TAKEN BY SIEGE.

[Copyright by J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, Pa., and published by special arrangement through the American Press Association.]

CHAPTER III.

RUSH HURLSTONE was not the only young man in New York in love with Helen Knowlton. There was scarcely a man in the city who was not in the same condition. I cannot say that all were as hard hit as our young friend, but several of them thought they were—which amounted to the same thing for the time being. This is not to be wondered at, either. Helen Knowlton was a woman of remarkable attractions. Aside from her gifts as a singer (and she was now at the zenith of her powers), she was a clever woman, a student of books and of men, and with sentiment enough to enable her to interpret poetic characters most successfully. While not, perhaps, what would be called a beauty, she was strikingly handsome.

According to classic ideas, her features were not perfect; yet one seldom sees finer eyes or a straighter nose, or a handsomer mouth than hers when she was talking or laughing. Some people thought her mouth too large, but Rush never liked a small mouth in man or woman; a large mouth with glistening teeth always attracted him. Her eyes were brown, with jet black lashes and brows, the former so thick and long that when he looked into her eyes he thought of fire burning its way through shrubbery. Her hair was brown, and grew in waving lines around her brow, and the line that marked its growth at the back of her neck was as clearly defined as though it had been drawn with a pencil. This may seem a small matter to speak of, but it is a great beauty in a woman. Her figure was exceedingly well proportioned, and she dressed with the most exquisite taste. With all these physical attractions, she had an unusually bright mind. She was constantly adding to her store of knowledge, and what she knew she knew thoroughly. If she had not been a prima donna, she would have distinguished herself in some other walk in life.

As to her character it was peculiar. When Rush came to know her intimately he told her she was the most singular combination of baby and woman he had ever met, and so she was. She lived in the world, but she was not a woman of the world. She could not say one thing and mean another, and her friends used to tell her that was an accomplishment a prima donna, of all persons, should possess. She was credulous, yet suspicious; she was practical to a fault, yet sentimental; she seemed cold in her nature, yet she unconsciously hungered for love. She made friends easily and took no pains to keep them, yet somehow or other they stuck by her. She was at this time just a little spoiled and with reason. The town was at her feet. There wasn't a man, woman or child who would not have been proud to do her a favor. Ladies vied with one another in entertaining her at their houses, young men fought for an introduction and old men toasted her at their clubs. I believe that if she had chosen to have Union club men pull her carriage instead of horses they would have humored her whim.

Everything new that came out in the way of bric-a-brac, jewelry or books was sent to her on the instant by some known or unknown admirer. Artists painted her in their pictures and poets landed her in their lyrics. She had had so much of this adoration that she took it almost as a thing of course; yet she was pleased by every new attention, and never tired even of the flowers that were showered upon her. Guarded like a hot house plant herself, the breath of scandal had never blown towards her. You could not look at her and believe that she was otherwise than pure, and the veriest old roue would have found himself awed by her innocence. Yet she was no prude. She was fond of the society of men and enjoyed a good time as much as any one, but she was possessed by a very strong idea of what a woman should and should not do. Her position made it necessary for her to be particularly careful, and, although she was 25 years old, she had never entertained a man alone in a room in her life. Foreigners, with their ideas of women on the stage, could not understand her, but none the less they joined with her countrymen in burning incense to her.

Helen Knowlton's parents had died when she was a baby, leaving her in charge of an aunt, Miss Rebecca Sandford, her mother's sister, who was known to half of Helen's friends and the whole musical profession as "Aunt Rebecca." This good lady was a dragon of virtue. She looked upon her niece as a child and treated her as such; and, as it was kindly treatment, it had the effect of keeping her young, so that at 25 she was as fresh and youthful in her ideas as most girls of 18. Aunt Rebecca never let "that child" know any of the business details of her profession. The good lady stood between her niece and the managers. She read the contracts; Helen signed them. It was a shrewd manager who could get the better of her in a bargain, and the managers knew it and respected her cleverness.

There were, naturally, a great many visitors to the little Gothic cottage in West Twentieth street, where the prima donna made her home; but they all had to pass the eye of Aunt Rebecca before they could see her niece, and even then the matron seated herself in the room let the visitor be man, woman or child and never left till he or she had gone. She did not always take part in the conversation, but would often busy herself with a French novel (Aunt Rebecca was very partial to George Sand) and let the young people talk of their own affairs. It must be confessed that she rather overdid the guardianship at times, but if any very intimate friend suggested this she would say: "I don't want to give wagging tongues a chance. If any gossiping creature says such and such a thing occurred at such a time I can reply: 'My friend, you lie, for I was there.'" Aunt Rebecca used sharp language at times, but, as she said, "What is the use of beating around the bush? You might as well eat the devil as drink his broth."

