

A MOONLIGHT Boy



E. W. HOWE

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W. O. Howe

A MOONLIGHT BOY

BY

E. W. HOWE

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF A COUNTRY TOWN," ETC.



SECOND EDITION

BOSTON
TICKNOR AND COMPANY
211 TREMONT STREET

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A MOONLIGHT BOY.

CHAPTER I.

A PRAIRIE KING.

JUST how I came to know originally that I was a moonlight boy, I cannot now remember. I have heard it said that I seemed to appreciate my disgrace when a baby, and was not so troublesome in consequence as most children are; therefore I must have had an inkling of it at a very early age, although I did not know what a moonlight boy was, and why I was one, until I was twelve years old.

During the years I suffered under the charge in silence, I did not mention the matter at home, hoping that the report would in some way prove to be untrue; but one evening, being particularly hurt by the reproaches of a child I had offended at school, I ran home determined to ask what a moonlight boy was, and have it out.

Tibby Cole, with whom I lived, was a leader of brass bands, orchestras, and singing conventions, and the front part of our house was a music store,

where were kept for sale all sorts of articles common to his business. When I hurriedly entered this room, looking for Mrs. Cole to ask an explanation, I found it empty, and passed through into an adjoining apartment, where I saw that Tibby had returned from one of his professional tours, and that he was leaning back in a chair, with his hands crossed behind his head, and smoking a pipe with a short stem. I knew what this meant at once: Tibby had been drinking again, for he smoked the pipe only when he was recovering from one of his spells. Usually he was as sober as need be, and always the best-natured man in the world, but when business was particularly brisk with him, and he thought of how pleased Mrs. Cole would be with the presents he would be able to buy her, he celebrated his good luck by drinking too much, which resulted in torturing headaches, and a period of meekness from which nothing could arouse him.

I frequently accompanied Tibby on his trips to the neighboring towns, where he went to teach singing conventions and brass bands, and sell organs on the way; but on the present occasion, I had been going to school for a while, as it had been decided by Tibby and his wife that my education was being neglected, and should be attended to; and I knew that while Mrs. Cole

mildly lectured her husband when he came home better natured than usual, she was always sorry for it, and humbly apologized, for he was such a cheerful and industrious man, ordinarily, that no one could find fault with him and not feel sorry.

But Mrs. Cole was bearing down pretty hard on her husband when I went in with my injured feelings, and was rejecting a proposition he had made with so much animation that she paid no attention to me when I came in and sat down near her husband. The offer concerned fifty dollars, and, as Mrs. Cole was financial manager of the house, I supposed it was a proposition to accept the amount named, in full of all demands for a stated length of time.

“The idea of your offering me fifty dollars to agree to such a heathenish thing,” Mrs. Cole said, looking around at her husband with as much indignation as she could command. “I won’t do it, so you needn’t ask me.”

Tibby muttered something which I understood to mean that he would make it an even hundred.

“No, I won’t take a hundred dollars, or two hundred dollars,” she said. “I should think you would want to be at home at such a time. I never heard of such a thing before.”

“But I’ll be so scared that I won’t be of any

use," Tibby said, mildly. "You'd better do it, mother."

But Mrs. Cole wouldn't agree to the proposition, whatever it was, and went on remonstrating with him because of his dissipation, to all of which Tibby mildly submitted; believing, no doubt, that he deserved it, and a great deal more.

Tibby looked around after I had been seated a while, and winked at me, which I understood to mean that I knew and he knew (as we both did) that Mrs. Cole did not mean a word she was saying, and that she would apologize to her husband presently, and speak a pleasant word to me, since she could not possibly keep from smiling very much longer. There never was a happier wife than Mrs. Cole, and the protests against her husband's drinking were induced by the fear that his patrons would think worse of him than he deserved; for really he did not drink a great deal, and was never disagreeable by reason of it.

Mrs. Cole was so fond of both of us that she cheerfully forgave all our faults, and however careless we were, she was always kind and patient, barring the times when she thought it her duty to lecture Tibby. And that we got along very well in spite of her husband's careless extravagance was due to her wonderful way of saving.

I have never loved any one as I loved Tibby Cole during my boyhood, or as I love him now, and as his wife showed a disposition that night to make her lecture longer than usual, I resolved to come to the rescue of my friend by inquiring:—

“Mrs. Cole, what is a moonlight boy?”

Both of them turned on me in surprise, and then looked steadily at each other. I had always called her mother before, and “Mrs. Cole” sounded so strange and unnatural coming from my lips that I regretted I had not left off that part of the question. I loved both of them, though I believe I was fonder of Tibby than of his wife, because he had none of the thrifty ways of men, and used his money to buy whatever I wanted, and I felt more ashamed of myself than ever when I saw that they were uncomfortable because of what I had said; but I had gone so far that there was no retreating, and therefore quietly looked at Mrs. Cole, and insisted upon a reply:—

“What is a moonlight boy?”

Tibby soon saw with his quick eyes that Mrs. Cole was helpless; therefore he came promptly to her rescue by turning to me.

“With reference to faults,” he said, puffing away at his pipe, as if to collect himself, for the pipe was out, “we all have them.”

Mr. Cole had but one objection to his wife ; she kept a pig and a cow, very much against his will, and I supposed he referred to this when he included Mrs. Cole in his sweeping assertion. Usually he referred to the pig and cow matter only when he was good-natured from drink, and then in a bantering way ; but this was evidently not on his mind now, for he continued : —

“I have my separate faults, and mother has hers, but we have one in common, which refers to the moonlight matter you have mentioned. We should have told you about it long ago, but we thought it might hurt your feelings, so we kept it from you ; but now that we are found out, we may as well make a full confession.”

Tibby Cole turned his eyes toward his wife, and they looked at each other in silence for a while, after which Mrs. Cole left the room, and soon after I heard her ascending the stairs, and walking around the room over the one in which we sat. Mr. Cole listened gravely to her steps, as she walked around, opening drawers and chests, and finally transferred his eyes from the ceiling to me.

“When mother comes back,” he said, “you’ll be surprised, and what she says may make you cry ; but I hope you won’t think any the less of us. You don’t harbor any bad feelings against us, do you ?”

Heaven knows that I did not, though I had often felt I was unworthy of their kindness; but I could not say this, I was so full of apprehension as to the coming disclosure, and could only shake my head in answer to his first question.

“Shake hands with me, then,” he said, extending his right hand to me, “and be as brave as you can, for here she comes.”

I did as he requested, and immediately the door opened, and Mrs. Cole came in, carrying a large willow basket in one hand, and a small bundle in the other. Seating herself at the table, she put down the basket, and opened the bundle, and began arranging the articles, apparently with a view of using each one to refresh her memory in the approaching confession. At last they were arranged, and she looked at her husband.

“Well, mother, what is it?” he inquired.

She began arranging the articles she had taken from the bundle again, as if trying to decide where to begin, and at last she wiped away the tears which had gathered in her eyes, and motioned me to come to her. Hurriedly running over to her side, I put my arms around her, and, as I stood there, she picked up a little baby cap from off the table, and put it on my head.

“When we first saw you, King,” she said, “this cap fitted you very well; but you have been with us so long that you have outgrown it. You are now twelve years and a few months old, and have been our child for twelve years; whose child you were before that, we do not know, and though we tried to find out when you first came, by advertising you in the paper, I hope we will never find out, unless we should discover that you *are* our own, and that the Good Father of us all sent you to us in His kindness without sorrow and pain.”

Tibby moved his chair over to the table, and picked up one of the stockings in the collection relating to my history, but his wife took it away from him, and placed it next to the cap, as though she intended to explain the cap first and the stocking afterwards.

“Twelve years ago to-night,” she said, “something caused me to feel, as I lay in my bed, that the front door was unlocked, and when I went down to see I found it ajar; probably it was unlocked because you were ready to come in, for there you were, sound asleep in this basket, and, as the moonlight fell on your little face, I thought it must be our own boy come back, for you were then just his age when he died, a year before.”

Tibby Cole and his wife had never had but one child of their own, and whenever he was men-

tioned, their voices became tremulous, and they were silent afterwards for a while until they became reconciled to his loss. In this case, Tibby pulled my coat sleeve, and walked out to the front door, where I followed. I knew that the kind-hearted fellow wanted to get out of his wife's presence while she was thinking of their dead boy, and as he explained in pantomime exactly where the basket stood in which I had been found (he did not dare to trust himself to speak) I paid respectful attention, making out that my head was lying to the west, as people are buried, and that the basket was found on the first step below the sill.

When we returned to the room, Mrs. Cole continued: —

“I carried you into this room; and when I called Mr. Cole down to see you, the first words he said were: ‘Bless the Lord for this, mother.’ Is that what you said?”

Knowing that he was addressed, Mr. Cole nodded his head several times, without looking around.

“Have you ever changed your mind?” she asked again.

Mr. Cole shook his head violently, as though he were anxious to particularly impress the fact on my mind, for we were famous friends; and the narrative proceeded: —

“Nor have I; I expressed thankfulness in much the same way when I first saw you, and have grown to love you more and more. Besides the little cap you have seen, you wore a slip of embroidered linen, a woollen skirt, and a pair of knit socks, besides the usual canton flannel common to infancy, and were wrapped in a soft blanket. Pinned to your sleeve was a leaf torn from a Bible, containing a part of the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew, with a pencil mark around these words: ‘Suffer little children . . . to come unto me.’ The articles are all here, and you may look at them.”

Mr. Cole came timidly over to the table, and we looked at the collection together. While we were about it, Mrs. Cole looked admiringly at the presents her husband had brought home that afternoon, and I knew that her good-nature had returned.

There was only one article worthy of close attention, which we found in the toe of one of the little socks; a medallion of copper or bronze, with the raised figure of a woman’s head on one side, and the initials “T. C.” engraved on the other. Above the raised figure a hole had been bored, and a piece of silk was still in this, as though the medallion had once been worn around a child’s neck. Mr. Cole and his wife looked at

this curiously for a moment, as though they did not remember seeing it before; but as the contents of my bundle had not been examined in several years, they probably concluded that they had forgotten the medallion, for it was soon put in the basket with the other things, and taken up stairs. When Mrs. Cole returned, she continued:—

“Except that a man came here to look at you a few months after your advertisement was printed in the paper, we know nothing more of your history than you know now. You were a good baby, and you are a good boy, and we think all the world of you; and now you know what a moonlight boy is.”

Mr. Cole was a rather tall and slender man, with short, black whiskers covering his face, and he had a distinguished look; and I thought as I glanced toward him that as a moonlight boy I could not have fallen into better hands, for he had never been unjust to me in his life, and was altogether so simple hearted and kind that I almost felt sorry I had discovered the secret of my birth, for it seemed to worry him.

“It means that you are the adopted son of a patient, good man,” Mrs. Cole said again, after a short silence, “and of a woman who often complains when she has no reason to.”

Mrs. Cole was herself again, and I could see that she was sorry for the harsh things she had said to Tibby.

“You may be a king, you know,” Mr. Cole hastened to say, intending to interrupt his wife, who he knew was about to apologize for giving him a scolding which he deserved. “You may think all sorts of harsh things about yourself, but take a cheerful look at it; you may be a king’s son, and that’s the way you got your name. You have a queen for a mother, any way; I *know* that.”

Knowing that they were about to make up their difficulty, I concluded to go out in town for a while to think about the matter, and leave them alone; therefore I put on my cap, and ran out the front door, and into the arms of a strange man.

CHAPTER II.

A BROAD-AXE MAN.

APPARENTLY the man had been stooping down and listening, for when I opened the door, and ran out, he got on his feet quickly, and held out his arms to prevent my running into him. It was quite dark by this time, and supposing the fellow to be some harmless stroller, I paid no attention to him until he inquired, in a half apologetic way, as if to avoid the suspicion of eavesdropping:—

“Can you show a poor devil the road to Warburton?”

This was a place ten miles away, on a railroad which did not run into Three Rivers, and as I knew the road very well, and was going in that direction, I told him that if he would follow me, I would point it out, at the same time walking briskly toward the business part of the town, for our house was in a quiet neighborhood, as the music store business did not warrant the payment of extravagant rent.

He came stumbling along after me, growling at the condition of the streets and sidewalks, and

falling into ditches, which I easily avoided from long acquaintance with them, until we came to the road he was seeking, where we found a pair of horses and a covered buggy, with the horses heading towards Warburton. The man went to work at once to release the horses from the fence to which they were tied, and while he was about it, I explained that he should turn to the right on coming to the first lane, and some other direction which suggested itself. He listened to me attentively while I was speaking, holding the lines in his hands the while, and when the horses became fretful he spoke to them in such a way as to cause me to believe that he was a very rough man.

“What do you like better than anything else in the world?” he asked, as he climbed into the buggy.

I thought over the matter a while, and concluded it was caramels; therefore I answered:—

“Caramels.”

“Good,” he muttered, jerking the horses, for they were impatient to start. “I have a box under the seat, and if you will go with me to the lane you speak of, and put me on the right road, I will pay you well for your trouble, and give you the box of caramels besides. I am a stranger here, and don’t want to take a risk of getting on the wrong road.”

The lane was only half a mile from town, and I readily consented to the proposition, as it would enable me to take an airing, and at the same time earn something; therefore I took the seat beside him, and we started briskly down the road.

It occurred to me at once that the horses were from Warburton, for they were keen to go, and, although the man paid no attention to the lines, the team kept the road surprisingly well.

While I was thinking about this rather strange circumstance, my companion lit a match by rubbing it on the floor of the buggy, and after protecting it with both hands until it was burning well, he pushed back my cap and held the light near my face while he looked at it. There was a long scar over my left eye, running upward toward the forehead, and this the man seemed to be examining, for he lit one match after another (they were the kind that make a great sputter, and do not go out in the wind), until he had looked at it thoroughly. When he was satisfied, he gave me the lines to hold, and reached down under the seat for something, which he laid on his lap until he could make another light. After the match was burning, he held it in his left hand (which I noticed was withered, and much smaller than the other one), and picked up with his right a small broad-axe

with a short handle, which he waved at me fiercely until the light went out.

“You’re going with me to Warburton,” he said, laying his left hand on my shoulder; “and you’re going to take the night train with me there, and you’re going to behave yourself, and say nothing to nobody, for if you don’t —”

He lit another match, and as soon as I was able to see him, went to hacking the air, as an intimation that I would be hacked to pieces if I refused to obey his instructions.

We had reached the lane by this time, and the horses turned into the right road of their own accord, for I was so badly frightened that I was unable to direct them. Once or twice I tried to speak, and ask to be permitted to return home, but I found that I could not, for I was kept busy dodging the axe, which the man was swinging over my head in the darkness.

I had seen a picture somewhere of armies of men armed with axes arrayed against each other, and spent a great deal of time afterwards in wondering whether the men ever got within reaching distance of each other, and what happened if they did, and it seemed to me that my strange companion was one of the soldiers out of the book, and that I was his prisoner.

The night was very dark, and occasionally we

went down hills into strips of timber at a run, for the lines were still in my limp hands, and the horses seemed anxious to get along as fast as possible. In these low places I could not see my hands before me, and in addition to my horror of the axe was the fear that the horses would leave the road and tumble us into some bad place. We clattered over a great many bridges, under which could be heard running water, but the horses had their own way, and stopped for nothing, though they were not unruly, and seemed only anxious to reach their stable, which was undoubtedly at Warburton.

On the high places, outlines of houses could be seen, which caused me to wonder what the people in them would do were they to know that a man was running away with a boy in the main road; but when we went down into the low places I could not see my companion, or the horses, and held on to the buggy in desperation, until we dashed over the bridge which the low place indicated, and gradually slackened speed in climbing the hill on the other side.

The man only spoke once during the ride, after telling me what he would do if I failed to carry out his instructions, and that was when an overhanging limb scratched his face while we were riding rapidly through a strip of timber. The manner

in which he cursed and raved after this accident frightened me more than ever, and when next he lit a match in order that I might look at the axe again, I found that there was blood along the edge, which he had undoubtedly put there from the bleeding scratches on his face. Several times he held the cold steel to my face and neck, chuckling to himself when I shrank from it, and once he made a light, and snapped at me as though he had a mind to bite off my head, but I said nothing to him, and did not even think of trying to escape, for my affairs seemed so desperate that I was content to avoid immediate death from the axe.

I hoped that on arriving at Warburton we would find people on the streets, when I would make a bold leap for liberty, and place myself under their protection; therefore I contented myself as best I could, and even tried to pay some attention to the lines, hoping to thus conciliate my companion, but I noticed that my interference only caused the horses to leave the road, and after that I let them alone.

The man began to pay a good deal of attention to his watch as we rode along, frequently looking at its face by means of his fizzaing matches, as though he feared he would not be able to reach his destination in time to catch the night train;

and being thus relieved from the terror of the broad-axe, I began to wonder what Tibby Cole and his wife would think of my strange disappearance. I even took some satisfaction in the reflection that they might think I was a boy of such spirit that when I learned of my disgrace, I ran away to hide in some distant place.

I concluded after a while that my companion did not intend to do me personal violence, and that he was only swinging his axe to frighten me; for had his intention been to make way with me, he could not have chosen a better place than the lonely road on which we were travelling. Therefore I came to the conclusion that he must have had something to do with stealing me away from my real home in the first place, and that he was now hiding me again, having some reason to fear discovery.

By the time I had worked it out in my mind that some one would appear at Three Rivers in a few days to claim me, and that I was very unfortunate for being spirited away at just the time when my good fortune was to commence, we reached the town, and soon drove through the open doors of a livery stable, under a swinging lamp. Two men appeared from the darkness immediately, and began unhitching the horses, and while they were about it, my companion made

some hurried inquiries about the night train. The replies indicated that we were in plenty of time, and as the men now began to look curiously at me, he explained as they were changing his money, that I was a bad boy who had run away from kind parents, and that he was taking me to them, at the same time keeping an eye on my movements.

When we came into the glare of the lamp, and before driving into the stable, I had seen him hurriedly buttoning his coat all the way down, and as he walked around the stable there was a certain puffy appearance about his breast which convinced me that he had the axe concealed there. This frightened me so much that I began to tremble, and I felt sure that the men believed that I was a very bad boy indeed.

I thought the fellow was in good humor because he had captured me with so little trouble, for once or twice he broke into a kind of a laugh, and seemed to regard me as a valuable piece of property which he had come into possession of without much difficulty. During his talk with the men, I learned that he had hired the team of them that afternoon, and I knew that much he was saying to them was intended for me. He professed to be a lion-tamer, and told them, in a swaggering sort of way, that everything in his charge had to

mind, and that disobedience with him meant death. The men apparently understood that he referred to lions, and were much interested; but I knew he meant boys, and that he wanted me to think of the broad-axe under his coat.

He told them a great deal about lions, and how he managed them (always successfully, else he killed them outright), and there was one particular lion in which I was greatly interested. He was commissioned to take him from one part of the country to another, and during the journey he said he never took his eyes off him; and had the lion made a single move to escape, he would have been brained in the same moment.

Of course he meant me, though the stable men did not know it, and he talked about killing with so much coolness that I was seized with terror, and darted out of an open door in the rear, into the darkness. I was scarcely three feet away from it when I tripped and fell, and while expecting to feel the steel of the terrible axe in my brain, I heard the three men rush by me, and go in pursuit. My companion was greatly excited, and as he ran offered huge rewards for my capture in time to catch the train, at the same time showering awful curses on my head. While they were yet in hearing, I crawled a little farther away from the door; and it was well that I did, for one

of them soon came back after the lantern, and had I not changed my position, he would certainly have seen me as he passed out again.

By raising my head, I could see the light as it was being carried rapidly along the road to Three Rivers, for they seemed to imagine that I had gone in that direction; but in a few minutes I saw them come back, and go around the other side of the stable. This was my opportunity, and as soon as they were out of hearing I took to my heels, and ran as fast as I could toward home.

I had become so accustomed to the darkness by this time that I could see the outlines of the road, and ran until I could run no longer, when I walked a while to recover myself, going on at a run again as soon as I was able, and turning my head frequently to see if my pursuers were in sight. A few times I lay down to rest, but I soon imagined that I could hear the men behind me, and went on again; down into the low places, and over the bridges, as we had done with the team. Once I stumbled and fell, and knew when I got up again that my face was bleeding from a cut; but in my fear of the darkness and the dreadful man who talked so coolly about killing, I went rapidly forward. At every farm-house the dogs barked at me, and I expected every moment that they would join in the pursuit, and all these causes so added

to my terror that soon after midnight the outlines of Three Rivers began to appear, and I ran faster than ever, until I reached Tibby Cole's door.

I saw when I opened it and went in, that a crowd of men had collected in the front room, and that they all looked at my bloody face in alarm; but I could see no more, for when Mrs. Cole appeared from another room, looking pale and frightened, I staggered toward her, and fell fainting in her arms.

CHAPTER III.

MY EARLY EDUCATION.

WHEN I awoke the next day at noon, I was entirely recovered from the fatigue of the night before, except a stiffness in my legs, and though I felt like getting up, they all seemed so certain that I was ill, that I didn't like to disappoint them, and remained in bed, very much to my personal discomfort. So many people came in to see me, and took such an interest in the matter, that I regretted that I had not received a slight wound from the man who had carried me off; but as I did not, I tried to look as sick as perfect health would permit, and groaned in mock agony when I attempted to move.

Most of the men who came in to see me had pistols strapped to them, and at their request I described my captor as best I could; a man not quite so tall as Tibby Cole, but stouter, with short whiskers all over his face. I could remember no more than this, I had been so frightened while in his company, and after asking a great many

questions, the men disappeared, and I learned afterwards that they made a long but fruitless search for the fellow, going off by twos and threes for company, and returning in good humor early in the night, as though they had enjoyed a pleasant holiday.

Tibby Cole was in the most tremendous excitement all day, and enjoyed the affair so much that he forgot his headache, and visited a medical friend who had once prescribed rock and rye for his cough, which seemed to trouble him that day, for he doctored it a good deal.

Whenever any one appeared to inquire about my adventure, Tibby brought him up to my room, and asked me to tell the story again, which I did with as much elaboration as possible. He seemed to know that I was anxious to get up, and every time he came into the room he brought me something to eat, which I regarded as pay for my discomfort in lying in bed. Once he came up alone, and whispered that the affair would be worth thousands of dollars to his business, at the same time putting a great wet towel on my head, and expressing the hope that I would be patient. After that, when I heard any one coming, I hurriedly put the towel on my head, and lay back on the pillows, looking as distressed as I knew how. He also brought up two tumblers, with spoons in

them, which he set down on a chair by the bed ; and in order to convince me that they did not contain medicine, he drank a gulp from each, though he tenderly gave me a spoonful of their contents when the visitors were in.

Late in the afternoon, when visitors became scarce, I got out of bed, and spent my time in eating what Tibby had brought me, and in looking out of the window to wonder what the people in sight thought of the affair of the night before ; but I always jumped under the covers, and put the towel on my head, when I heard any one coming upstairs.

After dark it was arranged that a man should stay in the room with me until morning. The fellow brought a loaded gun with him, which he laid across his knees, ready for use, and after that I was more uncomfortable than ever, for I thought it necessary to keep the towel on my head all the time, and after a while it gave me a headache sure enough. The guard was fully alive to his work, and whenever he heard any one ascending the stairs, he cocked his gun, and stood ready to blow him to pieces, should his mission prove an unfriendly one ; but, fortunately, he never had occasion to fire. Once I awoke in the night, and found that the guard had gone to sleep in his chair, his gun lying across his knees, and pointing

directly toward me, which made me so nervous that I determined to be very much better in the morning.

The people had apparently forgotten my adventure the next day, for but few of them came round to inquire how I was, or whether another attempt had been made to steal me; therefore Tibby began to arrange for his next trip, which had for its purpose the teaching of a convention of singers in a neighboring town, in connection with the sale of organs, and the possibility of organizing another brass band. The news of my adventure had spread over the country, and Tibby argued that my presence at the next convention would help to attract a crowd.

About the time I began to realize that I was a moonlight boy, I also began to realize that among the instruments scattered about my home was a violin, and that I was expected to learn to play it; indeed, I believe now that the first time I ever thought seriously of violins, I found one in my hands, as I stood before the kitchen table trying to sound the notes in a piece of music propped against a loaf of bread, and knew that the reward of success was to be a big slice from the loaf, accompanied by layers of butter and raspberry jam, for Mrs. Cole always paid me well for learning the lessons her husband gave me before

going away on his trips ; and if I won all the jam and pickles in the house in my contests with the violin, she was rather pleased than otherwise ; probably arguing that I would the sooner be able to help them in their business.

In much the same way I was taught the use of the cornet, and I began the study of notes at such an early age, that when I was able to read coarse print with difficulty, I read music easily, and as I grew older I came to regard a page of music and a page of print as about the same thing — something that every one ought to understand, as a matter of course. I frequently took the cornet to school, and as I had a habit of eating my dinner on the way, I gained considerable practice in attempting quicksteps during the noon recess in return for pie from the baskets of the other children.

When I was little more than eight years old, I was made a member of Tibby's band in Three Rivers, and this was the first circumstance in my life of which I was proud, for Tibby always collected two dollars for me when we had an engagement, as though I were a man, and I thus helped him in the difficult business of making a living.

I am certain that I was never proud of my knowledge of the cornet and violin, for Tibby and

I were hired to play as other people were hired to do other work, and I was as far behind the other children at school as Pidg Behee, my intimate friend, who went out to work with the farmers, and did not go to school much.

Pidg was about the only one in Three Rivers who regarded my playing as unusual, except Tibby Cole and his wife, and perhaps this was one reason he was my intimate friend. He was a man grown in stature, but intellectually he was about my age, and was usually my companion in everything, for I did not relish loitering around the town without him. I could not play ball myself to amount to anything, but Pidg was the best in that country, and when he took the bat, the fielders began to spread out, for they knew what was coming. It was his ambition to make a home run every time the ball was thrown to him, and when he failed, which was not often, I felt the disgrace as keenly as he did, for I only played ball through Pidg, as I felt, as in the matter of marbles, that while I could not play much myself, I had a friend who was invincible. Pidg running the bases was also an exciting performance, for his legs were long and heavy, and his body short and light, and the cheering was always tremendous, in which I led. Pidg was also the champion skater and swimmer, and the sleds he made in

winter were always the best. When he coasted down the hills, he never started until I was safely on behind; and if I became tired on any of our excursions, he could easily carry me on his back.

I occupied a room over the music store, and when Pidg had an engagement in the country, he frequently came to town to sleep with me, rousing me, if I were asleep, by throwing pebbles against my window, when I hurried down to let him in. Pidg was no cleaner than farm hands usually are, and when he came into the room there was always a perceptible odor of smartweed moistened with sweat, and he had a habit of lying crosswise of the bed when asleep; but I cheerfully forgave all these faults, because of his great fondness for me. He had no bad habits otherwise, and as he was perfectly safe and trusty, Mrs. Cole humored me in my friendship for him, and cheerfully changed the sheets after he had slept there.

So long as Mrs. Cole would consent to feed him, he remained with me constantly, sitting by in silent admiration while I practised, and following me wherever I went; but when Mrs. Cole tired of this, Pidg went back to his work with the farmers, coming in frequently to see if the other boys of the town had been treating me right, and promptly administering rebuke if they had not.

He was usually at our house when Tibby was at home with the team of horses he used in driving around the country, for he was very clever as a hostler, and would give up his best engagement to come to town to take charge of the stable, in return for his board, and the privilege of sleeping crosswise of my bed, so that he was frequently a member of the family.

It was arranged that Pidg should accompany us on the visit to the convention town, to drive the team and take care of the horses; and this added greatly to the pleasure I expected, for I knew he would be with me every moment, and be of use in regulating the boys who might have an ambition to fight. It had been announced that I was to play both the violin and the cornet in the concert following the convention, and I practised my parts so much that I was finally driven off to the stable, where Pidg listened with the greatest satisfaction while he held the music, and predicted that I would certainly paralyze them.

I had frequently accompanied Tibby on his trips, but the fact that I was to be made a special feature in future, because of my adventure, lent an additional charm to the proposed trip, and I thought of it as an excursion, instead of going out to work, for Pidg was going, too, and I knew that

he would not hear of my touching the horses or doing any other kind of work.

On the afternoon of the fourth day following my adventure we drove out of town in the light spring wagon owned by Tibby Cole, with an organ strapped behind the seat on which we three rode. I had my violin and cornet, and Tibby had his; and, in connection with the organ, we were quite a musical party. The horses had been groomed by Pidg until their hides were tender, and as we rattled through the streets, I thought I had never felt so well in my life before.

After we reached the country, Tibby began pointing to different houses, and after I had remarked them, and looked at him incredulously, not knowing what he meant, he gravely nodded his head, but without saying a word. Every mile or two he would touch my arm, point out another house, and nod his head in a self-satisfied way, after which I would laugh as though pleased with the pantomime, disliking to acknowledge that I did not understand what he meant. This continued a long while, until I finally understood that he was pointing out the houses where he had sold organs, whereupon I told Pidg, and after that we enjoyed his joke very much.

Our destination was a small place known as Bixby's Landing, the name probably referring to

the circumstance that a certain Mr. Bixby had landed there ahead of all the others, for it was not near a river; and the convention had been previously advertised to commence in the only church in the town on the evening of the Thursday of our arrival, and continue with two daily sessions until the following Wednesday, when it would close with a concert. We stopped in front of the hotel a little after five o'clock, and Tibby at once began to work the town in the interest of his convention, leaving Pidg and me to put away the horses at a neighboring stable, which we did, after unloading the organ and the violins and cornets at the church, where a crowd collected to look at us.

After this was done, we took a bundle of bills and went out to distribute them; and when I gave a man one, I could not help wondering whether he would become our patron, or whether he would use his influence against us. Pidg worked with such tremendous energy that before we returned to the hotel for supper, every house in town had one of Tibby Cole's announcements, and as we went in we saw that Tibby was practising three or four singers in the parlor, accompanying them on an organ, and which I wondered if he had sold. He had been silent and lazy during the drive over, permitting Pidg and me to enjoy ourselves as best

suiting us ; but he was so busy, wide awake, and active after arriving, that I began to fear he had taken something while out in town, and as he did not join us at supper, we did not see him again until we went over to the church, and found him addressing a great crowd on the benefits to be derived from a knowledge of the voice and its proper use.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONVENTION.

I HAD heard Tibby Cole talk in public before ; but as he stood in front of the organ, explaining his plan, I felt unusually proud of him, for he was terse and witty, and seemed to put the people in good humor at once.

He had a merry way about him which was irresistible, and while briefly explaining the proper and improper way of singing, he drew on his powers of mimicry so largely that the people laughed outright, and before they had fully quieted down again, he had books distributed among them, with the request that they turn to a simple anthem on a specified page. This he played through on the organ, and then called upon the people to sing it, which they did surprisingly well, all the parts being represented. Tibby noticed the singers closely while they were at the anthem, and, after commending the singing, he began to briskly point out the different singers and put them together ; the sopranos and altos directly in front

of him, and the tenors to the left, and the bassos to the right. The rapidity with which he did this was surprising, and he was altogether so brisk and cheerful that those present promptly did whatever he suggested.

“There is a strong alto voice over near the door,” he said, pointing in that direction with the lead pencil he used for a bâton. “I hope the lady will come forward, and join the circle.”

A lady promptly came out of the audience, and as she sat down with the others, it was evident that she was greatly pleased; and Tibby continued to pick out others in the same way, until he had nearly all the singers in the house massed before him, probably fifty or sixty in number. Whenever he said he had detected a fine bass voice, or a sweet soprano voice, or a clear tenor voice, or a well modulated alto voice, in a certain direction, a singer soon came forward; and it seemed to me that this was a trick, but if it was, it worked very well.

After the singers were all collected in the first four or five rows of seats in front of him, he began training them, changing so rapidly from the exercises in the front part of the book to tuneful melodies in the middle, that the singers enjoyed it. He had a blackboard brought over from the school-house, and on this he drew diagrams to ex-

plain his system, and was altogether so entertaining that Pidg and I agreed that there never was another man like Tibby Cole; though I hoped the people would not discover, as I had, that part of his animation and brilliancy was due to the circumstance that he had been drinking.

By degrees he gave the people to understand that those who patronized the convention would be expected to pay a dollar for one of the singing-books we had brought along, and that he would get his pay for teaching them from one half the proceeds of the closing concert, the other half to go to the church in which the convention was to be held. I knew that the books only cost him forty cents each, and as he would certainly have a hundred in his class by the next night, I began to understand how he made his money; a problem which I had never taken the trouble to investigate before.

Tibby Cole was really a very superior musician, and before the evening was over he had the class practising for the concert, which some of them good-naturedly said was not fair, for a great many others would be present at the next meeting.

After selecting an anthem which he thought was suitable, he played it over on the organ, and then sang it by himself to give an idea of what he considered proper as to time and expression. At

every pause he delivered a little lecture on music in general, but referring more particularly to the selection in hand, and then the sopranos were drilled alone until they were familiar with the air, when the altos, and tenors, and bassos were drilled in the same way, and finally all sang it together in a manner so creditable that the enthusiasm ran high. During this practice, which was interspersed with drills in the rudiments, he frequently spoke sharply to the singers, and caused them to tremble before him, after which he good-naturedly apologized, and said that discipline was necessary, or nothing could be learned.

After the anthem was well in hand, he called for me to bring up the two cornets, and announced that they would now sing it as it was to be sung at the concert. The words referred to trumpets and cymbals, and after a lady had been selected to play the organ, Tibby and I introduced the trumpets, which increased the general effect so much that at its close nearly all those present paid for a book, and promised to bring a friend the next day.

The convention met again at two o'clock the next afternoon, and while the number of spectators was not so great, the attendance of singers was larger than the night before, and it was evident that the concert was to be a success. Many

of the patrons came from the surrounding country, on horseback and in wagons, and a few of them were country singing-masters, anxious to profit by Tibby Cole's superior knowledge, who asked all sorts of difficult questions, and were promptly and satisfactorily answered. These country singing-masters were occasionally asked to lead the class, while Tibby and I played the cornets, and I knew this meant a large attendance at the concert from their different sections of country.

There were many splendid voices in the class, but nearly all of the singers read with difficulty; and, with a view of introducing me and my history to the people, Tibby asked any of them to select a difficult piece in a strange book, and I would play it on the cornet at sight, although only twelve years old. This was intended to illustrate that music was quite easy of comprehension, if you only gave it a little attention, and attended Tibby Cole's conventions.

Many of the singers had old books with them, containing favorite songs which they hoped to have rendered, and one of these was passed up, with a glee marked which was arranged after the fashion of a quickstep. I climbed upon a bench by Tibby's side, with my cornet in hand, but before I began, Tibby told them who I was, so far as he knew, and the attempt that had been made

to carry me off, in connection with the announcement that I would play not only the cornet but the violin at the concert. While he was talking, I looked over the music, and when he was ready to begin, I played it through without difficulty, Tibby joining me, and playing the alto, which made it a rather pretty duet. This pleased them so well that we responded by playing a rather difficult piece with which we were familiar, receiving rapturous applause.

I was not at all timid in the presence of the people, and I am afraid Pidg learned the same indifference from me, for he looked at the singers about as he looked at the accordions in the music store at home. If one of the tenors had a peculiarity in singing, — and they all threw their mouths open wonderfully wide on Tibby's recommendation, — Pidg watched him with the same quiet amusement he would have experienced in finding a fiddle that played itself. There was one woman who had an upper set of false teeth which occasionally did not go up with her gums when she encountered a high note, and Pidg watched her so intently, and from such close range, that Tibby was finally compelled to speak to him; for he did not seem to realize that he was doing anything wrong, and frequently looked at Tibby and me as if to wonder why we were not amused too.

Convinced that I was a drawing card, Tibby never lost an opportunity to introduce me after that. If a lady found the tone of an obligato solo difficult, I was told to accompany her on the violin; if the tenors stumbled, one of the number was sent back to the benches where Pidg and I peacefully slept, with the information that I was wanted up in front, where I rubbed my eyes to get awake and performed the part expected of me; if Tibby wanted to sing with the bassos to correct their time, I was put at the organ, and usually after every evening meeting I was sent to accompany some of the sopranos home who had no escorts.

On Sunday a double quartet from the class, specially drilled for the purpose, sang at the church services, under the direction of Mr. Cole, which was a means of getting the consent of the deacons for the concert, and in the evening he sang several appropriate songs alone, accompanying himself on the organ. He did this with so much tenderness and skill that those who were not patrons of the convention became his friends, and it seemed probable that the engagement would be the most profitable in all his experience.

The next day Pidg and I were put to drawing lumber with which to build the platform on which the singers were to stand on the eventful

Wednesday night, and by the time the doors were thrown open for the concert, Tibby not only had the class thoroughly drilled for the choruses, but various members prepared for solos, duets, and quartets.

The people began arriving before dark, and long before it was time to commence the house was filled in every part, even the aisles being occupied with chairs. The singers were arranged on the platform which Pidg and I had built at one end of the church, and as their parts were announced, they were expected to step to the front, do their work, and then retire to their seats.

As one of the performers, I was seated on this platform, near the middle of the long double circle, and as I was looking listlessly at the audience, wondering what they were thinking of me, I became aware that the man who had attempted to steal me was sitting near the middle of the house. He had his coat buttoned up to his chin, precisely as when I had seen him last, in the livery stable, and he watched me so intently that I believed that he still had the broad-axe with him, and that, should I attempt to expose his presence there, he would throw it at me, and split me in two. I could have pointed him out a dozen times to Tibby Cole, and caused him to be seized and detained, but I was afraid to, for I concluded

that a man so desperate as to come there at all would not hesitate at throwing a broad-axe.

