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"THE SITUATION WAS NOT ONE I COULD HAVE WISHED."—SEE PAGE 30.

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A
TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

BY

FRANK A. MUNSEY,

AUTHOR OF "UNDER FIRE," "AFLOAT IN A GREAT CITY,"
"THE BOY BROKER."

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TO MR. CHARLES E. RUSHMORE

I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME WITH
KINDEST REGARDS.

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"I hide it from my eyes,"

"I am so happy to see my little book praised

400 "

so warmly."

A TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

I.

"A H, here comes Bainbridge," said Goggins to himself, suddenly raising his eyes, as he sauntered across the campus in a thoughtful mood. "Good morning, Bain," he called out while his fellow student was yet some distance away.

"Good morning, Goggins," returned Bainbridge with equal warmth of salutation. "I'm glad to see you are out so early. Taking a constitutional, I suppose?"

"Well, yes, something of the sort, and thinking of your splendid victory last night. It was a surprise to every one."

"A surprise?"

"Yes."

"You even had no faith in me then," said Bainbridge, coloring slightly, his pride touched.

"Come, old boy, now don't be unreasonable," replied Goggins.

"I do not mean to be unreasonable, you ought

to know that, Goggins, but"—and Bainbridge hesitated, possibly for the right word to express his thought, or more likely to debate in his own mind if the thought should be spoken—if it would be politic to speak it.

"I think I understand you, Bain, and it is only natural that you feel as you do. Van Gilding is arrogant and overbearing."

"I care nothing for his arrogance," answered Bainbridge, snapping his fingers suggestively.

"You can well afford to say that now, old fellow, for you gave him such a drubbing as one seldom gets in a college debate."

"It was the opportunity I have been waiting for."

"And you improved it handsomely, and in a way, I fear, that will make Van Gilding your enemy for life."

"He could hardly have been considered my friend before last night's debate. I doubt, therefore, if I have lost much."

"I know you and he have not been on the most cordial terms, but I always supposed that the coolness between you was simply due to his haughty manner."

"No, not that alone, though that one characteristic was quite enough to cause me to keep away from him."

"What then was the main cause of your bitter dislike for him?"

"Why do you say bitter dislike? I have not said that I have any such feeling."

"It is not necessary that you should say it in so many words. You expressed it quite forcibly enough in the cutting satire you hurled at him last night, and in your manner as you spoke. I have never seen you half so much in earnest."

"I had to be a good deal in earnest to debate with one of Van Gilding's reputation in college as a speaker—especially so," continued Bainbridge, sarcastically, "when all my friends expected, as you say, that I would be so easily silenced."

"I think, Bain, you can well afford now to be magnanimous and make no further reference to our lack of faith in you as a speaker. Your victory insures you the position of class orator, and was all the greater in our eyes, inasmuch as we did not expect it. And now to return to my question."

"Which was——?"

"Which was the cause of your especial dislike for Van Gilding."

"Oh, I remember. I hardly know, however, what reply to make you, Goggins, inasmuch as I avoid, as far as possible, all disagreeable subjects. Let us drop this line of thought, then, and discuss something more agreeable."

"No, we can't do it, Bain. My interest is astir—my curiosity presses for an answer, and when my curiosity is aroused it is irresistible. I'm dangerous when I'm dangerous."

"That's strange," laughed Bainbridge, "but you are an odd Dick any way, Goggins. You are the embodiment of the unexpected. To be dangerous when you are dangerous is a rare trait, and it is most fortunate that your ferocity shows at no other time."

"That's so, Bain. Do you know that you are a mighty clever fellow? No ordinary college man would discover my strong points as quickly. But let me say to you that this won't do. I'm not the subject just at this moment for discussion. You have dodged the question at least twice in the last four minutes. Now to the point, and the point is, what was the trouble between you and Van Gilding?"

"I yield, Goggins, to your wishes, but on one condition only."

"And that is?"

"And that is that the conversation be not repeated. I do not mind talking it over with you, for I am satisfied that your friendship is genuine. I would not, however, like to have the matter talked over by others and distorted to a disagreeable degree."

"I accept your condition, Bain, and will honor your confidence. Here is my hand on it."

"Very well, Goggins, your curiosity shall be satisfied. Come along with me for a chop and a cup of coffee—you have not breakfasted yet?"

II.

“YOU know, I suppose, Goggins,” began Bainbridge, while serving the chops a few minutes later, “that I am paying my own way in college, and that——”

“Paying your own way?” repeated the other, incredulously.

“Yes, why not?”

“Nonsense, Bain. You look a heap like the boys that get through here without money, don't you? Do you mean to say that no one is putting up for you?”

“Well, yes, that is about the size of it, as I understand the situation,” returned Bainbridge, enjoying his friend's surprise.

“How do you do it, old fellow? I wish I knew how myself. I think I'd like it enough sight better than calling on the governor for every cent—that is, I'd like it if I could do the thing up in the style you do. But deliver me, please, from skinning through here as many of the boys have to.”

“If you wish to know all this—how I have managed my finances—I shall have to go back to my boyhood to make the matter clear to you—to put it in such a way that it will appear reasonable. I will be brief, however.

“My father is not especially interested in turning out a college-educated son. It is well that he is not, for if he were, he could not help me to any great extent without an unwise sacrifice in my behalf—a sacrifice that I would not allow him to make. His income is not sufficient to warrant him in spending any portion of it on a superior education for me. He is, like the great majority of our New England people, in comfortable circumstances. With frugality and industry he makes a good living. He owns his farm, is contented with his lot and lives happily—a respected, honest, average citizen. The keen edge of ambition has never cut him deeply. His father owned the farm now owned by him. The one tills it essentially as the other did. My grandfather was an Andrew Jackson Democrat. My father holds dear the same sentiments. He would have been satisfied with me had I followed the same ancestral path even as closely as he has held to it. With my restless ambition such a life would have been worse than death. Whenever I went into town, I saw there on every hand what wealth and enterprise had done. The activity of city people, their dress, their manner, the fine buildings, beautiful streets, and the very atmosphere, all were as tonic to my young ambition.

“I resolved, therefore, at a very early age, upon a different career from that followed by my immediate ancestors.

"I'm not going to burden you, Goggins, with a detailed account of my boyhood. I have told you this much, however, that you may understand how it is that I have to meet all the expense of my college education. A slight knowledge, too, of my history, will enable you to appreciate more fully the situation when I reach that point in my story bearing on Van Gilding and his attitude towards me."

"This sound like a novel, Bain; upon my word, I believe you could write a good book," said Goggins, with evident interest.

"I'm glad you are not bored, and—"

"Anything but that, old fellow, I assure you," interrupted Goggins heartily.

"Briefly told, then, I left the farm when only twelve years old, having secured through a friend of my mother's a position as cash boy in a large dry goods house. Shortly after going to the city I made the acquaintance of a young man in the telegraph service. He worked nights, and as I had nothing to do evenings I spent much of my time with him, becoming at the end of a few weeks deeply interested in telegraphy. All my spare time I spent in practicing the art under his directions.

"To become a superior telegraph operator one must commence the business very young. I have never known a thoroughly first class operator who began learning his profession after reaching

the age of twenty. My youth, therefore, you can see, was in my favor, and I seemed to have especial adaptability to the business. In addition to this I was so much fascinated by it that I could hardly take time to eat my supper, so anxious was I to get at the key and talk with some novice like myself, one or two hundred miles away. This persistent and untiring effort in a short time resulted in my becoming quite a fair operator—a marvelously good one for a boy of my age. The position as cash boy I now gave up for one at telegraphing, which paid me thirty five dollars a month—an extraordinary salary for a boy of thirteen.

“From one position to another I advanced in the Western Union service till at the age of seventeen I was receiving a salary of seventy dollars a month. I had now almost reached the top round of advancement as a telegraph operator. Realizing this fact, I became uneasy and dissatisfied. The work lost all its attractiveness, and I fretted under the bonds of limitation that kept me from further promotion. I looked about me for some way out of the difficulty, but could see none. I tried to secure a situation in some other business, where the possibilities for advancement were greater. All efforts in this direction, however, failed. Month by month I became more restless; month by month my prospects grew more and more obscure. That I had made a wrong start in entering the telegraph service I was fully convinced.

“How to recommence my career, then, was the question that pressed me for solution. Had I remained in the mercantile business I would have been in line for a limitless career. To go back to the cash boy, however, at my age was out of the question, and yet I realized that my services would be of little more value to my old employer than they were when I entered his service at the age of twelve. Then I knew nothing of his business, and could make myself valuable to him in no other way than to do as I was told. Now, with all my energy and ambition, I could do little more. I realized, after reasoning in this way for a time, that the avenue to competency and success is to know something well—to be so skilled in it that the competition of others becomes ineffective.

“Not finding such an opening as I sought, I determined at length to fit myself for college. An education, I argued, would help me in whatever field of labor I should enter, and it would open doors for advancement through which I could not wisely hope to pass without it. Once determining upon this course, I threw all my energy into books. My position in the telegraph service I kept, that I might have the means to carry out my purpose. I engaged a tutor at a small expense, and under his instruction fitted myself for Yale, entering at nineteen.

“My knowledge of telegraphy, you see, came in to good purpose after I had determined upon se-

curing an education. The salary I had earned while working at it as a boy was much larger than I could have got at almost any other employment. From my income I had laid by nearly two thousand dollars—the sum total of my capital at the time of entering college. I have, however, earned money since then. Each vacation has been spent at some summer resort in the service of the telegraph company. Last summer I was at the Manhasset House, Shelter Island. My office was situated in a part of the hotel much frequented by guests. There they read their books and papers; there they did their letter writing, and lounged about in easy chairs and on comfortable couches, chatting, laughing, dragging idly through a summer day.

“Situated thus I naturally became familiar with the faces of all the guests. Many of them came to me from time to time asking questions about the arrival of trains and boats, the condition of the weather in New York, and so on—whatever their fancy led them to suppose one in my position should know. Of telegraphing, too, they did quite a little. Thus you will see that I was brought in contact with them constantly—was one of them, and yet was not one of them. To be so much with people and yet to be so widely separated by the social barrier is galling to one of my spirit.

“You know nothing of this, Goggins, and cannot understand exactly how the situation irritated

me. You have had the good fortune to be supplied with all the money you have needed."

"No, I cannot of course realize just how you felt," returned Goggins thoughtfully. "But as to whether it is a good fortune to have all of one's bills paid by his father is a question with me. All this experience you have had will prove good capital some day, Bain. But go on with your story—I'm getting a good deal interested."

"Very well, then; we will discuss this point at some other time," said Bainbridge, sipping his coffee with evident relish. "In former seasons," he continued, "my office has been in a less conspicuous place, and I saw little of the guests, except as they came to me on business. The social question, therefore, troubled me less. Here, however, they were before me all the time—beautiful girls and ugly spinsters; simple old women and bright faced, clever matrons; rich, well fed men and their thin headed sons. A good place was mine to study character, a good place to grow satirical and bitter. I often laughed to myself as I watched the ridiculous young snobs promenading pompously with the young ladies. It was still more amusing to listen, as I was often forced to do, to their idiotic conversation—thin, cold, bloodless. How bright girls, with warm hearts and active intellects, could listen to such rubbish was a mystery to me. They did it, however, with seeming relish, much to my disgust. The patronizing

manner and self-importance of these nursery youths, looking condescendingly from their social eminence down upon all who were not in their own fortunate sphere, was intensely galling.

“ In college my standing in my class and record with the oars have given me, as you know, Goggins, a very satisfactory position—such a position as I aim to reach wherever I am in life. At this hotel, however, the fact that I happened to be an employee debarred me from all social pleasures. Had I been there as a guest, I see no reason why I should have been received less warmly than others. Such a custom of measuring one’s merits, I thought then, as I think now, is all wrong. For the social system, therefore, I had no admiration, nothing but contempt. Most men are at heart anarchists of a mild type in adversity and poverty. In prosperity they become the reverse, and are the hard hearted, hard headed monopolists. I fancy the same characteristics asserted themselves with me, only my rebellious feelings related to the social question instead.

“ The amount of work I had to do was not burdensome. My board cost me nothing, and my salary was very satisfactory. My vacation, so far as health and recreation are concerned, was as beneficial to me as if I had been a guest of the hotel. The air was as free to me as to those who paid large prices for their accommodations. The song of the birds was no sweeter to their ears

than to mine. All the opportunity for reading I could have wished for I had. Of exercise there was no lack, for I gave an hour or more to rowing or swimming every day. The early morning was my favorite time for this. Frequently, however, after closing my office for the night I would take to my boat for a good pull, a pleasure of which I never tire. It was on one of these occasions I got a view of the mean side of Van Gilding's character. I thought I knew him well before, but I did not. I doubt if I know him at his worst yet.

"That you may know him as well as I, I must go back a little. One day when I had been at the hotel several weeks, I sat at my desk drumming at the key and studying the promenaders with, I imagine, somewhat of a cynical sneer. Presently my office call clicked several times over on the sounder. I answered the summons and received a message which read something like this:

NEW YORK, July 25.

TO MANHANSSET HOUSE, *Shelter Island, N. Y.:*

Reserve good room for me. Will arrive five o'clock with the Cromptons.

(Signed) J. NORMAN VAN GILDING.

"Undisguised surprise could have been seen in my face as I wrote down the signature and acknowledged the receipt of the message.

"'Van Gilding of my class,' I said to myself, with a thrill of pleasure. 'I shall be mighty glad to see one of the boys. He is coming with a

party and will, of course, be in the swim.' Being his classmate, I thought my days of isolation were at an end. I became enthusiastic over the prospect before me, for between you and me, Goggins, there were a number of awfully sweet girls at the hotel whom I was most anxious to meet."

"A touch of heartache; I see, Bain," laughed Goggins. "This accounts for your satirical stricture on the dudes."

"Well, perhaps so. I confess that I was, and am still, not insensible to the charms of nature's sweetest product."

"Well put, Bain—your usual way of saying elegant things. But go on with the Van Gilding episode."

"Thanks, Goggins, my boy. Your compliments are always welcome; make me feel an inch or so taller, you know. But I will proceed. The ban of social inferiority being, as I anticipated, as good as removed from me, I gave myself up to fanciful imaginings. In such a mood how delightfully one deceives himself. From cold, stern reason his mind cuts loose and floats away to scenes of romance and perfect happiness. I shall not tell you how absurd my fancies were.

"On Van Gilding's arrival he stood at the office, talking with the clerk. A passing couple attracted his attention, and he turned round, facing my office. As he did so, his eyes met mine. He stared confusedly for an instant, then turned again

to the clerk, with evident embarrassment. I understood him instantly, and my cheeks burned with indignation. What a contrast this actual meeting from the one of my fancy! The reaction was disheartening, but my pride came to my aid, and I felt more in a fighting mood than ever before in my life.

"He asked the clerk my name, as I afterwards learned. Knowing now for a certainty that a classmate of his was present in so humble a capacity, he moved hurriedly from my view, wearing on his face a look of extreme perplexity."

"That's the meanest trick, Bain, I ever heard of," exclaimed Goggins, bringing his fist down upon the table savagely. "I can't understand how a classmate could do such a shabby thing."

"You can't understand it, Goggins, because you are not built that way," returned Bainbridge, enjoying his friend's show of spirit. "If you were constituted as Van Gilding is, you could do it as he did."

"Thank Heaven, I am not so constituted. Such selfish snobbery is contemptible."

"But I have not reached the meat in the coconut yet," resumed Bainbridge, with growing enthusiasm, as he lived over again this summer episode. "The fact that Van Gilding trained with another set than my own in college did not occur to me, so suddenly had I launched myself into rose tinted imagination. Members of the same

class, meeting accidentally at a summer resort, I took for granted would be friends. And this reasoning would doubtless have proved sound had we met there as guests. The inequality in our positions, however, proved too much to be overlooked by one so exclusive as Van Gilding. He sought, moreover, to be the social leader of the hotel. To lower himself to be intimate with me was a sacrifice he would not make.

“I was supporting myself by work; he was being supported by the wealth of his ancestors. The accident that made us members of the same class in college gave me no claims upon him socially. I could have appreciated a warm, manly courtesy from him, but I did not seek it. His position would have enabled him to do much for me without injury to himself. He did not, however, have the generosity to do it.

“With Van Gilding came Wilson D. Crompton, his daughter and sister. Mr. Crompton is a prominent broker in Wall Street. His wife being dead, his daughter was chaperoned by his sister—a pleasant faced widow of sober years. But Miss Crompton was the one on whom all eyes turned with admiring glances. Her age I should say was seventeen. Possibly eighteen summers had contributed alike generously to the production of so rare a girl. She was not pretty in the ordinary sense. Her charms lay in the extraordinary harmony of a whole.

“The lines of beauty, you know, my boy, in a woman's face are essentially weak. The stronger elements, those that suggest character and force of intellect, border more closely on the masculine than the feminine type. The pretty face suggests over modeling, a sacrifice of everything to delicate curves. Angles and straight lines, on the other hand, are ugly in the feminine face, though in them one reads strength, intellect and force of will.

“I often look at a pretty face feeling annoyed with nature that she should come so near producing an exquisite type of beauty, failing only by omitting the important element of character. Without this no face possesses that which holds men's admiration. In Miss Crompton this desirable element was not wanting. It did not, however, obtrude itself upon the eye. The straight lines, the angles and the curves were so delicately blended together that each was lost in the other, producing a rarely pleasing effect. Her beauty, though, was most noticeable in action. Few faces so young light up as hers did in conversation. A roguish smile, revealing glimpses of pretty teeth, added greatly to the attractiveness of her presence. Her manner, her well developed figure, tall and straight, the fresh healthful glow on her cheeks, all suggested a devotion to out door sports.”

“Your description of this girl, Bain, softens the

case against Van Gilding a good deal," broke in Goggins.

"How is that?" queried Bainbridge, puzzled.

"Why, it's plain enough. Do you suppose, under the circumstances, I would have done differently from what Van Gilding did?"

"I don't think I catch the line of your reasoning, Goggins."

"Modest as ever, Bain; else you would see at once that Van Gilding looked upon you as a dangerous man, situated as he was."

"I cannot see wherein I am over modest, as your view of the case is just the one taken by me."

"Yes, Bain; the same, only not the same. You forget that when one is striving for a prize he aims not to increase the number of his competitors."

"But I was no competitor of his."

"No, of course not; but—ah, my boy, why this heightened color?"

"Now don't get absurd, Goggins; if you do I shall tell you nothing more."

"Oh, but to stop now, Bain, would be cruel. I'm thunderingly interested."

"Very well, then, stop your nonsense."

Goggins made no reply, but winked suggestively—a way he had at times.

"Your suggestion of competition or rivalry," continued Bainbridge, "reminds me that Van Gilding was not free from its effect."

"Just what I thought," interrupted Goggins, with assumed seriousness. "I think Van Gilding would have been justified in drowning you."

"That would not have been an easy thing to do, had he had cause for so rash a measure. You forget, Goggins, that I only knew the young lady as a clerk knows a guest. She had not been there long, however, when every man with the least admiration for beauty sought an introduction to her, and some of them became pronounced rivals of Van Gilding. I was perhaps as capable of admiring her as those fortunate enough to be her friends. Her youth and laughing eyes appealed to me, I dare say, no less strongly than to others—perhaps with greater force than to those less sensitive to the merits of a superior woman. Between us, however, there stood the same barrier that had loomed up between me and those that reigned belles before her arrival. To be frank with you, Goggins, I did admire the girl; but only as one loves art for its own sake though it may be the property of another.

"We can admire a beautiful sunset, the tints of the rainbow, or the view from a mountain peak, though we cannot compass them and call them our own. Somewhat in this way I must have looked upon Miss Crompton. She was beyond me, even as the sunset, yet as beautiful and bright for my admiration. Never expecting to meet her myself, I got a good deal of satisfaction out of

watching Van Gilding's evident misery when she happened to be promenading with some other man. It is perhaps hardly commendable in me, Goggins, to make such an admission."

"It was only human, Bain, to feel that way; and whatever is human, I think, is commendable."

"Well, that is a thought that never occurred to me, old fellow. I do not know that I would subscribe to it."

"You'd better do so," laughed Goggins. "You see, Bain, it lets you down easily."

"That's the most attractive phase of the philosophy to me. But I'll pass on, for this story is consuming too much time. I referred, you will remember, to going out rowing after business hours at night. On bright moonlight evenings there is nothing in the world more enjoyable to me than to be out on the water. This feeling, I think, is pretty general, judging from the number of people one sees in boats at such times. In the early part of August we had a number of especially beautiful evenings—light almost as day. It was during this time that the incident, to which I have led up, occurred. After my work for the day was over, I hurried down to the landing and jumped into my boat, thinking I would spend a couple of hours at least by myself, pulling and idling my time away as I saw fit. I had been out perhaps an hour and was rowing leisurely homeward when I heard a voice directed, as I imagined,

to me. Resting my oars and turning my eyes in the direction from whence the sound came, I noticed at some distance a boat containing several persons. Thinking that some accident might have happened, and knowing that as the tide was low the boat could have run upon a rock, I threw my weight upon my oars and soon found myself plowing through the water at a rapid rate. As I drew near the boat I heard a lady say, 'Oh, Mr. Van Gilding, it is our telegraph man.' The voice was soft and musical, and betrayed surprise and delight—not the delight of joy expressed on unexpectedly meeting a friend, but rather that sort witnessed when one rescues another from danger. The voice of the speaker I did not recognize, but the name she uttered made plain to me the situation. I was paralyzed for an instant with surprise, and my oars dragged through the water as the boat sped along. What strange thoughts darted through my mind in that first realization of my changed relation to Miss Crompton and Van Gilding. The sensation was peculiar and contradictory. I was not wanting in magnanimity; I did not lack a less desirable element of human nature. Each asserted itself, and suggested the proper thing to do under the circumstances. Presence of mind, however, did not leave me long, and when this dominates one's acts, suggestions of revenge are most effectually ignored.

“I assumed a cool exterior, and the agitation I felt was unobservable by those in the boat, as I drew alongside and asked if anything had happened to place them in need of assistance. Van Gilding had been bailing out the boat with his cap. Learning that I was the rescuing party, he still feigned to keep this up, when I put the question, which was not addressed to any one in particular. A pause followed—only for an instant, but how long it seemed—when it was broken by Miss Crompton, who said, with evident embarrassment, ‘Yes; our boat ran on a rock, and is now leaking badly. Will you render us some assistance?’ ‘Certainly, with pleasure,’ I replied. ‘I see a good deal of water is already in your boat. If your escort will cease bailing and hold the boats together, I will at once transfer you to my boat.’ ‘You are very kind,’ replied Miss Crompton, looking with amazement at Van Gilding. ‘How fortunate that you heard us calling for assistance,’ remarked the aunt, preparing to step into my boat. Van Gilding had by this time recovered his senses to some degree, though he acted as if wretchedly ill at ease. The situation was not one I would have sought, much as I wanted to meet Miss Crompton, and bitter as I felt toward Van Gilding. Having him at such decided disadvantage I was disposed, at first, seeing his utter embarrassment, to relent towards him, but this feeling did not last long when I discovered his

willingness to usurp my place in my own boat, and trust me to the uncertain fate of his fractured craft. I admire magnanimity in others; I aim to practice it myself. It comes hard sometimes; it came hard on this occasion. I launched a little of it, however, in offering my oars to Van Gilding, when the ladies had been safely transferred. 'I will take your boat,' said I, addressing him, though taking care not to speak his name or recognize him in any way. 'Thank you,' he said, in a thankless manner, stepping into my boat as I jumped into his.

"'No, no,' cried both ladies in chorus, 'you must not risk your life in that sinking boat.' 'I think I can reach shore all right in it,' I replied quietly, and at the same time placing the oars in position for rowing. Van Gilding seated himself and quickly prepared to move away. It was evident and natural under the circumstances that the sooner we could part company the better he would feel. The situation was extremely annoying to him; it was awkward for me. I had a peculiar desire to remain with the party, since fickle fate had so strangely brought us together, and yet I felt that the damaged boat on the whole was more desirable since the relations between Van Gilding and myself were so very strained. The ladies I did not know. Their names were familiar to me, yet I assumed not to recognize them. With too much spirit to be treated as a porter, and with no

claims to be treated as an equal, I could not anticipate much pleasure in going home in the same boat with them.

"Mrs. Woodman, however, insisted that I leave the damaged boat. Miss Crompton's eyes filled with tears as she pleaded with me. I was slow to yield. The coaxing was too sweet to be needlessly abridged. The end you can guess, though, Goggins. I did just what you would have done."

"You would have been an idiot—a blank headed idiot, old man, if you hadn't gone back into your own boat," remarked Goggins. "Why, it was fate, man, that threw you in with them."

"Oh, bother fate, Goggins, I have no faith in that. It was something more substantial—a rock in the Sound with a jagged edge."

"Practical as usual, Bain; but go on. This suspense with you in the sinking boat and the sweetest of sweet girls coaxing you to come in out of the wet is too much for my nervous temperament."

"Very well," laughed Bainbridge, "your nerves must not be shattered. On my return to my own boat," he continued, "the question arose as to what disposition should be made of me. One of two places I could occupy—the oarsman's seat, or the bow of the boat. Van Gilding held the oars, and evinced no purpose to give them up. I therefore passed to the bow, resigned to innocuous desuetude, whereupon another protest came from

Mrs. Woodman. 'Mr.—' she said, and hesitated as if perplexed to know how to address me. 'Bainbridge is my name,' I said, thinking it only polite to relieve her of embarrassment. 'Thank you,' she replied, rather warmly, 'it is so difficult, you know, Mr. Bainbridge, to manage conversation with strangers.' I assented that it was a little stiff, but remarked that trivial formalities were of little moment under such circumstances as we were then placed in. 'That is very true, and the observation leads on to the question I started to ask you. Will you not row us home—the boat is yours?' I hesitated a moment, awaiting Van Gilding's pleasure. He made no response and gave no indication by his manner of any purpose to change places with me.

"'We are a heavy load, auntie,' said Miss Crompton. 'Perhaps Mr. Bainbridge would not care to undertake such a task.' 'It would be rather a pleasure than otherwise,' I replied. 'We should feel so much safer with you at the oars,' remarked Mrs. Woodman. 'You must know these waters well, Mr. Bainbridge, and can avoid the dangerous places.' 'Yes,' said I, moving toward the center seat; 'I have rowed about here a good deal, and am familiar with the places that should be avoided.' There was nothing more for Van Gilding to do but to go to the bow, and as he would be at my back in this position I rather liked the change. A stronger reason yet, as you will

see presently, Goggins, appealed to me. My boat would seat comfortably four persons besides myself. As there were but three in the rescued party, it was necessary that they be placed so as to balance the craft properly. Mrs. Woodman, as a matter of chance, or as you would say, old fellow, by the sly maneuverings of fate, chose the single seat in the stern. Miss Crompton, therefore, naturally took the one next to her—the one directly in front of the oarsman's. This arrangement was very satisfactory to Van Gilding, so long as he held the oars. To be relegated to my rear, however—to see me by the change brought face to face with Miss Crompton—to feel that I was the greater force for the time and he the lesser, was all bitterly humiliating to his pride. He had treated me as an inferior—one without family name or wealth to gild my career; and now, through a strange freak of misfortune, I was destined to hold for the next half hour a superior place in the eyes of those of all others whose good opinion he craved.

“His manner indicated all this, and his usual flow of small talk ceased altogether. Mrs. Woodman and Miss Crompton were evidently as much annoyed as puzzled by his strange conduct. They vainly tried to joke him into good humor, and urged him not to take the accident to heart so seriously. This, of course, was said for my benefit, with the clever aim to mislead me and show

some cause for Van Gilding's rudeness to one doing him and his party the service I was then performing. With only monosyllabic encouragement Miss Crompton soon became weary of coaxing one in his mood; and for the remainder of the time we were together she devoted her conversation with clever art to me—tantalizing art to Van Gilding. It was gall for him; it was glory for me. I had not sought revenge. It came, however, so unexpectedly, and from a source that even fancy could not have hit upon.

“‘What a beautiful stroke you have, Mr. Bainbridge,’ she remarked, watching my rowing with intelligent interest.

“‘I ought to handle the oars fairly well,’ I responded, thanking her warmly for the compliment.

“‘You have had a good deal of practice, then?’

“‘Yes; perhaps more than most men of my age,’ I answered in a way that stimulated her curiosity.

“‘But I hardly see,’ she continued, ‘how you could take the time from your business. Telegraphy, I have always supposed, is very confining.’

“‘Yes, so it is; but only my summer vacation is occupied at that business,’ I replied. The moon shone full in her face, revealing distinctly the expression of her eyes and mouth as she talked. My reply to her last remark, I could see, kindled her curiosity; but I thought I would not hurry to

make known my college relations, preferring to leave it to her own ingenuity to discover them for herself."

"Now that was art—the genuine art of conversation, Bain, -old boy," remarked Goggins. "I knew you were clever at a lot of things, but 'pon my word I didn't suspect you of this sort of thing."

"I shall never finish this story, Goggins, if you keep interrupting me with these compliments."

"Blame it all, I cannot help it—get excited—warm to the plot—something suggested needs comment—I comment—that's how 'tis—see? Go on."

"All right, old man; your apology is satisfactory. I will proceed.

"'Vacation?' repeated Miss Crompton, with rising inflection.

"'Yes,' said I, carelessly, 'I have from the latter part of June to the middle of September. Telegraphy comes in handy to while away a few of the summer weeks that would otherwise, perhaps, drag a trifle. Then, too, the income derived from this source is a consideration with me.'

"'The time you mention, Mr. Bainbridge,' she said, with growing interest, 'is the usual college vacation.'

"'Yes,' I said, smiling, 'otherwise I should not be here.'

“‘You are in college, then?’ pressed Miss Crompton, eagerly.

“‘Yes,’ I admitted, carelessly, aiming to place little importance on the fact. Van Gilding must have been in agony as we approached nearer and nearer to a revelation that threatened him with dismay. I was correspondingly light hearted, feeling that this was my hour, and determined to enjoy it to the fullest extent.

“‘I should think you would wear your college colors so that one might know where you hail from,’ said Miss Crompton, cleverly aiming to discover my alma mater.

“‘No, it seems to me best that I should not—hardly in good taste, you know,’ was my somewhat indifferent reply.

“‘What an idea, Mr. Bainbridge,’ she exclaimed, ‘I cannot understand why you feel so.’

“‘It is often difficult,’ I replied, ‘to make one understand just how another feels on matters of sentiment.’

“‘But we are not so dull, I believe, that we could not appreciate your position if you would explain your reasoning,’ returned Miss Crompton coaxingly. ‘You see I am curious, Mr. Bainbridge, and you interest me. You are so different from most men one meets at these summer resorts.’

“My heart felt a little insecure, Goggins, I confess, and I speculated with suppressed agitation on the probable effect of the revelation that I saw

could not much longer be delayed. Answering her I said: 'I aim never to allow the curiosity of ladies to suffer on my account. My feeling then about the college colors is this: I am at the hotel in quite a different capacity from the guests. I am earning my living, earning money to aid me in my next year's college term. Should some very swell classmate of mine come to the Manhasset (and none but the rich boys could afford to come) he might find himself greatly perplexed and wretchedly annoyed at being classed with one in my position. He might think it too great a sacrifice to associate with me, and yet he could not well furnish his friends with a satisfactory reason for coldly cutting a member of his own college class, simply because that member's ancestors had not hoarded as much money as his own. I think, after this explanation, you will agree with me that my point is well taken.'

"I fear you are very imaginative, Mr. Bainbridge,' laughed Miss Crompton, 'and altogether too sensitive.'

"Then you think such a condition of things could not reasonably be?' I questioned, plying the oars with a good deal of vigor.

"No,' she replied, with much spirit, 'it could not happen with people of sense, and college boys are supposed to possess this trait.'

"Suppositions do not always materialize, you know,' I replied.

“You of course have the advantage of me on this point, Mr. Bainbridge, since your knowledge of college men is much greater than mine. I am happy to say, though, that my acquaintance with them has not extended to one so exclusive and contemptible as you paint. If any such exists, I think his pleasure or annoyance would be of little consequence to me.”

“Ye gods, Bainbridge, I feel as if something were about to explode,” said Goggins.

“I felt about the same way at the time, old fellow. You see I did not anticipate such decided expressions from Miss Crompton.”

“I’ll bet you didn’t, or you would have drawn the situation more mildly.”

“I would indeed, for I didn’t know to what desperation Van Gilding would be driven. He showed cooler nerve, though, than I could have expected, saying nothing, and seemingly, as far as I could judge, paying no heed to our conversation.

“‘Isn’t Mr. Bainbridge the most obdurate man you ever saw, auntie?’ said Miss Crompton. ‘I’ve talked all this time trying to persuade him by every art I could command to tell me the name of his college without asking in so many words.’

“‘I am sure I do not mean to be obdurate, for I would like to tell you—I could have done so, but cannot now,’ I answered, hardly knowing what reply to make.

"The ladies exchanged glances that made my cheeks burn. I saw at once how the situation must appear to them. I had claimed to be a college man, and when put to the test would not name the institution to which I belonged."

"You were in an ugly situation indeed, Bain," broke in Goggins. "I think you would have been justified in sacrificing Van Gilding, since he had treated you from first to last so shabbily."

"No; I don't agree with you, Goggins; I could not do so under the circumstances without embarrassing Miss Crompton, and that I would not do."

"I guess you are right, Bain. But how did you get out of the muddle?"

"I didn't get out of it."

"And you allowed the ladies to go away thinking you an impostor?"

"I couldn't explain further than I had, though Miss Crompton reminded me of my statement that I aimed never to allow the curiosity of ladies to suffer. At the boat landing we were met by many friends of the rescued party, who had become anxious because of their long absence. In the excitement and clamor of voices, thanks to me for my services were forgotten. I found a letter, however, for me in the morning on entering my office, from Mr. Crompton, apologizing for this neglect and explaining that his sister and daughter expected to see me at the hotel after landing.

He said that they felt deeply indebted to me for my kindness, and that this feeling was fully shared by him. 'We leave here,' he continued, 'on the early morning train, or my family and myself would thank you personally.'

"I was amazed, Goggins, and could not realize that this charming girl, with whom I had been so strangely thrown, had so suddenly disappeared."

"And you have never seen her since?"

"No."

"Nor heard of her?"

"No, not a word."

"And that was nearly a year ago," mused Goggins. "Well, graduation will soon be over," he continued, "and then you locate in New York. Van Gilding lives in New York, Miss Crompton lives in New York, I go to New York—dramatic possibilities—eh, old fellow?"

III.

“**B**AINBRIDGE, how are you?” said Goggins, shaking his friend’s hand warmly, as the latter rose from his desk to greet him.

“Goggins, as I’m alive, it is you; and how well you look, my boy,” returned the other.

“Natural to me, you know, Bain—can’t help it.”

“Yes, I remember, and I’m exceedingly glad to be reminded of it by your presence—seems an age since I saw you.”

“Thanks, old fellow; I’m delighted to see you, too. It is four months now since we left old Yale.”

“Four months, yes; and in them you doubtless have had a surfeit of pleasure.”

“Pleasure! I should say so, dead loads of it; and girls—well, if I haven’t had a circus—played right along to full houses.”

“Your usual luck, Goggins—always in demand with the ladies.”

“My usual luck, plus A. B. Before I was only plain Goggins. Now I am Thomas Goggins, A. B.—see?”

“Yes, I understand,” replied Bainbridge, apologetically. “I had forgotten for the moment the added distinction.”

"I'm surprised, Bainbridge, that one with your cool head could forget, for however short a time, a matter of such importance."

"I can only account for it by my delight at seeing you again after all these weeks. But tell me where you have been, and did you make any conquests?"

"Make any conquests?" exclaimed Goggins. "Why, Bain, where is your logic? Didn't I say I had had loads of pleasure? And how is one to get pleasure at Saratoga and Richfield and Lake George and the Thousand Islands, I would like to know, without making conquests? Why, it's the regular thing to do, Bain, at these places, and all other summer resorts, as to that matter. And you know it, old fellow, as well as I, with your experience at Shelter Island."

"I only know it from the observant point; and one does not get much pleasure out of watching the conquests of others."

"Come, now, that won't do. I remember too well your admiration for Miss Crompton. And that reminds me, Bain, what progress are you making in that quarter?"

"None whatever; and besides, to admire is not to make a conquest, you know."

"But it is the first element in the undertaking, all the same."

"Granted, Goggins; though unaccompanied by action it is of little practical account."

“Action, however, is one of your strong characteristics.”

“A railroad engine is the embodiment of action, and yet it is a useless thing when off the track.”

“And you, like the engine, are off the track. Not a bad figure, Bain,” laughed Goggins. “Well, the young lady has been out of the city, doubtless; but this cool weather will soon drive her from the country, and then——”

“And then what?”

“And then look out, Van Gilding. By the way, that reminds me, have you seen him since coming to New York?”

“No; I have not had the pleasure.”

“Slightly sarcastic yet, I see. Well, never mind; he thinks too much of you to neglect you very long, old fellow.”

“And why do you think he will trouble himself to call upon me?”

“Did I say call upon you?”

“No; you did not use those very words.”

“No; nor did I mean to do so. There are other ways, Bain, of making one’s self felt than by personally appearing before a man.”

“Yes, I understand that; but as there is little in common between him and myself, I do not see the force of your reasoning.”

“There may be more in common than either of us can see at this time. The combinations of the

future, you know, old boy, are wonderfully strange. This, however, is all idle speculation. Let us get down to fact. Tell me what you have done, and what the outlook is."

"The outlook is a little hazy so far. My plans did not materialize as I anticipated. You will remember that I told you of a man who promised to back me with money in the venture?"

"And he failed you at the critical point?"

"He pretended to know nothing of our agreement when I called on him for the money."

"But how have you managed without his aid?"

"I was, of course, thrown entirely on my own resources, and as they consisted simply of the ingenuity I possessed and about cash enough to pay a week's board, I could not feel very secure in a strange city."

"A rather meager capital, I should say, with which to commence the publication of a high class weekly periodical in New York," laughed Goggins.

"It wasn't just what I could have wished; but having made all my plans to start such an enterprise, I would not give it up so long as I was not forced to do so."

"And you have been here nearly six weeks?"

"Yes; it will be six weeks on Thursday since my arrival."

"Bain, would you mind doing me a favor?" said Goggins, seriously.

"Certainly not, old fellow. On the contrary, I should be only too glad to be of service to you."

"I'm here, you know, to try my hand, too, at making a living in the metropolis, and I may not find it a very easy problem to solve; so, if you will just tell me how you have managed to extend over all this time your cash capital which was large enough to pay one week's board only, I'll be mightily obliged. You see, if I should happen to need the secret I would need it a good deal—it's best always to be ready for emergencies."

"Quite right, Goggins," replied Bainbridge; "though I doubt if you could turn to practical account the information you seek. You shall have it, however. After finding myself deserted by my supposed backer, when nearly all of my own money had been spent in buying literary matter, and this desk and few chairs you see here, I was puzzled to know which way to turn. Two questions pressed me for speedy solution, one to know how to raise the money to carry out my project, the other to discover some way to defray my living expenses. My board had to be paid in advance. The week for which I had already settled was drawing uncomfortably close to an end. I would not telegraph my father for money, and I disliked very much to abandon, even temporarily, the venture on which I had set my heart. The probability, however, that I should soon be unable

to set my teeth on anything more substantial than air, decided me in favor of providing for immediate wants. This may seem strange to you, Goggins, but my prejudice against slinging my hammock to a lamp post at night was too great to be overcome—a trifle old fashioned, I know you will say, but there are now and again new things which we do not embrace with enthusiasm."

"Yes, that's so, Bain. I know how it is myself. For instance, I always warm to a new girl, and freeze to a new formula in mathematics. New things do not always capture us, that's a fact."

"How well your experience enables you to appreciate the situation I was in," returned Bainbridge, dryly.

"Strange, isn't it? But tell me how you drove away the wolf."

"I sought refuge in the fort of employment."

"And gained admittance?"

"Yes."

"And just let the wolf howl himself hoarse outside, I suppose. Capital idea, Bain, though a little rough on his wolfishness. But what passport did you present?"

"The only passport that is of much service to one in this world—skilled hands."

"Oh, I see, your old business, telegraphy. But you are a college graduate now, Bain. I'm surprised at your going back to the employment of your boyhood."

“College graduates, Goggins, as you will find out, have no market value whatever. I could sell my services as a telegrapher; I could find no bidder for them as a college graduate. I placed them, therefore, at the best advantage.”

“One would judge from your talk that our four years at Yale have been wasted,” replied Goggins, less gayly, thinking, doubtless, that the outlook before him was not so sunny as he had expected.

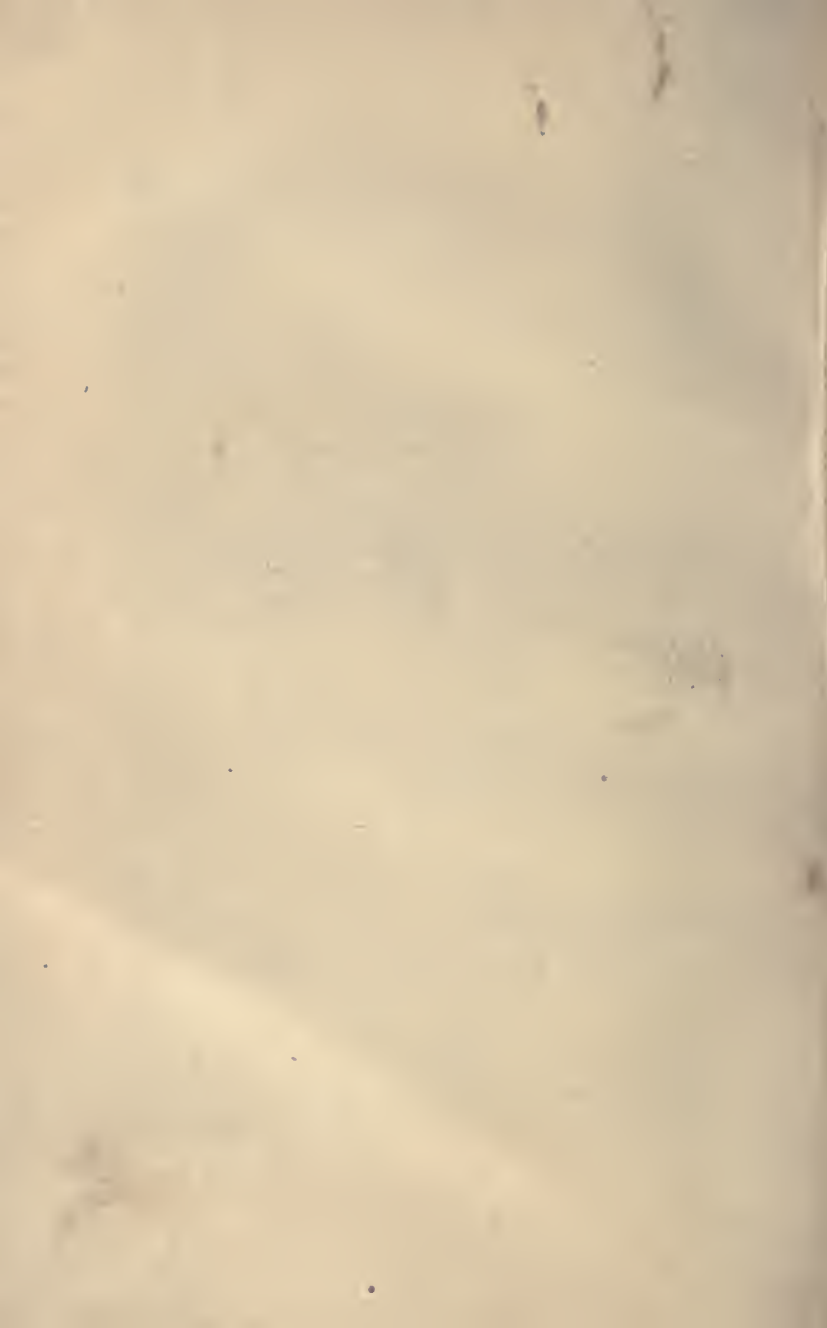
“No, I do not intend to convey that idea. A college education is a good thing, and gives one a broader and better foundation on which to build a career. But the foundation of a house is not salable, while the completed structure possesses a value because it can be made useful. When we have builded something that men want on this college foundation of ours, Goggins, then we can dispose of it, and until we have done this we cannot expect New York to respond to our desire for progress.”

“But tell me, old fellow,” inquired Goggins, “how it is that you are still keeping up this office, if you are in the telegraph service, as you say?”

“I am working nights—my hours are from six o’clock until one in the morning. I usually sleep till ten o’clock; dress, breakfast, and take a long walk, arriving here at twelve or one, as the case may be. All my afternoon, you see, is my own, and I devote it to the venture upon which I have staked my hopes.”

"IT IS VAN GLIDING DRIVING," EXCLAIMED BAINBRIDGE. — SEE PAGE 52.





"A splendid arrangement, Bain; and I hope you are making satisfactory progress with the publication."

"Well, no, not satisfactory, though I am keeping the idea alive, and doing some work that looks toward a commencement. Just when the venture will be launched, however, I cannot even estimate at this time. You see I have a good deal of correspondence already," continued Bainbridge, holding up a number of letters that he had been opening on Goggins's arrival.

"So I see; from authors, I suppose?"

"Yes, authors and artists; and some of them express a willingness to contribute to the paper, waiting until I can pay them for their work."

"They are taking chances, I should say, Bain, judging from the history of most publishing ventures. But come, old fellow, let us run up to Central Park for an airing. It will do you good."

"All right, Goggins; I will do so. A little vacation will do me no harm."

An hour later Bainbridge and Goggins were strolling leisurely through the park, chatting lightly. They talked of college days, and lived over again many of the happiest scenes in which they had been actors. Classmates were discussed, their peculiarities canvassed with a smile, and their probable future discounted with a freedom characteristic of youth. And the park, too, so beautiful, with soft, green grass, through which

wound the hard, white drives, was not without its share of comment.

Education is the mother of the appreciative faculty. The ignorant man could not see Central Park with the eyes through which these young men saw it. The broad, grassy plots would suggest to him, if he be a farmer, so many bushels of corn and potatoes; the well shaped trees, tall and stately, skirting the many circuitous drives and walks, would represent a tier of cord wood of such and such dimensions, or a certain number of feet of lumber, worth say twenty to thirty dollars a thousand. The graceful masonry, the artificial lakes, bordered by curves of most artistic fancy; the Mall, shaded on either side by great trees, with overhanging branches, and generously dotted on right and left with statues of the classic masters of music and song—what are all these to him? What does he know of Beethoven, of Scott, of Burns and Shakespeare? It were as well for him that these statues represented untutored savages. The modeler's work would interest him none the less, and beyond the chiseling he could not see.

How different this scene to Bainbridge and his companion! On every hand they saw the generous gift of a generous people—a playground for all the city's multitudes. Every beauty of nature or of art appealed to their sensitive fancy. The statues of the great masters meant more to them

than cold, bronze figures. Images only to the dull, untutored mind, they warmed the fancy of culture, and carried it back to roam hand in hand with these immortal masters over the fields of romance and the stirring scenes of war.

But the beauty of the inanimate did not alone appeal to these two minds, as they moved leisurely along with observant eyes. Too many sweet faced young girls and well dressed men thronged the walks and flitted along the drives, drawn by costly chargers, gaudily mounted with silver and gold, to allow them to think much on the past.

"I suppose in a year or two, Bain, we shall see you in a gaudy turnout like these, when your paper commences to boom," remarked Goggins, good naturedly.

"That is down right sarcasm, old man," replied Bainbridge, receiving the remark in the spirit in which it was uttered. "I'm afraid you have no faith in my venture."

"Well, no; not much in the venture, but a great deal in you. To come to this great city, however, with a view to starting out in the publishing business without money, aiming, of course, to compete with old established firms who have millions of dollars behind them, and years of experience to guide them, seems to me to be utterly quixotic."

"The same old story, Goggins—just what every one tells me. Enterprise would die, my boy, if it did not bound over these confining walls of con-

servatism and strike out into new fields. There is something interesting and inspiring and dramatic about piloting one's own craft over the dangerous reefs of bankruptcy. I would rather fail a dozen times in my undertaking and be all the time a man, than become the cogwheel to some other man's ponderous machine."

"I admire your courage, Bain; I have faith in you, and—ah, look at that showy rig, a tally-ho, I believe they call it."

"Yes; I think—why, Goggins, it's Van Gilding driving," exclaimed Bainbridge, the color fading suddenly from his cheeks.

"As I'm alive, so it is, Bain; and a jolly party he has with him. The lady on the seat beside him——"

"Miss Crompton," returned Bainbridge in a lower tone, his eyes falling to the ground.

"Miss Crompton!" repeated Goggins, with surprise. "Well, she is all you painted her, old fellow. I think from now Van Gilding will have another rival in me," he added, observing the change in his friend, and with delicacy assuming not to notice it. "It is as I expected," said he to himself, "Bainbridge still wears the imprint of her face on his heart."

"I think it was Miss Crompton," remarked Bainbridge, after a pause, in which he seemed to be arguing to himself the question whether it was actually she.

"Why didn't you recognize her, Bain?" asked Goggins.

"It has been something over a year since the last night I saw Miss Crompton, and I only caught a hasty glance of the one I took to be her."

"That glance satisfied you, however, that it was she?"

"That was my first impression," admitted Bainbridge, reluctantly, aiming evidently to convince himself that he was mistaken—that he had not seen Miss Crompton sitting beside Van Gilding in the coveted seat on the tally-ho.

IV.

“**H**ERE so soon, Van? I thought I would be the first to arrive, don't you know?” said a slight, pale young man—Stuyvesant Bigs by name—as he entered the box nearest the stage at the Bijou Theater.

“Well, it struck me it would be hardly complimentary to the girls, under the circumstances, to drop in after the play is half over,” replied Van Gilding.

“That is a point that didn't enter my head, and I don't see why it didn't, do you, Van?”

“These matters do not present themselves the same to every one.”

“Quite so; I've heard my governor make the same remark. I ought to have thought of it myself,” laughed Bigs, effeminately, adjusting his monocle, with which he surveyed the audience. “But I say,” he continued, with the pleased look of one who had hit on a clever idea, “Milkston evidently didn't think of it, either.”

“I'm surprised at his absence, as he worships the ballet, I am told,” returned Van Gilding.

“Milkston? I should think so. Between you and me, he was out four nights last week with the girls—wine suppers, you know.”

"Ah, there goes the curtain," exclaimed Van Gilding, fixing his eyes on the stage.

"Yes, there goes the curtain," echoed Bigs, bringing his eye glass into use. "It starts deuced slow, though."

"Why, I didn't notice that it went up more slowly than other curtains."

"The play, I mean, ha ha, pretty good—but the play, don't you know—it isn't much good in this scene."

"Oh, I understand you now. No, it doesn't show up very attractively at present, for a fact."

"But you will like it—best thing on the boards; and the ballet——"

"Great, is it?"

"I should think so—the most stunning girls, and the way they dance!"

"And flirt?"

"Flirt, ha ha! That's pretty good; just ask Milkston what he thinks about it—ah, here he comes now, verifies the old story, don't you know?"

"Milkston, how fine you look—as fresh as a newly blown rose," said Van Gilding, greeting his friend politely.

"Thank you, but I owe it to you in part, I think," returned Milkston, smiling good naturedly.

"How do you figure that, old man?"

"Why, the ride on your tally-ho this afternoon, and the girls."

"A stunning combination, wasn't it? Braced me up wonderfully," remarked Bigs, whose appearance did not suggest that he had improved very much from the ride, unless, indeed, he was in a most feeble condition before taking it.

"I knew you would like Miss Metcalf," said Van Gilding.

"Like her immensely," returned Milkston.

"She talks so well, too."

"Yes, talks well, and says clever things."

"Deuced clever, that's so; but she isn't to be mentioned in the same week with Miss Crompton," remarked Stuyvesant Bigs, flippantly.

"Oh, of course not, but she is practically out of the race, I assume," returned Milkston, with a suggestive wink toward Van Gilding.

"Out of the race, well, that's pretty good, ha ha, and I didn't know it before. Let me congratulate you, Van; she is just a stunning girl."

"But I am not to be congratulated yet," replied Van Gilding, with a trace of embarrassment.

"Well, it is all right, Van. No excuses necessary. As for myself, Miss Metcalf will do me for a while," said Milkston.

"I liked her eyes, rather an odd shade of blue, don't you know?" remarked Bigs.

"Yes, not so expressive as some, though."

"Lacked animation, that's what I thought. Lately came here from Chicago, I think you said, Van?"

"Yes, her family moved here last winter."

"Live in good style, I suppose?" asked Milkston.

"In palatial style—very wealthy, I understand."

"Very wealthy, well, that's pretty good, ha ha! We are in luck, Milkston."

"The money question does not interest me so much," returned Milkston.

"Oh, of course not, ha ha. I forgot, Milkston, a man of your fortune," apologized the impecunious Bigs, growing very red.

Van Gilding, though not perceptively affected by Milkston's careless remark, felt nevertheless uncomfortable, since the Cromptons were people of large moneyed interests, so reputed. He was far from knowing the value of money, though the wealth of the Van Gildings in comparison to that of the Milkstons was most insignificant. J. Norman Van Gilding, however, spent the hoarded savings of his ancestors with quite as free a hand as his new friend Milkston. The tastes of each were alike extravagant, and the style of dress affected by the one was no less expensive than that of the other. To keep abreast with Milkston, to possess as many gaudy trappings and entertain as lavishly, threatened peril to Van Gilding's fortune. And as his pride would not allow him to be outdone by a Milkston, he had looked of late upon a union with Miss Crompton as a desirable solution of the somewhat embarrassing

situation in which he found himself. It was the consciousness of this fact that caused Milkston's remark to nettle him. But skillfully turning the conversation to avoid an undesirable point, he said :

"You haven't told me what you think of my new tally-ho, Milkston."

"I think it is the finest I have ever seen. It is the swellest thing of the kind in the city," replied Milkston.

"Must have cost a lot of money," remarked Bigs, whose straitened circumstances suggested the thought.

"Yes, a great deal ; but the pleasure it will give me is worth the price," answered Van Gilding, seeming not to feel called upon to name the sum. "Ah, here is something worth seeing now," he continued, his eyes falling on a bevy of girls costumed largely in various shades of paint.

"Stunning, by Jove," exclaimed Stuyvesant Bigs, edging closer to the front of the box.

"How is this, Van, for the ballet?" asked Milkston, beaming at a particular girl with whom he was exchanging glances.

"Great, I think—you have seen it before, Milkston?"

"Yes, half a dozen times—advantage I had, you see, by coming into the city first."

"It looks that way surely, but perhaps under your guidance I will make up lost time."

"Let me alone for rushing you, old man—you see I've done up the town a good many times while you were in college."

"Done up the town, ha ha, that's pretty good—decorated it in tints, Milkston has, from one end to the other, don't you know?" said Bigs.

"But I had a good assistant to help me do it," laughed Milkston.

Bigs smiled proudly, elated by this compliment.

