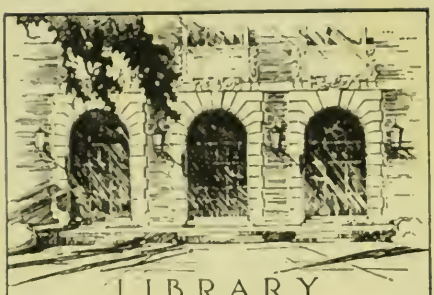
A Rich Man's Relatives

By The Author of

Inchbracken



A RICH MAN'S RELATIVES.

PRESS NOTICES

OF

"INCHBRACKEN,"

A NOVEL BY R. CLELAND.

Westminster Review, October, 1883.

"Inchbracken" is a clever sketch of Scottish life and manners at the time of the "Disruption," or great secession from the Established Church of Scotland, which resulted in the formation of the Free Church. The scene of the story is a remote country parish in the north of Scotland, within a few miles of the highland line. The main interest centres in the young Free Church minister and his sister and their relations, on the one hand, with the enthusiastic supporters of the Disruption movement, mostly of the peasant or small tradesmen class, with a sprinkling of the smaller land-owners; and, on the other hand, with the zealous supporters of the Established Church, represented by the Drysdales of Inchbracken, the great family of the neighbourhood. The story is well and simply told, with many a quiet touch of humour, founded on no inconsiderable knowledge of human nature.

Academy, 27th October, 1883.

There is a great deal of solid writing in "Inchbracken," and they who read it will hardly do so in vain. It is a story of the Disruption; and it sets forth, with much pains and not a little spirit, the humours and scandals of one of the communities affected by the event. The main incident of the story has nothing to do with the Disruption, it is true; but its personages are those of the time, and the uses to which they are put are such as the Disruption made possible. Roderick Brown, the enthusiastic young Free Church minister, finds on the sea-shore after wreck and storm, a poor little human waif which the sea has spared. He takes the baby home, and does his best for it. One of his parishioners has lost her character, however; and as Roderick, at the instigation of his beadle, the real author of her ruin, is good enough to give her money and help, it soon becomes evident to Inchbracken that he is the villain, and that the baby of the wreck is the fruit of an illicit amour. How it ends I shall not say. I shall do no more than note that the story of the minister's trials and the portraitures of elders and gossips, lags and maids and village notables—with which it is enriched are (especially if you are not afraid of the broadest Scotch, written with the most uncompromising regard for the national honour) amusing and natural in no mean degree. W. E. HENLEY.

"Inchbracken" will be found amusing by those who are familiar with Scotch country life. The period chosen, the "Disruption time," is an epoch in the religious and social life of Scotland, marking a revival, in an extremely modified and not altogether genuine form, of the polemic Puritanism of the early Presbyterians, and so furnishing a subject which lends itself better to literary treatment than most sides of Scottish life in this prosaic century. The author has a good descriptive gift, and makes the most of the picturesque side of the early Free Church meetings at which declaimers against Erastian patronage posed in the attitude of the Covenanters of old. The story opens on a stormy night when Roderick Brown, the young Free Church minister of Kilrundle, is summoned on a ten-mile expedition to attend a dying woman, an expedition which involves him in all the troubles which form the subject of the book. The patient has nothing on her mind of an urgent character. "No, mem! na!" says the messenger.

> "My granny's a godly auld wife, tho' maybe she's gye fraxious whiles, an' money's the sair paikin' she's gi'en me; gin there was ocht to confess she kens the road to the Throne better nor maist. But ye see there's a maggit gotten intil her heid an' she says she beut to testifee afore she gangs hence.'"

The example of Jenny Geddes has been too much for the poor old woman:—

> "Ay, an' I'm thinkin' it's that auld carline, Jenny Geddes, 'at's raised a' the fash! My granny gaed to hear Mester Dowlas whan he preached among the whins down by the shore, an' oh, but he was bonny! An' a graand screed o' doctrine he gae us. For twa hale hours he preached an expundet an' never drew breath for a' the wind was skirlin', an' the renn whiles skelpin' like wild. An' I'm thinkin' my granny's gotten her death o' ta'. But oh! an' he was grand on Jenny Geddes! an' hoo she up wi' the creepie am' heved it a the Erastian's heid. An' my granny was just fairly ta'en wi't a', an' she vooed she beut to be a mither in Israel tae, an' whan she gaed hame she out wi' the auld hugger 'at she keeps the bawbees in, aneath the hearthstane, for to buy a creepie o' her ain,—she thocht a new ane wad be best for the Lord's wark,—an' she coupet the chair whaur hung her grave claes,' at she airs fornent the fire ilika Saturday at e'en, 'an out there cam a lowe, an' scorched a hole i' the windin' sheet, an' noo, puir body, we'll hae to hap her in her muckle tartan plaid. An' aiblins she'll be a' the warmer e'y moulds for that. But, however, she says the sheet was weel waur'd, for the guid cause. An' syne she took til her bed, wi' a sair host, an' sma' winder, for there was a weet daub whaur she had been sittin' amang the whins. An' noo the host's settled on her that sair, she whiles canna draw her breath. Sae she says she maun let the creepie birlin' slide, but she beut to testifee afore some godly minister or she gangs hence. An' I'm fear'd, sir, ye maun hurry, for she's real far through."

The excuse for this long extract must be its excellence as a specimen of a long-winded statement, just such as a Scotch fisher boy would make when once the ice was broken. Not less idiomatic is the interview between Mrs. Boague, the shepherd's wife, and Mrs. Sangster "of Auchlippie," the great lady of the congregation, when the latter has had her painful experience of mountain climbing, till rescued by the "lug and the horn" at the hands of her spiritual pastor. Other good scenes are the meeting of the two old wives in mutches an the brae side, and the final discomfiture of the hypocritical scamp Joseph Smiley by his mother-in-law, Tibbie Tirpie, who rights her daughter's wrongs and the minister's reputation by a capital *coup de main*. Of more serious interest, though full of humour, are the trials the excellent Roderick endures at the hands of his kirk session. Ebenezer Prittie and Peter Malloch are types of many an elder minister and ministers' wives have had to groan under, and the race is not extinct. But all who are interested in such specimens of human nature should refer to Mr. Cleland, who knows his countrymen as well as he can describe his country.

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A

RICH MAN'S RELATIVES.

BY

R. CLELAND,

AUTHOR OF "INCHBRACKEN."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II

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A RICH MAN'S RELATIVES.

CHAPTER I.

FINANCE.

The sunshine and the glow faded slowly out of the air, the world fell into shadow, and the heavens changed their sunset glory for the blue transparency of summer twilight. Evening spread wings of soothing calm over the drowsy land, worn out, as a child might be, with its day-long revel in the garish light. The air grew softened and refreshed with falling dews which gathered unnoticed on the leaves and grass blades. The winds were still, and only fire-flies, blinking among the herbage or pursuing aimless flights across the deepening dimness, disturbed the perfect rest.

Along the dusty road came sounds of wheels, the wheels of the Misses Stanleys' home-going guests. The sound spread far and wide across the humid air which sublimated it into something above the common daylight noise, rasping and jarring against stones and gravel, into a rumbling half musical with suggestive echoes reverberating through the stillness.

Out of the gate they came, those vehicles, along the road, around the corner where Bruneau's cottage stood, and down towards the village shrouded in gathering obscurity, with the twinkle of a candle scattered through it here and there in rivalry of the fire-flies in the bushes nearer hand, but far less brilliant. The vehicles rumbled and disappeared, and the echoes of their wheels died out as ripples die on the surface of a stagnant pool; and the road was left alone to night and silence.

But not for long. Two passengers on foot came forward by-and-by, their footsteps audible in the sensitive quiet, while yet themselves were scarce visible in the gloom, and the fumes of their cigars tainting the sweetness of the clover-scented air. It was Considine and Jordan, who had preferred to walk while the rest drove on, and were

enjoying their tobacco in the coolness on their leisurely way.

"Fine lad that ward of ours is growing up. Healthy, handsome, and well conditioned, I should say by his looks. Likely to do credit to his good fortune." It was Jordan who spoke.

"To whom do you allude, sir?" answered the other, with the prim formality of print, and of his native land—a formality which continued residence among Her Majesty's more easy-spoken subjects was little likely to relax at his time of life. "I am not aware of any lad to whom I stand in the relation of guardian to a ward."

"I mean Ralph Herkimer's boy, of course. No! You are right enough! He is not our ward in the legal sense. We can have no voice in his education. But, really, if we had, I do not think we could have brought him up better."

"Ha! Ralph's boy? Yes. He seems what we would class as 'good ordin*ai*ry,' down my way, in the Cotton States—a shade better than 'fair to middlin'.' He ain't just real peart, I should say, but then he is not a poor man's son, so that is natural. It takes hard work, and hard feed, and not too much of the feed either, to make a lad truly peart. But he

seems high-toned, and that's the main point with a young man of his prospects. But I would expect no less from Mrs. Herkimer's son. Ah, sir! She's Noo Hampshire, 'tis true, and I don't hold with Noo Hampshire and its notions; but, sir, she is a high-souled, clear-seeing, honourable and accomplished—lady." Strange—is it not?—how every female American resents being called a *woman!* and no male American dare apply that most simple and dignified title to the sex. Let us hope that eventually the coloured lady who condescends to do the washing for white women—*she* calls them so—will succeed in disgusting them with the frippery pretentiousness of the title she usurps, and educate them into adopting the gracious style of their illustrious mother Eve.

"Oh, yes," answered Jordan, "Mrs. Ralph is an excellent person. My wife thinks all the world of her, and I like her too; though, perhaps, as you say, there is a little more New Hampshire than there need have been. Yes! no doubt, young Gerald is most happy in having such a mother. And then his father! Think of him! An extremely good fellow is Ralph Herkimer. So wealthy! Such talent! *Must* have it, you know—though that kind of cleverness does not show

much in society—to make such a fortune. The practical talent which amasses a fortune never *does* shine in society, though we are ready enough to give it every credit whenever it gives us the chance, which it never does but when it invites us to dinner, and that, somehow, is not often. However, Ralph is indisputably smart, as well as rich, and of course high principled. How could he have made such a fortune otherwise? Our young friend Gerald is most fortunate in his parents as well as in the old uncle."

"Ah! Gerald. Yes. I am with you there. A high-toned, whole-souled gentleman. I knew him well. Had much to do in assisting him to manage his affairs after he came to Canady. Very handsome affairs they were. And I feel proud at having arranged all to his satisfaction, and realized the whole before our unfort'nate unpleasantness, and the depreciation of values in the South."

"Yes, that was most fortunate. The old gentleman had time to make his Canadian investments before his demise, and so saved you and me, friend Considine"—this was an unwonted familiarity in Jordan's reserved manner of speech, betraying a desire to grow intimate, which implied something in his mind requiring a confidential mood for its

reception. "Saved you and me from a power of responsibility."

Considine puffed his cigar in silence. If this *rapprochement* was meant to lead up to something behind, let it do so, he would give it no assistance. He knew of nothing connected with the Herkimer estate requiring confidential talk just then, and his thoughts were disposed to linger on other themes. The soothing air and the fragrance of his weed brought pleasanter fancies to his mind than could spring from the contemplation of a dead man's money. He had spent a pleasant afternoon, in what, to an old bachelor of his retiring habits, was a scene of unwonted gaiety. The low soft hum of women's voices, the rustle of their silks, the garden scents, and a vague impression of gentle sweetness and pretty behaviour, so different from the tone at his hotel and the club smoking-room, where so many of his evenings were spent, hung like a rosy mist over his memory; and he would fain have let it hang, so unaccustomed was it, and so pleasant. There was something, too, like the wave of falling tresses before his eyes, and a sound of pleasant laughter, not loud or much prolonged, as he recalled his talk with Mrs. Ralph, and another talk which followed, in which Miss Matilda

was a third at first, and by-and-by sole auditor and interlocutor, which had lasted long and been extremely pleasant.

"Bless my soul!" said this sober elder to himself. "How deuced agreeable I must have been! She really liked it—I could see that—looked interested, no end, when I was explaining to her. And she understood it all at once! Intelligent, very—cultured, too, and well read—one knew that by the neat remark she made about Seringapatam. And a *fine* woman. What hair! Well-rounded bust, too, and what dainty slippers. Neat ankle—that time it showed when she kicked the puppy from under the tea-table. She looked as if she saw that I admired it when she was drawing it back. She coloured, I think. But not a bit offended—they never are, to see that a fellow appreciates their 'points.' How archly she smiled, too, at my little sally! What was it again? But I made several, now I think of it, and she smiled at them all—not sure, but she laughed. Yes, she did laugh once—laughed right out. I believe she appreciates me! A woman of discernment. Not one to be taken in by a sleek young puppy, fitted out by his tailor and his barber, and nothing inside but his dinner. No, she appreciates a man who knows something of life! Yes, I do be-

lieve she really did appreciate me;" and he stroked his chin complacently, blowing his smoke in a long thin tail of satisfaction into the night, and feeling that the world with its cakes and ale was not all over for him yet, as he pushed out his chest and stepped springily forward.

Jordan had received no answer to his last observation. He had more to say, but was waiting for a lead, such as his last remark should have called forth, but no lead came. He gnawed the end of his cigar impatiently; the thread of his discourse was being cut. Worse, it was being allowed to trail idly on the mind and be forgot; like a purposeless gossamer, which no one troubles to catch hold on, and which, though its length has been nicely calculated for the gulf it was meant to span, will never be caught on the further shore, and the ingenious spider who spun it must wait bridgeless and in vain, or else he must begin his labour over again, and try anew. Inwardly fuming, pishing and pshawing under his breath, and gnawing his cigar, the smoke grew turbulent and lost its way among the passages and recesses of his system. It got in his eyes, first, and made them smart, it got into his nostrils and made him snort; finally it made a solid charge backwards for

his throat, like a trapped animal struggling to escape. Then at last he threw the vexatious thing away, and stood in the middle of the highway, coughing, gasping and holding his sides, while his eyes ran water, and his companion wondered if anything ought to be done. Considine's day-dream after dark was dissipated utterly, and by the time the other had composed himself he was ready enough to attend to whatever his companion might choose to say.

"Horrid cigar, that," Jordan was at last able to utter, as they resumed their walk. "They *will* always slip a few bad ones into each box, however good. I wish the *con*founded tobacconist had had the smoking of that one himself, and coughed his head off, it would have served him right. But let me see —what was it we were talking about? Hm—ha. Ah, yes! Old Herkimer's investments. Most judicious they were. Oh, yes, very much so. Could not have done better—at the time, that is. But times change. Circumstances have altered since '59. This is '73, and no one can see fourteen years ahead."

"The stocks all stand higher to-day than they did then," observed Considine. "Let me see"—and he began to count off on his finger tips—"Banque d'Orval, that's one. A very large block of stock we hold there. That

has gone up mightily since the surrender. How it stood in '59 I can't say."

"Oh, yes. It is higher than in '59, of course."

The Proletarian Loan and Mortgage Co. Don't know a better mark on the share list at present than that. Pike and Steel Money Co. —good —Bank of Progress—would be glad to hold some of its stock myself—Tuscarora Roads —Consolidated Drainage. And—and three or four more which I do not recall at present. As for the Provincial Debentures, and Railroad and Municipal Bonds, we went over them together last time we cut the *coupons*—could not be better, and I reckon our friend bought them all at a discount. The estate will realize a handsome profit."

"Quite true, General!"—Jordan did not often lubricate his lips with American titles of honour—"just what I observed. Our client could not have acted with a sounder judgment when he made his investments. But it is years since then, and the business world has had its vicissitudes, like other institutions. Now—*entre nous*, and strictly in confidence—are there no whispers afloat in financial circles? Has no—well, no breath—shall I call it? no tone of depreciation come to your ears? No? You surprise me. But

to be sure, it is not so very unusual for signs and circumstances to leek out and become known in our profession. Not to be *talked* about, of course—that would *never* do. Betray the necessary confidence between lawyer and client? Oh, no! Not for a moment! But we do get to know things *at times*, while you men of the world are still in the dark, and going forward in the blindest confidence. As to the Banque d'Orval, now. Has nothing transpired to raise the—what shall I call it? —the shadow of a misgiving?"

"Misgiving?—Banque d'Orval?—I believe it stands as strong as the Bank of Commerce of Noo York! Certainly, nairy one! You cannot have looked into its last statement. Reserve of specie, circulation, discounts, all O.K. Never made a better showing since it was chartered."

"I confess I never muddle myself with unnecessary figures. And as to bank statements in general, the only reliable one of their affairs ever issued is the one put out by the assignee when they go into liquidation; and that comes too late to be of much use, except to sue the old directors upon. No, I did not look into the statement. I have always felt that that institution suffered an irreparable injury in the death of Truepenny, the old president."

"The shares are higher now than ever they were in his time."

"No doubt. But what does that prove? Is there any limit to the wrongheadedness and gullability of investors?—I know of none."

"But Pennywise is manager still. Think of his long experience in the bank, and how many years he acted under Truepenny. Pennywise is the most cautious and circumspect bank manager going."

"He is slow enough, if that is what you mean; and that slowness is the foundation of his high repute. It has been worth a fortune to him. You submit your proposal and he lets you talk, and when you have talked yourself into a belief that he will never let so good a thing go past him, he says 'hum,' and coughs—he has always a cough when he ought to speak, and gains time by eating a lozenge. When that is over he clears his voice with a long breath, and promises to submit the matter to his board. Truepenny, now, was gruff, but he was quick, and he did not waste time. He might cut you short in the middle of your story—he always cut Pennywise short when he began to wheeze and ask more questions—but it was because he knew what you were going to

say, and he gave you your answer. It was always the best answer for the bank's interest, and generally it was the kindest for the customer. His successor, Sacavent, is rarely to be seen in the bank parlour now, and Pennywise does as he pleases, that is, makes people wait, till his mind is satisfied, and their opportunity is past."

"But the bank's business has not fallen off. The profits are larger than ever this year."

"On paper, at least. But we must wait to test the reality. It takes time to weaken a made reputation. Sacavent, now! Do you think that was a judicious choice?"

"One of our most distinguished merchants —Why, of course!—Rich, popular, doing an immense business of his own. Who can understand the wants of the business community better?"

"That is just it. I fear he understands the *wants* of the business community too well—knows them from personal experience. What would you say, now, if I were to tell you that his fine house on the mountain was mortgaged up to the gold weather cocks? and that the bank has had to be content with a second mortgage, as collateral, which is just worth the paper it

is written on, for the first will cover everything."

"Hm. That sounds serious. Is it really so?"

"I hear so, and more. They tell me his wife, who has her own property—'*separée des biens*,' we call it in our law—has had to give security for a large sum."

"Indeed? But after all it is a big institootion. If Sacavent were to bleed it for all he is worth it would be only a pin-prick to the Banque d'Orval."

"Perhaps; but who can be sure that he is the only blood-sucker on the board? One cannot suppose the others would pass over his overdrafts if they did not get something for themselves. Why, even Pennywise will have to get something to keep him quiet. If it should turn out that there is a whole nest of needy ones, who can tell how far the queer transactions may extend? If anything should leak out—you see something *is* known, though not to the public—it would raise a panic."

"The Banque d'Orval can stand a run. Look at the specie reserve! It *must* stand. The government must come to its rescue in case of need."

"No doubt. But think of the shares! If they fall back to par—and it is not so

many years since they were only a few per cents above—the present value of an investment would be reduced one-half. And everything else on the share list would be affected by the distrust it would create. Many smaller institutions would go, and all would suffer. It is a serious consideration. There is the Proletarian Loan, now."

"That is sound at any rate. Mortgaged properties cannot be wiped out like the '*rest*' in a bank ledger."

"But you must recollect the Proletarian receives deposits. They had quite a flourish in their last statement over the increased amount, and the smaller interest they have to pay on such moneys than on the bonds they issue; which is all very well, but in case of a run by their depositors, how are they to realize the long-time mortgages in which their funds are tied up? They cannot look for much help from the banks, who naturally would not be sorry to see a competitor for the public savings in a tight place. Again, are you perfectly confident that the affairs of the Proletarian would stand a close audit? I confess I have a feeling myself which is not one of security, notwithstanding the high quotations of the shares. It has always been a mystery to me

how old Weevil, the managing director, made his fortune. When he went in there he appeared to have nothing but his salary from the company of three thousand dollars. Now the man is undeniably wealthy. Owns blocks of valuable city property, is director in several companies where he must have a large interest, and lives in a style which his salary could not keep up for a couple of months, far less a year—houses for his sons, who, by-the-way, do nothing for themselves, and English schools for his daughters, which a thousand dollars a-piece do not begin to pay for. I would be the very last man to say everything was not as it should be there, but at the same time it is hard to understand."

"Hm! These are new lights to me, friend Jordan. I must take time to comprehend them. Meanwhile what is your own opinion? And have you any suggestion to make as to what we should do?"

"Candidly, then, General—and with all deference in discussing a matter of finance with you, a member of the Stock Exchange, who make the subject your profession—I believe that you financiers have squally times before you. Confidence will be disturbed and quotations will fall. The investments of

our late highly valued friend stand now at higher prices than ever before. The full value of the property is vastly greater than when he purchased, and I hate to think of its shrinking back to the sum, insignificant by comparison, which it amounted to when it came under our care."

"But I do not see that we can help that, even if it should occur. It has not occurred as yet. The investments were made by Gerald himself, and if, in the fluctuations of the market, the property becomes less valuable, we are not responsible."

"Not legally, even if morally. Still, we would like to do our best for our worthy friend. For myself, I confess I am proud to be guardian of so handsome a property; and, seeing we are not asked to work gratuitously, it appears to me we should do our best for it."

"All very true; but suppose it should turn out that our investments do not prove profitable—that, after we have sold, the old investments improve—what then? The estate will have suffered a loss, and the heir may hold us to account."

"My dear sir, present prices cannot rise any higher. Take my word for it. How could they? Unless the rate of interest falls

materially, how could investors afford to pay higher prices? Consider that, and then discount those circumstances, not generally known, which I have mentioned to you—in confidence—and you cannot but agree with me. Besides, our friend Ralph—he is your friend more than he is mine—is a business man, prompt and off-hand. He knows. He is in big operations every day; and he will not haggle over the odd cents like a *habitant* farmer."

"But Ralph is not the heir. Gerald hated him, and would have thrown his money into the St. Lawrence sooner than Ralph should get it."

"Quite so. It is Ralph's boy, a fine lad, too. But he will do just as his father thinks best. Any young fellow would be like wax in the hands of so keen a practitioner as friend Ralph."

"I think not. Mrs. Selby's child is the heir. She was to have had the property herself if she had not married against her brother's wish."

"My dear sir, that child is dead. It must be. It is ten years since it disappeared. In spite of every effort and inquiry, nothing has been heard of it since the day it was lost. Ralph's boy is the heir in default of Mrs.

Selby's children. Failing the boy, Ralph would inherit from his son."

"I have known so many instances in the South of the long-lost heir turning up when he was least expected, that I never look on any one as dead till I have seen the burial certificate. After a person has been put under ground, in the presence of witnesses, I feel that his claims have been quieted, but not before. Twenty years from the date of Mrs. Selby's marriage we will hand over the property to her child; failing a child of hers we will pay it to Ralph's son; and, meanwhile, we need not trouble our heads with questions of heirship."

"True; but we would not fulfil the duty our deceased friend expected of us if we stood idly by while panics and fluctuations of the Stock Market were eating away the value of the property. Man alive! our allowances and commissions in selling out and re-investing would go a long way to make up any loss which could be proved in a court to have arisen from our error in judgment, even if our good intentions did not weigh with the jury to absolve us. That is, supposing the heir should be shabby enough to make such a claim. But the supposition is preposterous. If you sell out that block of stock in the Banque d'Orval and the Proletarian now,

your brokerage will be quite a pretty thing—makes a man wish himself a broker to think of it."

"And after the shares were sold, what would you do with the money?"

"Invest in first mortgages on good real property—never to more than half or a third of the value. I can lay my hands on any quantity of such security. It is safe beyond question; for, as you observed a little while ago, the acres cannot run away, and I will see to there being the fullest powers of foreclosure and sale; so there can be no possibility of loss."

"I do not understand your Canady laws about real property, and I would be sure to get tripped up in some nicety about titles."

"But *I* know, General. It is my business."

"Of course you do, and you would feel all safe. But what of me? One man don't exactly like to shoulder a responsibility on the strength of another man's knowledge—see? I would consult you myself, friend Jordan, on my own affairs, and go by what you told me, but somehow that seems different from going it blind in another man's business, and making myself responsible for everything some one else may do."

"But, my dear sir, I am as ignorant of

Stock Exchange matters as you can possibly be of the law of real property. Suppose we were to divide the proceeds of stocks sold into two parts ; you to invest the one-half in stocks and bonds, and I the other in mortgages, and each to furnish the other with particulars of what he had done. You would make a very pretty sum out of your share of the business, and I don't mean to say that I would not do the same out of the other, only as it is the borrower who pays the law costs, my profits would come mostly out of the public, while yours would come out of the estate, so you cannot but say I am well disposed towards you."

"But if we are to sell out the very strongest stocks on the list in fear of a panic, it would be a foolish thing to buy into the weaker ones at the same time."

"Buy American bonds then. You know all about them. So much of United States bonds, as being strong, and so much in bonds of the better individual States, which can be got at a discount now, and will be about par by the time the heir is to receive them. Quite a pretty transaction for you, I should think, general."

The "general" coughed and hummed, and cleared his voice as if about to speak ; but so

many different words rushed to his lips at once—words of doubt, words of inquiry, refusal and consent—that he could not frame them into speech.

"Think over it, general," Jordan said as they shook hands at parting, "and let me know as soon as you have made up your mind. Something should be done at once."

Considine thought it would be mortifying if the estate left in his charge should suffer diminution or loss simply on account of his own want of enterprise. Of course there were chances both ways, but was it not his business to make gain out of these chances? And had he not secured for himself a snug little fortune by manipulating them for his own advantage? And should he not risk something to save a friend, an old and deceased friend, who would besides, pay brokerage on all he did for him? Considine valued himself, and I doubt not, justly so, on his "high tone;" but he was human, as we who contemplate his conduct also are—and those brokerages *did* range themselves in his mind among the considerations for and against disturbing old Gerald's investments, and eventually it was on the side with brokerages that his decision fell; but we are not therefore justified in describing Considine

with his "tone" as a specious humbug. He meant well, as so many of us do, only he was happy to combine his own advantage with what he—therefore, perhaps—considered the advantage of his trust.

CHAPTER II.

MARY SELBY MEETS HER DAUGHTER.

Four years later, in a street in Montreal. It had snowed uninterruptedly the day before, in fine dry particles, sifting noiselessly through the air, and filling it with prickly points—not the broad clammy flakes of an insular climate which loiter as they fall, and feel damp and clay-like beneath the passer's feet; but rather an attenuated sand or dust, dimming and pervading the day, and heaping itself in drifts which overspread and bury while you watch, yet cannot reckon how it is they grow. And then it is so dry in its exceeding coldness that it will not wet, and springs and crackles merrily under foot.

It was morning—not yet nine o'clock—and the snow shovellers were only beginning here and there to relieve the encumbered footways, and contribute another layer to the solidly-packed thicknesses of snow and ice which winter had been building in the streets, a foot or two above the neighbouring side

walks. The snow had ceased to fall, and the laden clouds which had brought it having burst and dissolved themselves, the sky was a clear pale vault, filled with diffused and dazzling brightness.

From a door there issued a young girl, trim and slight. She was dressed in brown—brown close-fitting, warm and shaggy—muffled as to ears and chin in a wisp of "cloud" of the same colour, out of which there peered the daintiest little pink nose and a pair of eyes of merry blue, shining as they looked out from under the edge of her sealskin cap, with the gleeful twinkle of a squirrel's in the snugness of his nest. I would have said they were like fawn's eyes, save that it has a sentimental association which does not accord with Muriel Stanley, now arrived at the age of fifteen—the border land between child and woman—and fancy free. She stood on the doorsteps with a roll of music under her arm, and her hands in the pockets of her jacket. Muff she had none, it is in the way with active people who do their five or six miles on snow-shoes of winter afternoons, and "*toboggan*" down slopes in the moonlight.

