sympathies or emotions, and probably he gained rather than lost by this forbearance. When a woman has insight, she would rather exercise her intuitions than have things explained to her.

Matters went on in this manner for several months, and the year's vacation which Percy had allowed himself was more than up. He had as yet shown no sign of being bankrupt, unless a certain abstraction of manner at times, accompanied by a biting of his nails, and a drumming with his foot, might be construed as symptoms of approaching impecuniosity. But another affair, not connected

with finance, was going on at this period which, unless put an end to betimes, might result in trouble.

There was a young married woman in New York society named Mrs. Cuthbert Tunstall. Her husband, also young, had inherited from his father an immense business in coal. Cuthbert Tunstall was fond of activity, and he plunged into his coal with hearty good-will, intent upon creating a fortune twice as large as that which his father had left him. As a matter of course, and of necessity, he was absent all day at his office, and was often obliged to run down to the mines to oversee things there in person.

His wife was the daughter of an aristocratic Knickerbocker family ; she had been a reigning belle in her coming-out year, and the year following the match between her and Tunstall had been made. She liked her husband, because he was a good fellow, because he was in love with her, and because he was considered a big catch ; but she cared nothing for coal, and was jealous of his devotion to it. She wanted him to be devoted to her and to nobody else. She hated to think of him working—actually working—all day long. He came home to dinner, it was true ; but he was not fond of dining out, and when dinner was over, he was tired, and liked to stay quietly at home and go to bed at half-past ten. Such an existence as this was the next thing to unendurable to a woman like Sylvia Tunstall. Forty years hence, perhaps, this Darby-and-Joan kind of life might be practi-

cable ; but not now, in the flush of youth, variety, and curiosity ! She absolutely would not stand it !

Tunstall was a manly, straightforward, single-hearted fellow, and at first he did not comprehend his wife's attitude. He had homely ideas of married life, and the routine of social dissipation was without attractions for him. When at last he learnt how matters stood, he thought it over, and came to the conclusion that his wife had much reason on her side. She was young, good looking, and full of the wine of life, and it was only natural and proper in her to wish to see and to be seen. So he began by attempting to "go out" with her ; but he presently discovered that going to bed at two o'clock in the morning was not compatible with having breakfast at half-past seven. He then tried giving dinners twice a week and a reception once a month ; but Sylvia pointed out to him that the customs of good society demanded that they should accept invitations as well as give them : so that his second state bade fair to be even worse than his first. What was to be done ? He would not consent to give up his business ; on that point he was firm. Sylvia was equally convinced that it was impossible to give up society. For a time there threatened to be a deadlock.

Finally a compromise was effected. Sylvia had relations, and particular friends, who were in society, and of whose escort and countenance she could avail herself. Her husband could take her to places, and her relatives or friends could bring

her home again. By degrees it was found unnecessary to have him take her, and she both went and returned without him. His anticipations of domestic felicity were disappointed; but Sylvia was enjoying herself, and he always looked forward to a time when she would weary of gayety and return to him. He loved her as much as ever, and was proud of her social popularity; he had perfect faith in her truth and honor. He ate his dinner and went to bed alone, and when he rose in the morning he was careful not to awaken his wife. That was the style of the ménage.

But Cuthbert Tunstall was not a fool—a fact which his wife perhaps failed to fully appreciate. As long as her conduct was above reproach, according to the somewhat vague standards of society, he would not interfere with her pleasures; but he was not the man to permit the least step beyond this. And though he was naturally unsuspicious, and slow to wrath, any one who understood men would have known that it would be uncomfortable to arouse him. But Sylvia got the idea that she could do exactly as she pleased; and she did it.

One day, Tunstall got a hint from some precious friend of his—a very distant, indirect, ambiguous, and innocent hint, but a hint all the same. He appeared not to understand it, and passed it over without comment; but the repressed emotion which it aroused was so strong that he came near fainting where he stood.

He attended to his business the same as usual,

returned home at his customary hour, and sat down to his solitary dinner. His wife was upstairs, dressing. By and by she came down to say good-by to him for the evening, She was beautifully dressed, and was lovely to look upon. Cuthbert looked at her in silence.

"Good-night, dear," she said, drawing on her gloves. "I suppose you won't be up when I come home."

"Not if you come at your usual time."

"I wish you'd drop your horrid business, and come with me."

"I am more useful as I am. Do you know a gentleman by the name of Percy Nolen?"

"Percy Nolen? No—yes— I believe I do."

These were her words; but her face, and the tone of her voice, betrayed her; and they both knew it.

"He is an agreeable fellow, isn't he?" pursued the husband, quietly.

"I suppose he is like the rest; all men are alike to me—except you, of course, dear! But why do you ask?"

"Some one who knows him happened to mention him to-day. Well, and what is going on to-night?"

"Dine at Mrs. Murray's, and then the theatre."

"Won't you want something to eat when you get home?"

"Oh, no. Don't bother. I shan't be hungry."

"It might be better to order something to be ready for you here than to take supper at Del-

monico's," he said slowly, looking her in the eyes.

She turned away her eyes after a moment, ostensibly to pull up her cloak. "I had no idea of going to Delmonico's," she said, in a slightly strained voice.

"Of course not!" he repeated; and then he turned to his evening paper, and she went out, with a smile on her lips, and fear in her heart.

Her husband had given her warning, and he hoped against hope that it would be sufficient. He would not take the next step unless she compelled him to it; but he was resolved (and she partly felt it) that the next step would be final. How much he actually knew of her flirtation with Percy she could of course only conjecture. She had taken supper with him in a private room of a fashionable restaurant the night before. They had not been alone: there had also been present another young married woman; and a young man not married. But the two couples had not been in each other's way, they had rather helped each other out. It was certainly not an affair which Sylvia would have wished to have generally known—least of all to be suspected by her husband. Did he know about it? or had his questions been only the result of chance? She wished to believe the latter, but she could not. There had been something in the very quietness of his tone and manner that had appalled her. She had not thought that he had it in him to frighten her. Evidently she had been too careless—too thoughtless. After all, she did not seriously care for

Percy Nolen. It had been a mere flirtation for pastime. She had not supposed that her husband would care much, even if he knew. He had not, of late, betrayed any very passionate affection for her, If he loved her, why did he not accompany her on her social rounds ? It was ridiculous to say that he was obliged to attend to his business. They had plenty of money without any business. There was nothing, except his own obstinacy, to prevent him from retiring to-morrow and never going near his office again. But if he preferred his business to his wife, why could he not allow his wife her preferences ? It was unjust and tyrannical.

Nevertheless, if he was determined to be ugly about it of course there must be no scandal. She would tell Percy, the next time she saw him, that the acquaintance must cease. It was not worth while to run any risks on his account. Having made up her mind to this, she was more at ease.

After the second act at the theatre, Percy Nolen came into her box. She greeted him coldly, but he sat down beside her, and began to make various propositions. She repulsed him, but not very vigorously. At last she whispered, " You must really be more careful ! People are beginning to observe us. If any thing should happen, I would never forgive you ! "

" I will take every precaution, but—I love you ! " he replied in her ear. He had never said so much before, and she turned pale and gave him a look.

The curtain went up on the next act, showing how the hero, by a combination of circumstances, was arrested and taken to Police Headquarters.

CHAPTER IV.

NEEDS MUST.

JUDGE KETELLE'S prophecy was delayed; but it came true at last; and Mrs. Nolen did not keep her promise to him.

One morning Percy came to the house, and came up to his mother's boudoir, where she was sitting reading Mr. Shorthouse's romance of "John Inglesant." Mrs. Nolen was not given to reading fiction as a rule; but Mr. Shorthouse was understood to be a religious writer, and she enjoyed his book very much without entirely understanding it. Percy kissed her, and sat down in a chair opposite. After a little desultory conversation he said "Mother, I'm in a scrape!"

Her heart sank; she closed her book, and folded her hands upon it. "Oh, my son!" she said, falteringly.

"Well, it's nothing so very dreadful," he returned, forcing a smile. "I was up at Monmouth Park the other day, and lost a little money—well, it was a pretty good sum, for me. I'm not a Crœsus, you know, and a few thousand dollars makes a difference."

"Monmouth Park? What is that?"

"It's a track; they race horses there, you know."

"Percy, have you been betting on horse-races?"

"Mercy, mother, it's no crime! All the fellows do it. I should look queer if I didn't chip in with the rest! Only this time I happened to get in pretty deep; and as all the favorites were beaten I got badly left."

"Do you mean that you lost all the money you wagered?"

"Every cent of it; you never saw such a run of bad luck in your life. The trouble was, I made up my mind to win anyhow; so each time I lost I put it all on the next race, so as to get back what was gone, and more into the bargain. It was as good as certain that I wouldn't lose every race, you see. So when it came to the last I had a big pile on; and it was voted a sure thing. I believe it was the jockey's fault, after all. Anyhow, he lost the race by a short head; and if I hadn't had a return ticket I'd have been obliged to walk home."

"All your money gone! Why, my son, if you had invested it, you might have lived comfortably on the interest of it! And your father gave it to you to start you in your profession. What can you do?"

"Well, mother, I must do the best I can. I know it's all wrong, and I'm very sorry, and all that. But it's no use crying for spilt milk. I'm in a hole, and I've got to be helped out of it, somehow!"

"I will speak to Judge Ketelle, and see what—"

"Whatever you do, don't speak to Judge Ketelle!

He can do no good, and would be certain to do a lot of mischief. What business is it of Judge Ketelle's, anyway?"

"He was appointed executor under the will, and—"

"That is no concern of mine, mother. My interest in the will ceased when I got my patrimony. I have no further relations with the judge, nor he with me. He has no right to help me, even if he wanted to, which he doesn't."

"My son, he is the best friend I have, and whatever is for our good—"

"My dear mother, I tell you it won't do! I know what the judge would say, and after he had said it I would be no better off than I am now. I have some pride, and I don't want all the world to know that I'm a beggar. I shouldn't think you would, either."

"Percy, you know I wish nothing but your good, but—"

"The long and short of the matter is that unless I am to be disgraced I must have some money, and without any delay, too. I owe a few bills—they don't amount to much—and I must have a little to go on with. A thousand dollars would cover the whole thing. You can let me have it, can't you?"

"A thousand dollars! But after that, Percy? You will be wanting money all the time, and this cannot go on forever."

"It isn't going on forever. This is the first time

I have ever asked you for a cent, mother, and it shall be the last. Heaven knows, it was hard enough to have to come to you at any rate; but I didn't expect you would make it harder by arguing about it!"

"My dearest boy, you might have all I possess, so far as I am concerned—"

"Who else is concerned except you? a thousand dollars isn't going to ruin you, mother, but it is ruin to me if I don't get it. And don't fear I shall be coming to you again. I am going to stop the kind of life I have been living the last year, and turn over a new leaf. I have several opportunities to get positions in the city, and I am going to set to work at once and find out what will be the best thing. As soon as I am in a place where I can turn around, I shall put in my spare time studying up my mining, and before another year is out, I shall be ready to accept an engagement. I can support myself as well as the next man—and make a fortune, too! But I don't suppose you want to see me miss all that for the sake of a paltry thousand dollars?"

The end of it was that Mrs. Nolen gave him a thousand dollars. She tried to make him promise that he would come and live under her own roof; but he put her off with a temporizing reply, alleging, in no very logical vein, that he did not wish to make himself a burden to her; but when he got "fixed" so that he could pay her for his board and lodging he would come with pleasure.

The request indicated that getting fixed was an operation that required time. The fact was that Percy paid sums on account to his most pressing creditors, including the proprietor of his lodgings, and went on living much as before ; to salve his conscience he did make some inquiries about work, but not in such a manner as to secure practicable answers. One subject possessed his mind, and that was Mrs. Tunstall. It was impossible for him to live with his mother while that affair was going on. His infatuation was intensified by Sylvia's timidity and reluctance. A man's brains count for nothing in such a matter. Percy lived in the desire of the moment ; he gave no thought to the inevitable consequences. If he might see her to-day, or to-morrow, no matter about the day after, and no matter that the meeting was fraught with danger both to her and to him. The difference between a good desire and an evil one generally is that the former is sane and the latter has more or less of insanity.

Sylvia's heart was not engaged—if she could be said to have a heart—and it was clear in her mind that she must run no risk of compromising herself. At the same, had it been in her power to banish Percy forever by the utterance of a single word, it is doubtful if she would have done it. She knew that, were her husband to discover any further correspondence between them, he would not hesitate to act decisively and finally, and the first result of that action would be that she would find

herself cast upon the world with a damaged reputation. Such a thing was not to be thought of. But the very peril of her position was an allurement to linger in it ; and then there was the excitement of knowing that a man was in love with her who had no business to be so, and who was willing to go all lengths for her. Moreover, she was angry as well as dismayed because her husband had spoken to her as he did (like all women, she interpreted what was said by what was meant), and found a pleasure in defying him in thought if not in deed. So, although she did not openly and explicitly encourage Percy, she allowed him to believe that he was not indifferent to her.

Neither he nor she had committed any actual sin, but they were on the road to do so. People always believe that they can pull up at the last moment, and are therefore willing to go on until the last moment is reached. But by that time events combine in an unforeseen manner and push them over the edge. Then they are astonished to find themselves linked with the brotherhood of crime. And, once that link is forged, it defies all attempts to break it.

It happened before long that Percy needed more money. He had less than two hundred dollars left, and he owed more than that. He did not wish to go to his mother again, partly from shame, partly because he knew that, in order to raise the sum he needed, she would be obliged to sell some stock, and that would involve applying to Judge Ketelle.

One night, at a club, he was asked to take a hand at a game of poker with three others. He sat down and played with varying success for an hour or two. Then two of the quartette withdrew, and he and the other kept on.

Percy had faith in his luck, and had fortified himself with several whiskey cocktails. His opponent was a quiet man, and seemed to be in a dejected and timid frame of mind. The chips on the table represented a good deal of money, how much exactly Percy did not know; he meant to win it all. Some good cards were dealt to him; he drew, and found himself in possession of a superb hand. He was quite certain that his adversary held no such cards, and he began to bet. His adversary was drawn into raising him; they continued to raise each other. Percy swallowed another cocktail, and felt that he could not lose. He acted upon this conviction, and lost. Upon investigation, it appeared that the quiet man had won not only Percy's original stakes but some nine hundred dollars into the bargain.

Percy preserved a calm exterior, and wrote his I. O. U. for the amount, to be redeemed within twenty-four hours. Meanwhile, he was in a cold sweat of consternation, for he did not know how he was to get the money. It was too large a sum to borrow from any of his acquaintances: those whom he knew well enough to approach on such a matter were aware of his financial standing, and would not lend any thing. There was nothing for

it but to go to his mother. The money must be forthcoming. If he failed to pay, he would be dishonored; Sylvia would hear of it. . . . No! he must have the money at any cost.

He went to bed, passed a very bad night, and after attempting to eat some breakfast he betook himself to his mother's house. The nature of his errand was so apparent in his manner and appearance that she divined it at once. The interview that ensued was a very painful one to both parties.

Mrs. Nolen had not got the money, and could not get it for a week at least. She convinced her son by documentary evidence that such was the case. It might be possible to borrow from Judge Ketelle; there was no other way. These were facts which no arguments or entreaties could alter. Mrs. Nolen was terribly agitated by the revelation of her son's incorrigible perversity, and her tears and anguish put him in almost a suicidal frame of mind. It seemed to him that if he could only escape from this predicament he would never allow himself to get caught again. But there was no escape, except through the judge, and that was almost as bad as no escape at all. The judge, even if he agreed to the loan, was not the man to spare Percy a plain and severe statement of the reprehensibility of his behavior. The young man writhed in anticipation of this rebuke. He knew he deserved it, but it would not be easier to endure on that account. Under ordinary circumstances he might rebel and answer back; but it would not

do to fight with a man whom he was begging money of. He had always been proud of his pride; now that pride was going to suffer a fatal humiliation. Only one thing could be worse, and that was to inform his opponent of the night before that he could not pay him. Percy wished that he had never been born, and then he wished that he were dead.

The first wish being impracticable, and the second one that he did not care to put into practice, he left his mother's house in an unenviable frame of mind, and turned his steps in the direction of Judge Ketelle's office. He felt gloomy and desperate. He could understand how men, heretofore respectable, were induced to become thieves or robbers. Had he been a bank-cashier, he felt that he was in a mood to rob the safe and depart for Canada: or if he had been alone on a dark road with a wealthy old gentleman, he could have taken him by the throat and gone through his pockets. But he was on Fifth Avenue, in broad daylight, and these short methods of reimbursing himself were not available.

He struck into Broadway, and presently, about a block in advance, he caught sight of a graceful female figure that he knew, walking in the same direction with himself. It was Sylvia Tunstall. He hastened his steps: but just before he came up with her she turned into a large jewelry shop on the right.

It was as good a place as another for an inter-

view, and he felt a feverish desire to speak to her. He followed her into the shop, and, as she came to a pause at one of the counters, he stood beside her and uttered her name.

CHAPTER V.

A FATAL MEETING.

THE shop was a very large one, and was full of customers, for the holiday season was at hand, and the wealthier portion of the community was presenting itself with precious gifts. The customers were chiefly ladies, though there was also a fair sprinkling of the other sex. There were also the salesmen and the walkers, and perhaps a few other persons whose office was not to promote sales but to prevent appropriations of stock by individuals who had not gone through the formality of paying for it. Yet it seemed impossible that, among such a multitude, the eyes of a detective should be able to fix upon the malefactors, and nevertheless a successful theft was a very uncommon occurrence in the great jewelry shop.

When Mrs. Tunstall heard her name, she turned with a start, and her vivid but pretty face paled. "Don't stay," she said in a low voice; "do go! what is the use of running any risks?"

"I have as good a right as any body to be here," Percy replied. "If we both happen to be here at the same time, what of that?"

"What is the matter? You look quite ill!" she said.

At this moment a salesman, having despatched an adjoining customer, presented himself before her with a "What can I do for you, madam?" She handed him a card and said, "I have called about that necklace; it was to have been ready this morning." The man took the card, bowed, and hurried off. She turned again to Percy. Her muff was in her left hand; and as she turned she laid it upon the glass counter, on the side furthest away from him. His sudden appearance had evidently disconcerted her.

He met her look, and thought how charming she was. She was dressed in fine black velvet, trimmed with soft furs, and wore a wonderful bonnet, adorned with birds' feathers and sparkling points; a delicate silken veil was bound around it. Her oval face, with its bright eyes, small straight nose and rather full lips, was perfectly pretty; and now the blood, which had been driven from her cheeks for a moment, came ebbing back beneath the transparent skin. She was lovely, luxurious, and rich; those diamonds in her ears would have paid all his debts, and he believed that she would relieve his necessities in a moment had she known of them. But how impossible it was to tell her! How inaccessible she was, though he could have thrown his arms around her as she stood there! He felt a helpless rage—an impulse to seize upon her and make off with her bodily. If he only had had

money—money, and plenty of it—there was nothing so wild that he would not have ventured to propose it to her. What a power money was in this world!

All this time he stood gazing at her, and saying not a word.

"What is the matter with you, Percy?" she repeated. "What makes you look so? you are making every body notice us. Are you—" she hesitated.

"I am sober, if that's what you mean," he said. "If we were alone, I would show you what is the matter with me! Good God! is there no place in the world where we can be alone together for half an hour!"

Some one touched him on the arm. He turned savagely. It was only a gentleman who begged his pardon; he had left a cane standing against the counter. It was not there; he apologised and went off. Percy came round to the other side of Sylvia, and leaned on the counter, taking her muff in his hands.

"I can't stand this," he resumed. "I never see you at all now. I have as much right to see you as any of your acquaintances. You keep out of my way!"

"If you would be content to see me as my other acquaintances do—but you know perfectly well how dangerous it is. And you could not have chosen a worse place than this." She bent forward and added in a whisper, "I expect Mr. Tunstall may come in at any moment. He knew I was coming

here this morning about the necklace, and said something about intending to try and meet me. Do go! It will only make it more difficult hereafter."

"It cannot be more difficult than it is already," replied Percy sullenly. "I should like to meet him and have it out with him, if he wants to say anything! What is there he can say, for that matter? He has no business to interfere."

"You don't know him!"

"He doesn't know me, if he thinks I care for him! Why should we mind? If the worst comes to the worst, it would only throw us together. I am ready for it—are you?"

"Percy, you are crazy! How can you talk so! You will make me wish never to see you again. Nothing of that sort is possible. I never thought of such a thing."

"Such things have been thought of, and they are possible. You are not happy as you are now, Sylvia, and you know it. Why not let society and respectability go to the devil, where they belong, and enjoy life in our own way? There are other places in the world besides New York, or America?"

"Here is the necklace, Mrs. Tunstall," said the voice of the salesman. He was standing on the opposite side of the counter, with the box in his hands.

She was thankful for the interruption, for she was becoming seriously alarmed at Percy's manner; and, drawing the box towards her, she opened it.

It contained a necklace of fine diamonds, which had been selected some time before, and set according to Mrs. Tunstall's directions. She examined them, and expressed her approval. "It is twenty-five hundred dollars, is it not?" she said.

"Twenty-five hundred dollars," repeated the salesman, softly.

She looked around for her muff, which Percy had just replaced on the counter. She slipped her hand in it and uttered an exclamation. Then she sent a quick glance over the counter and on the floor.

"Have you seen it?" she said, in a startled tone.

"I beg your pardon!" said the salesman, blandly. Percy maintained a gloomy silence and an abstracted gaze.

"My pocket-book—and some money in bank notes. I had them in my muff," she exclaimed. "Have you—" she went on, turning to Percy.

He looked at her uncomprehendingly. "What is it?" he demanded.

"My purse—and the money. Why, you had my muff just now. Didn't you—"

"Did I have your muff? I wasn't aware of it. I know nothing about it," said he, unconcernedly.

"But I can't lose it—it must be found—it was right there!" she exclaimed again. "It can't have disappeared into nothing!"

"May I inquire if the sum was a large one?" put in the salesman, softly.

"Why, yes! there were twenty-five hundred dol-

lars and some smaller notes in the purse. I had brought it to pay for the necklace."

By this time several persons had collected, drawn by the evident agitation of the handsome young lady; among them was a small, bright-looking man, with an alert and confident manner. He subjected Mrs. Tunstall and Percy to a keen but unobtrusive scrutiny.

"Perhaps you put it in your pocket," Percy suggested, who, on hearing so large a sum mentioned, had begun to arouse himself from his curious apathy.

She put her hand in the pocket of her dress and felt in it anxiously, then shook her head.

"No," she said, "and, besides, I recollect it all now distinctly. I put the money in my purse when I went out this morning, and put the purse in my muff, as I always do. When I got here I took out the purse and took the notes from it —"

"Pardon me, madam," interposed the bright-looking man at this point; "I am connected with this establishment, and it is my duty to investigate cases of missing articles. Can you state what was the denomination of the bills representing the sum of money—twenty-five hundred dollars I think you said?"

"There were four bank-notes," Mrs. Tunstall replied; "one of a thousand dollars, and three of five hundred each."

"Thank you," said the man, making a note on some tablets in his hand. "Do you recollect

the numbers of the notes, or the banks they belonged to?"

She shook her head. "I didn't look," she said.

"You took these notes out of your purse, you say—"

"I took them out so as to have them ready. I was a little nervous about carrying so much money, and I thought, if I should lose the purse, I would have the money separate. But now it is all gone!"

"After taking the notes out of your purse, what did you do with them?" pursued the bright-looking man.

"I held them in my hand in my muff; in this hand," indicating her left. "Then, just as I came up to the counter, this gentleman spoke to me."

"This gentleman is a friend of yours?"

Mrs. Tunstall hesitated and colored. "I am acquainted with him—slightly acquainted with him," she said at length.

"Will you oblige me with your name, sir," said the other, turning to Percy.

"I don't know what my name has got to do with it!" returned Percy, rather brusquely. "Who are you?"

The man turned back the lapel of his coat and showed the badge of the Central Detective Bureau.

"I am attending to my business, sir," he said, "and as you were in this lady's company at the time the loss occurred you will be needed as a witness, if for no other purpose!" He pronounced the last

words in a peculiar tone, which caused Percy to turn upon him sharply.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"I mean, sir, that it is proper for me to make a note of your name," the detective replied. "I have no power, at present, to make you give it, however."

"Oh, I have no objection," Percy returned, carelessly. "Here is my card," and he handed it to the other, who read it, nodded, and slipped it into his pocket.

"Now, madam, what did you do after this gentleman spoke to you?"

"I answered him."

"Did you still hold the money in your hand?"

"No," she said, after a moment's thought. "I took my hand out of the muff, and left it lying there on the counter."

"Were the purse and the money still in it?"

"Yes."

"Where was he standing?"

"He was facing me, on this side."

"So your back was turned on your muff?"

"For a minute or two—yes."

"Did any one approach you during that time!"

"Not that I remember. Of course, some one might have come up behind without my knowing of it."

"What did you do next?"

"I think the salesman came up then, and I spoke to him about the necklace. He went off to get it."

"And you continued your conversation with this gentleman?"

"Yes."

"Was he in the same position as before?"

"No—yes—I don't remember!" She had suddenly became embarrassed, and the color flew into her cheeks again. She glanced at Percy with a frightened look. There was a short pause.

"Does your memory serve you on that point, sir," inquired the detective, turning to Percy.

"I have no particular recollection," he replied; "but I know that when the salesman came back with the necklace this lady was between me and the door, and I had her muff in my hands."

"That agrees with my own impression," said the detective drily. "I happened to be looking at you at the time. Did you notice whether there was any thing in the muff at the time you were holding it?"

"There was nothing in it. I put my hands inside, and if there had been any thing there I would have felt it."

"When you first spoke to the lady, you were between her and the door. Afterwards, you went round to the other side of her. I want to be sure I have the details all right, you know. What was the occasion of your changing 'round?"

"I don't know. I wasn't thinking of what I was doing. While she was talking with the salesman I had nothing to occupy me; I didn't even remember that I touched the muff until you asked me."

The detective glanced over his tablets, and said, slowly : " The question is, how to reconcile the two facts : that the muff had the purse and money in it when you first spoke to the lady, and a few moments afterwards, when you had hold of it, it was empty."

" I don't pretend to account for it ; that is your business, I suppose," Percy replied. " Of course, if the money was there, somebody must have taken it out."

" Yes, sir, somebody must have taken it out," the detective repeated, fixing his eyes upon the young man.

" Well, you don't mean to accuse me of it, I suppose," rejoined Percy, with a laugh.

" I am not accusing any body, at present, sir. What does the lady think ? "

" Oh, of course, that is impossible ! " said Mrs. Tunstall, looking much distressed.

At this moment a gentleman entered the shop, glanced this way and that until he saw Mrs. Tunstall, and then came straight toward her. As he approached, Percy recognized him ; it was Cuthbert Tunstall. The two men bowed politely and coldly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF AN INTRIGUE.

"WELL, Sylvia," said her husband, "have you transacted your business?"

She had been standing with her back toward him as he approached; at the sound of his voice she gave a start, and faced him. Her face expressed alarm, agitation, and something of defiance. Tunstall, on the contrary, was quiet, cold, and slightly contemptuous in his bearing. It was certainly unfortunate that he should have come upon her and Percy together. For months past she had taken every precaution to avoid such a mishap, and now it had occurred, nor had any advantage accrued as between her and Percy, but quite the reverse.

"I came in here to pay for the necklace, you know," she said.

"I know. If you have paid for it, I am ready to escort you home—unless you have some engagement with this gentleman."

"Oh, I have no engagement. Mr. Nolen happened to come in and find me here. But—"

"Then perhaps Mr. Nolen will excuse us."

"But, I have just found—I have mislaid my pocket-book."

"Left it at home?"

"No, I have lost it since I came in here."

"Do you mean it has been stolen from you?"

"It seems to have been. I can't account for it."

"If you will step this way, madam, and gentlemen," put in the detective, "we can talk over the matter in private. There is a parlor at the back, where we shall not be disturbed. You understand, sir," he added, addressing Tunstall, "that time is of importance in such things, and the sooner we can take measures to capture the thief, the better chance there is to recover the bank-notes."