"Yes, Bigs has told me something of the affairs you and he have gone through together," replied Van Gilding, watching the performance with growing interest. "The one in the middle now, you say, Milkston, is one of our girls," he continued, studying her critically.

"Yes, the one by the villain—see, just turning round now—on his left."

"I see—pretty face, and what eyes!"

"I should say so, and jolly."

"She looks it, surely, and how well she sings!"

"Stunning, isn't she?" said Bigs, pressing Van Gilding's arm nervously.

"The others are hardly as pretty," remarked the latter, not heeding the question put to him.

"The other two of our party, you mean?" asked Milkston.

"Yes. The one leading the figure on the left—there, just coming this way—isn't bad."

"I should say not—beats them all in my eyes."

"A little over dressed—not so taking a costume

as some of them affect, don't you know?" remarked Bigs.

"I don't agree with you—more style in it, even if it is objectionable on the ground you mention," returned Milkston.

"Well, perhaps that's so; you are right, I think, and besides you are so much better judge," replied Bigs, who was but the echo of his rich friend.

"Well, as a party it would be difficult to beat them," said Van Gilding, enjoying the dizzy scene before him.

"You mean the three that we are to take out to supper?" queried Milkston.

"Yes, certainly, they are the best of the company, and we are indebted to you, old man, for arranging this little affair for us."

"Oh, don't mention it. I'm glad to have you both in the party."

"And we are glad to be in it," said Bigs enthusiastically, answering for himself and Van Gilding.

"Milkston has no doubt of that, I am sure," replied the latter. "But where do we go?"

"You mean to supper?"

"Yes."

"Tosti's, probably, unless you have some other place in view."

"Tosti's—I don't know the place—sufficiently obscure, I suppose?" said Van Gilding, a trifle nervously.

"Oh, yes, a good eating house; all right, you know, perfectly respectable, and a favorite resort after the theaters."

"It might be just as well for me, I imagine, if it were not a favorite resort—if it were less patronized. You see I would not care to have it reach my friends that I was out on such and such a night to supper with these girls."

"Oh, come now, Van, you lack nerve, I'm afraid, and besides there is no danger," returned Milkston.

"No, I think I am not easily frightened, but I do not care to make needless trouble for myself. If a report of this affair should reach the Cromptons——"

"Oh, I see." interrupted Milkston, "but is one to deny himself all the pleasures of life just because some girl might object?"

"And when there are so many girls, too?" added Stuyvesant Bigs.

"No, I do not intend to lose any pleasure, so don't misunderstand me, Milkston," replied Van Gilding. "I appreciate your courtesy in making me one of this party, as I said before, and shall have a good time, I know. My point is simply that I do not want to expose myself needlessly, for I should not wish certain people to know all I do."

"That is natural, I suppose, to one situated just as you are, but for myself I don't care so long as I enjoy myself."

"A man is liked all the better if he is thought to be a little rapid, don't you know?" said Bigs.

"That is all right to talk, old man, but such a reputation wouldn't help me very much just now," replied Van Gilding.

"Well, we will shield you from the public eye by having a private room for our supper," said Milkston.

"But it makes me feel mean to put you to this trouble, and I your guest."

"Don't mention it, Van. I can imagine how the matter looks to you, but you will get used to it after a few evenings. Why, Bigs here was worse at first than you are, but nothing frightens him now."

"Nothing frightens me now! Well, I should think not—ha ha, that is pretty good," replied the latter, smiling with pride.

"If Bigs has come out so well under your guidance, I think you will have little trouble with me," replied Van Gilding.

"I'm sure you will be all right. Very well, then, we will go to Tosti's as usual," replied Milkston, settling himself comfortably in his chair, waiting for the performance to end.

V.

THREE months have registered with the mystic past since the bright autumn afternoon when Bainbridge and his friend Goggins strolled leisurely through Central Park. Then it was that he saw, for the first time in fifteen months, Miss Crompton—the same sweet girl, grown more beautiful in the intervening time. This momentary glimpse, revealing her seated beside Van Gilding on his tally-ho, and evidently happy in his presence, was to Bainbridge much as a long draught of alkali water is to a thirsty, tongue parched traveler on a sandy desert. The first sensation, as his lips touch the clear liquid pool, is that of paradise; the second a suggestion of another place. So with Bainbridge, thrilled with delight at seeing her who had struck a chord in his sensitive nature never before touched by woman, and tortured a minute later on realizing that with her was Van Gilding—he of all others whom he most despised. And then he wondered as he had a thousand times before queried in moments of reverie, how Van Gilding had explained his strange and unwarrantable conduct on that night at Shelter Island, when Bainbridge had rescued him and his party from the sinking boat.

“I claimed,” said he to himself, walking along, with head bent low in thought, and for the time oblivious to Goggins’s presence, “that I was in college, and then refused to name the institution to which I belonged. I remember too well the look exchanged between Miss Crompton and her aunt—a look that cut me, as it cuts me now—a look mingled with surprise and incredulity. An impostor in their eyes, I saw myself, and yet unable to prove the truth of my assertion, unwilling as I was to expose her to embarrassment. Van Gilding was too sharp to miss the trail which I had unwittingly blazed for him, and that he followed it I have no doubt, hunting down my already questioned character, and exhibiting it to them illshapen, distorted with vice—an abject thing of contempt. Thus his revenge for each bent bow of mine, with which I had sent arrows sharply tipped into his self conceit. Thus his exculpation in the eyes of women, who catch quickly at plausible theories, not often going beneath the surface if it be well varnished, ingeniously glossed over.

“But what should I care? I know I am sincere, and not the thing he has painted me. And to know one’s self is true were better than if all the world thought so, and to himself he were a villain from whom he cannot separate, a shadow of himself, with distorted features of avarice and cruel cunning, haunting him ever, freezing his blood with terror.



"WE ARE SAILING ON DIFFERENT LAKES, SEPARATED BY GREAT GOLDEN REEFS."—SEE PAGE 65.

“And what is she to me or I to her, that I should allow myself to be annoyed or pleased at any act or thought of hers—to be moved either the one way or the other, to allow my heart to quicken its action, as it did but a moment ago, by even so much as a single beat? There is no sense in it, no manliness in it, nothing but the weak sentiment of imagination. We are sailing on different lakes, separated by great golden reefs through which I have discovered no channel leading to the smooth waters upon which her craft floats dreamily. And since she could have no object in coming into these rough and treacherous waters in which my frail skiff moves perilously, I am, as I see myself, a fool to think further of reaching the snug harbor in which her boat drops anchor. And why should I? The world is wide and well peopled. But of these things I'll think no more—neither of her nor others—not until my enterprise develops strength to run itself, and gives me time for fancy. To that, then, all my energies shall go from this time on.”

Ambition is only a desire, a purpose. It aims at results, without the power to move towards them. Energy is the main spring of character, but energy without purpose is often put to bad account, and seldom leads to great results, except by accident of circumstance. Together ambition and energy form a combination that moves things. These Bainbridge had, and with them determina-

tion—a characteristic of equal importance to one whose aims are high. To this trait in man the world owes more than to any other. Without it, invention, discovery, and civilization itself would have depended upon accident. The staying quality bridges disaster, parries, delays, circumvents, renews the attack, and in the end vanquishes the enemy. In the path of a determined man there are few obstacles that he cannot overcome. Will power as a force in the world is infinitely greater than is supposed, and when intensified, stimulated, heated, as was the case with Bainbridge, it is well nigh irresistible.

“Success in this world, Goggins, costs something,” said Bainbridge, breaking the silence at last and speaking as one entering upon a dangerous undertaking. “Sentiment and fasting and prayer will not bring it. Save for an occasional accident now and again, it never comes to any one. He must go after it. I am going after it, prepared to follow the chase to the end.

“Few men are willing to pay the price, to make the sacrifice, to give up pleasure, home, friends, and society, to part with the sure thing they have, with the money received from hoarding ancestors, to work fifteen hours a day, concentrating every thought and every energy upon one subject.”

“Is it worth the price, Bain, to make such a sacrifice?” returned Goggins, taking on something of his friend’s serious mood.

"That is a question I cannot answer."

"And yet you have answered it for yourself?"

"Yes, for myself."

"But doubting the true answer, I should think you would not hazard your own career?"

"I only question the answer as applied to others—not to myself."

"It seems to me that a good policy for one would be a good policy for another."

"No, Goggins, you are wrong, as you will see when you think how people differ in temperament, purpose and surroundings."

"Yes, there is something in that, old man, but I would rather get a little out of life as I go along."

"And your preferences, you see, simply confirm what I just said. No, people are not willing to pay the price, and perhaps they are right, but constituted as I am, and situated as I am, life would have few charms if I could not reasonably picture myself in circumstances more to my taste."

"But suppose you fail in your undertaking, or die before success crowns your effort?"

"Until either of those occurrences I should be happy in the assurance of victory."

"Assurance, though, Bain, hardly seems the right word."

"Call it faith, then; imagination, anything. Whatever it is, it would be real to me—the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

"You are a better biblical scholar than I thought," laughed Goggins, breaking the seriousness of the conversation. "But you and I look at the thing from different standpoints. I know that what we get as we go along we are sure of."

"And what we wait for may never come,—yes, I know your familiar maxim and it is a good one, too," said Bainbridge, quoting the last half of it. "In fact I follow it myself—in my own way, though."

"A peculiar way, it strikes me, when one has to give up so much," remarked Goggins, satirically.

"Yes, peculiar, perhaps, but the way, all the same, in which I can absorb the most out of life as it slips by."

"You get your pleasures, I see, from imagination, but mine come from a more tangible source. And after all, the success for which you are willing to sacrifice everything does not necessarily bring happiness. Envy and worry will be a part of your reward."

"I'm quite ready to take my chances, though you are undoubtedly right about the envy. I see it every day in the men working beside me. Capitalists are roundly abused by them and denounced as hard hearted monopolists. How they do roll and accentuate and agonize this word in its pronunciation—distorting it into a hideous thing. The fact is, Goggins, most men want to get wealth and power by some magic process while spending

their income on pleasure. But it doesn't come that way, and because it doesn't they envy the man who has it, not considering the years of toil, the economy, the training and skill he has given in exchange. I find at least five hours a day outside of the telegraph service which I put to good account. These men could do likewise if they would, but they will not. Success they want, but not at the expense of personal sacrifice."

Men who think and feel as Bainbridge felt—whose ideas are as sound as his were—seldom fail to produce results. The three months that have intervened since the foregoing conversation with Goggins, prove Bainbridge to be no exception to this rule. He still holds his position with the telegraph company, and works at night as before, devoting his afternoons to his business project. His progress has necessarily been slow, but that he should have progressed at all is the surprising fact. A hundred dollars from his wages had been saved, and hours and weeks of thought had resulted in a number of important changes in the proposed publication. He had made the acquaintance of many artists and engravers, had interviewed literary men and talked with business houses. He listened to all, and found each one overflowing with advice. Literary men and artists were especially enthusiastic over the idea, capital they all said, and with a few changes would make a hit. Here are some of the changes suggested :

Mr. Quill—"Yes, yes" (speaking with much deliberation), "a splendid idea, Mr. Bainbridge, splendid, just what we have needed for a long time—nothing like it, you know—originality takes."

Bainbridge—"I am glad it pleases you, Mr. Quill."

Quill—"Pleases me much—yes, very much. Let me see, the size of the page is what?"

Bainbridge—"Nine and one half by twelve."

Quill—"Exclusive of margin?"

Bainbridge—"No, including margin."

Quill—"Including margin! Small, yes, too small, it strikes me; not enough room for stories, you know. In fact, I would make the pages fully double the size."

Bainbridge—"But see how much more it would cost—double the matter, double the composition, double the press work, and paper double in size."

Quill—"Ah, but paper comes by weight. Never mind if it is double in size, so long as the weight is not increased it costs no more. And then, too, thin paper has just as much surface as thick."

Bainbridge—"Very true, but thin paper feels cheap—is too much like the sensational story papers. And even if the paper costs no more, the other expenses would be doubled."

Quill—"No, not necessarily, as you could save on your illustrations—cut them down to half the number, and get them done by a cheaper process."

Bainbridge—"The changes you suggest would

make an entirely different publication from what I have planned."

Quill—"But success is what you want, young man. Publishers do business to make money, not to satisfy some whim of their own. I tell you, if you want to make this thing go, you must publish stories, and a lot of them, too."

Bainbridge—"You feel convinced of it, I suppose?"

Quill—"Convinced! I know it" (warming to the subject, and aiming to make a market for his oft rejected manuscripts). "Isn't it my business to study the taste of the people, and knowing it, do you suppose I would weave myself into tales of romance if such work were not appreciated—especially when I could take equally high rank in other branches of literature?"

Bainbridge—"Your reasoning is good, Mr. Quill. I will consider the points you make, in connection with your story as I read it."

* * * * *

Mr. Brush—"I have been looking for an order from you, Mr. Bainbridge, to go ahead with the drawing we talked of last week."

Bainbridge—"Not quite ready yet—want to be sure of the size, and so forth, before spending any money."

Brush—"Quite right, the fewer mistakes you make the better, but I thought you had settled on the size."

Bainbridge—"So I am, providing no change is made in the form of the paper."

Brush—"Oh, I see; contemplating making the pages smaller, as I urged—so much more artistic, you know."

Bainbridge—"A man just went out who urged doubling the size of the pages."

Brush—"Doubling them! Why, I never heard of such an absurd idea. Who could he be, for gracious sake? A coal heaver, I'm bound."

Bainbridge—"No, not a coal heaver; but Quill, the author of 'Beautiful Rain.'"

Brush—"The old ass—no more idea of art than a ground hog—just a hack—a literary hack, that's what he is."

Bainbridge—"He claims that his stories are in great demand—that they have been the making of several publications."

Brush—"Rubbish—mere rubbish—never wrote anything of note but 'Beautiful Rain,' and there is a good deal of doubt about his having written that."

Bainbridge—"You think I had better hold to my original plan, then?"

Brush—"Yes; except to make the pages a trifle smaller—the artistic effect is so much better, and everything depends upon art, you know, now."

Bainbridge—"Quill thought I should pay less attention to art—should reduce the number of illustrations one half."

Brush—"To make room for his alleged stories, I suppose—the old idiot."

* * * * *

Letter Carrier—"Publisher of *Breeze*'—know anybody in this building who answers to that description?"

Bainbridge—"It must mean myself, I suppose."

Letter Carrier—"I wish I had known it before—have hunted the whole building over from bottom to top. But what is this '*Breeze*' any way?"

Bainbridge—"The name of a new publication I am going to bring out."

Letter Carrier—"Oh, not out yet. Well, you had better change the name."

Bainbridge—"Why so?"

Letter Carrier—"Breeze!" (contemptuously). "Who ever heard such a name applied to a paper?"

Bainbridge—"Well, suppose it never has been used before as the title to a publication, is that any argument against it?"

Letter Carrier—"Why, it doesn't mean anything. You better take my advice and waste no money on that name."

* * * * *

Mr. Letterer—"Ah, glad to find you in—finished the heading a day earlier than I expected to—best thing I've ever done."

Bainbridge—"Yes, it is good—better than I expected."

Letterer—"Pleases you, then? I knew it would."

Bainbridge—"Yes, pleases me much."

Letterer—"Very catchy, and such a clever name for a paper—nothing like it, you know—new things take."

* * * * *

Mr. Boxwood—"Sorry you didn't let me get the heading designed for you. I know an artist who is very clever at this sort of thing."

Bainbridge—"But I like this design."

Boxwood—"Well, of course, if you like it, it is not my place to criticise it. But this 'B,' for instance—all out of proportion—too fancy; and the 'z' isn't just right. In fact, the style of letter isn't suited to the paper."

Bainbridge—"Am sorry I didn't get a design of you; but since this is accepted and paid for, I will have it engraved."

Boxwood—"Very well, then, I will put it through for you; but—ah, by the way, I want to offer a suggestion. You know you told me you had been figuring with a process house with the view to having your drawings reproduced by their method. Now don't do it. You are a young man just starting for yourself, and cannot afford to experiment. Process engraving will ruin the prospects of your paper, now take my word for it."

Bainbridge—"But it costs so much less; and then, too, our best magazines use a great deal of it."

Boxwood—"They are all going to give it up, though—looks cheap, and their circulation has gone down, down, right down, since they commenced experimenting in it. No, sir; it is only good for cheap work. I know what I am talking about."

Bainbridge—"But the French publications, in an artistic sense the best in the world, use it almost altogether."

Boxwood—"I don't care if they do, it isn't a success. I've been a wood engraver for thirty years, and I ought to know."

Bainbridge—"Since this process engraving is comparatively a new thing, you couldn't have watched it during all those thirty years. I am at a loss, therefore, to see wherein your judgment is superior to that of younger men who speak well of it."

* * * * *

Mr. Process—"These figures I give you are especially low—made so to encourage you and help you get started—not over one tenth the price you would have to pay for wood engraving, and you get a more perfect reproduction of your drawings."

Bainbridge—"Boxwood thinks wood engraving is the only thing that will make the paper go."

Process—"Boxwood be blowed! He is an old foggy—'way behind the times, and besides, he is talking for himself. Why, I am doing plates for the best people in the city. You bring your drawings to me and there will be no trouble about your

paper going—that is, no trouble barring the title—‘*Breeze.*’ Where in the world did you ever hit upon it?”

Bainbridge—“You don’t like it, then?”

Process—“Like it? Why, you might as well call a paper ‘*Shovel.*’ Do you think it would seli with such a name?”

* * * * *

Mr. Papermaker—“I should use a super-calendered paper if I were you, well finished. Illustrations print better on it, you know.”

Bainbridge—“Natural tint, or dead white, would you recommend?”

Papermaker—“Natural tint, by all means—all the best publications use it now—softer to the eye, you know.”

Bainbridge—“I agree with you, it is more pleasing.”

Papermaker—“Yes, no doubt about it; unlike the cheap papers, too. When do you expect to bring out the publication?”

Bainbridge—“I cannot say definitely yet.”

Papermaker—“Have you arranged for your composition and press work?”

Bainbridge—“No, not yet.”

Papermaker—“Well, be sure and use large type—I should say a bourgeois—nothing like large, clear print to recommend a paper.”

* * * * *

Mr. Typo (with an eye to business)—“Don’t think

of using bourgeois type, Mr. Bainbridge—it is altogether too large. Why, you couldn't get any matter in your paper."

Bainbridge—"What type would you recommend?"

Typo—"Nonpareil, I should say—not larger than minion, any way; nonpareil, though, is preferable. By the way, Mr. Bainbridge, what is your plan for circulating the paper? I intended to ask you this when you were here last. You see I am interested in your success, and don't want you to make any mistakes."

Bainbridge—"I appreciate your interest in my behalf, Mr. Typo—appreciate it very much. As to circulation, I expect to have it handled by the trade, that is, sold by newsdealers."

Typo—"Don't you do it, don't you do it, young man. Take my advice and keep out of the clutches of the news companies—sharks, monopolists, grinders, that's what they are—ruin you if you have anything to do with them."

Bainbridge—"But how can I get the paper into the hands of newsdealers except by dealing with the news company?"

Typo—"Let the newsdealers go, and make a push for direct subscriptions."

Bainbridge—"But isn't that system dead, especially on high priced papers?"

Typo—"Dead! of course it isn't dead. The idea! No doubt the news companies will make you think

so, if they can; but don't listen to them. And as to your price, if that is too high, why, make it lower—nothing like cheap prices for the public."

* * * * *

Mr. Newsvendor—"We are overcrowded with publications now—no room for a new one—too many in same line. Wish half of them were dead, then we would have less bother. See how my stand is cluttered up with all this trash—never sells, and why men want to throw their money away publishing it is more than I know."

* * * * *

Mr. Middleman (who works on a sure thing)—"Unique idea, Mr. Bainbridge—pushed sufficiently, ought to sell—have big sale. We see popular features in it."

Bainbridge—"I'm glad you like it; but now as to the price, is it too high?"

Middleman—"Ten cents a copy? No, not too high. The fact is, a good thing brings its price. But let me give you a point; don't waste money and energy trying to get direct subscriptions. Five dollars a year, in advance, is a good deal of money—not noticed, you see, by the week—and besides, the thing is played out, gone by, dead."

* * * * *

"From all this unsolicited advice and a thousand times as much more," said Bainbridge, talking the matter over with Goggins, "I got nothing that helped me. Why, even the porter and coal

heaven—imagine them telling one how to run a paper! But they did it unblushingly. And their advice was quite as valuable as ninety nine per cent of all that flowed in upon me. I have already learned one thing since entering on this business venture, which was not taught me in college, and that is, that one must think for himself."

VI.

TO read that some one did so and so is to see the act and not the man. But an act, however trivial in itself, when associated with individuality, becomes alive with interest. Personality, then, the trend of character, and the little incidents that bring these out and individualize the man, are quite as important to the proper development of a story as the more dramatic scenes that follow.

In real life, no one can form the character of another. So, too, in fiction an author cannot individualize his creation and give him character, however much he *talks of him* and dwells upon the scenes in which he acts. The individuality of the character must be learned by witnessing him on his daily rounds of toil or pleasure, by studying his temperament, his tendencies, his manner and his conversation.

Man is many sided. He cannot be seen and understood in one act, nor a dozen. To know him well, he must be studied under different conditions, with different influences bearing upon him, with different motives appealing to him. To have seen Bainbridge simply as a telegrapher at

Shelter Island, regarding those about him with a cynical frown, one would have formed a most imperfect impression of his true character. So, too, with Van Gilding. His sullen manner on the night of the accident to his boat would never have suggested the agreeable social side of his nature. His seeming admiration also for Miss Crompton, a young woman of culture and refinement, as he sat beside her on his tally-ho that afternoon in Central Park, would contradict the possibility of his association, a few hours later, with ballet girls.

But these scenes only give three sides of Van Gilding; and as it is desirable that we should know him better, I will here lift the curtain and show him in a different act—an act in which Major Artemas Poodel makes his appearance.

“Van Gilding is late,” remarked Milkston, looking at his watch and yawning lazily.

“Yes, late as usual—habit of his,” replied Stuyvesant Bigs, looking anxiously toward the door. “Deuced hungry, don’t you know?”

“Your appetite is never very languid, Bigs,” returned the other, with careless satire.

“Languid appetite, ha ha; that’s pretty good, by Jove! And it reminds me of what my governor says. He says——”

“Good evening, young men. Well, not been served yet?” said Major Poodel, advancing and interrupting young Bigs, much to the delight of Milkston.

"No, not yet; glad to have you join us," returned the latter.

"Certainly, delighted to have you with us," added Bigs, who never paid.

"Well, I hadn't thought of this," replied the major, hesitating, not to seem too anxious.

"You will enjoy the supper just as much, though, I dare say," returned Milkston.

"Oh, no doubt about it; in fact, the surprise will rather add to the pleasure than otherwise—serve as a sauce, you know."

"It often has that effect, I have noticed."

"Yes, often; and though it didn't occur to me before, I think I am a trifle hungry—just strolled in to see if any acquaintance were here, not thinking I would see you young men; but I'm in luck—better luck than I anticipated."

"It is very good of you, major, to say so."

"Oh, not at all, not at all; simple truth, that's all. Ordered, I suppose?"

"No, not yet."

"Waiting for Van Gilding," said Bigs.

"Van Gilding!" repeated Poodel, wrinkling his brow in thought.

"Why, yes; J. Norman Van Gilding," replied Bigs, surprised.

"Graduate of Yale," suggested Milkston.

"Graduate of Yale?" repeated Poodel, with rising inflection. "H'm, h'm!"

"And a deuced clever fellow," added Bigs.

"A clever fellow! Why, I ought to know him—of course I know him—Van Gilding?" looking much perplexed.

"I'm sure you know him—lives on Madison Avenue—father dead, only son, very old family," said Milkston.

"Old family? Know him, I should think I do. Knew his father before him. The young man has been in college, you say?"

"Yes, graduated last summer."

"Ah, that accounts for it; been away to college—out of society practically," said Major Poodel, with evident relief.

"Half past eleven," remarked Bigs, looking at his watch suggestively.

"Half past eleven, well—ah, here he comes now," returned Milkston. "Van, old fellow, why so late?"

"Sorry to have kept you waiting; but the play did not end till five minutes ago," replied Van Gilding.

"You know Major Poodel, Van?" said Milkston.

"I am very glad to meet you, major," returned Van Gilding, extending his hand.

"And it is a pleasure to meet a Van Gilding—seen you, of course, many times. Knew your father well," replied Poodel, profusely.

"I dare say; and your face is familiar to me."

"Familiar to everybody in society—a great beau, don't you know?" remarked Bigs.

“ Well, I have been in my time,” returned the major proudly ; “ but getting a little old now, you know.”

“ In your time? Ha, ha, that’s pretty good—beat us all now.”

“ No ; I’m sort of giving way to you boys.”

“ That won’t do, major ; we know you too well—biggest society man in the city today,” added Milkston.

“ Of course he is—not a reception this year he hasn’t attended.”

“ Well, force of habit, you know ; but then I cannot manage the giddy girls the way you can. The more sober matrons are more in my line now.”

“ ‘ The more sober ones ! ’ Ha, ha, that’s pretty good—the most giddy in the party, you mean, major ! ”

“ Not matrons, either—monopolized so much of Miss Metcalf’s time at the Wilkeses’ I hardly had a chance to speak to her,” said Milkston.

“ And Van, here, might make a similar complaint, for I thought the major never would leave Miss Crompton,” added Bigs.

“ By Jove, isn’t she a sweet girl, though ?—bright and full of animation,” replied Poodel, much elated at the review of himself. “ But—ah, I see Mr. Van Gilding is the young man who drives the swell tally-ho. I remember now—see you nearly every day in the park—charming girl. I’d buy a

tally-ho or a Pullman palace coach if she would ride beside me."

"Let me fill your glass again, major. You are drinking very little tonight; don't you like the brand?" said Milkston, always a generous host.

"Oh, yes, like it—no better. Cannot drink as much as I used to when I was your age. Don't feel as well for it, you know."

"A supper would be a failure without wine, and no wine like champagne. Let me help you to some terrapin."

"Well, yes; thank you—no place like Delmonico's for terrapin."

"That's so—your glass, Van—and you, Bigs—ah, all out—well, a fresh bottle will be here in a minute."

"That's pretty good. Ha, ha—want to see me paralyzed, don't you?"

"Paralyzed! Come, Bigs, that won't do. Don't try to emulate the major's modesty. Why, you are a full glass behind Van and myself. Here comes another bottle, now; old fellow, your glass."

An hour later the quartette have adjourned to Major Poodel's bachelor apartments in the "Elmwood." Seated at a table with cards before them, and poker the game, they were now in position to round out the night to their taste.

"Very good cards, major," remarked Bigs.

"Yes, imported—always prefer imported cards."

"The spots do not seem just right on them, however," said Van Gilding.

"No, I have noticed that they are a little wild in your hands ; but it's all in the draw, you know."

"You don't draw as well, Van, at cards as at some other things—girls, for instance," said Milkston, hauling in a large pot.

"That's pretty good, ha ha, Van," added Bigs.

"Never mind, old boy, we will bring you out all right at this game—takes some practice and plenty of nerve," said Milkston.

"Bring you out as we did with the ballet girls," added Bigs. "Ha ha! You should have seen him, major, the first night he met the Highkick girls."

"The Highkick girls at the Bijou?" asked Poodel, with surprised interest.

"Yes, stunning girls, aren't they?"

"I should say so. Well, you boys are not getting left very much."

"Getting left? Ha ha, that's pretty good, eh, old fellow?" gently tapping Van Gilding in the ribs.

"But tell me about it—any fun going on I don't want to miss it. What was the trouble with Van Gilding?"

"Oh, there was no trouble with me, major," answered Van Gilding, preferring to dismiss the matter in a few words rather than have it enlarged upon by his friends. "I was simply anxious to

avoid being seen at supper with the girls, and these two fellows have tried to tease me ever since."

"But the best of it is, major," said Milkston, "the way he has changed. I thought him rather a timid youth then, but now he leads Bigs and me a lively dance. Especially with the Highkick troupe—cut us completely out, you know."

"Well, that is clever," laughed Poodel; "very clever, but a little ungenerous since you introduced him to them, I should think."

"Major, don't you believe all they say—by Jupiter, Milkston, have you got that pot?—and I held an ace flush," said Van Gilding, throwing down his hand with disgust.

"A very good hand, Van, very good; hardly able to cope with four jacks, though," laughed the winner.

"You are playing to great luck tonight, Milkston. I've got to work to get my money back."

"Yes, this is my night—well, major, that is no mean haul—puts you away ahead of the game—and Van, you have lost again."

"Yes, I've been laying low for this chance," replied Poodel, with a triumphant smile. "But how about the Highkick girls? Why can't I join you some night for a bit of a lark and another supper?"

"Why, there is no reason whatever—well, Van, you better stop playing," said Milkston. "Bigs

has floored you now in great shape—landed the biggest game of the evening and nearly all your money.”

“I was lucky in dropping out,” chuckled the major. “Laid down three deuces, too.”

“I never had such mean luck before in my life,” said Van Gilding, with utter disgust. “In two solid hours I’ve only taken in one pot. I’ll take your advice, Milkston, and get out before I am bankrupt.”

“Two hundred and eighty three dollars, by Jupiter! That is a loss, Van, for the little time we have been playing,” remarked Milkston.

“And with only five dollar limit,” suggested Bigs.

“Well, it’s gone; but I’ll tackle you all again tomorrow night, if agreeable to you, and make it up,” said Van Gilding, looking anything but happy.

VII.

IT is now mid winter, and the gay season is at its height. Dancing parties, weddings, receptions, the great balls, the opera, the theater, card parties, riding clubs, private musicales, amateur theatricals, and great fairs given in the interest of charity, all combine with the thousand and one other events of endless variety to stir the social heart of the metropolis. New York, during these weeks of gayety, is a merry world. Night outrivals day in brilliancy, and pleasure reigns supreme—a monarch of iron will, drawing his revenues from the life source of his worshiping subjects. The hardest worked of all the city's multitudes are those who affect a life of leisure, and look upon honorable employment as an endless round of monotonous drudgery. Forced into the ranks of pleasure to escape the mildew of ennui, they find themselves matched with competitors so clever, so artful, so enduring, that they must put forth every effort, strain every nerve, cultivate every possible improvement, groom, train, diet—anything and everything that will aid them in the mad social race for supremacy.

A favorite most favored in this charmed circle of ultra fashionable folk was Miss Lela Crompton.

No german, no reception, no theater party, no ride on club nights was a complete success without her, lending as she did, by her bright, animated conversation, a dash and brilliancy to the whole company.

I use the word success in the broader sense, applying it to the spirit of the whole party, and not to a few of her own sex who secretly cherished sentiments of jealousy. The latter, however, were too well bred and too politic to show their feelings by sign or act.

There is no surer way for a girl to make herself unpopular than to show jealousy, or speak coolly of a favorite in her set. Being a favorite, she is generally admired, and praise for her is the correct and proper thing. It was this fact, with all vying with each other to speak the sweetest and most complimentary words of Miss Crompton, that gave her an enviable social prominence—a prominence that attracted the attention of shrewd matrons who aimed to excel as entertainers, and caused them to arrange dates, in not a few instances, especially to secure her presence.

She had many admirers, and not a few worshippers, so proclaimed by themselves. To all she talked clever nonsense, complimented them, teased them, or joked with them while in the dizzy whirl of Terpsichorean pleasures. But for Van Gilding her sweetest smiles and more serious and better thoughts were reserved. This was

plainly visible to every one, and yet her devotion to him in public was not so pronounced as to discourage others who paid her homagè and courted her society. She was sufficiently clever to hide to a wonderful degree her own feelings, otherwise the envied place she held in society would have been transferred to another.

It matters not how bright and attractive a young lady is, her popularity will soon cease if she has no eyes and thoughts for any save him on whom her heart is fixed. In other words, if she is very much in love with one man, and is unwise enough to let the fact become conspicuous, she speedily finds herself a drug in the social market. Man warms to the sentiment of a woman, but he warms to it only when the current is in touch with himself. To observe it in transit for another is to feel how weary, stale, flat and unprofitable a thing is love.

Miss Crompton's clever tact kept her from falling into this error. Her hold upon the affections of others besides Van Gilding was sufficiently strong to gratify any young woman of spirit. Her aim, however, was not to reap a full harvest of idle adulation, but rather the purpose to make herself agreeable to all—to act well her part in the social farce in which she was starring. But Van Gilding, as the one most favored by her, was conspicuously fortunate—not alone in possessing the warm regard of so sweet a girl, which in itself

was quite enough to make any man happy, but because of the prominence his nearness to her gave him. He, too, was in the inner circle of society's most favored few—not there simply as the friend of Miss Crompton, but because of the antiquity of his family and his own social tendencies. Yet these credentials would never have given him the swing he now had but for her aid.

Stuyvesant Bigs was admitted into the holy of holies on similar grounds, and was in every sense what is now known as a full fledged four hundreder. He was not, however, assigned to the first division.

A comparison with Bigs without a word in Van Gilding's favor would be unjust to the latter, for he was not wanting in manly elements. Had he been so, it is safe to assume that Miss Crompton would have found little pleasure in his company. I use the word elements as applied to him to give a different shade of meaning from what the term characteristics would signify. To say that Van Gilding's characteristics were manly would be to call him a manly man, and I should not like to hold myself responsible for such an utterance. Manly elements he had by inheritance, and under favorable circumstances they would have developed into manly characteristics. His childhood and early training, and the atmosphere in which he was reared, heavily laden with the decay of doting antiquity, all combined to spoil one really well endowed by

nature. His talents, notwithstanding this, were not ruined, only dwarfed. The pernicious effect was most potent in poisoning his disposition and giving him false ideas of his own superiority over others. Allowed to have his own way as a child, never yielding his will to his governess, he became selfish, arrogant and overbearing. These traits grew with him year by year, and to them was added extravagance, which is always especially deplorable in one who does not know how to deny himself. In his favor were his well developed physique, his rather handsome features, and pleasing address.

One of the most brilliant receptions of the season was given by Mrs. Van Rensselaer Strivewell. New York receptions are much like those of other cities, only more so, and Mr. Strivewell's was more so yet—the glory and envy alike of society. The chief features of events of this sort are crush, gush and glitter, the absence of any one of which would stamp the party a failure, and place the hostess in a most unenviable position. But Mrs. Strivewell never suffered this misfortune. The intensity and immensity of these features were all a proud and aspiring woman could wish. Unlike other things, pleasure at receptions is derived from discomfort, and the greater the discomfort the greater the pleasure. It is a strange freak of fashion, but since fashion decrees thus, it is a fact. To use a theatrical figure, crush and dress are but the setting

to the stage, while gush is the play. On this then more than anything else rests the success or failure of the assemblage. It is the only action, the only dramatic feature of the entertainment. One who is not up in it, who is not familiar with his lines, is very much out of place in such a gathering. The presence of a man like Major Poodel was well nigh indispensable. His acquaintance was extensive, and he knew the right thing to say to each one and just how to say it, properly emphasizing the telling words.

“Originality in society,” remarked the major, stroking his long gray mustache, “is a failure. It is never understood or appreciated. I know what I am talking about ; I’ve watched it for years. The man who tries to say new things and smart things is put down as stiff, uncongenial, a boor. Old jokes, old gush, if you please, is the thing that goes. No effort, you see, is required to understand it. It is plain to all. Nothing makes a woman so weary of a man as to have him say bright things that she doesn’t understand—that is, doesn’t catch the point of the joke. She feels compelled to laugh and compliment when she is ignorant of the foible punctured—one of her own, possibly. So, boys, my advice to you is never to try to be bright in new thoughts. The old ones, that you know are at a premium, are safe. A sure thing is always better than an experiment.

“To get on well in society,” continued this ex-

perienced observer, "is to do as others do—to laugh when they laugh, to condemn when they condemn, to praise when they praise, to seem to think as they think, to sneeze when they sneeze, and to follow the newest fads as they are followed by others. There are those, to be sure, who think and act independently and still maintain their position, which, however, is held only by virtue of the superior traits they possess. But they are most conspicuously in the minority, which is well, since too many independent spirits do not harmonize together. And without these social leaders the great body of society would be utterly helpless."

Major Poodel was not a theorist. He was an experienced actor on the social stage—had been a leading man for nearly half a century. See him now shaking hands with Mrs. Strivewell, every muscle of his face, the well trained sparkle of his eyes, his whole attitude even, expressing untold delight at being one of her guests on such an occasion. "No one can equal you in receptions," said he, casting his eyes over the crowded parlors. "Largest and most brilliant I have seen this season. And how charming you are looking."

Mrs. Strivewell—"How kind of you to say so, major—always so delightfully complimentary."

Major Poodel—"It would be unkind indeed to pass you by without expressing these thoughts. When one calls together by her genius and personal charms an assemblage like this, the least a

man can do in return for her entertaining is to express courteously his appreciation of it, and of the clever woman who so generously gives it."

Mrs. Strivewell—"If all men talked as you do, what a delightful world this would be—a sort of paradise on earth."

Major Poodel—"Wouldn't it? Don't you think I'm about the nicest fellow going?"

Mrs. Strivewell—"Yes, a charming man—ought to marry and make some little woman happy."

Major Poodel—"If you were only a widow, now!"

Mrs. Strivewell—"But I'm not, and my husband is very much alive."

Major Poodel—"Or had a sister, I was going to add."

Mrs. Strivewell—"Sorry I have not. What a delightful brother-in-law you would be." •

* * * * *

Major Poodel (to Miss Crompton)—"Well, if any one has any doubt about your being the sweetest girl in the city, he should see you tonight."

Miss Crompton—"What a clever man you are, major, and how charming your compliments."

Major Poodel—"No one that had any eye at all for beauty could help praising you tonight."

Miss Crompton—"Are you not afraid such profuse compliments will turn my head?"

Major Poodel—"No, not a girl of your sense. Do you know" (speaking softly, so that he could

not be overheard) "I think Mrs. Strivewell did a clever thing in inviting you to receive with her."

Miss Crompton—"It was very kind of her to pay me the compliment."

Major Poodel—"Kind to herself—shrewd woman—knows the drawing cards of society."

* * * * *

Major Poodel (to Miss Metcalf)—"Well, if any one doubts that the West produces the most charming girls, he should see you tonight."

Miss Metcalf—"What a graceful compliment, major—I wish I could think you sincere."

Major Poodel—"Sincere! If you could only see yourself as I see you, you would have no doubt about it; and how becoming that dress is—not another here like it."

Miss Metcalf—"You certainly could not have been less complimentary to Miss Crompton. She is lovely tonight—a perfect dream."

Major Poodel—"Yes, very sweet, but then one star differeth from another in glory. I know the style that suits me, and if I were only a younger man, these boys wouldn't be with you so much."

* * * * *

Major Poodel—"Mrs. Latrobe, I am delighted to see you here—looking more charming than ever—upon my word, you utterly eclipse the girls."

Mrs. Latrobe—"So kind, major, to greet me with these compliments after seeing so many of your friends before reaching me."

Major Poodel—"Only a just tribute to a beautiful woman."

Mrs. Latrobe—"And no flattery, my dear major?"

Major Poodel—"Flattery, no. My vocabulary isn't large enough to flatter you. It taxes a man's ingenuity to do so clever a woman justice."

* * * * *

Milkston (talking to Miss Metcalf)—"I wish the crowd would thin out so that we could have a dance."

Miss Metcalf—"So do I; what a crush, and how warm!"

Milkston—"Yes, a great crush and very warm—heightens your color, though."

Miss Metcalf—"That quite repays me, then."

Milkston—"Color is becoming to you, though your beauty does not depend upon it, as with many girls."

Miss Metcalf—"How charmingly you do flatter me, Mr. Milkston."

Milkston—"Flatter is not the right word. To do you justice, I fear, is beyond my powers of expression."

Miss Metcalf—"Oh, oh! you men would make one think she was the only woman in the world."

Milkston—"But all others are as nothing to him who sees only one."

Miss Metcalf—"I really believe you are getting to be quite as great a flatterer as Major Poodel."

Milkston—"Well, I like that. So you think I am no more sincere than he? See him now talking to Miss Lawton. Do I agonize and gush like that?"

Miss Metcalf—"Personal comparisons, I know, are often displeasing. But the thought was suggested to me by the effusive compliments paid me by the major only a few moments ago."

Milkston—"So he came to you first, and with his meaningless flattery dulled the edge of my genuine compliments. But speaking of the major and seeing him talking with Miss Lawton reminds me of something I heard of him a few days ago. It seems that when he was quite a young man he was very attentive to a Miss Bradbury. After a year's intimacy, in which he seemed to get no nearer to the marrying point, she dropped him, and in a few months became the wife of a Mr. Littlewood. Eighteen years later the daughter of this couple was courted by the major quite as assiduously as her mother had been before her. It looked now as if he were really destined to become the husband of the daughter of his boyhood flame. Society had it so, and gossips lent strength to the probability. But again he failed to become a benedict. Miss Littlewood, after a time, became Mrs. Lawton, and now Miss Lawton is before us, and, as you can see for yourself, is being warmly courted by the major."

Miss Metcalf (laughing convulsively)—"The

funniest story I ever heard, but I cannot believe it—just see how straight and well preserved the major is. Why, your story would make him out ninety at least—a sort of antique family relic handed down from generation to generation.”

Milkston (himself laughing)—“Yes, does sound like the invention of a novelist, but I assure you it is true, as I have the major’s own word for it.”

Miss Metcalf—“It was not he who told you the story?”

Milkston—“No, not he, though I charged him with it, and he verified it, laughing with such genuine enjoyment as one rarely witnesses.”

Miss Metcalf—“But how old it makes him!”

Milkston—“No, not necessarily. Fifty five or sixty years would give ample time—plenty of older men in the front rank of society now.”

* * * * *

Van Gilding was faultlessly dressed on this occasion, and in all respects was at his best. Approaching Miss Crompton with graceful ease, he said, after a few commonplace remarks: “You never looked so well as you do tonight;” then adding, softly, “you are singularly beautiful.”

Her heart responded to this touch of sentiment, sending a glow of happiness to her face that warmed him and kindled anew his hopes.

“I am so glad I came, then,” she replied, quietly. “This compliment from you quite repays me for the effort, and, besides, I am not at all fatigued.”

"I am delighted to hear you say so, for I have been anxious ever since you decided to come, fearing the excitement and strain of standing so long would overtax your strength; this is the first time you have been out, you know, since your illness."

"Yes, I learned your solicitude from your note—it was so good of you—and it proved a tonic to me, I think."

"If I really thought my notes were of such benefit I would gladly devote my life to you through pen and paper."

"But I fear," replied Miss Crompton, dropping her eyes with a suggestion of sadness, "you would soon tire of so dull a life, when you would have a gay and happy one by mingling with the world."

"No, that would not be happiness to me," he said, slowly, as if measuring each word, "but the thought that any act of mine would make your life more sunny would give me more pleasure than the society of other ladies. But we must not talk further upon this subject, else I fear we shall attract attention, for you are now so serious. I see your father, and I will chat with him for a moment, and then drift around for a time, coming to you later, when the crush is less."

After a brief conversation with Mr. Crompton, rather formal in character, Van Gilding hurried to Mrs. Woodman, the aunt of Miss Crompton. When Mr. Crompton's wife died Mrs. Woodman

came to her brother and did all that a loving sister could do to make good his crushing loss. She presided over his household and proved a mother to his daughter. These were her present relations with the Crompton family.

Her friendship, then, was an important factor in Van Gilding's effort to gain the sunny side of Mr. Crompton. If she could be induced to co-operate with the young lady, a combination would be formed that the hard headed father could not well resist.

"Have you noticed how beautiful Miss Crompton is tonight?" said Van Gilding, opening the conversation with Mrs. Woodman.

"Yes, she is lovely, and I am proud to see the attention she is receiving from every one."

That she should receive attention from others was hardly pleasing to Van Gilding; however, policy was his line of action.

"Yes," he replied, assuming to be rather glad than otherwise. "I have noticed it with pleasure, and I never saw her look so sweet; every one has remarked how charming she is."

"Her heightened color gives her unusual brilliancy, but I hope she will not get tired out—so warm, and such a jam."

"I was just talking with her about it, fearing the intense heat might be too much for her."

"You are very kind; she will appreciate your solicitude, I am sure."

"If Mr. Crompton would only look upon the matter in the same way," replied Van Gilding, aiming to discover Mrs. Woodman's attitude toward him.

"He thinks, you know, that you should be in business," she replied evasively.

"Business is such a drudgery, and besides I have no taste for it."

"Mr. Crompton is a very active man himself—is fairly devoted to business, and cannot look with allowance upon the unemployed."

"But what is the object of going into business when there is no necessity for doing so?"

"Would you like to know the answer he would give to your question?"

"Certainly I would."

"He would say that few young men affecting a life of leisure and pleasure ever make a desirable record."

"And do you hold to that opinion?"

"Why do you ask, and what does my opinion matter one way or the other?" replied Mrs. Woodman, anxious to maintain a neutral ground.

"I asked, wishing to know whether I could rely upon your friendship or not."

"Why, Mr. Van Gilding, I should think you would know that I am a friend of yours."

"Yes, I believe you are, in a way; but whether I can rely upon your co-operation is the problem I am anxious to have solved."

"I am certainly not hostile to your purpose. I could not be so without injury to the feelings of my niece, and neither could I argue in favor of the engagement without siding against my brother's views, and even you cannot question the genuineness of his motives. His love for Lela is almost devotion. You can easily understand, therefore, the solicitude he feels in this matter."

"Yes, I can understand," said Van Gilding, after a pause, "but he does not understand me. I can see no way out."

"Will you allow me to suggest one?" said Mrs. Woodman, anxious to see the matter of the engagement decided one way or the other.

"Yes, certainly."

"My advice, then, is to get up early tomorrow morning and try and secure a situation in some business house. I doubt if you can hope for my brother's consent to your engagement with Lela should you fail to make a move in this direction."

VIII.

“SO the situation is not improving, Van?” said Milkston, sitting at a table with his friend in the Hoffman Café.

“No,” replied Van Gilding, slowly, “it is not improving; on the contrary, it is much worse.”

“Worse! You surprise me, old fellow; and Miss Crompton seemed to enjoy your presence so much last night.”

“Yes, I believe she did, but the trouble is with her father.”

“So he has not yielded yet?—wants to see you bent over a desk, I suppose, wearing your life out.”

“Yes, making a drudge of myself, and all to please a whim of his.”

“How absurd for the old idiot to expect anything of the sort of one in your position—just like all the rest of the old fogies—no appreciation of a modern gentleman.”

“That’s the way it strikes me,” returned Van Gilding, draining his glass, and warming to the discussion. “I don’t see why I should yield to his will, any way——”

“And give up all the pleasures of life,” suggested Milkston.

"Yes, and give up all the pleasures of life."

"He must be a determined old dog, or he would let Miss Crompton do as she wants to."

"So I think myself. He is simply stubborn."

"What is to be done—give up the girl, or yield to her father?"

"That is the question that agitates the court just now."

"Miss Crompton is a prize," suggested Milkston, lighting a fresh cigarette. "I never saw her look so charming as last night."

Van Gilding made no reply, but rested his head on his hand, in debate with himself.

"I have an idea, Van," said Milkston, breaking the silence.

"Have you, and one that solves the problem?"

"I think so; strikes me as a clever scheme."

"Let me judge of its merits," returned Van Gilding, anxiously.

"This is the plan. Go down town and get desk room with some one or fit up an office yourself, whichever you prefer."

"But what business could I conduct? And, besides, I don't want to go into business—don't want to spend my life at anything of the sort just to please Crompton, while you and every one else are having a glorious time up town here."

"Oh, but I don't mean that you should do a lot of drudgery. There are always several ways to get round a point. When a man has an office it

looks like business, you know, whether he is in it much of the time or not."

"That is an idea, Milkston—a clever thought," replied Van Gilding, taking kindly to the suggestion. "But Crompton is too keen a man to be easily deceived," he added thoughtfully.

"That would necessitate your having some business, then—I see the objection."

"Yes, there is the rub, for I certainly wouldn't start a business."

"Well, suppose you get into some business house?"

"Should I do that, I would have to get down early mornings and work like an ordinary clerk, and this I wouldn't do for anybody."

"Not even for Miss Crompton?"

"No, I am sure I would not"—his old haughty spirit to the front.

"You surprise me, old man. I thought your devotion to her was so great you would not hesitate to make any sacrifice."

"Well, you know, we are not always understood," returned Van Gilding, flushing slightly.

"Very true, though I did not think myself mistaken in this matter," replied Milkston, inclined to press the point.

"Well, whether you read me right or not, it doesn't bear upon the question at issue. Let us see, then, if there is not some way of turning your suggestion to good account."

"I dare say there is. Now I think of it, I know a man in the advertising business who would take you in with him, possibly."

"An advertising agent?"

"Yes, runs a large business of his own."

"But he would expect me to work, of course?"

"No, I think that could be all arranged—a friend of mine, you see."

"Oh, a friend, well, that is fortunate. What is his name?"

"Migzer—Theodore Migzer—just the place for you, Van. I will call on him during the day and see what can be done."

IX.

THEODORE MIGZER was a character—a strange combination, a many sided man, possessed of great energy and in some respects unusual ability. With commanding appearance, supreme assurance and pleasing address, he made his way into secret orders, into the crack military organization, into clubs, business associations, corporations, and society itself. His acquaintance was extensive, he spent money freely, and was in the eyes of the world a good fellow, generous and obliging. With hearty grasp and clever tongue he greeted all, making them feel that in him they had a warm friend. He seldom failed to grant a favor; seldom failed to rob the party favored. His methods were more respectable and more profitable than those of the common thief, and withal less dangerous. He did not know the first principles of integrity or loyalty. Friendship and good fellowship he cultivated as a means to an end, insensible to the finer feelings that cement true men together. A polished man of the world—a gambler; a bright, energetic business man—a dishonest villain; a liberal friend—a deceitful fraud; a gentleman—a sort of Fagin on a larger scale. Such was Theodore Migzer—in sight, all that is desirable,

secretly a most dangerous and despicable character.

To this man (I use the word man for convenience) went Milkston in the interest of his friend Van Gilding.

"Any favor I can do for you, my dear Milkston, will be done with pleasure," said Migzer warmly.

"I felt satisfied of this," returned the latter. "No one is more ready to help others than you. But the favor I shall ask is not for myself. I have a friend who wants to come to business, and who wants to remain away from it."

"Rather a cross purpose, I should say," laughed Migzer.

"Yes, rather," replied Milkston, explaining the situation.

"Oh, I see the point—a clever scheme—your idea, you say—you're a trump, Milkston—wish you wanted to come with me. But now about your friend—what is the name?"

"Van Gilding—you must know him—graduate of Yale, and the young lady is the daughter of Wilson D. Crompton, the broker."

"Crompton's daughter! h'm, h'm," exclaimed Migzer. "Yes, I shall be very glad to make a place for the young man—wealthy fellow, you say—not necessary for him to work?"

"Yes, plenty of money, I judge from the way he spends it, and a good fellow too. But he has no taste for business."

“I see—good scheme, as I said before—simply wants to seem to be in business to satisfy the Crompton family.”

“Yes, or, more correctly speaking, Crompton himself.”

“Yes, yes,” said Migzer, thoughtfully. “Well, bring him down, and I will arrange everything as you wish.”

“I appreciate your kindness very much,” replied Milkston, shaking hands. “I shall see you, then, tomorrow forenoon, and will have Van Gilding with me.”

“Yes, in the forenoon, say at twelve o'clock.”

“Twelve o'clock—very well—good day.”

X.

“THE life of an impecunious reporter, Bain, in New York, isn’t the most juicy in the world,” said Goggins, one afternoon, jingling the few stray coins in his pocket by way of keeping his spirits up.

“But the juicy element, you know, comes largely from ripening,” replied Bainbridge. “Your career as a reporter is yet in early growth.”

“Very good; but some things wither and die from lack of nourishment or sunshine.”

“And do you think yourself in danger of suffering from either of these causes?” laughed Bainbridge.

“No, not exactly in danger, since I get enough to eat, but there is mighty little sunshine comes my way. News gathering, to one of my experience, is a cloud-bound occupation.”

“You are less cheerful tonight, old fellow, than I ever saw you during all our acquaintance.”

“Well, I feel blue, thundering blue. When one works like a mule all the week, and finds on Saturday night that nearly all his copy has been consigned to the waste basket, and that practically no money is coming to him, he feels like smashing things—I feel like smashing things.”



WITH FLUSHED FACE AND HARD BITTER LOOK HE TURNED HIS BACK:
HAUGHTILY UPON BAINBRIDGE—SEE PAGE 122.

"As a mule would," suggested Bainbridge, with a twinkle in his eye, adding: "but is working like a mule the best way to advance yourself in the newspaper field?"

"Satirical today, I see, and at my expense," replied Goggins, a smile forcing itself through the gloom of his countenance.

"Yes, the best way, it seems to me, to show you the folly of losing heart."

"Well, perhaps you are right; but all joking aside, I don't like doing piecework for a daily paper."

"How would you like a position with me?"

"A position with you! You don't mean it, Bain?" replied Goggins, surprised.

"Yes, certainly, I mean it."

"I should only be too glad to come with you."

"I must have some one to assist me, and would prefer you, if the matter of salary could be arranged."

"There will be no trouble about that. You can pay as much as I am earning now, I am sure."

"How much is that?"

"On an average, say eight dollars a week."

"Would ten satisfy you for the present?"

"Yes, I would like to come on even less."

"You will be worth ten dollars to me if anything—I would not pay you less. As the business prospers, assuming that it will, I will increase your salary as fast as I can afford to do so."

“Your proposition is generous and perfectly satisfactory, but I thought you intended to get along at first without assistance.”

“That was my intention, but I have been learning something right along, and find that I cannot hope to succeed if I put my time on work that can be done by a clerk. The proprietor worth to his business only ten dollars a week would not prove a strong competitor. I see how I can devote my attention to matters that will yield me much better returns. For instance, there is advertising, which is no small factor in the publishing business.”

“That is so; and if you can secure a fair amount of it, your venture will look more hopeful,” said Goggins, who had up to this time been a pessimist.

“I already have some promised me, and have made the acquaintance of several advertising agents, who say they will give me business when the paper is once on the market. One agent in particular was very encouraging. His name is Migzer—Theodore Migzer.”

“Oh, yes; I remember seeing his sign on Park Row—queer name, it struck me.”

“Yes, very odd; but he is a genial man, and, judging from what he said and from the number of clerks he employs, does a large business. I got a good many suggestions from him that will be helpful, and am to see him again tomorrow fore-

noon, hoping to get one or two advertisements for the first number of the paper. By the way, did I tell you that Saturday night will be my last with the telegraph company?"

"No; this is the first I have heard of it," replied Goggins, surprised. "Everything hereafter, then, is to be staked on the venture?"

"Everything, yes; and on Monday morning, with your help, we will take hold in earnest and make things move."

"I'm with you, Bain, old fellow," said Goggins, grasping his friend's hand warmly; "and with my aid success is certain. But tell me, you must have raised some money?"

"Yes; I found a friend who on my own note loaned me four hundred dollars; not much, to be sure, but it will prove useful; and this sum, together with the small line of credit promised me, must serve as my capital."