The air was so chill it seemed to catch the breath on emerging from the indoor warmth;

but it was so transfused with brightness and dancing sunshine that it sent the blood coursing quicker through the veins, and prickled in the nostrils with an exhilarating joy, like the sting of the air bubbles in effervescing wine.

The doorsteps were as yet unswept, and deep in snow, the shovellers being still a good many doors off, and Muriel stood on the top looking down and around ere she made the knee-deep plunge, when a voice accosted her coming down the street.

"Miss Muriel! yet surely not, at this hour of the morning."

"Yes, it's me, Mr. Gerald," she said, turning round. "What would any one stay indoors for on a jolly morning like this?"

"But you do not go out at this hour of the morning in general?"

"Neither do you; I know that much. We see the business people go past—M. Petitôt and the Ferretings—about half-past eight, but you gentlemen of the Stock Board never by any chance before half-past ten. If I were a man, and lazy, I would be a stock-broker. No going back to the office in the evening!"

"Ha, ha! you are severe this morning. Does that come of being out so early?"

"That? Oh! I have to go for my music lesson this morning if I am to have one at all. Mr. Selby has fallen on the ice and sprained both his ankle and his wrist. I have a note from him, written with his left hand, asking me to come to his house, as he cannot come to me—written with his left hand, actually; think of the trouble it must have cost him!—so I could not refuse to go."

"Poor old Selby! I did not hear of that. He is my uncle, you know, or at least he is married to my aunt. And Judy—Mrs. Bunce, I mean—is there just now, with Betsey, to show her the gaieties of the city. Nice house to see the gaieties from. They will consist of a *musicale* at Counter Tenor's, the dry-goods man, and one or two select performances of the Classical Quartette Club. Betsey's mind won't be unsettled by the dissipation, I guess. She won't leave town thoroughly dissatisfied with country life. Then again, what a pretty specimen of musical culture poor Betsey must be for Selby to lead around. I can imagine his being silently thankful for the sprain as an excuse to stay at home. Just come in the nick of time. However, as my mother was saying to me, though somehow it seems to have slipped out of my mind, we must do

what we can for Betsey. If she *is* a rumpty-tumpty little thing, with her hair always lying the wrong way, she can't help it, and Uncle Bunce is not half bad—for a parson. I have it! I shall go in with you now, if you don't mind, find them all at breakfast, like an intimate and affectionate nephew—it will save more valuable time in the afternoon—and offer to take Betsey to the Rink to-day at three or four o'clock—that is, if you will promise to be there. But let me see! Have I time? Ah, yes! Twenty minutes to spare before I am due at Hammerstone's."

"Hammerstone's? Professor Hammerstone's? Is it a breakfast? Do you attend scientific breakfasts?"

"No. But I study the sciences, though perhaps you would not think it. You see we have so much to do with mineral lands, mines, metals, and that sort of thing, that the governor thinks it is worth while for me to try and find out what it all means. Those sharks, the experts, impose on you so abominably if you do not know something of what they are talking about. So I go to Hammerstone for an hour three mornings in the week, if I get up in time; and really it is more interesting than you would suppose. It is

settled, then, that you will be on the Rink this afternoon?"

"I scarcely think it. Mr. Considine is coming to drive us out this afternoon."

"Considine! Phew—But gooseberries are not in season at this time of year! He! he!"

"I do not understand. I said we were going for a sleigh ride."

"With Considine? Will it not be rather cold work sitting with your back to the horses while the old chap makes—conversation—to the Miss Stanleys?"

"Aunt Penelope is afraid to venture out these cold days."

"Just what I said about wholesome summer fruit. That old Considine must be a sad bore, running out and in so much to one's house—like a tame cat."

"Mr. Considine is very nice. I like him. He is so good-natured, and he never says a word against people in their absence."

"One for me! But he *is* a good fellow, and I fancy you are not the only Miss Stanley who thinks so."

"How slippery it is! You turn off here, I think, to go to Professor Hammerstone's, do you not? I hope you will not be late. Thanks for carrying my music; I will take it now."

"But I mean to carry your music all the way, Miss Muriel. As I told you, I am going to look in on my three aunts at breakfast, and ask them for a cup of hot coffee. That will have a good effect on my aunt Judy, who I fear suspects me of being not very steady. She is a great promoter of coffee taverns. Tried to start one at St. Euphrase, I believe, and had to drink all the coffee herself because the *habitants* would not buy it. She will say I am an improving character if I ask for a cup of coffee."

When Muriel had finished her music lesson and was resuming her gloves and cloud, she found herself caught from behind by a pair of short fat arms in a sort of hug, accompanied by a little scream of enthusiasm.

"Muriel! And were you going away without ever asking to see me?"

Muriel turned in surprise. "Betsey Bunce! But I did not know you were in town till an hour ago. You know you never wrote."

"Wrote! What is there to write about at St. Euphrase?—unless I were to walk up to the farm and ask Bruneau about your cows and chickens. But you knew an hour ago, you say, and yet you were going away without asking for me. I call it real unkind."

"It is only ten o'clock, you know—far too early an hour for calling."

"You are so particular! Just like an old woman—and a stiff old-country woman, too—Miss Penelope all over."

"I hope so. Aunt Penelope is always right."

"Come in now, anyway, and take off your things. I am dying for somebody to talk to, after sitting round the stove for three days with three old women. What with Mr. Selby's bandages, and embrocations, and Miss Susan's neuralgia, and Mrs. Selby's poor health, this house is worse than a hospital. Auntie likes it first-rate; she enjoys giving people physic, and says it was a Providence which brought her here at this time; but I find it real lonesome. I have read through the only two novels I can find, and I declare my back aches with sitting still and doing nothing. Couldn't we go down town by-and-by and look at the shops? Let me help you off with your jacket. Fur-lined, I do declare! Cost twenty dollars, I dare say. Thirty was it? You're the lucky girl! Never mind fixing up before the glass, you're all right—here's a pin if you want one. Wherever did you pick up that cunning neck-ribbon?—lady bugs and grasshoppers—I call it sweet. It would just suit my geranium-

coloured poplin! By-the-way, do you think that will do for evening wear, if I am asked anywhere? It is made with a tablier—looked scrumptious the night they gave charades at Madame Podevin's boarding-house. Mdlle. Ciseau cut it out for me, and I run it on the machine myself—fits like a glove. But your city fashions are so different, one never can be sure. We will go upstairs and look at it; but first you must come into the Snuggery and see the old ladies."

The "Snuggery" was at the back of the house, a sort of family room in which strangers were not received. It had been the chief apartment of the old log homestead which preceded the existing dwelling. The logs had been found so sound and the chamber so desirable that it had been suffered to remain, and been incorporated with the "frame" building erected in front, which it promised to survive, and last on in solid stability when the lighter structure of posts and boards should have fallen to pieces. It was cooler than the rest of the house in warm weather, and warmer in cold; built of twelve inch logs carefully jointed together, plastered on the outside, panelled and ceiled within with red pine highly varnished, and floored with parquetry of different native woods. It had a

window on each of three sides, flanked by heavy curtains. There was no fire-place, but in the centre an old-fashioned box-stove, capable of holding billets from two to three feet long, and whose great black smoke-pipe pierced the roof like a pivot for the family life to revolve on.

A bear skin and rugs lay about the floor, sofas and tables stood by the walls, and round the domestic altar, the blazing stove, were the rocking-chairs of the three sisters, gently oscillating like pendulums in a clockmaker's shop, and making the wooden chamber feel like the cabin of a ship, heaving and swinging on a restless tide.

Muriel was greeted effusively by Mrs. Bunce, who looked more fidgety and alert than ever in that reposeful place, and then she was presented to the sisters. Miss Susan, swathed in quilted silk and webs of knitting, a bundle rather than a person, and immersed in her own misery far too deeply to feel or to excite interest in a stranger, merely bowed and shuddered at the breath of cooler air which entered from without; but to the other, Mrs. Selby, Muriel felt strongly drawn, and pleased in a strange and restful way to feel the gentle eyes of the sick and rather silent lady dwelling on her with wistful kindness.

She was tall and pale, and in the cross light of windows admitting the dazzling reflections from the snow, and among the browns and yellows of the wainscoting, there was a lambent whiteness which associated itself in Muriel's mind with those "shining ones" she had read of when a child in the "Pilgrim's Progress," and filled her with pleasant reverence.

The lady scarcely spoke, spoke only the necessary words of welcome to a stranger, and then withdrew from the hurry of Betsey's and Judith's eager talk, sitting silently by and looking on the new comer with gentle earnest eyes. In the focus of streaming daylight and backed by russet shadows she sat and looked, wrapped in her white knitted shawl, and with hair like frosted silver, features and hands delicate, transparent, and colourless like wax, and eyes which had the weary faded look which comes of sleepless nights and many tears. She found it pleasant to sit and rest her eyes on Muriel, so elastic and freshly bright, as she chatted with the others; she felt as when a breath of spring comes rustling through the dead and wintry woods, through sapless withered twigs and fallen leaves, whispering of good to come, and sweet with springing grass and opening buds.

She scanned the girl's face and guessed her age, and then her thoughts went back across the years, the weary sunless years which had come and gone since her joys had withered, and she could not but think that had her own lost daughter been spared, she would have been nearly of that age now, and perhaps she would have been gay and bright and sweet as this one was before her. Her eyes grew moist, but it was with a softer, less harrowing regret than she had hitherto known, more plaintive and almost soothing in its sadness. The girl looked so innocent and free of care, with low sweet laughter coming from a heart that had never known sorrow or unkindness. It did her good to watch, and made her feel more patient in her long and weary grief.

For the others, they had their own affairs to make busy with, and it was not every day they came to town. What interest, either, for them, could there be in the emotional variations of their silent and always sorrowful hostess? She had suffered—though it was fourteen years since then—and of course they "felt" for her; but there is a limit to sympathy as to all things human—if there were not, life would be unbearable—and to see her after so many years still cherishing the olden sorrow had grown tedious, if yet

touching after a sort, and the family had grown to disregard it as a settled melancholy or monomania, to be pitied and passed over, like the deafness, old age, or palsy of family friends. So Betsey and her aunt had settled themselves one on either side of Muriel "for a good old talk," as Betsey said, and they talked accordingly.

"I shall come round to-morrow morning to see your aunts," said Mrs. Bunce, "and spend a long forenoon with them," and so on *ad infinitum*.

A letter was brought in while the talk was in full swing.

"An invitation!" cried Judith. "Mrs. Jordan—requests the pleasure—a juvenile party. Well—I declare!—Betsey, we forgot to bring your pinafores—or should it have been a certificate of the date of your birth? A very strange way to pay attention to their rector's wife and niece! I thought Mrs. Jordan would have known better."

"Aunt Matilda and I are going," said Muriel in astonishment. "It was very nice last time. More than a hundred, big and little. They had the band, a splendid supper and lots of fun. Indeed, Aunt Penelope was almost unwilling I should go this time; it was so late when we got home."

"Very proper, my dear; I quite approve. Young people should keep early hours; but, you know, Betsey is a little older than you are. Not much," she added, as prudence pointed to the day, only a year or two ahead, when it would suit Betsey, if still a young lady, to be no older than Muriel—"still she *is* in long dresses, and it seems odd to invite her the first time to a child's party."

"They are not all children. Tilly Martindale, for instance, is as old as Betsey. So is Randolph Jordan himself and Gerald Herkimer."

"Will *they* be there?" cried Betsey kindling into interest. "We'd better go, auntie, there's no slight. I see the sort of thing it is; there are a few little girls—*big* little girls though, all the same—to give it the name of juvenile and take off the stiffness. Just like the candy pulling we had at Farmer Belmore's. You know Farmer Belmore's, Muriel? He lives just across the river and down below the island at St. Euphrase. His son's family from Michigan were with him in the fall, and his wife and daughters are too *dévotes* to meet their neighbours, and are only waiting his death to go off to the convent. However, the old man—and a good Protestant he is—was determined the children should have a good

time, so he gave a candy pulling and invited everybody for miles round—said it was for the children. So we all went—drove across the river on the first ice of the season—whether we knew Mrs. Belmore or no. And, Muriel, we had just the most too-too time you can imagine. The daughters sat in the back-room with one or two old French women, away from everybody, and the eldest granddaughter received the guests. There was a fiddle, and, oh, just a lovely time! Joe Webb and I pulled the whitest hank of candy in the room, and we danced eight-hand reels and country dances, till one of my shoes gave way and I had to sit out with Joe Webb. It was something beyond, I tell you!"

"Tush, Betsey!" said her aunt. "You are in the city now and must not go into raptures over rustic frolics, or people will think you know no better. I shall ask the Miss Stanleys about this, when I see them to-morrow. They will be able to tell me if we had better go, and how you should dress."

"Dress! Haven't I my geranium poplin?"

"But this is *town*, my dear, which may make a difference; one never knows. In *my* young days, now, I always wore white muslin and a blue sash! And you cannot think how

many civil speeches I used to get" added the old lady, bridling, with a spot of pink on either cheek and a toss which set the treacle-coloured curls quivering. The war-horse is never too old to prance and champ his bit at the sound of the trumpet, though he may be so old that no one can remember his ever having been in action.

"I do not remember ever seeing geranium poplin at a party," said Muriel, looking to Betsey; but her eyes fell before the glance of displeased superiority she met there.

"You have not seen my dress, or you would speak more guardedly. Besides, you are not out yet, and cannot be expected to know what goes on at fashionable gatherings."

"No," said Muriel, meekly, "I am only a little girl, I know that. Still, at the juvenile parties I go to—Mrs. Jordan's, Mrs. Herkimer's, and the rest—and at our parties at home, though *they* are not balls by any means—quite small affairs—the people dress very nicely—velvet, satin, lace, and so on—but I never saw a geranium poplin."

"No! Poplin is only coming in! I know that from 'Godey's Magazine.' It was just a mere chance Quiproquo of St. Euphrase

having one dress piece. I bought it, and you cannot think how rich it looks. Cut square!—they are all cut square in the higher circles this year—with elbow sleeves and a fall of rich lace at twenty-five cents a yard."

Muriel held her breath at the catalogue of rustic splendour. She would have liked to say a word in mitigation of the fright she feared Betsey was intending to make of herself, but dreaded to have her youth flung in her face again. The young are so ashamed of their youth while they have it; it is only after it has fled, that, like flowers drooping in the midday heat, they sigh for the dried-up dews of morning which erewhile weighed down their heads with mistaken shame.

There followed more talk of millinery, and then it was time for Muriel to go, after effusive farewells and appointments for future meeting. Mrs. Selby came forward last, when the more boisterous adieux were over. She would have liked to take this young girl in her arms; she felt so strongly drawn to her, and knew not why; but she restrained herself, and only begged her to come often while Betsey remained, and to be sure to come to the family room in passing, next time she came for a music lesson. And Muriel, looking in the face of the whitened lady, so

venerable and sweet, not only promised—as in good nature she could not avoid—but really intended to fulfil, promising herself pleasure in doing it.

CHAPTER III.

CONSIDINE.

A GREAT rise in the world had come to Cornelius Jordan, Q C. They seem all to be Q.C.'s, my reader, those lawyers in Canada; or more than half of them. The Queen is so remote a centre, that the beams of her favour are very widely, if thinly, spread, and this especial title of honour has come to be regarded as a polite and inexpensive attention which new prime ministers make haste to bestow upon their friends. And there are so many prime ministers, that at last it became a ground of dispute, between the minor premiers of the several provinces, and the premier-major at Ottawa, as to which should have the exclusive run of the alphabet for decorative purposes. Mr. Jordan, I repeat, had risen since we met him last at the Misses Stanley's garden tea. Then he was a rising man in his profession, doing well, and in comfortable circumstances; now,

he was one risen—full head and shoulders above his fellows, living in a house of the very largest size, and with horses and servants to equal the most prosperous of his neighbours, and reported to be wealthy; not with the startling but evanescent opulence of the merchant prince, which to-day is, and to-morrow is nowhere; but with the reality which attaches to professional wealth in the popular mind, as money actually coined from a man's own brain—the golden fees raked in from grateful clients—without risk, and irrespective of rising and falling markets. His name was spoken with that slight involuntary pause before and after which carries more distinction than any title; it is a form of respect so undefined. "What a man he must be!" his neighbours said, "to have made so much money, and made it so quickly!" made it at his profession, too. Nobody doubted that, for his name was never mixed up in other affairs.

It would have been hard guessing for a *quidnunc* about the Court House, had he attempted to trace how all that prosperity had been built up out of the fairly good solicitor's and conveyancer's practice carried on at his chambers, or from his not unusually frequent or brilliant appearances in Court;

though now that the fruits of success were so evident, these were vastly on the increase. "Ah!" those knowing ones would say, "he is not a brilliant speaker; but sound, sir, sound! What a head for law the man must have! What clearness of understanding, to have realized such an income. What a style of living he keeps up! How many thousands a year does it take? Quite the leading counsel at our bar." And so clients multiplied, and the suitor whose case failed in his hands felt surer it had had the best presentment than he would have felt had it succeeded with any one else. "If Jordan could not win the suit, pray who could?"

Jordan was liked, too, as well as respected. How could he fail of that? At his dinners, given every week all through the winter, were found the choicest bills of fare and the best people, and every one else was invited to share the feast. It is manifest that one cannot talk unkindly of a man while the flavour of his wine still hovers about the palate—so long, that is, as there is prospect of another invitation. When the last dinner has been eaten, and the last bottle of wine drunk, then truth is apt to come up from the bottom of her well—disturbed, no doubt, by the pumping, when the family is forced to resume water

as a beverage—and people's memories become wonderfully refreshed. They recollect—the women, that is—that really the man's wife was not a lady, that things were said at the time of the marriage, and there has been such levity and extravagance since; while the men shake their heads in cynical wisdom. They knew it from the first, and wonder how it has gone on so long, and how a fellow like that could have had the effrontery to entertain their high mightinesses so profusely.

For the present, however, if there was any unacceptable truth at the bottom of Jordan's well, she had the kindness to remain there, well out of sight. The hospitalities proceeded in a genial round; every one was proud to assist at them and spoke highly of the entertainer.

Considine was the only man who had a misgiving, and he kept his doubts and surmises to himself, hoping he was in error. He was associated with this man in many ways; and nothing is gained by letting slip an insinuation against a friend, even if good feeling did not stamp the act as abominable. His own conscience, too, was not at rest in the matter, for the expansion appeared to him to date from very shortly after the change they had adopted in managing the Herkimer Estate. He reproached

himself constantly for having consented to sell out the old man's investments, and wondered how he could have been tempted by those miserable brokerages to smirch the honest record of a lifetime. No doubt there had been considerable gain on the new securities purchased with the moiety of the funds which he administered; but what of the other half? Jordan had displayed so implicit a confidence in his judgment, such complete beautiful and gentlemanlike faith in his probity, waiving explanations, motioning off statements with expressions of unbounded reliance in his ability to do what was best, while really "in the press of other matters he had no leisure for unnecessary examinations into matters on which he could not advise," that Considine was completely silenced, and was left no opening to claim reciprocal explanations as to how the moneys in Jordan's hands had been applied.

He heard on 'Change now and then of Jordan granting short loans at fancy rates, and of his "doing" paper which was far from being "gilt-edged," and he thought of that other moiety of the Herkimer fortune. Such operations are not the way in which trust moneys are used for the benefit of the trust; but rather one in which, while loss,

if there be any, must needs fall on the trust, the extra profit accrues to the trustee. And what other funds could Jordan have to operate with? Considine knew of none but those which should have been otherwise employed, and for which, he himself would be held responsible if any misadventure were to befall them, and the sum was so large that in case of a catastrophe his own poor little fortune would go but a small way to make up the loss. He could contemplate that with comparative patience — though certainly it would be hard, after the labours and vicissitudes of a lifetime, to see the provision for his declining years swept into a pit, and one not of his own digging—but disgrace would accompany the ruin ; that was the intolerable thought.

To finish a life in which he had striven to keep his hands unsoiled and his name without reproach as a defaulting trustee! How he had been wont to scorn such, when they crossed his path! And to think that he should end in being classed with them! Who would stop to inquire into the merits? Had he ever himself stopped to sift the intricacies of a defalcation, before declaring the defaulter to be a rogue? Had not the money been confided to his care, and

was he not responsible for it to the heirs? Many a night when he lay awake in the darkness, with nothing to break the stillness but the ticking of his watch at the bed-head, the misgiving and the dread would waken in his mind, and possess him with the restless misery of an aching tooth, which would not be dulled or forgotten, toss and stretch himself as he might; and he would vow in desperation to go down the first thing in the morning and have it out with Jordan; and so, at last, he would fall into a dose, as the grey twilight was stealing on the night.

In the morning his resolution would be with him still. All through dressing and shaving he would feel determined "to have it out with Jordan," and he would run over in his mind the points of his unanswerable argument on which his co-trustee must needs be caught, and compelled to the fullest explanation, clearing away another expected sophism in the defence, with each scrape of the razor on his chin. When he descended to breakfast, however, the morning papers, the smoke of the coffee, the greetings of his fellow-boarders in the hotel, would gradually lead him back to the tone of every-day life and its amenities, and then his intentions would grow less stern. The tren-

chant points in his argument would grow dim before his eyes, and he would recollect how many things there might be to say on the other side. Perhaps, too, he might have been misinformed as to something, or he might be under some misapprehension—for who, after all, can tell the true inwardness of his neighbour's affairs until death or bankruptcy overtake him?—and how very uncomfortable his position would then be! In what an ungenerous, nay, churlish light he would be exhibiting himself before this most open-hearted and genial of all his friends! Indeed the prospect was not pleasant; then why should he force an interview and place himself in a false position? Was it not a shame in one claiming to be "high-toned," a soldier and a Southern gentleman of *ante bellum* times, to harbour injurious suspicions of a friend? "He must be bilious this morning—want of exercise. He would ride off his megrims in a two hours' gallop."

And so the days would pass in struggles to drive away the doubts which returned but the more persistently with darkness to spoil his sleep, till at length, in dread of their nightly upbraidings, he would nerve himself to the ungrateful task and stride down to Jordan's chambers, frowningly constraining

himself to anticipate the worst, if only to keep his courage from oozing away, as it sometimes would, when he reached the office door, leaving him to turn aside at the last moment and retreat ignominiously into his club, there to solace his drooping self-respect with brandy and soda. When, however, in sterner mood he persevered, it was still not always that the much-engaged lawyer could be seen. He was busy upon a case and could see no one; a client was with him, and two more were waiting their turn for an audience, or he was in court, and Considine—not altogether sorry at the respite—went home in comparative relief. He had done what he could, at least, and surely now the suspicions would leave him for a night or two and let him sleep in peace.

Once or twice, by a lucky chance, he was able to catch the busy man at a vacant moment intrenched behind black bags bursting with briefs, volumes of consolidated statutes, and calf-bound authorities.

"Ha, Considine!" he would cry, in a tone almost too jolly for "the profession" in business hours, "so glad to have been disengaged when you called! See you so seldom. Sit down, old man, and tell me what I can do for you. Don't hurry, I am at leisure now—that

is to say, for the next four minutes and a half," he would add, pulling out his watch. "Am to see the judge in chambers just five minutes from now. But take time, I can run down in thirty seconds, so you have good four minutes and a half. So glad you dropped in when I was at leisure."

Then Considine would hesitate and grow confused. He had charged batteries of artillery in his day, had "difficulties" on Mississippi steamboats, which were afterwards arranged with six shooters, "each to go on firing till one dropped," and he had never flinched from his task or quailed before antagonist. But how call this man antagonist? He seemed more ready to embrace than to fight. It was grievous to see him so friendly, and made our warrior feel but a shabby fellow with his inquiries and questions, which would sound so like insinuations, and might wound the genial soul which bore him so much goodwill. Being in for it, however, he must go on. It would never do for a Mississippian to run away, even in honour's cause. He pulled from his pocket a list of the bonds and debentures he held under their joint trusteeship.

"I want you to examine this list of securities, which I keep in my box at the Bank of Progress, and indorse your approval on the

back, if you do approve, and we can go over to the bank and compare the papers with the memorandum any day you find convenient."

"Tush, man! It's all perfectly right, I am quite certain. I have every confidence in you, General," declining to receive the paper.

"But I really wish you would look at it. I feel this irregular responsibility unpleasant."

"Bosh! it's all regular enough among friends. You know Ralph Herkimer this ever so long, and I should hope you know *me!* Imagine either of us getting ugly, and blaming you—whom the testator trusted so entirely—for anything you may do. No, no! And really, you must excuse me, but I cannot afford to muddle my head with unnecessary figures—even to please you! I need all my clearness for the delicate questions which arise in my practice. I abominate figures at all times, and never tackle them unnecessarily."

"But ought not I to affix some sort of approval to the mortgages you have bought for the estate?"

Jordan lifted his eyes to the other's face, in gentle wonder, as a good man might when wounded rather than offended by an unlooked for aspersion on his honour; and Considine, confused and abashed, stopped short, and then floundered on again:

"I mean it, of course, in no distrustfulness —for what should I distrust?—but just so as fairly and fully to divide the responsibility in case of the heirs desiring to call us to account."

"I really do not know," answered Jordan, matching his voice to the look of mild disappointment without reproach which the other found it so hard to bear up under; "I really don't know. I have not considered the point. It did not occur to me that you would wish to enter into the intricacies of titles in this country, which is a comparatively old one, and the tenures bear no resemblance to those of Mississippi, where I am told you go back only to General Jackson. Our system of law, too, is very different, being derived from the French, and not from the common law, as with you. No! It did not occur to me that you could possibly wish to enter into these mysteries. Our period of trusteeship, too, is drawing near its close. Three years, I should suppose, would conclude it; though I cannot speak precisely without reference to the will, and the date of Mrs. Selby's marriage. Will the study of our Quebec land-system repay you, do you think? And our friend Ralph is so entirely satisfied. Why should you bother?

"But we are not responsible to Ralph."

"No, not exactly. But it will be his boy Gerald, which is much the same thing. The lad goes into partnership with his father shortly, so their interests are identical; and it would surprise me to be told that Master Gerald did or knew anything but what his father told him. A nice boy. Wish my scapegrace was as manageable."

"I have never felt sure of that—of Ralph's boy being heir, I mean. There has been no proof of the missing infant's death; and where there is money the claimant seemingly never dies, but is always reappearing when least expected. But if, as you anticipate, it is to be Ralph we shall have to make up accounts with in the end, I am not confident that we might not have trouble, if he saw an opening for complaint. I have known him long, as you are aware. He is a fine man for business—none better—and has made a handsome fortune, but I had rather not be in his power."

"No fear of that! I fancy I know Master Ralph, too," pulling out his watch, "but there are few men of mark, especially in business, whom we lawyers cannot lay a hand on, when necessary, to keep them quiet. His bark would be worse than his bite in our case, for I think I know where to light on a muzzle that

will keep him quiet enough. Time's up, I see. If you are bent on overhauling those papers of mine, why not come up to dinner some evening? We could do it far more comfortably with the help of a glass of sherry and a good cigar. What day will you come? Friday? Or, let me see, what are you doing this evening? Come up to-night. Half-past seven, sharp. Good-bye, for the present. So glad you are coming."

And Considine would go as invited, and would find a number of other guests assembled; and Jordan would be all geniality and pleasure at having him; but never an allusion to business would escape his lips, nor would they find themselves alone together, even for a moment, till the evening was spent and it was time to go home. And so it fell that Considine's anxieties, while seeming to himself to require but one vigorous effort to end them, were never resolved, but hung about him vague and undefined, like the beginning of a low fever which has not as yet pronounced itself; causing restlessness and care, but bringing also a habit of acceptance which enabled him to live his life in spite of it, only with a diminished relish. His distrust wore in time out of the acute into the chronic form; and it is remarkable, with time, how much of anxiety a healthy man can work

through, and apparently be none the worse. Endurance brings a kind of strength to the mind like that which persistence does to the body, when the arsenic eater, after having consumed ounces of the deadly stuff, becomes able to swallow with impunity more than would have killed him not so many months before. The gouty and the rheumatic, too, how long they live!—live and enjoy even, somewhat, through their sufferings.