"Let us go in, by all means." said Tunstall. "But in what manner is Mr. Nolen concerned."

"I was here when the robbery was committed—if there was a robbery," said Percy, "and, according to this detective, my assistance is necessary."

The detective pushed a way through the crowd that had collected, and led the others to the rear part of the building, where there was a small room with chairs and a table. Into this room were admitted Mr. and Mrs. Tunstall, Percy, and the salesman.

"Now, then," said the detective, shutting the door, and taking up a position with his back toward it, "plain words don't break any bones, and the best thing we can do is to clear away whatever may look puzzling. Here's the way the case stands:

Mrs. Tunstall comes into the shop with her hands in her muff, and four bank-notes to the amount of two thousand five hundred dollars were inside, together with the purse. She comes up to the counter, and this gentleman," pointing to Nolen, "comes in right after her, and speaks to her. While she is talking with him, she lays her muff, with the money and the purse in it, on the counter, and turns her back on it. After a while, along comes the salesman, and while she is speaking to him this gentleman goes round the other side and takes up her muff, and turns it in his hands, as it were. A minute afterwards she takes the muff from him, and finds that the money and the purse are gone. The gentleman says he had his hands in the muff, and that it was empty. That's how the case stands. Now, I want to know if the gentleman has any thing more to say." And he looked at Nolen.

"I have told all I know about it," replied Percy steadily. "I found the muff empty, and if Mrs. Tunstall had not been so positive that the purse and the money were in it I should say she must have been mistaken. The bank-notes might have fallen on the ground and not been noticed, but the purse would have been heard to drop."

"May I ask, then, what your theory is?" inquired Tunstall, courteously.

"I have none," he answered shortly.

"And what is yours, Sylvia?" her husband continued.

"I'm sure I don't know what to think," she said in a faltering voice.

The eyes of Tunstall and the detective fixed themselves upon Percy in silence. He reddened as he returned the gaze, but whether with anger or with some other emotion it was impossible to determine.

"Well," he broke out at length, "it seems to me that I stand in the position of a suspected person. I can hardly believe," he added, in a hoarser voice, "that I can be seriously charged with picking a lady's pocket—especially a lady with whom I am acquainted." He paused; no one spoke. "Well, then," he went on, angrily, "I will say that I repudiate the charge, and I will hold to account whoever has the face to make it. I mean you, sir!" he said, with a fierce look at Tunstall. "Have you any thing to say to it?"

"So far as I am aware," said Tunstall, coolly, "the only person who has spoken of charging you with the theft is yourself. I was not present, and can only judge from hearsay. But I will say this, Mr. Nolen; if I were in your place, I should wish to vindicate my innocence in some other way than by asserting it. I should begin by asking this detective to search my pockets."

"Do you dare to say you want me to be searched?" cried Nolen, his face flushing red, while he advanced a step toward the other, with a threatening gesture.

"That is what an honest man would wish to have done," replied the other, not flinching.

"Come, come," said the detective, stepping between them, "we don't want any hard words here, gentlemen. But I'm bound to tell you, Mr. Nolen, that Mr. Tunstall is right. There's no disgrace in being searched, that I know of; and it would be worth more than a lot of loud talking."

Percy stood uncertain for a moment; then he stripped off his overcoat, and tossed it to the detective. "Do as you like," said he. "You have your duty to perform, I suppose. I will settle with Mr. Tunstall afterwards."

The detective put his hand into one of the side-pockets of the overcoat, then into the other. "Here's something, at any rate," he remarked; and with the words he drew out a lady's purse.

Percy uttered a cry, as of utter astonishment and dismay, and stared at the pocket-book like a man bewildered.

"Is that yours, Sylvia?" inquired her husband quietly, taking the purse and handing it to her.

She took it mechanically and opened it. "It is mine," she said, under her breath.

"Are the notes in it?" demanded the detective.

She shook her head.

"They are not in the overcoat," the detective added. "We shall have to pursue our examination a little further, Mr. Nolen," he said, in a grave tone.

"I don't understand—I have nothing to say—there seems to have been some plot against me," said Percy, in a dazed manner. "I desire to have

the thing cleared up more than any one else can. I wish to be taken to the station and examined."

"That's the best sense you've talked yet," answered the other, approvingly. "Call a couple of hacks, Ferris," he said to the salesman, "and we'll start at once. You charge this man on suspicion of the robbery?" he added, turning to Mrs. Tunstall.

She was standing with her eyes cast down, and her hands hanging folded before her, leaning against the table. She was in a delicate position, and she knew it. If she sided with Percy, it would be tantamount to a defiance of her husband—a defiance which he would never forgive, and would fight out to the bitter end. It would mean, for her, loss of social position, and consequent exile and obscurity, or, if not obscurity, a kind of prominence that no one would envy her. If, on the other hand, she took sides with her husband, it would afford the strongest possible indication, in his eyes, of her virtuous and wifely conduct and rebuke of the suspicions he had entertained against her. Moreover, the evidence against Percy was very strong and plausible. It might be misleading—and, in the bottom of her heart, she did not believe him guilty—but, in case it should turn out that he had yielded to some sudden temptation, it would be awkward, to say the least, to have compromised herself for a felon. Had she loved him, indeed, there might have been a tragic pleasure in sacrificing herself; but it was now revealed to her

that the only love in the matter was a love, not of Percy, but of excitement. The excitement had run itself out, and was succeeded by a desire to get out of the scrape by the shortest route. But did she feel no remorse at abandoning her lover at the moment of his greatest need? No; the feminine conscience is not so easily caught. It was with a glow of conscious virtue and connubial rectitude that she lifted her pretty face, and addressing her husband, said.

"Well, I suppose he must have done it. I don't see who else could have. Yes, I will make the complaint, though it will be very disagreeable to appear in a court, among a lot of criminals!"

She just glanced at Percy as she turned away, perhaps to see how he would take it. His eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of half-incredulous curiosity; but the next moment he threw back his head and burst into a loud laugh. She shrank a little at that sound, and edged toward the door; and this was the lovers' parting scene.

Such was the train of events that brought a young gentleman who might have made a good and respectable figure in the world to the office of Inspector Byrnes at Police Headquarters. The Inspector listened to the story, contemplating the prisoner and his accusers dreamily in the meanwhile; and after it was told, he sat for a while absently making lines on the blotting-pad in front of him with the point of a paper-knife.

Finally he looked up and briefly requested that

every one should withdraw except Mrs. Tunstall and Percy Nolen. When the three were alone together, he regarded Mrs. Tunstall pensively and said,

"How long have you known the prisoner?"

"Oh, a year or more."

"Has your husband approved of the acquaintance?"

"How do you mean, sir?" inquired the lady with a blush.

"You know what I mean, I think."

"I don't think my husband has ever liked Mr. Nolen," she replied uneasily.

"Considered him rather detrimental, I suppose?"

"Well, I suppose so."

"Were the prisoner and your husband at any time intimately known to each other?"

"They knew each other scarcely at all."

"And yet your husband considered him a detrimental? There ought to have been some reason for that! Are you prepared to state to me, Mrs. Tunstall, in Percy Nolen's presence, that your husband's ill opinion of him was in no way connected with what he knew or suspected of Percy Nolen's relations with you?"

The question was put so sternly and gravely that Mrs. Tunstall was unable to maintain the composure of her countenance. She stammered and hesitated, and looked first one way and then another. Was it possible that the Inspector, in some

incomprehensible manner, had become acquainted with the truth ?

"He—I—never asked him the reason of his opinion," she faltered at length.

"There are many ways of getting rid of a man when he ceases to be convenient and becomes objectionable," continued the Inspector. "Are you ready to stand before me and take your oath that you honestly and truly believe this man guilty of stealing your pocket-book ? Remember, Mrs. Tunstall, your answer may be the means of condemning an innocent man to irrevocable ruin ! "

But she had gone too far to withdraw ; selfishness and cowardice alike forbade it. Yet it was not without an inward struggle that left her pale and trembling that she said desperately, "Yes, I believe he stole it ! " and then, "The evidence shows it—it is not I ! "

"That is for neither you nor me to determine, Mrs. Tunstall," returned the inspector, rising. "I will not detain you any longer now ; you will be informed when your sworn testimony will be required hereafter." And Mrs. Tunstall went out.

The Inspector resumed his seat, and addressed himself to the prisoner.

"I was willing," he said, "for the sake of your family and friends, to give you every chance to which you were entitled. You had every advantage of training and education ; but you have lived a foolish and useless life, and this is the result of it. You were in need of money—in immediate and

and pressing need of it ; you had tried every way you knew to get it ; you found those bank-notes in your hand this morning, and you were unable to resist the temptation to take them. From a gentleman you became—what you are now ! "

" Inspector Byrnes," said Percy, firmly but apathetically, " I did not commit that crime. I have lived a bad and useless life, and no doubt I deserve to suffer for it ; but I honestly believe that no temptation would have induced me to do such a thing as that. I am obliged to you for suggesting to Mrs. Tunstall that she would reconsider her accusation ; but it will be no satisfaction to me to escape in any such way. If I cannot prove my innocence, I may as well be in gaol as anywhere else."

" Innocent men are very seldom convicted," said the Inspector impassively. " The facts are against you. No one but you is known to have been near the muff after Mrs. Tunstall laid it down. You admit having had it in your hands ; the pocket-book was found in your pocket. It is true that the bank-notes were not found ; but the presence of a confederate would account for that. It is for you to judge whether or not your plea should be guilty."

" I am innocent, and that's the end of it," said Percy. " I don't expect to prove it. The evidence is all the other way. Somebody must have taken the purse out of the muff and put it in my pocket ; as for the notes, I know nothing. You say I may

have had a confederate. If he was near enough to take the notes from me, he was near enough to rob the muff ; and if he could do that, it would remain to be proved that he was my confederate, or that I knew any thing about him. But all that would be in my favor is guess-work, and all that's against me is fact ; so it's a bad look-out ! "

" Undoubtedly it is," assented the Inspector quietly. " There was only one minute when a thief could have taken the money and left the purse in your pocket ; and that was when you were talking to Mrs. Tunstall, and her back was turned towards the muff. If any one had been near enough to put the purse in your pocket, you could hardly expect a jury to believe that you would not have noticed him."

Percy maintained a gloomy silence for a moment ; then his expression suddenly lightened, and he exclaimed, " Now that I think of it, some one did touch me on the arm, and when I turned round he asked me if his cane was standing against the counter. Perhaps he was the man ! "

" Can you describe him ? " asked the Inspector indifferently.

Percy shook his head. " He had a dark mustache, I believe ; he might have been under thirty ; but I hardly looked at him. I doubt if I should know him again."

The Inspector stroked his moustache. " That will hardly do," said he. " You have no defence at all. The best advice I can give you is to make

a clean breast of it. Such a defence as that is worse than nothing."

"Probably you are right; but I am innocent, and I will never say the contrary," replied the prisoner with a sigh. "So far as I am concerned, I don't care much what becomes of me. I owe money I can't pay, and—there are other things. I am sorry for my mother and sister; but I never was much good to them; and Judge Ketelle will look after them, I hope."

"Is Judge Ketelle a friend of yours?"

"He was my father's partner, and is the executor of his will."

"Do you wish to send for him? There will be the question of bail to consider,as well as other matters.'

"I suppose that will be the best thing I can do; I thank you for suggesting it, Inspector."

"Don't trouble yourself to thank me until you find out whether there is occasion for it," returned the chief detective coldly. He touched a bell, made a sign to the officer who entered, and Percy was led out.

"That boy never took that money," he said to himself, when he was alone. "Such fellows as he don't steal, least of all from the woman they're in love with. As for her—!" the Inspector's face grew very stern, and he brought his hand down heavily on the table. "She is sacrificing him to pull wool over her husband's eyes. Either Nolen's suggestion is the true one, or else she invented the story to get rid of him. It's a bad lookout; but let's see if we can't straighten it out!"

CHAPTER VII.

VAL MARTIN.

WHILE these untoward events were occurring at the jewelry shop and the police office, an affair of a different nature was being transacted at the house of Mrs. Nolen.

A couple of weeks had passed since Valentine Martin had called on Mrs. Nolen and her daughter, so that his appearance there that day had something of the charm of novelty. Mrs. Nolen, however, was too much upset by her interview with Percy to be able to extend the visitor a welcome, and that duty therefore devolved upon Pauline. The latter, it may be observed, had not been informed of her brother's pecuniary troubles, and only knew that her mother was for some reason greatly distressed. She came down-stairs and found Valentine in the library.

Judge Ketelle had pronounced Pauline a beautiful girl; and beauty was her most noticeable external quality; but it was not her chief claim to distinction among those who knew her. She was finely organized and trained in mind as well as body, and possessed a charm separate from any physical attraction. It was not that she was a

learned young woman; she never embarrassed any one by revealing the presence of more information than might reasonably be supposed to belong to her; but there was in her expression a spirit and understanding that promised whatever was delightful in mental scenery and tone. Her temperament was calm and equable because it was deep and healthy; it could not be aroused save for adequate cause, but when aroused it would clothe itself in power. This wide and vigorous nature would go on ripening and enriching itself long after ordinary people dry up and dwindle away. Pauline could not be measured or assignec her definite and fixed place in human nature. Her sympathies were broad, and what she might do or be depended rather upon the demands made upon her than upon any limitations in herself.

The young Englishman, after the first conventional things were said, did not appear to be in a loquacious mood. He replied in monosyllables to Pauline's observations, but his eyes kept returning to fix themselves upon her with an expression of sombre thoughtfulness.

"Are you getting tired of America?" she asked him, at length.

"I have enjoyed some of it, very much," he replied. "I wish I had known, years ago, what I should find when I came here."

"Would you have come sooner?"

"It isn't that; but I should have left undone some things that I have done in the past, A fel-

low is generally a fool in the beginning. He gets sense after a while, but the things the fool did remain—worse luck!"

"If they did not, you would never grow wise."

"What is the use of wisdom, if it only makes a man curse himself for having been not wise?"

"What do you expect wisdom to bring you?"

"It ought to bring fortune and happiness; but it doesn't."

"No, wise people don't seem to be happy or fortunate. But they are wise; they should expect to pay for that."

"Very true, Miss Nolen; we can't eat our cake and have it, too. But I might have been content to have eaten my cake, if only it hadn't turned out to be made of bran and shavings. How would you like to hear my strange, eventful history? It has never been published."

"I would like to hear the real life of a man—what he thought and felt. But that is the part the stories leave out."

"Well, the whole truth is a vulgar and sordid affair; a good deal of it is. And there's a reason for it, too. For it is chiefly the analysis of a lie."

"That is not the truth's fault."

"Oh, of course not; the children of light always have the best of the argument! There has been plenty of muck in my career, but plenty of variety and adventure, too. Younger sons have that advantage, at least, over the elders."

"According to our American way of thinking,

it is no advantage to inherit a great estate. It can only tempt a man to be like his ancestors. I would choose to be a younger son, myself."

"If it were a matter of choice, perhaps those most concerned might more often agree with you. But, if you are born a younger son, your preferences are not consulted; and it is not in human nature to enjoy having even a good thing crammed down your throat. However, I will say for my governor—he was Sir Henniker Martin, of Derwent Hall, near Kiswick, Cumberland—that he did very fairly by me, as a whole. To begin with, he laid the foundation of my future discontent by giving me what is called a liberal education—the Eton and Oxford business, you know. I distinguished myself in both places."

"Not for scholarship?"

"Since you will have it, no; but for running up debts. The trouble with me was, I was too good a fellow. I was the most popular fellow in Eton, at the time I left it; I had documentary evidence of that."

"Documentary?"

"Yes. When a boy leaves Eton, the fellows who liked him each give him a book—something swell, you know, bound in calf, and all that, such as he will be sure not to spoil by reading it too much. Well, I got a hundred and eighty of those 'leaving-books,' as they call 'em."

"A popular library!"

"Yes, and all gone now, like the popularity. It

was the same way at Oxford, only bigger bills and less innocence. But the governor paid up like a man, and then got me a clerkship in the Foreign Office. If he had made me Chief Secretary of Foreign Affairs, I might have buckled down to business; but the clerkship only made bad worse. Easy hours, light work. Of course I went into society, head over ears. No end of friends—lots of popularity! You never saw such a clever, good-looking, good-humored chap as I was. I had no time to waste in my office; my chiefs began to growl; at last father called me up, told me I was no good, and that he was tired paying for it: gave me two thousand pounds and an outfit, and packed me off to New Zealand. It was to be sink or swim, as luck might have it, but no more life-preservers from the old gentleman!"

"Were you popular there too?"

"It's every man for himself there. I went to Napier—Hawke's Bay—the best sheep-farming country in the colony. There I ran across a chap I had known at Eton, Cartwright Brown his name was; he had a station (that's what they call a ranch out there), Matapiro, on the banks of the Ngararoro River. Well, Cartwright initiated me into the mysteries of sheep-farming, docking, tailing, and all the rest of it. Very different from Mayfair and Piccadilly, I can tell you!"

"Was there no society out there?"

"Very entertaining society in Napier, and plenty of it. Oh, yes, there are women everywhere," said

Valentine; and he was silent for a time, and seemed to lose himself in revery. "There was a neighbor of Brown's, Hector Pope, between us and Napier; I invested my money in his ranch, and got to spending a good deal of my time there and at the club in town. I didn't scrimp myself much; I kept a couple of race-horses, and played unlimited loo at the club; my sheep and my other investments had to take care of themselves. You can imagine what the end would be, without my telling you."

"Mr. Martin," said Pauline, "you have left out something! You would not have gone on in that way if you had not had some experience that influenced you." He raised his head and looked at her; after a moment she added, "I don't mean that you should tell it. You lost your money, you were saying?"

"All but fifty pounds, and a heap of clothes. I packed the clothes in my trunks; forty of the fifty pounds I handed to Brown to employ as events might require; and I was just on the point of shipping for Australia when a Maori outbreak in the Taupo district was reported. I came to the conclusion that I was probably born to be shot; so I entered the service as full private in the Armed Constabulary. You have heard of the Irish Constabulary. This was something of the same sort.

"I enjoyed that campaign more than any thing in New Zealand. The Maoris are splendid chaps for a fight. You have your Indian wars here; but you

should see those fellows! Well, one day we had to attack a hill on which the Maoris were posted; it was about the shape of a bee-hive, and covered with trees; it was called Niho o te Kiore, which means Rat's Tooth. That tooth gnawed a big hole in our regiment. The Maoris had posted themselves in the trees—up in the branches—and had made a sort of glacis round the trunks; it was capital cover; they could see our fellows coming, and pot them at their leisure; but our fire was wasted on the trees. If we got too near, they would slip down from one tree and run to another. Our men kept dropping and dropping, but there was no sign that we were producing any effect on them at all. By and by the men came to the conclusion that the fun was too expensive; and they began to fall back. Of course the Maoris followed us—pretty fast, too. I hated the idea of getting shot in the back; I had a few rounds of cartridges left, and I kept drawing up and popping at 'em. Brown was near me at that time. It was bad going underfoot—rocks, bushes, gullies: all of a sudden I felt something hot just beneath my collar-bone—a bullet through the left lung. I remember feeling pleased that I hadn't been hit in the back after all; then I stumbled over a root and went down. Brown saw me—he was a lieutenant—he hailed three of our men, and they lifted me and carried me. I was pretty heavy and very bloody, and I had fainted, and the men thought I was dead, and began to grumble, for the Maoris

were closing up. They wanted to drop me ; but Brown pulled out his revolver and vowed he'd shoot the first man who let go. As that was a certainty, whereas there was a chance of dodging the Maoris, they held on, and brought me off. I got well, and was promoted to a lieutenancy—what for I never discovered. Before I could be about again the war was over. I went back to Napier, and there I heard that Miss Dorrien Taylor, my mother's sister, was dead, and had left me eight thousand pounds. I took a part of it and sailed for Aspinwall, and came up to New York."

"Did you leave the rest of your legacy with Mr. Brown ?"

"Yes ; and you were quite right. It was on the voyage out from London. There was a woman on board. When we reached Napier I married her secretly. Brown was the only man who ever knew it. It was not a wise affair, Miss Nolen. She is living ; she will outlive me. I knew I should have to tell you ; and I've done it !"

CHAPTER VIII.

A REVELATION.

"IF you have a wife why do you not live with her?" Pauline asked, her calm black eyes dilating a little as she turned them on Valentine.

"I'm not entirely a free agent in the matter. We were mistaken in each other—that's the long and short of it. She captivated me as women will sometimes captivate men when circumstances are favorable, and a long sea voyage is a very favorable circumstance. Then, for her part, she expected certain advantages from the marriage which it was not in my power to provide for her. It was a mutual misunderstanding. After the explanation, she went her way and left me to go mine. She did not ask my consent, and I did not enforce my authority. But whatever I have she has a right to share; and whatever cannot be shared I have no right to have."

"I am sorry for you," said Pauline, in a tone that conveyed more than many assurances.

"There's no help for it," returned Valentine, with an assumption of indifference, "not even in the law."

"You mean you cannot be divorced?"

"She will not consent to it."

"Why not?"

"Because she happens to know that my eldest brother is in delicate health, and that nothing stands between me and a fortune except his life. But let us talk of something else. I am thinking of leaving town."

"In the midst of the season?"

"The seasons are pretty much alike to me. Besides, New York will not be a pleasant residence for me any longer."

"Has New York changed, or have you?"

"The change is in my relations with you, Miss Nolen," said Valentine, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. "I can't come here any more. As long as I could keep up my false pretences—as long as you did not know me to be a married man—I could take advantage of your ignorance. But I have committed hari-kiri, so far as that is concerned, and it's time I disappeared."

"It is not keeping any false pretences merely to be silent about your past life."

"Not in the abstract, perhaps; but in this case it is."

"Why, Mr. Martin?"

"May I tell you? You won't be offended?" But without waiting for her answer, and as if fearing that it might be unfavorable, he added, hurriedly, "I have no right, being a married man, to feel towards you as I do. At first I didn't care. When I first saw you I knew it would be better for

myself to keep out of your way ; but then I thought that it could make no difference to you—you would never know what I felt for you—and that I might as well endure the pain for the sake of enjoying the pleasure. But since then my feeling has changed. You are not the kind of woman who ought to be the object of the love of a man in my position, even though you were not aware of it, and though —as I am able honestly to say—I would rather have died than attempt any act of deception towards you. I had never known before what love was ; there is a sort of sacrilege in my hanging around you, as I have been doing, not daring to show myself to you as I am. Two weeks ago I made up my mind never to see you again. But I couldn't stand going off without letting you know all about it. So here I am, Miss Nolen, for the last time. I can look you in the face now, and say good-by. And it wont hurt you to shake hands with me."

The changing tones, the passion, the restraint and simple pathos with which all this was said touched Pauline's virgin soul more deeply than it had ever been touched before. She divined all that was not spoken, and recognized the gallant spirit of the man who loved her too well to stay where she was: and whether or not she had hitherto been conscious of it, her mind now contrasted the man, fatally encumbered as he was, with the free man that she had supposed him to be ; and involuntarily the question presented itself—Had he been

free, would she have yielded what he desired? It was a perilous question, but she contemplated it steadily before dismissing it. She had an intellect capable of discriminating between merely conventional morality and the deeper distinctions between good and evil. Her respect was as small for the former as for the latter it was profound.

"If you had not cared for me as you do, you might have stayed, and we have been friends," she said finally: "but as it is you are right to go. I am only a girl—and I feel more than sorry for you; I don't know what I might feel if you were always here. No: I do not love you! don't think it, Mr. Martin. It is only that—if I wanted to love you—I should not send you away!"

Valentine sat silent; and whether he were happier or unhappier than at any previous period of his life he could not have told. So far as the significant part of his life was concerned, he felt that it was over with him; he would never henceforth be the victim of any strong desires, hopes, or fears. Only one possible event could give him liberty, the opportunity to live a real life. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask Pauline whether, in case this event occurred, she would let him return to her; but an accident postponed the question, and it was never put. The two had been so taken up with what was passing between them that they had not noticed the sound of the door-bell or the tread of a heavy foot upon the hall floor. But at the moment Valentine was about to speak, perhaps

with the effect of changing all their lives, the door was thrown open, and Judge Ketelle abruptly walked into the room.

He stopped short on seeing the two, and there was an instant of silent embarrassment ; but the judge evidently had something on his mind too serious to be postponed for conventional formalities. "My dear girl," he said to Pauline, "you will excuse my blundering in here, for it is probably better that I should have met you before seeing your mother. You will know better than I how to carry my message."

"Have you bad news, Judge Ketelle?"

"Painful—no, no, not the worst! your brother is perfectly well; he has suffered no physical injury whatever." He paused and turned to Valentine. "I think this is Mr. Martin?" he said.

"Yes ; can I be of any use?"

"I believe you are a friend of Percy's? Well, I dare say you could be of some consolation to him. He has got into a scrape—a matter in which he is not in the least to blame, however—that is, at all events regarding the main point at issue. It is a misfortune, but it will be set right ; but meanwhile Mrs. Nolen must be brought to a knowledge of it with all the tact possible. Indeed, if it were not one of those things that are certain to get into the papers, and perhaps to become for a time the subject of idle gossip, it would be best to say nothing to her at all."

"I am waiting to hear what the trouble is." said

Pauline, in a voice entirely calm, though her great black eyes shone with unusual brilliance. "You needn't hesitate to tell me any thing."

"It is annoying—that is the most and the least that can be said of it. Percy is now at Police Headquarters, my dear. He will be bailed out as soon as a magistrate can be got to hear the case; and I came up here in the interval."

"Oh! been punching somebody's head, has he?" said the Englishman, in a tone of relief. "Where was he last night?"

"Why, he was here this morning, a few hours ago," said Pauline. "He had a private talk with mother. He was not—"

"He was entirely himself," put in the judge. "This is one of those pieces of bad luck which may occur to any man. The circumstances were such as to suggest the hypothesis—though upon entirely inadequate grounds, in my opinion—that Percy had been guilty of an infringement of the law. You will smile when you hear it; but the absurdity of the thing does not render it less annoying for the moment. He happened to be in a jewelry store when a lady missed her pocket-book. It was supposed that it had been stolen—"

"And Percy was accused of taking it!" said Pauline, in a low voice.

"In default of any other plausible object of suspicion, the detective pitched upon him, and he was taken to the station."

"That is too preposterous to do him any harm,"

Martin remarked. "If it had not been so bad, it would have been a great deal worse."

"When the lady knows who he is, she will refuse to prosecute him," said Pauline.

"So I should have supposed," returned the judge. "But it appears that there was already some acquaintance between them; and Percy was in conversation with her at the time the loss was discovered."

"Who is she?" demanded Pauline, turning very pale.

"Her name is Tunstall, I believe—the wife of one of our coal barons."

"Tunstall—Mrs. Cuthbert Tunstall," repeated Pauline. "I think I have met her—yes, I have met her. She is a pretty woman—fashionable. And she accuses Percy of having robbed her?"

The judge moved his head silently. Martin, at the mention of the lady's name, had changed countenance slightly.

"She must be his enemy," said Pauline, setting her grave lips together. "No woman who knew Percy would have done that except from a wish to ruin him. She knows he is not guilty."

"Was Mr. Tunstall with his wife?" inquired Martin of the judge.

"He came in in the midst of the affair. I may as well give you an account of the affair." And the judge went on to to tell the story that is already known to the reader. Both his listeners listened intently.

"My opinion is," said Martin, when the narrative was finished, "that the job was put up on Percy. The woman did not have any money to lose."

"You forget that her pocket-book was found in his pocket," said Pauline.

"She may have put it there herself. But at all events that does not account for the bank-notes. New York women are not in the habit of traveling about town with two or three thousand dollars in bills in their muffs. She would have had a check, if she had had any thing."

