

in the open door of the study near the foot of the stairs. The face, of course, belonged to Mr. Mitchell, and he enlarged upon his first gentle sarcasm by adding: "I bought a thousand freight cars the other day in less time than it has taken you people to come to terms."

Nevertheless, he greeted his former employee with cordial and sincere affection, while Bessie, radiantly happy but a little confused, asked:

"What must have you been thinking all this time?"

"Mostly I was thinking what a superfluous person a father comes to be all at once," laughed Mr. Mitchell. "Isn't there anything I can do at all?" he asked, with mock seriousness.

"Yes," rejoined Bessie in the same spirit. "Telephone the papers to announce the engagement of your daughter to the Reverend John Hampstead, pastor of All People's Church."

"Oh, I did that after the first hour and a half," exclaimed the railroad man, laughing heartily.

But the situation was too grave, the feelings of all were too tense, to sustain this spirit of badinage for long. Bessie and Tayna fell upon each other with instant liking. Even Dick and Rose seemed able to forget the crisis which overhung them in the sudden advent of this beautiful young woman who had come into their ken again so suddenly and so mysteriously, and seemed to represent in herself and her father such a sudden and vast access of prestige and power to the cause of their uncle and brother.

John and his old employer sat down in the study for a quiet talk in which the minister related what he had told Bessie, the circumstances in which he stood, and finally and especially, his new compunction and Bessie's firm decision.

"She was right!" The heavy jaws of Mitchell snapped