The concert began with the anthem introducing the trumpets, and the fact that I acquitted myself reasonably well was no doubt due to my great desire to please Tibby Cole, of whom I was very fond, for the strange man's mean and disturbing eyes were on me constantly. Once I made a weak attempt to stare him out of countenance, but I could not do it, and finally tried to hide behind some of the singers, whereupon he changed his position, and watched me as intently as ever, laying his withered hand on the seat in front of him, as though I could recognize him by that.

It had been arranged that I should play the violin alone during the evening, and I knew that in announcing it Tibby would make a reference to the strange man, and perhaps incense him so much that he would hurl the broad-axe at me anyhow; and while I was thinking of this uncomfortable possibility, Tibby stepped to the front of the platform, and began a speech which I knew would lead up to the dreadful man. Tibby told the story in a graphic way, and expressed the regret (in which he was sure every respectable person joined) that the thief was not then in the house, that he might be taken hold of by fond fathers, and hanged to the nearest tree, as a

warning to other scoundrels that they could not ruthlessly carry off the Treasures of Home and the Joys of the Fireside, without prompt punishment. As the speech progressed I was in momentary expectation of a dreadful occurrence, though I was not certain whether Tibby or I would be the victim; but nothing came of it, and at last I found myself on my feet, in front of the people, who were applauding with great noise, and whose faces beamed with good-nature. This, and a determination to deserve Tibby's good opinion, encouraged me so much that I believe I played unusually well; even the unwelcome visitor seemed pleased—anyway, he did not throw the axe in disapproval.

Tibby's control over Pidg was unlimited, therefore when he announced, after my violin performance, that Mr. Behee would sing "Blow ye Winds of the Morning," I knew that Pidg would not hesitate to attempt it, although he was not a singer.

Had Tibby taken Pidg to a high precipice, and told him to jump off, he would not have hesitated, believing that a net had been arranged somewhere below to catch him; therefore he promptly came on the stage, and stood beside Tibby while he made an explanation to the effect that the song was intended to illustrate the benefits to be derived in music from study and practice. Mr.

Behee was really a very bad singer, Tibby said, because he had never practised or studied; but he was about to begin, under Tibby's direction, and when he appeared there again, he hoped the people could note a marked improvement. The people saw at once that it was all for their amusement, and laughed immoderately at Pidg's odd appearance, but he was not at all frustrated; indeed, he seemed to enjoy it, and laughed at the people, evidently thinking the joke was on them. Pidg, poor fellow, had sore lips, which he moistened so much by running his tongue over them that they were quite red for half an inch above and below his mouth, and this added greatly to his comical appearance, and to the boisterous merriment of the audience.

He began the song in a loud voice and in a high key, but as Tibby kept saying "louder," he finally roared, as the people did, but I noticed that the strange man was not amused, although those around him were, and to a remarkable extent, causing Pidg to sing the same verse over and over, for he only knew one. Indeed, I thought the strange man had a mind to stand up and call the people fools for laughing at such a silly performance, but he did not, though he looked as though he might be revenged on me after I was in his possession again. Finally Tibby showed Pidg

how to make a bow to the people, and he retired, after making the hit of the evening.

During the concert there was an echo to be produced in the lobby, in answer to a song on the platform, and when I went out with a party of singers for the purpose, the people making room for us in the aisle, I passed so close to the man that I could have touched him. While we were standing together outside, waiting for the place in the song where the echo was to come in, he passed out, and stood in the outer door a moment to look at me before disappearing in the darkness, but as I was surrounded by the singers, some of whom were brawny men, I was not afraid, and looked steadily at him.

This was the first time I had been bold enough to return his stare, and I thought I detected something of fright in his actions, as though he had lost confidence in his ability to control me; therefore, as soon as the concert was over, I told Tibby about the circumstance. It was unfortunate that I did, for he immediately began drinking more than ever, and after collecting a party of men, he looked through the town for the stranger, but without finding any trace of him. None of the people appealed to could remember seeing the stranger at the church, which I thought odd, for I could remember no one else, but they all agreed

that the fellow must be a rival of Tibby Cole's, who desired my services in the concert business, and let it drop at that, for no further interest was taken in the matter. Even Tibby soon forgot the circumstance, for after an hour or two of diving into dark alleys and out-houses, we went into a place where drink was sold,—a room behind a drug-store, I think it was, which was occupied by a man who had belonged to a brass band Tibby had once taught, and here they told stories and sang songs for a long time. Tibby was a very entertaining man when drinking, for he only drank enough to make him spirited, and his companions, who were generally young men belonging to the town band, laughed immoderately at his sayings and actions. They had a discussion about religion, I remember, and Tibby talked in favor of it as warmly as though he had been a minister perfectly sober. It was a pity, he said, that intelligent young men should talk flippantly about so serious a subject, and I thought his talk to them was equal to a sermon. I had noticed before that Tibby had the greatest faith in religion, and on the previous Sunday, when a number had joined the church, he had experienced the liveliest satisfaction, notwithstanding he did not belong himself, although he was a perfectly honorable, pure-minded, and upright man.

When I complained of being tired and sleepy, he took me up to the hotel, and pretended to go to bed when I did; but somehow I knew that he returned to his new-made friends, who were waiting for him, and spent the night in their company.

After I was in bed, I thought a good deal about the stranger who seemed to have private reasons for wanting to carry me off, but I could make nothing out of it, further than that I must be a person of some importance to be in such demand. I did not regret my escape from the fellow, of course, but I had a great curiosity to know what he intended to do with me, and finally wakened Pidg to get his ideas on the subject. Pidg was of the opinion, as I had hoped he would be, that the man recognized in me the making of a great musician, and wanted to become my manager, and divide the receipts. This was not an unpleasant conclusion, and we decided that it would not be so bad, after all, providing Pidg were taken along to attend the door and take the tickets. Pidg thought it possible that the man might want him to sing "Blew ye Winds of the Morning," as a relief to a classical programme for the violin, but as Pidg had been very generous with me, I did not dispel the idea.

CHAPTER V.

THE QUICKSTEP RACE.

AS soon as we were up in the morning, Pidg and I went to work tearing down the platform in the church on which the singers had stood; and by the time we had disposed of it, Tibby appeared. He had fully recovered from the effects of the party of the night before, apparently, for he was as fresh and good-natured as possible, and from the references he made to his old friend of the drug store, and the fact that he was chewing cardamom seed, I imagined he had been to see him that morning.

Being a reckless and extravagant man, and very fond of his wife, Tibby never went anywhere that he did not return with a great number of presents which she did not need, and usually could not use. He was always buying bonnets for Mrs. Cole which were not suitable to her complexion, and on his return from the drug store he had evidently been making purchases of presents at the cheap stores in the place, for he had a number of packages with him.

One of his weaknesses was for vases, probably for the reason that they were regarded as appropriate for presents, for he never made any other use of them except as receptacles of cigar ashes and other litter, and although I knew that our house was full of them already, I was not surprised to find that he had purchased two more, which he unwrapped and pretended to greatly admire. His library consisted of books he had bought for presents for Mrs. Cole, without reference to their contents, usually poems in fancy binding, for the stores in the towns we visited did not seem to keep any other kind, and if he found a new binding, it made no difference if Mrs. Cole had two or three copies of the same poetry already, he bought it, and felt that he had secured a prize. There were several of these books in the company of the vases, and I supposed that the other packages contained articles equally absurd, for he seldom bought anything of use or value. I have known him to laugh gayly at a suggestion from his wife that they needed a new carpet, and then spend more money than would have been needed for the proposed improvement in vases and books; and I have no doubt he did this from the best of motives, preferring to spend his money on his wife rather than on the house.

By the time he had taken formal leave of his

friends in the place, it was rather late in the afternoon, for his admiration for them was unbounded, particularly for his dear old friend of the drug store, who had formerly played baritone in his band, and he went down to say good-bye to him so often that I wondered how the big bottle looked out of which I had seen them drinking the night before, and which I remembered was nearly full. But at last he had all his packages collected in the wagon, and all his friends disposed of, and we drove away.

He was in his merriest mood as we hurried along the road, and for an hour or more he amused himself by practising Pidg for his next appearance in Bixby's Landing. Pidg's roaring and yelling caused the country people to come to the doors of their houses and look at us in wonder; but Tibby pretended to be very determined to give his pupil a correct idea of the song, for he directed the time by swinging both arms as though he were leading a chorus of a thousand. When Pidg was tired out, Tibby and I ran races with the cornets, by seeing which could play "Whirlwind Polka" and "Helter-skelter Quickstep" the fastest, both playing the lead part from memory. When I won, Tibby said it was because his "lip" was dry, whereupon he took a drink out of a bottle he carried with him, and tried it over;

so that when we reached home, a short time after dark, I was not surprised that he got out of the wagon, and asked me to take the presents to Mrs. Cole before he made his appearance.

“It will never do for a man in my condition to appear before a proper person like Mrs. Cole,” he said, “and I am going out in town to sober up”; and off he went, leaving me to make whatever explanation I saw fit.

Mrs. Cole acted at first as though she would not send for him, and said I might eat my supper, and then go to bed; but when I told her about the convention, and how the people admired Tibby, she changed her mind and told me to go out and get him, and hurry back.

I soon ran across him, in the rear of a grocery store, where he was eating his supper, which consisted of a can of salmon, a dipper of vinegar, and a handful of crackers, and which he seemed to be greatly enjoying; but when I said that Mrs. Cole had sent for him, he quickly finished his repast, said a cheerful good-bye to those in the place, and followed me down the street, laughing on the way as merrily as a child.

When we reached the music store, he pushed the door open and peeped in at his wife, who was sitting on the inside, trying to look very much displeased. When he saw the frown on her face,

he was greatly amused, and sat down on the step, where he laughed in the most immoderate fashion, occasionally getting up to take another look, as though he had never before seen anything so funny, and then going off into another fit of merriment.

“Look at the frown on her face, King,” he said to me as I stood beside him. “How funny mother looks when she’s cross.”

Although he laughed in an extravagant way at the frown, it did not disappear, for Mrs. Cole sat looking steadily at her folded hands, without turning her head. The determination of such a good-natured woman to be cross in spite of everything, caused Tibby to laugh more than ever, and finally I could not help joining him, for I knew she could not long keep her face straight.

“She wants to smile because we’ve come home, and brought her vases and books,” Tibby said, recovering from his merriment; “but she has concluded that I need a scolding; and though I do, I’ll never get it. There’s a smile in her heart now, and it’ll come to her face in a moment. Suppose we venture in.”

We both crept in with great caution, as though we expected something would be thrown at us, and Tibby sat down in a chair directly in front of

his wife, where he laughed quietly to himself for a while.

“Do you see that dimple in her cheek?” he said to me, going over to Mrs. Cole, and pointing it out.

After a great deal of trouble, I made out to discover it, and said so.

“Well, she’s coming round,” he said. “In a minute she’ll be smiling as pleasantly as you ever saw her in your life. I’ve known her a good many years, and she can’t look that way long, though she’s holding out longer than usual this time. When mother comes to herself, she’ll be mighty sorry she treated us this way, and she’ll take that hundred dollars I offered her.”

“I’ll not,” Mrs. Cole said, sharply, without looking up.

This exhibition of temper amused Tibby again, and he laughed in the cheerful, immoderate way which distinguished him after a successful convention.

“Oh, but you will,” he replied. “You’ll ask me to forgive you, and promise never to be cross again, for you know you always do. When I think how penitent poor mother will be to-morrow for this exhibition of temper, I feel sorry for her, but I’ll pretend that she has been so unreasonable that I can’t overlook it. I shall shake my fist at her to-morrow, and say:—

“‘Woman, we part. You have gone Too Far.’

“I shall be very fierce while about it, though smiling to myself all the while to think that mother believes I’m cross, when I never believe that she is; and when the erring creature begs me on her knees to forgive her, I shall walk out of the house, saying:—

“‘King, have the kindness to accompany me to the stable; I desire to speak a word to you in private before Going Away Forever!’

“We’ll make it up in the end, though, as we always do, and then you and I can get anything in the house by asking for it. Mother will be asking us to help ourselves to that jar of brandy peaches before the night is over, and it wouldn’t surprise me if we get the cream off the milk. King, have you kissed her since coming home?”

I replied that I had not, for the reason that she looked so stormy when I came in.

“Well, I’ll hold her hands while you pay your respects,” he said, and accordingly he approached his wife with great caution, and held her hands while I kissed her. Then I held her hands, and Tibby kissed her, springing back after it as though afraid of a blow, after which he again seated himself in front of her, and began watching for the first signs of approaching good-humor, remarking his observations to me as he made them:—

“I think the dimple is growing. The brandy peaches are not far off now. Ha! She’s smiling! She’s about to laugh; she *is* laughing!”

And then we all laughed together, and shook hands all round, and in five minutes the incident had been forgotten, and Tibby and I were following her around the kitchen as she prepared a lunch, the best-natured one in the party being Mrs. Cole, who brought out not only the brandy peaches, but the cream from the milk, and asked a hundred questions about the convention, showing a great deal of concern when we told her about the appearance in the audience of the man who had tried to carry me off.

“I’m sorry I acted as I did,” Mrs. Cole said to Tibby, when we were seated at the table, “but you really ought to quit drinking so much. I am good-humored now, and I will never be cross again, but the only trouble in my life is the fear that the habit will grow on you. I am as glad to see you as I can be, as I always am, but when you come home merry this way, it worries me to think that maybe the habit is growing on you.”

“I’ll tell you, mother,” Tibby replied, rather seriously, “you’ve always been so reasonable about it, that I’ve been thinking that some day I’ll quit short. I ought to be scolded, but you can’t do it; you like me too well for that. And so some day

you'll see me come home as merry as I am now, without any drink; and when I do it, I'll say, 'Mother, I'll be as kind to you as you are to me; I've quit.' I feel mighty mean when you don't scold me, though I know it's your duty; and though I'm always resolving to be better, I feel so good when I know the money's coming in, and how pleased you will be to hear it, that I get at it somehow. I think you ought to go with me, and then I wouldn't do it."

"But who would attend the store?" Mrs. Cole inquired.

"That's so; and the pig. How *is* the pig?"

As I have said before, Tibby Cole had only two objections to his wife, and these were not at all serious, — she kept a pig and cow; and when she had replied that the pig was doing very well, he continued: —

"We feed that pig enough, for after buying corn for him, and keeping his pen in repair, we have little left; but he is never satisfied. He is always squealing for more to eat, and the neighbors think I am a mean man for starving him. In your ambition to save ten cents worth of slop — it's a laudable ambition, mother, though a mistaken one — you spend a dollar for corn, and instead of being grateful, your pig tears down his pen, and loafs around town squealing all the time as

though suffering from hunger, although he really eats up most of the gardens in town, besides most of the corn raised in the neighborhood. The people all know him, and unless we can get him fat enough for the butcher, he will finally make us so unpopular here that we'll have to leave. There he is now."

The door of the room in which we sat opened out on a porch; and the pig, having escaped from his pen, came grunting around, and climbed up on this, as if looking for a bed. Not finding what he wanted, he trotted off toward the stable, squealing as he went, but soon returned, and lay down, and got up again to change his position, and grunted and made himself generally disagreeable. We were all very much amused, and after the pig was finally settled, Tibby attacked the cow: —

"Whenever I hear a rap at the front door, and hurry out, thinking a gentleman has called to buy a piano for his wife's Christmas present, I find some of the neighbor's children, carrying a bucket, and they say: 'If you please, sir, I've come after the milk.' Whenever I come home, the first words I hear concern the cow's whereabouts, or the probability of her coming home without being sent for, and I once heard that a man said I was nothing but a milkman, anyway. The cow follows

the farmers' wagons, in the hope of getting a mouthful of hay, though she has a loft full at home, and whenever I am on the streets, I see a farmer chasing our cow, and swearing that he will never buy an organ of me. When I quit drinking, I hope mother will quit keeping pigs and cows, and take that hundred dollars I offered her."

Tibby was getting sleepy by this time, and, going over to a lounge on the other side of the room, he stretched himself at full length upon it.

"I'm not ready to make the arrangement just yet," he drowsily said, "for I'm not sure I could keep my part of it, but some of these days I'll be revenged on the cow and the pig. If you'll excuse me, I'll take a nap of ten minutes, and then I'll get up, and talk all night, for I am mighty glad to get home."

In a few minutes he was sound asleep, and Mrs. Cole changed her chair to the side of the lounge, as if she desired to be near her husband.

"I will never find fault with him again," she said to me, after a silence between us. "When I try to be cross with him, and he won't believe that I am, it makes me feel very wretched, and then I realize that there are but few wives who can say that their husbands have but one fault. Does he talk about me much when he is away?"

"A great deal," I answered, which was the case.

This seemed to please her, and going out of the room, she returned with a pillow, which she placed under his head.

“We have been married twenty years,” she said, after she was seated again, “and he never spoke a thoughtless or unkind word to me in his life. I hope he won’t remember how I acted to-night. Do you think he will?”

I was certain he would not, so I shook my head.

“I wish you would say to him some time when you are alone that I have resolved never to find fault with him again, and that I am very proud of him just as he is. I don’t know that I would change him if I could.”

I said that I would, and soon after went up to my room, where I found Pidg occupying his old position crosswise of the bed.

I dreamed that night that Mrs. Cole never left her chair until morning, and that she sat beside her husband until broad day, thinking how unjust she had been to him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUEEN'S ARRIVAL.

I DID not understand the mysterious bargaining between Tibby and his wife, which referred in a general way to a hundred dollars, though I heard a good deal about it for several weeks; but one morning they agreed on a price, and Tibby hurriedly ordered out his horses, loaded in an organ, and drove out of town, taking me with him, and leaving Pidg at home. His last words were that in case he was needed at any time, Pidg could easily find him by reference to a note he had left with Mrs. Cole, and altogether he acted in a manner which indicated that for some reason he was ill at ease.

We stopped at a great many houses during the two days we leisurely travelled the road leading from home, and at several of them we carried the organ in and exhibited it; but Tibby did not seem to be in a humor for business, for we made no sales. At some of the houses were organs which had been sold on other trips, and for which

Tibby laid notes, and if the people were inclined to regret their purchase he soon convinced them by means of his playing that the organ was the most desirable instrument in the world, and encouraged them to make another payment on their notes. When we drove away from these places, it always occurred to me what a magnificent instrument an organ was in the hands of Tibby, who was a master, and how worthless it was to the farmer and his children, who could not play. When we found a particularly desperate case, I brought in the violin, and did what I could to revive the flagging interest in music, and induce a payment on the note.

I believe that as a general thing Tibby did not make much from his organ business. He paid his accounts with the manufacturers with scrupulous regularity, stinting his family until the emergency was passed, but his customers were not equally punctual with him, and frequently he was compelled to send the good money he earned by teaching bands and conventions after the bad coming to him for organs. He was also very careless, and lost so much that I often wondered that he did not give up that line of the business.

The second afternoon out we stopped at a cross-roads where there was a school-house, and I was surprised to hear that the farmer living across the

road was Pidg's father. Pidg had never told me much about his family, and on going in I learned for the first time that old Mr. Behee was a widower, and that he had a houseful of grown daughters, several of them widows. Although we were strangers (at least I was, Tibby may have met them before), we were scarcely inside the house before the daughters began accusing their father of an intention to marry again and rob them of what their mother had slaved for.

Old Mr. Behee came in out of the field as soon as he heard of our arrival, and treated us with great politeness, and although he declared that he had no intention of marrying again, his daughters said he knew he was as gay as he could be, and that he was bent on disgracing them all.

"You're good-looking, pappy," one of them said, "and you know it, and the way you carry on is disgraceful. I should think you would remember how mother carried water from the spring while you made your money, and behave yourself."

Mr. Behee was really about as ugly as he could be, but it pleased him that he had been called good-looking, though he winced when the spring water matter was brought up. He looked to me like an old gray squirrel, with his strip of whiskers running from ear to ear by way of his chin, and this impression was heightened when he did not

reply, and began eating an apple by holding it to his mouth with both hands.

“When mother was alive,” the widow who had been doing most of the talking said again, “you grumbled and growled around like an old bear, but I notice that you are mighty polite now. I saw you looking around in church last Sunday, and Amanda saw you, and we all saw you, and we all say that if you will give us our share of the property, we’ll leave, and let you bring a young wife here to use mother’s things. You made mother a slave, but I suppose the new one will have a hired girl; but we’ll not stay here to be bossed by her, will we?”

Those to whom this question was addressed all shook their heads violently.

“But I don’t intend to marry,” old Mr. Behee said, with a show of temper. “I can’t see what you are running on about. Nobody would have me.”

The widow gave a short, quick, derisive laugh, and her sisters did the same, as though it was an absolute certainty that all the women in the neighborhood were disgracefully anxious to get into their highly respectable family by marrying their beautiful pappy.

“I know you old widowers,” the widow continued, “and you needn’t talk to me. Mother is

hardly cold in her grave, for she only died five years ago last spring, and here you are running about the neighborhood at night like I don't know what. If you'll give me mother's picture out of the album, I'll hide it, for I know you want to put somebody else's in its place. And I'll tell you another thing: No new wife shall wear mother's crape shawl, and I give you notice of it now. If you'll give me my share of the property, I'll go to town, and hire out, but I'll not stay here and be abused by that miss."

The widow flew out of the room, followed by her sisters; and while they were getting supper, Mr. Behee went out to assure them that he had no intention of marrying, but they would not believe him, and continued to berate him in the most cruel manner.

I learned afterwards from Tibby that Mr. Behee was a poor man, and did not own the little farm on which he lived, which surprised me, for I had imagined from the widow's reference to her share of the property that he was quite rich. Tibby also said that Mr. Behee was not at all gay, and was as well behaved a widower as need be, which surprised me, too.

As business had been particularly bad, Tibby announced a concert for that evening at the school-house, at ten cents admission. In con-

sideration of fifty cents in hand paid, a young man mounted a horse, and left word at all the neighboring houses, and by early candle-lighting the people began to appear in encouraging numbers. We had placed the organ on the little platform usually occupied by the teacher, and I sat at the door to take the money, the subject of a great deal of curiosity from a crowd of men and boys who collected on the outside.

The widow and her sisters went in free, and when they appeared they were concluding a conversation concerning the disposition of a certain solid silver mustard spoon which had been a wedding present to their mother, and which they declared must be kept in the family at all hazards, even though it became necessary to knock the Impudent Miss down, and wrest it from her grasping fingers. They stopped at the door a few moments to talk with me, and when I mentioned Pidg as my friend, they intimated that he was not very heavy in the head, or he would remain at home, and assist them in keeping their mother's memory from being disgraced. Old Mr. Behee appeared soon after, considerably dressed up, and I thought he looked like a man who regretted that he was not as great a catch as his daughters imagined.

Tibby was not in his usual spirits, from some

cause, and though he was as good-natured and gentle as ever, he took little interest in the affair; therefore, when the people were nearly all in, and I went back to announce that we had taken in a little over six dollars (leaving the mounted advertisement at the door), I think he was surprised.

The concert began soon after, with a selection for the violin and organ, and everything we did that evening was from memory, which was not difficult, for we had given many like it before, in the same way. Tibby announced each piece, and did it so modestly that the people were soon friendly, and in the best of humor.

I cannot remember all that was done, but I know that both of us sang and played, singly and together; that we played violin duets, and cornet duets, and that both of us played the organ; but that which pleased the people most was Tibby's recitations and songs. One of his songs related to a side-showman at a circus, and after each verse he spoke a piece to represent the fellow who stands in front of the banners, and details the attractions upon the inside, while I kept the music going to represent the barrel organ. Tibby was very familiar with such scenes, having travelled several seasons with a wagon circus when a young man, and the people seemed to be

too, for it amused them so much that they made him repeat it.

Pidg's sisters were seated together well up in front, and they spent the evening in watching their father, who, I thought (for I watched all of them with a great deal of interest and amusement), acted as though he was flirting with the young girls in the audience, though as a matter of fact no one paid any attention to him. Whenever they caught him smiling, they supposed, of course, that he was ogling some Impudent Miss, and once or twice they acted as though they would leave the place, and not witness their family disgrace.

Tibby's recitations (they related to familiar subjects, and one of them told of a Gay Old Widower, which caused all the daughters to look toward old Mr. Behee) were equally well received, and when he awoke me to join him in playing "Home, Sweet Home" on the cornets, (for I had gone to sleep at the recitations, having heard them so often), I found that the people had been dismissed, but that they still loitered around, hoping for more, which had induced him to favor them with the closing selection just named.

We slept that night in a bed opposite old Mr. Behee's room, and as long as I remained awake, I heard his daughters come up one at a time, and

present some new incident to prove that he was disgracing their mother's memory, one of which was that his perfidy had found its way into the Shows. I hope that old Mr. Behee slept through it all, for I heard him snoring, though the widow once said he needn't pretend to be asleep, for she knew better.

Although we got up early the next morning, the widow was ahead of us, and was abusing her father in the most scandalous manner when we went down to breakfast, because of his outrageous conduct the night before. Old Mr. Behee did not seem to mind it much, for he talked pleasantly to Tibby and me, until we went away, although some one of the daughters was nagging him constantly because of his giddy disposition. The last thing I heard on driving away was a declaration on the part of one of them that she intended to have her mother's feather bed; and when I looked back from a hill-top, I saw old Mr. Behee working in the field, with one of his daughters standing beside him, and excitedly swinging her arms, as though determined to own her mother's counterpane.

About noon we reached a good-sized town, and before night had completed an arrangement to teach the band for a week — Tibby to receive five dollars a day, and the proceeds of the concert

after paying the expenses. The lessons began that night at the court house. The members were all young men of the town, and although most of them said their horns were out of order (as an excuse for bad playing, I thought), they turned out to be in excellent condition when Tibby took them in hand. There were several fairly good players in the organization, and, with our assistance, the music was so much improved that the members were greatly encouraged, and before the night was over we went out serenading prominent citizens with "Hail to the Chief," which they said would insure a donation toward the expenses.

We spent our days in the great assembly-room of the court house, Tibby preparing music, and training an occasional band man who found time to come to him. Tibby was so clever at writing music that if he heard an air whistled which pleased him, he could write out all the parts in a few hours, and this faculty was of assistance in making selections suitable to the capacities of the players in hand. I did little myself during the day except to wonder that Tibby made no acquaintance with the druggists, for the prospects were excellent for a profitable week, but he resisted all temptations, and acted very much as though he intended to return home and

demand that the pig and cow be turned out in return for his good behavior.

There was evidently something on his mind, for he did not sleep well, and often I walked the streets half the night with him because he was nervous and restless, although he was always gentle and kind. I supposed that this nervousness was due to his determination not to drink any more, and I cheerfully kept him company, though sometimes he did not get to bed until two or three o'clock in the morning.

He talked a great deal about Mrs. Cole during our lonely rambles, and I took occasion to tell him that she had concluded never to find fault with him any more, and that she thought him the best man in the world just as he was. This greatly pleased him, though he was not an egotistical man, and craved no credit which did not belong to him; but Mrs. Cole was such a worthy woman that her good opinion was very dear to her careless husband, and he asked me so many questions that I finally told him everything I had ever heard his wife say to his credit, which kept me busy for a long while.

I think a great deal of that week, now that I am a man grown, for we were together almost constantly; and whenever I recall the past, I somehow find my way back to a town the name of

which I can scarcely remember, but on the streets of which, at night, I see a man and a boy walking together, as friendly and cordial with each other as persons of the same age; and it occurs to me, in a vague sort of way, as though I had never seen the couple before, that the man has none of the selfish ways of men, and that he is as fair and considerate with the boy as he would be with a man able to enforce his rights. It seems to me that this simple-minded man, although not much given to business, is a hero because of his uprightness and honor, and that his gentle devotion to his wife and adopted son makes him the most conspicuous figure within the range of my recollection.

I think very often of the goodness of Tibby Cole, and somehow it always leads me to the week we spent together after he had quit drinking, and when I was able to be of some assistance to him in his nervous condition. All the good traits I have ever discovered in his character, I unconsciously trace to the seven days I spent with him alone, although the recollection really covers my entire life, and the more I think of it, the more I am convinced that the person nearest my heart is Tibby Cole.

The last two days before the concert were devoted to training the singers who were to take

part, and who came up one at a time, as though they all hated each other, as I believe they did. A piano had been carried into the room by the band men, who seemed to give up every other work during that week, and on this Tibby accompanied them, and illustrated his suggestions. The singers had made their own selections, and it seemed to me that when the band men came into the room, they were quietly delighted with the circumstance that their teacher was also a pianist; I don't know what they would have thought had they known that he played the violin very well, and made a specialty of the organ.

The concert came off as advertised, and did not differ from many others I had attended, except that Tibby drank nothing at all, and did not take the usual interest in his work. It was one of the most successful he had ever conducted, in the matter of receipts, but although the alto player was a druggist, and made frequent significant references to the quality of his "Prohibited," Tibby only laughed, and said he had quit.

A notion prevailed in the country where we lived that liquor was not to be had; but I never went anywhere that we did not have it carried to us in bottles, for a great proportion of the young men seemed to think it a manly thing to do, to carry it around with them, which habit resulted

in a good deal of unnatural dissipation. It was unfortunate for my patient friend, who was always trying to overcome temptation, that in nearly every town he visited, he found a druggist who either belonged to the band he was teaching, or had belonged to one he had taught before, and the fact that the pig and the cow triumphed over him so long was due to this circumstance.

On returning home, which we did immediately after the concert, by means of a long night drive, without stopping to buy any presents, we found Mrs. Cole sick in bed. I supposed it was malaria at first, for it was usually said that was the disorder when any one in our country was sick, but when they turned down the covers, and disclosed a tiny girl baby, which had been born during our absence, I understood why Tibby had been offering his wife sums of money; he wanted to be out of the way.

I thought it was an occasion for rejoicing, for the baby was as pretty as it could be, but Tibby knelt down by the bed, and sobbed as though he was sorry; whereupon Mrs. Cole soothed him, and said there was no need to cry then, as it was all over. This caused me to think that Tibby was not sorry the baby had arrived, and that he only felt badly because Mrs. Cole was sick.

It was perhaps an hour after our arrival, when

Tibby was himself again, that Mrs. Cole said the Queen had arrived just in time, as the King was going away. In answer to our look of surprise, she took from under her pillow a letter, the reading of which threw the house into the greatest excitement. It was dated New York, and ran as follows:—

DEAR SIR,—I have reason to believe that the parents of your adopted son have been found at last, and that he is about to be restored to the affluence from which he was stolen twelve years ago. If you will call upon Mr. Lander, the banker of your town, he will give the boy two hundred dollars with which to pay his expenses to this city; and I beg that you will send him at your earliest convenience. When he arrives in New York, tell him to address a note to me, care of *The Night-Watch*, Printing-House Square, when I will call upon him, and make further explanations.

Very truly, etc.,

GEO. W. BARTON,

Business Manager of The Night Watch.

To TIBBY COLE, Esq.

Had the King of the Cannibal Islands walked into the room accompanied by his royal band, he could not have created more astonishment than the letter; but we finally settled down, and discussed the matter quietly.

The letter had been received a day or two after

our departure, Mrs. Cole said; but she knew nothing, and Tibby knew nothing, beyond that. It was mentioned that perhaps the strange man's attempt to steal me had something to do with conveying the knowledge to New York that a moonlight boy lived in Three Rivers; but I knew nothing positively, except that my friends believed I was going away for good, and that they greatly regretted it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING'S DEPARTURE.

I THINK it never occurred to either Tibby or his wife, and it certainly never did to me, that any special preparation in the way of clothing was necessary for my trip to New York, for at that distance from the metropolis my Sunday suit was considered quite dressy, although it was bought ready made; therefore no delay was probable because of the lack of an outfit.

I believed that New York was much like Three Rivers, except that it was larger, and had more two-story houses, and that the New York people were much like those I had known all my life, except that they were not so honest and unselfish. The people I had known all my life thought my Sunday suit was good enough for any one, therefore I concluded that if I wore it every day, my personal appearance would attract favorable comment. Tibby had never travelled much himself, having come from one of the Middle States when quite a young man, and I cannot remember that

we bought anything in the way of wearing apparel except a box of paper collars, and a new neck-tie.

Tibby and I called on the banker mentioned in the letter, as soon as his place of business was open, and were immediately ushered into his private room, where we learned that he had received inquiries concerning me the day after the attempted kidnapping; that he had forwarded descriptions of the articles found with me to New York, and that in reply he had been authorized to supply me with two hundred dollars on my own receipt, in order that I might go to New York to be inspected. I then remembered that the banker had been one of the visitors at the house during the time when I was feigning illness in the interest of Tibby's business, and that he had called for the package which related to me, of which he made a close examination.

Mr. Lander, the banker, only had one idea, and that was to be honest. There were plenty of brighter and better men in Three Rivers than Mr. Lander, but in that booming town the business men were generally careless in sustaining their credit, and Mr. Lander was a prominent figure because he was an exception to the rule. There never was a better or more enterprising lot of fellows than the men of Three Rivers, but their enterprise led them into all sorts of extravagances,

and to credit whoever asked that accommodation, and the result was that we had a good many failures in business; indeed, the custom of failing in business was so universal that it was respectable, and the most unpopular man in town was a merchant who was careful and industrious, and managed to pay his debts. Whenever a Three Rivers man wanted a house, he built it on credit, and managed to get the matter so tangled up in the courts that he retained it; and men who were wretchedly poor one month, were prosperous merchants the next, and indulged in excesses which had the effect of hurrying their collapse. The neighboring farmers were as deep in debt as the town people, and it is not remarkable that a reliable man like Mr. Lander, though he knew nothing else, was esteemed in a way, though he was not popular in other respects.

Mr. Lander was also a good man, and received the credit of supporting the church to which he belonged. His wife, whose face always reminded me of her husband's whiskers, for it was of the same color, was usually with him except during banking hours, and when Lander walked out on a pleasant day, he pushed one baby before him in a buggy, and carried another in his arms. They attended church, and went to parties and entertainments in the same way, and although Mr.

Lander was generally admired by the wives of Three Rivers, the men, though they would trust him to any extent, privately called him Mary Louise Lander, his initials being M. L.

When I came to sign the receipt for the money, a question arose as to what my name really was, but it was compromised by Mr. Lander writing under my signature, in parenthesis: "Real name at this writing unknown," which set me to thinking whether the initials on the medallion had any relation to my name, or whether the piece of metal was simply a charm without any particular significance. Mr. Lander acted as though he knew all about the affair until he was compelled to acknowledge that he did not know my name, but after that he said as little as possible.

The people of the town took a very lively interest in my approaching departure, and I was overrun with suggestions, several of the men urging me not to fail to visit certain places of absorbing interest, which I thought was intended as a means of making the fact generally known that they were familiar with the metropolis, for they gave the bystanders bits of experience in connection with their suggestions to me. One man said the main thing was to look out for thieves, and mentioned a great many ways the New York people had of making money, includ-

ing sneaking it out of your pocket, and boldly holding you while they took it, but another man took me off to one side, and said that the proper thing would be for me to act as though I lived in New York, and not look curiously at anything, otherwise the police would arrest me. In order to convince me that he knew all about New York, he drew a map of Manhattan island and the city, which looked like a rough outline of a prize ear of corn, and after he had marked all the places of interest, to enable me to find them readily, I put the map away for future reference. Another acquaintance of mine said he knew all the principal men in New York, and offered to bet that he would know my father, when he was finally named, all of which made me rather timid, for I began to realize that I was going to a country very different from that surrounding Three Rivers.

When I returned to the house, and showed my money to Pidg (Tibby and I had jointly agreed that I should buy a huge leather wallet to keep it in, which gave me the appearance of carrying walnuts in my right pants pocket), he was speechless with admiration, I thought, but I afterwards found out that he was speechless with regret at my going away, for the honest fellow soon broke out crying, and said he knew I would never think

of him again after reaching my new home. I assured him in the most extravagant terms that I would, which cheered him some, and he afterwards examined the pictures on my money with considerable interest.

I found during the few days I remained with them that they were all much affected by my approaching departure, and though Tibby and his wife did what they could to appear cheerful, they were really very much dejected. When they talked of my going away, it was in a tender and plaintive manner, and I began to realize for the first time how kind they had always been to me. I had never heard a harsh word in that house, although I was only a poor moonlight boy, without claims upon them, and I would have spent half my money for presents for them had not Mr. Lander heard of it, and sent me word that I should be more careful. However, I bought a pair of vases and a book of poetry for Mrs. Cole, and a rattle for the Queen, who had been named Mary, and was comforted with the reflection that if everything went well in New York I would send Tibby and Pidg something from there.

While I looked forward to the parting with them with keen regret, there was something so novel in my situation that I was secretly delighted, and the consciousness of this caused me to feel

like a very ungrateful boy. I don't believe that I had ever been particularly ambitious, or that I ever regretted my lot, except that I was often sorry that Tibby Cole and his wife were not my father and mother, but there was a strange fascination in my situation which made it rather pleasant to me. While I could not feel that I had ever longed much to find my parents, or that I was unhappy without them, I could not help wondering who they were; how they would receive me, and how well they would be satisfied with me; what kind of a house they lived in, and how it came about that I was stolen at such a very early age. This was the burden of my thoughts during the days I remained at Three Rivers, but I am sure that as each day slipped away, Tibby and his wife became more dear to me.

There was a day and a night train on the road which ran through Three Rivers, and it was arranged that on a Monday night, at eleven o'clock, I should leave for New York, as there was a sleeping-car on the night train which would take me a long way without changing. This arrangement was deemed advisable, as I knew nothing about travelling; and when the night finally arrived, my trunk was brought into the room where Mrs. Cole was still in bed, and we waited

with some impatience for the hour we had agreed to start for the depot.

Pidg had a box in the stable where he kept his things; a pine affair, with a huge padlock in front, and leather hinges behind; so I secretly transferred my cornet to him, by pulling the tacks out of the hinges, and pressing them back in their old position with my fingers, after placing the cornet among his shirts. He had expressed a desire to learn its use, and take my place in the concerts, and I knew it would please him to find it after I was gone; but Tibby would not take the violin, though I pressed it upon him, so it was wrapped in an old coat, and placed in the bottom of the trunk, where it was not likely to attract attention, as I wished to conceal the fact in my new home that I had ever been a fiddler.