"The same objection occurred to me," said the judge, "and I spoke of it to Inspector Byrnes. But it appeared, upon investigation, that Mr. Tunstall, knowing his wife had several bills to pay to-day, including this at the jeweler's, had drawn a check for five thousand dollars in the morning, and given it to her before going down to his business. She has a private account at the Fifth Avenue Bank; she cashed the check there, and received, among other notes, the thousand dollar and the five hundred dollar ones specified in the complaint."

"No; it was not done in that way," said Pauline. "A woman like her would not dare to run such a risk. She must have lost the money. She may have lost it before she entered the shop, or some one may have stolen it from her there. But I am sure she did not accuse Percy because she thought he was guilty. There was some other reason, and when she missed her money she took advantage of

that pretext for attacking him. But she forgot he has a sister!"

"It may have been her husband who put her up to it, you know," said Martin to the judge, in an undertone, and he gave that gentleman a look, the significance of which he understood. He drew out his watch.

"The court will sit within an hour," he remarked. "I must go back to Police Headquarters to be on hand with bail. If you care to accompany me, Mr. Martin, I should be glad of your society. Pauline, I will leave the task of opening the matter to your mother to you. You will know how best to manage it; I should avoid appearing to attach very serious weight to it, and yet it won't do to altogether make light of it, either. You may expect to see Percy in the course of a couple of hours or so."

"Good-by till then," said Pauline, rising and giving him her hand. Then she turned to Martin and added in a lower tone, while the judge walked towards the door, "I should not feel so safe if it were not for you."

CHAPTER IX.

BAIL.

"HAVE you any knowledge about this Mrs. Tunstall?" inquired the judge, when he and Martin were in the street together.

"It's a nasty complication," replied the Englishman. "I fancy Percy has been making a fool of himself about her. There was no actual harm done, you understand; but there was some nonsense and imprudence, and Tunstall, somehow or other, got wind of it. Percy has been in a state of mind lately, but I didn't expect the woman would behave in this way. I suppose she had the alternative of turning against her husband or against Percy, and finding that the strongest battalions were on her husband's side, she very prudently and with much propriety sided with him. But what is Percy's defence?"

"He denies the charge," the judge answered; "but he has no theory as to how the thing happened."

"What is the theory of the prosecution as to the disappearance of the bank-notes?"

"They assume that Percy must have passed them to a confederate."

"Was any body resembling a confederate seen hanging about?"

"The shop was full of people coming and going; but no one in particular was noticed."

"It's a lame theory," remarked Martin, after a little consideration. "If Percy had passed a confederate the money, he would have passed him the purse too. It is more likely that whoever did the stealing kept the notes, which could not be identified, and got rid of the purse, which could be identified, by dropping it into Percy's pocket as he passed by."

"I think that view is a sound one," said the judge; "but the thief has got off, and the prospect of apprehending him is very small. Percy may not be convicted: I hardly think he could be: but there is, nevertheless, evidence enough against him to produce a disagreeable effect upon persons not acquainted with him. And, of course, when it is known that Mrs. Tunstall was acquainted with him, and yet did not hesitate to accuse him, his position—even after he has been legally exonorated—will be a painful and embarrassing one. I am inclined to think that the best thing for him will be to leave New York and remain away for some years. Meantime the affair will be forgotten, and possibly the true culprit may be discovered."

"I agree with you," said Martin, thoughifully. "Percy can be of no use here, no matter how the affair turns out. I have a mind to propose to him to go with me."

"To go with you!" repeated the judge, with an involuntary accent of surprise. "I infer, then, that you contemplate leaving New York?"

"I shall leave New York very shortly. My idea is to go to Australia by way of San Francisco. In Australia Percy would have a fair field to start out and do something. I might be able to give him some help."

"His family should feel much indebted to you," observed the judge, cordially.

"There's no obligation," returned Martin. "I am fond of Percy—not on his own account only. If I can be of any good to him, I shall consider myself lucky."

The two gentlemen now entered a horse-car, and the conversation ceased. Martin lapsed into a gloomy revery; but the judge's spirits seemed, for some reason, to have visibly improved. He had received a severe shock at the moment when he entered the room and found Pauline and Martin together. The latter's announcement of his intended departure brought an immense relief. He had already begun to like the young Englishman, but he now began to regard him with sincere affection.

They left the car at Bleecker Street and proceeded to Police Headquarters. There was still a quarter of an hour before the formality of getting bail could be arranged. They were admitted to the inspector's room, and at the judge's request he courteously gave permission to them to have an interview with the prisoner.

"How is he standing it, Inspector?" asked Martin.

"He doesn't find it amusing, I suppose ; but he is as comfortable as could be expected," replied that impenetrable officer.

"There will be no difficulty about getting bail, will there ?"

"I presume there will be nothing unusual. But the case is not a simple one. There are some awkward features to it."

"How is that ?" demanded the judge.

"Well, as regards motive, for one thing."

"It would need a strong motive to give weight to such an accusation," Martin remarked.

"That may be true for those who have made up their minds beforehand not to believe him guilty. But the jury will not be composed of such persons."

"What is the evidence you speak of ?" asked Martin.

"He has been short of money for some time past," said the Inspector. "There is reason to think that he borrowed a sum of money several weeks ago. But within the last two days his needs became very pressing. He incurred a debt of nearly a thousand dollars at play last night. The money has to be repaid this evening, under pain of social exposure. He was unable to borrow again, and it made his situation very trying. When a man in that condition suddenly finds two or three thousand dollars in his hands, and remembers that they belong to a woman whom he has every reason

to think will not betray him—well, when a skillful lawyer tells that story to a jury, it would not be surprising if it makes some impression on them."

"You don't take any stock in such rubbish yourself, Inspector," observed Martin, with a laugh.

The Inspector lifted his eyebrows. "I should be very apt to take the same view of the case that the judge and jury do—after I know what it is," he returned, quietly; and that was all that could be got out of him.

They now descended to the basement and were conducted to the imprisoned Percy. He was much more composed than they had expected to find him. In fact, he had experienced such intense and varied emotion during the last few hours that no matter for discomposure was left in him. Martin's presence seemed to gratify him. He asked the judge about his mother and sister, and received his somewhat rose-colored account of their condition with apparent indifference.

"But you will be able to judge of them for yourself at dinner," the judge added, kindly.

"You mean when I am out on bail?"

"Certainly; that will be in a couple of hours from now."

"Are you going to furnish bail, Judge Ketelle?"

"Undoubtedly I am. Who has a better claim to stand by your father's son?"

Percy was silent a moment. "Have you ever believed that I might possibly have committed this crime?" he asked at length.

"No such idea has ever entered my head. I am surprised you should ask me such a question," said the judge, with an emphasis that indicated that he was a little hurt by the insinuation.

Percy took a long breath, and as he looked up his face betrayed signs of a feeling that he had not hitherto betrayed. "You are a good man," he said in a husky voice. "I wish I had had the sense to trust you long ago. I was afraid you would pitch into me, and the fact that I deserved it made it all the more difficult to face it. I don't know whether you have heard that I borrowed a thousand dollars from my mother two months ago. She wanted to consult you, but I wouldn't let her. This morning I went to her again ; but she didn't have anything, and there was nothing for it but to apply to you. I was on my way to your office when this thing occurred. If I had not happened to see her —" He broke off and altered his phrase—"if things had not taken the turn they did I should long since have received your blowing-up and the money, paid my debt, and—but it turned out otherwise."

"Who is the man to whom you lost the money?" inquired Martin.

"His name is Henry Cotton," answered Percy. "You know him."

"To be sure ; and he is a friend of Tunstall's," returned Martin, thoughtfully. "Upon my word, the luck is against you. Will you answer me one question?"

"If I can."

"You can, and we are among friends. Are you cured of a certain lady?"

Percy laughed, and that laugh of bitter resentment and humiliation was a more convincing answer than any words could have framed. It put all doubts to rest.

"Ah!" ejaculated Martin, with an expression of satisfaction, "then it will be all right!"

At that moment an officer came with the information that the court was ready to decide the question of bail, and the whole party proceeded to the court room. The transactions there were brief and not particularly complicated. Mrs. Tunstall's lawyers professed to consider the case an especially grave one, and requested that bail be fixed at the full amount permitted by law. Counsel on the other side maintained that the charge against Mr. Nolen was a preposterous one, and demanded that he be allowed to go on his own recognizance. The Court, after due deliberation, declared that the facts against the prisoner, though not conclusive, were sufficient to warrant a *prima facie* evidence of guilt, and required bail to be furnished to the amount of fifteen hundred dollars. Judge Ketelle immediately qualified for that sum, the bonds were signed, and the prisoner left the court with his friends.

"And now," said the judge cheerfully, "the worst is over. Let us get into a hack, Percy, and drive up to the house. Your mother and sister will be anxious to see you."

"I am much obliged to you, judge, for all you

have done for me," replied the young man ; I wish I had known you sooner and better. But this affair is not over yet, and it may end differently from what we hope. Until the trial, at all events, I must remain a suspected man, and I can't go to my mother's house with that suspicion hanging over me. When I have been publicly acknowledged to be an honest man, I will go to my mother and sister, but not till then."

"My dear boy," said the judge kindly, "you are a little off your balance after all this trouble, and you naturally take a morbid view. I assure you you have no need to feel sore about the matter. I need not tell you that you will find nothing but love and confidence awaiting you at home ; and that there can be no other place in the world where you can hope to find them to any thing like the same degree. On the other hand, your mother and Pauline couid not fail to feel hurt if you did not appear."

"That is all very true, judge," Percy answered, "but there's something else that you haven't considered, and which will be certain to come out, now that the thing is going into the newspapers."

"What is that ?"

"My relations with Mrs Tunstall. My mother will hear of that, and that is a thing I can't deny. I love my mother, and I kuow she loves me ; but she could never make any allowance on such a subject. It would be a useless pain to both of us to attempt to discuss it, and I am not going to put

myself in the way of it. No, I can't agree with you, judge," he added, as the judge seemed about to make a rejoinder ; " I have been through as much as I can stand for the present, and any thing more would break me down Say to mother that I will see her by and by, but not now."

The judge saw that the young man was obstinate, and felt that his sensitiveness was, under the circumstances, not discreditable. He further reflected that, in the course of a day or two. he would probably be more disposed to modify his resolution. Accordingly, he relinquished for the present the attempt to persuade him, and having ascertained that he would take up his quarters with Martin pending further movements, he bade him farewell, little thinking how long a time would elapse before they met again.

Percy and Valentine betook themselves to the latter's rooms at once, and, having ensconced themselves there, Martin poured out some whiskey, offered his friend a cigar, and after they had smoked for a while, said,

" How much do you owe here, outside of your gambling debt ? "

" Not more than three hundred dollars."

" Thirteen hundred dollars debts, and your bail fifteen hundred. Two thousand eight hundred altogether. I have over seven thousand dollars. What do you say to my settling all your liabilities to-morrow, and taking you with me to Australia ? "

CHAPTER X.

PAULINE.

THE question staggered Percy for a moment.

"I didn't know you were going to Australia," he said.

"To Australia, or Mexico, or South America, or the North Pole; it don't make much difference where. But I am going, and I'm going to-morrow. And I want you to come with me, Percy."

"And jump my bail?"

"And jump your bail."

"I can't do that. Judge Ketelle is liable."

"Haven't I told you that I will settle all your liabilities? Half an hour before we leave New York, I will post a check to him for the amount. Your friend Henry Cotton will receive his dues this evening; every thing shall be paid. And we will be off together and make a fortune, if you like."

"If I went off in that way," said Percy, after a little thought, "everybody would come to the conclusion that I was guilty and feared conviction."

"You are not guilty, are you?"

"No."

"But you do fear conviction, and all the more if you're not guilty than if you are. That stands to reason."

"Of course I hope not to be convicted, but—"

"Exactly; and now do you know what I think? I think there is a strong probability—a deuced strong one—that you will be convicted. You can see for yourself that your defence doesn't amount to a row of pins. And if once you get into gaol, my boy, you are done for. Innocent or guilty makes no difference; you will have a stigma on you that all the years of your life will never obliterate. If I were in your place, I wouldn't risk it. You have an opportunity to escape now, and you had better take advantage of it."

"But if I escape judgment will go against me by default, and I shall have the stigma just the same."

"Listen to reason, Percy. To have the stigma of being adjudged guilty is bad enough; but what is it compared to being adjudged guilty and sent to gaol into the bargain? If you were actually guilty, or if I thought you were, the situation would be different; but you are innocent, though you can't prove it; and, being innocent, why should you spend two or three years in Sing Sing just to gratify the spite of Cuthbert Tunstall and his wife? It would be more sensible to take that razor and cut your throat. You are innocent, and you have a perfect right to avoid being imprisoned if you can. No one will suffer by it, and there is no tell-

ing how much you may gain. The robbery of which you are accused was committed by somebody, and probably by a professional thief. Professional thieves—pickpockets especially—are always practicing their trade; and sooner or later they are certain to get caught. When the thief who stole Mrs. Tunstall's money is caught it is more than likely that the truth about the robbery may come out; you will be vindicated, and then you may come home with flying colors. But if your vindication came after you had served your time in gaol it wouldn't do you much good—not to mention the positive harm that gaol life might have done you in the meanwhile; people would never forget that you had worn the stripes, though they might easily forget whether or not you had deserved to wear them. But come back with a fortune—come back after having made a respectable name for yourself in another part of the world—or after having simply lived in freedom, instead of in bondage and in the society of thieves—and, trust me, you will never regret it! This is not a matter to be treated on sentimental grounds; it is a serious thing—quite as serious as a question of life and death to you. You are innocent, and you have a right to your freedom; that's the case in a nutshell. Don't throw away your whole career for a figure of speech!"

This was a powerful appeal, and it lost nothing by Martin's delivery. It produced an evident impression on Percy.

"If I were certain that I should be convicted," he muttered, half to himself.

"You may fairly take that for granted," said Martin. "When there has been a crime, there must be provided a criminal; that is the legal maxim, and in default of a better you will have to bear the brunt."

"It is not myself, only, that is to be considered, Val.; my mother and sister are quite as important."

"I don't deny it; it's a part of my argument. You said this afternoon that you did not intend to see them again until after you were vindicated. Did you mean what you said?"

"Certainly I did."

"I think you were right in your decision, for more reasons than one. But, if you remain in New York, you will not be able to keep your resolution. If you don't go to them, they will come to you. But if you are a thousand or two thousand miles away, you will have no such embarrassment. And that isn't all, my boy. If you were put in gaol it would be a bad thing for you, but it would simply kill your mother outright, and ruin your sister's prospects as effectually as your own. Whereas, if you go off with me, you and I can keep up a correspondence with them, and explain exactly how the case stands. They can watch your career step by step, and the knowledge that they are doing so will give you the strongest stimulus to succeed that you could have. Meanwhile, they will

be watching the progress of affairs here, and as soon as any thing turns up in your favor they can let you know, and you can act accordingly. If there were no other reason for jumping your bail, consideration for your mother and sister would be enough."

This suggestion practically decided Percy. "I believe you are right," said he; "but I don't see what right I have to let you pay all my liabilities. You and I have been friends, Val., but I have never done any thing for you, and I have no prospect of repaying you for what you propose to do for me."

"You will owe me less than you suppose," Valentine replied. "In the first place, my money is no use to me; if I didn't spend it for you, it would go into the pockets of the tradesmen and bummers of New York. In the second place, I want your company; we suit each other, and that is not a thing that happens every day. But the real truth is—I have never spoken to you about it, although you may have guessed something for aught I know—the truth is that I am a good deal influenced in what I am doing by the fact that you are Pauline Nolen's brother."

"Ah! You care for her, then?"

"Yes, I care for her. She is the dearest friend I have in the world, and for her sake I would do most things. But she can never be more than my friend, and I can do very little."

"If you want to marry her, I am sure she—"

Valentine interrupted him with a gesture. "It can never come to a question of that, said he; "I am married already."

"You are a married man! Does Pauline know it?"

"I told her this morning. It's a long story, and you shall hear it another time if you want to. I married in haste, and I am likely to have plenty of leisure to repent. Well, you can imagine that nothing could please me so much as serving her in any way I can; and I know that no better way is open to me than to give a helping hand to you. So, if you agree to join me, you will be doing me the best kindness that one man can do another—it is not to be measured in time, or money, or any thing else. My prospects, as you may suppose, are not especially cheerful at the best; but whatever good comes to me will be from the thought that I am of some good to Pauline's brother. I can't live with her, or see her any longer; but I can live with you, and that's the next best thing, not to mention that you are tolerably good company on your own account." He ended with a laugh.

"It's very kind of you to put in that way, old fellow," said Percy, in a somewhat unsteady tone. "Well, I'll go with you. I have been a drug in the market so far, and I won't make any promises; but I don't think you'll find me a voluntary drag on you, at all events. Have you any definite plans?"

"I have a thousand; we have only to pick and

choose," Valentine replied. "My intention this morning was to go direct to Australia by way of San Francisco, but I think I shall change that, for one reason, because I mentioned it to Judge Ketelle, and, in any case, it will be well to get outside the country as soon as possible. We might go to Mexico by steamer, to begin with. I have some good letters to people there, so that we shan't be strangers. If any thing good turns up we can stay there ; if not we can go to Colon and Panama, and get aboard some vessel bound westward. You may find an opportunity to make a practical acquaintance with mining before you are done."

It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon. On consulting a newspaper they learned that one of the United States and Brazil Mail Steamship Company's vessels sailed on the following day, Wednesday, at two o'clock. This vessel stopped at St. Thomas, where, if they saw fit, they might disembark and take passage to Havana, and thence to Vera Cruz and Mexico, thus throwing possible pursuers off the scent. This seemed to be the best route open to them ; and, as there was no time to be lost, Martin left at once for Broad Street to secure their passage. Percy was left alone to meditate on his position.

Martin's rooms were in a bachelor apartment house, not far from the junction of Fifth Avenue and Broadway. The roar of the streets was audible as a continuous sound ; and to Percy, sitting in an easy-chair before the fire, and wearied with the

emotions and vicissitudes of the day, it had the soporific influence of the wind among pines, or the noise of surf on a shore. The sun had set, and the room became dusky. Percy's eyes closed, and he was just on the point of falling asleep.

The sharp sound of the electric bell aroused him. Had Martin returned already? He must have left his pass-key, to be obliged to ring. Still partly asleep, Percy arose and went to the door and opened it. A lady stood on the threshold, and as the door swung back she stepped quickly inside.

Percy recoiled a pace or two with a disagreeable sensation. He thought that the visitor was Mrs. Tunstall. But the next moment she spoke, and the voice was that of his sister. "I am so glad you are here!" she said breathlessly. "I feared I should miss you."

"Are you alone? How did you come here?" returned he. He closed the door and led her into the sitting-room.

"Judge Ketelle told us that you were staying with Mr. Martin. Is he—" she glanced about the room and hesitated.

"He has gone out," said Percy. "Did you come to see him?"

"I came to see you, Percy. I can understand why you kept away from us, but I wanted to tell you that I am your sister. I love you and believe in you, and whatever happens you can trust me. Let me do something for you!" She spoke with great emotion, though in a controlled voice, and he

could perceive that a tremor passed through her now and then as she stood before him.

A feeling of strong brotherly tenderness and gratitude came over the young man; he put his arms round Pauline and kissed her. "I couldn't do that if I wasn't innocent, my dear," he said.

"Of course I know you are innocent!" she exclaimed indignantly. "What made that woman accuse you? She knows it is false. Why is she your enemy?"

Percy hesitated. "Appearances were against me," he muttered.

"What are appearances to any one who knows you?" broke out Pauline impatiently. "She must have hated you. Why did she hate you? Women do not hate unless . . . has she ever loved you, Percy?" she demanded, with a changed voice.

"She—why, she's a married woman!" he returned, uneasily.

There was a pause. "Yes, I understand now!" continued the girl, with a sad laugh. "Oh, my poor brother!" She caught her breath and sobbed once or twice. "I am so sorry it is that," she said tremulously.

"I have been a fool, but nothing worse than that, said the young man. "There is no actual sin on my conscience, Pauline. It is no thanks to me, but it is the truth. It is all over now, and I thank Heaven it is over!"

"I thank heaven too, Percy; for, whatever you had done, I should support you and defend you;

and if you were wicked I should be wicked too. I am your sister"—it seemed to give her satisfaction to repeat this—" we are the same flesh and blood ; if we do not stand by each other, who else will ? But what shall you do, Percy ? You can not tell that in court."

He took a quick resolution. " I shall never appear in court," he said.

" Has the case been put aside ? " she exclaimed eagerly.

" No ; I am going away. I am going with Martin. He has gone to take our passages to the West Indies by to-morrow's steamer."

" Well, perhaps it is best," she returned, with a composure that surprised him. " Your bail has to be paid, has it not ? I will do that—I have money."

" Martin has done it already. He will pay every thing. I shall leave no debts, thanks to him. I thank you just the same, my darling sister."

" He is a good friend—he is a good man," she said thoughtfully. " I can afford to let him do it, for I know he does it willingly. So you are going away together ! " She gave a long sigh. " Well, I will take care of mother."

" Poor mother ! " said Percy, a great wave of grief and remorse coming over him. " Tell her the best you can of me, Pauline."

" I can manage her—don't fear ! It will come right at last, I know. I will go now, brother." She threw her arms around him. " Be good," she said ; " do the best you can. Oh, Percy, Percy ! "

she suddenly cried out, with a heart-breaking sob, pressing him to her with passionate energy. "I must go now, or never," she said, controlling herself by an immense effort ; and the next moment he was alone. But the ardor of her last embrace had something more than sisterly ; it conveyed a message to one who was absent.

CHAPTER XI.

AT SEA.

MARTIN came back about seven o'clock. He had secured a stateroom with two good berths; he had paid Percy's bills at the tradesmen's and at his lodging-house, and from the latter place he had brought the trunk containing the young man's worldly possessions, which were fortunately not numerous, and consisted chiefly of suits of clothes and underwear. They went to a quiet restaurant and had dinner, and then returned to Martin's, and spent the rest of the evening in packing up his effects.

Percy said nothing to his friend about Pauline's unexpected and hurried visit that evening, not on account of any pre-determined purpose, but because the interview had affected him too deeply to make it an easy topic of conversation; because, knowing Martin's feeling towards her, he was uncertain whether it would be expedient to mention her at present; and, further, because he doubted whether Martin would approve of his course in admitting Pauline to a knowledge of their plans. In revealing the secret to her, Percy had acted on

the spur of the moment; but he felt that the impulse was a wise one, and subsequent reflection had not caused him to regret it.

They went to bed at midnight thoroughly tired out; but were up again by eight in the morning, and had some coffee and eggs brought to them by the janitor.

"The chances are," observed Martin, as he cracked his egg in the English style, and put some salt in it, "that the authorities, who are pretty wide awake in this country, may have conceived the idea that you contemplate giving them the slip. When I went out yesterday afternoon, I noticed a man smoking a pipe on the opposite corner of the street; and when I returned in the evening I passed the same man under the gas-lamp just below. That may have been a coincidence; but then it may have been—"

"A detective?" said Percy.

"Something of that sort. At all events, it is well to be on the safe side. Now what I propose is this. We are of the same height and build, and look not unlike. If we were dressed alike, the chief point of distinction between us, to one who did not know us well, would be the fact that you wear a moustache and I whiskers. What do you say to a bit of a disguise? You will find a razor in the dressing-case; shave off your moustache and then put on these." As he spoke, he produced from his pocket a small pair of false whiskers. "All you have to do is to heat this inside

surface at the gas-jet, and they will cling to you as if they had grown. Then put on my cap and overcoat, and our detective will be a clever fellow if he recognizes you."

"But what will you do?"

"I shall remain what I am. You will start an hour before I do; and, by the way, you had better turn up town when you leave here, so as to give the impression that you are bound anywhere rather than to the United States and Brazil Steamship Company's wharf. Afterwards you can cross over to Sixth Avenue and take the elevated down. I will meet you on board the steamer; the trunks will go by express in my name."

"All right," said Percy, with a sigh; for he was a good-looking fellow, and his moustache was not wholly indifferent to him. "And when we are safe at sea, we can resume our natural selves."

"As soon as you like," returned Martin, "though perhaps it would do no harm if we exchanged names for a while longer. There is no telling what may happen, or where some spy may turn up who might find it for his interest or amusement to gossip about us in the wrong quarter."

Breakfast being over, nothing remained but to label the trunks, which Martin did by writing his name and that of the steamer on tags, and attaching them to the handles; an expressman was then called, and the trunks were removed. Percy sacrificed his moustache and affixed the whiskers; and finally, attired in his friend's outer garments, left

the house without interference, and strolled up to the Thirty-third Street elevated station. From there it was a twenty minutes' ride to his destination; and then all he had to do was to go on board and wait for Martin. The latter arrived in due course; and at two o'clock the steamer moved out into the river and pointed her nose toward the Narrows, much to the relief of two at least of her passengers. And yet both of them were leaving behind what was dearer than any thing they could expect to encounter. But those thoughts lay deep; the more trifling ones only appeared on the surface.

There were but few other passengers on the steamer, and those not being people whose society was especially attractive, Percy and Valentine passed the greater part of the time in each other's company. Valentine had an almost inexhaustible fund of anecdotes concerning his past life and adventures on hand, and many hours were spent in narrating those experiences to Percy, until the American had become almost as conversant with the Englishman's past career as if it had been his own. The episode of his marriage interested him more than any thing else.

Valentine had met the girl upon the outward-bound steamer from England to New Zealand. He had previously known nothing of her nor heard her name; but it afterwards transpired that she was well acquainted with his family history, a cousin of hers, with whom she corresponded, hav-

ing been engaged as companion to Lady Martin during several years. She had thus learned a fact that was supposed to be known by few or none outside the family circle—that Valentine's elder brother, who inherited the estate, was subject to a species of fits, which, though not always incompatible with long life, might bring his career to a close at any moment. In such an event, the property would descend to Valentine. Meanwhile, Valentine's London extravagances were not suspected by the girl, and she believed him to be possessed of a comfortable fortune of something like twenty thousand pounds—a sum not much in excess, to be sure, of what he would have had, had he invested his money to advantage and lived within his income.

She was a handsome girl, of about the same age as Valentine, and with a manner and temperament exceedingly alluring to a young fellow whose blood flows warmly in his veins, and who finds the interminable leisure of a voyage to the antipodes hang very heavy on his hands. She permitted him to acquire the conviction that he was any thing but indifferent to her; in fact, to use the colloquial phrase, she set her cap at him ; and Valentine, who spoke of himself without reserve as a poor man, and who was not aware that she disbelieved all his assertions on that head, and interpreted them as politic attempts to conceal his real wealth and prospects —Valentine was completely fascinated by the charm of her person and conversation, and so far com-

mitted himself with her, that by the time the voyage was ended he felt that he could not do less than offer her marriage.

She consented, and the ceremony was performed on their reaching New Zealand. But she stipulated that the marriage was to remain for the time being a secret ; for she had come on to visit some relatives of hers and was unwilling, for reasons satisfactory to herself, that they should know any thing of the hope she privately entertained of becoming Lady Martin. Valentine, on his side, offered no objection to this arrangement; he had his place to make in the colony, and the necessity of providing a suitable home for his wife at the outset would have seriously hampered him. She went to her relatives in Napier, and he, as has been already related, cast in his lot with his friend Brown, and visited her in town whenever opportunity served.

Now that she was his wife, however, she no longer felt any necessity of concealing from him her real belief as to the extent of his means ; she proceeded from veiled intimations to plain speech, and he became aware for the first time that she had married him, not for himself, but for something that he did not possess. Her plain speech led to explanations on his part equally plain, and thus they speedily arrived at a perfectly clear understanding of their mutual attitude. The consequence was a bitter quarrel and recriminations. The woman appeared in her true colors, which were not engaging ; she called him a variety of

hard names, and if he refrained from retorting in kind it was not because there was any lack of suitable expressions waiting behind his lips. But they were still husband and wife, and the bond between them could not be severed. As their marriage was a secret, however, there was no difficulty about a separation; and Valentine agreed to whatever pecuniary conditions she chose to dictate. In case of his brother's death she would come in for her share of the inheritance; but here he stipulated that she should receive the money only on condition that she forbore to assume the title, or allow her relation to him to be known. She at first demurred to this; but on his offering to hand over every thing except the real estate and lands—an offer extremely advantageous to her from a pecuniary point of view—she finally consented, probably reflecting that it would be difficult or impossible to make such a contract legally binding, and that when the time came—if it ever should come—she would be able to repudiate it with impunity.

