

here and there the roomy brick dwellings received distinctly plebeian inmates. One night, in this street formerly so dedicated to the calm of refinement, a frightful murder occurred. No one who lived in New York at that time can fail to remember the Burdell assassination. It was surrounded by all the most melodramatic luridness of commission. Its victim was a dentist, slaughtered at midnight with many wounds from an unknown hand. The mysterious deed shook our whole city with dismay. For weeks it was a topic that superseded all others. To search through old newspapers of the excited days that followed is to imagine oneself on the threshold of a thrilling tale, in which the wrong culprits are arraigned and the real offender hides himself behind so impregnable an ambush that nothing but a final chapter can overthrow it. Yet in this ghastly affair of the stabbed dentist a protracted trial resulted in a tame acquittal and no more. The story ended abruptly and midway. It lies to-day as alluring material for the writer of harrowing fiction. It still retains all the ghastly piquancy of an undiscovered crime.

The vast surrounding populace of New York have long ago learned to forget it, but there would be truth in the assertion that Bond Street recalls it still. Its garish publicity scared away the last of her fine-bred denizens. The retreat was haughty and gradual, but it is now absolute. Where Ten Eyck and Van Horn had engraved their names in burly letters on sheeny door-plates, you may see at present the flaunting signs of a hair-dresser, a beer-seller, a third-rate French *restaurateur*, a furrier, a flower-maker, and an intercessor between despairing authors and obdurate publishers. The glory of Bond Street has departed. Its region has become lamentably "down town." The spoilers possess it with undisputed rule. It is in one sense a melancholy ruin, in another a sprightly transformation.

But several years before its decadence turned unargued fact (and now we near a time that almost verges upon the present) Mr. Hamilton Varick, a gentleman well past fifty, brought into perhaps the most spacious mansion of the street a bride scarcely eighteen. Mr. Varick had lived abroad for many years, chiefly in Paris. He was a tall, spare man, with a white jaunty mustache and a black eye full of fire. He was extremely rich, and unless remote relations were considered, heirless. It was generally held that he had come home to end his days after a life of foreign folly and gallantry. This may at first have seemed wholly true, but it also occurred that he had chosen to end them in the society of a blooming young wife.

His Bond Street house, vacant for years, suddenly felt the embellishing spell of the upholsterer. Mr. Varick had meanwhile dropped into the abodes of old friends not seen in twenty years, had shaken hands with a characteristic lightsome cordiality, right and left, had beamingly taken upon his lap the children of mothers and fathers who were once his youthful comrades in dance and rout, had reminded numerous altered acquaintances who he was, had been reminded in turn by numerous other altered acquaintances who they were, had twisted his white mustache, had talked with airy patriotism about getting back to die in one's native land, had deplored his long absence from the dear scenes of youth, had regretted secretly his transpontine Paris, had murmured his bad, witty French *mots* to whatever matron would hear them, had got himself re-made a member of the big, smart Metropolitan Club which he thought a mere tiresome sort of parochial tavern when he last left it, and had finally amazed everyone by marrying the young and lovely Miss Pauline Van Corlear.

Pauline herself had very little to do with the whole arrangement. She was the only child of a widowed mother who had long ago designed to marry her notably. Mrs. Van Corlear lived upon a very meagre income, and had been an invalid since Pauline was eight. But she had educated her daughter with a good deal of patient care, and had ultimately, at the proper age, relegated her to the chaperonage of a more prosperous sister, who had launched her forth into society with due *élan*. Pauline was not a good match in the mercenary sense; she was perfectly well aware of the fact; she had been brought up to understand it. But she was fair to see, and perhaps she understood this a little too well.

New York was then what so many will remember it to have been about twelve years ago. The civil war had left few traces of disaster; it was the winter of seventy-one. Wall Street was in a hey-day of hazardous prosperity; sumptuous balls were given by cliques of the most careful entertainers; a number of ladies who had long remained unfashionable, yet who had preserved an inherited right to assert social claim when they chose, now came to the front. These matrons proved a strong force, and resisted in sturdy confederacy all efforts of outsiders to break their dainty ranks. They shielded under maternal wings a delightful bevy of blooming young maidens, among whom was Pauline Van Corlear.

