

Stories by American Authors, Volume 1 by Various

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STORIES BY AMERICAN AUTHORS. VOLUME I

[Illustration]

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WHO WAS SHE. By BAYARD TAYLOR

THE DOCUMENTS IN THE CASE. By BRANDER MATTHEWS AND H.C. BUNNER

ONE OF THE THIRTY PIECES. By WILLIAM HENRY BISHOP

BALACCHI BROTHERS. By REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

AN OPERATION IN MONEY. By ALBERT WEBSTER

1903

[Illustration: BRANDER MATTHEWS]

Stories by American Authors VOLUME I

WHO WAS SHE?

BY BAYARD TAYLOR.

Come, now, there may as well be an end of this! Every time I meet your eyes squarely I detect the question just slipping out of them. If you had spoken it, or even boldly looked it; if you had shown in your motions the least sign of a fussy or fidgety concern on my account; if this were not the evening of my birthday, and you the only friend who remembered it; if confession were not good for the soul, though harder than sin to some people, of whom I am one,--well, if all reasons were not at this instant converged into a focus, and burning me rather violently in that region where the seat of emotion is supposed to lie, I should keep my trouble to myself.

Yes, I have fifty times had it on my mind to tell you the whole story.

But who can be certain that his best friend will not smile--or, what is worse, cherish a kind of charitable pity ever afterwards--when the external forms of a very serious kind of passion seem trivial, fantastic, foolish? And the worst of all is that the heroic part which I imagined I was playing proves to have been almost the reverse. The only comfort which I can find in my humiliation is that I am capable of feeling it. There isn't a bit of a paradox in this, as you will see; but I only mention it, now, to prepare you for, maybe, a little morbid sensitiveness of my moral nerves.

The documents are all in this portfolio, under my elbow. I had just read them again completely through, when you were announced. You may examine them as you like, afterwards: for the present, fill your glass, take another Cabana, and keep silent until my "ghastly tale" has reached its most lamentable conclusion.

The beginning of it was at Wampsocket Springs three years ago last summer. I suppose most unmarried men who have reached, or passed, the age of thirty--and I was then thirty-three--experience a milder return of their adolescent warmth, a kind of fainter second spring, since the first has not fulfilled its promise. Of course, I wasn't clearly conscious of this at the time: who is? But I had had my youthful passion and my tragic disappointment, as you know: I had looked far enough into what Thackeray used to call the cryptic mysteries, to save me from the Scylla of dissipation, and yet preserved enough of natural nature to keep me out of the Pharisaic Charybdis. My devotion to my legal studies had already brought me a mild distinction; the paternal legacy was a

good nest-egg for the incubation of wealth,--in short, I was a fair, respectable "party," desirable to the humbler mammas, and not to be despised by the haughty exclusives.

The fashionable hotel at the Springs holds three hundred, and it was packed. I had meant to lounge there for a fortnight and then finish my holidays at Long Branch; but eighty, at least, out of the three hundred, were young and moved lightly in muslin. With my years and experience I felt so safe, that to walk, talk, or dance with them became simply a luxury, such as I had never--at least so freely--possessed before. My name and standing, known to some families, were agreeably exaggerated to the others, and I enjoyed that supreme satisfaction which a man always feels when he discovers or imagines that he is popular in society. There is a kind of premonitory apology implied in my saying this, I am aware. You must remember that I am culprit and culprit's counsel at the same time.

You have never been at Wampsocket? Well, the hills sweep around in a crescent on the northern side and four or five radiating glens descending from them unite just above the village. The central one leading to a waterfall (called "Minnehehe" by the irreverent young people, because there is so little of it), is the fashionable drive and promenade; but the second ravine on the left, steep, crooked, and cumbered with bowlders which have tumbled from somewhere and lodged in the most extraordinary groupings, became my favorite walk of a morning. There was a footpath in it, well-trodden at first, but gradually fading out as it became more like a ladder than a path, and I soon discovered

that no other city feet than mine were likely to scale a certain rough slope which seemed the end of the ravine. With the aid of the tough laurel-stems I climbed to the top, passed through a cleft as narrow as a doorway, and presently found myself in a little upper dell, as wild and sweet and strange as one of the pictures that haunt us on the brink of sleep.

There was a pond--no, rather a bowl--of water in the centre; hardly twenty yards across, yet the sky in it was so pure and far down that the circle of rocks and summer foliage inclosing it seemed like a little planetary ring, floating off alone through space. I can't explain the charm of the spot, nor the selfishness which instantly suggested that I should keep the discovery to myself. Ten years earlier, I should have looked around for some fair spirit to be my "minister," but now--

One forenoon--I think it was the third or fourth time I had visited the place--I was startled to find the dint of a heel in the earth, half-way up the slope. There had been rain during the night, and the earth was still moist and soft. It was the mark of a woman's boot, only to be distinguished from that of a walking-stick by its semicircular form. A little higher, I found the outline of a foot, not so small as to awake an ecstasy, but with a suggestion of lightness, elasticity, and grace. If hands were thrust through holes in a boardfence, and nothing of the attached bodies seen, I can easily imagine that some would attract and others repel us: with footprints the impression is weaker, of course, but we cannot escape it. I am not sure whether I wanted to find the unknown wearer of the boot within my precious personal solitude; I was

afraid I should see her, while passing through the rocky crevice, and yet was disappointed when I found no one.

But on the flat, warm rock overhanging the tarn--my special throne--lay some withering wild-flowers, and a book! I looked up and down, right and left: there was not the slightest sign of another human life than mine.

Then I lay down for a quarter of an hour, and listened; there were only the noises of bird and squirrel, as before. At last I took up the book, the flat breadth of which suggested only sketches. There were, indeed, some tolerable studies of rocks and trees on the first pages; a few not very striking caricatures, which seemed to have been commenced as portraits, but recalled no faces I knew; then a number of fragmentary notes, written in pencil. I found no name, from first to last; only, under the sketches, a monogram so complicated and laborious that the initials could hardly be discovered unless one already knew them.

The writing was a woman's, but it had surely taken its character from certain features of her own: it was clear, firm, individual. It had nothing of that air of general debility which usually marks the manuscript of young ladies, yet its firmness was far removed from the stiff, conventional slope which all Englishwomen seem to acquire in youth and retain through life. I don't see how any man in my situation could have helped reading a few lines--if only for the sake of restoring lost property. But I was drawn on, and on, and finished by reading all: thence, since no further harm could be done, I re-read, pondering over certain passages until they stayed with me. Here they are, as I set them down, that evening, on the back of a legal blank:

"It makes a great deal of difference whether we wear social forms as bracelets or handcuffs."

"Can we not still be wholly our independent selves, even while doing, in the main, as others do? I know two who are so; but they are married."

"The men who admire these bold, dashing young girls treat them like weaker copies of themselves. And yet they boast of what they call 'experience!'"

"I wonder if any one felt the exquisite beauty of the noon as I did, to-day? A faint appreciation of sunsets and storms is taught us in youth, and kept alive by novels and flirtations; but the broad, imperial splendor of this summer noon!--and myself standing alone in it--yes, utterly alone!"

"The men I seek _must_ exist: where are they? How make an acquaintance, when one obsequiously bows himself away, as I advance? The fault is surely not all on my side."

There was much more, intimate enough to inspire me with a keen interest in the writer, yet not sufficiently so to make my perusal a painful indiscretion. I yielded to the impulse of the moment, took out my pencil, and wrote a dozen lines on one of the blank pages. They ran something in this wise:

"IGNOTUS IGNOTAE!--You have bestowed without intending it, and I have taken without your knowledge. Do not regret the accident which has enriched another. This concealed idyl of the hills was mine, as I supposed, but I acknowledge your equal right to it. Shall we share the possession, or will you banish me?"

There was a frank advance, tempered by a proper caution, I fancied, in the words I wrote. It was evident that she was unmarried, but outside of that certainty there lay a vast range of possibilities, some of them alarming enough. However, if any nearer acquaintance should arise out of the incident, the next step must be taken by her. Was I one of the men she sought? I almost imagined so--certainly hoped so.

I laid the book on the rock, as I had found it, bestowed another keen scrutiny on the lonely landscape, and then descended the ravine. That evening, I went early to the ladies' parlor, chatted more than usual with the various damsels whom I knew, and watched with a new interest those whom I knew not. My mind, involuntarily, had already created a

picture of the unknown. She might be twenty-five, I thought: a reflective habit of mind would hardly be developed before that age. Tall and stately, of course; distinctly proud in her bearing, and somewhat reserved in her manners. Why she should have large dark eyes, with long dark lashes, I could not tell; but so I seemed to see her. Quite forgetting that I was (or had meant to be) _Ignotus_, I found myself staring rather significantly at one or the other of the young ladies, in whom I discovered some slight general resemblance to the imaginary character. My fancies, I must confess, played strange pranks with me. They had been kept in a coop so many years, that now, when I suddenly turned them loose, their rickety attempts at flight quite bewildered me.

No! there was no use in expecting a sudden discovery. I went to the glen betimes, next morning: the book was gone, and so were the faded flowers, but some of the latter were scattered over the top of another rock, a few yards from mine. Ha! this means that I am not to withdraw, I said to myself: she makes room for me! But how to surprise her?--for by this time I was fully resolved to make her acquaintance, even though she might turn out to be forty, scraggy, and sandy-haired.

I knew no other way so likely as that of visiting the glen at all times of the day. I even went so far as to write a line of greeting, with a regret that our visits had not yet coincided, and laid it under a stone on the top of _her_ rock. The note disappeared, but there was no answer in its place. Then I suddenly remembered her fondness for the noon hours, at which time she was "utterly alone." The hotel _table d'hote_ was at one o'clock, her family, doubtless, dined later, in their own

rooms. Why, this gave me, at least, her place in society! The question of age, to be sure, remained unsettled; but all else was safe.

The next day I took a late and large breakfast and sacrificed my dinner. Before noon the guests had all straggled back to the hotel from glen and grove and lane, so bright and hot was the sunshine. Indeed, I could hardly have supported the reverberation of heat from the sides of the ravine, but for a fixed belief that I should be successful. While crossing the narrow meadow upon which it opened, I caught a glimpse of something white among the thickets higher up. A moment later, it had vanished, and I quickened my pace, feeling the beginning of an absurd nervous excitement in my limbs. At the next turn, there it was again! but only for another moment. I paused, exulting, and wiped my drenched forehead. "She cannot escape me!" I murmured between the deep draughts of cooler air I inhaled in the shadow of a rock.

A few hundred steps more brought me to the foot of the steep ascent, where I had counted on overtaking her. I was too late for that, but the dry, baked soil had surely been crumbled and dislodged, here and there, by a rapid foot. I followed, in reckless haste, snatching at the laurel-branches right and left, and paying little heed to my footing. About one third of the way up I slipped, fell, caught a bush which snapped at the root, slid, whirled over, and before I fairly knew what had happened, I was lying doubled up at the bottom of the slope.

I rose, made two steps forward, and then sat down with a groan of pain;

my left ankle was badly sprained, in addition to various minor scratches and bruises. There was a revulsion of feeling, of course,--instant, complete, and hideous. I fairly hated the Unknown. "Fool that I was!" I exclaimed, in the theatrical manner, dashing the palm of my hand softly against my brow: "lured to this by the fair traitress! But, no!--not fair: she shows the artfulness of faded, desperate spinsterhood; she is all compact of enamel, 'liquid bloom of youth,' and hair-dye!"

There was a fierce comfort in this thought, but it couldn't help me out of the scrape. I dared not sit still, lest a sun-stroke should be added, and there was no resource but to hop or crawl down the rugged path, in the hope of finding a forked sapling from which I could extemporize a crutch. With endless pain and trouble I reached a thicket, and was feebly working on a branch with my penknife, when the sound of a heavy footstep surprised me.

A brown harvest-hand, in straw hat and shirtsleeves, presently appeared. He grinned when he saw me, and the thick snub of his nose would have seemed like a sneer at any other time.

"Are you the gentleman that got hurt?" he asked. "Is it pretty tolerable bad?"

"Who said I was hurt?" I cried in astonishment.

"One of your town-women fro them hotel--I reckon she was. I was binding oats, in the field over the ridge; but I haven't lost no time in comin' here."

While I was stupidly staring at this announcement, he whipped out a big clasp knife, and in a few minutes fashioned me a practicable crutch. Then, taking me by the other arm, he set me in motion toward the village.

Grateful as I was for the man's help, he aggravated me by his ignorance. When I asked if he knew the lady, he answered: "It's more'n likely you know her better." But where did she come from? Down from the hill, he guessed, but it might ha' been up the road. How did she look? was she old or young? what was the color of her eyes? of her hair? There, now, I was too much for him. When a woman kept one o' them speckled veils over her face, turned her head away and held her parasol between, how were you to know her from Adam? I declare to you, I couldn't arrive at one positive particular. Even when he affirmed that she was tall, he added, the next instant: "Now I come to think on it, she stepped mighty quick; so I guess she must ha' been short."

By the time we reached the hotel, I was in a state of fever; opiates and lotions had their will of me for the rest of the day. I was glad to escape the worry of questions, and the conventional sympathy expressed in inflections of the voice which are meant to soothe, and only exasperate. The next morning, as I lay upon my sofa, restful, patient,

and properly cheerful, the waiter entered with a bouquet of wild flowers.

"Who sent them?" I asked.

"I found them outside your door, sir. Maybe there's a card; yes, here's a bit o' paper."

I opened the twisted slip he handed me, and read: "From your dell--and mine." I took the flowers; among them were two or three rare and beautiful varieties, which I had only found in that one spot. Fool, again! I noiselessly kissed, while pretending to smell them, had them placed on a stand within reach, and fell into a state of quiet and agreeable contemplation.

Tell me, yourself, whether any male human being is ever too old for sentiment, provided that it strikes him at the right time and in the right way! What did that bunch of wild flowers betoken? Knowledge, first; then, sympathy; and finally, encouragement, at least. Of course she had seen my accident, from above; of course she had sent the harvest laborer to aid me home. It was quite natural she should imagine some special romantic interest in the lonely dell, on my part, and the gift took additional value from her conjecture.

Four days afterward there was a hop in the large dining-room of the

hotel. Early in the morning a fresh bouquet had been left at my door. I was tired of my enforced idleness, eager to discover the fair unknown (she was again fair, to my fancy!), and I determined to go down, believing that a cane and a crimson velvet slipper on the left foot would provoke a glance of sympathy from certain eyes, and thus enable me to detect them.

The fact was, the sympathy was much too general and effusive. Everybody, it seemed, came to me with kindly greetings; seats were vacated at my approach, even fat Mrs. Huxter insisting on my taking her warm place, at the head of the room. But Bob Leroy--you know him--as gallant a gentleman as ever lived, put me down at the right point, and kept me there. He only meant to divert me, yet gave me the only place where I could quietly inspect all the younger ladies, as dance or supper brought them near.

One of the dances was an old-fashioned cotillon, and one of the figures, the "coquette," brought every one, in turn, before me. I received a pleasant word or two from those whom I knew, and a long, kind, silent glance from Miss May Danvers. Where had been my eyes? She was tall, stately, twenty-five, had large dark eyes, and long dark lashes! Again the changes of the dance brought her near me; I threw (or strove to throw) unutterable meanings into my eyes, and cast them upon hers. She seemed startled, looked suddenly away, looked back to me, and--blushed. I knew her for what is called "a nice girl"--that is, tolerably frank, gently feminine, and not dangerously intelligent. Was it possible that I had overlooked so much character and intellect?

As the cotillon closed, she was again in my neighborhood, and her partner led her in my direction. I was rising painfully from my chair, when Bob Leroy pushed me down again, whisked another seat from somewhere, planted it at my side, and there she was!

She knew who was her neighbor, I plainly saw; but instead of turning toward me, she began to fan herself in a nervous way and to fidget with the buttons of her gloves. I grew impatient.

"Miss Danvers!" I said, at last.

"Oh!" was all her answer, as she looked at me for a moment. "Where are your thoughts?" I asked.

Then she turned, with wide, astonished eyes, coloring softly up to the roots of her hair. My heart gave a sudden leap.

"How can you tell, if I cannot?" she asked.

"May I guess?"

She made a slight inclination of the head, saying nothing. I was then quite sure.

"The second ravine, to the left of the main drive?"

This time she actually started; her color became deeper, and a leaf of the ivory fan snapped between her fingers.

"Let there be no more a secret!" I exclaimed. "Your flowers have brought me your messages; I knew I should find you"--

Full of certainty, I was speaking in a low, impassioned voice. She cut me short by rising from her seat; I felt that she was both angry and alarmed. Fisher, of Philadelphia, jostling right and left in his haste, made his way toward her. She fairly snatched his arm, clung to it with a warmth I had never seen expressed in a ball-room, and began to whisper in his ear. It was not five minutes before he came to me, alone, with a very stern face, bent down, and said:

"If you have discovered our secret, you will keep silent. You are certainly a gentleman."

I bowed coldly and savagely. There was a draft from the open window; my ankle became suddenly weary and painful, and I went to bed. Can you believe that I didn't guess, immediately, what it all meant? In a vague way, I fancied that I had been premature in my attempt to drop our mutual incognito, and that Fisher, a rival lover, was jealous of me.

This was rather flattering than otherwise; but when I limped down to the ladies' parlor, the next day, no Miss Danvers was to be seen. I did not venture to ask for her; it might seem importunate, and a woman of so much hidden capacity was evidently not to be wooed in the ordinary way.

So another night passed by; and then, with the morning, came a letter which made me feel, at the same instant, like a fool and a hero. It had been dropped in the Wampsocket post-office, was legibly addressed to me, and delivered with some other letters which had arrived by the night mail. Here it is; listen!

"NOTO IGNOTA!--Haste is not a gift of the gods, and you have been impatient, with the usual result, I was almost prepared for this, and thus am not wholly disappointed. In a day or two more you will discover your mistake, which, so far as I can learn, has done no particular harm. If you wish to find me, there is only one way to seek me; should I tell you what it is, I should run the risk of losing you,--that is, I should preclude the manifestation of a certain quality which I hope to find in the man who may--or, rather, must--be my friend. This sounds enigmatical, yet you have read enough of my nature, as written in these random notes in my sketch-book, to guess, at least, how much I require. Only this let me add: mere guessing is useless.

"Being unknown, I can write freely. If you find me, I shall be justified; if not, I shall hardly need to blush, even to myself, over a futile experiment.

"It is possible for me to learn enough of your life, henceforth, to direct my relation toward you. This may be the end; if so, I shall know it soon. I shall also know whether you continue to seek me. Trusting in your honor as a man, I must ask you to trust in mine, as a woman."

* * * * *

I did discover my mistake, as the Unknown promised. There had been a secret betrothal between Fisher and Miss Danvers; and singularly enough, the momentous question and answer had been given in the very ravine leading to my upper dell! The two meant to keep the matter to themselves, but therein, it seems, I thwarted them; there was a little opposition on the part of their respective families, but all was amicably settled before I left Wampsocket.

The letter made a very deep impression upon me. What was the one way to find her? What could it be but the triumph that follows ambitious toil--the manifestation of all my best qualities, as a man? Be she old

or young, plain or beautiful, I reflected, hers is surely a nature worth knowing, and its candid intelligence conceals no hazards for me. I have sought her rashly, blundered, betrayed that I set her lower, in my thoughts, than her actual self: let me now adopt the opposite course, seek her openly no longer, go back to my tasks, and, following my own aims vigorously and cheerfully, restore that respect which she seemed to be on the point of losing. For, consciously or not, she had communicated to me a doubt, implied in the very expression of her own strength and pride. She had meant to address me as an equal, yet, despite herself, took a stand a little above that which she accorded to me.

I came back to New York earlier than usual, worked steadily at my profession and with increasing success, and began to accept opportunities (which I had previously declined) of making myself personally known to the great, impressible, fickle, tyrannical public. One or two of my speeches in the hall of the Cooper Institute, on various occasions--as you may perhaps remember--gave me a good headway with the party, and were the chief cause of my nomination for the State office which I still hold. (There, on the table, lies a resignation, written to-day, but not yet signed. We'll talk of it afterwards.)

Several months passed by, and no further letter reached me. I gave up much of my time to society, moved familiarly in more than one province of the kingdom here, and vastly extended my acquaintance, especially among the women; but not one of them betrayed the mysterious something or other--really I can't explain precisely what it was!--which I was looking for. In fact, the more I endeavored quietly to study the sex,

the more confused I became.

At last I was subjected to the usual onslaught from the strong-minded. A small but formidable committee entered my office one morning and demanded a categorical declaration of my principles. What my views on the subject were, I knew very well; they were clear and decided; and yet, I hesitated to declare them! It wasn't a temptation of Saint Anthony--that is, turned the other way--and the belligerent attitude of the dames did not alarm me in the least; but she! What was her position? How could I best please her? It flashed upon my mind, while Mrs. ---- was making her formal speech, that I had taken no step for months without a vague, secret reference to her. So, I strove to be courteous, friendly, and agreeably non-committal; begged for further documents, and promised to reply by letter, in a few days.

I was hardly surprised to find the well-known hand on the envelope of a letter, shortly afterwards. I held it for a minute in my palm, with an absurd hope that I might sympathetically feel its character, before breaking the seal. Then I read it with a great sense of relief.

"I have never assumed to guide a man, except toward the full exercise of his powers. It is not opinion in action, but opinion in a state of idleness or indifference, which repels me. I am deeply glad that you have gained so much since you left the country. If, in shaping your course,

you have thought of me, I will frankly say that, _to that extent_, you have drawn nearer. Am I mistaken in conjecturing that you wish to know my relation to the movement concerning which you were recently interrogated? In this, as in other instances which may come, I must beg you to consider me only as a spectator. The more my own views may seem likely to sway your action, the less I shall be inclined to declare them. If you find this cold or unwomanly, remember that it is not easy!"

Yes! I felt that I had certainly drawn much nearer to her. And from this time on, her imaginary face and form became other than they were. She was twenty-eight--three years older; a very little above the middle height, but not tall; serene, rather than stately, in her movements; with a calm, almost grave face, relieved by the sweetness of the full, firm lips; and finally eyes of pure, limpid gray, such as we fancy belonged to the Venus of Milo. I found her, thus, much more attractive than with the dark eyes and lashes--but she did not make her appearance in the circles which I frequented.

Another year slipped away. As an official personage, my importance increased, but I was careful not to exaggerate it to myself. Many have wondered (perhaps you among the rest) at my success, seeing that I possess no remarkable abilities. If I have any secret, it is simply this--doing faithfully, with all my might, whatever I undertake. Nine

tenths of our politicians become inflated and careless, after the first few years, and are easily forgotten when they once lose place. I am a little surprised, now, that I had so much patience with the Unknown. I was too important, at least, to be played with; too mature to be subjected to a longer test; too earnest, as I had proved, to be doubted, or thrown aside without a further explanation.