When I looked up at the clock, and remarked that it was within a quarter of an hour of the time, a strange silence fell upon them; and when I looked from one to the other, I found that they were all crying, so little was said during the fifteen minutes before I went over to kiss Mrs. Cole and the baby good-by, and knelt down to receive Queen Mary's blessing, which she gave me by placing both her little hands on my head, with the assistance of her mother. Then I walked to the depot in front of Tibby and Pidg, who

carried my trunk between them, and regretted that Mr. Barton, whoever he was, had not requested them all to come with me, for I was not so brave as I was a few days before.

There was a certain innocence about all of them which reminded me of children, for I believe I was always the oldest one in the family, and when we reached the station ahead of time, and Tibby and Pidg stood around in silence, fearing to trust themselves to speak a word, the recollection of how considerate they had always been caused me to go into the shadow of the building, and cry heartily to myself. It was rather a chilly evening, and Tibby came around to express a regret, in choking words, that he had not thought to buy me an overcoat. All this affected me so much that I had a notion to declare I would not go to New York at all; but the train had been announced by this time, and Pidg pressed upon me a silk handkerchief which had been given him the Christmas before, and after wiping my eyes with it, I concluded I would go on, and come back the next week, in case everything was not satisfactory. Pidg remarked, in giving me the handkerchief, that it was of no use in Three Rivers, being entirely too rich, but that it would no doubt be the proper thing in New York; but as my two friends faded away in the darkness, I

thought it fortunate that Pidg had given me the present, for I did not usually carry a handkerchief, and found use for one in leaving Three Rivers.

When I stepped into the sleeping-car, my trunk having been checked by the agent, the black porter said, "The other car, you"; whereupon I produced a note saying that I was the person who had engaged a berth by telegraph, and he at once showed me my number. All the other passengers were in their beds, and as I walked down the aisle, and saw the shoes sitting on the outside, it occurred to me for the first time that my rough boots, though they had red tops, were hardly the proper thing for a sleeping-car; so, when I got into bed, I hid them as well as I could.

I did not go to sleep for a long time, and wondered a great deal who the other passengers were; what they looked like, and whether any of them had heard that I was going to New York to see my parents, after an absence of twelve years. We stopped at a great many stations, when I heard men moving about on the outside, and talking, and I imagined in every instance that one of these must be the fellow who had tried to steal me, and that he was inquiring of the train men if a boy of my description had taken the train at Three Rivers. Once during the night we backed

on to a side track, and another train went whizzing by, and I hoped that my enemy was on that train, and felt safer when the swaying motion of the car in which I rode gave evidence of rapid travelling the other way.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOE ALLEN, OF KANSAS.

IT is the boast of most worthy people that they are ready to rise from their beds with the sun, and go about their labors in the cool of the day; therefore it has always been a source of mortification to me that I sleep soundest and best at seven o'clock in the morning, except on Sundays and holidays, when, being free to sleep as long as I choose, I tire of lying in bed at four o'clock, and am troubled to occupy my time until others are stirring. One result of this unnatural habit is that I do not like to go to bed early; and as I spent the earlier years of my life in a community where boys were expected to cheerfully wash their feet at seven o'clock, and go contentedly to bed at eight, I fear there will be general indignation among my readers when I state that I have regretted many times that I was not permitted to run barefooted all day, and go to bed at midnight, without washing my feet at all.

As there was no necessity for my getting up early, I awoke a little after daylight the next

morning, and made the discovery that the black porter had found my boots during the night, and polished them, which I accepted as a hint that I should have blackened them myself before leaving home, for the porter seemed very surly because of the pains he had been to in making me presentable to a sleeping-car company.

None of the other passengers were stirring, so I concluded to get up, which I did after dressing in bed, and discovering that my appointments did not correspond with those of the car, which seemed to me to be little less than magnificent. Everything belonging to me was as unsatisfactory as the red-top boots by the time I crawled out of bed; and as the porter changed the bed back to a seat, he looked at me in a way which was anything but soothing to my unsteady nerves, and I concluded he had formed a very unfavorable opinion of me for starting on a journey without polishing my boots.

It was at least an hour before any of the passengers appeared, and I spent the time in wondering what sort of people were behind the different curtains, and what they would think of me when they finally got up. There was one pair of shoes, at the forward end of the car, which attracted my attention, although there was nothing remarkable about them, further than that they were rather large.

They stood in such a way that the open tops looked like a pair of eyes, and I imagined, from the impudent manner in which they stared at me, that when their owner got up, he would look at me for a moment, and then burst into a laugh.

On a peg above the bed was the hat belonging to the shoes, and this seemed to be grinning at me, and rolling around to get a better view. I sincerely hoped that the owner of the hat would be found dead when the porter went to call him, I was so certain he would be my enemy; but though the other passengers began to appear, and paid little attention to me, the unfriendly shoes and hat were not disturbed. There were only a few passengers, mostly business men on their way east, and I noticed that none of them dressed in bed, as I did; it was fortunate that there were no ladies in the car.

At last all the beds were made up except the one below the grinning hat, and I was beginning to think that my wishes had killed the man, when he suddenly appeared between the curtains and began rubbing his eyes. Instead of looking at me, and laughing, as I had expected, he did not look at anything or anybody, but after slipping on his shoes and pantaloons, he collected all his other effects in his arms, and went swinging down the car toward the washroom, walking with such ease, in

spite of the motion, that I imagined he must be an old traveller. He was a rather good-natured looking man, of middle age, and when I followed him into the washroom, having a curiosity to know what he would do, I found him taking a bath, and accusing the porter of keeping dirty towels, although it had occurred to me only a little while before that the towels were scrupulously clean.

As the passenger rubbed his neck with the clean towel which the porter produced with great swiftness and humility, he denounced the railroad and sleeping-car managers for a bad lot, and acted as though he had a notion to kick the porter as the only representative of monopoly present. He felt as much at home as though he were in his own room, apparently, and did not look at anything or anybody, though we were passing through what seemed to me to be a very interesting country, and after saying to the porter that he was at the head of a movement to cut down the fees of sleeping-car porters from twenty-five to fifteen cents, he put on his hat and coat, after ordering the porter to brush them, and walked into the other car. The other passengers soon followed him, and I was left alone again, in a little room which was used for smoking.

I don't know whether it was regret that I was not as capable and independent as the owner of

the grinning hat, or whether it was the feeling of loneliness which came over me as I went further and further away from Three Rivers, but any way tears came into my eyes, and were there when the grinning hat came back, with a toothpick just below its rim. Its owner sat down opposite me, holding an unlighted cigar in his left hand as he leisurely picked his teeth with his right, and, though I was looking out of the window, he saw my distress.

“What’s the matter?” he inquired, with a good deal more kindness in his voice than I had expected of him.

I wiped my eyes with Pidg’s handkerchief, secretly hoping he would notice its quality, and replied that I was lonesome.

“Have you had your breakfast?”

“No,” I answered.

“Then you’re hungry; that’s what ails you. Have you any money?”

I nodded my head, and he asked to see my pocketbook. After I had handed it over, which I did promptly, for there was something in his face which gave me confidence in him, he counted the money it contained, and gave it back, saying as he did so:—

“Come along with me, and you’ll feel better, A boy with a hundred and sixty dollars

in his pocket can easily get over being lonesome."

I meekly followed him into the next car, inwardly thanking him for his kindness, and found a number of negro waiters serving breakfast. My new-found friend seated me at one of the tables, and a waiter promptly appeared in answer to a snap of his fingers. He was not at all afraid of the porter, or of the waiters, and was altogether so good-natured that I thought it was fortunate for me that he was an honest man, for I would have readily loaned him all my money.

"What would you like to eat?" he said to me, placing a bill of fare before me.

There were so many articles on the bill of fare that I soon became confused in looking at them, which my friend apparently noticed, for he took the card himself, and deliberately looked it over.

"Where do you get your tenderloin, William?" he finally said to the waiter, whose name was not William, I am certain.

"In Chicago, sir."

"Well, if you can recommend the quality, bring him a tenderloin beefsteak, well done, some fried potatoes, a cup of coffee, two hot rolls, and a plate of corned beef hash. That will do for a starter, and I want you to hurry, for the boy is hungry."

While waiting for the breakfast to be brought in, my friend explained the various objects along the road about which he thought I might be curious, which entertained me very much, for I had been wondering about them all morning; and when the tenderloin finally arrived, he very kindly looked over a package of letters he took from his pocket, thinking, no doubt, that I could eat with more comfort if I was not watched. A man who sat opposite me showed a disposition to watch the awkward manner in which I ate my food, and my friend promptly engaged him in conversation, and I learned incidentally that my benefactor was a travelling man, which greatly increased my admiration for him.

After I had finished my breakfast, I produced my pocketbook to pay for it, but the man said, "This is on me," and paid for it himself.

When we returned to the sleeping-car, I noticed that in the conversation carried on in the smoking-room, where most of the men collected, my new acquaintance was superior in information to any of the others, and though he did not say much, what he did say was so directly to the point that the passengers had great respect for him. Once, when I stepped out to get a drink of water, I heard a fresh young fellow inquire who was "with that boy," to which my new-found friend promptly

replied, "He is with me," which closed the conversation.

During the morning the conductor of the sleeping-car appeared from some secret place, for I had not seen him before, and he had a disagreeable habit of looking at me, as though he wondered why I was not out in the emigrant coach. My friend rightly concluded that this was annoying to me; so he began finding fault with the way the car was managed, and greatly humiliated the fellow, in spite of his brass buttons and dapper appearance. He also trimmed off a brakeman who came into the smoking-room immediately after leaving every station, and who wanted to make a bet with me on the result of a slugging-match advertised to take place in Chicago that week; and my new acquaintance was altogether so useful that I don't know what I should have done without him.

He paid for my dinner as he had paid for my breakfast, and after he had smoked a while, explained canals, coal mines, potteries, etc., as we swiftly passed them, all of which was very interesting, for we had nothing of that kind in our country. In short, he spent his time in being agreeable to me, knowing that I was inexperienced and ignorant, and though he did not say much except in answer to my questions, he made me feel free to ask about whatever interested me. He exhib-

ited no euriosity about my personal history, except as to where I was going, and when I told him to New York, he asked to see my railroad ticket. This he looked at a moment, and then handed it back, saying that he would see me on the right train in Chicago.

We arrived in Chicago at three o'clock in the afternoon, after I had started to leave the train several times at the numerous suburban stations, and although the noise and the crowd in the depot almost made me crazy, my friend left his own baggage at a check stand, and went coolly about securing my trunk, and transferring it to the carriage in which we were to ride to another station. Arriving there, he ehecked the trunk for New York, bought me a sleeping-car ticket out of a bill I gave him, and then found my berth in the car for me, after which he made arrangements to depart, for much to my regret he said he intended to stop in Chicago.

I expressed my appreeiation of his kindness as best I could, but he waived it off as nothing, and said that he had once been a boy himself, and just about as green as I was at my age.

“When you become a man,” he said, “and meet a boy who is lonesome, do as much for him as I have done for you, and we will be square.”

I expressed a fear that I would not get along so

well in New York as I had in Chicago, to which he replied : —

“When you leave the train, get into the first hack you come across, and tell the driver to take you to the Gilsey House. When you get to the hotel, put your name down on the book you will find on the counter, and tell the clerk that Joe Allen, of Kansas, sent you there, and he will give you a good room.”

I promised to follow his instructions, whereupon he bade me good-by, spoke a word to the porter, at the same time putting something into his hand, and disappeared.

After leaving Chicago, we passed through a great many towns I had heard of from people who lived in Three Rivers, and I was so intent in watching for these that I got along quite well with the new company, which was larger than that on the other train, and apparently more select.

By the time it was dark, I had found out at least a half-dozen men whom I had heard extol, in the most extravagant fashion, the towns in which they had formerly lived, for we passed through them, and I could see from the stations where we stopped that they were like ordinary towns, and that the people I had heard praised were like the rest of us. This discovery, coupled with the circumstance that the porter treated me with great respect

(I think his politeness was due to Mr. Allen's interview with him), made me feel quite comfortable, and I went to bed to think over a letter I intended to write to Tibby, where I soon fell to dreaming that I was on the wagon, going to a convention, and that Pidg and Tibby were on the horses, and urging them into a run with long whips.

CHAPTER IX.

ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK.

I GOT along so well on the sleeping-car that I disliked the thought of leaving it, and taking my chances in a place of which I knew nothing, but the train seemed to run faster as we neared New York, as though something very interesting was going on there, and the passengers became nervous and restless as they discussed the probability of our arriving on time, which was eight o'clock in the evening.

The first morning out of Chicago we passed several schools at which Three Rivers people had graduated, and of which I had heard a great deal; and the fact that they were not at all like what they had been represented, greatly encouraged me, but as we neared New York the towns were larger than I had imagined; the farms were as much better than those with which I had been familiar as the passengers on the train were superior to me, and the old fear returned that my clothes were not suitable for the son of rich

parents, and that they would form an unfavorable impression of me at once because of it.

When we finally arrived in New York, and I joined the procession in leaving the train, I supposed that the people I saw rushing into the depot had heard of my arrival, and were looking for me with intent to rob, as I had been told that the New York people were very unscrupulous; but fortunately none of them knew me, and while they kept pushing into the building, and out toward the train, I escaped unnoticed, and passed into the waiting-room, where I lounged around with so much unconcern for a while that the people who were there no doubt imagined that I was waiting for the boy from the West, too.

I looked as savage as I could, hoping to thus throw off suspicion from myself, and I remember encountering a pleasant-faced man who I believed was the only honest citizen of New York, and who was probably there to warn me of danger; but before I could make a confession to him, he took a seat near a couple of ruffians who were reading newspapers, and I was afraid to make myself known.

Other trains arrived while I was in the waiting-room, and their passengers came rushing in with so much haste that I imagined I had been followed by unscrupulous men all along the route,

they having heard in some unaccountable manner of the hundred and sixty dollars I carried, which was so alarming that I had a mind to call out in a loud voice that I was the boy they were looking for, and ask one of the number to make a fair division of my money, since it was certain that they were bound to get it, but as none of them seemed to have a suspicion that I was the boy they were after, I determined to make a bold break for the hotel, and put myself in the care of Joe Allen's friend; therefore I wandered out of the building with as much unconcern as I could muster, and told the first hackman I met to drive me to the Gilsey House.

I thought the fellow was mad because the drive would cause him to miss his chance of catching the prize, and running him off to some unfrequented part of the town where robbery and murder could be done without attracting the attention of the others, but, whatever his thoughts were, he bundled me into the carriage, shut the door, and hurried away as fast as his horses could go, probably with a view of returning to the station as soon as possible, and taking his chance again.

It seemed to me, from the glimpses I could get of them from the hack window, that the people of New York were all stark mad. There was a

stream of foot passengers and vehicles of every sort vigorously crowding and pushing in the direction we were travelling, while another stream, equally formidable, was crowding and pushing the other way. The streets and houses were lit up so gayly that I imagined that there must be some great celebration in progress, though I could not imagine what the celebration was about, for it was neither the Fourth of July nor Christmas. The houses were so high that I could not see their tops, though in one of them I counted twelve windows, one above another, which reminded me that Pidg Behee's greatest ambition was to live long enough to see a four story building.

The noise, which seemed to be a mixture of howls, yells, and rumbles, gave me a headache, and I was glad when the hack stopped in front of a large white building, and the driver announced that we were at the Gilsey House.

Two or three colored men hurriedly opened the carriage door, and although I thought they were surprised when I stepped out, they said nothing, which encouraged me so much that I paid the driver with considerable ease. I had probably done the driver an injustice, for he gave me six dollars in change out of a ten-dollar bill, although I had expected him to demand as much more, for

that was what the Three Rivers people said he would do, and as I walked into the hotel I thought of looking the fellow up after I became acquainted, and thanking him for his kindness.

A good many well dressed men looked at me rather curiously as I tremblingly put my name on the register, and when I said that Joe Allen, of Kansas, had sent me there, the clerk seemed to be greatly pleased, for he wanted to know how Mr. Allen was getting along. On my replying that he was quite well, and had sent his respects, the clerk mentioned the matter to his companion, who also seemed pleased to know that Mr. Allen was well, for I saw him smiling quite good-naturedly.

“Mr. Allen said that if I mentioned his name, you would give me a good room,” I said again, to which the clerk replied by ringing a bell, and telling the person who appeared in answer to it to show me to No. 836.

I had been told about the elevators in New York hotels, and was not surprised when we got into one, though I trembled a little when I thought of the rope breaking, but we reached the top safely, and I was shown into No. 836. The room was certainly handsomely furnished, though rather small, and while it had but one window, this looked out into a court, which I supposed was an advantage, for the clerk had certainly looked

pleased when I mentioned Mr. Allen's name, and I had no doubt he had given me the very best room available, though it was on the top floor.

I immediately wrote a note to Mr. Barton, telling him of my arrival, and that I was in room 836, Gilsey House, and after addressing it as directed, I rang the bell for a porter to mail it, as Mr. Lander had told me to do. A man appeared soon after who would have been a banker or a merchant in Three Rivers, judging from his appearance, but he took the letter when I said I wanted it mailed, and went away, and I would have given half of my money to have heard what he said about me to his companions.

It was at least a quarter of a mile to the bottom of the well on which my window faced, and it seemed to me that all the noises from the street collected in there, and refused to be driven out. I could easily pick out the different sounds, — the clatter of horses' hoofs on the stone pavements; the tramping of feet on the sidewalks; the ringing of bells; the rumbling of heavy wagons and of carriages, all combined in one great big Roar. Once a fire engine went rattling by, — it sounded as though it had appeared at the bottom of the well, and then disappeared at the top; and the thought occurred to me that probably the fire was at my father's house, and that

he and mother would be burned up before I could see them, which distressed me so much that I rang the bell again, and asked the man who appeared if he knew whose house was on fire. But he didn't know, and I was compelled to wait until morning to find out. It occurred to me as rather strange that the man did not hurry off to the fire, and assist in saving the furniture, as the people did in Three Rivers, but then I remembered a statement I had heard that New York people were selfish, and didn't care how others prospered, so long as they prospered themselves.

I was interrupted in this reflection by the entrance of a man who did not knock, and who turned the key in the lock as soon as he was on the inside, and put his back against the door. He was rather well dressed, but he was evidently careless in his habits, for his coat collar was turned up, and in other respects he seemed to be in a hurry.

"Have you anything against me?" he inquired, as soon as he recovered his breath, and looking at me sharply.

I supposed this was his way of commencing a quarrel in which I would lose my money, but I managed to say that I had not.

"I have a pointer on you," he continued, still standing with his back to the door, "and if you

will help me, I now have a chance of getting to the front."

The very man I had been warned against, — the man with a scheme which needed a little of that assistance which ready money alone can give! My first idea was to claim that I had only fifty dollars, and give him that; and while I was thinking how to give him that amount without exposing the other contents of the big leather pocketbook, the man pulled a little table into the centre of the room, and sat down at it.

"If you will give me the facts in your case, and keep them from the other fellows," he said, producing a bundle of blank paper and a pencil, "it will enable me to distinguish myself on the *World*, where I am employed, and lead up to something better. It will be the making of me if you will keep the door locked until morning."

I felt kindly toward the man when I found that he was not after my money, and promised to do what I could to help him, though I did not clearly understand what he wanted.

"You have been the talk of the country for twelve years," he continued, looking at the door, and lowering his voice, "and if I make the first announcement of your return, it will attract the attention of the old man, and result in my getting more pay. I represent five outside papers,

besides the *World*, and I'll hit them all for a thousand words to-night. Now, then, give up."

He had his paper spread out by this time, and began asking me questions so rapidly, and noting the replies, that I thought he must have it all down before he had covered a page. He worked with tremendous energy for quite a while, only stopping once, when he heard a noise on the outside. This seemed to startle him, for he hurriedly bundled his paper into his pocket, pushed me into a large wardrobe near him, and stepped out into the hall.

"I thought it was Palmer, of the *Trib.*," he said, when he came back, and opened the door of the wardrobe to let me out, "but I guess it wasn't."

He resumed his questioning again, working as industriously as ever, and as he finished a page of notes, he put it away in his inside coat pocket, so it could not possibly get away. This he kept up until I told him everything I knew of Three Rivers, of Tibby Cole, and of myself, although I was careful not to mention the man with the withered hand, and when he had it all he made preparations to depart.

"Would you mind my locking you up and taking the key away with me?" he said, after he had put on his hat. "You won't want to go out

before morning, and it would be a great accommodation to me."

I said I thought that arrangement would be rather awkward in case of fire, whereupon he laughed lightly, and expressed the hope that as soon as he was gone I would bolt the door on the inside, and sleep soundly until morning, and without receiving a reply, he stepped out and disappeared, leaving me in a state of perfect bewilderment.

He had left a page of writing on the table where he had been working, which I picked up, and read:—

"The marriage of Mr. Thos. Courtlandt, which occurred yesterday at one of the fashionable residences on Fifth Avenue, recalls a romantic incident in the history of the groom. He was stolen from his parents in New York when only a few months old, and taken to the far West, where he was completely lost for twelve years, although his case was referred to daily in half the newspapers of the country. Twelve years ago, as a result of a train of circumstances which cannot be explained here, he came to New York to find his parents, highly respectable people living in elegant retirement in Bleecker Street. The present editor and proprietor of the *World* was at that time a young and industrious reporter, who found the boy at

the Gilsey House, and made the first announcement of his return, a scoop which is still vividly remembered in journalistic circles. — [From the *World* twelve years hence.]”

I began to understand what my visitor had been up to, and while regretting that I had not said that although I preferred that no mention of my history be made in print, I wanted two or three copies of the paper in case he insisted upon it, a loud rap came at the door. Opening it at once, I found three gentlemen upon the outside, who looked so much like my first visitor that I knew at once what they wanted, so I related the facts in my case about as I had related them before, only pausing when two others came in. The new arrivals wanted me to commence at the beginning again, and the other three wanted me to go on from where I had left off, and although there was a prospect of a fight for a while, they finally arranged it satisfactorily, and all of them went away together in the course of half an hour, apparently the best of friends.

Instead of going to sleep when I went to bed, I began to wonder in which direction my father and mother lived from the hotel. I was completely turned round, and didn't know the points, but I decided during the night that they lived over toward the bureau, and that my father's

place of business was in the direction of the window. I was equally sure that the sea was beyond the door, and determined that I would go and look at it at the first opportunity.

In the same listless sort of fashion I concluded that my father was a large, burly man, and that my mother was pale and thin, from her long worry about me; and that my father dealt in bananas by the bunch, receiving them direct from the ships, which conclusion may have been due to the fact that I was very fond of bananas.

What would they do when they met me?

My impression was that some time during the next morning they would dash into my room, and faint away; and this belief grew upon me to such an extent that I got up to see what the water facilities were, with a view of bringing them to. I hoped they would bring camphor with them, for there was none in the room, and I knew that Mrs. Cole would recommend it in a case of that kind.

I don't think I slept any that night, though I must have dozed occasionally, for I saw the most wonderful shapes at the window, which I had left partly open. The Roar hung on to the sill with iron fingers a dozen times to peer into the room, always disappearing in a hurry, as if to spread the news that I wore a paper collar and cotton

socks. At another time my mother, pale and wan, looked in, and I felt a twinge of sorrow that I had been the cause of so much trouble. As I tossed around, I imagined that she recognized me, and hurried away to inform my father, who came floating up the well soon after; stout and burly, as I had pictured him.

There was a strange light in my room, and I wondered what it was. It turned out to be daylight, and I got up and dressed myself, feeling as though I had not slept a wink all night.

CHAPTER X.

BARTON, THE BUSINESS MANAGER.

IT was only a little after six o'clock when I went down stairs the next morning, and stood in front of the hotel, watching the people hurrying by. The Roar was not what it had been the night before, but it was growing louder all the while, and I had no doubt that in an hour or so it would be deafening.

A short distance above the hotel, and on the same street, I noticed a particularly large building, and using this as a mark, I concluded to move around a little; so I walked up and down quite unconcernedly for a while, always keeping the hotel in sight, to prevent getting lost. Several times I wanted to stop and look at the displays in the windows, but I had been told in Three Rivers not to do that, or the police would arrest me; so I walked up one side of Broadway, and down the other, regretting that Tibby and Pidg could not see how unconcerned I was in spite of all the bustle around me; they would not have known, of course, that I had the hotel in

sight all the time, and would have been quite astonished at my cool indifference.

Passing a restaurant where there was a window display of a fat cook in a white apron, suggested that I was hungry; so I went in, and sat down at one of the tables. Only one other customer was in, who seemed to be waiting for his breakfast; so I looked over the bill of fare and determined to try a lobster.

Among the people I had known in Three Rivers were several who had lived in New York in their time, and I had heard them frequently say that no one could possibly know what good living was until he had eaten of fresh lobster, fresh oysters, fresh clams, fresh bluefish, fresh mackerel, etc.; and as lobster was first on the list, and I could not test them all at one sitting, I determined to order a lobster. The price was a little high, but I ordered one, nevertheless, in connection with fried potatoes, coffee, and bread and butter.

While it was being prepared I noticed that the other occupant of the room (a man who looked like seven out of every ten men you meet, for he had a moustache, and was of medium size) was eying me closely, and that he seemed to be comparing me with a description in a paper he held in his hand, but I supposed he had noticed that I

was a stranger just come to town, and was wondering where I was from, a habit with which I was familiar.

The lobster arrived soon after, on a platter as large as those on which turkeys were served at home, and in regarding this I soon forgot the man's curiosity. The lobster looked exactly like a crawfish, except that it was red, and much larger, and when I went to digging around under the shell after the meat, I could not help comparing the proceeding to cleaning my finger nails, and concluded that lobster was not what it had been represented. I then ordered a dozen clams, but the waiter had neglected to clean them before serving, for they had great paunches on them, so I finally called for ham and eggs and did very well.

While I was eating, a waiter brought over to me a note I had seen the other guest writing, so when I read, "Are you King Cole?" I wrote under it, "Yes," and when the man had received the answer, he came over and sat down by me.

"I thought you were the boy, as soon as you came in," he said, reaching out his hand, which I took rather timidly. "My folks are not very well this morning, so I came down here to breakfast, and the first thing that attracted my eye, when I picked up the paper, was the announcement of

your arrival. I was expecting you, for I am the man who found you out, but I did not know just when you would come. I am particularly glad to see you, for I am to get the reward."

I looked at him in surprise at the announcement that he was the man who had found me out, and that he was to get the reward, so he explained:—

"I am the business manager of *The Night Watch*—"

"You are Mr. Barton, then," I said.

"Yes, I am Mr. Barton, to whom you were to write on reaching the city; but it is all right, for I have found you, any way."

I explained that I had sent the note, as he had directed, but he said he had not received it, and continued:—

"As I was saying, I am the business manager of *The Night Watch*, a weekly religious newspaper, and have been for a great many years. At the time you were advertised in the *Three Rivers* paper, it was coming to our office, in accordance with some sort of an advertising arrangement. One of the editors happened to see the notice, and as your disappearance had created a good deal of talk, and prompted your parents to offer a large reward for your return, he cut it out, and put it away in his desk, but without believing that it

referred to the real lost child, though the description was wonderfully like the one given by your parents.

“Well, the editor forgot the circumstance in course of time, being a careless fellow, and thought no more of it for twelve years, but a few weeks ago we bought him a new desk, and in rummaging about the old one I found the scrap of paper. I talked with Mr. Couldock about it, and with Mr. Gruff, who cut out the paragraph originally, and as both of them went away on their vacations about that time—I never take a vacation myself—I looked the matter up. By calling upon your parents, I found that the offer of five thousand dollars reward still held good; so without saying anything to them of my discovery, I wrote to the banker of your town in the course of a week for further particulars. His reply convinced me that you were worth the investment of two hundred dollars, so I sent that amount to him, with instructions that you be forwarded for examination. Have you the proofs with you?”

I told him I had the medallion in my pocket, but that the other effects were in my trunk, which was still at the station. He asked to look at the trinket; and after I had produced it, he compared it with certain memoranda in his possession, very much as he had compared me with the description

in the newspaper while I was waiting for the lobster.

“This seems to be all that is needed,” he said, returning it to me; “but to make sure, we will drive to the station, and get the other articles.”

Without further ado, he paid my bill and his own, called a carriage, and told the driver to take us to the Grand Central Station. On the way he asked me a few questions concerning the matter in hand, but not many, seeming to be absorbed in thinking of some other matter, and after arriving at our destination, he got possession of the trunk by producing my check, opened it, told me to pick out the articles (which I easily did, for they were in a bundle in one corner), ordered the trunk sent to the hotel, and started down town again in another hack; all in such a brisk and business-like way that I had great admiration for him.

After a long drive we stopped in what I afterwards learned was Printing-*H*ouse Square, where my companion told me to get out, which I did, and followed him up a broad stairway covered with signs. Opening a door near the top, we entered a large room, or rather two rooms connected with folding doors, containing a number of desks, though they were all unoccupied, with a single exception.

At this one sat the man who had tried to steal

me in Three Rivers! He did not look up when we came in, and although he was bending over his work, I knew him in a moment; there could be no mistake about it,—the man with the broad-axe! I was so frightened at first that I had a notion to make a rush for the stairway, and try to escape, fearing I had been led into a trap, but the face of my conductor was so honest and re-assuring, as his manner had been, that I concluded to await developments, since the chances were against me.

The business manager seemed to be looking over a pile of letters on his desk, glancing occasionally at the other man, and finally he said:—

“Well, Mr. Gruff, here is the boy.”

Mr. Gruff paid no attention to the remark for a while, going on with his writing, but finally he raised his head, and looked at me. I could not take my eyes from his, he exercised such a power over me; and I knew, as well as though he had said it in so many words, that he had made up his mind to kill me in case I ever mentioned his appearance at Three Rivers; I knew it, and acknowledged my fear of him, for I almost believed afterwards that while he was looking at me I had promised aloud to keep his secret forever.

“So that is the boy,” Gruff slowly said at last, in a voice which sounded like his name, and turning to the business manager. “If he is the

right one, there will be a great sensation on Bleecker Street within an hour.”

He bent over his work again, which seemed to be some sort of writing, and while the business manager was distributing the letters among the other desks, Mr. Gruff did not look up again. I knew what he had in his desk, as well as if I had seen it every day of my life; a broad-axe, with a short handle, and I was so certain that he was writing a declaration that he would use it in case I did not carefully guard my tongue, that I was glad to follow my conductor down the stairs, and into the street, which I did soon after. At the foot of the stairs we met two young men who seemed to be employed in the office above, for the business manager spoke to them concerning their duties, in connection with a statement that he would be away for a while, and after we had found an empty carriage passing, we got in, and drove off—to the home from which I had been stolen twelve years before, as I was informed by the man who sat beside me.

How I felt at that time—in a strange city, in company with a strange man; driving to a home which I had never seen; without knowing whether we would stop in two minutes or an hour; before a big house or a little one; in a noisy street or in a quiet one—I can never tell.

I have never had such a feeling of awe and dread before or since, and though the experience was the most momentous of my life, I cannot describe the emotions with which I was filled. Every time the carriage stopped in making its way along the crowded streets, I looked out of the window, and settled on the house which we were to enter; but we drove on and on, stopping so often that I believed the driver had lost his way, which I hoped was the case, for in that event I would be given an opportunity to return to the hotel, and recover my composure. But the business manager seemed satisfied with the progress we were making, and a few moments after he began looking out of the window, we stopped for good, before a large house on a corner, in a quiet street, which looked old-fashioned even to me, for I had just come from the best part of the city.

The business manager glanced up at the house while he was waiting for his change from the driver, and so did I, making out that it was four stories high above a basement; and as soon as the fare was paid, we walked up a flight of stone steps, and rang a bell. The door was opened from the inside at once, and we stepped into the hall, and through a door leading off from it, into the presence of my father and mother.

CHAPTER XI.

MY FATHER AND MOTHER.

I WAS so unsatisfactory in appearance, that my mother—a rather large woman, with perfectly white hair—formed a dislike for me at once, and I knew she hoped that it could be easily proven that I was not her son. There was nothing in her manner which indicated a hope that I was the lost child, but a great deal which indicated that she was suspicious of me, and that I could not possibly prove satisfactory.

I had never seen any one so stately and dignified, with the possible exception of my father, who also had white hair, besides tufts of white whiskers on each side of a very red face, and I was so afraid of both of them that I began to hope myself that they would prove that I had no claim upon them, and send me away, for I knew that they disliked me from the moment I stepped into the room.

Both of them looked at me as though there was not the slightest possibility that I was their

son, and though my father asked me to be seated, he did it from politeness, and not because he wanted me there. They seemed to know Barton, and no doubt it was out of consideration for him that they consented to see me at all. Evidently they had just come down stairs when we rang the bell, and had not seen the morning papers, for when we stepped into the parlor, they acted as though they were impatient because of being disturbed at that hour by a boy who was evidently an impostor, and so they stood while talking, as if ready to go out the moment we concluded our business.

My face and hands were rough and brown, and when my mother looked at them I regretted that I was not delicate like a boy I knew at home, who had the consumption, and whose face was as white as a girl's. I also remembered that he had small feet, and could wear a girl's shoes; and when my mother had condemned my face and hands, she looked at my coarse boots, and then at her husband, as much as to say, "How fortunate it is that this rough boy is not our child."

During this time my conductor had been telling them that there was some reason to believe that I was the lost boy, and that he had sent for me to come from my home in the West to be inspected, to which my mother replied that since their baby

son had disappeared a great many boys had been brought to them, but they were all as unlike their flesh and blood as could be. I accepted this as an intimation that I did not look like the son of such respectable-looking people as they were, and was not in the least surprised when they excused themselves soon after, and went to breakfast, saying that they would return presently, and hear the claims I had to present, though they were convinced that it would be a waste of time on both sides.

I thought the business manager was grossly offended at this proceeding, though I was willing to be rid of them on any condition, and while they were gone he did not say a word, but sat gazing vacantly out of the window into the street.

I occupied my time in looking around, and saw that the room in which we sat, as well as the two connecting with it by means of double doors, was furnished with a lavish magnificence, but the carpet did not look as though it was intended to be walked upon, or the chairs and lounges as though they were to be sat upon, or ever had been, and there were many articles scattered about which no amount of coaxing could have induced me to touch. All this affected me so much that I had a notion to tell Barton that I was sure I was not the son of these people, and propose to slip away

while they were absent, for I knew they hoped I was not, and would be disappointed in case they found that I really was; but Barton was in a bad humor, and I was afraid to mention it. I had heard that people in great extremity sometimes found relief in prayer, therefore I closed my eyes and asked help from Heaven in my attempts to prove that I was not related to any one in New York.

After a long absence they came leisurely into the room again, and sat down near the window which faced the street. The business manager had not recovered his good-nature, so he did not speak until he was addressed.

“Our child had a long scar above his left eye,” my mother finally said, looking at the business manager. “If the boy you have brought has not such a mark, we need go no further.”

The business manager was more offended than ever at their cool indifference, so he said for me to walk over to the lady, and submit myself to an examination, adding in a spirited manner,—

“In bringing the boy here, I believed I was doing you a favor, but you treat me as though I were a suspicious character attempting to impose upon you. I am not accustomed to such treatment as this.”

My father hastily assured Barton that they appreciated his kind motives, but that they had been bothered so much that he hoped he would excuse what had seemed to be impatience.

I went over to my mother's side, and the mark over my eye was so distinct that they both took considerable interest in me at once, at last sending for a servant, who came and looked at the scar as attentively as they had done. It was the servant's opinion that the mark was very significant; indeed, it was so significant that my mother kept me by her, and asked a great many questions relating to my history in Three Rivers, all of which I answered as best I could, always giving Mrs. Cole as my authority in answering questions relating to my babyhood. This brought up the subject of the bundle we had brought, and it was produced and opened.

The little knit socks attracted most attention, and the serving woman (who answered to the name of Miss Ann) being called in again, and expressing the opinion that they, too, were significant, my mother's interest increased so much as she examined the articles that when I produced the medallion from my pocket, she broke into tears, and took me in her arms. My father was also visibly affected, and when he said to the business manager that he would see him again,

the business manager bowed stiffly, and withdrew.

My mother was quite affected, only recovering her composure to break out sobbing again, so she went up stairs with Miss Ann presently, and left me with my father, who took my hands in his, and said my return was a very great surprise, as they had long since given me up for dead.

“We were indifferent when you came, because we believed you were another of the impostors,” he said, quite gently, “but there is no doubt now that you are our son. The little medallion you took from your pocket just now was tied around your neck when we saw you last, and your mother recognized the articles of clothing, but it is all so strange and unexpected that we are not quite ourselves.”

I hope that the feeling of wretchedness which I experienced while sitting alone with my father, knowing that my mother had gone to bed sick because I was not what she expected, is not at all common, for I have never suffered so much before or since; and although I expected my father to put on his hat every moment, and go out to his work, and give me a chance to collect myself, he did nothing of the kind, apparently having no other thought just then than to make himself agreeable to me, at which he was very awkward.

He was a very kind and gentle man, but his situation was odd, like my own. My long absence had caused him to forget how a boy should be treated, and I believe he was uncomfortable, too, though he seemed to be willing to accept the uncomfortable situation cheerfully. There were a number of portraits hanging against the wall in an adjoining room, and he pointed out one of them, after placing a pair of glasses upon his nose, as my Uncle Henry, who lived on Commonwealth Avenue, in Boston. Near him was suspended my Aunt Charlotte, and my cousin Tommy, and Tommy's shoulders were covered with a great lace collar, which caused him to look like a girl.

