

"We came over to congratulate Mr. Grinnell," said Dawson. "We've just seen the Herald."

"Yes," said Mellen grimly.

"Oh, thanks," returned Grinnell, very politely.

"Herzog," said the richest man in the world abruptly, "you have been buying a great many bonds."

"We have bought some," assented the banker, with much gravity.

There was a pause. Grinnell glanced at Dawson, who was looking so extremely unconcerned that the young man smiled slightly. Mellen, who had been leaning forward in his chair, straightened himself and asked curtly: "Why?"

Mr. Herzog arched his eyebrows with a sort of amazed inquisitiveness and said nothing, intending his silence as a snub. But he changed his mind and said: "They were very cheap."

The richest man in the world turned toward Grinnell. Before he could ask any questions the young man said pleasantly: "You told me so yourself. Don't you remember, Mr. Mellen?"

"Did you buy any, Mr. Grinnell?" Mellen's voice had a serious ring. The young man's face took on a boyishly confidential look. He said:

"I bought some for my father-in-law. He had been waiting for them to go down. So had I. You see, my marriage was to come off as soon as I had invested his money."

Mellen's eyes opened wide, and Dawson, in a very quiet tone, asked: "And did you invest yours as well?"

"It seems to me," said Grinnell, "that we are drifting toward family matters—"

"I beg your pardon," said the president stiffly.

"I understood," the young man said apologetically, "that you wished to speak to me on some business matter. I haven't overdrawn my account, have I?"

"Perhaps we had better discuss this at the bank, Mr. Grinnell; if you could come—"

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Dawson, but I start on my wedding tour in an hour. I have no business secrets from Mr. Herzog, so if it is a business matter we may discuss it here. In all probability I would repeat our conversation to him."

Dawson's face flushed violently; his nostrils dilated unpleasantly. Mellen's face turned perceptibly paler and the lines of it became harder. But his voice was steady and his manner almost matter-of-fact as he said to the young man: "Then it is almost certain you are not going to deposit too much gold hereafter at the Metropolitan Bank."

"I am not going to deposit any more gold at any bank, because—" Grinnell hesitated.

"Yes?" Mellen's eyes were fixed on the young man's face, as if he thought every fleeting expression was as important as the words themselves.

"Because I haven't any more gold to deposit," finished Grinnell, very calmly.

"That is now. But will you not produce any more gold?" The richest man in the world spoke very quietly and very distinctly.

"I never produced any. I sold the Assay Office the last ounce I ever had over a month ago."

"You must have obtained it somewhere, somehow," said the richest man in the world. His manner conveyed an impression of patience. "Did you buy it?"

"No, sir. I didn't buy it." The young man's calmness was not theatrical and it had a quieting effect. He paused an instant; then he went on: "In fact, I had no gold of my own. It was all my father-in-law's." He turned away and rose as if to go to the window.

Mellen spoke sharply: "Mr. Grinnell!"

Grinnell frowned. He spoke to Mellen with impatience in his voice: "Mr. Mellen, you have asked me many questions, which you had no right to ask. I've not said anything about it before; but I tell you now that you annoy me!"

Mellen turned livid. "I—" he began.

"Listen, please," interrupted Grinnell quickly, his face growing stern. "I am going to tell you about that gold. That is, I shall tell if you do not interrupt me. I don't wish you to ask me any more questions—not one."

"My father-in-law, Mr. Robinson, two years ago at the height of the boom thought the stock market must collapse sooner or later. I became engaged to his daughter, whom I had known ever since I was a boy. He naturally talked over his affairs with me in a general way, though I am not a business man." He paused as if to pick his next words. A curious smile flickered for a fraction of a minute on Mr. Herzog's lips.

"He wished to sell most of his stock holdings in various companies and then buy bonds. But if stocks

were too high, bonds were not low enough. It was therefore decided to sell stocks at once, but to defer the purchase of bonds until a more propitious occasion. That occasion came last week. Mr. Herzog bought the bonds for him. That's where he comes in."

The young man paused again. Mellen did not interrupt; he nodded twice, not quickly at all, but in an acquiescent manner that invited further revelations. Grinnell continued slowly:

"Mr. Robinson had been a rich man for years, but I did not suspect how rich until he had sold all his stocks, when he told me he had fifty-four millions to his credit at his banks. To me this was so incredible that it made me think a man with that much cash in bank might do other things just as incredible. He is one of the unknown millionaires whom the newspapers discover when their wills are probated. That fact, the ignorance as to the extent of his wealth, also would help. As at that time so many of our financial institutions were unsafe because their officers were gambling in stocks and underwriting ventures, we concluded to lose the interest on it and turn it into gold. Once we had accumulated fifty millions in gold, the existence of which was unsuspected by bankers or brokers or newspapers, it was obvious that there were various ways in which the gold and the secret of it could be made valuable. Mr. Robinson, lacking the excitement of active speculation in stocks, and having retired from active business, was quite willing to indulge in a few psychological experiments. I had suggested various plans. He accepted one of them. So, we got the gold together."

"Yes, but how? Where did you get that much gold?"

"There was only one way that I could see. We withdrew gold coin from circulation, gradually, all over the country, but principally in San Francisco. We spent two years at it. It took a great deal of care and trouble. Indeed, that was the hardest part. As fast as we got it I took it to my house, which I had bought for that very purpose, and melted it into bars so heavy that no burglar could carry away one. I painted them black and put them in the cellar, near the back wall. They were safe."

"Ah!" The sigh came from the Hebrew banker who now leaned back in his chair and looked at Dawson. The president's lips were slightly parted, and the frown was still on his face, his eyes on Grinnell. Mellen's face had lost its tense look. He said, very quietly:

"I see!"

"I deposited the gold, as Assay Office checks, in Mr. Dawson's bank, and stopped calling on my fiancée. Later, I bought the bonds. I didn't see Mr. Herzog until they were cheap."

"You scound—"

"Richard!" interjected the richest man in the world, soothingly. He had already reckoned the extent of his enormous losses, for he would have to buy back at high prices bonds he had sold at low, and he would have to reverse the process in stocks. Grinnell, or his father-in-law, probably had made fifteen or twenty millions through the mistake. Mellen's losses, because of the imaginative faculty, would probably be twice as great. But gold was gold still, and therefore, he was not ruined. He would retrieve the loss. He saw what he must do.

He turned with a look of almost benignity to the young man and said suavely: "Mr. Grinnell, I should like to have you come to see me when you have time. You have told me a very interesting story. I should like to see more of you. You are rich, but—" He stopped, to look encouragingly at the young man.

"Oh, no," laughed Grinnell, "my father-in-law is. But even he is not in your class."

"Come and see me anyhow. There is no telling what class you will be in." In his mild earnestness and soft voice there was an unmistakable promise. The young man did not answer. Dawson now smiled affably.

"Mr. Grinnell, you are still one of our depositors, you know," he said, with an air of claiming family relationship.

"Yes; to the extent of \$342. I'll give that to the detectives who— Oh, no offence, Mr. Dawson. I'm sorry I must leave you. We married men have trials." He shook hands warmly with Mr. Herzog, nodded pleasantly to Dawson and Mellen, and said: "Good-morning, gentlemen."

As the door closed on George Kitchell Grinnell, Mellen, thinking of the new working alliance he must effect with Herzog in order to facilitate the campaign of retreat and re-conquest, turned to the Hebrew banker and said quietly:

"Now, Herzog, let's get down to business."

(THE END.)