It was a season of amusing conflict. Journalism had not yet learned to fling its lime-light of notoriety upon the doings and mis-doings of private individuals. Young girls did not wake then, as now, on the morning after a ball, to read (or with jealous heart-burning *not* to read) minute descriptions of their toilets on the previous night. The "society column" of the New York newspaper was still an unborn abomination. Had this not been the case, a great deal of pungent scandal might easily have found its way into print. The phalanx of assertive matrons roundly declared that they had found society in a deplorable condition. The balls, receptions and dinners were all being given by a horde of persons without grandfathers. The reigning bells were mostly a set of loud, rompish girls, with names that rang unfamiliarly. The good old people had nearly all been drowsing inactive during several winters; one could hardly discover an Amsterdam, a Spuytenduyvil, a Van Schuylkill, among this unpleasant rabble. There had been quite too many of these spurious pretenders. Legitimacy must uplift its debased standards.

Legitimacy did so, and with a will. Some very fine and spacious mansions in districts bordering or approximate to Washington Square were hospitably thrown open, besides others of a smarter but less time-honoured elegance in "up-town" environments. The new set, as it was called, carried things by storm. They were for the most part very rich people, and they spent their wealth with a lavish freedom that their lineage saved from the least charge of vulgarity. No display of money is ever considered vulgar when lineage is behind it. If you are unblessed with good descent you must air your silver dishes cautiously and heed well the multiplicity of your viands; for though your cook possess an Olympian palate and your butler be the ex-adherent of a king, the accusation of bad taste hangs like a sword of threat in your banquet hall.

Among all the winsome *débutantes* of that season, Pauline Van Corlear was the most comely. She had a sparkling wit, too, that was at times mercilessly acute. Most of the young friends with whom she had simultaneously "come out" were heiresses of no mean consideration; but Pauline was so poor that an aunt would present her with a few dozens of gloves, a cousin would donate to her five or six fresh gowns, or perhaps one still more distant in kinship would supply her with boots and bonnets. The girl sensitively shrank, at first, from receiving these gifts; but her plaintive, faded mother, with her cough and querulous temper, would always eagerly insist upon their acceptance.

"Of course, my dear," Mrs. Van Corlear would say, in her treble pipe of a voice, while she rocked to and fro the great chair that bore her wasted, shawl-wrapped body—"of course it is quite right that your blood-relations should come forward. They all have plenty of money, and it would be dreadful if they let you go out looking shabby and forlorn. For my part, I'm only surprised that they don't do more."

"I expect nothing from them, mamma," Pauline would say, a little sadly.

"Expect, my dear? Of course you don't. But that doesn't alter the obligation on their part. Now please do not be obstinate; you know my neuralgia always gets worse when you're obstinate. You are very pretty—yes, a good deal prettier than Gertie Van Horn or Sallie Poughkeepsie, with all their millions—and I haven't a doubt that before the winter is over you'll have done something really handsome for yourself. If you haven't, it will be your own fault."

Pauline clearly understood that to do something handsome for herself meant to marry a rich man. From a tender age she had been brought up to believe that this achievement was the goal of all hopes, desires and aims. Everybody expected it of her, as she grew prettier and prettier; everybody hinted or prophesied it to her long before she "came out." The little contracted and conventional world in which it was her misfortune to breathe and move, had forever dinned it into her ears until she had got to credit it as an article of necessitous faith. There are customs of the Orient that shock our Western intelligences when we read of women placidly accepting their tyrannies; but no almond-eyed daughter of pasha or vizier ever yielded more complaisantly to harem-discipline than Pauline now yielded to the cold, commercial spirit of the marriage decreed for her.

She was popular in society, notwithstanding her satiric turn. She always had a nosegay for the German, and a partner who had pre-engaged her. It was not seldom that she went to a ball quite laden with the floral proofs of male admirers. Among these latter was her third-cousin, then a gentleman of thirty, named Courtlandt Beekman. Courtlandt had been Pauline's friend from childhood. She had always been so fond of him that it had never occurred to her to analyse her fondness, now when they met under the festal glare of chandeliers instead of in her mother's plain, dull sitting-room. Nor had it ever occurred to any of her relations to matrimonially warn her against Courtlandt. He was such a nice, quiet fellow;