And in some such fashion Considine lived on, in moderate comfort and prosperity, with the shadow of possible ruin in the back-ground; always felt, but not so strongly that he must disturb the daily furniture of his life by an effort to exorcise the demon; which is a state of things not so very different from what the rest of us endure. We have our threatening shadows too, loss, disease, madness, not so very far off, and always the dismal shade of Death himself looming up behind and dwarfing all the others; yet, like the people before the flood, we manage pretty well to comfort and amuse ourselves in the present.

Considine solaced himself not unsuccessfully under his cares. He had naturally much of the wise vegetable enjoyment of existence, and things conducing thereto, eating, smoking and gentle exercise, which is natural to the country

bred more than to those brought up in cities. He had 'Change through the day, to gossip and lounge upon, and his club in the evening. He had opportunities too of going into society, even if he did not make the most of them, and very frequently he would spend an hour in the Misses Stanley's drawing-room, sipping tea and talking over the news. He had fallen into the way of spending the hot months at St. Euphrase, just as those ladies spent the cold ones in the city. Their migrations agreed pretty closely in time, and both he and they, owing to years and circumstances, being somewhat out of the swim of busy life, found it pleasant to sit together on the banks, as it were, and watch the gambols and antics of those younger and brisker, who disported themselves in mid-current.

The ladies had come to town the first winter solely for their niece's education, but the following year they undoubtedly had their own solacement quite as much in view as her improvement. The tranquillity and repose of their rural life was if anything too complete, and after having once broken it by wintering in the city, it would have felt like returning to bed after lunch to have remained in the country all the following year. There is a feeling of companionship to be derived even

from the faces of our fellows as they pass us in the street, which is pleasant to such as have been leading secluded lives, and it takes months for this mild excitement to lose its relish ; but it will grow tame eventually, and so, too, will the morning calls among ladies of a certain age. Humanity being in two forms, which combine with and supplement each other to constitute the perfect whole, a social circle composed of one kind alone must needs be incomplete, tending to limpness if it be feminine, to hardness if all of men.

The day for flirtation and matrimonial intentions may be over, but still the habits and tastes formed in that brighter time survive, even when incorrigible celibacy has caused society to pass by the offenders as hopeless subjects. Fortune, by endowing a young lady with competence, grants her the privilege to be unworldly or critical, so that she lets her precious springtime pass unused. The privilege is by no means an unalloyed boon as the years go by. She finds herself inadmissible to the conclaves of matrons of her own age, where husbands, doctors and children are discussed with freedom ; yet her god-daughters and nieces can scarcely be expected to accept her as a compeer ; she is a *demoiselle passée*, an outside hoverer on the confines of social life, with the gay bachelors

of earlier decades who are still unwed, and whom society passes by as obdurate and hopelessly unavailable for matrimonial use.

It is pitiful to see these disappointed "have-beens," with their relish for youthful pleasures still unslaked, flitting in a disregarded twilight, like Homer's ghosts, while the reviving blood of the sacrificial bull is quaffed by other lips. Well for them, is it not, if they can make up a little party among themselves, and by keeping each other in countenance, contrive to ruffle it without ridicule among the younger revellers?

And so, from mutual convenience and sympathy, Considine and the Misses Stanley became fast comrades. In their drawing-room he could drink a cup of tea with the ladies whenever he had a mind, and they were sure of an escort for the evening when they so desired.

CHAPTER IV.

BETSEY EN FÊTE.

In spite of her pretence to make little of an invitation to a juvenile party, the prospect of that gaiety took strong possession of Betsey Bunce. Mr. Selby's lameness had prevented his taking her anywhere or affording her opportunity to spread her plumage among strangers; which, indeed, was all the satisfaction which could have accrued from going out with him, she not being musical, and he very little else. Betsey's dissipations, therefore, had been of so meagre a kind that she might well set store by Mrs. Jordan's invitation; it would at least, she told herself, be an opportunity to show people that she was fit for better things. Her cousin Muriel had told her she might expect to meet a hundred guests or more, and surely they would not all be children, though poor Muriel was too young perhaps to know; but, at least, both her Montreal *beaux*, as she choose to denominate

Randolph Jordan and Gerald Herkimer, would be there. So she made no doubt of having a "good time." The image of Joe Webb rose before her mind's eye as that idea occurred to her, and he seemed to her to look reproachful. "Poor Joe!" she sighed to herself, glancing archly in her glass; but Joe was fifteen miles away, and Betsey fancied herself a heart-breaker. "A girl can't help these things," her thoughts ran on; "and Joe has never said a word—though I can tell by the sinking of his voice when he speaks to me, he would say plenty if I just gave him encouragement. Poor Joe! He's too modest. The *beaux* won't need encouragement! I guess I shall rather have to make them stand off a bit—at first, that is, they ain't going to think they are to have it all their own way with an Upper Canadian, even if she *has* moved down to St. Euphrase. Nice fellows both; but such awful *dudes!* When they walk down the street of St. Euphrase in their cricketing suits, the sidewalk don't seem broad enough to give them both room. And my! don't the *habitants* stare at them? I kind of like a *dude*, or I almost think I could bring myself to like one," and as she glanced in the glass again, she coloured half shyly before the intelligence in her own eyes. "Their gloves and their

boots do fit so splendid! Their necks look tight like in the stiff collars, but their tongues wag freely enough—too freely sometimes, at St. Euphrase. They're real "sassy" sometimes. But at a large party, no doubt they'll know enough to behave. No! Dudes ain't half bad. But these two hai'nt got the fine manly shoulders and strong arms of Joe Webb."

"Ah, how big he is! And how safe a girl would be with him to take care of her! To see him gather up the reins behind that young team of his in one hand, when they grow fractious, and lash them with the other till they simmer down like lambs! Poor Joe!" and she took another look at her all conquering charms in the glass.

Her hair—how should she arrange it on the night of conquest? There was searching of fashion magazines for something distinguished yet chaste. Many startling novelties, with much expenditure of time and hairpins, were attempted, with signal unsuccess; and it was only after every florid device had been exhausted, that she had at last to confess that a severe simplicity accorded best with her other charms; or to speak plainly, was the only hairdressing she could succeed in.

These labours led to a more critical scrutiny of her complexion than she had ever made

before. Hitherto she had accepted it like her other perfections in contented faith; but now, on closer observation, was there not just a suspicion of yellowness under the eyes—tan marks on the neck—a freckle or two across the ridge of the nose? Violet powder! that was what she needed, and forthwith she repaired to an apothecary, who, I fear, supplied her with other embellishments at the same time. It is certain, at least, that on the looked-for evening, when, after keeping her aunt long waiting, she at length came downstairs arrayed in all her glory, with shawl and hood carried in her hand, that the assembled family might have the privilege of a private view, before she set out on her career of conquest, Mr. and Mrs. Selby being in the hall and a maidservant near to open the door and catch a glimpse of the show, she appeared in one of those startling complexions which are affected by equestrian ladies of the circus, in which not the lily and the rose combine, but the chalk-ball and rouge contrast their rawness.

Mrs. Selby's mild and weary eyes opened in amused amazement, and her spouse coughed industriously behind his hand to stifle his laughter. Mrs. Bunce lifted her "pinch-nose" to her eyes in dismay and indignation.

"What is it? Who is it?" she asked, while

Betsey simpered and tossed her head. "That I should live to see a clergyman's niece make a ——"

"Guy of herself with violet powder and druggist's red," volunteered Mr. Selby. "It's a mistake, my dear Betsey, I assure you, attempting to improve Nature's choicest effort, the cheek of a pretty girl. It's like painting the lily—gilding refined gold."

Betsey turned wrathfully round, flushing scarlet here and there where the powder lay less thickly. "But perhaps he meant well, too," she thought. His concluding words implied a gratifying appreciation of her every-day looks; so she let it pass, and the angry red subsided from her forehead.

"Fie, Betsey!" continued the aunt. "There is scripture against such sinful interference with the natural complexion. Think of the wicked Hebrew queen."

"Who painted her face and was thrown out of the window," added Selby, with some irreverence. Poor man, he was apt to grow jocose.

"But, auntie, the fashion magazine says brilliant complexions are all the go, especially with simple *coiffures;* and I am sure mine is simple enough—nothing but a bang, an Irish wisp, and—well, only three or four pads. In

Europe, it is said, they use rouge and pearl-white quite freely. I have only put on a little powder."

"A *little*, my dear?" muttered Selby, half aside, "you look as if you had come out of a flour barrel—with the white flakes sticking all over you. It ought to be a fancy ball you were going to, and you to represent a snow-storm. The dust is flying from you every time you turn your head."

"Nonsense, George," said his wife. "You are vexing, and very ridiculous. Why tease the girl? We have all made mistakes of that kind in our day, Betsey, my dear. You should have seen Mr. Selby himself, when he was a young man, and wanted to look his best. He could hardly walk—he hobbled—from the tightness of his boots."

"You are mean, Mary, to go back to that. If I did, it was only when I hoped to walk or dance with you."

"And you would have danced far better if your shoes had been a larger size. But truly, Betsey, if you will try the effect of a wet sponge on your face, you will find your own nice natural colour infinitely more becoming."

"I am afraid it will make me awful pale. I'd hate to look pale alongside Muriel, her colour brightens so when she gets ani-

mated. And there's Tilly Martindale; perhaps she'll be there, and I guess *she's* sure to have a colour, however she comes by it."

"*They* are not in the Church," said Mrs. Bunce, grandly.

"Nor am I, auntie. It's a *party* I'm going to." Public opinion, however, so freely expressed, had its effect, and Betsey returned to her room, to reappear more like her ordinary self, and accept with little satisfaction the congratulations and praises which good-hearted Mrs. Selby felt bound to shower upon her.

As the aunt and niece drew near their destination they felt their hack suddenly slow off into a walk. There was a sleigh in front of them, and when Betsey stood up, craning her short neck to reconnoitre, there was another in front of that, and another, and another. Then there were gates and an illuminated mansion beyond, up to which the line of sleighs was streaming, slowly and intermittently, as each in succession stopped to set down its load, and then vanished.

"I declare, auntie, we're in a procession! Ain't it cunning? and quite grand. The company will all arrive together, and there's no doubt they will make a grand entry, two and two with the music playing a march—

just like there was in Tullover's Circus, last year, at St. Euphrase. Only we'll have to walk, on account of the stairs, and not having horses. I always knew it was the stage and the pulpit gave the law about speaking, but I didn't know before, it was the circus set the fashion for other things. Ain't it well, now, that I was there?—though you scarcely thought so at the time. You just keep as near me as you can, and I'll tell you what to do—all I know. But, to be sure, they'll be providin' us with *beaux*, and we'll have to go wherever the gentlemen take us. Ah! When I remember the lady in the yellow satin riding habit, with the knight in steel button armour and the peacock plume! It was something beyond. I don't see why steel button armour should not go quite as well with geranium poplin as yellow satin. But knights, if there are any, won't wear their uniform at a private party, I'm afraid. The Queen makes them keep it for wearing at the palace, most likely; but it's mean of her, all the same. However, black swallow-tails look real nice, with almost any colour a girl can put on, and it's just the very thing to tone down my geranium colour, and make it look moderate."

There was no place for Mrs. Bunce to slip in a word as her niece ran on in a continuous

monologue — soliloquy rather, for she was merely thinking aloud, and her thoughts had grown so engrossing that she probably would not have heard, had she been spoken to. Presently the sleigh came to a final halt, and it was their own turn to alight and follow the stream of cloaked figures up the stairs. A counter-stream of those who had disentangled themselves, like moths escaped from the dusky chrysalids, and were rustling their airy glories into form, passed them on the banister side, while the arrivals not yet perfected in the cloak-room slunk upwards by the wall.

Betsey's breath seemed to forsake her in one little gasp of ecstasy. She followed her aunt upwards mechanically. Her consciousness had gathered itself into her eyes, and sat there all athirst, drinking in impressions from the novel scene. The scent of flowers was everywhere, and the sound of sackbut, psaltery, fiddle, and all that she could dream of festive music. Through the open doors below, as she ascended, appeared dancing figures, whirling and vanishing in endless succession. Lamps and glitter seemed everywhere, and gowns of every hue—a moving rainbow. She could only liken it to the description from a New York pantomime in that morning's newspaper of the "Halls of Dazzling Light." The

hall-way, which she looked down on as she went up, was filled with people in evening dress, circulating to and fro, and a stream of people in festive array was passing her on the stairs—velvets, satins, jewellery, lace and flowers, not to speak of niceties in hair-dressing and general arrangement, which it had not hitherto entered into her mind to conceive, but were still so beautiful. She caught them all in the passage of her eye across that serried stream as she went up a flight of stairs. She was a born milliner, as the upper Canadienne not very seldom is.

Mrs. Bunce and her niece had been almost the last of the guests to arrive, and had been long detained in the cloak-room by those finishing touches to their adornment over which it is by no means the young or the beautiful who spend the longest time. In the present case it was the treacle-coloured *chevelure* of the aunt which had come askew under the hoods and wrappings she had worn upon her head, and her cap secured in its place by many a hairpin required to be removed before the other invention could be adjusted. She lingered over minor embellishments till the other occupants had left the room, when she found some pretext to send away the attendant also. Then she sprang to

the door and locked it, and turning to Betsey with startling vehemence, made her promise by all she held sacred never on any pretext to reveal or divulge what she was presently to behold. Betsey has kept her promise.

Whatever awful rite may have supervened has remained unknown. The maid at the key-hole saw moving figures, but what they were doing she could not tell, though the time allowed for observation was ample during which she was kept outside. Eventually the door was unbarred, and Mrs. Bunce came forth with the dignified self-possession of a well-dressed woman. Betsey followed, looking pale and anxious, as the inquisitive waiting-maid discerned, and with the far-off look in her eyes which the books tell us is worn by those who have come through a new experience.

They were so long of getting down stairs that Mrs. Jordan had left the doorway, in which she had been standing to receive her guests, and was now by a fireplace with some of her friends. It was necessary for Mrs. Bunce to cross the room, at some risk to herself from passing dancers, in order to pay her respects. Betsey followed as well as she was able, but she did not reach the presence of her hostess.

From beyond the radius of a dowager in truffle-coloured satin drifting easily onwards

in the same direction, in whose wake Betsey had found it safe and easy to steer her course among the throng—from out of the unknown region, which the bulk of truffle-coloured satin concealed, there came a whirlwind of palest blue, with silver chains and bangles tossing among curling hair, and smiles and dimples, revolving wildly with the music, and with a shock and a little cry there came into her arms — who but Muriel Stanley! The meeting was of the briefest. They had scarcely time to ejaculate each other's names ere Muriel's cavalier had his partner well in hand again, and they were gone, Betsey looking after them with all her eyes. It was Randolph Jordan who was dancing with Muriel, looking, as Betsey phrased it, "fit to kill," in his evening suit. One of Betsey's *beaux!* How engagingly she looked at him, and after him, out of her boiled gooseberry eyes—throwing glances of fascination which I fear fell short, or were not understood —with a simper on her round fat cheeks, and lips parted in smiles, displaying slab-like teeth.

"Whoever was that we cannoned off just now?" said Randolph, when his partner stopped for breath. "Curious looking person to meet at a party. Who is it? You seemed to know her."

"That was my cousin, Miss Bunce. You know her too—quite ready to know her out at St. Euphrase you seem. In your own house I should have thought you would know every one."

"There, now, I've put my foot in it. She's your cousin, she's all right of course. Don't be vexed, Muriel. But what makes her wear that horrid gown? I never saw anything like it."

Something stole into Muriel's eyes as she thought of the "geranium poplin," and how very superior its wearer intended to be when she put it on—"made with a *tablier* and cut square"—but she checked the impulse, and only said: "Poor Betsey must feel herself a stranger here; I do not think she knows a soul but those she has met at St. Euphrase. I think I shall sit down now. No! Not another turn, I feel quite tired. Go and ask Betsey; you will do me a favour if you will, and then introduce a few gentlemen to her. Help her to enjoy herself. It must be dreadful to be so alone in a room full of people."

"You are hard on me, Muriel, to deprive me of half my dance and then hand me over to—to— If she were quietly dressed, it would not be so bad. She used to look quite passable at St. Euphrase in her cotton gowns;

but the sumptuous apparel is really too dreadful. Every one will observe us. And see! I do declare she is ogling somebody up in this part of the room. Just look. Did you ever see such facial contortions? and what a mouthful of teeth! Like an amiable hyena, or the show-window at a tombstone factory."

"I am fond of my cousin Betsey, Randolph. If you do not hurry away to her she will lose this dance, and I shall be disappointed."

It was with tardy and reluctant steps that Randolph obeyed, but he had not to go far to meet the engaging Betsey. That young lady, watching her *beau* from afar, saw Muriel led to a seat, and himself, after a few words of conversation, turn in her direction; and with the inspiration of conquering beauty, she divined that it was to her his steps were tending. And yet the steps seemed lagging even after they were disencumbered of the partner. They positively seemed to falter. Ah! poor young man, the *beau* was diffident—needed encouragement; and he should have it. It seemed to her tender heart to be no time for standing on punctilio. The young man suffered; and it was for her. That was enough.

She turned her steps to meet him as he came —meet him half-way, I might have said, had I been censorious—and as he came in view

she smiled, smiled like a brimming tea-cup filled with sugar and water; and she spread her hands in welcome, spread them, that is, as to the fingers, she did not move the wrists, for, notwithstanding the certainty of beauty's intuitions, there is still the possibility that one may be mistaken, as Betsey had been ere now —and she stood with her eyes fixed on Randolph's countenance.

The look met him full in the face as he came before her, struck him as the jets from the fire-engines may have struck the Parisian mob which General La Moricière so cleverly dispersed without the help of steel or gunpowder; and he would have run away, but he could not. Not only was Betsey before him, but Muriel was somewhere behind, and both would have seen his demoralization. Betsey's eyes were beaming on him with a peculiar radiance. They swam, it seemed to him, in a shining wateriness, and with a light in which the green rays and the yellow blended as they do in an over-ripe gooseberry where the sun is shining, looking luscious, and not too cool—inviting, to those whose tastes that way incline.

The greetings between these two were not prolonged—the one had been ordered to give a dance, the other was eager to encourage

a *beau*. There was a bow and a word or two. Miss Betsey's head lay back on her short neck as the gentleman's arm slid around her waist. Then, as she laid her little fat hand on his arm, her head rolled over to the other shoulder, and she found herself in the ecstasies of the mazy dance. She drew a long breath of delight, and leant just a trifle heavier on the strong encircling arm, when—crash! sharps and flats. Another chord—the music ceased, and—oh, bathos—she found herself standing on the train of a lady's gown, who was regarding her with a scowl, while she herself was pinned to the ground from behind in the same way, and she could not but dread how the hoof-marks would look on her geranium poplin.

It was Randolph's turn now to draw a breath of relief, and he looked over his shoulder to where he had left his little friend —little, not obviously in stature, but only because she still wore short frocks, though counting for more to him than all the grown-up ladies in the room. The feeling of holiday, however, was of short duration; he could read disappointment on Muriel's features, and when he gazed towards her as claiming thanks for what he had done at her behest, she looked another way, ignoring the demand.

It was little satisfaction he could look for during the rest of the evening if Muriel were disobliged, and her present demand was one of those disinterested ones which must be fulfilled specifically and cannot be made up for, or "squared" by attentiveness in other ways; therefore, as one who cannot make a better of it, he turned to Betsey, regretting that their dance had been cut short prematurely, and begging that the next might be his.

Betsey was nothing loth. The *beau* must be very far gone indeed, she thought, and she could not but cast a backward and regretful glance of her mind to Joe Webb, Gerald Herkimer, and several others, taking them all pell-mell and quite "promiskis," as she pronounced the word. However, she could only have one, she knew that; and she intended to take whoever offered first, if he was eligible, and not run risks by "fooling" after the rest. So much for being practical-minded and not idiotically in love, except with one's own sweet self!

Randolph resigned himself to work out his dance conscientiously, but without enthusiasm. Her waist was so far down that he would have to stretch to get steering leverage upon this rather compact partner, and as has happened before to many a tall youth with a

stumpy fair one, he had a presentiment that his arm would ache before the exercise was concluded. In walking round the room, however, before the solemnity commenced, he caught so pleasant a smile of thanks from Muriel over his lady's head that he was consoled, and set himself manfully to perform the task before him; the more so, perhaps, that Muriel was sitting, and though he would not have owned to grudging her a pleasure, it pleased him best when she danced with himself.

He had kept more than half his card free from engagements, that she might have plenty of dances, and his mother was looking for an opportunity to take him to task for the horrid way in which he was neglecting her guests. He would have been less content could he have looked back and seen the alacrity with which she rose a moment later when Gerald Herkimer came forward to claim her. Of all the "fellows" in the room, Gerald was the only one as to whose standing in Muriel's good graces he had a misgiving.

The dance began, and Randolph found he had not under-estimated the work before him. Betsey was positively festive, exuberant and unconfined, on the very top rung of her gamut of feeling, as she bounced and caracoled along.

She could dance, of course—every Canadian woman can dance—but she possessed a solid massiveness peculiar to herself, and really remarkable in one of her size. Randolph found there was little he could do but merely hold on. Strain and adjust himself as he might, the centre of their joint equilibrium would not be brought under his control. Betsey seemed totally inelastic, and her ballast was in her heels. "Hefty" was the word a Vermont cattle dealer had used to describe her action after a dance at St. Euphrase. Deviously she pranced, a filly whom no rein ever invented could be hoped to guide; and as the rapture of the music wore into her soul, she threw herself back on poor Randolph's arm with an *abandon* and an entirety which made it feel strained and paralyzed for long after.

"Oh, Mr. Jordan," she cried, when at last the poor fellow was compelled to stop; "you seem fairly done up and out of breath. For me, now, I feel fresher, I do declare, than when we started off."

"Small wonder," thought Randolph, "after making me all but carry you completely round the room;" but he said nothing, merely looking at the half-paralyzed hand and fingers of his strained arm, and wondering how long it

would be before he should be able to use them.

"You're a lovely dancer," the Syren resumed. "Reely, too—too—awfully nice for anything. Something quite beyond! But to think of *your* being tired! And here's me, a fragile girl, feelin', I declare, just as good as new, or rather better! Now, if you would like to go on again, I'm quite ready," and she drew herself up ready to relapse on the manly support of Randolph's arm the moment it should come behind her.

But it did not come. Randolph observed that it was very warm; "had they not better walk to the other end of the room?—they might be able to find ice there, or something to drink;" and he led her round the outskirts of the dancers. The dancers were all intently engaged, disporting themselves some more and some less deftly, but all as best they could, and Betsey eyed them enviously, glancing reproachfully on her *beau*.

And then there passed them a pair which drew the eyes of both, it passed them so easily, so lightly, so swiftly, like a curl of blue smoke across a wooded hillside, and it was flown, like the crotchets and semi-quavers in a bygone bar of the tune —a waft upon the air, they passed so lightly,

passed like the music, leaving but the memory of glancing smiles as the music leaves a sense of sweetness when it has ceased.

"Was that not Muriel went by just now, and Gerald Herkimer?" asked Betsey.

"I think so," said Randolph, with just a tone of sulky disgust in his voice.

"I wonder at Penelope and Matilda bringing a child like that to a ball like this. It's real bad for young children bringing them forward so soon—just tempts people to think them old before their time; and if Muriel takes after her aunts, she'll have plenty time for parties before she marries, even if she came out three years late in place of three years too soon. I doubt if she is fourteen yet."

"Oh, yes, she will be sixteen next July, she told me so herself."

"A great age. But still she shouldn't be here to-night at a grown-up dance."

"This is a juvenile party, Miss Bunce."

"Muriel is the only juvenile I see, and she seems to be carrying on just like one of the grown-ups—all but the frock. She has on a short frock, I'll admit that, and I don't see another in the room but her own."

"The juveniles are in the ball-room. Perhaps you have not been there yet. Would you like to go? This is only the drawing-

room with the carpet up, for a few grown-up friends of my mother's—a mere side show. Let us go and see the children. You will find Miss Matilda Stanley there, and have an opportunity to give her your views about Miss Muriel's nurture."

"Oh, pshaw!" cried Betsey, in deep disgust. It was really too tantalizing to have secured a splendid partner for a round dance, to have been checked in full career before the dance was a third part over, to have been led away under the promise of ice cream and something to drink; and if there was anything Betsey liked next best to dancing, it was ice cream, with red wine after—not claret by any means, but something sweet, warming and—if not exactly strong, it would be so horrid to like anything strong—at least able to communicate a sensation of strength or general betterment. To have all these delights dangled before one's eyes, and then to be led away to look at a parcel of children, who should have been in their beds hours before, dancing the polka! Oh, no! Betsey felt she was being wronged. If she were not to have her dance out, at least she should get the bribe she had been promised. She would be so far true to herself as to strike a blow for the ice cream. It was easily done. She observed to Randolph

that she felt a little faint, and really the rooms *were* warm. He acquiesced at once. So long as it was not to dance, he would do anything for her. And so they sat down snugly enough near a refreshment table and tried to be comfortable.

CHAPTER V.

RANDOLPH'S TRIBULATIONS.

"RANDOLPH!" hissed Cornelius Jordan in his son's ear, as they met in a vacant doorway not long after. "You're a fool!—a pig-headed young fool. There are plenty young duffers around to tend the children and the wall-flowers, and yet you have done nothing else the whole evening. Dancing three times running with a little girl, and then towing round a curiosity, just as if you wanted to tell your mother's guests that you didn't mind any of them, and would as soon dance with a stitcher. What do you mean, sir?" and he shook the young man's arm to rouse him.

The young man moved his eyes lazily round to the other's face and said, "Yes, sir;" whereat the other stamped his foot.

"Well for me, father, is it not, that I'm too big to whip, or I'd catch it now?"

"You'll catch worse than whipping if you don't mind. You'll ruin your prospects for

life! If I'd whipped you better when it was in my power, you'd be more sensible now."

"Don't blame yourself, sir; you did your best in that way. I believe I got more lickings than the five other boys on our street all put together. You have nothing to reproach yourself with on that score. You made me squirm, and perhaps it did good, relieving *your* feelings if it lacerated mine. But it's over now—forgotten and forgiven, I suppose, as it has left no marks or effects behind it; for I fancy the other fellows' fathers have more influence with them than we can flatter ourselves you have with me."

"You can come to my study to-morrow morning when I am shaving if you want me to hear the rest of your discourse upon the evil of harshness in bringing up a supersensitive boy; though my own belief is that it was your mother who spoiled you. Meanwhile, use your common sense for once, if you have any; hear me out, and then do as I say.

"You think yourself talented, and for myself I should be pleased to think so too, but you hate work, and will not drudge at the routine of our profession, without which success cannot come. You think you have a turn for politics, and could make your mark that

way; and for myself, I am bound to say I think you might become a good speaker with practice; but success in politics wants either industry and application at the beginning, qualities which you do not possess or will not exercise, or else a connection with some influential interest. This last you have not either, but with very moderate assiduity any young man, who is also my son, may at this moment acquire and retain it for life. Mlle. Rouget is of an age to marry—just the right age for you. Her granduncle is archbishop, her uncle a cabinet minister. She is an only child, and her father is seignior of La Hache. I have been able to be useful to the old man, and he will consider your pretensions favourably if you will only declare yourself. In fact, I have in a manner declared on your behalf, and a very moderate degree of attention on your part, in confirmation, is all that is necessary. You see she is French, and well reared—willing to let her parents bestow her hand where they see fit. So you will not be compelled to such lavish demonstrations as I have seen you make elsewhere, where nothing was to be got by it; only, of course, it will be good taste to discontinue the attentions in other quarters while you are a pretender to mademoiselle's hand!