XI.

“VERY glad to meet you, Mr. Van Gilding,” said Theodore Migzer, extending his hand. “Your friend Milkston here said many nice things of you yesterday.”

“I am sure I appreciate his kindness and yours as well in greeting me so warmly, since you know the purpose of this call,” replied Van Gilding.

“But why should that make any difference, pray? I understand the situation fully, I think, and do not look upon you as one coming to me seeking employment,” said Migzer, in a way that put Van Gilding quite at his ease.

“Just as I told you it would be, Van,” remarked Milkston.

“Yes, and I am glad to find everything so agreeable. You see, Mr. Migzer, I felt a sort of horror of coming to a busy man like you on a matter of this kind,” said Van Gilding.

“I don’t see why you should, and besides I am never too busy to do a friend a favor. Come with me into the next room, and see how it will suit you—roll top desk and comfortable office chair.”

“Why, these are brand new,” said Milkston, surprised.

"Yes, just in this morning. I thought this room would suit Mr. Van Gilding best, and new furniture is always so pleasing to the eye," returned Migzer, unlocking the desk.

"Exceedingly kind in you, Mr. Migzer," said Van Gilding. "I assure you I appreciate this effort to make it agreeable for me, but I am afraid you are inconveniencing yourself."

"Oh, not at all, and besides I think I shall like some one of your intelligence—a Yale man, if you please—to exchange a social word with now and again."

"But your typewriter?" urged Milkston.

"Oh, she is now in the large office—rather glad, you know, to get rid of the clatter of the machine."

"This reception is an utter surprise to me," said Van Gilding. "I am inclined to think coming down here will not be such a bore, after all."

"I shall certainly see that it is not," returned Migzer. "I never allow any one with me to be bored, and besides, as I understand it, you are not to remain here any more than you choose. Your aim is to seem to be in business—to have regular employment."

"Yes, that is the idea. You see I am not willing to tie myself down to a desk so long as there is no need to do so."

"You are quite right. I have often wished myself out of business, so that I could have more

time for pleasure, but when one is at the head of a house like this he finds it very difficult to break away."

"I should think so," replied Van Gilding, beginning to look upon Theodore Migzer as an extraordinarily pleasant fellow.

"Yes, no one knows how difficult till he has been similarly situated. By the way, I am a member of the Terrapin Club, which meets at one o'clock—best dinner in town—nothing equals it. Now won't you both join me? I would like immensely to have you do so, and you would enjoy it—all jolly fellows, and such terrapin."

"Thank you," said Milkston; "I would like nothing better—awfully fond of terrapin, and have heard a good deal of the Terrapin Club—a lively set of boys. What do you say, Van?"

"Why, certainly, I'll go with pleasure."

"A wise conclusion," replied Migzer. "I'll see that you enjoy it so much you will want to go a second time with me. Now, if you will both excuse me for a few minutes while I look after some business matters, I will be with you in time for the dinner. You can remain here and get accustomed to this office. Everything in the way of stationery, pens, and so forth, is in the desk, Mr. Van Gilding."

"Well, old man, how do you like him?" asked Milkston, quietly, when Migzer had gone back to his desk in the adjoining room.

“Like him immensely—is the most genial man I ever met.”

“Isn't he pleasant and whole souled?”

“Yes, and the way he grasps one's hand makes him seem like an old friend.”

“Yes, I've often noticed that; and do you know I think he has done the handsome thing by you in furnishing your office like this.”

“Exceedingly handsome; and what good taste he's shown in everything—even in the inkstand—nothing gaudy and cheap, you see.”

“That is so. He does everything in the swellest way—spends heaps of money.”

“Makes it easily, I suppose,” said Van Gilding.

“Oh, yes; I have heard that he has made as much as a hundred thousand dollars in a single year.”

“A hundred thousand dollars! Is it possible?” exclaimed Van Gilding, with growing admiration for so clever a man.

“Yes, there isn't much doubt of it. You see he is associated with men who put through big schemes—is on the inside with them.”

“I see—nothing like operating on a sure thing.”

“That is so; and I think, Van, you would do well to get some points from him. We might use them and turn a good investment occasionally.”

“I've been thinking of that myself, and will see what can be done after getting better acquainted.”

“It is good fun to make a little money once in

a while, even if a fellow doesn't need it," remarked Milkston.

"Let him come in," said Migzer to the clerk, who had just brought a card. "Well, how is it today?" he continued, a minute later, extending his hand to Bainbridge.

"Everything is moving satisfactorily, thank you," returned the latter, cheerfully; "and I expect you will give me enough business to make the outlook very bright."

"Glad to hear it, yes, glad to see your courage is so good—a difficult undertaking, but you look like one who can carry it on to a successful issue—won't you be seated?"

"Thank you, but I do not want to take up so much of your time."

"Oh, that's all right, and besides we may do a little business together—always like to encourage young men and help them to a successful start."

"I wish there were others as generous," replied Bainbridge with warm gratitude.

"But I am hardly entitled to such credit from you. Surely Bodwell & Company and the other agents must have done something handsome."

"But they have not, much to my regret."

"And you have seen them personally?"

"Yes, they were courteous enough, but put me off with the remark that nothing could be done without seeing the paper itself."

"I am surprised, for every one of them handles a lot of business that could be turned over to you."

"But they represented that they had no power in the matter—that they had to submit everything to the advertiser for his approval before giving it out."

"Simply an excuse—a way of getting rid of you for the time being. I am in no better position to give you business than they are, and yet here are several things for you—soap, perfume and food advertisements—all gilt edge business. You may take these electrotypes with you. I will have the order made out and sent by mail tonight."

"I appreciate your kindness more than it is possible for you to understand," replied Bainbridge heartily.

"Very glad to give them to you—three good orders, too—run up to over two hundred dollars."

"Splendid orders, and business of such good character—encourages me very much."

"I'm glad to be the means of helping you, but this is only a starter. You may expect other orders to follow these. I feel interested in you, and will do all I can to make your venture a paying one. By the way, you told me you were a Yale man, I believe?"

"Yes—an 8— man."

"8—! I have a surprise for you. Come with me," said Migzer, leading the way to the adjoining room. "A classmate of yours, Mr. Van Gilding,"

he continued, smiling broadly in anticipation of the surprise he would witness.

"A classmate of mine!" exclaimed Van Gilding, rising to face the visitor. The next instant, with flushed face and a hard, bitter look, he turned his back haughtily upon Bainbridge.

For an instant all was silence. Migzer and Milkston were dazed. They looked at each other and at the two men from Yale, wondering what could be the cause of this strange behavior. Migzer, with flushed and embarrassed face, stammered and moved uneasily toward the door.

"This you could not have foreseen, Mr. Migzer," said Bainbridge, with quiet dignity. "Do not therefore blame yourself."

"I thought I was doing you each a good turn—giving you an agreeable surprise, you know," answered Migzer.

"Yes, I am sure of that. Your motive I appreciate, and beyond that you are not responsible," said Bainbridge, passing into the adjoining room, followed by Migzer. "I certainly regret," he continued, "that I should be a party to your embarrassment, but accidents cannot be avoided."

"No, it seems not," answered Migzer, inclined to say as little as possible, and, as it impressed Bainbridge, manifesting a strange anxiety.

"And why should he seem so nervous over the matter—a mere accident as it was?" asked the young publisher of himself, as he walked toward

his office with the advertising electrotypes in his hand. "Fortunate," he continued, meditating, "that I got these orders before this untimely meeting, otherwise I fear I should have had to go to press without them, and the paper will look so much better—seem so much more like a genuine publication—with a fair show of good advertising."

"I hope you understand, Mr. Van Gilding," said Migzer, apologetically, "that I am innocent in this matter—knew nothing, of course, of your feeling toward this man Bainbridge."

"Yes, I understand," said Van Gilding, hardly at ease. "An accident, of course, though the sort of accident I do not take to kindly."

"Yes, I judged so from your manner, and I regret it as much as you can."

"Does he come here often?" asked Van Gilding.

"He come here often!" exclaimed Migzer, in a tone that suggested the absurdity of the thought.

"Pardon me for asking the question, but it occurred to me that you must know him well to learn that he was a member of my class in college."

"Never saw him but once before in my life," replied Migzer. "He came then, as he did today, to solicit advertising for his paper."

"For his paper!" repeated Van Gilding, incredulously.

"Yes; the paper he is about to bring out. He showed me the prospectus, and told me he was a

Yale man. So that is all I know of him or his enterprise."

"Oh, I see, that puts the matter in a better light; for I thought if he were a friend of yours I would not want to come here."

"No, no friend of mine, I assure you."

"So he is going in the publishing business—something cheap, I suppose—must have found some idiot to back him—no money of his own, you know."

"I know nothing of his financial condition," replied Migzer, cautiously.

"You have seen a prospectus of his paper, you say?" asked Van Gilding, his curiosity scintillating with envy.

"Yes, the first issue will be out soon, I believe—called *Breeze*."

"*Breeze!*" repeated Van Gilding, with rising inflection.

"Yes, that is the name. His aim is to make it bright, he says—sort of satirical, humorous sheet, as near as I understand."

"Satirical and humorous," said Van Gilding, half audibly, and frowning darkly.

"A wild undertaking unless he has a fortune to push it with," remarked Migzer, by way of comfort to his new friend.

"Not much chance of his succeeding, then, I judge," replied Van Gilding, a ray of light breaking over his cloud-bound face.

"No, none whatever, I judge. Why, how is he to compete with the old established publishing houses? The idea is absurd. They have everything in their favor—money, experience, skilled employees, an established circulation, a name known throughout the country, and large advertising patronage. Against this what has he to warrant him in undertaking such a venture?"

"Nothing, I should say, except his assurance," replied Van Gilding, bitterly.

"Now you remind me of it, I remember that it seemed to me he has a plenty of that—cheek, perhaps, would be the better word—otherwise he would never have bored me for advertising for his proposed paper—a thing that isn't born yet, and has, of course, no circulation."

"I should think that was cheek indeed, but you, of course, gave him no encouragement."

"Encouragement!" laughed Migzer, as if it were a good joke. "I think too highly of my honor to my customers to throw away their money on such wildcat schemes."

"I am glad to hear you say so—makes me feel more at home here."

"By the way," said Migzer, looking at his watch, "we must hurry away, or we shall be late at the Terrapin Club dinner."

XII.

IT was a blustery, blizzardish night outside, and cold withal, so cold that the chill penetrated the house, causing Mr. Crompton and his daughter to draw nearer to the warm grate fire. Home never seems so sweet as on a night like this. Effect is always heightened by contrast, and what a contrast the howling wintry wind to Mr. Crompton's pretty library, tastefully decorated with pictures and bric-a-brac, and furnished, as such rooms should be, with a view to comfort. The soft, yellow blaze from the kennel coal sent out a warming and cheering glow. Mr. Crompton, in smoking jacket and slippers, sat in his great easy chair, his eyes bent upon the fire, seemingly watching the flame as it shot upward, drawn spitefully by the fierce wind without.

At a little distance sat his daughter, with book in hand, as sweet a girl as proud father could reasonably desire. If she was the acknowledged beauty at Mrs. Strivewell's reception, tonight she was yet sweeter and more charming. Then she wore a party dress, with stiff, hard waist, but now her robe, of a delicate tint and of some soft material, was artistically fashioned, adding a graceful effect to a graceful figure. The conventional basque gives

its wearer a cast iron appearance, while the dress that suggests careless and easy draping lends a charm that no other cut can equal.

A close observer could have seen something more than an idle gaze in Mr. Crompton's eyes, for he was deep in thought, studying a problem that pressed him for an answer—a problem bearing on one dearer to him than all else in the world. As he became more deeply absorbed, a frown, a mere suggestion at first, came out upon his brow and lodged there, growing till well defined, indicating the nature of the mental struggle within. And now it wavers, vanishes almost, and returns again with darker shading, only to yield at last to a sentiment of different nature—solicitude, perhaps, expresses best the thought.

As she turned the pages of her book, Miss Crompton's eyes strayed to her father's face, which revealed the reverie he was in.

She watched him for a time wondering the subject of his meditations, and then went to him, and, flinging her arms impetuously around his neck, kissed him.

"What is worrying you, my dear father?" she said, throwing herself upon an ottoman at his feet, her arms resting upon his knees, while she looked up at him, anxious to share his thoughts.

"Worrying me!" repeated her father confusedly. "Why do you ask such a question, my child?"

“Because, if anything causes you anxiety, I am old enough and strong enough to help you bear it. Won't you make me your confidante?”

“Are you quite sure you would like to help me in the present matter?” asked Mr. Crompton, taking his daughter's hand in his own and stroking it affectionately.

“It is my place and my pleasure as well to help so good a father as you are to me,” replied the daughter.

“But suppose to help me called for a great sacrifice from you?”

“Should I not always be ready to make a reasonable and proper sacrifice for you?”

“Do daughters usually think so, especially if the sacrifice be against their own judgment?”

“I can answer only for myself,” returned Miss Crompton, suspecting now the trend of her father's thoughts.

“But I will not allow you to commit yourself, Lela, on this point, without knowing the nature of my anxiety. As you say, you are old enough, and, I am proud to say, have the strength of intellect to talk this matter over with me reasonably and sensibly. I have already said enough to give you a hint of the subject of my meditation.”

“Yes, I think I understand you, father,” she said, her hand trembling in his and her cheeks whiter by many shades.

“And you realize, I am sure, my dear, that I can

“WHAT IS WORRYING YOU, MY DEAR FATHER?”—SEE PAGE 127.



have but one object in this matter, and even in life, and that is your happiness," replied the father, with aching heart.

"Yes, I am sure of that, and yet how can I be happy, if I follow your advice and give him up?"

"Experience and observation are wise teachers, my child, who make plain what seems to one of your age unreasonable—impossible even. Until this engagement question came up, you have always trusted in a singular degree in my judgment and advice. Have you not found it for your good—found that all my thought since your mother's death has been centered upon you?"

"Yes," replied the daughter softly, and with downcast eyes, "always."

"If, then, in other matters my judgment should prove so good, why should it be utterly wrong in this one, and why should you think your judgment superior to mine?—you an inexperienced girl with no knowledge of the world."

"It is not that I consider my judgment better than yours. I do not think of it in that way. But you cannot understand how I feel about it. It is not a matter of reason at all. How can a woman with true, pure love forget a man to whom she is attached, and say, as if it were a matter of cold business, 'I will care no more for him,' and straightway and without seeming effort turn her thoughts toward another or cease to love at all?"

“That is absurd, my child, and opposed to the very nature of human affections.”

“And yet is it not what you ask me to do, thinking, and, I know, honestly believing, that it would be for my good?” returned Miss Crompton with growing enthusiasm.

“To get at it in the way you suggest is not what I ask. If you were so cold a being, even I, your father, could have no love for you—for one so inconstant, a thing of fickle fancy. Love is the chief element that binds us to each other, that makes association desirable, bearable even. Without it this would be a miserable world, cold, selfish, cruel, unendurable. To love unwisely, however, is folly, and shows the lack of good judgment.”

“But it does not seem to me, as I said before, a matter of judgment. If a woman loves a man, she loves him, and that is all there is of it. She cannot help it, if she has any heart at all.”

“On your theory, then, if a young woman of good family loves a coachman, or a butler, or we will say a tramp, there is no help for it—nothing but to continue on in idiotic love.”

“But that is absurd, father,” replied Miss Crompton, finding herself cornered by his better reasoning.

“Not absurd at all,” said he, “for we have any number of conspicuous precedents. Whenever one is brought to public notice the world cries ‘fool,’ but logically considered, since it is not a

question of reason, the girl who marries her coachman is equally as wise as her sister who becomes the wife of the best man in the community. If the love of the less fortunate sister ought to be transferred, then it is transferable, and being transferable there is no sense in a girl's allowing herself to become the wife of a man unworthy of her. Love is a question of association—a thing of cause and effect. You love your big St. Bernard to the extent that you would be heavy hearted if he were to get killed or grow sick and die, yet twelve months ago, when I first brought him to you, his suffering would not have moved you more than the suffering of any other dog. In the year that he has been with us he has made a place for himself in our hearts, and we likewise by kind treatment and petting have made ourselves important to his happiness."

"But it seems perfectly dreadful, father, to compare a girl's feelings for a favorite dog to her love for one to whom she is fondly attached," replied the daughter, holding firmly to her own opinion.

"It does not appear to me to be at all dreadful," returned her father, warming to the argument. "Love for a pet dog is governed by the same laws that bear upon the attachment between men and women, for both alike are nourished and fed by association. Do not misunderstand me and think I hold that the two are one and the same thing. Such is not my idea—is not the fact, though the

same philosophy runs through both. You can understand, I am sure, how you could become equally fond of another dog, while you cannot realize that it would be possible for you to care so much for another man as you now do for Van Gilding. And this is why I have made use of your St. Bernard—simply as an illustration, and with no view to cheapening the attachment you feel for the man in question. I have no doubt of the purity and force of your sentiment for him, neither have I any question but that it is possible for you to care quite as much for another—to love him with equal warmth and sincerity, providing of course all conditions are favorable.”

“How little you know me, my dear father, and how cruel of you to say such things,” said the daughter, with moist eyes.

“You should know, my child, that I could not think of being cruel to you,” replied the father, sensitive to the situation, yet feeling the necessity of exhausting all argument before yielding.

“Forgive me, father,” replied the daughter, pressing her lips to his hand. “I know you could not, but then the thought you express seems so horrible to me—so cold and calculating—not a bit like you.”

“To try and show that I am right,” he replied, slowly, “to make you understand if possible the folly of your infatuation and the falsity of your reasoning, I will tell you a story of myself—of my

own foolish experience when a young man, and like yourself the plaything of fancy, never heeding the reason that should have guided me. I had hoped never to resurrect this bit of personal history, long since buried, but for your good I will do so, though there is no need that you should know it."

"I cannot imagine anything in your life that I do not know," replied the daughter, already curious.

"No, you could hardly imagine it, Lela," said the father, hesitating to fix upon the best way to open the personal reminiscence. "You already know," he continued, "that when I was quite a young man I came to New York and lived with Uncle John Crompton. He had given up active business, but had a good number of investments in various enterprises, one of which was located in the upper part of this State in a place called Woodville, which, by the way, was most appropriately named, since for miles and miles around it was one vast forest. A fine large mill had been built there for the manufacture of pulp from the spruce trees abounding in that immediate region. After it had been in operation for a year or so, Uncle John managed in some way to get a controlling interest in it, and he conceived the idea that it would be a good thing for me to learn something about the manufacture of wood pulp. And, moreover, he wanted a personal representative on the ground. Thus it came about that I was sent to

Woodville, which consisted at that time of this pulp mill, a country store, and the few humble homes of those employed by my uncle. I got board in the family of one Sylvester Hargrave, a good hearted, uncultivated laborer. He lived in one of the houses put up and owned by the company, a story and a half structure of the plainest type. It was, however, much superior to the furniture, which was scanty, and not of the most fashionable or expensive make. The home, though, was all very well for a man in his circumstances, and compared favorably with those of the other workmen.

“Mr. Hargrave’s family comprised himself, wife and daughter, a young woman at that time about eighteen. Mrs. Hargrave was rather short and fat—a jolly faced woman who knew a good deal of the kitchen and little else. Miss Rachel Hargrave was generously endowed with her mother’s figure. Her horizon, too, was bounded by the kitchen walls, but in her little world she was no mean actor. Coming from Uncle John’s palatial residence to this quiet domestic home was a decided drop for me in the social scale. But the difference in the style of living in nowise equaled that between the society in which I had mingled and these simple Hargrave people, my present associates.

“The drawing room of New York, with bric-a-brac and pictures, and merry with bright people, was exchanged for the kitchen, and these simple,

good hearted folks, who, it seemed to me, were the embodiment of all that was uninteresting. They knew practically nothing of books save the three R's. The art of agreeable and interesting conversation was apparently as far from them as from the mud turtle which haunted the streams thereabouts. They talked quite enough, to be sure, but to talk is not necessarily to say anything. The few neighbors, the workmen, the pulp mill, were gone over and over again, always with equal interest to them—with equal stupidity to me. You can have no conception of my dislike for Woodville and the people in it. My first few weeks there were worse than being alone in the forest. The small talk of the Hargraves, and of Miss Rachel in particular—her dumpy figure clad in calico of outrageous cut—all was so out of harmony with what I had been accustomed to in New York, that I was driven nearly mad. The table etiquette, too, at the Hargraves' was picturesque and original—a thing of terror to one unaccustomed to its peculiarities. It was a vigorous "get there" etiquette, such as you have never seen, with a jump-in-and-win swing that made things move. There were no frills and furbelows in that family, neither in their etiquette nor elsewhere. It was straight business with them all around the circuit. Their chief dissipation and luxury was tobacco, but even this did not extend to Miss Rachel, though it seemed to me it was

simply a question of time when it would, since her parents were so fond of it. They affected no especial style in this bit of extravagance more than in other things. Sweetly scented fine cut, the modern cigarette, and the high priced Havana, had not penetrated the Hargrave household. Navy black plug was the regulation brand—something strong enough to shatter the nerves of less hardy people than they, and I often wondered that it did not kill them, as I watched them smoking it by the hour in old fashioned clay pipes, grown black and strong with use. The fumes alone were quite enough at first to drive me out into the fresh air, however cold the wintry wind. But Miss Rachel did not mind it, having been reared in an atmosphere thus laden with poison.

“I took a good supply of books with me, but reading I found to be a wretched farce in that stuffy kitchen, the only room in which a fire was kept regularly.”

“And up in that woody country?” said Miss Crompton, becoming so much interested in her father’s story that she forgot her own heartache.

“Yes,” he replied; “it is a peculiar fact that where fuel is most easily obtained it is used the least. People in the country get in the way of living in one room, and it seems to them a waste of effort to keep up two fires, and besides they get so accustomed to the kitchen that they prefer it to any other room.”

“What queer taste!” exclaimed Miss Crompton, whose knowledge of country folk was very imperfect. “But why didn’t you have a stove in your room, so that you could be by yourself?”

“That is just what I did do after three or four weeks, feeling that I could stand the kitchen no longer. I wrote to Uncle John to send me a good heater, for the winter was the coldest I had ever seen. When it came I felt very light hearted, thinking my imprisonment was over and anticipating much pleasure from the pile of books in my room, for in them I knew were people with whom I could find pleasure in associating. But the plan did not prove as successful as I expected. The fact is I felt too lonely in there by myself to forget myself and my whereabouts. The wind whistling around the house, the creaking of great trees sending out an ominous sound, the occasional report of a nail broken by the action of the frost, all distracted my attention and unfitted me for enjoying fiction. Weary of my book, I would throw it down and join the family in the kitchen, which, now I was not forced to remain in it, seemed less disagreeable to me. And the Hargraves, too, became less stupid, whether because I knew them better, or that I was getting down nearer to their standard I could not tell. I found myself at length taking part in their small talk and their gossip. The Joneses, the Smiths, the Higginses and all others in the place were as familiar to me

as to the Hargraves. I knew the family history of every one—his aims, his successes, his follies, and his love affairs. Month by month I thought less of the past and more of the present. My horizon was fast narrowing down to the little world around me, and it seemed rather a restful life, well supplied with sleep and appetite.

“Miss Rachel and myself did not get along especially well at first. We did not of course indulge in open hostilities, but were uninteresting to each other. At least she was so to me. Leaving New York girls, and I knew some very charming ones at that time, and going directly to the Hargraves’, a young man with my eye for beauty and appreciation of refinement and culture could hardly fail to make invidious comparisons between Miss Rachel and the more polished members of her sex. At any rate I did so, and my thoughts must have been reflected in my manner, for she was very curt with me, much to the annoyance of her parents, who were anxious to retain the revenue derived from boarding me, and also to keep on my sunny side, since I was the representative of the owner of the mill. But Miss Rachel was obdurate—not saucy, but cool, and eyed me curiously whenever she thought I did not see her. Several times I caught her at this, much to my amusement, and to her annoyance, as evinced by the rush of color to her face.

“‘My superior airs,’ as she called them, I after-

ward learned, annoyed her. Plain Jim Smith and Nate Stover, with woolen shirts and trousers inside cowhide boots, were 'good enough for her,' she said. They were men in her eyes, who could swing an axe and ford a stream, dress a cow or dance a hornpipe. My city manners and dress were as distasteful to them as to her, and since they were rivals for her hand, and necessarily with her much of the time during the long winter evenings, I of course naturally came in for a good share of rustic criticism. Rusticity in the city is a thing to laugh and joke over, but city polish in a rural village is not infrequently a thing of contempt and possibly coarse abuse from the more aggressive portion of the community.

"But when I manifested a preference for the kitchen over the seclusion of my room, Miss Rachel commenced to warm to me—very gradually, though. The rivalry between Jim Smith and Nate Stover interested me. I watched them and their awkward love making, wondering often which would win the belle of Woodville. It was a new sort of courtship to me—thoroughly unromantic, thoroughly unlike anything I had ever seen or read of. It did not appear to me that there was much genius or natural tact on either side, yet they seemed to progress satisfactorily and harmoniously up to a certain point, when it became evident that either Jim or Nate must yield to the other. A good deal of bitter feeling

followed, a good deal of gossip sprang up afresh, but in the end Nate Stover was victorious, and came out as the acknowledged lover of Miss Rachel Hargrave. The latter bloomed and blushed in the sunshine of his sentiment, and would, I think, have been immensely happy but for my presence and the feeling that I secretly sneered at Nate and his love making. I am certain that this annoyed her, for she turned the November side of her nature toward me again. Divining the cause, I decided to make an extra effort to be agreeable to her, hoping to banish from her mind the fancy that annoyed her. I commenced by repeating, in so far as I could remember, the story of Robinson Crusoe. This tale I chose, thinking it best to start with something simple that all could comprehend. Nate Stover was present, and I paid a good deal of attention to him—actual deference even. This, I saw, touched a responsive chord in Rachel's nature. She, with all the others, became intensely excited over Crusoe's experiences. From this beginning I told other stories, and then read a book aloud. It was received so well that I read others and still others, till at length my supply gave out, and pending a fresh installment I introduced checkers, inviting Miss Rachel to play with me. Had I suggested this two months before, she would have refused, I am sure, but now she accepted the invitation with evident pleasure. This gave us a new sort of en-

tainment, and one that brought us much together. Then I undertook to teach her the banjo, which I could play very well. She had a fairly good ear for music and a very good natural voice, rather sweet and pleasing. She learned the songs I knew, and after that we often sang together, she sometimes playing the accompaniment, and sometimes I. Nate Stover at first thought it very obliging in me to teach Miss Rachel these accomplishments. His soul expanded, lighting up his face, when he first heard her play and sing, but now a cloud had settled upon it that in its shape depicted jealousy. He was a big, strong fellow, rather good looking, but uncultivated. The feeling that I was usurping intentionally or otherwise Miss Rachel's love made him most bitter towards me, and now again there arose a fresh supply of gossip, all of which was carefully kept from me, for my connection with the owner of the mill made me a sort of deity in the town—so very policy-serving were its citizens. And to this fact alone I owe my whole bones, else Nate Stover would have pummeled me into a sorry plight. But as it was, nothing of the sort could be meditated upon, for fear that it would bring ruin to some—no one knew how many and whom.

“I had no intention, of course, of wounding his feelings, or of coming in between him and Miss Rachel. If such an idea had by any chance suggested itself to me, I should have laughed myself

ill over so absurd a thought. Time went on, however, and November changed to June alike in fact and figure. From music I went to books, and told Miss Rachel something of history, of literature, and art. Her imagination gradually kindled, and the hitherto narrow confines of her little world broadened. The effect of this could easily be noted in her round, chubby face. With dull aptitude for learning, she nevertheless progressed better than I could have expected, knowing so well as I did her ancestors, and the atmosphere in which she had been reared.

“The summer went by quickly, yielding all too soon to the cold fall days, and now we were driven into the house again to pass our evenings by stove and candle. But to me this was not the hardship of a twelvemonth before, when first I entered the Hargrave home. The simple life and manners had grown on me, and I saw much in them to warm the heart and lend quiet comfort to this life of ours.

“Knowing that the skating season was close at hand, I sent to New York for my skates, and with them had a pair come for Miss Rachel. How delighted she was when I presented them to her—more pleased at this little gift than a metropolitan heiress would be at a thousand dollar necklace!

“‘Will you try them with me the first ice we have?’ I asked.

“‘Nothing would please me more than to do so,’ she replied, admiring the handsome trimmings, and expressing in every look thanks more eloquent than words could embody. Thus it happened that I took her skating, and in that skate my leg was broken. I was taken to my room and put in bed. A doctor came and set the bones, saying that the break was a bad one, and that unless I had the best of care I would never again have perfect use of my leg. Miss Rachel seemed at first to blame herself for my accident, saying that I would not have been on skates but to give her pleasure. She watched over me devotedly—with the most thoughtful solicitude, always exerting herself to do something for my comfort. Now she played and sang, rewarding me for the lessons I had given her. Books, too, she read, and dainty dishes prepared by her own hands were constantly tendered me. Notwithstanding the pain from the knitting bones, I found myself in a rosy tinted world—warmed by the beat of a kindred heart, and ministered to by loving hands. The eyes of this artless, simple country girl—whom now I loved—spoke volumes to me. Poor Nate Stover! I could not understand his jealousy when first it dawned upon me, but now it was plain—too plain, perhaps, for in my own heart I felt the same bitter hatred for him.

“As the contest for Miss Rachel’s hand had been waged between Jim Smith and Nate Stover,

so now it must be fought between the latter and myself. That she loved him before my arrival with true, pure affection is certain, and but for me she would long since have been a happy bride. But here again comes in the law of association, which bore heavily upon her and myself alike, situated as we were under one roof, eating, singing, reading, chatting, always together. And then my unfortunate accident, resulting as it did, revealed to me her sacrificing nature, her tender solicitude, the delicate touch, the watchful care—all of which helped to kindle my heart with the love that now burned fiercely—a love that I could see she felt for me.

“We became engaged to be married—she the dumpy little girl of calico gowns, and I the nephew of the proud and wealthy John Crompton. But what cared I for the wealth of gold and silver? Was not I rich in her love? and with such love a kitchen in a humble cottage is better than the palace of the richest. So infatuated was I with this simple girl, that I would have renounced friends, relatives, opportunities—anything and everything that stood in my way to oppose our marriage.

“Nate Stover, poor fellow, left Woodville heavy hearted and with bitter feelings toward me. Of this I will perhaps tell you something hereafter, but for the present I will keep close to my story.

“At the time of my accident Uncle John was in Europe, but almost immediately on his return he came to Woodville in hot haste to see what condition I was in. He was a gentleman of the old school, a keen observer, and endowed to an unusual degree with good, sound common sense. He had not been in the house very long when he took in the situation. I saw him standing at the window, his brow wrinkled in deep thought. He did not realize that I could see him from where I sat. I am sure of this, for when he turned toward me an instant later his face was as sunny and cheerful as I ever saw it. I was puzzled at the opposing expressions, the one following the other so quickly.

“‘I think I will send for the doctor,’ he said, addressing me. ‘I am anxious about your leg and want to talk with him myself about it. Possibly he is incapable of giving you proper treatment. Of this I wish to satisfy myself, for I cannot allow you to go through life a cripple.’

“This seemed reasonable to me, and I thanked Uncle John for his solicitude, not suspecting then what I know now. I learned from Miss Rachel that he went for the doctor himself. This seemed to me strange at the time, but I thought little of it, though afterward I learned his object, which was to arrange with the physician to advise my removal to New York, on the ground that I required better treatment than it was possible to get at

Woodville. New York had lost all attractions for me, but I could not of course be so unreasonable and impracticable as to refuse to accompany Uncle John.

“The leave taking between Miss Rachel and myself you can imagine. It is not necessary that I paint it—more than to suggest that it did not lack warmth or force. It must have been gall to Uncle John, though he smiled and joked, much to my amazement. Knowing him as well as I did, I naturally expected an earthquake would strike me when he learned my relations to Miss Rachel, who in his eyes must have appeared so insignificant, so utterly unsuited to become the wife of a Crompton. But he was a philosopher of the finest type, dear old man, and never did the wisest sage touch the chords of two human hearts more skillfully than did he. It is a difficult matter to reveal a sunny smile when a tempest rages within. But this is just what Uncle John did, for I am sure he was sufficiently provoked and disgusted to feel like throwing me out of the window.

“In New York I was kept in the house by the doctor’s advice weeks after I was well enough to go out. Nearly every day, however, I sent a letter to Miss Rachel, teeming with my love for her and expressing my desire to return to her and dear old Woodville. I was in the early stages of this love affair, when the fires of sentiment burn fiercely.

But for this fact I fear that the first letter from Rachel would have quite cooled my ardor. She could make a pie or turn a flapjack with any girl, but when it came to writing she was insufferably weak, and her first effort to me was the worst piece of composition, spelling and penmanship I have ever seen. But I was not in a critical mood. Her errors I laughed at, seeing only the woman and not the miserable expressions she employed to represent her thoughts. I think I wrote about six letters to her one. Being aware of her own weakness with the pen, she aimed to compromise the matter by writing as little as possible, thinking, doubtless, that thus fewer mistakes would haunt me.

“One day Uncle John came to me and said: ‘Since you expect to marry the young woman at Woodville, it has occurred to me I can serve you by promoting the prosperity of her family. I judge from what I saw of them that they are not in the best of circumstances. I learned also at the mill that Hargrave himself receives only a dollar and a half a day. He is, I believe, though, said to be a faithful, honest man.’

“‘I shall be very glad, indeed, Uncle John,’ I replied with enthusiasm, ‘if you can give him a better position. I am sure he is honest, and that he would serve you faithfully.’

“‘Yes, I believe so myself, and I want to show you that I am inclined to help you in your matri-

monial aspirations, instead of opposing them as you doubtless expected I would.'

"'I have been utterly surprised at your attitude,' I replied, thanking him heartily for his encouragement and the promised aid to the Hargraves, 'for I expected the most stubborn opposition, a regular scene.'

"'But that would be silly, Wilson,' he said, laughing. 'Not much use to oppose love matches, so why make myself disagreeable? But to business: I have recently purchased a large tract of land in Wisconsin, up in the lumber district. A saw mill is already up and running, converting lumber into marketable shape. Now I want a good man to go there, who knows something of lumbering—a man in whom I can trust. If Hargrave is in every sense worthy, I will send him, and at a salary that will pay him well. I rather fixed upon him, too, for the reason that his wife seems a good, sensible woman who would not mind going into a new country.'

"'No, she would not mind it,' I replied, my thoughts wandering confusedly.

"'And you could recommend Hargrave?' continued my uncle. 'You of course know him well.'

"'Yes,' I replied, 'I can recommend him. You could not do better.' This seemed only just to the father of the girl I loved, but the thought of her going so far from me—all the way to Wisconsin—was disheartening. Uncle John noted

this and read me well. 'I have thought somewhat of suggesting that you go out there too,' he said.

"'Have you?'" I replied, with enthusiasm. 'I would like to go so much, and new countries offer such a chance for enterprise.'

"'Yes, splendid chance; but I cannot let you go at present, as I have other matters for your attention whenever you are fully recovered.'

"I had never seen Uncle John's house so gay—never known the time when so many charming girls visited it as had been there during my compulsory imprisonment. I did not guess the old gentleman's motive then, but it is plain to me now. Singing, dancing, and supper parties, were the regular thing. I, of course, as the unfortunate and as Uncle John's nephew, received a good deal of attention, and was thus forced into the society of young women who were clever in all the arts that go to make one interesting and fascinating. Had Miss Rachel been present in that brilliant company how inferior she would have appeared! The thought forced itself upon me, and, having once taken definite shape in my mind, constantly kept recurring. The beautiful costumes, somehow or other, always seemed to be side by side in my mind with Miss Rachel's rustic gown—the drawing room was grouped with her stuffy kitchen—the girl of finest figure stood beside the short, dumpy form of her to whom my life was pledged. And

whenever I saw a letter or note handsomely written and well expressed, lying beside it in my mind's eye was one of Rachel's wretched productions. But notwithstanding all this I loved her, and tried to overlook her defects, which were constantly heightened by my present surroundings. This made me anxious to get away from New York—to get back to Woodville, where I could forget everything that belittled her. But now Uncle John's proposition upset my dreams. She was to go to Wisconsin with her father and mother, and I could not accompany them. Uncle John watched me carefully to see that I did not go off and get married before her departure. I thought of doing so, but was prevented from carrying out the rash purpose by various skillful devices that he threw in my way.

“At last the home of the Hargraves was broken up in Woodville, and they started on their long journey on funds furnished by my uncle. I am sure it is not often that two young people have heavier hearts than were Miss Rachel's and mine at her departure. The world looked dark and dismal to me, and I know there were no bright rays in it for her on that March morning when we said good by. But for the hope of joining her in a few months, as hinted by Uncle John, I would never have allowed her to go without me. If this was not genuine love on both her part and mine, then I do not know what the feeling is.

“Pine River Falls was the destination of the Hargraves—a new town up in the pine region, sparsely settled. Few families had moved in, the inhabitants being largely single men who had gone there from the East to make their fortunes. The appearance of the Hargraves, therefore, with an unmarried daughter, was hailed with delight, and sent a thrill of joy through the heart of every would-be benedict. Uncle John Crompton, on deciding to send the Hargraves to Pine River Falls, had ordered a comfortable house erected for them—the most imposing structure in the town. He was a man who never half did things. His object in sending the Hargraves there was to have them remain, and therefore he spared no expense to be sure that they would do so. He fully understood the circumstances that had brought about my engagement to Miss Rachel, and he argued, and very correctly too, that when certain influences produce certain results in one case, like results are pretty sure to follow under similar conditions.

“He suggested, therefore, that the Hargraves might find it to their advantage to take a few boarders into their family, saying that large prices could be had, and that any one would esteem it a rare opportunity to get board in a good family in Pine River Falls. Mr. and Mrs. Hargrave thought the idea a good one, and preparations were accordingly made with this object in view. ‘It will seem more natural to have some one with us, and we

will not be so lonesome,' argued the latter, happy over the prospect of the better days before them. But Rachel was too much depressed at leaving me to express an opinion or even a wish in the matter. She assented listlessly to whatever arrangements her parents made without interest or heart in the proceedings."

XIII.

“SIX weeks dragged by after the departure of the Hargraves,” continued Mr. Crompton—“weeks made miserable by an aching heart, notwithstanding the gay company around me. My only pleasure I found in writing long and very sentimental letters to the simple little girl in far off Wisconsin, and in reading over and over her painful efforts at composition. But how long it took to get a letter out there and back—nearly two weeks at that time. Throughout the first month, however, my ardor never faltered. As regularly as the day came around I penned my thoughts to Rachel—warm heart thoughts, asking always a thousand questions that I knew, or should have known, she would never find the time to answer, so slow and tedious was the labor of the pen to her. But toward the end of the second month my enthusiasm was less buoyant than at first—not that I cared for Rachel less, but because I found it monotonous writing six letters to one in return, and because also the time occupied in transit was dampening the fires of the sentiment within me. Uncle John studied me and my movements like the philosopher that he was. When it seemed to him safe to mention to me a

plan he had in view—so safe that I would not refuse point blank to carry out his wishes, he called me into his library one morning, and said :

“ ‘ Wilson, how would you like to make a hurried trip to Europe for me ? ’

“ ‘ I go to Europe ? ’ I exclaimed, surprised.

“ ‘ Yes, ’ returned Uncle John, watching my face and toying with his glasses carelessly. “ I have an interest in a property in London that I want looked into. The reports received from there are not as clear to me as I could wish. It is possible that something crooked is going on. ’

“ ‘ But have I the necessary experience to represent you satisfactorily ? ’ I asked, forgetting everything except Uncle John’s interests.

“ ‘ Yes ; with instructions I will give you, you can do as well as any one, and besides it will give you a chance to show me what sort of a business man you are going to make. ’

“ ‘ Very well, I will go then, ’ I said ; ‘ for my object, of course, is to make myself as useful to you as possible. When shall I sail ? ’

“ ‘ The first week in May, ’ he replied, his eyes dancing with satisfaction at his own cunning device to further the scheme on which he had set his heart.

“ ‘ I shall be ready, ’ I answered, my mind reverting suddenly to Wisconsin and the little girl whose heart held mine. ‘ But how long shall I have to be away ? ’

“‘Oh, only a few weeks,’ he replied, a trifle uneasy as he noted the sudden change in my manner.

“‘Only a few weeks?’ I repeated, with downcast eyes. ‘Well, I will go, for I said I would, and because your interests are my interests. But of course you understand, Uncle John, that I would much rather go West.’

“‘Yes, I realize that,’ he replied, gravely, and, I think, with genuine sympathy for me. Poor old man, his heart must have ached secretly at the deceit he was practicing, even though it was for my good.

“‘She already seems so far away,’ I sighed, ‘and now to think of adding three thousand miles more—to be separated by the Atlantic Ocean—she in the wilderness of America, I on the continent of Europe.’

“‘I am sorry for you, Wilson, my boy,’ said Uncle John. ‘I was young myself once, and know pretty well how you feel. But really there is no apparent reason why this trip to Europe should delay your seeing Miss Hargrave. I had not planned to let you go to Wisconsin before fall.’

“‘Yes, I suppose you are right,’ I answered, listlessly, not then laying any stress on the words *apparent reason*, which my uncle used.

“Thus it came about that I was sent to Europe, as I supposed, to serve Uncle John’s interests, when really I had been packed off for my own good and on a mere pretense. A day or two be-

fore I sailed I learned that Mr. David Rathbon, his wife and daughter, were to go on the same steamer with me."

"Grandfather Rathbon?" exclaimed Miss Crompton.

"Yes, your grandfather Rathbon, and Uncle John told me of the fact with seeming surprise."

"When he really arranged that you and they should go together, I suppose?" said Miss Crompton. "What an old fraud he was."

"But the very best kind of a fraud, though, as time has proved," replied Mr. Crompton.

"And this was how you met my mother?"

"Oh, no; I had known her slightly, as her parents and Uncle John were on very friendly terms; yet we had not been thrown together much, as she was still at school when I went to Woodville the year previous. But now she was a young woman of fine figure, tall and graceful. Her face was handsome, her conversation bright and interesting. Altogether, one could hardly wish to be on ship-board with a more charming companion."

"Mother must have been very pretty then," remarked Miss Crompton, sadly.

"Yes," returned the father, drawing his daughter closer to him and speaking with a husky voice: "she was very pretty, and a lady of finest breeding. But I will proceed. To my surprise again, I found on going on board the steamer that by another accident my stateroom adjoined those of

the Rathbons. But Uncle John's hand in the arrangements did not even now suggest itself to me—so cleverly did he simulate surprise and express delight at the freak of fate that placed me in such good company.

“And in Mr. and Mrs. Rathbon Uncle John had able lieutenants, for they, too, were in league with him, to break up my infatuation for Rachel Hargrave. Your mother, however, was as innocent as I of the scheme of these older heads. Had either of us suspected the true purpose of our association, I am sure we should have been very disagreeable to each other.”

“I am so glad you didn't know, then,” exclaimed Miss Crompton, enthusiastically.

“Why so?” asked Mr. Crompton.

“Because, do you suppose I would have wanted my mother to be the dumpy, ignorant little woman you have pictured Miss Hargrave?”

“But for Uncle John's clever management, however, she would have been,” replied Mr. Crompton, shrugging his shoulders expressively. “As it so happened,” he continued, “there were none but the Rathbons on the steamer whom I had ever met before. The result was that Miss Rathbon and myself were much of the time together, walking on deck or sitting in our steamer chairs chatting in some quiet corner. On one pretext and another her father and mother skillfully avoided being too much with us, walking

usually by themselves or lounging in the saloon. By the end of the third day out Miss Rathbon and I had become well acquainted, and were already very good friends—the first step toward a closer union. And now a heavy storm came on, pitching and rolling the ship till nearly all on board were sick. Miss Rathbon yielded with others to Neptune's call, leaving me quite alone and one of the very few who suffered no ill effects from the tossing of the waves. The cold rain storm and the desolate, almost deserted ship, gave me such a feeling of loneliness as I had never before experienced. I tried to read and could not, my spirits being too much depressed. But at length the day wore through, I know not how, and the night came on, intensifying the gloom. I thought of the previous evening, which had passed so pleasantly in Miss Rathbon's presence, and wondered that any one save Rachel Hargrave could make such a difference in my feelings. Then in reverie I floated to the piny regions of Wisconsin and saw a simple kitchen scene like the one I first beheld in Woodville, with father, mother and daughter around the table—all as in the old time, save the latter, whose faced was tinged with sadness—the sadness it wore when we last met. How I wished myself one of them, and wondered how I had ever consented to the foreign trip.

“But the morning sun rose brightly, and to my

great joy Miss Rathbon appeared early on deck, a little pale but very pretty—much prettier and sweeter for the day's absence. I went to her with greetings more warm, I fear, than one so enamored of another should have given. And she seemed equally glad to see me after her enforced imprisonment. The depression and gloom of the preceding day heightened our pleasure at meeting again on this sunny, cheerful morning. As we walked the deck, filling our lungs with the soft invigorating air and chatting with buoyant spirits, I could not help feeling that she was superior to all the women I had ever met. But this was simply a mind thought—not a sentiment of the heart—and yet I could not deny that her charming manner, her clever conversation, her splendid presence, were growing on me day by day. I began now to study her characteristics, to fathom her thoughts, to test her knowledge—all perhaps from curiosity—but for the time centering my thoughts upon her, robbing by just so much the one to whom my heart and life were plighted. It became impossible to refrain from comparing the merits of Miss Rathbon with the defects of Miss Hargrave. I could not see the one without beholding the other, contrasted as they were in figure, features, intellect, breadth of thought, culture, dress, refinement of manner, elegance of bearing—in short, in everything. And how severely my ingenuity was tested in apologizing

for the one I loved, for on every point that suggested itself to my imagination I found her inferior to the rare young woman before me. Notwithstanding this my heart was still true to simple Rachel Hargrave, who in my eyes, with all her blemishes, was more than this beautiful girl made more beautiful with culture and refinement.

“These were my feelings on less than a week’s intimate acquaintance. Could Uncle John have been a spectator and read me secretly—noted my increasing desire to be with Miss Rathbon and my uneasy, restless manner in her absence—he would have glowed with enthusiasm over the satisfactory progress I was making in the way he had planned.

“But time slipped by and we were in London, I with rooms in the same hotel. My instructions relating to my uncle’s business were rather indefinite—so much so that I did not know what to do. After thinking a good deal, however, and talking the situation over with Mr. Rathbon, I decided on his advice to write Uncle John that I must know better what he wished of me before making any move. The letter posted, I had nothing to do but to enjoy myself for the next few weeks, pending a reply. Mr. Rathbon suggested that we all run over to Paris for a little stay. I agreed to the proposal and we were off, arriving in good time after a great shaking up on the English Channel. Sightseeing was now the order of the day, and I



"I COULD NOT HELP FEELING THAT SHE WAS SUPERIOR
TO ALL THE WOMEN I EVER MET."—SEE PAGE 159.

became much interested in the gay life about me. In the three weeks that we spent in Paris I wrote only two letters to Rachel Hargrave, thinking, honestly, too, that I did not have the time. No other cause for the change in me was suggested to my mind, and had it been I would have repudiated the idea as a gross insult to my honesty, for I believed my heart as loyal and true to her as ever. That time is the subject of will did not occur to me. I was sincere in the fallacy that I was too busy to send a daily letter to Wisconsin. And, moreover, it was now fully six weeks since a line had reached me from there—a good excuse, I argued, for not writing so often, aiming to justify myself in my present course.

“But I had a mean feeling that Miss Hargrave would grieve at not hearing from me more frequently. Here the thought came in my mind that she would perhaps think I cared less for her than formerly. This hurt me; for I felt sure that I loved her as dearly as ever. I argued the question with myself to see if there was any possible cause to suspect that I did not. The verdict was satisfactory, and I concluded that she would be very unjust to think anything of the kind of me; and yet I felt sorry for her, wishing sincerely, as I thought, that I could find the time to write as often as formerly. But this desired opportunity did not force itself upon me, since every day and every evening were spent with Miss Rathbon. There was always some-

thing to see, somewhere to go, and I could not properly break up our party by remaining at home to write letters.

“Two months passed and I was still in Europe, kept there on one pretext and another of Uncle John’s, based on the belief that I was no longer in a hurry to return to America. I am sure he would not have insisted on my remaining there had he believed me anxious to get home. In fact, he knew pretty well from my letters and information received from Mr. Rathbon, that I preferred remaining abroad for a number of months longer. In one of his letters, therefore, he suggested that I should do so. I was highly pleased at the prospect, and would have been positively sad had he called me home, for the law of association had again put in its work on me, operating jointly with the law of absence. I could no longer deceive myself, if I tried ever so hard, for the tall, beautiful young woman beside me had won my heart, and I loved her madly. For weeks I tried to argue myself into the belief that our relationship was merely friendly, but at last I yielded, realizing then how it had all come about, and wondering at my stupidity in not earlier recognizing the true nature of my regard for her. I asked myself how it was that I ever came to love Rachel Hargrave—short, plain, unlettered, uninteresting. How immeasurably superior Miss Rathbon seemed to me—a woman of different de-

gree, whom I could worship, and of whom I could feel justly proud. No apologies need be made for her. She was beyond them—my ideal.

“A little less than four months had produced this change in me. Uncle John’s clever scheme was a perfect success in so far as it applied to me. The truth of his philosophy was beyond question, but even now I did not suspect his purpose, for he had seemed all the while to favor my marriage to Rachel Hargrave. This was shown conclusively, I argued, in his efforts to help her family to a better position. What he would say, then, on learning that I no longer loved her, caused me a good deal of anxiety. In fact, I did not know but that he would be very angry, and the more I thought of it the more this belief forced itself upon me. I wondered if he would lose faith in me and send me away to fight my own battles in the world without his aid. That he would do so was not at all improbable, but even this view of the case had no tendency to rejuvenate my sentiment for the little girl in Wisconsin. The fact of the matter was that it was dead—died a natural death after weeks of anxious effort on my part to keep it alive. But it was no use. The fire burned low and lower yet. I could see the flame sinking, and found myself helpless to add new fuel. Old letters, old associations, and thoughts that once warmed me—all were gone over, but with no effect. The four thousand miles between us con-

tributed in no small degree to the final result, and were a good second to the more powerful influences about me. It mattered not then what Uncle John might say—how severe his reprimand or penalty, since to keep my promise to Miss Hargrave was no longer possible. I had tried to love her, and had loved her, but now I did not, and could not, and the more I tried the farther I found myself from doing so. Love is not subject to the will.

“To try to love, in obedience to the mind, as a matter of duty or policy, usually results in a feeling directly opposed to the one sought. While I fancied that Uncle John would blame me severely, and that I should be roundly denounced by Miss Hargrave and her friends, I knew that I was not at heart blamable, for I had tried honestly to be loyal, expecting to keep my promise and make her my wife.

“But no man can battle successfully with the law of association, and hope to win, when the circumstances are as marked as they were in my case. My anxiety on my own account, however, was as nothing in comparison to that felt for Miss Hargrave, for I imagined the knowledge that I no longer loved her, and that I could never make her my wife, would prove a crushing blow. That she would blame me there could be no doubt, and I knew that I was powerless to vindicate myself in her eyes in any degree. Our association had

been such that I shrank from telling her the truth—shrank from the feeling that she would hate me. To be blunt seemed cruel and lacking in art. I therefore sought to suggest, faintly at first, my lack of interest in her by writing shorter and cooler letters, by hinting at my prolonged stay abroad, and by failing to say anything that could in any way tend to warm the current of sentiment. By this means I hoped to prepare her gradually for the information that must reach her sooner or later. And as time went on I began to feel that this plan was working well, as her replies were less sentimental, had less of the heart touch of her earlier letters. This, I fondly assured myself, was due to my own cleverness, not realizing then that the law of association, which had so changed me, had borne with equal force on her—with greater potency, even, for she was the only marriageable girl in Pine River Falls—the idolized of all the town. But one rarely sees others as he sees himself. I understood my own case, and knew that circumstances had brought about the change. It did not occur to me that her constant association with other men than myself could ever change her heart. The agony I suffered, therefore, for the poor girl was quite enough to break the constitution of one less hardy than myself. I grew thin and colorless, my bones were accentuated, and the elasticity natural to me was gone, I thought, forever. This being engaged to one girl—an inferior

being—and madly in love with another, one that I fairly worshiped, was a strain upon my nerves that threatened to upset me and make me a youthful wreck.”

Mr. Crompton here arose, went to his desk and from a lot of papers carefully tied up in a leather pouch selected one.

“Imagine my relief,” he continued, returning to his chair, “on receiving this letter. You may read it,” he said, handing it to his daughter. “Otherwise you could not understand so well the contrast between this young woman and your mother.”

I have secured, through the kindness of a friend, a verbatim copy of this letter, which I append.

pine River falls Wis. Sept 27

Mr. Crompton i take my pen in hand to rite you and let you no i am well and hop you air enjoyin the same Great Blessin. i have something that i must say to you and i don't want to say It for i no It will make you feel bad, and you have bin so Good to me i hate to mak You feel bad but i cant Keap It to myselfe No Longer for if i do It will kill me i no. i can't bare to think You will hate me for i have broke My Promis to you and allowed Sam Hubbard he Keaps a Grocery Store hear to fall In Love with me i no You will think It horid and will say i am a meen girl when i promist to be Your Wife and Love You and no one Else but Sam boarded with us and was just as good as He could be and He had the only Store hear and dun a awful Good trade and Kept a Teem and askt me to ride with Him but i wouldn't Go not at first and he felt Awful Bad and seamed to think i Was Stuck up and to prowld to ride with Him and Mother said I Should Go or Sam would Leave us and we Wanted him to Stay for Mother said it was a Good Thing to have A Merchant board with us so this Is the way i happened to go to Ride with Sam and he had such a nice hors and was so good i couldnt Help likin Him but didnt think i would care No More for Him than anybody else and i went to ride with Him again pretty soon and he used to bring Home

a lot of nice Things from his Store and we played Checkers together and i ust to sing to Him and play on the Banjoe You Give me and He was just crazy over my singin and playing so you see we was Together a good deal and i didnt mean No Harm for i aint disonest at my hart and dont Intend Never to do anything Rong but Sam was so Kind and You wus so Fur Away why before i new it we Sam and i was in Love with Each other and when i found it out i felt awful bad for i liked You so much and thot how You would feal and what You would say about me i was pretty near sick for i didnt no what to do i wanted to be Lawyal to you and Keep my Promis and hear was Sam all the while sayin Love things to me and making Himself so Agreeable that i was jest crazy thinkin what i should do and then Sam threatened to sell out His Store and leave toun and Actuly hinted at Suisid if i didnt Give Him Some Encouragement so what was i to do i couldnt allow myself to be the meens of drivin Sam to take His Life or sell out His Business fur it was a good Business and paid splendid and we all liked Sam and couldnt think of seeing no Harm come to Him wal i talked with Sam about it when i couldnt Keep in no longer and had a Good Cry He was jest as good as He could be about it and said He felt Sorry for me but was Sure He Loved me Better than You i said i was Sure You loved me jest as much as any one could for You have told me so a lots of times, haint you but Sam Says He Knew that nobody Else could ever love me as Much as what He did He says that you was away off their in Urop where a lot of girls air and i was the only one in this whole Place so he thot it stood to Reason that You couldnt Love me the way He did and then You no Mr. Crompton You did not Rite me not near so often as what You did and when i thot of this i says to myself prhaps Sam is Wright after all and You have found somebody Else you like jest as Much as me. it made me feal awful bad to think You could do so but Sam put it into my Head and i conldnt get it out noway, and so You see I have been in a Sure between You and Sam and He is determined to Have me anyway so You see i thot i had better rite to You and tell You all about it for i cant stand this Thing no longer Be You mad with me now fur saying what i have Said if you air i am awful Sory for i hate to have You feal bad i want You to tell me jest what to do for i mean to be onest with You and will do as you say tho i do wish ther was Some Way to Save poor Sam for i am awful frade He will do something Desprate and He is so good aud is so well Liked by Everybody You

see it is pretty Hard for me and i no You will tell me what to Do and i will Do it now You wont think i am meen will You and dont you feal bad About me if You like somebody Else Better than me for I do like Sam tho I never intended to Do So but You see i got to loving Him before i new it i was with Him so much and then it was to late as Sam says himself Now i want you to rite me rite away for i cant stand this straingn and then Sam is at me all the time for an answer sayin he cant stand it either. i wont send no love in this Letter cause I am frade you wont want no more of my love after readin what i have rote to You but i am Your Friend and will do as You say.