Growing tired, at last, of silent waiting, I bethought me of advertising. A carefully-written "Personal," in which _Ignotus_ informed _Ignota_ of the necessity of his communicating with her, appeared simultaneously in the Tribune, Herald, World, and Times. I renewed the advertisement as the time expired without an answer, and I think it was about the end of the third week before one came, through the post, as before.

Ah, yes! I had forgotten. See! my advertisement is pasted on the note, as a heading or motto for the manuscript lines. I don't know why the printed slip should give me a particular feeling of humiliation as I look at it, but such is the fact. What she wrote is all I need read to you:

"I could not, at first, be certain that this was meant for me. If I were to explain to you why I have not written for so long a time, I might give you one of the few clews which I insist on keeping in my own hands. In your public capacity,

you have been (so far as a woman may judge) upright,
independent, wholly manly: in your relations
with other men I learn nothing of you that is not
honorable: toward women you are kind, chivalrous,
no doubt, overflowing with the _usual_ social
refinements, but--Here, again, I run hard upon
the absolute necessity of silence. The way to me,
if you care to traverse it, is so simple, so very simple!
Yet, after what I have written, I cannot even
wave my hand in the direction of it, without certain
self-contempt. When I feel free to tell you,
we shall draw apart and remain unknown forever.

"You desire to write? I do not prohibit it. I
have heretofore made no arrangement for hearing
from you, in turn, because I could not discover
that any advantage would accrue from it. But it
seems only fair, I confess, and you dare not think
me capricious. So, three days hence, at six
o'clock in the evening, a trusty messenger of mine
will call at your door. If you have anything to
give her for me, the act of giving it must be the
sign of a compact on your part, that you will allow
her to leave immediately, unquestioned and
unfollowed."

You look puzzled, I see: you don't catch the real drift of her words?

Well--that's a melancholy encouragement. Neither did I, at the time: it was plain that I had disappointed her in some way, and my intercourse with, or manner toward, women, had something to do with it. In vain I ran over as much of my later social life as I could recall. There had been no special attention, nothing to mislead a susceptible heart; on the other side, certainly no rudeness, no want of "chivalrous" (she used the word!) respect and attention. What, in the name of all the gods, was the matter?

In spite of all my efforts to grow clearer, I was obliged to write my letter in a rather muddled state of mind. I had _so_ much to say! sixteen folio pages, I was sure, would only suffice for an introduction to the case; yet, when the creamy vellum lay before me and the moist pen drew my fingers toward it, I sat stock dumb for half an hour. I wrote, finally, in a half-desperate mood, without regard to coherency or logic. Here's a rough draft of a part of the letter, and a single passage from it will be enough:

"I can conceive of no simpler way to you than the knowledge of your name and address. I have drawn airy images of you, but they do not become incarnate, and I am not sure that I should recognize you in the brief moment of passing. Your nature is not of those which are instantly legible. As an abstract power, it has wrought in my life and it continually moves my heart with desires which are unsatisfactory because so vague and

ignorant. Let me offer you, personally, my gratitude,
my earnest friendship: you would laugh if
I were now to offer more."

Stay! here is another fragment, more reckless in tone:

"I want to find the woman whom I can love--who
can love me. But this is a masquerade where
the features are hidden, the voice disguised, even
the hands grotesquely gloved. Come! I will
venture more than I ever thought was possible to
me. You shall know my deepest nature as I myself
seem to know it. Then, give me the commonest
chance of learning yours, through an intercourse
which shall leave both free, should we not
feel the closing of the inevitable bond!"

After I had written that, the pages filled rapidly. When the appointed
hour arrived, a bulky epistle, in a strong linen envelope, sealed with
five wax seals, was waiting on my table. Precisely at six there was an
announcement: the door opened, and a little outside, in the shadow, I
saw an old woman, in a threadbare dress of rusty black.

"Come in!" I said.

"The letter!" answered a husky voice. She stretched out a bony hand, without moving a step.

"It is for a lady--very important business," said I, taking up the letter; "are you sure that there is no mistake?"

She drew her hand under the shawl, turned without a word, and moved toward the hall door.

"Stop!" I cried; "I beg a thousand pardons! Take it--take it! You are the right messenger!"

She clutched it, and was instantly gone.

Several days passed, and I gradually became so nervous and uneasy that I was on the point of inserting another "Personal" in the daily papers, when the answer arrived. It was brief and mysterious; you shall hear the whole of it.

"I thank you. Your letter is a sacred confidence which I pray you never to regret. Your nature is sound and good. You ask no more than is reasonable, and I have no real right to refuse. In the one respect which I have hinted, _I_ may have been unskilful or too narrowly cautious:

I must have the certainty of this. Therefore, as a generous favor, give me six months more! At the end of that time I will write to you again. Have patience with these brief lines: another word might be a word too much."

You notice the change in her tone? The letter gave me the strongest impression of a new, warm, almost anxious interest on her part. My fancies, as first at Wampsocket, began to play all sorts of singular pranks: sometimes she was rich and of an old family, sometimes moderately poor and obscure, but always the same calm, reposeful face and clear gray eyes. I ceased looking for her in society, quite sure that I should not find her, and nursed a wild expectation of suddenly meeting her, face to face, in the most unlikely places and under startling circumstances. However, the end of it all was patience--patience for six months.

There's not much more to tell; but this last letter is hard for me to read. It came punctually, to a day. I knew it would, and at the last I began to dread the time, as if a heavy note were falling due, and I had no funds to meet it. My head was in a whirl when I broke the seal. The fact in it stared at me blankly, at once, but it was a long time before the words and sentences became intelligible.

"The stipulated time has come, and our hidden romance is at an end. Had I taken this resolution

a year ago, it would have saved me many
vain hopes, and you, perhaps, a little uncertainty.
Forgive me, first, if you can, and then hear the
explanation!

"You wished for a personal interview: _you have
had, not one, but many_. We have met, in society,
talked face to face, discussed the weather, the
opera, toilettes, Queechy, Aurora Floyd, Long
Branch and Newport, and exchanged a weary
amount of fashionable gossip; and you never
guessed that I was governed by any deeper interest!
I have purposely uttered ridiculous platitudes,
and you were as smilingly courteous as if
you enjoyed them: I have let fall remarks whose
hollowness and selfishness could not have escaped
you, and have waited in vain for a word of sharp,
honest, manly reproof. Your manner to me was
unexceptionable, as it was to all other women:
but there lies the source of my disappointment,
of--yes--of my sorrow!

"You appreciate, I cannot doubt, the qualities
in woman which men value in one another--culture,
independence of thought, a high and earnest apprehension
of life; but you know not how to seek
them. It is not true that a mature and unperverted

woman is flattered by receiving only the general obsequiousness which most men give to the whole sex. In the man who contradicts and strives with her, she discovers a truer interest, a nobler respect. The empty-headed, spindle-shanked youths who dance admirably, understand something of billiards, much less of horses, and still less of navigation, soon grow inexpressibly wearisome to us; but the men who adopt their social courtesy, never seeking to arouse, uplift, instruct us, are a bitter disappointment.

"What would have been the end, had you really found me? Certainly a sincere, satisfying friendship. No mysterious magnetic force has drawn you to me or held you near me, nor has my experiment inspired me with an interest which cannot be given up without a personal pang. I am grieved, for the sake of all men and all women. Yet, understand me! I mean no slightest reproach. I esteem and honor you for what you are. Farewell!"

There. Nothing could be kinder in tone, nothing more humiliating in substance. I was sore and offended for a few days; but I soon began to see, and ever more and more clearly, that she was wholly right. I was sure, also, that any further attempt to correspond with her would be

vain. It all comes of taking society just as we find it, and supposing that conventional courtesy is the only safe ground on which men and women can meet.

The fact is--there's no use in hiding it from myself (and I see, by your face, that the letter cuts into your own conscience)--she is a free, courageous, independent character, and--I am not.

But who was she?

THE DOCUMENTS IN THE CASE.

BY BRANDER MATTHEWS AND H.C. BUNNER.

PART FIRST:

DOCUMENT NO. I.

Paragraph from the "Illustrated London News," published under the head of "Obituary of Eminent Persons" in the issue of January 4th, 1879: _

SIR WILLIAM BEAUVOIR, BART.

Sir William Beauvoir, Bart., whose lamented death has just occurred at Brighton, on December 28th, was the head and representative of the junior branch of the very ancient and honourable family of Beauvoir, and was the only son of the late General Sir William Beauvoir, Bart., by his wife Anne, daughter of Colonel Doyle, of Chelsworth Cottage, Suffolk. He was born in 1805, and was educated at Eton and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He was M.P. for Lancashire from 1837 to 1847, and was appointed a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber in 1843. Sir William married, in 1826, Henrietta Georgiana, fourth daughter of the Right Honourable Adolphus Liddell, Q.C., by whom he had two sons, William Beauvoir and Oliver Liddell Beauvoir. The latter was with his lamented parent when he died. Of the former nothing has been heard for nearly thirty years, about which time he left England suddenly for America. It is supposed that he went to California, shortly after the discovery of gold. Much forgotten gossip will now in all probability be revived, for the will of the lamented baronet has been proved, on the 2d inst., and the personalty sworn under £70,000. The two sons are appointed executors. The estate in Lancashire is left to the elder, and the rest is divided equally between the brothers. The doubt as to the career of Sir William's eldest son must now of course be cleared up.

This family of Beauvoirs is of Norman descent and of great antiquity. This is the younger branch, founded in the last century by Sir William Beauvoir, Bart., who was Chief Justice of the Canadas, whence he was granted the punning arms and motto now borne by his descendants--a beaver sable rampant on a field gules; motto, "Damno."

PART SECOND:

DOCUMENT NO. 2.

_Promises to pay, put forth by William Beauvoir, junior, at various
times in 1848: _

I.O.U

L105.0.0

April 10th, 1848.

William Beauvoir, junr.

DOCUMENT NO. 3.

The same.

I.O.U

L250.0.0

April 22d, 1848.

William Beauvoir, junr.

DOCUMENT NO. 4.

The same.

I.O.U.

L600.0.0.

May 10th, 1848.

William Beauvoir, junr.

DOCUMENT NO. 5.

_Extract from the "Sunday Satirist," a journal of high-life, published
in London, May 13th, 1848: _

Are not our hereditary lawmakers and the members of our old families the guardians of the honour of this realm? One would not think so to see the reckless gait at which some of them go down the road to ruin. The D----e of D----m and the E----l of B----n and L----d Y----g,--are not these pretty guardians of a nation's name? _Quis custodiet?_ etc. Guardians, forsooth, _parce qu'ils se sont donnes la peine de naitre_! Some of the gentry make the running as well as their betters. Young W----m B----r, son of old Sir W----m B----r, late M.P. for L----e, is truly a model young man. He comes of a good old county family--his mother was a daughter of the Right Honourable A----s L----l, and he himself is old enough to know better. But we hear of his escapades night after night, and day after day. He bets all day and he plays all night, and poor tired nature has to make the best of it. And his poor worn purse gets the worst of it. He has duns by the score. His I.O.U.'s are held by

every Jew in the city. He is not content with a little gentlemanlike game of whist or _ecarte_, but he must needs revive for his especial use and behoof the dangerous and well-nigh forgotten _pharaoh_. As luck would have it, he had lost as much at this game of brute chance as ever he would at any game of skill. His judgment of horseflesh is no better than his luck at cards. He came a cropper over the "Two Thousand Guineas." The victory of the favorite cost him to the tune of over six thousand pounds. We learn that he hopes to recoup himself on the Derby, by backing Shylock for nearly nine thousand pounds; one bet was twelve hundred guineas.

And this is the sort of man who may be chosen at any time by force of family interest to make laws for the toiling millions of Great Britain!

DOCUMENT NO. 6.

_Extract from "Bell's Life" of May 19th, 1848: _

THE DERBY DAY.

WEDNESDAY.--This day, like its predecessor, opened with a cloudless sky, and the throng which crowded the avenues leading to the grand scene of attraction was, as we have elsewhere remarked, incalculable.

* * * * *

THE DERBY.

The Derby Stakes of 50 sovs. each, h. ft. for three year-olds; colts, 8 st. 7 lb., fillies, 8 st. 2 lb.; the second to receive 100 sovs., and the winner to pay 100 sovs. towards police, etc.; mile and a half on the new Derby course; 215 subs.

Lord Clifden's b.c. _Surplice_, by Touchstone..... 1
Mr. Bowe's b.c. _Springy Jack_, by Hetman..... 2
Mr. B. Green's br.c. _Shylock_, by Simoon..... 3
Mr. Payne's b.c. _Glendower_, by Slane..... 0
Mr. J.P. Day's b.c. _Nil Desperandum_, by Venison..... 0

* * * * *

DOCUMENT NO. 7.

Paragraph of Shipping Intelligence from the "Liverpool Courier" of June 21st, 1848:

The bark _Euterpe_, Captain Riding, belonging to the Transatlantic Clipper Line of Messrs. Judkins & Cooke, left the Mersey yesterday afternoon, bound for New York. She took out the usual complement of

steerage passengers. The first officer's cabin is occupied by Professor Titus Peebles, M.R.C.S., M.R.G.S., lately instructor in metallurgy at the University of Edinburgh, and Mr. William Beauvoir. Professor Peebles, we are informed, has an important scientific mission in the States, and will not return for six months.

DOCUMENT NO. 8.

Paragraph from the "N.Y. Herald" of September 9th, 1848:

While we well know that the record of vice and dissipation can never be pleasing to the refined tastes of the cultivated denizens of the only morally pure metropolis on the face of the earth, yet it may be of interest to those who enjoy the fascinating study of human folly and frailty to "point a moral or adorn a tale" from the events transpiring in our very midst. Such as these will view with alarm the sad example afforded the youth of our city by the dissolute career of a young lump of aristocratic affectation and patrician profligacy, recently arrived in this city. This young _gentleman's_ (save the mark!) name is Lord William F. Beauvoir, the latest scion of a venerable and wealthy English family. We print the full name of this beautiful exemplar of "haughty Albion," although he first appeared among our citizens under the alias of Beaver, by which name he is now generally known, although recorded on the books of the Astor House by the name which our enterprise first gives to the public. Lord Beauvoir's career since his arrival here has been one of unexampled extravagance and mad immorality. His days and

nights have been passed in the gilded palaces of the fickle goddess, Fortune, in Thomas Street and College Place, where he has squandered fabulous sums, by some stated to amount to over L78,000 sterling. It is satisfactory to know that retribution has at last overtaken him. His enormous income has been exhausted to the ultimate farthing, and at latest accounts he had quit the city, leaving behind him, it is shrewdly suspected, a large hotel bill, though no such admission can be extorted from his last landlord, who is evidently a sycophantic adulator of British "aristocracy."

DOCUMENT NO. 9.

_Certificate of deposit, vulgarly known as a pawn-ticket, issued by one Simpson to William Beauvoir, December 2d, 1848: _

=John Simpson,
Loan Office,
36 Bowery,
New York.=

Dec. 2nd, 1848,

One Gold Hunting-case Watch and Dolls. Cts.

Chain 150 00

William Beauvoir

Not accountable in case of fire, damage, moth, robbery, breakage, &c.

25% per ann. Good for 1 year only.

DOCUMENT NO. 10.

_Letter from the late John Phoenix, found among the posthumous papers of
the late John P. Squibob, and promptly published in the "San Diego
Herald":_

OFF THE COAST OF FLORIDA, Jan. 3, 1849.

MY DEAR SQUIB:--I imagine your pathetic inquiry
as to my whereabouts--pathetic, not to say
hypothetic--for I am now where I cannot hear the
dulcet strains of your voice. I am on board ship.
I am half seas over. I am bound for California
by way of the Isthmus. I am going for the gold,
my boy, the gold. In the mean time I am lying
around loose on the deck of this magnificent
vessel, the _Mercy G. Tarbox,_ of Nantucket, bred by
Noah's Ark out of _Pilot-boat,_ dam by _Mudscow_ out
of _Raging Canawl._ The _Mercy G. Tarbox_ is one of

the best boats of Nantucket, and Captain Clearstarch is one of the best captains all along shore--although, friend Squibob, I feel sure that you are about to observe that a captain with a name like that would give any one the blues. But don't do it, Squib! Spare me this once.

But as a matter of fact this ultramarine joke of yours is about east. It was blue on the _Mercy G.--_mighty blue, too. And it needed the inspiring hope of the gold I was soon to pick up in nuggets to stiffen my back-bone to a respectable degree of rigidity. I was about ready to wilt. But I discovered two Englishmen on board, and now I get along all right. We have formed a little temperance society--just we three, you know--to see if we cannot, by a course of sampling and severe study, discover which of the captain's liquors is most dangerous, so that we can take the pledge not to touch it. One of them is a chemist or a metallurgist, or something scientific. The other is a gentleman.

The chemist or metallurgist or something scientific is Professor Titus Peebles, who is going out to prospect for gold. He feels sure that his professional training will give him the inside track in

the gulches and gold mines. He is a smart chap.

He invented the celebrated "William Riley Baking Powder"--bound to rise up every time.

And here I must tell you a little circumstance.

As I was coming down to the dock in New York, to go aboard the _Mercy G.,_ a small boy was walloping a boy still smaller; so I made peace, and walloped them both. And then they both began heaving rocks at me--one of which I caught dexterously in the dexter hand. Yesterday, as I was pacing the deck with the professor, I put my hand in my pocket and found this stone. So I asked the professor what it was.

He looked at it and said it was gneiss.

"Is it?" said I. "Well, if a small but energetic youth had taken you on the back of the head with it, you would not think it so nice!"

And then, O Squib, he set out to explain that he meant "gneiss," not "nice!" The ignorance of these English about a joke is really wonderful. It is easy to see that they have never been brought up on them. But perhaps there was some excuse

for the professor that day, for he was the president
pro tem. of our projected temperance society, and
as such he had been making a quantitative and
qualitative analysis of another kind of quartz.

So much for the chemist or metallurgist or
something scientific. The gentleman and I get on
better. His name is Beaver, which he persists
in spelling Beauvoir. Ridiculous, isn't it? How
easy it is to see that the English have never had
the advantage of a good common-school education--so
few of them can spell. Here's a man don't
know how to spell his own name. And this shows
how the race over there on the little island is degenerating.
It was not so in other days. Shakspeare,
for instance, not only knew how to spell his
own name, but--and this is another proof of his
superiority to his contemporaries--he could spell
it in half a dozen different ways.

This Beaver is a clever fellow, and we get on
first rate together. He is going to California for
gold--like the rest of us. But I think he has had his
share--and spent it. At any rate he has not much
now. I have been teaching him poker, and I am
afraid he won't have any soon. I have an idea he
has been going pretty fast--and mostly down hill.

But he has his good points. He is a gentleman
all through, as you can see. Yes, friend Squibob,
even you could see right through him. We are
all going to California together, and I wonder
which one of the three will turn up trumps first--Beaver,
or the chemist, metallurgist or something
scientific, or

Yours respectfully, JOHN PHOENIX.

P.S. You think this a stupid letter, perhaps,
and not interesting. Just reflect on my surroundings.
Besides, the interest will accumulate a good
while before you get the missive. And I don't
know how you ever are to get it, for there is
no post-office near here, and on the Isthmus the
mails are as uncertain as the females are everywhere.
(I am informed that there is no postage on
old jokes--so I let that stand.)
J.P.

DOCUMENT NO. 11.

_Extract from the "Bone Gulch Palladium," June 3d, 1850: _

Our readers may remember how frequently we have declared our firm belief in the future unexampled prosperity of Bone Gulch. We saw it in the immediate future the metropolis of the Pacific Slope, as it was intended by nature to be. We pointed out repeatedly that a time would come when Bone Gulch would be an emporium of the arts and sciences and of the best society, even more than it is now. We foresaw the time when the best men from the old cities of the East would come flocking to us, passing with contempt the puny settlement of Deadhorse. But even we did not so soon see that members of the aristocracy of the effete monarchies of despotic Europe would acknowledge the undeniable advantages of Bone Gulch, and come here to stay permanently and forever. Within the past week we have received here Hon. William Beaver, one of the first men of Great Britain and Ireland, a statesman, an orator, a soldier and an extensive traveller. He has come to Bone Gulch as the best spot on the face of the everlasting universe. It is needless to say that our prominent citizens have received him with great cordiality. Bone Gulch is not like Deadhorse. We know a gentleman when we see one.

Hon. Mr. Beaver is one of nature's noblemen; he is also related to the Royal Family of England. He is a second cousin of the Queen, and boards at the Tower of London with her when at home. We are informed that he has frequently taken the Prince of Wales out for a ride in his baby-wagon.

We take great pleasure in congratulating Bone Gulch on its latest acquisition. And we know Hon. Mr. Beaver is sure to get along all right here under the best climate in the world and with the noblest men the

sun ever shone on.

DOCUMENT NO. 12.

_Extract from the Dead Horse "Gazette and Courier of Civilization" of
August 26th, 1850: _

BONEGULCH'S BRITISHER.

Bonegulch sits in sackcloth and ashes and cools her mammoth cheek in the breezes of Colorado canyon. The self-styled Emporium of the West has lost her British darling, Beaver Bill, the big swell who was first cousin to the Marquis of Buckingham and own grandmother to the Emperor of China, the man with the biled shirt and low-necked shoes. This curled darling of the Bonegulch aristocrat-worshippers passed through Deadhorse yesterday, clean bust. Those who remember how the four-fingered editor of the Bonegulch "Palladium" pricked up his ears and lifted up his falsetto crow when this lovely specimen of the British snob first honored him by striking him for a \$ will appreciate the point of the joke.

It is said that the "Palladium" is going to come out, when it makes its next semi-occasional appearance, in full mourning, with turned rules. For this festive occasion we offer Brother B. the use of our late retired Spanish font, which we have discarded for the new and elegant

dress in which we appear to-day, and to which we have elsewhere called the attention of our readers. It will be a change for the "Palladium's" eleven unhappy readers, who are getting very tired of the old type cast for the Concha Mission in 1811, which tries to make up for its lack of w's by a plentiful superfluity of greaser u's. How are you, Brother Biles?

"We don't know a gent when we see him." Oh no(!)?

DOCUMENT NO. 13.

_Paragraph from "Police Court Notes," in the "New Centreville [late Dead Horse] Evening Gazette" January 2d, 1858: _

HYMENEAL HIGH JINKS.