This affair produced a bad effect on Valentine; he became reckless, and indifferent to his business interests, and ill-fortune attended him. He welcomed the Maori revolt as an opportunity of ridding himself of his troubles by stopping a bullet; but though he stopped the bullet, the bullet failed to stop him, and the legacy that he received changed considerably the complexion of affairs. He placed half the sum in the bank at Napier for the benefit

of his wife, and sailed for San Francisco with the rest. He had had no settled plan in leaving New Zealand, except to appease his restless desire for change and excitement. The future could hold nothing good for him, because, however good in itself it might be, it would be defiled by the chronic and inevitable necessity of sharing it with that wife of his—for what is the greatest blessing, stimulus, and joy, to a man happily married, is the dreariest of miseries to the man mismated.

One misfortune, however, he did not look for; one danger he did not fear; one emotion of all others he was confident he could not feel. And yet this emotion, this danger, this misfortune were precisely those to which he was destined to fall a victim. He could not foresee the meeting with Pauline Nolen, nor the effect that she would produce on him. Up to that time his unhappiness had been chiefly negative—the ordinary disappointment and disillusion; now he had to deal with a positive pain—the impossibility of being united to the only woman he had ever loved. It was like tantalizing a prisoner-for-life with scenes of freedom and felicity.

"I am talking a lot about myself," he remarked one day to Percy, as they were sitting smoking together on the deck, "but it isn't entirely egotism, either. I have a motive in it, connected with you."

"What have I to do with it?"

"You and Brown are about the only friends I

have in the world. I want you to know what my life has been, and what my situation is, in order that you may be able to act intelligently in case any thing happens to me."

"Come, Val, you're not contemplating a premature end, are you ? "

" Oh, my health is good, and I am in good shape generally—never better. I am speaking of accidents, which are liable to happen to the best regulated gentlemen. In case of my sudden taking off occurring while I am in your company, I want you to be competent to act as my agent, representative, or executor ; I want to give you my unrestricted power of attorney, in short. And to that end," he added, taking a wallet from his pocket, " I have written out a paper which empowers you to use the requisite authority, and also indicates what I would like to have done in case certain other things happen. Here's the document ; put it in your pocket, and don't bother yourself to look at it unless circumstances should make it necessary."

"If I had any thing to leave or to manage," said Percy, taking the paper which Valentine handed him, " I would retaliate by appointing you my sole legatee and executor ; but all I possess are my clothes and the receipted bills you paid for me. However, if I die, you must say to those whom it may concern that I maintained to the last that I did not steal Mrs. Tunstall's money. Send my love to my mother and Pauline, and, if I die on shore, get me buried if possible. I can't be seri-

ous about it," he went on, with a laugh, "and yet I have had a presentiment ever since we started, that I shall never see the end of this voyage. Of course, presentiments are all nonsense, and I don't in the least believe in this one ; but it is there all the same. So, if it comes out true, I shall say, 'I told you so!' At least, you will know I would have said it if I could!"

"I'll remember," replied Valentine. "As for presentiments, I believe they do come out true, though my theory of existence assures me they must be coincidences. I have no presentiment regarding myself, only a business-like solicitude that, when I am gone, my dregs shall not occasion any avoidable inconvenience.

Just then the second officer sauntered up and nodded to windward. "Looks pretty nasty up there," said he. "Shouldn't wonder if we had a blow before night."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

MARTIN and Percy looked in the direction indicated by the officer. It was then about five o'clock in the afternoon, the sky clear overhead, the sea calm, the sun sinking red toward the west, over Cuba and Hayti, which were below the horizon, some hundreds of miles away. The temperature during the last few days had been growing warmer and warmer, and they were now near the twentieth parallel of north latitude, and about on the sixty-sixth meridian west from Greenwich. Since passing between Hatteras and the Bermudas they had had fair weather, with light airs from the south and east. But to-day there had been no breeze whatever, and the heat had been oppressive. The surface of the sea looked oily, and lay quite flat, without any perceptible heave or swell. Masses of drift-weed were passed occasionally, strung out in long lengths, as if drawn by invisible currents. Sometimes a cocoanut or an orange would float past, silent heralds of the islands near at hand. The course the steamer was steering was taking her toward the group of little islands between the

greater and lesser Antilles, of which St. Thomas is one. It was there that they were to make their first landing.

The officer had pointed toward the southwest, or a few points off the starboard bow. Percy could see nothing remarkable there ; but Valentine, who was familiar with the sea, at once fixed his eyes upon a small dark cloud, low down on the water, the peculiarity of which was that it changed its shape with great rapidity, and without any apparent cause. One moment it looked like a hand, with the fingers extended ; then it was like a hat, the crown of which grew larger and larger until it presented the aspect of a pointed foolscap. Then the cap suddenly inverted itself, and stood on its apex ; then the foolscap divided down the centre, and took the form of a huge bird with wings pointing upwards.

"That is rather odd," muttered Valentine, intently watching the protean little cloud. "I have seen a hurricane begin that way. I hope it will give us a wide berth. This is a bad place to be caught by a tornado, with that string of islands right ahead of us."

"It must be a couple of hundred miles to the nearest of them," said Percy. "We are safe enough. This steamer can stand any thing."

"There comes the captain," observed Valentine, without noticing Percy's remark.

In fact, the captain emerged from his cabin, and mounted the bridge ; he cast a glance at the

cloud and then gave some orders in a low tone. They were followed by an immediate activity on the part of the watch on deck. The sailors moved rapidly about, and seemed to be occupied in stowing under hatches, or otherwise making fast, various barrels, cases, and other loose objects that had hitherto been kept on deck. Meanwhile, the captain had got out a telescope, and was contemplating the cloud through it with great earnestness. Presently he passed the glass to the officer who stood by him on the bridge, and who also took a careful observation; then they conversed together in an undertone, and occasionally issued a new order to the crew. There were no sails set on the steamer; but the sheets and halliards were hauled taut and securely belayed, and every thing was made fast and battened down in such a way that nothing short of a hurricane could dislodge it.

"The old man understands his business," remarked Valentine; "and I fancy he thinks that it may need all he knows to pull us through. Look at the cloud now!"

Valentine again turned his eyes toward the southwest. The small cloud had suddenly become very much larger, and was now seen to be connected with a mass of dark vapor that was rapidly crowding upon that section of the horizon, and of which it was the pioneer. This vapor was of an extraordinary darkness, or rather blackness; it had not the blue shade that is often seen in storm clouds, but was of the hue of the densest factory smoke,

with yellow and greenish streaks upon it here and there. The rim or upper margin of the on-coming blackness continued to advance with such astonishing rapidity that after only a few moments it had blotted itself upon all that quarter of the horizon, and now seemed to have embodied the fore-running cloud, or to have incorporated itself with it. Looking more closely at it, its edges and surface appeared wildly commoted, flakes and shreds of vapor, like black fleece, being torn off from the general mass, and whirled around, or snatched in various directions, so swiftly that the eye could scarcely follow their movements. The green and yellow streaks were multiplied and other colors were represented until the inky surface assumed an aspect of hideous iridescence. Meanwhile the northern and eastern portions of the sky and sea remained unchanged in their sultry calm, except that, the light of the setting sun being cut off, their aspect had a strange feverish ghastliness, unlike the tints of nature. A hot, faint air drew past the vessel in the direction of the black canopy, as if it were sucked thither by some malign attraction. Presently the ears of the observers began to be conscious of a singular minor sound, somewhat resembling that produced by the wind on a telegraph wire, only infinitely more hollow, deep, and reverberating. It resounded all over the level surface of the pallid sea, and appeared to be echoed back from the horizon and the vault above, as if the heavens were a metallic enclosing dome. It

sang and resounded and roared, but still with an inner sound, as if that which uttered it were still afar, or walled off by some obstacle that it had not yet overcome. Every thing else was deathly still ; the plash of the foam against the vessel's bows and under her stern was the only other sound, but that seemed abnormally loud.

The captain's voice on the bridge broke out with startling distinctness, though he spoke not above his customary pitch. He gave the order to put the vessel about. Immediately she began to swing round on her course, describing a semicircular sweep with her stern ; and in a few minutes she lay with the cloud at her back, and her bows pointed towards the unclouded regions of the northeast. Her propeller still moved, but slowly ; she was like a champion awaiting the onset of an enemy and gathering himself up for the struggle.

The enemy was now at hand. By this time the central advance had thrown out two long black arms that crept along the horizon to the right and left, enclosing the vessel in a deadly embrace. Darkness fell over them as from an eclipse ; the unshadowed east, ere it vanished altogether from sight, looked like a scene viewed through a tunnel. The moment was one of awful suspense ; no human creature could long have endured it without giving way to some outbreak of intolerable emotion. The blood flowed thick in the veins ; the brain throbbed confusedly ; the breath came in difficult sighs. With a sudden but majestic upward gradation, the

minor roar swelled to deafening shrieks of noise ; there was a vision of a white fury of waters astern; a blast as cold as winter swept from the taffrail to the bowsprit ; the darkness shut down and became absolute, so that the observer seemed plunged into impalpable pitch ; and then with a paralyzing shock the hurricane smote the vessel, beating her down into the sea as by the sheer weight of a giant hand. The next instant, with a shudder and a spring, she leaped forward, staggered, and leaped again. Fragments of boiling surge hurtled along her decks, striking what they encountered with the force of grapeshot. The mizzen-mast broke off within a yard of the deck, and, lashing forward, struck the main-mast and brought it down in ruin, though the noise of the crash was inaudible in the yell of the frenzied gale. The steamer was rushing onward at headlong speed, yet she seemed to be standing still, so fast did wind and sea fly past her. She reeled, staggered, leaped, was buried, and rose again, again to be overwhelmed. It seemed another world, another age, compared with the sunlight and calm of a few minutes previous. Blind, whirling, weltering chaos had engulfed all things ; nothing could be seen, nothing heard, nothing done nor directed ; only awful plungings and strainings could be felt, and thunderous blows and shocks. Only by these signs could it be known that the vessel was still above the water, still being swept onward. Whither, and to what fate, none could foretell.

The sea was at first beaten flat by the wind, though great pieces of water were stripped from the surface and dashed through the air ; by and by, however, waves began to form, but irregularly, some rolling low, some reaching aloft and stalking gigantic. One of these, hurrying through the blackness, mounted the steamer's stern and traversed her deck to the bows, carrying with it the funnel, the remaining mast, and every thing on board that offered resistance. That wave struck the forecastle with a report like the bursting of a siege-gun, stove through the oaken planks, and dashed a hundred tons of water through the opening. All therein were drowned and crushed to pieces, and the bodies of several were whirled out again and carried like rags off into the waste of the tornado. Heavily the ship rose from the blow ; it seemed as if she could never rise again. But up she came, and the weight of water went booming aft, breaking down partitions and deluging cabins and staterooms. More than fifty men were killed or disabled by that single buffet ; and the survivors believed that the end of all of them could be not many minutes distant.

But it so happened that no catastrophe of equal terror followed. The ship drove on, sometimes threatening to broach to, yet maintaining her steerage way beyond all expectation, on the whole ; and when some time had passed—how long, no one ever knew—the hurricane fell faint, and in a breath or two, as it seemed, died quite away. The dark-

ness lightened, and straight overhead appeared a patch of sky half-veiled by wheeling shreds of mist. They were in the center of the tornado: and now the waves leaped up with a rebound so breakneck and astounding that all sense of vertical and horizontal was lost, and the vessel reared and pitched like a maddened broncho. This phase of the battle between ship and storm bade fair to be more dangerous than the opening experience; but, however that might be, it did not last long. The inky cloud shut down again; again rose the shriek of rushing winds, coming now from the opposite point of the compass, and once more the dismantled and bruised hulk sprang forward on her fearful race, galvanized, as it were, into preternatural activity by a force not her own. Stripped bare as she was, and weighted by the water she had taken on board, she moved more steadily than at first. Nor could the nerves of those who still manned her continue to respond as before to the call of horror. The worst was past for them, even should death itself be in store. None knew at that time who were living and who were dead; each held on to whatever support was nearest him and waited in darkness and uncertainty for what might come. The engine fires had been put out, and all the men available were taking turns at the wheel, in a desperate and unequal struggle to keep her before the wind. Some felt that it would be a relief if the ship would founder and go down. But she swept on, outstripping death itself. Suddenly

one of the passengers, who had been alternately praying and blaspheming in the cabin, broke out in a yell of mad laughter, and rushed up the companion-way and out on the deck. The hurricane caught him and hurled him forward; he was jammed between the stump of the mainmast and the shaft of one of the anchors, which had somehow been carried there; the wind turned his coat over his head and whipped it into ribbons in a moment; in another moment he was naked to the waist; then he was twisted and beaten and lashed about until he was a shapeless mass of bloody flesh and shattered bones. At length a sudden pitch of the vessel loosened the anchor, and it and the corpse went overboard together, and the ship swept on.

It was perhaps an hour after this, and long after the most sanguine had yielded dumbly to despair, that the steamer rose on a monstrous wave, which mounted and mounted beneath her until it seemed as if it would end by carrying her through the sky; then, with a last furious effort, flung her forward, and slipped back under her keel. The great vessel was carried on by the impetus of the onset, and fell with an appalling crash, not on the sea again, but on the solid earth. Her voyage was over, and she was in port at last.

Her iron ribs were crushed by the fall, but her frame still held together, and all motion ceased. The wind still shrieked and the sea bellowed and thundered, but no waves struck the ship. She

seemed to have been lifted beyond their reach ; but where they were no one knew, nor could have guessed within a hundred miles. After an interval, the quartermaster, who had been the last man at the wheel, crept to the companion-way, and, securing himself by a rope passed round his waist and made fast to the railing below, looked out.

At first he could distinguish nothing, and the rush of the wind stifled him ; he dragged himself back and waited. He had not waited long before it appeared to him that the noise of the hurricane was abating, and the darkness was less intense. At length he ventured forth again. Moment by moment the wind was decreasing ; the change was not so sudden as it had been when the center of the tornado passed over them, and occasionally there was a return of rage and fury. But these became less and less frequent, and there were great cleavages upwards through the clouds, revealing the remote sparkle of stars, for the sun had gone down long since. One by one, those of the ship's company and passengers who remained came on deck and stared about them. Were they on a desert island ?

A number of square objects, curiously symmetrical in shape, and distributed with an appearance of regularity, became visible in the immediate neighborhood of the steamer. They were all of nearly the same height, though in their other dimensions they varied considerably ; their sides were whitish, the tops darker. In front of the vessel, as she lay,

the land rose upwards in a gentle slope, and these rectangular objects showed themselves thickly in that direction.

"They don't look unlike houses," remarked the quartermaster, peering earnestly through the gloom. "I don't know any coast hereabouts that has rocks like that."

"If they were houses," said the second officer, who stood near, with his arm broken, "we should be in the midst of a town, and no small town either."

"Hark! what's that?"

All listened. There was the sound of a halloo, clearly repeated, and in a moment it was answered from a further distance. Then in several directions, near and far, were heard calls, cries, and lamentations. The listeners uttered murmurs of surprise and perplexity.

Just then a great mass of cloud in the east broke away, and the full moon shone forth with surpassing brilliance, shedding over the scene a light which, in comparison with the previous darkness, seemed as bright as day. It revealed an extraordinary spectacle.

Beyond the stem of the steamer extended the tossing waters of a large bay, strewn with wreckage and an indescribable medley of floating objects. In front and on either side were the streets and houses of a half-destroyed town. The steamer had been carried over the sea-wall, and lay beyond the wharves, between the ruins of a

hotel and a large warehouse. A little way off was what had been a public pleasure-garden or casino; it looked as if a gigantic roller had been passed over it. In a terrace higher up a heavy iron gun stuck out like a half-driven bolt; it had been whipped out of a vessel in the bay and borne nearly half a mile, passing completely through a house on the way. Nearly every house left standing was unroofed; many were torn from their foundations and thrown topsy-turvy. The iron shaft of a street lamp was bent over and twisted like a corkscrew. In the center of a small fort to the west of the town was a brig, with one mast still standing. A floating wharf just outside the sea-wall was sunk; a steamer was on top of it, and on top of the steamer,lying crosswise, were the remains of a three-masted merchant-ship. A large provision-store had been blown to pieces, and the stores whirled about in all directions over the town and adjacent lands. In the bay, now rapidly becoming calmer, appeared the masts of a score of sunken vessels, sticking up like reeds in a swamp. Among them floated casks, blocks, spars, boxes, quantities of oranges and cocoanuts, fragments of trees, the rafters and beams of houses; and bobbing about everywhere were the drowned and mutilated corpses of hundreds of men and women. But these were not to remain long visible. Ever and anon there would be a swirl in the water, a jerk and a splash, and a shark would glide away with a human arm or leg in his jaws. The banquet was an unusually

rich one, and the banqueters were assembling in thousands.

"Well," said the quartermaster, as his eyes rapidly traversed this scene. "I've heard of miracles, but this is the nearest to one that ever I saw. Of all the things that might have happened, this is the unlikeliest; we get caught in a hurricane, and blown north and south, we don't know where, nor whether we were under water or above it; and here at last we find ourselves high and dry, in the port we were bound for, and within a dozen rods of the very wharf we should have lain up to! This is a queer world!"

"What place do you say this is?" inquired one of the passengers, drawing near.

"This is St. Thomas, sir—what there is left of it—and no other place in the world. Oh, is that you, Mr. Martin? I'm glad to see you safe and sound; I expect a good half of us will never speak again. Where is your friend, sir?"

"I don't know," replied the other; "I have been looking for him. I haven't seen him since the time the wind first stopped blowing out at sea."

"It was that big wave that came aboard us, most likely," said the quartermaster, gloomily. "That carried off the captain, and many a good man with him. You may sail the seas till you're an old man, sir, and never see the like of that storm again."

But his interlocutor had moved away, and was beginning a search through the ship, in the forlorn hope of finding at least the body of his friend.

CHAPTER XIII.

TO AWAIT CONFIRMATION.

THE day appointed for Percy's trial was a week after he left New York. During this period, his mother and sister and Judge Ketelle were the only persons who knew of his escape. On the morning of the trial, the judge dropped into Inspector Byrnes's office, with a newspaper in his hand and a very grave face.

"I want to call something to your recollection, Inspector," said he; "something of importance to me, though you may have forgotten it."

"Oh, you mean young Percy Nolen's case, don't you?" returned the Chief of Detectives. "I remember; he was accused of a robbery in a jewelry store, and you went bail for him in fifteen hundred dollars. Yes, the trial comes on to-day."

"You have a good memory. Well, you are perhaps not aware that Percy left New York on the day following the examination, and never returned."

"Yes, judge, I happen to be aware of that, too. You see, we anticipated there might be some difficulty of the kind, and so we put a man on to watch him. Mr. Nolen spent that night at Mr. Martin's

rooms on Fifth Avenue. The next morning, some one whom our man took to be Martin walked out and went up town. An hour or two later, Martin himself came out. Instead of following him, our man made the mistake of going upstairs to see whether Nolen was in the rooms. In that way they both got off. We did every thing in our power to stop them, but it was too late. I sincerely hoped he would think better of it, and come back. I am sorry for you, but there it is ! "

" As regards myself, I'm not a loser. I don't mind telling you that, a few hours after his escape, I received by letter the amount of the bail ; it came, I have reason to believe, from Martin. All Percy's outstanding bills were also paid, probably by the same hand. Of course, Percy should have stood his trial, and had I had any inkling of what he intended I should have used every means to prevent his departure. But at any rate he left no debts behind him."

" He made the mistake of his life," said the Inspector emphatically. " As the reason why will be known in a few hours, I may as well tell you now. In the first place, the evidence againt him was not conclusive, and, taking every thing into consideration, the chances are that he would have been acquitted. His looks and manner and his previous record and social standing were in his favor, though it is true that he had been making a fool of himself here and there, as boys sometimes will. But a fellow like that is not likely to steal a lady's pocket-

book, in face of the absolute certainty of being suspected of it. The game wasn't worth the candle."

"I quite agree with you," replied the judge; "still, there was a possibility that the verdict might go against him; and you can understand that a conviction would be as good as death to him."

"Even then, if he were innocent, the guilty party would be sure to turn up sooner or later, and he would be vindicated. I could make a guess, even now, as to who the thief really is; but he has not committed himself yet, and as the money stolen was in bank notes of course it is more difficult to trace than jewels or any kind of personal property would be. But that is not the point I was going to make. If he had appeared in court to-day, he would have been a free man ever after."

"How can you know that?"

"In this way. You have heard all about that affair of his with the wife of the plaintiff. No actual harm had been done, but she was compromised and her husband had heard of it; they had had some words about it probably; and when he found Nolen in such an awkward predicament, he naturally was not going to lose the opportunity of jumping on him. So he pressed the charge, as we saw. But his wife did what he had not anticipated—she joined him in the accusation, and thereby ranged herself definitely on his side. Of course that took the wind out of his sails; it proved that she hated

Percy as much as he did, and therefore removed his own chief reason for hating him."

"I understand; but—"

"Very well. Having no longer any especial reason for revenging himself upon Percy, and probably not believing, on sober second thought, that he had committed the crime, he would begin to ask himself how the public trial would affect his wife and himself. And the first thing he would see would be that it would involve letting out the whole story of the flirtation. Now, if his wife had persisted in her folly, instead of acting the part of a virtuous cur, as she did, he might have been willing to have her shown up; but as it was, he would desire to hush it up as securely as possible. There was only one way to do that, and that was—"

"Ah! I see. The plaintiff would decline to prosecute?"

"Exactly; and that (as I have the best reason for knowing) is just what he has done. His counsel are instructed to withdraw the charge; and of course, under the circumstances the judge would allow him to do so. But when they see that the prisoner is not on hand, it may cause them to modify this course. They might profess themselves ready to go on with the case, and as the prisoner is absent judgment would issue against him."

"It is that result that I hoped to avoid. It would be a sad thing for an honorable family to be dragged through the dust in this way for a crime for which the accused is not responsible."

"He should have had the manliness to face his accusers," repeated the Inspector. "No one knows better than you, judge, that in this world a man must defend himself. He can not expect other people to find excuses for him. But, as I say, he may live it down; he is a young fellow yet, and—"

"Have you seen this morning's paper?" interposed the judge.

"I have looked through it. Is there any thing particular?"

The judge held out the paper, with his finger on a certain paragraph. The Inspector took it and read as follows:

"A terrible hurricane is reported as having occurred in the neighborhood of St. Thomas, W. I., on the 13th ult. It is described as the severest ever known in those latitudes. It was preceded in the morning by a dead calm and excessive heat. Early in the afternoon weatherwise persons predicted a heavy blow. The prophecy was soon verified. Clouds were observed collecting in the southwest; they rapidly increased in size and darkness, and advanced toward the northeast, from which quarter a gentle breeze was blowing. The storm burst with terrific fury. The harbor of St. Thomas is a large basin, the entrance to which is a comparatively narrow pssage between two headlands. The harbor was at the time filled with shipping, including several steamers and large vessels. One of the steamers was at the time taking on passengers; the captain gave orders that

this should be stopped, and steamed out of the harbor in the hope of weathering the gale. The steamer has not since been heard of, but fragments of it have been picked up at sea, and there is no doubt that she perished with all on board. The storm was accompanied by intense darkness, greater than that of an ordinary midnight without moon or stars. The wind's velocity was estimated to reach no less than two hundred miles an hour, and the destruction it caused was terrible. After blowing for a couple of hours from the southwest it hauled about and blew with equal violence from the northeast. All the shipping in the harbor was destroyed, and several vessels were lifted out of the water and carried inland. One large merchant ship was taken up bodily and planted in the midst of a warehouse near the shore. The houses of the town were unroofed and in most cases annihilated. Upwards of four hundred lives were reported lost, and the harbor was full of corpses, which were devoured by the sharks. One of the most remarkable episodes of this disastrous storm was that of the U. S. and B. Co.'s steamship *Amazon*. She was due at St. Thomas on the day after that on which the hurricane occurred. She had cleared from New York with six passengers and a full cargo. She had fair weather up to within two hundred miles of St. Thomas, and was somewhat ahead of her schedule time. According to the narration of the survivors, she met the hurricane about three o'clock on the afternoon of the 13th. She was put about so as to

run before the gale. The wind and waves almost immediately dismasted her, and it was found impossible to do more than keep her before the wind, even this taxing all the powers of those on board. At one time she was pooped by a heavy sea which broke into the forecastle and swept many overboard. When the wind veered about the steamer became virtually unmanageable; she drove before the gale, and it was expected that she must founder. But after several hours she was suddenly beached; and on the storm breaking it was discovered that she was lying in the main street of St. Thomas, close to her own dock. In the darkness she must have been driven through the narrow entrance of the harbor, and so across to the town, avoiding by a miracle numberless obstacles. She is, however, a complete wreck, and half her ship's company were swept overboard and drowned, while many of the others have received severe injuries. Of the six passengers who were on board the following are killed: Alfred Harper, went insane and washed overboard; Charles Tupper, neck broken; James Blair, washed overboard; Percy Nolen, washed overboard. The surviving passengers are Herbert Simpson and Valentine Martin. Mr. Martin occupied the same stateroom with Mr. Nolen, and is much affected by his death. He says he saw him shortly before the time when the steamer was pooped; he was on his way to the forecastle, under the impression, it is supposed, that there was greater security there than in the stern. Mr. Martin left

for Vera Cruz yesterday. It is his intention to return by way of Aspinwall to his sheep-farm in New Zealand, near Napier."

Having read thus far, the inspector laid down the paper, and stroked his chin awhile with a meditative air. "So the young man is drowned, is he?" he said, at length. "The account seems to look that way."

"Do you mean there can be any doubt about it?" exclaimed the judge.

"I don't say there is; and as a matter of course, judge, I recognize the sincerity of your attitude. Still, if I were interested in the boy, I should think twice before I accepted this news as conclusive. Have you heard any thing personally?"

"Nothing. This is all we know, so far."

"Well, you are aware that people reported drowned at sea sometimes have a way of coming to life again. The sea is a big place, and it's difficult to be sure what becomes of a man in a heavy storm, when every thing's as black as pitch. Then again young Nolen, you must admit, might find it convenient to have it supposed he was permanently out of the way. He could start in under a new name, with very little fear of ever being interfered with. When this affair has blown over or been cleared up, he might come back, and all would be right again. I don't say that is what has happened; I only say it might be so. And, considering that Mr. Martin was a friend of the family, it seems a little odd that he shouldn't have sent a

letter giving a full account of the affair. He must have known what a value the mother and sister would have put upon it."

"I hope with all my heart your theory may be the true one!" said the judge. "But I fear the report is correct," he added, after a pause. "There can be no doubt about the hurricane, nor that Percy was on the steamer. There was no necessity of inventing a report of his death; he would be as safe in Mexico or New Zealand as at the bottom of the Atlantic. No, I'm afraid the poor boy is gone. And, I was saying just now, I trust that no steps will be taken to-day to blacken his memory. The cause of justice would not be vindicated, and it would add a terrible pang to his mother's and sister's grief. Some consideration should be shown to them."

"Well, let us go down to the court-room," said the Inspector, rising and taking his hat. "I don't suppose any one wants to trample on a dead man —not even the woman he was in love with."

This surmise proved partly correct. On the case being called, counsel for the plaintiff submitted that their client was disposed to abandon the prosecution. The court asked where the prisoner was, and the report of his death was put in. The court observed that the prisoner appeared to have intended forfeiting his bail, and was of the opinion that the evidence of death was insufficient. But as the plaintiff wished to withdraw, and there

was only a moderate presumption of guilt, the case would be adjourned pending confirmation of the report of death, when the question of estreating the bail would be decided.