Rachel Hargrave.

p s now rite rite away wont You for i want to hear from You Awful bad.

R. H.

p s don't hate me will you for i didnt mean to love Sam and it come on me before i knew It.

R. H.

“Well, you did make a lucky escape,” exclaimed Miss Crompton, on finishing this remarkable letter. “How you could ever have cared for such a woman is a mystery to me.”

“A mystery to any one, viewed in the light of reason,” replied Mr. Crompton; “but not so to those who know the law of association, which is a much greater force with young people in love matters than reason.”

“But she was so illiterate—so far beneath you,” returned the daughter.

“The same law, however, holds good when the reason is inoperative,” said her father. “And it would have resulted in my marrying Miss Hargrave but for Uncle John’s extraordinarily clever plan of preventing it. You can be sure I lost no time in writing her and giving her a release from her promise. I told her, and truthfully, too, that

her letter was of course an utter surprise, but that it would seem unwise to continue our engagement under the present conditions. I therefore waived all claims, wishing her and Sam Hubbard a full measure of happiness. I assured her that she still had my friendship, and that I cherished no bitter feelings toward her.

“This let me out very easily, and it seemed to me on reflection unnecessary to state that I had suffered a like torture of mind with herself. I then wrote to Uncle John, giving the substance of her letter, and praying that he would not discharge Mr. Hargrave from his employ, as I feared he would. I went further, and told him of my admiration for Miss Rathbon, and assured him that I had not suffered from a broken heart because of Miss Hargrave’s acknowledged love for another, as I myself was in a similar state of heart affection.

“‘I never was so happy in my life,’ wrote Uncle John in reply. ‘It has turned out just as I expected, just as I planned that it should. The truth of my philosophy is established beyond question. When I went to Woodville and found you in love with Miss Hargrave I was disgusted, and felt like going home and leaving you to shift for yourself. And then it occurred to me that I was responsible for the whole thing in allowing you to go there, so I determined to save you at any cost. I felt like telling you plainly what I

thought of your folly, but instead smiled and let you infer from my manner that I approved your determination to marry the girl. To effect my purpose I saw that you must be separated. I therefore bribed the doctor to advise that you be sent to New York. But you were madly in love, and I soon saw that a deeper plot must be put in operation; so on the pretext of helping the Hargraves I sent them to Wisconsin, where women are scarce and men plentiful. In this move I foresaw just what has happened. But the distance between Wisconsin and New York was not enough to guarantee the success of my plan, so it became necessary that you should go to Europe, and I took good care that you went in agreeable company—with so sweet a young lady that you could not fail to admire her when once away from America and the influences that centered your thoughts on Miss Hargrave. Well, as I said before, it has come out all right, and I am happy, and glad that you are happy. You could not love a more worthy girl than Miss Rathbon. A marriage with her would gratify me beyond measure and result, I believe, in a happy life for you.'

"This is the end of my story, Lela," said Mr. Crompton. "You can see the effect of Uncle John's good sense in my love affairs, and can estimate how different my life has been from what it would have been had he not interfered with my plans. I have repeated this romance for your benefit to

show you the possibility of your loving another equally as well as you do Van Gilding—some one more worthy of you.”

“Oh, but the circumstances are so different, father,” pleaded the daughter. “Your case was an extreme one, utterly unnatural.”

“Equally natural with your own,” returned the father, disappointed at the failure of what he believed would prove a convincing argument. “It is all a question of association. You think you could not love any one but Van Gilding, while I am certain you could under favorable conditions.”

“And I am sure I could not,” replied Miss Crompton, with more decision. “If you refuse to allow us to become engaged, why, I must submit; but as for acknowledging that I could love another, I will not, for I know it would be impossible.”

“My experience and observation count for nothing with you, then?”

“No, nothing in this matter, for I am sure you do not understand me, or you could not speak of it in such a cold, business-like way.”

“I speak simply in a sensible way—say what I know to be a fact. Love is as transferable as real estate.”

“Oh, what a horrible statement—fairly makes me shudder,” exclaimed Miss Crompton.

“Horrible, perhaps, without some explanation, but nevertheless true. I said it in this sense, that

the transfer of each alike depends upon certain conditions. Real estate never changes hands except for cause ; so, too, the sentiment of the heart cannot be transferred without some law bearing upon it. I hold, however, that there are combinations so strong that it is impossible to withstand them. I have felt the effect in my own case, and can easily imagine conditions a thousand times harder to resist. You may some time find yourself where you can understand the force of my reasoning. It is plain to you now as applied to myself or as one might apply it to others, but when it bears on yourself you are blind to what ought to be perfectly plain to you.

“I have said all that is necessary,” continued Mr. Crompton, yielding after having exhausted all argument, “and shall no longer oppose your engagement to Van Gilding. To do so would, I am convinced, make you unhappy, and since he has commenced work I am more hopeful of his future.”

XIV.

THE following day after Bainbridge's unfortunate meeting with Van Gilding in Migzer's office, he sought his mail with anxious interest. Somehow or other the impression had fastened itself upon him that Migzer would not send the advertising contracts as he had promised. This idea gained credence from the fact of Van Gilding's association with the advertising agent, and Bainbridge had no 'doubt that his old college enemy would injure him if possible. Then he speculated on the relationship between Van Gilding and Migzer, and recalled the strange nervousness of the latter on discovering the feeling manifested at the introduction.

"Can it be that Van Gilding is connected with him, I wonder?" mused Bainbridge. "If so, there is little hope of any favors from that agency."

The day went by and no communication was received from Migzer's office.

"This is a serious disappointment to me, Goggins," said Bainbridge. "These are fine advertisements, that would give character to the paper and would bring in quite a little revenue."

"I am disappointed, too, and very sorry," returned Goggins; "but I am not altogether sur-

prised to feel the effect of Van Gilding's malice. You know I hinted at the probability of something of the sort."

"Yes, I remember it, but I wish it might have come later, or when I am stronger financially and better prepared to meet him on his own ground."

"I wish so too; but since fate has willed it otherwise, we must meet the issue, that is all."

"Certainly we must, and as a matter of consolation I shall try to think that these little disappointments are perhaps necessary to prepare me for the larger ones that are pretty sure to come—to give me sufficient strength to meet them successfully."

"A good way to look at it, Bain," said Goggins. "You are nothing if not philosophic, old man. But between you and me, if this Migzer is the sort of man to go back on his promise in this way, then Van Gilding isn't in the best of company."

Ten days later and the first issue of *Breeze* was put upon the market. Bainbridge and Goggins were present when the first copy came from the press. How eagerly they sought it, scanning the handsome pages with excited pride. This was an important epoch in the career of Bainbridge—an event to stir the blood of young ambition. He had staked everything upon it. Realizing this, it is only natural that his anxiety should have been intense on beholding a complete copy of the paper—the tangible realization of his conception.

In the sheet before him—clean, bright, pleasing to the eye—he saw the focus of his thoughts and labors—the first born, that would make him happy or plunge him into misfortune.

This was Bainbridge's first bid for public favor, alike in business and literary effort, as he had never written until now for publication save in college journals. He must be judged, now, therefore, both for his business capacity and his merit as a literary man, as he had himself edited his paper and written a large proportion of the copy. Nothing was passed without his personal supervision and revision—not even the manuscripts of Goggins. Men strongly backed by capital can recover from trivial mistakes—can experiment, change, and improve, to meet public taste more fully. But the meager capital of Bainbridge would not admit of this. He realized that he must make a favorable impression at once, or his undertaking would prove hopeless. The nervous anxiety, therefore, with which he watched the reception of the first issue could not be well imagined. Nearly the entire edition was turned over to the News Company, to be placed by them on the leading news stands in all the important towns of the country. The paper was so neat and so well illustrated that it commended itself to news dealers, and they gave it a generous display on their stands, something that is not always done with new papers. This was an encouraging sign.

A sample of the new journal was also sent to all the important newspapers for notice and comment. Here is the first notice that Bainbridge saw. It was in the columns of the *Sun*, and it filled his soul with rejoicing :

Breeze is the name of a publication which has just been brought out. It is published by Livingston Bainbridge, and is a clean and brisk novelty in illustrated weeklies. Its neat pages show taste, nerve, and force. A cheerful vein of philosophy, a graceful wit and a quick sense of the picturesque direct its policy. It is bound to make a go.

"Splendid, Bain!" exclaimed Goggins, grasping his friend's hand and congratulating him with hearty enthusiasm.

"It is good," returned Bainbridge, delighted. "I certainly did not expect such a flattering notice."

"Neither did I, old man, though I thought myself that the paper was mighty clever."

"Bound to make a go," repeated Bainbridge to himself, lingering on these words, which fairly intoxicated him.

"Yes, it says bound to make a go, and that's the best of all, Bain."

"Yes, that's all I ask," returned Bainbridge, his face flushed with excitement. "And this notice certainly makes it look more hopeful."

The next mail brought in the following comment from the *Advertiser* :

It takes a bold man to start a new weekly periodical nowadays, but this is just what Mr. Livingston Bainbridge has done. The name of his publication is *Breeze*. It is issued in New York, and is a breezy sheet, clean, clever, and humorous.

"This speaks well for the paper, too, Bain," said Goggins.

"Yes," returned Bainbridge, whose face showed slight disappointment. "I would much rather see predictions of success, however, than to read praise of the paper."

"But to praise the paper is to suggest success," answered Goggins.

"In a way, yes, though the notice as a whole, saying it takes a bold man to start a paper nowadays, gives the impression that the venture is a hazardous one."

"But you went into it with that idea."

"So I did, and if I had read this notice first I doubt if I should have been disappointed. But the *Sun* said the paper was sure to go, and this notice suggests a very broad doubt."

"Ah, here is another notice in the *Herald*," exclaimed Goggins.

"Is there?" said Bainbridge, hurrying to Goggins's side that both might read it at one time. It ran as follows :

There are about two thousand publications of one kind and another started every year in the United States, and of this number fully fifteen hundred find an early grave—some of them not living more than a very few weeks. The latest journalistic enterprise that has come before our notice is the issuing of a publication called *Breeze*. Livingston Bainbridge, its editor and publisher, we understand, is a young man. Judging from its contents, it is safe to presume that he has good literary taste, for the publication is certainly clever. But it takes something more than bright pages to make a weekly periodical live. It requires money, energy, and splendid business qualities. If Mr. Bainbridge has these he may succeed, but even with them the chances are against him, for it is a most difficult thing to compete with old established houses.

"The same old story," said Bainbridge when he had read it through, a trifle down hearted, nevertheless.

"Yes, and when one paper says it is sure to make a go and another intimates failure, what do such predictions amount to, any way?" replied Goggins.

"Very little, I imagine. The paper is started, and we are here to win without regard to dubious predictions," returned Bainbridge, somewhat disgusted, but looking also very determined.

XV.

IT was now a little more than two weeks since Van Gilding first met Theodore Migzer, and in this time he had grown to like him immensely. The liberality and genial manner of the man were irresistible. The dash with which he conducted business and the boldness of his operations were alike captivating. Money making seemingly was as simple to him as a sum in addition to an ordinary man. He was magnetic, so much so that Van Gilding, to his own surprise, found more pleasure in remaining down town in his office than in spending his time as formerly. The spirit of speculation began to work within him, and he sought advice from Migzer, who had very carefully refrained from speaking first on the subject, but who, nevertheless, expected the matter would come up for consideration.

"I always hesitate about advising any one to speculate," he replied, "but am willing to show you my profits for the last week. Here is the statement—four thousand two hundred and seventy one dollars and twelve cents, after paying all commissions and interest."

"And you made all this in one week?" asked Van Gilding, his eyes dwelling on the figures.

"Yes, just a little flier, you know—nothing to do with my business here—a mere side show."

"A pretty good flier, I should say—at the rate of over two hundred thousand dollars a year, all the same."

"Yes, it helps out on expenses," returned Migzer, as if it were a trivial sum.

"I should think it would," said Van Gilding. "And I believe I am not so opposed to business but that I would like to conduct a little side show, as you call it."

"As I said before, I never advise any one to speculate—a matter of principle with me, you know—but if you decide that you want to do so you will find me always ready to assist you."

"You are very kind, indeed, Mr. Migzer. I am already sufficiently interested in the matter to take you at your word, and try my hand with your advice at making money for myself."

"There is a lot of pleasure in it, you will find."

"I am beginning to think so. And now about a flier on wheat—what would you advise me to do?"

"I shall *buy* today, and I suppose the best advice I can give you is to tell you what I propose doing myself."

"Naturally it would be," returned Van Gilding; "and if agreeable to you I will join you in the speculation."

"Perfectly agreeable," said Migzer. "I will

order my broker to buy for us five hundred thousand bushels—we to own it equally.”

“Yes, equally.”

The wheat was accordingly bought and placed to Migzer's account. Fortunately the market was strong and prices advanced, allowing the deal to be closed out inside of two days, with a net profit of something over twenty four hundred dollars, or about twelve hundred dollars each.

This venture was so successful that Van Gilding became infatuated with the idea. Twelve hundred dollars—the first money he had ever made, and how easily it came!

“There is a lot of fun in business, after all,” he said to Milkston, telling the latter of his winnings.

“I should think so, when money can be made so easily; but look out, Van, that you do not lose.”

“There isn't much danger of that so long as I have Migzer's advice.”

“Evening papers—*Advertiser, Mail and Express, Telegram!*” called out a newsboy.

“Give me the *Mail and Express*,” said Milkston. “What will you have, Van?”

“The *Telegram*, I think—has a good deal of society news, you know.”

“Yes, I believe you are right—largely a matter of habit, though, as to the paper we read—ah, what is this? A new journal—*Breeze*—why, isn't that the name of the publication your classmate—the

fellow Migzer introduced to you—was going to bring out?"

"Yes, *Breeze*—I think that is the name. What does it say about it?" replied Van Gilding, curious.

"It is quite a long notice, but I will read it."

Breeze is the name of a new illustrated weekly issued in this city. The first number is now on our table, and is excellent. Its articles on different subjects are well written as well as judicious. Its sprightly comments on life in New York are in good taste, and the clever illustrations add much to the attractiveness of the handsomely printed journal. It is bright, piquant, original, and is bound to succeed. The editor and publisher, Mr. Livingston Bainbridge, is, we understand, a young man, and a graduate of Yale. But he is evidently old enough to know something of public taste, else he would not have brought out a journal so well calculated to become popular with our best people. *Breeze* is too clever a publication to die young.

"Well, Van, if that isn't a royal notice I never saw one," said Milkston, when he had finished reading it.

"Let me see the paper," replied Van Gilding frowning. "Excellent—well written articles—sprightly comments—clever illustrations—bright—original—bound to succeed—Bainbridge editor and publisher—graduate of Yale—calculated to become popular with best people—too clever to die young," he muttered with evident displeasure.

"I wonder if I can't get a copy," said Milkston, anxious to see what *Breeze* was like. "You sit here, old man, while I run out to the news stand. I may find it there."

And he found it—almost the first publication his eye fell upon. "Two copies of *Breeze*," said he. "How is it selling?"

"It is going fine for a new paper—had fifteen copies—nearly all gone," replied the newsdealer, handing Milkston the change.

"Sells well, then—think it will make a go?"

"Looks like it—if it sells like this right along, there is no doubt of it."

"Here it is, Van," said Milkston, returning and handing a copy to his friend. "The newsdealer says it is selling splendidly."

"Says it is selling!" repeated Van Gilding, running his eye over the pages with critical prejudice.

"It does look well, Van, for a fact," said Milkston. "Illustrations are neat and clever—nothing just like it in the market."

"The pages are small—not much reading on them," remarked Van Gilding, hunting for imperfections.

"Yes, but they look bright and readable—so many illustrations."

"All small, though—no big, rich pages."

"No, but they tell the story all the same—funnier, don't you know, and more interesting than a picture of a stone building or an iron bridge, however large it is."

"I like the large pictures better, and it costs ten cents, too."

"Yes, ten cents. There must be a good profit on it."

"I should say so, if it has any sale at all."

“On the whole, Van, I’m a good deal surprised to find so clever a publication, after hearing what you and Migzer said of this fellow Bainbridge.”

“I don’t see anything so clever about it.”

“It strikes me that it is clever. There is a vein of witty satire running through it that it will take with the public.”

“You think it will be a success, then?” said Van Gilding, enviously.

“Judging from what Migzer said, I suppose that will depend altogether upon the backing it has. So far as the merit of the paper goes, I think it is quite good enough to live.”

“But I am pretty certain that this fellow Bainbridge cannot have any backing, and without it I cannot see how he can hope to make it go.”

“It would be strange if he should, wouldn’t it?”

“But there is no chance of it,” replied Van Gilding, trying to reason himself into this belief. He could not help feeling anxious, fearing that by some magical means Bainbridge would make a name for himself in New York, outdoing all his classmates.

“Strange and unexpected successes are some times won, though, Van,” returned Milkston.

XVI.

NOW that Bainbridge's paper had made its appearance, his hands were full of work. The first number represented the thought of months, while each of the following issues had to be produced in a single week. How time flew! days merging into night with surprising swiftness. Literary matter to prepare, illustrations to be drawn and engraved, type to be set, electrotypes to be made, presswork, binding, circulating—all within six working days and all to be under the care of one man. And this represented a vast amount of thought and labor. Bainbridge was his own business manager, his own art critic, his own editor, bookkeeper, cashier, advertising solicitor and financier. Goggins did not rise to the dignity of being at the head of any department. He was, however, a good all-round assistant, who did whatever needed doing most. But the care and responsibility rested with Bainbridge, who gave personal supervision to everything, even the slightest details. There is probably no occupation in which so large a percentage of a man's time is consumed by others, without profit to himself, as in the publishing business. A large class of professional writers, of semi literary people,

of self styled geniuses, of cranks and curious individuals, unblushingly inflict themselves and their manuscripts on the long suffering editor. He is regarded by them, and by many others as well, as one whose time belongs to the public, and, therefore, they feel free to bore him on any subject, however trivial and absurd.

The old timers learn after a while that little satisfaction is to be had from journals long established, whose editors have become hardened and unappreciative of genuine merit, such as their contributions show. They are always on the lookout for new publications, and when one appears it is immediately flooded with manuscripts—old travelers, that have been rejected by one and another for years, and show the wear and tear of time. These literary efforts are often accompanied by wordy letters, setting forth the author's long experience and favorable connections with some unheard of rural paper, which out of friendship or otherwise has once perhaps published a miserable doggerel or a skimpy item of gossip—quite sufficient in the mind of the egotistical writer to give him a place among the literary workers of the day.

And the cranks, and those who fret and perspire with the longing to reform the world, all alike see in a new journal a means for making the public understand the truth of their philosophy. And so with high hopes and sweltering enthusi-

asm they fall, in person and by letter, upon the unfortunate publisher who as yet remains accessible to them, and listens helplessly, patiently, to their wild persuasion.

Bainbridge escaped no less easily than others who have entered upon the career he had chosen. His mail was heavily swollen with letters and prosy manuscripts of no use to him, but which he thought, thus early in his career, he must read and answer. But this nuisance gradually lessened, as he learned what all editors know so well, that the waste basket is an important factor in the editorial sanctum. His hands, however, were more than full, for he represented in himself what in a well established house would be half a dozen departments, each of which would have a chief with assistants under him.

To be business manager, art critic, editor, book-keeper, cashier, advertising solicitor, and financier—the latter the most difficult and important of all—required a variety of talents such as few men possess. Whether Bainbridge had them or not was a question yet to be solved. It was not, however, a matter of fitness with him. It was one of necessity, and necessity is not infrequently the source of genius. In whatever move he made earnestness was always apparent, overcoming to a great degree the disadvantages under which he labored, when compared to the long experienced but less interested clerks of other houses. Now

we see him as an author, writing jokes as if the humorous side of life alone was his—producing a delicate bit of satire on public men and institutions, or puncturing the foibles and fads of the day in a way to provoke the most uproarious laughter. As an editor, selecting from the contributions sent him, pruning and polishing, he showed good taste and indicated a better knowledge of public fancy than one of his years would be expected to possess.

His knowledge of art was necessarily imperfect, and well perhaps for his success that it was so, since the standard of the people to whom he expected to sell his paper was quite different from that of the hypercritical artist—always to the last degree unpractical, irrational. Bainbridge had the good fortune to be free from hobbies. As he said himself, he was not publishing a paper to reflect his own fancies, but rather to give the public what it wanted. And to learn the taste of the people, he went to them asking questions of whomsoever he met—avoiding always in so far as possible authors and artists—for these, he learned, all sooner or later fell into ruts that carried them ahead of or else behind the public and out of sympathy with them.

Here, again, the poverty of Bainbridge helped him, for had he possessed a bank account of many thousands an art critic—an art crank, perhaps, more correctly speaking—would have been employed, filling the paper, at high cost, with strained

effects—meaningless to the public eye. But having his drawings made to please the people, as he understood their taste, and insisting always upon the things he sought, his system resulted in producing a paper so unique and unconventional that it was praised on every hand. Nothing in print appeals so strongly to the public as good illustrations, such as they can understand. Strength often lies in supposed weakness, and so with Bainbridge in this particular feature of his paper.

But to one situated as he was, the most important duty of all was that of *financiering*. With practically no capital, he had launched upon an enterprise that should have been backed by a hundred thousand dollars to insure success. Less than a thousand was all he had in cash—the balance lying within himself—the genius that was his. After a solid bank account, the best thing to business men is good credit. To get credit, however, in an enterprise such as Bainbridge had embarked in, is one of the most difficult undertakings in the world.

“You view the matter, Mr. Bainbridge, through the eyes of enthusiasm,” said James Packard, a large paper merchant. “I look at it in a more practical light, knowing so well as I do the history of all such ventures. I am here to sell paper, and would like to supply you if I could see any reasonable probability that you will be able to pay me. But the chance that you will make your

publication live—started without capital by a young man without experience and without the backing of an established house, is the slimmest of all slim chances.”

“Your remarks are hardly encouraging, Mr. Packard,” replied Bainbridge, suppressing his anxiety and appearing undisturbed.

“I realize that they are not,” returned the paper merchant, a man of princely fortune; “and I regret to throw cold water on your warm hopes. But as you asked me for credit I could not do otherwise than make plain to you my reasoning.”

“Frankness is always commendable,” said Bainbridge with quiet dignity. “But discouraging remarks are not what I seek. They flow in from all sources unsolicited.”

“And they have no effect upon you?”

“No, sir, they have not, otherwise the paper would never have been started.”

“I judge that you are not easily discouraged, then, young man,” replied the merchant, recognizing metal in Bainbridge.

“I do not believe that I am. There is usually a way to accomplish most things that men set their hearts upon.”

“And you have set your heart on making a success of your undertaking?”

“Yes, that is about the fact of the case.”

“Energy will do a great deal, I know, but the publishing business is so hazardous. Why, the

shore is strewn with wrecks—on too many of which I lost heavily myself through giving credit.”

“But there are publishing ventures that succeed,” remarked Bainbridge undaunted.

“To be sure there are, but it would be difficult to find a publication that has lived, brought out by a young man with no more capital than you possess.”

“But are there none?”

“I know of none, and do not believe there is one.”

“Isn't it time, then, that there should be one?” said Bainbridge calmly.

“Well, perhaps so; this is an age of progress. But do you want to try the experiment, taking the chances of incurring debts that you cannot pay?”

“I will not admit that it is an experiment, neither would I contemplate incurring obligations that I could not meet.”

“You are bold, young man, even to audacity.”

“Your meaning is hardly clear to me,” said Bainbridge, thinking perhaps the merchant spoke disparagingly.

“I used the word in the sense that you are unusually courageous—not easily discouraged—not frightened at difficulties, and this trait is the only one that affords me any hope that you will succeed, for everything is against you—publishers with millions back of them, whom you must meet in competition.”

“I realize the force of all you say, Mr. Packard, but since seeing how well the paper has been received by press and public alike, I am sure it can be made a success. I do not ask for a large line of credit at first. Suppose you were to trust me to the extent of a thousand dollars—a sum that I could surely pay in time by working at my old business, were the paper to be stopped—you would, I am confident, have no cause to regret doing so.”

“No, I would probably not regret it, provided one thousand dollars represented the sum total of your indebtedness; but while running your account up to this sum with me, debts in other directions would grow. The line of credit you ask of me, therefore, might help you in getting other credit, as is usually the case, till say ten thousand dollars represented the total. And suppose now you were to fail—a most natural supposition—could you reasonably hope to pay dollar for dollar, earning the money slowly as a telegraph operator?”

“Are you not picturing the worst phase of the case—attempting to give life to improbabilities?” returned Bainbridge.

“No; most certainly no. I am looking at the matter as any careful business man should.”

“But you assume that certain results will follow simply because other ventures, seemingly similar, have failed.”

"Actually similar—not seemingly so."

"I cannot agree with you; first, because no paper exactly like mine has been started, and second, for the reason that no man of precisely my temperament, feelings, energy, courage, and so on, has been tried in a publishing venture of this sort. So it is impossible to predict, reasoning from the past, just what my future will be. Little things often turn the scale, you know, and there may be little advantages in my favor."

"There is force in what you say, I must admit, though really no argument to show why you are more likely to succeed than those who, equally hopeful with yourself, started their publications and failed."

"I did not try to bring out that idea. I simply aimed to show that you could not forecast from what others have done what I may do."

"But does not your reasoning suggest over confidence—I will not say assurance?"

"Why not say it if you think it?—for assurance in the sense of confidence in myself and the success of my enterprise is just what I have."

"That is the sense in which I would have used the word. I hesitated, however, thinking you might take it as uncomplimentary."

"No, I don't see why I should. I am not foolishly sensitive. But we are wandering from the question at issue."

"Yes, slightly though not unnecessarily so,

since if I were to give you credit I must do so without regard to precedent, against well established business principles, with no tangible security, simply on yourself—the characteristics you have that appeal to me.”

“I see your motive now in asking so many questions about me, the first time we met.”

“They seemed unbusiness-like to you, I suppose?”

“Yes, for you made me the subject of discussion rather than my proposition to buy paper, which struck me as strange.”

“Well, what you told me of yourself then interested me. I have since had your statement verified by reports from the commercial agency, adding confidence in you to the interest previously excited. But this confidence is of a personal nature, and does not extend to your business venture. It, however, strengthens the hope that you will be successful. I can see no reason for giving you a line of credit, and yet I think I will do so, impelled perhaps by fancy, or influenced by the audacious boldness of your undertaking. I cannot help admiring your courage, though I have aimed to dissuade you from pursuing the course you have marked out for yourself, simply because the chance of your succeeding is so slight. Notwithstanding this belief, I will enter your order in my books, and keep you supplied with paper for the present, relying on you to pay me for the same as soon as

you can do so. There is, however, one condition to this contract, and that is that you report to me every week your financial condition, setting forth the prospects of your publication."

"I agree to the condition cheerfully, Mr. Packard," said Bainbridge, warmly, triumphant where he had expected failure, "and I will keep you fully informed so long as I am in your debt."

"In extending you this line of credit," continued the merchant, impressively, "I wish you to feel that I am doing a very unusual thing—am acting directly in opposition to my judgment. In a publishing business, such as you are in, everything goes into *good will*, which, if the paper is discontinued, is utterly worthless—as intangible as the air. Nothing remains for the unfortunate creditor to put his hands upon. If I were a dry goods merchant I would be better justified in trusting one of your character to the extent of twenty thousand dollars than I am in allowing you any credit in your present venture. The stock of goods would be a security in itself, while you have absolutely nothing.

"I say this to show you how favorable an impression you have made upon me. It will strengthen your confidence in your ability to deal with men, and help you, I hope, to justify me in this instance in following impulse instead of reason."

XVII.

FAR up on the side of a woody hill on my father's farm was a spring of purest water. In dry seasons and wet alike it bubbled ever the same through a crevice in the solid ledge of granite, and, overflowing, formed a tiny stream that made its way slowly through the grassy valley below. It was the merest brooklet, barely large enough to find a channel and hold to it. Yet month after month and year after year it wound its way over the white pebbles with never failing regularity.

One day it entered into my boyish fancy to dam the stream that I might have a sheet of water upon which I could sail a boat—a toy affair that I had myself constructed. The place chosen for this bit of engineering was a point where the valley narrowed and the banks on either side were steep, forming a basin sufficient in size to hold a large body of water. But that any great quantity would ever accumulate from the diminutive brooklet that was to feed it did not occur to me at first. The dam I built, therefore, was a frail structure, but quite sufficient, it seemed to me, to hold all the water that would ever press against it. To my surprise, however, at the end of a week I was re-

warded by seeing quite a little pond, and I found it necessary to strengthen and enlarge the dam. I became much interested in my artificial lake, as yet very small, but growing slowly.

Seven months of constant, untiring contribution from the little hillside spring had given me a fine, large body of water, upon which floated a boat of sufficient size to carry me safely. But one day a leak appeared in the dam, which was yielding to the too great pressure. It was so slight at first that I felt no uneasiness, though I aimed to repair the damage, and succeeded, as it seemed, for the dripping ceased altogether. But in a few days another break appeared, which was patched up with far greater difficulty. Finally a point near the bottom yielded to the strain upon it, letting through a small stream perhaps an inch in diameter. This occurred in the morning, and by noon the outflow had grown to four times its former size. Minute by minute it increased till towards night a body of water as large as the trunk of a great tree rushed madly through the break, draining my beautiful lake before the darkness closed in upon me.

"My son," said my father, "let this teach you a lesson, which, if heeded, will prove invaluable to you throughout life. The little stream flowing from yonder hill fittingly illustrates the philosophy of accumulation. By this principle of ceaseless application knowledge is obtained and wealth

gathered. The nobler elements, too, in man are the result of growth, slowly waxing in volume as did your lake from a never failing system of purity. It would have seemed to you preposterous to suppose that so large a body of water as was accumulated here could come from the little crevice in yonder rock. But the constant, untiring flow did it—seven months of accumulation, and how soon wasted!—in less than a day. Let this illustrate to you, my son, the slow process of rising in the world, and how little time a man requires to sink into obscurity or disrepute when once he yields to evil influences.”

This illustration made a deep impression on me, a boy at the time. I have watched the growth and decay of character ever since with keen interest, always thinking of my artificial lake made by the little mountain brook. It showed me the possibilities of application, and taught me how soon all could be lost by a fatal defect in character. The career of Bainbridge and that of Van Gilding, starting from a common point in college, but now so widely divergent, again brought to my mind the lesson my father impressed with such force upon my boyhood fancies.

In the preceding chapters of this story I have narrated incidents, in themselves trivial, but which taken collectively show the trend of character alike in Bainbridge and Van Gilding. The unmanly treatment of a classmate on discovering

him at the telegrapher's desk, at Shelter Island, the yet more uncivil and unappreciative manifestations on being rescued from the damaged boat, the intimacy with the rapid Milkston and the vapid Bigs, the association with ballet girls, the gaming table, the extravagant tastes, the abhorrence of honest labor, the haughty pride, the willingness to deceive the father of the girl whose hand he sought, his relations with the crafty, scheming Migzer, his entrance into speculation—all show the bent of Van Gilding's character. Nine months have elapsed since first he met Migzer. Within that period the bulwarks of his character had, as it were, slowly settled, while leaks from various minor breaks weakened his moral nature, so that the resisting power was insufficient to check the flow of evil tendencies when once they had gained headway, growing surprisingly as did the fatal breach in the dam of my parable.

For a time speculation went well with Van Gilding, yielding a revenue that warranted him, as he thought, in extravagances in which even Milkston would not indulge. But fate turned upon him after a season of subtle toying and pressed him hard with reverses resulting in losses that he could ill afford to bear.

"The best way out of your difficulties," said Migzer, "is to win the money back at the same game."

"So I thought," replied Van Gilding dubiously,

"and I have been trying to do so, till now I am thirty three thousand dollars behind, and much pressed for funds."

"Thirty three thousand dollars?" exclaimed Migzer, seemingly startled.

"Yes," faltered Van Gilding.

"And you are pressed for the money," said Migzer, stroking his mustache thoughtfully, and adding: "But why not mortgage your real estate?—easy enough to raise money on good security."

"But don't you see, if I were to do so, Crompton would find it out?"

"H'm, h'm," mused Migzer, with a world of meaning, "leaves you in a tight fix, I see. But you must have friends who would gladly help you?"

"I don't know—in fact I don't like to ask further favors," returned Van Gilding, with a hopeless sigh.

"You expect to make up your losses, I suppose, by further speculation?"

"Yes, I hope to do so."

"But suppose you continue to lose you will soon find yourself alarmingly in debt."

"That is what worries me," replied Van Gilding nervously.

"The market will go against one sometimes. I have seen men lose, lose, lose, and never seem to strike it right," remarked Migzer, thinking it about time to counsel caution.

"I certainly think I am unlucky at everything—cards, racing, speculating—all go against me."

"You would doubtless be successful in business, then—something legitimate."

"I wonder if I would."

"I am confident that you would, and business, after all—a good, legitimate business—is so much better than speculation."

"I may have to try my hand at it to make up these losses."

"It strikes me it would be the best thing you could do," said Migzer, growing enthusiastic over the idea. "I know of a little scheme that would bring you out handsomely—give you profit enough to pay off this thirty three thousand indebtedness, and leave you as much more in your pocket."

"You know of something, you say, in which I could make such a profit?" asked Van Gilding, eagerly.

"Yes, the cleverest scheme I ever saw."

"But wouldn't it require a lot of money to operate it?"

"No, not a cent."

"Not a cent!" exclaimed Van Gilding.

"No, no money need be put up—simply a question of security. My credit will furnish the capital."

"And are you willing to let me in on it?"

"I shall be glad to do so, as I want to help you out of this difficulty. Thirty three thousand doll-

ars is too big a loss for you to stand without some move to get it back."

"A good deal too big a loss—one that would make a big hole in my income. But tell me about the scheme."

"You see this watch," replied Migzer, taking from a drawer in his desk a small brass instrument and handing it to Van Gilding.

"A watch!" exclaimed the latter.

"Yes," laughed Migzer—"let me explain. This piece is a compass—notice how the indicator points in the same direction when I turn the case—a sun dial, you see."

"But can you tell the time by it?"

"Yes, by the aid of the sun."

"Not accurately, though."

"Well, accurately enough for our purpose. There is no necessity of discussing its merits too closely."

"But I cannot understand how you can call it a watch," replied Van Gilding.

"A watch is an instrument for telling the time. This is an instrument for telling the time. Is it not, then, as much a watch as one of any other make?"

"Looking at it in that light, it might be, I suppose," admitted Van Gilding, still examining the worthless toy. "But what has this to do with the scheme you think will yield such profits?"

"Here is the proof of an advertisement," replied

Migzer, "that I put out ten days ago for Dagwood & Company. It is pulling immensely. From three papers alone they have had over five hundred replies up to the present time, and their mail is increasing daily."

"Five hundred replies means five hundred dollars, I judge, as the advertisement calls for a dollar," replied Van Gilding, meditating.

"Yes, five hundred dollars from only three papers. Just think of the number of papers there are in this country—over fifteen thousand, and then compute the possibilities of profit on this scheme."

"Stupendous!" exclaimed Van Gilding, his brain growing hot with rapid reasoning.

"Stupendous! I should say so—the biggest scheme I have seen in years, and not much has missed my eye."

"Great, isn't it?—a clean fortune."

"Yes, a clean fortune, and the beauty of it is it can all be cleared up in a few months' time—a profit of—well, I won't attempt to estimate the amount—so large it would seem fabulous."

"Yes, that is so," replied Van Gilding, following Migzer's thought. "But look here, aren't Dagwood & Company ahead of us—won't they put their advertisement into all the publications before we could get ours out?"

"Trust me for that," laughed Migzer, his crafty cunning well defined in the smile he wore.

"How can you manage it?" asked Van Gilding eagerly, already anxious to become a party to the scheme.

"I can hold their advertising back on one pretext and another."

"But wouldn't they place it through another agent?"

"No, they would not dare to do so. I have them well in my grasp. Feel secure on this point, then."

"A paper would have to be got up, though."

"But that could be done in a short time," replied Migzer, warming to the discussion.

"But this idea of giving away premiums with publications is not a new one. I have seen dozens of Cheap John sheets put upon the market by means of wretched chromos and yet worse lithographs. Why, the country is full of canvassers on such schemes. But these papers never seem to live and gain headway."

"Don't I know all about such ventures?—been bored nearly to death myself by these wretched canvassers. But the trouble all lies in the fact that the premiums are too common. Nobody wants them any more. Why there was a time when fortunes were made on the chromo publications. But that day is gone forever, thank heaven. A watch, however, never grows old—never gets out of public favor, and here is just where the merit of this scheme lies. I tell you, as

I said before, that it is the biggest thing, with a big B, that ever fell under my eye. But of course it involves a good deal of capital to handle it as it should be," continued Migzer, satisfied that he had Van Gilding well in hand.

"There is the rub," replied the other.

"You must raise thirty three thousand dollars immediately?"

"Yes, immediately."

"What security can you offer?" questioned Migzer, knowing Van Gilding's financial affairs all the while.

"I have in my own name a piece of real estate worth one hundred and twenty five thousand dollars. But, as I said before, if I were to mortgage this, Crompton would find it out, and would want to know what I had done with the money."

"It seems to me that it is none of his business what you do with your money," replied Migzer, with a gesture designed to increase Van Gilding's dislike for Mr. Crompton.

"It isn't his business, but he is only too ready to find some flaw in me."

"A strange sort of man, I should say."

"The fact is, he doesn't like me."

"And it was to please him you came down town to business," suggested Migzer, leading Van Gilding on.

"Yes, to please him," replied the latter, bitterly ;

"and but for him I wouldn't be in this hole now—thirty three thousand dollars out of pocket."

"Why not go to him and ask him to give you a lift? He is very rich, you know."

"Go to him!" exclaimed Van Gilding, yet more bitterly.

"No, that wouldn't do, I see," said Migzer. "He is not the sort of man to extend sympathy to you, I judge."

"He would like only too well to know of my losses."

"Can it be possible he is so mean as all that? I am afraid you do him injustice, my dear fellow."

"No, no injustice—not a bit. He has been trying to find something against me, so that the engagement could be broken."

"He has!" exclaimed Migzer incredulously.

"I am sure he has."

"But that must not be. You should guard every avenue of possible attack."

"That is just what I am trying to do in keeping these losses from him."

"Crompton is very rich, I understand, and his daughter is the only child?"

"Yes, the only child."

"A fascinating young lady, too—not her equal among all my acquaintances. If she were an ordinary girl, or one of a large family with little money, the case would be different. I tell you, my dear fellow, when a man marries a fortune,

getting a wife like Miss Crompton, he is in the biggest kind of big luck. And then, too, in her case there is no mother-in-law, eh, my boy?"

The more Migzer praised Miss Crompton, the more bitter Van Gilding was against her father. Thus the wily advertising agent prolonged the discussion, working his victim into such a state that he would make any sacrifice to shield his losses from the public eye.

"Couldn't you raise the money from your mother?" continued Migzer, after a pause in which neither spoke.

"That would be impossible," replied Van Gilding, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "There is only one way for me, and that is to get the money myself."

"But your mother of course knows of your losses?" said Migzer.

"No, she knows nothing of them," returned Van Gilding, with heightened color.

"Neither your mother nor sister?"

"Neither of them."

"But suppose you were to tell them, wouldn't they gladly help you out of this difficulty?"

"I cannot tell them. I would rather make almost any sacrifice than to let them know of my losses. As I said before, I must raise the money myself. There is no other way."

"Have you no friend who would advance it you?"

"No; none who would let me have it without security, and then I would not want any friend of mine to know of the hole I am in."

"That is so. It would be unfortunate to have any one know of it who would tell it all over town."

"And I imagine that is just what would be the result, even if the matter of security could be arranged without mortgaging the property."

"Would your friend Milkston tell of it?"

"I wouldn't have Milkston know it for the world."

"Would he let you have the money without a mortgage?"

"No, I am sure he would not, for between you and me it is to him I owe part of this thirty three thousand dollars, and he seems very anxious to get his money back."

"And this is the sort of friend Milkston is?" said Migzer, accenting the word friend suggestively.

"It seems so," replied Van Gilding dubiously.

"I am surprised at Milkston, and I don't know why I should be, either, since he is one of those fellows who don't care a rap for anything or anybody, so long as they are all right themselves. A good fellow, you know, as the world has it. But a man isn't known till he is tested. You have tested him and found the sort of friendship he has for you. With his immense fortune, he could as well

as not help you out and never miss the money. With me, however, my funds being invested in business, it is different. If you only needed a few thousand dollars I would provide it for you, as I said before. But thirty three thousand is no small sum to raise in a hurry. Were it not for Crompton, you could place a mortgage on your real estate."

The mention of Mr. Crompton's name again caused Van Gilding's face to grow darker.

"I tell you what it is, my dear fellow," said Migzer. "You can depend upon me to do all I can for you. You shall not say of me, as you could of Milkston, that my friendship has no warm blood in it. Now the situation is this. It is possible I could get your notes discounted for the thirty three thousand dollars you must raise, if I could show the president of my bank that I have good security to back them up. I say it is possible merely, for to raise so large a sum of money on the notes of one who has no commercial rating is no easy matter, I assure you. A mortgage on property is unknown to the public until it is recorded. I am willing to help you to the extent of trying to raise this money for you, providing you will give me a mortgage on your real estate, with the understanding that I shall not have it recorded. Of course the chances are that I cannot raise the funds, but I will make as great an effort as I ever made in my life to do this favor

for you. I am showing a good deal of faith in you in making such a promise, since a mortgage unrecorded is not the best sort of security. If, however, there is any other way in which you can raise the money, I would of course prefer that you do so, as this arrangement could not fail to cripple me at my bank. But I never desert a friend, and will not commence now."

With profound thanks Van Gilding accepted the proposition of Theodore Migzer, giving him eleven notes of three thousand dollars each, all payable in six weeks. These were secured by mortgage on the one hundred and twenty five thousand dollar piece of real estate. The notes were discounted, and inside of three days the proceeds were handed over to Van Gilding, making him once more happy. His obligations to Milkston and others were met, leaving his mind free to bend itself to business problems.

Migzer had by this time grown to be a wonderful man in Van Gilding's eyes—a man whose capabilities could not easily be measured. He trusted him implicitly, feeling that in him he had a most generous and unselfish friend.

The publishing scheme was now pushed with the greatest energy.

"It is better that you do not appear personally in the enterprise, I think," said Migzer. "It has occurred to me that Crompton might nose around and annoy you more or less. If you act on my

advice, you yourself will be unknown in the scheme. I know of just the man for you—a novelty dealer who has sufficient room for handling the business, and all the help he would need."

"Of course I will act on your advice," replied Van Gilding. "I know nothing about the business, any way; and, as a matter of fact, this paper isn't just the sort I would like to have my name connected with."

"No; not quite enough tone to it—appeals to a class of people with whom you do not associate."

"That is the way it strikes me. But who is the man to whom you refer?"

"Stover—Nate Stover—a good enough fellow in his way."

"Oh, I know him—a man about forty five, I should say—had a chat with him one day when he was waiting to see you."

"Yes, the same man, I judge—tall, rather good looking."

"Yes, and do you know of whom he reminds me?"

"I am sure I do not."

"Crompton," replied Van Gilding, seemingly soured by the pronunciation of the name.

"Now you speak of it, I am inclined to think there is a strong resemblance between them. Strange the idea didn't occur to me before, but the fact is I don't often see Crompton—both he and myself are busy men, you know."

"I never saw any one more actively employed than you are," replied Van Gilding, purposely or otherwise failing to include Mr. Crompton in the compliment.

"Well, I like an active life," said Migzer. "Nothing suits me better. This similarity, by the way, between Crompton and Stover will not prejudice you against the latter?"

"I cannot say that it does not have some influence with me, yet I won't allow myself to be foolish about the matter, if he is the best man."

"Glad to see you so sensible—best man we could get. But now about the point you brought up when we were interrupted. You see the difficulty in my taking a financial interest in the scheme is this: I cannot in justice to my customers do anything that would bring me into competition with them. There is only one way," continued Migzer effusively, "to do business, and that is to do it honestly—to hold firmly to principles, never yielding, no matter how tempting the reward."

"I see the force of your reasoning," replied Van Gilding, now believing without question anything the plausible Migzer said, "and certainly must commend you for the position you take when you could as well make this money as I."

"I appreciate your good opinion, surely, and will aim to reward your faith in me by helping you to make in this venture enough money to be quite independent of either Milkston or Crompton."

"I hope so," replied Van Gilding, his brow corrugated with thoughts suggested by Migzer's harrowing reference.

Later in the day Nate Stover, the novelty dealer, was seen and apprised of the scheme.

"It is a good one," said he. "Will pull enormous returns."

This remark strengthened Van Gilding's faith in the venture—not that it needed bolstering up, for he no longer questioned Migzer's view of the tremendous possibilities in the undertaking. Stover's indorsement, however, had the effect of increasing his enthusiasm and preparing him more fully for entering the well laid trap of the crafty advertising agent.

It was arranged that Stover should conduct the publication in his own name, taking full charge of the business. The advertising to be placed was to be guaranteed by Van Gilding, who, on this account, was to have three quarters of the profits of the venture—the other quarter to go to Nate Stover.

"What shall the paper be called?" said Migzer, losing no time.

"I have been thinking about that," replied Van Gilding, thoughtfully. "It seems to me that we should have something short and snappy—say, for instance, '*Dash*.'"

"*Dash!*" laughed Migzer. "Why, that would kill the scheme."

"Kill it dead," added Stover.

"I don't see why," replied Van Gilding, not relishing the fun made of his suggestion. "There are any number of papers with names of similar character," he added, mentioning those most familiar.

"And *Breeze*, too," suggested Migzer, in a mirthful spirit.

"Well, yes, *Breeze*, if you please—it seems to live," replied Van Gilding, defending his position.

"Strangest thing in the world," remarked Migzer, turning the conversation for a minute, "that that fellow Bainbridge should have kept his paper up all this time—I can't understand it—a fellow with no money, no experience. It is simply extraordinary—something unheard of. But to return to the point. Your suggestion for a name, my dear fellow, is a good one—could not be bettered, if the paper were, for instance, of the same character as *Breeze*, but such a publication couldn't be sold for a penny in country towns—no, not for a penny."

"And it is on the country trade we must depend," remarked Stover, who knew the tastes of the rural districts.

"You see," continued Migzer, "your life has been cast in this city, where you have associated only with the best people. You could hardly be expected to understand the queer notions of rural communities. The name of a paper must mean

something to them—must appeal to them. Now, I would suggest that the publication be called ‘*The Home Journal and Welcome Companion.*’ How does this strike you, Stover?”

“Just the thing,” replied the latter—“couldn’t be beat.”

“I am glad my name isn’t to be connected with it publicly, then,” said Van Gilding.

“Of course it matters not to me what the paper is called,” remarked Migzer. “I suggested a name that I am sure will catch; but if you prefer *Dash*, why, I shall not object.”

“I’m sure Mr. Migzer is right about the name,” said Stover.

“Well, it doesn’t matter to me. If the countrymen want such a wretched name, why, let them have it,” replied Van Gilding, yielding, as usual now, to the judgment of Migzer.

XVIII.

THE advertisement, when set in fine type, occupied a space of about six and one half inches square. In one corner was a cut of a watch with handsomely chased cases, to which a chain of elaborate design was attached. The sun dial was called a *time keeper*. In no place was the word "watch" used ; but the handsome engraving of a watch, together with the crafty phraseology of the advertisement, was designed to lead all readers to conclude that a genuine watch was offered as a premium with a year's subscription to the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*.

"To promise to give a watch and fail to do so," said Migzer, "might make trouble. But you are not responsible for the imagination of others. If the public assume that you promise a watch when you do not, why that is a matter of theirs and not yours."

"Of course, I understand that," added Stover. "Nobody can hold us for what we don't agree to give."

"A pretty sharp point, though," remarked Van Gilding, smiling at the ingenious wording of the advertisement.

"Yes, rather sharp," returned Migzer ; "but one

must be keen nowadays, or he will get grandly left. Just a little trick, you know, and tricks lurk in every branch of business. Dagwood & Company, you see, have phrased their advertisement essentially in the same language."

"Yes, just about the same," assented Stover.

"The next question for consideration," said Migzer, when the advertisement had been approved, "is regarding the number of papers we shall use."

"You mean the number of papers we shall put the advertisement in?" asked Stover.

"Yes," replied Migzer, whose aim was to place as many dollars' worth of advertising as possible. Under any circumstances this would have been his purpose, as he received, on an average, say fifteen per cent in commissions, or fifteen thousand dollars on one hundred thousand. But Migzer at the present time had a special cause, as will be revealed later, for urging that the advertisement be sent out broadcast, since he saw in Van Gilding a victim equipped to guarantee the payment of the account.

"There is a big lot of papers in this country—splendid paying papers, too," said Stover, leading up to the point at issue.

"About fifteen thousand, I think you said, Mr. Migzer," remarked Van Gilding.

"Fifteen thousand, yes; and I wish we might cover every one of them."

"So do I, for this is a chance of a lifetime—yes, of a lifetime," said Stover, nervous with enthusiasm.

"Just my idea of it," added Migzer; "but it would cost so much."

"But what does that matter?" urged Stover. "Why, the money will all come back inside of thirty days."

"Of course it will—come back and a fortune with it," returned Migzer, more magnetic than ever. "But that isn't the point. The question is, how much money Mr. Van Gilding will authorize us to spend."

"I thought the plan was to take everything," replied the latter.

"We did speak of it—yes, I remember now," said Migzer. "But—why, great Cæsar, man, your mail would astonish the world, it would be so large."

"Astonish the world!" repeated Van Gilding to himself, his old egotism to the front, then adding in reply: "Why, that is just what I should like to do."

"You would do it fast enough—make the enterprise of your old classmate, Bainbridge, look very insignificant," said Migzer.

"And nothing would suit me better than to take him down—the conceited upstart!" replied Van Gilding, touched on a tender spot.

"I have heard that he purposes outdoing all his

class; in fact, it was said to me that he openly boasts of doing so," said Migzer, not hesitating at falsehoods.

"He does—boasts of it, does he?" exclaimed Van Gilding, with freshened hatred for Bainbridge.

"That is the way I understand it," returned Migzer. "But let us keep to the point."

"I'm tremendous anxious to see the whole country covered," said Stover.

"Of course, what you don't take will be scooped up in a hurry by Dagwood & Company," returned Migzer.

"And a mean house, too—too mean to be decent—not square competitors," returned Stover.

"But they are good for any amount of money—would take every paper in the country in a minute, if the transaction involved half a million dollars," answered Migzer.

"But isn't Mr. Van Gilding here just as good as what they are, I'd like to know?" said Stover, effusively.

"Why certainly he is—better, many times better, of course. But you didn't understand me, Stover. It is not that I am unwilling to trust Mr. Van Gilding, but rather to what extent does he wish the advertising put out."

"I didn't think it would cost as much as five hundred thousand to take every paper in the United States," said Van Gilding, a good deal sur-

prised at these enormous figures which Stover and Migzer used so lightly.

"But you see, my dear fellow, this is a big advertisement," replied Migzer. "If it were a little three liner, then the cost would of course be a trivial sum. But something for nothing cannot be had—not often. You want to put out an advertisement that will pay big returns. It necessarily costs something, but what does that matter so long as it all comes back and a fortune with it?"

"That is the way I look at it," remarked Stover—"a chance of a lifetime, this is, as I said before."

"But five hundred thousand dollars is a big fortune," replied Van Gilding. "I wouldn't feel justified in asking you to place such an amount of advertising for me."

"Well, we had better cut off the least desirable papers, then," replied Migzer. "I dislike doing so, for I know that Dagwood & Company will scoop everything you leave. It is, you see, *now* or *never* with you. But for Dagwood & Company you could take part of the papers at a time—getting in the money from the first lot to pay the second."

"That is the annoying feature of the scheme," said Van Gilding, "which makes me feel like getting the cream at least of all the publications."

"I would urge you to do so by all means," returned Migzer.

"There is no other way if big money is to be

made out of the scheme," added Stover. "If it isn't pushed I cannot afford to give my time to it."

"Don't you worry about that, Stover. I have already seen enough of Mr. Van Gilding to know that he is not the sort of man to half do a thing," replied Migzer, touching the son of aristocracy on his weakest point.

"It isn't a question of policy with me, but one of responsibility," said Van Gilding, showing in manner and emphasis of pronunciation the effect of Migzer's flattery.

"But that should not trouble you," returned the advertising agent. "So long as I am satisfied to place the business for you, you have no cause for anxiety. I would suggest that we make up a list of the best publications—the cream of all the papers—a list that will not amount to over say two hundred thousand dollars."

"Do you think that is large enough for a scheme like this?" asked Stover, seemingly much disappointed.

"Well, under the circumstances, perhaps we had better keep the amount down; Mr. Van Gilding, I am convinced, would prefer it."

"Well, of course I know nothing of this business," replied the latter—"nothing whatever, but five hundred thousand dollars seems to me an enormous sum of money to spend in advertising."

"It is a good deal of money, to be sure," said Migzer, "but not nearly so much as some houses

spend. On the whole, however, I am in favor of keeping the amount down as low as possible, say not over two hundred and fifty thousand at most."