"Why, man! with the church and the government at your back there is not a constituency in the country you may not aspire to represent; and with experience and my advice—which is worth more, my son, than you in your sapiency can very well make out—there is no position whatever which you may not rise to. Now don't be pig-headed! I see the obstinate look gathering; but do not let us have a public row for the entertainment of our friends. Go and dance with Mdlle. Rouget, and be civil to her; and take in her or her mother to supper. That will not compromise you either way, and it will save me for the present from the false position in which my zeal for your prospects, and your own indifference to them, seem like to land me."

Jordan and his son were scarcely good friends, though both were inclined to do their family duty. Like the positive poles of two magnets, they never met without repelling each other. Jordan was naturally diplomatic, with a pronounced turn for management, which generally ended in his getting his own way, and therefore made him disinclined to yield. In town he was liked for his pleasant ways, and generally he was yielded to; but at home, his consort, whom the rest of the

world found charming, had, for him, what charming women so often possess for the enlivenment of their nearest and dearest, and without which, perhaps, they would soon cease to be charming at all, a will of her own. She had an inconvenient turn for epigram, and with a verb, or even with a laugh, could prick a bubble or a wind-bag in its weakest place, bringing the poor high-flyer flapping to the ground; and Jordan, doubtless, like other Benedicts, though moderate in his flights abroad, would at times adventure to soar a little by his own fireside. Amelia permitted no soaring there except her own—is not home the woman's kingdom?—and perhaps it was thus that her boy learned a disregard for paternal advice and reproof which could not but irritate a man accustomed to guide and control in the outer world. A boy! and his own. It would have been too humiliating to stoop to management there, especially with mischief-loving Amelia looking on; so he fell into a habit of commanding, and beating the boy when he transgressed.

The stick, however, is a sceptre little suited to the nineteenth century or the Western Continent. For the subjects of the Khedive it is manifestly just the thing. The people understand it, and the more vigorously it is

applied the happier are the results—for the State at least. But then His Highness is generous even to prodigality in administering the State medicine, without stint or exception, and on every occasion. It is *Thorough* which succeeds in Government. James II. was perfectly correct when he said that it was yielding which cost King Charles his head. It *was* yielding, yielding after having attempted "thorough" without the strength or the daring to work it out. When the bad rider, inexpert with spur, whip, and bridle, strokes the steed's neck and says "poor fellow," softly and soothingly, depend upon it the horse understands the situation as well as his so-called master, and goes his own way. Conciliation, reparation—what you will—to noisy discontent, is a mistake of the same kind; the rider may borrow a handsome name for it from the doctrinaire, but he will not persuade the steed that anything but weakness or fright has wrung from him his pretty behaviour. So much we may gather from recent British history.

But the teller of this story may well leave British history to run its own course, and he craves pardon for his trespass. What he would testify against, in his small way, is historical inconsistency and hysterical inter-

ference, however well meant, with the sequence of events. See how a ship has to tack and turn when the wind changes, if she would continue her voyage; if the ship of state is merely to turn her helm and scud before an altered wind of popular feeling, without regard to whence she comes or whither she is bound, sooner or later she will find herself among the breakers, and on a lee shore.

Jordan had attempted the *fortiter in re* with his son, but not consistently, and especially not persistently. Indeed, like many another, he would have let the brat alone during his growing years, merely sending him out of the room when he was noisy, or tossing him silver in moments of paternal pride, for his thoughts were kept busy on other things; but the whelp acquired a trick of ensconsing himself behind his mother's gown and bidding defiance to the rightful lord of the manor, and then the latent savage, which is said still to survive in the most cultured, would break out, and nothing but blows and howls would appease him. On these occasions it was the lad's mother who brought fuel to inflame the father's wrath. It pleased her so much that her boy should come to her for protection in his troubles, and she was so pleasing a person herself—or the world

said so, and she had got to think it—with her vivacity, her brightness, and her satiric smile, wherewith she could goad old Slow-coach to fury; and he being man enough, at least, to respect his wife, the fury glanced harmless past her and fell in stinging whacks on the poor little adventurer behind her, who had raised the storm. Yet even at his worst, Jordan could find nothing soul-satisfying in beating a small boy, and after a clout or two he would desist, with no harm done except to the young one's personal dignity and the resentment bred therefrom, and that was an evil not to be measured by the severity of the assault, but rather inversely. The lighter the correction the heavier the resentment and offence.

"If you *will* whip a child," as I once heard an American lecturess say—she was a superior person who knew all about it, and had left her own seven lambs at home under the care of a hired help, while she went out into the world with her evangel of nursery tactics—"If you *will* whip a child, *be sure you really hurt it!*" There must be tingle enough to overbear the indignation and resentment which the violence you are doing to its person will naturally arouse; you must whip enough to make it forget the outrage in the solid pain which it suffers. It is only

then that you need expect to super-impose your own will upon that of the patient.

I suppose Jordan had never listened to the American lecturess, if he had, he did not lay the homily to heart. At any rate, he struck, when he might have managed quite as well without; and striking, he struck only enough to arouse in his son feelings of deeper rebellion than those which he undertook to quell; and thereafter a grudge and a suspicion came between the old man and the young, which perhaps the mother without any evil intent, but merely from loving to be first with her own son, his councillor and his friend, did more to aggravate than any one else.

Randolph went in search of Miss Rouget to secure his dance, but the young lady's card was filled up. She had kept a vacancy for him some time, but at length her mother sitting by, displeased at the young man's neglect, had made her fill it up with some one else, and now glanced at the offender with a somewhat stony reserve, which softened, however, when he approached herself, and prayed the honour of leading her to supper. On glancing round the company she could see no good reason why her host had not come forward in person to perform the office. "But then those English," as she told herself, "are so ignorant

of the *convenances*." Again, the young man might be diffident in pursuit of his matrimonial aspirations, which was to his credit; and also, she was getting very tired where she sat. Her English was not fluent, and the French of the others was so indifferent, that few dared use the little they had, whence she had not been entertained with much conversation, and the smiling bows had grown monotonous. Supper was the one recreation open to her, and as she looked, behold, her husband was leading the way with his hostess. So after all there was no ground of offence, and her features relaxed into their wonted graciousness as she joined the procession. The younger people continued to dance, and Randolph felt a little twinge of jealousy to see Muriel again dancing with Gerald. He was able to whisper to her in passing, however, which was something, begging her to linger and let him take her to supper by-and-by. Madame ceased speaking just then, to some one on her other side, and claimed his attention by an observation, so that he failed to catch what Muriel said in reply.

Madame enjoyed her supper, as was fitting. She had earned it by hours of conscientious *chaperonage*, which had declined even the allurements of the neighbouring card-

room. She was so fortunate too as to be placed near a gentleman who spoke French well, and now indemnified herself for the enforced silence under which she had been yawning so wearily. In the comings and goings, the risings and sittings down, of some going back to dance and others coming in to sup, a little circle of her intimates gathered round madame, and Randolph, no way averse, found himself merely a supernumerary on its outskirts. It was his opportunity; he availed himself of it, and stole back to look for Muriel among the dancers. He came upon her as she rested at the end of a dance, with still that same too constant Gerald in attendance.

"Now then, Miss Muriel," he cried; "if you are ready we will go at once. The dowagers are leaving the supper-room, and after this dance the musicians will take a rest, and there will be a crush of all the dancers coming in at once. If you are ready we will go."

Muriel looked up.

"Thanks for the information. Miss Muriel is going presently. We will get in ahead of those who are dancing now," said Gerald with a suppressed smile.

Randolph drew himself up just a little, and strove to look dignified while he ignored the

last speaker. "Of course there is no need to hurry if you prefer to rest; but it is so much cooler in the supper-room; do you not think you will be better to come at once, Muriel?"

"I was just rising to go with Gerald Herkimer when you spoke."

"But I spoke some time ago—when I passed you with Madame Rouget. You were dancing at the time."

"That was my dance, Muriel," interjected Gerald; "you promised then to let me take you to supper."

Randolph drew himself up to his tallest—he was two inches taller than Gerald—and turned his flushed face with all the dignity he could muster in it upon his offending friend. "I have only Miss Stanley to deal with in this matter, and I prefer to settle it with herself."

"Bosh! man. What is the use of your putting on grand airs with me? Haven't we gone to school together? It isn't a bit of good your trying to play Don Fandango. If you like, we can go down to your back yard, take off our coats, and have it out with fists in the old way; but the people will be sure to laugh, and we shall look rather rumpled when we get back here. We are getting old for that sort of thing, besides. Don't you see you

have made a mistake somehow, and the young lady is engaged for supper to me?"

"I don't! and I won't! and I do——"

"Law, now! Mr. Jordan, ain't this just splendid? You are making up a party for supper, I see, and I am a hungry party that will be most pleased to join you;" and Randolph felt a fat arm slip through that arm of his own which he had been offering so pressingly to Muriel. There was a vision of geranium-coloured poplin flapping against him, and when he looked round, behold, Miss Betsey had him in possession. There was nothing for it but to submit and lead the way while the other two followed; even though a smothered "haw, haw," which he could hear behind him, filled his heart with fury, and made him long to face about and brain the offender on the spot. The natural man is a savage still, especially when his inclination to the fair is crossed; culture, good-manners, and white kid gloves notwithstanding.

Betsey was exuberant. Thanks to Muriel's efforts, she had danced and eaten ice with Randolph, and Gerald, and a good many more —danced almost continuously, and quite energetically—having, in her own words, "a real good time." And now she was a little hungry, but in overflowing spirits, as she

trotted beside her tall cavalier, with her chin pressed into the dimpling redundancy of her short thick neck, where every line and crease seemed to vie with the parted lips in smiling content.

Randolph stalked gloomily by her side, realizing his helplessness, and resenting the amused glances which met him as he proceeded. But what could he do? He could only submit, and get through with the interlude as quickly as possible. He was lucky enough to find a small table vacant in a retired corner of the supper-room, where he placed himself and his little companion, ignoring tugs and nods and pointings to more conspicuous places, where the lights would have shone brighter on her beauty and her revelry—which were just the things he wished to keep out of sight. Betsey had the best of everything to eat, however, which was compensatory, and her companion had at least the satisfaction of sitting opposite Muriel. He had secured them for the rest of his own table, and if he was unable to say much to her himself, it was something to have prevented a *tête-à-tête* with his rival.

Randolph's disturbed feelings were subsiding into sullen calm. He was eating his

supper. He had filled his companion's glass and his own; and Betsey, smiling to pledge him, held her foaming goblet in her hand awaiting his answering glance, when a sombre body—the back and shoulders of a man's coat —interposed itself between them.

"Jordan! Here you are at last," it said. It was only a man's coat, so far as Betsey could see, intruding most impertinently between herself and her *beau*. "I have been looking for you everywhere. Now I have found you. Madame Rouget has done supper, and is waiting for you to go back to the dancing-room."

Betsey made a little gulp of indignation; but no one perceived it, or seemed to heed her. Randolph rose like a truant returning to school, led away by the man in the coat; and she, poor Betsey! was left—lamenting? No—finishing her supper. She held her glass across to Gerald for a little more champagne, and thereby tacitly placed herself under his protection for the rest of the meal. There was much natural adaptability to circumstances in Betsey, notwithstanding her too evident lack of polish. Like the celebrated brook, she went tranquilly forward, however "men might come, or men might go," in a consistent following out of what seemed the

attainably best for herself. With opportunity and culture Betsey might have gone far.

Madame Rouget rose at Randolph's approach, and took his arm to leave the room. She showed no displeasure or cognisance of his desertion, but there was a distinct refrigeration of the graciousness with which she had accepted his escort to the supper-table half-an-hour before. In leaving the room they were stopped for an instant in front of the little table which Randolph had risen from. Madame lifted her eye-glass just where geranium-coloured poplin made the feature of the view, and its wearer in much comfort held a wine-glass to her lips, smiling across to Gerald Herkimer, a modernized suggestion of one of Jourdain's carousing beauties, though with the flesh tints far less delicately rendered. She dropped the eye-glass with a click, and a French shrug, and that accompanying rise of the eyebrows so infinitely more expressive of scorn and contempt than any word.

"I am *desolée* to have take Mistaire Jordain from ze plaisirs of his soopaire. But ze demoiselle aippears herself to console ver well. Wich rassure me ver much."

Madame must certainly have been indignant when she used these words, for, when quite herself, her English was grammatically correct

enough, if the vocabulary was restricted and a word was sometimes used in a wrong sense. It is a woman's right to take offence at the *formam spretam* by a suitor, and if the form despised be her daughter's instead of her own, she can resent it with even better grace.

Not long after, Mr. Jordan senior came upon Mr. Rouget leaving the card-room, and expressed a hope that he had been able to amuse himself.

"I have not the good fortunes at cards this evening," that gentleman replied; "I have won nothing; lost, rather, I fear."

"So sorry; come have a glass of wine, and perhaps the luck may turn."

"*N'importe*, I shall play no more to-night. The fortunes are not *propices*. My *système* does not conform to the play of Mistaire—what you call?—Constantine."

"Considine. Probably not. He generally plays euchre. You were playing whist. Liable to trump his partner's best card. I know his weakness. Let me find you some one else."

"I thank you. No. It grows late. I go in search of madame. *M'sieur* himself does not succeed well in the little plan he did me the honour to propose—to ally our families. I observe M'sieur Randolphe withholds the—

—what you say?—the *petits soins* which aire of custom when a gentleman pretends to the hand of a demoiselle. *N'importe*, I accept the excuses of m'sieur without saying. One knows the authority of father counts for nothing with you English; but the more should have been an understanding before to approach me."

"My dear sir," Jordan began deprecatingly; but the other raised his hand in dignified protest.

"Enough. I make no reproach—*N'importe*. My good brother, the ministre, has views. We will forget."

"My dear Mr. Rouget—I beg!—I will even admit that you have ground of offence, but pray take into account the waywardness of a head-strong youth who resents being dictated to, and fancies he should decide his own movements. Still, I must say for him, the boy really is steady, and a good lad; and that, you will allow, is a qualification not always to be met with among the eligible young men of the present day. The mortgage upon La Hache would be a nice provision for the young people, would save you from the possibility of instalments falling due at inconvenient times, and I think—though perhaps I am too nearly related to be an impartial judge

—the lad has parts, and would not discredit the Honourable the Minister of Drainage and Irrigation either in politics or the public service. He has been bred to the law, as perhaps you know, and passed his examinations with distinction."

M. Rouget bowed his head and allowed the look of displeasure to relax upon his countenance. He was most willing to push forward the matrimonial scheme, though naturally, as being the weaker party, it behoved him to keep that fact to himself, and to be ready, at the first sign of backwardness on the other side, to feign offended dignity, that he might be able to withdraw from the fruitless negotiation with the honours of war.

They were now leaving the supper-room together, and Considine approached just as the Frenchman walked forward alone in search of his ladies.

"At last," thought Considine, "I shall catch Jordan alone, and get over that talk I have been so long wanting to have with him;" and he pressed his breast pocket to make sure of the documents he had carried about so long, in hopes of catching the busy man in a moment of leisure. Jordan noticed the movement, and was defensively on the alert at once.

"Considine, old fellow! Not dancing?"

"My dancing days are over. But I say, Jordan, I wish you would give me just a few minutes quiet——"

"Over? What an idea! The springiest man of our set! Without the first sign of either gout or rheumatism! And you would give up dancing, and ticket yourself a fogy before your time? No! no! Couldn't think of it. Yonder are a score of ladies, all your friends, sitting down after supper, and waiting to be asked to dance. Every woman likes to be danced with after supper, if only to show the world that men don't look upon her as too old. Come along! Let me find you a partner, though you know every one here."

"But I never valse."

"It is Lancers this time. I am going to dance myself. Mrs. Martindale. A very old friend. Knew her before either of us were married. We always have a dance when we meet. Come along!—Miss Stanley! Here is a gentleman so desirous of dancing with you, and too modest to ask. Pray take pity on him."

Miss Matilda looked up in a little surprise, but smiled on seeing Considine.

"You are a sad wag, Mr. Jordan. It seems scarcely fair that we grown-up people should

crowd out the young ones. However, as Mr. Considine is so kind——" and she rose, and taking his arm they joined the dancers.

Age is not a question to be decided by almanacs or the comparison of dates. How many generations of roses have bloomed and disappeared since the aloe was sown, a hundred years ago, which now is only opening its flower. The willow has fallen into battered decrepitude, while the oak, its slow-growing contemporary hard by, has barely reached his prime. Life should not be measured by the tale of years, but by itself—by the measure of oil unburnt, which remains within the lamp. There be some, who, making bonfire of their store—lighting the candle at both ends in the gusty weather—have consumed it mostly ere the seventh lustrum has run out, and go darkling thenceforth with nothing but a smoky wick and a guttering remnant; and there are others who have dwelt where the winds were still, and have shaded their lamps and trimmed them, like prudent virgins, whose light grows clearer as they pass along, and accompanies them with a tranquil radiance far down into the valley where the shadows are, and the inevitable end. It is the excitements and the cares which devour our strength, the unsatisfied greeds which eat inward, the ill-regulated

pleasures which exhaust. Work never killed a man; or, if it did, he was a weakling, or he had mistaken his trade.

"Only look!" cried Amelia Jordan, touching her neighbour, Martha Herkimer, with her fan, "I think I may flatter myself that my juvenile party is a success, when the contagious gaiety has caught even that superannuated couple. I should feel flattered, but I confess I am not fond of frisky grey beards. There is a time for everything, even for sitting still and watching the young ones. I wonder at Considine; and really Matilda might have had more sense than yield to his absurdity."

"Do you mean the gineral and Matildy Stanley? Well now, 'pears to me, they're about the likeliest couple on the floor. If they're old it's their own business, their bones will ache the worse and the sooner; but as far as looks go, I will say there ain't man or boy of them all looks as spry as the gineral. And, as for Matildy, she looks well. I always liked Matildy, and I admire her."

"Oh, certainly, my dear, I quite agree with you. I am fond of Matilda—good simple soul—I cannot think how she missed getting married. So many worse, have established themselves well, since she was young. But really you know it is just a little ridiculous,

at her time of life, to see her disporting herself. Why, there are her niece and your own boy in the same set!"

"So are Mr. Jordan and Mrs. Martindale."

"Oh, yes, but that is nothing. Jordan must make himself useful in his own house; and every one knows Louisa is a fool, who would like to be thought gay, giddy, and dangerous. I would bet a box of gloves, now, she thinks she is breaking my heart with jealousy. Just look how she wriggles about, and how the chandelier so nearly over her head brings out the crowsfeet and wrinkles round her eyes. I would not, for fifty dollars, walk down the centre of the room when that thing is lighted, if anybody were looking.

"You don't see no crowsfeet around Matildy's eyes, I guess. She's a fine woman, is Matildy Stanley. I wonder where the man's eyes have been that she should have stayed Matildy Stanley so long. See how she walks! As upright as a broomstick, and as springy as a cane."

"Men like other things along with looks," said Amelia bridling. "Though really Matilda looks quite nice—considering. One can scarcely claim to be in one's first youth now-a-days, and we all came out the same year, so our ages cannot be very far apart, Louisa

Martindale, Matilda, and I; and Louisa and I have grown up children."

"You don't say that Mrs. Martindale is one age with Matildy? She looks nigh on twenty years older. *You're* different," she added quickly, as the gathering of a look on her friend's face, which did not betoken satisfaction, became apparent.

"Perhaps Louisa does wear a little badly," she answered, in returning good humour. "That light betrays everything. Louisa has so much vivacity, and perhaps she is just the least bit in the world affected, I believe it must be that has made her go off so. So much simpering and smiling, when one doesn't feel so very pleased, and makes believe a good deal, must naturally wear creases in the face. Do you not think so? Matilda, on the other hand, as you know, is so calm and tranquil; her face has not half the tear and wear of Louisa's, and therefore it lasts ever so much better. But, somehow, Louisa, I should say, has got more good out of her life. She has got more bad, too, I grant, for she has been in the thick of everything; but I think I prefer that. Matilda seemed never just to hit it off with the men. I do not recollect her ever receiving any marked attentions, and she did not betray any strong preferences

to her. There are no little vignettes, that I ever heard of, to illustrate her biography. You know what I mean. *Passages*, people call them, which most of us like to bring out of our memories and look at, when we feel low and a little sentimental; just as we open the old box where our bridal wreath is laid away, and wonder as we wrap the thing up again in its tissue papers, if the gingerbread has really been worth all the gilding we overlaid it with."

Martha sniffed. It did not become an honest married woman to talk that way, she thought; but she said nothing, and the sniff proved enough to modulate Amelia's tone down to the narrational key again.

"When the officers were quartered here, of course it made society lively; and they paid a great deal of attention to us all,"—with just a suspicion of bridling, as she said it, as though she had "vignettes" of her own to remember, if it were worth while to count the scalps won in such old-world encounters. "Matilda was in the thick of it all, and got plenty of attention, but it never came to anything; and I am bound to say she betrayed no anxiety that it should. Her father was an Englishman, you see, and she has travelled; and she has money, and a

sister; so I suppose it comes natural to them to take things easily and be comfortable in their own cool-blooded and retired sort of way. Very nice women, I must admit, and always the same wherever you meet them; but one cannot make free with them as we do amongst ourselves. Really it is quite like long ago, to see Matilda dancing out there with Considine. She is little changed. Fuller in the figure, perhaps, but that is becoming as one gets up in life. Her hair is in the same old way she always wore it—in streaming side curls. 'Books of Beauty,' when I was a little girl, displayed ladies with hair-dressing like that; but, except Matilda, I never saw a living woman wear it. Though it becomes her."

"Splendid hair! So long and thick; and not one white thread in it. Now, what colour was Mrs. Martindale's originally? It's dun-duckety mud colour now, or what you please," and her eyes involuntarily rested on Amelia's head-dress, eliciting an angry red spot upon either cheek, which was answered by a flush of ashamed confusion on her own, at the inadvertence, and brought the conversation to an abrupt conclusion.

The unconscious subject of her friend's criticism swam here and there through the

figures of her dance in sympathy with the music, borne up and carried forward, like a well-trimmed yacht, upon the current of sound. She had danced little, if at all, for years; but it came naturally to her to dance. There was no heart-heaviness or carking care, no malice, envy, or uncharitableness—the unadjustable ballast which makes so many a hull roll heavily. Her health was good, as it had always been, her nerves as well strung, and her ear as sensitive to the spirit of sound. She looked well, and she knew it, with the mature and realized beauty of a summer afternoon—a lady such as the late King George admired. There was not the dewy promise of morning, but neither were there evening's pensive shadows pointing backward in regret—a handsome woman who had shed her girlhood, but showed no other sign by which to count the years. It was pleasant to be brought down off the shelf where matrons and old ladies sit and contemplate the gambols of the young, and made her think of her first ball, and how nice it had been, but without regret, for it was nice even now; and there was her own little Muriel whom she had reared, almost grown up, and marching before her just like another woman in the evolutions of the dance. And really it was

very nice to have a gentleman so attentive, and all to one's self; like long ago, before her married friends got their establishments, and put on their absurdly patronizing airs, which were sometimes so provoking, though always so ridiculous—"as if one could not have done everything *they* succeeded in doing, if one had cared to try."

That reflection brought perhaps a trifle more colour in her face, and made her shake out the ringlets just a little, till she looked at her partner before her, carefully executing with conscientious precision a gyration in her honour. She could not but smile as she gave him her hand to turn round, and the man looked positively grateful as he received it. Grateful, but was it for the smile or the hand? Yet surely he gave the hand a little squeeze. The man must be growing audacious. And yet he was so respectful. But Mr. Considine she knew was always respectful, and really very nice.

Considine thought it very nice too—did not know, in fact, how long it was since he had enjoyed anything so much. "Amazing fine woman," is how some of his compeers would have expressed their feelings; but Considine did not even pretend to be a *roué*, and he was not a fogy, though quite old enough

to have been one, if that had been a necessary phase of existence to pass through. He felt happy with a respectful enjoyment, such as he might have known thirty years earlier, in the recognized season for such things, and he only regretted that it was to end so soon. He wondered if he might venture to ask her to dance again, and that smile we have mentioned, met him, and he thought he would risk it; but alas, the programme had been arranged to suit the younger talent, and this proved to be the last square dance. Then he bethought him of the subscription assemblies, and wondered if Miss Stanley attended them, and then the evolutions of the next figure brought him back to the business in hand.

Muriel and her partner watched him carefully solemnizing the rite with a good deal of amusement. Youth is so graspingly exclusive, and so intolerant. It engrosses the present and claims the future for itself, and accords as little place to its quite recent predecessors, the have beens, as would be given to the ancient kings at Westminster, if they should leave their vaults in the abbey and walk across the street to the hall or the palace over the way.

CHAPTER VI.

A BENEVOLENT SPIDER.

M. Rouget de la Hache was hard up. He was a "swell," in a small way, after the mild colonial fashion, with a seigniory whose ancient privileges had been curtailed by advancing civilization; but civilization had paid him a good round sum when it abolished his rights over the persons and property of his humble neighbours—rights which were becoming an anachronism, and always more difficult to exercise. Being a swell, he did not work, but he was closely related to many who did, and who exercised the most important functions in the country, while they still looked up to him as in some sort their chief; though, in reason, the deference should have been all the other way. M. Rouget did not work, and therefore, not being a vegetable, it was necessary that he should play. When circumstances, in mistaken kindness, lay no burden on a man's shoulders, he fits one on himself—*il faut*

s'amuser—and one which often proves hard to carry. There is a taskmaster, as the nursery saw tells us, still ready to find occupation for idle hands, occupation in which they too often burn their fingers.

Guns and dogs answer well enough at a time, so do trotting horses; but by-and-by there must be other men's horses to trot with, and give the interest of emulation. A man cannot continue to amuse himself on his own land; and in colonial cities people are too busy making their fortunes to be amusing company for an idle man. However, Saratoga, in its season, was not far away, and there was New York beyond, which lasts all the year round—more or less. Rouget had been used to be "of the best" at home—a personage, in a small way, wherever he appeared—and abroad it did not occur to him to abate his pretentions. Measured by the golden foot-rule of New York, he would have found himself on a far back bench, and even then his neighbours would have been able to lay down a dollar for every dime which he could produce; but the idea of applying such a standard did not occur to him. He believed himself a notability, and looked among the foremost for his peers. Was he not related to several of those old French governors who

traded beads for peltry in the wake of a Jesuit Missionary, chaffering with the simple children of the wilderness beneath the forest shade, ere ever a vulgar common-place Englishman had arrived to cut timber, open a shop, or make money? And the foremost accepted him at his own valuation, as something "*ro*-mantic, and quite beyond." He was ready to put down his stakes alongside theirs, and it would not be "manners" to ask the size of the pile from whence the stakes were drawn. Wherefore the American heart opened genially to receive him, just as it opens to the Lord Toms and Sir Harrys who each year enter its hospitable gates, and remain while their money lasts, or till they are found out.

It is hard upon the pipkin who adventures to sail down stream with the brazen bowls. There are eddies on the smoothest streams, and among the eddies there will be bumping. Only the pipkins need mind that, it is they alone who suffer. They inevitably get cracked in a collision, while the brass goes bumping and ringing along for very sport. It can come to no harm. Mr. Rouget got cracked—badly cracked—at last; but the wonder is that it had not befallen him long before. His friends did what they could for him—friends always do, when the subject is a worthless one, while

virtue gets leave to shift for itself in its disasters, virtue being essentially prosaic, uninteresting and unpicturesque—but even his friends ran dry at last, and he had to mortgage his land. That occurred when Jordan began first to invest moneys for the Herkimer estate, and it was he who had bought the mortgage. It was a fairly profitable operation for Jordan, and had been the beginning of a useful intimacy; but it seemed to him, ere long, after the accruing advantages were well secured, that to sink so large a sum in so long-winded a transaction had been a mistake, and he might have done better in short loans, money on call, and general usury. There was the idea, to be sure, of engrafting his son effectually upon the dominant French interest by marriage, and if that could be compassed, it might turn out that the money had been well invested; but the boy was so head-strong and contrary, so like the Irishman's pig, which insists on going the other way, in what way soever he may be desired to go, that there was no certainty of working out the scheme, however compliant they of the other side might be.