CHAPTER XIV.

A POWERFUL ALLY.

SEVERAL days after this event, the Inspector was informed that a lady desired to see him. He gave orders that she be admitted, and a young woman dressed in mourning entered the room. She was pale and handsome, with powerful dark eyes. The Inspector rose and placed a chair for her. She sat down, regarding him with great intentness, as if endeavoring to satisfy herself what manner of man he was.

"Can I be of any assistance to you, madam?" the detective inquired.

"I hope you may," was her reply, "for I don't know where to look for help, unless to you. You were officially cognizant, were you not, of the case of Mr. Percy Nolen, who was accused of a robbery a few weeks ago?"

The Inspector inclined his head. "It came to my knowledge, in the ordinary routine," he said. "It has been adjourned, as you are probably aware, and the chances are that it will not soon be heard of again."

"Percy Nolen was my brother," she resumed.

"He was lost at sea." Her lips trembled, but she recovered herself—the Inspector noted that she seemed to possess unusual self-command—and went on. My mother and I are the only ones of the family left alive; and my mother is an invalid. My brother died with a shadow upon his name, and I consider it my duty to remove it. I am sure that it can be done; and I am ready to make any effort or sacrifice to do it. Nothing would be a sacrifice that would accomplish that result."

"I'm afraid you will find it no easy matter, Miss Nolen. Speaking as a professional man, I must say that the prospect is not a hopeful one."

"I don't expect it to be easy; but I am determined to succeed, and I mean to give all my life and energy to it," said she, in the same quiet tone which she had used from the first, but with immense underlying earnestness. "Of course, I know nothing about the ways of finding out criminals, and I don't think that, in an ordinary matter, I should make a good detective; but this is a thing I care so much about that it's different. I believe that if the man who stole that money was to pass me on the street I should feel that it was he."

The Inspector dropped his pencil, and stooped to pick it up. The notion of identifying criminals by emotional intuition was not without its humorous side; but he did not wish his smile to be seen; and by the time he had recovered his pencil he had recovered his gravity likewise. "Even if you were able to recognize him in that way, Miss Nolen," he

remarked, "there would be no evidence in that to fasten the crime upon him. The jury might think you were mistaken, and would refuse to convict; in fact, I don't think you could persuade any judge on the bench to grant you a warrant."

"I wasn't thinking of putting it on that ground," Pauline replied, coloring a little. "But when I have convinced myself that I know the man, I would find evidence against him that would convince the world too. Only let me know him first, and the rest would be easy."

"Well, all I can say is, I hope you'll find him."

"I should not have come here to waste your time merely by telling you this," she continued, looking up at him firmly. "I wish to tell you something that may indicate who he is, and then you will be able, perhaps, to help me find out where he is and what his record is. I don't suppose you know that Percy was not my only brother?"

The detective intimated that he did not.

"My other brother's name was Jerrold. He died a few years ago. They had reason to think that his death was hastened by foul means. The man whom he accused of it was tried; the case was appealed several times, but at last, after having been confined for over a year, the accused was acquitted. He said that he would be revenged upon us. Why may he not have taken this way to be revenged?"

The Inspector began to be interested. "What was his name?" he asked.

"His name was Horace Dupee. He was a medical student."

"Tell me the circumstances. I may recollect something of it."

"When my brother Jerrold left college he decided to be a physician, and he began the study of medicine here in New York. He attended lectures and went to the hospitals. He was fond of fun, and a favorite with his fellow-students, and, I suppose, he was rather imprudent in his habits. He was good-natured and excitable, and the others led him on.

"The way the end came was this. There was a supper given to one of the students who had got through his course. He was the Horace Dupee I spoke of. He was a clever man, I believe. I never saw him; and he and Jerrold were great friends. There were ten or twelve other young men at the supper. They drank a good deal of wine, and became noisy and excited. They began to play practical jokes on one another. At last Horace Dupee got up to make a speech. My brother, who sat near him, kept interrupting him with jokes and laughing. He got angry finally—Dupee did—and made some threat or said some insulting thing. My brother instantly threw a glass of wine in his face, glass and all.

"Dupee rushed at him and struck him with his fist. They began to fight; but my brother was the stronger, and he struck Dupee in the face, so that he fell over a chair. Then the others separated them; and my brother, after a moment, forgot his

anger, and wanted to make friends with Dupee again, but Dupee would not for a while, but the others urged him, until at last he laughed and came and shook hands with my brother, and pretended that he was quite reconciled; but he said afterwards to one of the young men that he 'would be even with Nolen yet.'

"They had been on the point of breaking up before, but after this they got to drinking and talking again; and Dupee came and sat down by my brother, and kept filling his glass for him, but only pretending to drink himself, until my brother got quite intoxicated and acted foolishly. It was then after midnight, and the young men began to go home, and Dupee said he would see my brother to his lodgings. My father and mother and myself were not in New York just then; we had gone down to a Southern watering-place on account of my mother being delicate, and Jerrold was staying in furnished rooms in a boarding-house.

"He and Dupee started off together after leaving the others. My brother could walk, but he was not fit to take care of himself. The boarding-house was on West Twenty-third Street, some way down. The door had a covered porch to it, and was nearly on a level with the sidewalk. It was a winter night, but there was no snow on the ground.

"It was not quite one o'clock in the morning when they left the restaurant together. At two o'clock the policeman whose beat was on that part of Twenty-third Street saw some one lying in the

porch of the boarding-house. He examined him, and found that he was in evening dress, with an overcoat on; he was insensible, and his pockets were empty. There did not seem to be any mark of violence on him. The policeman thought he was insensible from drink; he knocked up the people in the house, and when he found that my brother lived there helped to take him up to his room. But there was a physician living in the house, and he came and looked at my brother, and saw there was something wrong; at last he found a bruise on his head, behind the ear, made with some blunt instrument, for the skin was not cut, but it had produced concussion of the brain. Towards dawn he partly recovered consciousness, and when he was asked about his injuries he mumbled something about Dupee; but they could not get anything definite from him. A telegram was sent to us at Old Point Comfort, where we were stopping. My mother was too ill to move; I stayed with her, and my father went on at once, but he arrived too late. My brother—"

Her voice faltered, and she broke off. The story had been told with entire simplicity, but with intense vividness and earnestness. The scenes which she described seemed to be before her as she spoke, and the emotion which she had striven to repress broke forth at last in a few quick sobs. She soon controlled herself and added, "My father had an inquest held; the young men who had been present at the supper were called upon to testify,

and they told of the quarrel, and the apparent reconciliation; and it was shown that Horace Dupee was the last person seen with my brother. In his examination Dupee said that he had taken him home and left him in his doorway, bidding him good-night: and that, though my brother had seemed not quite himself, yet he was able to take care of himself. He denied any knowledge of the blow. But it was proved that he had threatened my brother; and it was thought that he might have emptied my brother's pockets only to make it appear that the murder was the work of some common thief. So the coroner held him for trial."

"I remember the case now," put in the Inspector. "The case was pushed against him vigorously, but it broke down at last for want of conclusive evidence, and Dupee was discharged, as you say, after having been kept in gaol for a year. Well, I must say, Miss Nolen, that the doubt as to his guilt appears a reasonable one; and, supposing him to have been innocent, he has certainly received hard treatment; for such an accusation as that, though not proved, is enough to ruin a man's career."

"I do not believe he was innocent, Inspector Byrnes! I am sure that he was guilty, and, having escaped punishment for that, he means to do us more injury still. No—an innocent man would not have been ruined by an unjust accusation! It would have stimulated him to prove by his after-life that he had been wronged."

"Do you know what his subsequent life has been?" inquired the Inspector.

"I have heard enough to know that it has been what I should have expected it to be. He has associated with low and dishonest people; he has gone under different names, and it is probable that he may have been arrested more than once for other crimes. I have always felt that he was our enemy, and have expected that something like this would happen. I am the only one of us left to fight him, Inspector Byrnes. He killed my eldest brother; he was the means of bringing about the disgrace and death of Percy; my father died of disappointment and grief; my mother is a broken-down invalid. But I am strong and well, and I am determined to bring him to justice! Will you help me?"

Her eyes darkened and her cheeks flushed as she put the question. The Inspector, though he could not but perceive that the chances were against the correctness of her theory, was touched by her earnestness.

"In what way would you expect me to assist you?" he inquired.

"You can communicate with the police in all parts of the country," she answered, "and you know, or can find out, the history of all the criminals who have been arrested in New York and in many other places. What I ask you to do is to trace the record of Horace Dupee from the time he left the gaol on the termination of his trial

till now. Find out his associates, and make them give evidence against him; learn what his aliases have been, and whether he was not in New York on the day that Mrs. Tunstall lost her money. If he was—and I am sure it will turn out so—it will be found that he had money to spend soon afterwards, and perhaps some one of the bank-notes can be traced to him. Oh!" she exclaimed, lifting one hand with an irrepressible gesture, "if I can see him stand before me in the prisoner's dock, I shall have lived long enough!"

"Upon my word, Miss Nolen," remarked the Inspector with a smile, "I wouldn't envy the man who had done you an injury, be he who he may; and if this fellow Dupee, or any one else, has been guilty of the crimes you charge him with I hope with all my heart you may live to see him convicted of them—and a long time afterwards, too! As for my share in the business, I can assure you that all possible investigations shall be made and, if Dupee has really joined the criminal classes it will probably only be a question of time before we run across him. It is something to have a definite person suspected in connection with the affair. I don't want to give you any hopes that I can not fulfil; but I am willing to say that it is not impossible something may come out of this."

"I don't ask for promises—only let something be done!" Pauline replied, rising and giving her hand to the detective. He felt the strong clasp of her little fingers, and smiled again.

"You may depend upon my being at least as good as my word," he said kindly. "Your cause is a good one, and, so far as I am connected with it, you may be certain that it will not suffer. But you must be prepared for disappointment, and you must be patient."

CHAPTER XV.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.

IT had been the custom with the Nolens, during the summer months, to go to a seaside resort known as Squittig Point, on the New England coast. They owned a small cottage there, consisting of a sitting-room, three bed-rooms, and a kitchen, and a verandah the area of which was larger than all the rest of the house. The house stood upon a low bluff directly overlooking the beach. There was a semi-circular inlet at this point, about fifty yards across; in this a pier had been constructed, to the end of which a catboat was moored.

It was a pretty place, but a very quiet one. To reach it it was necessary to drive five or six miles from the railway station in the neighboring town. Within a radius of a mile there were perhaps a dozen cottages similar to the Nolens' and occupied chiefly by artists. Milk, eggs, poultry, and vegetables were furnished by the farm-houses in the vicinity; fish could be caught by any one with a fishing-line and a boat; meat and groceries must be fetched from the town. It was out of the line

of fashionable travel ; and those who knew of its existence, and had established themselves there, were united in a conspiracy to keep fashion away from it. If they themselves felt the need of a little dissipation, they could be at Newport in four or five hours, or at Swampscott before night. But here they could always be sure of rest, seclusion, charming scenery, and as much fishing, sailing, and bathing as they wanted. Of course they could not hope to keep their secret long ; sooner or later somebody would appear and build a hotel ; but meanwhile they enjoyed it all the more for feeling that their exclusive possession of it must be limited.

Opposite the Point was a line of low islands, seven or eight miles distant, which served as a natural breakwater against the violence of the Atlantic's waves, and gave to the intervening expanse of water the advantages of a bay. They were also a charm and attraction in themselves ; for they were constantly undergoing the most surprising changes under the influence of the mirage; and, being within an easy sail, were often visited for picnicking purposes by the sojourners in the cottages. Baskets of provisions were carried over, and the materials for a clam-bake or a chowder were always obtainable from the sands and the sea. The time not occupied in cooking and eating could be devoted to picking huckleberries, practicing with rifle or shot-gun, or, if the age and circumstances of the members of the party permitted,

in quiet flirtations along the beaches or in the woods. The sail home was made by the red light of sunset or by the white lustre of the moon.

The winter and spring had passed away without any news having been obtained concerning Horace Dupee ; if he had really been in New York at the time of the perpetration of the robbery, he had entirely disappeared. The only thing to be done was to wait patiently until he came back again, keeping a bright but undemonstrative lookout for him in the meanwhile. As Inspector Byrnes had the matter in charge, it was not necessary that Pauline should remain in New York ; she could be communicated with at any time, and it might even hasten the result she desired if she were known to be out of the city. Accordingly, as summer approached, and her mother's health manifestly demanded a change, preparation were made to go down to Squittig Point. Judge Ketelle, for reasons which the reader will perhaps comprehend, arranged to accompany them. He had not as yet made any avowal to Pauline of the nature of his sentiments towards her, but he had been assiduous in his attentions ; and only the greatness of the prize at stake withheld him from putting his fate to the touch at once.

They arrived about the middle of June. The cottage had previously been put in order for their reception ; curtains unpacked and put up ; mattings spread on the floors ; hammocks swung in the verandas ; Venetian blinds fastened over the

windows. The catboat had been routed out of her winter quarters in the barn, a new coat of paint had been given her, new sheets and halliards rove, and her shrunken seams had been soaked till they were water-tight. There she rested at her moorings as gracefully as a sea-gull. Every thing being ready, the party, convoyed by the judge, drove out from the town one fine day and took possession. It was sunset by the time the last trunk was moved in. They had supper, and then sat out on the veranda enjoying the pure salt air and the liquid outlook over the bay. There was a faint breeze; little waves made a barely audible plash on the shore of the cove. The boat curtesyed gently off the end of the pier, as if welcoming its owners back to nature. The moon rose late and red; it was past the full. To the right, beyond the point, the light-house lamp flashed intermittently; a sloop drifted past half a mile out, and the sound of a banjo tinkled audibly across the water. "It's delicious!" murmured the judge, sitting with Mrs. Nolen on one side of him and Pauline on the other, and a cigar between his lips. "To-morrow we'll go out in the boat and visit the island."

Mrs. Nolen gave a sigh. She was thinking of her son drowned at sea.

Pauline understood what the sigh meant; but she was made of other metal than her mother. "I mean to learn how to sail the boat myself this summer," she said. "I like the sea; I would like to

live beside it, or on it, always. How soft and gentle it is now! But when the storms come—!"

"I can give you lessons in sailing," observed the judge. "You know, when I was a boy I spent a year before the mast."

"I learned something last year from Percy," Pauline replied, "and, now that he has become a part of the sea, I shall feel more at home on it than before."

The next day, accordingly, the practice of navigation began, and was continued day by day thereafter. Pauline showed herself an apt pupil, and was, indeed, quicker in an emergency than the judge himself. Mrs. Nolen at first could not be prevailed on to accompany them; but, one warm day, they induced her to venture out, and the experience was so pleasant that she repeated it from time to time.

Meanwhile, the judge's affair was manifestly approaching a crisis. The constant companionship of the girl he loved was inexpressibly sweet to him, and he was unable to repress some manifestation of it; yet he could not decide whether or not Pauline cared enough about him to accept him as her husband. That she esteemed him highly was evident, and that her affection for him was deep and sincere; but there are many kinds of affection, and the question was whether her affection was of a kind capable of being developed into the love of a wife. The judge wished with all his heart that he could do her some immense service, or make

for her sake some noble sacrifice, which might serve to draw her nearer to him. But such things can not be commanded at will, and seldom occur when they are wanted. It seemed that he must trust to whatever unaided merit he possessed to win her heart.

Pauline had always been mature for her age; but since the calamity that had fallen upon her she had developed greatly. She was graver and more taciturn than before, and her manner was more thoughtful and controlled. She seemed already to have outgrown her girlhood, and to have attained the strength and experience of a woman. All this was in the judge's favor; for his age was the factor in the matter which he feared most. If they could meet on more nearly equal terms in this respect, he could feel more confidence as to the rest. She conversed with him on his own intellectual level, and consulted him freely and confidentially on all matters of interest to herself. No friendship between a man and woman could have been more intimate and genuine; but it was something more than friendship that the judge longed for; if he could have detected a single glow of passion in her cheeks, he would have been a much happier man. On the other hand, Pauline was quite able to veil her feelings; and no young woman of healthy mind can be expected to show what emotion may be in her, or even to acknowledge it to herself, until she has been fairly challenged.

At length, having become quite accustomed to

the management of the boat, they decided to make the trip to the island. The lunch-basket was packed, and stowed amidships ; fish-lines and hooks were placed in the locker, in case they should come across a school of blue-fish ; cushions and wraps were provided for Mrs. Nolen, and extra ballast was put into the hold, in order to keep her steady in case the wind should increase. An early start was made, for the breeze was so light as scarcely to ruffle the water, and set nearly in a direction opposite to that which they wished to go. In order to get out of the little cove it was necessary to use the oars ; but after that the wind gently swelled the sail, and, proceeding by long tacks, they slowly made their way toward the island that seemed to quiver and waver in the heat on the horizon. About eleven o'clock the breeze freshened a little, and the boat slipped more swiftly, but still with an even, gliding motion, through the water. The judge, who fancied he detected signs of blue-fish, now relinquished the helm to Pauline, and got out his lines. The squid was thrown out astern, and cut a tiny wake through the waves, while the judge, with his finger on the line, watched it like a hawk. For half an hour, in spite of several false alarms, nothing was caught, but finally there was an unmistakable tug, and, hauling in with feverish rapidity, the judge, in a few moments, had the pleasure of lifting on board a fine large demijohn, tightly corked, which had been hooked by the handle.

After the laugh had subsided, the judge suggested that the demijohn might contain something, and he knocked off the head against the gunwale of the boat. About a pint of salt water came out, and then a fragment of wood—apparently part of the lid of a cigar-box, on which something had been written with a pencil. The writing was almost obliterated, but two or three words, or portions of words, still remained.

"See if you can make them out, Pauline," said the judge, after scrutinizing the inscription a few moments. "Your eyes are better than mine."

Holding the tiller in her left hand, Pauline took the bit of wood in her right, and looked at it. "I can make out part of a name," she said presently, "and some figures—a date, I suppose . . . Ah!"

Her lips closed tightly, and her eyes dilated. The boat swung round into the wind, and lay with the sail flapping. She had forgotten the tiller.

"What is it?" asked the judge, in surprise.

She met his eyes, and then glanced stealthily toward her mother.

"Nothing," said she; and put the helm over again. The boat resumed its course, the water bubbling under the stern. Mrs. Nolen, gazing toward the island, which was now near at hand, had noticed nothing.

After a moment, she leaned toward him and whispered in his ear: "It is the name of the steamer in which Percy sailed, and the date of the hurricane. Some one must have thrown it overboard in

the storm—perhaps it is his own writing. Say nothing ; mother must not know."

She thrust the bit of wood into the front of her dress, while the judge drew back with a grave, concerned face, and folded his arms in silence. It was a strange event, indeed. That demijohn had been drifting about on the ocean currents for months, to be brought, at last, to the very hand for which it had been perhaps intended. Pauline did not doubt that Percy had thrown it overboard at the moment when all hope seemed gone, and probably just before he himself was swept from the deck ; and if so it must have been to her that he had in his heart addressed it.

The incident brought the picture of the disaster vividly before her imagination ; she had never realized it so intensely before—the plunging hull, the reeling decks, the shattered masts, the white leaps and seething of the maddened seas, the deafening shriek of the gale, the black darkness around and overhead ; and her brother, her own beloved brother, staggering forth into this blind fury of chaos to waft to her the last message of despair. She saw it all ; and then, with a long indrawing of the breath, her eyes beheld the blue surface of the summer sea, the warm and tender sky bending over it, the green shore of the island toward which they were softly gliding. Her heart melted, and tears wet her cheeks unawares.

"I am really glad I came," said Mrs. Nolen, turning round with a smile. "It has been a

delightful sail, and the island looks so pretty ! I hope it will be as nice going back."

"Well begun is half ended," said the judge, raising the centerboard as the boat entered an inlet and ran up on the beach ; "and, if the worst comes to the worst, we have provisions enough to stay here over night."

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE WOOING.

THE judge pulled off his shoes and stockings and jumped into the shallow water, and, tugging manfully, pulled the boat up high enough to render it an easy matter to transport the ladies to the shore. Mrs. Nolen he took in his arms and set down on the beach; then he turned to do the like service for Pauline, and his heart beat at the thought of having her for a moment so near him. But as she stood poising herself in the bows, light, beautiful, and agile, he perceived that she meant to make a leap of it, and indeed the distance was probably not beyond her powers. She glanced at him at that juncture, and could not have failed to notice the sudden faltering of his expression from its previous joyful expectation; she hesitated, and then, with a faint blush, held out her arms, saying, "After all, perhaps you had better take me."

The judge could not speak; the revulsion was too sudden. She had never before done any thing which seemed so significant, and as he received her on his sturdy shoulder he experienced a happiness more poignant than he had ever known. The ac-

tion lasted but for an instant, but the effect was by no means so transient; on the contrary, it kept glowing and increasing in his soul, and quite illuminated his whole aspect. Pauline, too, was in an unusual mood; she seemed softer and more accessible than was usual with her. The tears which she had lately shed had brought all the woman in her to the surface. There were tones in her voice that thrilled to the judge's heart like exquisite music. The memory of her brother had done her lover good service.

A spot was selected under the shade of a cedar, with clean white sand underneath. Here Mrs. Nolen was established with her cushions, and the cloth was spread for lunch. The basket was unpacked, the plates and knives and forks arranged, and the good things set out. They had brought a jug of water, but it had become so warm as to be unpalatable; so the judge proposed that they should go and find a spring; there was sure to be one not far off. Pauline assented and they started, leaving Mrs. Nolen beneath the cedar.

"I did not know whether to be glad or sorry that I was the means of bringing that strange message to you," said the judge, when they were out of ear-shot. "And yet I could not help thinking that there must have been some providential design in the matter. It was as if Percy had appointed me his messenger to you."

"Oh, I am glad—I am only glad!" rejoined Pauline musingly, with her eyes downcast. "It

puts my doubts at rest. All this time I could not realize that he was gone. I knew it, of course; but it had not been brought home to me. Now I can feel that all is well with him. I am glad it came."

"It seems a pity that so much of the message should be illegible," remarked the judge. "It would have been well to know for a certainty that it came from Percy's own hand."

"Perhaps it will become more legible when the wood is dried. But I should not care if it turned out to have been written by some one else. It is from Percy's ship—the *Amazon*—and in that case it is from him."

"I am a little surprised," said the judge, after a pause, "that Mr. Martin has not written us some of the details of the affair. He can hardly have failed to understand that any information, however slight, would have been precious to you. You have not heard from him, have you?"

"No, and I think you are right. He should have written. But I can imagine why he has not. It was his suggestion that Percy should leave New York. He urged him to go with him; he took that responsibility. The least he could do was to guard him from harm. When that storm came, he should not have let him go out of his sight. But, instead, he let him be drowned. I can understand why he has not written to me — he would not dare!"

She said this with a passionate emphasis. The

judge was secretly conscious of a feeling of relief, but his sense of rectitude compelled him to say, "It would not be just, I think, to charge Mr. Martin with being accountable for Percy's death."

"Perhaps it is not logically just; but that is the way I feel," was her reply.

By this time they had reached the spring, which trickled out of a sand-bluff a few feet above high-water mark, and filled a barrel that had been sunk in the sand below. The judge knelt down and plunged the jug into the cool water, which gurgled into it with a refreshing sound. Pauline stood, with her hands hanging folded, looking down on him. The blue sea, the sunshine, the warmth were inexpressibly soothing.

"How pleasant it is here," she said.

The judge rose, with the jug in his hand. A moment before he had not meant to speak so soon; but now the words seemed to break from him involuntarily.

"Pauline, will you be my wife?" he said.

She took a step backward, and their eyes met. She was startled, and the expression of her face at first seemed to indicate refusal. But after a few moments the softer look returned to it, mingled with sadness.

"Would that be best?" she asked.

"Infinitely best for me. But it is you who must decide. I have loved you ever since you were a little girl."

"Does my mother know of this?"

"Yes, since last year; and she has bidden me Godspeed. But I do not wish you to be influenced by that. Decide for yourself alone. I am twice your years, and more; but in my love for you I am young, and shall always be."

She stood silent for a while. She was evidently touched by his words, and by the manly generosity of his appeal; but something was yet wanting to give the final conviction to her heart, and she was too true to herself to commit herself without it.

"There is no man living for whom I care so much as for you," she said at length; "but I have never thought of caring for you in that way. I have depended on you and trusted in you, but to be your wife. . . . Oh, you must give me time! I do not know what I think, or feel. But I shall not be in doubt—I will give you an answer soon. It seems to me that if I could love you as you wish it would be a fortunate thing for me—fortunate that a man like you should wish to marry such a girl as I am. But give me till to-morrow."

"As long as you need," answered the judge, huskily. "It is my duty and my happiness to wait for you, and upon you, as long as I live."

The breeze fell again during the afternoon, and they delayed their starting in expectation of a change later on. The result justified their forecast; for as the moon appeared above the eastern horizon the clouds began to gather in the west, and the tops of the trees waved and murmured,

The direction of the wind was such that, after leaving the island, they could make a nearly straight run for home, keeping the boom over the port quarter. In setting out, a long tongue of land, extending on the southeast, broke the sweep of the wind, and made it seem much lighter than it really was. The water was smooth, and the impulse just sufficient to make them glide along rapidly. But the moment the point of the cape was passed the sudden increase in the violence of the wind fairly startled them. The judge, who was at the helm, made the mistake of supposing that it was a gust or temporary squall only, and therefore did not put back into the smooth water and double-reef his sail, as he should have done. By the time he had discovered that the wind had come to stay, they were too far on their course to make a return advisable. To have done so would have involved beating up almost in the teeth of the gale, which would not only have been a long job, but one which the height of the waves would have rendered dangerous. To keep on, on the other hand, seemed comparatively easy, the wind being nearly fair, yet not so much so as to involve the peril of jibing ; the distance, moreover, was not very great, and the boat, though heavily laden, was going fast. Accordingly the judge grasped the tiller firmly, and kept her headed so as to pass the lighthouse a couple of points to the northwestward.

The three occupants of the little craft were all seated, of course, close up on the weather side, the

spread of sail having a tendency to bear her down to leeward. The judge sat next the stern ; Pauline was close to him, and Mrs. Nolen was next to Pauline, her feet being supported against the sheath of the centreboard. But as they sped along the waves ran higher and higher, and began at length to dash over the weather gunwale, wetting Pauline's back and shoulders, and running down into the well. The effect of this, after it had continued for a while, was inevitably to make the boat sit lower in the water, and thus offer less opposition to the inroads of the seas ; and it was evident that an effort must be made to bale her out. There was a tin dipper in the locker ; not without difficulty the judge succeeded in getting this out, and, stooping down, endeavored to bail with his right hand, while handling the tiller with his left. But it was impossible to hold the boat to her course with one hand, in such a sea ; and after a minute Pauline took the dipper and intimated that she would attend to that part of the work. She bailed rapidly and steadily, and threw out a large amount of water ; but the waves continued to rise and overlap the gunwale, so that she was unable to keep pace with the influx, and the boat settled so low that ever and anon a wave would wash in to leeward. This was a serious matter ; it meant that swamping was not far off ; and with the extra ballast on board she would go to the bottom like a stone. And if she did, nothing was more certain than that they would be drowned. It would be

impossible for even the strongest swimmer to reach the shore on such a night.

Mrs. Nolen, after expressing, in the subdued manner characteristic of her in all circumstances, her horror and despair at the situation—the real gravity of which she was, however, probably far from recognizing—had relapsed into a sort of lethargic state, half reclining on the narrow seat, motionless, and seemingly unconscious of the water that was dashing over her. This passive attitude was doubtless the best for all concerned that she could possibly have assumed. The judge perhaps suffered more than any of the party; for he felt himself mainly responsible for the affair; and the idea of death stepping between him and Pauline at such a juncture was almost more than he could bear. Pauline, alone, was apparently perfectly cheerful and composed. She even felt a pleasant exhilaration in the face of the imminent danger. The exertion of bailing had put her in a warm glow from head to foot; and though she saw that her labor was ineffectual she maintained it with unfaltering resolution. They were now within a mile of the light-house, and as soon as they passed under the lee of it they would be comparatively safe. But it was a question whether the boat would hold out so long, and just then an unforeseen catastrophe occurred.