William Beaver, better known ten years ago as "Beaver Bill," is now a quiet and prosperous agriculturalist in the Steal Valley. He was, however, a pioneer in the 1849 movement, and a vivid memory of this fact at times moves him to quit his bucolic labors and come in town for a real old-fashioned tare. He arrived in New Centreville during Christmas week; and got married suddenly, but not unexpectedly, yesterday morning. His friends took it upon themselves to celebrate the joyful occasion, rare in the experience of at least one of the parties, by getting very high on Irish Ike's whiskey and serenading the newly-married couple with

fish-horns, horse-fiddles, and other improvised musical instruments. Six of the participators in this epithalamial serenade, namely, Jose Tanco, Hiram Scuttles, John P. Jones, Hermann Bumgardner, Jean Durant ("Frenchy"), and Bernard McGinnis ("Big Barney"), were taken in tow by the police force, assisted by citizens, and locked up over night, to cool their generous enthusiasm in the gloomy dungeons of Justice Skinner's calaboose. This morning all were discharged with a reprimand, except Big Barney and Jose Tanco, who, being still drunk, were allotted ten days in default of \$10. The bridal pair left this noon for the bridegroom's ranch.

DOCUMENT NO. 14.

_Extract from "The New York Herald" for June 23d, 1861: _

THE RED SKINS.

A BORDER WAR AT LAST!

INDIAN INSURRECTION!

RED DEVILS RISING!

WOMEN AND CHILDREN SEEKING SAFETY IN THE LARGER

TOWNS.

HORRIBLE HOLOCAUSTS ANTICIPATED.

BURYING THE HATCHET--IN THE WHITE MAN'S HEAD.

[SPECIAL DESPATCH TO THE NEW YORK HERALD.]

CHICAGO, June 22, 1861.

Great uneasiness exists all along the Indian frontier. Nearly all the regular troops have been withdrawn from the West for service in the South. With the return of the warm weather it seems certain that the red skins will take advantage of the opportunity thus offered, and inaugurate a bitter and vindictive fight against the whites. Rumors come from the agencies that the Indians are leaving in numbers. A feverish excitement among them has been easily to be detected. Their ponies are now in good condition, and forage can soon be had in abundance on the prairie, if it is not already. Everything points toward a sudden and startling outbreak of hostilities.

[SPECIAL DESPATCH TO THE NEW YORK HERALD.]

ST. PAUL, June 22, 1861.

The Sioux near here are all in a ferment. Experienced Indian fighters say the signs of a speedy going on the war-path are not to be mistaken. No one can tell how soon the whole frontier may be in a bloody blaze. The women and children are rapidly coming in from all exposed settlements. Nothing overt as yet has transpired, but that the Indians will collide very soon with the settlers is certain. All the troops have been withdrawn. In our defenceless state there is no knowing how many lives may be lost before the regiments of volunteers now organizing can take the field.

LATER.

THE WAR BEGUN.

FIRST BLOOD FOR THE INDIANS.

THE SCALPING KNIFE AND THE TOMAHAWK AT WORK AGAIN.

[SPECIAL DESPATCH TO THE NEW YORK HERALD.]

BLACK WING AGENCY, June 22, 1861.

The Indians made a sudden and unexpected attack on the town of Coyote

Hill, forty miles from here, last night, and did much damage before the surprised settlers rallied and drove them off. The red skins met with heavy losses. Among the whites killed are a man named William Beaver, sometimes called Beaver Bill, and his wife. Their child, a beautiful little girl of two, was carried off by the red rascals. A party has been made up to pursue them. Owing to their taking their wounded with them, the trail is very distinct.

DOCUMENT NO. 15.

Letter from Mrs. Edgar Saville, in San Francisco, to Mr. Edgar Saville, in Chicago:

CAL. JARDINE'S

Monster Variety and Dramatic Combination.

ON THE ROAD.

_G.W.K. McCULLUM,

Treasurer

HI. SAMUELS,

Stage Manager.

FNO. SHANKS,

Advance_.

_No dates filled except with first-class houses.

Hall owners will please consider silence a polite negative._

SAN FRANCISCO, January 29, 1863.

MY DEAR OLD MAN!--Here we are in our second week at Frisco and you will be glad to know playing to steadily increasing biz, having signed for two weeks more, certain. I didn't like to mention it when I wrote you last, but things were very queer after we left Denver, and "Treasury" was a mockery till we got to Bluefoot Springs, which is a mining town, where we showed in the hotel dining-room. Then there was a strike just before the curtain went up. The house was mostly miners in red shirts and very exacting. The sinews were forthcoming very quick my dear, and after that the ghost walked quite regular. So now everything is bright, and you wont have to worry if Chicago doesn't do the right thing by you.

I don't find this engagement half as disagreeable

as I expected. Of course it aint so very nice
travelling in a combination with variety talent but
they keep to themselves and we regular professionals
make a _happy family_ that Barnum would not
be ashamed of and quite separate and comfortable.
We don't associate with any of them only
with The Unique Mulligans wife, because he beats
her. So when he is on a regular she sleeps with
me.

And talking of liquor dear old man, if you knew
how glad and proud I was to see you writing so
straight and steady and beautiful in your three
last letters. O, Im sure my darling if the boys
thought of the little wife out on the road they
wouldnt plague you so with the Enemy. Tell
Harry Atkinson this from me, he has a good kind
heart but he is the worst of your friends. Every
night when I am dressing I think of you at
Chicago, and pray you may never again go on the
way you did that terrible night at Rochester.
Tell me dear, did you look handsome in Horatio?
You ought to have had Laertes instead of that
duffing Merivale.

And now I have the queerest thing to tell you.
Jardine is going in for Indians and has secured six

very ugly ones. I mean real Indians, not professional.

They are hostile Comanshies or something who have just laid down their arms. They had an insurrection in the first year of the War, when the troops went East, and they killed all the settlers and ranches and destroyed the canyons somewhere out in Nevada, and when they were brought here they had a wee little kid with them only four or five years old, but _so sweet._ They stole her and killed her parents and brought her up for their own in the cunningest little moccasins. She could not speak a word of English except her own name which is Nina. She has blue eyes and all her second teeth. The ladies here made a great fuss about her and sent her flowers and worsted afgans, but they did not do anything else for her and left her to us.

O dear old man you must let me have her!
You never refused me a thing yet and she is so like our Avonia Marie that my heart almost breaks when she puts her arms around my neck--_she calls me mamma already._ I want to have her with us when we get the little farm--and it must be near, that little farm of ours--we have waited for it so long--and something tells me my own old faker will make his hit soon and be great. You cant

tell how I have loved it and hoped for it and how
real every foot of that farm is to me. And though
I can never see my own darling's face among the
roses it will make me so happy to see this poor
dead mothers pet get red and rosy in the country
air. And till the farm comes we shall always have
enough for her, without your ever having to black
up again as you did for me the winter I was sick
my own poor boy!

Write me yes--you will be glad when you see
her. And now love and regards to Mrs. Barry and
all friends. Tell the Worst of Managers that he
knows where to find his leading juvenile for next
season. Think how funny it would be for us to
play together next year--we havent done it since
'57--the third year we were married. That was
my first season higher than walking--and now I'm
quite an old woman--most thirty dear!

Write me soon a letter like that last one--and
send a kiss to Nina--_our Nina._

Your own girl,

MARY.

P.S. He has not worried me since.

[Illustration: Nina drew this herself she says it is a horse so that you can get here soon.]

PART THIRD:

DOCUMENT NO. 16.

_Letter from Messrs. Throstlethwaite, Throstlethwaite and Dick,
Solicitors, Lincoln's Inn, London, England, to Messrs. Hitchcock and Van
Rensselaer, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 76 Broadway, New York,
U.S.A._

January 8, 1879.

Messrs. HITCHCOCK & VAN RENSSELAER:

GENTLEMEN: On the death of our late client, Sir
William Beauvoir, Bart., and after the reading of
the deceased gentleman's will, drawn up nearly
forty years ago by our Mr. Dick, we were requested
by Oliver Beauvoir, Esq., the second son of the

late Sir William, to assist him in discovering and communicating with his elder brother, the present Sir William Beauvoir, of whose domicile we have little or no information.

After a consultation between Mr. Oliver Beauvoir and our Mr. Dick, it was seen that the sole knowledge in our possession amounted substantially to this: Thirty years ago the elder son of the late baronet, after indulging in dissipation in every possible form, much to the sorrow of his respected parent, who frequently expressed as much to our Mr. Dick, disappeared, leaving behind him bills and debts of all descriptions, which we, under instructions from Sir William, examined, audited and paid. Sir William Beauvoir would allow no search to be made for his erring son and would listen to no mention of his name. Current gossip declared that he had gone to New York, where he probably arrived about midsummer, 1848. Mr. Oliver Beauvoir thinks that he crossed to the States in company with a distinguished scientific gentleman, Professor Titus Peebles. Within a year after his departure news came that he had gone to California with Professor Peebles; this was about the time gold was discovered in the States. That the present Sir William Beauvoir

did about this time actually arrive on the Pacific Coast in company with the distinguished scientific man above mentioned, we have every reason to believe: we have even direct evidence on the subject. A former junior clerk who had left us at about the same period as the disappearance of the elder son of our late client, accosted our Mr. Dick when the latter was in Paris last summer, and informed him (our Mr. Dick) that he (the former junior clerk) was now a resident of Nevada and a member of Congress for that county, and in the course of conversation he mentioned that he had seen Professor Peebles and the son of our late client in San Francisco, nearly thirty years ago. Other information we have none. It ought not to be difficult to discover Professor Peebles, whose scientific attainments have doubtless ere this been duly recognized by the U.S. government. As our late client leaves the valuable family estate in Lancashire to his elder son and divides the remainder equally between his two sons, you will readily see why we invoke your assistance in discovering the present domicile of the late baronet's elder son, or in default thereof, in placing in our hands such proof of his death as may be necessary to establish that lamentable fact in our probate court.

We have the honour to remain, as ever, your
most humble and obedient servants,

THROSTLETHWAITE, THROSTLETHWAITE & DICK.

P.S. Our late client's grandson, Mr. William
Beauvoir, the only child of Oliver Beauvoir, Esq.,
is now in the States, in Chicago or Nebraska or
somewhere in the West. We shall be pleased if
you can keep him informed as to the progress of
your investigations. Our Mr. Dick has requested
Mr. Oliver Beauvoir to give his son your address,
and to suggest his calling on you as he passes
through New York on his way home.

T.T.& D.

DOCUMENT NO. 17.

_Letter from Messrs. Hitchcock and Van Rensselaer, New York, to Messrs.
Pixley and Sutton, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 98 California
Street, San Francisco, California._

Law Offices of Hitchcock & Van Rensselaer,

70 Broadway, New York,

P.O. Box 4078.

Jan. 22, 1879.

Messrs. PIXLEY AND SUTTON:

GENTLEMEN: We have just received from our London correspondents, Messrs. Throstlethwaite, Throstlethwaite and Dick, of Lincoln's Inn, London, the letter, a copy of which is herewith enclosed, to which we invite your attention. We request that you will do all in your power to aid us in the search for the missing Englishman. From the letter of Messrs. Throstlethwaite, Throstlethwaite and Dick, it seems extremely probable, not to say certain, that Mr. Beauvoir arrived in your city about 1849, in company with a distinguished English scientist, Professor Titus Peebles, whose professional attainments were such that he is probably well known, if not in California, at least in some other of the mining States. The first thing to be done, therefore, it seems to us, is to ascertain the whereabouts of the professor, and to interview him at once. It may be that he has no knowledge of the present domicile of Mr. William Beauvoir--in

which case we shall rely on you to take such steps as, in your judgment, will best conduce to a satisfactory solution of the mystery. In any event, please look up Professor Peebles, and interview him at once.

Pray keep us fully informed by telegraph of your movements. Yr obt serv'ts,

HITCHCOCK & VAN RENSSELAER.

DOCUMENT NO. 18.

Telegram from Messrs. Pixley and Sutton, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 98 California Street, San Francisco, California, to Messrs. Hitchcock and Van Rensselaer, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 76 Broadway, New York.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

Jan. 30.

Tite Peebles well known frisco not professor
keeps faro bank.

PIXLEY & SUTTON.

(D.H. 919.)

DOCUMENT NO. 19.

_Telegram from Messrs. Hitchcock and Van Rensselaer to Messrs. Pixley
and Sutton, in answer to the preceding._

NEW YORK, Jan. 30.

Must be mistake Titus Peebles distinguished
scientist.

HITCHCOCK & VAN RENSSELAER.

(Free. Answer to D.H.)

DOCUMENT NO. 20.

_Telegram from Messrs. Pixley and Sutton to Messrs. Hitchcock and Van
Rensselaer. in reply to the preceding._

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.,

Jan. 30.

No mistake distinguished faro banker suspected

skin game shall we interview

PIXLEY & SUTTON.

(D.H. 919.)

DOCUMENT NO. 21.

_Telegram from Messrs. Hitchcock and Van Rensselaer to Messrs. Pixley
and Sutton, in reply to the preceding._

NEW YORK, Jan. 30.

Must be mistake interview anyway

HITCHCOCK & VAN RENSSELAER.

(Free. Answer to D.H.)

DOCUMENT NO. 22.

_Telegram from Messrs. Pixley and Sutton to Messrs. Hitchcock and Van
Rensselaer, in reply to the preceding._

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., Jan. 30.

Peebles out of town have written him

PIXLEY & SUTTON. (D.H. 919.)

DOCUMENT NO. 23.

Letter from Tite W. Peebles, delegate to the California Constitutional Convention, Sacramento, to Messrs. Pixley and Sutton, 98 California Street, San Francisco, California.

SACRAMENTO, Feb. 2, '79.

Messrs. PIXLEY & SUTTON:

San Francisco.

GENTLEMEN: Your favor of the 31st ult., forwarded me from San Francisco, has been duly rec'd, and contents thereof noted.

My time is at present so fully occupied by my duties as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention

that I can only jot down a brief report of my recollections on this head. When I return to S.F., I shall be happy to give you any further information that may be in my possession.

The person concerning whom you inquire was my fellow passenger on my first voyage to this State on board the _Mercy G. Tarbox_, in the latter part of the year. He was then known as Mr. William Beauvoir. I was acquainted with his history, of which the details escape me at this writing. He was a countryman of mine; a member of an important county family--Devonian, I believe--and had left England on account of large gambling debts, of which he confided to me the exact figure. I believe they totted up something like L14,500.

I had at no time a very intimate acquaintance with Mr. Beauvoir; during our sojourn on the _Tarbox_, he was the chosen associate of a depraved and vicious character named Phoenix. I am not averse from saying that I was then a member of a profession rather different to my present one, being, in fact, professor of metallurgy, and I saw much less, at that period, of Mr. B. than I probably should now.

Directly we landed at S.F., the object of your inquiries set out for the gold region, without adequate preparation, like so many others did at that time, and, I heard, fared very ill.

I encountered him some six months later; I have forgotten precisely in what locality, though I have a faint impression that his then habitat was some canon or ravine, deriving its name from certain osseous deposits. Here he had engaged in the business of gold-mining, without, perhaps, sufficient grounds for any confident hope of ultimate success. I have his I.O.U. for the amount of my fee for assaying several specimens from his claim, said specimens being all iron pyrites.

This is all I am able to call to mind at present in the matter of Mr. Beauvoir. I trust his subsequent career was of a nature better calculated to be satisfactory to himself; but his mineralogical knowledge was but superficial; and his character was sadly deformed by a fatal taste for low associates.

I remain, gentlemen, your very humble and
obd't servant, TITUS W. PEEBLES.

P.S.--Private.

MY DEAR PIX: If you don't feel inclined to
pony up that little sum you are out on the bay
gelding, drop down to my place when I get back
and I'll give you another chance for your life at
the pasteboards. Constitution going through.

Yours, TITE.

PART FOURTH:

DOCUMENT NO. 24.

_Extract from the New Centreville [late Dead Horse] "Gazette and Courier
of Civilization," December 20th, 1878: _

"Miss Nina Saville appeared last night at the Mendocino
Grand Opera House, in her unrivalled specialty of _Winona
the Child of the Prairies;_ supported by Tompkins and Frobisher's
Grand Stellar Constellation. Although Miss Saville
has long been known as one of the most promising of California's
younger tragediennes, we feel safe in saying that the impression

she produced upon the large and cultured audience gathered to greet her last night stamped her as one of the greatest and most phenomenal geniuses of our own or other times. Her marvellous beauty of form and feature, added to her wonderful artistic power, and her perfect mastery of the difficult science of clog-dancing, won her an immediate place in the hearts of our citizens, and confirmed the belief that California need no longer look to Europe or Chicago for dramatic talent of the highest order. The sylph-like beauty, the harmonious and ever-varying grace, the vivacity and the power of the young artist who made her maiden effort among us last night, prove conclusively that the virgin soil of California teems with yet undiscovered fires of genius. The drama of *Winona*, the *Child of the Prairies*, is a pure, refined, and thoroughly absorbing entertainment, and has been pronounced by the entire press of the country equal to if not superior to the fascinating *Lady of Lyons*. It introduces all the favorites of the company in new and original characters, and with its original music, which is a prominent feature, has already received over 200 representations in the principal cities in the country. It abounds in effective situations, striking tableaux, and a most quaint and original concert entitled 'The Mule Fling,' which alone is worth the price of admission. As this is its first presentation in this city, the theatre will no doubt be crowded, and seats should be secured early in the day. The drama will be preceded by that prince of humorists, Mr. Billy Barker, in his humorous sketches and pictures from life."

We quote the above from our esteemed contemporary, the Mendocino Gazette, at the request of Mr. Zeke Kilburn, Miss Saville's advance agent, who has still further appealed to us, not only on the ground of our common humanity, but as the only appreciative and thoroughly informed critics on the Pacific Slope to "endorse" this rather vivid expression of opinion. Nothing will give us greater pleasure. Allowing for the habitual enthusiasm of our northern neighbor, and for the well-known chaste aridity of Mendocino in respect of female beauty, we have no doubt that Miss Nina Saville is all that the fancy, peculiarly opulent and active even for an advance agent, of Mr. Kilburn has painted her, and is quite such a vision of youth, beauty, and artistic phenomenality as will make the stars of Paris and Illinois pale their ineffectual fires.

Miss Saville will appear in her "unrivalled specialty" at Hanks's New Centreville Opera House, to-morrow night, as may be gathered, in a general way, from an advertisement in another column.

We should not omit to mention that Mr. Zeke Kilburn, Miss Saville's advance agent, is a gentleman of imposing presence, elegant manners, and complete knowledge of his business. This information may be relied upon as at least authentic, having been derived from Mr. Kilburn himself, to which we can add, as our own contribution, the statement that Mr. Kilburn is a gentleman of marked liberality in his ideas of spirituous refreshments, and of equal originality in his conception of the uses, objects and personal susceptibilities of the journalistic profession.

DOCUMENT NO. 25.

_Local Item from the "New Centreville Standard," December 20th, 1878: _

Hon. William Beauvoir has registered at the United States Hotel. Mr. Beauvoir is a young English gentleman of great wealth, now engaged in investigating the gigantic resources of this great country. We welcome him to New Centreville.

DOCUMENT NO. 26.

_Programme of the performance given in the Centreville Theatre, Dec. 21st, 1878: _

HANKS' NEW CENTREVILLE OPERA HOUSE

A. Jackson Hanks.....Sole Proprietor and Manager.

FIRST APPEARANCE IN THIS CITY OF TOMPKINS & FROBISHER'S GRAND
STELLAR CONSTELLATION,

Supporting California's favorite daughter, the young American

Tragedienne,

MISS NINA SAVILLE,

Who will appear in Her Unrivalled Specialty,

"Winona, the Child of the Prairie."

THIS EVENING, DECEMBER 21st, 1878,

Will be presented, with the following phenomenal cast, the accepted

American Drama,

WINONA: THE CHILD OF THE PRAIRIE.

WINONA..... Miss

FLORA MacMADISON..... BIDDY

FLAHERTY..... OLD AUNT DINAH

(with Song, "Don't Get Weary").....Miss NINA SALLY

HOSKINS..... SAVILLE (With

the old-time melody, "Bobbin' Around.") POOR JOE (with

Song)..... FRAULINE LINA

BOOBENSTEIN..... (With stammering song,

"I yoost landet.") SIR EDMOND BENNETT (specially

engaged).....E.C. GRAINGER WALTON
TRAVERS.....G.W. PARSONS GIPSY
JOE.....M. ISAACS
'ANNIBAL 'ORACE 'IGGINS.....BILLY BARKER
TOMMY TIPPER.....Miss MAMIE SMITH
PETE, the Man on the Dock.....SI HANCOCK
Mrs. MALONE, the Old Woman in the Little House.... Mrs. K.Y. BOOTH
ROBERT BENNETT (aged five).....Little ANNIE WATSON

Act I.--The Old Home. Act II.--Alone in the World. Act III.--The
Frozen Gulf: THE GREAT ICEBERG SENSATION. Act IV.--Wedding Bells.

"Winona, the Child of the Prairie," will be preceded by

A FAVORITE FARCE,

In which the great BILLY BARKER will appear in one of his most
outrageously funny bits.

New Scenery.....by.....Q.Z. Slocum

Music by Professor Kiddoo's Silver Bugle Brass Band and Philharmonic
Orchestra.

Chickway's Grand Piano, lent by Schmidt, 2 Opera House Block.

AFTER THE SHOW, GO TO HANKS' AND SEE A MAN

Pop Williams, the only legitimate Bill-Poster in New Centreville.

(New Centreville Standard Print.)

DOCUMENT NO. 27.

Extract from the New Centreville [late Dead Horse] "Gazette and Courier of Civilization," Dec. 24th, 1878:

A little while ago, in noting the arrival of Miss Nina Saville of the New Centreville Opera House we quoted rather extensively from our esteemed contemporary, the Mendocino Times and commented upon the quotation. Shortly afterwards, it may also be remembered, we made a very direct and decided apology for the sceptical levity which inspired those remarks, and expressed our hearty sympathy with the honest, if somewhat effusive, enthusiasm with which the dramatic critic of Mendocino greeted the sweet and dainty little girl who threw over the dull, weary old business of the stage "sensation" the charm of a fresh and childlike beauty and originality, as rare and delicate as those strange, unreasonable little glimmers of spring sunsets that now and then light up for a brief moment the dull skies of winter evenings, and seem to

have strayed into ungrateful January out of sheer pity for the sad earth.

Mendocino noticed the facts that form the basis of the above meteorological simile, and we believe we gave Mendocino full credit for it at the time. We refer to the matter at this date only because in our remarks of a few days ago we had occasion to mention the fact of the existence of Mr. Zeke Kilburn, an advance agent, who called upon us at the time, to endeavor to induce us, by means apparently calculated more closely for the latitude of Mendocino, to extend to Miss Saville, before her appearance, the critical approbation which we gladly extended after. This little item of interest we alluded to at the time, and furthermore intimated, with some vagueness, that there existed in Kilburn's character a certain misdirected zeal combined with a too keen artistic appreciation, are apt to be rather dangerous stock-in trade for an advance agent.