Jordan was sitting in his office one day, in the week following his wife's party, examining his diary of bills coming due, considering where

renewals might be granted, and how much he might extort in consideration of his forebearance, what sums would be paid him, and how they were to be employed. Rouget, overbearing the clerk who kept the sanctum door —it was an inner room, lined with tin boxes, but free from the professional lumber which garnished that wherein he received his clients, the spider-hole, in fact, where he sat to devour his flies, and very private—appeared before him.

"Jordain! Your clerk ees not *respectueux*. I must complain. He tell me you were gone out. Ven vid dis ear I hear you cough my ownself. Everee body know Jordain's cough. Yet he *défend* my entry."

Jordan laid down his pen testily, but composed himself at once. "M. Rouget de la Hache, eh? The young man has orders to let no one in here. He should have said I was engaged. Those were his orders."

"He deed say so; but I shust look heem in ze eye—so!—vit a grand *sévérité;* and he fail of his word, and grow *confus;* and zen he tell me you were gone out. And so—behold me."

"Sim should stick to his orders. The first lie is always the best and safest. Not that this was a lie—he had his orders to say I was

engaged, and admit no one. *You* would have been an exception, of course, had I expected to see you. But how should I? Nevertheless, most pleased to see you; though really I am very busy. Pray sit down. How can I serve you?"

Rouget sat down, looking vacantly about him. To attempt to hurry him, shook up his muddy wits, which needed all their accustomed rest to clarify themselves in any measure.

It was a bare little room, all but its wall covering of shelves, supporting tin boxes, which were all brown japanned alike, and garnished with gold letters and numbers enough to give one headache. There were three chairs, on one of which he was sitting, while Jordan had another, and the third stood waiting—for whom? It disturbed him, this foolish question, for it was impossible to answer it. The table was covered with black leather, and there was a book open—a big fat book—wonder what it was about?—and a bit of paper with names and figures, which Jordan was noting down with a pencil. Wonder what he meant by it? Had it anything to do with him, Jean Vincent de Paul Rouget? But yet the pencil and slip of paper looked unimportant enough, and so, with the bold assurance of ignorance

Rouget concluded that they could not possibly be of much consequence, and Jordan was only making believe—a humbug, in fact, as all people *là bas* mostly were. It takes a transatlantic "swell," who has never seen one of the acknowledged great ones of the earth, to fully realize the vast inferiority of the "lower orders" to his own ineffable mightiness.

And yet it was easier to make the grand entrance he had achieved, and even to seat himself with dignity, than to plunge at once *in medias res*. He shuddered a little, like a bather on the brink, and looked round the room again, but it was so bare it would not suggest anything; and he wanted an idea—some neutral subject of talk which could be steered and edged about, whither he would; like a boat to waft him round the cliffs on the opposing shore, to some unguarded inlet with sloping banks, where he could land in good order and deploy at will toward the point he sought to gain. But this fellow was so abrupt. The *brusquerie* was not in good taste, and at another time he would have let him see it; but now——

"How can I serve you?" said the spider again. He knew the value of directness and dispatch. A fly must be well immeshed in the web to be there present. It is mercy to

the poor things to come to the point with a bound, and bleed or devour. To prolong the preliminaries is but adding gratuitous pain. The victim will but flutter the more wildly, and what usurer would make rich if he heeded the remonstrance of impotence? In prolonged palaver, too, and the frantic flutterings, may not the captive burst a gossamer bond, and be free? The bonds are all gossamer, at first, like the rainbow-coloured rays of a sea anemone, but they thicken and grow tense when the prey gets among them, and do it so quietly that he is partly swallowed before he realizes his danger, and then his struggles are apt to be in vain. Still, there are chances, and vigour and dispatch are best.

"How can I serve you?" and Jordan glanced into the book before him, and then made a cross with his pencil at a name and some figures on the list he seemed to be making out. It was manifest that he guessed already what was going to be said. It was mortifying, and still it was a relief to see that preliminaries were unnecessary and the subject already opened.

"I find I cannot meet all the interest due the day after to-morrow."

A mere bow of the head from the spider. Not a motion of an eyebrow, even, in token of

surprise. This composure hurt M. Rouget much. Was he not an important person, and looked upon as rich? And was it not the duty of ordinary people to expect him to pay up? He felt almost insulted that anybody should thus take his inability as a matter of course. He coloured, and looked an interrogation.

"Yes?" said Jordan.

"I vill give a cheque for two tousand dollars. You must hold over the rest for the present."

"Make it three, and I will take your note for the rest at thirty days—Sim!" touching the hand-bell at his elbow.

"That vill not do! I shall not be able to pay so soon," said Rouget more disturbed. What did the man mean by calling in his clerk so quickly to increase his embarrassment?

"Never mind, Sim! a mistake," and the door closed again.

"Tirty days would be no use. You mus give me time. I have had looses, and want time to retrieve myself."

"But how? Mr. Rouget. You will say I have no right to ask such a question, perhaps, and I dare say I appear discourteous; but in business it is essential to understand the case clearly, and our transactions are for such large sums that you must excuse

seeming intrusiveness. Will sixty days suit you?"

"No. I want time! and freedom from all anxieties. I have a *système* wich is infallible in the end, and *must* make me rich, but it demands time, watchfulness, and money."

"Phew!"—Jordan whistled slowly, lying back in his chair and burying his hands in his pockets. "That is—Well, we will not wrangle over spilt milk, and I do not question your right to do as you choose with your own money; but it seems to me, when you granted those large mortgages, you made use of that same expression—referred to something, something or other under the name of a system."

"And what then?" said Rouget flushing. A little indignation would help him, conversationally at least, he began to think. Not being in trade, he was unfamiliar with the liberties which money will empower a lender to take with the man who would borrow, or worse, who would be excused when the time comes round for repayment.

"Oh! nothing. Only if it has cost $150,000 already before the system begins to work favourably, it may take as much more yet, and where is the money to come from?"

"It vill not! It *cannot* take so much. It

mus' be propice ver soon. I have confidence. I have considered. There is certainty!"

"And the first of the three repayments of $50,000 comes due in six months."

"I know it, and I want you to add dese few tousands to the new mortgage you will draw —wid interests and commissions, all to be sure, widout question;" and the poor man rallied his waning pomposity to make one little shrug in naming the gains and perquisites of the *roturier;* before whom, his heart misgave him, he might yet have to quake.

"But, my dear sir, the operation is not a profitable one, and I did not contemplate renewing the mortgage. I can do much better with the money on the street."

"*Mon Dieu!* Jourdain. What do I hear? Increase ze interests if so mus' be—and ze security is good. Ze ministre, *mon frère*, say zey are firs class, and zat I pay *trop*—too much."

"Quite so, Mr. Rouget, that is just where it is. I have my feelings and my reputation like another man. Why should I place myself in such a position that the Minister of Drainage and Irrigation should look on me as a usurer? I can command better terms for my money on the street, with nothing said, than I could charge you on your mortgage even with the

loss of reputation involved in that word usurer."

"My dear sair! But ze mortgages were to be for fortune to M. Randolphe, in heemself marrying to Adèline, who would have the *survivance* of La Hashe for *dot*."

"But if receiving interest on the mortgages is to be contingent on the success of a 'system' —and of course a son-in-law must grant indulgence if his wife's father gets behind—the young people might not have much to live on. In any case, there are still the other instalments—a very fair provision—if the young lady should condescend, and the young man can be brought to the point—which, with the unruly youth of the present day, is, I confess, doubtful; and the more difficult to accomplish, the less ground of dissatisfaction there may be, beyond mere aversion to be dictated to. Business arrangements cannot be left open, in waiting, to accommodate the whims of boys and girls."

"Would you buy La Hache? How much would you give?"

"Are you in earnest? Do you propose to hand it over in settlement of the mortgages?"

"How much more would you give—'to boot,' as you say in buying a horse."

"I didn't contemplate buying. It would not suit me to have so large a sum tied up in

unremunerative acres. If I were to buy, it could only be that I might sell again, and that involves delays, expenses, uncertainties, loss of interest. No! Mr. Rouget, it is not to be thought of. If there is a default in payment all the mortages fall due at once, and in our small market the sum involved in the foreclosure is as large as any buyer would be likely to bid on one property."

"But, my friend! Ze securities aire ample. You had it valued four years ago."

"Certainly. It seemed safe for the money at that time. But you were then supposed to be well off, independently of the property; to-day you have explained that you are so no longer, and cannot even attend to the regular interest."

"Lend me anoder fifty tousand on de property."

"Not to be thought of."

"Tirty——"

"Could not do it."

"Tventy——"

"Sorry it cannot be."

"Ze lands aire rich."

"Realize them, then, Mr. Rouget. I will promise to place no unnecessary impediments in your way."

"Zere is vealth in ze ground itself. Rich-

esses of minèrals. See! Behold," and he drew from under his fur gloves, cap, and mulller, which he had thrown upon the table in a heap on entering, a small box which he proceeded to open, and displaying a number of mineralogical specimens, handed across to the other. There was a green incrustation on the stones where they had been long exposed to the weather, but the new faces made by recent hammer-fracture, shone red and metallic like a beetle's back.

"Ah," said Jordan. "Really very nice. I am no judge of such things, but to my ignorant eye some of these must be nearly pure copper. Were they found at La Hache, and does the deposit appear extensive?"

"Dey were in de swamp, a mile back from the river, last fall. We were shooting, I, that is, and a young *savant* of my friend's, who studies wit Professor Hammerstone. The professor has examined, himself, since den, and he finds the indications ver rich and abundant. He says zere is a fortune there beyond compute. Now! What say you? You know the Professor Hammerstone is of great reputation. Wat you say now?"

"Say? For one thing, Mr. Rouget, I congratulate you, and I would say that your prospects look infinitely more hopeful from this point of

view than in connection with your 'system,' which—you must forgive my saying it—was leading you to destruction. In heaven's name let the 'system' slide, and apply yourself to develop your property."

"But ze money? my friend. You cannot develop wid notting. Lend me money, and I vill give my vor d'honneur"—and he patted his palms outstretched on the bosom of his greatcoat—"to abandon de système."

"Mining matters are outside of my field; I do not understand them. You should call on some of our leading capitalists and speculators with your specimens. They will look into the affair, and if there is anything in it, will make you a proposal. On one point only let me offer a word of advice. Do not insist upon too much money down to begin with. You cannot expect them to subscribe a capital merely to hand it over to you. Show your willingness to take the bulk of your price in shares and you will get something very handsome indeed. So soon as the stock is all taken up, the shares become saleable, rising and falling in sympathy with public talk, long before any of the ore has been got to market, and you may be able to sell out at good prices very soon, if the scheme happens to strike the general fancy. For myself, as I have said, mining is not in my

line, but I will do what I can not to embarrass you. I will take your note at ninety days for that unpaid interest, and as for the mortgage due next summer, we will talk of it when the time comes, and, meanwhile, we shall have time to see how the mining enterprise will prosper —Sim!"

Sim appeared, received orders to draw a promissory note for Mr. Rouget to sign, and withdrew, followed by that gentleman seemingly let down from the self-satisfied attitude of feeling in which he had entered—meeker, much meeker, but yet more hopeful for his own future than he would have felt, perhaps, if his demands had been complied with.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE RUE DES BORGNES.

The Banque Sangsue Prêteuse occupied the chief part of its own cut-sandstone building on the Rue des Borgnes, the remainder, conspicuous in brass and plate glass, being the offices of Ralph Herkimer and Son, general operators, who were "in" railways, in minerals, in finance, in whatever promised to turn an honest penny. A smart man was that Ralph Herkimer, his neighbours said, who tried everything, and made everything pay. Always early in the field, and getting the cream of the speculation, while other men were pondering its prospects, and then putting off on them the closely skimmed milk which must always be got rid of—the shells, which the oyster-eater must make somebody carry away if he would not be smothered in the ruins of his former banquets.

The bank was an enterprise originated by Ralph himself—evolved by him when his

ambition had found the local share list too narrow a field. Why should he labour, he thought, to pull strings, and not always efficient ones, to make established stocks jump up and down as he desired, when he was now strong enough to build an automaton of his own, which should obey his wishes without fail, and without outside interference? His friends wondered at his choice of a name so little calculated to invite business; but he was of opinion that that was of little moment. Wherever there is money to lend, the borrowers will scent it out, as flies discover a honey-pot, by instinct. It was small investors whom he wished to attract, those who, having little money, are eager to get much interest. In the general increase of wealth, and the fall in rates of interest, these worthy people find their expenses increasing while their incomes are falling off, and the image of a lending bloodsucker, while unattractive to the borrower, who nevertheless submits to the lancet, is pleasing rather than otherwise to those who would share the spoils.

Ralph was president and manager of the institution, "filling two offices for one salary," as he sometimes said, "in his desire that the bank should do well;" and benefiting largely in many ways, as he did *not* say, by the unsu-

pervised control which thus fell into his hands. The bank parlour and his own private office were only divided by a wall, and they were connected by a very private door between the dressing rooms pertaining to the two apartments, so that the clerks and the business of both establishments were at all times under the master's eye, the master was virtually in both places at the same time, and he could at any time be in the other if an undesirable visitor was to be evaded.

Ralph was in his office. He had been presiding at a meeting of the St. Laurence, Gattineau and Hudson's Bay Railway, consisting of himself and a couple of others, at which they had granted a contract to construct another fifty miles running north. They had also arranged to hold a demonstration on the occasion, with speeches and champagne, to be followed on the morrow by placing a quantity of the stock on the market. As soon as he was left alone he took from a drawer some specimens of plumbago brought from lands of his which the road he had been assisting to place under construction would open up. Lumps of lustrous purple blackness, like a raven's plumage, which he fingered admiringly, muttering to himself, "They will bring value soon now, but we must wait till

the road is nearly built. If they were brought out now they would be half forgot before we could take people up to look at them. Revivals generally fall flat, people just remember enough of what they heard before to make it harder to interest them with it again. We must wait till just before the road is going to open, and then spring tracts A and B upon the public. Rich deposit, rare mineral, joint stock company, limited liability, unlimited profit, and so forth. When these are disposed of, and the company is just going to work upon them, tracts C and D can be discovered to be as rich as the others, and offered likewise. That will be enough to attempt for some years. By the time C and D are in working order, the owners of A and B will be doing something foolish, and having discouragement, and then it will be no use to offer E and F for ever so long. Yet it would not improve prospects to offer all at once, it would only bring down the value and send other people prospecting. We can then fall back on the phosphate beds," and he glanced at some other specimens in his drawer. "By that time the second fifty miles of rail will be built, and we will be able to issue debentures. Our stockholders will have had no dividends, so they will be sure to take the bonds and

new preference shares to get something out of the old enterprise—no operation so popular as throwing good money after bad—and then, to secure traffic for the far-away end of the line, they will buy my phosphate beds, and work them. That will answer well enough. I shall have unloaded the last of my railway shares ere then. I wonder why the contractors agreed to take so much stock in payment? They must have more faith in our enterprise than I have, or can they have got hold of tracts G, K, L, and Q? But they have never named plumbago once. Can that be slyness? In any case they want watching. I'll keep my eyes peeled."

A card was brought in by a clerk with a timid—"Would like to see you, sir."

"I told you, Stinson, to say I was engaged, whoever called."

"The gentleman was so positive you would see him, I was afraid he might have reason for what he said."

"Who is it?—Rouget—Hm—Who wants to be bothered with Rouget in business hours? Say I shall be pleased to see him at half-past three. I am occupied till then. Let no one in, now, but Mattock the builder, and Calcimine the architect, and bring over that roll of plans, and the maps marked 'proposed St.

Hypolite suburb,' and spread them out upon the table. Ha! Bank bell? What do they want in there? Who can it be? Bid those men wait, Stinson, if they arrive before I get back from the bank. Tell them you expect me every moment. At the same time, if any cheques have to be signed, send them into the bank; I do not know how long I may be detained. Any one in the outer office besides Rouget? You go first; send him away and then tell me. I like going into the bank by the front door."

"The Bishop of Anticosti is waiting, and two sisters of charity with a subscription list, waiting till you are disengaged."

"They can wait, then. I shall go the other way," and so saying he disappeared by way of the dressing-room.

It was half-past four instead of half-past three when Rouget was at last admitted to the presence. His consequence was a good deal ruffled at being kept waiting, and he gave Stinson to understand that he did not like it; whereupon the clerk suggested that he should call another day, and was altogether so callous and unimpressed, that, after failing to get him to carry in another card with messages scrawled across, Mr. Rouget desisted, submitted, and sat down in a chair like any humble person awaiting an audience.

"Ha! Mr. Rouget!" was his reception when at last the moment of admission arrived. "So sorry that you should have had to wait; but business—you know. How do things go on at St. Euphrase? I have been meaning to drive over there, some day, now the ice and the sleighing are so good; but have been so busy."

"We have been making discoveries at St. Euphrase, Misterre Herkimaire—discoveries of mines and metals. Wat do you tink of dat, for instance, Misterre Herkimaire?" and he laid some lumps of nearly pure copper, each about the size of an egg, and a piece of rock, green with exposure to the weather, and veined with metallic bands upon the table. The window, as it happened, faced the west, catching the last of the daylight from the radiant sky. A gleam, grown ruddy, and struggling with the gathering shadows, seemed drawn to the polished faces of the ore, and made them shine with enhancing lustre.

"What?" cried Ralph, thrown off his guard at the unexpected sight, which made him forget the cool and critical attitude of a business mind. "Copper! Virgin copper, or I'm a Dutchman! Specimens sent in by his explorers to the Minister of Irrigation? Kind of you to bring them to me, Mr. Rouget, and

give me a chance to bid for the lands. Many thanks. I have been turning my attention to minerals lately, I doubt not but with the minister's goodwill we may arrange something to our mutual advantage—yours and mine. Where do they come from? Up the Ottawa? Or, perhaps the Gattineau? Yes! that must be it, the Gattineau. I am interested in Gattineau lands already, and we have indications of copper; but I am free to confess I did not dream of anything so fine as this. If the government wants a company formed to develop minerals on the Gattineau, I'm their man. It will help us to build our railway at once. I did not calculate on extending so far out for a year or two, but the mines will require an outlet, and they will bring the road into notice, and enable us to make an increased issue of stock. The government will have to increase our land-grant, however."

Rouget stood regarding the "promoter" with a smile. How he did run on, to be sure!

"W'ere you say dey come from?"

"The Gattineau, I have no doubt. I never saw a Lake Superior specimen half as rich."

"Eet ees not Lake Superior, you aire right. W'at you say eef I tell you it come from sout' of de Saint Laurence?"

"It will be a fortune for the owner if it does. Freight and expenses there will be so light in comparison with Fond du Lac."

"Dese specimens aire from La Hache."

"You don't—— "

"Fact. Here is Professor Hammerstone's report."

"Hammerstone? I see him constantly, but he has never mentioned it. He spent a week with me at St. Euphrase last summer. My son Gerald reads with him several times a week, but he has heard nothing of this or he would have told me."

"Hammerstone was employed by me—a private survey—confidential affair."

"Ah?" said Ralph, looking at his friend the personage and man of pleasure with newborn respect Who could have supposed it? A man he had always looked on as a fool—spending his days in losing money on racecourses, his nights in poker!—to think that such a one should have taken up with science, economies, and the intelligent development of his property!

"You see it arrived to me all unexpected to make the discovery. The young Richaud, of the Crown Lands Department, is of the relatives of madame the most intimate. He made a *séjour* wid us the last Septembre, and

one day we go for the *chasse aux oiseaux*, and we stop to repose ourselves in the svamp by the river not far from Saint Euphrase—the svamp is dried up as you may know in Septembre—and Richaud, he cry out, and he say, 'M. Rouget,' he say, 'how you aire *riche!*—more *riche* as the dreams of avarice.' 'Behold!' he cry, and frappe wid a large stone ze rock laid bare by the uprooting of a fallen tree, w'ere I myself had seated. And truly the fragment broken off did shine wid a lustre as of the metals. Richaud has information of such tings in the department, and he advised me to consult the Professeur Hammerstone, w'ich, by-and-by, w'en the frosts have wizzered the herbage, I do, and you behold his report rendered."

Ralph took the report and read it through, while recovering at the same time his self-possession. It was an injudicious display of eagerness which he had been betrayed into, and he felt heartily ashamed as well as sorry that his nerves should have relaxed from that critical calm which becomes a proposing buyer while the bargain is incomplete. How many thousands, he wondered, would his lack of circumspection cost him? Yet who could have associated the ass Rouget with anything to sell? It was most provoking.

He sniffed a depreciating sniff as he read through the report, raised his eyebrows and pursed his lips; and in concluding read aloud the saving clause in which the worthy scientist guarded his reputation for infallibility by reminding his readers of the impossibility of ascertaining the depth to which the outcropping lodes extended, by mere surface observations, and without sinking an experimental shaft, and the chances of faults, breaks, and interruptions in the vein at any depth below that to which his examination had extended.

"You want to sell this, then, Mr. Rouget? this parcel of, say a thousand acres, with its metalliferous indications? What value do you put upon it?"

Had Rouget come there the day before, ere he had had speech with Jordan, or had slept and dreamed upon the encouraging visions which that conversation had bred, and which had been expanding themselves ever since, as is the way with visions, there is no doubt he would have jumped at once, named a sum, and been thankful to take half of it; but he had spent the night in building castles, and storing them with the uncounted riches which other men were to dig out of his land and pay over to him, and the idea of a fixed

sum even if far larger than he had yet named, was now cold and unattractive.

"I vish not to compromise my interests in zis land. I vill not sell."

"Then what do you come to me for?"

"I vish to inaugurate a company to develop ze mines."

"But the mines, if there are any, are yours, Mr. Rouget. It is for the proprietor to develop his property."

"I have hoped since three months to do so. Money is ze difficulty; I need money."

"Then sell! Those who have the money are likely to give a good price. It will be pure gain to you, for this thousand acres, I dare assert, has never yielded you one cent. Sell to wealthy men who can afford to develop the property, it will bring in population, perhaps originate a town, and in any case create a new market for your tenants, and increase the value of all your lands."

"If it vould be good for dose vealthy men to buy, it vill be my affair not to sell. I shall keep my interests in ze mines."

"How much good will they do you if you have no capital to work them?"

"I have come to you to get ze capital."

"And how would you purpose to pay for the accommodation?"

"Your bank lends, does it not? I would borrow!"

"What security?"

"My own. Is that not enough? And now there will be dis mine also."

"You would mortgage it then to get an advance? Can you give a first mortgage? —No?—mortgaged already, eh? Then sell, Mr. Rouget. Sell to a company. If your ideas are reasonable I may be able to help you; but a large outlay will be required to start the enterprise, and getting up a company is an expensive process. However, I think I am safe in saying you can sell your unproductive swamp for the price of the best agricultural land in the province, or double what any cleared land round St. Euphrase would bring. Yes! I will even risk giving you fifty dollars the *arpent* myself, and take all the risk and expense, while you will have the prospective advantage when population comes streaming in to work the mines."

"You are kind, Mr. Herkimaire. I thank you. But either you are not serious, or you believe me more fool than is the case. Messieurs Pyrites and Sulphuret may be willing to put me in the way to develop my property. I am told they do large business in metals. I shall wish you a good evening, Mr. Herkimaire."

"No, no! Mr. Rouget. Stop a moment! Just tell me plainly what it is you want, and I shall be pleased to promote your views if I can. I have asked you how much you would take for your property, or what you wish to do with it. You have made no answer. I then made you an offer for the land, which of course you were quite at liberty to refuse; but surely your refusing to take my price does not necessitate your taking offence, especially seeing that you have not yet said what value you put on the property yourself—and I am sure there is no arrangement which Pyrites and Sulphuret would make with you which I am not quite as able to carry out. Since you have been good enough to give me the first chance, pray do not go before we have had time to understand each other. What is your own idea in the matter?"

"Mr. Jordain, he say——"

"Jordan is in it, then, is he?" muttered Ralph. "Worse luck."

"He says I should place myself in the hands of some capitalist, who would form a company, paying me some in money and the rest in stock. Is not that the fashion to speak of in the language of commerce."

"Quite so, Mr. Rouget. That is the usual way of fixing things. And your figures?"

And here there arose much altercation and argument, as was inevitable where each wanted to get as much and give as little as possible. The dialogue need not be recorded. Its like can be heard in any market place, between hucksters and old women, chaffering and wrangling over a copper cent as if their lives depended on having it, though the one must sell and the other will buy, in any wise, and they both know it.

It was settled at last. Ralph was to arrange and bring out the company, with all perquisites thereto accruing. Rouget got a fifth part of the stock as his price, and a few thousand dollars, wherewith he hurried to New York in a fever of restlessness until he should have dropped them all into the same abyss which had swallowed so much already, in obedience to the infallible *système*. Jordan being first mortgagee, with power to become troublesome, was made solicitor of the concern, with a handsome block of stock allotted, the calls on which, it was understood, were not to be pressed. Ralph, as promoter, kept still, acquiesced, and said not much while the other two preferred their extravagant demands. It was he who was to issue the stock and handle the funds, and as the venture progressed he was sure of abundant profit. Meanwhile, it

was best that his mates should have their way, be kept sanguine and in good humour, if only that they might innoculate the public mind with their brilliant anticipations.

The prospectus was a work of art, and it was fortified by certificates from the greatest authorities. True, these authorities had not seen the metalliferous deposits—indeed no one could see them just then, buried as they were under drifts of frozen snow—but they were allowed to see Hammerstone's survey, and Hammerstone was a man of knowledge and character, whom even the most distinguished felt safe in endorsing, if the fee were sufficient. As the mind of practical science puts it—practical science is the science of making as much money out of as little knowledge as possible—to express another man's observations in finer and more taking language, is surely the highest compliment one can pay him, and the most emphatic manner of granting him our valuable indorsation. Hammerstone was immensely gratified to read in the prospectus the opinions of Professor Sesquioxide, of Boston, and other luminaries, his bigger brothers among the sons of knowledge, so minutely confirmatory of his own; but he wondered much as to when they had been called in, and he felt a little hurt that they

should have been so near to him and Montreal without visiting him.

The public mind was judiciously educated up to the receptive point by a series of graduated rumours and paragraphs of ascending interest. One may come to believe anything if it seems in sequence with what went before; therefore, when an assertion seems corroborated by others already accepted, and which yet appear to be in no way connected with it, the natural man accepts it at once. The newspapers swarmed with clippings from the latest mining sensations in Colorado, and following them would appear rumours of important mineralogical discoveries "nearer home." By-and-by there were descriptions of California bonanzas, followed by more rumours of vast metallic wealth at the very doors. Then an imaginative reporter received confidential information which he was not at liberty to divulge, but which he felt it a duty to his beloved public to hint at in various picturesque ways. He described gigantic masses of virgin copper quarried from their beds with pre-historic wedges which still lay beside them in witness, and discussed the civilization of the ancient Mound-builders in the popular archæological manner, still ringing the changes on the wealth of copper so

near at hand. Finally, when people's minds were ready to believe, the prospectus of the Mining Association of St. Euphrase appeared.

After the association's subscription lists had remained open only a few days they were suddenly closed, and it was announced that the capital was all subscribed. Then all the dilatory who had contemplated investing in a general sort of way, but had not done it, grew eager to hold shares, which they hurried to buy at a premium. It was afterwards said that in every instance it was Ralph Herkimer who was the seller, and that he only subscribed for the shares which he sold, after he had touched the premiums. But people are uncharitable, and if a man ever ceases to be rich, they are sure to recollect naughty things which they say he did in his time of prosperity.

Before the snow was gone, material and machinery had been collected on the ground, and there was a rise in the price of the stock.

When the snow went, operations began, and the stock rose higher, with inquiries for it from distant places, which sent the price bounding still higher and higher still.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TIE OF KINDRED.

In those days—the days of Judith's visit—George Selby and his wife were always punctual in coming down to breakfast. It was their hour for undisturbed conversation and intercourse. The guests, unaccustomed to city gaiety and late hours, were still in their soundest sleep, when the clang of the breakfast bell would wake them to the knowledge that another day had begun, and they must drag themselves from between the blankets. As for Susan, owing to neuralgia or laziness, she always breakfasted in bed.