While I was thinking that I should never like any of my Boston relatives, my mother sent Miss Ann in to say that she wanted to see me in her room, and I accordingly followed the servant up the stairway which began in the hall, remarking as I went up that Miss Ann had holes in the heels of her stockings, which was the only familiar thing I had seen since coming to New York.

My mother was lying down in a room above the one in which I had first seen her, and when I came in she motioned me to a seat beside her bed. I knew that she regarded me as an undesirable relative, suddenly arrived, to whom she thought it a duty to be kind; therefore when she asked me to

tell what I first remembered, and what I had been doing since, I made a poor story out of it, being unable to do either Tibby Cole or his wife justice.

It seemed unjust that my mother had expected to find me as delicately reared as though I had never left her care, but she did, and mentioned it as a kind of apology for her action when I first came in. She had in her mind a picture of her boy, she said, and though she had not seen him in twelve years, she was as familiar with the picture as though she had seen the original grow into it day by day; this was the reason she at first doubted my identity — I did not look like the pictures; for when she thought of her boy being put to hard work, with rough people, she believed so much in his blood as to imagine that he would come back to her, in spite of it all, refined and intellectual.

At my mother's request Miss Ann pulled back the curtains from the windows, and revealed three framed pictures; it was not necessary for them to tell me that they represented the lost boy as the mother imagined him at different ages. She had believed that her son was with rough people, a gentleman by instinct because of his birth, and that he continued in this way in spite of the jeers and taunts of his captors, and would finally return to her arms as well dressed, as well educated, and

as well trained, as though he had never been away from her.

For honest Tibby Cole and his good wife she had the greatest contempt, though I could not have fallen into better hands had God himself directed it, as I believe He did, and though I had hoped that she would be very grateful, and write them an acknowledgment of their kindness, which would please them, she even found fault with their name, and said it had a common sound.

My father, who had followed me up the stairs, and sat quietly by during the conversation, was kind enough to say that her ideas were wrong and unjust, but her manner of answering him convinced me that she was a woman set in her ways, and that no difference how friendly my father might be, I could never hope for the friendship of my mother. I came to this conclusion within an hour after I first saw her, and I have never since had reason to change my mind.

As my mother talked this over in her quiet, dignified way, I believed she was giving me to understand that she should never like me, and was justifying herself in it, all of which I took so much to heart that, had she suggested it, I would have cheerfully gone away, never to return. But this was not suggested, nor thought of, so for her determination to bear with me, I resolved to do

the best I could, and be as unobjectionable as possible.

We had dinner at five o'clock in the afternoon, in the front room of the basement, which had windows looking out on two streets, and although I watched them both narrowly, I made a great many mistakes in eating my food. Instead of pointing out my errors, and telling me the proper way, my mother watched me in nervous astonishment, as if to say, "Is it possible that a son of mine knows no better than this?" This caused me to make more mistakes than ever, and the most wretched day of my life was the first day I spent with my new-found parents; I do not believe I could have stood it at all, had not my father looked at me kindly when he had an opportunity, as if to say that we would get together presently, and agree on an arrangement which would be more comfortable to all concerned.

When we returned to the front room again, after the miserable dinner, we sat for an hour in silence, until it began to grow dusk. From her position in the bow window on the corner, my mother could look into two streets, and as I sat there in the twilight watching her, I imagined that she was still listening for the footsteps of the boy in the picture, and trying to forget that I had arrived at all. My father sat back in the room,

and I could make him out by his white hair and whiskers long after other objects were lost in the darkness.

It was about this time that they began talking of my old life in Three Rivers again, and asking me questions about it.

“What did you do on the trips into the country?” my mother inquired. “You say you usually accompanied Mr. Cole.”

Believing that she would in time find it out any way, I confessed that I played the violin, and that I had brought the instrument with me; not with a view of ever playing it again, but because I had owned it since I was six years old, and it seemed like an old friend. Immediately Miss Ann was summoned, and told to bring it there. She returned with it presently, having been informed by me that it was in the bottom of my trunk, which had arrived from the hotel during the day. My mother handed it to me, and asked me to play.

I dreaded to make a sound with it in that quiet place, and struck the strings, in tuning it, so lightly that they gave forth plaintive sounds, as if they were sorry for me, and though I dreaded to disgrace the violin as I had disgraced myself, I drew the bow across the strings, and felt that I was in the company of an old friend. For a little while I forgot my strange surroundings, and

was once more in company with Tibby and Mrs. Cole, and Pidg, and felt like myself.

I do not remember what I played, except that whatever it was must have been mournful, for I was in that frame of mind; and though I played with all the skill of which I was capable, they neither commended nor condemned the performance when I had finished, which caused me to remember that more indifferent playing had been noisily applauded in other places within my recollection. I played for an hour or more, pausing between the pieces to listen to the footsteps on the outside, and watch the shadows on the window from the shops opposite, and though they were both perfectly quiet, I came to the conclusion that my father was pleased with the performance, and felt more friendly toward me than my mother. Had it been necessary for me to ask one of them a favor that night, I should have gone to my father.

I had learned to say good-night to Tibby Cole and his wife because I loved them; and when I knew that it was time for me to retire to my own room, I felt so kindly toward my father for his gentle manner toward me that I went over to where he sat, and wished him good-night, as naturally as I had ever done at home. He responded in a pleasant voice, and I was retiring

from the room when I remembered my mother. The fact that I had started to go up stairs without noticing her, caused me to stammer and hesitate in saying good-night; and when I reached my room I felt that we were farther apart than ever, and that I could never please her, no matter what I did. The room which I was to occupy was a very large and stately one, on the corner, and by standing in the bow window I could look into both the streets, and watch for the boy who would be welcome in that house, and not be regarded as an intruder.

I felt that my mother would be ashamed to present me to her aristocratic friends, who had been sending in congratulations all day, and that I would be ashamed to meet them, for I did not know how to act; and though she would not teach me, I felt certain she would not fail to upbraid me in her mind for my awkwardness. I did not know what time to get up in the morning, or what to do after I was up, and felt so wretched altogether that I lay down on the bed in my clothes, and sobbed myself to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ATTIC GHOST.

THE portion of Bleecker Street in which we lived had formerly been devoted largely to private residences of the better class, but at the time of which I write there were shops in the basements instead of cooks, and office desks in the parlors instead of pianos. The Roar had been driven out of that locality, providing it had ever lived there; for on the second morning after my arrival, I looked out of my windows, and noticed that the streets were as quiet as those in Three Rivers, though not at all like them, for the buildings were of brick and stone, and very high.

Our house was kept neat and clean, outside as well as in, but many of the others looked dirty, and in bad repair, though I could easily imagine that when they were built their owners were quite proud of themselves. A few of the houses retained their old character as residences, and had names on their front doors, but as a rule these were devoted to boarders, and though a great

number of people lived in our neighborhood, they lived in rooms, and not in houses of their own, as we did.

I learned somehow — probably from Miss Ann, who dashed into my room at all hours of the day and night, to see that I was not playing with matches, and with whom I soon made friends — that my name was Thomas Courtlandt, having been named for my cousin Tom, in Boston, and that our part of Bleecker Street was at one time a favorite residence quarter, but that the people, as they grew richer, had moved to more desirable localities. Miss Ann had heard my mother say some years before that if her son ever came back, she intended to follow her old neighbors, and give him the advantages his wealth and position warranted; but I knew that we would never leave Bleecker Street, for though the son had returned, he was not satisfactory.

In the forenoon of the second day after my arrival, Miss Ann came into my room with her bonnet on, and said that I was to follow her, which I did without hesitation, though I didn't know but that she had been commissioned to throw me into the river, for she seemed to be a capable sort of a person who could do anything.

As we walked along, it occurred to me that I had seen her before somewhere, for her face

looked familiar, and then I remembered that she looked like the woman on the new silver dollars. I had never seen the lady on the silver dollars full in the face, but as I looked up at Miss Ann, who walked beside me, there was certainly a marked resemblance from a side view, for Miss Ann's lips were thick and determined looking, and she had a large, fat face, though her hair was dressed differently from that of the figure on the money.

I supposed Miss Ann was the cook, but when I mentioned it to her, she said that she had never been, and never would be, a cook, and that she was of more importance than that. This was probably true, for she took me to a number of places (including a tailor shop in a room which had once been a parlor, where she ordered me two suits of clothes) and paid out money, took receipts, and transacted other business. I noticed that whenever she wanted to look at anything in a window, she stopped and looked at it under the eyes of the police, and I thought from this that she must be a very bold woman.

I wondered a great deal at all I saw, and as Miss Ann politely answered all my questions, we soon became quite confidential, so much so that she informed me that my noise at home made my mother's head ache, and that I had been sent out

to give her an opportunity to sleep. This greatly humiliated me, for I remembered clattering down the stairs two or three times during the morning to look at something which attracted my attention in the street, though I had no intention of being noisy or offensive. Miss Ann also said I had a bad habit of whistling, which only negro boys should indulge in. I did not enjoy the sights so much after that, and went to my room, when I returned home, on tip-toe, where I occupied myself for a time in writing a letter to Tibby Cole, in which I expressed the opinion that my New York relatives did not seem to understand me as well as he did.

In the afternoon I made a tour of the house, while my father and mother were entertaining some one in the parlor, and found that Miss Ann was general manager of two other women and a man, who composed the help. These four were disposed to be friendly, and I sincerely regretted that I could not eat with them, for I knew I would feel more at ease; but when I mentioned it, they did not seem to be particularly pleased. I don't know that they were displeased, but they all laughed at the idea, as though it was absurd, and Miss Ann said that in a little while I would feel as big as anybody. One of the others said that I had "the blood" in me (my mother's I

thought she meant) which would soon show itself, and I would quit talking about wanting to eat with the servants. I learned also that Mr. Barton was the guest in the parlor, and that the five thousand dollars reward for my return had been paid him, which caused me to feel that it was a great deal more than I was worth.

I went to bed quite early that night, having lost considerable sleep by reason of my excitement in coming to a strange home, and was awakened about midnight by realizing that some one was in the room. When I opened my eyes I saw the figure of a woman, dressed in white, standing in front of me, at the foot of the bed, and I had no more doubt that it was a ghost than I had of my own identity.

“Who are you?” I feebly inquired.

“A Ghost,” was the reply; whereupon the ghost sat down beside me on the bed, and began examining the scar over my left eye, in which they all took a rather remarkable interest. The fingers were small, and there was warm blood in them, so I soon recovered my composure, though I trembled from my previous fright as the examination progressed.

I have never seen a more distressed face than the one which came into my room that night, and when the woman to whom it belonged raised the

window curtain to enable her to make a closer examination of the scar, the eyes looked to me as though they had grown dull and weak from weeping and sorrow. I was not afraid of her after I had seen her pitiful face, and when she had sat silently at the foot of the bed a while, I asked her if she lived in the house.

“Yes,” she answered, with a curious and pitiful sort of a sigh, “you are my nephew; your mother is my sister.”

I wondered why I had not seen her before, and she explained why, after thinking over her answer before giving it:—

“Because I am queer, and moody, and do not see company,” she said. “I have not seen any one for so many years that my acquaintances believe me to be dead, and have long since ceased to inquire about me. I have trouble here.”

She came over closer to me, and put my hand to her heart, which was beating at such a rate that I wondered I could not hear it.

“There are servants in this house who have never seen me,” she said again, after a long pause, “for I have not left my room before in many years, but I wanted to see you because I was very fond of you when you were a baby; it was I who let you fall against the window when you received the cut over the eye, and I have thought ever

since that you were stolen to punish my carelessness."

It occurred to me at once that here was an opportunity to find out about my earlier history, so I told her that my mother did not seem to be pleased with me, and that I knew nothing except that whereas once I was lost, I had recently been found.

My companion never answered a question until she had meditated a long while, and she had a way of sighing that made my heart ache, — a subdued, pitiful sob such as a child might make in peaceful sleep, after a fit of crying, and it sounded particularly sad in a grown person, who could not forget a sorrow like a child, but at last she said: —

"I am not surprised that your mother does not like you, for she does not like any one. She has not seen me for ten years, and Miss Ann, who brings me something to eat twice a day, has given me her word that when I am fatally ill, no one shall know it until I am dead. Then let them look upon my pale face, and be haunted by it."

She said this with a considerable vigor, as though she was a good hater, but was soon in her old quiet, thoughtful mood, and sighed in the pitiful way I had remarked when she first came in. She was looking out of the window, but I am certain that she was so lost in thought that she

would not have seen it had a flaming torch appeared before her.

“Tell me what you know of yourself,” she said, turning toward me, “from the time you began to remember, and I will tell you all I know. Don’t miss anything; tell me everything.”

I was so anxious to hear what she knew concerning me that I told her everything, even to the second appearance of the strange man, and my seeing him after arriving in New York. She looked at me attentively during the telling, and seemed to be more interested in my accounts of Tibby and his wife, and their way of making a living, than in anything else. After I had concluded, she thought a while, and then fulfilled her promise.

“Your father and mother were married a good many years before you were born,” she said, “and when you finally appeared — you were born in this house — there was great rejoicing. I rejoiced as much as any one, for I had not then become queer or moody. Your father was a banker and a broker at that time, though he has long since retired, and his enthusiasm was so great that he invited a great number of his associates to the house to see you, and they drank wine and feasted to such an extent that when you were brought into the room for their inspection, their noisy con-

gratulations set you to crying, and you had to be carried out.

“Your mother and I were only children, and when she was married, I came to live with her. I had some money of my own, and your father has always had the management of it. Every year he brings me a statement of it, and it is always right to a penny, for he is very methodical and exact. At these times he asks me if I am not ready to resume my old place downstairs, when I reply that I am not, whereupon he goes away again. I am waiting for the invitation to come from my sister, but she is such a stubborn woman that I know it will never come, and that she will never see me until I am dead, when I hope my pale face will haunt her until she dies.

“My sister had no heart for anything save for society a grade above her. A great many of those who are now the richest people in New York formerly lived in this vicinity, and were our friends, and her ambition in life has been to keep up the acquaintance. She was rather fond of you, but I was permitted to look after you a great deal, and it was my greatest pleasure. There was no objection to this until one day I put you in a little chair to look out of the window. You were six months old, and very stout and active, and while I was on the other side of the room, with my back

turned to you, I heard a crash, and ran over to find that you had fallen against the window glass and broken it, and that blood was streaming from your face. Your mother ran up in response to my cries, and carried you out of the room, denouncing me in the most cruel manner for my carelessness. I retired to my room, and heard from the servants that you would probably lose your eye, but you did not, though the wound healed slowly ; indeed, before it was entirely well you were stolen. Your mother was out of the house somewhere at the time, and when the nurse came into the room where she had left you for a moment she supposed that I had taken you up to my room, which I often did when my sister was away, but at no other time. When your mother returned unexpectedly, and was told that you were in my possession, she was very angry, and told the nurse to get you at once. The nurse returned pale as death, and said you were not there.

“The house was filled with police officers and sympathizing friends for a month, and your father and mother spent great sums of money in searching for you. The nurse girl was arrested, but she proved that she went to the kitchen, and remained there, after finding (as she supposed) that I had taken you up stairs ; the cook was arrested, but she proved by Miss Ann that she was busy all

that afternoon, and it is not known to this day who took you, or anything about it."

This was the story; and as soon as my visitor had finished telling it, she went out of the room as quietly as she had come. I found out afterwards, from my father and Miss Ann, that the story of my disappearance was substantially as it had been told to me by my aunt. I mentioned her visit to Miss Ann, but I never pretended to any one else that I knew of her presence in the house, though I soon formed the habit of visiting her room in the attic story, and she was always glad to see me. We were both lonesome, and Miss Ann often joined us, when we talked in whispers, like wicked conspirators.

My aunt was of great assistance to me, too, for I told her how humiliated I had felt because of my rough manners, and she at once went to work to teach me better, showing much patience, though I was so dull that I wonder she did not become discouraged.

She was of about the same figure as my mother, though not quite so stout, and I imagined that she was about forty years old. Her face had once been handsome, I thought, and there was much gentleness and refinement in her manner. I knew at once that her estrangement from my mother was due to a fit of sulks, which had lasted nine or

ten years already, and as both of them were very stubborn, I had no idea that their insignificant difficulty would ever be made up, though both of them were no doubt anxious to bring it about. I had no hope that I could ever accomplish it, unless it would be through my father; and when I mentioned this, my aunt said that nothing could ever reconcile them, and that as long as they lived they would live as they were living then.

CHAPTER XIII.

BARTON'S FAMILY.

IT was arranged within a few weeks after my arrival that I should attend a commercial school during four hours of each day, as I was so far behind other boys of my age that I should have disgraced my family elsewhere, and that from two to five every afternoon I should learn something of business in the office of *The Night Watch*, the paper on which Mr. Barton was employed. Accordingly, from nine to twelve, and from one to two, I studied all sorts of things at a school where there were no other boys, but only young men from out of town, with whom I usually lunched at noon at some of the neighboring counters.

Promptly at two o'clock I left my books (which I really studied very hard, though I did not make much progress) and joined Barton, who took a good deal of friendly interest in my progress. At first I had little to do in the office of *The Night Watch*, except to look at the others while they worked, including Mr. Gruff, who spoke to me

one evening, and said that his object in carrying me off had been to secure the reward, which Barton had robbed him of, and that he hoped everything would be pleasant between us in the future; but in course of time a desk was assigned me, and all the letters pertaining to subscriptions to the paper were placed thereon, ready for me when I arrived at two o'clock.

At the beginning of the week a printed proof of the mailing list was furnished me, on which I noted from day to day the subscribers whose money had been exhausted, and attached lists of the new names which had been received, besides correcting the addresses of those who had changed their residences. Mr. Barton, the business manager, had direct charge of my work, and he frequently helped me when there was a rush.

For this service I received six dollars a week, after I was able to perform it with moderate ability, and as I received more than that amount at home as a personal allowance, I soon had more money than I knew what to do with, for I had no expenses of any kind except my noon lunch, and an occasional theatre ticket.

The other clerks usually quit work at half-past four, and as Mr. Barton was always at the office until six, and was always present when I worked at night (which I sometimes did, as I was anxious

that no complaints should reach my mother's ears), we were often alone, and soon became good friends. He had lived in New York a long time, and knew a great many people, and as my mother had confidence in him, there was no objection when I attended theatres and concerts with him, and went to my room at a late hour by means of a night key. I believe this was part of the programme agreed upon between my mother and Mr. Barton, as she wanted my rough edges worn off; therefore we were much together, and were quite confidential.

I learned a great deal from him, and he always imparted his information so politely that I was not offended. If he saw me eating with a knife, he did not mention the matter at the time, or appear to notice it, but after we had left the table, and were on the street, he would relate an amusing incident of a man (never a boy) who came to New York from the country, and created a great deal of amusement by eating with his knife, it being a custom in New York to use a fork. I admired him for his consideration of my feelings, and frequently asked his advice on matters in which I had an interest, but always in the round-about way he had adopted.

I learned from him, too, that my father, although not what might be called a rich man in

New York, was well-to-do, and had more of an income than he could spend, and that as I was the only heir, I would finally be well off. I further confided to him my dislike of my cousin Tom, of Boston, for whom I had been named, and it was through Barton's cleverness that I was generally called King in New York, for he spoke to my father about it, who readily accepted the suggestion, and although my mother always insisted on calling me Thomas, she frequently fell into the habit the others had adopted.

. When I told him that my mother did not seem disposed to make up with me, he promptly recommended that I keep out of her sight as much as possible. Barton had a good deal of confidence in this treatment, saying that when a person disliked another, it only made matters worse to throw them together, and recommended that I avoid her so strongly that I tried his suggestion, though I believe the only effect it had was to cause her to say that I was an unnatural son, and disliked my parents. For days at a time I did not see her at all, breakfasting before she did, and going to dinner after her usual hour, but when I could not avoid a meeting, I was very respectful, and pretended that I did not see her more frequently because I was busy in attempting to improve myself.

I kept it from him as long as I could, but I finally told Barton about Mr. Gruff's attempt to steal me, and what he had said afterwards about being robbed of the reward, but Barton said that Gruff was a great big liar, and that he would get into trouble if he ever made that remark again. I could see at once that they were not friends, for Barton said that instead of going after me like a decent man, Gruff's first thought had been of kidnapping, as a respectable suggestion never found its way into his head; and he grumbled and growled a good deal over what Gruff had said concerning him, as though he did not enjoy being called a robber.

I told him all about Tibby, and Mrs. Cole, and Queen Mary, and Pidg, within a month, and as he always seemed interested, I often read their letters to him, of which I received at least three every week. He professed the most profound admiration for a happy home such as I described, and as soon as I wrote to them about Barton's kindness to me, they usually asked after that to be remembered to him; and Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Mary, soon recognized him as one of her most faithful subjects, for Mrs. Cole wrote letters for the baby as well as for Pidg, and there was always a reference in them to the business manager.

Mr. Barton was a rather well dressed man ; at least, his clothes were fashionably cut, and of good material, but he worked so much that he had little time to brush them. He told me a great deal about his wife devoting her life to her family, and having no time for anything else, whereupon I wondered that he always looked so neglected, from his shoes to his cuffs, and from his coat collar to his pockets, which always had holes in them. Whenever he lost his safe key, he took off his shoe, and found it; and I have known him to borrow money of me in the street, explaining that he had money of his own, but could not get at it there conveniently.

He lived in a street leading out of Central Park, and was a man of considerable property, owning the house in which he lived, and having investments which made his income, in addition to his salary, quite comfortable. He was a prodigious worker, and the prosperity of *The Night Watch* was largely due to the fact that he was always at work by eight o'clock in the morning, and was the last man to leave the office at night.

Although Mrs. Barton devoted her life to her home, and had no other ambition than to excel in this respect, her husband did not seem to appreciate her efforts, for he never spent an evening at home if he could help it. If he had no work

to do on Sunday he went off on some sort of an excursion, taking me with him when I could arrange it. I mentioned this to him one day, or something like it, when he surprised me by abusing himself in the most extravagant fashion, saying that if he ever killed himself, it would be because he was such a mean fellow that he could not appreciate a pleasant home and a devoted family, which evidence of depravity caused him a great deal of worry.

“I have a pleasant home,” he said, “and an agreeable family, but I have spent so much of my life in boarding-houses and hotels that I become accustomed to the comforts of home very slowly. To be frank with you, I am rough, and don’t take kindly to the refined influences of a family. It’s a humiliating confession to make, but I am not right in this respect, and you will find on better acquaintance that I am not as good a man as you imagine.”

After I had known him about six months, he said one evening as I was preparing to go home, that Mrs. Barton was anxious to see me, and had invited me up to dinner; so I accepted, and we presently set out.

He had a great number of commissions to execute, having a memorandum of them, and by the time we were ready to take the elevated road for

his part of the town, he had so many bundles that he managed them with difficulty, and I relieved him of part of them.

There was mince meat in one of the packages, and bulk oysters in another, so that I had to be very careful, for I occupied a seat with them, and was considerably crowded by a pail of lard. Barton explained that there were plenty of stores near his home where household supplies could be purchased, but his wife hadn't time to attend to such matters, being worked to death as it was, and it became necessary for him to bring them.

His house was rather a commodious-looking one, situated in a little yard by itself, and when we went in, although we were late, dinner was not ready. Indeed, the cook had just started a fire, as I could see through an open door, and was sitting in front of it reading a paper when Mr. Barton went in, and mentioned what he would like to have prepared.

Everything was in the greatest disorder, there being evidence on the parlor carpet that the children had recently lunched there; but Mr. Barton, as he went about trying to put matters to rights, said he hoped I would excuse it, as his wife was greatly overworked, and could not do all that her ambition dictated.

I learned while we waited for dinner that Mr. Barton was from the West, too, and that he came to New York from somewhere in the Indiana woods when a very young man, which was probably one reason he was so kind to me. I was impressed at once with the difference in his manner at home and in his office. At his office he had everything in perfect order, but at home he was helpless, and seemed to be nervous because of it. When anything went wrong at his place of business, he made it right with remarkable quickness, and questions concerning his business were answered with promptness and accuracy, but that he was perfectly helpless around his home I could easily see.

When dinner was finally announced, we found it necessary to wait some time for Mrs. Barton, who was upstairs, and who had not put in an appearance since our arrival. I thought she was paying more attention to her toilet than usual, but I was wrong in this, for when she came down, attended by a nurse girl and two children, her hair and dress were in such disorder that I expected her to say she had forgotten my coming, and apologize for her appearance. It turned out that she was expecting me, however, and was glad that I had accepted her invitation, as she had a great curiosity to see the boy who had been lost so long.

A toothache sort of a woman; a headache sort of a woman; a bad breath sort of a woman, — these were the thoughts that passed through my mind when Mrs. Barton came in; and finally I added, a woman with a fondness for doctors, for within a few minutes I learned that she had been treated by at least a dozen, and she had most of their medicines on the sideboard, for she took a dose out of several bottles before sitting down to dinner, remarking as she did so that she was no better, and thought of trying another physician. I had expected her to be as agreeable a woman as Barton was a man, but she was not, and I was unfavorably impressed with her from the first.

After I observed her more closely, I concluded I had wronged her in at least two particulars, for her teeth were nearly all gold, and therefore could not ache much, and her head was so small that if she ever had a headache, it must have been an insignificant one, and, boy though I was, I knew at once that Mr. and Mrs. Barton did not get along well. Although Mrs. Barton's actions might have deceived me, for she looked at her husband in a loving sort of way which indicated that they had a great many confidences of which the world knew nothing, Barton could not look at his wife with any sort of comfort, and while talking to her

kept his eyes on me, or on one of the children, though in other respects he was polite enough.

The dinner was wretchedly served, and wretchedly cooked, but Mrs. Barton did not notice it, nor the equally important fact that the children were boisterous, and frequently slapped the rather modest girl who attended them. Indeed, during the meal, which was so ill conducted as to put Mr. Barton in the greatest agony, his wife did nothing but talk about her ambition to excel as a wife and mother, and say that while others were anxious to shine as actresses, writers, woman suffrage speakers, and so forth, she was content to distinguish herself as a wife and mother, and make Home the dearest place on earth.

The cook came in to look at me, and the children talked about me to my face, but Mrs. Barton was blind to everything except the laudable ambition mentioned. Mr. Barton excused these peculiarities, though he noticed and remarked them, saying that he had not "begun right" with the children, and that the dinner was everything that could have been expected with the material at hand, and that he should have brought up more.

"Mrs. Barton is famous in this part of town because of her devotion to her home and the children," the business manager said, as though he was very proud of the circumstance. "The women

of the neighborhood all talk about it, and they are always coming in to tell me how fortunate I am to have such a wife. I *am* fortunate, I know, but I often fear that I do not appreciate her as I should. Griffith, what is the matter now?"

Griffith, the oldest boy, had turned up his nose, and remarked that there was nothing fit to eat on the table; and while he was scowling and grumbling, his mother was looking at me as sweetly as possible, but paying no attention to the boy, who acted in such an ugly manner that his father offered him a dollar on condition that he behave himself.

"I don't like boiled dinners very well myself," Barton said to the boy, "but it is the best your mother found time to prepare; it's a wonder to me that we get anything at all, she has so much to do."

Griffith refused to take his father's money, though he said he would subside for five dollars; and although this was really very impudent, Barton pretended to think that it was very clever.

"I used to think that I worked rather hard myself," he said, addressing me, and glancing occasionally at Griffith, "but when I became familiar with the manner in which Mrs. Barton slaves around the house, I felt ashamed of myself. I usually have an hour in which to eat my break-

fast and get down town, for I am always up at seven o'clock, and seldom get to the office before eight; I have an hour at noon, and the evenings are my own, unless I choose to work, but Mrs. Barton is always busy; she never goes to bed except when the girls are asleep, and there is no one to help her move something which requires assistance."

This was splendid sarcasm, I thought, but Barton did not so intend it, for I never saw a man more in earnest in my life. His wife was very much pleased at the compliment, and repeated her old assertion that she had no other ambition than to be a capable housekeeper and devoted mother.

"She is a wonderful cook, too," her husband said, managing to get in a word above the uproar made by the children. "One day, when the girls were away, she got dinner without any assistance, and I have never eaten better hard-boiled eggs in my life."

There was a great deal of talk of this kind, and although all of it might have been irony, Barton seemed to be in earnest, as he also did when he took the blame upon himself when anything went wrong, — and everything was so very wrong that he had a terrible time of it.

Mrs. Barton had a certain Cousin Pendleton

living somewhere in the agricultural districts of Ohio, and her husband admired him immensely. Cousin Pendleton, Barton said, dressed the children in the morning, and started breakfast, after building all the fires, and sweeping all the rooms, and when there was a particularly heavy washing, he helped with it, and was altogether about the best man I had ever heard of, and I was not surprised that Barton thought a great deal of him, or that he talked about him in a reverential manner which amounted almost to worship. Cousin Pendleton could take care of the children as well as Cousin Ellen herself, and the cleverness with which he could put the baby to sleep, or use a needle and thread, or hang out the clothes, was surprising. Mrs. Barton looked at her husband archly during the progress of the meal, and wondered what Cousin Pendleton would say when he learned that he (Barton) had neglected to bring home five cents worth of nutmeg, after being expressly charged with the errand in the morning, and Barton said he supposed he would be disgusted beyond measure, and sincerely hoped he would never hear of it.

I remained until ten o'clock, sitting with them in a room adjoining the one in which we had eaten the miserable dinner, and I could not help remarking that Barton had a dread of his wife and chil-

dren, although he pretended to admire them very much. The children were about as bad as they could be, but their mother never interfered, though she was with us most of the evening, occasionally mentioning that she was content to make her home a pleasant one. I also thought that Barton was inwardly regretting that his wife did not go away, and leave us alone, for while she was around he had the air of a man who goes into the presence of a masterpiece, and frankly acknowledges that he cannot appreciate it. I had thought of Barton down town as a bold and worthy fellow, but he appeared to poor advantage in the presence of his wife; as though she made him worse instead of better. Mrs. Barton's conversational powers seemed limited to praise of herself and gossip concerning her two servants, both of whom were threatening to get married, and from the manner in which Barton said that they had better let well enough alone, I believed that he either disliked such a trifling subject, or was not very well pleased with matrimony himself.

When I started home, Barton walked with me to the station, and talked so long after we arrived there, that I felt sure he was waiting for his wife to go to bed before he returned, as though she was so good that her presence accused him of being bad.

As we stood at the foot of the stairway leading up to the station, Barton asked several passers-by for a chew of tobacco, and at last securing a huge bite of plug from a good-natured fellow who was going down town, he stood there chewing and spitting in a manner which caused me to think that was his way of dissipating when he was out of sorts, for I had never seen him chew before, and he evidently did not like it; perhaps the tobacco made him sick, and subdued his disposition. When at last I took a train and started, I looked out of the window, and saw Barton still standing at the foot of the stairway leading up to the station, chewing and spitting to enable him to control his disgust, and waiting for his wife to get out of his way before returning home.

CHAPTER XIV.

MY UNCLE HENRY, FROM BOSTON.

I HAD not been at home a week until I heard my father say one morning, while looking over his mail, that Uncle Henry was coming over from Boston soon, and that he would bring Aunt Charlotte and little Tom with him.

I had grown to dislike little Tom particularly, because I was frequently sent to look at his picture, as a sort of punishment whenever I did wrong. If I went to the table with a speck of dust on my coat (my new coat; Miss Ann had brought it home three days after my arrival), I was requested to go up stairs, and see if I could see any dust on little Tom's coat; if I showed a disposition to eat greedily, I was ordered to look at little Tom's picture immediately thereafter, and I hated him so much that I was pleased to learn, as I did from Miss Ann, that he was only eight months older than me, and no larger. I did not tell any one why this information pleased me, but I remember that I soaked my knuckles in oil

several nights after I heard he was coming, to harden them.

Uncle Henry wrote concerning his proposed visit for a month; his affairs seemed to be of the most important nature, for when we expected him on Monday, we received a letter in the morning saying that unexpected engagements would keep him at home until Tuesday, and on Tuesday morning we heard that he could not possibly leave his affairs until Wednesday. This was kept up for such a length of time that I finally hoped he would not come at all, but the letters reminded my mother of little Tom every day, and I heard a great deal about his splendid qualities.

He could go into the parlor and be introduced to a company in so creditable a manner as to excite murmurs of approval, the very thought of which made me tremble, and caused me to go to my room, and pretend that I was sick; he was entertaining in conversation, which I was not, though Miss Ann once did me the honor to wonder why I could not talk as well to my father and mother as I did to her; his hands were white and shapely, which caused me to remember that mine were red and large, and his feet were so small that he could not be heard when he walked across the room.

All this, and much more, I heard, until I be-

lieve it was responsible for the fact that I came home one evening with the proud consciousness that I had a headache! I had longed for a headache ever since coming to New York, and had often tried to produce one, but without result; therefore I was particularly pleased when this one came unexpectedly, and of its own accord. I mentioned the fact when I came into the presence of my mother, and said that I believed I didn't want any dinner that day, and I hoped that she was pleased, though I never knew that she was.

I went up to my room to lie down, but the headache of which I was so proud soon left me, and I was compelled to acknowledge that I was hungry, in spite of the hope that I was losing my appetite, so I went up into my aunt's room, and refreshed myself with the remains of her dinner.

The room which she occupied was directly above mine, in the top story of the house, and was provided with so many conveniences that I did not wonder she never left it. Everything was kept with the greatest neatness, and she had adorned the place with so many odd things that I never tired of looking at them. In one of her closets she kept the remnants of her dinners, and as I felt more at home in her company than with any one else in the house, I was frequently bribed to re-

main with her until bedtime, and tell her about the people I had known in the West, and the gossip of the house. In return for this she told me about New York, and my early history, and on a few occasions, when I fell asleep on her bed, I awoke in the morning to find her sitting in a chair beside me, apparently not at all displeased that I had kept her up all night.

I felt perfectly free and natural in her company, and it being known that my father and mother were going out on the night of which I speak, I was easily persuaded to bring up my violin, and play for her, after closing all the doors and windows as tightly as we could.

I had never seen her smile, therefore I was not surprised when she asked me to play religious tunes, at the same time referring to the old trouble with her heart. I had learned a great many hymns during my trips with Tibby Cole, and, after playing several of them, I sang one, accompanying my voice with the violin; a queer, melancholy tune, which must have been written by some one like my aunt.

This is the way I long have sought,
 Glory, glory, glory ;
 And mourned because I found it not,
 Glory, glory, glory ;
 My grief a burden long has been,
 Glory, glory, glory,
 Because I was not saved from sin,
 Glory, glory, glory.

This affected her in the most remarkable manner, and though she walked around the room wringing her hands while I was singing, she insisted upon my repeating it over and over, which I did.

I did not feel so comfortable in her company after that; and when I went away, she was still walking about wringing her hands, occasionally bursting out in a fit of crying, and even though she did not notice me when I left the room, I dreamed about her all that night, awaking in the morning to learn with horror that my Uncle Henry had arrived on an early train, and was at that moment awaiting my appearance.

They were all in the parlor when I went down stairs, and little Tom was presented first, probably with a view of making me feel uncomfortable for the remainder of the day when I reflected on his distinguished politeness, but the only reflection I had was that I should like to trip him as he came over toward me, with his dancing-school hippity-hop. It was not considered necessary to introduce Uncle Henry and his wife, and I knew that little Tom had been introduced only to teach me politeness. He was a boy who seemed to say in his manner: "Boys with red hands and big feet and awkward ways, will please watch me; they can learn a great deal from little Tom," and I

hated him thoroughly the moment I met him. Indeed, I hated them all that morning, except my father, who looked over occasionally as though he felt like coming to my rescue, for I thought my mother took a sort of pride in displaying my ignorance, as an evidence that I had missed a great deal by being deprived of her society, and as a result of it all, I became stubborn and wicked.

While we were at breakfast my father tried to save me as much as he could, by directing the conversation into channels which could not include me, but Uncle Henry, who seemed to be a poet, and who said I was a poem, continued asking me ridiculous questions about the West, and the people I had known there.

At first I answered him respectfully enough, but he provoked me by some unkind reference to Tibby Cole, whom I loved more than ever, and I became devilish, and tried my best to make him ridiculous. He imagined that the country where I had lived was wild and barbarous, and when I was excused from going to school to remain at home and amuse him, I resolved to surprise him, if I could, so I paid no attention to the truth all that day, and acted in the most outrageous manner.

I told him that Tibby Cole was a half-breed Indian, and when he insisted upon my giving an

imitation of an Indian war whoop, I yelled in such a manner that they were all greatly startled, except my father, who was a practical sort of a man, and knew that I was driven to desperation by his quizzing.

As a matter of fact, I knew little about Indians, having only seen vagrant remnants of vagrant tribes, but I professed to know all about the trail, the tomahawk, the war-dance, and the scalp. I had seen vagrant Indians go through the war-dance in return for nickels from idle men and boys, when it seemed to me that the Indians were thoroughly ashamed of themselves, and that their guttural exclamations told of how fast they could run when pursued by soldiers, how often they had beaten their wives, and how expert they were as vagrants, thieves, and assassins, rather than of their bravery in war, therefore I promptly accepted an invitation to represent a war-dance, and jumped about the floor, yelling "Who-ah! Who-ah!" at the same time wildly flinging my arms around. Then I gave an imitation of taking a scalp, using little Tom for a subject, and pulling his beautiful curly hair until he yelled with pain (I had always longed for curly hair myself, and was particularly hard on him in consequence), explaining as I did so that a Sioux always said, "Ooch, ooch, kiowa yowwou" (meaning, "Thus

do I right the wrongs of my fathers"), in taking this bloody revenge, whereas the Utes invariably said, "Peme kan neo" (meaning, "Thus be the fate of all palefaces"). I carried on to such a ridiculous extent that I was amused myself at last, and saw my father laughing quietly, but the others were very earnest about it (my mother from shame, I thought); and Uncle Henry took notes for a poem which he said would create brisk bidding between the different magazines.