It was twenty seven minutes past two o'clock yesterday afternoon. The chaste white mystery of Shigo Mountain was already taking on a faint, almost imperceptible, hint of pink, like the warm cheek of a girl who hears a voice and anticipates a blush. Yet the rays of the afternoon sun rested with undiminished radiance on the empty pork-barrel in front of McMullin's shebang. A small and vagrant infant, whose associations with empty barrels were doubtless hitherto connected solely with dreams of saccharine dissipation, approached the bunghole with precocious caution, and retired with celerity and a certain acquisition of experience. An unattached goat, a martyr to the radical theory of personal

investigation, followed in the footsteps of infantile humanity, retired with even greater promptitude, and was fain to stay its stomach on a presumably empty rend-rock can, afterward going into seclusion behind McMullin's horse-shed, before the diuretic effect of tin flavored with blasting-powder could be observed by the attentive eye of science.

Mr. Kilburn emerged from the hostlery without Mr. McMullin. Mr. Kilburn, as we have before stated at his own request, is a gentleman of imposing presence. It is well that we made this statement when we did, for it is hard to judge of the imposing quality in a gentleman's presence when that gentleman is suspended from the arm of another gentleman by the collar of the first gentleman's coat. The gentleman in the rear of Mr. Kilburn was Mr. William Beauvoir, a young Englishman in a check suit. Mr. Beauvoir is not avowedly a man of imposing presence; he wears a seal ring, and he is generally a scion of an effete oligarchy, but he has, since his introduction into this community, behaved himself, to use the adjectival adverb of Mr. McMullin, _white_, and he has a very remarkable biceps. These qualities may hereafter enhance his popularity in New Centreville.

Mr. Beauvoir's movements, at twenty-seven minutes past two yesterday afternoon, were few and simple. He doubled Mr. Kilburn up, after the fashion of an ordinary jack-knife, and placed him in the barrel, wedge-extremity first, remarking, as he did so, "She is, is she?" He then rammed Mr. Kilburn carefully home, and put the cover on.

We learn to-day that Mr. Kilburn has resumed his professional duties on the road.

DOCUMENT NO. 28.

Account of the same event from the New Centreville "Standard" December 24th, 1878:

It seems strange that even the holy influences which radiate from this joyous season cannot keep some men from getting into unseemly wrangles. It was only yesterday that our local saw a street row here in the quiet avenues of our peaceful city--a street row recalling the riotous scenes which took place here before Dead Horse experienced a change of heart and became New Centreville. Our local succeeded in gathering all the particulars of the affray, and the following statement is reliable. It seems that Mr. Kilburn, the gentlemanly and affable advance agent of the Nina Saville Dramatic Company, now performing at Andy Hanks' Opera House to big houses, was brutally assaulted by a ruffianly young Englishman, named Beauvoir, for no cause whatever. We say for no cause, as it is obvious that Mr. Kilburn, as the agent of the troupe, could have said nothing against Miss Saville which an outsider, not to say a foreigner like Mr. Beauvoir, had any call to resent. Mr. Kilburn is a gentleman unaccustomed to rough-and-tumble encounters, while his adversary has doubtless associated more with pugilists than gentlemen--at least any one would think so from his actions yesterday. Beauvoir hustled Mr. Kilburn out of Mr. McMullin's, where the unprovoked assault began, and

violently shook him across the new plank sidewalk. The person by the name of Clark, whom Judge Jones for some reason now permits to edit the moribund but once respectable _Gazette_, caught the eye of the congenial Beauvoir, and, true to the ungentlemanly instincts of his base nature, pointed to a barrel in the street. The brutal Englishman took the hint and thrust Mr. Kilburn forcibly into the barrel, leaving the vicinity before Mr. Kilburn, emerging from his close quarters, had fully recovered. What the ruffianly Beauvoir's motive may have been for this wanton assault it is impossible to say; but it is obvious to all why this fellow Clark sought to injure Mr. Kilburn, a gentleman whose many good qualities he of course fails to appreciate. Mr. Kilburn, recognizing the acknowledged merits of our job-office, had given us the contract for all the printing he needed in New Centreville.

DOCUMENT NO. 29.

Advertisement from the New York "Clipper" Dec. 21st, 1878:

WINSTON & MACK'S GRAND INTERNATIONAL MEGATHERIUM VARIETY
COMBINATION. COMPANY CALL.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company will assemble for rehearsal, at Emerson's Opera House, San Francisco, on Wednesday, Dec 27th, 12 M sharp. Band at 11. J.B. WINSTON EDWIN R. MACK--Managers. Emerson's Opera House, San Francisco, Dec. 10th, 1878. Protean Artist wanted. Would like to hear from Nina Saville. 12-11.

DOCUMENT NO. 30.

Letter from Nina Saville to William Beauvoir.

NEW CENTREVILLE, December 26, 1878.

My Dear Mr. Beauvoir--I was very sorry to receive your letter of yesterday--_very_ sorry--because there can be only one answer that I can make--and you might well have spared me the pain of saying the word--No. You ask me if I love you. If I did--do you think it would be true love in me to tell you so, when I know what it would cost you? Oh indeed you must never marry _me_! In your own country you would never have heard of me--never seen me--surely never written me such a letter to tell me that you love me and want to marry me. It is not that I am ashamed of my business or of the folks around me, or ashamed that I am only the charity child of two poor players, who lived and died working for the bread for their mouths and mine. I am proud of them--yes, proud of what they did and suffered for one poorer than themselves--a little foundling out of an Indian camp. But I know

the difference between you and me. You are a great man at home--you have never told me how great--but I know your father is a rich lord, and I suppose you are. It is not that I think you care for that, or think less of me because I was born different from you. I know how good--how kind--how respectful you have always been to me--my lord--and I shall never forget it--for a girl in my position knows well enough how you might have been otherwise. Oh believe me--my true friend--I am never going to forget all you have done for me--and how good it has been to have you near me--a man so different from most others. I don't mean only the kind things you have done--the books and the thoughts and the ways you have taught me to enjoy--and all the trouble you have taken to make me something better than the stupid little girl I was when you found me--but a great deal more than that--the consideration you have had for me and for what I hold best in the world. I had never met a gentleman before--and now the first one I meet--he is my friend. That is a great deal.

Only think of it! You have been following me around now for three months, and I have been weak enough to allow it. I am going to do the

right thing now. You may think it hard in me _if
you really mean what you say,_ but even if everything
else were right, I would not marry you--because
of your rank. I do not know how things are at
your home--but something tells me it would be
wrong and that your family would have a right to
hate you and never forgive you. Professionals
cannot go in your society. And that is even if I
loved you--and I do not love you--I do not love
you--_I do not love you_--now I have written it you
will believe it.

So now it is ended--I am going back to the line
I was first in--variety--and with a new name. So
you can never find me--I entreat you--I beg of
you--not to look for me. If you only put your
mind to it--you will find it so easy to forget me--for
I will not do you the wrong to think that you
did not mean what you wrote in your letter or
what you said that night _when we sang Annie Laurie
together_ the last time.

Your sincere friend,

NINA.

DOCUMENTS NOS. 31 AND 32.

_Items from San Francisco "Figaro" of December 29th, 1878: _

Nina Saville Co. disbanded New Centreville. 26th. No particulars received.

Winston & Mack's Comb. takes the road December 31st, opening at Tuolumne Hollow. Manager Winston announces the engagement of Anna Laurie, the Protean change artiste, with songs, "Don't Get Weary," "Bobbin' Around," "I Yoost Landet."

DOCUMENT NO. 33.

_Telegram from Zeke Kilburn, New Centreville, to Winston and Mack, Emerson's Opera House, San Francisco, Cal.: _

NEW CENTREVILLE, Dec. 28, 1878.

Have you vacancy for active and energetic advance agent.

Z. KILBURN.

(9 words 30 paid.)

DOCUMENT NO. 34.

_Telegram from Winston and Mack, San Francisco, to Zeke Kilburn, New

Centreville: _

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 28, 1878

No

WINSTON & MACK.

(Collect 30 cents.)

DOCUMENT NO. 35.

_Bill sent to William Beauvoir, United States Hotel, Tuolumne Hollow,

Cal.: _

Tuolumne Hollow, Cal., Dec. 29, 1878.

Wm. Beauvoir, Esq.

Bought of HIMMEL & HATCH,

Opera House Block,

JEWELLERS & DIAMOND MERCHANTS,

Dealers in all kinds of Fancy Goods, Stationery and Umbrellas, Watches,
Clocks and Barometers.

TERMS CASH. MUSICAL BOXES REPAIRED.

_Dec. 29, One diamond and enamelled locket..... \$75.00

_One gold chain..... 48.00

—————
\$123.00

Rec'd Payt.

_Himmel & Hatch,

per S._

PART FIFTH:

DOCUMENT NO. 36.

_Letter from Cable J. Dexter, Esq., to Messrs: Pixley and Sutton, San
Francisco: _

NEW CENTREVILLE, CAL., March 3, 1879.

Messrs. PIXLEY & SUTTON:

GENTS: I am happy to report that I have at last reached the bottom level in the case of William Beaver, _alias_ Beaver Bill, deceased through Indians in 1861.

In accordance with your instructions and check, I proceeded, on the 10th ult., to Shawgum Creek, when I interviewed Blue Horse, chief of the Comanches, who tomahawked subject of your inquiries in the year above mentioned. Found the Horse in the penitentiary, serving out a drunk and disorderly.

Though belligerent at date aforesaid, Horse is now tame, though intemperate. Appeared unwilling to converse, and required stimulants to awaken his memory. Please find enclosed memo. of account for whiskey, covering extra demijohn to corrupt jailer. Horse finally stated that he personally let daylight through deceased, and is willing to guarantee thoroughness of decease.

Stated further that aforesaid Beaver's family consisted of squaw and kid. Is willing to swear that squaw was killed, the tribe having no use for her. Killing done by Mule-Who-Goes-Crooked, personal friend of Horse's. The minor

child was taken into camp and kept until December of 1863, when tribe dropped to howling cold winter and went on government reservation. Infant (female) was then turned over to U.S. Government at Fort Kearney.

I posted to last named locality on the 18th ult. and found by the quartermaster's books that, no one appearing to claim the kid, she had been duly indentured, together with six Indians, to a man by the name of Guardine or Sardine (probably the latter), in the show business. The Indians were invoiced as Sage Brush Jimmy, Boiling Hurricane, Mule-Who-Goes-Crooked, Joe, Hairy Grasshopper and Dead Polecat. Child known as White Kitten. Receipt for Indians was signed by Mr. Hi. Samuels, who is still in the circus business, and whom I happen to be selling out at this moment, at suit of McCullum & Montmorency, former partners. Samuels positively identified kid with variety specialist by name of Nina Saville, who has been showing all through this region for a year past.

I shall soon have the pleasure of laying before you documents to establish the complete chain of evidence, from knifing of original subject of your

Sent to Dead Letter Office.

Mr. William Beauvoir

Sherman House Hotel

Chicago

United States of America

not here

try Brevoort House

N.Y.

DOCUMENT NO. 38.

Letter contained in the envelope above:

CHELSWORTH COTTAGE, March 30, 1879.

MY DEAR BOY: In the sudden blow which has
come upon us all I cannot find words to write.
You do not know what you have done. Your
uncle William, after whom you were named, died
in America. He left but one child, a daughter,
the only grandchild of my father except you.

And this daughter is the Miss Nina Saville with
whom you have formed so unhappy a connection.
She is your own cousin. She is a Beauvoir. She
is of our blood, as good as any in England.

My feelings are overpowering. I am choked by
the suddenness of this great grief. I cannot write
to you as I would. But I can say this: Do not
let me see you or hear from until this stain be
taken from our name.

OLIVER BEAUVOIR.

DOCUMENT NO. 39.

_Cable dispatch of William Beauvoir, Windsor Hotel, New York, to Sir
Oliver Beauvoir, Bart., Chelsworth Cottage, Suffolk, England_:

NEW YORK, May 1, 1879.

Have posted you Herald.

WILLIAM BEAUVOIR.

DOCUMENT NO. 40.

_Advertisement under head of "Marriages," from the New York "Herald,"
April 30th, 1879: _

BEAUVOIR--BEAUVOIR.--On Wednesday, Jan. 1st, 1879, at Steal Valley,
California, by the Rev. Mr. Twells, William Beauvoir, only son of Sir
Oliver Beauvoir, of Chelsworth Cottage, Surrey, England, to Nina, only
child of the late William Beauvoir, of New Centreville, Cal.

DOCUMENT NO. 41.

_Extract from the New York "Herald" of May 29th, 1879: _

Among the passengers on the outgoing Cunard steamer _Gallia_, which left
New York on Wednesday, was the Honorable William Beauvoir, only son of
Sir Oliver Beauvoir, Bart., of England. Mr. Beauvoir has been passing
his honeymoon in this city, and, with his charming bride, a famous
California belle, has been the recipient of many cordial courtesies from
members of our best society. Mr. William Beauvoir is a young man of
great promise and brilliant attainments, and is a highly desirable
addition to the large and constantly increasing number of aristocratic
Britons who seek for wives among the lovely daughters of Columbia. We
understand that the bridal pair will take up their residence with the
groom's father, at his stately country-seat, Chelsworth Manor, Suffolk.

ONE OF THE THIRTY PIECES.

BY WILLIAM HENRY BISHOP.

I.

GRUYERE'S.

In the spring of the year 1870 the premium on gold had fallen so low that it began to be thought by sanguine people that specie payments would be resumed at once. Silver in considerable quantities actually came into circulation. Restaurants, cigar-stands, and establishments dealing in the lighter articles of merchandise paid it out in change, by way of an extra inducement to customers.

On one of these days Henry Barwood, a treasury clerk, and Megilp, the rather well-known picture restorer, met by accident at the door of Gruyere's restaurant. Gruyere's place, although in the business quarter, is not supported to any great extent by the hurrying throng of bankers', brokers', merchants', and lawyers' clerks who overrun the vicinity every day at lunch-time. It is a rather leisurely resort, frequented by well-to-do importers, musicians, and artists, people who have travelled, and whose affairs admit of considerable deliberation and repose. Barwood in former times had been in the habit of going there

occasionally to air his amateur French, burn a spoonful of brandy in his coffee, and enjoy an economical foretaste of Paris. Returned to New York after a considerable absence, to spend his vacation at home, he was inclined to renew this with other old associations.

Megilp, sprung from a race which has supplied the world with a large share of its versatility of talent and its adventurous proclivities, was familiarly known at Gruyere's as "Mac." He was removed above want by the possession of an income sufficient, with some ingenuity of management, to provide him with the bare necessities of life.

He found leisure to come every day to retail the gossip of the studios, and fortify himself for the desultory labors in which he was engaged. He liked the society of young men for several reasons. For one thing, they were more free with their purses than his older cronies. The association, he also thought, threw a sort of glamour of youth about his own person. Finally, they listened to the disquisitions and artistic rhapsodies in which he was fond of indulging, with an attention by no means accorded by his compeers.

Barwood was of a speculative turn of mind, and had also by nature a strong leaning towards whatever was curious and out of the common. These proclivities Megilp's conversation, pursuits, and studio full of trumpery were calculated to gratify. A moderate sort of friendship had in consequence sprung up between them.

They made mutual protestations of pleasure at this meeting. Barwood considered it an occasion worthy of a bottle of Dry Verzenay, which was not demurred to by Megilp.

The payment of specie was so entire a novelty that, when the inquiries and explanations natural after a long separation were concluded, it was among the first topics touched upon.

"Sure it's the first hard money I've seen these ten years, so it is," said Megilp.

"That is my case also," said Barwood. "I took as little interest in the matter as any boy of fourteen might be expected to; but I remember very well how rapidly specie disappeared at the beginning of the war."

"And where has it been?" said Megilp. "There's many fine points of interest about it, do you see. Consider the receptacles in which it has been hoarded--the secret places in chimneys, under floors and under ground, the vaults, old stockings, cabinets, and caskets that have teemed and glittered with it. Then there's the characters again, of all its various owners: the timid doubters about the government, the speculators, the curiosity hunters, the misers"--

"Yes," said Barwood, "the history of a single one of these pieces for the period would probably make a story full of interest." It did not

detract from the value of Megilp's conversation, in Barwood's view, that the worthy artist said "foine" and "hoorded" instead of adopting the more conventional pronunciation.

"But what I'm after telling you isn't the singular part of it at all," resumed Megilp, taking some silver from his pocket and evidently settling down to the subject. "What is ten years to it? According to the mint reports a coin of the precious metals loses by wear and tear but one twenty-four hundredth of its bulk in a year. These pieces I hold in my hand, coined forty years ago, are scarcely defaced. In another forty they will be hardly more so. What, for instance, has been the career of this Mexican dollar? Perhaps it was struck from bullion fresh from a Mexican mine. In that case I have nothing to say. But just as likely it was struck from old Spanish plate or from former coin, and then it takes us back to the earliest times, and its origin is lost in obscurity. The same metal is time after time re-melted, re-cast, re-stamped, and thus maintained in perpetual youth. This gold piece upon my watch-chain was perchance coined from the sands of the Pactolus, and once bore Chaldaean characters. And to what uses has it come?

'Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;'

and so the pieces paid for the ransom of the Inca of Peru or Richard the Lion-hearted, the material of the spurs of Agincourt, the rings of Cleopatra and Zenobia, the golden targets of Solomon, fashioned from the

treasures of Ophir, may purchase soap and candles and mutton-chops for John Smith. And yet why not? We ourselves have come down to commonplace usages; why should not the works of our hands? You with your conventional hat and English walking-coat, I with my spectacles and Irish brogue, have had ancestors that wore coats of mail in the first crusade, or twanged cross-bows with Robin Hood, sailed in the ships of Tarshish, and traded to Tyre and Sidon."

"You think, then," said Barwood, "that some part of the coinage of antiquity is still in circulation."

"To be sure I do, don't I tell you? I say the precious metals are indestructible. All the coins that have figured prominently in history are in some shape or other among us still. Twenty-four hundred years of active use are needed to wear out a coin completely. How long will it last with moderate use, and with intervals of lying buried for hundreds of years, as much of the coinage of antiquity now extant in its original condition has done? We have among us the rings, bolts, chains bracelets, drinking-vessels, and vases that glitter in the narratives of all the chroniclers, and embody the pomp and luxury of all the ages.

"My silver dollar here, which I ring upon Gruyere's table, and with which, had it not been for your amiable politeness, I should have paid for my frugal lunch, has haply been moulded in Cellini's dagger-hilts or crucifixes, or formed part of a pirate's booty from a scuttled galleon on the Spanish Main. For aught I know, it was current money in Nineveh

and Babylon. Perhaps it is one of the pieces paid by Abraham to the children of Heth for the double cave that looked towards Mamre."

"Or one of the pieces for which Judas betrayed the Master," suggested Barwood.

Megilp looked startled, and involuntarily pushed the money away from him. "That is a singular fancy of yours."

"It came to me quite spontaneously this moment," said Barwood. "I don't know but it is, and yet it was a very natural sequence from what preceded."

Both were abstracted for some moments, and contemplated in silence the bubbles twisting up the stems of the delicate wine-glasses.

"Do you suppose," finally said Barwood, "that those coins, if extant, carry with them an enduring curse?"

"There's no good in them, you may depend," said the other. By this time both bottle and plates were empty. The train of thought they had been pursuing seemed to have found its climax in the turn given it by Barwood. Over their coffee and dessert they discussed more cheerful topics.

"Come around to my place before you leave town," said Megilp, as they shook hands at parting. "I have a one-legged bronze Hercules from Pompeii. I think ye'll enjoy it."

As he hobbled away he muttered to himself more than once, "It's the devil's own fancy, so it is."

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II.

ETHEREAL CLAIMS.

The business of the Bureau of Ethereal Claims at Washington was conducted by a moderate force of clerks, under the direction of General Bellwether. The general had been a little of everything in his time. At the outbreak of the war he abandoned an unprofitable insurance agency to raise a company. He displayed considerable courage and strategic talent in his campaigning, came out a brevet brigadier, and had been making a good thing of it ever since in the government service. The office bristled with military titles. Everybody except Barwood and Judge Montane was either colonel, major, or captain. As to the judge, a middle-aged, uncommunicative man who was known to be supporting a large family, he confessed one day over a bottle, ordered in by the bureau

during the general's absence, that his title was chiefly honorary.

"What court did you used to be judge of, Montane?" inquired young Mars Brown.

"I'll tell you, boys," replied the judge, yielding to the genial influences of the occasion; "I'm just no judge at all, do you see, except may be as I'd be a good judge of whiskey or the like."

It was doubtful whether the claims of some others of the number could have been much better established.

Mars Brown, son of the senator of that name,--a man whose influence few generals or bureaus of claims could afford to disregard,--was naturally the most privileged character in the office. He chatted familiarly with the general when that irregular chief was present, absented himself for several days at a time with perfect unconcern, came late in the morning, and went early, as he explained, to make up for it. He was a handsome fellow, thoroughly confident of himself, and companionable. He displayed, among other accomplishments, an acquaintance with the manners and customs of horses and dogs, and a facility in the management of boats, guns, and fishing tackle that made him an indisputable authority on all matters of the sort. His stock of stories was immense, his wit always ready and very comical. He could convulse a dinner-party when everything else failed, by making ridiculous faces. Among ladies of all ages he was a sort of conquering hero. He was consequently in general

social demand as the life of the company.

Such was Mars Brown, whom Barwood, shortly after his return to Washington, began to regard with distrust and dislike, as a possible rival in the quarter where his affections were chiefly centred.

It might have been expected, from the general's excessive preoccupation with lobbyists and politicians, that the business of the bureau should languish, and so it did. The brunt of it was borne by a few clerks--of whom Barwood was not one--whose tenure of office depended upon efficient work rather than upon influential backing. Government work must be performed by somebody, and it happens that, in spite of the great principle of rotation, the heads of men of undeniable usefulness rest firm upon their shoulders while hundreds are toppling all about them.

The bureau was not without spasmodic attempts at discipline. The general spent an occasional forenoon in lying in wait for delinquents, whose shortcomings he made the text for some very forcible remarks. The business of the office, he would state warmly, should be attended to, or he would make unpleasant theological arrangements for himself if he didn't know the reason why. With Brown he never went much further than to request, as a personal favor, that he would try to be on hand a little oftener and rather earlier, to which Brown always acceded quite cordially.

Admirable punctuality of attendance and of office hours was almost

always observed for a couple of days after these formalities, and then things resumed the even tenor of their way.