"Mary!" cried George eagerly, when they met one morning, about a week after Betsey's first ball. "It is needless to ask you if you have slept well. You look refreshed and revived as I have not seen you look for years and years. I have noticed a change for the better going on for these last two weeks, and this morning it almost seems as if the Mary of long ago were coming back again. The clouds are

lifting, dearest, I do believe, and we shall know peace and quiet happiness yet again. It is wearing on to afternoon with us both now, and ours has been a sad, black, rainy day; but at least we have been together through it all, and that has been more than sunshine. And now if the rain but cease and the clouds break up, we may be blessed with a peaceful sunset and the serene twilight of old age, with the clear, pure brightness far off behind the hills waiting for us till we enter the eternal day."

George was a worthy, gentle soul, with yearnings true, if not powerful, towards the spiritual and poetic. Who, condemned to hammer scales into stupid little girls without ear or fingers, through all the years, could be expected to carry more of the golden but unpractical gift into hum-drum middle life?

Mary laid her hand upon his shoulder, leant her head upon his cheek, and her eyes grew moist. They were grey-haired people both, those two, but people do not cease to be foolish, my dear young friends—if it *is* foolish, which I deny—when they cease to be young and handsome; that is, if they have not ceased to be good. Goodness is the salt, the preserver, the eternal spring, which can keep a heart from ever growing old. Egotism in youth, when all is fair, may shine and glitter

like a dainty varnish, but it dulls and hardens and cracks as the years go on, and becomes but the sorriest item in the general break-up and decay, when that sets in. Love only is immortal, a giver of life to the failing forces, like the olive tree in the prophet's vision, which supplied in continuous flow the oil to furnish the perpetual lamp.

Mary leaned up against her husband in a mute caress, and then drawing a long breath, sat down at the table to pour out his coffee. She was not accustomed to put her feelings into words. She had suffered far too long and too terribly for that. Had she been a woman of emotional utterance, she must have exhausted her sorrow or her life, whichever of the two were the weaker, long ago; but voice was wanting. She had held her peace, had borne and lived and suffered, till those about her had trembled for her reason; trembled, and yet in pity, at times, had almost hoped for her the fearful anodyne of madness; but she was strong of body as well as mind, she agonized in silence and lived on.

She poured out her husband's coffee, and, handing it, met his eyes still fastened on her face in earnest, happy love. "Yes," she said, replying to his still unanswered observation, "I have had a long delicious sleep, without a

dream, or only one short sweet fancy before I woke, as if our baby were lying in my arms, as she lay that very last morning before we lost her. Oh, George! The delightfulness of the sound oblivious sleep I have enjoyed of late! No one can conceive it who has not gone through all these weary years. I had forgotten what refreshing sleep was like. I was dreadful to me to lie down at night and give myself up to cruel horrible dreams. You know how constantly I have wakened with a cry—always the same bad dream, yet always with a cruel difference in the horrors. Always the child in danger or in pain, destruction in every fearful shape impending, and I unable to reach, incapable of protecting her. I have always felt that she was alive and needed my care, and how I have yearned and prayed to get to her, God only knows. And now, George, it seems to me that God must have heard, and taken pity on me. It is well with her now. I seem to feel it. She is with God I do believe, and perhaps He lets her spirit come down and comfort me. At least I am very sure now that she is happy, and I feel resigned as a Christian woman should, in a way I have never been able to feel before."

"The company of your sister Judith has done you good, Mary. I have been wrong,

and judged her harshly, I am afraid. She is a good woman I believe now, for all her queerness, and I should have thought of having her to stay with you long ere now. A fellow is so unthinkingly selfish, and I suppose I judged of your feelings by my own. You are my all, you see, and I fear I grudge sharing you with others. But it was selfish in me to forget that you and she are sisters, and must have many feelings in common. In any case I owe her a debt now, and I shall never think a thought against her again as long as I live."

"You have no occasion to blame yourself, George. I do not imagine it is owing to her visit that I feel so calmed; though certainly I am happy to have her. We never had much sympathy, she and I. The difference in our age and disposition was too great. I was always fonder of Susan. No! It is not that. Her coming brought me no consolation, I am sure. I do not think I ever passed more miserable nights than those two first after her coming. But then there came a change, a peace and consolation which I cannot describe or explain, and I do not understand. It is just a blind unreasoned certainty that all is well, and I want no more. The Good God has heard me at last, and taken pity on a miserable mother. He has taken my darling to Himself,

I surely believe, and she is safe at last in the Everlasting Arms. Oh George, I have been wicked to repine, and distress you as I have done, with my ignorant complainings. She is safer far, I recognize it now, than she could have been had she been left in such care as mine. No! It is the Great Consoler who has pitied me and sent me comfort; such distraction as poor Judith could have brought would have been of little avail. That little girl, Betsey's cousin, seems to bring a far more soothing influence with her than Judith or Susan, or any one I ever met, but you. There seems a peacefulness in the air when she is by, that rests my weary, hungry heart. It does me good to sit and look when she comes in, and to hear her talk. She is a darling little girl, and I could feel it in my heart to envy the people she belongs to. She is an orphan, poor thing, they tell me. She must be very near the age our Edith would have been if she had been spared to us," and the poor lady wiped her eyes and sighed.

"You mean Muriel Stanley. Yes, she is a dear little girl, or at least she was till very lately; but she is opening out into young womanhood now, as they all do, the pretty buds that I am so fond of. I see the dawning woman more clearly every week, and I shall

soon be losing her. She is so pretty, you see, and those wretched boys see it, too, and tell her it. Why is there not a Herod in Montreal to kill off the sprouting striplings? They spoil all my little maids for me, just as I get fond of them, when they are at their freshest and sweetest; turn there pretty heads with nonsense and make them think themselves grown up; and then good-bye to the poor music master. Your young nephew—Ralph's son—has something to answer for in this case, the rogue. I have noticed him lurking round our gate more than once, and have kept her an extra fifteen minutes out of pure malice. There is always some one, and they make one feel so old."

Mary smiled, as her husband meant she should, and then the door opened, and Judith and her niece appeared together. The scene was changed into one of bustle and small talk, fumigated with the smoke of coffee and hot broiled fish.

"You were late of getting home last night," said George. "I was so blind sleepy that I could scarcely see you when I let you in. But pray don't apologize. I am glad of it. One wants to see one's country friends entertained when they come to town, and, what with my sprains, I feel conscience-stricken at

having been able to do nothing to amuse you myself. I hope you spent a pleasant evening?"

"Oh, yes, Martha always does that kind of thing well. She's a good hostess."

"And, Miss Betsey? Were you much admired?"

Betsey gave her head a little toss with a Venus Victrix glance—*à la* Bunce, that is. The marble goddess in the Louvre looks straight out of level eyes, too proud for petty wiles; but Betsy's glance came from the corners. She was arch, you see, or thought so, and the certainty of conquest was all that she had in common with her divine prototype.

"I wore a nice new dress, Mr. Selby, a present from Aunt Martha—cousin, I suppose I should call her, seeing she is auntie's niece; but she is too old to be a cousin to *me*. I think I shall call her simply Martha, I am sure she will not mind. She would like it, I do believe, only——" and Betsey began to change colour.

"Only?" said George, who had been looking her in the face, with a laugh. "Only it would be awkward to be heard calling one's mother-in-law by her Christian name, and it is not easy to get out of a habit of speaking—is that it?"

Betsey grew crimson and bent over her plate.

"George! You are too bad altogether," said Mary.

"Mr. Selby, you are a dreadful quiz," said Betsey, not at all displeased. "But about my dress. I was quite disappointed to find you were not at hand as we went out, I wanted you to admire it. Beautifully made. It must have cost a lot of money. Black *tulle*, with any quantity of Marshal Niell roses, and just a morsel of scarlet salvia here and there to light it up. The salvia was my own idea, and an immense improvement. The dressmaker said all she could against it, and a deal about severe simplicity; but I hate simpletons of all kinds, and I fear my taste is not severe at all. However, it was I who was to wear the gown, so I had my way. I would not have chosen black myself, but M——" (with a returning flush) "Mrs. Herkimer said black, so what could I do? I am fond of warm colouring myself, and a good deal of it. That is why I got my geranium poplin; but one wants a change, and the *tulle* is that. Only it is so quiet, nobody would guess how expensive it is."

"I would pin a card with the price on behind. People who wear ready-made

clothing have been known to appear in public so decorated, when the shopman forgot to remove his ticket. It attracts a good deal of attention. All for $15 say, or your choice for $20."

"It cost a great deal more than that, Mr. Selby," answered Betsey, with just a touch of crossness in the tone, as she began to recognize that she was being chaffed. "Shows how little *you* know about ladies' wear," she added, as Selby rose to go into another room and give her music lesson to Muriel Stanley, who could be heard arriving.

The ladies gathered round the fire and proceeded to talk over the events of the party. Betsey sat in the middle in front of the blaze, and as opportunity offered, strove to enlighten the inexperience of her elders in matters of "style" and good behaviour, with items drawn chiefly from her recollections of "Godey's Magazine," which were copious, and sometimes startling, and illustrated by reminiscences of festivity at St. Euphrase, in which a certain Mr. Joe Webb appeared to have borne a prominent part. She was still in full career when Selby returned, introducing Muriel Stanley, whom for his wife's sake he had persuaded to come and shake hands with her cousin at that early hour. Mary was leaning

back in her chair, and had armed herself with patience to endure the torrent of Betsey's talk, which needed only an occasional exclamation of dissent, easily overborne, from Judith, to keep it running in the full turbulence of its muddy flow. No word of hers was needed, and her thoughts had drifted away into their accustomed channels. Her husband noted the flush of pleasure and the kindling of her eye at sight of the stranger, who also seemed drawn to the invalid, and who, in the re-arranging of the party, dropped into a low seat by her side. Unconsciously. as it seemed, Mary's hand was laid on the girl's shoulder, and then, as recollecting itself, drew back, to steal again involuntarily towards her, and touch her hair.

Muriel, too, unwittingly seemed to lean towards the other, and accept contentedly the unconscious caress; and George, regarding them, could not but wonder how the girl seemed drawn to his wife, so nearly a stranger to her, even in the presence of the others whom she saw so constantly in the country. It showed the tenderness of a womanly heart, he thought, and its overflowing sympathy, thus silently to go out to the stricken invalid, and he loved and admired his favourite pupil more than he had ever done before.

The loquacious Betsey had other things to think of, things to speak about, and to speak about a great deal. The subject of the party was taken up again from the beginning, to be gone all over once more, while Judith held her hands out to the blaze to shield her eyes, and Mary sat mutely happy, she knew not why, gently stroking the hair plait with her finger.

"You were not at Mrs. Herkimer's party last night, Muriel? and I did not see your aunts."

"No, they were not there. Aunt Matilda rarely goes to a dance, except a juvenile one, when I am invited. I am not out yet, you know."

"To be sure not, Muriel; I know it. Time enough, my dear," said this experienced woman of the world. "Your time will come quite soon enough, and I hope you will enjoy it. Ah!——" and she heaved an ecstatic sigh, "It was a lovely party. So many gentlemen! And such a floor! I put in a heavenly time, Muriel. I wish you could have seen it. I wish you could have seen me in my new ball-dress—a present, you know—from auntie's niece—by Mme. Jupon! no less—just too elegant for anything. Quite subdued, you know—black *tulle*—much draped. Too sub-

dued, if anything, for my taste—you know I like things cheerful—but awfully sweet. Garnitures of roses—large Marshal Niell roses—dollars and dollars' worth of them—frightfully expensive—and real chaste. I saw the people asking each other who that elegantly-dressed person could be, and my card was filled up just like winking. There was, let me see, there was Mr.——But what of that? You are not out yet. You could not be expected to know any of them. But it was lovely. Oh, how some of those dear men do valse!"

"Betsey!" said Judith reprovingly, "how you do run on. It is scarcely feminine."

Betsey looked not well pleased, and a retort was rising to her lips, when she caught sight of Selby watching her, and the twinkle of "impertinent" amusement, as she thought it, in his eye was too much. It scattered her forces and snapped the thread of her discourse.

"There is a tobogganing party to-night, Betsey," said Muriel, now that there came a lull; "that is, there is always one these moonlight nights; but we are going to-night. Would you care to come? Aunt Penelope will be so pleased if you and Betsey will dine with us, Mrs. Bunce, and she can go in our party. Aunt Matilda is going. You will

meet all your St. Euphrase friends, Betsey. Mdlle. Rouget will be there, I understand."

"I scarcely know the girl, and she don't want to know me, so that is no inducement. However, we'll go, auntie? I think we had better go. It's home to St. Euphrase to-morrow, you know, with lots of time for sedateness and parish duties. Let's enjoy ourselves all we can while we're here."

And so it was agreed.

CHAPTER IX.

TOBOGGANING.

The moon was at the full, and she hung, still tending upwards, high in the transparent vault where all the host of heaven were burning and blinking like tapers in a fitful wind, so brilliant was their scintillating lustre seen through that clear dry atmosphere where the moonlight shows the red and the green of brick wall and painted verandah, colours which are but modulated greys where insular moistness thickens and dims the air. It was bright as day over the snow-covered landscape, with even a trace of the yellowness of sunshine in the light, but with an uncertainty in distances, and a liquid idealizing of objects and their shadows, sublimating reality out of commonplace, and lifting it into the likeness of what is seen in dreams.

The thermometer stood at zero, but the air was still, for all the fantastic flicker of the stars overhead; and it was so dry with the frost, which had precipitated all moisture, that it did not feel cold on emerging from heated

houses. It was bright and exhilarating to breathe—like something to drink—and sent the blood dancing more briskly than before down to the tips of the thickly-gloved fingers Sounds of laughter and frolic were about, every one who was young and strong was abroad in the intoxicating lustre, arrayed in blanket-coat and moccasins, with *toque* and sash of blue or scarlet.

It was a steep snow-covered bank in the suburbs, with a long meadow spreading out below. Steps and footpaths were worn up the face on either hand, and in the middle was the slide polished into glass, down which the toboggans, pushed past the brink of the descent, a girl or even two seated in front with a man behind to steer, shot with the celerity of an arrow from above, slackening in speed when the steepest of the declivity was past, and travelling far out across the level meadow on the spending impulse they had gathered on their way. With steering and good luck the crew reach a standstill as they started, the damsel gets up, the swain draws his vehicle by the cord, and both mount again to the summit, once more to precipitate themselves down the slope, and if there be no miscarriage, resulting in shipwreck, with toboggan overturned or broken, and crew shot out pro-

miscuously with ugly cuts and bruises, to repeat the experience a score of times, till at length the weary limbs shall refuse to scale the slippery height again.

"Miss Stanley," said Randolph Jordan, addressing Miss Matilda, "won't you trust yourself to me. I promise to steer carefully, and I can say what every one cannot, that I have never spilled my cargo yet."

"Thanks, Mr. Randolph, I do not mistrust you in the least; but really—it is so long since I got upon a toboggan—that I—I shall just stay here with Mr. Considine, now I have got to the top of the hill, and watch you young people like a sedate chaperon. But here is my cousin, Betsey Bunce; I am sure she will be delighted. They do not toboggan at St. Euphrase, and I am sure she never saw one in Upper Canada. Oh!"—with a little scream—"It really is quite frightful to see them start. And that is Muriel, I declare, and Gerald Herkimer. He will break the child's neck, I do believe; he is so heedless. I wish we were home again."

"Oh, law!" cried Betsey; "are you sure it is quite safe? I used to coast with my handsled, like the rest of the kids, when I was little, but it kind of frightens one to see the go-off. Are you quite sure you can protect my bones,

Mr. Jordan?"—looking clingingly in his face in search of encouragement—"I feel awful frightened."

"Well, perhaps you are right," said Randolph, impervious to the cling; "it is a good plan to watch the others for a while first, it gives one confidence," and he was gone. He had paid his duty invitation to the head of the party, and, not having bargained for Betsey as a substitute, availed himself at once of the simulated dread which was intended merely to make him urgent and assiduous. Betsey felt foolish, and turned round to Matilda, but she, supposing she had provided for her charge, had taken Considine's arm and strolled away. Betsey was pretty well able to do for herself, however, and ere long she descried a bachelor, unprovided with a maid, and whom she had danced with the evening before; he, on her recognizing him, was not averse to taking her on his conveyance *faute de mieux*, it being "kind o' lonesome," as he told himself, to ride alone, "when every other fellow was provided with his bit of muslin."

Randolph was at Miss Rouget's side in a moment, tendering his respectful services, which she at once accepted with the grave bow of a maiden obedient to her parents, who feels gratified in her conscience with the sense

of a duty fulfilled, in doing what she knows they would approve—the superior satisfaction of a well-regulated mind, higher, because a moral pleasure, than the indulgence of mere personal preference, but by no means so gratifying to the gentleman, if he only knew it, which, fortunately, he seldom does. Randolph's feelings, too, might perhaps be considered as of that same higher moral sort, which dispenses with good honest attachment of the natural kind; more exactly to be described as indifference touched with filial piety and flavoured with a pinch of self-interest.

Old Jordan had been immensely impressed by the mining discoveries at La Hache, and although it was a damper to recognize in the desired father-in-law of his son a rabid and an unsuccessful gambler, still, the man's interest in the mine could be saved, he thought, by settling it upon his daughter as *dot*, if the old man were permitted to enjoy the usufruct during his life; besides, was there not a certain institution where troublesome old gentlemen had been locked up ere then, at the instance of wives or heirs? and was not monsieur the seignior eccentric enough for any purpose, with skilful counsel to lay it properly before a jury? Randolph was the impediment himself; he was like a badly-ridden colt, whom the

horseman, armed with whip and spur, which he has not the judgment to use, vexes into rebellion which he cannot overbear.

It was humiliating, but his sight was clear enough to see that Amelia, in opposition to whom all his dealings with his son hitherto had been taken, must now be called in to use the very influence which had hitherto made the lad so unruly, and render him tractable for once. Amelia, for a wonder, lent a favourable ear. She recognized it as a tribute, and an admission, in arranging the most important circumstance in her son's life, that the arrogant block-head, who had attempted to lord it with so high a hand over herself and the boy, had come to see his impotence at last. The sense of victory soothed her, and made her gentle, as a filly has been known to become under coaxings with lump sugar and carrots, when rougher means had failed. She agreed to take the youth in hand, and she moulded him without his knowledge, as she had done all his life before, like wax between her fingers.

He had as yet — whatever later years might bring him — no very pronounced faculty of love for other than himself; his attachment to herself, as she saw full well, being due chiefly to what she could do for him and give him in the way of flattery, sympathy, and

help to assist himself, and so forth. She saw it without much pain, though she was his mother, for she was a practical-minded person who indulged in the affections but sparingly as being too luscious and apt to pall; "it was just," she thought, "the way of the coarser sex—brutal, selfish, stupid—overbearing in the rude strength of their muscle, the delicate nerve-power of the women." "But brain-fibre was more than a match in the long run for such fibre as theirs," she told herself; and after all the boy was her own, to be proud of among other women, and to make do in the long run, as she only could make him, by delicately pulling the strings she wot of in his being, pretty much as she would.

She was aware, of course, of his kindness for Muriel, but she divined that its roots did not go deep, and when she now took him in hand to direct his attachments, his own description confessed the truth when he spoke of her as "a jolly little girl, and awfully pretty, whom the fellows were crazy after, and he meant to take the cake from them all."

"I am not so sure that you can, my boy; having been a girl myself I am likely to guess nearer the truth than you can; girls are such goosy little things, and I should say your friend Gerald has the best chance there."

"Gerald!" said the young man, drawing himself up to the full of that one-inch advantage he had over his friend; but then he remembered how Gerald had taken her in to supper the evening or two before, and he felt a doubt; but it only made him angry and more obstinate to win the prize.

"I think, Randolph," his mother went on, reading his thoughts, "your cake, as you call her, you gluttonous boy, is hardly worth the eating; leave it for your friends, and make them welcome. Muriel Stanley is no match for you, and no great catch for anybody. She will get her aunt's money, I suppose—a comfortable little sum—when they die, which is not likely to happen for twenty years; but she has no connections whatever, and a good connection is so very advantageous for a young man. You will realize that more and more as you get on."

"But she is awfully pretty, the prettiest little thing in Montreal, and the nicest."

"I grant you that, if you think so; but she is only fifteen, and her aunts will not let her marry for five years yet. She will be stout at twenty; that kind of girl whose figure forms so early, always gets stout, and you will think her a little coarse—men of taste always think that of plump girls, I have

observed—but you will sacrifice yourself all the same, like a man of honour, if you are already engaged. That will not be the worst, however; five years more and she will be positively fat! Imagine yourself with a wife like that! You will be about thirty then, just in your prime, with your nice slim figure merely improved from what it is now, the shoulders a little broader, of course, which will be no disadvantage, and your moustache a trifle heavier, but otherwise scarcely changed—in fact, at your very best. How will you like then walking down St. James's Street on the circumference of a copious wife?—a sprig of lavender tied to a marigold! Does the picture attract you?"

When you drive together or have stalls at the theatre, imagine yourself protruding from among your spouse's cloaks and flounces. The buggy could be built of extra size, to be sure, but all the stall chairs are alike. It is a subject for your own consideration exclusively. Personally, I am fond of Muriel. She is a nice little thing, and I should welcome her as a daughter; but it is not I who should have to appear in public with her for the remainder of my days; and if a man means to go into society, he is wise to choose a wife who will group well with him.

"Now, there are our neighbours at St. Euphrase. Think of an only daughter!—heiress to a seigniory, and connected with all the best people in the province. You will say she has not a good complexion; but how short a time complexion lasts in this climate! and those who have had one, and lost it, always look haggard and older than those who never had any. A man married to an old-looking woman, whether fat or lean, always strikes me as a melancholy spectacle—like a sapling sprouting from a crumbling wall, as the poet says—and the world is seldom respectful. It is apt to look on him as the man who broke the commandments and married his grandmama, because nobody of his own age would have him. There is no fear of that with Adèline Rouget; she will improve every year she lives. She is distinguished looking now, though she is not pretty. Every year she will improve, that is the advantage of having plenty of bone. She will look stately in middle life, and be beautiful—the rarest kind of beauty—in old age. Look forward always, my boy, when you think about marrying, it is an experiment which generally can be tried but once, so bought experience can do you no good."

Mother and son had a long conversation, in

which she plied him with so many flatteries, that finally of his own free choice he promised to "go in" for Miss Rouget, yet at the same time felt himself magnanimous and dutiful in yielding his own wish to the gratification of his parent; and she encouraged the delusion as likely to hold him to her point. Self-denial is a heroic sort of virtue, and rather above the purchase of most folks; therefore, to be self-denying, and so, admirable to his seldom gratified moral sense, while still pleasing himself, was exaltedly delightful. If a man is not a hero, it pleases him the more to see himself in a heroic light. It is new, and it may not occur again, therefore he will do his best to retain the gallant attitude in which he finds himself; and Randolph set himself to *live up to his ideal.*

It was in ceremonious and most well-behaved fashion that the young lady placed herself on the toboggan, and permitted her cavalier to wrap the outflowing draperies more compactly about her in gracious quietude. The gentleman gave the equipage a push beyond the brink, jumped in behind with a parting kick against the shore, and they were away; swiftly, and with ever-accelerating speed as the hill grew steeper—"shooting Niagara." The *bienséances* of the convent, with their

modest tranquillity, are scarcely maintainable in a toboggan shooting down a glassy incline of fifty degrees or more, at the rate of miles in a minute, with the certainty that dislodgment from the quarter-inch board one is seated on may hurl one anywhere, bruised or maimed, but assuredly ridiculous.

Adèline caught her breath with a gasp as she found they were off, and, as the pace quickened down hill, she clenched her teeth tightly and closed her eyes; and then there came a jolt as they sped across some swelling in the ice, and she felt herself thrown backwards, and gave a little scream; and Randolph was there behind to support her, with a laugh, as she bumped against his chest, a laugh she could not but join in, though a little hysterically, perhaps, at first. And then the pace began to slacken as they reached the level of the meadow below, and still it slackened, and finally they stopped, and stood up, and shook themselves from adhering snow, and found, the experience was over, that they were both safe, and that it had been a little thrilling, but "*awfully jolly.*" The ice was broken between the two young people forthwith, and the Lady Superior with her nuns, who had taken such pains in the formation of Adèline's character and manners, would scarcely have

recognized her, or been able to distinguish her from one of those dreadful, fast, heretical English girls, they had been wont to hold up to her and her companions as models to avoid, as she caught Randolph's arm to climb to the top of the bank again, and vowed it had been delightful.

Conventional mannerisms are like mud in a slough, when the animal which has floundered through gets out into the sunshine, it dries and peels off and falls away very quickly. These two were average young people who had been comfortably reared, with warm clothes and nourishing victuals imagination, sentiment, "yearnings" of any kind had been omitted from their composition, but they were unconscious of the deficiency, so were perfectly content. They were both healthy and strong, and the physical surroundings of the moment were exhilarating in the highest degree—bright clear air and exciting exercise. The quickening of their pulses, caused by their romp upon the snow, was as high a delight as either was capable of knowing, and they clung closer together each time they re-climbed the steep to shoot again from the summit, and laughed more joyously with each succeeding jolt, and persuaded themselves even, perhaps, that they

were really falling in love—it is a delusion which often has no more substantial foundation.

And Muriel, too, was careering merrily down the slope, with Gerald for steersman. It was a sport in which they frequently indulged, and many a chilly promenade upon the frozen snow, on the top of the hill, had it cost Aunt Matilda that winter, though she never dropped a complaint which might check or damp her darling's pleasure. Perhaps, too, she may have found the *chaperonage* not altogether an infliction in every aspect. By some happy concurrence of circumstances Considine was always of the party. He might have dropped in to visit the ladies before the hour for setting out, or else he would accompany young Gerald when he called to persuade them to go; assuredly he was always there, and freighted with rugs of the thickest and warmest. When the ground was reached, he was curious in his selection of the snuggest nooks and corners sheltered from the wind to rest in; and when his rugs were heaped on the sealskins she already wore, Miss Matilda found she was not one bit cold in the world, and Considine in attendance, who on these occasions was invited to smoke, was perfectly happy, and blessed the inventor of the toboggan.

Muriel and Gerald were experienced voyagers who slid down and clambered up again in calm familiarity with what they were about, without transports of timidity or delight, but in thorough enjoyment. Muriel sat motionless like a part of the outfit, and Gerald was able to steer their way intricately and securely between others more laggard or awkward who got in the way and would have brought grief to a less skilful pilot. And then it was so pleasant to be together, though neither said so, they were so used to it—had been used to it for three or four winters now—and it had grown on them so quietly that they said and perhaps thought nothing about it. There were no speeches; there was no opportunity for them, for there had been no breaks in their intimacy. A boy and girl companionship at first, it had strengthened and progressed with themselves, till, while it was possible neither might have confessed an attachment to the other, it was certain they could never, now, attach themselves to any one else. They were comrades, at least in their winter exercises, but without the rough familiarity which sometimes arises in that relation. Muriel's virginal rearing by those worthy gentlewomen, her aunts, had made that impossible on her side; and Gerald had been his mother Martha's

"vineyard," tended and weeded and cared for assiduously as to his moral nature, brought up in manliness to scorn evil and reverence women, as only that quaint daughter of the solitary places in "Noo Hampshire" could have done.