Never having known anything different, Helen was well satisfied with her aunt's guardianship, and never questioned it. Sometimes she would say to her young friends, as they started out for a walk in Fifth avenue, "I envy you your freedom to come and go as you please, but I suppose while I am a public singer I must accept the situation and give up the usual amusements of young women of my age." So she would go back to her room and superintend the making of a costume with so much interest that she would forget all about the ordinary pleasures of life, and be wholly wrapped up in the dry details of her profession. She studied hard every day, and exercised and ate as carefully as an oarsman in training for a race. Properly speaking, she had never had any childhood, as she had begun her studies when very young and had been singing since she was in her teens. She liked the life of a singer and she didn't like it. The act of singing was of itself a pleasure, and there was nothing in the world so exciting to her as a large and enthusiastic audience.

"If an audience only knew how much better music it gets from an artist when it gives her something in return," she used to say, "I think it would always show a sympathetic spirit." She had little to complain of on the score of coldness in her audiences. In New York she was always treated as though she were the particular favorite of every auditor, and the applause when she came upon the stage only ceased that they might hear her sing.

It is not surprising that a woman of this sort should have had many admirers. It was said in society that she could marry any man she wanted—that they all would only be too happy to bestow their hands and fortunes upon her, from Uncle Lightfoot Myers to that much courted young man, Mr. West Hastings.

Aunt Rebecca smiled at the attentions of Uncle Lightfoot, but she was more severe upon West Hastings, though the latter was of a suitable age, had an income of eighty thousand dollars a year, and was considered a most desirable parti altogether. He was looked upon as a confirmed bachelor until he met Helen Knowlton, to whom he began paying devoted attentions very early in their acquaintance. Hastings was a man of the world, a member of half a dozen clubs, and lived more like a European than do most Americans. He had inherited his money, and had never done a day's work in his life, which was so much the worse for him; but he was not so good-for-nothing as are many of his countrymen similarly gifted by fortune. It was said that he patronized the ballet in the persons of its premieres; but, however this may be, you could never find a woman in society who would believe it, for there was nothing in his manner to betoken that he was not a man of the most exquisite refinement. If it had been Livingston Dash, or Charlie Vernon, or any one of half a dozen other well known club men, who had been so accused, the accusation might have been believed.

When Archie Tillinghast told his cousin Bessie Archer that he had seen West Hastings' coupe, with the blinds up, driving away from the stage door of Niblo's Garden during the run of "The Black Crook," she left the room in indignation, and would hardly speak to him the rest of the evening, though he was her escort to the Charity ball. When it became generally known that Hastings was paying marked attentions to Helen Knowlton the women said that she would do well to accept him; that a marriage with him would be a brilliant close for a brilliant career; but some of the men who knew him best shook their heads and said that, while West Hastings was a "good fellow," he was hardly calculated to make a good husband; that he would get tired of the best woman in the world if he was married to her, and they wanted to see Helen Knowlton married to a man who would make her happy to the end of her days.

That Hastings was interested in Miss Knowlton is not surprising. She was the most feted woman in New York, and she was the one woman whose head was not turned by his attentions. He had been used to a different sort of woman on the stage. Here was a prima donna who was as much of a lady and as pure a woman as his own sister. He began by pouring the ordinary compliments of a man of the world into her ear (he had to do it in Italian, for Aunt Rebecca was always on hand); but he soon saw that it bored her, and that she was only interested when he talked sense. He had traveled far and wide, had heard the native music of many countries, and could be very interesting if he chose. That she listened to him best when he appeared to the best advantage pleased him. Indeed, she pleased him altogether, for she gave him a new sensation, and if there was anything in this world that Hastings honestly loved, it was a new sensation.

He was beginning to think that he was in love with Helen Knowlton; and so he was, to a certain extent. He thought her cold, but he also thought her the most interesting person he had ever met; and then he liked to be considered the favored suitor of the most popular prima donna in the country. It pleased him that the men at the club called him a "lucky dog," and he enjoyed hearing it whispered, "That is West Hastings with Miss Knowlton." "I believe I'll marry that girl," he would sometimes say to himself, never taking into consideration the fact that "that girl" might refuse to marry him. Then he would think of his luxurious bachelor quarters, of his perfect freedom from all domestic ties, and he would conclude to wait awhile longer before making a formal offer of marriage, believing that he could occupy the field as long as he cared to.

Helen Knowlton liked West Hastings very much. He was attentive and amusing, and he didn't ask her to marry him. I think that if he had put the question seriously she would have refused him. She was in love with her art. Music was the only thing that realized her ideal. She looked upon men, the little she saw of them, as pleasant companions, that was all. Music had satisfied her longings up to this time, and Aunt Rebecca had instilled into her mind the idea that men were a delusion and a snare; that her art was the only thing upon which she could rely. "The more you do for men, the more you may do," said that wise woman; "but the more you do for art, the more art will do for you. Don't tell me! I haven't lived all these years among men for nothing. They can't take me in, and they never could." I don't think the man ever lived who could have been induced to take Miss Rebecca Sanford in, for he would have known that if he did so he would have to give the reins into her hands and resign the driver's box forever.