Whatever might be the effect of this state of affairs upon the other employes of the office and upon the general public, it was certainly disastrous to the private interests of Henry Barwood. Naturally of an unpractical, somewhat morbid disposition, he needed the stimulus of a business life in which the necessity for action and its results when performed were constantly apparent. If engaged in his own ventures, taking risks and devising plans, he might have abandoned his speculations and fancies, and become a man of affairs. As it was, he found too much opportunity for their indulgence.

Every day from nine to three he assorted, copied, and made abstracts of applications and reports, the objects of which were remote, their expediency questionable, and their ultimate fate problematical. Without interest in the work and without any particular pressure for its performance, he dreamed over it, and often awoke from his reveries to find his figures inaccurate and his sentences meaningless.

Morbid people are probably as incomprehensible to themselves as to others. The world is viewed by each through the medium of his own ill-adjusted temperament. Objects are seen in a strangely tinted light, which is more than suspected to be delusive, yet cannot be decolorized. Barwood's vision was affected by such a distorting influence. He discovered subtle meanings in ordinary things or circumstances, in the

manner of a nod from an acquaintance or the tone of a remark, and brooded over them. He continually scrutinized and questioned his own motives and those of others.

The mind of every human being is a puzzle to every other. With what is it occupied when left to its own devices? There is, in Barwood's handwriting,[1] proof that his brain was filled with a procession of changing activities and impressions which were for the most part melancholy,--aspirations for fame, distrust in his own powers, forecasting of probabilities, repining for past sins and follies, rage and epithets for imaginary meetings with enemies. In the midst of all there were moments of perfect peace made up of reminiscences of a high-porticoed house, the grass-grown wheel-tracks and the sandy beach of the village on the Connecticut coast where his early home had been. His fancies were rich and full, but slightly chaotic. So also his will was strong and imperious at times, but vacillating.

It could not be said that he was not ambitious. He would have desired success in order to secure a kindly recognition and to obviate the jars and harshness of life. But no one prevailing impulse had ever enlisted his full powers. He saved money, with a general indefinite notion of some day becoming a capitalist, and also gave much time to studies of various sorts. He learned music among the rest, after coming of age, and composed music of his own, using as an inspiration a favorite poem, picture, or character. These compositions were marked by a quaintness like that--if a comparison may be made to something tangible-- of a Chinese vase or a broken bronze figure. His family, the Barwoods, had

been from the earliest times a race of shrewd and driving New England storekeepers, the very antipodes of sentiment and dilettanteism. Such incongruities are among the compensations of nature. The Holbrook farm was the one locality, and Nina Holbrook the one figure, in the generally sombre prospect which Barwood saw about him, that gleamed in sunshine. By the interposition of Mars Brown these also were presently shadowed.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1: From entries in a carefully kept diary.]

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III.

THE SEARCH.

It would have been strange, with Barwood's habits of retrospection and continual casting about for the rare and curious, if the subject matter of his conversation with the old painter at Gruyere's had not taken some hold upon his imagination. But to explain the rapidity with which the notion there suggested grew, and the absorbing interest with which it finally held him, would be difficult. The influence of the mind upon the body is known. By persistent direction of thought one can both create and cure a pain in any specific spot of his organism. The mind has a

similar power over itself. By intense concentration upon one subject it may suspend and finally destroy its faculty of interest in any and all others.

The idea that the price of the treason of Judas is still extant and current in these every-day, commonplace times is at first sight utterly incongruous and incredible, perhaps a little sacrilegious. Yet it is evidently plausible. "The precious metals are indeed indestructible, as Megilp has said," soliloquized Barwood. "They do not oxidize. The most violent excesses of the elements have no effect upon them. If not still extant, where then are the treasures of the ages?"

"Buried under ground or in the ocean.

"What proportion of the whole has been thus disposed of?"

"In the absence of statistics a definite amount cannot be stated, but from the nature of the case it cannot be large. This form of wealth has been too highly esteemed, too jealously guarded, and too rigorously sought for when lost. In the wars and convulsions of society it has changed hands but it could not be destroyed. Alexander and Tamerlane and Timour the Tartar and Mahomet might overrun the world, burning and destroying, and melting its more fragile riches like frost-work. But the money of the vanquished was useful to the victor for his own purposes. Rome took from Alexander, the barbarians from Rome, and modern civilization from the barbarians. The waves of time roll over and engulf

all the monuments of men, all that gold and silver buy and sell, and, as it were, create; but these irrepressible tokens themselves float and glitter in the foam-crests upon those very billows. It cannot, then, be doubted that the instruments and accompaniments of most of the pomp and luxury, the war, treasons, and varied mercenary crimes of the world, are still acting their part in it.

"And why not with the rest the fatal money which Judas cast down before the chief priests in his remorse, going out to destroy himself?"

These were the reflections that recurred again and again to Barwood, and possessed him with a strange fascination. All coins acquired a new and intense interest. He saw in each the exponent of centuries of human passions and activities. It is true that in a country like our own a large part of the coinage is fresh from the mine. Yet his occasional encounters with foreign, especially Mexican and Canadian pieces, and a consideration of the immense sums received at the great ports of entry, were, in his regard, sufficient to leaven the whole.

Is there anywhere in literature an account of the subsequent career of the thirty pieces?

The Capitol library, one of the most complete collections in the world, offers unlimited facilities for research. There Barwood was to be found some part of every day for months.

The writer has seen a list of the works consulted by him in his singular investigation. It numbers some hundreds, and includes commentaries of all sorts upon the Gospels, lives of the apostles, collections of apocryphal Gospels and Scriptural traditions, the works of the early fathers, chronicles of the Middle Ages, treatises upon Oriental life and customs, histories of symbolism and Christian art, a great number of works upon numismatics, and, finally, accounts of great crimes and calamities. For Barwood took a new view of history: he looked to find that the great treasons, briberies, betrayals of trust, murders from mercenary motives, and perhaps financial troubles, had been set in motion by this fatal money, made the instrument of divine vengeance.

"It has mown a swath through history," he said, "like a discharge of grape."

He believed it would appear, if the truth were known, in the bank accounts of Manuel Comnenus, of Egmont, Benedict Arnold, and the Hungarian Gorgey.

His progress was by no means rapid. Much of the literature among which he delved, musty with age, written in mediaeval Latin and in obsolete characters, gave up its secrets with reluctance. Nevertheless he found definite replies to the questions which he propounded to himself. A collection of apocryphal Gospels "printed," according to the quaint title-page, "for Richard Royston at the Angle in Amen Corner, MDCLXX,"

relates particulars about Judas, among the rest, which do not appear in the Scriptures. He was when young, it was said, a playmate of the boy Jesus, who delivered him from a devil by which he was even then possessed. The chief value of this book to Barwood was in a reference it contained to a fuller Gospel of Judas Iscariot, not now extant with the exception of some passages quoted in the writings of Irenaeus. But these passages were upon the very subject of which he was in search. In a treatise of Irenaeus's, therefore, of about the second century, Barwood found the first definite mention of the coins.

The main part of the story is that of the authorized version, but after the account of the relinquishment of the coins by Judas, saying that he had betrayed innocent blood, and of their use in the purchase of the potter's field, occurs a passage translated^[2] by Barwood as follows:--

"Now the shekels were of the coinage of Simon, the high priest, which Antiochus authorized him to issue. They bore the pot of manna and the flowering rod of Aaron, the high priest. But he to whom they were given knew that they were the price of blood, and was afraid. And he stamped them with a mark in shape like a cross. And great tribulations came upon him, and tribulation came upon all that bought and sold with the money of Judas." Later on, Leontinus, a Byzantine writer of the sixth century, in a treatise devoted to showing the efficacy of certain forms and processes in imparting virtue to inanimate matter, instances as well known the malevolence inherent in the thirty pieces of silver of Judas, which carry ruin wherever they go. From this time the legend is traced down through successive periods. The Middle Ages, which so delighted in

the romantic, the mysterious, the portentous, received it implicitly.

Eginhard, abbot of Seligenstadt under Charlemagne, William of Malmesbury, the English chronicler of the twelfth century, Roger Bacon of the thirteenth, Malespini, the Italian chronicler of the same period, and many others of equal note mention as fully established that the coins of Judas were in circulation, and were inflicting serious injury upon those into whose possession they came. It was said to be impossible to amalgamate them with any other silver. They either would not melt or in melting remained distinct. This, however, was a disputed point. Some of the alchemists in their writings seem disposed to attribute the ill success of their efforts at transmutation to the presence of some taint of these pieces in the silver upon which they were experimenting.

Matthew Paris, who first popularized the legend of the Wandering Jew, as now received, strangely enough makes no mention of them.

The conclusions arrived at by Barwood were these:--

1. There was for hundreds of years a general belief in the existence and active circulation of the thirty pieces paid to Judas.
2. They were supposed to be sent as a divine judgment, and to leave ruin in their track.

3. The tradition gradually disappeared and cannot be traced in the literature of modern times.

Here was a valuable pursuit for a young American treasury clerk of the nineteenth century! It would have been interesting to have got the general's opinion upon it, if it could have been sought in some hurried interval of his confidential transactions with Richard Roe, claim agent and brother-in-law, or his attention to addition and division with Congressman Doublegame.

Barwood did not stop here. Now that his belief was put into tangible shape, he felt impelled onward to its realization. He examined minutely every coin collection in Washington. Then, as he could, he made journeys to several of the great cities. Very seldom did he find a specimen of Jewish money of any kind. Jewish coins are rare. "It is known that the Jews had no coinage of their own until the time of Maccabeus. Simon Maccabeus, by virtue of a decree of Antiochus (1 Macc. xv. 6) issued a shekel and also a half-shekel. These with the exception of some brass coins of the Herods, Archelaus, and Agrippa, and a doubtful piece attributed to Bar Cochba, the leader in the last rising against the Romans, are the only coins of Judea extant."

Barwood began to be affected by a nervous dread brought on by his too close study and constant preoccupation with this subject. As he alone had felt this interest and prosecuted this strange inquiry, might it not be that he was being drawn in some mysterious way within the influence

of the fatal money? Perhaps he himself was to be involved in its relentless course. He shuddered at the thought, and yet was borne irresistibly on, as he believed, in his pursuit. He imagined at times that he felt a peculiar influence from the touch of certain pieces. This he held to be a clairvoyant sense that they had figured in crimes. Perhaps contact with a hand affected by powerful passion had imparted to them subtle properties capable of being detected by a sensitive organization.

In such study and speculation Barwood passed the spring and summer of 1870. Towards the middle of August occurred the well-remembered flurry in Wall Street consequent upon the breaking out of the French and Prussian War. Gold jumped up to one hundred and twenty-three. Money was loaned at ruinous rates. The whole financial system was disturbed. Silver, then withdrawn from circulation, has not reappeared to this day.

The effect of these events upon Barwood although not immediately apparent, was highly important. With the disappearance of specie, the daily sight and handling of which had given his conception a tangible support, its strength declined. It was not forgotten at once, nor indeed at all. But time drew it away by little and little. It threw mists of distance and hues of strangeness about it, until at length Barwood looked back upon it, far remote, as a vague object of wonderment.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 2: Diary, June, 1870.]

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IV.

THE HOLBROOK FARM.

The day had been sultry. Even after sunset the atmosphere was oppressive, and pavements and railings in the city were warm to the touch from the steady blaze to which they had been subjected. At the Holbrook farm, however, occasional puffs of air stirred the silver poplars skirting the road, and waved the brown timothy grass that grew knee-deep up to the veranda.

Porto Rico and Carter's boy turning somersaults in the grass--entirely without the knowledge of the discreet Carter himself, it may be assumed--suddenly relinquished this fascinating sport to rush for the privilege of holding Barwood's horse, Porto Rico's longer legs and general force of character gave him the preference. He jumped into the saddle as soon as Barwood was out of it, and trotted off to the stable with Carter's boy whooping and bobbing his woolly head in the rear.

"Never you mine," said Carter's boy, "I'll have the other gen'l'm'n."

"No other gen'l'm'n a'n't comin'," said Porto Rico. "Don't I done tole you dey don't bofe come de same day?"

The Holbrook house, three miles from the Capitol, of the dome of which it commands a pretty glimpse across an expanse of foliage, is one of the old residences remaining from the days of the slave-holders. Like many such places it has been much altered and improved. It seems to have been originally a one and-a-half-story stone dwelling, to which some later proprietor has added a high-peaked roof, dormer windows, and ample piazzas. It stands half-way up a slope, near the top of which is a grove. A brook runs down through the woods on the other side of the road, and beyond that rises a steep little bluff crowned with scrub-oaks and chestnuts.

The attraction that drew people to Holbrook farm was not the proprietor himself, nor very much his maiden sister, the housekeeper, nor yet Carter, the farmer and manager who came with them from Richmond. It was rather the engaging manners and amiable beauty of Nina Holbrook, the daughter of the house. The old gentleman was a partial paralytic, whimsical, and not especially sociable. He was known to have lived in princely style at Richmond, formerly. He was said to have met for some years past with continual reverses, in the loss of property, in sickness, and in the death of friends. The farm was bought with almost the last remnants of a great fortune.

As Barwood strode down the piazza, a young lady rose from her reading to give him her hand.

Blonde beauty is slightly indefinite. The edges are, as it were, too much softened off into the background. The figure before Barwood was fresh, distinct, clear-cut,--pre-Raphaelitish, to take a word from painting. In all the details, from the ribbon in her feathery brown hair to the pretty buttoned boot, there was the ineffable aroma of a pure, delicate taste.

To a man of Barwood's temperament falling in love was difficult. He analyzed too closely. To ask the tender passion too many questions is to repel its advances.

Nevertheless, after two years of intimate association, in which he had discovered in Nina Holbrook a frankness and loveliness of character commensurate with her personal graces, he had arrived at this condition. First, He believed that her permanent influence upon his character could cure his moodiness and his unpractical tendencies, and enable him to exert his fullest powers. Second, By making the supposition that anything should intervene to limit or break off their intercourse, he found that she had become indispensable to him.

Their acquaintance had begun in some one of the ordinary ways in which people meet. It might have been at a tea-party, or a secretary's

reception, or a boat excursion up the Potomac. They discovered that they had mutual acquaintances to talk about. His evening rides began to be directed through the pretty lanes that led to Holbrook. She loaned him a book; he brought her confectionery; they played some piano duets together.

On her side the sentiment was different. She respected Barwood for fine traits and was grateful for his many kindnesses to her. But certain peculiar moods of his made her uncomfortable. His interest also was too much occupied with books, speculations about the anomalies and problems of life, and similar serious matters. She found it wearisome and often difficult to follow him. She admired such things, but had not as much head for them as he gave her credit for. Her taste was more practical, commonplace, and cheerful. She was satisfied with people and things in their ordinary aspects.

She got on much better with Mars Brown, exchanging comments with him upon the affairs of her friends and his, discussing the last party and the next wedding, or laughing at his drollery. She confessed her stupidity and frivolity with charming frankness.

Barwood was conscious that he did not always interest her, although she never showed anything but the most ladylike attention. He often went away lamenting the destiny that had fashioned his nature to run in so small and rigid a groove. His happiness, therefore, did not consist in being with her, for then he was oppressed by a consciousness of not

entirely pleasing her. It was rather in retrospect, in his memory of her sweet and earnest face, the tones of her voice, the shine of her hair. He gave her such small gifts as he might within the restraints of social propriety. It would have consisted with his notion of the fitness of things to give her everything he had and leave himself a beggar.

Barwood rode to Holbrook to-day with a definite purpose. He was aware, although, as Porto Rico said, both gentlemen did not come on the same day, that Mars Brown was devoting more attention in this direction of late than the exigencies of his boat and ball clubs, his shooting and fishing, and the claims of the social world in town would seem to warrant. He did not yet really fear him as a rival. His presence was only a suggestion of possibilities. There might at some time be rivals. He had determined to forestall possibilities, and tell her of his affection at once.

Mars Brown was, however, a dangerous rival, although himself perhaps as little aware of it as Barwood. He also had met Nina and been impressed by her animated beauty. Accustomed to success, he had ridden out to Holbrook to add one more to his list of flirtations and conquests. The results had by no means answered his expectations. When he approached sentiment Nina laughed at him. By degrees he had been piqued into earnestness, and had for the first time in his life approximated to a serious esteem and attachment.

Although Nina laughed at first, later on she sometimes blushed at his

voice or his step, or when she put her hand into his. If his customary shrewd vision had not been disturbed by some unusual influences at work within himself, he would have seen it.

He had the audacity that charms women, and with it a frank, open face, a hearty laugh, an entirely healthy, cheerful disposition, and an air of strength under all his frivolity.

It has been said that Barwood had come to the farm to-day with a definite purpose. He drew up one of the comfortable chairs at hand, and sat down near to Nina. They talked at first of ordinary things, the unusual heat, the news of the day, and what each had been doing since their last meeting.

The secluded prospect before them was very peaceful. Barwood felt its soothing influence acting upon the perturbation of his spirit.

"I am improving my mind, you see," said Nina, holding up to him one of Motley's histories, which she had apparently been reading. "I do not believe even you can find fault with this."

"Am I in the habit of finding fault with anybody, Miss Nina?"

"Oh no, I don't mean that exactly, but you know so much, you know, that you frighten one."

"Thank you," said Barwood with a grave smile, "you flatter me."

"Why were you not at the Hoyts' last Tuesday?" said she.

"I was not invited, and, strange to state, I am a little diffident about going under such circumstances."

"Ah, you are! how singular! But I wish you had been there, if it was only to see Betty Goodwin. You used to know her. It is such a short time ago that she was a little girl. Now she is out of school and as important as anybody. You should have seen the attention she had, and her perfect self-possession. It makes me feel extremely antiquated. Am I very much wrinkled?"

Barwood gazed with admiration at her animated face. She was to him the personification of youth and beauty. The notion of age and wrinkles in her regard was inconceivable.

"Why, of course," said he; "Methuselah wasn't a circumstance."

She dismissed the subject with a little pout.

"I am so glad you have come early," she resumed. "I wish the others

would imitate your example."

"The others? What others?"

"Mr. Hyson, the Hoyt boys, Mr. Brown, Fanny Davis, and the rest. You did not suppose you were to do them alone, I hope."

"Do what alone? I don't understand."

"Why, the tableaux--Evangeline. Did you not get my message yesterday?"

"I got no message. Am I to be implicated in tableaux?"

"Why, certainly. You are to be Evangeline's father. They are for the benefit of the French wounded. I sent Carter to tell you yesterday. We are to arrange the preliminaries this evening."

Barwood saw that if he would not postpone his purpose no time was to be lost. The visitors might arrive at any moment.

Literature is full of the embarrassments of the marriage proposal. To all who are not borne along by an impetuous impulse it is a trying ordeal. Barwood was too self-conscious ever to be transported out of himself.

"I have something to say to you, Miss Nina," he began, "which I have come from town expressly to say. It is of the greatest moment to me."

She continued to look straight before her at the glowing evening sky, and so did he. The crickets and katydids had commenced their chorus and the tree-toads their long rhythm. Fire-flies flitted in the uncertain light. There came from the woods the call of the owl and the whippoorwill.

"We have sometimes laughed together at sentiment," he continued, "and voted it an invention of the story-books; but there are times--there is a sentiment--which--in short, dear Nina, I have come to ask you to be my little wife. I have loved you almost since our first meeting."

"Oh, Mr. Barwood," said she, looking hastily towards him, with heightened color and a tone of regret, "you must not say so. I cannot let you go on."

"I must go on," said he. "I have never felt so strongly upon any subject as this. I know I am not worthy of such happiness, yet I cannot bear the thought of losing it. Consider our long friendship. You will be mine? Oh, say so, Nina!" In the terrible dread that his petition was already refused, he became a little incoherent.

Nina, a tender-hearted young lady, was by this time in tears. His evident distress, and her recognition of the great compliment he had paid her, would have commanded almost any return save the one he asked. But the sacrifice was too great. She had not thought it would ever be necessary to change their relation of friendship.

"I am very sorry to have to say what is painful to you," said she, with a sob only half repressed. "I want you to be always my friend. I shall be very unhappy if our friendship is to be broken, but _I_ cannot--you will find some other"--

"Do not speak further," he interrupted, impetuously. "You have not yet said no. Reserve your answer; take time to consider. Let me still hope."

"No," she began, "I ought"--but wheels and merry voices were heard at the gate. "Oh! I cannot let them see me now," she said, and hurried away. In a moment more the Robinsons' carriage was at the steps. When Nina came down with a sweet, subdued manner, there was a jolly party of ten or twelve in the drawing-room. Mars Brown was already amusing everybody with his absurd posturing.

"I want to be Evangeline," said he, wrapping a lady's shawl about him and sitting on the arm of a chair in a collapsed attitude. "No, on second thought, I want to be Basil the blacksmith." He made imitations of tremendous muscular power with a tack-hammer that happened in his way

for a sledge. Everybody on such occasions has his own notions of the picturesque. A deal of talking was required in arranging the various scenes. Evangeline must manifest a "celestial brightness," according to the lines. "I don't think you do it quite right," said Julia Robinson.

"You should smile a little."

"Oh no, not at all; she should have an earnest, far off look," said another critic.

"Of course she should," said Mars Brown, rumpling his hair and contorting his features into an expression of idiotic vacancy; "something this way."

"We ought to have a real artist to arrange them," said Nina; "what would I give if old Mr. Megilp were here."

"Did you know Megilp?" exclaimed Barwood.

"Why, of course I did. He was my drawing teacher at Richmond for years."

"What a small world it is, to be sure," said Barwood, giving vent to a favorite reflection. The mention of Megilp brought back for a moment a remembrance of their last meeting and conversation, and the strange pursuit into which it had led him.

The signing of the marriage contract was selected by the amateurs as an appropriate subject for illustration.

"We must have a table," said Miss Travers. "At one side sits the notary, lifting his pen from the document which he has just signed, and at the other her father, pushing toward the notary a roll of money in payment."

"Here you are," said George Wigwag, taking his place and assuming the appropriate gesture; "here's your notary; bring on your old gentleman and his money."

"A roll of old copper cents would be just the thing," said Miss Travers.

"They look antique enough."

"Will some gentleman deposit with the treasurer a roll of antique copper cents?" said Brown, passing a hat. "No gentleman deposits a roll of copper cents. Very well, then the wedding can't go on."

"Do you think I'll sign marriage contracts for copper?" said Wigwag.

"No indeed; I'm not that kind of a notary."

"I will bring down some of papa's curiosity coins from his cabinet," said Nina. "I don't believe he will scold me, just for once."

She returned in a moment with a dozen or more silver pieces, and placed them on the table by Barwood. He began to examine them carelessly.

"I did not know your father was a numismatist," said he.

