

into ill health. London is no place for those who are not fully equipped for the race."

"You speak truly, sir," said Reedham, with some bitterness. "And it has been the ruin of many who imagined themselves as you express it, fully equipped."

The note of personal bitterness rang insistently through the words, and the clergyman knew that in thinking that a troubled soul dwelt in the bosom of the man by his side, he had made no mistake."

"You have had misfortune, perhaps?"

"Yes, brought about by my own incredible folly," admitted Reedham, more and more amazed at himself. But there was really nothing to marvel at in the sudden craving for human sympathy. Only the man who has been wholly cut off from it, even for a period of days, knows how real is the deprivation. To Reedham it was a wholly new experience; he had up till then only tasted the sweets of life."

"But misfortunes pass," said the clergyman quietly. "And to all they have their uses. I hope I do not intrude if I express the hope that you see a way out of your misfortunes."

"No," replied Reedham, and a guarded note crept into his voice. "At present I see no way out."

"May I inquire whether you are what is commonly called out of work, though I see that you are a gentleman?"

"Yes, I am out of work."

"And what is your line of things?"

Reedham hesitated a moment.

"I am a clerk," he replied at hazard.

A faint disappointment, almost touched with incredulity, overspread the clergyman's face.

"It is not a profession affording many possibilities," he remarked kindly. "I hope that you have something in view."

"No, nothing, and I have to get down here," he said, as the omnibus drew up with a jerk at the corner of the Euston-road.

"A moment, friend," said the clergyman quickly, as he drew out a card from his pocket and a pencil, with which he proceeded to write something on the back of the card.

"There, that is my name and address, and on the back you will find the address of a gentleman who delights in helping those who are down. He is an intimate friend of mine, we met in connection with a case in which we were both interested, and I have often thanked God for him since. He will see you if you present that card. I have his permission to send to him whom I like, and I feel strangely interested in you. I hope we shall meet again."

He offered his hand, and after a moment's hesitation Reedham accepted it.

"Perhaps if you knew my history you would not touch my hand," he said thickly. "Good-bye, sir, and thank you."

He raised his hat and made haste down the steps of the omnibus to the ground. Immediately he turned towards Gower-street, and in a quiet doorway stopped and looked at the card.

On the one side was written:

"The Rev. Cyrus Fielden, St. Etheldred's Vicarage, Camden Town."

On the reverse side a name which caused Reedham to laugh aloud.

"Archibald Currie, Esq., 98, Hyde-park-square, and 18, Old Broad-street, E.C."

The brother of his own partner, James Currie, though a very different type of man.

He thrust the piece of pasteboard into his vest pocket, and strode on, having no particular object in view. He had merely got down to escape the kindly but embarrassing attentions of the Vicar of St. Etheldred's.

But the name on the reverse side of the card pursued him as he walked. Something in the mere thought of presenting himself to Archibald Currie, who had known him quite well in the old days, which already seemed so far away, attracted him with a sort of weird fascination.

He was a very different man from his brother James, and if by means of his sympathy and assistance he could climb back to the paths of self-respect, how great would be the irony of his triumph!

There was something adventurous in the mere idea which appealed.

All day long he wandered in the by-