Those familiar with advertising will understand that a proposition to place anything like five hundred thousand or two hundred thousand dollars' worth of business of the character in question is absurd. Migzer had no idea of doing so. The piece of real estate on which he already had a lien of thirty three thousand dollars was perhaps worth a hundred and twenty five thousand, as Van Gilding claimed. This would leave it worth in round numbers, less the mortgage, say ninety thousand dollars, which was the amount the scheming advertising agent had fixed his mind upon. He argued that if he proposed putting out ninety thousand, this sum might be reduced to nearer twenty, on which Van Gilding doubtless would not care to give any security. This would not serve his purpose at all. He therefore arranged with Stover to talk big figures, not with a view to putting out any such quantity of business, but to prepare Van Gilding, so that he would agree to make himself responsible for the desired amount. The influence that a clever tongued villain like Migzer, with the aid of a Stover, can exert at times over bright men is extraordinary—marvelous even. The bunco men, the gamblers, the fraudulent schemers—all have their victims in large numbers, among whom may be found men

supposed to be keen—men in all professions, in all kinds of business, at the head of great financial institutions: If questioned after their mortifying misfortune they will say—many of them—that a strange power possessed them—an influence, a magnetism, a something that deadened the cautionary powers of reason, allowing them to follow blindly, landing them at last in the schemer's trap. If I were asked to name this influence, this strange power, I should call it simply *intoxicated enthusiasm*.

To be successful in a matter of this kind, at least two men must be employed, who can so stimulate the imagination of a victim that he becomes temporarily blind to the reasonableness of things. Of course careful preparations must be made for this, developing relations and purposes that will warrant the *denouement*.

There had been no lack of preparation on Migzer's part. He had made himself important to Van Gilding—had learned his weaknesses, his foibles, his desire for money, and his own influence over him. Every line had been laid with care, and tested in a way to excite no suspicion, in order that the crafty schemer might feel sure of the result, for matters were now nearing a crisis with him.

Asking Stover to step into the outer office for a few moments, Migzer said, addressing Van Gilding, quietly :

“I have a proposition I will make to you personally—one I would not want Stover to hear, as he might ask similar favors of me in the future. Now I want to see this venture made the biggest success of anything in modern journalism, and to help you in the matter I am ready to do for you what I would not do for others—what I never have done for any one in all my business career.”

Van Gilding, warmed by this statement, was profuse with thanks, feeling more than ever his good fortune in possessing a friendship of such sterling nature.

“The proposition is this,” continued Migzer, in his most magnetic and generous way. “I will place the business for you, say two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and not ask you to give me security for over one hundred thousand. This is contrary to my business principles, and something, as I said before, that I would do for no one but you. But I feel an unusual interest in you—a warm friendship for you, knowing how you are situated, with Crompton watching like a hungry tiger for a chance to pounce upon you.”

The reference to Mr. Crompton was timely and served its purpose well with Van Gilding, whose hatred of the father of the girl to whom he was engaged grew more bitter from day to day.

“I told you,” Migzer went on, warming as he proceeded, “that you would not find my friendship the thin and bloodless sort, like Milkston’s.”

"I have felt from the first that I could depend upon you," replied Van Gilding; "and this generous offer convinces me that there is no flaw in your friendship. But I dislike to have you do so much for me when I see no way to repay you."

"Don't let that bother you, my dear fellow," said Migzer. "This is my opportunity to do you a good turn, and I am going to do it. You will doubtless be able to favor me some time in the future. But if you do not, my reward will be ample in seeing you place yourself beyond any possible harm from Crompton's bitter malice. As the matter stands, your danger is only postponed. In less than five weeks—and they will slide by with surprising rapidity—you will again be pressed to raise this thirty three thousand dollars. Speculation has proved dangerous to you. Were you to keep at it, you might win back your losses, but would perhaps be more likely to find yourself plunged further than ever into debt—a debt that would swamp you and result in Crompton gaining his mean desire. This publishing scheme, therefore, is a godsend to you, my dear fellow—a piece of good luck that seldom falls into one's hands when he needs money as you do. With your approval, then, I will go at this thing with a will, rushing out the advertising as no other house in this city could. But to place so large a contract, I must of course have something on which I can raise money, as a small fortune can be saved to

you by sending check with the order. I shall want you to give me notes, secured as the others were. With them I can get the money to swing this contract."

"The mortgage would not be recorded?" asked Van Gilding, wearing a slightly anxious look.

"No, certainly not. I trust I am too good a friend to you to permit such a thing."

"I am sure you are, but I dislike giving so many notes," answered Van Gilding, not suspecting danger, but hesitating on general principles.

"But there is no other way, if this scheme is to go through," said Migzer, assuming a suggestion of disgust.

"No, I suppose not," returned Van Gilding, apologetic in manner. "But you can understand my feeling against placing myself under such heavy obligations."

"Certainly I can, my dear fellow, and were you not already in an ugly hole I would advise you to live on your income and keep out of business. But as matters stand, what can you do? The force of the situation you understand only too well."

"I do, indeed, and but for Crompton I would not be in this fix," replied Van Gilding, sorely. "Every time I think of it, and the row he made about my being an idler, as he said, makes me furious."

"And you are justified in feeling as you do, es-

pecially now that you are in business and he still cherishes his old unreasonable prejudice," said Migzer, finding that by denouncing Crompton he elevated himself in Van Gilding's opinion. "But the question at issue now," he continued, "is what shall be done about this venture. There are but two things to do—one is to go in and make a success of it—treat it as it should be treated—the other is to give it up altogether. But in this event, what shall you do—how will you raise the thirty three thousand dollars? It is better for me to be plain with you than to disappoint you—more friendly, you know—more sincere. I will say, therefore, that there is no certainty that I could renew your notes or help you in any way to raise the money with which to take them up. I refer, of course, to the thirty three thousand dollars. How, then, could you reasonably hope to raise the money without mortgaging your property to some money lender, who would instantly have the mortgage recorded, leaving you in the undesirable position where Crompton has doubtless been hoping to get you?"

"There would be no way," admitted Van Gilding, with a painful sigh—"no way under heaven."

"That is the business side of it, and in money matters there is no sentiment—nothing but cold, clean cut business."

"I hate business, confound it all!" exclaimed Van Gilding, bringing his fist down savagely

upon the table. "I have no taste for it, and why I ever yielded to that infernal Crompton, I don't know."

"It *was* a mistake," said Migzer, "an undoubted mistake, but now that you are in, the question is, how can you get out? The only way I see is to avail yourself of this opportunity, but I do not want to urge you—it is not my place to do so."

"It is the only avenue of escape, I know. The danger, it seems to me, is less than speculating."

"Danger?" exclaimed Migzer. "Why, what danger can there be in an advertisement that brings the unprecedented percentage of replies Dagwood & Company have received?"

"Well, I suppose there is none, but it seems like taking big chances, though, to give notes for a hundred thousand dollars."

"But this is a world of chances—danger on every hand. If business men waited for down right certainties, enterprise would be dead forever. In speculation you did not lack courage. I cannot understand why you should now, when you have so good an opportunity to make a great haul. Think of the chances Bainbridge has taken—facing obstacles that seemed to me insurmountable, as I told you, when he first started his paper. But he is still issuing it, with fair prospects, seemingly, now, for making a big success. I tell you what it is, my dear fellow, nerve counts for everything in this world of ours."

To show less courage than Bainbridge—to prove weaker in Migzer's eyes than his hated classmate, was something Van Gilding with his overwhelming pride would not allow. This reference to Bainbridge came at the right time, proving the one thing necessary to cause Van Gilding to yield to Migzer's proposal, which was that he should make himself responsible for one hundred thousand dollars' worth of advertising, giving notes for that sum, which were to be secured by mortgage on his real estate.

"I would not think of doing this with any other man living," said Van Gilding, "but I feel that I can trust you—that you are a sincere friend."

"I appreciate this compliment, my dear fellow," returned Migzer, "and can assure you that your confidence shall be amply rewarded."

"I have no doubt of it," said Van Gilding, cheerfully. "Now that the matter is decided, I feel like pitching in and making things hum."

XIX.

THEODORE MIGZER was not the man to lose anything by dallying. He had worked long and with clever tact to effect the deal with Van Gilding, and he took good care that no delay should rob him of the big reward which now seemed as good as secured. Never before had advertising been rushed out from any agency in so short a time—never had an equal amount been placed so recklessly—with so little regard for the selection of desirable mediums. As Van Gilding knew nothing of the business, he naturally did not interfere with Migzer, who, left to himself, made the most of his opportunity. Stover did not trouble himself about the papers listed for the advertisement, as he was not responsible for the bills. He assumed, however, as a matter of course, that Migzer would not place the business in publications that could not possibly be expected to pay. But as matters were shaping themselves with the advertising agent, what cared he whether the results proved good or bad? He was secured by mortgage, and could not lose under any circumstances. His object, then, was to get the business placed somewhere, anywhere, so that his books would show Van Gilding to be

actually in his debt to the extent of one hundred thousand dollars.

While the advertising was going out, Stover and Van Gilding busied themselves with getting up the first number of the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*. This was not a very arduous undertaking, as the paper possessed no merit whatever—was simply a reprint of matter that had appeared elsewhere, furnished by a ready print association. A few illustrations were added—bought from an old cut shop, just to give the publication the appearance of an illustrated journal.

When the advertising on the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion* had been out something like a week, Stover found his mail suddenly swelling. Money had commenced to flow in, and the subscription list of Van Gilding's paper grew marvelously. Everything now was silver tipped with the scion of aristocracy. The sight of dollar bills, piled high in box—the product of a thousand letters from simple country folk, warmed him, developing a smile broad and deep, where but a few days before had rested gloom.

One forenoon, soon after the first advertisement had appeared, a brisk little man with keen gray eyes shaded by peculiarly long, grizzly eyebrows, appeared at the publication office of the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion* and asked to see Mr. Stover.

“Mr. Stover is busy in his private office at

present," said a clerk—a pleasant faced young woman.

"I'm in a good deal of a hurry," replied the little man, whose eye surveyed the office critically.

"Can I not serve you?" asked the young woman, politely.

"Thank you, no, I wish to see the publisher personally."

"I will take your card to him," replied the young woman, deciding that the little man was not the sort who usually subscribe to such papers as the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*.

"I have no card," replied the stranger.

"Your name, then?"

"Mr. Stover would not recognize my name—simply say to him that I want to see him on business."

The young woman carried the message to Mr. Stover, and Mr. Stover straightway appeared in person, wearing a curious look.

"Mr. Stover?" said the little man, fixing his keen eyes upon the latter.

"Yes, that is my name."

"I see you offer a watch with your paper," said the little man, coming to business at once, and taking from his pocket a copy of Van Gilding's advertisement. "Now, this strikes me," he continued, "as a scheme that can be worked to almost an unlimited extent up in my section of the country."

"What is your section of the country?" asked Stover, his curiosity quieted with the thought that the little man merely wanted an agency.

"Connecticut," replied the stranger; "and there is no section of this country where folks take to a thing of this kind as they do in Connecticut. Them Yankees are great on getting something for nothing. Now if I can make the right kind of a deal with you, why I'd like to represent you in my locality—taking the whole State, if we can agree on the terms. I tell you there is loads of money in this scheme if it is only worked right, and I think if I do say it that I am just the man that can work it for all there is in it."

"Well, you are the sort of man I like to talk with," replied Stover, his face glowing. "Just come into my private office, where we will be alone, and I'll see what can be done."

The little man was agreeable to the proposition, and followed the publisher to his den, where the conversation continued for a full half hour, in which time the little man gathered the information he sought, ending in subscribing for a year to the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*. He handed the money to Stover personally, taking his receipt for it, and got the sun dial premium, which he wrapped in tissue paper and put in his pocket as if it was a really precious article.

"Sorry we can't agree on terms," said Stover, as the little man rose to go.

“Yes, so am I,” replied the latter, moving toward the door with a copy of the *The Home Journal and Welcome Companion* in his hand. “But the fact is, you are not willing to pay enough for my services.”

The hands of the big clock in Stover's office were climbing toward twelve when the door closed on the alleged man from Connecticut. Reaching the apex, they started on the post meridian descent, and before the smaller hand had traversed three of the hour spaces, Stover was apprised of the fact that all mail addressed to the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion* had been stopped by the government.

XX.

ON receiving notice that the mail on the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion* had been stopped by order of the Postmaster General, Stover readily saw the hand of the little man with grizzly eyebrows. "A post office inspector," he mused, with darkened brow—"came here to pump me—not from Connecticut more than I am—agent of the government. Well, I'm in for it now, I guess," he sighed, talking low to himself. "He hoodwinked me in good shape, and found out everything."

Without stopping for an overcoat, though the air was crisp and wintry, Stover hurried to Migzer's office with troubled face. The advertising agent and Van Gilding were both there. They had been discussing the scheme and calculating the amount of money the latter would clear from the venture. The profit estimated by Migzer was over two hundred thousand dollars. Van Gilding, elated by the inflow of money, put it even higher.

"Sixty days from now you will be independent of Crompton—will have more ready money than he has," said Migzer.

"I am sure I will," replied Van Gilding, haughtily.

"And you will probably take good care that you do not cripple yourself again to please him."

"Cripple myself to please him!" repeated Van Gilding, bitterly.

"A man who, as you suggest, would rejoice in your downfall," interjected the subtle Migzer.

It was at this juncture that Stover arrived, with an anxious look on his face.

"What has happened?" said Migzer, quick to suspect the nature of the trouble.

"Our mail has been stopped," answered Stover, breathing fast.

"Stopped!" exclaimed Migzer, as if doubting his own senses.

"Stopped!" echoed Van Gilding, his face already colorless.

"Yes, stopped by order of the Postmaster General," answered Stover, dropping into a chair.

"On what grounds?" demanded Migzer, with well feigned surprise.

"On the ground that we are using the mails for illegitimate purposes."

"This is outrageous!" said Migzer.

"Illegitimate purposes!" exclaimed Van Gilding, grasping the arm of his chair.

"Yes, illegitimate purposes."

"And we shall get no more mail?" asked Van Gilding, white as marble.

"No more I suppose," replied Stover, dubiously.

"No more, and all this advertising to pay for—a hundred thousand dollars!" muttered Van Gilding, the picture of misery.

"There must be some mistake," said Migzer, putting on a bold front. "The advertisement is all right—perfectly legitimate. You don't promise anything that you do not give."

"I'm ruined!" groaned Van Gilding, completely unmanned—"ruined—all my property gone—everything gone!"

"Don't give way so," said Migzer, mopping the perspiration from his face. "There may be some mistake—that is, it may be fixed all right yet."

But this remark did not cheer Van Gilding, who now sat bent over in his chair, resting his head on both hands.

"And this is business—business!" he groaned. "Why did I ever come down here—here where everything has been lost?"

On Migzer's advice the case was put into the hands of a lawyer, with instructions to do everything possible to have the order stopping their mail rescinded.

Twenty four hours later, and there had been no change in the situation. Van Gilding became despondent—wretched even, for now he had little hope to cheer him. Another day went by—two, three, a week, and now the final decision came

from the Postmaster General, wherein he refused to revoke his order to stop the mail. He claimed that the phraseology of the advertisement, in connection with the cut showing a watch, led people to believe that they were to get a watch and chain with the paper as a premium.

“The mere fact,” he continued, “that you do not state in so many words that a watch will be given as a premium, does not help your case so long as you convey the same idea in another way. It is plain that you seek to have the reader believe he will get a watch and chain, else why have you printed the cut of a watch in the advertisement? In no place have you mentioned the fact that the premium you send out is a mere sun dial. Words are not the only means of conveying intelligence. There are many ways in which it can be done. To my mind it matters not what the vehicle is—the result is what I look to. You have said to the reader of the advertisement, in effect, by a cunning arrangement of words and the use of this cut, that you will give him a watch and chain as a premium with the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*. Relying on your representation, he sends his dollar to you and gets a worthless sun dial and a paper of no more value—a sheet that bears on the face of it evidences of having been got up purposely to use with the scheme you have attempted to run. The United States mails cannot be used for purposes of this sort. All letters

addressed to the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*, therefore, will be returned to the writers."

The last hope vanished, Van Gilding was utterly wretched. He knew not which way to turn—what move to make. One hundred and thirty three thousand dollars he owed—enough to more than swamp his real estate—enough to leave him penniless and still in debt. Instead of making the money to pay all his losses in speculation, he had sunk a hundred thousand dollars more. Now he commenced to distrust the sincerity of Migzer's assumed friendship; now he commenced to trace the hand of the crafty villain, but alas, too late, for he was in the schemer's power, had been ruined by him and yet dared not say a word or as much as hint at his suspicions, fearing the two mortgages would be recorded.

There was one hope for him yet, and but one, as it seemed to him. That was to marry Miss Crompton, and share her wealth—the wealth that must come to her from her father. But his chance of effecting this union now seemed extremely doubtful, since all hope of doing so would be lost should Mr. Crompton learn of his losses. To keep this knowledge from him Van Gilding was willing to make any sacrifice—willing to do anything Migzer might demand. His suspicion of the advertising agent once aroused, he easily saw how he had been deceived by him in the plausible guise of friendship. He rehearsed his connection with

him, recalling the lavish generosity of the man—his whole souled manner—his apparent interest in helping him to make money, the advice he gave him in speculation, and in raising funds to cover his losses.

In all this Van Gilding now saw the clever scheming of Migzer. Every exhibition of generosity, every act of kindness, showed the subtle purpose, the black and unprincipled unselfishness of the advertising agent. It did not occur to Van Gilding at the time that Migzer would make about fifteen thousand dollars in commissions in placing the hundred thousand dollars' worth of business. His mind had been fixed upon his own interests, never suspecting a selfish purpose in Migzer, who at that time seemed the embodiment of generosity—the ideal friend. Now all was changed. The advertising agent had shown his hand. The man who but a few days before had been a revelation of generosity, of unselfishness, of kindness, was now, in the eyes of Van Gilding, the blackest souled of all the human race. He could not endure him in his sight—could not enjoy a moment's peace with him beyond his vision, fearing always the mortgage—the mortgage—a volcano ever threatening to destroy him. To loathe a man as Van Gilding now loathed Migzer—a villain of darkest and most subtle character—and yet to be obliged to hide the feeling, smiling while the heart burns with hate, is

something to unman one—to humiliate and wreck the spirit inherited from proud ancestry.

Pride, dash and overbearing manner do not signify genuine force of character. They are, however, not infrequently taken for such in seasons of prosperity. But in adversity, when the strain comes and the gauge of the haughty character is taken, it is pretty sure to be found wanting. Then it is that the quiet, unostentatious man—the man of modest spirit and retiring habit—shows himself the greater of the two, and proves able to bear the test to which the other yields.

In college Van Gilding's haughty pride, his family name, his self conceit, passed as force of character with boys, who read not deeply. But embarked on the voyage of life, where estimates count for naught, and only true metal can withstand the strain—the sudden squalls, the storms, the threatening dangers—there it is that one finds himself a man, if man he be, or learns the weak thing he really is.

Van Gilding's gauge was taken, and he was found wanting—wanting in the elements necessary to meet manfully the disaster that had swept away his fortune. He became the puppet of Mizer, when a strong character would have faced the issue boldly and denounced the villain who had used him so treacherously. Weak people pay frightful interest for *more time*, hoping that in some mysterious way it will be easier to face the

facts which they so much dread and which grow in ugliness as the weeks go by.

Had Van Gilding met his first loss wisely, he would still have had a good property left. Had he met his second bravely as he should, he would not have sacrificed his manliness and dignity as he did by becoming the despised tool of the scoundrel Migzer.

XXI.

THERE seems sometimes to be a strange fatality in the world that directs our steps. So many peculiar and inexplicable happenings are brought to our notice from time to time that we are wont to ask if there is not a subtle force in the world of which we know nothing. There may not be anything in this idea. I am not prepared to say that there is. No one can say so from actual knowledge. It is a question of impression—of belief based on the strange occurrences that happen so frequently in all our lives. The mysterious force may be a sort of magnetism. In some cases it seems that it is. If so, and if there be such an element attracting man to man, or working in various ways peculiar to itself—if so, I say, Van Gilding and Bainbridge must have been subject to its subtle power, so strangely were they thrown together again and again when it was the wish of each to avoid the other.

Entering the same class in college, they early sought different paths. But fate, or magnetism, or whatever it be, would not allow the will free sway, often bringing the two together in strange and unexpected ways. The meeting at

Shelter Island, the rescue from the sinking boat—strange, very strange, I say, that it should have been Bainbridge to go to Van Gilding's assistance when so many boats were out on that moonlit night. Again, Bainbridge runs up to Central Park for an hour's outing—the first for months—and approaching the east side drive—the roadway most frequented by carriages—the first, or almost the first to come before his eyes was Van Gilding. Again in Migzer's office they were thrown together; and now another meeting occurs in an out of the way place, brought about by an accident on a dark, dismal night.

Bainbridge, as I have previously recorded, was doing the work of several men. To make this possible, his evenings were pressed into the service, lengthening out his days by just so many hours. Usually he spent this time in his room, writing, doing editorial work, or perhaps in getting up business forms. Sometimes, however, he would go to the house of an engraver or artist to arrange for work for his paper. On the night in question he was out on an errand of this sort. A Mr. Spartenberg, an artist of very good fame, lived on Riverside Drive, not far from the tomb of General Grant. He was so badly crippled that he seldom made his way down town. Bainbridge, therefore, found it necessary to go to his house, as a personal interview always resulted in getting more satisfactory drawings.

It was about half past nine on this evening when Bainbridge finished his business with Spartenberg and commenced his homeward journey. The nearest station on the elevated road to the artist's home is at One Hundred and Fourth Street. It happened that Bainbridge, contrary to his usual custom, decided to walk down on Riverside Drive till he came to One Hundred and Fourth Street, whereas, on previous visits to this locality, he had returned by the way of the Boulevard to the street on which the station stood—a shorter and much more desirable route for a cold and very dark night, as this was. The only explanation of the strange freak that led him to follow a lonely driveway—a driveway skirting a steep embankment beneath which the rushing tide of the North River could be heard—a place to make the wayfarer shudder and suggest to his mind tales of robbery and crime—the only explanation of this, I say, must lie in the subtle unknown power, the strange magnetism that was once more bringing Bainbridge and Van Gilding together.

The former had reached One Hundred and Twelfth Street, and was swinging along at a lively pace, when he heard the rumble of wheels approaching on the hard ground. Another block passed, and still another, when suddenly he heard a crash, followed by a cry of pain.

Bainbridge ran to the scene of the accident, which was but a little way off. It was so dark that

faces could not be recognized, though sufficiently light to discover the cause of the mishap. A deep, broad hole had been made in the road by a recent heavy rain. The lamp in the lantern, which was placed there as a warning, had ceased to burn, leaving the danger without a danger signal. The coachman of a brougham coming along at a good speed, and sitting carelessly on the box, had driven squarely into the hole. The left forward wheel dropped to the axle, stopping the brougham suddenly, and throwing the driver to the ground with such force as to break a leg and bruise him badly.

The two men occupying the cab escaped without injury other than a thorough shaking up. They hurriedly climbed out of the wrecked vehicle, and appeared to be dazed, paying no heed to the calls of the injured driver, who groaned loud and incessantly. Bainbridge arrived on the scene at this time, and, taking in the situation at a glance, concluded that the men were too much frightened to know what move to make first. He hurried to the side of the prostrate coachman and raised him to his feet, finding, when he had done so, that the man could not stand. The horse had now become restive and needed attention, and Bainbridge called to the men to assist him, directing one to secure the horse, and the other to come to him and help support the injured driver.

“You go to the horse, Briggs,” said one of the

two, betraying much excitement in his voice, "and I will help the man."

The man called Briggs obeyed the command with a "Yes, sir," while the other came to Bainbridge's assistance.

When the nature of the coachman's injuries were learned, the only thing to do was to make preparations for having him removed to his home or a hospital. Bainbridge therefore requested the man who came to his assistance to remain with the coachman while he inspected the damage to the cab, with a view to patching it up if possible, so that it would serve as an ambulance. This he thought might be done if it could be pulled along to the nearest street lamp.

His plan was accordingly carried out, Briggs assisting him, with his habitual "Yes, sir," whenever spoken to. When the cab had been pulled to the light, Bainbridge found the damage to be such that it could be temporarily repaired with the means at their command. He then went back to assist the man with the coachman in taking him to the cab, Briggs meanwhile holding the horse.

When the coachman and his two supporters neared the lamp, where the light fell upon their faces, Van Gilding—for it was he—gazed, terror stricken, on Bainbridge—the man of all others he hated most—the man who constantly crossed his path as if directed by an unseen hand to torture him.

Bainbridge,* always cool, always collected, was nevertheless startled at meeting again his old enemy at that time and place.

“This meeting is quite as much a surprise as our last,” said he, feeling that something must be said. “But it will not necessarily be prolonged. If you will assist me now, we will place the coachman in the cab. I will then help your friend about hitching the horse in the shafts. Either he or you, as you prefer, can then drive, while the other rides inside with the coachman.”

This suggestion was carried out, the cab shortly disappearing in the darkness, with Briggs on the box, while Bainbridge hurriedly made his way to the elevated station, wondering how many more times in his career he and Van Gilding were to be thrown together under circumstances strange and peculiar.

XXII.

THREE weeks lacking one day had passed by since the mail on the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion* was stopped, when one morning the *Herald* came out with startling head lines, giving a brief account of a mysterious murder in one of New York's palatial homes. The following is an extract from the newspaper report :

A handsome private residence on Murray Hill, the home of Wilson D. Crompton, the well known broker, was the scene last night of a mysterious tragedy. The victim was Nathaniel Stover, who, we learn from the commercial agency books, was a novelty dealer on Fulton Street. The report of the affair reached us at so late an hour that it was impossible to get any reliable details. The fact, however, that a murder has been committed on a fashionable part of Fifth Avenue, and in the home of a well known and respected citizen, is calculated to excite unusual interest in the community. We have learned of no motive for the crime. No arrest has been made. The whole affair is shrouded in mystery.

As predicted by the journal from which the foregoing extract was taken, the announcement of this murder stirred all New York and the neighboring communities. Mr. Crompton's standing in business—his daughter's position in society—all lent interest to the mysterious crime itself. In overcrowded portions of the city, the tenement house districts, packed with the worst element of foreign, crime stained humanity, murders occur not infrequently. But culprit and victim alike are unknown to any save a few in their immediate circle.

The assassin does not haunt our best avenues, where wealth and refinement dwell. He lurks in the narrow alleys, amid squalor, mingling for the most part with those of hot tempers and brutal nature like his own.

It would not be so strange that blood should be shed in some crowded rookery in the lowest part of the metropolis, the natural breeding place of dirt, disease and crime. But it almost passed belief that such a tragedy could be enacted in one of the stately homes of Murray Hill. How could it have come to pass that in Mr. Crompton's library—the cozy room in which the latter had told his daughter the story of his early romance—a story that introduced Nate Stover as the lover of Rachel Hargrave, the rival of himself—this same Stover, grown older by twenty odd years, now lay cold in death, the victim of an unknown assassin—murdered for an unknown cause?

The extraordinary circumstances of the case, and the mystery that surrounded it, were enough to startle all Manhattan Island, and paint interest intense and curious on the faces of its dwellers. The murder became the topic of the hour, and the eagerness with which further information was sought was only equaled by the difficulty, or almost impossibility, of obtaining it.

In the afternoon following the night of the tragedy the coroner's jury met to make its investigation of the affair. The evidence presented to it

was to the effect that Nathaniel Stover was found dead in Mr. Crompton's library ; that he was sitting in a chair, his body having fallen forward so that it rested against a table, upon which his right hand lay, the other having dropped by his side, while his head lay upon the table, resting on the right cheek. A small incision was found in the back of the coat, a little to the left, and about an inch and a half below the shoulder blade. This had been made by a sharp pointed instrument, possibly a stiletto, or more probably a thin steel letter opener, which was found near the lifeless form, smeared with blood. The instrument, whatever it was, had entered the dead man's back, and, as testified by medical experts, penetrated the heart, causing instant death. The position of the wound precluded the idea of suicide. The coroner's jury therefore found that Nathaniel Stover came to his end by the hand of person or persons unknown, and that death ensued from a wound inflicted with a sharp pointed instrument.

XXIII.

NOW that it had been determined, by due process of law, that Nathaniel Stover was murdered, the question was asked by every one, "Who is the assassin?" To solve this problem detectives of the first rank, and newspaper men representing the great dailies of the city, vied with each other. Money was spent freely; clews were investigated; theories were followed up. Public interest in the tragedy was so great that the genius of modern journalism was taxed to supply the feverish demand of the people for facts and theories bearing on the mysterious affair. Many columns of generalities and speculation were printed in the more sensational sheets, writing up details and giving graphic pictures of imaginary scenes, horrible and thrilling. Ingenious theories were advanced and worked out with careful detail, sufficient in length for an hour's reading, and which, perhaps, in the very next issue of the same journal were discarded—replaced by a different exhibition of imagination, no less clever than the first.

And so it went on day after day, the public patiently reading and unreading, devouring specu-

lation and getting little substance upon which to satisfy their curiosity or allay their interest.

The facts in connection with Stover's mysterious death were of a character very likely to involve Mr. Crompton in the tragedy. Circumstances certainly pointed suspiciously toward him as the perpetrator, or one in league with the perpetrator of the crime. On the other hand, his reputation as an honorable citizen, and the utter lack, so far as was known, of any motive for the murder, stood between him and the verdict of guilty in the minds of the people—shrouding the whole affair in deepest mystery. Few people were willing to believe, without additional facts of a criminating character, that Mr. Crompton—a leading business man—a man of excellent standing in the community, could deliberately commit such a crime. If he was the murderer, they argued, it must have been in self defense; and yet the wound—a thrust in the back—and the position of the dead man, as testified to before the coroner's jury, tended to the belief that the assassin had made the fatal thrust secretly, while the victim's head was turned away, so that he would not have seen one stealing up behind him.

Under ordinary circumstances, Mr. Crompton's word would never have been questioned. But under the finger of suspicion, what he said, unsupported by evidence, counted for little in his favor. He could suggest no plausible theory to account

for the crime, and claimed that it was as much a mystery to him as to the public.

In the entire absence of any other clew—any other possible theory than that the murder was perpetrated by Wilson D. Crompton, the detectives went to work to try and justify this belief—to discover facts, circumstances in the careers of the dead man and the man suspected of committing the crime, that would sustain their theory. Mr. Crompton's history was followed back step by step to his boyhood, and even to his ancestry, three generations beyond. And the career of Nathaniel Stover likewise was examined, resulting in a discovery that quickened the pulse of the grim detective. From ancestry widely diverged, the careers of the two men were traced to a common point in Woodville. Here, then, was the starting place—the key to the situation—the beginning of complications centered in a love affair.

With renewed diligence, with buoyant hopes, the keen eyed detective now applied himself to the case, examining with painstaking care every act of the two men from the Woodville episode to the time of the murder.

XXIV.

ON the night when Stover came to his untimely end Miss Crompton and her aunt, Mrs. Woodman, were again at Mrs. Strivewell's house. The scene on this occasion was not unlike the one presented there nearly a year before—the reception to which I devoted a considerable space.

On that evening Miss Crompton received with the hostess, but now her place was taken by another—a less charming girl, but one who had not incumbered herself with a matrimonial engagement.

Miss Crompton, notwithstanding her relations with Van Gilding, showed excellent tact in smiling on others as well as him—not in a way to excite his jealousy or to bring forth critical remarks from austere matrons. Her popularity, as was natural, then continued, whereas another, given to sentimental exclusiveness, as many engaged girls are, would have very nearly lost her hold upon all save one man—the man, forgetting all others—forgotten by them. Not so with Lela Crompton, whose good sense and loyal heart kept her from errors to which a weak character is always subject. She could talk and joke with the men of her acquaintance with safety, finding pleasure in the pastime—find-

ing, too, that by so doing she enjoyed the presence of her lover with keener zest than she could have realized from one dead level of maudlin sentiment for him.

Her circle was always a charmed one—always bubbling with fun and bright sayings—a circle wherein gossip and bickerings—the product of thin, poverty stricken souls—found little room for recognition. The year that had passed, crowning her with twenty summers, had added to her beauty, had enriched her mind, had strengthened her position in society.

It seems sometimes that an impending doom is foreshadowed, as it were, by excessive joy and unusual brilliancy on the part of him whose fate is close at hand. And so with Miss Crompton, who never before had been so charming; never had looked so sweet; never had given her friends so much pleasure; never had had so many pleasant things said of her as on this evening. Major Poodel, Milkston, Van Gilding, Bigs, Miss Metcalf—all were there, acting the old play over again with the zest of a year before. The major, after repeated efforts, had reached Miss Crompton's side and was outdoing himself with prettily phrased compliments—compliments that must have been genuine, inspired by her beauty—when Mrs. Woodman joined her with troubled look, saying they were summoned home with great haste.

The two ladies excused themselves, threw on

their wraps, and asking Mrs. Strivewell to explain their sudden departure to Van Gilding, who could not for the moment be found, hurried into the carriage in waiting, as yet ignorant of the dreadful calamity that had fallen upon their happy home. The carriage whirled rapidly along the avenue, dashing past St. Patrick's, on to the old reservoir, and still on till the horses were suddenly brought to a standstill at the door of Miss Crompton's home. Instantly she alighted and ran up the steps, closely followed by her aunt. At the door her maid met her, and grasped her hand in wild excitement, exclaiming :

"Oh, Miss Lela, Miss Lela !"

"What is it, Mary? Tell me quickly, tell me," replied Miss Crompton, with face white as marble, but nerving herself for the worst.

"It is too horrible, too horrible," sobbed the girl, hysterically.

"Is father——?" gasped Miss Crompton, not daring to finish the sentence.

"No," answered Mary, divining her mistress's meaning.

"Not ill?" pursued Miss Crompton, eagerly.

"No—oh no, Miss Lela."

"What then is it?—oh, this suspense !"

"A man—killed," answered the girl, with a shudder.

"Killed?" repeated Miss Crompton.

"Yes—murdered."

"Murdered—who—where?" demanded Miss Crompton, grasping her maid's arm, unable longer to suppress her excitement.

"Murdered!" echoed Mrs. Woodman, falling to the floor unconscious.

"Oh, this is dreadful, dreadful!" said Miss Crompton, rushing to her aunt's assistance. "Water, water!" she cried, urging the girl to action, who for the minute was dazed by this new trouble—another death, perhaps, she thought.

Hearing the commotion below, and recognizing his daughter's voice, Mr. Crompton quickly descended the stairs to join her—to tell her what had happened—to feel her sustaining presence in this terrible hour. "My God!" he exclaimed, pale and haggard, on beholding his sister's prostrate form, over which his daughter bent with tear stained face. "This is too much!" he went on, driven almost beside himself by the thought that she, too, lay dead—a sacrifice, perhaps, for the awful crime that had been done above stairs.

"Oh, father, what is it? What has happened?" cried Miss Crompton.

"Your aunt—dead, too!" said he, unnerved, and standing as if transfixed.

"Only fainted, I think—I hope," replied the daughter, dashing a glass of cold water in her aunt's face. "Yes, only fainted," she repeated nervously. "See, she revives—oh, aunty, aunty dear!"

“What is it?—what is all this about? A dream, a horrible dream—I must be dreaming—Lela, Lela, is this you?—is this you, dear?” murmured Mrs. Woodman, with returning consciousness, grasping her niece meanwhile by the hand, and shuddering as if to tear herself away from some horrible nightmare.

“God be praised that she is not dead, too!” exclaimed Mr. Crompton, calming himself and assisting his daughter to lead Mrs. Woodman to a sofa in the reception room.

“Oh, something terrible has happened, Wilson—something terrible!” exclaimed the aunt, wringing her hands piteously. “It could not have been a dream,” she went on—“no, not a dream—it all comes back to me now—the party, the summons home—a man dead—murdered. Oh, Wilson, Wilson, what is it? Tell us, tell us—let us know the worst!”

“It is horrible!” exclaimed Mr. Crompton, in bitter anguish—“horrible, unaccountable.”

“Let us share the trouble with you, father—let me share it. I am strong enough to do so—it is my place to do so,” said Miss Crompton, throwing herself about her father’s neck and pressing her lips to his forehead.

“My dear child,” he murmured, his eyes filling with tears and choking with emotion.

“Oh, this suspense!” cried Miss Crompton—“it is harder to bear than the truth, however ugly.”

And still Mr. Crompton said nothing, clinging the while passionately to his daughter, the picture of misery and sorrow.

“Mary said—she said a man is dead—he is—that he was murdered,” continued Miss Crompton, trying to learn the truth.

“Murdered!” echoed Mr. Crompton, with a shudder.

“Yes, she said—oh, horrible, horrible!” she cried, shrinking from her father’s embrace and covering her face with her trembling hands. “Blood!” she murmured to herself half inaudibly. “Blood on my father’s hands!”

He caught her words—the wretched father—and felt her tear herself from him as if he were a thing to be loathed by his own daughter.

The effect of her untimely words and sudden action she quickly realized, and would have given her life almost could she have recalled both in time to save her father this additional pain. Again she folded him in her arms, again she pressed her lips to his forehead, saying, “Depend upon upon me, dear father, in this wicked hour. I will be all to you that mother could have been had she lived. Now tell me all, keeping from me nothing; for I must know the worst.”

XXV.

THE sudden departure of Miss Crompton and her aunt from Mrs. Strivewell's reception caused a buzz of inquiry to hum around the parlors. No explanation was given, save that they were unexpectedly called home—whether on account of sickness or accident no one knew. Every one wondered what could be the cause, every one expressed regret at Miss Crompton's absence; every one ventured the hope that nothing serious had happened, and all alike tried to invent a possible reason for the summons. Miss Crompton, therefore, continued to be a theme of conversation throughout the remainder of the evening.

Van Gilding returned to the parlors a little time after her departure, and received the message left with Mrs. Strivewell for him. He turned very pale on hearing it, and appeared much agitated.

"I hope that nothing serious has happened," said the hostess.

"I hope not," replied Van Gilding, seemingly in deep study.

"No one was ill at the Cromptons'?" queried Mrs. Strivewell.

"No, I think not—er—at least I heard nothing of any one being ill."

"Mr. Crompton was at home?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Possibly he is ill, then?"

"Possibly he is."

"He usually comes to my reception, you know."

"Yes, I believe so."

"If he had been ill, though, his sister and daughter would not have left him."

"I think you are right—they naturally would not."

"No, I am sure they would not—Miss Crompton is so fond of her father, you know."

"Yes."

"And he is equally fond of her—worships her, even—has ever since his wife died. An excellent man, Mr. Crompton."

"Yes."

"I'm so anxious, fearing something has happened—an accident, possibly."

"It is possible," replied Van Gilding, looking towards the floor.

"I don't see how there could have been an accident, though—in a private house, too."

"Neither do I, though strange things do occur now and again," said Van Gilding, wiping the perspiration from his brow. Excusing himself with the remark that he was too anxious to remain longer in ignorance of the cause that called Miss Crompton home, he hurried from the room and was soon making his way down the avenue.

"How devoted Mr. Van Gilding is to Miss Crompton, to follow her so soon!" said some one.

"He is all devotion," replied Mrs. Strivewell. "I thought surely he would faint when I told him how suddenly she had been called home."

"Yes, I noticed it," returned the other—"was so nervous and seemed so anxious."

"Yes, poor fellow, I believe it would kill him if anything should happen to her."

"She is such a lovely girl, I would not be surprised."

"The sweetest girl in all my acquaintance—so bright, you know."

"Yes, and so refined—so ladylike."

"Very wealthy, too."

"The only child, I believe."

"Yes—will inherit all her father's fortune."

"How nice, and I am so fond of her!"

"So am I—every one is, in fact."

"Her manner is so cheerful, and she seems to enjoy making others happier."

"Yes, that is her way—her very presence lights up a room."

"Makes it sunny and cheerful. I've noticed that myself."

"Always has been so ever since she was a small child."

"How fortunate Mr. Van Gilding is—when is the marriage to come off?"

"Very fortunate," replied Mrs. Strivewell, "but

he is a splendid fellow—always such a gentleman, you know.”

“Yes, seems to be—they have been engaged about a year, I believe?”

“Hardly a year—pretty close to it, though.”

“I should think they would marry—both have plenty of money.”

“Yes, I suppose so, though the Van Gildings are not as wealthy as the Cromptons.”

“Enough, though, I dare say.”

“Oh, I dare say.”

“Well, I almost envy them their happiness—two such delightful young people.”

“Well matched, and a love match, too—devoted to each other, you know.”

“So I understand—love matches are always so charming—so interesting, you know.”

At this point the foregoing conversation was interrupted by Major Poodel, otherwise it might have continued for the rest of the evening, so little substance is actually necessary in the conversation of two women—some women. Though not especially edifying, it will serve to show how dearly Miss Crompton was loved by her associates, and in what high esteem Van Gilding was held.

At length the party was over, and all went home to sleep—to sleep and wake and behold what?—murder! Murder at the Crompton household recorded prominently in all the morning papers.

The mystery was solved—the mystery regarding Miss Crompton's summons home, only to give place to another, as yet dense and unfathomable.

Society was astir at least an hour earlier than on any previous day since the commencement of the season.

"Was Mr. Crompton guilty of the murder? Could it be possible that he would commit such a crime?" each asked the other, groping for a clew to the mystery. It was an important matter to all those now denominated "the four hundred," as Miss Crompton was no ordinary society girl. For two full years she had been a leading belle—for two full years she had been more admired, more flattered, more praised, than any other in the exclusive circle. What was society to do now—condole with her or shun her? What should it do—what could it afford to do? These were questions asked and discussed and discussed again.

Hear what Bigs the brainless—Bigs the impecunious—the shadow of the rapid Milkston—had to say, bearing on the all absorbing topic.

"Do tell me, Mr. Bigs, if you have heard anything new about the murder," said a diminutive young woman. "I'm so curious about the affair."

"Every one is just so, don't you know?" answered the modern New Yorker of the genus dude.

“So strange, and do they think Mr. Crompton guilty?”

“Well, you see, there is no other explanation. My governor said suspicion would surely fasten upon him.”

“Said it would?” asked his questioner.

“Yes, that is what he said, and he is such a good judge of matters of this kind.”

“I should think he must be—a clever man, I know. But tell me what the club men say of the affair—they are such clever men, too.”

“Oh, very clever, don’t you know, and they think as my governor does. In fact, and between you and me, I can’t see any other way the murder could have happened.”

“Do you really think so? Then you think he is guilty?”

“I wouldn’t want to say that in so many words, don’t you know; but if you won’t repeat it I’ll tell you secretly that I think there is trouble ahead for the Cromptons. You understand, of course, that it is policy for a man in my position to be guarded, because if anything should occur to show that Crompton is innocent, why, don’t you see, it would be deucedly awkward for me, being in the same circle of society, don’t you know?”

“Decidedly awkward, of course. But do you imagine there is any chance that he will be found innocent?”

“It doesn’t look that way now, and yet it may

be—strange things happen sometimes, don't you know?"

"Yes, so they do. I wonder how Miss Crompton feels!"

"Must be a great come down to her."

"Mustn't it, though—any one as proud as she."

"Yes, any one as proud as she—and not so much to be proud of, either, as I see—not an old family, don't you know?"

"I'm glad to hear you say so—glad to find some one who doesn't rave over her. For my part, I'm positively sick of hearing her praises sung."

"I don't wonder at it, but I guess her praises will not be sung any more right away."

"Do you really think so?" asked the diminutive young woman, rousing herself from her habitual languor.

"Why, of course, she is under a cloud, don't you know?"

"And a pretty black one too, I judge."

"Of course, and who do you think would risk his reputation by—by—"

"By associating with her now?" suggested the diminutive young woman.

"Well, yes, perhaps that will do, though, you see, it wouldn't be the thing to take a pronounced position the other way."

"Yes, that is so—we will have to maintain a neutral ground for a few days till something more definite is learned."

XXVI.

THREE days of awful suspense, three sleepless nights went by, and Miss Crompton still had her father with her, though she felt that the cloud of suspicion was settling each hour more heavily upon him. Several times she saw a man eying the house—twice in the dead of night, and again late in the evening. “He must be a detective,” thought she, with a sinking heart, “sent here to see that my father does not escape. Oh, why should life yield such misery?” she soliloquized, walking to and fro in her chamber with clinched hands. “It is cruel, unjust to suspect him of this awful crime—so good a man as my father—always kind, generous and tender as a woman. What has he done, what have I done that this foul deed should be laid at our door?—this crime that taints our names, leaving us things to be shunned like a pestilence. Three days ago and I was petted, flattered and led to believe that my friends would make any sacrifice—die, almost, to give me pleasure. I called them friends, and friends they seemed, when friends I needed not; but now in this cruel hour, when I crave a look of kindness, a cheering word, I am deserted by those I loved. If this be friendship then friendship

is a mockery, a hollow, stalking mockery—mean, selfish, cruel—an ill shapen thing, cold to the touch—masquerading in the guise of warm ideality. And without friendship—that which we flatter ourselves is friendship—what has this world to offer that justifies man in facing the disappointments, the calamities, the misery that he is forced to meet? Only love remains, and love—can we be sure of that?” said she, drawing from her bosom a note—a tear stained note, showing many previous readings. It was from Van Gilding—the man who had promised to make her his wife. Refolding it, after dwelling upon its contents for some moments, she returned it to her bosom, saying softly to herself as she resumed her measured tread, “Strange he should have been taken ill at this time—not seriously so, he says—a cold—and prohibited by the family physician from leaving the house for a day or two. And that was three days ago, and he has not come to me yet—neither he nor any word save this. Perhaps he has grown worse and cannot write. How else can I account for his prolonged absence and this silence when I so much need his love—his presence?”

“His sister, though—his mother, his doctor—any one might write were he really too ill to do so. But I must not, will not think of him in this way. Something keeps him from coming to me, I know it does. He is delirious, perhaps, and cannot

think of me—does not realize how serious the situation is with us.”

The night dragged by, yielding to Miss Crompton a few hours' troubled slumber. The morning came, the sun rose brightly, emphasizing in contrast the gloom of her doomed home. But in a little time a cloud appeared in the eastern sky which grew larger and larger till at length it settled down over the face of the sun, turning the bright morning into a dismal day. She felt somehow that this change was ominous—that it foreshadowed the thing she most dreaded. “But why should it?” she asked herself. “I have seen just such days before,” she continued, with a deep sigh, “many of them, and they bore no ill forebodings to me. Perhaps, though, to others situated then as I am now, they served as warnings.”

This was a new vein of thought to Miss Crompton—a touch of superstition. But it having once taken hold of her, she could not rid herself of the idea. Today, then, the hours, misery laden as they were, flew by more swiftly than ever before. Every one she counted, wondering how many more would pass before her father would be taken from her. Twelve o'clock came—one, two, three, four; and now she began to hope that there was nothing in the ominous suggestiveness of the day. Half past four, five—five thirteen, and the door bell rang. It had rung many times before. She had heard it from a child up, and knew its every

sound, she thought. But alas, no, no; for never till now had it sent out such cold, hard tones—tones that chilled her and almost froze the blood within her veins.

It was as she expected; the stern, hard faced officers had come for her father, with a warrant for his arrest, charging him with the murder of Nathaniel Stover.

She threw her arms about her father when the officers entered the room, as if to shield him from their rude, cruel hands.

“My dear child,” he said, huskily, overcome by her emotion and tender love, “this is not the place for you. You must not witness this scene. I must leave you and your aunt to care for each other for the present. My lawyers will look after your wants. They have been instructed to do so, as this movement on the part of the officers of the law has been fully anticipated by me. I am sure,” he continued, “that it is no surprise to you, either, for I have read your thoughts only too plainly and with the most bitter pain. But through all—throughout these last four awful days—your love and courage and loyalty have sustained me, have been a revelation that repaid me in part for my anxiety and suffering. It is your sorrow for me and the weight of this terrible blow resting upon you, as I foresee it will, that pain me most deeply—that grieve me almost beyond my strength.”

"Oh, do not think of me, my dear father," sobbed the daughter. "Think only of yourself, and how to prove your innocence to the world."

Too deeply moved to say more, Mr. Crompton led his daughter to the door, and handed her to her maid, with instructions to take her to her aunt's room. The parting between father and daughter was so touching, so pathetic, that the eyes of the hardened officers grew moist, and they turned away sorrowful.

The worst was over now with Mr. Crompton. Returning to the officers, he soon became calm, prepared to face manfully the fate that awaited him. He was taken to the Tombs, and soon found himself confined in a narrow cell, meagerly furnished. What a contrast to his beautiful and luxurious home, and how suddenly the change had come to him! Four days ago his word was beyond question, his reputation was beyond reproach. Now, confined as a criminal, disgraced, his family in sorrow, ruined socially—as surely ruined as he himself, though they were in no way responsible for the crime.

XXVII.

MRS. WOODMAN had not yet fully recovered from the shock sustained on learning of the murder. She lay on a couch in her room at the time of Mr. Crompton's arrest, ignorant of the officers' presence. Miss Crompton, as requested by her father, joined her aunt, and, throwing herself into the latter's arms, with head buried upon her breast, sobbed heart broken, bemoaning the cruel fate that had fallen so heavily upon her father.

For a full half hour aunt and niece clung together in hysterical embrace, mingling tears with tears, their hearts going out to him who, handcuffed and disgraced, was dragged from their midst, charged with the crime of crimes—his very life in danger. At length Miss Crompton roused herself, and showed her aunt the strong, brave girl she was.

"We must leave this house—this wretched, crime stained house," she said, her words bearing the force of determination.

"Leave this house!" repeated Mrs. Woodman, surprised at this sudden resolution of her niece.

"Yes, we must leave it. I cannot remain here another twenty four hours, where I see always the murdered man haunting me—horrifying me. No,

we cannot stay here in this great house, so lonely now—the scene of our downfall. Tomorrow we will leave it—leave it forever—if another night spent within these cold stone walls does not rob me of my reason.”

“But, my dear, where shall we go, and how can we get away so soon?”

“Leave that to me,” answered Miss Crompton, quietly. “A long night is before us, and I would rather work than toss upon my bed and walk the floor the weary hours through, thinking of my father in a narrow cell—living over again the last four cruel days. No, no, I could not do it!” she said, with a shudder and a motion of the hand as if to bid the hated vision leave her. “I have heard it said,” she went on, “that work, more than anything else, tends to dull the keen edge of trouble. And so with busy hands I will try and endure another night here, where it seems to me I could not stay but for the prospect of leaving tomorrow.”

“But you will make yourself ill,” protested the aunt with troubled brow. “For four nights you have hardly had an hour’s sleep. You will break down, if you persist in doing as you say.”

“No, dear aunt, I shall not break down. The thought of leaving here will keep me up. I am sure I know what is best for me.” And turning to her maid she said: “Bring me writing materials and ring for a messenger.” A note was quickly dispatched to Mr. Cromwell, her father’s lawyer,

asking him to call upon her at once. Another was written to Van Gilding, and sent by messenger also. The servants then were summoned into her presence. She told them of her decision to leave the house on the morrow and asked them if they were willing to work with her throughout the night in putting things in readiness for moving.

"We will do anything for you, Miss Lela," they said with one accord, "if only you will go to bed and get some rest."

"No," she replied, "I would not ask you to work while I slept, even if that were possible to me at this time. We will all work together," she continued. "It is the best way I can spend the night. With you, I feel that I am in the presence of those who are interested in me—that your hearts are warmer and more loyal than those of many who have had better opportunities than you."

"We all loves you, Miss Lela," said Bridget the cook, "and will do anything for you," her eyes overflowing with warm heart tears.

"I knew you would, Bridget, you and Mary and Hannah and James—all of you," replied Miss Crompton, touched deeply by the warm, loyal words of the servants—an exhibition of affection strongly contrasted with the cold selfishness of those she had supposed to be her friends.

An hour later and Mr. Cromwell came in answer to her note. He had been with her father

at the Tombs, else he would have responded earlier to her summons.

"We leave this house tomorrow," said Miss Crompton, after talking at some length about her father.

"Leave here tomorrow?" exclaimed Mr. Cromwell doubtfully.

"Yes, tomorrow," was the reply, spoken in a way that left no question in the lawyer's mind of her intention.

"Where do you propose going, may I ask?"

"That rests with you, Mr. Cromwell."

"With me?" genuinely surprised.

"Yes, with you, for you must secure us an apartment tonight."

"Have you given this matter careful thought, Miss Crompton?" asked the lawyer with troubled brow.

"Yes, my mind is made up."

"But the time is so short," urged Mr. Cromwell, trying to make out if his client's mind had not become unsettled by the sudden and awful trouble into which she had been plunged.

"Quite long enough," replied Miss Crompton. "We—the servants and myself—will work all night, making the necessary preparations."

"Why this untimely haste?" asked the lawyer, now inclined to think Miss Crompton's mind really unhinged.

"It is not untimely," she replied quietly, but

firmly. "My plans are all made and will be carried out. We leave here tomorrow, as I said before, and shall expect you to secure us an apartment."

"Did your father suggest this movement on your part?"

"No, he did not."

"Knows nothing of it?"

"No."

"Would it not be well to ask his advice?"

"It would be useless to do so."

"Useless?"

"Yes, since we should leave here just the same—this scene of murder and misery. And besides, father must not be burdened with caring for us. It is for us to care for him, in so far as we shall be permitted to do so."

"Perhaps you are right," admitted the lawyer, seeing now the force of her position, and realizing that it was useless to oppose her plans further.

"What sort of an apartment do you want?"

"A plain, simple apartment—not showy."

"In what part of the city?"

"In some respectable, quiet locality—away from the avenues—away from the homes of all those with whom I have always associated."

"The time is very short," said he, looking at his watch—"eight o'clock already."

"The night is before you," replied Miss Crompton, in cool business fashion. "I shall depend

upon you to have submitted to me tomorrow morning the plans and particulars of several apartments."

"I will do all that can be done for you," said Mr. Cromwell, bidding her good night.

Shortly after his departure the door bell sounded. Miss Crompton heard it, and asked herself if it were he—meaning Van Gilding, the thought alone sufficient to quicken the movement of her blood. A minute later a card was brought to her in formal fashion. She seized it eagerly—read it—Mr. J. Norman Van Gilding. A ray of happiness—of old time happiness—shot across her at the sight of this name—at the thought that at last he had come to her—a ray of happiness momentary only, for a minute later her spirits sank at the formal and unusual manner of his announcement. "It means nothing, though," she argued with herself while descending the stairs to meet him. But she approached the reception room with uncertainty—with misgivings, feeling that if he were well enough to come to her now, he must have been well enough for some time past to write, if he had wished to do so. And, moreover, her faith in humanity was shaken, broken, gone forever, she felt at this time.

As she entered the room, her eyes turned toward the right, expecting to find Van Gilding seated in the bay window, a favorite place with him in the past. But he was not there. Facing the other

way, she saw him in the extreme end of the room, as if he had gone there with a view to putting as much space as possible between himself and her. He had risen, and, when their eyes met, bowed stiffly, awkwardly, betraying much embarrassment in manner and heightened color.

"Good evening," said Miss Crompton, not coldly, not warmly.

"Good evening," he replied, advancing slowly.

"I hope your health is improved," she continued, speaking as if to a comparative stranger.

"Yes, I am better," he answered, drawing a little nearer.

"I have been very anxious," she said, pausing suddenly, as if to study the termination of her sentence before uttering it.

"I came in response to your note," stammered Van Gilding, paying no apparent heed to what she had said.

"So it seems," remarked the other.

"This meeting between us, Miss Crompton, is necessarily strained and awkward," he continued, working his hands nervously.