"Oh yes," said Nina, "he always had a great taste in that way. His collection now is nothing. When we broke up in Richmond most of it was sold off. He retained only a few of the most valuable pieces, which he keeps in a case in his room. I don't know much about such things, for my part. Here is one that is considered curious. It was taken out of a wreck on the California coast, I believe, and was the last papa bought before his failure. I think it is Russian, perhaps, or Arabic--no, let me see"--

Barwood, with an abstracted air, took it to examine. Suddenly he uttered a strange exclamation and fell back in his chair, pale, trembling, almost fainting.

__The coin was a Jewish shekel, with a cross cut through at one side.__

He pleaded sudden illness, and rode hastily homeward in a state of indescribable agitation.

* * * * *

V.

YOUNG FORTINBRAS.

Barwood's strange and almost forgotten conception was thus at length realized, and the interest with which it had inspired him intensely revived. One of the fatal pieces was found. He would now fain have overthrown the structure of probabilities which he had labored so painfully to elaborate. He reviewed step by step all the details of his former study; but no argument availed in the face of the extraordinary corroboration now offered. The piece was "stamped with a mark in shape like a cross," and the account of Irenaeus was verified.

That this fatal piece should appear in the hands of the people whom of all others he most esteemed and with whom his own fortunes were most intimately bound up, was a terrible shock. This, then, was the clew to the catalogue of Holbrook's misfortunes. What surpassing crime could the old man have committed to be so signally marked out for vengeance? But the question of most vital interest was what could be done to save the family so dear to him from their impending fate.

With the recovery of some calmness, he felt that his first duty was to remove the coin from their possession. But how was it to be done? He could not disclose his knowledge of its baleful properties. It would be

set down as the vagary of a disordered brain; nobody would entertain it for an instant. His object must be accomplished, if at all, by artifice.

When he next rode to the farm, nearly a week had elapsed since the evening into which so many distracting emotions had been crowded. He exerted himself to display unusual cheerfulness, with the double object of removing any disagreeable impression which might have been the result of his sudden departure on that occasion, and also of finding means to forward his purpose. The subject uppermost in the thoughts of both was at first carefully avoided, and they talked much in their usual fashion.

"Those coins, Miss Nina, which were used the other evening in the tableau," said he, with a careless air, "can I see them again? I found them interesting, but owing to my sudden illness, as you know, had scarcely time to examine them."

"My father was displeased at me for taking them," said she, "and has forbidden me to do so again. I think he would show them to you himself with pleasure, if he were here, but he went North yesterday on business which will detain him a week. He took the key of his cabinet with him."

Disappointed in this, there seemed to be for the present no resource. He recurred again to his love. If she would consent to be his, he thought, he might disclose the danger, and they could plan together to avert it. He told her with what anxiety he had been awaiting her decision, and then once more made his appeal with all the ardor at his command. As he

finished, standing close beside her, he took her hand.

She did not withdraw it, but still went on to tell him with great calmness and dignity that what he desired could never be. She hoped their friendship might always continue, but as for a closer relation, it would be unjust to him as well as herself to enter into it without the affection which she could not give.

He went away apparently very much broken down, saying that his life was a burden to him, and that he had no use for it. The next day he came again and acted so strangely, mingling appeals to her with talk about her father's coins, that she was a little frightened.

The few days that succeeded made a striking change in the appearance of Barwood. He became pale and haggard, and seemed to have lost his capacity for business and fixed attention. He sat staring helplessly at his papers for an hour at a time. The general, who with all his iniquities was a good-hearted chief, thought he was sick, and told him to stay at home and take care of himself. His reflections at this time were tormenting. He saw that he had indeed been drawn within the influence of the fatal coin. It was at him that its malignity was directed, and he believed that his doom was approaching, as indeed it was. Sometimes he gazed at his altered face in the glass, while tears streamed down his cheeks. He said aloud, in a piteous tone, "Poor Henry Barwood."

The sympathy of the world is generally upon the side of the unsuccessful lover. He is considered to have been defrauded of happiness which should by right have been his. But is it fair? Because her face is sweet, her manners are amiable, her form is slender and graceful, and her hair has a golden shine, and Barwood or Brown or Travers, as the case may be, in common with all the world, recognizes it, does that establish a claim upon her? Just as likely as not he has a snub nose and only fifteen hundred a year, and cannot dance the Boston. No! sympathy is well enough, but let not the blame be cast upon Chloe every time that Daphnis goes off in despair to the Sandwich Islands, or the war in Cuba, or turns out a good-for-nothing sot. Let it rather be set down as one of the ill-adjustments of which there are so many in life, and the endurance of which is no doubt of service in some direction not yet fully understood.

In about a week there came from Holbrook Farm a message which was not needed to complete the measure of Barwood's unhappiness.

"My father," wrote Nina, "has just returned. He has decided that we are to remove permanently to Connecticut, where my aunt has fallen heir to the Holbrook homestead. We shall leave next Monday. Will you let us see you before we go?"

He mounted his horse and started at once. He did not know exactly what he should do or say. His ideas were in a state of confusion, and there was a numbness over all his sensations. He gave himself up blindly to

his destiny.

He saw Nina sitting in the shade of an apple-tree, half-way down the lawn, near a little plateau which served for a croquet ground. He tied his horse to the fence outside, much to the disappointment of the rollicking negro boys, and walked up. Nina held in her lap a tray of coins which she was engaged in brightening. She assumed a sprightliness not quite natural, and evidently designed to obviate the awkwardness of their peculiar relation.

"We have had an accident," said she. "One of our chimneys fell through the roof during the storm last night. It shook down the plaster upon papa's cabinet. The glass was broken and the rain came in so that this morning it was in a sorry condition. I am repairing damages, you see. If I were superstitious," she continued, "I should fear that something was going to happen. I meet with so many omens lately. I spill salt, cross funerals, and make one of thirteen at dinner parties."

Barwood replied as best he could; he did not know exactly what. He was in no mood for flippancy. He assumed a dozen different positions in a short space: first sitting on a camp-chair beside her, then hurried walking up and down, then careless prostration upon the grass. The old, useless argument was gone through with again. She told him at last that it annoyed her, that he was very inconsiderate. Then again he paced up and down the little croquet ground. She saw him twisting and clutching his hands together behind him. At the fifth or sixth turn as he came by

she had the marked shekel in her hand. He took it from her and looked at it curiously.

"Yes, it is indeed," said he in an unnatural voice, "fatal money, and I am its latest victim!"

He threw it towards the woods with great force.

It rose high in the air, skimmed the trees, and they saw it twinkle into the brook.

It was a very little incident. No magic hand arose from the water. The beauty of the August day was not marred. The rain of the past night had swollen the brook, which ran hurriedly on to the Potomac, making little of this trivial addition to its burdens.

Nina did not reproach him. She felt that her father would consider the loss irreparable, yet she had no words for this extraordinary rudeness. After two or three turns more in his walk he stopped close beside her.

"For the last time," said he, "have I urged everything, and is it of no use?"

She made no answer.

"You have said so?" he persisted.

"Yes, I have said so," she replied, with a touch of impatience, and without raising her eyes. "I am engaged to Mars Brown."

He went forward several steps and stood still. Glancing up she saw him hold a little revolver to his temple. It was one she had known him to carry for protection when riding late in the evening. He seemed to deliberate one terrible moment while she sat spell-bound as if by nightmare, and then he fired and fell.

She tried to reach his body, but fainted on the way. Mars Brown, riding to Holbrook for a half-holiday, was almost within sight.

Upon the closing scene of Hamlet, where the characters, after a period of stormy conflict and exquisite anguish, lie strewn by violent death, arrives young Fortinbras at the head of his marching army. Tall, sturdy, elastic, dressed in chain-mail, victorious, careless, the impersonation of ruddy life, the young Norway conqueror leans upon his sword above the pitiable sight.

So this brilliant young man, elegant in figure, well dressed, joyous, cynical, came whistling up the path. He cut off the clover tops with his walking-stick. The butterflies, the pleasant aromas, and all the

manifestations of rural beauty pleased him.

"Egad," said he, "this isn't so bad, you know."

In a moment he stood by the apple-tree, and the whole sad spectacle was before him.

* * * * *

The telegraphic column of a New York newspaper gave the story next morning, in the conventional manner, as follows:

"Henry Barwood, a treasury clerk, was killed yesterday at the Holbrook estate near Washington, by the discharge of a pistol in his own hands. The shooting is thought to have been accidental, although he had been ill and depressed for some days, and is said to have shown symptoms of insanity on former occasions."

BALACCHI BROTHERS.

BY REBECCA HARDING DAVIS.

"There's a man, now, that has been famous in his time," said Davidge, as we passed the mill, glancing in at the sunny gap in the side of the building.

I paused incredulously: Phil's lion so often turned out to be Snug the joiner. Phil was my chum at college, and in inviting me home to spend the vacation with him I thought he had fancied the resources of his village larger than they proved. In the two days since we came we had examined the old doctor's cabinet, listened superciliously to a debate in the literary club upon the Evils of the Stage, and passed two solid afternoons in the circle about the stove in the drug-shop, where the squire and the Methodist parson, and even the mild, white-cravated young rector of St. Mark's, were wont to sharpen their wits by friction. What more was left? I was positive that I knew the mental gauge of every man in the village.

A little earlier or later in life a gun or fishing-rod would have satisfied me. The sleepy, sunny little market-town was shut in by the bronzed autumn meadows, that sent their long groping fingers of grass or parti-colored weeds drowsily up into the very streets: there were ranges of hills and heavy stretches of oak and beech woods, too, through which crept glittering creeks full of trout. But I was just at that age when the soul disdains all aimless pleasures: my game was Man. I was busy in philosophically testing, weighing, labelling human nature.

"Famous, eh?" I said, looking after the pousy figure of the miller in

his floury canvas round-about and corduroy trowsers, trotting up and down among the bags.

"That is one of the Balacchi Brothers," Phil answered as we walked on.

"You've heard of them when you were a boy?"

I had heard of them. The great acrobats were as noted in their line of art as Ellsler and Jenny Lind in theirs. But acrobats and danseuses had been alike brilliant, wicked impossibilities to my youth, for I had been reared a Covenanter of the Covenanters. In spite of the doubting philosophies with which I had clothed myself at college, that old Presbyterian training clung to me in everyday life close as my skin.

After that day I loitered about the mill, watching this man, whose life had been spent in one godless theatre after another, very much as the Florentine peasants looked after Dante when they knew he had come back from hell. I was on the lookout for the taint, the abnormal signs, of vice. It was about that time that I was fevered with the missionary enthusiasm, and in Polynesia, where I meant to go (but where I never did go), I declared to Phil daily that I should find in every cannibal the half-effaced image of God, only waiting to be quickened into grace and virtue. That was quite conceivable. But that a flashy, God-defying actor could be the same man at heart as this fat, good-tempered, gossiping miller, who jogged to the butcher's every morning for his wife, a basket on one arm and a baby on the other, was not conceivable. He was a close dealer at the butcher's, too, though dribbling gossip there as

everywhere; a regular attendant at St. Mark's, with his sandy-headed flock about him, among whom he slept comfortably enough, it is true, but with as pious dispositions as the rest of us.

I remember how I watched this man, week in and week out. It was a trivial matter, but it irritated me unendurably to find that this circus-rider had human blood precisely like my own it outraged my early religion.

We talk a great deal of the rose-colored illusions in which youth wraps the world, and the agony it suffers as they are stripped from its bare, hard face. But the fact is, that youth (aside from its narrow-passionate friendships) is usually apt to be acrid and watery and sour in its judgment and creeds--it has the quality of any other unripe fruit: it is middle age that is just and tolerant, that has found room enough in the world for itself and all human flies to buzz out their lives good-humoredly together. It is youth who can see a tangible devil at work in every party or sect opposed to its own, whose enemy is always a villain, and who finds treachery and falsehood in the friend who is occasionally bored or indifferent: it is middle age that has discovered the reasonable sweet *_juste milieu_* of human nature--who knows few saints perhaps, but is apt to find its friend and grocer and shoemaker agreeable and honest fellows. It is these vehement illusions, these inherited bigotries and prejudices, that tear and cripple a young man as they are taken from him one by one. He creeps out of them as a crab from the shell that has grown too small for him, but he thinks he has left his identity behind him.

It was such a reason as this that made me follow the miller assiduously, and cultivate a quasi intimacy with him, in the course of which I picked the following story from him. It was told at divers times, and with many interruptions and questions from me. But for obvious reasons I have made it continuous. It had its meaning to me, coarse and common though it was--the same which Christ taught in the divine beauty of His parables. Whether that meaning might not be found in the history of every human life, if we had eyes to read it, is matter for question.

Balacchi Brothers? And you've heard of them, eh? Well, well! (with a pleased nod, rubbing his hands on his knees). Yes, sir. Fifteen years ago they were known as The Admirable Crichtons of the Ring. It was George who got up that name: I did not see the force of it. But no name could claim too much for us. Why, I could show you notices in the newspapers that--I used to clip them out and stuff my pocket-book with them as we went along, but after I quit the business I pasted them in an old ledger, and I often now read them of nights. No doubt I lost a good many, too.

Yes, sir: I was one of Balacchi Brothers. My name is Zack Loper. And it was then, of course.

You think we would have plenty of adventures? Well, no--not a great many. There's a good deal of monotony in the business. Towns seem always pretty much alike to me. And there was such a deal of rehearsing to be

done by day and at night. I looked at nothing but the rope and George: the audience was nothing but a packed flat surface of upturned, staring eyes and half-open mouths. It was an odd sight, yes, when you come to think of it. I never was one for adventures. I was mostly set upon shaving close through the week, so that when Saturday night came I'd have something to lay by: I had this mill in my mind, you see. I was married, and had my wife and a baby that I'd never seen waiting for me at home. I was brought up to milling, but the trapeze paid better. I took to it naturally, as one might say.

But George!--he had adventures every week. And as for acquaintances! Why, before we'd be in a town two days he'd be hail-fellow-well-met with half the people in it. That fellow could scent a dance or a joke half a mile off. You never see such wide-awake men nowadays. People seem to me half dead or asleep when I think of him.

Oh, I thought you knew. My partner Balacchi. It was Balacchi on the bill: the actors called him Signor, and people like the manager, South, and we, who knew him well, George. I asked him his real name once or twice, but he joked it off. "How many names must a man be saddled with?" he said. I don't know it to this day, nor who he had been. They hinted there was something queer about his story, but I'll go my bail it was a clean one, whatever it was.

You never heard how "Balacchi Brothers" broke up? That was as near to an adventure as I ever had. Come over to this bench and I'll tell it to

you. You don't dislike the dust of the mill? The sun's pleasanter on this side.

It was early in August of '56 when George and I came to an old town on the Ohio, half city, half village, to play an engagement. We were under contract with South then, who provided the rest of the troupe, three or four posture-girls, Stradi the pianist, and a Madame Somebody, who gave readings and sang. "Concert" was the heading in large caps on the bills, "Balacchi Brothers will give their aesthetic _tableaux vivants_ in the interludes," in agate below.

"I've got to cover you fellows over with respectability here," South said. "Rope-dancing won't go down with these aristocratic church-goers."

I remember how George was irritated. "When I was my own agent," he said, "I only went to the cities. Educated people can appreciate what we do, but in these country towns we rank with circus-riders."

George had some queer notions about his business. He followed it for sheer love of it, as I did for money. I've seen all the great athletes since, but I never saw one with his wonderful skill and strength, and with the grace of a woman too, or a deer. Now that takes hard, steady work, but he never flinched from it, as I did; and when night came, and the people and lights, and I thought of nothing but to get through, I used to think he had the pride of a thousand women in every one of his muscles and nerves: a little applause would fill him with a mad kind of

fury of delight and triumph. South had a story that George belonged to some old Knickerbocker family, and had run off from home years ago. I don't know. There was that wild restless blood in him that no home could have kept him.

We were to stay so long in this town that I found rooms for us with an old couple named Peters, who had but lately moved in from the country, and had half a dozen carpenters and masons boarding with them. It was cheaper than the hotel, and George preferred that kind of people to educated men, which made me doubt that story of his having been a gentleman. The old woman Peters was uneasy about taking us, and spoke out quite freely about it when we called, not knowing that George and I were Balacchi Brothers ourselves.

"The house has been respectable so far, gentlemen," she said. "I don't know what about taking in them half-naked, drunken play-actors. What do you say, Susy?" to her granddaughter.

"Wait till you see them, grandmother," the girl said gently. "I should think that men whose lives depended every night on their steady eyes and nerves would not dare to touch liquor."

"You are quite right--nor even tobacco," said George. It was such a prompt, sensible thing for the little girl to say that he looked at her attentively a minute, and then went up to the old lady smiling: "We don't look like drinking men, do we, madam?"

"No, no, sir. I did not know that you were the I-talians." She was quite flustered and frightened, and said cordially enough how glad she was to have us both. But it was George she shook hands with. There was something clean and strong and inspiring about that man that made most women friendly to him on sight.

Why, in two days you'd have thought he'd never had another home than the Peters's. He helped the old man milk, and had tinkered up the broken kitchen-table, and put in half a dozen window-panes, and was intimate with all the boarders; could give the masons the prices of job-work at the East, and put Stoll the carpenter on the idea of contract houses, out of which he afterward made a fortune. It was nothing but jokes and fun and shouts of laughter when he was in the house: even the old man brightened up and told some capital stories. But from the first I noticed that George's eye followed Susy watchfully wherever she went, though he was as distant and respectful with her as he was with most women. He had a curious kind of respect for women, George had. Even the Slingsbys, that all the men in the theatre joked with, he used to pass by as though they were logs leaning against the wall. They were the posture-girls, and anything worse besides the name _I_ never saw.

There was a thing happened once on that point which I often thought might have given me a clew to his history if I'd followed it up. We were playing in one of the best theatres in New York (they brought us into some opera), and the boxes were filled with fine ladies beautifully

dressed, or, I might say, half dressed.

George was in one of the wings. "It's a pretty sight," I said to him.

"It's a shameful sight," he said with an oath. "The Slingsbys do it for their living, but these women--"

I said they were ladies, and ought to be treated with respect. I was amazed at the heat he was in.

"I had a sister, Zack, and there's where I learned what a woman should be."

"I never heard of your sister, George," said I. I knew he would not have spoken of her but for the heat he was in.

"No. I'm as dead to her, being what I am, as if I were six feet under ground."

I turned and looked at him, and when I saw his face I said no more, and I never spoke of it again. It was something neither I nor any other man had any business with.

So, when I saw how he was touched by Susy and drawn toward her, it

raised her in my opinion, though I'd seen myself how pretty and sensible a little body she was. But I was sorry, for I knew twan't no use. The Peterses were Methodists, and Susy more strict than any of them; and I saw she looked on the theatre as the gate of hell, and George and me swinging over it.

I don't think, though, that George saw how strong her feeling about it was, for after we'd been there a week or two he began to ask her to go and see us perform, if only for once. I believe he thought the girl would come to love him if she saw him at his best. I don't wonder at it, sir. I've seen those pictures and statues they've made of the old gods, and I reckon they put in them the best they thought a man could be; but I never knew what real manhood was until I saw my partner when he stood quiet on the stage waiting the signal to begin the light full on his keen blue eyes, the gold-worked velvet tunic, and his perfect figure.

He looked more like other men in his ordinary clothing. George liked a bit of flash, too, in his dress--a red necktie or gold chain stretched over his waistcoat.

Susy refused at first, steadily. At last, however, came our final night, when George was to produce his great leaping feat, never yet performed in public. We had been practising it for months, and South judged it best to try it first before a small, quiet audience, for the risk was horrible. Whether, because it was to be the last night, and her kind heart disliked to hurt him by refusal, or whether she loved him better

than either she or he knew, I could not tell, but I saw she was strongly tempted to go. She was an innocent little thing, and not used to hide what she felt. Her eyes were red that morning, as though she had been crying all the night. Perhaps, because I was a married man, and quieter than George, she acted more freely with me than him.

"I wish I knew what to do," she said, looking up to me with her eyes full of tears. There was nobody in the room but her grandmother.

"I couldn't advise you, Miss Susy," says I. "Your church discipline goes against our trade, I know."

"I know what's right myself: I don't need church discipline to teach me," she said sharply.

"I think I'd go, Susy," said her grandmother. "It is a concert, after all: it's not a play."

"The name doesn't alter it."

Seeing the temper she was in, I thought it best to say no more, but the old lady added, "It's Mr. George's last night. Dear, dear! how I'll miss him!"

Susy turned quickly to the window. "Why does he follow such godless ways then?" she cried. She stood still a good while, and when she turned about her pale little face made my heart ache. "I'll take home Mrs. Tyson's dress now, grandmother," she said, and went out of the room. I forgot to tell you Susy was a seamstress. Well, the bundle was large, and I offered to carry it for her, as the time for rehearsal did not come till noon. She crept alongside of me without a word, looking weak and done-out: she was always so busy and bright, it was the more noticeable. The house where the dress was to go was one of the largest in the town. The servant showed us into a back parlor, and took the dress up to her mistress. I looked around me a great deal, for I'd never been in such a house before; but very soon I caught sight of a lady who made me forget carpets and pictures. I only saw her in the mirror, for she was standing by the fireplace in the front room. The door was open between. It wasn't that she was especially pretty, but in her white morning-dress, with lace about her throat and her fair hair drawn back from her face, I thought she was the delicatest, softest, finest thing of man- or woman-kind I ever say.

"Look there, Susy! look there!" I whispered.

"It is a Mrs. Lloyd from New York. She is here on a visit. That is her husband;" and then she went down into her own gloomy thoughts again.

The husband was a grave, middle-aged man. He had had his paper up before his face, so that I had not seen him before.

"You will go for the tickets, then, Edward?" she said.

"If you make a point of it, yes," in an annoyed tone. "But I don't know why you make a point of it. The musical part of the performance is beneath contempt, I understand, and the real attraction is the exhibition of these mountebanks of trapezists, which will be simply disgusting to you. You would not encourage such people at home: why would you do it here?"

"They are not necessarily wicked." I noticed there was a curious unsteadiness in her voice, as though she was hurt and agitated. I thought perhaps she knew I was there.

"There is very little hope of any redeeming qualities in men who make a trade of twisting their bodies like apes," he said. "Contortionists and ballet-dancers and clowns and harlequins--" he rattled all the names over with a good deal of uncalled-for sharpness, I thought, calling them "dissolute and degraded, the very offal of humanity." I could not understand his heat until he added, "I never could comprehend your interest and sympathy for that especial class, Ellinor."

"No, you could not, Edward," she said quietly.

"But I have it. I never have seen an exhibition of the kind. But I want

to see this to-night, if you will gratify me. I have no reason." she added when he looked at her curiously. "The desire is unaccountable to myself."

The straightforward look of her blue eyes as she met his seemed strangely familiar and friendly to me.

