

So this had been the result of my very occasional and guarded references to my family history, and I had actually been the possessor of two nick-names.

"What was his personal appearance?" I asked. "Fine-looking man?"

"No, anything but that," replied Hobbs, who spoke with a decision and directness of statement quite unprecedented in my experience of him. He was a small, insignificant-looking man, with a washed-out, whitey-brown complexion: thin, straggling whiskers, the color of dead grass, and a greenish-grey eye. He had a fine-looking wife, however. It is queer what she saw in him, but it beats everything how those fine-looking women throw themselves away on little runts of men. There'll be a fine chance there for some smart young fellow.

The train began to whistle, and Hobbs to wistfully finger the paper. So on my own part, having had a quite strong enough dose, I left him, and, to get away from the oppressive heat of the stove, took a seat at the far end of the car.

I was meditating on the vanity of human life, and the marvellous power all of us possess of self-deception, and our wonderful unconsciousness of the real estimate our fellow-men form in regard to us, when the train having stopped at a siding to let an express pass, someone from the seat behind leaned over and touched me on the shoulder.

I looked hastily round; and saw a fine-looking, full-bearded, middle-aged man. "Can I have a word with you?" he asked, in a low and rather excited tone.

I readily granted his request, and he left his seat and sat down beside me.

"You must excuse me, sir, as a total stranger, for speaking to you, but I overheard your conversation regarding the late Mr. Horseman. My name is Barkley. I live, when at home, in a place called Oaktown, about half-

way between Mountainville and Toronto."

"Oh, indeed," I said politely, with a vague sense of having heard the name before. "Were you acquainted with the late Mr. Horseman?"

"Not personally, although I knew him by sight, but I knew his wife very well before she married."

In a moment the whole thing flashed across my mind. So this was the "rich, handsome old bachelor" that my wife occasionally used to mysteriously allude to as being ready at one time to "break his neck" (to use her own expression) for sake of her, and whom I had had the distinguished honor of cutting out. I looked at him with a new interest. He was an exceedingly well-preserved man of forty-eight, faultlessly dressed, with irreproachable linen, a dark-brown beard, just getting grey, aquiline nose, and brown eyes,—a decidedly handsome man. There was about him, however, that pernicketty primness of dress and manner, and that slow, measured manner of talking, that unerringly indicates the old bachelor. He was a perfect specimen of what Sir Walter Scott calls a "beau garcon."

"Have you seen her lately?" I asked.

"No, never since her marriage," he answered with a sigh, "but as she has no relations, and I've known her since she was a child, I have come up to the funeral, and shall probably call upon her."

"Take care, Mr. Barkley," I said, slyly. "Widows are proverbially dangerous, and as the saying is, an old flame is easily rekindled."

He looked at me intently, and half-suspiciously for a moment, then, lowering his voice, he said: "Are you a friend of the family?"

"Yes, I'm a distant relation, although I never saw Horseman. I'm going to the funeral."

"Well, in that case," he said, with a look that was intended to be hugely sly: "I don't mind telling you that