

At last Leslie made the startling discovery of two facts; first that he had a heart like other men; and second that he was in love beyond redemption with Clara Banks. But what could he do? Miss Clara had said she had no notion of marrying a man who thought more of his money than of his mind. That meant that he was unlearned and consequently unrefined. But that could be remedied; and he set himself to the work of self-culture and improvement. He ascertained, by careful examination, that he was worth fully three hundred thousand dollars—a very good capital to work on. He rented his farms for a term of years, sold his grocery store and contents, invested his money in stocks, and was then ready for his new work. He visited the town near the residence of the Bankses, and strolled about the streets, hoping to get a sight at least of Miss Clara. In this he succeeded beyond his expectation. He saw her one day coming out of a photograph gallery just as he was passing. She did not notice him, but he got one good, long look at her, and that was satisfaction enough to pay for all his trouble in coming to see her. After Clara had passed out of sight, Leslie entered the picture gallery, and carelessly inquired of the proprietor the name of the name of the young lady who had just gone out, saying he thought he had met her before somewhere. The proprietor of course told him that she was a Miss Banks, and that she had just ordered a dozen photographs, some of which he had already completed, and showed one to Leslie. He examined the picture closely a minute, then said to the operator, "I will give you ten dollars for this picture if you will promise never to divulge the fact of having sold it." His offer was promptly accepted, the money paid, and within the hour Leslie was on his way to New-York.

Two years were spent by Leslie Bunk in hard study under the best tutors that money could procure in New York. The next two years were spent by him in the study of medicine and in the practice of his new profession in the hospitals and among the poor of the city. Leslie then went to Europe, and spent the next two years in travelling and careful study of men and manners. The picture of Miss Clara Banks had been his constant companion and most cherished friend, and he had at no time wavered in the love he bore the original of that picture.

At last he determined to return to his native land, and try once more to see her for whom he had spent so much time and money in striving to render himself worthy of her respect and love, and of whom he had not even heard a word in the last six years. "If she be already married," said he to himself, "I shall have the satisfaction of compelling her to confess that I am not now one to love my money more than my mind, to respect my wealth more than a wife, or to worship my gold more than my God."

While studying in New York, Leslie had joined the Masonic fraternity, and became one of its most ardent lovers and admirers of its principles and membership.

After reaching New York on his return from abroad, Bunk spent a few days looking after his financial affairs, and found that his investments had been good ones, and that he had actually grown richer during his years of study and travel.

His business arranged to his satisfaction, Bunk took the train for the town where he had last seen the only woman he had ever loved. Time never seemed so long to him before as now, although the trains were making thirty miles per hour; yet to him it seemed as if they scarcely moved. He became more and more excited, and even feverish, as he approached his place of destination. What would he find? was the question he was constantly asking himself. Was Clara alive or dead? Was she single or married? If alive and single how would she receive him, and what chance would he have of winning her love? His thoughts became a torture to him. He tried to read, but could not. He looked out the window at the constantly changing scenes, but all the time the face of Clara Banks seemed to come between him and every other object. The whistle blew for a station, and the sound had the effect of an electric shock upon his nerves. He sprung up from his seat, and stood pale and trembling until the train stopped. He looked out at the window, expecting to see her face—the face of Clara Banks—waiting and watching for her. But she was not there, and he knew the next moment that he had no reason to expect she would be. He stepped out on the platform, received his baggage, ordered it to be sent to the best hotel, and then slowly walked up and down for nearly half an hour, longing and yet afraid to question every one he met concerning the Bankses.

At length a gentleman approached him, whom he recognized as the photographer of whom he had years ago obtained Miss Clara's picture. Mustering up his courage as best he could, he addressed the gentleman with the questioning assertion:

"Some years ago there lived in this vicinity a family named Banks. Do they live here still?"

"Oh no, sir," replied the gentleman; "they have been gone nearly four years. They met with some terrible misfortunes before they left," continued he.

"How! What!" exclaimed Bunk, almost breathless.