Aunt Rebecca didn't intend that her niece should marry, at least for many a long day, and her influence was very strong. She wouldn't say: "You mus'n't know So and So," or try any of the usual means of keeping a girl from falling in love; but she would with her witty tongue put a man in so ridiculous a light that Helen could never think of him again without laughing. Aunt Rebecca was very clever in her way, and she was more than a match for her niece. If she had once given Helen a chance to fall seriously in love the girl's attachment would have been too strong to be shaken by her shafts of ridicule. But she did not. When she thought West Hastings was becoming a little too attentive she asked Helen if she had noticed how he picked all the truffles out of the pate and put them on his own plate and selected the delicate bits of the celery for himself. Helen had not noticed this, but she supposed that if her aunt said so it must be true.

Aunt Rebecca was always ready with an anecdote against Hastings, which she told with a good natured laugh that entirely diverted suspicion. No one knew why she was so opposed to Helen's marrying, except that she wanted her to make even more of a career and add still more to her bank account. And she really did not believe that a woman was any happier for being married. "Marriage is a lottery, where all the tickets are blanks," she would say; and she got her niece to be very much of her opinion. In the case of West Hastings, Aunt Rebecca's plan was to impress Helen with the idea that he was a selfish old bachelor (he was only 30), and every little thing he did that might be regarded as selfish she magnified. He was a selfish man, there is no doubt about that. Most wealthy bachelors are. They have had few or none of the experiences that are supposed to sweeten a man's disposition. Hastings had everything in the world that he wanted, and he was never crossed in any of his pleasures. It piqued him a little that Helen Knowlton did not seem to be more impressed by his attentions, but he never for a moment dreamed that he would be unsuccessful in a serious suit of that young woman.

At the time Rush Hurlstone saw him escorting Miss Knowlton to her carriage at the stage door of the Academy of Music more than one-half of society thought that he was engaged to be married to her, though neither of the persons most interested had heard the rumor. Aunt Rebecca took a wise course in the Hastings affair. From the day Helen first met him at Bessie Archer's "coming out" ball she showed a greater liking for him than for any man she had met before, and the astute Miss Sandford said to herself, "To break this off I must be diplomatic. It never does to oppose young people openly in matters of this sort. Let him come to see her. I will stop him from going too far if I can, and if I can't I shall accept the situation gracefully (he has eighty thousand dollars a year) and consider myself shelved for the rest of my days. But I don't propose to let him go too far. I don't see myself shelved at my time of life."

Aunt Rebecca enjoyed the business details of the operatic profession as much as her niece did the artistic part. To outwit the managers was as exciting to her as a game of chess is to some people, and she loved to plan a winter's campaign. No traveling was too hard for her, not even a "jump" from Boston to Chicago. She could make herself as happy in a car as in a drawing room. Her mind was on the gallop all the time, and it could work as well in one place as in another; indeed, she contended that the motion of a train only stimulated her thoughts. Helen was naturally of an active disposition, but she had grown passive under her aunt's dominating influence, and did not assert herself as much as she should have done. Once in a great while she would rebel, but it was a mere flash in the pan. Few people who did not know Helen Knowlton can imagine such a person, and there is no doubt that she was an exception to the rule of womanhood.

Just at the time of which I write, she was absorbed in the study of her new part, and the thousand and one things that had to be attended to before the eventful night on which the new opera was to be produced. Every one in New York who had a picture or a book relating in any way to Helen of Troy sent it to her, and all took a personal interest in the presentation of the opera. The night was drawing near. The Saturday matinee was postponed that she might get more rest and study, and there was to be a full dress rehearsal on Sunday, to which the critics of the press and a favored few were to be invited. Monday night was the great night, and you may imagine that she was more or less nervous in anticipation. Uncle Lightfoot Myers sent her a set of gold bands for her hair, with his best wishes for her success, and West Hastings sent her a beautifully wrought golden girdle, with the inscription, "And, like another Helen, fired another Troy," engraved on the inside.

It seemed as though every one in New York wanted to have some part in the production of the opera beyond the mere buying of seats. In that they were generous enough, for everything in the house was bought up the day the box office opened. Monday came. There was a flurry of spring snow in the morning, but by afternoon it was bright and clear. Helen did not get up until 12 o'clock. She ate the lightest sort of breakfast, and at 4 had a heartier meal. All day long she was not allowed to speak—which was no deprivation, as she did not feel like it, being too much excited for words. At 7 o'clock the carriage was at the door, and she was driven to the Academy with Aunt Rebecca and her maid. For the next hour everything was confusion in the dressing room at the foot of the little stairway. Stitches that had dropped had to be caught up, a tight sleeve had to be let out, and all the thousand and one details that crowd into the last moments of a great occasion had to be attended to.

As the prima donna stood in front of the long mirror, maid and costumer busily at work upon her skirts, she would open her mouth and run a scale to see if her voice was in condition, while the narrow wall trembled with her song. When the finishing touches had been put to her toilet the manager came in to see how she looked. "Beautiful, my child! Mon Dieu! how exquisite! Superb!" And he kissed both of her hands enthusiastically and retired. Then came the leader of the orchestra, with a similar ecstasy of admiration and the announcement that it was time for him to begin; that the ballet had been danced and the men were tuning up for the opera. Was she ready? "Yes; begin at once. I am nervous as a witch, but nothing is gained by delay."