As Pauline stooped to fill the bailer, the little vessel gave a sudden lurch to leeward, throwing the girl forward on her knees in the bottom of the

boat. The judge reached out quickly to save her from going overboard; in doing so, the tiller was thrust over; the boat came directly before the wind, the sail jibed, and the boom, as it swung to starboard, struck the judge on the head, and knocked him into the water. At the same moment a wave came over the stern and deluged the seat-room. The end seemed to be at hand.

But Pauline was not a woman to be vanquished without a struggle. As she sprang up and seized the tiller, her mind was perfectly clear as to what should be done. The boat had already fallen off, and was broadside to the wind; she put down the helm, and brought her up in the wind's eye, rapidly hauling in the sheet as she did so, and giving it a turn round the cleat. Then she bent her gaze on the dark confusion of waters in which the judge had sunk.

It was ten to one that he had been carried to leeward and out of reach. But one circumstance, of which Pauline was not aware, operated in her favor. There was a strong tide running out against the wind; and when the judge rose his head appeared within a foot of where Pauline sat. She stretched over toward him, grasped him by the sleeve of the coat, and drew him toward her. Though half stunned by the blow he had received, he managed to get his arm over the gunwale, and, a wave coming to his assistance, he half scrambled, half was thrown into the bottom of the boat. Once there, his remaining strength forsook him,

and he lay unconscious. Pauline did not attempt to relieve him; she had her hands full of other matters. The boat was almost in a sinking state, and they were still more than half a mile from port.

She watched her chance heedfully to come about, for to ship another wave like the last one might be fatal. The boat obeyed her helm promptly, and set off with a plunge and a roll towards her destination. During the pause she had drifted some distance to leeward, so that she was now sailing with the wind very nearly behind her and the boom far out; and although this involved some danger of jibing again, it diminished the risk of taking in water over the quarter, and was in so far an advantage. Pauline's utmost strength was required to hold the tiller, which struggled with her like a wild creature fighting to get loose; yet she was compelled to keep one hand upon the sheet likewise, which might at any moment need hauling in. The strain upon her nerves and muscles was terrible, but she clenched her teeth and held on; in courage and spirit, at least, she was equal to the occasion. Once in a while she threw a hasty glance into the body of the boat. Mrs. Nolen had slipped down from her seat and had managed to draw the judge's head and shoulders on her lap.

"If I save them," said Pauline to herself, "I will accept it as a sign."

As she spoke the boat gave a leap and was suddenly in smooth water. The sail barely swelled to the breeze. The change was so sudden that it

seemed miraculous. They had passed under the lee of the lighthouse, but that appeared inadequate to account for so abrupt and great an alteration. Indeed, Pauline always believed and declared afterwards that the gale had actually ceased, without visible cause, in a moment of time. The boat slipped sluggishly through the water on an even keel. There was scarcely air enough to carry her to her moorings in the little cove.

"Well, then, I will be his wife," said Pauline to herself, as they touched the pier; "and I think I love him now!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A HUNTER'S YARN.

ON a warm evening in October the steamship *Pilgrim*, of the New York and Fall River line, had just left her dock at the former place, and was on her way up the Sound. A rather stout, but actively made man, with curly red hair and side-whiskers, and rather prominent gray eyes, mounted the gangway from below, and stood near the door of the saloon. He had just taken a cigar from his waistcoat pocket, and was in the act of cutting off the end of it with his penknife when a tall personage with bony features and a thin neck came in through the door and confronted him. He was about to pass on, but, at a second glance, stopped and said, as if to himself,

"Henry Clifton."

The red-haired man turned sharply. "Bob Stapleton, by jingo!" he exclaimed.

They shook hands, evidently pleased at the encounter, eyeing each other all over as if to make sure that no part of either was missing.

"Well, and what have you been doing with yourself these three years past?" inquired he of the red hair who answered to the name of Clifton. "Let's

see ; it was in Liverpool I saw you last, wasn't it ?" You were after that forging gang."

"Yes, and I got 'em," responded the other who had been addressed as Bob Stapleton. "It was a good job ; I've had nothing better since. But what brings you over here ?"

"Oh, a private affair—something particularly choice," replied Clifton, sticking his cigar in his mouth. "All expenses paid and twenty pound a month."

"Hullo ! That's not bad. A hundred dollars and expenses. What is it ? Is Scotland Yard after the Fenians again ?"

"No, no. I don't belong to the Yard any more ; doing business now on my own feet. I'm engaged on a case involving a hundred and fifty thousand pounds—seven hundred and fifty thousand of your money."

"Great Scott ! A robbery ?"

"No ; no such common business. A lost heir !"

"A lost heir ? That sounds good ! Come, we've got the evening before us ; suppose you spin the yarn."

"Humph ! I'm not so sure about that," returned Clifton, scratching his whiskers thoughtfully. "This isn't the sort of story that one tells to every body. However," he added, "you're not every body, though I suppose you consider yourself somebody ; at all events, if you promise to keep it dark, I fancy I can trust you. But let's go into

some quiet corner—as it's a warm evening, suppose we sit outside, where we can smoke. I have cigars enough, and this yarn will probably last out more than one of them."

As they passed out of the door, a gentleman who had been sitting in a chair not far off, with his hat drawn down over his nose, and who had seemingly been asleep, rose quietly from his seat and proceeded to the door of a state-room a little way forward of the paddle-box. He entered the room and locked the door after him; then he breathed a sigh of relief. He took off his hat, and looked at his reflection in the mirror. It showed the countenance of a man between twenty and thirty years of age—perhaps nearer the latter age than the former—the lower part of which was thickly covered with a brown beard, cropped short at the sides and round the throat, but allowed to grow to a point on the chin. The forehead, cheeks, and nose were deeply bronzed by the sun, giving a peculiar appearance to a pair of handsome blue eyes. The hair was cut short; any one would have taken the head for that of a Frenchman. This idea would have been confirmed when the gentleman put across his nose a pair of tinted eyeglasses, mounted in gold. He regarded himself critically.

"Yes," he muttered, in the undertone which people use when conversing with themselves, "it's a good get-up, considering the simplicity of the materials. No one can say I am disguising myself; and yet I doubt if my own mother—God

bless her!—would recognize me at the first glance, though my sister might. I must have been intended by nature for an actor; my features lend themselves so readily to a disguise. At one time I am an American; then an Englishman; now a Frenchman; to-morrow I may attempt a Turk or a Russian. But what an extraordinary piece of bad luck that that fellow Clifton should be on this steamer! Does he know that I am on board? Hardly. And yet, what is he here for? It must be on that same business; and in that business I am concerned, however unwillingly. Perhaps he has come to look up my record. Confound him, why can't he let me alone! I shall have a hard enough time of it without him. Of course he will go straight to Inspector Byrnes, and when the Inspector finds out that I am not—what's that?"

In order to answer this question, it must be observed that the state-room occupied by the bearded gentleman was an "outside" one; its window opened on the water, or rather on a narrow strip of deck which intervened between the rail and the wall of the state-room itself. This strip of deck was just wide enough to admit of a person sitting there, with his shoulders against the wall and his feet on the rail—an attitude said to be a favorite one with Americans, and which any person who has studied the circulation of the blood and its action on the brain will gladly put himself into. The window, it should be added, was pro-

tected by a wooden blind with fine slats, not noticeable from without.

The noise which had caused the bearded gentleman to break off so abruptly in his monologue had been caused by the advent of two persons with camp-stools to the apparently secure retreat which the narrow strip of deck already alluded to afforded. Having established themselves there to their satisfaction, and lit their cigars, they began to talk in a low tone. But although the blind of the bearded gentleman's state-room was shut, the window itself was open; and as he had reason to suppose that the conversation was going to be of particular importance to himself he took care to leave the window as it was, and even to sit down beside it. As the reader will already have surmised, the speakers were the two gentlemen to whom we have already been introduced—Henry Clifton and Bob Stapleton.

"You went first to New Zealand, eh?" Stapleton was saying. "How happened your man—Valentine, do you call him?—to be there?"

"He was the second son, don't you see? and consequently, after he'd run through the money his father gave him, he had only himself to fall back on. So he started for New Zealand to make his fortune at sheep-farming. When I got there he had been gone the better part of a year or more. The sheep-farming had not turned out very well, but he had got a sum of money somehow, and had gone off to enjoy it; whether he would come back

again, and where he had gone, no one could tell me. You may be sure that if he had known that his elder brother was going to die, and let him into full possession of an estate worth three-quarters of a million of dollars, he would have left his address."

"It's a most curious thing," observed Mr. Stapleton, philosophically, "how some men will run after a good thing all their lives and never catch it, and another man will run away from a good thing all his life, and never let it catch him."

"Well, as I was saying," Mr. Clifton continued, this Mr. Valentine—as I call him—had left for parts unknown, and my business was to find out where that was. I thought it all over, and made up my mind that America was about the most likely place, for he wouldn't be likely to go back to England, and, being of a roving disposition, and never having visited the States, that was naturally the first place he'd think of. And when a man goes to America he's pretty certain sooner or later to fetch up in New York. So it was in New York that I figured I should find him. But before I started I thought it would be as well to make the thing certain by sending on a cable message, addressed to certain parties in New York that you may have heard of, asking whether my man was there. Sending telegrams half round the earth costs money, Bob; but it doesn't cost quite as much as to go yourself, let alone the time and the wear and tear."

"However, expenses being paid—" said Bob.

"That's all very well; but parties employing one like to have a good account of their money; and a good recommendation is sometimes worth more than cash in hand. Well, I didn't look for an answer inside of a week or ten days; but forty-eight hours after I had sent off the despatch the landlord of my hotel came up to me and told me that he believed I was looking for Mr. Valentine, and that a man had just arrived from Panama who had met a party going by that name in Mexico some six weeks before, and he thought likely he'd be there yet. I told him to bring the man around, and he came and I had a talk with him.

"He had seen Valentine, sure enough; I made up my mind as to that. He described him as near as could be; for though I had never seen him myself I had all the points about him from those who had, and a photograph taken four or five years before. The fellow said that Valentine had come to Mexico from New York, after being wrecked in a big gale at St. Thomas, and a friend of his—I'll call him Percy—was drowned in the same storm."

"You call him Percy, do you?" interposed Mr. Stapleton, "and he was drowned in the St. Thomas hurricane? And what might his other name be?"

"I'm not giving names; I'm telling you a story," returned Mr. Clifton curtly.

"That's all right: something occurred to my mind, that's all; and a mighty good story it is you're telling," rejoined the other affably. "So

Mr. Valentine went over to Mexico, did he? And what did he do there?"

"Well, he'd brought some letters, so it seems, introducing him to the President and some other swells; and he handed 'em in, and was received in good style. He gave 'em to understand that he'd come to settle, and to grow up with the country, so to speak. One thing led to another, and at last they got talking about mines; and with that the President gave him a guide, and sent him off up to a place called Pachuca, about sixty or seventy miles north of the city. He moused about there—he knew something of mining, it appears—and examined the mines that were working, and some others that had been given up: and at last he fixed on a bit of ground where there wasn't any mine at all; but he took a fancy to it for all that, and went back to Mexico to see about getting possession of it. He managed things very cleverly, and got the swells interested, and made out that he wanted to let them into a good thing, and would be satisfied with a very small share himself, and would take all the trouble of looking after the business off their hands into the bargain. So what did he do but raise a company, and the company raised a capital—you know how those things are worked—and they filed their claim to the land, and appointed him manager, and the first tests he made showed a bigger percentage of silver than had been known in that neighborhood for a hundred years. That was the news my informant

brought me; he said all Mexico was talking of it; and that Mr. Valentine's pickings, though they might be small, comparatively speaking, were likely to stand him in a cool hundred thousand dollars a year, which is enough to keep a man off the parish."

"Yes, I should think it might," Mr. Stapleton assented. "And that's the way it is in this world, Henry Clifton; luck goes dead against a man for years and years, and no let up; and then, all of a sudden, for no reason that ever any body can find out, his brother dies and leaves him a million in England, and he goes to Mexico and collars a mine worth a hundred thousand a year. The million ain't enough, and the mine ain't enough; he must have 'em both; that's the way of the world every time!"

Mr. Clifton accepted this statement without comment, and went on with his story.

"As you may suppose, I lost no time in packing my grip for Mexico, and I got there in due season, and without accident. I put up at the best hotel, as is always my way, for it costs no more in the end and gives a man a good standing at the first send-off. I made my inquiries, in a quiet, off-hand way; and I had no difficulty at all in hearing all I wanted. Mr. Valentine was there; nobody could speak too well of him; he was hand-in-glove with the President, and he was at that moment out in Pachuca, superintending the putting up of the new machinery in the new mine. If I had any business with him, that was where I would find him.

So the next morning, at six o'clock, I took the train at Buena Vista station to Omeltusco, and then by diligence and horse-car to Pachuca, which I reached at sundown, dead tired, and chock full of dust, and a precious cold, disagreeable, shabby hole Pachuca is, and I don't care who knows it!

"But I was on business, and when I learned that Mr. Valentine was camping out about five miles above I hired a mule then and there, and a black fellow to show me the way; and by nightfall I had him!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DILEMMA.

"AND so you handed him over the deeds of his estate, and that's the end of the story?" said Mr. Stapleton interrogatively.

"You're going a bit too fast," the other replied. "The story is just going to begin; what I've told you is merely by way of explaining the situation. After chasing a man half round the world, and a little more, you don't expect to get through your business with him in five minutes. When I first saw him he was smoking a cigar by a fire that was built outside of one of them adobe huts, and drinking a stuff they call pulque, which is the nearest they can get to whiskey in that country, and pretty poor stuff it is. Well, I stepped up to him and says I, 'Good evening, Mr. ——' (giving him his name you understand) 'for I am told that you are that gentleman.' He looked up at me, and I said to myself that I had made no mistake. He had on a Mexican serape and a wide-brimmed hat; but his figure and face answered well enough to my description of him, though instead of side-whiskers he had a mustache and a chin-beard, as if he meant to be a Mexican through and through.

"'Yes,' says he, looking up at me; 'and have you any business with me?'

"'Well,' says I, 'I think I may say I have, since I've come some fifteen thousand miles to find you.' He stopped a bit and then said, 'From England, Oh?' 'You are right, sir,' said I: 'but before I go further, and to be sure there's no mistake, I must ask you to be kind enough to give me an account of yourself—your family and so forth—so that I may know you are the man I'm sent to see, and no other.' 'And what if I refuse?' said he. 'Then,' said I, 'all I'll have to do is to go back where I came from; though I may tell you that if you are the gentleman in question it will be your loss, and a big loss too, not to let me know it.'

"'As to that,' he says, 'I don't know that you can give me any thing I care to have, whatever you may have brought; but if you want to know my history I always carry my papers about with me, and I've no objection to your looking them over.' And with that he took a wallet out of his pocket, and handed it to me. I opened it and examined the papers one after the other. 'They seem all right, sir,' I said, 'and I suppose I may as well take it that every thing is correct and regular;' so then I went on and told him what had happened, how his brother was dead, and he the heir of the property. He heard it all with a sort of strange look on his face; and when I got through at first he said nothing at all. He got up and took a turn up and down, smoking his cigar; but at

last he comes back, and says he, "Who's the next heir after me?"

"I didn't see just what that had to do with it; but I said I supposed it would be his cousin or whatever relative was nearest his own blood. 'Well,' says he, chucking away his cigar, 'whoever he is, he may have it. I'm very well satisfied as I am, and I won't have any thing to do with it.' Those were his very words, and you may suppose I was a bit surprised. 'You won't have any thing to do with a hundred and fifty thousand pounds?' says I. 'Not with that hundred and fifty thousand, at any rate,' said he. 'But what are you going to do about it?' says I; 'the property is yours, and it's entailed, and you can't get rid of it.' 'Oh don't trouble yourself about that,' said he, with a laugh. "It won't be buried in the ground. And if the worst comes to the worst, how do you know that I am the right man after all? I have got the papers, and I am called by that name; but you yourself said that you never saw me before; and you could not swear that I am not somebody else. I should have to go to England, in any case, to prove my identity. But I prefer to stay here; and that's the end of it!'

"It was the queerest case ever I heard of, and I didn't know what to make of it. I sat there and talked and argued with him for an hour and more, but nothing I could say made a bit of difference. He wouldn't have the property at any price, and he didn't care what came of it. I gave it over, at

last, for the time being, and passed the night in the hut ; the next morning I tried him again, but he was as obstinate as ever. Well, I didn't believe yet that he meant all he said, so I made up my mind to give him a bit more rope. I told him I was going to stay in Mexico a week or two, and let him understand that if he wanted to change his mind, he'd have an opportunity ; and then I said good-day and rode off. I went back to Mexico, and put up at the hotel, and thought it all over ; but the more I thought about it the less I could make it out. If he was the right man (and every thing about him showed he was) it didn't seem in human nature to refuse the property ; and if he was an impostor, who had somehow managed to get hold of the right man's papers, and to personate him—why, then, what on earth could his object be if not to get the property ? If any thing, that would be the strangest case of the two.

" I had been back from Pachuca just a week when I was told that there was a lady in the house —an English lady—that wanted to see me. Thinks I, ' Now, what does this mean ? ' I brushed myself up a bit and went down to find out. She was sitting at a table in the patio, with a cup of tea in front of her. She was a good-looking woman, and as I judged might be something under thirty years old.

" I made my bow, and she asked me to be seated. After a little talk, says she, ' I hear you have been inquiring after Mr. Valentine '—giving his full

name, you understand. I told her that I had. 'Did you find him?' asked she, 'I did,' said I. She seemed a bit excited or anxious, and I began to have my own ideas; but I wasn't prepared for what she said next. 'I wish you to know that I am his wife,' she said, 'and whatever is his business is mine also.' 'I am bound to inform you, madam,' I said at last, 'that his family has no knowledge of his marriage; they believe him to be a bachelor.' 'I am aware of that,' said she, 'but fortunately I am in a position to prove what I say'; and with that she took her marriage certificate out of her pocket and showed it to me; it was as regular as the multiplication table; she was married to him three or four years ago, in New Zealand. I hadn't a word to say. 'I understand he has come into his property,' said she. 'Well, as to that, madam,' said I. 'So he has; but he has refused point-blank to have any thing to do with it.' She turned white and looked at me very sharp. 'What do you mean?' she cried out. 'Just what I tell you,' said I; and then I went on and gave her the story of my visit to him.

"Well, that seemed to floor her, at first; she kept making exclamations, and saying things half to herself, and biting her lips; it was plain she didn't know what to make of it any more than I did. 'I must see him!' she cried out at last, jumping up from the table; 'I must see him, and—' 'Speak of an angel, madam,' says I; 'here he is!' and sure enough, by the funniest chance in the world, in

walked Mr. Valentine into the patio at that moment. I don't think he was overpleased at the meeting; but it was too late to get out of it, so he came up; and I noticed he only glanced at the lady, as if she was some one he had never seen before; then he gave me good-day, and took my hand. It was a bit awkward; I said, 'I suppose you will wish to converse with your wife alone, sir; I will leave you.' 'My wife!' says he; 'I was not aware there was such a person!' 'Is not this lady your wife?' cried I. He stared at her like a man astonished, and then at me. 'I never saw her till this moment,' said he. 'Come, sir,' said I, 'I have just seen the certificate of her marriage with you.' 'Oh, it is all a mistake,' put in the lady. 'I was never married to this gentleman; I never saw him; I am the wife of Mr. Valentine.' 'Well, and this gentleman is Mr. Valentine,' said I. 'He may have the same name, but he is another person altogether,' said she. 'As to that,' said I, 'you must settle it between you; Mr. Valentine's papers are all correct, and there is only one estate in England with the name that his bears. 'But I have proved,' cried the lady, 'that I am the wife of the heir of that estate; and if this gentleman says he is the heir, I denounce him as an impostor!"

"At that, I looked at Mr. Valentine. He had kept his eyes on the lady all the while, with a sort of perplexed expression; but now he smiled very quietly, and said he, 'I think I have heard of this lady before. I wish to say nothing against her.

She seems to be in a dilemma from which there is no way of extricating her. If she wishes to lay a claim to the estates, she can do so only by acknowledging me as her huband. But you have just heard us both declare that we have never seen each other before. But she also declares me an imposter. Suppose I am; she must find the real man before she can profit by the inheritance. If I am not he, where is he? Grant, on the other hand, that I am he, and this lady is my wife; I still decline to touch a penny of the hundred and fifty thousand pounds; and what I will not accept she cannot share. That is logic and law both, I believe?'"

"Upon my word, Henry Clifton," ejaculated Mr. Bob Stapleton at this juncture, "this is about as peculiar a yarn as ever I listened to! It's as good as a play, and better too. When you get to New York, do you go straight to a manager and offer to sell it to him; and if he don't give you a good price for it I'm a Dutchman!"

"Good or bad," returned Mr. Clifton, "it happened just as I tell it you. When Mr. Valentine said that, the lady seemed staggered for a moment; and then all at once she called out, 'I see how it is! You two have arranged this thing between you! You are in a conspiracy to cheat me! You have plotted to get hold of this property and share it between you, and keep me out! But I will have my rights in spite of you! I will denounce both of you to the authorities. For all I know, you may have murdered my husband, and taken his papers

But you will not succeed; I will expose you, and you shall be punished!'

"Well, that made me a little angry, and I told her that if she wanted to charge me with conspiracy she had better set about it at once, and the sooner the better, for I knew who would get the worst of it. As for Mr. Valentine, he didn't lose his temper, but he said very quietly, 'I am not a murderer, madam, and you will only waste your time in trying to prove me such. But I can assure you that, if I am not your husband—and I certainly am not—no such person exists in the world. Neither can you sustain the charge that I am aiming—either in combination with Mr. Clifton, or alone—to keep you out of this property. I told him a week ago, before you arrived in Mexico, that I would have nothing to do with it; and to that determination I shall adhere. The utmost you can attempt to do is to show that I am not Mr. Valentine; and that you are welcome to attempt. But I warn you beforehand that all the evidence is on my side, and that you will fail. I advise you to go back whence you came, and to give up any idea of ever becoming a great English lady. Meanwhile, I have the honor to wish you good morning!'

"He bowed to her as polite and cool as you please, and walked out of the patio and I followed him. 'What in the name of wonder does all this mean?' I asked him.

"'Really, Mr. Clifton,' said he, 'I can give you

no explanation. You have heard the whole conversation, and you must draw your own conclusions from it, as I do mine. If you believe that that lady is the wife, or the widow, of the Mr. Valentine who has inherited the estate, you are at liberty to act in accordance with your conviction. The most difficult thing will probably be to make other people believe as you do.'

"'That's all right, Mr. Valentine,' said I, 'but there is one thing you can tell me. You said just now that you had heard speak of that lady before, and the inference was that what you had heard was not to her credit. Now what did you mean by that?'

"'Well, Mr. Clifton,' said he, 'perhaps I may have heard of her before, or perhaps I may be mistaken in thinking I had; but I don't see why the inference to be drawn is necessarily a bad one. At all events, she has never done me any harm, and I don't believe she ever will, or can; and I have no present intention of harming her, either by word or deed. As I said before, you must follow your own judgment; as for me, what I have said I stick to, and nothing will change me.' By that time we had got to the door of the office of the Secretary of the Interior, who was a friend of his, and he went in and left me in the street, to do my own thinking."

"Well, and what was the upshot of it all?" inquired Mr. Stapleton.

"It isn't ended yet," Mr. Clifton replied; "but

from facts that subsequently came to my knowledge I came to the conclusion that I might learn something by coming on to New York. I don't mind telling you that I have formed a theory about the case, and I think I have a clue; but what the clue and the theory are it would, of course, be premature to state. I expect to be in the city for a month or so, and if, as is probable, I run across you again, why, there may be something new to say. But that's all for to-night."

"Now that I think of it, it's growing a little chilly, too," rejoined Mr. Stapleton, "and as the Governor of South Carolina once remarked to the Governor of North Carolina, 'it's a long time between drinks.' I have some acquaintance with the head steward on board this boat; suppose we go down-stairs?"

Apparently Mr. Clifton accepted this suggestion; for when, a few minutes later, the bearded gentleman pushed open his blind, the two camp-stools were vacant.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN A CARRIAGE.

JUDGE KETELLE and his young wife took up their abode in a house not far from the southern boundary of Central Park, taking Mrs. Nolen to live with them. The wedding aroused considerable interest in New York city, the beauty and accomplishments of the bride being almost as well known as the forensic and judicial ability of her husband. The newly married couple did not entertain, however, owing to the recent domestic misfortunes which had overtaken Mrs. Ketelle's family ; they received a few friends very quietly and informally, and made scarcely any calls. The judge had not been on the bench for some years previous to his marriage ; but he had a large and important practice as a barrister, and he now devoted himself to this with more assiduity than ever. Report had it that he and his wife were very happy together, and though some people admired the judge's intrepidity in venturing to appropriate a lady so beautiful and so much his junior, there was nothing in their relations to indicate that his choice had not been as prudent as it certainly was enviable.

The wedding had taken place about the first of October, on the return of the Nolens and Judge Ketelle from the seaside ; and after a short honeymoon they settled in their new dwelling early in November. The judge attended to business down town every day ; his wife spent her mornings at home, and in the afternoons was fond of driving out in the park in her brougham, occasionally accompanied by her mother, but more often alone. The weather was cold but very fine, and the hue of the autumn leaves was unusually beautiful. But those who happened to see the face of the young wife at the window of her brougham forgot all about the autumnal foliage and had their thoughts filled with the memory of another kind of loveliness.

One afternoon, while passing the children's play-ground, Mrs. Ketelle caused the coachman to stop his horses, in order that she might watch the little creatures at their games ; for nothing pleased her more than the spectacle of children having a good time. After remaining a few minutes, she was about to give the order to move on, when her attention was attracted to a gentleman who was standing with his back partly turned towards her in a foot-path that here approached the carriage-way. He was tall and well made ; he wore a thin cape ulster of dark tweed, and a black felt hat with a curved brim—a sort of fashionable modification of the picturesque Tyrolese headgear. Of his face she could see only the outline

of the cheek and brow; he had a mustache, and a short, closely cut beard.

Why was it that the sight of this man produced so strange and powerful an impression upon her? She asked herself this question, but could give it no satisfactory answer. Surely he was not an acquaintance of hers! And yet there was something about him that not only arrested her gaze, but sent a thrill to her heart, as if particles of ice and fire were being driven through it. Her hands became cold and her teeth chattered, and yet her cheeks were burning, and drops stood on her forehead.

The gentleman turned slowly to resume his walk. As his face came more fully into view, Mrs. Ketelle caught her breath with a sharp sound, and her fingers grasped the frame of the door convulsively. She could not cry out; her lips were parched and her tongue was dry. But her whole soul went out to him through her eyes. Was it a dream? Was he a phantom? Could she be deceived by some marvellous resemblance? Oh, would he pass on without seeing her, and vanish forever!

He had, in fact, walked on several paces, and in another minute he would he out of reach. But either accident or one of those mysterious mental impressions which many persons have experienced in some epoch of their lives caused him suddenly to pause, turn about, and look directly at the face in the carriage window. Their eyes met for a

moment; then the woman covered her face with her hands, and sank back in her seat with a breathless cry of terror, bewilderment, and intolerable joy.

The gentleman, who also seemed pale and agitated, came over to the road and laid his hand on the carriage door. "Drive on!" he said to the coachman, and with the words he entered the carriage and closed the door after him. Then he pulled down the shades over the windows. The coachman spoke to his horses, and they moved on.

This episode had taken place in a short space of time, and with very little visible manifestation of feeling on either side. Nevertheless, it had not entirely escaped observation. Two men had been sauntering along the path side by side, apparently whiling away the hour or two that separated them from dinner. One of them was a tall, slender, graceful fellow, with sharp but well-molded features, black hair and moustache, and a pair of restless black eyes. He was dressed quietly, in dark colors, and yet there was a certain jauntiness in his appearance that suggested the sporting man or the sharper. His companion was a considerably older man, and his face was of a much coarser cast; his clothes were new, but fitted him ill, and he wore a flashy necktie and watch-chain. His small gray eyes had noted the little occurrence above described, and as the carriage rolled away he nudged his friend with his elbow.