"Miss Crompton!" How cold and distant the words sounded from his lips—from him who had so often called her by endearing names.

"I observe that it is strained and awkward, whether *necessarily* so or not," she answered—an answer that made him wince.

"It seems to me," he replied, after a moment's

hesitation, "that your distinction under the circumstances is ill timed."

"Perhaps so," said Miss Crompton, quietly adding, "will you not be seated?" indicating the chair for him to occupy.

He complied with her suggestion, while she threw herself upon the sofa—the most desirable place, she thought, for one about to pass through an ordeal that would perhaps overtax her strength.

"I am very sorry for your misfortune," he went on, evidently in a hurry to bring the interview to a close.

"I appreciate your sympathy," replied Miss Crompton, her heart going out to him at the slightest opportunity.

"Of course the calamity could not have been foreseen by me," he stammered, moving about in his chair uneasily. "If it had," he went on—then paused and stammered. "If it had," he repeated again, once more pausing.

"If it had?" said Miss Crompton, holding her breath.

"If it had, our relations would have been utterly different."

"Yes," said Miss Crompton, struggling hard for composure. "But you have not finished."

"If a man loses his property in speculation," Van Gilding continued, speaking as if delivering a sentence he had carefully wrought out and committed to memory, "or it is swept away by flood or

consumed by fire, he alone must bear the loss. His neighbors rarely—almost never—share it with him. The calamity is his and his alone, and he could not reasonably expect others to help him bear the burden. So, too, it seems to me that you cannot under the present circumstances look to me to fulfill my marriage engagement with you—cannot expect me to share your misfortune—the disgrace that has fallen upon your family—something that I had no cause to expect when I promised to make you my wife. Then your name was without blemish; now it is—well, you know the effect it would have upon mine and my family if our past relations were to continue. You cannot realize how much I regret the misfortune that necessitates this step on my part, and you cannot, I am sure, justly blame me for taking it—a step necessary in order that I may shield my mother, my sister—our old and honored family name from contaminating associations. I hope you will not think me unkind, ungenerous. I know of no other way than to speak plainly—words, I fear, that will pain you, yet which under the circumstances—the cloud that has settled over your family—had to be spoken in justice to myself and those whose interests are my interests.”

During the delivery of this cold, cruel speech Miss Crompton sat with her eyes fixed upon the floor, her face white as marble, one hand grasping the sofa nervously, the other pressed to her

heart as if to still the tumult—the tempest of emotions raging within her breast.

“Have you finished?” said she, speaking as one dazed—one from whom all feeling had gone.

“Yes,” replied Van Gilding, wiping from his forehead great drops of perspiration.

“I am glad you have finished—it is over, then—the worst,” speaking more to herself than to him, “the worst, all but one thing,” shuddering at the thought. “You too have deserted me—friends—associates—lover—all turned against me, all afraid of contamination. Oh, cruel, cruel!” she cried.

“But you cannot blame me,” interrupted Van Gilding, most ill at ease.

“And this is friendship—love—the love you gave me—the love for which I sacrificed all others,” she went on passionately, eloquently, unheeding his remark. “Oh, my mother, my mother!” she cried. “Why did you leave me in this selfish, cruel world? Would to God I had gone with thee!”

While uttering these impassioned words she rose to her feet, tall, graceful, eloquent in figure and feature—the embodiment of queenly dignity.

Van Gilding, nervous and uncertain before, now crouched and cowered at the burning sarcasm, the bitter contempt of this outraged girl.

“My father told me so—told me long ago, when first I learned to love you—told me the sort

of man you were—unmanly and without purpose. I would not listen to him—would not believe his words—my father who loved me and would have died for me—so little blemish, so little of this cold, cruel selfishness could I see in you. Fool that I was, blind, innocent, trustful—the victim of one who recoils from me the minute an unforeseen cloud descends upon our family name—recoils from me as from a pestilence, fearing contamination—yes, contamination—your own words! Oh, shame, shame, when manhood comes to this!”

“Here is the ring which once I loved—take it, hide it from my eyes—the ring with which you pledged your love in burning, eloquent words—take it, take it, I say; will you not take it, along with the thin, cold love you withdraw from her who needs it now, if ever a woman did—an honest love, I mean—not the crawling, policy-serving sort like this of yours.”

Taking the ring, Van Gilding moved towards the door—aiming once or twice to speak—stammering unintelligibly with head down, the picture of a crushed, frightened, treacherous coward.

Not another word was spoken between them, Miss Crompton standing as when she finished her last sentence—towering to her full height—her eyes fixed upon him, with every feature of her face, every muscle of her body, expressing keenest contempt and scorn for him as he gained the door and was lost behind it to her view.

XXVIII.

WHEN Van Gilding had gone, and Miss Crompton was left alone, the reaction came, and she sank down upon the sofa, burying her face in the soft pillow. She was true to her sex—a type of extremes. A few moments before eloquent, forcible, courageous, vehement, and now weak, prostrate, sobbing, racked with the tempest of emotions—broken hearted, discouraged, dejected—womanly, all womanly.

An hour passed, and still she lay there, pitiable in her grief, hating and loving almost at the same time the man who had so recently gone from her bearing the sting of bitter reproach.

Her maid came to her once, twice, and was each time sent away. She wished to remain alone, unable in her present state of mind to endure the presence of any one. Ten o'clock came. She was weak and exhausted. If ever one needed rest and tender care she was that one. The last four days had been hours of torture to her, sleepless, awful hours. In this time she had felt the danger that threatened her father, had witnessed his alarm, his suffering—had seen him dragged away to prison, had felt the treachery of friends, and now the man she loved, for whom she would have made

any sacrifice—given up even life itself—he, too, shunned her—his cold, cruel words piercing her very heart. There was no rest for her, nothing but anguish, misery, torture, so long as she remained in that house. She recalled her purpose to leave it on the morrow—her promise to work throughout the night with the servants.

Nerving herself for the effort, she rose from the sofa, pale and haggard, her eyes swollen, but with grim, steadfast purpose to carry out her plan. She joined the servants, who were alarmed at her appearance and made every effort to persuade her to take to her bed. Her aunt urged that the doctor be sent for, but Miss Crompton would not listen to this, knowing too well how ill she was, and that he would insist upon her abandoning her plan to move while in her present condition. Her mind was fixed upon the escape from that crime stained house, the tomb of her hopes, her family name, her love—all that was near and dear to her.

The night dragged slowly by and the morning came, and still Miss Crompton kept her place with the servants superintending the preparations for moving. Mr. Cromwell was on hand early with the plans of apartments as requested by her. One glance at her haggard features startled him. In all his long professional career he had never before seen a young face so expressive of suffering as hers. He remonstrated with her for having remained up all night when she should have been

under the doctor's care, and almost insisted that she should give up the idea of moving while in her present condition. But she was unyielding in her determination, saying that she must leave the house without delay, else she would never do so alive, for to live there in her state of mind and body seemed to her impossible.

The lawyer could easily believe this from her appearance, and so did not oppose her further. The plans were submitted, and a neat apartment in a quiet west side street was selected.

At three o'clock on that same afternoon Miss Crompton, accompanied by her aunt and maid, entered the family carriage and drove away from the scene of the tragedy, leaving forever the house wherein she had seen the happiest and most joyous hours of her life ; wherein a cloud of impenetrable gloom had settled upon her future. Less than a half hour later she entered her new home, which had speedily been made ready for her to take possession. Energy will accomplish much in a short time, and the apartment was orderly and comfortable when Miss Crompton first beheld it.

"It pleases me," she said to her aunt. "I hope you like it."

"Yes, new and clean and all the room we shall need," replied the latter.

"Quite large enough, and in much better taste for us now," said Miss Crompton, looking sadly upon the floor.

“Yes, Lela,” replied Mrs. Woodman, seeing the white face of her niece grow whiter, and in another instant the heroic girl fell forward, her exhausted nature giving way completely. She was supported by her aunt till the servants came, when she was taken to the room she had selected for herself, and put to bed. The collapse had come, the reaction had set in. Her will had been fixed upon reaching her new home, and she had steeled her nerves for the effort. The point gained, nature refused to do more.

In a little time the doctor came—her old physician. She did not recognize him now in her delirium. He felt her pulse, and, learning the strain to which she had been put, looked very grave. It was evident from his manner and from the guarded way in which he spoke, that he considered Miss Crompton dangerously ill.

XXIX.

VAN GILDING was inexpressibly shocked on learning of Stover's sudden and untimely death. Their partnership affairs had not yet been settled up. A thousand or fifteen hundred dollars had come in before the government stopped their mail. From this sum Stover had paid several bills, leaving a balance in his hands of perhaps a thousand dollars, which he had promised to turn over to Van Gilding on the following day. It properly belonged to the latter, as he was responsible for the advertising, and as their agreement was to the effect that Stover was to receive nothing personally until all expenses had been paid.

Migzer understood all this, Van Gilding having promised him a thousand dollar payment on the morrow—the thousand dollars that was to come from Stover. The latter had deposited all moneys received on the *Home Journal* to his own personal account—charging himself with them and giving the firm proper credit. The sum, then, that belonged to Van Gilding could be drawn only on Stover's order over his own signature, as the account stood; and as the latter was no longer signing checks, the sudden termination of his life left his partner in an awkward predicament.

“ HERE IS THE RING WHICH ONCE I LOVED—TAKE IT, HIDE IT FROM MY EYES ”—SEE PAGE 283.



The payment had been promised to Migzer, who had become pressing in his demands for cash. The money belonged to Van Gilding, but how was he to get it?—would it be policy to get it? These are questions upon which he dwelt with serious thought. It was learned that Stover left no will—that he had appointed no executor. No paper was found indicating that he owed Van Gilding anything. To be sure, the money on hand was credited to the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*, but as he appeared before the public as the publisher and owner of the business, it was thought that the credit to the paper was simply designed to enable him to keep a better record of his business—a usual thing among such houses. It was clear, then, that Van Gilding could never receive anything from Stover's estate without proving conclusively to the courts that he was a partner in the questionable publishing venture—and this he would not do for one thousand dollars or ten.

Migzer's surprise, too, at Stover's death—to say nothing of the means by which he came to it—was no less than Van Gilding's, and his regret was even greater, for he held the dead man's notes for twenty seven thousand dollars—given by him only a few hours before his death. These notes Migzer purposed having discounted in his various banks on the day the tragedy was made known. But dead men's paper is not bankable, and

Stover's did not go, much to Migzer's disappointment; to add to which Van Gilding now failed him on the promised payment.

"I must have money," said Migzer to the latter, very much in earnest. "You will have to raise some for me, or these mortgages on your property must be recorded. I cannot carry this load for you with no apparent effort on your part to help me."

Van Gilding, however, staved off the crisis until after Mr. Crompton's arrest. Then Migzer, satisfied that there was little to be hoped for from Van Gilding—that he had used him to the full extent of his value—without further warning had the two mortgages recorded.

The much dreaded blow had fallen at last, and was no lighter for the delay. On the contrary, the intervening time had been purchased at fearful and awful cost. A few days more, and the first notes he had given Migzer would fall due. That the mortgages had been given and recorded was still unknown to his mother and sister, but the facts could not much longer be kept from them. And yet Van Gilding hadn't the courage to make a clean breast of his unfortunate transactions.

"Is there no way I can possibly escape?" he asked himself. "This load is crushing me—eating into my very life," he groaned, walking his room at dead of night.

There was no Migzer now from whom to seek

advice. No Milkston either, the latter having drifted away into other circles. All Van Gilding's dealings with the villainous advertising agent were at an end. He felt the most bitter hatred for him, having cringed and cowered at his feet, sacrificing self respect, manliness—everything to prevent the recording of the mortgages. But all this served only a temporary purpose, debasing himself alike before Migzer and in his own self esteem. And now that all was over between them—that eating the dust would do no more for him—he craved revenge on the scoundrel who had deliberately planned his ruin.

On learning that the dread blow had fallen he went to Migzer's office, burning with rage. There he was told that the latter was out of town for the day. He was also informed that the room he had occupied was now put to a different use, and that Migzer could no longer let him have it. This intelligence made Van Gilding so furious that he lost his head and denounced the advertising agent to his clerks in bitter and graphic language.

The next day he went again to Migzer's place of business, no less wrathful than twenty four hours before. But now he was refused admittance to the office—refused an opportunity of seeing the man he sought, the man whose treachery had made him what he now was—something to be despised even by himself, haughty and arrogant though his nature was.

XXX.

MEN do many-foolish things in their coolest moments; under the influence of passion their acts are sure to be irrational. Van Gilding, always injudicious in matters where he should have shown sense and reason, now proved himself capable of equal folly when in anger.

From Migzer's office he went direct to the Astor House, where he wrote the advertising agent an ill advised letter, of which the following was part :

Yesterday I called at your office, as soon as I learned of your treachery in having the mortgage on my property recorded. I was told that you were out of town for the day, which I learned from investigation was false. You were not out of town, but skulked away to avoid meeting me—not having the manhood to do so. I was also told that you could give me desk room no longer, which shows that now you have robbed me of all the money I had in the world—property left me by my father—you want to get rid of me. Again today I called on you and was informed that I could not see you—could not enter the office even. This is monstrous, inhuman, on the part of one who deliberately planned my ruin for personal gain—doing all under the guise of friendship. I understand you now and can trace every generous act from your hand to that vulture's heart of yours—black and cruel.

But you have not seen the last of me. No more, however, will your oily tongue lead me into your meshes. Our meeting will be of a different character—a meeting in which I shall seek redress and get it, else your ways will be made plain to the world. Your deceit, your hypocrisy, your outrageous dealings—all will be made public—revealing the sort of craven you are to those who now look upon you,

as I did, as a man of most generous instincts, an ideal friend. All of this, I say, will be made public, unless you meet me as a man—assuming the role of a man for once—and make good in so far as possible the money you have stolen from me—make good the money and apologize for this outrageous treatment.

A cold, hard smile, of something like diabolical exultation, revealed itself in Migzer's face as he read Van Gilding's angry note—revealed itself only for an instant, and vanishing, gave place to a dark frown.

But he was too cunning, too wise to reply as he felt. He knew the folly of putting on paper what might at some time be used as evidence against him. He was wonderfully discreet in this respect, as was necessary for one of his character. His answer to Van Gilding was brief and to the point. In substance he said :

I note what you say, and beg to remind you that you omitted the statement of your connection with the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*. Your partnership with the late Stover was also evidently forgotten. If you wish to meet me as suggested, I will go over these matters with you and arrange for putting them before the public. They will make racy reading.

This reply, so cool, so suggestive, so ominous, was quite enough to dissuade Van Gilding from following out his plans for redress or vengeance, as the case might have been. A brief note was Migzer's, yet quite long enough to make Van Gilding cringe again and cower at the possibility of these dread facts becoming known to the world. By his angry letter he gained nothing, but lost more than he could at that time possibly

estimate. Up to that point Migzer had felt only contempt for him. He knew Van Gilding's weaknesses better than any other man, and had played upon them, gaining his own selfish ends, with the feeling of disgust that one of Van Gilding's superior airs, haughty manner and foolish pride could be so easily led and turned this way and that at will.

Up to the present time, I say, this was his feeling towards the arrogant scion of aristocracy, but now, pierced by cutting words and threatened with exposure, he felt the fires of hatred burning hotly within his breast. But he could not make public Van Gilding's connection with the *Home Journal* and with Stover without being drawn into the affair himself, and he was quite as anxious as Van Gilding to avoid embarrassing complications in a case that was attracting so much public attention as that of Stover's mysterious assassination. He did not want to feel that detectives were looking into his record and studying critically his connection with the murdered man. The thought was not a cheering one to his mind, and he was sure to let the matter rest, well hidden from the public gaze, if Van Gilding would do likewise. And there was little doubt of this, with the latter's pride to guide his acts.

"I must discover some other means, then, of making him feel my contempt—to teach him that he cannot trifle with me. He will see the time

that he will bitterly repent having sent me this threatening letter—the conceited snob,” muttered Migzer.

But the crafty advertising agent was too busy with financial matters at this time to give much attention to thoughts of revenge. He had been at work for months upon a great scheme of his own, of which the Van Gilding deal was but a part. In no less than twelve banks Migzer now had accounts, and in each one notes representing a good many thousand dollars were discounted. Some of these notes were genuine, given, as Van Gilding's were, for money owed. But many were what is known as accommodation paper—that is, notes made purposely with a view to raising money when the maker of the note owes nothing. All told, Migzer had under discount over three hundred and fifty thousand dollars at this time. Much of the paper was secured from friends by the method of exchange. That is to say, Migzer would give his note for a thousand dollars or more, as the case might be, to Mr. A., in exchange for the latter's note for an equal amount, Mr. A. doing this as a favor to his friend Migzer. With perhaps fifty persons transactions of this sort were made, some lending their name to paper to the extent of ten and even fifteen thousand dollars. They thought Migzer good for any amount. He was well rated by the commercial agencies, and it was to their interest as well

as a matter of pleasure to them to favor so generous a friend.

But very suddenly this generous friend, Theodore Migzer, the well known advertising agent, failed with liabilities close to half a million dollars—assets chiefly good will—value nothing. Several days before this fact was made public he had transferred his two mortgages on Van Gilding's property to a sharper like himself, who was in league with him in this nefarious scheme. The large sums of money in his various banks were checked out just prior to the failure, and drawn by an alleged Wall Street broker. This was done to make it seem that the money had been sunk in speculation, while as a matter of fact it came back to him in a round about way that could not easily be detected.

As he paid the papers nothing for the advertising placed for Van Gilding, having purposely failed before the bills came due, it will be seen that he made out of the latter not merely the fifteen thousand dollars in commissions, but a hundred thousand in round numbers. And this was his plan from the first when he led his victim into speculation, preparing the way for the great advertising scheme. The twenty odd thousand dollars in notes signed by Stover was accommodation paper. Stover did not owe this sum to Migzer, but loaned him his name on the promise of the latter to place a quantity of advertising for him

on his old line—the novelty business. Unfortunately for Migzer, but fortunately for the banks, Stover was murdered, otherwise these notes too would have been discounted, the proceeds going into the advertising agent's pockets.

As it was, they were worth something to him, Stover having Van Gilding's thousand dollars in his own name. Migzer, therefore, transferred the notes to another party prior to his failure—a party who would collect in due time from Stover's estate all available property and turn it over to Migzer. Thus again he bled Van Gilding for another thousand dollars. And his friends—all those who had favored him with their names as an accommodation merely—they too were victims of his cruel greed. Their notes they had to pay at the banks that discounted them, and being of course unable to realize on Migzer's worthless paper, their money was practically stolen from them—a sum that bankrupted several and turned others out of their homes, forcing them to sacrifice everything to meet their obligations. It was a pitiable sight to see his handsome house taken from one who had treated this scheming villain like a brother—to see his wife and children driven from it, seeking refuge in a humble flat. Never was scoundrel more cruel, more treacherous, more damnable in his cold, calculating methods, than this same Migzer—the embodiment of deceit, the essence of rascality.

XXXI.

IN a few days after Migzer's failure Van Gilding's first notes fell due. He knew the date of their maturity, but did nothing towards taking them up. Like one awaiting an impending doom, he went about dazed, hollowed eyed, pale and without appetite. His mother and sister were alarmed at his appearance, believing, however, that it was due to the sorrow he felt for the Cromptons—the heartache that tortured him at giving up the girl he had loved—an act necessary in their eyes as well as his, that the ancient family name should not suffer. But this theory was soon to be dispelled, for the notes for thirty three thousand dollars were now presented at his bank and returned unpaid—marked “no funds.” The next day proceedings were commenced against Van Gilding's real estate to satisfy the mortgage. The lawyer having charge of the Van Gilding estate, who knew thoroughly all the financial affairs of the family, was astounded when he learned this fact. But on investigation, which was made without delay, he found a record of the two mortgages made to Migzer, aggregating one hundred and thirty three thousand dollars—more than enough to wipe out the entire property. His

blood boiled with indignation at this revelation, for he had been counsel and friend alike to Van Gilding, Senior. He lost no time in going to Mrs. Van Gilding to acquaint her with the facts, and to discover if possible the cause of this shameful waste of property. He hoped, too, that there might be some way even now to avert the disaster in part. It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon when he rang the bell and sent his card in to Mrs. Van Gilding. The latter received him cordially, though looking much troubled.

"I hope you are not ill this morning," said the lawyer, noticing her nervous, anxious manner and wondering how to preface the disclosure.

"Not myself, but my son—he is very ill."

"Ill!" repeated Mr. Barden—for that was his name.

"Yes, ill in bed, and I am so anxious," returned Mrs. Van Gilding, nervously.

"And the cause——"

"This unfortunate crime, poor boy," the mother continued, not waiting for Mr. Barden to finish his sentence. "Nerves completely shattered, the doctor says," she went on, wiping the tears from her eyes. "The strain has been too much for him. He has looked like death ever since the murder was committed, poor boy, and he was so fond of her."

"You have my warmest sympathy," said the lawyer, debating with himself whether, with this

trouble on Mrs. Van Gilding's mind, he should tell her about the mortgage. Much as he shrank from doing so, he felt that as her lawyer it was his duty to lay all the facts before her.

"Finding you in this trouble," he went on, in sympathetic tones, "I have hardly the heart to still further burden you, but I feel that I must do so."

Mrs. Van Gilding became very pale at the sound of these words, and grasped a chair for support.

"Your son's illness," continued Mr. Barden, "is not due wholly, I imagine, to sorrow over the Crompton affair."

"What else can it be?" asked Mrs. Van Gilding, too impatient to wait for the natural unfolding of the story.

"Financial difficulties," answered the lawyer, pausing to see the effect of his words.

"Financial difficulties—my son?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I cannot realize it. There must be a mistake."

"I have a statement with me that points strongly to such a conclusion—in fact, it makes it absolutely certain," replied the lawyer, proceeding then to explain all he himself knew, which was quite enough to prostrate Mrs. Van Gilding.

"The property all gone!" she moaned. "All gone!" her eyes fixed staringly upon the floor.

"Will it not be possible for me to see your son and learn something of the transactions? This

man Migzer, to whom the mortgages were given, has just made an assignment. His failure looks exceedingly suspicious, quite enough so to make me think the man is a villain. I would like to know what means he took to get these mortgages from your son. It is of course doubtful if anything could be done; but I do not like to see this property go without a protest. If any portion of it can be saved, it should be done. Migzer himself has cleared out to escape arrest, as I learn. It will therefore be necessary to see your son and get his story, if any effort is to be made."

Mrs. Van Gilding was so bewildered, so shocked at this revelation, that she could make no reasonable reply. Her senses seemed to desert her entirely for a time, leaving her hysterical and in tears, and calling for her daughter. The latter came in answer to the summons, alarmed at the report the servant had brought of her mother.

"Tell all to her, Mr. Barden—all, all—you can do it better than I. Oh, I could not repeat it—oh, oh!" murmured Mrs. Van Gilding.

Her daughter, a young woman of probably twenty eight years, though severely shocked, bore the report much better than could have been expected. She seemed to possess some strength of character, and was evidently the ruling spirit of the household, her mother always depending upon her.

And it was fortunate that one like her was in

the family at this time, when her brother lay tossing above stairs in delirium, and her mother was prostrated beside her.

Learning at last of Van Gilding's helpless state, the lawyer left the house, knowing that it would be both useless and unwise to see him. Nothing more could be done to prevent the sale of the property, and matters were therefore allowed to take their course.

It was perhaps an hour from the time when Miss Van Gilding left her brother till she returned to him again. Then he was in a drowsy stupor; now he talked incessantly—his sentences broken, disconnected, and his pronounciation at times unintelligible. On discovering this, after listening a moment to his utterances, his sister, pale and startled, quickly dismissed the servant who had taken her place as watcher, and closed the door after her with unseemly haste. The keyhole, too, she stuffed with cotton—the keyholes of both the doors of the room, that no sound might reach the ears of any save herself.

XXXII.

FIVE days after the tragedy Miss Crompton was taken to her bed, the fires of her life nearly extinguished—merely smoldering. They had gone down so suddenly that at first it seemed not a spark even remained to give hope to those who stood over her watching with keenest solicitude for the slightest sign of life. The doctor, skilled in knowledge of the human body, and whose touch was so delicate that he could detect the slightest vibration—he alone could say that she was yet alive. Evidence of this, however, he could not detect with his eyes, for she lay as one dead—colorless and without motion. During the first week of her illness there was little or no hope that her life could be saved; but so long as the faintest spark remained, the good doctor toiled on with never flagging energy, bringing to his aid every means known to modern science to fan the smoldering embers once more into a blaze.

At the end of ten days he began to see signs of improvement—a sight quite sufficient to reward him amply for his untiring efforts. Each twenty four hours now showed a gain—a barely perceptible gain, for one reduced as she was, whose life has hung in the balance so long, does not recover

with a bound. She was much wasted and very weak. Could her father have seen her now, white as the white bed upon which she lay, he would scarcely have known her. The red cheeks, the well rounded form, the abounding spirits, had vanished, leaving her but the emaciated shadow of her former self. Her full, laughing eyes were now disproportionately large and inexpressibly sad. The old sweet smile, as natural as her very breath, was gone, and in its place was a subdued, sorrowful expression—the reflection of a sad and broken heart. And a few weeks only had wrought this change, so transforming the happy joyous girl that she was like another being.

Mr. Crompton in his prison cell was kept ignorant of her illness for a time, and even then was not informed how low she had been. He knew, however, that she was too feeble to come to him, else he would surely have had a visit from her, and as the days passed his anxiety for her grew—his desire to see her increased. Intense as was his own suffering, he felt that hers had been greater. He knew nothing of the severed engagement—of the cruel manner in which it had been broken, else he had almost burst his prison walls and wreaked vengeance upon Van Gilding.

With increasing strength Miss Crompton's chief aim was to go to her father—not to parade her own troubles, but to console him and assure him of her love and desire to be with him, to sustain him in

the trial, which was close at hand. But it was two months and more before the doctor would permit her to see him—not until a good share of her strength had been regained.

Van Gilding, prostrated nearly a week later than Miss Crompton, and like her suffering from the effect of shattered nerves, responded much more readily to the doctor's treatment. Five weeks from the time he took his bed, his mother, his sister and himself sailed away from New York, bound for Europe. But he was still feeble and haggard and much reduced in flesh. The unseemly haste of Miss Van Gilding and her mother to get away from New York, while their patient was yet so ill, was a matter of comment among their friends. The reason they assigned was that he must have a change of scene. The doctor did not fully agree with this view, urging the opinion that it was better for him to remain at least a few weeks more. But Miss Van Gilding was unyielding in her determination, and they sailed away from New York while her brother was yet too weak to walk without assistance.

That Van Gilding and Miss Crompton should be prostrated at the same time and by a similar cause was a peculiar coincidence, yet natural enough in itself and easily explained. But that Bainbridge should be at the boat on which Van Gilding sailed is not easily accounted for. It was strange, inexplicable, the work of fate.

In all the time Bainbridge had been in New York, he had never before witnessed the departure of an ocean steamer. But it so happened now that a friend of his was booked for a passage on this boat, and he went down to see him off, though the hour was unseasonable—six o'clock in the morning. Bainbridge stood on the deck near the gang plank, talking with his friend, when a close carriage drove up, and to his amazement he saw Van Gilding alight. Knowing nothing of the latter's illness, Bainbridge was much surprised to see him so wasted and haggard in appearance. His natural impulse was to relent towards his old enemy, now so weak and feeble. He watched him closely as he moved towards the gang plank, supported on one side by a man and on the other by a woman—whom Bainbridge took to be Van Gilding's sister from the resemblance she bore to him.

Half way up the plank he beheld Bainbridge, studying his features as if to divine the cause of his illness. Instantly he drew back startled—a bitter scowl settling on his thin, emaciated face, and exhibiting a degree of force that his appearance would indicate he did not possess.

The woman at his side gazed at him in wonder, uttering an exclamation that Bainbridge did not catch. The surprise over, the sick man proceeded up the plank, his head down, and was lost to Bainbridge's sight.

In a few moments the latter left the ship, the gang plank was lowered, and the great ocean racer commenced moving from her moorings. At this instant Bainbridge's attention was directed to a man running as if to catch the steamer or to see some one before its departure. As the man came nearer, Bainbridge noted that his dress was slovenly and that he seemed unsteady, as if suffering from a long debauch. And now he was quite near.

"Briggs!" exclaimed Bainbridge, instinctively drawing back. "Briggs—yes, 'tis he—the same scar running obliquely across his right temple—same face, I remember it well. How strange it seemed to me on the night of the accident to the carriage that this fellow should be with Van Gilding," he continued, musing, "and whom does he want here? Van Gilding again, perhaps," thought he, as he witnessed the disappointment shown on the fellow's face on discovering that he was too late, the steamer being already thirty feet or more from her wharf.

XXXIII.

ON the morning set down for Mr. Crompton's trial the court room was crowded almost to suffocation.

The prisoner's position in business circles and in society was quite enough to make him an object of unusual interest. The mystery surrounding the crime, too, and the decided opinions of the public—some contending that he must be responsible; others claiming that they would never believe him capable of such an act—all this awakened a strong feeling in the proceedings. As many, therefore, as could possibly gain admittance to the scene of the trial thronged into the court room. Many society people were among the number, curious to observe the prisoner's manner and to note the effect of his imprisonment—to see whether they could detect guilt or innocence in his face. They expected, moreover, to see Miss Crompton, the handsome daughter of the accused, and were anxious to discover how she had borne the disgrace that had come so suddenly upon her family.

But when they saw her enter the court room with Mrs. Woodman, her face veiled, and dressed in black, plainly and without ornamentation, many surprised glances were exchanged.

Could it be possible, they asked each other, that this was the Miss Crompton who had but a few weeks before charmed their circle with her beauty and vivacity?

A few minutes later the prisoner was brought in, pale and nervous. He showed plainly the anxiety and mental strain he had undergone since the crime was committed. One looking at him now for the first time, seeing his sad, troubled face, would never imagine that three months before he was one of the most cheerful of men, always entertaining his friends with bright stories and clever jokes.

Presently the judge entered, and in a few moments the court was opened. Mr. Crompton was allowed to sit beside his counsel, and seats not far from him were given to his daughter and sister. In due time a jury was secured and sworn in. The clerk then read the indictment, charging Wilson D. Crompton with the murder of Nathaniel Stover.

A presentation of the case was made by the District Attorney, setting forth what he should try to prove. Judge and jury alike watched the prisoner critically during this opening speech. No one present could say how his manner impressed them. But those in the audience who had stoutly maintained his innocence were surprised at his nervousness. They feared it would, at the outset, produce an unfavorable effect on the minds of the

jury. Moreover, the latter was composed of small traders and mechanics, whose homes were well removed from Fifth Avenue, men who naturally had little admiration for residents of Murray Hill. This fact alone placed the prisoner at disadvantage, though the jurymen were honest citizens, who could be trusted to render a verdict warranted by the evidence. But the human mind is so constituted that little prejudices, if ever so slight, are many times difficult to overcome. They have a decided tendency to give to words and acts a meaning that they do not naturally possess.

The District Attorney now called the first witness. He was James McHenry, the butler in Mr. Crompton's service. He testified in substance that he was employed by the prisoner; that on the night of the tragedy he was at the house, attending to his duties as usual; that at about half past nine in the evening, within a few moments after the departure of Miss Crompton and Mrs. Woodman, the door bell rang. "I went to the door," he continued, "and saw a man there, who, handing me his card, asked if Mr. Crompton was at home. I replied that he was, and, showing him into the reception room, took the card to Mr. Crompton."

A lawyer for the prosecution here asked if witness had ever seen the man before.

"No, sir," was the reply.

"Did you read the name on the card while taking it to Mr. Crompton?"

"No, sir; I did not, sir."

"You may proceed."

"I handed the card to Mr. Crompton. He looked at it for a minute, and said, 'Tell him I will be down directly.' I started to go, and when I had got near the stairs he called me back, and said, 'James, I think you may show him up here. I will not go down.' I said, 'Yes, sir,' and showed the man up to the library."

"You say," asked the District Attorney, "that Mr. Crompton looked at the card for a minute, and then told you to tell the man he would go down?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure of this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was Mr. Crompton in the habit of looking at cards sent up by visitors a whole minute before speaking?"

"No, sir; I cannot say as he was."

"But you are quite sure that he looked at the card on this particular night some time—a minute, before telling you that he would go down to the reception room?"

"I can't say, sir, that it was just a minute."

"But it was some time? In other words, the prisoner paused before speaking?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are quite sure that he did not always do this, when other cards had been sent to him?"

“Yes, sir; I am.”

“Will you please say if during this pause you noticed any unusual expression in the face of the prisoner?”

“He might have scowled a little, sir.”

“He might have, to be sure, but did he? Can you swear that he did not scowl?”

“I would not want to say so, sir.”

“You wouldn’t swear that he did not scowl?”

“No, sir.”

“Did his manner indicate to your mind that he was glad to see the man, or the reverse?”

“I judged, sir, that Mr. Crompton didn’t care much about seeing the man.”

“You remember distinctly having this feeling?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now you could not have had this impression without some cause. Kindly say, therefore, what led you to believe that the prisoner did not want to see the visitor.”

“It must have been his manner, sir.”

“Yes, doubtless; but will you kindly explain his manner to the court?” continued the District Attorney, pressing the witness hard.

“I don’t know as I can, sir, only the expression on his face,” replied the witness, becoming uneasy at the question.

“What was the expression?”

“It was a scowl,” admitted the butler, at last.

Witness was now asked to state what the pris-

oner was doing in his library when the deceased's card was taken to him.

"He was reading, sir," was the reply.

"What did you do after showing the deceased into the prisoner's library?"

"I went down into the kitchen."

"Did you not notice the greeting between the prisoner and deceased before leaving the library?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Did you hear any words spoken by either?"

"No, sir."

"How long did you remain in the kitchen?"

"Till I was called to the library."

"How were you called to the library?"

"By an electric bell."

"Whom did you find in the library when you got there?"

"I found Mr. Crompton and the man I had shown to the library about an hour before."

"You were summoned to the library, then, at about half past ten?"

"Yes, sir."

"Please state the prisoner's manner—say where he was and what he was doing when you entered the room, and also describe the position of the deceased."

"I can't just tell you, sir. I was so upset by seeing the man dead."

"How did you know he was dead?"

"Mr. Crompton told me so, sir, and I could see

for myself from the way his head rested on the table and the way his arm hung down all like a dead man's, sir."

"Where was the prisoner when you reached the library?"

"He was standing near the door. When he saw me he told me that the man was dead, and pointed to the floor where a bloody instrument was. I knew then that there had been a murder, and I asked how it happened."

"And what reply did the prisoner make?"

"He said he did not know—that he was down stairs, and when he came up he found the man as he was when I saw him."

"Is this the bloody instrument you saw on the floor near the deceased?" asked the lawyer, handing Mr. Crompton's long steel letter opener to the witness.

"It looks like it, sir."

After other questions on this point the District Attorney asked the witness to describe the appearance of the deceased.

Witness's powers of description were not especially good, but evidence to the effect that the deceased seemed to have been drinking was got from him. While not so intoxicated as to walk unsteadily, yet his flushed face and manner was like that of one who had drunk too much wine.

Witness stated that Miss Crompton's maid and the up stairs girl were on the floor above at the

time the murder was committed—that the cook was in the kitchen with him, and that no one else, to the best of his belief, was in the house. He said that he called the two girls down directly after learning of the tragedy. Their manner, on hearing of the crime, satisfied him that they knew nothing of it until told by him of the facts.

Witness could not account for the murder, as it was clear to his mind that no one save those already mentioned was in the house.

The next witness was Mary, Miss Crompton's maid. She testified that she went to her room directly after Miss Crompton's departure for the party; that she found there Hannah, the up stairs girl, who roomed with her; that they did not leave their room from this time until summoned down stairs by James, the butler; that she had never seen the deceased alive. She testified that Mr. Crompton's library door was almost never closed, and that very loud talk in the library could be heard in her room with her door closed. She had not heard the door bell ring, she said, and did not know that any one was in the library with Mr. Crompton till the sound of voices reached her room.

“The fact, then, that you could hear the voices in the library while in your room with the door closed is evidence that the voices must have been raised to a high pitch?” asked the District Attorney.

Witness admitted that such was the case.

Several of the jurymen exchanged suggestive glances at this point, and the prisoner's counsel looked less happy than those for the prosecution.

Hannah, the up stairs girl, corroborated the evidence of the preceding witness. Then expert testimony was introduced, which showed that the deceased had drunk freely of wine less than two hours before his death. This testimony confirmed the opinion expressed by the butler.

Bridget, the cook, testified that James the butler was in the kitchen from the time he answered the door bell until summoned to the library by Mr. Crompton.

This, then, made it clear that he could have had no hand in the crime. His whole time was accounted for, as was that of each of the other servants. And all alike testified that they had seen no strange person of suspicious character in or about the house. They were intelligent, honest appearing servants, whose testimony was so straightforward that it had great force with judge and jury alike. It was evident that they were very fond of Mr. Crompton, and, while telling the truth, aimed always to have their testimony show as little against him as possible. This fact was noted by the jury, to the detriment of the prisoner's cause.

But their evidence, notwithstanding their purpose to shield him, all tended to the belief that he

committed the crime, since no facts were brought out to show how it could have been perpetrated by another.

And now the prisoner's career from childhood was dragged into the case, introducing testimony that consumed two full days. The quarrels he, like other boys, had had with playmates, were graphically told, with the view of showing that his temperament was impetuous, uncontrollable, when suddenly angered. From boyhood the prosecution passed on to his stay in Woodville, bringing out testimony of a damaging nature. The engagement to Rachel Hargrave was dwelt upon at length. Keen detectives had dug their way to the very bottom of the affair, and were on hand with witnesses so biased that the story Mr. Crompton told his daughter of the romance was almost unrecognizable beside that made up from their testimony. Big Jim Smith, who had been a rival with Stover for Rachel Hargrave's hand, was put on the witness stand. He remembered the affair perfectly, giving all the details that the court would admit. According to his testimony, there was ill feeling between himself and the deceased for a time after the latter proved victorious in the contest for the girl's hand. But when the prisoner stepped in between deceased and Miss Hargrave, then Stover came to the witness, telling him of his troubles. Deceased felt crushed at the loss of Miss Hargrave's affections, and blamed

prisoner for winning her away from him. Deceased was fondly attached to her, and claimed always afterward that had he married her his whole life would have been different. Disappointed and disheartened, he took to drink, left Woodville and followed the sea for a number of years. Deceased never married, and led a more or less irregular life from the time prisoner won his sweetheart away from him. Deceased had often talked the matter over with witness and blamed the prisoner for doing as he did. Witness testified that a bitter feeling existed between deceased and prisoner when the engagement between Stover and Miss Hargrave was first broken off. Unkind remarks of both deceased and prisoner were admitted as evidence. Witness's memory was wonderfully retentive on all these matters, and his testimony was corroborated by others of the Woodville settlement. The prisoner's manner of breaking off the engagement between himself and Rachel Hargrave was aired in court. Contending lawyers wrangled over all these points, but generally the prosecution succeeded in bringing out the facts, whether admitted in evidence or not. And if ruled out by the judge, the simple story was not without its effect upon the jury. That the prisoner should deliberately plan, as it appeared from the testimony, to break the engagement between the girl and deceased, and then adopt a clever scheme to break it between himself

and her, served to strengthen the prejudice against him that already lurked in the minds of the twelve jurymen, tinging all the evidence with a darker hue.

A letter was found in deceased's effects from the prisoner. It was written only the day before the tragedy was committed. It ran as follows :

DEAR SIR,—I have thought over very carefully your request for a loan of money, but I cannot think it advisable to let you have it. Twice you have borrowed money from me before, and have failed to return it as agreed. I know of no reason why I should *give* you money, for lending it to you amounts to the same thing as *giving*. Had you returned the other loans, you would have shown yourself worthy of my confidence. Your statement holding me responsible for your unsuccessful career, on the ground that I caused the engagement between you and Miss Hargrave to be broken off, is not creditable to you. It shows very little strength of character, very little of the manly quality. I decline to give you money on such grounds, or to think myself responsible in any way for your shortcomings. That Miss Hargrave preferred me to you was her affair, and not yours. I wish, therefore, that you would not annoy me further about the matter. The money you owe me you can keep, and welcome, only don't ask me for any more. I am too busy to give you any more time, so write this letter that you may understand the situation. But before closing it, I will take the liberty to suggest that if you would let your "schemes" alone, and avoid the use of liquor, you could earn at some honest employment sufficient money to keep you from the necessity of borrowing.

Yours truly,

WILSON D. CROMPTON.

Letters get many people into trouble. They furnish telling evidence, which cannot without great difficulty be disproved. This letter, signed by the prisoner—written just previous to the committal of the crime—taken in connection with all

the other testimony, was quite enough to make the defense quake with fear. The prisoner had followed the testimony with keen, business-like intelligence, and he was for the most part astounded at the evidence submitted. Every act of his whole life, every jest or thoughtless remark, now seemed to spring up from the earth, like a ghostly skeleton, to damn him. And all these little acts and idle speeches, now that the finger of suspicion was pointed at him, were like small hempen strands—tiny, frail things of themselves, but which, combined with others and skillfully arranged, would weave a cord of sufficient strength to hang him.

And now the prosecution rested their case, having accumulated evidence from all the quarters of the earth, as it were. The trial had been on four days, and thirty witnesses and more had given testimony against the prisoner. How many more were there in the world, he wondered, who could add still other touches of black to his well blackened reputation! Until the night of the tragedy he did not know that any one save the deceased could truly say an unkind word of him; but now, alas! how many there were to give graphic testimony to the ugly flaws in his character.

With mingled feelings of shame and resentment at beholding himself as he had been painted—hot tempered, selfish, cruel—he took the witness chair

in his own defense. Curiosity was warmed to a degree of intense interest. The prosecution had made out so strong a case that even those who had stoutly maintained the innocence of the prisoner, now wavered in their faith, and admitted, in suppressed whispers to close by friends, that the outlook was dark—almost hopeless. But they trusted that he might be able to say something for himself that would overcome the effect of the combined testimony of the other side.

There was less certainty in his manner than at the commencement of the trial. He had lost faith in humanity, while listening to evidence that made him the thing he was not. He knew the true history of his childhood wrangles, of the love affair with Rachel Hargrave. As he had told his daughter about the romance, so it was, but now how different it appeared, as given by others and heightened in effect by the suspicion that rested upon him! He began almost to doubt his own senses—to think the whole thing was some horrible nightmare. But this was dispelled when he took the witness chair and with one hasty glance at the audience saw many familiar faces, their eyes fixed upon him as if they would read the secret of his very heart. He shuddered at the thought and looked down for an instant, then glanced cautiously at the faces of his daughter and her aunt. Both were thickly veiled, but he fancied that they were pictures of despair, and

drew a long breath, suggestive of his own depression. This nervousness passed off somewhat when he had commenced testifying, but not soon enough to escape the bad effect it produced upon the jury. He stated that he was at his home and alone in his library when the card of deceased was brought to him as described by James the butler.

“I was annoyed that the man should come to my house to see me,” he went on, “when I had written him only the day before, stating plainly that I could not let him have any more money. My first thought was to go down to the reception room and get rid of him as quickly as possible. But after a minute’s deliberation, I called the butler and told him to bring deceased to my library. Presently the man came up, his face much flushed and presenting the appearance of one who had been drinking—not one who was intoxicated, but who had perhaps drunk a good deal of wine at dinner.

“I said ‘good evening,’ rather coldly, and asked him if he did not get my letter.

“‘Yes,’ he replied, sitting down without receiving an invitation to do so.

“Till then I had remained standing, hoping to cut the interview short, but seeing that he had evidently come to stay for some time, I took a chair on the opposite of the table from him.

“‘Yes, I got your letter,’ he went on, ‘and

called at your office today to see about it, but was refused admittance.'

" 'I am aware of that,' I replied, 'as your card was handed to me by one of my clerks.'

" 'I suppose so,' he said, a trifle angrily.

" 'My letter and my refusal to see you today should be sufficient to make you understand that I cannot be bothered with your requests for money,' I replied.

" 'But if it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be here now,' he went on. 'You stole the girl away from me that would have been my wife. With her I would have been a different man—wouldn't have taken to drink, which I did to try to forget her. And now you tell me you won't help me after causing my ruin—won't lend me a little money to get started with in something that will pay me.'

" 'Stover,' I said, 'I'm ashamed of you. You have no right to make such charges.'

" 'Didn't you do it?' he demanded, his voice becoming elevated, 'didn't you do it?'

" 'Enough of this nonsense, Stover,' I replied, sharply. 'I will not have it in my house.'

" 'But it is a fact,' he continued, much excited, 'a fact that you stole her from me, and you can't deny it.'

" 'I did not care to have matters of this sort discussed so loudly that the servants could hear what was said. I therefore thought it advisable

to quiet him. 'And you hold me responsible for your failure in life, simply because you didn't marry the girl you loved?'

"'Yes, I do,' was the decisive answer.

"'Do you think such a statement is manly, Stover?' I asked, looking him steadily in the eye.

"'It is manly enough to suit me,' he muttered.

From this point witness continued his testimony, repeating the conversation between himself and deceased, stating that after a while he yielded to the latter's request for a further loan of money.

"I turned to my desk, then," he went on, "to write a check for deceased. My check book was not there. I looked in several drawers for it, and could not find it. It suddenly occurred to me that I had written a check while at the dinner table. The book had been brought to me there. 'Excuse me a minute,' I said, 'while I run down stairs and get my check book.' I remembered placing it on the mantel beside the clock when I left the dinner table. When I reached the dining room and turned on the gas, I found it where I had left it. With it were several letters that had come by the late delivery, and were handed me while I was at my dinner. One of them was from deceased. I had opened it with the others, and seeing the signature, and assuming that I knew the nature of its contents, had concluded not to read it while at dinner. From that time until de-

ceased's card was handed to me I thought no more of his letter, my mind being much absorbed in a book I was reading. But seeing the letter now, I decided to read it before returning up stairs to the presence of deceased."

The letter was here put in evidence. It was long, and practically a repetition of deceased's plea for money, holding the prisoner responsible for his unsuccessful career. The postmark on the envelope indicated that the letter should have reached the prisoner about the time stated.

"The reading of the letter," continued the prisoner, "occupied several minutes, and as much more time was spent by me in deliberation. I was provoked at the man's charges, and felt inclined even now to refuse him the money he asked for. Just how long I was away from the library I cannot say. I should estimate that ten minutes would cover the time. When I returned, I saw deceased, his head resting on the table, his right hand a little removed from it, and his left hanging over the side of the table. My first thought was that he had become drowsy, as the effect of the liquor he had drunk died out, and that he had fallen asleep. Acting on this supposition, I called him by name and went to him, placing my hand on his shoulders to rouse him. But when I reached his side and beheld his ghastly features, I became alarmed. His appearance was that of a dead man. I turned from deceased to ring for the butler, with a view

to summoning medical aid. As I did so, my eyes fell upon something upon the floor. I picked it up. 'My God!' I said to myself, 'what is this?—my letter opener smeared with blood.' I could not believe my own eyes—dead, murdered, how, by whom? These thoughts rushed upon me as I dropped the bloody instrument upon the floor with a shudder of horror. Then I pressed the button, summoning the butler. I hardly knew what to do. This awful thing had come upon me so suddenly that I was staggered, bewildered, beside myself almost—questioning my own reason."

From this point the prisoner's testimony was substantially the same as that given by the butler, with the further statement that a physician was at once called in and that the authorities were notified of the crime.

Cross questioned by prosecution, prisoner admitted that he felt very angry toward deceased for coming to his house and for trying to raise money on the plea he put forth; that their voices were elevated, both being more or less excited at one time in the discussion.

On this matter of anger the prosecution dwelt at length, bringing out, by cleverly phrased questions, little points and shades of meaning, suggesting that the quarrel between prisoner and deceased was much more bitter than witness was willing to admit.

Leaving this part of the testimony, the prosecu-

tion pressed witness for a satisfactory reason for deciding finally to give deceased the money. "Your letter to deceased stated distinctly that you would not give him any more money," said the District Attorney, "and now, according to your testimony, you sought your check book with the view of drawing a check for him. What explanation can you give to the court of this change in your mind?"

Witness hesitated and answered evasively, whereupon the question was repeated sharply.

"I might have yielded to his persuasion," answered witness, evidently embarrassed and distressed by the District Attorney's manner.

"I do not want to know what you might have done," returned the lawyer severely. "I wish you to say what you did do. Now, was there or was there not a cause that led you to change your mind to such a degree that you were willing to give deceased the money he asked of you?"

"I cannot say that there was any definite cause," replied the witness.

"Will you tell me, sir, if in your business career you have been in the habit of changing your mind in this way, drawing checks without apparent reason for doing so?" continued the clever cross examiner.

"I cannot say that I have."

"Have you, or have you not?"

"I have not."

“ You have not ? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ But with the deceased—a man who had annoyed you as he had, who had no claim upon you, one who already owed you money, whom you had distinctly refused to aid further—in the case of such a man you change your mind, and propose giving him a check, and yet are unable to say just why you proposed doing so. Is this not peculiar ? ”

The answer to this question and to those that followed upon the same point was in effect that no specific cause led witness to change his mind, but that he decided to do so partially from kindly impulse, partially with a view to getting rid of deceased—to save further annoyance.

“ Is this kindly impulse to which you refer,” said the District Attorney, sarcastically, “ the feeling you usually have for those who annoy you ? ”

The prisoner’s reply was indefinite, and of a character to strengthen the case against him.

The purpose of the prosecution evidently was to discredit his testimony to the effect that he yielded to deceased’s request for money. Much time was put upon this point, and not without good effect.

“ You testified that you asked to be excused while you ran down stairs for your check book ? ”

“ I did.”

“ Was not this an unusual proceeding, to leave

a guest and go yourself for something that could have been brought by a servant?"

"Yes, perhaps it was."

"Was it your custom to do things of this sort?"

"It was not."

"But you say that you did so on the night that deceased was murdered?"

"Yes, I did."

"Could you not have easily summoned a servant to bring the book to you?"

"Yes."

"But you did not do so?"

"No."

"Can you give any reason for going yourself in this instance, instead of summoning a servant to bring the book?"

"No, I cannot."

"But ordinarily, if you had a guest with you in your library, and wanted something from below stairs, would you go for it yourself or ring for a servant to bring it?"

"Ordinarily I suppose that I should ring for a servant to bring it."

"But you can in no way account for the fact that you did not do so on this night?"

"I cannot, more than to say that it happened as it did," replied the prisoner, wearily.

Many more questions followed, and finally the matter of reading deceased's letter while down stairs was reached. Legal skill was put to its

severest test on this point to discredit the statement. With the fierce wrangling of opposing counsel, fully two hours were spent upon this portion of the testimony alone. When it was all over, and the prisoner stepped down from the witness stand, the feeling among the audience was that Mr. Crompton was a doomed man. His testimony for the most part was straightforward, and given with seeming honesty. But once in the hands of the keen prosecution, his statements assumed a darker hue.

It was evident that they did not believe his story about going down stairs for the check book, and they made a strenuous effort to break it down.

The butler was recalled, and testified that the check book was taken to the prisoner while he (the prisoner) was at dinner. He also stated that three letters came for the prisoner on the late delivery at about seven forty five; that they were handed to him while he was dining. He did not know whether prisoner read them or not. He did not know what was done with check book and letters. Did not see prisoner put them on the mantel, though he might have done so without witness's knowledge. Never saw them again in dining room. Did not hear prisoner or any one in dining room while he was below stairs at the time prisoner testified he was there.

All the other servants were put upon the stand again, and each testified that she heard no one

passing up and down the stairs or in the hall way. The cook said she had noticed no sound of footsteps in the dining room at the time prisoner testified he was there. He might have been there without her hearing him, but usually she could detect steps on the dining room floor.

A number of witnesses were put upon the stand who testified to prisoner's previous good character. The defense now announced that their evidence was all in, and, it being late in the day, the judge adjourned court until the morrow.

This sudden termination of the testimony caused a murmur of disappointment on the part of the society people who had watched the trial from the first. They had expected to see Miss Crompton put upon the witness stand. The heavy veil she wore had never been lifted. They had watched eagerly for a sight of her face, but she did not gratify their curiosity. They contented themselves, however, with the belief that she was sure to testify in her father's behalf, and then she could no longer veil her features. But she knew nothing that had any material bearing on the case, as she was away from the house at the time the crime was committed. And moreover her father instructed his counsel not to place her upon the stand, feeling that her testimony could do him no good, and wishing to save her from the rude glances of the crowded court room.

XXXIV.

THE interest in the case of Mr. Crompton, great as it had been on the previous days of the trial, reached a climax on the morning allotted to the closing arguments of opposing counsel.

The prisoner was haggard and worn. His manner was peculiarly nervous, and he showed evident traces of the severe mental strain to which he had been put. Now and again he spoke to his counsel—suggesting a thought for consideration. But for the most part his eyes were fixed upon the floor, his head bent, his brow wrinkled as if in troubled thought. In a word, his appearance was pathetic, so hopeless was the expression of his face.

Miss Crompton and her aunt were not in the court room. The prisoner had requested that they should remain at home. He wanted to spare them from listening to the argument of the prosecution, which he knew would paint him as black and cruel—as one with a bitter, distorted nature. He preferred that his daughter should not see him through the prejudiced eyes of the prosecution. Moreover he dreaded the verdict of the jury. It seemed to him that the strands of cir-

cumstantial evidence had been wound about him so tightly that escape was almost impossible. He could not endure the thought that his daughter should hear the jury pronounce her father guilty, and such would be the verdict, he felt almost certain. She had urged that she should be allowed to accompany him, but yielded to his request, feeling that she could not refuse the slightest wish of his.

Mr. Cromwell, the prisoner's senior counsel and lifelong friend, made the plea for the defense. He reviewed the evidence critically, putting his interpretation upon it. "And regarding the prisoner's stay in Woodville," said he, "why, it is absurd to drag these incidents into the case—incidents that occurred nearly a quarter of a century before. Any hostility that might have existed between deceased and prisoner at that time, growing out of the Crompton-Hargrave romance, had ceased to exist years ago."

The lawyer argued that as no quarrel between deceased and prisoner had ever taken place, the alleged hostility could at no time have been very bitter; that the fact that deceased had been to prisoner for favors, and that the latter had on two occasions granted them, was conclusive evidence that the old feeling had died out. It was very easy to magnify such matters, he argued, especially when for any cause one had had the finger of suspicion pointed toward him.

Leaving this point, the lawyer passed to the consideration of the letter written by Mr. Crompton to deceased on the day before the tragedy. He claimed that it was in no way extraordinary; that it was just such a letter as any man would naturally write to one who had borrowed money from him and failed to return it.

“And if it is such,” said he, “it should have no bearing on this case. Suppose, gentlemen,” he went on, impressively, “that this crime had been committed down town, or anywhere save in the prisoner’s house—suppose such had been the case, I say, is there anything in the evidence submitted—is there so much as a word in all the testimony that would suggest to your minds that the prisoner had anything to do with the crime? I am sure there is not, for you are reasonable men. Why, gentlemen,” he continued, with much force, “the case of the prosecution rests entirely upon circumstantial evidence. Not so much as one word of direct testimony has been introduced that implicates the prisoner.”

