

step as if they never meant to come up again. He wore stylish clothes, kept his hands much in his coat pockets, affected high-colored neck-scarfs, and had a red face with blunt features. When he was excited his face wore a fierce aspect; when he felt friendly it became almost foolishly sentimental; as a general thing it was morosely inert.

Being in my senior year, I did not see much of either Vibbard or his friend; but I sometimes occupied myself with attempts to analyze the sources of their intimacy. I remember stating to one of my young acquaintances that Vibbard probably had a secret longing to be feminine and ideal, and that Silverthorn felt himself at fault in masculine toughness and hardihood, so that each sought the companionship of the other, hoping to gain some of the qualities which he himself lacked; and my young acquaintance offended me by replying, as if it had all been perfectly obvious, "Of course."

After I had been graduated, and had entered the Law School, Silverthorn and Vibbard came to my room one day on a singular errand, which—though I did not guess it then—was to influence their lives for many a year afterward.

"Ferguson," began Bill, rather shyly, when they had seated themselves, "I suppose you know enough of law by this time to draw up a paper."

"Yes, I suppose so; or draw it down, either," I replied. But I saw at once that my flippancy did not suit the occasion, for the two young fellows glanced at each other very seriously and seemed embarrassed. "What do you want me to do?" I asked.

Silverthorn now spoke, in his soft, light, inexperienced voice, which possessed a singular charm.

"It's all Bill's idea," said he, rather carelessly. "I would much rather have the understanding in words, but he—"

"Yes," broke in Bill, growing suddenly

red and vehement, "I'm not going to have it a thing that can be forgotten. No one knows what might happen."

"Well, well," said I, "if I'm to help you, you'd better fire away and tell me what it is you're after."

"I will," returned Vibbard, with a touch of that fierceness which marked his resolute moods. "Thorny and I have agreed to stand by each other when we quit college. Men are always forming friendships in the beginning of life, and then getting dragged apart by circumstances, such as wide separation and different interests. We don't want this to happen, and so we've made a compact that whichever one of us, Thorny or me, shall be worth thirty thousand dollars first—why, that one is to give the other half. That is, unless the second one is already well enough off, so that to give him a full half would put him ahead of whichever has the thirty thousand. D'you see?"

"The idea is to keep even as long as we can, you know," said Silverthorn, turning from one of my books which he had begun to glance through, and looking into my eyes with a delighted, straightforward gaze.

"That's a very curious notion!" said I, revolving the plan with a caution born of legal readings. "Before we go on, would you mind telling me which one of you originated this scheme?"

I was facing Silverthorn as I spoke, but felt impelled to turn quickly and include Vibbard in the question. They were both silent. It was plain, after a moment, that they really didn't know which one of them had first thought of this compact.

"Wasn't it you?" queried Silverthorn, musingly, of his comrade.

"I don't know," returned Vibbard; then, as if so much subtlety annoyed him: "What difference does it make, anyway? Can't you draw an agreement for us, Ferguson?"