

And he drew out a pocket handkerchief, and sighed.

"Left you? Since when?"

"About a month ago. That is to say, we had differences. She was one of those dreadfully retrospective persons who eternally reproach themselves and everybody—quite what the French call a *pleureuse*. It bored me. I suggested at last that she could not do better than return to her husband. She made a scene. A few nights afterwards she disappeared. Poor girl, I hope she hasn't done anything foolish. The river is close by, and women of that temperament have a fascination for running water."

Even Mr. Hawk, though he belonged to the vulture species, was not quite hardened enough to be edified by words so cruelly flippant and pitiless.

"Make certain of one thing," he said sharply, "this man, if he ever finds you, will kill you."

"He will try," returned the other coolly, fingering the breast of his overcoat. "But I always carry arms, and am a good shot. Honestly, I am very sorry for poor Jake. Had I thought that he would have taken the affair so much to heart, and that it would have entailed such an infinity of trouble on myself, I should never have disturbed his domestic hallucinations."

"You sail in three weeks, you say?"

"Yes."

"Avoid New York till then. I'll keep the man busy."

"Good. By the way, Hawk, I owe you a small account."

"Which you will settle within a fortnight from to-day," said Mr. Hawk, affably.

"Must I? Well, as you please, though I'm not all over money. You may rely upon me."

After a few words more the two separated.

As Mordaunt left the office, Mr. Hawk thus soliloquised—

"If the rascal attempts to sail without a settlement I'll put this madman on him. He deserves it, the infernal scoundrel! But if he pays—well! I never approve of extreme measures."

Mordaunt, on his side, strolling quietly back to the railway station, soliloquised also.

"I don't trust my friend the vulture, and I don't mean to pay him. He little guesses my passage is taken under an *alias* in the Mesopotamia, which sails in ten days from now."

Two days passed, and Jake heard nothing from Mr. Hawk. Then, fierce and impatient, he called again at the offices.

"I was just going to write to you," said the lawyer. "I think we have got a clue. There is a man living in Philadelphia who answers the description, and he is accompanied by a female, whom he calls his wife."

Jake tottered and staggered, while Mr. Hawk, with well-simulated sympathy, gave him the address of a Philadelphia hotel. Jake clutched it wildly, and made for the door.

"Take care what you do!" cried Mr. Hawk warningly.

Jake made no answer, but turned a livid face on the lawyer, and vanished. Hastening to the depot, he ascertained that there were no through cars to Philadelphia till the evening, so that he had several hours to spare. So he went to his lodging, strolled into the drinking bar, and carelessly took up an old newspaper. He was looking at it almost vacantly, turning his eyes from column to column, and scarcely knowing what to read, when his face went deathly pale, and he reeled on his seat like a drunken man. For staring him in the face, as if written in letters of blood, were these words:

*"Personal. If this should meet the eyes of Jake Owen, of Jacob's Flat, let him come to New York, and inquire of the Janitor of the — Hospital, New York City. He will hear news of one for whom he is seeking, and who prays for his forgiveness."*

The next minute Jake was in the street, hurrying up town in the direction of the hospital, one devoted entirely to patients of the female sex. He reached the place at midnight, rang the bell, and told his errand. The janitor at the door informed him that his wife was a patient there, but that it was impossible to see her at that hour—he must

return next morning between visiting hours.

"See her?" he shrieked, losing all self-control.

"I will see her, by —!"

A terrible scene ensued—the officers were summoned, and Jake was about to be ejected, when one of the physicians came upon the scene.

"Don't send the man away," he said, "if he is, as he says, the woman's husband. I don't think she'll last out the night. My man," he added to Jake, "I must ask you, if we grant your request, to be very quiet. Nothing can save your wife—she is dying!"

"Dying!" It seemed at that moment as if a thunderbolt had fallen on Jake Owen's head. He was dumb with horror and despair.

The rest the reader already knows from Jake's own confession to Barbara. The last meeting of husband and wife, the scene in the dim light of the hospital ward, the last forgiveness and farewell, the quiet burial in the heart of the great city are pictures already dimly guessed at, and not to be lingered over without pain. A few days later the broken man stood over his wife's grave, and lifting up his haggard face to Heaven swore to continue his search for the man who had destroyed them both.