The moon hung in the highest heaven, the snow near by was aglitter in its sheen, the distance was dim with hazy brightness, and many tobogganers had come in from around to join the sport. The place was not inclosed, it was a bare hill-face at other times, and somewhat out of the way; but it suited, and when once a few had used it into shape, all the tobogganing world was glad to avail itself of it. Its out-of-the-way-ness alone preserved it to the use of its quieter frequenters from the *gamins* and "roughs" of the more densely-peopled streets; but this night was so gloriously still and bright and exhilarating that those who had tasted its brightness could not tear themselves away, and as the shop-lights were extinguished they wandered farther afield instead of creeping under dusky shelter and going to sleep. The snow was dotted with groups of a dozen or a score, streaming out from the town and coming to the snow slide. All were on foot, a few on snow shoes, and many dragging hand-sleds behind them—those devices of

the enemy which make the winter street of America so dangerous for an elderly gentleman. He will look around for a policeman to stop urchins coasting in mid-highway, at the hazard of their skulls, from passing horse-kicks; he will not find one, but with a roar and a sweep another coaster will rush down the pavement, bruising his shins, over-turning him, and passing on its career of devastation before he can gather himself up to box the audacious ears of the offenders.

"What a crowd of people are gathering down here at the end of the track," observed Muriel, as she stepped off the toboggan at the journey's end to re-climb the hill.

"Yes," said Gerald, "a great many. I do not mind their standing down here, they seem peaceable. They are only looking on, and soon they will find it cold, and go away. But look at the crowd up there at the top! They seem a more unruly crew. I fear there will be a row. Ah!" he added, "there it is! Our pleasure is over for to-night. There is a rowdy with a hand-sled, starting down the course. Hsh! what a pace—and another—and a third. The third has upset, however, and rolled down the hill. I could almost wish he would get in front of number four. It would certainly hurt him, and spill number

four as well, and both deserve it. It will not be safe to launch a toboggan now. The iron shod runners of the sleds travel as fast again as a flat toboggan board. We shall get run into and smashed. I fear we must knock off for to-night. I am awfully sorry, but really it is not safe, with a parcel of roughs in possession of the slide."

"Don't say so," said Muriel. They were climbing the bank, she leaned on his arm, and she pressed on it just a shade heavier as she said it.

"No doubt," he answered; "they must soon give it up. The ground is too steep for runners. See how they shoot, and how far they are carried beyond where we stopped. And there is a ditch there too. The least thing will upset them coming down at such a bat, and somebody will get hurt. They will all get hurt in time, but we shall have too long to wait for it, I fear."

"Don't you think we might have just one or two more? The evening is only beginning, and it is so lovely. I do not feel one bit afraid, you steer so beautifully."

And what could Gerald do but yield when so appealed to, and so flattered?

They made another descent in safety, and then another, in which Gerald performed

prodigies of steering which elicited the lively applause of the onlookers, and filled himself and his companion with confidence and pride. For now the sled-riding invaders were in possession of the field, the tobogganers having withdrawn, all save Gerald, who, in the new position of affairs, appeared as the intruder, and whom the majority in possession now set themselves deliberately to molest and chase from the ground; shooting down after him, and endeavouring to run into him from different sides, when he would suddenly veer out of his course and leave the chasers to run into each other, with bruises and scatterings, and derision from the onlookers.

Each descent they made Gerald begged might be their last, but Muriel more eagerly pleaded they might have yet another. It was so splendid, she thought, to see the rowdies, balked in their malice, run thundering into each other, while Gerald received rounds of applause. What taskmaster ever drove so hard as does the female partizan, who desires nothing for herself but merely the glory of her champion?

They made the descent again. It was to be really the last time. "Just this once more;" but it proved the once too often. They started immediately behind a sled which shot down like lightning, and insured a clear course at

the going off; but presently one slid by on their right, and they had to swerve to avoid it, and then there passed one on their left which almost grazed them. They had scarcely escaped when another came thundering down behind them. Gerald veered aside as well as he could, but still as it came on it was only by flinging himself against the foremost passenger that he avoided being run over, and it cost him his balance. In the instant, while he was still in poise, he was able to lay a goodly stroke with his guiding stick across the head of the stéersman of the buccaneer, and then he fell out of his seat and rolled down the steep. The sled had turned cross-wise to the incline, and rolled over with the three who were its crew; and Muriel startled, alarmed, and with the toboggan turned aslant, fell out likewise, and slid downward with the toboggan atop.

Gerald reached the bottom pell-mell among the brawling, kicking, and swearing cargo of the sled, who set on him in concert ere yet he had well reached his feet, when Muriel's falling amidst them, covered by the over-turned toboggan, dispersed the combatants for an instant, and gave Gerald time to recover his guard. Then with a howl the three rushed upon the one, or rather on the two, for they knocked down Muriel, half risen, and trampled

the toboggan to pieces in rushing over her. Gerald was ready with one from the shoulder, delivered squarely in the jaw, to knock down the first, but the other two sprang on him together, and he would have fared ill if one from the crowd had not leaped into the fray with blazing eye, clenched fist, and gnashing teeth, and a growl of *sssacrrré* and *chien*, as he felled one ruffian with a blow under the ear and attacked the other. The first was now up again, assaulting Gerald with foot and fist, and calling his fellows in the crowd to come and help him, when the ministers of the law appeared in the persons of two burly constables, who caught Gerald and his succourer by the collar, and stood over the last felled of the assailants while the other two ran away.

It was a "brache of the pace," they declared, and all must come to the station, stretching out a hand to seize Muriel by the muffler—an act which nearly upset Gerald's composure, and brought him into collision with the police; but fortunately at that moment Considine intervened.

He had been spending an enchanted hour near the top of the hill with Miss Matilda, swathed in rugs—all but her head—looking down upon the sports, and chatting pleasantly while he buzzed round her, near enough to

hear and answer, but far enough off to let the fumes of his cigar travel elsewhere. Something said in the crowd hard by had drawn their attention to the slide. "Is not that Muriel?" Matilda had exclaimed, jumping to her feet; and then the collision had come, and the upset, and they both hurried down the bank to arrive on the scene at the same moment as the police.

"You need not take the young lady into custody, my man," said Considine, assuming his grand military manner—learned in "the war"—so effective with policemen, who, like other disciplined beings, seem to love being spoken down to. "Here is my card, and I write the lady's address on the back. She will appear before the magistrate whenever he desires."

"Roight, yur haunur!" said the man, coming to "attention," and saluting.

"And this gentleman will give you his card, too, and promise to appear when wanted," a suggestion which was also complied with, and Gerald was liberated from custody.

"And this young fellow, who has behaved like a man, can I do nothing for him?"

"This is Pierre Bruneau," cried Matilda, "our farmer's son at St. Euphrase. So good of you, Pierre, to come to Miss Muriel's

rescue. I did not know you were in Montreal."

Pierre pulled off his *toque* and made a shame-faced bow, smiling gratification all over his countenance to find his service appreciated.

"The Frinchman must com wid us, sorr. He kin hilp to dhraw the sled wid the chap he knocked down—an' roight nately he did that same—for a Frinchman. We'll thrate him well, sorr, but we'll have to lock him up. Ye kin spake a worrd to his haunor to-morrow maurnin', sorr."

Pierre started, and looked piteously to Miss Matilda, and then his manly heart gave way—he was not very old—he stuffed his fists into his eyes and wept sore. To prison! To be locked up! It was dreadful, and it was shame; and yet, even then, if it had had to be done over again, he would have done it just the same. It was for Muriel he had fought, and for her sake he was content to suffer.

CHAPTER X.

ANNETTE.

"Poor Pierre!" was the natural burden of the conversation round the Misses Stanley's supper table that night.

"Did not think it was in him," said Considine. "A quiet, fat, soft-eyed, soft-spoken boy—just like some of my mulatto table-niggers at home, in the old time. Never struck me there was man in him at all."

"He struck out splendidly," cried Gerald. "Straight from the shoulder—just one almighty drive, and the rowdy fell in his tracks—felled like an ox—without a struggle. Hope, for Pierre's sake, he has not killed him. He had not moved up to the time we left the ground. There could not have been a prettier stroke. We must not let him get into trouble about it. It would have gone roughly with me if he had not run in just then. One on either side, and I dared

not hit out at the one, for laying myself open to the other."

"You did very well, Gerald. Your own man was not at all badly floored, though he recovered more quickly than the other. 'Pon honour, I felt my old blood warming at sight of the fray. I should have been at your side in another instant, when I saw that ruffian get on his feet again, with musket clubbed—walking stick, I should say—a rather ridiculous object, I fear; but the old war-horse, you know"—and he turned to Matilda as if he had made a happy quotation from the poets, and she responded with an approving smile as in duty bound—"pricks up his ears at the noise of battle. However, the policeman appeared, and saved me from making a show of myself. That is one of the troubles of getting old. A man is more likely to get laughed at for showing his mettle than admired."

"Nobody would have laughed, Mr. Considine," said Matilda. "It was kind of you to mean it. But about Pierre. I can think of nothing but poor Pierre being taken up for trying to protect Muriel from a gang of ruffians. How came he to be there? He might have dropped from the clouds, I was so surprised."

"There were some beef cattle at the farm," said Miss Penelope. "Pierre drove them into town. He was here in the afternoon. I gave him money to stay in town overnight and go home by the cars to-morrow. So that is explained."

"Mr. Considine, may we commission you to engage the very best advice for Pierre?" said Matilda. "Being our servant we should feel bound to help him out of a difficulty in any case; but when he was assisting to protect Muriel, we must do more still. Spare no expense. See Mr. Jordan, or whomever you think the best. We would have sent word to Mr. Jordan by Randolph to act for us, but Randolph has not come back here. He will have walked home with Miss Rouget, I dare say. They seemed to enjoy each other's company immensely, which rather surprised me. Adèline is a nice girl, but rather inanimate, and Randolph is a lazy fellow, who prefers to sit still and let a lady amuse him. So they struck me, when they went off together, as being not a well-assorted pair, and yet they seemed to hit it off together uncommonly well. In fact, I have quite come to the conclusion that in such cases one never knows."

"Jean Bruneau will be anxious about his

boy if he does not get home by to-morrow evening," said Penelope; "but how to send him word? I need not write, for he never goes to the post-office, and a letter to him would lie there till the postmaster happened to see him in the village. Telegraphing is the same; the message might lie a week at the post-office."

"We are going home to-morrow, Betsey and I," said Mrs. Bunce. "Can we assist you, Miss Stanley?"

"Indeed you can, Mrs. Bunce; if it is not too much trouble. If you would walk out to Bruneau's cottage and explain to them the detention of their boy. Tell them how well he has behaved, how indebted we feel to him, and how willingly we will go to every expense to send him home as soon as possible. You will indeed do us a favour. We will write you to-morrow, after Mr. Considine has spoken to the magistrate, so as to give the very latest news."

The Rev. Dionysius had eaten his morning rasher, and was consuming his second plateful of buckwheat cakes and maple syrup—there is nothing like a copious breakfast for enabling one to resist the cold—and was basking in his regained domesticity. He had

been dwelling alone for three or four weeks, and though at first he had plunged with enthusiasm into his books, secure of freedom from interruption, he soon found the unbroken stillness grow oppressive. He wanted to speak, but there was no one to listen. He had felt himself, like the psalmist's solitary sparrow on the housetop, desolate and forlorn, and now he enjoyed even his wife's wordy narrations with a zest which surprised himself as much as it gratified her.

She was pouring forth a continuous stream of ecclesiastical tittle tattle, about curates, choirs, congregations and preferments, which would have been idle talk and a sinful waste of time in her serious eyes if it had related to politics or the public offices, but seeing it was not the State which it remotely touched on, but the Church, she believed it both important and improving; for with her, Church, like charity, covered anything, and transmuted even back-biting into holiness.

Dionysius listened and ate his cakes. Human speech of any sort was much, after three whole weeks of silence, broken only by the heavy foot of his domestic, or the clatter of delf-breaking in the kitchen. Judith, again, was a good woman, he knew, and it was his duty to bear with her infirmities—

and bear up under them, too, at times, which was a heavier task. Perhaps she was not in all respects as much to be admired and respected as he had persuaded himself when he married her, but at least he knew that she admired and respected *him*, which was much more important, and very soothing.

Miss Betsey had breakfasted, and being in haste to divulge her experiences of travel, gaiety, and *beaux*, had walked along the village street to the post-office in hopes of meeting a gossip. She now returned with the family letters.

"Here you are, uncle! Four letters for you, and one of them registered—that means money. And here is one for you, auntie; everybody is in luck but me."

"Did you expect a letter, my dear?"

"Well—yes, I kind of thought I should have heard;" and her colour deepened. Two nights before she had striven so hard to impress her address on the memory of her cavalier of the tobogganing. They had parted such good friends—on her side at least—that she had been promising herself a letter from him all the day before. It would come, however, sooner or later, she told herself, and thereby found strength to possess her soul in patience.

"My letter is from Penelope Stanley," said Mrs. Bunce. "Dionysius, can you drive me out to the Miss Stanley's place, in the cutter* to-day? She asked me to deliver a message to their man, and he should get it to-day."

"I was not going in that direction to-day, but it does not matter. I will take you; but you must arrange either to stay a few minutes only, or else to wait a few hours, as I have an appointment elsewhere."

"Here is Bruneau's wife coming down the hill, auntie; carrying a fat goose and a pair of ducks. Be sure you make a trade with her for the ducks; I believe in roast duck."

"A *brace* of ducks, my dear."

"A *pair of ducks*, uncle. They're farm-yard ducks. Think I went to Ellora Female College for nothing?"

"Call her in, Betsey, and let us take your erudition for granted."

"She won't come, auntie. Remember we're heretics. She wouldn't let herself be seen coming into a Protestant parson's house."

"Oh, yes, she will, if you ask her the price of her ducks. Money can do anything."

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* A one-seated sleigh, intended to carry two persons.

Annette Bruneau was called in as she passed; and came, looking distrustfully to right and left. The parson beat a retreat, which augmented her confidence somewhat, but still she seemed not much at her ease. A question as to the price of ducks, however, reassured her. Ducks were food for Christians, and it was the souls of men and the flesh of little children on which the nameless person she dreaded to see was believed to subsist. What price for the ducks? Oh, yes, she was herself at once, and did a very fair stroke of business, too, extracting some twelve or twenty cents more from the misbelievers than she would have had the assurance to ask from the storekeeper for whom they had been destined.

"I have a letter from Miss Stanley this morning," said Mrs. Bunce.

"*Ah oui, madame?* I hope she goes well."

"She is so pleased with your boy Pierre. Feels really indebted to him, and says he has behaved so well."

"But yes, madame? And is it upon the affairs of Mees Stanlee zat he is not of the return?"

"He was taken up by the police. He behaved—oh! remarkably well. Miss Stanley feels under the greatest obligations to him,

and will do her very utmost to have him well defended and brought off."

"Police, madame? My Pierre *chez* ze police!—*à la prison?* But vy? Is it as he have *cassé la tête de personne?* Ah! *le pauvre garçon*," and she wiped her eyes.

"I feel deeply indebted to him myself—under the very greatest obligations—which will console you, I hope. Mr. Bunce has many friends in town, and I shall make him use his influence with them; so calm yourself, my poor woman. I owe it to your boy and also to myself to console you. Take comfort. Your son has behaved extremely well. Indeed, he has shown himself a fine manly youth; you may be proud of him, you may indeed, Mrs. Bruneau; and who knows but his arrest—the man he knocked down was still unconscious when Miss Stanley wrote. The inquiry was adjourned yesterday in case it should involve a charge of manslaughter. He must have struck a fearful blow!"

"Manslaughter? Meurtre, *assassinat?* In-*croyable!—My* Pierre?" The tears ran down her quivering face, and she clasped her hands. "But perhaps I do not *comprend*, ze English is *difficille*. Say it again."

"Be comforted, my poor woman?" and Judith wiped her own eyes—she was sym-

pathetic and even kind, after a sort, notwithstanding her absurdity. "We must submit, you know, to the dispensations of Providence; and who knows but, after all, your son's confinement may prove a precious blessing in disguise. He may have opportunities of coming in contact with the truth there. The jail chaplain is an admirable man, and I am sure will do his utmost to bring him to an appreciation of doctrinal truth, especially if Mr. Bunce were to write to him, as I shall see that he does. With a blessing that might induce the sweetest uses of adversity, as the hymn says—though, to be sure, you cannot be expected to understand that just yet—and when I come to think of it, the lad will he confined in the police cells at present, not the jail. However, I shall always feel bound to say a good word for your son, after his manly assistance to my nephew; and Gerald's father—Mr. Herkimer, you know—is bound to exert himself, and he has a great deal of influence. No; there can nothing happen to your son worse than a short detention. Keep up your heart, my friend," and she patted her gingerly on the shoulder.

"But I do not *comprend*, madame; you say Mistaire Herkimaire and M. Gerald—I know him—vat say you of dem?"

"Why, you know—but, to be sure, you don't know, I have not had time to tell you anything yet. These interruptions make it so difficult for me to tell my story. You must know that two nights ago Mr. Gerald, my nephew, was attacked by a number of ruffians, and your son came gallantly to his assistance, and helped him to beat them off."

"Ah! mon brave. Ze good Pierre!"

"And one of the roughs seems to have been hurt; he was taken to the hospital, and is still unconscious. The police interfered, and I suppose it was necessary to make arrests. The roughs made their escape; it was proper to take some one into custody, so they took your son to found a prosecution upon, as I am told the proceedings they mean to institute are called. They will found their prosecution, and then the truth will be found out—you see? Ingenious, is it not? and I have no hesitation in saying your son will he honourably acquitted; acquitted and, perhaps, even complimented by the bench. Think of that. What an honour!"

"Ze bench? I do not know him. He vill not know my poor Pierre. But M. Gerald? Is he also arrest?"

"He gave his card, and he promised to appear."

"Ah! and my poor Pierre have not ze carte. But he give ze promesse, and he keep it."

"It could not be taken, unfortunately. You see the others had run away, and the law must be vindicated. What else are the police for?"

"Ah!—*La loi!* She take ze poor vich have not ze carte, ze riches *echappent*. It is not but ze good God who have pity on ze poor," and she sat down rocking herself in hopeless woe.

"You must bear up, my good woman. There is really no ground for despondency. Miss Stanley has engaged the very best lawyers in Montreal to see that the young man is brought safely through his difficulty. She feels most grateful to him."

"Mees Stanley is ver good. I have say so always. But it was to M. Gerald Pierre bring ze *secours*. Does he notting? Go all his money to buy *la carte?*"—with a shrug which rather outraged Mrs. Bunce, who claimed much deference from the lower orders.

"My nephew will see your son comes to no harm," she said, just a little loftily. "Set your mind at rest as to that; but Miss Stanley insists on bearing all the expense. She looks on your son as having got into

difficulty through defending her niece; and indeed the young man himself, as he was being led away, said he would have done far more than that for the sake of Miss Muriel. We talked about him all through supper, when they got home—I did not go to the tobogganing myself—and we all said it was so nice of him. Depend on it, he will be no loser in the end——"

"For Mees Muriel? Always Mees Muriel! My Pierre shut up for *her!* Sainte Vierge! Have pity on a wife and mother *malheureuse!* —ah!—And was it me who brought her there! *Serpenteau! Que tu m'as broui les yeux par ta vue! Que tu as niaisé le cœur de ton frère légitime!*"

"Speak English, my good woman. What is it you say? You seem to have some ground of complaint against Miss Stanley's niece."

"She is not niece of Mees Stanley. She is *enfante trouvée.*"

"What sort of an infant? But why do you say she is not Miss Stanley's niece? She is the daughter of Miss Stanley's brother. Surely a lady like Miss Stanley must know who are members of her own family. Why! Mr. Bunce is her first cousin."

"*Vous vous trompez, madame. Vous vous l'imaginez la nièce*——"

"Speak English, please."

"You imagine yourself the nièce——"

"I do nothing of the kind. Betsey! I think this poor soul is losing her wits with grief for her boy. What shall we do?—Call your uncle."

"Not a bit of it, auntie. She is as peart as you or I; but she knows something about Muriel, and we'd better hear it. Designing little monkey! It is just scandalous the way that girl goes on with Gerald and all the young fellows who will mind her. I have long suspected there was something, and Uncle Dionysius always said he never knew that the Stanleys had had a brother at all, till he was shown this daughter."

"Surely that was sufficient."

"I don't know. Let's hear her, any way," and she drew her chair forward, smirking and nodding her head by way of introduction to the French woman.

"*Vous avez raison, Mademoiselle.*"

"I told you so, auntie. She says I have reason. That means sense, of course, and I believe her; though some people"—and she sighed—"don't seem to see it. She is evidently a person of penetration and sagacity, this—a superior person. We'd better hear what she has to say. Wee, wee, ma bong fam," turning

to the stranger; "but speak English. Parley Onglay, you know, we haven't much French here."

Annette knitted her dark brows and coughed determinedly; and then she stopped, and as another thought seemed to strike her, the frown cleared itself away before the propitiatory smile which she turned on her interviewers, as the night police cast the gleam of their bull's-eye on those who accost them.

"Since madame and mademoiselle are of ze parents of Mees Stanley, it is of their right, it is able to be of their advantage to know."

"Parents? Betsey. Penelope must be every day as old as I am. I told you the poor creature's wits were unsettled."

"Tush! auntie. Be quiet. Wee, wee; but speak English, Mrs. Bruneau. To be sure we wish to hear something to our advantage. Go on."

"But madame and mademoiselle must promesse not never to say zat the *connaissance* have come from me. My man vould lose his *emploi chez* Mees Stanley for sure."

"We'll promise you," cried Betsey, in eager curiosity. "Go ahead."

"*Cela étant*——"

"No French now, please. Take your time, but put it all into English."

Annette settled herself in her chair, clasping her hands in her lap with a long breath; while her eyes rolled abstractedly in her head in search, no doubt, of the English words to convey her meaning. "Madame is *mariée* as me. She will know *la jalousie*, which carries ze good vife for *son époux*."

"Auntie!" cried Betsey in uncontrollable hilarity. "Were you ever so jealous of Uncle Dionysius that you had to carry him about with you? It would be more likely to be the other way. It is you, I should say, would want watching. He! he!"

"Betsey," said Aunt Judy austerely, for in truth her sense of propriety was outraged, "you surprise me. No! Mrs. Bruneau, I am not jealous. I have no occasion."

"Madame ees *heureuse;* but me—*l'épouse* who loves as me, vill have *des doutes* from time in time. Zere arrive von night—it was a hot night of summer, ven ze vindow ver leff open, and I do not sleep well, and zen sound *au dessous de la fenêtre*—"

"Say window, and go on."

"I hear ze cry of a *bébé*, I raise myself and go down, and behold! on ze stoop it were laid. And *la jalousie* she demand of me

'*pour-quoi* at ze door of my Jean Bruneau?' And I *réponds qu'oui*, it is too evident. And I say in myself that no! It shall not be that the *enfante d'autrui* shall eat the *croûte* of *mes enfants;* and for Jean Bruneau, he shall of it never know. And then I carry to the *porte* of Mees Stanley, and I sound, and hide myself till I shall see it carried in ze house. And now, behold, the reward of my *bienfaisance!* Pierre, *à la prison!* And he has loffe her since long time. *Peut-être sa sœur!* Oh! My boy so innocent, in sin so mortal, and not to know! But how to hinder?"

"And the child is no relation to them at all? Well—I call it *ou*dacious. Auntie, did you ever hear anything like it? A brat like Muriel, not a drop's blood to them in the world, to be pampered up there in sealskin and velvet, while I, their own cousin, am glad to dress myself in a suit of homespun."

"Yes, my dear, it seems wrong. I wonder at a correct person like Penelope Stanley compromising herself in a thing so contrary to all rule. But then, Matilda is flighty; I always thought her flighty. Beware of flightiness, Betsey, and yielding to the momentary impulses of an ill-regulated mind. It never answers. In the touching language of—of—

the Psalmist, I suppose—and be sure your impulses will find you out! No, that isn't just it, but it might be ; that is the intention of it. But, Mrs. Bruneau, I feel for you "—she rose as she said so, to intimate that the interview was ended—" I feel for you deeply. Be sure of my kindest consideration. When we hear further about your son, we will let you know, and all my influence I promise you to exert on his behalf. Good morning. You may rely on our not making an improper use of what you have told us "

" Madame have give her promesse to be silent. I confide ; " and she curtsied herself out, with a confidence which was fast wearing into a misgiving that she would have done more wisely to hold her tongue. A secret shared with two others, who have no interest in maintaining it, has ceased almost to be a secret at all.

CHAPTER XI.

BLUFF.

The mines brought a rush of trade to St. Euphrase. The drowsy little place, of late years, under the patronage of the railway, had been growing into a sort of sequestered rustic suburb, or at least a rural outlet for dust-stifled townspeople during the dog days, where such as could buy a house might pick their own strawberries, or cut their melon with the dew still on it, for breakfast. It was now breaking into the "live-village" stage of growth, raising its own dust in most respectable clouds, exhaling its own smoke—the villagers had burnt only wood in their golden age, and their atmosphere had been pure—with brawling navvies at the lane corners to disturb the night, and the glare of illuminated saloons, now for the first time able to outface the disapproval of M. le Curé, who hitherto had been able to fend off such dangerous allurements from his simple flock.

As spring advanced things progressed with a rush, and everybody in the district expected to make his fortune forthwith. The cautious *habitants*, who would not risk their savings in a bank (remembering how once upon a time a bank had broke, and a grandfather had lost some dollars), but hid them away in crannies below the roof or underneath the oven, took courage now, and bought shares. Were not the mines there? visible to the naked eye. Did not Baptiste and Jean earn wages there? paid regularly every Saturday night. The whistle of their steam engine could be heard for miles around, and clouds of smoke drifted across the country, dropping flakes of soot on the linen hung out to dry. It was very real, this—definite and tangible. Had it not raised even the price of hay, which now could be sold at home, for the mine teams, at more than could be got for it in Montreal?

The rustics crowded into town to buy shares, and the price rose higher and higher, till they became so valuable that no one would sell. Still, however, shares were to be got, with exertion, and at a good price, at the offices of the company, which were also those of the Messrs. Herkimer, whose senior partner was president of the company.

The board of directors was so composed as

to conciliate the local interests of St. Euphrase—M. Podevin the hotelkeeper, Joseph Webb, Esquire—Esquire meaning J.P.—Farmer Belmore, and Stinson, Ralph's favourite clerk. These met periodically to accept five dollars apiece for their attendance, sanction such proposals as their president might make, and sign the minutes. None of them had an opinion upon the matters to be considered, and even if they had had one, they would have felt it to be indelicate to question the decisions of the city magnate who was making their fortunes; but that mattered little; it was pleasant to sit upon the board, and be paid for sitting, especially when their decision upon the points on which they came to be consulted was already framed, to save them the trouble of consideration, and required only a mute assent. They found their consequence vastly augmented among their neighbours, who all prayed them for advice and private information; which, not having, they found it difficult to give, and had to fall back on their habit, learned at the "board," of looking as wise and saying as little as possible.

It was delightful, for the time being, thus to play at Lord Burleigh, and be thought only the wiser the more they held their

tongues; but they little imagined the responsibility they were building up for themselves, when issues of stock unregistered in the company's books, funds not accounted for, and other irregularities had to be explained to infuriated shareholders. The storm was yet in the future, for the present the heavens were shining.

That year both Herkimer and Jordan removed their families to St. Euphrase quite early in the spring, instead of waiting for the summer heats. It was a demonstration of the importance they attached to the mining operations, and their desire to be on the spot. Directly, it was whispered among their acquaintance that fresh discoveries were being made, and cultured persons, who combined science with money-making, hastened to bespeak a summer residence in the favoured village, whence they might scour the neighbourhood on holidays, hammer in hand, rummaging for minerals, and picking up information about the remarkable find already made at La Hache. Every house, and even every shanty, to be let, was secured for the hot months, and some impatient prospectors, unwilling to wait so long, arrived at once, and established themselves with the Père Podevin, whose house had never been so full before,

and who, feeling that his fortune was as good as made, began to prepare his family to adorn the great position they were about to fill, withdrew his eldest daughter from the kitchen, where she had been wont to assist, and sent her off to the celebrated convent of St. Cecilia, at Quebec, that she might learn to play the piano, and be turned into a lady.

