

John Morton, or as he was more popularly known, Squire Morton, was an old gentleman whose ample fortune had been acquired by close attention to a large wholesale business, carried on in a city which for convenience sake we will call Martville. After several years of successful commercial life, during which time he amassed wealth, sufficient to keep his small family in princely comfort for the remainder of their days, declining health began to exclude the squire from the practice of that strict attention so necessary to the successful carrying on of extensive mercantile pursuits. Not having any competent relatives to whom he could entrust his vast concerns John Morton found it necessary to retire from business, so with some reluctance he was induced to hand over his extensive commercial interests to a wealthy company for a satisfactory consideration.

It was the fond expectation of his family, that cessation of the heavy strain necessitated by diligent care of vast financial affairs would produce the salutary effect of restoring to the Squire that vigorous strength which previously resided in his robust constitution. Hence their repeated importunities were to a great degree responsible for his retirement. Rest, they thought, was the only remedy needed, and the merchant submitted to its treatment, more to satisfy the desires of solicitous relatives, than from any great hope he entertained of bodily improvement.

For one who has long been engaged in active occupation, dull inactivity is not always calculated to produce beneficial results. Thus it was with the Squire. Not having to attend to his usual employments, life began to lie heavily upon him, and day by day his health continued to decline. His characteristic sauvity of temper gradually grew worse, and his friends began to have serious fears regarding his condition. At the suggestion of the family physician, one Dr. Merden, a skilful, but unscrupulous practitioner,—John Morton removed to his country seat at Marklyne, which for a quarter of a century had been the permanent homestead of the Morton family. At the death of the Squire's father which occurred about eight years previous, the Marklyne property was bequeathed to the only surviving son, who henceforth occupied the rural residence only during those summer months in which there could be found a few weeks relaxation from business. For the