

TWO VENTURES.

BY HURKARU.

CHAPTER XIV—THE SECOND VENTURE.

Of course my readers are well aware, that when a man like Van Higgin, whose transactions are so numerous and large, fails it is a very different affair, to that of one who is only in one line of business, and it takes much longer to reduce order out of the chaos created by the crash. The winding up of such an estate necessarily proceeds slowly, where there are so many interests of magnitude involved. Meetings of creditors have to be called, a statement of assets and liabilities submitted, and, as is often the case, it was not advisable for those concerned to be too hasty in realizing the assets by forcing sales at a time when there was hardly any demand. So with his private property, while his house on Fifth avenue, with its furniture, and his carriages and horses, were understood to be in the market, they were not to be disposed of at ruinous prices to the first bidder. Some months might elapse before everything could be sold, and though the establishment was considerably reduced, and entertainments entirely ceased, Van Higgin still continued to reside in his house for the time being.

Thus on returning to New York, Dugdale instead of going to the Brunswick, as formerly, chose the Buckingham for his quarters, which hotel is we all know, almost opposite a certain residence in Fifth Avenue. Dugdale had heard with amazement, on his way through Chicago, of the failure of his friend Van Higgin, and while he knew he was bound to feel sorry, I fear his sorrow was not unmingled with a kind of gladness, for he belonged to a type of the sterner sex, which can never rid itself of shrinking from the supposition, that money was the motive in the choice of a wife. That motive, being now entirely removed as regards Madeline, gave to Dugdale a sense of relief which it is possible you or I sir would not comprehend.

Dugdale first sought out the Ralstons, and learned from Guy, all the particulars of the great Van Higgin failure.

"He has handed over everything to his creditors" said Ralston, "and he and Madeline are looking out for a couple of rooms in which to go and live."

"His house is not sold yet, I presume?" enquired Dugdale.

"No, they are trying to sell it privately, but it is not everyone who can afford such a place."

"It must be hard lines for Miss Van Higgin, after the way in which she has been brought up."

"Upon my word Dugdale, Madeline seems to think very little of it, but her father feels it greatly for her sake."

"No doubt, no doubt. Do you happen to know who has the disposal of the house and furniture Ralston?"



"Why, Mary, what on earth's the matter? Your hair has turned quite white."

"Sure the Misses sent me to town wid yure kays, and I wint down in one of thim fiery cars, and what wid the heazing lectricity, the runnin' off the trolley, the bumpin' and jumpin' into carts, and the crowls, an' the yelling of the engine driver,—sure it's a wonder I have any hair left at all, at all."

"It is in the hands of Flotsam and Son the real estate agents" was the reply.

"Ah, well I must go and see Van Higgin," said Dugdale pulling out his watch and making a hurried departure. Yet it was very late in the day before he called at the office in Wall Street, and then he said little beyond hearty expressions of regret, for what had taken place, concluding with an ordinary polite enquiry after Miss Van Higgin. He excused himself, on the plea of business, when invited to call round that evening, but hoped Van Higgin would give him half an hour the day but one following, on a matter of some importance, which he did not wish talked about. Van Higgin named a time for the meeting and whatever was discussed at that interview will be quickly divulged; let it suffice for the moment to say, that Van Higgin went home that evening in a strange state of elation, which he was at great difficulty in concealing from his daughter.

Two days later, Dugdale, in company with the Ralstons arrived after dinner at No. 600 Fifth Avenue. Madeline received the former frankly enough, yet with a certain reserve which, although observed by Dugdale, he took no notice of, but chatted in a free and easy manner, upon passing events.

The whole party was seated in the rear drawing room, which was separated from the one in front, by heavy oriental curtains and folding door—the latter being partially closed. There appeared to be a secret understanding between Annette and Dugdale, for in a temporary lull in the conversation, Mrs. Ralston, beckoning to Guy, passed with him into the front room, evidently expecting Van Higgin would follow, but as he, with the blundering blind-

ness of his sex, failed to catch the situation, or take the hint, Annette came back to the dividing doors, and exclaimed with that French transposition of words, she never quite lost, "Ah, pardon Mr. Van Higgin, but do you have perhaps a magnifying glass? I do desire to examine with you these beautiful photographs." This phrase has become a joke among us since and if a private interview seems necessary we cry out "Oh, pardon Robson (or Dobson as the case may be) but do you have perhaps a etc.,"

Van Higgin hastened to Annette, who completed her generalship, by closing the door between the two rooms. "Mon Dieu Madeline is she not an American and do you suppose she wants Papa at this moment?" she cried, leading Van Higgin to the further end of the room, where—would you believe it?—there was not a single photograph visible.

Left alone with Dugdale, Madeline had no difficulty in surmising what was coming, and was perhaps a trifle annoyed as a free born American, in having been made a passive instrument in the bringing about of a situation, she would have preferred to have arranged herself. Annette had stolen a march on her, but she would not, in spite of that, be caught unprepared, and Dugdale found her perfectly collected as to continue the military parallel—he turned towards her and opened fire.

"Do you remember Miss Van Higgin," he began in a low voice, "my speaking to you of two ventures, when I was leaving for Denver?"

"I recollect something you said, Mr. Dugdale," replied Madeline slowly "but circumstances have altered since."

"Yes you were then such a wealthy heiress that my motives might have been misconstrued, but now—"

"Hush" interrupted Madeline softly, "I never imputed such baseness to you, and you need not try to prove what I knew already."

"Then Madeline will you not crown my second venture with success?" cried Dugdale, a great joy overspreading his face, as he fancied he saw victory within his grasp.

"How long can you wait for your crown?" asked the girl almost in a whisper.

"Wait! what is the use of waiting?" was the impatient rejoinder.

"Think of Papa—I could not leave him t a time like this" said Madeline.

"Is that your only reason?" asked Dugdale with a peculiar smile—"you promise you will not keep me waiting longer than a time when you see your father comfortable again, Madeline?"

"Yes"—

"You are quite sure you do not consider me too poor?" pursued Dugdale.

"Now you are ungenerous!" cried Madeline raising her eyes, but instantly drop-