

10 MARY MINDS HER BUSINESS

In the next twelve months Josiah seemed to age at least twelve years—his cousin Stanley watching him closely the while—and then one day came the news that Paul Spencer had shot and killed a man, while attempting to hold him up, somewhere in British Columbia.

If you could have seen Josiah Spencer that day you might have thought that the bullet had grazed his own poor heart.

"It's God's punishment," he said over and over. "For seven generations there has been a Spencer & Son—a trust that was left to me by my father that I should pass it on to my son. And what have I done. . . . !"

Whereupon he made a gesture that wasn't far from despair—and in that gesture, such as only those can make who know in their hearts that they have shot the albatross, this preface brings itself to a close and at last my story begins.