"Well, what now?" said the latter.

"Did you see that?"

"What?"

"Well, your wits are wool-gathering, it seems. Did you see that fellow get into that carriage?"

"What carriage?"

"That carriage that was standing here just now with the lady in it. Why, what's got into you, Horrie? Don't you know who she was?"

"No I don't. How should I?"

"Well, you might find it money in your pocket some day, that's all. Swell women like that don't drive out alone in the Park for nothing, I reckon! And may be, rather than have their husbands know what they're after, they might see their way to paying an obliging person a consideration to keep his mouth shut."

"Oh, stuff! That business is played out. The swells are on to it, and the first word that's said they ring the bell for the police. I don't want any of that in mine, thank you! And if you want any one to believe you know all the ladies that drive in the Park in their own broughans, you must find some greener hand than I am."

"I know who she was, just the same," retorted the other. "She's the girl that married that fellow Ketelle, a month ago."

"She?—the sister of that—" he stopped.

"The sister of Jerrold Nolen! You remember him, if I ain't mistaken," said the short man, with a chuckle.

"Yes, I remember him; and when the accounts

are evened up I'll remember you too, Jack Grush, and don't you forget it!" exclaimed the black-haired man, with a sullen fierceness. The fellow he had called Grush laughed but made no reply. "So that was his sister, was it?" the other went on, muttering to himself; "and she's married to the judge a month ago, and taking fellows to drive in her brougham!" He twisted the ends of his moustache, and switched the toe of his boot, as he sauntered along, with the light cane he carried.

Let us follow Mrs. Ketelle's carriage.

After the first few minutes of speechless and wild emotion were passed, Pauline relinquished her brother's hand, and shrank away from him to her side of the carriage. A reaction of feeling had come over her. She felt a sort of indignation that she should have been all these months grieving for a calamity that had never happened.

"Why did you never let us know that you were alive?" she demanded.

"I put it off from day to day," he said. "I had not decided, at first, what to do. I thought of coming home; then I thought, that since I had been reported dead it was better to let it be believed so for a time, until the truth about the robbery should be discovered. Besides, I knew that detectives would be after me, and I feared that a letter addressed to you or to the judge might betray me. At last when I found something to do I decided to wait until I was certain of success before communicating with you. And finally, cir-

cumstances led to my coming back here unexpectedly, myself."

"But Valentine might have written, if you could not."

"Valentine! Why, Pauline, don't you know—don't you see—it was Valentine who was drowned!"

"Valentine! Oh, God forgive me! how I have wronged him!" she turned aside and rested her face against the side of the carriage, and sobbed for a few moments passionately. But she was never one to be long mastered by emotion. She forced back her tears, and said, "Tell me! tell me all!"

"The whole affair came about by an accident, without any prearrangement at all. When I went down to the pier of the steamship, Val had suggested my making one or two alterations in my dress and appearance, so that if any one were on the lookout for me I should pass for Valentine. Afterwards, on the steamer, we found that people were giving us each other's names, and we let it be so. We occupied the same state-room, and I used his things—I had brought very little of my own with me. On the voyage he told me all his private history: I afterwards thought that if he had been consciously training me to personate him, he could not have done it more effectually. Then came the day of the hurricane. We were close together all the time until within a few minutes of the time the wind changed. We were in the cabin; there was a lantern burning, but it was almost quite dark. Val left me and went to our room. I could

see him there ; he seemed to be writing on something that he held up before him. Afterwards he went towards the steward's room, holding on by the iron pillars of the cabin as he went. That was the last I saw of him. He must have gone on deck —for what, I can't imagine—and been swept overboard. No one knew any thing of it until the next morning."

"Now I know—now I know!" murmured Pauline, pressing her hands over her heart. "It was he—he did not forget—I might have known it!"

"What might you have known?" asked her brother.

"Nothing ; go on. When you found that he was dead, what then?"

"We had agreed, before, to go to Mexico. He had letters and papers. I took them, and went, travelling as Valentine Martin. I saw that in that way I should get a standing in the place which I could not have obtained for myself, and that the report of my death would throw off the police. I was cordially received in Mexico, and put in the way of doing some valuable business. Every thing prospered with me, as it had never done before. The story is too long to tell fully now ; but in the midst of my success an extraordinary thing occurred ; an English agent of the Martin estate came over and told me—supposing me to be Valentine —that by my brother's death I was the heir. I did not wish to enter into explanations, so I simply told him that I did not want the estate, and that it

might go to the next of kin. I had forgotten that Val had a wife, though, of course, I knew all about her. She had ruined his life in more ways than one, and was no better than she should be; but if his death were known she would be entitled to a share of the estate. It seems she had got wind of the English agent's business, and had followed him from New Zealand. I had a curious interview with her; she charged me finally with having made away with her husband in order, by personating him, to get his property, and treated my assertion that I was not going to touch the property as mere buncombe. But the next day I got a letter from her in which she actually offered, in case I would make common cause with her, to go to England, prove her marriage to Valentine, get the estate, and then divide with me!"

"Poor Valentine!" murmured Pauline, with a trembling lip.

"When I refused, she declared war, and said she would expose me as an impostor and probable murderer. She learned that I was manager and part owner of a valuable mine that I had discovered near Pachuca. The other owners were two high officers of the government. She went to them with her story. They told me what she had said. I had already made up my mind what to do; I gave them the whole history of what had happened since Valentine and I had left New York; I told them what he had told me about his wife; and then I showed them the letter she had just written

me. I knew I was risking every thing in making a clean breast of it; but the fact was I was tired of living under a name that did not belong to me, and I wanted to put an end to it at all hazards."

"I am glad of that!" said Pauline.

"They were rather upset by the story, and for a while I thought the affair would go against me. But I suspect they considered me too useful a man to lose; I was making a great deal of money for them, and doing all the work; and then the woman's letter tipped the beam. They said, finally, that they would accept me for what I was, if I could give them satisfactory proof that I was what I declared myself to be. Let me show letters or vouchers from reputable persons in New York, bearing out my account of myself, and they would accept me as a full equivalent for what I had pretended to be. I had a power of attorney that Val had given me on the steamer, but of course I could not tell them what had led to my leaving New York; I could not ask any one here for a certificate of good character until my name has been cleared of the charge against it. But it wouldn't do to hesitate; so I said, on the spur of the moment, that I would go to New York, get the evidence they required, and return to them with it. So here I am; but I overheard some conversation, coming down on the boat, between the English agent and a New York detective, which made it seem probable that my affairs will be investigated whether I like it or not, and that meanwhile the true story of how the robbery

was committed has not been revealed yet. How is it?"

The answer to this question led to a long conversation, in the course of which Percy learned all that had happened during his absence, including Pauline's marriage. The search for the thief for whose crime he had suffered had as yet met with no success; but it was still being carried on. After discussing the matter, it was decided that Percy's presence in the city should, for the moment, be kept a secret from every one, even from his mother and Judge Ketelle. He should conceal himself in lodgings in the upper part of the town, where Pauline could visit him from time to time, and report the progress of affairs, and learn, if possible, from Inspector Byrnes, what were the object and result of the English agent Clifton's mission to New York. There might be difficulties in the way; but the brother and sister were young, and believed that the longest lane has a turning.

It was late when Pauline drove up to the door of her house, and, alighting, walked up the steps of the porch. Her mind was full of her brother; and she did not notice the tall man with the black moustache who stood on the corner of the street, tapping his boot with his cane.

CHAPTER XX.

A CHECK.

HAVING seen the lady into the house, the man with the black mustachios turned on his heel and sauntered away.

Black Horace (as he was known to his intimates) was not born to a criminal career, and his present position and character were the result partly of innate evil and partly of circumstances. He had received an excellent education and had graduated from the New York Medical School in good standing. Up to that time, beyond a tendency to loose company and irregular habits, he had developed no noticeably bad tendencies. The chances were that he would outgrow his youthful follies and become a useful member of society.

Almost immediately upon his graduation, however, his destiny took a sinister turn. At a parting supper with his comrades he got into a quarrel with one of them, ending in a scuffle in which blows were exchanged. The quarrel was patched up and the two antagonists shook hands and drank together, but Horace secretly bore a grudge and was determined to "get even." At the end of the

evening, his late antagonist being somewhat the worse for liquor, Horace volunteered to see him home. They walked off together, Horace revolving in his mind the scheme of some practical joke.

That night Horace's companion was found insensible on his doorstep with the mark of a blow from a slung-shot behind his ear. He never entirely recovered consciousness, and died the next day after uttering the name of Horace Dupee.

Horace was arrested on a charge of murder, and in default of bail was thrown into prison. After a long series of delays, extending over a year, he was brought to trial and acquitted. The evidence, though amounting to a strong probability, was not conclusive, and the jury gave him the benefit of the doubt. He went forth nominally a free man, but his social and professional career were blasted ere they had fairly begun. The shadow of the mark of Cain, if not the mark itself, was upon him.

He might have changed his name and achieved success in another country. But half from sullen obstinacy, half from lack of business energy, he did not do this. Instead, he drifted into bad society and soon found himself in harmony with it. The class of society in which he had formerly moved ceased to know him. The police began to take an interest in him, but he was shrewd and cautious enough to avoid falling into their hands. Some of his escapes were very narrow, but up to the present time his photograph had not appeared in the Rogue's Gallery. In such a case, however,

detection is certain to come sooner or later. Some oversight is committed, some "pal" turns State's evidence, or some fatality occurs.

Since the time of his downfall Horace Dupee had wandered from place to place and lived in most States of the Union. But again and again he returned to New York, though he knew that he ran greater risks there than elsewhere. At the time we come up with him he had been absent from the city for nearly a year. It was on the day after his arrival that his companion, Grush, had called his attention to Mrs. Ketelle.

She was the sister of the man of whose murder he had been accused. This fact was sufficient to inspire him with animosity against her. He had never seen her before. The only member of the family with whom he had ever come in personal contact was Jerrold Nolen. But he owed them all a grudge. If it had not been for them he might have had a successful career. He was prepared, therefore, to do her whatever ill-turn came in his way. It was an additional motive that the ill-turn to her could be made of advantage to himself. Grush had suggested this, and though he had turned aside the suggestion, he considered it none the less. There was no need of letting Grush into the affair. In secret councils was safety. Besides Grush had no claims upon him—quite the contrary; he, too, was associated with whatever was disastrous in his life. He made up his mind to carry out his purpose without saying any thing to Grush about it.

Several days passed. One afternoon Mrs. Ketelle left her house and took a Fourth Avenue car uptown. She left it in the neighborhood of Harlem, walked across town a couple of blocks, and entered the door of a small flat that formed part of an unfinished block on a side street. She remained there for upwards of an hour. Twilight was beginning to fall when she came out.

She had not walked far when she heard a step behind her, and a voice said, "Good evening, Mrs. Ketelle. How is the judge to-day?"

She turned, and saw at her side a well-dressed man of dark complexion, who fixed his eyes upon her in a manner she did not like. But his knowledge of her name and of her husband led her to suppose that she must have met him somewhere and forgotten him. "You must excuse me, sir," she said, "but you have the advantage of me."

"Indeed, I believe you are right," he answered, with a short laugh. "The advantage is all on my side. But tell me, Mrs. Ketelle, how does married life suit you? Does the judge come up to your expectations? For my part, I should think twice before marrying a woman so much younger than myself. By the time you are coming into full bloom the judge will be in the sere and yellow leaf. But I suppose you know how to manage him. He hasn't betrayed any symptoms of the green-eyed monster yet, has he?"

This speech produced such astonishment in Pauline that she could not find words to interrupt

it. But when the speaker paused she stood still and looked him curiously in the face.

"You don't seem to be intoxicated," she said at length. "You may be crazy. Whatever you are, I advise you to go. I do not want you."

"No, I suppose not," he replied, returning her glance insolently. "I am not the lucky man. The judge has no cause to be jealous of me. But, on the other hand, I may be of some use to him. Of course, it will be a pity to spoil your little game. You have managed it all so nicely, even to providing him with lodgings; and he is such a fine looking young fellow, and it is all so lovely and romantic. But, you see, I have a high regard for the judge, and I can't bear to see him made a fool of. These billings and cooings in the park, and assignations in flats — they must be stopped. Society won't stand it. And the best way to stop it that I can think of is to tell Judge Ketelle."

Pauline listened to all this attentively, at first with a dreadful fear that this unknown man had become acquainted with the fact that her brother had returned to New York. But as he went on she perceived that he supposed Percy to be her lover; and then his object became clear. A deep blush overspread her face. That she should be thought capable, even by a wretch who did not know her, of an illicit intrigue, filled her with horror and anger. But underneath this feeling there was another and a more powerful one. It was a feeling of relief and joy that her brother was safe,

at least that she could save him by the sacrifice (so far as this man was concerned) of her reputation as a pure woman. By letting him continue to suppose that it was an ordinary intrigue in which she was engaged, and paying him for his silence—for she divined that it was for that purpose he had accosted her—she could keep Percy's secret until the time arrived when it might safely be divulged. The sacrifice was perhaps as arduous a one as an honest woman could be called upon to make; but there was no hesitation in her mind as to whether or not she should make it.

"I have heard that there were such persons as you, but I never saw one before," she said. "You are a blackmailer, are you not?"

There was something in her tone that touched a sore spot in him, callous and degraded though he had become. To see her beautiful face and angry eyes gazing straight into his, and to feel that her contempt for him was far too great for her to make any attempt to express it in words, was an experience that even he found trying. He remembered, with a pang of hopeless rage, that he might have so lived as to have the right to meet this lovely woman on terms of social equality, and to win her respect and perhaps her regard. As it was, it was impossible for one human being to despise another more than she despised him. And yet, what right had she to despise him if she were herself reprehensible before society? The thought hardened him again.

"I see you are up to business, as well as to some other things," he said. "I have my living to make; you are paid for by your husband and amuse yourself by deceiving him. If he divorces you, you may find out what it is to make your own way in the world; as long as your good looks last no doubt it will be easy; but after that you may be ready to take a few lessons from me. But meantime I intend to bleed you for what I want. As soon as you get tired of paying me, I shall go to the judge—and you will go to the devil! Is that plain?"

"Yes, I understand you. You will certainly earn your money," she remarked, with a smile that made him grind his teeth. "Well, then, I will pay you for your silence. Now, as to the amount. Have you thought about that?"

"You will hand over five hundred dollars this evening. I will let you know when I want any more."

"No," she said decisively, "I will not give you five hundred dollars. That is absurd."

"Either that, or your husband knows all about your performances before he goes to bed to-night."

"Very well. But recollect that by betraying me to him you will free me from every restraint and scruple. I suppose you don't need to be told that I am not kindly disposed toward you. The pleasure of destroying you would compensate me for the loss of social position you speak of. While

you are with my husband, I shall be with Inspector Byrnes. I promise you faithfully that you shall suffer the utmost penalty of the law ; and after the law has done with you, I will take you in hand myself. When that time comes, you will wish that the law had kept you longer. You will never draw a breath that is not free from pain and terror as long as you live. Look at me, sir. Don't you think I mean what I say ? "

The quietness of anger at white heat was in her eyes and voice, and it scared the man somewhat, as it would have scared a much more doughty rascal. He forced a laugh, and struck his boot with his cane. After a moment she turned and resumed her walk up the street.

He remained where he was until she was half a block distant. Then he hastened after her and overtook her.

" Look here, Mrs. Ketelle," he said, " business is business. I'm not a fool. Tell me what you can do, and I'll give you my answer."

She replied at once, continuing her walking, but keeping her eyes upon him as she spoke. " I am allowed by my husband fifty dollars a week pocket-money. I will pay you twenty dollars a week, until, in my opinion, you have had enough. I will pay you your first month's wages in advance—eighty dollars. You must be careful not to apply for more until the month is out. Those are my terms."

" They won't do ! " said he, blusteringly. " You'll

pay me two hundred now and fifty a week, or it's no deal! Come, now!"

"If you address me again, except to accept my proposition, I will have you arrested, come what may!" The color rushed to her face and her eyes flashed. She was losing her temper, and she was evidently in earnest.

He was silent a moment, and then shrugged his shoulders. "All right, I'll take it," he said. "Hand over the money."

"I do not carry that amount in my purse," she returned quietly.

"How am I to get it, then?"

"You will come to my house like any other person to whom things are paid. Did you think I was going to make appointments to meet you at the street corners, or in liquor saloons? My husband will pay you."

"Your husband! Look here, Mrs. Ketelle, you are a smart woman; but if you think you can play any game on me, you are mistaken. You have more at stake than I have. Don't try to bluff me!"

"If I have the most at stake, why do you feel uneasy? You will receive your money in that way, or not at all. It is just as you choose."

They had now reached the corner of the avenue; Pauline signalled the down-town car that was approaching, and got in. The man followed her. She handed the conductor a double fare, remarking, "I am paying for that person."

No conversation passed while they were in the car. Dupee was ill at ease, but he could not see but that he had the best of the situation. She could not afford to betray him. On the other hand, what if Judge Ketelle should happen to know him by sight? No; he was certain they had never met; the judge had taken no part in his trial, either as witness or jurist. Besides, again, was it not her interest to protect him?

The car stopped, and they got out, and walked across to her house. The door was opened to her ring, and they entered.

"Is Judge Ketelle in?" she asked the servant.

"Yes, madam. He has just gone into the library."

"Sit down here," she said to Dupee, addressing him as if he were a tradesman's clerk who had called for his bill. "I will let you know when it is ready."

She passed through a door on the right, leaving him there. Presently he heard her voice and another—the judge's—in conversation. Then she opened another door further up the hall and called to him, "Come this way, please."

He went forward, and found himself in the library. The judge was seated at a writing-table on which stood a student's lamp. He was in the act of taking his check-book from a drawer.

"What amount did you say, my dear?" he inquired, suspending his pen over the inkstand.

"Eighty dollars," she replied.

The judge began to write. "What name?" he inquired, looking up at Dupee, who stood somewhat in the shadow.

"What is your name?" Mrs. Ketelle repeated.

Dupee now fancied he knew why she had brought him to the house. In the first place, the check could be traced; then the judge could be called to prove that it had been paid to him; and, finally, she had hoped to surprise him into betraying his name. But he had gone too far to go back; and as for the name, that was easily managed. It was partly from a malicious motive that he answered:

"My name is John Grush."

"John Grush," echoed the judge, writing it down. He signed the check, and extended it toward Dupee. "Have you receipted the bill?" he asked.

Dupee looked at Mrs. Ketelle. "I did not get a bill," she said. "The check is itself a receipt, is it not?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure," rejoined her husband. "Well, that's all right, then; that's all!"

"You may go," said Mrs. Ketelle, glancing at Dupee as if he were a piece of furniture. When she heard the street door close, she went round to her husband and kissed him. "You are very good," she said.

"What—to give you eighty dollars without asking you what you had bought?" he returned, laughing.

"Yes; but you shall know some time."

"My dearest, I am not curious: I only want you to love me. Do you know," he added, "I can't get it out of my head that I have met that fellow—that clerk who was here just now—that I have seen him somewhere before,—and under odd circumstances, too."

"Where?" said she, startled and deeply interested.

"Hum! I can't fix it! Maybe I shall remember later. But it's no consequence, after all. Now one more kiss, and I'll go and get ready for dinner."

CHAPTER XXI.

AT HEADQUARTERS.

THE next morning, while the judge and Pauline were sitting over their breakfast, he said, "By the way, my darling, you remember my saying yesterday that that person—the black-haired man, whom I paid a check to—reminded me of some one?"

Pauline, who had been sitting in a listless and pensive posture, instantly brightened up, and expectation sparkled in her eyes.

"Yes, I remember! Have you thought who it is?"

"It occurred to me last night, or early this morning, while I was lying awake. The name he gave yesterday evening—John—something—"

"John Grush."

"John Grush—yes; that was not the name of the person I am thinking of. I don't mean to imply that his name may not have been John Grush. But he certainly bears a remarkable resemblance to another man whom you, I think, never saw, but whose name will be familiar to you."

"Who? tell me!"

The judge was a little surprised at her impatience. "Mind you, it's only a fancy of mine," he said. "Perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned it; but it had such an odd relation to a matter very near to you. Of course, however, it is impossible that the person who was here last night can be the man I refer to."

"But who is it?"

"He reminded me of Horace Dupee," said the judge. "Of course you know whom I mean. I was not personally engaged in the trial, but I dropped into the court one day, and watched the proceedings for half an hour. That was the only occasion on which I ever saw Dupee. He was a striking looking fellow, and I retained an unusually distinct memory of his features. This man Grush looks a good deal older than Dupee did—though, to be sure, it was several years ago."

"Will you have some more coffee, dear?" asked Pauline.

"No more, thank you. I'll go and smoke a cigar, and then . . . How is your mother feeling this morning?"

"About the same. I have an idea it might be good for her to get up to breakfast in the mornings. I think she could, if she tried. Perhaps a stimulus of some sort would benefit her—some great piece of news, for instance."

"Possibly. But I hardly think there is any news that would be likely to interest your mother. She hardly ever so much as looks in a newspaper."

"I don't mean news of that kind. But if, for instance, she should hear that the thief who committed the robbery of which Percy was accused was caught and convicted; or (if it were possible) that Percy himself is not dead, but had in some strange way escaped!"

"Ah, yes; such news would give her fresh life, no doubt. But we must not let our imagination take so wide a range."

"It is not impossible. Why may not Percy be alive? No one has seen his dead body. Why may he not return some day? Men have often returned who were thought to be lost for years and years."

"Why, my dear, do not let your mind run on such thoughts! You are excited already. We must not hope to see Percy again."

After a pause, Pauline said, "If he were to come back, do you think he would be arrested on that old charge?"

"Speaking from the legal point of view, I suppose he would be."

"But suppose he were to come back—suppose he were in New York now—would it be unsafe for him to be seen or to have it known? Would he have to keep in hiding until his innocence could be proven?"

"My dearest wife," replied the judge, gently, "the law can not be affected by sentiment. If it were so, it would cease to be the law. I do not say that, in ceasing to be the law, it might not, in certain instances, become something better and

higher. Only in certain instances, mind you! As to Percy's case, there is no reason to suppose that he would be treated with any special severity. Quite the contrary. It is almost certain that the original prosecutor would not appear; and the government would scarcely take up the matter. No; Percy would be arrested, and certain formalities would be gone through with, and—but, bless my soul, I am talking as if the poor boy were still in this world! God bless him! He is far beyond the reach of worldly justice or injustice now!"

With these words the good judge got up, and after kissing his wife's hand, in a chivalrous fashion of his, he went into the library to smoke his cigar.

Pauline loved her husband, but she was glad to be alone at that moment. She was wrought up to a high pitch or excitement, and felt the necessity of dealing with her thoughts and emotions in private. She went up to her boudoir and locked herself in.

Since the occurrence of the day before, she had more than once been on the point of revealing the whole matter to her husband. Had it concerned herself alone, she would have done so at the outset. But the secret was Percy's in the first place; and she could not tell how she had been blackmailed without revealing his presence in the city. No doubt the judge would keep the secret, for her sake if for no other reason; but she had reflected that it could do no good to Percy to have him

know it; and if Percy's presence should happen to be discovered in any other way it might prove awkward for the judge to have been found in the position of sheltering a fugitive from justice. On the other hand, she could not tell Percy of the insult that had been put upon her, because he would undoubtedly sacrifice every thing to inflict summary punishment upon the blackmailer. She had therefore decided to pay the latter a sum of money, giving him to understand that no more would be forthcoming for a month; and in the course of that month she intended to turn all her energies to the task of clearing Percy, by some means or other, of the old charge which so hampered and obstructed him. She would then be free to deal with the blackmailer at her leisure; and she intended to punish him to the full extent of the law.

But the revelation of the blackmailer's identity changed the whole aspect of the case. To Pauline it had been totally unexpected; and yet in looking back she could fancy that she had known him intuitively from the first. Be that as it might, it was a triumph more complete than she had ever dared to anticipate. Dupee was the man who had murdered her brother Jerrold; he (as she believed) was the man who had cast a nearly fatal shadow over the career of Percy; and he, again, delivered himself, bound hand and foot, into her power by perpetrating upon her the crime of blackmail. She had him securely, for though he had given a false

name the judge would be able to identify him as the recipient of the check, and the case against him would thus be proved. He would be arrested on that charge, and then it would go hard but the whole truth should come out. She regarded Percy as being as good as free, and was strongly impelled to go and tell him the story at once; but, on second thought, she decided to wait until the probability had been made a certainty, and then bring him news in which there should be no element of conjecture. She wished, moreover, to enjoy the pleasure of managing the affair herself, without either her husband's or her brother's help.

Having determined in her own mind her plan of proceedings, she waited until her husband had started on his daily trip to his office, and then she put on her cloak and bonnet and went out herself.

It was a fine, clear forenoon. It was not the first time she had visited Police Headquarters, and she knew the way thither. The squalid denizens of Bleecker and Mulberry streets stared at the handsome lady as she passed by, but she was too much preoccupied by the matter in hand to notice their observation. She mounted the steps of the big white-faced building with a light heart, and asked to be admitted to see Inspector Byrnes.

She had just put the question to the sergeant when the Inspector came out, in hat and overcoat. He recognized her immediately, and lifted his hat with a smile.

"You are going out," she said. "When can I see you?"

"I am not going out," was his reply. "I am going to ask you to come into my office and have a talk. If you had not come here I might have called on you to-day. Come in." And he conducted her to the inner room.

"Now, then," he said, when they were seated, "what is the news?"

"It is you who should have news for me," she returned, smiling. "I'm sure you have had time to find out a dozen such mysteries as the one I asked you about."

The Inspector wore an amused look. "When you want to bamboozle an old hand like me," he said, "you must first of all learn to command your face. You must not look happy if you expect me to believe that you are miserable. If you have lost a brother you must not look as if you had found one!"

Pauline blushed and got a little frightened. "It was not my brother that I asked you to find, Inspector Byrnes," she said.

"No; the brother was to be thrown in, I suppose! This is fine weather we are having just now, Mrs. Ketelle," he added in another tone. "Capital for exercise!"

"I beg your pardon."

He laughed. "You live up near the Park," he said. "Would it be too far for you to walk up to 125th Street, or that neighborhood?"

"To 125th Street?"

"By the way, that reminds me of something; perhaps you may be able to enlighten me. There is an English friend of mine in town, a gentleman by the name of Clifton. He is over here to look after the interests of a valuable English estate. It seems that the hereditary owner of this estate lately deceased, and it became necessary to find the next man in the succession. It was known that he had gone to New Zealand, but upon investigation there it appeared that he had left on a visit to this country. Finally news of him was received from Mexico. Dōes the story interest you?"

"Let me hear," she said.

"Well, in Mexico a man answering to his name was found; but, on being told of his inheritance, he declared that he would have nothing to do with it. That seemed odd; for people are not in the habit of throwing away three-quarters of a million of money. Just then a person appeared on the scene who affirmed that this man was not the person he represented himself to be at all, but an impostor. That seemed possible in one way; but in the other way, an impostor would be the last man in the world whom one would expect to let a great property slip between his fingers. My English friend was puzzled; but he knew that this mysterious gentleman had lately been in New York, and it occurred to him that it might be a good plan to come on here and see if he could learn any thing more about him.

"Now, it so happens that I have an acquaintance in Mexico who makes a point of knowing what goes on there, and whenever he hears of any thing that he thinks might interest me he drops me a line, or sends a telegram, if there is any hurry. He had heard about this affair I speak of, and also that the mysterious gentleman had had an interview with some government officials, and immediately afterwards had left Mexico, *en route* for the United States. He telegraphed this information, together with the alleged name of the mysterious gentleman. It was a name I had heard before, and I had even met the gentleman himself. So, when the steamer was announced, I took half an hour, and went down to the wharf to say good-day to him. And then, Mrs. Ketelle, a curious thing happened."

