

The uplifted legs shifted themselves: "Don't be fanciful, my friend, don't adorn your narrative!"

Mr. Needy looked up reproachfully. "The devil take you, Olaf, if you don't want to hear, why—say so—that's all: it is only because—really—I have to tell you the facts."

"Go on!" with godlike patience Olaf spoke, and then with still greater serenity, as Needy handed him a glass of hot—lemonade—which he had meanwhile been preparing, "Go on, or I'll hang you."

"Well, we walked on together, and she talked sweetly of one thing and another. She told me she had been 'shopping' and I asked her if she liked 'shopping.' 'Oh! yes,' she said, 'it displays so many different phases of human nature.' Oh! If you could have heard the words coming in all gravity from her rosy lips," and Mr. Needy went off into an hysterical titter.

"Then she told me she was tired—and now for the joke. 'I would have ridden up,' and she turned her eyes *innocently* upon me, 'but I left my purse at home.' 'Shopping' without a purse was the thought that occurred to me. I think it struck her too, for she quickened her pace a little. However, I replied that though that might be unfortunate for her, still for me, etc., and 'it is an ill wind, etc.' Well—a—we were not far from her door, when she drew her pocket-handkerchief quickly from her muff and something fell. I stooped to pick it up. She had paused for an instant and then passed on. What do you think it was? A pretty little red morocco purse, with oxydized silver clasps. Oh! shall I ever forget that purse? What could I do? I hadn't the moral courage to give it to her—I couldn't keep it. She was walking on; I had to overtake her. By Jove! I was wild. I slipped it in my pocket and joined her. Her head was averted—she drooped; the light of the street-lamp discovered her flushed cheeks and tremulous lips. She was terribly cut up; she turned her head slowly round to me, as if awaiting her doom. I talked away—Heaven knows about what. She could hardly speak; I saw the agony she was in to think she had been found out. 'Well, good night, Miss Lincoln,' I said, 'I am indebted to you for this delightful little chat.' She smiled faintly—her eyes couldn't meet mine. 'Good night,' she answered, and disappeared within the sheltering portals." Mr. Needy seized his glass and drank long thereof.

"Is that all?" came in a heavy voice from the other side of the fire.

"Not quite," and the narrator, running his fingers through his luxuriant hair, said bashfully: "You see I felt deliciously flattered, but terribly uncomfortable. I did not know how to give her the purse. But an idea struck me, and next day I sent it over to the college and had it left with the matron, with strict injunctions that it was simply to be given to Miss Lincoln. That afternoon the sun was shining; the snow looked warm; the vast blue dome above was...ahem! I was making *for* the College; Miss Lincoln was sauntering *from* it. 'Will she cut me?' I mused. 'Will her unjust resentment thus revenge itself, or will her magnanimity conquer? Perchance the humiliation will be greater than she can bear.' We steadily approached one another. She was looking straight before her in assumed unconsciousness; her blushes called forth my own—her lips were rigid—but her whole being was agitated. Then, ah! we met; her face relaxed; turning towards me flushed and smiling, she just *beamed* and cried out in a fresh timid voice, 'Pleasant afternoon, Mr. Needy!' It had been a struggle, but her native nobility came out, you see. I don't think she will lie to me again even for the sake of enjoying my—a—my society."

Needy viewed his friend—smiling. His friend viewed the fire—not smiling.

The wind still blustered without, and the windows rattled in concert. The music of the caretaker's footsteps resounded in the corridor, as he laboriously accompanied a scuttle of coal to the bosom of his family, gathered together in the third room to the left.

Olaf got up—regarded the smiling Needy thoughtfully—"Better call in at the office about eleven to-morrow. Put out the lights—and come on!" and taking his hat and stick, he made his exit.

"Tom," said Mrs. Caretaker to her worthyspouse, as he stood warming his huge, red hands, "isn't them fellows gone yet?"

"Jes gone, I guess—there's the door slummin'."

"They're up late enough of nights anyhow—I believe in lookin' after the body as well as the brain."

Mrs. Caretaker was not without opinions.

"Them's the brains as 'ull rule this here country after a while; they *hev* to be cultivated."

"I s'pose so"—and the good woman sighed.

## II.

From the warm red depths of her favourite armchair Miss Seagram discontentedly surveyed the artistic draperies of the handsome drawing-room curtains. On her lap lay Laokoon and a German dictionary; on the table at her side a steaming cup of coffee and a plate of fresh cracknels invited her discussion. But neither German nor coffee, it would seem, could offer her consolation. A sudden peal of the door-bell, however, interrupted her reverie; Miss Seagram rose to her feet just as the door was thrown open—and love and light and hope presented themselves in the shape of Edith Lincoln.

"Oh! you wretch you," cried Miss Seagram, eagerly flying to her, "I have a great mind not to speak to you. To think that you could leave me alone all this time, shut up in this house—sick, too! Oh! Edith, you darling, I'm so glad to see you. I thought you had forgotten me. Why didn't you come before?"

"I was ashamed to come, positively ashamed, Lizzie. I'll tell you all about it. You poor girl—but indeed you look ever so much better. You are better, are you not?"

During these little outpourings they embraced one another fervently, and being now sufficiently uncomfortable, repaired to the capacious armchair.

"Well, *do* tell me," continued Miss Seagram, rapturously gazing into the grey eyes so close to her own, "tell me all about it. What happened to you?"

"Oh, nothing, I went down town the day after I saw you and bought your purse, just the kind you wanted and".....

"Is there anything to be ashamed of in that?"

"No," returned Miss Lincoln, lightly, "but on my way home I lost it—I got it again though, and here it is," so saying she pulled out a red morocco purse.

"You found it then?"

"No—not exactly. I don't know where, when, or how I lost it. I had it in my muff quite safe, but when I came to look for it, behold! it had vanished like a tale that is told."

"How odd!" said Miss Seagram, laughing.

"No, my dear, but it is odd that next day it should be handed to me in the common-room over at the college, and that no one should know whence it came."

"Odd! I should say so—just left there for you?"

"Just left there for me," nodding gently.

"I am glad anyway, for it is just lovely. Did you see any one down town?"

"No person—much—it was so cold out," and Miss Lincoln gave a little shudder. "I was too cold to look at anybody. I met that friend of yours though, what is his name? Seedy—no—Needy,—Mr. Needy."

"Did you? oh! where?" enthusiastically.

"On King—I was just about to hail a car when I remembered I had no money, and at that moment Mr. Needy came up. I inwardly hoped he was not coming my way, because I was too weary to talk. He makes me tired, anyway."

"Oh! Edith—I think he is so nice—so interesting; he really has more in him than a dozen other men."

"There may be something *in* him, but there certainly is not much *of* him."

"Oh! How *can* you, Edith? He is so different from other men—so free from *conceit*—so generous. I *know* he is incapable of anything mean—incapable of attributing mean motives to people, or anything like that, you know. Why, he is just splendid!"

"I won't quarrel with you, dearest, but I find him a bore; though I confess I did beam on him the other day when I met him on the lawn. Having just got back your purse, you know, I felt in such a good humour with the world in general—I believe I would have called a friendly 'good day' to Mephistopheles himself. However, let us talk of something more interesting."

And very cheerfully the moments slipped away.

E. A. D.