The house was packed; there was not a square inch of standing room in the place by half past 8. Even the boxes were filled, the usually tardy occupants being as anxious as the family circle to welcome the prima donna when she came upon the stage in her new role. And they did welcome her. They gave her three cheers, and would have added a "tiger" if any one had suggested it.

But where was Rush Hurlstone all this time? He was not far away. Being unable to buy a seat—they had been sold before he came to New York, and the speculators' prices were beyond his means—he acted upon the suggestion of his friend of the ballet and accepted the stage manager's offer to don a Grecian dress and go on the stage as a Trojan warrior. You would have supposed that he was going to sing the leading tenor role, he was so exceedingly nervous on this occasion. But it was not the thought of facing an audience that unstrung his nerves; he knew well enough that he would not be seen, or, if seen, recognized; it was the fact that he would be taking a part, no matter how small, in the same performance with Helen Knowlton, and that he would be within touching distance of her garments perhaps a dozen times in the evening.

It was a great occasion, and the new opera was a complete success. Helen never sang more beautifully. In the great aria just before her flight with Paris she brought the house to its feet by her dramatic singing and acting. Uncle Lightfoot Myers leaned out of his box at an angle that imperiled his life, and waved his opera hat, shouting "Brava!" until he was hoarse. West Hastings, who occupied a proscenium box with his sister, Mrs. Dick Griswold, stood up and applauded with an elegance that was remarked by every one in the house; and Mrs. Dick not only threw the bouquet that lay on the railing of her box, but unpinned the bunch of roses at her corsage and threw them at the prima donna's feet. Mrs. Vandewater Tod, who occupied the next box, not to be outdone in enthusiasm, took a large diamond star from her hair, and, pinning it to a bouquet, threw it with excited fingers at the singer; but it fell short of its mark, and, striking the venerable bass viol player on his bald head, bounced into the orchestra. The house roared with good natured laughter as the old man, after feeling his head to see that the skull was not cracked, picked up the bouquet with its precious addition and handed it to the smiling prima donna, while the family circle shouted and the boxes waved their handkerchiefs. The ushers were worn out carrying "floral tributes" down the aisle; and, altogether, such a night had never been known.

The most excited person in the house was Rush Hurlstone. By a lucky chance he was standing in the wings in all the dignity of his Trojan armor when Helen made a sudden exit. Coming from the brilliantly lighted stage into the dark behind the scenes she struck her foot against a carelessly laid gas pipe and almost pitched into his arms. He put out his hand and she caught hold of it quickly. The thing did not take half a minute. "Grazie," said she, lightly, thinking of course that he was one of the regular Italian chorus. Then she passed on to her dressing room followed by her maid bearing her train, and her aunt, who had just thrown a wrap across her shoulders. Rush blushed scarlet under his warrior's beard. He was afraid the men standing around would hear the thumping of his heart against his tin armor. When no one was looking he raised the back of the hand she had touched to his lips and kissed it, and then he wondered how he could have been such a fool.

When the opera was over, Rush thought it no more than polite for him to accompany Mme. Cella and her daughter home; but when he went to look for them he found that they had gone as soon as the dancing was finished. He was not sorry, for now he could linger around the place and perhaps see Helen again. As he stood by the door leading into the auditorium, he saw half the wealth and fashion of the city pass through on its way to the prima donna's dressing room to congratulate her upon her great success. He could catch an occasional glimpse of her, standing there in her classic robes, a veritable Helen, giving her beautiful hand to this one and a gracious word to the other. Rush felt like throwing himself at her feet, or (like another Paris) bearing her off in his arms. He watched the men as they talked and laughed with her, until he was beside himself with jealousy. He recognized West Hastings at once, having seen him at the stage door the week before, and felt certain that the confidence of his manner in addressing the prima donna was the assurance of proprietorship. Uncle Lightfoot Myers came rushing in, his gray hair matted on his brow, and the perspiration running down his florid cheeks.

"I deserve a kiss, my dear, for what I've done for you to-night," he exclaimed. "Two pairs of gloves split into shreds, my collar wilted, and my voice all gone shouting 'Brava!' Come, now, where is my reward?"

"Your reward is in the consciousness of having done a good deed," answered the singer, gayly, giving him her hand, which he kissed with old fashioned gallantry.

"Ah, Uncle Lightfoot," said Mrs. Dick Griswold, "you are too young a man to be claiming an old man's privileges."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" said Uncle Lightfoot, straightening his necktie and looking as pleased as Punch. "I'm old enough to be Helen's father."

He was really old enough to be her grandfather; but it would have been a cruel person who could tell him so.