At that moment Susy stood up to go. Her cheeks were burning and her eyes sparkling. "Dissolute and degraded!" she said again and again when we were outside. But I took no notice.

As we reached the house she stopped me when I turned off to go to rehearsal. "You'll get seats for grandmother and me, Mr. Balacchi?" she said.

"You're going, then, Susy?"

"Yes, I'm going."

* * * * *

Now the house in which we performed was a queer structure. A stock company, thinking there was a field for a theatre in the town, had taken a four-story building, gutted the interior, and fitted it up with tiers

of seats and scenery. The stock company was starved out, however, and left the town, and the theatre was used as a gymnasium, a concert-room, or a church by turns. Its peculiarity was, that it was both exceedingly lofty and narrow, which suited our purpose exactly.

It was packed that night from dome to pit. George and I had rehearsed our new act both morning and afternoon, South watching us without intermission. South was terribly nervous and anxious, half disposed, at the last minute, to forbid it, although it had been announced on the bills for a week. But a feat which is successful in an empty house, with but one spectator, when your nerves are quiet and blood cool, is a different thing before an excited, terrified, noisy audience, your whole body at fever heat. However, George was cool as a cucumber, indeed almost indifferent about the act, but in a mad, boyish glee all day about everything else. I suppose the reason was that Susy was going.

South had lighted the house brilliantly and brought in a band. And all classes of people poured into the theatre until it could hold no more. I saw Mrs. Peters in one of the side-seats, with Susy's blushing, frightened little face beside her. George, standing back among the scenes, saw her too: I think, indeed, it was all he did see.

There were the usual readings from Shakespeare at first.

While Madame was on, South came to us. "Boys," said he, "let this matter go over a few weeks. A little more practice will do you no harm. You can

substitute some other trick, and these people will be none the wiser."

George shrugged his shoulders impatiently: "Nonsense! When did you grow so chicken-hearted, South? It is I who have to run the risk, I fancy."

I suppose South's uneasiness had infected me.

"I am quite willing to put it off," I said. I had felt gloomy and superstitious all day. But I never ventured to oppose George more decidedly than that.

He only laughed by way of reply, and went off to dress. South looked after him, I remember, saying what a magnificently-built fellow he was. If we could only have seen the end of that night's work!

As I went to my dressing-room I saw Mrs. Lloyd and her husband in one of the stage-boxes, with one or two other ladies and gentlemen. She was plainly and darkly dressed, but to my mind she looked like a princess among them all. I could not but wonder what interest she could have in such a rough set as we, although her husband, I confess, did judge us hardly.

After the readings came the concert part of the performance, and then what South chose to call the Moving Tableaux, which was really nothing in the world but ballet-dancing. George and I were left to crown the

whole. I had some ordinary trapeze-work to do at first, but George was reserved for the new feat, in order that his nerves might be perfectly unshaken. When I went out alone and bowed to the audience, I observed that Mrs. Lloyd was leaning eagerly forward, but at the first glance at my face she sank back with a look of relief, and turned away, that she might not see my exploits. It nettled me a little, I think, yet they were worth watching.

Well, I finished, and then there was a song to give me time to cool. I went to the side-scenes where I could be alone, for that five minutes. I had no risk to run in the grand feat, you see, but I had George's life in my hands. I haven't told you yet--have I?--what it was he proposed to do.

A rope was suspended from the centre of the dome, the lower end of which I held, standing in the highest gallery opposite the stage. Above the stage hung the trapeze on which George and the two posture-girls were to be. At a certain signal I was to let the rope go, and George, springing from the trapeze across the full width of the dome, was to catch it in mid-air, a hundred feet above the heads of the people. You understand? The mistake of an instant of time on either his part or mine, and death was almost certain. The plan we had thought surest was for South to give the word, and then that both should count--One, Two, Three! At Three the rope fell, and he leaped. We had practised so often that we thought we counted as one man.

When the song was over the men hung the rope and the trapeze. Jenny and Lou Slingsby swung themselves up to it, turned a few somersaults and then were quiet. They were only meant to give effect to the scene in their gauzy dresses and spangles. Then South came forward and told the audience what we meant to do. It was a feat, he said, which had never been produced before in any theatre, and in which failure was death. No one but that most daring of all acrobats, Balacchi, would attempt it. Now I knew South so well that I saw under all his confident, bragging tone he was more anxious and doubtful than he had ever been. He hesitated a moment, and then requested that after we took our places the audience should preserve absolute silence, and refrain from even the slightest movement until the feat was over. The merest trifle might distract the attention of the performers and render their eyes and hold unsteady, he said. He left the stage, and the music began.

I went round to take my place in the gallery. George had not yet left his room. As I passed I tapped at the door and called, "Good luck, old fellow!"

"That's certain now, Zack," he answered, with a joyous laugh. He was so exultant, you see, that Susy had come.

But the shadow of death seemed to have crept over me. When I took my stand in the lofty gallery, and looked down at the brilliant lights and the great mass of people, who followed my every motion as one man, and the two glittering, half-naked girls swinging in the distance, and heard

the music rolling up thunders of sound, it was all ghastly and horrible to me, sir. Some men have such presentiments, they say: I never had before or since. South remained on the stage perfectly motionless, in order, I think, to maintain his control over the audience.

The trumpets sounded a call, and in the middle of a burst of triumphant music George came on the stage. There was a deafening outbreak of applause and then a dead silence, but I think every man and woman felt a thrill of admiration of the noble figure Poor George! the new, tight-fitting dress of purple velvet that he had bought for this night set off his white skin, and his fine head was bare, with no covering but the short curls that Susy liked.

It was for Susy! He gave one quick glance up at her, and a bright, boyish smile, as if telling her not to be afraid, which all the audience understood, and answered by an involuntary, long-drawn breath. I looked at Susy. The girl's colorless face was turned to George, and her hands were clasped as though she saw him already dead before her; but she could be trusted, I saw. She would utter no sound. I had only time to glance at her, and then turned to my work. George and I dared not take our eyes from each other.

There was a single bugle note, and then George swung himself up to the trapeze. The silence was like death as he steadied himself and slowly turned so as to front me. As he turned he faced the stage-box for the first time. He had reached the level of the posture-girls, who fluttered

on either side, and stood on the swaying rod poised on one foot, his arms folded, when in the breathless stillness there came a sudden cry and the words, "Oh, Charley! Charley!"

Even at the distance where I stood I saw George start and a shiver pass over his body. He looked wildly about him.

"To me! to me!" I shouted.

He fixed his eye on mine and steadied himself. There was a terrible silent excitement in the people, in the very air.

There was the mistake. We should have stopped then, shaken as he was, but South, bewildered and terrified, lost control of himself: he gave the word.

I held the rope loose--held George with my eyes--One!

I saw his lips move: he was counting with me.

Two!

His eye wandered, turned to the stage-box.

Three!

Like a flash, I saw the white upturned faces below me, the posture-girls' gestures of horror, the dark springing figure through the air, that wavered--and fell a shapeless mass on the floor.

There was a moment of deathlike silence, and then a wild outcry--women fainting, men cursing and crying out in that senseless, helpless way they have when there is sudden danger. By the time I had reached the floor they had straightened out his shattered limbs, and two or three doctors were fighting their way through the great crowd that was surging about him.

Well, sir, at that minute what did I hear but George's voice above all the rest, choked and hollow as it was, like a man calling out of the grave: "The women! Good God! don't you see the women?" he gasped.

Looking up then, I saw those miserable Slingsbys hanging on to the trapeze for life. What with the scare and shock, they'd lost what little sense they had, and there they hung helpless as limp rags high over our heads.

"Damn the Slingsbys!" said I. God forgive me! But I saw this battered wreck at my feet that had been George. Nobody seemed to have any mind

left. Even South stared stupidly up at them and then back at George. The doctors were making ready to lift him, and half of the crowd were gaping in horror, and the rest yelling for ladders or ropes, and scrambling over each other, and there hung the poor flimsy wretches, their eyes starting out of their heads from horror, and their lean fingers loosing their hold every minute. But, sir--I couldn't help it--I turned from them to watch George as the doctors lifted him.

"It's hardly worth while," whispered one.

But they raised him and, sir--the body went one way and the legs another.

I thought he was dead. I couldn't see that he breathed, when he opened his eyes and looked up for the Slingsbys. "Put me down," he said, and the doctors obeyed him. There was that in his voice that they had to obey him, though it wasn't but a whisper.

"Ladders are of no use," he said. "Loper!"

"Yes, George"

"You can swing yourself up. Do it."

I went. I remember the queer stunned feeling I had: my joints moved like a machine.

When I had reached the trapeze, he said, as cool as if he were calling the figures for a Virginia reel, "Support them, you--Loper. Now, lower the trapeze, men--carefully!"

It was the only way their lives could be saved, and he was the only man to see it. He watched us until the girls touched the floor more dead than alive, and then his head fell back and the life seemed to go suddenly out of him like the flame out of a candle, leaving only the dead wick.

As they were carrying him out I noticed for the first time that a woman was holding his hand. It was that frail little wisp of a Susy, that used to blush and tremble if you spoke to her suddenly, and here she was quite quiet and steady in the midst of this great crowd.

"His sister, I suppose" one of the doctors said to her.

"No, sir. If he lives I will be his wife." The old gentleman was very respectful to her after that, I noticed.

Now, the rest of my story is very muddled, you'll say, and confused. But the truth is, I don't understand it myself. I ran on ahead to Mrs.

Peters's to prepare his bed for him, but they did not bring him to Peters's. After I waited an hour or two I found George had been taken to the principal hotel in the place, and a bedroom and every comfort that money could buy were there for him. Susy came home sobbing late in the night, but she told me nothing, except that those who had a right to have charge of him had taken him. I found afterward the poor girl was driven from the door of his room, where she was waiting like a faithful dog. I went myself, but I fared no better. What with surgeons and professional nurses, and the gentlemen that crowded about with their solemn looks of authority, I dared not ask to see him. Yet I believe still George would rather have had old Loper by him in his extremity than any of them. Once, when the door was opened, I thought I saw Mrs. Lloyd stooping over the bed between the lace curtains, and just then her husband came out talking to one of the surgeons.

He said: "It is certain there were here the finest elements of manhood. And I will do my part to rescue him from the abyss into which he has fallen."

"Will you tell me how George is, sir?" I asked, pushing up. "Balacchi? My partner?"

Mr. Lloyd turned away directly, but the surgeon told me civilly enough that if George's life could be saved, it must be with the loss of one or perhaps both of his legs.

"He'll never mount a trapeze again, then," I said, and I suppose I groaned; for to think of George helpless--

"God forbid!" cried Mr. Lloyd, sharply. "Now look here, my good man: you can be of no possible use to Mr.--Balacchi as you call him. He is in the hands of his own people, and he will feel, as they do, that the kindest thing you can do is to let him alone."

There was nothing to be done after that but to touch my hat and go out, but as I went I heard him talking of "inexplicable madness and years of wasted opportunities."

Well, sir, I never went again: the words hurt like the cut of a whip, though 'twan't George that spoke them. But I quit business, and hung around the town till I heard he was going to live, and I broke up my contract with South. I never went on a trapeze again. I felt as if the infernal thing was always dripping with his blood after that day.

Anyhow, all the heart went out of the business for me with George. So I came back here and settled down to the milling, and by degrees I learned to think of George as a rich and fortunate man.

I've nearly done now--only a word or two more. About six years afterward there was a circus came to town, and I took the wife and children and went. I always did when I had the chance. It was the old Adam in me yet, likely.

Well, sir, among the attractions of the circus was the great and unrivalled Hercules, who could play with cannon-balls as other men would with dice. I don't know what made me restless and excited when I read about this man. It seemed as though the old spirit was coming back to me again. I could hardly keep still when the time drew near for him to appear. I don't know what I expected, but when he came out from behind the curtain I shouted out like a madman, "Balacchi! George! George!"

He stopped short, looked about, and catching sight of me tossed up his cap with his old boyish shout; then he remembered himself and went on with his performance.

He was lame--yes, in one leg. The other was gone altogether. He walked on crutches. Whether the strength had gone into his chest and arms, I don't know; but there he stood tossing about the cannon-balls as I might marbles. So full of hearty good-humor too, joking with his audience, and so delighted when they gave him a round of applause.

After the performance I hurried around the tent, and you may be sure there was rejoicing that made the manager and other fellows laugh.

George haled me off with him down the street. He cleared the ground with that crutch and wooden leg like a steam-engine. "Come! come along!" he cried; "I've something to show you, Loper."

He took me to a quiet boarding-house, and there, in a cosy room, was Susy with a four-year-old girl.

"We were married as soon as I could hobble about," he said, "and she goes with me and makes a home wherever I am."

Susy nodded and blushed and laughed. "Baby and I," she said. "Do you see Baby? She has her father's eyes, do you see?"

"She is her mother, Loper," said George--"just as innocent and pure and foolish--just as sure of the Father in heaven taking care of her. They've made a different man of me in some ways--a different man," bending his head reverently.

After a while I began, "You did not stay with--?" But Balacchi frowned. "I knew where I belonged," he said.

Well, he's young yet. He's the best Hercules in the profession, and has laid up a snug sum. Why doesn't he invest it and retire? I doubt if he'll ever do that, sir. He may do it, but I doubt it. He can't change his blood, and there's that in Balacchi that makes me suspect he will die with the velvet and gilt on, and in the height of good-humor and fun with his audience.

AN OPERATION IN MONEY.

BY ALBERT WEBSTER.

I.

In an elegant and lofty bank-parlor there sat in council, on an autumn morning, fourteen millionaires. They reposed in deep arm-chairs, and their venerable faces were filled with profound gravity. Before them, upon a broad mahogany table, were piles of books, sheaves of paper in rubber bands, bundles of quill pens, quires of waste paper for calculations, and a number of huge red-covered folios, containing the tell-tale reports of the mercantile agencies. They had just completed the selections from the list of applicants for discount, and were now in that state of lethargy that commonly follows a great and important act.

The president, with his hands pressed together before him, was looking at the fresco of Commerce upon the ceiling; his ponderous right-hand neighbor was stumbling feebly over an addition that one of the bookkeepers had made upon one of the papers--he hoped to find it wrong; his left-hand neighbor was doubling his under-lip with his stout fingers; an octogenarian beyond had buried his chin in his immense neck, and was going to sleep; another was stupidly blinking at the nearest coal-fire; two more were exchanging gasping whispers; another was wiping his gold spectacles with a white handkerchief, now and then stopping to

hold them unsteadily up to the light; and another was fingering the polished lapel of his old black coat, and saying, with asthmatic hoarseness to all who would look at him, "F-o-u-r-teen years! f-o-u-r-teen years!"

A tall regulator-clock, with its mercury pendulum, ticked upon the wall; the noise of the heavy rumbling in the streets was softened into a low monotone, and now and then a bit of coal rattled upon the fender.

The oil-portraits of four former presidents looked thoughtfully down on the scene of their former labors; the polished wainscots reflected ragged pictures of the silent fourteen, and all was perfectly in order and perfectly secure.

Presently, however, there was an end to the stagnation; the white heads began to move and to look around.

The president's eyes came gradually down from the Commerce, and, after travelling over the countenances of his stirring _confreres,_ they settled by accident upon the table before him. There they encountered a white envelope, inscribed "to the President and Honorable Board of Directors--Present."

"Oh gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried the president, seizing the letter, "one moment more, I beg of you. Here's a--a--note--a communication--a--l

don't know what it is myself, I'm sure, but"--the thirteen sank back again, feeling somewhat touched that they should be so restrained. The president ran his eye over the missive. He smiled as one does sometimes at the precocity of an infant. "The letter, gentlemen," said he, slipping the paper through his fingers, "is from the paying teller. It is a request for"--here the president delayed as if about making a humorous point--"for a larger salary." Then he dropped his eyes and lowered his head, as he might have done had he confessed that somebody had kissed him. He seemed to be the innocent mouthpiece of a piece of flagrant nonsense.

There was a moment's silence. Then a heavy-voiced gentleman took up a pen and said:

"Is this man's name Dreyfus--or--or what is it?"

"Let me think," returned the president, returning once more to the Commerce; "Dreyfus?--no--not Dreyfus--yes--no. Paying teller--hum--it's curious I can't recall--it commences with an F--FIELDS--yes, Fields! that's his name--Fields, to be sure!"

The questioner at once wrote down the word on the paper.

"This is the second time that he has applied for this favor, is it not?" formally inquired another of the thirteen, in the tone that a judge uses

when he asks the clerk, "Has he not been before me on a former occasion?"

"Yes," replied the president, "this is a renewal of an effort made six months ago."

There was a general movement. Several chairs rolled back, and their occupants exchanged querulous glances.

"Suppose we hear the letter read," suggested a fair soul. "Perhaps"--a septuagenarian, with snowy hair and a thin body, clad in the clerical guise of the old school, and who had made a fortune by inventing a hat-block, arose hastily to his feet, and said:

"I cannot stay to listen to a dun!"

A chorus from the majority echoed the exclamation. All but four staggered to their feet, and tottered off in various directions; some to pretend to look out at the window, and some to the wardrobes, where was deposited their outer clothing.

"Clarks," stammered the feeble hatter, feeling vainly for the arm-holes in his great-coat--"clarks presume on their value. Turn 'em out, say I. Give 'em a chance to rotate. You've got my opinion, Mr. President. Refuse what's-his-name, Fields. Tell him he's happy and well off now,

without knowing it. Where _can_ be the sleeves to--to this"--his voice expired in his perplexity.

Fields's cause looked blue. One director after another groped to the door, saying, as he went, "I can't encourage it, Mr. President--tell him 'No,' Mr. President--it would only make the rest uneasy if we allowed it--plenty more to fill his place."

The hatter's voice stopped further mention of the subject. He stood at one end of the apartment in a paroxysm of laughter. Tears filled his eyes. He pointed to another director, who, at the other extremity of the room, was also puzzling over a coat. "There's Stuart with my mackintosh! He's trying to _put it on--_and here am I with _his_ coat trying to put _that_ on. I--I said to myself, 'This is pretty large for a slim man like you.'--Great God, Stuart, if I hadn't been quick-sighted we might have stayed here all night!" He immediately fell into another fit of laughter, and so did his friend. They exchanged coats with great hilarity, and those who had gone out of the door lumbered back to learn the cause of it. The story went round from one to the other, "Why, Stuart had Jacobs's coat, and Jacobs had Stuart's coat!" Everybody went into convulsions, and the president drew out his pocket-handkerchief and shrieked into it.

The board broke up with great good feeling, and Jacobs went away very weak, saying that he was going to tell the joke against Stuart on the street--if he lived to get there.

Three gentlemen remained, professedly to hear Fields's letter read. Two staid because the room was comfortable, and the other because he wanted to have a little private conversation with the president afterward.

Therefore the president wiped away the tears that Stuart's humor had forced from his eyes, and opened the crumpled letter, and, turning his back to the light, read it aloud, while the rest listened with looks of great amusement in their wrinkled faces.

"_To the President and Directors of the ---- National Bank._"

"GENTLEMEN: I most respectfully renew my application for an increase of my salary to five thousand dollars per annum, it now being four thousand. I am impelled to do this because I am convinced that I am not sufficiently recompensed for the labor I perform; and because other tellers, having the same responsibilities, receive the larger sum per annum; and, lastly, because I am about to be married.

"I remember that your answer to my first application was a definite refusal, and I blamed myself for not having presented the case more clearly to your distinguished notice. Will you permit me to rectify that fault now, and to state briefly why I feel assured that my present claim is not an unreasonable one?"

"1. While ten years ago we agreed that three thousand dollars was a fair compensation for the work I was then called upon to perform, and four years later agreed that four thousand dollars was then fair pay for my increased tasks, caused by the increase of your business, is it not just that I should now ask for a still further advance in view of the fact that your business has doubled since the date of our last contract?

"It has been necessary for me to acquaint myself with the signatures and business customs and qualifications of twice the former number of your customers, and my liability to error has also become greater in like ratio. But I have committed no errors, which argues that I have kept up an equal strain of care. This has made demands upon my brain and my bodily strength, which I think should be required for.

"2. I, like each of you, will one day reach an age when the body and mind will no longer be able to provide for themselves. But between us, should we continue our present relations, there would be this vital difference: You would have made an accumulation of wealth that would be sufficient for your wants, while I would be poor in spite of the fact that I labored with you, and next to yourselves did the most to protect your interests. In view of my approaching incompetence (no matter how far off it is), I am working at a disadvantage. Would it not be right to enable me to protect myself from this disadvantage?

"3. While you pay me a price for my labor and for my skill as an _expert_, do you compensate me for the trials you put upon my probity? You pay me for what I do, but do you reward me for what I _might_, but do _not_ do? Is what I do _not_ do a marketable quantity? I think that it is. To prove it, inquire of those whose servants have behaved ill, whether they would not have paid something to have forestalled their dishonesty.

"There is a bad strain to this paragraph, and I will not dwell upon it. I only ask you to remember that enormous sums of money pass through my hands every day, and that the smallest slip of my memory, or of my care, or of my fidelity, might cause you irreparable loss. Familiarity with money and operations in money always tend to lessen the respect for the regard that others hold it in. To resist the subtle influences of this familiarity involves a certain wear and tear of those principles which _must_ be kept intact for your sake.

"I beg you to accept what is my evident meaning, even if my method of setting it forth has not been particularly happy. I have assured myself that my claim is a valid one, and I await your obliging reply with anxiety.

"I remain, very respectfully, "Your obedient servant,

"----FIELDS, _Paying Teller."_

At the end the president suddenly lowered his head with a smile, and looked over the top of his glasses at his audience, clearly meaning, "There's a letter for you!"

But two of the gentlemen were fast asleep, nodding gently at one another across the table, while their hands clasped the arms of their chairs. The other one was looking up toward the roofs of the buildings opposite, absorbed in speculation.

The president said, aloud:

"I think, as long as Fields has made such a touse about it, that I'd better draft a reply, and not give him a verbal an--"

"Draft!" said the speculator, brought to life by the word. "Draft did you say, sir? What?--On whom?--"

"I said 'draft a reply' to--to this," returned the other, waving the letter.

"Oh, a reply! Draft one. Draft a reply--a reply to the letter about the salary. Oh, certainly, by all means."

"And read it to the directors at the meeting next Friday," suggested the president.

The speculator's eyes turned vacantly upon him, and it was full half a minute before he comprehended. "Yes, yes, of course, read it to the directors next Friday. They'll approve it, you know. That will be regular, and according to rule. But about Steinmeyer, you know. When a man like Steinmeyer does such a thing as--but just come to the window a minute."

He led the president off by the arm, and that was the last of Fields's letter for that day.

* * * * *

II.

Fields was truly on the anxious-seat.