With a view of being entertaining to little Tom, I said I would send for my bow and arrows and shoot a nickel off his head at fifty yards the next time he came to see me, but he received the proposition coldly, I thought, and his mother said that while the idea would make a good verse in the poem, she would not consent to an exhibition, which caused me to say that there was not the slightest danger, as I had performed the feat successfully many times at a hundred yards, which was rather more difficult than at fifty. My success in imposing upon them caused me to grow bolder, and when there was a pause in the conversation, I said: —

"Two weeks before I came away, Three Rivers was torn almost to pieces by a herd of buffaloes. We don't usually have such big droves there, but these were blown in by a cyclone."

"A cyclone!" Uncle Henry gasped, evidently having heard the word before.

"Yes," I answered, "when the wind blows our way from the plains, we know what to expect, and get out of the way of the buffaloes, squatters, cattle, and cowboys which we know will arrive in a few days. We had a buffalo cellar at home, in which we took refuge whenever the wind blew from the west."

Uncle Henry said this was so remarkable that he begged me to rest a moment until he caught up with his notes, which I did; but when he was ready again I could not think of anything else, except that the wind blew an Indian against our barn one day, and held him there until he starved to death; so I was excused and went out to play with little Tom in the back yard, where I taught him how the Indians ran foot races, and tripped him so neatly that he fell and knocked the skin off his nose.

When we went into the house again, my father was alone in the front room, and after little Tom had gone off to find his mother, my father looked at me in an amused way, and asked:—

"Did you ever see a buffalo?"

"Yes; one. In a circus."

"Did you ever see a real Indian?"

I had seen copper-colored loafers, but nothing else, so I shook my head.

“Did you ever shoot an arrow from a bow?”

“No, I answered.

“I thought not,” he said, though he did not seem to be displeased. “Perhaps you had some justification for your course this morning; but if I were you, I wouldn’t do it again.”

There was company at the house that evening; a Mr. Richards and his wife, and their daughter Kate. Mr. Richards had been a friend of my father’s since boyhood, and Mrs. Richards and my mother had been friends a long while, and they lived in a house very much like ours, on the same street, though a few blocks further down. I had seen them all every week since my arrival, and rather admired Mr. Richards and his wife, but I could not bear the girl, an independent young snip, who seemed to be at least forty years old, judging from her manners, though she was really about my own age. There was talk among the servants that my father and Mr. Richards had expressed an anxiety when Kate and I were little babies that we should marry when we grew up, and my return had revived the story, so that I heard a great deal of it, as well as Kate.

There was a boldness about her which I think was due to a proper confidence in herself, and

when she found out that I did not like her, she took the greatest delight in reminding me that we were intended for each other. She provoked me so much that I finally blurted out that I would never marry her, because she was too much of a tomboy to suit me, but this only amused her, and caused her to reply that I couldn't help myself: I had to; whereupon we wrangled about it in the most absurd manner, and although I knew she was tantalizing me, I became quite angry and displayed a very ugly temper, which she said she would in time regulate.

She frequently looked in the most loving way at little Tom, and said what a pity she was not intended for a nice boy, at the same time shrugging her shoulders, and making an awful face, as though I were an exceedingly ugly dose which she would in time find it necessary to take. This made me so angry that I left the room where we were, and joined those in the parlor.

Uncle Henry had forgotten me entirely in thinking of Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, where he lived. Uncle Henry did not claim any one as a friend unless he lived up or down Commonwealth Avenue, although he knew a few people who lived on Beacon Street, a block away, and during the entire evening he did not mention anything which was not connected in some way with

the street in which he lived. When the others talked of foreign travel, of music, or of art, he was perfectly silent, as though the subjects mentioned were not worth thinking about; indeed, he acted at times as though he had a mind to take me into another room, and get some more points for his poem, but opportunity always presented itself to ring in the Avenue, and I escaped.

There were a few unfortunate people he had once known who lived on Beacon Street, and he mentioned those patronizingly, as if to convince his hearers that from the lofty pinnacle on which he lived, he had not entirely forgotten former acquaintances who were in adversity from no fault of their own, but generally his conversation led me to believe that this world was bounded by the two sides of Commonwealth Avenue, the Public Garden, and the Back Bay.

My father was somewhat ill-tempered at this blind belief that there was nothing worth a serious thought outside of Commonwealth Avenue, and even went so far as to enumerate some of the worthy features of New York, but Uncle Henry waved him off with a patronizing laugh, and said that the infatuation of some people for their homes was amusing.

I learned afterwards that these two were always quarrelling about Boston and New York, and that

Uncle Henry usually got the best of it, for he would not seriously discuss the question, always pretending that a man of my father's experience knew without argument that everything in the way of intelligence and refinement centred in Boston, and that he only argued for New York because he lived there; a local prejudice which was as prominent in a savage as in a New Yorker.

But my father worsted him when they got to discussing poetry. Uncle Henry was almost as fond of rhyme as he was of the most aristocratic residents of Commonwealth Avenue, and being a man of leisure, he affected poetry, and talked and read so much about it that he finally attempted verses himself.

He had sent my father a paper containing some of his rhymes, and, being asked for an opinion as to their quality, my father said:—

“Oh, it's poetry; I noticed that the last words of every other line jingled, therefore I knew it was poetry. I regard poetry very much as I do Greek; I do not understand it, but I know it when I see it.”

Uncle Henry was crestfallen at once, and mildly argued that such an arrangement of words was approved by the best authorities.

“If there is good reason for making any two particular lines jingle,” my father said, with more

animation than I had seen him display before, "why not six, or seven, or eight lines? Why not make the last words in every line of the poem jingle? Since you say the people are so fond of it, why not end your first line with law, and jingle on down with maw, raw, daw, saw, and end your last line with hurrah. That would be Art."

My father was as hard on Poetry as Uncle Henry had been on New York, and they continued to discuss the question until I fell asleep in my chair, the last thing I heard being an assertion on the part of my father that when he wanted to say "I have enough," he preferred to say it in so many words, without the use of buff, muff, ruff, or any other stuff.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NIGHT WATCH.

MR. GRUFF, the editor of *The Night Watch*, was an ill-conditioned and dissipated man, and although we all hated him, including the business manager, he was retained because he was useful in his way. Personally he was the meanest man I have ever known, although he was so conceited that he considered himself the best, but when he was sober he could write really powerful editorials on moral and religious subjects, and a man to fill his place could have been found only with the greatest difficulty. Although he was usually drunk every afternoon and evening, when he was more disagreeable than ever, he demanded the prohibition of the liquor traffic in his professional capacity with marked ability, and carried a declaration at the head of his columns to that effect.

He had told me that his object in trying to carry me off was to get the reward himself, instead of dividing it with Barton, and while I forgave him for that, I hated him because he did

not like Barton, who was my friend, and because he was generally the meanest man I had ever known. There was a good deal of bitterness between the two men because of the reward; either Gruff did not receive what he thought he was entitled to, or none at all, for I never knew exactly what the quarrel was about, though I knew they were enemies, and that it was concerning the reward. They did not speak within six months after my arrival, and when Barton had instructions for Gruff, he wrote them out on a piece of paper, and left them on his desk, and his week's pay I usually carried to him.

For a while Gruff was disposed to be friendly with me, but he soon saw that I disliked him, and was fond of Barton, and though I hoped he would quit speaking to me, he preferred not to, often cursing me when he was drinking for an ignorant upstart who had come into the possession of money, when deserving people could not earn it by honest work.

He had a friend who lounged and drank with him, — a short-haired man who said he was a fellow out of luck, and I often met these two at night, when I found that I was not alone in being unsatisfactory, for they cursed New York and everything in it, from the selfish rich to the ignorant poor. They occupied a room together in

one of the side streets near Printing-House Square, and sometimes they insisted upon my going with them there, which I did because I was afraid to refuse, where they ordered up drinks from a neighboring bar, and amused themselves by making fun of the New York people, which they did with keen sarcasm, for they were both very bright. I greatly admired the energy which had built the splendid city, but these two could prove to their own satisfaction that the rich people of New York were all robbers, and that they prospered by robbing others.

I knew of nothing that suited them except a certain quality of brandy which they purchased at a place near their room, and this they praised and drank in the most extravagant manner. I have heard them talk about women, morality, religion, and temperance, but they abused everything except the brandy, and had respect for nothing else.

The admiration Gruff should have had for other people he lavished upon himself, and the fact that he did not hate himself was evidence to my mind that his hatred was to be desired. His self-esteem was so great that he was even fond of his withered hand, which was disgusting to look at, and he always used it when the other one would have answered the purpose better; and although Gruff's friend lived off of him, he did not like the withered

hand any better than I did. One time in my presence, when they were about to shake hands over a particularly mean thing one of them had said of the New York people, the fellow out of luck said, "Don't hand that brisket out to me," whereupon Gruff changed his mind about the proposed congratulation, and added with an oath that the fellow was an ungrateful dog.

Gruff called his friend Red, which I believed referred to the color of his nose, and I knew little about him except that he came originally from one of the territories, and that he professed to believe that the only genuine civilization was found in the rough country where he had formerly lived. The splendid streets in New York, which attracted so much admiration from me, only attracted Red's disgust, and he told me once that it was contamination to live in such a place, where there was no chivalry or honor. He believed that all the fine houses had been built with the proceeds of thefts, and that their owners acknowledged their guilt by occupying them, and his general manner toward New York was that of a coy maiden who walks by dishonest splendor with a firm and quick step.

He had once lived in a perfect place, called "Dead Man's Gulch," where he had known two splendid men named "Grizzly Bill" and "Faro Tom," and when he desired to put New York and

its people to the blush for a lack of civilization and chivalry, he talked lovingly of his old friends and their good qualities. I have heard both Gruff and Red say that they could become rich were they not too honorable to adopt the means of making money resorted to by the New York people, and this sort of fiction in connection with the brandy seemed to afford them a good deal of comfort, although I frequently wondered at it.

The paper edited by Mr. Gruff was a profitable one, and had a large circulation among a class of people who believed that they and *The Night Watch* were in favor of good morals in opposition to all the rest of the world, and I believe to this day that our subscribers did not take other papers because they occasionally read in them references to their own follies. We never found fault with anything save Sin and Intemperance, and perhaps this was one reason we did such a profitable business; for there are so many ways of doing wrong that perhaps it is not surprising that a charitable paper like *The Night Watch* had many ardent admirers.

The theory of the paper was that its subscribers were moral, upright and religious people who were anxious to promote these virtues by increasing the subscription list of *The Night Watch*, but

that they found it difficult because the people who did not take the paper were fond of wickedness, and resorted to all sorts of unscrupulous measures to injure it; therefore the conflict between *The Night Watch* and the World. On one hand was *The Night Watch* and its subscribers, representing all the virtues; on the other hand was the Devil and the World, and this doctrine was preached with so much cunning and persistency through the editorial columns that at first I had some confidence in it myself, thinking when I heard of the commission of a great crime, that the culprit might have saved himself for two dollars, which was the price of *The Night Watch* per annum.

The proprietor of the paper, Mr. Couldock, was a mild little man of pronounced piety, who spent most of the time he was at the office in reading the encouraging letters which were received in great numbers, usually in connection with new subscribers sent in by old patrons. These he read with marked enthusiasm, but I noticed that when he attempted to answer any of them Barton interfered, for he had a clerk whose business it was to attend to that sort of work. Hundreds of personal letters were written by this clerk every week, from forms prepared by Barton, expressing the greatest thankfulness for interest taken in the noble cause, and although Mr. Couldock's name was

signed to all of them, he did not even see them.

These forms were suited to all the correspondence, and although it was pretended in each one that Mr. Couldock was the writer, and that he had found time with difficulty to give advice, or express his thanks, as a matter of fact the one clerk wrote them all, and dozens of them every day, sending exactly the same letter to parties in different portions of the country, except filling in different names where the blanks occurred.

Most of the letters referred to subscriptions, and as this was my department, I at first took a good deal of interest in reading them. A majority of the letters either spoke encouragingly of the attitude of *The Night Watch* on certain important reforms, and forwarded or promised help, or asked advice from Mr. Couldock's storehouse, and these we answered with No. 8 and No. 13, and in a little while I was able to mark these numbers on the letters on turning them over to the correspondence clerk, which I remember greatly amused him. Form No. 8 was in these words:—

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER,—The friendly interest you take in my weak endeavor to forward the great cause, induces me to address you personally, and express my sincerest thanks. I am glad that ——¹ has at

¹ Name of town where the correspondent lives.

least one citizen who appreciates the cunning of the enemy, and realizes that the army of the Lord needs re-inforcements. In the name of Religion, Temperance and Morality, I thank you for what you have done,¹ and assure you that *The Night Watch*, though all the guns of the enemy are levelled against it, will continue to battle for the right until the Master whom we both serve shall say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Believe me, your friend and well wisher,

M. COULDOCK.

To —— (Name), —— (Town),
 —— (County, if necessary), —— (State).

¹ Or promised to do.

No. 13 was oftener used than No. 8, for it was in answer to those who asked Mr. Couldock's advice, and though the writers all pledged Mr. Couldock to the greatest secrecy, their letters were common property in the office, until I finally disposed of them by marking "No. 13" across their face in red ink, and handed them over to the correspondence clerk.

There was nothing the letters did not seek advice about — love, neighborhood quarrels, cold husbands, and indifferent wives; whether kissing-games were admissible at parties; religious doubts; politics; worldly children; worldly husbands. Mr. Couldock was expected to give advice under all these heads, therefore Barton found

it necessary to make No. 13 of a general character, which he did as follows:—

DEAR SIR,—The trusting spirit with which you lay your trouble before me touches my heart, and your confidence shall always remain a sacred care.

My time is so much occupied with the cares of the great cause in which we are both so much interested that I can only recommend what I have found a remedy for every ill: to wit, Prayer. If you have tried it once, try it again, and keep on trying until the right way is made manifest. There is a Friend willing to hear every grievance, and point out the Way, if you approach Him with meekness and faith. In addition to this, ask the prayers of the righteous in ——¹ and all will be well.

Believe me, with sincere sympathy for your troubles,
your earnest well-wisher, M. COULDOCK.

To —— (Name), —— (Town),
—— (County, if necessary), —— (State), etc.

¹ Name of town where the correspondent lives, or "your neighborhood," if the writer lives in the country.

The other forms referred to special subjects, and were not so often used as No. 8 and No. 13, but I finally mastered them all, and was able to mark the proper number on every letter.

Mr. Couldock wrote a great deal for the paper, and his desk was always cumbered with manuscripts on religious subjects, but they were never

published, as all the writing was done by two men in the office, and several special contributors on the outside, under the direction of Barton, who furnished subjects, and dictated the course of the paper in everything. Mr. Couldock always came into the office in the morning with great bunches of manuscript sticking out of his pockets, as though he spent his nights as well as his days in writing, but I never saw a line of his composing in print, and know that his editorials were not even examined by the business manager, so that while Mr. Couldock was the only man about the place who was in earnest, he was the only one who did nothing.

Mr. Couldock was so bold in defying wickedness that the readers of the paper imagined that he was at least seven feet high and brave in proportion, for many of the letters said that a man of his sterling qualities was needed in different localities to combat the common enemy. Indeed, many of the subscribers offered Mr. Couldock good round sums to come to their homes, and preach and lecture, but as Mr. Couldock was very short and thin, and was in constant fear of being robbed on his way from the office to his home, Barton prepared a form to answer these appeals, which was couched in the following words, and known as No. 7:—

MY DEAR BROTHER, — While it would afford me the greatest pleasure to aid you in routing the enemy in — (name of town where correspondent lives, or “your neighborhood,” if writer lives in the country), my time is so taken up in the Watch Tower over which the Lord has placed me, that in my feebleness I can only recommend —. (In cases of this kind be careful in recommending prayer; the correspondent may have tried it. “Perseverance and united effort” would perhaps be the best thing.)

It might be a good idea to distribute a number of copies of some good paper in your town (or neighborhood) while the excitement lasts, being careful to see that the seed is sown in good ground. I presume that our business manager would make a very low rate in a case of this kind; I will ask him to write to you.

Yours for the right, M. COULDOCK.

To — (Name), — (Town),
 — (County, if necessary), — (State).

When No. 7 was used, Barton always wrote, too, “at the suggestion of Mr. Couldock,” and frequently received very good clubs of subscribers in return.

Personally Barton was not an impious man, though he was not religious, and when I looked over the paper, and remembered the men who conducted it, somehow I always felt like an impostor, though I had little to do with it. In addition to his duties as business manager, Barton had

charge of the Home Department of the paper, made up largely of letters from fictitious correspondents, and answers thereto, most of which Barton wrote himself. These fictitious letters were often so absurd that I have seen their author laughing while writing them; but in spite of their absurdity, they seemed to be popular, for many of the letters referring to the subscriptions, which I handled, made complimentary references to Barton's department. I have known him to invent a woman with a dissipated husband, and keep her going for months, giving her pious advice in every issue, and gradually increasing her misfortunes until it was imagined, when her letters finally failed to appear, that her wicked husband had certainly murdered her.

There was a woman of Barton's inventing who appeared in the Home Department once over the signature of "Mrs. K.," and although her first grievance was no more serious than that her husband would not attend church with her, it developed in a few weeks (in connection with a declaration that "Mrs. K." had found genuine comfort in the advice of *The Night Watch*) that Mr. K. was a drunkard, and an ugly-tempered man who spent his earnings for Rum, leaving his wife and children to suffer from hunger. The letters which I handled began to mention poor "Mrs. K.," by

this time, and offer her sympathy, and Barton was so much encouraged that he caused to be published a letter representing that the unfortunate correspondent was in bed from the effects of a severe beating at the hands of her misguided husband, for no other reason than that she suggested that her small earnings be invested in clothing for their children in preference to investing them in Rum to satisfy Mr. K.'s depraved appetite. In the same letter "Mrs. K." told what a fine man her husband had been before he took to drink, and how penitent he was when sober, but as soon as he began drinking, he forgot everything noble, and went to smashing up the furniture. In course of time Mr. K. almost killed one of his children (a noble boy, who loved *The Night Watch* and his Sunday-school teacher) because he refused to go out after Rum, and next he burned his house while in a drunken rage; and when "Mrs. K." finally disappeared from the Home Department, it was because there were no more misfortunes into which she could be led, although our subscribers believed that she had been made away with. A good many donations for the woman were sent in, Mr. Couldock contributing to the fund among the others, without knowing that "Mrs. K." was a fraud, and the money was given to a certain mission church in the name of *The Night Watch*.

Editorial references were occasionally made to the case of "Mrs. K.," as an evidence that the people should drop all other business, and Throttle Rum, and one correspondent went so far as to say in a letter that he had a notion to hunt up the brutal Mr. K., and wipe the earth with him.

Barton's next invention of a serial nature was a young woman who had been kissed at a festival, and who felt so meanly over it that she thought seriously of drowning; but she did not take very well, and soon disappeared in favor of a man who had Grave Doubts.

Gruff, who wrote nearly all the editorials clamoring for a better world, did not seem to have the slightest respect for anything he advocated with so much force, and I believe *The Night Watch* had little standing in New York, where there were so many really deserving publications, but its course appealed to prejudiced and narrow people on the outside, and the paper made money. Its stand on the questions of temperance and religion looked well, but it advocated these virtues from motives of selfishness, and although there is nothing I admire more than temperance (unless it be true and modest piety), I soon came to regard *The Night Watch* as a fraud of the most pronounced type.

Its advertisements, as well as its editorials, appealed to narrow-minded people, I used to think,

for when I read them over I thought that no mentally sound person would be taken in by their promises, but the advertising space was always in brisk demand, from which I imagined that they were carefully read by our subscribers.

I have heard Barton say, when he looked over the New York papers which depended on enterprise and intelligence for success, that he felt ashamed of his own business, which was profitable only in encouraging narrow prejudices, and I have very often felt the same way myself.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIBBY COLE IN NEW YORK.

I THINK it was near the close of my third year in New York that while walking up Broadway one morning I ran into Tibby Cole, which was a great surprise to me, for I was in constant correspondence with him, and he had never intimated an intention of changing his residence.

He had lost much of his old cheerfulness, I thought at once, and there was a sort of meek distress in his manner which was painful to see, but he was the same dear old fellow he had always been in other respects, and was so glad to see me that I felt more like myself than I had since leaving him three years before.

He pretended to me, as we walked along, that the people of Three Rivers had finally become so incensed at Mrs. Cole's cow and pig that they found it necessary to move, but later he admitted that he had come to New York to improve his prospects; that he and Mrs. Cole, and the baby and Pidg, had been there three weeks, and that, although their prospects had not improved per-

ceptibly, he was hopeful, and believed everything would come out for the best in the end.

I had not heard from Three Rivers for nearly a month, but I supposed they were preparing some sort of a surprise for me, and did not imagine that during the time I had so anxiously been awaiting the arrival of a letter from them they were in the same city with me. I felt hurt that he had not notified me of his arrival before, but when I mentioned it he said that he had intended calling on me as soon as he was fairly settled; indeed, he was coming that day, as he had secured a situation in a music house, and was going to work the following Monday.

As he was on his way home I readily consented to accompany him, and was soon in the arms of Mrs. Cole, who, I noticed, was showing gray hairs, and looked paler, as though they had not been prospering since my departure, and she had been doing the worrying for the family, as she had always done.

The baby had grown out of all recollection, and they had told her so much about me that she came to me at once, and nestled in my arms in such a pretty way that I loved her as though I had known her all my life. The first thing that attracted my attention was the adoration of Tibby Cole and his wife for the child, and I learned

during my stay (from Pidg, I believe, who had secured a situation as teamster, and who came home in the evening in time for dinner) that Tibby had quit drinking because of his love for Queen Mary. For a year after she was born, he had drank at long intervals, but finally he had stopped entirely. Pidg also informed me in private that the music business no longer flourished in Three Rivers, and that even the conventions were failing as a source of profit. For a year after my departure, Tibby did well enough, but after that his business became dull, and he had grown so fond of Queen Mary that he preferred remaining at home with her to teaching unappreciative singers and bandmen; therefore, in course of time, he had resolved to try his luck in New York, as he had heard that musicians were well paid there.

It seemed a dreadful thought, but it occurred to me that Tibby's lack of success, of late years, was due to the fact that he had quit drinking, for I had noticed during my experience with him that stimulants acted as aids to his business, and that without them he was dull and timid. I also thought that a few drinks would have made him enjoy the sights of New York with a genuine relish; but as it was, he was shrinking and ill at ease, and the Roar, to which I had barely become

accustomed myself, made him tremble. There was a wonderful change in him, and I could attribute it to nothing else than his change in habits, for he had been a moderate drinker ever since he was quite a young man.

I have said that Tibby had none of the selfish ways of men, and I may add that he had none of their selfish desires. His disposition was so amiable that his first thought was to do that which was manly and honorable, and my experience in New York caused me to remark this to his credit more than I had ever done before. He had no blasted hopes nor ambitions to make him disagreeable, for I believe he was content to spend his life as a poor musician; his only hope in coming to New York was that his daily earnings would be increased, which would enable him to provide better for his wife and child, and that his old attachment for me could be gratified without harming any one. There are men of little worth who worry because they cannot attain an impossible greatness, but Tibby was a man of unusual qualities who was content to live a modest and blameless life, and I am satisfied that none of those who knew him intimately ever thought to his discredit that he was careless and extravagant, for he was never careless in his demeanor toward his friends, and only extravagant in loving them.

Any one who is thrifty and painstaking seems to be selfish, and I believe Queen Mary was fonder of her father than of her mother, as I had always been, though I was almost ashamed to acknowledge it even to myself. When I was a boy, and asked for that which was not good for me, or which they could not well afford, Mrs. Cole refused it, but it was different with Tibby, who never refused me a request of any kind; and although Mrs. Cole did her duty toward me better than her husband, I could not help being fonder of Tibby than of his wife, and Queen Mary seemed to have had the same experience. She always said that Tibby was her sweetheart, and nothing could induce her to say that her father was not first in her affections; but none of us were envious of this great honor, so certain were we that Tibby deserved the distinction. I also noticed that Queen Mary was like her father in everything, even to her health, which seemed to be frail, and as I watched them that night I thought they were a pair fit for heaven.

I was not surprised to learn, among other Three Rivers gossip, that old Mr. Behee was still a widower, for I had always believed in his own doctrine that "nobody would have him," but Pidg said his sisters were still worrying over his giddy ways, though, as a matter of fact, he was

becoming so old and feeble that he was more concerned over making a living than over the girls in the neighborhood, which I thought highly probable. I never knew what an interesting place Three Rivers was until after I left it, and it afforded me a good deal of pleasure to learn that I was regarded as quite a hero there, although there was really no reason why the people should entertain that opinion of me; I had led anything but a hero's life since leaving them. They had the most extravagant ideas, too, of the number of suits of clothes owned by me, and of the magnificence of my appointments on Bleecker Street, and all the Three Rivers men who had formerly lived in New York professed to have known my father intimately, but I found out afterwards that he did not remember any of them.

Queen Mary was unusually bright, and certainly she had old ways, for they at once put her through a list of accomplishments; the singing of baby songs, and the making of baby speeches, which she did with great cleverness. In addition to this, the baby seemed to be very amiable, never having been of the slightest trouble, they said; and I noticed while I was talking to Mrs. Cole that Tibby was entirely lost to everything else in the company of the baby, playing with it as tenderly as though his lightest touch were likely to break

it. His honest, kindly face was in a perfect glow as he played with little Mary, and I thought it strange that such gentleness and devotion were cramped in three poor upper rooms in the Bowery, while there was so much coldness and discomfort at my own home, and at Barton's.

We had a delightful supper at seven o'clock, after Pidg's return, to which I contributed as many articles as I could carry from the nearest market. I assured them a dozen times during the evening that I thought more of them than of my father and mother, which I did, and promised to bring Barton around to see them, knowing that they would be delighted with him, as I was. I had told Barton a great deal about them all, and I felt so sure that he would like them that I was only deterred from going after him then by the certainty that I could not get back before bed time.

Tibby was greatly encouraged by my presence, and talked hopefully about his getting along in the world, when he would call on my folks in company with Mrs. Cole, but I felt in my heart that he had made a mistake in coming to New York at all. I was more worldly than either of them, and I had not got along very well, being frequently humiliated by my painful lack of experience. They all talked like confiding, good-

natured children, for they expected that within a few months they would become acquainted and be recognized as they had been in Three Rivers, where Tibby and his wife were known and respected, and in constant demand. I knew this could never come about, and that their simple hearts would be hurt, and while I was glad that they had come on my own account (they acknowledged that their greatest desire in making the change was to be near me), I was sorry for them, for I knew that they would be disappointed in everything except in the love they expected from me.

Pidg regarded me with the veneration he had shown at home for Mrs. Cole's vases, and during the evening, when we were singing to the accompaniment of the organ which Tibby had brought with him, if I felt a soft touch on my arm, I knew that Pidg was silently admiring the texture of my coat. My general appearance excited his warmest admiration, and when we went to bed together, at a late hour that night, I imagined that he did not sleep much, as he left the light burning, and I believed he was admiring the clothes I had piled up in a chair.

Mrs. Cole came into my room after I was in bed, Tibby having gone to sleep in his chair, with Queen Mary in his arms, and I thought I detected

that she was uneasy because of the change in their residence, although she said nothing to indicate it, and tried to hide it in her actions. I told her all about my new mother, and how coldly she treated me, and pleased her by saying that I intended in future to spend most of my time with her in the Bowery. She was much interested in Aunt Caroline, and in all my affairs, and when I became sleepy, I asked her to tell me a story, as she used to do when I was in Three Rivers. This she did, and it was about a lady who brought up a child not her own, and although the child grew to be a boy, and went away to his own home, the foster-mother continued to love him as much as ever, and longed for him as though he was of her own flesh and blood. As I was going off to sleep, I heard the declaration from gentle lips and in a gentle voice, that the foster-mother would always mourn the loss of the child she had loved so long, and that in her heart she felt that she could never give him up to strangers.

CHAPTER XVII.

GRUFF'S LOVE AFFAIR.

AN incident occurred about this time which caused me a good deal of uneasiness, and which I may as well mention now as at any other time.

A few weeks after the arrival of Tibby Cole, I went alone one evening to call on the Richards, hoping that I would be able to conduct myself so well that a good report would reach my mother's ears. I must have had more confidence in myself than usual, because of the homage paid me by Tibby and Pidg, for I was surprised at my own courage when I rang the bell, and felt like running away before any one came in answer to it, but while considering this, the door was opened by a servant, and I was ushered into the parlor, which the girl illuminated in a jerky sort of a way, as though gas was high, and dull visitors entirely too numerous.

As it has been frequently necessary during the progress of this narrative to use the personal pronoun I, the person whose history is being related

deems it proper to explain here that the objectionable capital is used only as a convenience, and that he is not at all fond of himself. In fact, he believes that he possesses a gift which a certain lover of doons and braes regretted was not more common; to wit, the gift of seeing himself as others see him, and were it not for the fear of challenging the opinion that poets are inspired, and that poets therefore know exactly what they are writing about, he would even go so far as to say that he is more familiar with the ridiculous side of his own character than any of his acquaintances, since it is certain that he has frequently suffered agony from a consciousness of having done ridiculous things, and then discovered that those whose criticisms he feared had observed nothing out of the way in his conduct.

It would seem that from long practice every one ought to be familiar with the use of his hands, and know what to do with them; but I never sat down in a company in New York in my life that I did not feel that my hands were out of place; and if I ever succeeded in placing them satisfactorily, I derived no comfort from the reflection, since it immediately occurred to me that my feet were not what they should be, either in size or position. I had been bold enough in Three Rivers, where I had admirers, but my mother's cool neglect con-

vinced me that I was so clumsily made that only the greatest care would keep me from disgrace. This timidity affected me so much that I believe I never owned a satisfactory suit of clothes until I was a man grown, or a pair of cuffs which were not either too long or too short, and whenever any one looked at me I imagined at once that he was finding fault. There was some comfort in the circumstance that the mouths of most people were too large, but my other failings were so unusual that I wonder I did not frankly state to the people of New York that, having no reason to be, I was not fond of myself.

During my three years in New York I improved a little, of course, and was as well dressed as most young men of my age ; but I could never get rid of a certain timidity because of my mother's course towards me. Had I been satisfactory to her, and been taught as I should have been, I might have finally rid myself of the constant fear that I was doing something wrong ; but as it was, I felt at all times that my mother was not far away, and that she was watching me closely, with a look of contempt on her face.

While waiting for the Richards to appear — I had hoped Mr. Richards would come to the door himself, and say that he was glad I had dropped in, as it was a lonesome evening — I became con-

vinced that I was in an awkward predicament, though I was not, for I knew the family very well, but I could not get rid of the feeling, and grew gradually worse, until I heard Mr. Richards' footsteps approaching.

They had evidently talked the matter over when my arrival was announced, and concluded it was strange that I had called alone, for when Mr. Richards appeared, he acted in an amused way, as did his wife, who came in soon after, though they were both friendly enough. Had they treated me naturally, I should have had no trouble; but their manner was so patronizing, as though they knew I was awkward and needed help, that I regretted I could not think up an errand which would give me an excuse for retiring at once. Both of them tried to talk in the most unconcerned manner of my affairs; but in patronizing me they made matters worse, and I stuttered and stammered in speaking of the most trifling things.

I had gone there with a view of sitting an hour or two; not as a visitor, but as a family friend, and when they began lighting up the house, instead of inviting me into the ordinary family room, as I had expected, it seemed to me that my hands and feet were larger than ever. My tongue became surprisingly thick, and instead of making

a good impression, and causing them to speak a kind word of me to my mother, I acted like a hopeless imbecile. If I thought of something to say which I believed would sound free and natural,—I thought of that a good deal, because Barton had told me that was the correct thing,—I made the most horrible mess of it, and my actions were equally unfortunate.

It occurred to me as I sat there that they believed I had called to see Kate, and that they were amused because I was love-sick, and though I was not love-sick, and had not called to see Kate, I knew that I acted as though I were either love-sick or crazy. The more I tried to act as though I cared nothing for the girl, the more I seemed to convince them that I did, and was anxiously waiting for her appearance; and finally I hoped that one of the servants would run into the room and announce that the house was on fire, which would give me a chance to retire without being noticed.

When Kate finally came in, my guilty imagination suggested that she acted as though she had been pouting in her room because she was expected to see me at all, and this added so much to my discomfort that I inwardly cursed myself for a fool for coming at all, and I would have given all I possessed to be safe in my own bed.

I also imagined that she had some sort of an engagement for the evening, and though I wanted to go away, I did not know how to, and what I feared and dreaded finally happened: Mr. Richards and his wife left the room, smiling at each other, as though they thought my love-sickness was very amusing.

Kate was as hateful as she could possibly be, and as handsome, and made fun of everything I said and did, but in a way which is generally considered bright rather than offensive, and though a great many ill-natured and appropriate replies came into my mind, I smirked and smiled, and pretended that I liked to be skinned, though the process is really a very horrible one to me. She brought up the marrying matter again, and intimated that her suffering had commenced, and though I wanted to say that I despised her, and would rather marry her father's cook, I believe I acted as though I had really begun my attentions, and would keep them up, whether she liked it or not, until she was finally tied hand and foot, and married to me in spite of her screams. Although I knew she was pretty and intelligent, I also knew that she disliked me, and I am certain that I was not in love with her, and had no idea that I ever would be.

After an hour or two of this, I invented a plan

by which I thought I could get out of the house creditably, to wit: by pretending to be taken suddenly ill; but just before I attempted to carry it into effect, Mr. Richards and his wife came in again, and I was as bad off as ever. I knew it was time for me to go, but I did not know how to say my adieus properly, and I finally became so hot and excited that I would have dashed wildly out of the room but for the fear that my legs would give way under me, and leave me sprawling upon the floor.

I watched them telegraphing with their eyes for another hour, wondering why I did not go, and knew that they were becoming annoyed and impatient, but to save my life I could not make a move to go, and remained, though I knew they hated and despised me. I could only hope that they were accustomed to remaining up until twelve o'clock, though I knew they were not; and I do not remember even now how I finally got started, though I believe Mr. Richards helped me in some way. But even after I was on my feet, and had spoken of going, the spirit of dullness held me back in the hope that I could, in a measure, retrieve my fallen fortunes, so that it was midnight before I finally got into the street, flushed and excited, but so cold that my teeth rattled.

I remember that tears came into my eyes when I thought how awkward I had been, and that I was denouncing myself out loud, when I noticed a man and a woman walking in the street ahead of me. Both of them seemed familiar, and when they passed under the street lamp, I saw that it was Gruff and my Aunt Caroline. They seemed to be discussing something with a good deal of animation, though I could not hear what was said, and kept at it until they reached our house, when my aunt went in, and Gruff passed on up the street.

All this seemed so strange to me that when I went into the house, I hurried to my aunt's room, and told her what I had seen. She did not seem at all surprised, but explained in a weary, hopeless way, that Gruff had once been her lover; that she had intended to marry him, until he took to drink, and that even after that she occasionally met him for a few minutes on the street, but only to assure him that she had changed her mind.

In answer to my statement that Gruff did not like me, she only said that he did not like any one; that he was a soured and ruined man, and that he did not dislike me any more than any one else, which may have been the case, for I had certainly never heard him speak well of any one

or any thing, except the kind of brandy he patronized.

I was at first disposed to be indignant at my aunt's relations with Gruff, but cooled down somewhat when I heard the story, which was to the effect that he had been very promising as a young man, when my aunt's acquaintance with him began, and that he continued his attentions then, very much against her will, by writing her notes, and asking to see her just once more, which he kept up from year to year, although she always told him that she would never change her mind.

I am not sure that I did not think less of my aunt because she had once been in love with Gruff, whom I regarded as the most worthless man I had ever known; but I hope I soon forgot it, for his misfortune and her own made her very wretched; and as long as I remained in her room that night she walked about in an abstracted way, occasionally moaning and wringing her hands. When I told her of my unfortunate experience at the house of Mr. Richards, she said in my misfortune I could sympathize with her, as her entire life had been as uncomfortable, hopeless and helpless as my evening with Kate Richards.

At last I induced her to lie down on the bed, where I bathed her throbbing forehead, but this only caused her to burst out crying, saying that

it was the only act of kindness that had ever been shown her. I had never seen her in such a state before, and though she thanked me for my efforts to comfort her, they did not seem to do any good, for she was as wretched and unhappy as she could be.

She had always taken a great interest in Tibby Cole and his wife, and I mentioned for the first time that they were in New York, hoping that the information would please her, but instead of that I thought it made her worse, for as long as I remained in the room, she was in a state bordering on desperation, and from which I could not possibly rouse her.

I told Barton about her strange actions next day, and in speaking of her love affair with Gruff, he referred in the most respectful language to his enemy, saying that he had been a very promising man before he became a slave to drink.

This incident caused me to regard Gruff more favorably, but he hated me more than ever, apparently, for he was always making threats which found their way to my ears; and once he rushed at me on the office stairs, as though he intended to use his hatchet, but some one appeared, and he went away with a wicked scowl on his face, and muttering curses against me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RETREAT IN THE BOWERY.

IT was a part of Tibby Cole's work at the music store where he was employed to put bad musical compositions in shape for publication at the expense of the authors, and his earnings were sufficient to pay the cost of his living, for he also had an engagement with a city band and orchestra, and earned something additional in that way. At the first opportunity I took Barton down to see him, and they were charmed with each other, as I expected they would be. Tibby regarded it as greatly to his credit that a real New York man could be friends with him, and accepted the circumstance as an indication that in the course of time, he would become quite well known in New York society.

