

ered heavily. Then he put his hand carefully into the breast of his coat, and after a moment drew out his pocket-book.

"Here it is," said he, very quietly. "I came home intending to give you back your money, but you were not here."

"You expect me to believe that?" retorted Vibbard, scornfully, "when I know that you went from here after receiving the check, and—ah! I couldn't have believed it if I hadn't heard—"

"You overheard us, then? You came, though I warned you not to? And what did you hear?" Silverthorn's lips certainly curled with contempt now.

Vibbard answered: "I heard you pleading with Ida to promise herself to you."

"That's a lie," said Silverthorn, calmly.

"Didn't you say to her, 'You have never yet fully engaged yourself to me? Weren't you pleading?'"

"Yes. I was begging that she would forget all the words of love I had ever spoken, and listen to you when you should come to tell her your story."

Vibbard's head bowed itself in humiliation and wonder. He came forward two or three steps, and sank into a chair.

"Is this possible?" he inquired, at last.

"And you, too, had loved her!"

Silverthorn vouchsafed no reply.

Vibbard, struggling with remorse, uncertainty, and a dimly returning hope, brought himself to speak once more, hesitatingly.

"What did she say?"

"At first she would not tolerate my proposal. I saw there was a conflict in her mind. Something warned me what it was, yet I could not help fancying that she might really be unwilling to give me up. So then I said I had made up my mind any way, as things stood, to return you your money. I—forgive me, Bill, but it was not treachery to you—only justice to all—I asked her if she would wish to marry me as I was, poor and without a future."

"And she—?" asked Vibbard, trembling. "What did she say?"

Silverthorn let the pocket-book fall, and buried his face in his hands. It was answer enough for his friend.

Vibbard came over and knelt beside him, and tried to rouse him. He stroked his pale brown hair, and called him repeatedly "Dear old boy."

"Poor Thorny, I wish I could do something for you," he said, gently. "Are you sure you understood her?"

The other suddenly looked up.

"Don't blame her, Bill," he said, beseechingly. "Don't let it hurt your love for her. There was nothing mercenary. She hesitated a moment—and then I saw that it had all been a dream of the impossible. I had always associated this money with myself. It turned back the whole current of her ideas, and upset everything, when I separated myself from it. All the plans of going away—all that life I had talked of—had to be scattered to the winds in a moment. She did not love me enough, for myself alone!"

"Poor Thorny?" again murmured his friend.

Love, amid all its other resemblances, is like the spirit of battle. It fires men to press on toward the goal, even though a brother by their side, pushing in the same direction, should fall with a mortal wound. And the fighter goes on, to wed with victory, while his brother lies dead far behind cheated of his bride.

Vibbard offered himself to Ida the next day. It was a strange and distressful wooing; but she could not deny that, in a way unknown to herself till now, that she had loved Vibbard from the beginning, more than his friend. In her semi-engagement with Silverthorn, she had probably been loving Vibbard through his friend. But when the strong man, who had gained a place in the world for her sake, returned and placed his heart