As he had said in his letter, he was engaged to be married, and he wanted to be about the consummation of the contract, for he had already delayed too long. His affiancee was a sweet girl who lived with her widowed mother in the country, where they had a fine house, and a fine demesne attached to it. When the time for the marriage was finally

settled upon, the lady instantly set about remodelling her domicile and its surroundings, and making it fit for the new spirits that were soon to inhabit it. She drew upon her accumulation of money that had thriven long in a private bank, and expended it in laying out new lawns, planting new trees, building new stables, erecting tasteful graperies and kiosks. This sum was not very large, and it included not only what had been saved out of the earnings of the farm, but also what had been saved out of the income from the widow's property, which consisted of twelve thousand dollars in insurance stock.

Fields had thus far expended nearly all of his salary of four thousand dollars. He was accustomed to use a quarter of it for his own purposes, and the rest he applied to the comfort of his aged parents, whom he maintained. Thus it will be seen that Fields's desire to add to his own wealth had reason to be.

Just at this time there stepped in the Chicago fire. On the second day Fields began to be frightened about the twelve thousand dollars in insurance stock. Telegrams poured into the city by hundreds, and the tale grew more dismal with each hour.

His fears were realized. The widow's money was swept away, and a sort of paralysis fell upon the country-house and all its surroundings. The carpenters went away from the kiosks, the masons from the face-walls, the smiths from the graperies, the gardeners from the lawns, and everything came to a stand-still. The extra farm-hands were discharged,

and much of the work was left unfinished.

What was to be done?

The mother and daughter wept in secret. Their careers had been interrupted. Desolation was out-of-doors, and desolation was in their hearts. The earth lay in ragged heaps; beams and timbers leaned half erect; barns were party-colored with the old paint and the new, and the shrubbery was bare to the frosts. Joys which had smiled had fled into the far distance, and now looked surly enough; all pleasures were unhorsed, and hope was down.

It was under these circumstances that Fields wrote a second time to the honorable board of directors to ask them to pay him better wages.

Friday came. There was a meeting, and Fields knew that his case must now be receiving consideration.

At eleven o'clock the directors emerged from their parlor, and passed by his desk in twos and threes, chatting and telling watery jokes, as most great men do.

"They look as if they had entirely forgotten me," said Fields to himself.

Pretty soon the cashier came and placed a letter upon his counter.

"Ah!" thought the teller, "I was mistaken. I wonder if I can read it here without changing countenance?"

He could but try it. He tore off the envelope. It went thus:

"_Mr.----Fields, Paying Teller._"

"DEAR SIR: The president and directors, to whom you addressed a request for an increase of salary, must beg to criticise the arguments advanced in your polite note.

"They do not understand why you should place a new value upon your honesty because in other people there happens to be sometimes such a thing as dishonesty. It is a popular notion that honesty among men is rare, but the idea is a mistaken one. Honesty of the purest kind, as honesty is usually understood, is very common. They cannot help feeling, also, that you somewhat overestimate the value of your work, which to them seems to be only a higher sort of routine, calling for no intellectual endeavor, and requiring but little more than an ordinary bookkeeper's care for its perfect performance. But for the differences that do exist between your tasks and those of the bookkeeper you will remember you are already compensated by a

salary a fourth larger.

"Briefly, they consider their bank a piece of money-making mechanism, of which you are an able and respected part; but they cannot understand how you could hope to raise their fear of peculations and villainies when their system of checks and counter-checks is so perfect. They have never lost a dollar by the immorality of any of their employes, and they are sure that matters are so arranged that any such immorality, even of the rankest kind, could occasion them no inconvenience.

"Nor do they comprehend why your idea that increase of business justifies a request for an increase of salary may not be met with the suggestion that your hours of labor are the same as your former hours, and that all you were able to perform in those hours, to the best of your capacity, was purchased at the beginning of your connection with them.

"In regard to the pure question of the sufficiency of your salary, they hint in the kindest manner that all expenditures are contractible as well as extensible.

"They hasten to take this opportunity to express to you their appreciation of your perfect exhibits; and, complimenting you upon the care with which you have fulfilled the duties of your post, they remain your obedient servants."

The teller felt that a more maddening letter could not have been written. Its civility seemed to him to be disagreeable suavity; its failure to particularize the points he made to be a disgraceful evasion; and the liberty it took in generalizing his case to be an enormous insult.

The very first sentence on honesty put him in the light of a blackmailer--one that threatened mischief if his demands were not complied with. The next sentence went to show that he was an egotist, because he thought his labors required wear and tear of brain. The third called him a sound cog-wheel. The latter part of the same said that a villain could do no evil if he wished to, for they (the directors) had protected themselves against villains. Then it went on to say that the writers did not understand how anxiety and caution could be involved in the pursuit of his duties; and then it was thrown out that his marriage was his seeking--not theirs. Finally, they patted him on the head.

The devil!

Fields passed a sleepless night. He felt that he had been belittled to the extremest point, and that there was not a foothold left for his dignity. His soul was incised and chafed, and he lay awake thinking that degradation of himself and his office could have proceeded no further.

Toward morning he hit upon a plan to establish himself in what he believed to be the proper light. "It will require nerve," reflected he, doubtfully, "and not only nerve in itself, but a certain exact quantity of it. Too much nerve would destroy me, and too little nerve would do the same thing. I think, however, that I can manage it. I feel able to do anything. Even a paying teller will turn if--" etc., etc.

* * * * *

III.

On the following Monday there was a special meeting of the directors for the purpose of examining the books and accounts of the bank. The bank-controller was expected to call for an exhibit within the coming week, and it was desirable that the directors should feel assured that their institution was in the proper order. The call of the controller was always impending. It might come any day, and it would require an exhibit of the condition of the bank on any previous day. He was permitted to make five of these calls during the year, and, inasmuch as he was at liberty to choose his own days, his check upon the banks was complete. If he found a bank that had not fulfilled the requirements of law, he was obliged to take away its charter, and to close it: hence the examination-meeting in the present case. The accounts of the tellers were passed upon, the cashier's books were looked over, as were also those of the regular bookkeepers. There seemed to be no errors, and the contents of the safes were proved. There was perfect order in all the

departments. The clerks were complimented. "Now," said Fields to himself, "is my opportunity."

On the next day at ten o'clock the directors again assembled--this time for their regular labors--to examine the proposals for discount.

The day happened to be cold and stormy. The twenty clerks were busily and silently at work behind their counters and gratings, and the fourteen directors were shut tight in their mahogany room. There was but little passing to and fro from the street, though now and then a half-frozen messenger came stamping in, and did his errand, with benumbed fingers, through the little windows. The tempest made business light.

At eleven o'clock Fields wrote a note and sent it to the directors' room. The boy who carried it knocked softly, and the president appeared, took the letter, and then closed the door again.

Then there was a moment of almost total silence; the clerks wrote, the leaves rattled, and it seemed as if it were an instant before an expected explosion.

Presently an explosion came. The clerks heard with astonishment a tumult in the directors' room--exclamations, hurried questions, the hasty rolling of chairs on their casters, and then the sound of feet.

The door was hastily drawn open, and those who were near could see that nearly all the directors were clustered around it, straining their eyes to look at the paying teller. Most of them were pale and they called, in one voice, "Come here!" "Come in here at once!" "Fields!" "Mr. Fields!" "Sir, you are wanted!" "Step this way instantly!" Fields put down his pen, opened the tall iron gate which separated him from the counters, and walked rather quickly toward the den of lions. An opening was made for him in the group, and he passed through the door, and it was shut once more.

He walked across the room to the fireplace. He took out his handkerchief, and, seizing a corner between a thumb and forefinger, slowly shook it open, and then turned around.

"This note, sir! What does it mean?" cried the president, advancing upon him, waving the paper in his trembling hand.

"Have you read it?" demanded Fields, in a loud voice.

"Yes," said the president. He was astonished at Fields's manner. He cast a glance upon his fellow-directors.

"Then what is the use of asking me what I mean? It is as plain as I can make it."

"But it says--but it says," faltered the venerable gentleman, turning the paper to the light, "that you have only money enough to last until twelve o'clock. Your statement yesterday showed a balance to your credit of three hundred and fifty-two thousand dollars. That will last at least--"

"But I have not got three hundred and seventy-seven thousand dollars. I have only got twenty-seven thousand dollars!"

"But we counted three hundred and seventy-seven thousand dollars."

"When?"

"Yesterday."

"Yesterday--yes. But not this morning."

"Great God!" cried Stuart, thrusting himself forward, "what!--" He fixed his feeble eyes upon Fields, but could speak no further. His arms fell down by his sides, and he began to tremble. He did not have sufficient courage to ask the question. Somebody else did.

"What has become of it?"

"That I shall not tell you!" returned Fields, looking defiantly at one director after another.

"But is it gone?" cried the chorus. Many of the faces that confronted Fields had become waxen. The little group was permeated with a tremor.

"Yes, it is gone; I have taken it."

"You have _taken_ it!" "_You_ have taken it!" "_You have taken it!_"

The directors, overwhelmed and confounded, retreated from Fields as if they were in personal danger from him.

"In Heaven's name, Fields!" exclaimed the president, "speak out! Tell us! What!--where!--the money! Come, man!"

"You had better lock the door," said the teller; "some one will be coming in."

One of the most feeble and aged of the board turned around and hastened, as fast as his infirm limbs would permit him, and threw the bolt with feverish haste, and then ran back again to hear.

"Yes," said Fields, with deliberation, "I have taken the money. I have carried it away and hidden it where no one can lay hands upon it but myself."

"Then--then, sir, you have stolen it!"

Fields bowed. "I have stolen it."

"But you have ruined us!"

"Possibly."

"And you have ruined yourself!"

"I am not so sure of that."

"Stop this useless talk!" cried a gentleman, who had heretofore been silent. He bent upon Fields a look of great dignity. "Make it clear, sir, what you have done."

"Certainly. When I left the bank last night I put into my pockets one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in greenbacks of the one-thousand-dollar denomination, one hundred thousand dollars in

national-currency notes of the one-hundred-dollar denomination, and one hundred thousand dollars in gold certificates. I left to the credit of my account twenty-seven thousand eight hundred and sixty-two dollars and some odd cents. Eight thousand of these have been already drawn this morning. It is not unlikely that the whole of what is left may be drawn within the next five minutes, and the next draft upon you will find you insolvent. If the balance is against you at the clearing-house, you will undoubtedly be obliged to stop payment before one o'clock."

Fields's interlocutor turned sharply around and sank into his seat. At this three of the young members of the board--Slavin, a wool-dealer, Debritt, a silk importer, and Saville, an insurance actuary--made a violent onslaught upon the teller, but others interposed.

What was to be said? What was to be done? Somebody cried for a policeman, and would have thrown up a window and called into the street. But the act was prevented. It was denounced as childish. After a moment, everybody but Fields had seated himself in his accustomed place, overcome with agitation. Those who could see devoured the teller with their eyes. Two others wept with puerile fear and anger. They began to realize the plight they were in. It began to dawn upon them that an immense disaster was hanging over their heads. How were they to escape from it? Which way were they to turn to find relief? It was no time for brawling and denunciation; they were in the hands of an unscrupulous man, who, at this crucial moment, was as cool and implacable as an iceberg. They watched him carelessly draw and redraw his handkerchief through his fingers; he was unmoved, and entirely at ease.

"Can it be possible!" said a tall and aged director, rising from his chair and bending upon the culprit a look of great impressiveness--"can it be possible that it is our upright and stainless clerk who confesses to such a stupendous villainy as this? Can it be that one who has earned so much true esteem from his fellow-men thus turns upon them and--"

"Yes, yes, yes!" replied Fields, impatiently, "that is all true; but it is all sentiment. Let us descend to business. I know the extent of my wickedness better than you do. I have taken for my own use from your bank. I have robbed you of between a quarter and a half million of dollars. I am a pure robber. That is the worst you can say of me. The worst you can do with me is to throw me into prison for ten years. By the National Currency Act of 1865, section 55, you will see that for this offence against you I may be incarcerated from five to ten years--not more than ten. If you imprison me for ten years, you do your worst. During those ten years I shall have ample time to perfect myself in at least three languages, and to read extensively, and I shall leave the jail at forty-five a polished and learned man, in the prime of life, and possessed of enormous wealth. There will be no pleasure that I cannot purchase. I shall become a good-natured cynic; I shall freely admit that I have disturbed the ordinary relations of labor and compensation, but I shall so treat the matter that I shall become the subject of a semi-admiration that will relieve me from social ostracism. I have carefully reviewed the ground. I shall go to jail, pass through my trial, receive my sentence, put on my prisoner's suit, begin my daily tasks, and all with as much equanimity as I possess at present.

There will be no contrition and no shame. Do not hope to recover a dollar of your money. I have been careful to secrete it so that the most ingenious detectives and the largest rewards will not be able to obtain a hint of its whereabouts. It is entirely beyond your reach."

Fields was now an entire master of the situation. The board was filled with consternation; its members conferred together in frightened whispers.

"But," pursued Fields, "do you properly understand your situation? My desk is virtually without money. My assistant at this instant may discover that he has not sufficient funds to pay the check he has in his hand. In a moment more the street may be in possession of the facts. Besides the present danger, have you forgotten the controller?" Nothing more could now add to the alarm that filled the room.

"What shall we do, Fields? We cannot go under; we cannot--"

"I will tell you."

The room became silent again. All leaned forward to listen. Some placed their hands behind their ears.

"I do not think that the drafts upon us to-day will amount to eighty thousand dollars. You might draw that sum from the receiving teller, but

that would occasion remark. I advise you to draw from your private accounts elsewhere one hundred thousand dollars, and quietly place it upon my counter. I would do it without an instant's delay."

"But what guarantee have we that you will not appropriate that also?"

"I give you my word," replied Fields, with a smile.

"And to what end do you advise us to keep the bank intact?"

"That we may have time to arrange terms."

"Terms--for what?"

"For a compromise."

"Ah-ha!"

Here was a patch of blue sky--a glimpse of the sun. Fields was not insensible to moderation, after all.

"What do you propose?" eagerly demanded three voices.

"I think you had first better insure yourselves against suspension," was the reply.

In ten minutes one of the directors hurriedly departed, with five checks in his wallet. These were the contributions of his fellows. The president passed out to see how matters stood at the paying teller's desk. No more drafts had been presented, and the nineteen thousand dollars were still undisturbed. He returned reassured. He locked the door again.

"Now, sir," said he to the paying teller, "let us go on."

"Very well," was the reply. "I think you all perceive by this time the true position of affairs. I possess three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and your bank has lost that sum. I have detailed the benefits which will accrue to me, and the trouble which will in all likelihood accrue to you. It will be unpleasant for you to throw your selves upon the mercies of your stockholders. Stockholders are hard-hearted people. Each one of you will, in case this matter is discovered, find his financial credit and his reputation for sagacity much impaired; and, besides this, there will be incurred the dangers of a 'run' upon you, to say nothing of the actual loss to the institution, which will have to be made good to the last dollar. But let us see if we cannot do better. Notwithstanding the fact that I have fully made up my mind to go to prison, I cannot deny that not to go to prison would be an advantage. Therefore, if you will promise me immunity from prosecution, I will

return to you to-morrow morning a quarter of a million dollars. I ask you to give me a reply within five minutes. The proposition is a bare one, and is sufficiently plain. I shall require your faith as directors and individuals, and in return I will give my pledge, as a robber of the highest grade--a bond which perhaps is as good as any that can be made under the circumstances."

The directors no sooner saw that it lay within their power to regain five-sevenths of their money than they began, almost with one voice, threaten Fields with punishment if he did not return the whole.

"Gentlemen," cried the paying teller, interrupting their exclamations, "I must impose one more condition. It is that you do not mention this affair again--that you keep the whole matter secret, and not permit it to be known beyond this apartment that I have had any other than the most agreeable relations with you. All that is imperative. There remain but two more minutes. The president will signify to me your decision."

The time elapsed. Fields put his watch into his pocket.

"Well, sir?" said he.

"We accept the terms," replied the president, bowing stiffly.

Fields also bowed. A silence ensued. Presently a director said to

Fields:

"May I ask you what led you to this step?"

"Sir," replied the teller, with severity, "you are encroaching upon our contract. I may speak of this affair, but you have no right to."

Then he turned to the board:

"Do you wish me to go back to my work?"

There was a consultation. Then the president said:

"If you will be so kind."

Fields complied.

The business of the day went forward as usual. The teller's counter-desk was supplied with money, and no suspicion was aroused among his fellows.

As each director went out of the bank, he stopped at Fields's window, and addressed some set remark to him upon business matters; and so

intimate did the relations between them seem that the clerks concluded that the lucky man was about to be made cashier, and they began to pay him more respect.

In the intervening night there again recurred to the directors the enormity of the outrage to which they had been subjected. The incident of recovering so large a part of what they had originally supposed was gone had the effect of making them partially unmindful of the loss of the smaller sum which the teller finally agreed to accept in place of punishment. But in the lapse between the time of the robbery and the time of the promised restitution, their appreciation of their position had time to revive again, and when they assembled on the next morning to receive the money from Fields, they were anxious and feverish.

Would he come? Was he not at this moment in Canada? Would a man who could steal one hundred thousand dollars return a quarter of a million?

Absurd!

Every moment one of them went to the door to see if Fields had appeared.

The rest walked about, with their hands behind them, talking together incoherently. The air was full of doubts. The teller usually came at a quarter past nine, but the hour arrived without the man. Intolerable suspense!

Two or three of the directors made paths for themselves amid the chairs, and anxiously traversed them. Slavin took a post beside a window and

gazed into the street. Debritt, with his right hand in his bosom, and with his left grasping the upper rail of a seat, looked fixedly into the coals. Stuart sipped at a goblet of water, but his trembling hand caused him to spill its contents upon the floor. No one now ventured to speak except in a whisper; it seemed that a word or a loud noise must disturb the poise of matters. The clock ticked, the blue flames murmured in the grate, and the pellets of sand thrown up by the wind rattled against the windows.

But yet there were no signs of the paying teller.

Was it possible that this immense sum of money was _gone?_ Could it be true that they must report this terrible thing to the world? Had they permitted themselves to become the lieutenants to a wily scoundrel? Were they thus waiting silent and inactive while he was being borne away at the speed of the wind, out of their reach?

All at once Fields came in at the door.

He was met with a gladness that was only too perceptible. Every gentleman emitted a sigh of relief, and half started, as if to take the delinquent by the hand.

Fields had expected this. He was shrewd enough to act before the feeling had evaporated.

He advanced to the table. The directors hastened like schoolboys to take their accustomed places. They bent upon the teller's face the most anxious looks.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I believe that you fully understand that I return this large sum of money to you at my own option. You recognize the fact that most men would endure, for instance, an imprisonment of ten years rather than lose the control of a quarter of a million of dollars."

The directors hastened to signify "Yes!"

"But," continued Fields, taking several large envelopes from his inner pockets, "I shall be content with less. There is the sum I mentioned."

The directors fell upon the packages and counted their contents. The table was strewn with money. Fields contemplated the scene with curiosity. Presently it was announced that the sum was complete.

"Now, gentlemen," said Fields, "you have suffered loss. I have a hundred thousand dollars which I have forced you to present me with. That is a large sum, though to us who are so familiar with millions it seems small, almost insignificant; but, in reality, it has a great importance. You now see, my friends, what a part of your money-making mechanism may achieve. There is no bank, even of third-rate importance, in this city,

whose receiving teller or paying teller may not do exactly as I have done. On any day, at any hour, they may load themselves with valuables and go away. You, and all directors, depend servilely upon the pure honesty of your clerks. You can erect no barrier, no guard, no defence, that will protect you from the results of decayed principle in them. They are deeply involved in dangerous elements. Ease, luxury, life-long immunity from toil, wait upon their resolution to do ill. This resolution may be the determination of an instant, or the result of long-continued sophistical reasoning. You cannot detect the approach to such a resolve in your servant, and he, perhaps, can hardly detect it in himself. But one day it is complete: he acts upon it. You are bereft of your property; he flees, and there is the nine days' stir, and all is over. Your greatest surety lies in your appreciation of your danger. I have proved to you what that danger consists of; you did not know before. Your best means of defence is to respect, to the fullest extent, the people upon whom you depend. They are worthy of it. An instant's reflection will show you that neither of you would be proof against a strong temptation. For the sake of recovering a sum of money you have compounded with felony. All of you are at this moment in breach of the law. You have submitted without a struggle to the dominant impulse. The principle of exact honor which you demand in me does not exist in yourselves. But let us end this disagreeable scene. Perhaps I have demonstrated something that you never realized. I hope you understand. I now surrender to you the one hundred thousand dollars, which you thought I had stolen. I had no intention of keeping it; I only pretended to take it in order to impress you with my ideas."

Every director arose to his feet in haste. Fields placed another packet upon the table, and, in face of the astonished board, left the apartment.

An hour afterward he was again summoned to the parlor. He advanced to his old position at the end of the table. It was clear that the temper of the assembly was favorable to him.

"Mr. Fields," said the president, "your attack upon us was singular and rapid, and I think it has made the mark that you intended it should. Your mode of convincing us was, one might say, dramatic; and, though I believe you might have attained your object in another way, we acknowledge that your letter had but little effect. We now wish to provide for you as you claim, and as you deserve. But we cannot look upon you with quietude. It is almost impossible to see you without shuddering. We must place you elsewhere. If you remained here, you would always be in close proximity to a quarter of a million dollars."

"But you believe in my integrity?"

"Perfectly."

"You understand my motives?"

"Fully."

"And you acknowledge them to be just?"

"Unqualifiedly just."

"Well?"

"But you personify a terrible threat. You are an exponent of a great danger, and you could not ask us to live with one who showed that he held a sword above our heads. That would be impossible. We therefore offer you the position of actuary in the ---- Life. Mr. Stuart is about to resign it, and at our request he has consented to procure you the chair. Your salary will be thrice that you now receive. Do you accept?"

"Without an instant's hesitation," replied Fields.

He then shook hands with each director, and they separated excellent friends.

* * * * *

Fields winged his way to the farm in the country, and told the news.

That is, he told the best of it. He told the actual news after hours, when there was but one to tell it to.

There was a shriek.

"Oh, if they _had_!"

"Had what--Sun and Moon!"

"Why, sent you to prison."

"Well, we should have had to wait ten years, that's all. After that, we should have been worth, with interest added to the capital, five hundred and sixty thousand dollars."

"Sir! Can you suppose that I would ever marry a robber, a wretched robber?"

"Never! But it is different where one robs for the sake of principle."

"Y--yes, that is true; I forgot that. I think that principle is a great thing. Don't you?"

"Exceedingly great."

In the spring the face-walls and the lawns and the kiosks went forward according to the original design, and the actuary frequently brought his city friends, directors and all, down to look at them.