Men and women came crowding in and out of the prima donna's room, but Rush noticed that West Hastings stood his ground and showed no signs of going, and he also noticed that he stooped down now and then and whispered some words in the singer's ear which seemed to give her a good deal of pleasure, for she would raise her eyes to his with a look that Rush would have died for. He didn't know then that a woman, particularly a prima donna, may look everything and mean nothing. Finally there was a lull in the gay chatter, and the manager entered the room, followed by a somewhat seedy looking young man with keen bright eyes and a well shaped head. He whispered something in Italian to Miss Knowlton. An expression of annoyance passed over her face, but she was exceedingly polite when the manager introduced Mr. Grady, of The Dawn, who begged that he might ask her a few questions.

The young man was evidently embarrassed at meeting so many outsiders in the room, and the prima donna, though she was annoyed at the interview, was most gracious in her manner, particularly as she detected the ends of West Hastings' mustache turning scornfully upward, and feared that the reporter also might notice his sneer. Aunt Rebecca would have taken the interviewer under her protection at once, but she was striking for bigger game. She had the musical critic of The Daily Trumpet by the ear, and was calling his critical attention to the remarkable fioriture added by her niece to the grand aria. Rush recognized in the reporter one of the men he had seen at the office of The Dawn, and he listened attentively to learn how the process of "interviewing" was carried on.

"How were you pleased with your reception, Miss Knowlton?" the reporter inquired.

"I was delighted; nothing could have been more cordial or more gratifying," she answered.

"Is the music of the opera pleasing to sing?"

"Thoroughly so. It does not strain the voice, yet it displays its best qualities."

"What impressed you most in the performance?"

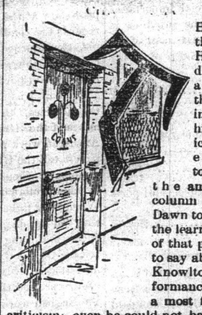
"I can tell you what impressed me the most, Helen," exclaimed Mrs. Dick Griswold, bursting in upon the interview. "It was in the scene with Tartalli, when you took the poor old thing's hand and made her come down to the footlights. She hadn't done anything, to be sure, but your manner in insisting upon her sharing the applause with you was beautiful. It almost made me cry; for although I never heard Tartalli in her prime I know she used to be a favorite singer and I always feel the liveliest pity for favorites who have outlived their popularity but who still have to keep before the public to earn their bread and butter. Put that in your paper, my dear sir, and you will have a charming incident" rattled on the vivacious Mrs. Dick.

The reporter thanked her and the prima donna also, and bowed himself out of the room, the manager following at his elbow. "The poor fellow didn't get much material for an interview there," thought Rush. "He'll have to make his excuses to the city editor to-night." The talking was resumed in the dressing room, but only in the shape of good nights. West Hastings said something to Uncle Lightfoot in an undertone, and the old beau put Mrs. Griswold's arm through his. "I'll take you home, Mrs. Dick, and, if it isn't too late, I'll stop and have a rubber with that lazy Dick of yours, who, I'll wager, is toasting his toes and reading the stock market reports before the fire."

"I'll gladly accept your invitation, Uncle Lightfoot, and we'll leave West to Helen's tender mercies. Will you take good care of him, Helen, and keep him out of mischief," said Mrs. Dick.

"If that be possible," replied the prima donna, smiling. "But in the mean time I shall have to ask him to take a seat in the green room while I get ready for the street."

At this all the visitors retired, and Rush hurried off to a room somewhere up among the "flies" where he transformed himself from a warrior of Troy into a peaceful citizen of New York.



THE first thing Rush Hurlstone did upon awaking the morning after his operatic experience was to turn to the amusement column of The Dawn to see what the learned critic of that paper had to say about Miss Knowlton's performance. It was a most flattering criticism; even he could not have asked for anything better. When his eye reached the last line, however, he was astonished to catch the sub-head, "After the Opera. What the Prima Donna Thinks of her New Role," followed by a stout column of solid type describing the scene in the dressing room, the Trojan soldier (Rush himself) who stood guard at her door, the appearance of the prima donna among her friends, with her three lines of conversation elaborated into a hundred, and what Mrs. Dick Griswold had said worked up into a most dramatic and pathetic incident. Altogether it was as lively a piece of reportorial ingenuity as Rush had ever met with. He cut it carefully out, and filed it away with the criticism of the opera, and he bought every other New York paper that day and read what it had to say, preserving the critiques for a scrap book that he intended devoting exclusively to notices of his new idol.

Things were not as promising at the office of The Dawn as Rush had anticipated from his first interview with the city editor. His funds got lower and lower and still no work came. But he fully determined to brave it out, for he knew his mother could not afford to send him any money from her limited income. He had plenty of clothes and he had paid his lodging a month in advance, but the ready money for his meals was slowly disappearing. He had given up the seventy-five cent dinners at the Italian restaurant and was trying what fifteen cents would do in Wooster street. Five cents served him for many a breakfast. At last he found himself reduced to ten cents, and still no "assignment." There was but one thing to do, he could pawn his watch. He didn't have to walk far along Chatham street before he came to the establishment of an accommodating Semite, who lent him $10 on his timepiece—unfortunately an old fashioned one. In the mean time he had called upon Leoni and had been urged by her and both of her parents to share their savory Italian dinner. He could smell the odor of the spaghetti as he declined, but he did so because he could not bear to accept when he needed the food so sorely. The watch money was soon eaten, and he was about to begin on his gold sleeve buttons, when he thought he would call on Mr. Spar at his house and talk over the situation with him out of business hours.

