

‘Ah, well, if he turns out as well as his father he’ll be worth the trouble of rearing him. You’ve always been a good boy, Bob, and I didn’t do the right thing by you. It was the drink, nothing but the drink—it poisons the very nature of a man. You’ll bring up your boy to abhor it. Tell him it ruined his grandfather in his old age. I’ve been taking myself to task these few days, lying in my bed. What a life I’ve led these women-folk lately! Bob, your sister’s a brick. She gave *him* the right-about-face and no mistake.’

The old man shook with silent laughter at the remembrance of that night.

‘I hoped she’d do it; and yet he threatened all sorts of things if she wouldn’t have him. I’m glad all this has happened. He had too tight a hold. I could scarcely call my soul my own. You won’t let him in upon me if he comes. I have no strength. He can make me do anything.’

Robert’s heart was full of pity at the pathetic weakness his father displayed.

‘He will not come back in a hurry, sir. He has been here this morning. I have just come up from showing him out, after a few plain remarks.’

‘No!’ Mr. Hazell sat up in his chair, with eager, excited interest. ‘What did you say?’

‘He was beginning in a very high-handed fashion, but I stopped him. I told him that he could settle any legal business with Atkins, and that I, as your representative, declined to have any further talk with him.’

Tears—tears of relief—actually started in the old