The influx of city men had scarcely become apparent—it was the middle of May now—when a new phenomenon met the explorer's eye. A board fence was of a sudden run up around the property of the mining company, and watchers were stationed at intervals to see that no inquisitive stranger should scale the barrier. Excitement among the speculators grew intense. It was immediately inferred that silver, or perhaps even gold, had been found, else why this jealousy? and the crowds who came from town to scour the adjacent lands were so great that the Père Podevin had to use his stable and poultry house as sleeping quarters, and sold permission to two gentlemen to sleep on the floor under his billiard table on the same terms as he had been wont to charge for an entire chamber.

There was constant hurry in the offices in the Rue des Borgnes, by gaslight as well as

by day. The jaded clerks seemed always at work, save when they crept home at night to sum up the endless figure columns over again in their sleep, and hurry back to business next morning. The president seemed as hardly driven as his servants. The street—where hitherto he had been a prominent figure, notebook in hand, making bargains, picking up information, and distributing it in passing, because it could be done so much more quickly than on 'Change, where some contrive to make a little business go so far in the way of talk and time-killing—the street knew him no more, and he was beset by people all day long, in his office, on every imaginable errand.

Hitherto he had been so cool, and so quick, and so strong—a very steam engine for doing business—so confident and so clear, perceiving all the bearings of a question at once—deciding on his course and completing an agreement in a few incisive sentences, while another man would still be figuring up with pencil and paper the preliminary calculations. Now there were signs of fatigue in the robust figure, a stoop of the shoulders, a flush about the temples. His temper, too—in time past he had had no temper, or at least it had been impossible to ruffle it, except where anger was made to serve a business end—his temper

had grown irritable, as the luckless clerks too frequently found out, and he suffered from sensations of faintness which led to his withdrawing momentarily into his dressing-room, where there now stood a decanter of sherry, a thing which theretofore he would have scorned to permit on his premises. His habit till then had been to drink a couple of glasses of sherry at the club by way of luncheon, but the idea of keeping a "pick-me-up" at his elbow, to be referred to at uncertain intervals, had never occurred to him, because, till then, he had found his own strength sufficient for the day's work.

That may have been because things had gone well always, and there is no tonic in the pharmacopœia like a habit of succeeding; but now there were so many things, mines of copper, plumbago, phosphate, a railway, a suburb, and a bank, besides—besides everything else; for Ralph's greed grew with his success, the more he secured the more he still desired, and he could not see an opportunity go by without wishing to have a fling at it. A few months before, when money was flowing in for copper shares, there had seemed to be an opportunity in railways on New York market, and Ralph went in. It fretted him to see money lie idle when work

could be found for it. He went in, but the unforeseen had happened, as it always will some time, and he found he could not come out again without loss, such as was not to be thought of, and therefore he must go in deeper still.

His own railway, too, the St. Lawrence, Gattineau, and Hudson's Bay, had been suffering a check in the shape of a swamp it had to cross, in which it went on burying itself as fast as it could be built above the morass. A contractor had already failed. No other would undertake the work. The company was compelled to do it itself, under pain of being cut in two, with sections built to the south and north, and this gap in the middle, which made both ends useless. Ralph was largely interested in the road, which indeed he had both projected and promoted, to connect his plumbago mines and his phosphate lands with "the front," *i.e.*, with civilization and a market.

The plumbago mines were at work, gangs of men digging into the ground and dragging out riches which were barrelled up to await transport; but, until that swamp could be bridged over, of no more present value to the owners than so many tons of gravel. The workmen could not eat it, and would not accept it in payment of their wages; and to

haul it to market over distances of corduroy road was to end by disposing of it for something less than it had cost to bring it there.

The public were aware of the trouble, and the shares would not sell. The bank, of course, could be brought to the rescue up to a certain point, but that, he began to realize, was nearly reached. There were signs of failing confidence at the board meetings, whisperings, and averted glances betokening incipient opposition, though mistrustful as yet of strength to declare itself, which in time past, when he could defy it, he would easily have browbeaten into submission; but now he dared not attempt to browbeat, the consequences of unsuccess would have been too serious. He tried to conciliate and persuade, where he had been wont to command, and when the master tries to conciliate the pupil, it is a sign the whip has gone from him, and the subject divines that he has a master no longer than he cares to accept one.

Again, the success of St. Hypolite Suburb was hanging fire. The suburb had been a tract of waste ground some years before, when Ralph picked it up on easy terms, as being unfit for agriculture and useless for anything else, and his scheme was to build on it a new and improved quarter of the town. He had

sunk great sums in draining, levelling, and filling up. He had laid out a park, with a fountain, overlooked by semi-detached villas, and approached by residence streets of a superior kind. A few houses had become tenanted the year before, and a great sale of houses in June of the current year had been written up in a series of ingenious paragraphs in the local newspapers; when, on the arrival of warm weather, a visitation of ague and typhoid fever fell upon the pioneer settlers in the district, and frightened the public out of all the interest which it had cost so much money and pains to instil into its mind. The sale came off as advertised, but the half-dozen dwellings first offered—"replete with every modern improvement and convenience"—fetching barely enough to pay the advances of the Proletarian Loan and Mortgage Company, the rest were withdrawn for the present.

In a house of cards, though one card may be in doubtful equilibrium, if those other cards it leans against are moderately steady, it may stand. Nay, it may even contribute a measure of support to its supporters; but if all are shakey at the same time, it is a task of infinite dexterity to balance the several weaknesses each upon each. Even then the

balance is but temporary; a flutter in the surrounding air will disturb the equipoise, and, when that befalls, the structure holding together only by weaknesses which balance each other will tumble to the ground a heap of ruin. And this was the fate Ralph saw impending. He was in so many ventures, and up to his full strength in each. If only one of them had weakened he could have propped it with the others in such wise as he had done before, but when everything grew shakey at the same time, it seemed as if the pillars of the universe itself were giving way; and worse, he felt the giving way within himself, a nodding to that frightful fall which was approaching, a yielding such as he had never known before. Hitherto each difficulty had called out latent strength to overcome it, but now there seemed a torpor in himself which would not be thrown off. His mind would not, as hitherto, answer to his call with new expedients to circumvent each new check; he felt benumbed, and sought to that decanter in his dressing-room for the strength, ingenuity, and courage he had theretofore found within himself.

It was a morning in the beginning of July—Ralph had remained in town overnight, not so much for the sake of doing anything as

merely to be beside his business. In time past, when his affairs flourished, he had rather prided himself on the determination with which he could dismiss "shop" from his mind at five minutes past four, when he walked out of his office, and his promptitude in resuming it, exactly where he had left off, at a quarter before ten next morning. But now, when it would have been a relief to his jaded mind to lay cares by for a time, they clung to him all the while, disturbing sleep, even, with confused and harassing visions. To be away from business aggravated his anxiety—filled him with doubts as to what might occur in his absence, and he found his mind easier in the office than anywhere else. Even so the mother of a sick child will sit by the bed for hours, though the child be in sleep the most undisturbed, and she can do nothing more. There is assurance in being present, if she were away she would imagine things were happening, and be miserable.

After the hot night in town, with its unrefreshing sleep, and the untasted breakfast which followed, Ralph sat in his office listless and limp, with nothing to brace him but that hateful sherry in the dressing-room. It was ten o'clock. The train from St. Euphrase must have arrived, but his son had not yet appeared,

when Jordan hurried in, closing the door behind him, and fastening it.

"You were not on the train this morning, Herkimer. Were you trying to give a man the slip?—and unload before any one else knew?"

"Unload? Slip? I remained in town last night. What do you mean? Is anything wrong?"

"Podevin tells me he heard some of the men, who were drinking in his bar, talking. They were telling each other that our lode was no true vein, that every bit of metal would be out in three months' time, and they would all be thrown idle. They were the only people in the place at the time; Podevin took them in hand, and made them promise to hold their tongues; but it's all coming out, can only be a question of a day or two. He came to me in a d—l of a funk—says he will be ruined, as everything he has is in it. To tell you the truth, I shall be hard hit myself—have never sold a share, and I have been buying. I do think you might have given me a hint."

"My dear sir, I am a heavier holder than you and Podevin both put together. The price has been going up so steadily I did not care to sell; it might have injured the pro-

perty for the rest of you; and this is the first I have heard of a threatening collapse. We must sell at once, that is all."

"Too late, I fear, though I am now on my way to my broker. You will be selling, too? Wish I had known enough to hold my tongue till after I had unloaded," he added with a nervous pretence of hilarity. "Well! I'm off."

"Don't be a fool, Jordan. Of course I don't blame you for wishing to save yourself, I do the same; but perhaps it is just as well you came in and told me first. I mean those shares to go higher yet before I sell. I have all along known there was a possibility of what you tell me coming to pass, though I had hoped to get shut of the thing before it took place, and I would have preferred to slip out quietly. There will be a row, now, perhaps; but what of that? If it must be, we can weather it, so long as we save our money. It was to provide against such a contingency that I had that fence built round the operations, to keep prying fools on the outside; and you know how well that has answered. I see by the *Journal* they have been finding indications of silver; if we inclose another hundred acres it will be taken to indicate gold and diamonds. But no, that

would be too slow, and some one would blab in the meantime. I must telegraph the superintendent to work over-time, and contrive that the men do not go into the village. I shall telegraph to the directors, too, and hold a board meeting. It is handy having men so easily within call, and yet so innocent of business. You had better be present as solicitor, and convince yourself that we are not stealing a march. *And then*——"

"You wish me, then, not to offer my stock to-day?" said Jordan dubiously. The saw tells us there is honour among thieves, and perhaps there sometimes is, but there is seldom confidence among the over-sharp.

"As to that," cried Ralph scornfully, "you can please yourself. Go to your brokers, by all means, if you think well. Or, if you would like to save brokerage, you can just speak to Stinson as you go out. Tell him what you want to sell, and I shall buy at yesterday's quotation;" and he lay back in his chair with a cheerful smile, and twiddled his gold chain exactly like the prosperous millionaire his neighbours thought him.

Jordan looked and hesitated, and bit his nails, and then his brow cleared, and he drew a long sigh of supreme relief. "Well!" he said, smiling effusively, "you know more

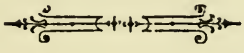
about it than I do. I'll trust your advice, and hold on till to-morrow."

"I gave you no advice whatever, sir. Please to remember that;" and he sat up in his chair with a suggestion of dignified offence on his features which made Jordan feel contrite and ashamed, and thoroughly satisfied that he had better not disturb his shares for the next twenty-four hours at any rate. "You can tell Stinson about your shares if you have a mind to; but whatever you do, I must beg that you will not only not circulate, but that you will put down any foolish report such as that you have just mentioned."

"You may depend on me for that, old fellow," cried Jordan, nodding adieu, and walking out with a sense of disburdenment from the cares he had been carrying, which made his middle-aged gait positively elastic.

Ralph rose, and watched through a convenient chink his retreating figure off the premises, and then he drew a breath, and stretched himself with a sardonic twitch of the eyebrows. "There's nothing like bluff after all! Yet where should I have been if he had concluded to take my offer? A fine rumpus those white-livered directors next door would have raised over the cheque. However, *that's* weathered. Now for the

mines," and he sat down and wrote his telegrams. He felt better and stronger than he had done for weeks. There was something to do now, action, work, combat with circumstances. He was a man once more with a fund of strength within, which needed only to be drawn on to come forth. The sherry decanter diffused its topaz radiance in vain all that day, for never once came Ralph within sight of the seductive lustre. He had something to do and think of, and in doing he found the best tonic for his system. It is waiting and looking forward to uncertain evil, distant as yet, and impossible to be struggled with, which racks the nerves to pieces with its strain, and drives the victim to artificial supports, which they from whose coarser construction a nervous system seems to have been omitted, and who cannot comprehend such needs, brand as intemperance and dissipation.



CHAPTER XII.

A BOARD MEETING.

It was not yet eight o'clock on a summer morning at the little railway station of St. Euphrase. The sweetness from the dew on the ripening hayfields still hung on the drowsy breezes which came laggingly athwart the dusty platform, growing fainter each moment in the waxing heat.

Farmer Belmore was the earliest intending passenger to appear on the platform. The ticket office was not yet open, and he flopped about impatiently in his clean linen coat, mopping his brow with a vast handkerchief drawn from the crown of his broad-leafed Panama hat. His grand-daughter had arranged a poppy and a branch of southern-wood in his button-hole by way of embellishment, his cravat was of the fiercest blue, fastened with a gold horse-shoe of the largest size. He felt himself, as director in a great company, to be a man of mark, appropriately and

becomingly arrayed on the present occasion, and it disappointed him that none of the general public should be there to see him.

Joe Webb appeared ere long; compact, well knit, athletic; an example of the very satisfactory result to be looked for by-and-by, when the Teutonic and Gallic stocks shall have joined and blended to form the specialized type of a new nationality; swarthy and black-eyed, with the nose short, but prominent and aquiline, marking affinity to the high-spirited and vivacious French, while the level eyebrows and forward balancing of the head showed equal kinship with the reflective Saxon.

"Ha!" cried both men simultaneously. "For town? Board meeting?" Simultaneously, too, they answered, as if there could be any doubt. "Yes. Thought I might as well go this morning as another, and be present at the meeting. And draw my five dollars," added Belmore. "This special meeting will be just so much pure gain, if we do not do too much business, as I hope we shall not, and make the next regular meeting unnecessary. But to be sure the monthly meetings are obliged to be held, according to the bye-laws, or the charter, or something—so Mr. Stinson tells me—therefore, this is quite an extry five dollars to the

good, and better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick. You think so, too, squire, I guess."

The distant whistle of the approaching train was now heard, and the opening of the ticket office with a bang. There were only three or four other intending passengers, and all had soon bought their tickets, and stood awaiting the train.

"What can have come to old Podevin?" said Webb. "If he waits for the train at 9.30 he may miss the meeting altogether, and his fee. He will have been watching to see the president go by before starting himself for the station, and the president stayed in Montreal last night. I happen to know that. Podevin will miss his train."

"So much the better for us. There will be the more for you and me. I'd love to finger a dollar that should have been coming to Podevin more'n fifty of my own. He's that near, it's like drawing teeth to get a *sou* out of him. He hain't paid me yet for the cord-wood that kept him warm last winter, and now he wants me to take out the price in white Yankee beans. 'No, sir,' says I; but I let him show me the truck, and, squire, if you'll believe me, the weevils were that thick, you could see them quarrelling together who

was to get the next sound bean, and they were that big you could see them looking out of their holes at the buyer, and warning him like, against the trade."

The brother directors, however, were mistaken in supposing Podevin was minded to forego or endanger the emoluments of his directorship. He was in waiting, though they did not see him, behind a convenient cattle-car on the siding, anxious only to avoid speech with them till all were in presence of the president, that his own misgivings might be resolved without prejudice; for he dreaded that his *confrères* might elicit something from him before he had learned the right way to view or state it himself, and so his undigested words might get abroad and do him harm. Wherefore he waited till he saw the couple step on the train, and then clambered quietly into the carriage behind, avoiding the platform and the ticket office, and paying his fare to the conductor on the train, who charged him ten cents extra, wringing his heart with the thought that two per cent of his director's fee was thereby lost to himself and his heirs for ever.

The board of directors of the Mining Association of St. Euphrase assembled at the appointed place and time. The president

was in the chair, and Jordan, the company's solicitor, sat by his side. Podevin sat beside Stinson, whispering anxiously, and striving to draw support and encouragement from the involuntary exclamations of the man he was alarming with his tales and forebodings, while Belmore and Webb awaited the opening of the proceedings in the placid tranquillity of perfect ignorance. Nothing disturbing had as yet come into their knowledge, or even their dreams, and they sat by the leather-covered table contemplating the minute book and the inkstand, and wondering how long it would be before they should sign their names, draw their fee, and take their departure.

The president tapped the table with his ruler. Stinson read the minutes of the previous meeting, and the board was in session and ready to proceed to business. The president stated that he had been made the recipient of singular information affecting the value and prospects of their property only the day before, and he had lost no time in calling them together, that the matter might be inquired into. "And our worthy solicitor, Mr. Jordan, will now kindly repeat to the board the statements he has already made to me in private."

"I know nothing, gentlemen," said Jordan,

"but what was mentioned to me by one of your own number, here present. He is now, I doubt not, ready to repeat his statements at length for your united consideration. I allude to my respected friend, Mr. Podevin."

The Père Podevin coughed behind his hand, looking disgust from under his eyelids for a solicitor who could thus betray a confidential conversation. "Was the man a fool or a rogue?" he asked himself. If he had not actually paid him a fee on addressing him, had he not given information worth thousands, if properly used?—given it freely for the sake of consulting him—and Jordan had promised advice in the morning—the morning now come—and here, instead of a friendly hint how he might save himself, the treacherous adviser, having already had twenty-four hours' exclusive use of the news, was calling on him to divulge everything before the whole board, giving an equal start to the others with himself in the race to save something, or rather letting himself be ruined with the rest. However, all eyes were on him now, and there was no escape.

"It was on yesterday," he said, "zat I hear of ze men to say, ver *secrètement* to ze ozers, as they have dig out all ze *cuivre* of ze mine. I give zose men to drink in retirement

from ze rest, and I ask, and zey confirm zat of ze *cuivre* is no more. *Mon Dieu!* Misterre Herkimair—to tink of ze moneys to nourish my *vieillesse*, and ze *dots* of my daughtairs *innocentes!* All sunk in ze mines——"

"Well?" asked Ralph a little testily; "and pray who did it? Who sunk your money? You are of lawful age, Mr. Podevin, and believed to be of sound mind. You are privileged to act for yourself, and you must bear the consequences of your own acts. If your shares had risen to double the price you paid for them, you would have taken the profit as the reward of your own smartness; if it turns out the other way, why should you come grumbling to me? *I* did not make you risk your money or throw it away."

"You say, Misterre Herkimair, zere were fortunes in ze rocks of La Hache swamp, and I believe ze *riche* Misterre Herkimair, and I give ze little *bourse* made up *sou* by *sou* in all zese year vit so much of care——"

"Yes, and thought to make your fortune, Mr. Podevin? and now you think you are going to lose it—the chance every man is liable to who speculates or plays poker. You throw a sprat expecting to catch a herring, and at times the herring is *not* caught, and the sprat is thrown away. You must accept the

chances of the game, or else you should not play. Look at me! Think of the thousands I stand to lose if our enterprise miscarries! What are your few hundreds compared to that? Yet I make no lament."

"M'sieur ees so *riche* and *distingué!* He vill not see a poor man lose ze sparings of his life," and he bowed cringingly to the chair.

Farmer Belmore vied with him in a gaze of pathetic sweetness and tremulous hungry adoration before the great man who had brought his savings into jeopardy, and who yet, if any one could, could bring them safely out. The disclosure made by Podevin had been as unexpected by him as it was sudden. He had fancied himself growing rich, and now to be told that he was stripped of his savings! He would have been furious had he dared—talked of fraud, trickery, and the law; but when he saw Podevin prostrate himself in spirit before the chair, and cry for succour from the hand which had inaugurated the ill, he controlled himself and lay back in his chair, constraining his lips into sugar-coated smiles which the doubtful and hungry gleaning of his eyes deprived of any seductiveness they might otherwise have carried.

"This is simply, gentlemen," said the

president, coughing and raising his voice, "one of those circumstances to which every enterprise—especially every enterprise dealing with minerals—is liable. As business men you calculated the risks and counted the cost before you embarked your money. The likelihood of profit appeared sufficient to us all to warrant our running the risk."

"M'sieur did not mention risks ven he so kindly undertook to improve my fortunes. I confide my case to ze generous *souvenirs* of m'sieur. He vill not permit to suffer ze man who place *confiance* and dollars in his *recommande*."

Ralph snorted. "Let us talk business, gentlemen," he cried. "We are not here to scold like old women, or to lament like children. You are men of understanding, who would not have dropped your money but where you saw good promise of a large return. Whether you gain or lose, therefore, you have only yourselves to thank. You know as well as I do that where money is to be made it is also to be lost. If it were not so, all the world would crowd in to make its fortune every time, and there would be nothing for anybody. Therefore, I object to expressions such as have fallen from my friend, Podevin. He regrets them already

himself, I am sure, now I mention it, and he brings his clear good sense to bear on the point. Gentlemen! we went in to win. Of course we did! It goes without saying. But, if we have to lose, let us behave like men of business and common sense; let us not cry over spilt milk, but let us make the best of it. And first, let us look the matter in the face. What is it that has happened to us?——"

"Ze *cuivre* is not zere!" cried Podevin, eager to rally his self-respect and preen the rumpled plumage on which Ralph had sat down so unceremoniously. If his plea for help and relief must be set aside, at least a partial satisfaction might be taken out in scolding, and there seemed an opening here.

"To put it shortly, gentlemen," said Ralph with a shrug, "that would appear to be about the state of the case just at this moment; but I would recommend you not to say it that way out of doors, unless you want to write off every cent you have invested in the undertaking as dead loss. That would not be all either, gentlemen. You, the directors, conjointly and severally, would be liable to suit by each individual stockholder for misrepresenting the value of the property. Is that not so, Jordan?"

"Clearly, they might claim to have their

subscribed stock made good. Whether they would secure a verdict, would depend a good deal, of course, on the management of the case on both sides. But that is not all. It is possible that a criminal information might be laid for obtaining money under false pretences, and when commercial miscarriages are fresh in the public mind, there is a proneness in juries to find against the defendants. It is really a serious consideration—a penetentiary offence."

"*Mon Dieu!*" gasped Podevin with folded hands, gazing at the ceiling with eyes whose watery sorrow threatened momentarily to overflow. Belmore pulled the posy from his button-hole and flung it on the ground, its festive hue and fragrance irritated his senses in the gloom which had fallen on him. If he could but have cast his speculation from him as easily, or hurled the man before him, who had led him into it, to the ground in like fashion, how good it would have been!

"But, gentlemen," cried Ralph, pleased at the impression which his words had made, "things have not come to that pass yet, nor will they, if I can help it. There is always life for a living man; that is, if he is willing and able to use it sensibly for his own preservation. What is this which has fallen on

us after all? It may prove to be nothing but a fault in the lode. Such things occur frequently, and the recovered vein, when it is found again deeper down, is generally richer than it was before. It is true that what we have been working on may prove to be mere pockets of the metal, unconnected with other deposits, but we cannot say for certain until we have carefully examined, and that will require time. Meanwhile, idle tales may get abroad, which would shake public confidence, injure and discredit the property, and destroy the value of the stock. We must forestall mischievous rumours, gentlemen, and I now propose—Stinson! enter on the minutes, 'proposed and carried *nem. con.* that this board now declare a dividend of one dollar per share.'"

"That will be five per cent on the paid-up capital?" said Joe Webb. "All the earnings, so far, have gone in working expenses. It seems a big dividend to declare out of nothing."

"—sh!" muttered Belmore, pulling his sleeve. "—sh, man! It will be so much saved out of all that has gone to the dogs."

"But, Mr. President," Webb continued, "where is the money to come from to pay the dividend?"

"Never fear for that, squire. Declare your dividend, and up go your shares. We have still stock which has not been issued yet. We can sell it then at the advanced price, and shall be in plenty of funds to pay anything."

"But is that right? Mr. Herkimer. Is it honest?"

"Right? Honest? Sir! What do you mean? Your words require explanation," and Ralph pushed out his chest, making the diamond studs flash scornful fire on the farmer's inexpensive raiment, while his brow gloomed and his cheeks grew purple like an angry gobbler.

"Mr. Webb is more familiar with the procedure at quarter sessions, and the operations of agriculture, I suspect, than with the practice of the financial world," observed Jordan soothingly. He loved to lift his placid head, like Neptune, above the troubled waves, and still a rising storm. He used his smoothest, oil-pouring tones, enjoying them himself, and calming those who heard him. "I feel confident he had no intention of reflecting on our worthy president, who, on my thus explaining —with Mr. Webb's manifest concurrence—will refrain from viewing as unfriendly any unadvised expression he may have used. And, my dear Mr. Webb, you will permit me to

say that the impulse which unadvisedly prompted still does you infinite honour. It would be well for our commercial community if the noble sentiments which flourish in the rural districts were to obtain in the busy marts of trade. In the present instance, however, my young friend will perhaps permit me to say that his scruples appear to be —well, to be just, a little over-strained. As Mr. Webb states the case, it may indeed be said that there is a seeming impropriety in the time chosen for declaring this dividend."

"It is not the time, it is the dividend I object to. It has not been earned, and it is to be paid out of the subscriptions of the new shareholders."

"My good man," cried Ralph, "can you make a better of it? You would not throw up the sponge—stop the workings—before it has been proved whether it is not merely a temporary check we are suffering. You do not want to lose all the money you have put in, and perhaps be sued by disappointed shareholders besides, till you are stripped bare of every cent you have in the world?"

"I do not want to take the money of misled subscribers, and divide it among ourselves on pretence of a dividend which we have not earned."

"That is a question of book-keeping, sir, allow me to tell you. Certain debit entries are merely deferred, to be charged later on, leaving a present surplus. It is easily done. Besides, you must admit that we—that the present shareholders—actually *have* earned the premiums at which the stock stands, or may stand hereafter. That is a profit which the company and the older proprietors have fairly earned by holding the stock in time past, before it grew popular, and the price rose. Trust the management, Mr. Webb. The rest of us are more deeply interested even than you are in things going right."

"I don't like it. It does not seem to be the honest thing to do."

"Mr. Webb, Mr. Webb, you are letting yourself grow warm again, are you not?" said Jordan. "What other method would you propose? This one will give time for examining the property and striking the vein again, and, if we cannot do that, we shall have time to sell out and wash our hands of the whole operation without loss, or even at a small profit."

"But how, as honest men, could we sell property, knowing it to be worthless, at the same price as if it were of real value?"

"*Caveat emptor*, my dear sir, to quote a

legal maxim. The buyers are business men, well able to take care of themselves, and they will do it, you may rest assured. They will satisfy themselves that they are not paying too dear. Your scruples are honourable, no doubt, but do you not think they must be over-strained, seeing they run counter to the general practice? I can assure you it is nothing unusual which has been proposed—nothing but what has frequently taken place in most respectably managed concerns. There was the Porpoise and Dolphin Oil Company, Limited, for instance—since gone into liquidation, but that is neither here nor there—its management was in the hands of a body of directors, than whom no gentlemen in the community stand higher, among others the Rev. Mr. Demas, of Little Bethel, in the Rue des Borgnes—you will have heard him preach, no doubt—a most evangelical man, and surely you will not take upon you to find fault with proceedings such as *he* has sanctioned by participating in."

"I really could not bring myself to declare a dividend, that is, as I understand it, to profess that we have earned money when I know for a fact that we have not earned it at all."

"Tush, man!" whispered Belmore; "sit

down. Let's get through, sign the minutes, and draw our pay. I have coal oil to buy, and nails, and I shall miss my train if you do not sit down and let us finish up."

"Proposed," cried Ralph, "that the board declare a dividend of one dollar per share, payable on the first of next month. Gentlemen in favour of the motion will hold up their hands. Carried! *nem. con.*"

"Gentlemen!" began Webb, in a faltering voice, which was overborne and drowned in the rush and stream of the president's words, which grew loud and rapid at this point, and who went on as though unconscious of interruption. "Any other business to bring forward, Stinson? No? Then this meeting stands adjourned to the second Monday of next month. Sign the minutes, gentlemen, and draw your honorarium."

Webb requested Stinson to record his dissent from the vote in the minutes, but was informed that the meeting was closed, and nothing could be added to its proceedings. He then demurred to signing, but Belmore, heated up to the point of speaking out in meeting for once, declared that he must, or he should not have his dollars—that himself and Podevin earned them by signing their names, and Webb must do likewise.

"The dollars may slide!" cried Joe, growing indignant, and tossing on his hat.

"But, Mr. Webb," said Stinson, speaking most respectfully, "will you sign the minutes to show that I have done my duty, and they are correct. You have been present, and the law says so;" and poor Joe Webb, unable to bear up against a city man's polite address, though he would have maintained his point against all the blustering farmers in his township, yielded, and placed himself under the same moral condemnation with the rest, as sanctioning for stock-jobbing purposes a fraudulent dividend to be paid out of capital.

END OF VOL. II.

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