He selected Sunday afternoon, and started out on a walk to the Spars' residence, in Ninety-third street, with just five cents in his pocket. Hunger got the better of his pride, and he so timed his visit as to arrive just at the dinner hour, 6 o'clock, as the good man had once told him to do when he offered his hospitality in a general way. The long walk had acted as a tonic, and Rush was nearly famished when he reached the house. He found Mr. Spar at home and delighted to see him. They had a very pleasant chat, but Rush could not quite make up his mind to tell him just how hard up he was. Perhaps he would feel more confiding after dinner over a bottle of wine. He heard the clock strike 6, half past 6 and finally 7, when his kind host remarked:

"I'm sorry you didn't come out to dinner. We always dine at 4 o'clock on Sundays, to let the servant have a good evening out. She needs the rest, poor thing, and we dine so heartily that we don't get hungry again until the next morning." (Rush really feared that Mr. Spar would see him change color.) "But my wife will be delighted to get you up a little supper; for it must be after your dinner hour."

Rush wouldn't listen to such a proposition. Thanking his host, he soon bade him farewell, and went out into the street. His state of mind was not enviable. He was the possessor of five cents, and he was just four miles from his lodgings. Should he in his weak state walk home and spend the five cents for something to eat, or should he ride home and go without food? The cravings of his stomach answered the question, and, finding a German bake shop open, he bought a five cent loaf of bread. Then he walked over to Central park. Selecting a secluded seat, he ate half of the loaf, put the other half in his pocket for the next day, and walked wearily back to West Eleventh street.

He made up his mind that night, as he tossed excitedly from one side of his bed to the other, that he had fooled away time enough in trying to get a position on The Dawn, and that he would try his hand at something else if he did not get an assignment the next morning. He started listlessly down town, and his landlady, as she passed him on the steps, shook her head, and said to herself:

"That young man is not getting enough to eat. I've suspected something ever since he stopped his coffee and rolls. If it was want or money he need only have told me he was a little short. I'd trust that face for any amount. Poor young gentleman! he doesn't look like the same person he did six weeks ago."

Rush was just about in front of the Astor house when some one slapped him on the back and called him by name, and, looking around, he saw his old college friend Archie Tillinghast. Archie Tillinghast was in a class ahead of Rush Hurlstone, and had graduated since Rush left Harvard. They had not been particularly intimate at college, but Rush had always liked Archie, because he was gentle in his manners and because the other students were rather inclined to poke fun at him. They called him a "cad," and jeered him for reading De Musset when they wanted him to play football; and they moreover thought that he was too much of a dandy for every day use. Archie Tillinghast was not brilliant, but he got along in his studies much better than some of his brighter companions, probably because his tastes were more studious and he was industrious. He belonged to an old and wealthy family, and was somewhat inclined to look down upon the "unwashed." He would rather sit alone in his room than associate with men whom he considered coarse; so in revenge they called him a "cad."

If Archie had been his dearest friend Rush could not have been more delighted to see him than he was just at this moment. He nearly shook his eye glasses off in his heartiness.

"My dear boy," said Archie, "I never was more pleased in my life. But how is it that you are in New York without letting me know?"

"I was waiting to get established, and then I meant to hunt you up."

"And aren't you established yet?"

"Well, not exactly," said Rush, with a faint blush.

Archie noticed a slight embarrassment in his friend's manner and determined to find out what the trouble was—if there was any. Rush at the same time remembered that Archie was a man of wealth, or at least that his father was, and hesitated to talk over his affairs with him lest he should think he wanted to borrow money.

"This is luck indeed," said Archie, taking his friend's arm and walking along with him. "It is not often that I am down town so early in the morning, but this is pay day at The Trumpet office, and I hadn't a cent to bless myself with. What's the matter? You look astonished?"

"I was astonished for a moment," replied Rush; "but I suppose you are joking. I thought you were a bloated bondholder, Archie."

"So I was, dear boy," said Archie, with a sigh; "but I am so no longer. My father died—rascally executors—the old story—mother, the girls and I left penniless; but the worst is over. Come have breakfast with me at Mouquin's. We'll have deviled kidneys and a bottle of wine, and I'll tell you what little there is to tell. It may amuse you. Then we'll talk over old times and the present—that is, if you are not otherwise engaged."

"Unfortunately, no; I'm quite the gentleman of leisure. My time's my own."

Rush would never have suspected from his appearance that Archie Tillinghast was not as rich as ever. He was faultlessly attired. Careful examination later on showed a little wear in his clothes that had come from hard and constant brushing, but their fit was perfect and gave him the appearance of being better dressed than he really was. "You certainly look as much the man of wealth as ever," said Rush, regarding Archie's city style with admiration.