That the jury might understand how misleading and deceptive circumstantial evidence is—with what allowance it should be taken—he quoted a dozen cases where testimony of this kind had secured the prisoner’s conviction, when, as it was afterwards proved, he was innocent of the crime with which he was charged.

The prisoner’s home life and his standing in the

community were considered and discussed with much effect. Then followed an extraordinary appeal for acquittal, urging the jury to think well before taking upon themselves the responsibility of destroying a human life. With this the lawyer's argument closed. It was a clear, manly review of the facts, with careful, well grounded deductions. There was warmth and soul in his manner, and, as he referred to the desolate home, and pictured how horrible is the conviction of an innocent man to death, there were few dry eyes in the crowded court room.

Seldom had any one pleaded for the life of a friend with greater earnestness and with deeper feeling than the veteran attorney showed on this occasion. But from first to last he felt the disadvantages under which he was laboring, for to a trained lawyer of his experience it was easy to see that the jury had virtually fixed upon a verdict before the opening of his argument.

Mr. Cromwell was followed almost immediately by a lawyer named Brentwood, who was to make the closing argument for the prosecution. He was an especially strong pleader—a man of fine address and extraordinary command of language. He commenced his argument by ridiculing the theories and deductions of his opponent, and by taking the ground that circumstantial evidence is less liable to be misleading than any other. He admitted the genuineness of the cases cited by his opponent

to prove the danger of convicting on circumstantial evidence, but went on to show that it was a rare exception when justice miscarried from this cause.

“If you should see a man,” said he, “steal up behind another and deliberately stab him, your testimony would be direct evidence—the only evidence, according to the theory of my learned and eloquent friend, that it is safe to rely upon. But suppose you were to come on the scene just in time to see the assassin standing over the prostrate form of his victim with stiletto still in hand and stained with blood, then your evidence would be merely circumstantial. You could not swear that he committed the crime, as you did not see him in the act, and yet to your mind there would be no doubt of his guilt. But if circumstantial evidence is to be disregarded—treated as dangerous and unreliable—the murderer would go unpunished. Not one criminal in a hundred is found guilty on direct evidence. Circumstantial evidence is the great safeguard of the public—the only avenue to the assassin’s lair. Disregard it, and our deserted prisons will stand as the gloomy monuments of our folly, while the land flows with innocent blood.”

Passing on to the consideration of the evidence, he dwelt upon that portion relating to the temperament of the prisoner. Much had been made of this point by the District Attorney in bringing

out the testimony, but to the silver tongued speaker was left the work of giving it color and reality—of showing the volcanic nature of the boy Crompton. His early quarrels with playmates were drawn so cleverly, contrasting his turbulent spirit with the mild, yielding nature of much abused companions, that even then, far back in the prisoner's boyhood, he stood out to the imagination as almost a young fiend—cruel, hot tempered and overbearing. But these scenes of the prisoner's early youth did not afford the orator the play for his genius that he found in the Woodville episode. Now he was at his best, earnest, eloquent, pathetic, as he recited the history of the prisoner's entrance into the Hargrave home. Could one have heard the story as told by Mr. Crompton to his daughter and listened to it again as it fell from the orator's lips, he would never have recognized it as the same. Then it was related simply, without aim at effect, but now it was colored, twisted and distorted till the prisoner's character became the embodiment of cunning selfishness—a thing so crooked and deformed as to be shunned by all honest men. The feeling between deceased and the prisoner was taken up and discussed at length, with the purpose of showing that it was still bitter at the time of deceased's death.

Every act in the prisoner's life, and every jest or idle remark that could be turned to the portrayal

of such a character as the prosecution sought to build for him, had been dragged into the trial as evidence. They were commented upon by the speaker, and exhibited to the eye in so delusive a light as to appear black and even hideous in purpose.

The various views of the prisoner's character from boyhood to the present time, as drawn and colored by the speaker, were gathered together by him, and photographed with clear rhetoric into one composite picture, producing a type of face that might well cause a shudder.

"Now, keeping in mind this likeness, gentlemen," said he, "will you kindly come with me to the scene of the tragedy?"

Here the speaker went over the evidence and made a strong argument to show the improbability of the prisoner's testimony regarding his decision to give deceased money. The story of prisoner going down stairs for a check book and stopping to read a letter was ridiculed. Much was made of the evidence of the servants to the effect that loud voices were heard in their room, issuing from prisoner's library, and the steel letter opener—the property of deceased—smeared with blood, was handled with masterly effect.

"The evidence shows," said he, "that deceased must have been murdered by the prisoner, or else by some one outside of the prisoner's

house. And from the testimony, and in the opinion of the servants, it would seem utterly irrational to assume that some one from outside entered the house unseen, and committed the crime during the few moments which passed, as the prisoner testifies, while he was down stairs. The defense have utterly failed to show any motive for murdering deceased on the part of any one save the prisoner. But even granting that some one had a motive, is it reasonable, gentlemen, to suppose the assassin would follow deceased to the prisoner's house, that he would be able to gain admittance, that he would go to the prisoner's library just at the instant when he (the prisoner) was out of the room for a few moments only; take prisoner's letter opener, stab deceased to his death, leave the house quietly, unobserved by any—doing the whole thing in less than ten minutes—the time the prisoner testifies he was away from the library? Why, such a theory is too absurd for consideration—utterly irrational and without substance. And yet, according to the testimony, gentlemen, the crime was either committed in this way, or else by the prisoner."

The speaker continued at length on this point, and discussing his theory of the murder. He held that deceased had drunk just enough wine to be reckless; that he was angered at prisoner's letter, and again provoked at prisoner's refusal to see him at the latter's office, and that in this mood deceased

and prisoner quarreled ; that deceased became so provoking in taunts and manner that prisoner, with his hot temper and already bitter feelings for deceased, while in a fit of passion snatched up his letter opener and stabbed the deceased.

“This is a reasonable theory, and the only reasonable one of the killing,” said the speaker ; “and in matters of this kind we are supposed to get at facts through reason. It can be done in no other way. But my learned friend who preceded me, while offering no explanation of the crime, rests his case on what he was pleased to term ‘the excellent character’ of the prisoner. It was beyond belief, he argued, to suppose the latter capable of committing such a crime. But, gentlemen, let me ask you if to your minds it is so unreasonable, when you trace the prisoner’s career and learn his temperament?”

With a final appeal to the jury to perform their duty as men upon whom a great responsibility rested—urging them to be guided by the evidence and reason alone—to forget the pathetic features of the case—with this the speaker closed his argument.

The judge reviewed the evidence carefully and impartially. In his charge to the jury neither side could say that he favored the other. At the close of his remarks the jury went out. Court was then adjourned for two hours.

XXXV.

WHEN the court was reconvened it was found that the jury had agreed upon a verdict. The prisoner watched them as they filed in, the foreman in the lead. He tried to read the verdict from their faces, but could not.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?" said the clerk.

"We have, sir," the foreman replied. "We find the defendant guilty of murder in the second degree."

The court room was as still as death while the verdict was rendered. The prisoner listened to the words without flinching. He was as motionless as a statue. With the exception of seeming a shade whiter there was no change in his appearance. It was plain that he had not expected acquittal. If the verdict had been murder in the first degree, it is doubtful whether he would have cared. The one to him was as much as the other. His hopeless, utterly crushed manner showed this. It was so sad and pathetic that court and audience alike partook of the feeling. There was not a face in the room that did not show pity and seem to say, "I wish the verdict had been different." And yet no one disputed that it had been

rendered according to the evidence. Many had expected that it would be murder in the first degree, and they felt grateful when they heard the last words of the verdict, which removed all fear of capital punishment.

Mr. Cromwell, the senior counsel for the prisoner, was visibly affected. He had labored hard to clear his friend, whom he believed to be innocent of the crime, and the result of the trial pained him deeply. He made a motion for a new trial. This was denied by the judge, who almost immediately sentenced the prisoner to hard labor in Sing Sing for the rest of his natural life.

Counsel for the prisoner then appealed to the supreme court on what they claimed to be errors in the trial, and obtained a stay of proceedings. The case was heard at the May term, and the verdict of the lower court was sustained. Next an appeal to the court of appeals was made. In the latter part of November an opinion was received from this, the last court to which the case could be taken. It affirmed the opinion of both the lower courts, and the prisoner stood convicted.

Every possible effort had been made to save him, but all proved unavailing. The following day after the opinion came from the court of appeals he was sent to Sing Sing to commence his life sentence.

He had lain in Ludlow Street jail up to now, during which time he was allowed to see his

daughter and sister at frequent intervals. These visits from them, together with the hope that favorable results might be had from the appeals to higher courts, were all that kept him up, but even as it was he was but a shadow of his former self. The old smile had gone forever, it seemed. The gloom had settled so thickly upon his life that no ray of sunshine ever penetrated it—a pathetic, sad, cheerless existence was all that remained to him.

And this effect had been brought about not alone by his incarceration and the blight it had put upon his family, but by the entire collapse of all his business enterprises. When he was arrested some twelve months before, he was counted a rich man. His interests were in fact large and diversified. With bold tendencies and restless spirit, he went into many enterprises, putting in money and becoming responsible in some cases for large amounts of indebtedness. In these ventures he found pleasure. The dull routine of banking was not to his taste, though that was his chief business. But his mind dwelt largely upon the bold enterprises which he had undertaken. Associated with him in these were good men for details—good men to serve under an executive mind—and his was that mind. When he was charged with crime and dragged off to jail he was no longer able to manage these various enterprises. The fact, too, that the leading spirit in

them should be charged with the crime of crimes brought them into disrepute. His associates lost heart. Money was needed to save them, but could not be raised. No one wanted to touch the enterprises of an assassin. They promised great results, but involved the use of enormous capital. Mr. Crompton, with his reputation and acquaintance among moneyed men, had had no difficulty in floating the paper of the concern. But now it was all changed. There was no longer an executive mind to direct affairs.

The result of all this was that Mr. Crompton, who thought himself a millionaire when he was arrested, proved, when taken to Sing Sing, to be a bankrupt. The odium of an assassin had blighted every interest, financial and human, that was dear to him. It is a difficult matter to make money; it is the easiest thing in the world to lose it. Had this misfortune not come upon him, there is every reason to believe that two years would have seen his fortune at least doubled and possibly trebled. As it was, all was lost—not even a meager income being left to his daughter.

Seldom is a sadder case recorded than this of Wilson D. Crompton. To one in the lower walks of life—a man of coarse, brutal instincts who knows nothing of the pleasures of refinement and luxury—to such a man the prison walls and prison fare have less terror than to a sensitive nature like that of Mr. Crompton.

His loss was immeasurable—wealth, standing, home, freedom—all gone, and worse yet, a thousand times more bitter to him was the knowledge of his daughter's suffering. He had seen her crushed by the awful blow, seen her dropped by friends and shunned as a pestilence, and now, worst of all, left without the means of support—she who had been reared in luxuries, and courted and flattered by society, must now battle with the cold, hard world for her daily bread.

XXXVI.

“IT is perhaps better, dear,” said Miss Crompton, talking with her aunt, “that the property is gone. With father imprisoned for life, and this stain upon us, we have little to live for. Busy hands will make the days drag less slowly. But for father death would be a relief. So long as he lives, I hope, though, that I shall be spared, to cheer him on the visiting days. Oh, this whole thing is so cruel, so unaccountable,” she broke out in tears. “How could they find him guilty of that horrible crime—my father who is as innocent as I am—the most tender hearted of men!”

“Do not cry, my child,” said Mrs. Woodman, tenderly. “If tears would do any good, your father would have had his freedom long ago. But He who doeth all things well will not forget us in this, the hour of our tribulation.”

“I wish I could have your faith,” replied the niece with a deep sigh. “But God seems to have forgotten us, or else is purposely wielding his rod of punishment. And for what reason? What have father and I done to merit such scourging?”

“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,” replied the aunt.

“And can you believe that, dear? Is it not a strange way to show one’s love?”

“But, my child, we cannot understand the ways of the Almighty. They are high, and far above our comprehension. Some day you may see the purpose in this affliction, and yet it may not be revealed to you but to another. For my part I have faith in the God of your father’s father and my father’s father. I am as certain as you are that my brother is an innocent man. Why he should be thus punished I cannot say—perhaps to divert a worse calamity. But sooner or later the wicked one will be apprehended, and your father will be set at liberty.”

“Oh, I wish I could believe so,” said Miss Crompton, grasping her aunt’s hand. “But it takes so much faith, and now since cruel fate has so completely blasted our home and hopes I have none left. All looks black and dreary ahead of me. Nothing but toil and sorrow till the end comes.”

From this subject the two women drifted to the more practical discussion of their financial condition.

“My income, as you know, Lela,” said her aunt, “is only about four hundred dollars a year.”

“And mine at present,” replied the other, “is nothing, but it shall not remain so long. These apartments we must give up. They are too large and cost us more than we can pay. On the west

side of the city, in the new districts, anywhere from Seventy Second to Ninety Fifth Streets, are many handsome little apartments. Mr. Cromwell told me that they can be had—small cozy ones such as we want—for from twenty five to thirty five dollars. If you will come with me we will go at once and look at them, for the sooner we get settled the better.”

Miss Crompton's suggestion was acted upon, and in less than an hour the two women were busily engaged examining apartments. Their search resulted favorably, and a week later their home was transferred to Eighty First Street, between the Boulevard and Ninth Avenue. Sufficient furniture and bric-a-brac was retained to give the new apartment a very cozy, homelike effect. Everything else was sold—furniture, pictures, and a quantity of silver not needed in their new home. The result of the sale netted somewhat over seven thousand dollars. But a good proportion of this money Miss Crompton used in paying certain personal obligations of her father's, leaving her about three thousand. This sum she invested in securities that brought her five per cent, making her income one hundred and fifty dollars a year, or the combined income of herself and aunt five hundred and fifty. But as the rent for their apartment was in round numbers four hundred a year, only one hundred and fifty dollars remained for living and other expenses.

The necessity, then, of increasing their income was apparent, and Miss Crompton decided to take the matter into her own hands. But just what sort of employment she should seek was the subject of many discussions. At last typewriting and stenography was fixed upon.

"I prefer it," said she, "for the reason that it will bring us in a steady income whenever I succeed in getting a good position. Music, art, and all that sort of thing, are so uncertain and precarious, you know. Of course either would be more to my taste, but taste is no longer a factor for consideration with us. And then there is this other advantage in typewriting. It will keep my mind busy, so that my own troubles will not wear upon me as they would if I were painting."

"But I would so much rather you would try painting. I cannot bear to think of you going into business offices."

"But you know, dear," protested Miss Crompton, "my paintings have little real merit. They are pretty enough in a way, but have little, if any, commercial value. And my time must be exchanged for money, or we shall use up what little principal we have."

Mrs. Woodman finally yielded, and the next day Miss Crompton made arrangements with a quiet spinster who had a typewriting machine in her house, to learn typewriting and stenography.

XXXVII.

NEARLY twelve months have passed since any mention has been made of Bainbridge. The last time we saw him he was at the pier on the morning when Van Gilding sailed for Europe. Two years and a little more have gone by since he started his publishing enterprise under conditions so disadvantageous. Then every one aimed to discourage him, all agreeing that the project was foolhardy and hopeless. Today this same Bainbridge, who had the courage of his convictions, has a princely income. His paper is a great success, and month by month its circulation is gaining. The days of grim financial struggle are over with the young publisher, and he is now branching out in other lines of publishing.

Goggins, his old college friend, has remained with him, and now draws a handsome salary as business manager. The bare room in which Bainbridge commenced business has been exchanged for commodious, well arranged offices. Fifty names, perhaps, are on his weekly pay roll—clerks, compositors, engravers, artists, and now he decides to add another—that of a typewriter. To his advertisement in one of the daily papers he received

nearly two hundred replies—all by mail, as he gave the number of his post office box only.

Goggins had opened them all, and put them on Bainbridge's desk when he arrived at his office.

"All these replies!" said the latter, amazed at the unexpectedly large number.

"Yes," replied Goggins, "and I presume the next mail will bring another hundred or so."

"Well, here are enough in all reason—so many that it is difficult to tell which is the most desirable."

"I should say each one is the most desirable, judging from the way she tells it," said Goggins.

Meanwhile Bainbridge sorted the letters into two lots—the better and the poorer ones. This done, he went over those that pleased him most a second time.

"Here is one, Goggins," said he, "that promises well—from a Miss Barry of Eighty First Street—West—the writing is excellent—well capitalized and properly punctuated—mighty important, you know, in a stenographer. Here are others that promise well—had experience, too, but some flaw—a misspelled word—badly constructed sentence—wrong use of capital—badly punctuated—not one of them perfect, no, not one out of all this batch except that of the Eighty First Street girl, and she has had no experience."

"Well, sometimes that is an advantage," remarked Goggins.

"How so?"

"Why, she will not have to unlearn anything."

"There is something in that surely, and I would much prefer a stenographer who will do correct work, even if she is a little slow."

"But this girl may not be so slow."

"Yes, that is so. Suppose, then, we try her."

"Very well—as you say," returned Goggins.

"You may write to her to come down in the morning—a good time for her to break in during my absence—oh, by the way, I didn't tell you that I have to go to Chicago tonight."

"No, I have heard nothing of it."

"Yes, got a telegram—shall be away a week probably."

"H'm, h'm—well, I'll see that everything goes well, and will write for Miss Barry as you suggest—hope she won't prove ugly enough to sour my disposition."

"It would take a monstrously ugly woman to do that, Goggins—no fear of you on that score, and then she may be your ideal—who knows?"

The following morning Miss Barry responded personally to Goggins's letter, and the room she was to occupy was shown her. It was a diminutive affair off Bainbridge's private office—just suited to typewriting purposes. A new machine, with folding cabinet, had been bought for her. Altogether everything was much more to her taste than she expected to find it. Goggins dictated a number

of letters, one of which went to Bainbridge at the Grand Pacific Hotel, Chicago. By the wording of it she learned that the proprietor was away.

The first day passed satisfactorily with her, and her work was acceptable to Goggins. The latter was very much of a gentleman, she thought, and he evidently tried to make her work easy for her. She wondered if the proprietor would be likewise considerate or if he were a sour old fellow who would make life miserable.

On Bainbridge's return Goggins met him at his hotel with his personal mail. They talked over the business and finally reached the stenographer.

"By the way, Goggins, is she as ugly as you feared she would be?" laughed Bainbridge.

"Ugly!" exclaimed Goggins, "why, she is anything but that—a lady, if ever I saw one—tall, good figure, and such fine features, but sad—why you never saw anything like it."

"Well, you interest me," replied Bainbridge thoughtfully.

"And she interests me—been trying to make her out all the week."

"Does her work well?"

"Yes—perfectly."

"That is the main point, and I'm rather glad if she is a lady, for I dislike to have ugly, bad mannered people around—they annoy me."

XXXVIII.

ON the following morning Bainbridge was at his desk looking over business papers when Miss Barry arrived. She had put her writing machine in order for the day, and was arranging letters for the file when Goggins introduced Bainbridge to her, saying that he was the proprietor.

She was evidently much surprised that a man of his age should be at the head of so large a business.

"I hope you find the office pleasant, Miss Barry," said Bainbridge.

"Yes, thank you," she replied quietly.

"This is your first experience at typewriting, I believe?"

"Yes, and I have found it much more agreeable than I expected."

"I am glad you like your surroundings. We will try to avoid giving you too much work."

"Thank you, but I think there is little danger of that, since I prefer being kept busy."

"That speaks well for you," said Bainbridge pleasantly. "And how goes the machine?—new yet, and may work a little hard."

"No, it does not—see, it does perfect work,"

she replied, exhibiting a page she had written on it.

"That is excellent," returned the young proprietor, examining the work critically. "The alignment is perfect."

"Yes."

"Nothing makes a page look worse than bad alignment."

"Nothing except bad spelling and the incorrect use of capitals," replied Miss Barry, daring to express her thoughts before her employer.

"I accept your amendment," laughed Bainbridge. "You are quite right, and do you know that the perfection of your letter in this respect decided me to send for you?"

The color tinged Miss Barry's cheeks, and turning the conversation she said: "Then it is to you I owe my position? I supposed it was to Mr. Goggins, as the summons came in his handwriting."

"Matters of this kind I usually decide," returned Bainbridge, carelessly, adding that if she was ready to take dictation he would give her a number of letters. "You had better come to my desk," said he, "and as I run over my mail I will give you the answers."

Several times he cautioned her not to let him talk too fast. "There is no need," he went on, "of hurrying you beyond your natural speed."

"I appreciate your consideration very much,"

said Miss Barry, "and if you can put up with me for a few weeks I think I shall have no difficulty in taking down your dictation."

"You already do very well indeed—surprisingly well for one who has had no experience."

"I am glad to hear you say so, as I feared that in the matter of stenography I might prove unsatisfactory."

"You need give yourself no further uneasiness on that point," replied Bainbridge reassuringly. "And now regarding your salary—Mr. Goggins, I believe, told you that I would arrange that with you."

"Yes," replied Miss Barry softly, her eyes resting on her note book.

"Would fifteen dollars a week satisfy you for the present, Miss Barry?" asked Bainbridge, studying her face critically.

"I did not expect nearly so much," she replied, lifting her large, sad eyes to his with surprise.

"You did not?"

"No," in lower tones.

"How much had you fixed your mind upon?"

"My teacher said I could hardly expect to receive more than seven or eight dollars at first."

"To tell you the truth, I had not expected to pay over ten or twelve dollars, but your work pleases me and I believe in rewarding merit."

"I thank you sincerely, Mr. Bainbridge, and only hope I shall earn the generous salary you

offer me," replied Miss Barry, a ray of happiness darting across her fine features—the first for many long, dreary months.

And Bainbridge was already repaid for his liberality in beholding the effect it had upon her. The brightest gleams of sunshine one ever sees in this world are reflected from a heart made happy by some kindness or act of generosity.

Bainbridge, unlike so many of our men of means, understood this fact and made his money yield him abundant reward for the untiring energy he had exchanged for it.

At night, when the cares of the day had been dismissed, and he sat in his room with slippers on his feet, lazily watching the soft yellow blaze from the burning coal, his mind went back to the morning. He thought of the surprise he felt when his eyes first fell upon Miss Barry. Goggins had told him a good deal of her, but he was not prepared to see one quite her equal.

"Her face is young," he mused dreamily, "and wonderfully sweet, but so sad and pathetic. She cannot be older than twenty, if I judge well—twenty or a year more at most. Her refinement of manner and her evident culture stamps her a well born, well bred lady. Reverse of circumstances, I doubt not, has compelled her to seek employment for support. Poverty to one who knows the luxuries of life is a frightful thing, and yet poverty alone could never tinge the heart with

sorrow so deep as that which burdens this fair girl."

And now Bainbridge opened his book and commenced to read, but the pathetic sadness of Miss Barry's features lay pictured before his eyes on every page. He heard her soft, sweet voice repeating her thanks for the generous salary he had promised. The ray of pleasure that he saw on her face, he again beheld, warming his heart a second time. "She seems so out of place in a business office—a woman of different fiber and finer thought and sensibilities than those of her sex who devote their lives to the strife of commerce. Well, misfortune did it doubtless—some cruel fate; alas, how it tampers with many a life, turning it from its natural course into by paths steep and thorny. One of the saddest features of life in a great city," he went on meditatively, "is the misery one is forced to see, feeling all the while his inability to relieve it. I meet a man on one corner broken down and asking alms; on the next is a woman with pinched features and outstretched hand; the adjoining block reveals another unfortunate to my eye, and so on from early morning to late at night these poverty marks punctuate the trend of our daily life. In smaller towns one can do much to relieve this suffering, but in such a city as New York the wealth of forty Vanderbilts would make little diminution in the number of those who seek charity. The best one can do here, I suppose, is

to help those with whose misfortunes he is familiar, and to deal out sparingly from his means to the great body of unfortunates."

These thoughts were suggested to Bainbridge by the reverses that he assumed had occurred in Miss Barry's life. Again he took up his book and read, or seemed to read. One, two, three pages were turned, and he threw the volume down and went to the window and looked out. It was raining, and the hour hand, he saw by his watch, had passed nine. "Too dreary," he said to himself, "to go out for a call and too late. How this evening drags!" he exclaimed, throwing up his arms with a lazy yawn. He walked several times up and down his room and again peered out through the same window. An electric light stood on the corner close by, dispelling the darkness so fully that any one passing could be recognized as easily as at noonday. Presently a shabby looking fellow came along. He attracted Bainbridge's attention by his unsteady gait, and because men dressed as he was seldom passed that portion of Fifth Avenue. The man came along to the corner, and, stopping, took from his pocket a memorandum book, with the evident purpose of reading something in the strong light. Having done this, he returned it to its former place as he supposed, and removing his hat for an instant, revealed his face to Bainbridge.

"Briggs!" exclaimed the latter with a shudder,

though why he should have this feeling he did not know. "Briggs—yes, the same scar on his temple, and still under the influence of liquor. Poor wretch, what is there about him that is so repellent? He has never done me any injury. The fact that he was with Van Gilding doubtless accounts for it."

In another minute Briggs was gone, having vanished around the corner, but as he moved away Bainbridge saw something drop to the sidewalk and fall off the curb into the street. "It may be his memorandum book," thought the latter—"a worthless affair, no doubt. Well, this is a peculiarly monotonous evening," he went on; "I wish I had gone to the theater or invited Gog-gins up here—half past nine only—too early to go to bed, and I'm not in the mood for reading."

After taking another turn up and down his room, he threw himself into his easy chair again to watch the fire and ruminate. Presently he thought of Briggs once more, and asked himself what the relation could have been between him and Van Gilding. His curiosity astir, he spurred himself to the effort of putting on his boots and coat to go down to the sidewalk and look for the mysterious something that he saw fall as Briggs moved from under the gaslight.

"Yes, I was right," said Bainbridge to himself triumphantly as he picked up the memorandum book and hurried back to his room. "A misera-

ble night out," he went on, talking to himself—"regular Boston east wind," and he hurriedly threw off his coat, and, putting smoking jacket and slippers on again, commenced the perusal of the memorandum book. "Is it just right to do this—to pry into another's secrets?" he asked himself. "No, it is not," said he, "and ordinarily I wouldn't do it, but this once I think I will, and I have no reason for doing so, either—none except my wish to discover the man's relation to Van Gilding."

The first entry in the book recorded the date on which he commenced work in a down town restaurant. "So he was a waiter," mused Bainbridge—"a strange sort of fellow to be hobnobbing with Van Gilding on lonely roads late at night."

A few pages farther on he discovered Van Gilding's name, and under it written the words "Marlborough Stable, Forty Fifth Street, West, 8:30."

Bainbridge now laid the book down, and going to his desk, hunted up a paper which he brought back with him. "Yes, it must be the same night," he said to himself, comparing the date of his writing with the one that preceded and the one that followed the Van Gilding entry in Briggs's book; "the very same night that I saw them on Riverside Drive—fifteen months ago," and Bainbridge read again his notes of the strange meet-

ing on that dark night. He had recorded the facts on his return home, expressing his surprise at seeing Van Gilding thus associated with one whose appearance and speech stamped him as a servant.

Laying down the paper he resumed the perusal of the book. On the second page following the entry referred to, Bainbridge discovered what seemed to be something written in cipher. This he took to be a memorandum recorded in initials. Somewhat farther on the fact of Van Gilding's departure for Europe was recorded, and a few weeks later there was mention of a sheriff's sale of Van Gilding's property.

"This is strange," said Bainbridge to himself, puzzled. "Van Gilding must have got into financial difficulties, but why this drunken waiter should interest himself, as he evidently did, is a mystery to me."

Nothing further of any importance was discovered in the book—not even the man's present address. "The whole thing is a mystery," said Bainbridge, as he prepared for bed. "And so Van Gilding's property was sold by the sheriff!"

XXXIX.

BEFORE ten days had passed after Bainbridge's return from Chicago, he had said to himself: "I regret that Miss Barry is in my employ. Her pathetic face haunts me, and the mystery of her life is much too frequently the theme of my thoughts." This was said with the contradictory feeling that he was glad she had come to his office, where she would be treated as a lady, instead of falling into the hands of a hard, unsympathetic employer. Conflicting emotions these, yet perfectly natural to one of Bainbridge's temperament. Had he been a man of coarse fiber, these thoughts would never have troubled him. But he could not meet day after day one suffering as Miss Barry was from some blighting trouble, without sharing the burden with her, and burdens of this sort did not rest lightly upon him. Sympathetic, generous natures never bear them easily.

"If I could only know the facts," he reasoned with himself, "I might perhaps do something that would to some degree dispel the shadows that so completely envelop her. I know of nothing more trying," he went on, "than to have some one appeal to me for aid when I am unable to give the relief sought. And she appeals to me with the

pathos of every movement—with her sad eyes and the yet sadder expression of her mouth. In the ten days she has been with me I have detected only a single ray of happiness in her, and that was when I fixed her salary at a larger figure than she had anticipated. But that one gleam—almost instantaneous as it was—showed the beauty of her face as God had intended it to be, and vanishing, left the sorrowful features darker than before.”

The door to her room, opening into Bainbridge’s private office, was seldom closed. As the latter sat at his desk, he could see her at her work by turning his eyes slightly to the right. Not infrequently, he would hear the sound of the typewriter cease, and, attracted by the stillness, look up, only to find Miss Barry so completely wrapped in thought as to forget her task.

“Again peering into the future, or dwelling upon some horrible past!” Bainbridge was wont to say to himself, as he studied the varying expressions of her face—fright, bewilderment, scorn, unutterable sorrow. “To read these thoughts,” he went on, speculatively, “would be to solve the mystery of her life. Is it a love affair, I wonder, and if so, how has it resulted in bringing her to the necessity of work?” And thus he pondered, gaining, he thought, at times, a little light.

Once or twice, as she sat beside him taking dictation, he made remarks that would have given her an excuse for confiding her troubles to him.

His motive was generous and manly—not one of idle curiosity. He felt that she must know this, and, knowing it, still preferred to guard her secret. He had no desire to pry into her affairs—only a purpose to help her if he could—to help her not only for her sake, but to rid his office of the gloom she had brought into it.

He had not the heart to tell her that she had better look for another position. Her work was well done, and the refinement of her manner was agreeable to him. But the cloud that hovered over her extended to his room, shutting out the cheerful air that he naturally loved to breathe. Just what to do he did not know.

A month passed, and he was no nearer solving the problem than when it commenced.

“In the six weeks she has worked for me,” said Bainbridge, meditating one evening as he lounged in his easy chair, smoking a fragrant cigar, “I have never seen her smile once—never seen her manifest the slightest interest in anything save her work. I cannot understand how any sorrow or combination of sorrows can be so great as to produce such an effect upon one whose natural disposition must have been sunny and cheerful. And she is so young, so beautiful. There is no greater mistake in all the world than that of dwelling upon one’s troubles. To worry over the future is worse than folly, but to dwell upon misfortunes of the past—the loss of money, position, friends,

lover, or whatsoe'er it be, is a crime against one's self—sapping the life and enervating the brain."

From this thought Bainbridge's mind drifted to other subjects. He went to his book case, and taking out an old college journal, read it with varying expressions—sometimes smiling, sometimes laughing aloud. Finally he came to the record of the debate with Van Gilding—the one referred to by Goggins in the opening chapter of this story, and a frown settled upon his brow. He threw the book down, went to his lounge, and stretched himself upon it at full length. Tonight he was in a thoughtful mood, and the college journal had recalled old remembrances. Since coming to New York his life had been so closely occupied with the present and his plans for the future that he had hardly turned to the past. But once getting back to the old scenes, he commenced to live them over again. Thoughts of his boyhood pressed in upon him, of his mother and father, the old home with its low roof and great shade trees, of the amusing incidents in his early career in telegraphy, of the depression he felt on realizing the limitations of the business, of his decision to get an education, and now he was back at old Yale again, thinking of the days of hazing and the bright hours of college life. Passing on, he dwelt for some time in imagination over the debate with Van Gilding—something of the old enthusiasm and the old bitter feeling com-

ing back to him as he saw the haughty sneer on the lips of his opponent.

"It will make you class orator," he heard Goggins say, with a thrill of pleasure, as he had heard it once before in reality. This thought brought back to his mind the breakfast and the story he had told Goggins—a story that had to do with Miss Crompton.

"I wonder what her life is now," he asked himself, "since her father's dreadful crime. Strange that he should have turned out a murderer—a man of his refinement and social position. I presume she may be the wife of Van Gilding before this—engaged nearly two years ago, I believe. And yet I saw him as he sailed for Europe, and she was not with him. He may have returned before this, though I have heard nothing of his doing so. Perhaps when her father was arrested, Van Gilding deserted her. His aristocratic pride, it strikes me, would hardly allow him to marry the daughter of a murderer."

That her father had been sentenced to State prison for life, Bainbridge knew, and this was as far as his knowledge of the Crompton family extended. When he saw her in Central Park riding beside Van Gilding, he had promised himself that he would think no more of her. He was not the sort of man to fall desperately in love with any girl without some good cause for doing so. He had met her but once in his life, and then by acci-

dent, and at a time, too, when their social positions were widely apart. But he admired her for her beauty and the charm of her manner, as most men would. He concluded that she and Van Gilding were much attached to each other, and this idea was confirmed a few months later when he was told that they were engaged. She had, to be sure, made a marked impression on him, but now that her hand was promised to another there was but one thing for a sensible man to do. Bainbridge knew this, and would not allow himself to look upon her picture—the picture graven on his memory.

The pressure of business, too, helped him in this determination, for he had little time for thought on other matters. He would not go to the court room during the trial, as he did not care to see her, humiliated as he believed she must be by the fearful crime her father had committed. Fifteen months had passed since the jury found Mr. Crompton guilty. With that verdict public interest in him and his family was at an end. Bainbridge had succeeded in disciplining himself to think no more of them. But tonight, in reviewing the past, he saw Miss Crompton again, and she was as beautiful to his eyes as ever. For some reason he lingered over the picture, studying it fondly. From her his thoughts returned to Miss Barry, and as he beheld the two side by side in imagination he sprang to his feet, startled and surprised.

“They are so like,” said he to himself, the color going from his face; “so like,” he repeated, now walking to and fro in his room. “But no, it cannot be Miss Crompton come to this, with all her father’s wealth. Such a thought is idle nonsense. And yet their figures are strikingly alike, and their features, too, so similar. I wonder why I have not thought of this before. Yet there is nothing in it, for Miss Crompton would never assume a false name, even if she were forced into the ranks of those who toil for a living.

“But suppose,” he went on arguing with himself, “it were she. Her father is imprisoned for life, and branded as a murderer. It is possible his property has vanished. And it would not be surprising if Van Gilding had deserted her. Sufficient cause I see in this for such a sorrow as that which blights the life of Miss Barry.”

For a long time Bainbridge pondered over this new phase of the mystery—dismissing it at last, bewildered and annoyed, as he sought his bed.

XL.

THE next day Bainbridge went to his office somewhat earlier than usual, resolved to determine whether his stenographer was Miss Crompton or not. He was at his desk when she came in, and raising his eyes to hers he greeted her cordially, at the same time studying her with critical look.

"You are here early this morning, Mr. Bainbridge," she said in her quiet, subdued way.

"Yes," he replied, "I am a little before my usual time, but I have a good deal to do today."

"I am glad, then, that I got through with yesterday's correspondence before going home last night," said she, looking really pleased, and continuing added, "cannot I help you in other ways than mere letter writing?—you have so much to do."

"You did not finish all those letters?" returned he, surprised.

"Yes," was the modest reply.

"I fear you must have remained very late, and it was not necessary," said Bainbridge, appreciating the interest she showed in facilitating the business.

"But I preferred to do so, rather than have them left over for today."

"I must regulate my dictation accordingly, then, as I do not wish you to overwork. To one who has not been accustomed to office life, this confinement cannot prove otherwise than trying."

"To one who has not been accustomed to office life!" she repeated to herself, the color mounting to her cheeks, with the thought that perhaps her employer had learned her history. Then, replying, she said: "I think there is little danger that I shall more than earn the generous salary you allow me," laughing with feminine tact to hide the confusion she had shown.

Her heightened color and the glimpse of her pretty teeth, revealed by the soft laughter, startled Bainbridge, so like to his memories of Miss Crompton was the young woman beside him.

He attempted to speak, hesitated, stammered and in desperation pressed an electric signal summoning Goggins. In another instant the latter responded personally, with an interrogation point in his eye. But Bainbridge was little better off than before, as he was now puzzled to know what to say to his clerk. "Mail opened yet?" he finally queried.

"No," answered Goggins, wondering at his employer's haste.

"Not opened—don't know what the receipts are, then?" stammered Bainbridge.

"Well, not exactly," returned Goggins, staring with surprise.

"No, I suppose not. That's all," replied the proprietor, his face bordering closely on the crimson.

Goggins returned to his own desk bewildered, and wondering what had upset Bainbridge's usually cool head.

Puzzled at his strange manner, Miss Barry sought to relieve him of his confusion by reminding him that he had not answered her question. She, too, was utterly at a loss to understand his embarrassment.

"Your question?" said he with rising inflection.

"I asked if I could not help you in other ways than letter writing," replied Miss Barry, surprised that he should forget the query so soon.

"Oh, I remember," returned Bainbridge, regaining his composure. "But I hardly know how to answer you. In fact, it seems to me that you are already sufficiently busy."

"No, my time is not very fully occupied. You see, I turn off the work much more rapidly than at first."

"I have noticed that you do. Your gain in speed has been extraordinary. But as to helping me—my work, you know, is largely executive in character."

"You devote a good deal of time to editorial matters," suggested Miss Barry, timidly.

"Have you any taste for such work?" asked Bainbridge, betraying surprise.

"I think I have a taste for it, though perhaps not the ability to do any part of it well."

"You shall try it since you wish to do so, and if you succeed at it, I can give you a much better position than you now have," returned Bainbridge.

She thanked him warmly for his kindness, and returned to her writing machine, thinking that her identity was still veiled from him.

Bainbridge's brain whirled with conflicting thoughts. She was so like Miss Crompton, that it seemed she could be no other, and yet he could not swear to her identity.

On the assumption that his suspicions were correct, he felt indignant—annoyed—that she should come to him in misfortune, and under a false name. "Before her father's horrible crime," he went on, wiping small beads of perspiration from his forehead, "she sought Van Gilding's company, and so far as I know never gave me a thought after I had landed her safely on shore, rescuing her from a sinking boat. But now, in poverty and disgrace—deserted doubtless by Van Gilding and the friends she courted—she turns to me. Monstrous!" he exclaimed, thrusting the pen, with which he had been writing, hard into the paper.

To one of his spirit a thought like this was sufficient to make him very angry. But after a time

reason, that stood him in so well on all occasions, overcame his indignation, and he studied the matter coolly. "It is possible," he admitted, "that she is not Miss Crompton, but if she is it is not certain that she remembers me. In fact, there is, perhaps, less reason that she should have remembered me than that I should have remembered her. Then I was merely a telegraph operator, and now at the head of this business. One naturally would not associate the boy operator with the New York publisher."

These thoughts softened the case, and made her appear to him less cunning, less designing. And with all his resentment and indignation there was a strange unaccountable feeling of pleasure.

In this bewilderment, Bainbridge put on his overcoat and hat and went out for a walk in the cool air. He did this that he might be alone to think and ponder over the situation. At the end of half an hour's vigorous thought he exclaimed with a triumphant smile, "I have it."

He returned to his office, placed his coat and hat in the wardrobe and went to his desk. A little time was devoted to his morning mail, a few moments to putting down notes on a pad of blank paper, and then he called Miss Barry and asked if she could take dictation.

"Certainly," she replied, and joined him at his desk.

He gave her one letter, and hesitated—took up

another and seemed to be reading it, then looked at the notes he had made just previously on the pad, and, though feeling like a criminal, proceeded with his dictation as follows, watching keenly meanwhile the expression on the face of his fair stenographer.

“MY DEAR HAWTHORN :—A letter from you always brings back our college days, and I live over again some of the happiest scenes of my life. Am very glad you are doing so well. You deserve success, and now in your new position you are on the road to the reward you seek. Yes, Goggins is with me yet, and has developed into a first rate business man—keen and conscientious. You ask about Van Gilding. I know little of him. Somewhat over a year ago he went to Europe under rather peculiar circumstances, and has not returned, so far as I can learn. You know he was engaged to a Miss Crompton of this city, the daughter of—”

The letter was never finished, for at this point the stenographer sprang to her feet and ran to her own room overcome with terrible emotion. She sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

Bainbridge's heart went out to her as he witnessed her agony, while he condemned himself for what now seemed cruel and thoughtless.

That she was Miss Crompton he was now certain, and he forgave her for coming to him in her misfortune, though only little more than an hour before he had boiled with indignation at the thought. The expression of her face at the mention of Van Gilding's name—the resistless blush and hidden frown—fear yielding to a look of keenest pain, as if she were pierced by a dagger, were quite enough

to torture Bainbridge, and he brought all his mind to bear to know how he might soothe her.

"Better she should understand that I know all," he said to himself with kindest feelings, as he approached her and called her by name.

The shudder that racked her frame at the sound of his voice was all the answer she gave.

"Miss Crompton," he said tenderly, "it pains me to witness your distress, the more so since I feel myself the cause. It was cruel and thoughtless in me to discover your identity by such means. But will you not forgive me, since my motive was not one of idle curiosity?"

And still she sobbed piteously.

"'Tis better, far better," he went on, "that we understand each other, for now I can perhaps help you in some way. Your sad, pathetic face has appealed to me till at times I have almost wished I had never seen you, since your secret you kept to yourself, rendering assistance from me impossible. But now it is different. I assure you that any kindness I can do you will be done with all my heart." And stepping to her side, he placed his hand upon her arm and raised her to a standing position.

"I appreciate your kindness, Mr. Bainbridge," she said, her eyes still buried in her handkerchief, "and will try to forget the wound you gave me. I can see that it was meant kindly, but do not know what to do—whether to remain here longer or not. I feel that I should not, and yet——"

“Do not talk of leaving under circumstances such as these,” interrupted Bainbridge, with pained features. “I should never forgive myself for my cruelty if you were to do so.”

“I must have time to think,” she replied. “This has come upon me so suddenly—so unexpectedly, that I am bewildered—beside myself almost.”

“Will you not go home now, where you can have quiet and rest? I will do your work.”

“And this is always such a busy day with you,” she murmured.

“Never mind that,” said he, in his generous way. “I am sure it is better that you should go home now, as you are not in condition to remain here. But again let me urge you not to think of giving up your position. You will find me a friend as well as an employer, and I am sure that friendship will not come amiss with you. Were you to go into some other office you might be better situated; you might not fare as well.”

But Miss Crompton was too full of emotions to trust herself to reply, and motioned him away with genuine thanks and tear stained eyes.

XLI.

IT was a little past midday when Miss Crompton walked into her aunt's presence. Her troubled face and agitated manner were those of one who had received a severe shock. Mrs. Woodman ran to her, asking what had happened.

"Nothing serious," replied Miss Crompton, struggling to hide her feelings.

"But, my dear, you are very nervous, and this is not your usual time for coming home," returned the aunt, much alarmed.

"I will explain all in a little time," said Miss Crompton, kissing her aunt almost hysterically, and throwing herself upon a couch.

Mrs. Woodman sighed.

Miss Crompton's breast heaved with emotion, the tears forcing themselves to her eyes.

Mrs. Woodman made an effort to soothe her, but she became more agitated, and giving way, burst into a fit of passionate weeping.

Mrs. Woodman wrung her hands, moving about on tiptoe and looking as if the last hope had vanished. The suspense was dreadful to her. She pictured the worst possible evils, working herself into a state of great excitement.

"It is cruel," sobbed Miss Crompton.

“Cruel!” echoed the aunt in utter despair.

A deep sigh, sorrowful and pathetic, shook Miss Crompton’s slender figure.

“The Lord help us!” exclaimed Mrs. Woodman, fainting and falling to the floor.

The shock with which she fell startled Miss Crompton, and springing to her feet she rushed to her aunt’s side. Her own sorrows were instantly forgotten in this new alarm, and she was now the same brave girl she had always been in the face of danger—thoughtful and sympathetic. With the aid of restoratives Mrs. Woodman soon regained consciousness, but complained of suffering severe pain on the side that came in contact with the floor. Assisted by a servant, Miss Crompton placed her aunt upon the couch she had but a few moments before occupied herself. An examination showed that the flesh on the shoulder was already discolored. Fearing that Mrs. Woodman’s injuries might be more serious than appeared on the surface, she sent for their family physician, meanwhile doing everything she could for her aunt’s comfort.

Personal sorrow is always most effectually silenced by an effort to soothe the sufferings of another. Miss Crompton no longer nursed her own grief or allowed her mind to dwell at all upon the disturbing thoughts of the morning. In a little time the doctor came, and his diagnosis of her aunt’s injuries lifted a load from her heart.

"No bones are broken," said he; "merely a bruise, but the shock to her nerves was more severe. You have no cause for alarm, however. With good nursing and nothing to annoy or excite her, she will be all right in a week or so. These powders," he added, "will have a quieting effect—one every three hours, commencing now."

Toward the middle of the afternoon Mrs. Woodman became drowsy, and finally fell into a sound sleep.

Miss Crompton sat beside her, a faithful and loving nurse. She blamed herself, feeling that she was the cause of her aunt's suffering.

"I should not have given way as I did," she murmured softly, "but the revelation came so suddenly, and it was so unlike him—the cruel words—oh!" she sighed, clutching her hands tightly, "he could not have realized how they pierced my heart."

And then she thought of her flight into her own room, and of Bainbridge's manly apology for the wound he had inflicted; of his generous, thoughtful treatment of her at all other times.

"The income I need," she went on reasoning with herself, "and must have. Were I to leave him, I could hardly hope to do as well, or to be as pleasantly situated. But to stay there, feeling that he knows all, would be so hard—so humiliating. He cannot respect me for having given him a false name, and yet it was the only thing I could do to

shield myself from the cold, coarse stare of the thoughtless world."

The afternoon and evening passed, and she had not yet decided what to do. Both sides of the case were argued many times without a decision. Her reason appealed to her to keep her position with Bainbridge, but her delicate sensibility caused her to shrink from the thought.

The night went by and the morning came, and still she was irresolute. Mrs. Woodman was too ill to be left alone.

"Fate has perhaps willed that I shall not return to him," thought Miss Crompton, and there was a trace of sorrow in her features. "To be obliged to remain away is in effect the same as if I did so of my own free will."

She did not regret ministering to her aunt, and gladly stayed at home on her account. But throughout the morning she felt a strange desire to continue in Bainbridge's employ, notwithstanding the contradictory feelings, from the very thought of which she shrank.

XLII.

BAINBRIDGE sat at his desk writing and glancing nervously at the clock as the hands climbed towards nine, the time for his stenographer's arrival. He had spent the evening and the early hours of the night in thought. Many times he had condemned himself for so cruelly wounding Miss Crompton. The extreme delicacy of her sensibilities he had not considered. Once or twice he had almost determined to write a more ample apology and send it by messenger, but he questioned the wisdom of doing so, fearing that she might regard it unfavorably.

Nine fifteen—nine twenty—twenty five—thirty—and no stenographer. Bainbridge moved about uneasily, saying to himself: "She is not coming;" and yet he counted the minutes, hoping that she was merely detained by some trivial cause. At twenty minutes to ten a letter was handed to him. He tore it open eagerly, and ran his eyes over the neatly written pages. It ran as follows:

MR. LIVINGSTON BAINBRIDGE,

DEAR SIR:—My aunt is too ill to be left alone. I must remain with her for several days and perhaps a week. You cannot in justice to yourself wait for me to return, and I am not certain that I could bring myself to the point of going back to your office, knowing how you must look upon me. I am very sorry that I am compelled to

leave you without a stenographer when you are so busy, but my place is with the sick at present.

With sincere thanks for your generous kindness and liberality,
Very sincerely yours,

LELA CROMPTON.

Bainbridge's face was brighter now. The deep shadows of anxiety that had clouded it vanished, leaving it cheerful as of old. Three times he read the letter over, finally gathering the conviction that she would not leave him on account of the thoughtless wound he gave her on the previous day.

The fact that nowhere did she state distinctly that she would not return was what cheered him most, and he believed that by delicate handling she could be persuaded to come back to his office again.

Viewed in the light of his indignation that she should presume to seek employment of him, his present anxiety is strange. But one rarely studies his own differing thoughts, whereas in another he is keen to detect the least inconsistency.

It did not occur to Bainbridge that he was now manifesting any special anxiety; if it had, he would have been puzzled to assign any cause, other than the sympathy he felt for Miss Crompton in her misfortunes. Pressed for an answer, he would have called it sympathy and believed himself sincere. That she might know that he would hold her situation for her, he sent the following note in reply to hers :

MY DEAR MISS CROMPTON: I am very sorry that your aunt is sick, but trust her illness is not of a serious character. Can I serve you in any way? If so, I hope you will not hesitate to call upon me. Do not worry about my being left without a stenographer. I can get along very well, and shall certainly do nothing about filling the place so long as there is a possibility of your returning. Since you had not up to this morning decided that you could come back, is it not possible that in your aunt's illness the hand of destiny has been felt, causing you to remain at home long enough to think wisely? This is a thought for your consideration. Deliberate calmly and at length. In your note you say: 'I am not certain that I could bring myself to the point of going back to your office, knowing how you must look upon me.' I think I understand you, and appreciate the delicacy of your feelings. A sensitive nature like yours could not well view the matter differently. You do yourself credit—do me injustice. The best purpose in life is to make others happy—best because it drives away the shadows, giving cheer to the world that is reflected far and wide. With such a motive I could hardly do otherwise than aim to help and to shield you from all annoyances. Your identity is known to myself alone in this office. Should you come back, therefore, you had better come as Miss Barry, and everything will move along as it did before my unfortunate blunder.

Again urging you to call upon me if I can serve you in your aunt's illness, and with the hope that her recovery will be speedy, I remain,

Very truly yours,

LIVINGSTON BAINBRIDGE.

The envelope was addressed to "Miss Barry, in the care of Mrs. Woodman, No. — West Eighty First Street."

Half an hour later it was handed to Miss Crompton. She opened it eagerly and yet with a feeling of reluctance, dreading lest Bainbridge would adopt her suggestion and employ another stenographer. But the letter was so generous and friendly that tears of joy filled her eyes as she ran

quickly over the pages. Again she read it, finally exclaiming half aloud : " He is an enigma to me—so unlike the men I have known."

Taking up the envelope she returned the letter to it, and now noticed the superscription it bore. " In the care of Mrs. Woodman," she said, surprised. " How did he learn my aunt's name? I am sure I have never mentioned her to him ;" and she bent her head in thought, puzzled at this new revelation. " Who is he, that knows so much of me, while I know nothing of him?" she exclaimed. " I cannot place him—never met him in society—never heard of him except as the publisher of *Breeze*."

Following her thoughts, she soon found herself back in his office, and finally came to the letter he had commenced dictating when she fled from him.

She recalled every word of it. They were burned into her memory. " A letter from you always brings back our college days," she repeated, with the look of one who had struck the trail he had been seeking. " He must have been a classmate of ——" she reasoned, frowning and refusing to speak the name even in thought. Here was a point gained. " Bainbridge a Yale man," she pondered, and with sharply focused thoughts followed back the path she had trodden from childhood on. At length she reached the Man-hasset, recalled the pleasures of her brief stay

there, and studied again the faces of those she had cared to give place in her memory. Finally she came to the incident of the shattered boat. This was somewhat out of the usual character of events, and Miss Crompton dwelt upon it for some moments, bringing to mind the strange position taken by the telegraph operator who rescued them.

"He claimed to be a college man," she said to herself, "but would not name the institution to which he belonged. I could never account for that, and the reason he assigned was so absurd—as if a classmate could be mean enough to do such a thing."

The word *mean* to her mind was synonymous with Van Gilding's character, and she said, with a perceptible shudder, "*He* might do it, though. I remember with what strange bitterness he spoke of the telegraph operator at the time, sneering at his claim to be a college man. Suppose it were he," she reasoned, "and the operator told the truth—I wish I could recall his name—his features even have gone from my memory. He said he spent his vacations at telegraphy, earning money to help him through college." Thinking of telegraphy, she recalled the fact that in Bainbridge's desk she had seen a telegraph instrument. "Absurd," she exclaimed, startled as the thought flashed through her mind that her employer and the young man who rescued her from the sinking boat were one

and the same. "Like a novel," she tried to persuade herself, "such things do not happen in real life. Not at all likely that one in his circumstances at that time would now be at the head of such a business as Bainbridge has." But the idea grew upon her. There was just enough romance in it to quicken the blood and stir the curiosity. As the days slipped by, while she filled the *role* of nurse, Bainbridge became more and more the subject of her thoughts, and the change from dwelling upon her own sorrows did her a world of good. The old time color commenced to show itself in her cheeks again, and her spirits were more buoyant than for many a day. Saturday night came, and with it a note from Bainbridge inclosing her week's salary, though she had been away from his office since Tuesday.

"I hope," said he, "that you are beginning to look more favorably upon the idea of coming back here whenever you can be spared from the sick room; and I trust that your aunt is doing well."

"Ought I to accept all this money, dear?" said Miss Crompton, running to her aunt with the crisp new bills, and looking very happy.

"A whole week's salary?" queried the aunt, with no little surprise.

"Yes, a whole week's—just see—fifteen dollars, and all such pretty bills."

"Mr. Bainbridge must have a kind heart," remarked Mrs. Woodman, thoughtfully.

"He says the best purpose in life is to make others happy."

"And you have contemplated leaving him to go into an office where perhaps you would be rudely treated?"

"I did think of doing so," answered Miss Crompton softly.

"I am glad you have changed your mind," replied the aunt, satisfied that her niece had done so. "But about retaining the full salary, your own good taste will determine that. It is evident that he wished you to accept it, or he would not have sent it."

Miss Crompton had not answered Bainbridge's first letter, as it did not call for a reply, but this note afforded her a chance to write to him, and she did so, feeling that the task was no great burden. Her letter ran as follows:

MR. LIVINGSTON BAINBRIDGE,

MY DEAR SIR: I hardly know how to thank you sufficiently for your kindness to me. The full week's salary just received was a genuine surprise, but I fear I ought not to keep it. I will talk further of this when I see you, which I hope will be no later than the middle of next week. I have decided to keep my position with you, if you still wish me to do so, and can wait a few days more. In the meantime, if you will send me some editorial work (you know you promised to give me some) I will do my best to please you.

Again thanking you for your kindness,

Very sincerely yours,

LELA CROMPTON.

"In a much more cheerful vein," said Bainbridge to himself, as he read the letter, experiencing a feeling akin to delight at the thought that she

would soon be again at her old place in the office.

He replied at once, saying that he should expect her as soon as she could safely leave her aunt. The tone of his letter was dignified and in good taste, though, perhaps, a trifle warmer than the mere business side of the matter called for. He expressed himself as very glad that she had concluded to come back, and said that he would take good care that she had no cause to regret her decision.