Barton soon became a favorite, not only with Tibby, but with Queen Mary and her mother, and on my visits I frequently found him there before me. He regarded his fondness for visiting Tibby Cole's family as a great fault, and I do not believe

he ever mentioned it at home. His admiration for the pleasant relations existing between Tibby and his wife was unbounded, and he frequently told me that he might have been equally fortunate but for a natural depravity which made him nervous when around his own house. Queen Mary, he said, thought more of him than either of his own children, which seemed to be the case, and it was his weekly custom to spend Sunday afternoon there, and drop in one or two evenings of the week. I usually accompanied him, and the most pleasant recollections of my life are connected with my visits to Tibby Cole's house in New York, accompanied by Barton, the business manager, for there was an air of comfort about the place which was particularly agreeable to me as a relief from the cold dignity of Bleecker Street, and Barton had equally good reason for his enjoyment in three back rooms in the Bowery, and up two flights of stairs at that.

Barton usually did little while there, except to romp with the baby, and admire Tibby and his wife, but he always thoroughly enjoyed his visits, though he came sneaking in like a man who felt very guilty, and went away in the same manner. He told Mrs. Cole a great deal about what a wonderful woman his wife was, and how devoted she was to her home and her children, and how she

had no other ambition in life than to distinguish herself as a wife and mother; though I noticed soon after that he began feeling in his pockets as if he wanted a chew of plug tobacco to dissipate on. Mrs. Cole must have wondered about this, in connection with his spending so much of his leisure time away from his magnificent wife, but she said nothing, nor did she make inquiries of me, or encourage me when I expressed the opinion that Mrs. Barton was not the lovely woman her husband said she was.

It was a little wonderful to me that Barton enjoyed home life in Tibby Cole's three little rooms, when with his own wife and children he could not bear it; but he did, and he often told me the only real pleasure he knew was in visiting my friends. Nothing pleased him better than to eat dinner at Tibby's, which he nearly always did on Sundays, first sending word home that he found it necessary to go to Albany. If Barton handed me a note on Saturday at the office saying that he found it necessary to go to Albany on the following day, I knew what it meant, and in the evening made a number of purchases for the morrow, the cost of which we divided equally, for we were considerate enough not to put Tibby to extra expense because of his guests. Mrs. Cole always believed that I furnished the money for the

dinners, and that it was my way of entertaining Barton, who had no home of his own worth speaking about.

It seemed to me that little Mary did not prosper very well in the close rooms where they lived, and that she was paler than when they first arrived, but I was sorry I mentioned it, — as I did one Sunday afternoon when Barton and I were there as usual, — for Mrs. Cole burst out crying, and I could say nothing after that to comfort her; perhaps she had noticed it herself, and my remark had confirmed her fears. Tibby was also very uneasy, and as he sat by the window afterwards, looking out toward the country, I thought he was accusing himself because he was poor, and could not take his wife and child to a better place. His wife divined his thoughts as readily as I did, and went over to him, and told him, in her gentle way, that everything would be for the best, and that she was quite happy. This exhibition, and my unfortunate remark, caused us to go away early in the evening, and it was just dusk when we went down the stairway and into the street.

We had walked quite a distance when we suddenly ran into Gruff and his melancholy friend. Both of them had been drinking, and Gruff no sooner saw me than he stood in front of me, and began abusing me and my friends, his remarks

having especial reference, I thought, to Barton. I tried to walk on, but he interrupted me, and continued his insulting talk, saying that he had "made me," and that now I was too important to speak to him, although I had been ploughing corn in my bare feet only a few years before. Two or three times he stopped me as I attempted to pass him, during which time I noticed that Barton was seized with a nervous twitching, and finally he hailed a passing carriage, knocked Gruff down with a quick blow, followed me into the carriage, and drove away. Gruff fell against his friend, knocking him down too, and the last I saw of them they were in a heap in the gutter.

Thus it came about that I spent the night at Barton's house, for we drove there direct, and, though Barton evidently did not desire the company of his wife, preferring to spend the evening with me, she hovered around him constantly, telling me how devoted she was to him, and how much he admired her. I thought this bored Barton immensely, though he gave me to understand that it was all true.

Everything was going wrong around the house, apparently, from the children going to bed to one of the servants quarrelling in a loud voice with some one in the kitchen, and although Barton looked at his wife appealingly, as though express-

ing the hope that she would straighten out matters, she did not understand him, and continued to tell me how pleasant she made her home by giving all her time to it, and how much better it was that she was content to shine in this direction, and not as an actress, or singer, or writer, or woman suffragist. Half the time I could not hear Mrs. Barton's complimentary references to her housekeeping, because of the noise of the children, who seemed to be both crying at once, but she prattled on in spite of the interruptions, and seemed to believe all she was saying.

The oldest boy was having trouble upstairs with the nurse, it seemed, for he came into the room where we sat with a scowl on his face, and kicked over everything within his reach. He was a handsome fellow, seven or eight years old, but neither of the parents had any control over the children, and they were as noisy and bad as possible. The nurse finally induced the boy to go upstairs again, by making all sorts of extravagant promises, and through it all his mother told of the sacrifices she made in properly training her children, though she was content to make them, as she preferred distinction of that sort to any other. If the neighbors said her house was always in order, and her children well behaved (as they frequently *did* say), she was happier than the

woman who was praised by the entire country as an actress, a writer, or a woman's righter.

Barton did not pay much attention to his wife's talk, except that once or twice he reached his hand out to me and asked that I congratulate a thoroughly fortunate man, but I believed that he was disgusted.

Mrs. Barton had an idea that her husband did nothing down town except to enjoy himself, and have a good time, and it was one of her favorite sayings, when matters were going on worse than usual around the house, that no man ever appreciated the trials and cares of a woman; and although Barton really accomplished more in a day than his wife did in a week he did not seem to know it, for he referred to himself as a loafer, who could not appreciate the hardworking mother of his children.

"But I must have my gay whirl," he added, after referring to himself as a loafer. "I have grown so accustomed to a life of idleness that I cannot get down to plain, plug work; it's fortunate that I have a wife who does enough for both of us."

Mrs. Barton went out soon after, to visit a neighbor who had great admiration for her as a housekeeper, and her husband and I listened to the racket upstairs a while in silence, the expres-

sion on my companion's face indicating that he had a notion to go out and jump headforemost into the cistern, to the end that his family might be rid of an encumbrance.

During my frequent visits there I always thought of Barton's home as a disagreeable boarding house which he could not get rid of, and where he was compelled to pay not only his own board, but the board of all the other guests, although they were not congenial. I have heard Mrs. Barton express anxiety over the cook's cough, and pity the poor milkman who came around in cold weather, but she had no idea that her husband might be an unhappy man, or that she might be able to help him in any way; my opinion was that she argued that Barton was her husband, and he could not help himself, whether his family pleased him or not. Barton was really very liberal toward his wife and children, spending even more than he could afford for them, but notwithstanding this, they regarded him as a very close and stingy man, who could only be induced to provide the commonest necessities by strategy and persistence, which I thought was an unnecessary piece of cruelty, for he was always ready to meet their demands, however unreasonable they were, and easily saw through their schemes.

"That oldest boy," Mr. Barton said, after

a while, as he looked through his pockets for plug tobacco, but without finding it, for his pockets all had holes in them, "is so much like me that I blush every time he comes into my presence. I never had a failing of any kind that is not reproduced in that boy. As soon as he is a little older, I will send him to the reform school, if I can get his mother's permission."

There was a terrific noise upstairs, and we both concluded he had thrown something at the nurse girl.

"It is not his mother's fault that he is so bad," he said. "She gives him a great deal of attention, but he is so much like his father that he is unmanageable. I am sorry I am not given to management, but I have so many other faults that this one is insignificant in comparison. Everything would be pleasant and agreeable around here to a respectable man, but to me it is distasteful, and I am ashamed of myself. If ever I commit suicide, it will be because I am so low that I cannot appreciate a good woman and a pleasant home."

I suggested that he control the boy, and make him behave, but Barton wearily shook his head, as though it was impossible.

"I *can* control him, of course, by knocking him down, and tying him, but I won't do that. I'm

not too good, but somehow I dislike to beat children. He thinks he's doing right, no difference what he does (for he's like me, and I usually think I am right), and I'll not beat him. I struck him once, and I felt so meanly over it that I have quit; if he will forgive me for that, he may go to the penitentiary before I strike him again. I was just like him as a boy, probably, and I hate my father yet because he whipped me. For some reason my presence enrages him, for his mother says he is much better when I am away. If it wasn't for me, they would all get along better."

He said this with the utmost seriousness, and seemed to be as much in earnest in abusing himself as his wife was in praising herself.

"Out of every half-dozen men," he said, after staring up at the ceiling a while, "six of them talk too much. I talk too much to you, and feel very silly because of it, when I am alone; but you have a boy's faith in me, not being old enough to despise me as I despise other men who act as I do; therefore it is rather a satisfaction to me to make a confidant of you. I hope you believe that I am not as bad as I seem, although I am. I suppose a bandit enjoys hearing his wife abuse the bad men who are looking for him. Your friendship for me is a great comfort. Do you like cats?"

I replied that I had no great fondness for them, though I was not annoyed by their presence.

“I know a man who is exemplary in every respect except that he despises cats. The sight of a cat throws him into an alarming rage, and if he had to live in a house with one, I believe he would go crazy. He can't help his aversion for cats, although he does not apologize for it, and don't care who sees him when he is throwing stones at them. Indeed, I have often been amused myself at his natural antipathy for the harmless little animals, and no one seems to think any the less of him because of his failing. I know another man, exemplary in every respect except that he has a natural aversion for sobriety, and drinks a great deal. This poor fellow is ashamed of his failing, and when sober denounces his drunken folly in the severest terms, as do all his friends.”

He looked at me as though he expected that I would say something, but although I was interested in his two friends, I could think of no comment to make. This amused him a little, for he laughed lightly, and said it was no matter, except that he had hoped that I would observe, for my own benefit, that it made a good deal of difference what turn a man's depravity took.

He ran on in this way, abusing himself soundly, until his wife returned from the neighbor's to

give wonderful accounts of how other women neglect their homes and children, and adding that she could not see for the life of her why they were recognized in the community. This annoyed Barton so much that he suggested that I must be sleepy, whereupon he showed me to my room.

He went to bed soon after himself, in a room near mine, and I suppose he was kept awake half the night, as I was, by his wife prowling around. She managed to waken the children twice, on a pretence of making them more comfortable, and it must have been two o'clock in the morning when she passed my door mixing something in a glass with a tinkling sound, and finally disappeared in her room. Some time after this, when I went into Barton's room to inquire whether he thought Gruff would quit work because of the knock-down, I found that he was wide-awake too, though the encounter with Gruff did not seem to be bothering him; he was evidently thinking of his family affairs, for he had pulled a spittoon up to the side of the bed, and was vigorously chewing plug tobacco. Indeed, he paid little attention to the encounter with Gruff, for both of them were at work as usual when I went to the office the next afternoon, and though Gruff took pains to say in Barton's presence, in answer to a ques-

tion from one of the clerks, that he intended to get even with the man who had struck him, Barton apparently did not hear him, for he went on tearing up an editorial from Mr. Couldock's pen, with the coolness which usually characterized him when similarly engaged.

Before I went away that evening, he handed me a note, which read: —

That oldest boy of mine, like his father, cannot appreciate kind treatment. His kind-hearted mother woke him last night to inquire if he were not hungry, and you no doubt heard the fuss he made. A short time after his ungrateful behavior, and after I had gone to sleep, Mrs. Barton (imagining I had a headache, with her usual thoughtfulness) came into my room, and put a cold cloth on my forehead. I am such a depraved man that I did not appreciate the kindness as I should have done, although I did not have a headache; indeed, the cold cloth awoke me out of a pleasant sleep, and I was mad enough to swear.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE POETRY COMPLETED.

I NEVER knew where Mr. Couldock, the proprietor, lived, although I understood that his home was in one of the suburban towns, and that he came to the city every morning on a boat. Of course Barton knew all about him, but the rest of us were always in great wonder concerning the little proprietor, who was so mild and inoffensive that we all liked him, although we did not respect him a great deal.

I used to think that Barton bullied him, for I never knew Mr. Couldock to do a thing which was satisfactory to the business manager. Occasionally a man who evidently did not live in New York called at the office, and inquired for Mr. Couldock, whereupon Barton said that he was not in, though as a matter of fact he was in the next room, and probably heard the inquiry for him. I asked Barton about it once, and he said that the men were patrons of the paper from the country, and that, as they probably imagined that Mr. Coul-

dock was a big man, of fine address, it would not do to dispel the illusion. Mr. Couldock had no acquaintances in the city who ever called at the office, to my knowledge, and the most that I knew about him was that he lived over in the Long Island way, for he talked a good deal about a ferry which he patronized in the upper part of the city, where he occasionally met men who borrowed his money and never paid it back.

Every one who came into the office was met by Barton, who disposed of them promptly and satisfactorily, and although Mr. Couldock was always expecting men of different descriptions to come in, and pay him borrowed money, no one ever came on such an errand, and the ferry had a bad reputation in the office.

After the first few years of my arrival in New York, I spent all of the afternoons in the office, studying only three hours of each day at the commercial school, and my wages were proportionately increased, as I became able to assist Barton in his department, in addition to my own work, for I still had charge of the letters, and marked No. 13, or No. 8, or No. 7, on those which needed an answer. One day a particularly gushy letter was received, and I called attention to it. All of them, except Mr. Couldock, were amused at the contents, which referred to a worldly son who

would not go to church, though regularly invited by his patient mother. Mr. Couldock was much affected by the writer's trouble, and at once set about answering it, occasionally wiping his moist eyes as he did so. When he went away that evening, he left a very bulky letter on his desk, addressed to the correspondent in question, which Barton tore up without reading.

The business manager's usual conduct toward the proprietor was after this fashion, although he invariably treated him with the greatest respect. I have known him to gravely consult him with reference to a matter which had been disposed of a week before, and if Mr. Couldock asked time to think about it, Barton would remind him of it from day to day until he gave a decision, which was a waste of time, for the business manager never did anything that the proprietor recommended.

Indeed, Barton was more considerate of me than he was of Mr. Couldock, for one afternoon when Uncle Henry called at the office, and inquired for me, the business manager admitted him at once, and pointed out the desk where I was at work.

Uncle Henry was rather a good fellow, on closer acquaintance, except his insane fondness for Boston and Commonwealth Avenue, and when he came to New York he looked about him with the same patronizing interest which might have char-

acterized him in examining a western village. I have known him to look at a block of buildings in New York which could not have been surpassed in Boston, either in size or architecture, and remark that it was curious or antique, as though he was only interested because it was so much smaller than houses he had been accustomed to, and he wondered why it was not blown over by the wind.

Uncle Henry was so wrapped up in Boston that he could stand in front of a magnificent house in New York, and honestly believe that it was nothing in comparison to a much inferior structure in his own city, and he also believed that as a Boston man he knew everything, as a matter of course, and that New York people knew nothing, also as a matter of course. When I introduced him to Barton, I thought he regarded him very much as he might an insane man who imagined that his room in the asylum was a great newspaper office, and that he was the manager, and when Barton, in the course of the conversation, made some careless reference to the Ten Commandments, Uncle Henry said, "I beg your pardon, but there are only nine."

Barton's face flushed, and his mouth twitched as though he had a mind to say something ugly, but he gulped down his anger and rapidly wrote a note, which he handed to me:—

Tell Mr. Gruff to advocate a change in *First Kings*, twelfth verse; the intimation that Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived is evidently a mistake, and will bring discredit upon the Bible.

Uncle Henry's particular business in New York on this occasion was to deliver into my hands the poem for which he had taken notes at our first meeting, and after we returned home he presented it to me, and said that in case I ever became poor, I could sell it, and thus secure a considerable sum of money. The poem was quite long, and I quote the first lines, to show its style:—

From the flush and hectic West,¹
 Fierce Flavonius² sends his dread behest.
 Nemesis,³ avenging goddess, shows the way,
 And Jove,⁴ with mighty muttering, begins the fray.
 King Atlas,⁵ trembling at the portentous hail,
 The stampeding herds⁶ his rugged face assail.
 The Cyclone!⁷ Avenger of the plains,⁸
 Elysian⁹ only when Olympus¹⁰ reigns,

¹ First line not original.

² The west wind.

³ Nemesis represents the righteous anger of the gods.

⁴ Jove, or Jupiter, was king of gods and men. The thunder was his favorite weapon.

⁵ The western limit of the earth, where the sun goes down, was, in ancient mythology, regarded as the realm of King Atlas.

⁶ In the great West a storm creates a stampede among the herds.

⁷ The Cyclone is a storm common in the West, which devastates whole sections of country.

⁸ The vast desert between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains is known as "The Plains."

⁹ The Greeks believed that on the western margin of the earth, by the stream of Ocean, lay a happy place named the Elysian Plain, whither mortals favored by the gods were transported, without tasting death, to enjoy an immortality of bliss.

¹⁰ Mount Olympus was the abode of the gods.

Riding on the winds,¹¹ to Janus¹² light,
 The destroying Bison¹³ appear in sight.
 Cattle and herder,¹⁴ helpless all,
 Weapons of the Cyclone, they rise and fall.
 The trembling settler,¹⁵ convulsed with fear,
 Toward his cellar¹⁶ begins to steer.
 Mild Flora's¹⁷ pity comes too late
 To avert the quiet village's fate.
 The Brave¹⁸ his scalp knife¹⁹ puts away,
 And rides the wind to this dread affray;
 The Dance of Death,²⁰ in earth and sky,
 Is mingled as the Bison fly.
 The plumèd warrior²¹ 'gainst the stable door,
 Is held until he can sin no more.²²

¹¹ The wind is frequently so strong in the West that it picks up buffaloes like pebbles, and carries them along with it.

¹² Janus was the porter of heaven.

¹³ The Bison of the Plains, known also as buffaloes, which feed and travel together by the millions. When a storm appears, they are picked up and carried with it.

¹⁴ In the great storms of that cheerless region, cattle and their herders are frequently mixed with the trees and houses which float through the air, or bound along the surface of the earth, carrying destruction and death.

¹⁵ Those bold people who live on the Plains are known as settlers.

¹⁶ In the regions where storms are common, the people build cellars outside of their houses, where they take refuge when danger is imminent. These are known as "buffalo cellars," for the reason that the buffaloes roll over them without doing the occupants harm.

¹⁷ Flora was Flavonius' lover. Milton alludes to them in "Paradise Lost," where he describes Adam waking and contemplating Eve still asleep.

¹⁸ Among the Indians, every male between the ages of twenty and fifty is known as a Brave.

¹⁹ A knife used by the Indians in taking scalps.

²⁰ The Sioux practise a War Dance, or Dance of Death.

²¹ The Indian warrior wears eagle feathers in his hair, believing that they will make him brave and fleet of foot.

²² The author has it from a perfectly reliable source that the winds in the West are so strong and continuous that Indians are often held against houses until they starve to death.

Uncle Henry read the poem over to me in dramatic style, and as he referred to the notes, and read them, wherever the marks occurred, it was a very amusing performance, although I pretended to be intensely interested, and thanked him for the favor, saying that if ever I became poor, I should suffer a long while before giving it up.

I played the violin for Uncle Henry that afternoon at his invitation, he having heard, in some way, that I had been a concert specialist, in my time, and although he knew nothing about the instrument, he criticised the performance severely, but in a way which indicated that I should receive suggestions from a Boston man as a favor. One of his suggestions was that I should get a silver E string at once, which would add much to the clearness of the high notes, and when I said that such a thing was never heard of, he looked at me with unutterable pity, as if to say: "Oh, well, if you refuse to accept a Boston man's advice, you must suffer the consequences."

When we went out in town together, I tried to interest him by pointing out some of the famous sights, but Uncle Henry would only glance at them, saying that the New Yorkers had given up even trying to do anything worthy of mention.

There was a particularly funny play running at one of the down-town theatres, and I took him to

that, which he sat through without once breaking into a smile, but between the acts he told me about Boston being the home of the drama, and as he pitched his voice in a rather high key, a good many people looked curiously at us. I thought Uncle Henry accepted this attention as a compliment, and he probably imagined that the people were staring at him because they were anxious to learn something from a Boston man, but it was very annoying to me.

Once during the performance I referred to our part of the house as the "parka," whereupon Uncle Henry said: "Excuse me; the parket," but later when I said "parket," he as promptly replied: "Excuse me; the parka." Thinking that perhaps he was in a bad humor because I had not praised his poetry as much as he thought it deserved, I quoted a few lines of it, adding that it kept running in my head, which pleased him, and we got on better after that, so much so that he confided to me that the line "From the flush and hectic West," was entirely original with him, but that he had said that it was not, in the notes, to create an impression that he was a very exact and honest poet.

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It was about this time that I met my old friend, Joe Allen, of Kansas. Barton and I had gone to

the theatre one evening, and when the curtain went down on the first act, I noticed that Mr. Allen was sitting directly in front of me. I held out my hand to him, which he took rather awkwardly, as he did not remember me. I hoped he had heard that the boy he had befriended was the son of rich parents, and that I had been the subject of much newspaper notoriety, but he had not, though he remembered meeting me when I recalled the circumstance. When the play was over, I insisted upon showing him a great deal of attention, but the most he would accept of was a supper at a restaurant near his hotel, which was the Metropolitan, and not the Gilsey, where he had friends. He seemed to be as much at home in New York as Barton, and a great deal more familiar with the town than I was, although I had lived there four years.

In ordering the supper I became somewhat confused, and Mr. Allen came to my assistance with his old-time good nature. Barton accompanied us, of course, and he and Mr. Allen soon came to a friendly understanding, and kept up a brisk conversation, in which I took little part. When Mr. Allen learned from Barton that I was the boy who had created such a sensation by mysteriously disappearing, he was interested for a moment, but soon forgot it, and politely refused

my invitation to call at our house on Bleecker Street the next day, saying his time in the city was limited. Indeed, he did not seem to feel at all honored by my attentions, though he was very polite, and I am not certain that he was not bored.

I remember that I ordered a bottle of claret with the supper, and though I drank it, and insisted upon Mr. Allen having some, he called for coffee instead, and cared nothing for customs which were not agreeable to him. This made me feel rather foolish, since I did not drink wine at meals myself, and had only ordered it to make Mr. Allen believe that I had reached that stage of improvement. However, Barton kindly helped me out, and between us we managed to dispose of the most of the bottle, although neither of us liked it.

Barton and I accompanied Mr. Allen to his hotel, and after expressing a hope that he would see us again (but without setting a date), he stepped into the elevator, and went up to bed.

CHAPTER XX.

QUEEN MARY ILL.

I MADE the discovery one Sunday that Tibby Cole was much poorer than he pretended, and that although it was the dearest wish of his heart to be able to take Queen Mary back to Three Rivers, he did not have the necessary money, and had no prospect of getting it.

It would have been a pleasure for me to have given all my money to Tibby, but I had so little care myself that it never occurred to me once that they needed anything. There were no poor people in Three Rivers, so my thoughts never turned in this direction, for Tibby and his wife always seemed to have plenty. It may have been that their hospitality made their rooms seem pleasanter than the big house in which I lived, and their fare better than that to which I was accustomed, and when I discovered that they had been so thoughtful of me that I had neglected to think of them, I felt very guilty.

Tibby's pay had not been advanced as they expected, and I know now that one reason was

that he neglected his work because of Queen Mary's sickness, and that he frequently asked permission to go home in the middle of the day to look at her pale face, when he cheerfully assured his patient wife that she looked very much better, though he knew in his heart that she was gradually growing worse.

As soon as I learned what they needed, I immediately said I would go out in town and make the purchases, and asked Tibby to go with me, hoping to cheer him up by a brisk walk. But it did not have the desired effect; every purchase that I made reminded him of the child's sickness, and when I went into a store and came out with my packages, I found him standing timidly on the outside, and he turned his swollen eyes away from me, fearing to look at the packages I had bought. As we went from place to place, he followed me like a timid, wretched boy, never beside me, but always following; pausing when I did, to look at me timidly and wonderingly, and following again when I decided my course, and started once more on my way. The manner in which he looked at me, as if fearful that he might unintentionally do something displeasing, was so pitiful that I found all the articles mentioned by Mrs. Cole as soon as I could, and sent Tibby back with them, having decided

to find Barton, and consult with him as to the best course to pursue. I was almost afraid to trust Tibby to find his way home alone, he seemed so much like a child, but he assured me that he would have no difficulty, and went on his way, after I had told him I would follow him in the course of a few hours.

Barton was not at the office, so I went to his house, and found him there, much to my surprise. He had on a dressing gown and slippers, which I had never seen him wear before, and although he did not say so, I knew he was trying to behave himself, and spend the day with his family, like a decent man. His manner of pretending to enjoy himself, although I knew he was really in the greatest agony, was extremely amusing to me, and I did not mention my errand for an hour or more, during which time he kept up his pretence in the most furious and comical manner.

When the children came into the room where we were, he patted them on the head in a patronizing way, and played around with them like a boy, although this was not his natural way; but he had evidently determined to subdue his wicked self, for he called them around him, read them story books and explained their contents, played with their playthings, and pretended to enjoy their rude noise.

He had instructed the cook to make them a pot of taffy, in furtherance of his determination to be a father to his children, and each of them had a roll of it, which they smeared all over him; but he pretended not to notice it. I could not help thinking of him as a man who had made arrangements for a warm shower-bath, but, finding the water ice-cold, was shivering and cringing in an attempt to enjoy it.

The oldest boy was in a particularly bad and boisterous humor; but the worse he acted, the louder his father laughed. The cook was also mad for some reason, and was storming around about the children; but Barton joked her good-naturedly, and apparently nothing could cast a cloud over his sunny disposition. Several times he went to the foot of the stairway, and called up to his wife, whom he addressed as "Hortense, my dear," and told her of something very clever the oldest boy had done, and although the act was really an impudent one, Barton pretended that it was very cunning indeed, and said that they had great reason to be proud of their children.

I frequently laughed outright at his antics (for they were antics, since everything he did was unnatural and unbecoming to him), but he paid no attention, and loudly bantered me to become a fox to hunt the geese represented by himself and

the boys, which I did, only to have something valuable thrown at my head whenever I caught the oldest one.

We all went up stairs once to ask Mrs. Barton for a decision concerning a certain point in the game, and we found her lying on the bed reading, dressed in such a negligent and careless fashion that I expected her to blush when I appeared, but she did not, and said, in a contemptible sort of way, that we were making a lot of unnecessary noise downstairs. In reply to this, Barton laughingly said that the children must be amused, and immediately transformed himself into an elephant to carry the oldest boy, a huntsman looking for tigers, down stairs again, I following as a dromedary, carrying the youngest, who was a merchant on his way to the other side of the desert to trade with the inhabitants.

The mean reference to the noise downstairs was not intended for the boys, but for their father; and I had noticed before that Mrs. Barton's good-natured worthlessness with the children (she was usually amiable with them, no matter how bad they were, and considered it to her credit) did not extend to her husband, for she was very exacting with him, and regarded him generally as a necessary nuisance.

I disliked Mrs. Barton thoroughly, and used to

think that there never was a sensible man who could have tolerated her, believing that she should have married a fool of a fellow as slovenly and unambitious as herself, who would have believed her story that she was a very remarkable woman. She was a good deal like Gruff in the particular that she was very fond of herself without reason, and I believed that had she possessed but one eye, she would have talked to me a great deal about her beautiful eyes.

When I interrupted Barton's pleasure by telling him of the situation at Tibby's, and that we ought to go down there to encourage and help them in their distress, there was genuine joy in his face at the prospect of getting down town with a good excuse, and after calling cheerfully up to his wife that he would return as soon as possible, and enjoy his home again (from which the demands of business had called him, much to his regret), he patted the children on the head lovingly, and went away with me.

He confessed as he went along that he was not enjoying himself as much as he pretended (as though I did not know it!), but that he had determined to make an effort to overcome his contemptible disposition, and find pleasure where respectable men found it. He was of the opinion that he had succeeded very well for a first attempt, and

would continue trying, in the hope that he would finally overcome every difficulty, and make a man of himself.

The first thing he did on reaching Tibby's was to send Pidg out for a medical man, who decided on his arrival that the child could not be sent back to the West for a week or two, but he gave all of us so much hope that we felt encouraged. Barton felt very much ashamed, as I did, that he had not been more thoughtful, and was determined to make amends, for he told the doctor in the hall to call as often as he thought necessary, and send the bill to him.

The sun coming out warm in the afternoon, we procured a carriage, and went out to drive with Tibby and his wife and Queen Mary, Pidg riding on the box, and they appreciated this small favor so much that I thought I would be content to spend all my money in helping them. We drove past our house in Bleecker Street, and although Pidg was interested when I pointed it out, Tibby and his wife were not, and seemed hurt because my mother had never called on them. I knew they had reason to feel the slight, and regretted we had driven that way, for it was the only unpleasant incident of the drive.

As little Mary seemed quite exhausted with the drive, we left her at home with Pidg, and the rest

of us went to a restaurant for dinner, where Barton ordered in the most lavish manner, not forgetting Pidg and the baby, for the basket he carried back to them was tremendously large, and although we all said it was a waste of money, for they could never eat it, Barton's judgment turned out to be good, for Pidg managed to make away with it during the evening, without assistance from the baby, who lay on her little bed and seemed to enjoy the day as well as any of us.

During the evening Barton told them how he had enjoyed himself at home that morning, playing with the children, and that he longed for the next Sunday to come, so that he could have another good time, but I knew he was only apologizing because he was not as fond of his children as Tibby and his wife were of little Mary, who became feverish before we went away, and although she was always patient and considerate, like her father and mother, I became convinced that she was seriously ill, and would never get well. The Queen's domain was on the prairie, and she was pining away and dying in that inhospitable climate.

This reflection caused me such a pang of regret that I did not read the note that Barton wrote and handed me during the day, but after I went

home I remembered it, and read this strange paragraph: —

I hope Mrs. Barton will not die before I do. I could not look decently sorry, and those who attended the funeral would notice it, and remark it to my discredit.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE QUEEN'S CONDITION.

ALTHOUGH my mother never liked me, I hope that my father had a good deal of charity for my failings, for he was always disposed to treat me fairly, and took considerable interest in my affairs. I made him my confidant, to a certain extent, and when I spent a day or an evening with Barton, I told him exactly what we did, and though he seldom found objections, he occasionally offered suggestions which were pertinent, for he was a man of much practical good sense.

After I had been at home a year or two, we became quite good friends, and he occasionally did me the honor to walk up town when I did, and invite me to accompany him around to the offices where he had business interests. If I had advice to ask at home, I asked it of him, for I never thought of going to my mother, who seemed impatient when I showed a disposition to learn and improve, as though she preferred that I should remain ignorant rather than convict herself of forming a wrong opinion of me in the first place.

I think it was my father's idea that I should continue at the commercial school, as he did not believe in a theoretical education to the exclusion of everything practical, but my mother readily agreed to it, fearing, no doubt, that I would disgrace her in a regular school; so I continued to study at the place where I originally began, following a course which had been mapped out by Mr. Courtlandt, for so I usually referred to him, and thought of him, for neither of them ever seemed to be any relation to me.

In course of time my mother quit sitting in the bow window to listen for the footsteps of the boy in the picture, and who would have been welcome in the house, but she continued to occupy her old position after I had been at home five years, and listened instead for the approach of her aristocratic acquaintances, who called on her at long intervals. I seldom saw these people, but when I did I thought that they regarded my mother as she regarded me, with a feeling of indifference, although she was very anxious to gain their favor and good opinion. I had seen some of their houses, and they were so much finer than ours, and so much larger, and in neighborhoods so superior to ours in Bleecker Street, that I sometimes wondered why their occupants called on my mother at all, but my Aunt Caroline explained

that it was on the score of old acquaintance, and that while our people were well-to-do, those whose society my mother courted were vastly superior in this respect.

I think my mother found out that I visited her sister, and disliked me because of it, but any way she did not like me any better at the close of my fifth year in New York than she did at the close of my fifth week, though I believe I may say without vanity that I improved as much as any ordinary boy would have done under the circumstances.

When I spent an evening at home, I usually retired to my own room, where I either read or studied until bed-time, for I was always uncomfortable when downstairs, and my mother had a habit of reading to me which I disliked, for she always selected something which I thought had reference either to my awkward manners or pronounced ignorance; but one evening when I was preparing to go over to Tibby Cole's, my mother met me in the hall, and made some impatient reference to the fact that I was seldom at home. As I always politely adopted her suggestions, I laid aside my hat, and went into the sitting-room, where she soon joined me. My father was already there, looking over a newspaper, and I noticed he looked up rather impatiently when she began reading aloud.

She selected a tragedy for this occasion, and was reading it in very dramatic fashion when my father turned around and politely inquired:—

“America, do you imagine that you are a good reader?”

My mother, whose first name had reference to her country, was annoyed by the interruption, but she said nothing, and went on, in a louder voice than ever. I thought my father was also annoyed because she did not answer his question, for I noticed that he kept looking at one place in the paper, and did not seem to be reading.

“Because if you *do* imagine that you are a good reader,” he said again, “you are mistaken. You have many excellent qualities, and I like you, but you can't read.”

My mother blushed like a schoolgirl at this (because she disliked to have her faults pointed out when I was present, I thought), and replied, with freezing dignity:—

“It is very impolite to interrupt any one when they are reading, Mr. Courtlandt. I am surprised at your conduct to-night.”

She looked at my father as much as to say, “Well, I hope you have enough of it,” and went on, narrating in a loud voice how the knight swung his sword, and caused his courtiers to cower before him.

"I was reading quietly to myself when you came in," was the reply, "and your interruption is very annoying."

Glancing over at me, and seeing that I was enjoying her discomfiture (though I straightened my face very suddenly when she looked at me), my mother determined to proceed at all hazards, and as the knight raised his sword to strike off a traitor's head, my father interrupted her again.

"If you imagine that I enjoy your reading aloud, let me say that I do not. I detest it, even in a good reader, but it is particularly annoying when the voice is weak and the words mispronounced."

"Mr. Courtlandt, what do you mean?" my mother demanded, trembling so much that she lost her place in the book.

"I mean that I don't like to hear you read," he replied, quietly, determined to win, since he had set out to.

Exasperated beyond measure at his impudence and coolness, my mother opened the book at random, and began reading the first thing that caught her eye, as rapidly as she could, whereupon my father began to sing in a voice which was so loud and unmusical that it reminded me of Pidg's rendition of "Blow, ye winds of the Morning."

This settled the controversy, for my mother threw down the book, and walked rapidly out of the room, catching me laughing as she did so.

The victor did not seem at all conceited because of his success in the match, for he went on reading the paper, and though I felt like congratulating him, I really did nothing but laugh to myself. Finally he heard me, and turning round, said, with the utmost gravity:—

“King, don't laugh at your mother.”

Recovering myself at once, I said I believed I would go down to Tibby Cole's, which caused him to inquire if my mother had called there yet. On my replying that she had not, he seemed to be annoyed, but said nothing, except that there was no objection to my going.

Within a few blocks I met Barton, whom I had never seen in that part of town before, and upon my expressing surprise, he put his arm through mine, and said:—

“I had nothing to carry home to-night, so I remained down town. You ought to know by this time that when a mean man has no errand to take him home, he don't go home.”

I think he was loitering around to kill time, for he was vigorously chewing tobacco, and when I said I was on my way to Tibby's he readily consented to accompany me, explaining as we went

along that he had been there that afternoon, and consequently disliked to go again within a few hours, although he had been wishing a few moments before I came up that he owed them a visit. I assured him that he would always be welcome at Tibby's, to which he replied that he was a funny kind of a man, and that when he was fond of any one, he was so very fond of him that he sometimes feared that he was a nuisance to his friends.

On arriving at Tibby's, we were both distressed to find that Queen Mary was no better, although we pretended that we could see a marked improvement, and as Tibby and his wife had been up a great deal at night of late, we persuaded them to go to bed, promising that we would watch through the night. This they consented to do, knowing that the child liked us both, so they soon went into another room, and, I hope, fell asleep.

I did not mention it during the watch, nor did Barton, but Queen Mary was very ill; there was no mistaking it, and though she was patient and good, she was so restless, and acted in such a strange manner, that we both became serious at once. Tibby and his wife frequently came in to look at her, with so much anxiety in their faces that I was really alarmed; but the child finally

fell into a peaceful sleep, and the low hum of our voices, as we talked quietly, seemed to assure them that all was well, for they did not disturb us again for several hours.

Barton was always a cheerful man, although he seemed to honestly regret his faults, but the presence of sorrow in the house made him more serious than I had ever seen him before, and there was a good deal of sadness in what he said about himself that night.

I don't remember how the conversation came up, but I expressed the belief, in answer to his abuse of himself, that had he married a woman who was naturally agreeable to him, he would have been a different man, and that it was unfortunate that one of his children was not a little girl, like Queen Mary, to which he answered:—

“What you say has a sweeter sound to my ears than words have ever had before, for though I am depraved and wicked, I cannot help enjoying kind words. I do not deserve them, for my heart is nothing but a cold spot under my pencil pocket, but I find that on occasion it warms up very easily. You have been so fond of me during our acquaintance that I was thinking the other day that the only real love affair I ever had in my life was with you, but though your confidence in me is as grateful as a rainfall in a desert, I must re-

prove you for it. Don't let your friendship for me cause you to be unfair to a deserving woman like Mrs. Barton. When you become a man, you will be like the rest of them, and never excuse this fault of mine; but your confidence in me causes my heart to palpitate; I believe it would thaw out with a little use."