"Ah, my boy, I've made the study of economy a fine art. I can wear a coat about as long as any man you ever saw, but it looks well to the end, because—I don't mind telling you the secret—it fits me. I have a jewel of a tailor, who makes my clothes from a fashion book that I furnish him. You smile. You will smile more when I tell you what the book is—Punch. Du Maurier's men dress like gentlemen, not like tailors' dummies. My clothes are the envy of the club. They think I get them direct from Poole. If I were not a journalist I should be a tailor. The art of dress is a great art. Think of the pleasure of creating a well dressed man! But here we are at Mouquin's. I see they have my table ready for me. I breakfast here every Tuesday morning."

Archie entered the room with the dignity of a lord mayor at the great banquet of the year. As they seated themselves at the table, he said to the waiter:

"The same breakfast, Louis—only enough for two; and don't let the cook burn those kidneys. I am very particular, you know; and they were a little too brown last week. Now, dear boy," turning to Rush, "tell me something about yourself."

"You have whetted my curiosity to hear your own story. Archie Tillinghast as a workingman is something I never dreamt of. You spoke of journalism, so that is your profession, is it, and you are on The Trumpet? What do you do?"

"What don't I do, you might ask with greater propriety. Well, I do little odds and ends of everything; but my great day is Sunday. A page of the Sunday paper is given over to my pen."

"A page! you must be making a fortune, Archie."

"I'm not a 'space man,' dear boy; it is the salaried men—the small salaried man, I should say—who fill two columns a day, and a page on Sunday."

"But what department gets a page to itself?"

"The one that least deserves it—society. You know that I am connected by blood or marriage with half the society people of New York, and, notwithstanding the loss of my money, I am invited everywhere. Young men are scarce, and well connected young men are at a premium, and I am invited none the less because I write the society notes for The Trumpet. Time was when an American gentleman seriously objected to having his balls and routs described in the newspapers; but it is done so much nowadays that his wife is afraid they will be called nobodies if their name is not seen in print in connection with the winter's festivities. I am in great demand from Murray Hill to Mackerelville; they all want me. What it is to be popular!—eh, old fellow?"

By this time the breakfast was served. There were more than kidneys, and it was a most delightful repast; but Rush was not in a condition to do justice to it. He had eaten so little for a week past, and such plain food, that even the rich aroma of the kidneys, with their wine sauce, was almost more than he could digest.

"Where's your appetite, old man? You're not eating anything. Perhaps you had a late breakfast and are not ——"

"On the contrary," said Rush, who was beginning to feel as though he were going to be ill, and that he need have no more pride in the matter, "I have had no breakfast, and I am very hungry—too hungry, in fact, to eat."

And he then made a clean breast of it, and told Archie just how he was situated. To say that amiable young man was shocked would be doing injustice to his kind heart. He was genuinely distressed at his friend's condition; but before he entered into particulars he ordered a bowl of bouillon, which was easier of digestion than the deviled kidneys, and he made Rush eat it and then drink a glass of brandy and soda. Then, when he had got him into better condition, he began by scolding him for not looking up his friends, after which they discussed the situation calmly.

"I made up my mind to give The Dawn one more trial," said Rush, "and then, if there was no work for me there, to try some other paper or break stones on the highway; but I certainly would not go back to Farmsted and sponge on my mother. If a chance does not occur here sooner it will later, and I'm young enough to wait for it."

"There is always the chance, but it is devilish slow in coming sometimes. Now if you are not too proud I'll put you in the way of a job that will bring you in fifteen or twenty dollars a week, and need not interfere with your work on The Dawn, if you get any. I'm not too proud to increase my limited income by the same means, but I tell you frankly dear boy, I would not care to have it known among the rich and great with whom I hobnob out of business hours Can you write poetry?"

"Hardly that; but I can make rhymes," said Rush, wondering what bomb his friend was about to burst.

"So much the better. A poet would scorn to engage in this business, but it is the fortune of the rhymester. Now, I am paid $20 a week by the wealthy proprietor of the Damascene soap to write rhymes in praise of his wares. I do the New York morning papers; and he told me the other day that if I could get up a new batch for the evening papers he would like to have one, or, if I had not the time, perhaps I could suggest some one with a poetic talent who would take the job. He didn't know much about poets himself—thought they were a rum lot—and he would be obliged to me if I would bag a Byron for him. You're just the man. No one need know it, and it will keep your stomach from getting in such a condition again as it was in when I found you. You need not be particular about being original; you can work over your Tennyson or your Longfellow; only get in the word Damascene, and your duty's done. Meet me at the club to-morrow with a batch of verses. We'll dine together; and in the mean time I'll see old Pennypacker and have a check ready for you, from which I will deduct $5 that I'm going to give you now."

"No, Archie, old man, said Rush, pushing away his hand, and with difficulty speaking for the lump in his throat. "Wait till I've earned it. Your kindness has completely upset me, but I can't take your money. I'll gladly try my hand at the soap verses and take my pay when they're written; but not till then."