He paused and fixed his eyes on her. She sat before him with her hands tightly clasped in her lap, her lips compressed, and her eyes dark with emotion.

"The gentleman whom I saw," continued the Inspector, "was not the one named in the telegram, but it was an intimate friend of his, whom I had also met before. He had, however, been reported dead. But seeing him alive and well, though somewhat changed in appearance, I came to the conclusion that perhaps a mistake had been made, and that it was the friend who had died —"

But Pauline could restrain herself no longer. She lifted her hands slightly and let them fall again.

"He was a dear friend of mine," she said, while the tears came into her eyes; "he was a good friend to Percy. I see you know all, Inspector; you seem to know every thing! What are you going to do with him?"

CHAPTER XXII.

JOHN GRUSH.

"WHAT am I going to do with him?" the Inspector repeated. "Why, I have been under the impression that he was already in the best of hands, and would need no attentions from me!"

"Ah, don't laugh at me! If you mean harm to him, let me know it. It was by my advice that he kept in hiding. If he were arrested here, it would ruin his position in Mexico, even if he were released again immediately."

"Now, Mrs. Ketelle, let us understand each other," said the Inspector, becoming grave and business-like. "You asked me, a year ago, to clear the memory of your brother, whom you believed to be dead, of the stain that had been put upon it, by discovering and punishing the real perpetrator of the crime he was accused of. I told you that I would do what I could, and I have kept my word. By and by you discover that your brother is not dead after all, and is in New York. Don't you think it would have been a kind and courteous act on your part to have come to me and told me of it?"

"He is my brother," was her reply. "I could think of nothing before his welfare. I have told no one that he is here, or that he is alive—not even my mother nor my husband. I know that you are an officer of the law, and that when you saw your duty you would have no choice but to execute it. I hoped that the real criminal would be found, and so all turn out right."

"I don't know as I ought to expect you to care more for the law than you do for your brother," remarked the detective, stroking his chin; "and perhaps I should feel complimented that you expected the real criminal, as you call him, to be tracked and captured out of hand. But America is a large place, and the police have a number of things to look after; and, as you know, it is one thing to suspect a man, and another to convict him. As to Mr. Percy Nolen, I will only say, at present, that I have thought it sufficient to keep one eye on him; his arrest is not necessary at this stage of the proceedings."

"I thank you, Inspector Byrnes," Pauline said, "whether you considered me in your action or not. But have you heard nothing of—of Horace Dupee?"

The Inspector raised his head and contemplated her gravely.

"So you continue to think it was Horace Dupee who stole the money?" he said.

"Oh, I am sure of it!"

"But would you go on the stand to-day and swear to it?"

"I could not do that," she replied reluctantly. "I have not the evidence; I only feel that it was he."

"Then, if you had the evidence, it would be all right?"

"Yes, indeed. Have you found any thing?" she asked eagerly.

"Well, that depends on what one considers anything." He opened a drawer and took out some papers. "There seems to be reason to think that Horace Dupee was in New York at the time the robbery was committed."

"Ah; I knew it!"

"It also appears that, immediately after the robbery, he left New York and went to San Francisco."

"Yes, yes, I knew it! He fled to escape arrest!"

"Shortly after his arrival there," continued the Inspector, impassively, "a thousand-dollar banknote was presented to be cashed at a bank there, which was issued by a banking institution here in New York, and, as it happened, by the same institution where Mrs. Tunstall kept her account."

"Then it is proved! He is the man!" exclaimed Pauline triumphantly.

"No, it is not proved," returned the detective, shaking his head. "It takes more than that to make a conviction. We do not know that the note was presented by Horace Dupee; and even if we did it would still be possible that he had received it from some one else. No, Mrs. Ketelle, we can-

not arrest Dupee on that evidence. If we could find any pretext for arresting him, either on this charge or on any other, then it might be possible to complete our evidence as to this. But the power to do that is unfortunately wanting."

"Do I understand you that if any one brought a charge against him on another matter you could obtain a conviction on this?"

"I don't promise we would do it; I only say it might be possible. But at any rate I think it would do no harm if you would tell me all about your interviews with Dupee and what came of it."

Pauline gazed at the Inspector in astonishment.

"You know about that too?" she exclaimed at length.

"Why not? What is there so wonderful in that?" he returned, composedly.

"I suppose nothing seems wonderful to you," replied she; "but I confess I had expected to surprise you in regard to that! Well, then, if you know that I have seen him, I suppose that you know all that passed between us, also?"

"No, no," rejoined the Inspector, laughing, "my knowledge stops at the fact of the interview. What you said to each other you will have to tell me if you wish me to know it."

"It was in order to tell you that I came here," said Pauline; and she went on to give an account of the whole affair, the Inspector listening to her with close attention. Her narrative was clear and precise.

"Do you think that he was aware that you were the sister of Jerrold and Percy Nolen?" he asked, after she had finished.

"He must have known it. I was married only a short time ago, and my maiden name was in the papers."

"Does it not seem odd that he should have made this attempt upon a woman whose brother he had murdered? Murderers are usually more careful, if nothing else. I think we shall find, Mrs. Ketelle, that he is innocent of that crime. As regards the robbery I say nothing; but I have never thought it likely that a fellow like Dupee would committ a murder so peculiarly cold-blooded and comparatively unprovoked as that would have been. But if he was wrongly charged with it it is quite conceivable that he may have embraced this opportunity to revenge himself upon a member of the family that brought him to ruin."

"You may be right."

"I believe it will turn out so. But there is another point suggested by your story. It is quite certain that he did not know your brother, for if he had he would not have attempted to blackmail you on his account—or, at any rate, not on the ground that he put forward."

"Yes, there can be no doubt about that," Pauline assented.

"Then don't you see it has a bearing on the robbery? Your theory has been that he committed the robbery partly, at least, in order to have your

brother arrested for it. But as he did not know your brother by sight that theory will not stand. If we consider him to have been the thief, his involving your brother in the scrape must have been merely a coincidence. Your brother happened to be talking to the lady, and his overcoat pocket happened to be the one in which the purse could most conveniently be dropped. If Mrs. Tunstall's husband, instead of your brother, had been in your brother's place, the evidence, so far as the purse was concerned, would have pointed at him."

"That is logical—I cannot deny it," said Pauline. "But it does not show his innocence of the robbery; it only shows that he had not the motive for committing it that I supposed he had; it was not revenge—it was vulgar pocket-picking!"

"Well, that is as it may be. But let me refer to another point in your story. You said that the name he gave to your husband was Grush—John Grush?"

"Yes, but of course it was an assumed name."

"No doubt; but it is curious that he should have assumed that particular name instead of another."

"Why not that as well as any?"

"Because it is the name of another man—a real man, that is, a fellow who has been a companion and intimate of Dupee's for some years past. John Grush went with Dupee to California, and returned with him. It was he who pointed you out to Dupee in the park, the day you first saw your brother.

It was he who suggested to Dupee that it might be a profitable job to blackmail you."

"How did you learn all that, Inspector Byrnes?"

"I might tell you that I learned it by detective intuition, or some other sort of witchcraft. But the simple truth is that John Grush told me!"

"He told you? He is one of your men, then?"

"Not at all! But he has done me good service on this occasion, nevertheless."

"But . . . I don't think I understand!"

"It is such a thing as happens every day. John Grush was arrested last night for attempting to take a man's watch in an elevated train. It is not the first time we have had dealings with him, and when he was brought in he realized that he would probably be sent up for a long term. So he resolved to get even with a man who had 'gone back on him,' as he expressed it. And that man was Horace Dupee."

"They had quarreled?"

"Precisely. And the quarrel was about you. When Grush proposed blackmailing you, Dupee had pooh-poohed it; but he did so only in order to have all the profits to himself. Having got rid of Grush, as he supposed, he followed you about, and traced you to your brother's lodgings in Harlem. What he did there, you know. But Grush had distrusted him, and found out the double game he was playing. He bore him a grudge for it; and early this morning he sent word to me that he had something to communicate. I went downstairs and

saw him in his cell. He told me of Dupee's bad faith, and said that I would find that Dupee had actually received money from you. I acted as if I placed no credit in his accusation; and upon that he went on and declared that Dupee had, a year ago, committed a robbery for which an innocent man was arrested. Yes, Mrs. Ketelle, it was the Tunstall robbery that he mentioned. I asked him how he knew, and he said that he was intimate with Dupee at the time, and that when Percy Nolen was arrested Dupee had laughed and remarked that it was a good job; he was glad to have done a Nolen an ill-turn, and that he hoped Nolen might rot in gaol while he was spending the money Nolen was imprisoned for."

"Oh, the villain!" murmured Pauline, with dilating eyes.

"I told Grush," continued the Inspector, "that I believed, if Dupee had had anything to do with the robbery, that Grush had been equally guilty. He denied it at first, but finally admitted that he had discovered the fact that Mrs. Tunstall was in the habit of going about town with large sums of money in her pocket; and upon my pushing him still further he added that he had pointed her out to Dupee on the morning of the crime, and had waited outside the jeweler's shop while Dupee was doing the work inside. According to his account, Dupee had not acted squarely with him on this occasion either; he had refused to give him a fair share of the plunder; but Grush had postponed betray-

ing his dissatisfaction until he could give it some practical effect. He gave a number of details which coincided with facts that I had previously ascertained, and convinced me that his story was substantially true."

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Pauline. "Oh, my dear brother!"

"Wait a moment!" rejoined the detective. "We are not quite out of the woods yet! On making a review of the evidence at our disposal, I doubted whether it would be safe to cause Dupee's arrest on the robbery charge. If we should fail to hold him we might bid him good-bye; he would never be seen here again. But if I could get from you a confirmation of the blackmail story, and especially if you could prove actual payment of money, then our course would be much simpler. We could arrest and hold him on that ground without any doubt, and the rest, unless I am greatly mistaken, will come of itself."

"I can certainly prove the payment," said Pauline. "My husband and the check are both in evidence."

"Very good; and now," said the Inspector, lowering his voice and leaning forward, "let me explain to you a little plan I have formed for bringing this thing to a head."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SHADOW LIFTED.

BY ten o'clock the next morning all Inspector Byrne's preparations were complete, down to the least detail; and there was nothing left to do but wait for the fly to walk into the web.

Horace Dupee, after receiving his check, put it in his pocket with the intention of getting it cashed at the bank on the morrow. But in order to do this it would be necessary that he be identified. This would not be a particularly easy matter in any case, and the less so because the name on it was not his own. At length he decided to get it cashed through some friend. He was reluctant to have it known to any one that he had had any dealings with Judge Ketelle, and it was partly on this account that he had given Grush's name. But it was an annoyance and a risk even so, and he promised himself that he would not be caught with a check again in a hurry.

Late that night he succeeded in cashing the check over the bar of an inn in the lower part of the city, where he was lodging. The landlord of the inn was a depositor at the bank on which the check was drawn. This was on Wednesday. The

next day, Thursday (the day of Pauline's interview with the Inspector), the check was sent to the bank to be turned in with the other receipts. On Thursday evening the check came back, marked N. G. Dupee was not in the hotel at the time; but he entered about eleven o'clock. The hotel-keeper called his attention to the dishonored check, and demanded from him payment of the face amount. Dupee had by that time spent a good deal of the eighty dollars; but rather than have any disturbance he deposited fifty dollars, and promised to go to the bank the next day and have the thing straightened out.

But though he carried it off with a composed face, he was in reality filled with rage and apprehension.

What could be the meaning of it? A check signed by Judge Ketelle refused at his own bank! Was it a mistake, an accident, or a deliberate plan? A mistake it could hardly be; there was nothing ambiguous in the wording of the check, and Dupee had made sure that the date and all the minor details had been correctly entered. The probability was greater of its being an accident. Judge Ketelle might have inadvertently overdrawn his account. If this were the case, the matter could be easily rectified. But, on the other hand, the third contingency remained—that the check had been stopped by special direction. If that were so, it meant that Mrs. Ketelle had declared war. She had resolved to defy him. She fancied, perhaps, that

he would not have the courage to carry out his threat and reveal her intrigue to her husband. Well, if that were her idea, she would discover her mistake. He would reveal her shame, whatever the consequences to himself. He would blast her life ; not only her husband, but the whole world should know what she had done ; and if he suffered imprisonment for it, at any rate the time would come when he would again be free, and then he could seek her out and taunt her with her ignominy. For time would bring no freedom to her.

This bitterness of malice on his part was partly characteristic of the nature of the man ; but there was in it an element of exceptional animosity. Almost all criminals who have fallen from a higher social position lay the responsibility of their degradation at the door of some person or combination of circumstances outside of themselves. So it was with Dupee, who dated the beginning of his misfortune from the day when he was arrested on the charge of murder by the father of Jerrold Nolen. Pauline and her mother were the only living representatives (as he believed) of that man. They should suffer a vicarious punishment. So strong was his desire to me this punishment inflicted that he half hoped Mrs. Ketelle had really played him false. The longer he thought over the matter however, the less likely did it seem that this could be the case. Whatever she might think as to the probability of his failing to carry out his threat, the possibility that he would carry it out was too serious

a one to invite. Recognizing this, Dupee prepared himself for either contingency. He would go to Judge Ketelle's office and inform him of the refusal of the check, as if he supposed it to be an ordinary business error. If the judge redeemed the check, well and good ; the matter might stop, for the present at any rate, where it was. If, on the contrary, resistance should be offered to his claim, he would know how to defend himself.

It was about eleven o'clock when he mounted the steps of the judge's office on Pine Street. The rooms were on the first floor ; there was an outer office, and two or three inner rooms, opening into one another. Two or three clerks were writing in the outer room when Dupee entered. He asked one of them if Judge Ketelle were within.

"I'll see, sir," replied the clerk, looking up. "What name shall I say?"

"Say Mr. Grush wants to see him a moment—Mr. John Grush."

The clerk went into the inner room, and soon came back with the request that Mr. Grush would stop inside. Dupee passed through the door, which was closed behind him. He found himself in a handsomely furnished parlor, beside the window of which Judge Ketelle sat at his desk. The judge turned in his chair, and asked him to be seated. "I think you were up at my house, the other evening," he remarked. "I recognize the name and the face."

"You are quite right, judge," replied Dupee,

assuming an easy air, "and it is on a matter connected with my visit to you on that occasion that I have ventured to trouble you now. There was a check, you remember?"

"Perfectly. A check for the sum of eighty dollars. Well?"

"Well, there seems to have been some difficulty or misunderstanding—probably the cashier at the bank made some stupid mistake; but, anyhow, the check was returned yesterday, marked 'no good.' I thought you would wish to know about it."

"Hum! I am not in the habit of having my checks returned, certainly," said the judge. "Let me see; on what bank was the check drawn?"

"The Battery Bank," replied Dupee.

"I will tell you how such a mistake might occur, Mr. Grush," said the judge, after a short pause. "I keep accounts at several banks. Sometimes one or other of these accounts runs out before I am aware of it. My wife has a separate account, which is at the Battery Bank. In writing the check the other evening I may have inadvertently used her check-book, my own account being exhausted. The fact that she had money there would of course not warrant the cashier in paying my check. I do not assert that this is the explanation; but it might be."

"To be sure; nothing more likely," rejoined Dupee. "But, at all events, the check having been returned, I suppose you will have no objection to writing another?"

"There would be some other considerations involved in that, Mr. Grush," said the judge, bending an intent look on Dupee. "May I ask you, in the first place, what this payment was for?"

"It was for a purchase made by Mrs. Ketelle, sir," said Dupee, somewhat confused by this unexpected question; "a purchase at—at our store—I am a salesman there, and—"

"What store is it you speak of?" demanded the judge.

"Castellani's, on Broadway," replied Dupee, giving the first name that occurred to him, and feeling a little uneasy at the turn of the conversation.

"Castellani, the jeweller?" said the judge. "I know the place well. It was there that the robbery of Mrs. Tunstall's pocket-book took place, last year."

Dupee bit his lips. But it was necessary to carry out his part, and he could not resist the temptation to aim a blow at the judge. "You are quite right, judge," he said, "the robbery for which young Percy Nolen was arrested."

"Yes; he was arrested for it," returned the judge, gravely; "but it has been discovered, Mr. Grush, that the robbery was the work of another man. That man," he added, fixing his eyes upon the other, "is known to the police, and will undoubtedly expiate his crime. But to return to this check. How does it happen that the money was

payable to you, instead of to the company? That seems peculiar."

"Well, you see, I—I have an interest in the business, and am authorized to receive payments personally."

"Ah! Still, as the matter, from the pecuniary point of view, concerns the company, and not you, it can make no difference if I cause inquiries to be made at Castellani's before writing you another check. As I have no personal acquaintance with you, you will perceive the propriety of this precaution."

"I don't regard the matter in that light," answered Dupee, who was beginning to lose his nerve. "I am not accountable to the firm. I sold the goods, and I must request you to pay me the money."

There was a book lying on the judge's desk, and at this moment, apparently by accident, a movement of his elbow caused this book to fall heavily to the floor.

"The affair concerns Mrs. Ketelle more directly than it does me," he observed. "I will communicate with her; and if she authorizes the payment I will make it." At that moment the door into the outer office opened. "And by the way," continued the judge, "here is Mrs. Ketelle now. We can settle this thing here."

It was, in fact, Pauline. Her face was pale and grave, but her eyes sparkled like stars. Dupee knew not how to interpret her abrupt appearance.

The look that she bestowed upon him did not tend to reassure him. But he summoned all his resolution, and resolved to fight if brought to bay.

"My dear," said the judge, as his wife came over to him and stood by his chair. "This person tells me that the check I gave him, at your request, has been stopped, and he wants me to write him another."

'It was stopped by my orders," said Pauline, turning her eyes again on Dupee. "The money will not be paid."

"Why won't it be paid?" retorted Dupee. "Do you mean to deny that it is due?"

"I owe you nothing," she replied.

"Oh! we'll see about that! Do you wish me to tell your husband what it was you bought of me, and paid eighty dollars on account?"

"I owe you nothing and shall pay you nothing," was her answer. "You are an impostor and a thief. Your name is not John Grush, but Horace Dupee. I have waited for you a long time."

"Never mind what my name is, or what I am! I know what you are, and what you have done! And unless you pay me, here and now, not eighty dollars but eight hundred, your husband shall know as much as I do!"

"Not so loud, sir, if you please," interposed the judge. "I don't think you can tell me any thing about Mrs. Ketelle that I do not already know. But if you think otherwise, I am ready to hear you, and I fancy Mrs. Ketelle will not object."

Pauline inclined her head contemptuously. "Let him speak!" she said.

"Oh, I'm going to speak—don't make any mistake about that!" Dupee exclaimed, beside himself with mingled fear and rage; for he was wholly unable to account for the security of Pauline's demeanor. "I'm going to speak, and what I say shall he heard not only by your husband, who imagines you to be a virtuous and respectable woman, but by all New York, or wherever else she may go. I tell you, Judge Ketelle, that the sooner you turn that woman into the street the better it will be for your credit and reputation! She has deceived you ever since she was married to you! Let her deny it if she can! Let her deny that she visits a fellow—her lover—in his lodgings in Harlem, and drives with him in the park! Let her deny that if she dares! She meets him every day; he is a younger man than you are, judge, and better looking, and they laugh at you for an old fool when they are together. And they are together every day. I say, the sooner you kick her into the street the better, or you will have all New York laughing at you! I've got the facts, and I'll make 'em known, and prove 'em, too!"

"Are you prepared to maintain," said the judge, in a quiet tone, "that there is any thing unseemly in the relations of the gentleman you speak of and Mrs. Ketelle?"

Dupee laughed harshly. "Ask him!" he re-

turned. "Bring him and her together, and ask them what their relations are!"

"I am fortunately able to do that," answered the judge, "because the gentleman in question happens to be at hand. I will summon him." And stepping to the door of the inner room, he partly opened it and said, "Come in!"

The next moment the figure of a tall young man appeared on the threshold, and advanced into the apartment. He was the very man whom Dupee had seen in the park, and afterwards traced to the Harlem flat. But how came he to be in waiting here? What was the meaning of it all?

"Is this the gentleman you speak of?" inquired the judge of Dupee, indicating the new-comer.

"Oh, I suppose they have fooled you with some clever lie or other," said Dupee with a snarl. "All the same, what I tell you is the truth; and the world will believe it, if you don't!"

"You seem to know so much, sir," answered the judge, "that you probably do not need to be informed that Mrs. Ketelle was formerly Miss Nolen, and that she had two brothers. One of them died from the effects of injuries received mysteriously, while in the company of one Horace Dupee, several years ago. The other brother, Percy by name, was accused, a year since, of a robbery at Castellani's jewelery store. He left New York and was reported drowned; but the report turned out to have been an error. He returned to New York about ten days ago; but his presence was not

generally made known, owing to the fact that the true perpetrator of the robbery had not yet been identified. The identification has now been made, however, and therefore the necessity of concealing Mr. Percy Nolen's presence no longer exists."

"Well, and what has all this rigmarole to do with me?" demanded Dupee defiantly. "What have I to do with Percy Nolen?"

"I am Percy Nolen," said the gentleman in question, regarding Dupee with a very stern expression, "and this lady is my sister."

Dupee saw at once that he had been outwitted and trapped. The check had been stopped in order to induce him to come to Judge Ketelle's office; and it had been previously arranged that Mrs. Ketelle and Percy were to meet him there and effect his discomfiture. There was nothing left for him to do except to retire like the baffled villain in the melodrama, muttering, "Foiled! but I will yet be avenged!" or words to that effect. Dupee, however, failed to grasp the dramatic opportunities of the situation; but he said, as he moved towards the door, "You have been known as a pickpocket, Percy Nolen, and it 'll stick to you!" With that he opened the door, and would have gone out of it, had he not been confronted there by a broad-shouldered, athletic gentleman, with a brown mustache and piercing eyes, who was accompanied by a dejected personage wearing the familiar aspect of Mr. John Grush, the only true and genuine proprietor of that name.

The broad-shouldered man, after handing Grush into the room, followed him and closed the door. "Good morning, Mrs. Ketelle and gentlemen," he said, cheerfully. "Well, Horace, you see I have a friend of yours here. Jack has been complaining to me of you. He says you not only stole his name, but infringed his patent blackmail scheme. And so, by way of retaliation, he has been telling very bad tales of you. I'm afraid you are in for a good deal of trouble, Horace."

"There's no need of making a fuss about this affair, Inspector," said Dupee, assuming a nonchalant air. "There's been no blackmail that I know of. It is true that Judge Ketelle paid me a worthless check the other day; but there has been no pecuniary transaction, properly speaking, and I don't know what this man," indicating Grush, "is grumbling about. I know very little of him."

"He has the advantage of you, then," returned the Inspector, "for he knows a great deal about you. I have been waiting for you for a year. I knew you'd be back here, so I didn't bother to disturb you in San Francisco; but I've got that thousand-dollar note up at the office; and Grush has filled up any little gaps in the chain, though we could have done very well without him. Hold out your hands!"

The last words were spoken in a voice so different from the good-natured banter of the foregoing sentences that Dupee gave a start and mechanically extended his wrists, and the next

moment the hand-cuffs were round them. The moment after that, however, he seemed to take in the significance of what the Inspector had said. He turned and cast a very malignant glance at Grush.

"You will find evidence against me, will you!" he cried, in a grating tone.

"You did that job on the lady in the jewelry store, and put it off on him," returned Grush, nodded toward Percy, and speaking with a swagger. "You know it, and I'll take my oath to it any day. You played a low-down game on me, and that's what you get for it!"

"You'll give evidence that I'm a pickpocket, will you?" repeated Dupee, staring at the man with a strange expression, half leer and half scowl. "Well, you may do it; or you needn't, just as you please; for I did rob the woman, and I don't care who knows it, now! But you gave it away too quick, Jack Grush; this is the worst day's work you ever did; it would have been worth something to you to have found out, first, whether I had any little stories to tell about you!"

The Inspector, who had been on the point of putting an abrupt end to their dialogue, seemed to change his purpose at the last sentence; and the others present involuntarily listened for what might follow.

"You can't tell any thing to hurt me!" retorted Grush. "I've got my medicine, and I'm going to take it. You can't change it."

"We'll see if I can't. I know something; I've known it for years—for years, do you hear, Jack Grush! I haven't said any thing about it; it was too good a thing to give away—until the time came! It was a whip I could drive you with any time, and I kept it till I should want it. Little you imagined that I have had the whole thing, pat by heart, ever since the first month I was out of the prisoner's dock! I knew better than to let you suspect it. But I've waited long enough, and you might as well have it now as later."

"Blessed if I know what he's chattering about!" said Grush, addressing the company in general with an air of perplexed innocence. "I suspect he's gone off his head a little."

"When I left the prisoner's dock, acquitted of murdering Jerrold Nolen," Dupee went on, with intense emphasis, "you were one of the first to make up to me and say that, since society had kicked me out, I was justified in kicking against society, and living by my wits. But, all the time, if I had been convicted, you would have let me hang, you hound, sooner than say a word to save me! and yet you were the scoundrel who crept up to a drunken man. . . Hold him, Inspector!"

Grush, in fact, had suddenly made a leap at Dupee like a wild beast. But the Inspector's hand was stretched out like a flash and grasped him by the back of the collar with an iron hold. The fellow made one tremendous but vain effort to break loose, and then stood still, shaking all over,

but dangerous no longer, The Inspector gave a sharp whistle ; a sergeant entered the room, and at a nod from his superior had Grush manacled in a jiffy and stood up against the wall. The Inspector straightened his shirt-cuff and said, "Come, Horace, make an end of this business; we can't stay here all the morning to hear you two scoundrels abuse each other."

"I say," said Dupee, with a sort of excited shriek in his voice, "that after I took Jerrold Nolen to the door of his house, and left him, so help me God, alive in the stoop there, though so drunk he didn't know what he was about, that devil there came up to him and robbed him, and gave him the blow behind the ear that killed him ! I say it, and I can prove it ! And when he feels the rope about his neck, let him remember that it was Horace Dupee put it there !"

"Take them out, sergeant," said the Inspector, abruptly; "I will be at the office presently. They're a pair of them, and, to my thinking, hanging is too good for either of them !"

The little audience which had been involuntary spectators of this violent and ugly scene drew a breath of relief when the door closed behind the two convicts. It was a long time before the nightmare impression wore off.

"That last turn was unexpected," observed the Inspector, deprecatingly. "It wasn't on my programme. I think Dupee probably told the truth

about it; you remember, Miss Nolen, I always doubted his having committed the greater crime. But, on the whole, I think we may congratulate ourselves on having made a very good end of the affair. You will not have to return to Harlem, Mr. Nolen, unless you wish to. And, on the other hand, when you go back to Mexico, I fancy you will find no difficulty in carrying with you all the guarantees, social or business, that you want."

"Thanks to you, Inspector," said the young man with feeling, grasping the officer by the hand.

"Oh, no; that is where your thanks belong," the latter returned, bowing toward Pauline with a smile. "She deserves most of the credit for the successful issue of this affair. No sister, I'll make bold to say, ever stood by a brother so faithfully as she has by you. I have done little besides back her up now and then; and, if I hadn't, I believe she would have done the whole thing alone by herself!" and evading further thanks and praises, the chief detective made a comprehensive salute to the company, and vanished from the room.

"He's what I call a man!" said Percy.

"And a general!" added the judge.

Pauline said in a whisper, "God bless him!"

Judge Ketelle and his beautiful wife continue to live in New York, and now that the shadow is lifted from them they are the sunny center of a charming society. Mrs. Nolen lives with them, in the enjoyment of a serene old age. Percy returned

to Mexico, and is still living there, having become quite wealthy; and his betrothal is reported to the daughter of one of the chief men in the government. Mrs. Valentine Martin is believed to be in England, intriguing, without much prospect of success, for the possession of her late husband's estates. Dupee is behind the bars; Grush contrived to cheat the gallows. Inspector Byrnes is hard at work; but hard work agrees with him.

THE END.

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