I gave him several reasons for my belief that, under proper circumstances, he would enjoy a home very much, but he interrupted me by saying:—

"Don't talk that way to me, King; it is too much like my own wretched fancies, and you will encourage me in my wickedness. There is something wrong with me, and while I don't know exactly what it is, I know that I am a very unusual man in the depravity way. A great majority of the men,—I am one in a thousand, fortunately,—are always kind and thoughtful to their wives and children, and are never harsh or unjust to them, and my inferiority in this respect makes my life a failure, though usually I avoid being sullen or morose. My wife and children never pay me the slightest attention, except when they have an unusual favor to ask, and the fact that I deserve such treatment is humiliating. Although Mrs. Barton is one of the best wives and mothers in the world, in my unnatural eyes she does nothing

that a woman should, and nearly everything that a woman should not, and such a beastly feeling as this is enough to make any one feel uncomfortable. She has a woman's wit, and must know how I feel toward her, and her knowledge that I am incapable of appreciating her virtues adds to my discomfort when I am in her presence. Every decent man should enjoy the good-natured noise and freaks of temper in children, but I do not, and cannot learn to, and I sometimes think that a fatal accident ought to happen to me, for the benefit of my family. I wish you would repeat the complimentary reference you made to me a while ago."

I had said that he was naturally a domestic man, and that there were plenty of women who would think a great deal of him, and make his home so pleasant that he would never leave it except to go to his business, and hurry back again as soon as possible; this I repeated, which he listened to with every evidence of satisfaction.

"It is not true," he said, "but I like to hear it. There never was a woman who was not too good for me, or one who could be pleased with me, but I often have pleasant dreams like a foolish school-boy, and am transformed by magic into a respectable man. A new home is created for me, and I am so useful in it that I am greatly admired, and

when I waken to the old uncomfortable reality, I almost swear because of my vicious temperament. One night I dreamed that I knew a man who was compelled to keep his wife in the house after she was dead, and remain with her during his leisure hours, instead of seeking more agreeable surroundings. It was the law of the community in which he lived, and though I was one of those who made the rule, and was happy myself, I pitied the poor fellow, and it seemed to me that I was in his company, trying to encourage him, when I awoke. King, you are going to sleep on me."

I believe I had been nodding, and Barton did not talk any more after that. Later in the night, while half awake and half asleep, I knew that Queen Mary became restless, and that Barton carried her in his arms until I fell asleep again.

CHAPTER XXII.

BARTON'S DISAPPEARANCE.

I WENT to the office one Monday afternoon, and found that Barton had not been there since the previous Saturday morning, and as this was very unusual, it was suggested that I go up to his house, and make inquiries concerning him.

I did so at once, and when the servant opened the door in answer to my ring, I found the oldest boy standing at the head of the stairs in momentary expectation of an attack from the rear. By the time I had hung up my hat, he came dashing down the stairs, closely followed by his mother, who paid no attention to me, and I learned from the girl that the boy had done something unusually bad, and that his mother was trying to capture and punish him. They kept up a great racket for several minutes, occasionally dashing by me as I sat in the parlor waiting for Mrs. Barton, but at last the boy tired his mother out, and she came in to see me.

“Where is Mr. Barton?” she panted, as she sat down near me.

“I came up to make the same inquiry of you,” I answered, “as he has not been at the office since Saturday morning.”

It occurred to me that Mrs. Barton was not at all worried at this information, for her attempts at looking troubled reminded me of Barton’s great fear that he could not look decently sorry should his wife die before him. I also thought that at heart Mrs. Barton was rejoiced at the prospect of being a widow, since, in that event, no one could prove that her statements of her husband’s devotion were untrue.

She expressed the opinion at once that her husband had been made away with, because he was so fond of her that he would not absent himself without sending word, but while engaged in an attempt to make her eyes red by rubbing them, she saw that the oldest boy had crawled up to the door, and was listening. Forgetting her grief, she sprang at him, and away they went, leaving me alone again.

As I was anxious to report at the office, I did not await her return, and hurried away. I was convinced that if Barton had been foully dealt with, Gruff was at the bottom of it, and when I went into the office, and announced that the busi-

ness manager had not been at home since Saturday morning, and that his wife knew nothing about him, I noticed that Gruff did not raise his head from his work, although all the others were much excited. Mr. Couldock was particularly worked up over the news, and soon put on his coat and hat, and disappeared.

Barton had a great many friends in New York, some of them influential men, with whom I was slightly acquainted, and it was decided that these should be informed at once, which was done, and although they telegraphed in every direction that night, nothing came of it, and the papers next morning were full of the strange disappearance. All the papers referred to Barton's steady habits, and his perfect happiness with his wife and children, so there was but one conclusion: he had been made away with, either by a robber or an enemy.

I was so certain that Gruff was responsible for the disappearance of Barton, that I expressed the opinion to an officer who was investigating the matter, and told him of the old quarrel between the men. Gruff knew at once that he was being watched and investigated, and went boldly to the officer, and told him that he was on the wrong scent, at the same time saying that no one suspected him except an ignorant young upstart

(meaning me); and the circumstance that I had mentioned him as a possible murderer increased his hatred so much that I was afraid to come into his presence alone, for he talked about my perfidy in the office, and swore by all that was good and bad that he would yet square accounts with me. This only convinced me more than ever of his guilt, and I employed a man at my own expense to watch him, and find out where he had been during the preceding Saturday and Sunday nights.

The man discovered that on Saturday night he had been walking with my Aunt Caroline, in Bleecker Street, and this discouraged as well as humiliated me, but I gave orders to hunt up his whereabouts on Sunday night, and made a good many inquiries with that end in view myself.

Mr. Couldock, the proprietor, did not come to the office on Tuesday, but on Wednesday morning he came in with more manuscript in his pocket than usual, and on being told that nothing had been heard from Barton, he began collecting his effects, and said he was going home. He acted in the most unaccountable manner while about it, and finally he surprised us all by saying: —

“I don't own the paper; I have no interest in it except twenty dollars due me on account, and

if some of you will pay me that, you may have my interest. Barton owns the paper, and always has owned it, and paid me wages for the use of the name of Couldock. I'm going home; I don't know anything about the paper; I can't do anything, and I'm going home."

We were all very much surprised at this announcement, and asked him a great many questions concerning it, but he was in such a flurry that we could learn no more than that he had simply been an employé of Barton's, who had preferred to use another name than his own as publisher of *The Night Watch*. During that week Mr. Couldock came in a few times to make inquiries concerning the missing man, carrying away with him each time great bundles of the complimentary letters which had been received from admirers of the Home Department; but the presence of two of Barton's friends, who had taken charge, and who seemed to know that Mr. Couldock was not the proprietor, seemed to scare him, and he disappeared on Saturday, and I never saw him again. Indeed, he acted so strangely that it was thought desirable to look him up, and although two men were detailed to find him, they finally gave it up, and said he was lost as thoroughly as Barton.

The papers were full of the matter every day

for a week, and *The Night Watch* published an editorial concerning the business manager, from Gruff's pen, which was really very beautiful. Barton had devoted his life to good works, Gruff said, and there was an intimation that the Hosts of Sin, recognizing that he would finally knock down their strongholds, had silenced him, though the particulars of the crime were, at that writing, unknown. The beautiful home-life of Mr. Barton was also referred to, as well as the close intimacy which had existed so long between the missing man and the writer, and though the Captain of the movement against Sin had fallen, his followers would storm the Works of the Enemy with increased vigor, and avenge their Noble Commander's atrocious death. I could see guilt behind every utterance of Gruff's, and made up my mind that I would devote all my spare time to running him down.

Mrs. Barton put on mourning which did not become her, and spent her time in quarrelling with the children and telling how very fond Barton was of her. I was frequently at the house, as one of the friends of the family, and while there had never been any order in the family, perfect chaos reigned after Barton's disappearance. Mrs. Barton believed that her husband had been murdered by some one who envied

his pleasant home-life; whereupon she sighed, took a dose of medicine, and said that her devotion to her family had been her greatest curse, after all.

Tibby Cole had so much trouble of his own that I did not talk with him about Barton, whom we greatly esteemed, any more than I could help, but I never lost sight of the belief that it was my duty to shadow Gruff. Night after night I followed him from place to place, knowing that, should he discover me, he would divine my purpose, and that my own life would be in danger, but the only discovery I made was that twice within a week Gruff met my Aunt Caroline, as if by appointment, and walked with her for half an hour or more. I could never hear what they were saying, though I knew both of them were engaged in exciting conversation; and somehow I came to believe that Gruff had made a confidante of my aunt, both before and after the murder, and that this guilty confidence was one cause of her trouble, which seemed to increase every day since I had known her. I therefore determined to pay her particular attention, and see if I could not, in some way, induce her to confide her awful secret to me.

During the days immediately following Barton's disappearance, I spent a great deal of my time at

Tibby's, and although I did all that I could for them, they were as miserable as was possible. Queen Mary grew steadily worse, in spite of the medical man's skill, and although I employed a woman to help Mrs. Cole, she annoyed rather than assisted that worthy woman, for she turned up her nose at everything in the house, and had neither interest nor sympathy in their distress.

I felt my disgrace keenly when I remembered that during my six years in New York, I had not made a friend whom I could ask to call on them; and, above all other things, Mrs. Cole needed the assistance, encouragement, and sympathy which only women can give, out of hearts full of kindness and pity for distress; but I could not ask my mother, and I would not ask Mrs. Barton, for I had so little confidence in her that I believed she would make matters worse. I thought once of asking Kate Richards' mother to come and see Mrs. Cole, as she was a kindly woman, but I was afraid to, and every day saw that my friends were being cruelly neglected, besides wearing themselves out in watching their dying child. I know now that, had I spoken to my father about it, he would have found a way to come to their rescue, but I never did, and the days were very wretched, for I gave all my time to my friends, and they

were all in distress. I imagined that Barton might be in a position where he needed my aid, if I could only find the clew; therefore I went out to hunt for him only to return to Tibby's unhappy home and realize that, while I had done Barton no good, my other friends were worse off because of my absence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I MAKE A DISCOVERY.

ONE morning, after a wretched night at Tibby's, I went to the office, and found a letter on my desk, which had been delivered from the general post-office. Opening it at once, I read the following:—

If you are a friend of the late Geo. W. Barton, go to the Battery to-day, and hunt around until you find a ship in a stairway. Go up the steps, and keep on going, always turning to the right, until you reach the top floor, where you will find a door with an indistinct cross marked upon it in pencil. Knock softly three times, and if the person on the inside takes four steps forward, rap again, when you will be admitted.

Borrowing a pistol from one of the men in the office, for I did not know what to make of the letter, and feared running into a trap of some kind, I repaired to the Battery without delay, and began looking for a stairway with a ship in it, which I soon found in a very high building almost opposite Castle Garden, and not far from the land-

ing of the Coney Island boats. A part of the building was occupied as a steamship office, and there was such a display of ships about the place that I was in doubt for a while, until I discovered that, although there were ships all over the front of the house, there was but one in the stairway, so I went up the steps, and kept turning to the right, as directed, until I reached the top floor, where I looked around until I found a door with a cross marked upon it.

I was so blown from climbing that I stopped a while to rest, and noticed that the place was not much frequented, for there were evidences of neglect everywhere, and dust and dirt abounded. "To Let" signs appeared on many of the doors, and there was something about the place, probably an air of decaying respectability, which reminded me of the portion of Bleecker Street where I lived.

When at last I rapped on the door three times with my knuckles, some one inside took four steps forward, and then stopped, which was the plan agreed upon; therefore I knocked again, and the door opened.

I think I was never more surprised in my life than when Barton stood before me, not only alive and well, but in excellent humor, for after I stepped into the room, and the door had been

bolted behind me, he laughed quite heartily at my look of wonder. Two of the windows in the large room looked out into the square in front of the building, and when I sat down near one of these, still unable to speak, Barton reclined on a lounge near me, with a good-natured smile on his face.

“You seem surprised,” he said.

“Well, yes ; I *am* surprised,” I answered. “I thought you were dead.”

He was dressed in a negligent way which indicated that he had been “lying around,” for his coat and vest were unbuttoned, and his general appearance was frowsy and comfortable. The room was in as much disorder as his person, there being empty bottles and broken victuals on the table, and other evidences scattered everywhere that a careless man had been living there, and chewing a good deal of tobacco.

“So far as New York is concerned,” Barton said, after watching me closely while I made an inspection of the room, “I *am* dead, and will never be resurrected, for before you leave this room I expect you to promise that no word of me shall ever pass your lips. For reasons of my own — which relate to the natural depravity of which I have spoken to you before — I want to lose myself, and never see any of my acquaintances again.

When I leave this room, I leave New York, never to come back.”

Although I was listening to what he was saying, I was also making another tour of observation with my eyes; so Barton stopped, and politely waited while I noted that there was a comfortable bed in the room, a piece of carpet in front of it, a square table, a lounge, a wash-stand, and a wooden affair which might have been either a wardrobe or a cupboard. After I had noted these effects, and wondered who was Barton's accomplice in supplying him with food, I turned to my companion again, who asked me a question: —

“Have you ever heard me speak an unkind word of Mrs. Barton or the children?”

I answered that I never had, which was true; during my acquaintance with him he had always spoken well of them.

“Have you ever heard me express impatience with them?”

I shook my head, and added that, on the contrary, I had heard him speak well of his wife and children a great many times.

“That is the only circumstance to my credit,” he said, “for I am of such a wretched disposition that none of them ever did a thing in their lives which did not displease me, but knowing that it was all owing to my unfortunate ideas of things,

I never said anything. Knowing that I am unworthy of them, and that they will be better off without me, I have left them all I possess, and want them to believe that I am dead. With the exception of a few hundred dollars which I have saved up during the past two years for this purpose, they are welcome to everything I possess, and I regret that I have not more to leave them, but I am never going back there any more, and intend to begin life anew somewhere. My name is Dennis, now; U. Manly Dennis, which means Unmanly Dennis; I have parted my name in the middle so that my new acquaintances will avoid me."

This proceeding seemed so strange to me that I could only laugh at the absurdity of it, though the thought had flashed into my mind as soon as I came into the room that I was very stupid in not thinking of some such explanation of his disappearance before.

"You have done a ridiculous thing," I said, feeling very awkward because of my conclusion that Gruff had murdered Barton, and my vow that he should be brought to justice.

"I know it," he promptly admitted. "It is not only ridiculous, but idiotic; I could not have done worse, but as I have a depraved way of looking at things, I enjoy it. I suppose you imagine

that I am experiencing a great deal of remorse," he said, after we had laughed at each other a while, in a foolish sort of way. "I *ought* to be, and any man of principle would feel like killing himself, but I am so vicious that I am actually enjoying this escapade. Indeed, the first night I came here, I felt so good over my escape from a pleasant home that I actually drank liquor until I was tipsy, and laughed over it in drunken joy. I had a spree all to myself, in short, and went to sleep after midnight, laughing because I was happier than I had ever been before. It was a disgusting proceeding, but I was equal to it."

"The strangest thing to me," I said, remembering the miserable home he had deserted, "is that you take all the blame on yourself."

"I take all the blame because it belongs to me," he answered. "I had a home which a respectable man would have enjoyed; Mrs. Barton gave all her time to it, and the children were like all other children, but I was so wicked that I could not appreciate it, therefore I have rid them of my presence. I might pretend that I was driven to it, but it wouldn't be true, and the claim would therefore be of no comfort to me. I believe you know that I do not like tobacco smoke. Well, to use a figure, my wife and children have been smoking vigorously ever since I have known them.

I have tried with all my might to become accustomed to it, knowing that the habit was perfectly respectable; that others practised it, and that it was an evidence of bad taste that I did not. I have even spoken highly of it when I was so sick from the fumes that I could barely hold my head up, but it did no good; I could not get used to it, so I came away. The people with whom I was acquainted — excepting you, for you have always had a fondness for me which is much to your discredit — all acted as though smoking was highly respectable, as it is, and that those who object to it were depraved and unnatural, and, with the single exception named, I never knew any one who did not invariably accuse me of being a beast every time he looked at me. I am thoroughly ashamed of myself, and very proud of my family, but I am never going back home.”

I had often suspected that, when Barton was abusing himself, it was in a spirit of irony, so I asked him directly if he meant all he said to me concerning the admirable qualities of his wife, and his own lack of appreciation. His reply convinced me that he was very much in earnest, so I could only say: —

“It will be a great blow to your Cousin Pendleton.”

I intended this as a pleasantry, and said it with

a view to amusing him, but he accepted it with the greatest seriousness.

“I know it,” he answered, “and I am as sorry as possible; but it can’t be helped. I only hope he will believe that I fell into the river while on my way to do a kind act of some kind. I admire Cousin Pendleton; but I cannot become his equal, and have quit trying. Now that I am dead, the people will probably speak kindly of me, and perhaps Cousin Pendleton will never know what a contemptible man I really am.”

“But don’t you believe that nature and circumstances have much to do with his contented disposition, and that you are entitled to some charity because nature and circumstances have not been equally kind to you?”

“No, I do not,” he answered, without the slightest hesitation. “A man who has a contemptible nature, or a contemptible disposition, should overcome it; otherwise, he is not a good man. I could not overcome my bad nature, and after a trial of ten years, I rid my family of my presence. It is not right that a worthy woman like Mrs. Barton should be hampered; therefore here I am, and here I remain until I leave New York. My name is Dennis, and I like it.”

A young man and a young woman, arm in arm, passed on the opposite side of the street, and they

seemed so fond of each other that they attracted our attention until they passed down to where the excursion steamers landed.

“There was a time,” Barton said, “when I was as fond of Mrs. Barton as that young man is of the girl with him. When I was courting her, I wondered that all the other young men in the world were not my rivals, believing that they would have been could they have known what a superior woman Hortense was. I believe I was a young man of average sense, and I came to the conclusion, after careful thought and investigation, that through some freak of fortune, I had drawn The Prize, though I knew I did not deserve it. I wondered how other men could be content with the wives and sweethearts they had selected, and when I discovered (before I was married it began), that I was not altogether content myself, it seemed such a monstrous offence that I resolved to devote my life to overcoming it. But in spite of everything I could do, the discontent grew upon me, and here I am. When she upbraided me for growing cold toward her, I knew it was a serious fault, and said it was only my way, and that I was really very fond of her, so at last, when I could stand it no longer, I rented this room, furnished it as you see, and began staying here when I pretended to be out of town. It was a mean thing

to do, and when I discovered that I enjoyed it you will imagine that I felt very vile. I have been unfortunate in one respect: had I found loneliness uncomfortable, I should have gone home, and tried again to behave myself; but I found it agreeable. On Sundays, when I went away from home to spend the time, I found idle and agreeable friends ready to join me, who enjoyed my company as much as I did theirs, and this has had a great deal to do with my downfall; it is a pity that my acquaintances did not turn their backs on me when they saw I was not accompanied by Mrs. Barton; it is a pity that the days I went out were not stormy and disagreeable; but they were not, and it has come to this. Every one of ordinary reasoning faculties knows that there never was a woman who was not good enough for any man, and that there never was a man who had reason to be dissatisfied with his wife, therefore I have resolved to quietly disappear, as all my acquaintances know what my loathsome difficulty is. I am a wolf who cannot appreciate the innocence and gentleness of a lamb; I never had a friend in my life who did not think I was contemptible because of an unreasonable aversion for my home."

"I never did," I said.

"Because you are only a boy," he quickly

replied, steadily refusing encouragement and sympathy, "and do not know the grave responsibilities of men. When you become a man, you will think, as the others do, that while in some respects I may have good qualities, in the most important particular I am wrong."

"I am almost eighteen years old," I replied, "and I can detect no evidence of a change in my opinion of you. I am as confident now that you are an average man as I was six years ago. I think you are entitled to less than half the blame for your unfortunate married life."

This remark caused Barton to go off into a study, and he walked up and down the room several times. After seating himself, he deliberately took out his watch, looked at its face, and asked how Queen Mary was. I replied that she was no better, but very much worse, and we talked for some time about the Coles and their unfortunate experience in New York, Barton expressing the opinion that we were to blame for failing to send them back to Three Rivers before the child became seriously ill, which thought had often occurred to me. Barton held his watch in his hand, and looked at it, while we were discussing the matter with a good deal of seriousness.

"The time is up," he said, finally, closing the watch and putting it back into his pocket. "I

gave myself five minutes in which to enjoy your kind remark, for it had a very pleasant sound, but now I want to deny it. I am entitled to all the blame, and I don't allow any one to speak disrespectfully of my wife. My only hope is that the splendid woman and the children will get along better because of this affair."

I had been thinking that if ever I was compelled to marry Kate Richards I would join him in his retirement, and so asked him where he intended to locate, but he did not know, though he said he would inform me when he made up his mind, so I made preparations to depart, promising to call on him frequently.

"By the way," I said, "it turned out after your disappearance that Mr. Couldock did not own *The Night Watch*."

"No?" he said, apparently with genuine interest. "Why, who was the owner?"

"The business manager."

He seemed greatly surprised, and expressed a good deal of wonder at such a queer arrangement.

"Will the widow of the business manager have any trouble in getting possession?" he asked again.

"Oh, no; Mr. Couldock has agreed to everything, and says there is nothing coming to him except a few dollars in wages."

“It didn’t seem just right for a bad man like me to publish a good paper like *The Night Watch*,” Barton confessed, musingly, “so I hired Mr. Couldock to let me use his name. The new proprietor can continue the arrangement, and the business will not be interfered with. The business manager’s widow ought to get a good price for the paper; it circulates twice as many papers as *Zion’s Trumpet*, and is paying well. This is generally known, and if the widow has good advice, she will get a fair price.”

I readily undertook the mission to advise her not to be in a hurry to sell, for I understood his words as a hint to that effect, and asked if he had read what the newspapers said about him.

“Yes, I get them all every day. Their references are so kind, and flatter me so much, that it would never do to acknowledge why I disappeared. You understand that?”

“Perfectly.”

“I stand very well in New York now, and I shall never acknowledge my name again; I would be a disappointment after all the papers have said about me. I see the favorite theory is that I have been made away with for my money; they usually say that of defaulters, but anything satisfies me. By the way, I have another secret which I will entrust to your keeping; this one may amuse you.

Mr. Couldock's name is not Couldock at all. When I began looking around for a quiet, good man to represent the proprietor of *The Night Watch*, I found one, but the name of Jimmy Punch would not do for the masthead, so I changed it to M. Couldock, which I think sounds very well. Jimmy has been very faithful, and the people who know him personally imagine that Mr. Couldock is a great fellow. On your way up town I wish you would get this paragraph printed in one of the papers as a news item."

He handed me a folded note, which I opened and read:—

The pilot of a Staten Island ferry reports having seen an unknown body floating in the bay yesterday. The clothing corresponded with that worn by the late George W. Barton, and it is probable that the unfortunate man has before this drifted out with the tide.

Promising to do what I could to secure its insertion, I stepped into the hall, heard Barton quickly bolt the door behind me, and went away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BARTON TURNS OUT TO BE A FAVORITE.

ONE evening I called at Barton's retreat, and found him in rather an odd humor, and before I went away he told me a queer story concerning his grandmother which gives so much insight into his previous history that I reproduce it in these pages.

"I came to New York from the woods of Indiana, when only a boy," he said, "and had not seen my grandmother in twenty years, but I did not regret the separation much, for as a boy I regarded her as a big bully who had a mean habit of cuffing me without provocation. I think I never went into her presence that she did not strike at me, or say something disagreeable, for she seemed to believe that I could not be controlled at home, and seldom came to our house that she did not get me into trouble. I never went to her house of my own free will in my life, for I cannot remember the time when I was not afraid of her, and our hatred of each other was the subject of so much remark in the family that

my mother one day interfered in my behalf, and although she has been dead fifteen years, I still remember it with more distinctness than any other act of her life.

“On the day to which I refer — it was Sunday, and we had all been at church — my grandmother was at our house, and by representing that I had not behaved during the sermon, she managed to get me beaten in the most unmerciful manner. I am sure that I was innocent of the offence, but my father wasn't very fond of me either, so he whipped me, and my grandmother was so delighted over it that I hated her from the bottom of my heart.

“I lay writhing on the floor where I had fallen from my father's blows, and then it was that my mother accused them both of being against me, and always ready to believe every ill report. She was a weak little woman, and I think they were surprised at her boldness, but they made no reply, and went sullenly out of the room, leaving me to sob myself to sleep in my mother's arms. I have not many pleasant recollections of my childhood; if there is but one, it is of that day when my mother's trembling voice said they were all unjust to me. Though I heard it when my heart was aching, and my flesh smarting from recent blows, I can never forget it. If I should be so

fortunate as to meet her again, my first thought would be that I loved her more for that act than for everything else.

“My grandmother did not come to our house much after that, and I did not see her again until I became three times ten years old, as I shall presently relate.

“At long intervals I met my brothers and sisters; grown, like myself, and when they told me that I was contemptible because I did not write to my grandmother, I felt as indignant as I did that Sunday afternoon when she caused me to be beaten, and enjoyed it; I made them acknowledge that there was no reason for the awful whipping I got, and then refused to talk about it further. But before dropping the conversation they always said I was unreasonable, and that grandmother always liked me, which I knew to be untrue.

“So I never wrote to her, and she never wrote to me, and I never sent her my love, nor did she send hers to me, for twenty years. I hated her as thoroughly as a man as I did as a boy, but when they told me she was getting old and feeble, and would not live long, I quit hating her, and only said after that that I had been a worry to her, and that she did not like me.

“My three brothers went to see her at different

times, and all of them brought back quilts made from pieces of dresses our mother had worn before we were born, and though they did not say so direct, they led me to believe that at our old home a pair of wrinkled hands were wearily working away on a quilt for me; a piece from my mother's girlish dresses, pieces from her wedding dresses, pieces from the dresses she wore when I was a baby,—all going into a quilt to cover me, grown out of all knowledge. I thought of my grandmother working with all the feeble haste at her command, hurrying to complete the work before she died, since all the others had been remembered, and the hope that a piece of the dress my mother had worn on the memorable Sunday was going into the patch work caused me to feel more kindly towards my grandmother than I had ever done before.

“One Saturday my mother's brother came to see me, and during the Sunday we spent together in reviewing the past, he said I had always been my grandmother's favorite! I had never been called anybody's favorite before, as I never have been since, and I thought about it a great deal, for when a man who is not well liked is told that he is greatly admired by any one, it makes a deep impression on his mind.

“I came to the conclusion, in course of time,

that my grandmother always did the best she could for me, and that our disagreement was due to my own vicious temperament, and the more I thought of it, the more I became convinced that I ought to go and see her.

“As I thought of her working away on the quilt for me, pausing frequently to wipe the tears from her eyes because of my cruel neglect, I felt very much ashamed of myself, and during the week I spent in finding opportunity to go to Indiana to visit her, I thought of little else than her life-long devotion to her favorite, and of my meanness in accusing her of disliking me.

“During my long absence a railroad had found its way into my native country, and I left the train at a lonely station which had been built near a stream with which I was familiar in boyhood, but the creek seemed to have shrivelled up with age, for it was much smaller than I had imagined. I had believed that I could pick out the deep holes where I had bathed, and renew my acquaintance with the riffles where I had waded in looking for kiel, but everything was as strange to me as a new country, and I felt as lonely as though I had gone among old friends and all of them failed to recognize me; therefore I hired a man at once to drive me to my grandmother's,

who was a widow living with an unmarried son who had never left her.

“I recognized the house easily enough, though I seemed to remember it from a description some one had given me rather than from memory, — a double log house covered with weather boarding; and with a flutter at my heart, I alighted from the wagon, walked through the gate, and rapped at the front door. Receiving no answer, I walked around the house, and came to the kitchen porch. Through an open door — for it was summer time — I saw my grandmother sitting before the great fire-place, knitting, instead of sewing patches together, as I had hoped. She had not heard my rap, nor my step on the porch, and I looked at her with painful interest for several minutes, for I had foolishly expected to find her as I had seen her last, though I might have known that twenty years had brought changes to her, as they had to me. I would have known her anywhere, I think; but age had withered and bent her once robust figure, and there was something pathetic in her being alone in that lonely place.

“‘I am looking for George Thurston,’ I said, as I stepped upon the porch and into the room. ‘Will you be kind enough to tell me if he lives in this neighborhood?’

“She looked up without surprise at sound of my

voice, as though strangers were common along the road on which she lived, and then went on with her work. I could easily see that what I had heard was true; my grandmother was old and feeble, and not long for the world. Her hands trembled as she slowly proceeded with her knitting, and when she slyly looked at me over her spectacles, as she used to do, it recalled all my life in that country.

“‘Yes, he lives in this neighborhood,’ she slowly replied, after a time, in a soft, faltering voice, as though it were an effort to speak.

“‘Do you know him?’

“She looked at me curiously for a moment, as if to divine who was asking for her son, and then answered, as before: —

“‘Yes, I know him.’

“I had hoped that she would recognize me when she looked into my face — how strange she did not mark my agitation! — but she did not; so I inquired again, —

“‘Will you be good enough to tell me where I can find him?’

“After another long pause, during which she looked at me several times, without the slightest sign of recognition, she replied, in the slow, painful way I had remarked on coming in, —

“‘Follow the road a half mile in this direction,’

she said, pointing with her needle, 'and you will find him building a bridge.'

"I glanced around the room when she ceased speaking, and saw that nothing had been changed; the furniture was exactly the same I had seen when there last. The counterpane on the bed, and the bedposts themselves were old acquaintances, as were the blue dishes in the dresser, and the big red bandbox which stood on the bureau.

"'I am very anxious to see him,' I said, with a tremor in my voice, 'for he's my uncle, and I have not seen him in twenty years.'

"Again she raised her eyes to mine, and looked steadily at me, and though I was trembling all over, she was perfectly cool, and made no sign of recognizing me. It seemed to me that the old clock over the fire-place, and the red bandbox, and the blue dishes, recognized the noisy boy of twenty years before, and were extending congratulations as well as they could, but my grandmother did not, though I had come a long way to see her.

"'You will find him at the bridge,' she said, presently, without being bothered in the least. 'He will be here at noon; he is my son.'

"This was so different from the reception I had expected that I thought I might have known enough to doubt the story that I was anybody's

favorite, and saved myself the journey, for it was ridiculous in me believing it in the first place. I have never had many friends, from some cause, and I suppose this was the reason I so readily accepted the story that my grandmother was really very fond of me. But I resolved to make the best of it, so I said, —

“‘If he is your son and my uncle, you must be my grandmother.’

“She put down her knitting, and seemed to be intently thinking for several minutes, during which time I kept back my tears with difficulty.

“‘Is it Jim?’ she asked at last, without looking up.

“Jim was my oldest brother; the one who was always industrious and quiet and truthful as a boy, and whose goodness was thrown up to me a dozen times a day at home. I thought with shame that Jim would naturally come into her mind first, though I had hoped differently. But I was compelled to acknowledge that I was not Jim.

“I thought she was confused because of her bad guess, as I was, and while she sat thinking, I stood and trembled like a man with a chill.

“‘It must be Bruce, then,’ she said, after a long silence, and looking up at me as though certain that she had finally guessed my identity.

“I always thought of Bruce as receiving the kindness at home which belonged to me, in addition to his own share. I was fond of Jim, who was such a good fellow that I believed he deserved all the attention he received and more, but Bruce was no better than I was, though they all seemed to think so.

“‘No, I am not Bruce,’ I said.

“My grandmother resumed her knitting, and I sat down near the door, thinking that I had been cruelly imposed upon by those who had told me that I was my grandmother’s favorite, and that I had come a long way to find it out. She looked at me once or twice in a timid way, and finally went into another room, slowly and feebly, returning after a time with another ball of yarn in her hands. As she passed me, she stopped and looked at me intently over her spectacles.

“‘If you are not Charley,’ she said, as she walked toward her chair, ‘then I don’t know you.’

“Charley, four years younger than me; good-natured and handsome; the one who kept up a correspondence with all of the relations he could hear of, and who sent them presents every Christmas. Not being Charlie, I got up, and walked out, and as I was getting into the wagon, I saw my grandmother coming slowly out to the fence. I felt sure she was coming out to say that she was

old and feeble, and was sorry she had not recognized me at once; but she did not; she simply pointed out where I would find my uncle George, and I drove away without looking around.

“The last time I saw my Uncle George he was hewing a bridge timber, and when I came upon him in the woods, twenty years later, he was still hewing away, as though he had not yet finished the stick on which he was at work when I said good-by to him as a boy, and went away to earn my own living.

“He knew me at once, and I was so grateful to him for it that when he sat down beside me upon the log, after awkwardly shaking hands, I felt like hugging him.

“‘Have you seen mother?’ he asked, after remarking how much I had grown.

“‘Yes, I stopped at the house as I came along.’

“‘Did she know you?’

“‘No, she did not know me; she could not recall that she had ever seen me before.’

“‘Mother is getting old,’ Uncle George said, thoughtfully; ‘but she is thinking it all over now, and when we go back to the house to dinner, she will remember you very well.’

“‘She remembered Jim, and Bruce, and Charley,’ I said, looking away from him, fearing he would see that I was hurt, and tell her.

“This seemed to bother my Uncle George, for he did not reply immediately, and sat hacking at the log with his axe.

“‘They have been over to see her,’ he said, after a little while; ‘and maybe that is the reason she remembers them.’

“‘Only once,’ I answered. ‘I have been over as often as they have.’

“He seemed to regret the manner in which I had been received, and said again that when we went back to the house, she would know me; that my grandmother was getting very old, and that even then she was waiting to give me welcome.

“‘I saw your brother William two years ago,’ I said, ‘and he told me that I was my grandmother’s favorite, but I find that she has no recollection of me at all, though she knew the other boys, and gave them each a quilt, made from pieces of mother’s dresses.’

“He would express no opinion on the subject himself, further than it would be all right when we returned to the house together, so I said I would drive over to our old place, and return in the course of an hour or two, and go with him to dinner.

“The old place seemed so unnatural that I did not even go into the house, fearing I might be

shown the room where I had received the eruel beating, and when I thought of my grandmother's humiliating reeeption of me, I concluded not to go baek, so I reached the station by another road, and came home without a quilt."

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Barton was generally out of sorts that night, either because he was becooming lonesome, or because of the reecollection that he was not anybody's favorite, for he did not talk much after relating his experience with his grandmother, and was generally dull and stupid. I told him all the gossip I thought he would care to hear, but he was not much interested, except when I mentioned that Queen Mary was growing steadily worse. Although I told him all about his own family, he seemed to honestly believe that he had done his wife and children a favor by disappearing, and did not have much to say about them, though he frequently regretted that he was not free to help Tibby and his wife in their loneliness and distress.

When I started to go away, he was lying on his back on the bed, studying the ceiling, and saw so much in the plaster to interest him that he was not aroused until I said good-night at the door, when he got up, returned my salute cheerfully, and bolted the door behind me.

On my way to Tibby's, it kept running in my head that I had just left a very good fellow who was not appreciated, and that had he married a sensible woman, he would have been a useful man, if not a good one.

CHAPTER XXV.

QUEEN MARY LEAVES HER FAITHFUL SUBJECTS.

I WOULD not ask my mother to go down to Tibby's, believing that she would refuse because they were friends of mine, so I concluded one morning, after a night troubled by dreaming that Queen Mary was dying without any one to speak a pitying word to her sorrowing father and mother, that I would tell my Aunt Caroline of the trouble my friends were in, and ask her to visit them, for it seemed to me that the child's death would be particularly sad should there be no sympathizing friends in the house to close her eyes and prepare the body for burial. This I did at once, going to the house for the purpose, and my aunt accepted the suggestion with so much good-will that I regretted I had not told her before.

While she was getting ready, I concluded to ask Kate Richards to go too, feeling encouraged by my aunt's ready acceptance, and when I went down to the house, I met her at the door, coming out, and I imagined that she was going up town. Hurriedly telling her my errand, she agreed to accom-

pany me at once, and stopping at home for Aunt Caroline, we were soon at Tibby's.

My aunt saw at a glance that the child was dying, but Tibby was much encouraged by the arrival of my friends, and frequently came over to tell me that he could see a change for the better, adding to his wife that Queen Mary would soon be well, and that they would all be happy again in their old home. Mrs. Cole knew differently, I think, but she would say nothing which had a tendency to trouble her nearly distracted husband.

My Aunt Caroline sat down by the little crib, and soon had the mother's confidence to such an extent that she set about helping Kate put things to rights in the house, though she frequently went back to Queen Mary's side to watch for the change which Tibby was predicting, though she knew in her heart, poor woman, that it would never come.

In spite of her haughty ways and rich dress, Kate Richards knew how to be womanly, and she went about her work so quietly and effectually, and had so much sympathy for the distress of my friends, that I felt that I had always misjudged her, and when she asked me why I did not tell her of my friends before, I confessed that I believed she was too selfish to take an interest in the poor and unfortunate. I think this hurt her

feelings, though I did not so intend it, but I could only mend it by saying I was very sorry I had not told her before, for my friends were greatly in need of the delicate attention they were then receiving.

Tibby was determined that Queen Mary was getting better, and a dozen times he believed he saw her smiling, although she was really gasping and moaning in a manner so pitiful that it was distressing to remain in the room where she was.

“I tell you, mother,” he would say, “she is breathing easier. The great change the doctor hoped for is taking place, and she will be restored to us.”

A great change was taking place, but it was the change from life to death; I was compelled to confess it in my own mind, though I had hoped as long as I could.

“Do you know me, dear?” he would ask, after leaning over the crib a long while, and watching her closely.

Something in the child’s face — a paroxysm of pain, or a restless movement — would convince him that she had answered in the affirmative, and he would joyfully exclaim:—

“She knows me, mother; she says she knows me. Your long life of goodness and gentleness, mother, has saved her, and the Heavenly Father

you have served so faithfully will not let her die. I have always hoped for that; He might do nothing for me, but He would for you. Do you feel better, Mary?"

Again the unhappy man believed that he received an answer in the affirmative — a slight motion of the head, a look of recognition from the eyes; his bleeding heart was so anxious that he could look Death in the face, and find a promise of Life.

"She says she is better," he joyfully said, turning to the anxious faces around the crib. "You all saw it; you could not help seeing it. Why do you look so discouraged?"