"Nonsense! What is a friend for if not to help one when he needs it? I shall really feel hurt, Rush, if you refuse me. I wouldn't treat you as formally. It's only $5, and you will have earned it before midnight I'll lay a wager. Come, old man, don't make me feel that I am asking you to do something dishonorable. Much more than a paltry $5 has passed between us at college."

"Yes, to be sure there has, but neither of us needed it as much then as we do now. It is much easier to borrow money for tomfoolery than for food. But I'll do as I would be done by; I'll take your $5, Archie, and try to think that it is old times. I feel that this is the turning point, and I can't thank you enough."

"Don't mention it, dear boy. I'm sorry you take a trifle so seriously. It all comes of the condition of your stomach. I think you can venture on eating a fairly hearty dinner to-night and a good breakfast to-morrow. And then you must dine with me at the club to-morrow night at half past 6 sharp, for I have three receptions and a wedding on hand. By the way, put on your dress coat, for I shall take you to one of the receptions with me at my uncle Archer's. I want you to know my cousin, Bessie Archer. She's an awfully jolly girl. I'll tell them I'm going to bring you. They will be delighted, for they've often heard me speak of you. Come, cheer up, man; you look 50 per cent. better already. So long, and don't forget to-morrow night. 'Powwow' club, Fifth avenue and Nineteenth street." Archie put out his hand, and Rush took it with a grip that drove the rings on his friend's fingers into the flesh; but the latter was too polite to wince.

Before he could quite man himself to confront the people in the waiting room of The Dawn office, Rush walked rapidly down Broadway as far as Trinity church, where he stood for a moment looking through the iron railings of the fence into the grass grown church yard. The clock in the church tower struck 3, which reminded him that the city editor would not be long at his desk; so, with his mind fixed upon the business in hand, the strain on his nerves relaxed, and he walked up the street and ran up the winding iron stairs at the office as lightly as on that hopeful first day which now seemed so long ago.

He had hardly put his foot on the threshold of the waiting room door when the old messenger stepped up to him and said, "Just in time, sir. Mr. Musgrave sent out here for you only five minutes ago, sir, and I told him this was the first day you had missed in three weeks. I'll go at once and tell him you are here, sir"—which he did, returning with the message that Mr. Musgrave would like to see him. "It never rains but it pours," thought Rush, as he walked eagerly to the little room.

"Ah, Mr. Hurlstone, how are you? Sorry not to have been able to do anything for you before, but we have been pretty well filled up. Just at this moment, however, we are short handed and I want to work up a particular case at once. Do you know where the Academy of Music is?"

Rush looked at Mr. Musgrave to see whether he was joking; but he was busily writing, and not even looking at him. "In Irving place, I believe."

"Quite right. Irving place and Fourteenth street. I have been informed that there is a strike in the orchestra. I want you to go up there and see Mr Maxmann and get what he has to say about it, and then see some of the orchestra and get their story. 'What the Bass Drum Says.' 'How it Strikes the Cymbals'—good head lines, eh?"

Then, laying his pen down, ramming his hands into the depths of his pockets, and taking aim at Rush with one eye, he said, "Do you know Miss Knowlton?"

Rush felt that he started, and knew by the tingling in his cheeks that he blushed. Luckily, Mr. Musgrave was thinking his own thoughts, and, although his right eye was staring hard at the young man before him, his mind was upon something else.

"I must have an interview with Miss Knowlton on this strike; it would be immense. I'll give you an open letter from The Dawn, Mr. Hurlstone, and she can not refuse; you're a persuasive young man, too, I fancy, and you must do your prettiest."

Seizing a pen he wrote in a quick flowing hand:

"Will Miss Knowlton do Mr. John Gasper Plummett the honor of giving his representative, Mr. R. Hurlstone, the bearer, her views on the recent strike among the musicians in Mr. Maxmann's orchestra for publication in The Dawn?"

"There! I guess that will do it," said Mr. Musgrave, running his eye rapidly over the note. "Now see how successful you will be with your first assignment. Go to the Academy first. You are more likely to find Miss Knowlton in later in the day. Good luck to you!"

Rush stood a moment in the corridor and read Mr. Musgrave's note carefully over, word by word.

"I don't think I shall ever forget this day," said he to himself as the glass door clicked behind him.

(*To be Continued.*)

A MODERN SAMSON.

The Hercules who is Astonishing the Public in London, England.

There are many Delilahs, but only one Samson, and he is performing at the Royal Aquarium at present, where his feats of strength are certainly of an original and marvellous character. The spectator as he watches feels that it is better to be friendly with such a man; with a blow of his fist he breaks an iron chain that will bear a pressure of 3,000 pounds. With his two hands grasping a short chain of 2,500 pounds ascertained pressure, he make a momentary effort and pulls the iron chains to bits, and in what seems the most wonderful feat—namely, fastening two tight iron chain bracelets or armlets round his biceps—the spectator may view the process from beginning to end. One hears the