With the note he sent a book, just issued by the Scribners, asking her to write a review of it. "This will give you a chance to show me what you can do at literary work," he said.

Though ignorant of business and business customs, Miss Crompton nevertheless knew enough of human nature to feel satisfied that Bainbridge treated her with extraordinary deference for an employee.

"He knows something of my life, I suppose," she said to herself, with aching heart, "and seeks to dull the keen edge of my sorrows with kindness. 'Tis good to feel that some one cares for this in a world so cold and selfish, peopled by a race that could condemn my father to prison walls."

The book was now taken up and read with great care, after which she bent her energies to writing the review. Tuesday and Wednesday

were devoted to this task, and on Thursday morning she reported for duty at the usual hour at Bainbridge's office. He was at his desk writing when she came in. Rising with a pleasant smile, and extending his hand, he greeted her more warmly than she had anticipated, sending a flush of pleasure to her cheek.

"Here is the review," she said, handing it to him, with a tinge of pride.

"I shall read it with keen interest," he replied, adding, with a laugh, "for I am always searching for genius."

"If I did not know you were so generous, your satire would frighten me."

"If my generosity is all that stands between you and fright, then I shall cease joking altogether, as I do not wish you to leave me a second time."

"You must have had to work very hard without a stenographer," replied Miss Crompton, modestly.

"But I did not mind the work so much," returned Bainbridge, speaking as if he would like to say more.

A pause followed.

"You know, Miss Barry—" he began.

Miss Crompton quickly raised her eyes to his, questioningly.

"Is it not better that you go by this name for the present?" said he, understanding her instantly.

"Perhaps so," she replied, her face becoming very sad again.

"I am sure it is the better plan, and think you were wise to shield yourself in this way in the first place," returned Bainbridge, sorry to see her cheerful spirit vanish.

"But the shield did not hide my identity from your penetrating reason."

"It did so most effectually until ten days ago, and but for a peculiar incident that occurred several years before I should never have suspected that you were Miss Crompton."

"A peculiar incident?" queried the latter, darting a quick look at Bainbridge.

"Yes," said he; "and through this incident I got the clew I had tried so hard to discover."

"Your reference to something that happened several years ago strengthens a suspicion of my own—one that has been growing with me for nearly a week."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bainbridge, a trifle surprised—"makes you think we had met before you came into my office?"

"Yes, am I not right?"

"You are, but where?"

"At Shelter Island."

"Yes—out on the water. A strange meeting, wasn't it?"

"It is like a dream—I cannot realize it," replied Miss Crompton.

"More like a romance, seems to me," returned Bainbridge.

"A romance that has entirely reversed our positions," said Miss Crompton, never losing sight of the fact that she was merely an employee.

"Oh, do not talk of positions," he replied, annoyed at the thought. "There is too little substance in the idea. It has no place in this establishment. But tell me, how did you make the discovery?"

Miss Crompton explained the process of her reasoning, and Bainbridge then told how he came to connect her with the young woman he had rescued from the damaged boat, adding in his ingenuous way, "Then you asked me to assist you. Will you not be equally free with me now?"

Miss Crompton thanked him warmly, feeling that he was more the friend than the employer.

It was not till afternoon that Bainbridge found time to run over Miss Crompton's book review. Knowing so well how little to expect from untrained writers, he commenced reading it with mingled feelings of curiosity and dread. But as he proceeded his face lighted up with pleasure, and when his eye had reached the last line, he went direct to Miss Crompton and congratulated her.

"It is very clever," said he; "shows force and thought. Your style, too, is excellent—so good that I can hardly believe you have never written before for publication."

"Are you quite sincere in this praise?" asked Miss Crompton, her heart leaping with joy.

"Perfectly sincere," returned he, adding other good words for the manuscript.

"I cannot thank you enough for this encouragement," she replied, looking the words she had uttered.

"Your style, and the thought you have put into this one paper, give abundant promise of better work to come from your pen."

"Such flattering words bewilder me, coming so unexpectedly," said Miss Crompton. "Though I do not doubt your sincerity, I cannot realize that this little writing merits such praise."

"I am not misleading you," said Bainbridge in a way to inspire confidence. "You show too much promise of good literary work to devote any further time to stenography and typewriting."

"And you really want to send me away so soon—the very first day after my return?" queried Miss Crompton, with feelings of regret.

"If I were to consider myself in the matter, I should certainly urge you to stay here; but last week when you fled from me I came in here to you and promised to be your friend as well as your employer. To keep you here at your present employment, when I am satisfied that you are capable of undertaking a higher grade of work, would be a mean sort of friendship. Having had an opportunity to do you a good turn once before, and

knowing something of the misfortunes that have come upon you, for which you are in no way responsible, I feel a special interest in helping you. Will you not then become my pupil, undertaking such literary work as seems to me best suited to you?"

"Friendship such as this contrasts so sharply with the way of the world, as I have known it, that I almost doubt my own senses," replied Miss Crompton. "I can hardly realize the proposition you make me, it is so generous and unexpected, and I fear if I were to accept it I should disappoint you so much."

"I feel no uneasiness about that, since I do not often make a mistake in my estimate of people," returned Bainbridge, his spirits rising at the thought of bringing out a literary genius.

"And all the time I spent in learning typewriting and stenography will be thrown away," mused Miss Crompton.

"Not at all," protested Bainbridge. "It has proved a means to an end, a stepping stone to something better. Little things turn the course of our lives. But for your knowledge of stenography you would never have come into this office, and through coming here you find an opportunity to commence a literary career. Moreover, you will find both stenography and typewriting useful in your new field."

XLIII.

IT is now the early fall, and Miss Crompton has just commenced the writing of a novel. Six months have gone by since she left Bainbridge's office, and they have yielded her an income from her pen averaging a trifle over twenty dollars a week. But of far greater value to her than this sum has been the training she has received and the confidence she has gained.

Bainbridge never half did anything. He had undertaken to bring her out as a writer, and he bent his energies to the task. At first his motive was one of generosity, but after a time it became a matter of strong personal interest. He had little faith in the theory that men are born authors.

"It is a question of training, accident, or more often one of necessity, that makes a man write books," he claimed. The idea was something of a hobby with him, and he aimed to prove by Miss Crompton that he was right.

The grasp of her mind and the felicity with which she expressed her thoughts surprised and encouraged him. Yet there was much for her to learn about the art of composition, and he went over every line of her writings with her, criticis-

ing and suggesting improvements. Under such guidance her progress in literary work could hardly have been otherwise than rapid. Nothing encourages a young author so much as to see his writings in print. Bainbridge knew this, and exercised care that Miss Crompton should undertake no work which with his pruning would not be acceptable for publication.

From the mechanical side of authorship he took her to the realm of thought, leading her on to a bolder and broader plane of reasoning. People and motives were discussed philosophically, giving her a deeper insight into human nature. Finally they passed into the world of fancy, where together they worked up a unique plot for a novel.

"This will give you a chance to try your hand at story writing," said Bainbridge, with enthusiasm. "It deals with a phase of life with which you are familiar."

"But it is quite as much your idea as mine," protested Miss Crompton.

"I could not work it up as skillfully, however, as you can. Your imagination is stronger than mine, and you have a more perfect knowledge of the people to be portrayed. Moreover, I am not going in for the honors of the novelist, except as they are reflected upon me from you, as one who had something to do with bringing you out."

The novel once begun, Bainbridge found a

plausible pretext for spending many more evenings with Miss Crompton than before. He followed her manuscript carefully, sometimes suggesting slight changes, but much more frequently praising her work warmly. His good words were an inspiration to her, spurring her on to her best efforts. The development of the plot was so clever, and the satire so keen, that Bainbridge found himself amazed at the genius she was showing.

Fifteen days from the time the last page of manuscript was finished the story was in book form, handsomely bound in cloth. Bainbridge took half a dozen copies to Miss Crompton in the evening. How her eyes danced with joy as she turned the book in her hand, examining it critically.

"I think it is beautifully bound, and printed on such good paper."

"I am glad it pleases you," returned Bainbridge, sharing her happiness.

"It is lovely, and such good print."

"Let me congratulate you as the author of a very clever book," said Bainbridge, extending his hand and clasping hers with rather more pressure than the occasion seemed to warrant.

"I owe it all to you," replied Miss Crompton, the warm blood mantling her cheeks.

"Nonsense," said he, "you owe it to your own genius."

Miss Crompton protested against any such view, insisting that all the credit belonged to him.

“The book will make a great hit,” said Bainbridge, “and will give you a reputation. I only wish your own name could have appeared as the author, but some time, I have no doubt, you will receive the credit that your work really deserves.”

XLIV.

AT one of the small tables in Delmonico's, Bainbridge sat alone, eating his dinner and studying, meanwhile, the animated faces of those about him. Everybody seemed to be happy, laughing, chatting—getting the fullest possible enjoyment from the meal. He could not help contrasting himself with them.

“How much better they relish the food than I!” he thought.

His dinner was a somber necessity; theirs was a scene of pleasure.

For a good many months Bainbridge had eaten alone, but his loneliness never came home to him with such force as it did tonight. “Does food of itself such as this—as good perhaps as the world affords—does it constitute a dinner for man?” he soliloquized. “Is there not another side of his nature—one that feeds not on substance, but which depends upon the warmth of genial associations for life? If so, then I am starving the better portion of myself,” he went on, “starving it and becoming more and more the animal all the time.”

With this feeling he returned to his bachelor quarters. The rooms were handsomely furnished. A comfortable lounge, several easy chairs, pictures,

bric-a-brac, statuary and a fine library—all that he could wish for in the way of surroundings to minister to his comfort.

But he was not happy. There was no warmth in all this luxury—no soul, no companionship. He lighted his cigar, but the flavor of the Havana to-night lacked its usual sweetness.

“No more proof to read,” he sighed, “no more instructions necessary;” and his eyes rested upon the fire, while his thoughts pushed out beyond the narrow confines of his room.

“I wonder what she is doing tonight,” he mused—“writing perhaps, or more likely singing to her aunt. How sweet and soft her voice is, and her touch puts soul into the piano.”

After a time he picked up a novel and commenced to read, but his eyes wandered constantly from the lines. The heroine of the book—how dull and commonplace beside the heroine of his heart! The latter was to him everything that a woman should be—his ideal, sweet mannered, intelligent, beautiful in face and figure.

“But this creation of the novelist,” he said to himself contemptuously, “what is she? Weak—a pretty face without character—an insipid sort of girl—flirts well—laughs on the slightest provocation—but no heart—no breadth of reason.”

With this expression he threw the book upon the table and lighted a fresh cigar. He drew a few vigorous puffs, and then slowly emitting the smoke

"I AM SO HAPPY TO SEE MY LITTLE BOON PRAISED SO WARMLY."—SEE PAGE 404.



from his mouth watched it curl and eddy as it wound upward, and lost itself in the air. But his mind was not with his eyes. He was thinking of Miss Crompton and reviewing his relations with her. "She guards herself so carefully," he meditated, "never saying anything that would give me the slightest encouragement. Sometimes I think she cares for me more than she will allow herself to believe. Little things suggest these thoughts to me. But they are so delicate, so unpronounced, that I cannot safely rely upon my judgment regarding them."

Presently he roused himself from his reverie and in the absence of anything better to do decided to call upon a young woman whose acquaintance he had recently made. She was at home, and expressed herself as delighted at seeing him. An hour spent in her society, and Bainbridge was glad to escape from her effusive small talk and return to his rooms.

"An evening wasted," he said to himself, as he prepared for bed—"wasted utterly;" and the look of disgust on his face showed that he felt quite as deeply as his words would indicate.

The following morning brought the first review of Miss Crompton's book. It was by the *New York Tribune*. Bainbridge read it with a heart overflowing with delight. "This will give me a good excuse for calling upon her tonight," he thought, and his pulse beat more rapidly than for

a week. How the day dragged with him, though his hands were full of business, and business usually reduces time to a minimum.

It was perhaps a quarter past eight in the evening when Bainbridge entered Miss Crompton's presence. He was dressed in excellent taste, and looked his best—a manly fellow with fine physique.

"I am very glad to see you," said Miss Crompton, forgetting herself for an instant and betraying a pleasure at his coming which she would have preferred to conceal.

"Nothing puts a man more at ease than to be so cordially welcomed," returned Bainbridge.

Miss Crompton's cheeks flushed, the added color making her very beautiful.

"I hope you had no doubt about being cordially welcomed by one for whom you have done so much as you have for me."

"I believed you would be glad to see me, yet one can easily make himself a burden by calling too frequently."

"You need have no fears on that account. Your presence is always a pleasure," she replied guardedly, as if she would like to say more, but dare not do so. Turning the subject she added, "how well you look tonight—the first time you have ever honored me by wearing evening dress."

"But this is the first time my call has ever been strictly social," replied Bainbridge, thanking her

for the compliment, and taking a seat on the sofa.

"I appreciate this one especially, then, since you have taken the trouble to come to see me when you could spend your evening in society."

"And can you imagine that it is so much trouble to me, or that I would prefer the society to which you refer?"

"You must not ask me to imagine anything," she laughed, cleverly avoiding his question. "You know I am saving up all my imagination for another book."

"Yes, I know—the fact slipped my mind for the moment. But speaking of another book reminds me of something I have to show you—won't you come here?" indicating the other end of the sofa.

Miss Crompton hesitated—yielded—sat beside him.

"It's about you and your book," he said, taking the review from his pocket.

"About my book!" exclaimed Miss Crompton, at once interested.

"Yes, and it is as handsome a notice as I ever saw."

"Do let me see it!" exclaimed Miss Crompton with feminine impatience.

"See, all of that—nearly a column," said Bainbridge, handing her the review.

She read it with the eager pleasure with which

a child investigates a new toy. The very pronounced praise of the *Tribune* fairly intoxicated her with happiness. The reception accorded to the book was a veritable triumph. Tears were in her eyes when the last line was reached, and turning to Bainbridge she said impressively, "I owe it all to you—you are the best friend in the world, and I am so happy to see my little book praised so warmly."

"It makes me equally happy," returned Bainbridge, sharing her enthusiasm; "and the best of all is that the book will sell. This review alone will make a great demand for it."

"You know you said all along that it would have a good sale."

"Yes, I remember, and if it goes as I believe it will, your income from it will amount to quite a snug little fortune. You have won a great triumph, Miss Crompton, in writing this book," continued Bainbridge, now very serious—and speaking as one who did not trifle with words, he added, "You have done something else—you have won my admiration and my heart. May I not——"

"Oh, this must not be!" interrupted Miss Crompton, showing inexpressible pain as she spoke.

"Must not be!" echoed Bainbridge, the color leaving his face.

"No, *must* not be," she repeated, burying her

face in her hands, and yielding for a moment to an emotion that swayed her as a tree is tossed by the tempest.

Bainbridge was almost unnerved as he beheld her agony and realized what her words meant to him.

A half hour passed between these two, and how it passed the reader shall never know from me. There are secrets and feelings so delicate, so sacred, that even the novelist should respect them and refrain from revealing them to the world.

Satisfied in his own mind that Miss Crompton loved him, Bainbridge now pressed her for a reason for the position she took. He managed this with delicacy and clever tact, learning in the end that the stain upon her family name was to her mind sufficient to preclude any closer relation than friendship between herself and him.

"You have been too kind to me," she said, slowly measuring her words as she spoke, "too kind by far for me to allow you to make a false move from which I can save you. I think too much of you to permit myself to drag you down to my own social level. Your future now is rich with promise, and you should improve the opportunities you have. So long as my father, innocent though I know he is, stands condemned before the world, I—his daughter—must bear the stain of crime. *You shall never feel its blighting influence through me.*"

Bainbridge sought with all his power to convince her that she was wrong—that in so generously sacrificing herself in what she took to be his interest, she was really wounding him almost beyond recovery. But it was all to no purpose, and he left her and went his way sorrowing. The heart of each bled, and there was no physician to dress the wounds—no tender hand to allay the pain.

XLV.

THESE words ran in Bainbridge's mind as he tossed upon his bed through the long hours of the night, sleepless and utterly miserable.

"So long as my father, innocent though I know he is, stands convicted before the world, I—his daughter—must bear the stain of crime. *You shall never feel its blighting influence through me.*"

At dead of night, when all about is still, one sometimes thinks as he can at no other time. The fact that he cannot sleep suggests the idea that his mind is stimulated to an unnatural degree, and when so stimulated brighter and broader thoughts are the natural product. Be this as it may with others, so it proved with Bainbridge, for as he lay upon his bed, turning from side to side, he struck a train of thoughts that startled him and set his brain awlirl.

The east was streaked with the gray of dawn before his eyes were closed. All night long his mind had been absorbed in thought. Hour after hour he argued, reasoned, studied motives, and dissected acts. The result of this was a theory so well grounded that he was almost ready to agree with Miss Crompton that her father was innocent of the crime for which he stood convicted.

"If he is not guilty," exclaimed Bainbridge, "oh, horrible, horrible! What must his feelings have been—how inconceivable his suffering!" And, with the determination characteristic of him, he added, "if he is innocent he shall be rescued from prison walls, if my time and my money can do it."

Immediately on reaching his office Bainbridge sent to his lawyer for the report of the trial "*State of New York vs. Crompton.*"

As soon as it came he commenced studying the evidence, and was delighted as he proceeded to find that not a word of testimony was recorded that would tend in any way to upset his theory of the murder. And when the entire report had been gone through he threw the book down with an exclamation of disgust at the stupidity, as he termed it, that detectives and defense alike had shown in conducting their respective sides of the case.

But Bainbridge was wrong here, and did not show his usual discretion. He forgot that he had information that the detectives did not possess. Instead of exhibiting stupidity, they had shown themselves remarkably clever men. But theories cannot be manufactured from air. There must be something for the mind to focus itself upon—some tangible fact to start with. In this case the detectives looked in every direction for a clew. They searched, studied, consulted, and each time were forced back to the only theory that they could discover—namely, that Mr. Crompton committed

the crime. Then they applied themselves to the matter of discovering evidence that would justify such a conclusion.

Bainbridge now sent Goggins out to ascertain if possible the whereabouts of Theodore Migzer. He also sent a note to Rawlinson's Detective Bureau, asking that a clever detective be sent to him at once. It was perhaps an hour and a half before Goggins returned, and Bainbridge became impatient.

The substance of Goggins's information was this: that Migzer was supposed to be in St. Louis; that he was known there as Colonel Migzer, and was cutting a big figure as a capitalist and a dashing operator on exchange; that he dare not return to New York, fearing arrest for the fraudulent failure he had made.

Armed with these facts, Bainbridge decided to start by the first train for St. Louis, to hunt up Colonel Migzer. He arranged his business affairs, leaving everything in charge of Goggins, and then wrote the following note:

MY DEAR MISS CROMPTON:

I leave at six o'clock tonight for St. Louis. An important matter calls me there at once. Just how long I shall be away is uncertain. Mail will reach me at the Southern Hotel. Will you not write to me? I need not assure you that a letter from you would be more than welcome—you know it already.

With very best wishes, I remain,

Faithfully yours,

LIVINGSTON BAINBRIDGE.

This note sealed and mailed, and Bainbridge

closeted himself with the detective—a keen, bright faced man of thirty five, named Gregory—Phineas Gregory. He came with a letter from the bureau speaking in the highest terms of his ability, and assuring Bainbridge that any confidence intrusted to Gregory would not suffer.

“You are the man I want,” said Bainbridge ; and then he told him the theory on which he had commenced working, and instructed him what he wanted done. “I wish you to report to me daily the result of your efforts,” added Bainbridge, “and I will give you further instructions from St. Louis. Now throw yourself into this matter with energy, Mr. Gregory, and you shall be handsomely rewarded. We will see what there is in this theory in short order, and if an innocent man is undergoing a life sentence, that sentence must and shall be canceled without waste of time.”

Saying this, Bainbridge extended his hand to the detective and bid him good day, going almost immediately thereafter to his own room to prepare for the journey.

XLVI.

AS good luck would have it, Bainbridge found on arriving in St. Louis that Colonel Migzer lived at the Southern Hotel, the same at which he stopped. "This is better than I anticipated," said he to himself. "I shall have little difficulty in meeting him now." And he was right in this conclusion, for at noon, while he was talking with the clerk of the hotel, Migzer came up and asked for his mail.

"Nothing this time," said the clerk.

"Nothing!" repeated Migzer, and turned to go.

"Is not this Mr. Migzer?" said Bainbridge, speaking as one glad to see an old acquaintance in a strange city.

"Yes, Migzer is my name," replied the former, darting a quick look at his interrogator.

"Don't you remember me?" asked Bainbridge, extending his hand.

"Your face is familiar, but for the minute I cannot place you."

"Bainbridge is my name—the publisher of *Breeze*."

"Oh, yes, Bainbridge—strange I did not recognize you at once—very glad to see you, my dear fellow; been in the city long?"

"No, not long—got in this morning, and yours is the only familiar face I have seen."

"I'm right glad to see you, Bainbridge, for of all the men I have ever known you showed the most pluck in undertaking the publication of your weekly without any capital. I have thought of you a thousand times, and always wondered how you ever pulled through; and I have thought of you, too, because I did not treat you as I should have done; but there was a cause—nothing that reflected on you—perhaps you understand it already."

"I think I could guess," returned Bainbridge, laughing, as if the whole thing were a trivial matter.

"Yes, I am sure you could—in my office, you know, and was so bitter in his dislikes."

"Few know that better than I," returned Bainbridge.

"I should judge not by the shameful way he treated you the day I introduced you to him," replied Migzer. "I was frightfully cut up over that, and didn't know what to do."

"It was a delicate matter for you to handle. I was, of course, very much surprised at seeing him with you, and terribly disappointed at not getting the business you had promised me."

"That is what annoyed me most," said Migzer. "I wanted to keep faith with you, but he said so many mean things of you and opposed my assist-

ing you so strongly on personal grounds, that I yielded to his wishes, and have felt mean over the matter ever since. I hope you can appreciate my situation, and will overlook the matter."

"Certainly ; I understand the whole thing," returned Bainbridge, "and cherish no ill feelings towards you."

"You relieve me of a burden when I hear you say that, Mr. Bainbridge, for the matter has always troubled me," replied Migzer, suiting his expression to the words. "And now," he continued, in his liberal, whole souled way, "what can I do for you to make amends for past failings? Shall I not show you the city?—our fair grounds are especially fine, and there are a good many points of interest—theaters, and so forth."

"You are very kind indeed, Mr. Migzer. I will gladly accept your courtesy, though you do not need to make amends, as you say, for that matter is all right."

"I know, my dear fellow ; but it will be a pleasure to me—think of it in that way, please."

Later in the day Bainbridge went out riding with Migzer, and their conversation gradually drifted around to Van Gilding.

"By the way, what has become of him?" asked Bainbridge, "never hear of him now—he seems to have dropped completely out of the world."

"Yes, dropped out, that is a fact," returned Migzer,—"is in Europe, I believe."

"Doing any business?"

"He do business?" exclaimed Migzer.

"I do not understand you, I fear."

"Why, the fact is, that man Van Gilding couldn't make a success of selling peanuts."

"You surprise me. He had a good deal of dash in college, and was considered very bright."

"I can't help that—I know from experience—owed me over seventy five thousand dollars beyond his capacity to pay, and precipitated my failure."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bainbridge. "That was quite a severe blow."

"Severe enough to break up my business," returned Migzer bitterly, and then went on to tell Bainbridge something of Van Gilding's connection with the *Home Journal and Welcome Companion*.

"This is indeed news to me," replied Bainbridge. "But I am most surprised that he should go into business at all. In college he gave us to understand that he was very rich. Then, too, he was engaged to the daughter of a very wealthy man, I was told."

"You know who she was?"

"I heard at the time the engagement was announced," returned Bainbridge, with a blank expression.

"Miss Crompton—the daughter of the man who murdered Stover."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Bainbridge, assuming great surprise. "And did he marry her?"

"No, left her the minute her father was suspected of the crime—cold blooded villain."

"I should think he would have married her—her money would, no doubt, have fixed him all right, and saved him from bankruptcy."

"There was the rub," returned Migzer; "yes, there was where the whole trouble lay," and continuing he explained what the reader already knows, but what was entirely new to Bainbridge, namely, Van Gilding's object in coming down town to business, his bitter dislike for Mr. Crompton and his desire to marry the daughter—a desire stimulated in no small degree by his purpose to secure the great wealth that he supposed she would inherit at her father's death.

While listening to this recital Bainbridge felt his blood boil with indignation. Little by little he drew from Migzer, by clever touches, the whole story of Van Gilding's financial embarrassment, and when he had finished his heart beat so with agitation that he found it difficult to maintain a cool exterior.

The following morning he received a letter from Miss Crompton expressing great surprise at his sudden departure for St. Louis. It was plain to Bainbridge that she was a good deal more alarmed than she would admit.

"It is perhaps only natural that she should feel

so," said he to himself. "Our last meeting ended so unfortunately—thinks I am crazy, very likely—believe I'll telegraph her, so that she will not worry, poor child—has enough to trouble her already."

In his telegram he said :

Letter received. Very glad to hear from you. Business all transacted, start for home tonight. Wrote you yesterday.

And then he wrote out the following letter to Phineas Gregory the detective :

You are on the right track. Follow it up. Will see you day after tomorrow. My trip more successful than I anticipated.

XLVII.

BAINBRIDGE called on Miss Crompton the first evening after his return from St. Louis. She showed that she was much more glad to see him than he had anticipated. Her welcome was more than cordial, though evidently guarded, as if to conceal the secret of her heart.

After half an hour's conversation, and when they were alone, Bainbridge said to her, "You were a good deal surprised at my sudden departure for St. Louis. Would you be still more surprised, I wonder, should I tell you that I went in your interest?"

"In my interest?" exclaimed Miss Crompton doubtingly.

"Yes, in your interest, and you wonder, I see, how I could serve you by such a trip."

"I do indeed," she replied, puzzled.

"Miss Crompton," said Bainbridge, speaking deliberately and in a peculiar manner that indicated that something of great weight was coming—"Miss Crompton, can you be very brave and help me in a matter that bears on your happiness?"

"I think I can," she replied resolutely, but with a visible shudder.

“I have something to say to you which will result in making you very happy, or will cause you much anxiety—much keen suffering. Are you equal to the task?”

“You know if I should hear it. I will trust to your friendship—to your judgment,” she replied, very pale and holding fast to the arm of her chair.

“You can help me,” said he, “else I would not come to you with uncertainty. I would go to your aunt, but she cannot stand excitement. I wish to speak of your father’s innocence.

“The last time I saw you, you spoke to me of him. You had never mentioned his name to me before, and until then I knew nothing of your strong conviction that he was innocent of the crime for which he is now in prison. After leaving you I went direct to my rooms, but was too much depressed to sleep. Your remark about your father’s innocence I found myself repeating again and again, till at length I came to wonder if it could be possible that you were right. My mind was very active, and I thought for hours, studying the possibilities of the case—aiming to discover some rational theory of the crime other than the one on which his conviction was based. I did not follow the trial closely, and naturally accepted the verdict as a matter of course. I had an object in not interesting myself in your father’s cause, which I will explain later.

"I wish there were some way," continued Bainbridge, hesitatingly, "to tell you the result of my reasoning without reference to one—the mention of whose name will, I fear, wound you cruelly."

He could not have suggested Van Gilding's name more delicately, and yet the shock to Miss Crompton was inexpressibly severe. Her silent suffering was torture to him, and he had already condemned himself for saying so much when she requested him to continue with what he had to say.

"I fear I have made a mistake," he began.

"No," she said, summoning up her resolution. "The worst is over now. Proceed."

"No theory of a crime," he went on, "possesses much value unless it shows that the one suspected had an object in committing the deed. Supposing that your father is innocent, the misleading fact in the case, it seems to me, is that Stover was the victim; and this is the weakest point in my theory, because I can find no reason why the person I suspect should want to have him put out of the way. If your father had been murdered, I argued, then I could see how the crime might have been committed for a purpose. But as he was not, I was at a loss to make use of the knowledge I had of a certain suspicious incident, until the thought came to me that Stover was perhaps murdered by mistake, when your father was the intended victim."

Miss Crompton shuddered at this suggestion, but followed Bainbridge with almost breathless interest.

"This was only one thought among a thousand," he continued, "but it was the only one that stood the test of reason. Accepting it then, for argument's sake, as a fact, I went on studying the various elements in the case and comparing them with the facts in my possession. I will tell you what they were;" and he related in careful detail the incident wherein Van Gilding and Briggs were seen by him on a dark night on Riverside Drive.

"This," said he, "was just previous to the murder of Stover in your father's home. I saw this same man Briggs again, at the boat that took Van Gilding to Europe. He arrived too late to see the latter, and was evidently greatly disappointed. Once since I have seen him, under my window at night. That was when you first commenced working for me. He was somewhat intoxicated, and dropped this little memorandum book, which I went out to pick up. It contains several statements that helped me in working out my theory of the crime. If I am right, your father is innocent, and this man Briggs is the hired assassin of Nathaniel Stover."

"Let me see the book," replied Miss Crompton, holding out a trembling hand.

Bainbridge passed it to her, watching with keen-

est interest the expression of her face as her eyes fell upon the writing.

"Briggs!" she exclaimed, her excitement increasing. "Did you say his name was Briggs?"

"Yes, that is what Van Gilding called him."

"And you said he had a scar on his right temple?"

"Yes."

"Resembled a servant?"

"Yes, looked and spoke like one."

"Medium height?"

"Yes."

"A perfect description," she went on; "and this writing—his, I am positive—same peculiar capital G that I have noticed so many times, and the little y turning backward, and the capital J where there should be a small one. Oh! horrible!" she exclaimed with a shudder, and throwing the book from her as if it were stained with human blood, she hid her face in her hands.

Bainbridge was satisfied that the murderer must have been familiar with the Crompton home, else he never could have accomplished the crime without detection. And this was the chief reason why he went to Miss Crompton at this time with his theory, as it was necessary that he should know everything relative to the servants who had been in her father's employ.

After becoming a little less agitated, she told him that the man whom he had known as Briggs was

to the best of her belief a discharged butler named Michael McCaffery.

"He became so addicted to drink that father was obliged to send him away," she continued.

"How long before the murder did this occur?" asked Bainbridge, feeling more and more that he had discovered the true explanation of the mystery.

"About six weeks, as near as I can remember. There was something of a scene, I know, and he was very ugly about being discharged."

"It is strange that he was not suspected," replied Bainbridge.

"Suspected of murdering Stover?" queried Miss Crompton.

"Well, no, it wasn't strange, I suppose—just as I told you, the misleading fact is that the wrong man was murdered. And this idea would never have occurred to me but for a knowledge of the suspicious incidents I have related."

Continuing, Bainbridge explained the object of his St. Louis trip, and repeated all the conversation between himself and Migzer.

"And you knew nothing of this till you saw Migzer in St. Louis?" queried Miss Crompton, her eyes fixed on Bainbridge with utter amazement.

"No, nothing, except that Van Gilding's property was sold at sheriff's sale to satisfy debts. That I learned from Briggs's memorandum book—here,

see," and he showed her the entry. "This man Migzer," continued Bainbridge, "I knew to be a villain—an unprincipled scoundrel, and, aware that Van Gilding was associated with him, I thought it worth the trouble to hunt him up, with the hope that I might learn something of importance. The information I got was just what I needed to give substance and vitality to what before was rather a vague idea.

"I told you a few moments ago that any theory that did not show a well defined object for the crime was of little account. Follow me and see if my reasoning is not good, when I suggest that Van Gilding would have found it greatly to his advantage could your father have been suddenly removed. According to Migzer, Van Gilding disliked him because he opposed his engagement to you. He went down town with the express purpose to deceive him, pretending to be engaged in business, when he had no intention of doing so. But he fell under bad influence—into the hands of one who deliberately planned his ruin for selfish gain. He became involved—had to raise money (the very trap this man Migzer had set for him, doubtless)—unbosomed himself to Migzer—held your father responsible for his losses, and as he brooded over them, his dislike grew till at length his feelings became most bitter—Migzer furnished the money to tide over his embarrassments—he trusted him with blind faith—his hatred for your

father increasing all the while—goes into the publishing business—loses everything—becomes almost insane—is desperate—something must be done—his connection with the fraudulent publication will become known—your father will learn of his collapse—will insist upon breaking off the engagement—his hopes will be dashed—his standing ruined—his pride trodden in the dirt. No, such a disgrace would never do for a Van Gilding—and then the thought of work, common, vulgar work, as a means of earning bread to feed upon!

“Contrast this now with the other side. You are an only child—your father is very wealthy—Van Gilding is engaged to you—you have beauty, social standing—all he could wish in a wife—loves you, perhaps. With your father dead you inherit all of his vast wealth—Van Gilding marries you—your property becomes his to manage—he easily covers his debts—the future is to his taste—a life of luxury and idleness. Between these two extremes stands what?—merely the life of one man—a man whom he hates—a man responsible for his downfall. What is such a life to him?—alas, 'tis human and he shrinks from the thought of blotting it out. Then he turns to his misfortunes and realizes that something must be done. He thinks till his brain whirls, and no escape from the impending doom—no escape but one, and that the taking of your father's life. And as this thought recurs to him again and again, the horror

of the act grows less, yet he shrinks from considering any means of accomplishing the deed. He was not a hardened criminal, but the pressure brought to bear upon him by Migzer was too great. He had not the strength of character to stand boldly up and meet the issue like a man. He shrank from the exposure, from the cold looks of those who had courted him for his money and position—from the breaking off of the engagement—from poverty, from common toil—and seeks escape, if only temporary, at any cost—whatever cost, it matters little to him, for now perhaps he even contemplates suicide as the only avenue left to him. And with these thoughts he walks the streets in despair, meeting in an evil moment your discharged butler, who pours forth his wrath against your father.

“‘The problem is solved!’ suggests itself to Van Gilding. ‘Here is the way to Crompton’s removal,’ and he leads the butler on—little suggestions and expressions intensify his hatred. And now we see them together in a close carriage, driving on a lonely road at night. What better place for planning the bloody purpose?

“At length the fatal night arrives—Stover calls unexpectedly upon your father—is sitting with his back to the door, his head bent over a book, as the evidence shows—your father is absent from the room—the assassin steals in on tiptoe—sees Stover—excited at the crime he is about to

commit, he mistakes him for your father—stabs him to the heart, and makes his escape. The plot has failed—your father is arrested—Van Gilding's pride will not allow him to marry the daughter of one charged with this atrocious crime—the engagement is broken off—everything is lost with him—the last hope gone, and the responsibility of a life rests upon his hands. His property is taken from him—he goes to Europe, and loses himself in some country of the old world.

“This is my theory,” said Bainbridge. “Is it not reasonable, and does it not show sufficient strength of purpose to warrant an investigation—an investigation which I hope will result in returning your father to liberty and his home.”

Miss Crompton was almost overcome by this vivid portrayal of the crime as Bainbridge saw it in imagination. It was like living over again the dreadful scenes, and the horror of the whole thing—the thought that Van Gilding, whom she had loved with all the force of her nature, could plot to murder her father, fairly unnerved her for a time. It was a dreadful revelation to her sensitive woman's nature—enough almost to unhinge her reason. But her strength of character stood her in good stead, and from that hour she joined Bainbridge with all her energy, laboring to establish her father's innocence.

XLVIII.

“**S**UPPOSE that this theory of mine is the true one,” said Bainbridge in a further conversation with Miss Crompton, “we have taken only one step towards securing your father’s freedom. The chief difficulty will be to establish the guilt of McCaffery and Van Gilding. And there is practically but one way to do this, and that is by forcing a confession from the former. Yet we will exhaust every means. I have engaged another detective to assist Gregory in discovering McCaffery or Briggs, by whatever name he may go.”

“You have found no trace of McCaffery, then?” asked Miss Crompton, a trifle downhearted.

“No, none whatever. But we have found the coachman who drove him and Van Gilding on the night of the smash up on Riverside Drive. You remember I told you that his leg was broken. The incident, therefore, is forcibly impressed upon his mind. I have had a talk with him and he remembers both Van Gilding and McCaffery well.

“I asked him to what point he was instructed to drive. He said to no particular point, but was told to keep up Riverside Drive. This, you see, tends to confirm my idea that they simply wanted to arrange the details of the plot, and chose the

brougham, in this out of the way locality, as the safest place to talk the matter over."

"That is certainly a reasonable conclusion," replied Miss Crompton, adding—"but unless we can find McCaffery, there will be no hope, will there?"

"I would not say that," returned Bainbridge. "Hope should never fail."

The search for McCaffery was kept up by Phineas Gregory and his assistant till at last they found their man. He had gone from bad to worse, and was now little better than a wreck. Drink had destroyed a vigorous constitution—drink and possibly the torments of remorse. He had managed to live by doing odd jobs, but was very poor when Gregory found him. The detective assumed a friendly guise, taking great care not to excite his suspicions. After a few weeks' acquaintance he managed to get him a position with Bainbridge, where he was employed in packing mail and doing one thing and another around the publishing house.

One day Bainbridge sent for him to come into his private office and fold some circulars. He had arranged in the meantime with an inspector of the police department, a man well known to McCaffery, to be on hand. Miss Crompton had also been advised of the plan, and accordingly came at the time appointed. A curtain had been hung in one corner of the room. Behind this the inspector

stood, his eyes close to an aperture so that he could see everything that went on in the room. Bainbridge arranged a small table so that McCaffery would face the door as he sat folding the circulars. He was then sent for and came in, commencing his work at once, when the nature of it had been made clear to him.

He had barely got well under way when Bainbridge touched a button and Miss Crompton entered the room. McCaffery looked up—started—took a second look, and, jumping to his feet white with fear, made for the door.

“Not so fast,” said the inspector, stepping quickly from behind the curtain and placing a firm hand on McCaffery’s shoulder. “Not so fast, McCaffery,” he repeated, in a voice that struck terror to the culprit’s heart.

At this instant Bainbridge touched the electric button a second time, and immediately the coachman who drove Van Gilding and McCaffery on the night of the accident faced the prisoner. The latter recognized him and trembled with fear—unnerved and unable to speak. Bainbridge touched the button a third time, and in response came Phineas Gregory, no longer the “friend” of McCaffery, but a detective with badge and official bearing. The criminal saw—realized all, and with knees knocking together staggered, and would have fallen but for the support of the inspector.

Bainbridge now joined the group, and once beside the coachman was instantly recognized by McCaffery, who saw that he had been trapped, and in his fear and shattered condition imagined that the secrets of his crime were fully known. He muttered something unintelligible, shaking all the while with fright, his features drawn and colorless.

"We know all," said the inspector. "Here is the coachman—you recognize him, I see—the man who drove you the night you plotted the crime. And here is Mr. Bainbridge—you remember him, too, it is evident—doubtless recall the assistance he gave you at the time of the smash up, when you were known as Briggs—not McCaffery, your real name."

The culprit groaned with increasing fear.

"And here is a memorandum book of yours," said Bainbridge, with penetrating glance—"see your own writing—shows your connection with Van Gilding."

"With Van Gilding!" exclaimed the prisoner, fiercely, speaking for the first time, and with a gesture that told his hatred for the latter.

"You do not seem to like the association," replied Bainbridge.

McCaffery simply scowled.

"I thought you were very anxious to see him the morning he sailed for Europe, and you just missed him at the boat," continued Bainbridge.

This remark still further alarmed McCaffery, and convinced him that his career was known. With this feeling, and weakened in intellect and physical energy, it is perhaps only natural that he made no attempt to brave the accusation.

He was overcome by the sudden revelation and the dramatic way in which it was brought about. The sight of Miss Crompton alone—her whom he had known from a little child, and whom, in his better days, he loved almost as much as if she had been his own offspring—the sight of her suffering from her father's disgrace, was quite enough to unnerve him. Altogether, he had not the courage and stamina to withstand the force that was arrayed against him. He swayed with agitation—now showing a cruel, bitter expression, and again the victim of abject fear.

Miss Crompton, though shrinking from the miserable wretch, could not help pitying him—her old butler, who used to study her pleasure and wait upon her with never faltering loyalty. The tears would come, try ever so hard to restrain them. He saw her hide her eyes in her handkerchief and turn away. The sight was too much for him, and he broke down and cried like a child, penitent and miserable.

The feeling that she had sympathy for him, when he had been the cause of all her suffering, touched him as nothing else ever did, and amid sobs he called to her and begged that she would forgive

him, saying at the same time that her father should no longer be held responsible for the crime.

And then followed his confession, brought out by skillful questioning on the part of the inspector.

Bainbridge had diagnosed the case rightly. His theory of the killing and the motives that prompted the act was so nearly true to the story told by McCaffery that it would prove little more than repetition, to give the latter's exact words. He laid the blame upon Van Gilding, and charged him with instigating the crime. The plot, as Bainbridge had guessed, was to murder Mr. Crompton. For performing the atrocious act McCaffery was to have been paid a large sum of money by Van Gilding.

"When it was found that the wrong man had been killed," said McCaffery, "I got nothing but abuse from Van Gilding. I went further and further into drink, to try and drown the thoughts of my crime, till now I am what you see me—a wreck. But for the curse of rum I would never have been discharged by your father," he added, bemoaning his wretched fate.

He then went on and explained how he gained admittance to Mr. Crompton's house, and how he effected his escape after the fatal act. The incident of the steel letter opener which was supposed to belong to Mr. Crompton, and which had much to do with his conviction, was explained by McCaffery in this way ;

“I knew the kind it was and bought one just like it, and rubbed it till it looked as if it had been worn. It was this new one that I used and that was found covered with blood. The old one I took from the desk, and with it in my pocket got away from the house.”

Further than this there was little in the culprit's confession that is worth narrating, except to state that his story, which seemed to be straightforward, made it look very black for Van Gilding. The latter's immediate necessity of raising money—his dread of poverty—his hatred of Mr. Crompton—his desire for wealth and luxury—in these lay the cause—the purpose of the crime, and McCaffery, maddened at his dismissal, crazed by drink, led on by Van Gilding, became the tool of the latter, striking the fatal blow.

XLIX.

THE following day after McCaffery's confession Bainbridge sent Miss Crompton a check for five hundred dollars with a note saying that he advanced her this sum on the copyright of her book. "Your father will be with you in a few days," he continued, "and you will perhaps find use for a little extra money. I can let you have it now as well as later, and by the way, judging from the demand for the book you will soon be entitled to a second check from me."

"Another instance of his thoughtfulness and generosity!" exclaimed Miss Crompton as she read the note; "only another," she repeated softly, with gratitude and love. "And the money I need so much," she continued meditatively. "New clothes to buy for father and some extra things for the house to make him comfortable and happy on his return—poor dear father, and he will be with us in a day or two—be with us to stay, to be loved and cared for after all these months of cruel imprisonment."

When the necessary legal steps had been taken Mr. Crompton was set free, pardoned by the Governor—pardoned, mind, pardoned for a crime which he never committed—not declared innocent

by process of law, but pardoned, pardoned—a pardoned convict merely. Behold him when this foul suspicion fastened itself upon him—a man of manly bearing, in the vigor of health and prime of life—a man of influence, station and wealth—happy in his home, rich in the love of daughter and friends. Contrast this picture, reader, with the bowed and haggard man before you and tell me if you can trace the likeness. You remember the healthy glow of his cheeks and the bright keen eyes, merry with laughter. Look now at the dull sad orbs, the hollow emaciated cheeks—look again before you answer or the resemblance you will miss. Two years and a little more since his arrest—the arrest of an innocent man. Two years did I say?—yes, scarcely more and yet the change is that of twenty frost bound winters. His hair, then black and plentiful, is thin and white, and the elastic step, tamed by prison chains, is the movement of an old man weary of life.

Cruel injustice—legal wisdom, if you please, had brought him to this—had robbed him of all that made life worth living—filched from him his good name—crushed his spirit, broken him in health, inflicted untold suffering upon himself and family, branded him as an odious criminal, ruined him financially, usurped his freedom, dragged him from his home where he dwelt in luxury and was warmed by the love of the fairest of daughters—dragged from this scene of earthly heaven

and rudely thrust him into a prison cell to shrink and wither into bitter age. And his redress is what?—this falsely imprisoned man when his innocence is finally discovered—discovered not by the efforts of the authorities that condemned him, but through the kind offices of a friend—his redress—alas, that is not the word, for all that remains to him—the most that he can hope to get is *pardon*—to become a pardoned convict. Oh! shame, shame. Is this our boasted civilization—the consensus of legal wisdom—to rob an innocent man of all but life, and life itself perhaps oftener than we think, and call it justice? Is it not time that commonwealths become responsible for their acts? If not, and our present laws represent the genius of the nineteenth century in dealing with crime, then let us not proudly flaunt the glory of our humanity before the world.

Mr. Cromwell, the lifelong friend and lawyer of Mr. Crompton, met him at Sing Sing and accompanied him to the cozy apartment occupied by his daughter and sister. The meeting between the reunited family was most touching. It was a heart greeting where tears of joy flowed freely—a welcome to make one almost forget the cruel injustice he had suffered and cry aloud to God in thanks for such happiness as is possible to man.

After the first hour of ecstatic delight at her father's return, Miss Crompton could not help feeling a sense of sadness as she studied his

shrunken features and noted the change in figure—now bowed and emaciated.

“Can it be possible,” she asked herself, suppressing a sigh, “that only a little more than two years have wrought this frightful change? Oh! what must his sufferings have been to bring so strong and youthful a man to this?”

Another matter, too, disturbed her, marring further the happiness she had fancied she would feel. I refer to the absence of Bainbridge. But for him her father would still be behind prison walls. Gratitude and love alike suggested to her mind that he of all others should be present at this reunion. She could not divine the cause that kept him away.

“His assurances of love,” she meditated, “seemed so sincere, and his interest in me and in getting father freed from the stain of crime—all go to prove that he was honest in his declarations. ‘I think too much of you to allow myself to drag you down to my own social level.’ Yes, this is the answer I gave him, but now that the stain is removed from my name—oh, well, I must not think of this,” she sighed softly, her heart yearning for the man she loved.

Everything she could do for her father’s comfort was done. She went over her literary triumphs, trying to revive the old time spirit in him, but that was gone forever—had been withered by the stigma of crime and the blighting chill of prison

walls. Little by little, through her delicate attention and her thoughtful care, he began to improve. The melody of her voice in speech and song cheered him, and he watched her every movement with rare devotion.

To minister thus to him was a loving service, and yet there was something wanting to complete her happiness. Bainbridge had called but once in a week and then his manner was strained and unnatural. She could not read him, and found herself becoming more and more anxious as the days went by, for she loved him, worshiped him, if woman ever worships man.

L.

RARELY has there been such a sensation as that caused by the discovery of Mr. Crompton's innocence. The papers devoted column after column to the subject, reviewing the facts, the history of the prisoner, and reproducing much of the testimony given at the trial. All who knew Van Gilding were stunned on learning of his connection with the crime. Public sentiment became very bitter against him and several detectives were detailed with instructions to discover his whereabouts that he might be brought to the bar of justice and suffer the penalty for his crime. Society was both shocked and chagrined. The Cromptons had been shunned by this exclusive few as a pestilence from the hour that suspicion fell upon the head of the family. How they could excuse their selfish acts was the question. The situation was an awkward one for them—especially awkward since now Miss Crompton and her literary genius were quite as much talked of as the innocence of her father. She was the heroine of the hour. Pages of her book were quoted in long reviews—pages with keenest satire on the society that had so cruelly shunned her as soon as misfortune fell upon her home.

And all this was the work of Bainbridge, who with his keen eye for business saw a chance almost unparalleled for advertising her book. Without consulting her, therefore, he took the liberty of divulging the secret to the public, making her known as the author of the clever work that had caused so much speculation. Not only did he do this for the money she would receive from the increased sale, but because he wished her to have the credit before the world for the genius she possessed. Little did he imagine the result that would follow. He believed that the statement would be a genuine surprise coming as it did immediately upon her father's release from prison, but it proved a sensation that set every one talking. Her beauty and charming manner were inordinately praised by competing journals, vying, it seemed, with each other to say the most upon the topic of the hour.

Mr. Crompton's case awakened strong interest throughout the entire country. His social position and the mystery shrouding the crime attracted the attention of every one. Now that he was discovered to be innocent after many months of imprisonment, the interest in him was reawakened and intensified. Every one talked of the cruel injustice he had suffered, expressing strong sympathy for him, and asking each other if there was no redress. Side by side with the report of his release stood the glowing review of

his daughter's book and the story of her brave struggles during his imprisonment, with added praise for her personal charms. No sooner had these facts reached the public than every one sought her book. Orders poured in from every quarter. Printing houses and binderies ran night and day turning out thousands of volumes, and still the demand kept up. No work of fiction, perhaps, ever sold with such a rush as this one. No work was ever so effectually advertised. The sale was phenomenal—enough to make Miss Crompton comfortably rich once more, and all from the profits of her pen.

Bainbridge was delighted at her rich golden harvest, and at the generous praise she had received from press and public. But his visits to her home became less and less frequent. This could be accounted for in part by the fact that his time was occupied very closely in looking after the manufacture of her book and in pushing its sale. But this was not the chief cause that kept him from her. It was a fancy against which his delicately sensitive nature rebelled. She had said to him in effect that so long as her father remained a prisoner she should not marry. He had through his own efforts and the expenditure of his own money secured her father's freedom. To go to her now and renew his suit, it seemed to him, would be little short of demanding her hand as a reward for the service he had done her. The

thought of this was repellent to him, though he loved her with all the force of his generous, manly heart.

Weeks dragged by and the future grew darker and darker to him—became darker and darker to her. Unable at length to bear the suspense longer—a suspense that was blighting her life—she wrote a note, asking if she had in any way offended him, expressing at the same time regret that he had remained away so long. Her letter was well worded and in good taste, but nevertheless told much more between the lines than was said in the text. It was the very thing that Bainbridge needed to dispel his doubts. He replied in person, his face cheerful and bright with hope, and his coming filled her heart with gladness.

After a pleasant half hour's conversation Mrs. Woodman went into another room on some pretext or other, and shortly afterwards Mr. Crompton followed her, saying to himself, meditatingly, as he left the room: "I told her so—told her the story of my own early romance—trying to convince her of the folly of her unwise infatuation. But she could not follow my reasoning then. Alas, poor child, the lesson has cost her dearly—cost me—but I must not think of this since she is happy now, and loves a man in every way worthy of her true heart."

On Fifth Avenue, a little way above Seventy

Second Street, a very handsome new house had recently been built. Its architecture was somewhat odd but pleasing withal to the eye. From the broad bay window one looked out upon Central Park with its soft green grass, luxuriant foliage, beautiful trees and hardened roadways. In a tiny vale of the park, almost directly in front of the house, nestled a little lake, bordered by embankments that sloped upward, and then stretching far away were lost in the trees and shrubbery. A view too could be had of the vast army of pleasure seekers as their gaudy turn outs and stately carriages skirted the winding drives. The song of birds, the odor of flower and honeysuckle, borne in by the breezes, added to the charm of this location.

It was only a few days after Bainbridge's call upon Miss Crompton that this house was sold to a young man. Decorators and furnishers were immediately set to work, and at the end of a few weeks they had converted it into a beautiful home. Money had been spent freely, but not in the accumulation of showy furnishings. Art had guided every purchase, giving a rarely pleasing effect throughout.

Servants were installed and then the house was opened—opened with a quiet, charming little wedding. Among those present were Mr. Crompton and his sister, Mrs. Woodman; Bainbridge's father and mother, Goggins and Mr.

Cromwell, the lawyer. The bride—well, you know her name, reader, but I'll tell it to you nevertheless—Lela Crompton, happy, beautiful—and the groom—Livingston Bainbridge, a manly fellow in bearing and acts alike—now rich in the love of one of the dearest and sweetest of wives.

THE END.

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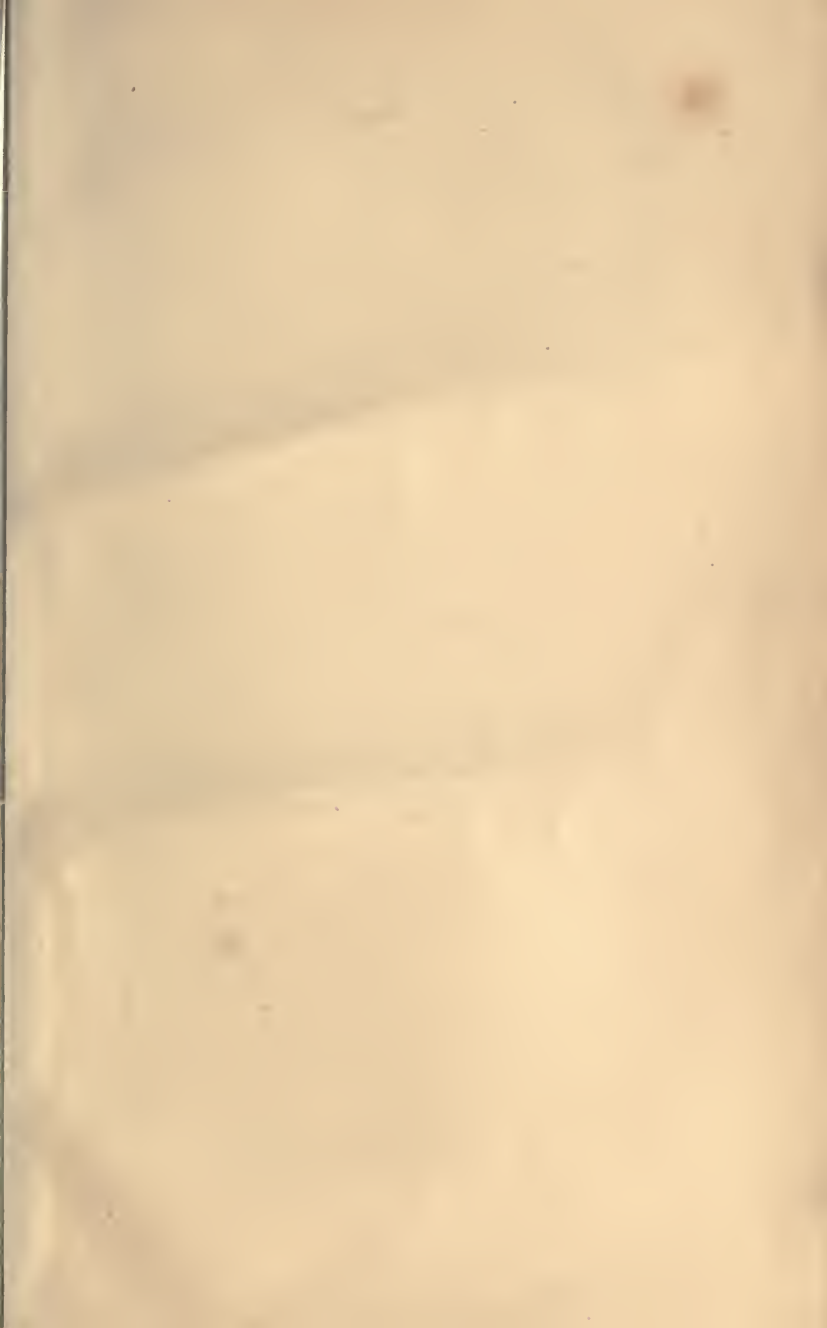
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