There was no hope in the grave faces into which he looked, and he choked up, and went into another room, where his wife followed, in her gentle way, and tried to comfort him, but he soon came back, and said that surely such a pretty child, and such a useful child, would not be taken from them, for they had done nothing wrong, and should not be punished so severely. His eyes were swollen and bloodshot, and as he went about trying to do something to help the little sufferer, I thought there was nothing in the world I would not give to be able to help him, for I feared he could not bear the shock of the child's death.

Fearful of disturbing Queen Mary, he told my aunt and Kate Richards in whispers of her gentleness and pretty ways, but always with a view of inducing them to say that they hoped she was better, which small comfort he received gratefully, and said that while mother was discouraged, he believed the crisis was passed, and the patient on the road to recovery.

So the hours passed away, from morning until afternoon, the breathing growing more painful and the moaning more pitiful. Pidg was kept constantly going on errands, for all of us were continually thinking of some last hope, and when he returned he was usually crying out loud, in which condition he probably ran along the streets.

As the sun began declining in the west, and threw long shadows into the room, the weary child became easier, and Tibby was sure this time she was better; any one could see that her breathing was regular and easy, and that she no longer moaned, and although the rest of us knew what it meant, Tibby was greatly encouraged.

“We couldn’t live without Queen Mary,” he said, “and remembrance of His great mercy shall always be my first care. I have been careless of my duty at times, but I shall never neglect it

again, for I can never forget that the Father in Heaven, knowing how faithful mother has always been, has brought little Mary back to life as her reward."

A look of peace had come into the child's white face, and the change had been so gradual that I hoped for a moment that Tibby was right, and that she had gone to sleep, but a look at Mrs. Cole convinced me that Queen Mary was dead.

"She has gone to sleep," Tibby softly said, as he stooped over the crib to arrange the covering, "and she will awake, and be very much better. Poor little thing, how welcome sleep comes after her long suffering."

He continued to arrange the covering of the quiet sleeper, and looked at the dead child with joy in every feature of his face, but a glance at those around him brought the conviction that the sleep was an eternal one, and with a startled cry he picked up the lifeless body, and went to carrying it up and down the room, his wife following, and begging him to be reconciled.

I seldom see Tibby now that I do not recall that dreadful evening, as he walked up and down, carrying the dead body of Queen Mary in his arms. I dream of it at night, and it seems to me that Tibby, my honest and constant friend, is to be executed in an hour for a crime of which

he is not guilty. I am powerless to aid him, and his grief disturbs me so much that I awake in a cold chill, and cannot go to sleep for a long time after.

He finally permitted my aunt to take Queen Mary from his arms, but continued his distracted walk until it began to grow dark, when he stepped into another room, and I hoped he had lain down and gone to sleep.

Aunt Caroline and Kate Richards dressed the poor little Queen in robes which Pidg was sent out for, and as I saw them working tenderly about her, I felt so much gratitude that I thought I would endeavor to distinguish myself in some way, in order that they might feel proud that they had known me, and befriended me in time of need. Tibby and his wife were more to me than everything else, and their gentleness at this dreadful time made such an impression upon me that I shall love them forever.

An hour after dark Kate went away, saying she would return later in the evening, and soon after Mrs. Cole came to me as I sat looking gloomily out of the window, and said that her husband had gone out of the house, and that she was anxious about him. I immediately put on my hat to go out and look for him, fearing that in his distraction he had done something which would add to

his wife's sorrow, but Mrs. Cole did not seem to share my fears; anyway, she said to say to Tibby, when I found him, that she had sent for him, and was anxious for us to hurry back; the same patient mother she had always been, hiding her own sorrow that she might comfort us.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GRUFF'S EXPLOSION.

BEING sent out at night to find Tibby recalled in my confused mind the many times I had gone on the same errand in Three Rivers, where I was happier as a poor moonlight boy than I had ever been in the cold gentility of my new home, and it was probably responsible for the circumstance that, after making inquiries along the waterfront, — for my first idea was that Tibby had jumped into the river, — I finally found my way into an orderly drinking-place, not far from the rooms where my friends lived.

While crossing the threshold of the place, the thought occurred to me that Mrs. Cole feared that little Mary's death might cause her husband to resume his old habits of dissipation, and before I could fairly think it over, I heard his earnest voice on the inside, which reminded me of the old days of the concerts and conventions, and of the long rides along the quiet country roads, for he was talking in a manner which somehow

reminded me of the time when he was a prosperous and happy man.

He was standing before the bar with an empty glass in his hand, when I stepped into the room, and I knew at once that he had been drinking, for there was a flush of excitement in his face, and more animation in his voice than was natural to him since his hard times and misfortunes in New York. He had taken off his hat, and placed it on the counter beside him, which caused me to remark how gray he was becoming; the last three years had been extremely hard upon him, and he had become an old man since I had parted with him in Three Rivers.

He had evidently been treating those standing around him, and when I went in and took up a position behind the party, he was telling them what a shame it was that any one as pure and good as Queen Mary should be taken from parents who had no other children. He was not drunk, and I had never seen him in that condition; but he had taken enough to make him talkative, and those around him seemed a good deal interested in his pitiful story, for they paid respectful attention.

“She was just such a little girl as we wanted,” he said, “and as she was the only comfort we had in the world, I can't understand why she had to die.

The poor little thing knew how we loved her, and there was so much sorrow in her face when she was dying that I can never forget it."

The recollection of this caused Tibby to sob and wipe his eyes, and he paused for a while until he had recovered himself, adding, as he did so, "Boys, ain't it a shame."

"We have been very poor since coming to New York," he said again, "but we didn't mind that so long as we had Queen Mary, for she was as bright and happy as a bird all the time, and we forgot everything else in loving her. But now that she is dead, I don't know what we'll do; you can never know what a comfort she was to us. I wish you could have heard her sing her little songs, and make her little speeches. You could have understood then why we loved her as we did. I'm glad that one of her prayers was, —

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
I come to Thee, a little child."

They will love her in heaven for the gentleness and trust with which she said it."

The poor fellow sobbed out his last words again, and could not proceed for a long time, and several of his new acquaintances turned away to hide their quivering lips.

"What hurts me most is that I have been a spendthrift all my life," Tibby continued, after

recovering his composure, "and that I might have saved her but for my poverty. When I first saw her cheeks growing pale, I should have taken her back to the free air and bright sunshine where she was born, but I was so poor that I couldn't, and when my friends discovered what was in my mind, it was too late. I can never forget this, boys, and I hope that all of you will remember when you are throwing away your money that the time may come when you would give your lives for the privilege of calling back some of your wasted dollars."

He called for liquor again, at the same time asking his companions to join him, but the bar-keeper refused to give it to him, saying he had enough already, to which Tibby replied that one drink was too much, and that another would not hurt him. There was considerable talk of this character, when the barkeeper changed the current of Tibby's thoughts by making some kind reference to his dead child and unhappy wife, for he thought a moment, and continued, forgetting his order:—

"If you knew how patient Queen Mary's mother has always been with all my faults, and how Queen Mary herself loved me, you would know how much I regret that in the greatest extremity of their lives, I was too poor to help

them, though I have made money in my time. I have squandered in a week an amount of money which, had I hoarded, would have saved the Queen's life, and now that she is dead I haven't enough to bury her. Mother and the baby were always thoughtful of me, but I have been very thoughtless of them, though I never knew what depths of misery my carelessness was leading to. I don't see how I can ever face them again. Mother is such a gentle woman that she will never think of accusing me of being unkind to Queen Mary, but I can't help accusing myself. For weeks mother nursed the child alone, having no help save mine; no one of her own sex to speak a friendly word or extend a helping hand, although a better woman never lived. King brought two of his friends to-day, and while I thank them for their kindness, they came out of charity; not because they esteemed the Queen's mother as she deserves. I wish the people of New York knew mother as I know her, for they would appreciate her. There are good people in New York, for they live everywhere, and they would feel sorry if they knew that a patient, good woman like mother had no one to help her in caring for Queen Mary, and no one to encourage her. If your wives and mothers and sisters knew how patiently she has held little Mary for weeks,

night and day, without a woman's face in the room, they would feel sorry. I know they would."

Some one in the party now suggested that Tibby ought not to drink any more, when he called for the bottle a second time, and he promptly accepted the suggestion, saying that he had changed his mind about jumping into the river, and was going home, whereupon he shook hands all around, and started to go, when he saw me. On being told that Mrs. Cole had sent for him, he said all right, and we went up the steps, and into the street, where we met Gruff and his friend.

I tried to pass them and hurry on, but Gruff recognized me with a savage growl, and stepped in front of us. There was something so unusual in his manner that the thought occurred to me that he had determined that afternoon to kill me at sight, for he was so ugly in his rage that he looked like a fiend.

"You nameless vagrant," he said, his face twitching with rage, and shaking his withered hand at me, "I said I would square accounts with you, and I have done it."

I pushed him out of the way, and walked on, leading Tibby, but he ran after me, still swinging his withered hand.

“I have been able to ruin you any day since you came to New York, but I have deferred it until now, that you might become accustomed to rich fare, and despise the cold scraps to which I have sent you this afternoon. When you return to your fine home on Bleecker Street, you will be thrown out like the nameless impostor that you are, for I have sent the word that will make a va-grant of you.”

Something in Gruff's excited manner told me that there was a dreadful significance in his words, and my curiosity as well as fear was excited, but on Tibby's account I pushed him aside, and went on, Gruff following and cursing me so loudly that passers-by looked at him in astonishment. One of his expressions was that although I had been ploughing corn barefooted only a few years before (which I had never done in my life), I was then wearing cuffs and gloves, both of which he had taken from me that afternoon, because I was not entitled to wear them. Once he caught me by the collar, and held me while he poured out his abuse, and though in my rage and mortification I hit him in the face with my clenched fist, he soon recovered from the blow, and ran after me again, forgetting the insult in his anxiety to declare that he had disgraced and exposed me.

“You are not the lost son of the Courtlandts,”

he said, wiping the blood from his lips with his withered hand, "but the wretched child of nameless people who are ashamed to own you. I know it; I have the proof, and I have sent the word which will throw you into the street, where you belong. Ask your Aunt Caroline; she'll tell you. She knows what became of the missing Courtlandt boy, and she won't deny it. Tell her that I told you, and referred you to her for proof, and don't forget that I am even with you, as I said I would be."

A crowd was rapidly collecting, and the fear that an officer would appear, and detain us, caused me to urge Tibby into a run, Gruff following, but we soon got away from him, although I could hear him yelling "impostor!" and "vagrant," after we were out of sight.

I knew instinctively that what he said was true, from a hundred circumstances that came thronging into my mind. The manner in which Mrs. Courtlandt had always treated me indicated a doubt that I was her son, although the proofs seemed to be all right, and as we hurried along the street I remembered, when Mrs. Cole first told me that I was a moonlight boy in Three Rivers, that she seemed surprised to find the little medallion in the bundle of my effects, and looked at it curiously, as though she had never

seen it before. The medallion was the only thing which clearly established my identity, since the clothing of infants is much the same everywhere, and when I thought of Mrs. Courtlandt's joy in discovering that she could not love me because I was of inferior blood, and of her boasting that she thought all the time that a boy like me could not be her son, I resolved not to return to the house on Bleecker Street, and rob her of the revenge which I felt sure she was longing to take; I resolved to bury Queen Mary as soon as decency would allow, and return to the West, without ever seeing any of my New York acquaintances again, for when I remembered the ridiculous but innocent part I had been playing, I concluded I could not decently do anything else.

In spite of her heavy heart, Mrs. Cole received Tibby at the door as kindly as though she were a rich woman whose husband had just returned from some errand of which she was the object, and when they knelt together beside Queen Mary's crib, I forgot my own trouble in pitying them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE STORY OF THE COURTLANDT BOY.

IT was arranged that Aunt Caroline and I should watch through the night, and we at last induced Tibby and Mrs. Cole to go into an adjoining room and lie down, in the hope that they would secure much needed rest, for they had been on their feet almost night and day for weeks.

Kate Richards came soon after, hoping to be of some use, and I could not help remembering how womanly and capable she was. I did not like her, but I could never forget her kindness to my friends, and I frankly admitted that she was very pretty, and more of a woman than I had believed. When she found that arrangements had been made for the night, she spoke of going home, so I called a carriage and accompanied her, thinking on the way that when she heard of my downfall she would despise me more than ever.

During my six years in New York, I had learned a great deal, and it was the one boast of my life that I had taught Kate to respect me. I had

no idea that she would ever love me, and little hope that she would, but she had long since ceased to make fun of me, and we were friendly to such an extent that she did not dislike my society. We often talked about the story of the servants that we were intended for each other, but of late years I had enjoyed the joke, and was no longer childish about it. I had been her escort on many occasions, and acquitted myself creditably, and I think that my greatest regret in leaving New York was because I could not triumph over Kate by becoming her equal.

This was in my mind as we rattled along the streets, and I said little except to thank her for her kindness to Tibby and his wife. In replying to this she talked more seriously, more like a woman who respected me, than she had ever done before, and when I finally let her out at her father's door, there was something in her voice when she said good-night which caused me to feel that when I came to leave New York, my greatest regret would be Kate Richards.

Knowing that I would not be missed for an hour or two at Tibby's, I determined to go down to see Barton, so I drove down to his hiding-place, and hurried up to his room. I found him with his coat off, playing solitaire, and keeping count of the game as faithfully as though his

life depended upon the result. When I told him that Queen Mary was dead, he almost cried, but when I gave him an outline of what Gruff had told me, he forgot everything else in his excitement, accepting Gruff's statement as true without question, as I had done.

I was in a great hurry, and when I told him that we all intended to return to Three Rivers in a few days, he said that he would go with us, and that we would triumph over Gruff, after all. Promising to come back as soon as I could, I hurried away, and soon after joined Aunt Caroline in Tibby's desolate home.

We sat in the same room with the body, which was covered with a white sheet, and when everything was quiet, I told my aunt what Gruff had said to me. Much to my surprise, she did not seem startled, but, on the contrary, sighed wearily, and said she was glad it was over, and that she had been expecting it for months. The guilty secret had given her no rest for years, and now that it was known, she would never go into her sister's house again. She had done nothing criminally wrong, but she would live in future by herself, and never again set foot in Bleecker Street, where she had suffered so much.

What Gruff had told me was true enough, but he did not tell it all. On the day the Courtlandt

boy disappeared, my aunt said she went into the nurse's room to see the child, as she often did when her sister was out of the house (for she was not on good terms with her sister, because of the accident already mentioned), and found that the nurse had gone out for a moment. Taking the child in her arms, she carried it to her own room, and the nurse did not come after it, knowing that it was in good hands. When she thought it time for her sister to return, she started down the stairs with the child, to deliver it to the nurse, when the baby, in a vigorous burst of good-natured strength, jumped out of her arms, and fell over the rail, and on to the floor below. When she picked it up, she found it was quite dead, as it had broken its neck. In her excitement she carried the baby back to her room, and knowing that her sister's grief and anger would be terrible, particularly as she had once before come nearly killing the child, in a moment of desperation she thought of concealing the body, and pretending that the child had been stolen; therefore the body was placed in her trunk, and buried in the cellar, at two o'clock in the morning, five days after the accident.

This step once taken, she could not bring herself to a confession, and in time the secret so wore upon her that she confided it to Gruff, who had been her lover. He took such a friendly in-

terest in her distress that she finally intrusted him with the package containing the medallion and some of the clothing which the child had worn, in order to get them out of the house. These he had agreed to put in a bank vault, or some other equally safe place, but, instead of doing it, he kept the package about him until he accidentally learned that a boy bearing a strong resemblance to the one which had been accidentally killed, had been left on a doorstep in Three Rivers. He made a journey to Three Rivers, and while alone with the basket containing the trinkets, managed to substitute those belonging to the real child, and then went away. She knew nothing of this at the time, supposing that the package she had delivered to Gruff was safely put away. Gruff had confessed to her after my appearance that his original idea was to secure the reward, but that he finally gave up this thought entirely, and intended to let the matter rest.

Then Barton found the newspaper paragraph which had attracted Gruff's attention, and Gruff hurried off to Three Rivers to secure the package, but while about to enter the house, I ran out into his arms, and he determined to steal me, and hide me somewhere until he could think of a better plan. After my escape from him, he hung about the neighborhood for a few days, undecided how

to act; finally returning to New York, and confessing his perfidy, saying that when the Three Rivers boy arrived (and he was then on the way), he would be accepted at once as the lost son, for the circumstances were such that his identity would not be doubted. When I finally arrived, she was as far from making a confession to her sister as ever, and I knew the rest. Barton had secured the reward, and Gruff had formed such a hatred for me, because I had been Barton's friend, that he finally told what he knew, as he had been threatening to do ever since I came. Had I been Gruff's friend, my Aunt Caroline said, I might have lived and died a Courtlandt, and come into the Courtlandt money, for she would not have dared to tell the truth.

I believe she was really glad that her secret had become public property, for it had caused her sorrow and trouble for seventeen years, and I had never seen her look as contented as she did when she had finished telling me of it. She was determined never to enter her sister's house again, she repeated the second time, and when she sighed again, in a manner which reminded me of the top story in the Bleecker Street house, I could not help thinking of little Mary, who seemed to welcome a great change as a relief.

I know that I blushed when I remembered the

ridiculous but innocent part I had been playing for nearly six years, and felt a sense of shame (which I have not yet fully outgrown), when I remembered how Mrs. Courtlandt would rejoice over her victory, but fortunately for my peace of mind, I was interrupted by a gentle rap at the door, and opened it to admit the reporter who had called upon me the first night of my arrival in New York. He cared nothing for my downfall, apparently, but wanted the facts, so the principal witness in the case gave them to him in as few words as possible.

As he kept looking at the covered crib occasionally, I told him its simple history, and he was so much interested that he made notes of what I told him about Tibby and his wife, and finally asked to see the dead child. He was greatly affected at sight of the sweet, peaceful face, and after we were out on the landing, he offered to divide his money with me, for Tibby's benefit, and there was a tremor in his voice which will cause me to remember him, as a good fellow as long as I live. A great basket of flowers was sent to the house the next day, and although I never knew that he sent it, I believe that he did, and still feel that the newspaper on which he was employed has done me a kindness which I can never repay. Although I did little to aid him, I was glad that he scored a

“scoop,” for none of his rivals came to see me, and he had the only account of the change in my fortunes the next morning.

Some time during the night I went to Tibby’s room, hoping to learn from their regular breathing that he and his wife were asleep, but while I was congratulating myself that they were resting, the poor fellow burst out sobbing, and his patient wife, the greatest sufferer of all, tried to comfort him with gentle words. Mrs. Cole had learned enough of Gruff’s story to know that I was in disgrace and distress, and as soon as Tibby was quiet, she spoke kindly to me, and said that I would be their son again, and that we would be contented and happy in our old home, in spite of our unfortunate experience in New York. She was the same good mother she had always been, forgetting her own sorrows in comforting Tibby and me, and I went out to tell my aunt that her wonderful love and patience had cheered me as nothing else could, and that I would do my best in the future to repay her unselfish affection.

I spent the remainder of the night in walking through the rooms with Aunt Caroline (for so I continued to address her, at her special request), whose old humor had returned, and I found it necessary to comfort her as well as Tibby, who came in every little while to look at the dead

child until he could no longer see her through his tears, when he bowed his head, and sobbed in such a pitiful way that his patient wife could not control herself sufficiently to speak to him. Even the noises of the great city seemed subdued, for it was a quiet night. He was always coming over to me, and asking if it were not a shame that such a pretty child, and such a useful child should be taken from them, and I could make no reply, for it seemed a shame to me.

“I don’t know what we will do without her;” he said this so many times, and in such a despairing way, that I could only say that we had mother left, who was always so patient and kind to both of us, and it was fortunate that I said it, for he seemed to remember how troubled she must be, and went out to speak to her, and was quieter after that. Once he sat down at the organ, to the music of which little Mary had sung so many times, and I thought that it came nearer telling of the sorrow that was in the house than any of us could do.

The first flush of day, the sunshine, and broad daylight, found us all wide-awake, and our eyes did not close in sleep until long after we stood by little Mary’s grave, and heard the earth falling upon her coffin. Kate Richards went with us to the cemetery, and though I feared she was think-

ing that she was happily rid of me, and that I was only a cheap fraud who had been found out, she was kinder to me than ever before, and took my arm when we walked back to the cemetery gate, leaving Queen Mary in the kingdom of Heaven.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WE LEAVE NEW YORK.

THE next day after the funeral, we removed to a hotel near where Tibby had lived, as I was anxious to get them away from the scene of their trouble as soon as possible, and made immediate preparations to return to Three Rivers. The few effects which they were anxious to keep, Pidg and I boxed up before noon, and sent them off to the railroad, and the remainder was disposed of to a second-hand dealer at his own figures. I found that Tibby had no money at all, but I had saved a few hundred dollars, and this I used to pay the funeral expenses and satisfy a few bills which had accumulated during their trouble.

My Aunt Caroline had a long talk with Mrs. Cole the night after we returned from the cemetery, and they announced to me the next morning that she would accompany us to Three Rivers, and probably remain there, as she was determined to leave New York; but as she had money of her own, I did not worry about her expenses, so she

went with us to the hotel, and was there when word was sent up in the afternoon that Mr. Courtlandt and Kate Richards were waiting to see us in the parlor. Being assured that her sister was not there, Aunt Caroline consented to accompany me down stairs, and we talked the matter over plainly and as pleasantly as the circumstances would allow. Aunt Caroline told them the story she had told to me, and Mr. Courtlandt listened to it in his usual dignified, kindly way, from which I hoped that he had no ill feeling toward either of us. She was easier in her manner, and more contented, than she had ever been before during our acquaintance, which caused me to think of Barton, and I am sure that Gruff's exposure was a relief to her, as it was to me, for I was glad that my innocent masquerading was over, and told them so, which declaration, I think, advanced me in their good opinion.

Mr. Courtlandt referred to the whole affair as unfortunate, saying that he dismissed it all into the past without bitterness, and that he desired to attest his good will toward me by begging my acceptance of his check for \$5000. I was beginning life, he said, and would need the money; he was near its close, and had more than he needed, and thought it was no more than right, since I had endeavored to be dutiful, and been drawn

into the mistake through no fault of my own. Besides that, he thought well of me, and hoped that I would always remember him, and frequently let him know by letter how I was getting along. This I promised to do in accepting the check, with the understanding that I should be permitted to pay it back with interest, and although I thought it a very manly condition on my part, I noticed that Mr. Courtlandt paid little attention to it.

He finally went over to the other side of the room to talk with his sister-in-law, without mentioning the absence of his wife, except to say that she took the matter very much to heart, and would probably never forgive either of us. He also explained that Gruff had sent them a letter narrating the facts, on the afternoon of the day he had accosted me in the Bowery; and that the remains of the dead boy had been found in the cellar, exactly as the letter stated. My impression is that they were left there, and never disturbed.

Kate and I retired to one of the windows overlooking the street, and I could think of nothing to say except that her kindness to my friends would always remain in my memory, and that I was very grateful. I really thought that the manner in which she had acted was worthy of frequent mention, or I should not have mentioned it again. The kindness of the reporter and of

Kate affected me so much when I thought of it that I kept the tears out of my eyes with difficulty. But she said it was nothing, and seemed ill at ease, finally saying:—

“I have learned, since Mr. Gruff told his secret, that there was no foundation for the story that you and I were intended for each other.”

I was very much surprised to hear this, for I had always believed it, as a matter of course, though I had never thought seriously that we would ever be married, believing that our joint opposition would finally result in breaking it up, so I said that, under the circumstances, it was fortunate.

“Mother says she never heard of such a thing,” Kate said; “so we have been acting under a misapprehension all along.”

“It was you who acted,” I replied. “I did nothing.”

“I know you are referring to how unkind and rude I was to you when you first came.”

I nodded my head, for I did refer to that.

“I have often been sorry for the way I acted,” she said. “I hope you will forget it.”

“I don’t know whether I can or not,” I replied. “It has always seemed to me that you should have pitied my ignorance when I first came, and helped me with your abundant knowledge of the

ways of the world, but instead of that I was two years longer in learning the simplest things because of your ridicule of me. When Tibby and his wife were in trouble, your heart prompted you to help them, but when you saw I was in trouble, you did all you could to hurt my feelings and keep me back."

"It was all on account of the ridiculous story among the servants," she answered. "I am not naturally vicious, I hope, but I resented what I thought was an interference in my affairs. I was only a child, and the story made me forget my duty to help the weak and friendless. Had I not heard it, I should have been your friend, and helped you all I could in your new home. Besides, you never said anything; you acted as though you enjoyed it."

"What else could I do?" I inquired. "You were so much brighter than I was that I either had to smile or fight; of course I couldn't fight you, though I often wanted to, therefore I had to smile. Had you treated me as you said you should have done, it would have been gratefully received, for I have had nothing but hard usage in New York. With the exception of poor Barton, I shall not regret any one here very long."

"I hope you will think of me sometimes," she replied, quietly and earnestly.

“Whenever I do, it will cause me to remember how cruelly you made me suffer,” I said. “I shall always think that you are very pretty, and very bright, and I shall frequently regret that I was not deserving of your kindness, but further than that, I hope to forget you as soon as possible.”

“We have been friendly of late years; I have not tried to provoke or aggravate you for a long time.”

“But you did at a time when you knew it would hurt me most. I said just now that I hoped to forget you as soon as possible; I didn’t mean that exactly, for it will always be a pleasure for me to remember how good you have been to my unfortunate friends. They will have little to remember of New York that is pleasant except you, and it is very kind of you to come here to bid them good-by.”

“I came to bid you good-by, too,” she replied, “for I wanted to say that I was very sorry for my rudeness during the first years we were acquainted. I did not think of it as rudeness then, but as spirit, and I think you ought to overlook it now that you are going away.”

I had never expected to see Kate Richards so much interested in me, and although I knew she only felt concerned because of the belief that she had acted rudely, I refused to forgive her, although

on the way up stairs to see Mrs. Cole I promised to write to her, and tell them how I prospered.

I took final leave of Kate in Mrs. Cole's room, and after saying good-by to Mr. Courtlandt, who was waiting for her in the parlor, I took a car, and went down to see Barton again. It was about five o'clock when I arrived there, and on his inquiring why not leave for the West that night at eleven o'clock, we thought the matter over, and concluded that it would be just the thing, as I knew that Tibby and his wife and Aunt Caroline could get ready in an hour, and would be glad to get away as soon as possible. Therefore I agreed to meet Barton in Jersey City a little before eleven, and to stop at a railroad office on my way up town, and secure accommodations. He had allowed his whiskers to grow all over his face, as a disguise, and said for me to secure a state-room for an invalid. On being informed that Pidg was still with us, he said that he could act as his servant, and thus give more color to the invalid theory, and this was also agreed upon.

Barton evidently had several trusted friends who knew of his hiding-place, for he had been supplied with a considerable sum of money, which I observed when he produced his roll, and asked me to buy his children presents, and take them

up to his house, which I could easily do before starting. This I agreed to do, and went away, securing the sleeping-car berths and railroad tickets on my way back to the hotel.

They were all glad to go that night, and began their preparations at once, and before I left the hotel at seven o'clock on my way to see Mrs. Barton, they were ready, and anxious for the time to arrive. I told Tibby and his wife and Pidg about Barton, and that he was going West with us, at the same time impressing upon their minds the necessity of secrecy, and after commissioning Mrs. Cole to tell Aunt Caroline, I hurried away on my errand for Barton.

He had given me fifty dollars with which to buy presents for his two children, and I laid this out to the best advantage I could, and hurried up to his house. Mrs. Barton was over at a neighbor's, and the children were engaged in some sort of a noisy game with the servants, and though they paused long enough to look at the presents, they soon went on again with their playing. Mrs. Barton came over in answer to a summons, and was looking better than I had ever seen her. She knew about the change in my affairs, so I had little to say, except that I was going away that night, which she pretended to regret. The fact that *The Night Watch* was to be sold in a few

days for a good price, I knew already, though I pretended to be surprised when she told me, as I did when she said that there was enough property, thanks to her saving and hard work, to keep the children in comfort until they were old enough to do something for themselves.

When I started to go away, she called to the children to come and bid me good-by, but neither of them paid any attention, so I hurried out, and by midnight was on my way West, with all my friends around me.

Barton was very much cast down during the trip, because of his unnatural desertion of his family, and spent his time in his state-room, looking out of the window with such a sorrowful countenance that I pitied him with all my heart, knowing that he was not regretted at home. The other members of the party spent a good deal of their time with him, and when we finally arrived in Three Rivers, I am certain that they all believed in Barton, and had as much confidence in him as I had myself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT HOME AGAIN.

THE energy which Barton displayed in investigating Three Rivers and the surrounding country was remarkable, even in a man of his active disposition, and I think one reason for it was that he wanted to forget that he had ever lived in New York, or knew any one there. Within a few months he had quite an extensive acquaintance as "Mr. Dennis," when we embarked in the shipping and commission business together, using my five thousand dollars as original capital. The town had doubled in population two or three times during my absence, and had become of considerable commercial importance, and as "Mr. Dennis" was very clever in business we were in the enjoyment of a very comfortable income by the time I was of age, with the pleasant certainty that it was growing steadily larger.

Aunt Caroline bought a large and comfortable house in Three Rivers with some of the money she had brought with her (Barton invested the

remainder to good advantage), and we all lived together, in comfort and quiet. Barton admired Tibby and Mrs. Cole as much as I did, and spent his evenings at home, never losing his peaceful composure, except when there was a sudden rapping at the front door, for he never got over the fear that his retreat might be discovered. He had the greatest respect for women, but he always admired them at a distance, saying they were flowers too tender for his rough handling. Occasionally he went up into Aunt Caroline's room to play a game of cards, when he was always distant and respectful, and he never tired of Mrs. Cole's company, but he was very much afraid of other ladies, and avoided them on all occasions. We had a good deal of company at our house, whereupon Barton retired to his room, and remained there until he went to bed.

Aunt Caroline is as quiet and grave to-day as when I first met her in New York; but I hope and believe that she is less unhappy. We are all very fond of her, and although she spends a great portion of her time in the retirement of her own room, her laugh has been heard in Three Rivers, and she emerges from the house frequently, with Mrs. Cole, to comfort and aid the distressed.

Tibby and Pidg are again in the brass band, orchestra, convention, and organ business; but I

regret to state that Pidg has utterly failed in his attempts to learn the use of the cornet, though he is more capable than ever in taking care of the team. Barton's clear ideas of business having been introduced into Tibby's affairs, he is prospering better than he ever did before, and although he has many profitable concerts, he comes home perfectly sober, and so good-natured and gay that we are all as fond of him as we can be.

On several occasions Barton, and Mrs. Cole, Aunt Caroline, and myself have driven out to his concerts, and his pleasant surprise at sight of us has amply repaid us for the long drive. A few times I have played the violin with him and the cornet in the choruses, on which occasions he was kind enough to refer to me as an artist from New York.

From these concerts we have all driven home together, and as we travelled along the quiet country roads, I think we talked more about our several unhappy experiences in New York than at any other time, and agreed that everything had come out for the best.

During one of these drives we stopped to see old Mr. Behee, Pidg's father, and although he is now so old that he gets around with difficulty, his daughters believe that he is on the eve of a matrimonial alliance with some very young person, and

abuse him accordingly. Fortunately the old gentleman is now quite deaf, and cannot hear the absurd gabble of his daughters concerning his extreme giddiness. Pidg one day brought his father to town to transact some sort of business which his early dissolution rendered necessary, and two of his daughters, imagining that he was running away to get married, followed on horseback. They found their father at our house, very much exhausted from his drive, which they regarded as penitence for his shameful conduct, and the manner in which they referred to their mother's things that afternoon was extremely ludicrous.

Although we all regard Barton as one of the very best men that ever lived, he still thinks of himself as very mean and contemptible, and often says that it is very much to his discredit that he could not appreciate a good woman and a pleasant home. We all believe that Barton had good reason for his strange disappearance, but Barton will not permit us to say so, and his affair is never referred to except by himself, when he abuses his unnatural and inhuman conduct in the most vigorous fashion.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

I DON'T suppose the readers of this will ever imagine that I am married to Kate Richards, therefore I will surprise them with the announcement that five years after I returned to Three Rivers, I went to New York, and was quietly married to that excellent lady, as a result of the correspondence which we kept up during that time. Mrs. Courtlandt did not attend the wedding, but her kind and dignified husband did, and seemed to be pleasantly surprised at the appearance I made, which I hope was favorable, for I had been a hard student under Barton, who often said that had he been in love with his wife as much as he was with me, he would still be a respectable man. It was his only pleasantry that he had never had but one love affair and that was with me, and therefore I was glad that I had improved so much under his direction that Kate consented to marry me, and she often says that she does not regret the step.

When I went to New York to be married, I walked past our old house on Bleecker Street, on my way to call on Kate, but the blinds were down, and I saw nothing to remind me of the old times save Miss Ann, who came up the basement steps as I was passing. Although it was after night-fall, she knew me at once, and walked down the street with me. Miss Ann was very proud of the circumstance that I had come back to marry Kate, as she regarded me as a sort of protégé, and in a burst of confidence said that she believed that Mrs. Courtlandt would drive me out of the house should I attempt to enter it, although Mr. Courtlandt was still my friend. Miss Ann had heard a great deal to my credit since I left the city, more than I deserved, and with her usual disregard for the police, said she had a notion to hug me then and there, but for some reason she changed her mind.

I might tell of my meeting with Kate, and relate that she was as badly flurried for a while as I had been when I first called there, but the reader is no doubt tired, and I will hurry forward to the two words at the bottom of the last page, one letter in which was written by Tibby, one by Mrs. Cole, one by Barton, one by Kate, one by Aunt Caroline, and one by Pidg, the period being put in by me. I may be pardoned for adding,

however, that Kate declared that she cared nothing for my moonlight origin, and that as she at first came to care for me because no one expected it of her, she at first hated me because she thought she was intended for me. I hope I appreciate that she made a great sacrifice in becoming my wife, as I hope I have succeeded in repaying her great trust and confidence.

I gave Mr. Courtlandt an account of the money he had given me, which Barton prepared with so much cleverness that it would have done credit to a New York counting-house, and the balance was so decidedly in my favor that he was satisfied with my stewardship, and intimated that he would be glad at any time to honor my draft in an emergency.

During the conversation with Mr. Courtlandt on the occasion of my marriage, I told him who "Mr. Dennis" was, as I wanted him to know that my deserving friend was really entitled to the credit, and when I asked him to promise to keep the secret, he told me that he had kept it already five years, as he had known it about that length of time.

Barton had a good many friends in New York who knew the facts in his case, but they had kept everything so quiet that his wife had given him up for dead, and married again at the end of her

fourth year of widowhood, the second choice being an idle fellow whose love was probably induced by the circumstance that Mrs. Barton had considerable money.

I went to call upon them while in New York, and the late Mrs. Barton was evidently fonder of her second husband than she had ever been of my friend, although he was a weak-eyed, worthless man, as any one could see at a glance. This confirmed my early impression that she could not admire a sensible man, and that a sensible man could not admire her.

Mr. Belcher, Barton's successor, was not doing anything just at that time, though he informed me that he expected an engagement in a few days. This was a fiction he had practised ever since his marriage, and his wife accepted it, though no one else did. Mr. Belcher had also convinced his wife that he was so intelligent and capable in business that there was a widespread jealousy of him, and that when he finally got a chance, he would certainly startle them all.

The oldest boy quarrelled a great deal with his stepfather, and was greatly pleased when I said I would think seriously of giving him a place in Three Rivers, and would write him after my return. Barton was delighted with the idea, so the oldest boy joined his father,

kept his secret, and became a very worthy young man.

I told Barton on my return that Mr. Belcher was a very deserving and energetic man, and that his wife was very happy. This lifted a great load off his mind, and he frequently referred to the circumstance with a great deal of pleasure, always adding that his wife was an excellent woman, and deserved a husband who would appreciate her. The fact that she had secured such a prize convinced him that his going away was for the best, and gave him more peace of mind than he had known before. He had secured a divorce at his old home in Indiana, by some process which I never fully understood, and though his wife knows now that Barton is alive and well, she is not haunted by the fear that she is a bigamist. The oldest boy is in the office with his father, and the other one is the special care of Aunt Caroline, Mrs. Cole, and Kate, and that he receives the best attention I hope the reader will understand.

I met Gruff on the street while in New York, but he did not recognize me, for which I was grateful. I understand that he is still engaged on *The Night Watch*, but that he has fallen from his former high position as editor, and is now looking after the Home Department. Mr. Couldock has never been heard from, and for all I know he may

be publishing a religious paper under another assumed name; I frequently see a paper which leads me to believe that he is. My literary uncle still lives in Boston, I believe, though I have never heard from him except immediately after it was announced in New York that I was not the son of the Courtlandts. The day after this humiliating announcement was made, I received several telegrams from my uncle Henry (all of which were marked, 3 — collect), to wit: "Sell the poem." The fact that I did not offer his production to the magazine publishers probably displeased him, for I have never heard from him since.

Tibby and his wife seldom refer to the little girl they lost in New York, but we always knew that her memory was nearest their hearts, so when they went to the cemetery one sunny afternoon, to visit the grave of their first-born, they found a simple stone raised to the memory of Queen Mary, and knew that her remains had been brought from New York, and buried there. Their gratitude for this little act of kindness was so great that I almost regretted that Barton had suggested it, though I am sure that I entered heartily into the proposal as soon as it was brought to my mind.

As I hope that others have charity for my own faults, I have charity for those of Barton, who has always been an unhappy man in spite of his uni-

form cheerfulness, though he is more contented now than he has ever been before, and I hope that he will finally receive that pity and mercy which all the children of men should find at last.

As to the mystery which surrounds my origin, I have come to regard it with indifference. I could not be more fortunate than I am had I grown up in the usual way, since my friends are everything that my heart can suggest, and those nearest to me have been kind enough to say that after making the usual allowance for frail humanity, my conduct has been such that they can love and esteem A Moonlight Boy.

THE END





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