

pleasure that in their hour of trouble they had asked me to be by their side and seemed to rely on me to help them. I proceed to act at once. First of all I wrote as follows to Simpson, my assistant editor:—

“Dear Simpson, you must see the paper through this week, as I have been called away. I notice in the make-up that there is no ‘par’ about myself. How can you be so careless? Cut out the bi-metalism ‘par’ and write something about my new book.”

Then I wired back to Blackburny.

“Am coming do not despair.”

Finally I left the office, packed hurriedly, and drove to Euston. The evening was closing in; all day the skies had been overcast; and now the rain fell steadily and gloomingly. The wind howled pitifully, like a heart-broken child, as though it knew that far away in Carlisle poor Harry Blackburny was becoming a humorist.

The words of that sad telegram repeated themselves over and over in my mind, in time to the rattling of the train.

The Blackburny's were wealthy; they were successful; it had seemed that they had all that a man desired to make him happy. And now their only son, their dearly-loved Harry, was becoming a humorist. Wealth could not stop it; no efforts of theirs could have averted the blow. We are toys in the hands of Destiny and Destiny breaks us up.

It had been quite unexpected. Only a few weeks before I had seen Harry, and had never dreamed of anything of the kind. Indeed I should have said that his principles would have stood any stress.

At Carlisle I found George Blackburny waiting for me on the platform. He looked old and worn. He grasped my hand and said in a voice choking with