

Two Purse-Companions.

BY GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

EVERYBODY in college who knew them at all was curious to see what would come of a friendship between two persons so opposite in tastes, habitudes and appearance as John Silverthorn and Bill Vibbard. John was a hard reader, and Bill a lazy one. John was thin and graceful, with something pensive yet free and vivid in his nature; Bill was robust, prosaic and conventional. There was an air of neglect and a prospective sense of worldly failure about Silverthorn, but you would at once have singled out Vibbard as being well cared for, and adapted to push his way. Their likes and dislikes even in the matter of amusement were dissimilar; and Vibbard was easy-going and popular, while Silverthorn was shy and had few acquaintances. Yet, as far as possible, they were always with each other; they roomed, worked, walked and lounged in company, and often made mutual concessions of taste so that they might avoid being separated. It was also discovered that though their allowances were unequal, they had put them together and paid all expenses out of a common purse. Their very differences made this alliance a great advantage in some respects, and it was rendered stronger by the fact that, however incompatible outwardly, they both agreed in acting with an earnest straightforwardness.

But perhaps I had better describe how I first saw them together. It was on a Saturday, when a good many men were always sure to be found disporting themselves on the ball-field. I used to exercise my own muscles by going to look at them on these occasions; and on that particular day I came near being hit by a sudden ball, which was caught by an active, darting figure just in time to save

my head from an awkward encounter. I nodded to my rescuer, and called out cordially, "Thank you."

"All right," said he, in a glum tone meant to be good-naturedly modest. "Look out for yourself next time."

It was Bill Vibbard, then in the latter part of his freshman year; and not far distant I discovered his comrade Silverthorn, watching Bill in silent admiration. They continued slowly on their way toward an oak grove, which then stood near the field. Silverthorn, a smaller figure than Vibbard, wore a suit of uniform tint, made of sleazy gray stuff that somehow at once gave me the idea that it was taken out of his mother's discarded dresses. His face was nearly colorless without being pallid; and the faint golden down on his cheeks and upper lip, instead of being disagreeably juvenile, really added to the pleasant dreaminess that hung like a haze over his mild young features. He was slender, he carried himself rather quaintly; but his gait was buoyant and spirited. At that season the lilacs were in bloom, and Silverthorn held a glorious plume of the pale blossoms in his hand. What the first touch of fire is to the woods in autumn, the blooming of the lilac is to the new summer—a mystery, a beauty, too exquisite to last long intact; evanescent as human breath, yet, like that, fraught with incalculable values. All this Silverthorn must have felt to the full, judging from the tender way in which he held the flowers, even while absorbed in talk with his friend. His fingers seemed conscious that they were touching the clue to a finer life. In Vibbard's warm, tough fist the lilacs would have faded within ten minutes. Vibbard was stocky and muscular, and his feet went down at each