Further interviews with the firm of Hawk & Fourmart proved of no avail. Mr. Hawk could not, or would not, help him, and strongly advised him to return in peace to Jacob's Flat. What was his astonishment one morning, therefore, to receive a message from Mr. Hawk, asking him to call at once.

He hastened down to the office.

"I think your man is found," said Mr. Hawk, "and I will give you his address on one assurance—that you do not contemplate any violence."

"No!" cried Jake. "Give me the writing—I only want to look at him, that's all."

"If you only want to look at him," said Mr. Hawk, smiling, "go at once to Black's Hotel, Nokota Town, on the Hudson River, and enquire for Mr. H. N. Stoddard. I should advise you to lose no time, as Mr. Stoddard, *alias* Mordaunt, is about to depart for the old country."

Jake rushed from the office, while Mr. Hawk, with a very ugly look in his eyes, reflected to himself.

"I think it would have been wiser, my friend, to pay our debt and so escape *his*. The firm of Hawk & Fourmart are longsighted, and it is not on record that they were ever swindled, even by so clever a man as you."

The meaning of which was that the astute Mr. Hawk, by means best known to himself, had ascertained that his elegant client had lied to him, and was going, without any ceremonies of settlement or farewell, to sail for Europe on the Mesopotamia.

That night, amid a storm of wind and rain, Jake Owen arrived in Nokota Town, a dismal collection of buildings on the banks of the Hudson.

He had no difficulty in finding the house he sought, for there was only one hotel in the place. Striding into the place, and keeping his passion well under control, he inquired for Mr. H. N. Stoddard.

The landlord, a lank, cadaverous person, smoking a long and damp cigar, instantly replied:

"I guess you come too late, for he ain't here, and, what's more, I don't want to know any more of him. He's left, and he's a good riddance."

Thereupon, rendered voluble by liquor, Mr. Black enlarged upon Mr. Stoddard's manners and peculiarities in such a way as to make it perfectly clear, even to Jake's dazed mind, that this same Stoddard was the very man he sought. He had been Mr. Black's confidential manager and adviser for some months, and had left that very day, leaving behind him a strong odour of what in America is called "Smartness" and in England petty larceny.

"And where's he gone," cried Jake Owen, in despair.

"I calculate," said Mr. Black, "that he's taking ship for Europe, and you bet I hope he'll stay there!"

Jake stood close to the inner door of the hotel, the upper part of which door was paned with plate glass. No sooner did he hear the landlord's last words than he uttered a fierce shriek, and dashed

his clenched fist through the glass in his rush to leave the place.

Cries and curses followed him, but he did not turn. Wild and bareheaded, he rushed out again into the night.

Could he only take the villain by the throat and cast him into the gutter, and stamp his heel upon his face, and crush that pretty barber's block into pulp—could he only make him a thing that men would shun and women loathe.

"Hark! what is that?"

The whistle of a steam engine in the distance. Beside him, within a stone's throw, stands a desolate railway station, not the one at which he alighted an hour or two ago. How many miles he has walked he does not know, nor does he care to enquire. With a bound he springs into the booking office, obtains a ticket for New York, and is just in time to catch the passing cars.

The railway people take note of his wild appearance, his blood-stained hand and arm, his matted hair, his haggard eyes, his clothes saturated with the rain, his torn coat and soiled linen. They evidently take him for a madman or a murderer, and they telegraph to New York accordingly.

The chief constable and a couple of police officers await his arrival; when he steps out he is arrested.

In vain he struggles, in vain he demands to know the offence with which he is charged. The only answer he can get is:

"Time enough, you will know by-and-by."

Fortunately for him, and still more fortunately for the man of whom he is in pursuit, some civic ceremony takes place that day at the docks, the police-court is not open, and he is relegated to the lockup until to-morrow.

It is well that he is mad only on one point. Were it otherwise, the humiliation and disgrace to which he is now subjected would surely upset the balance of his reason. The all-engrossing object for which he lives, however, endows him with more than a madman's cunning. He hides his rage, and affects a settled calm he does not feel.

Besides, if his enemy could learn; if he should escape him now when he is so near him—so near his revenge! The previous night and its attendant horrors have begun to tell upon him. He is faint from loss of blood. He asks for a doctor and obtains one.

Evidently this gentleman is under the impression that his patient is mad. While his wounds are being dressed the Police Inspector cautions him that anything he says may hereafter be used as evidence against him, so he remains discreetly silent.

The doctor takes his leave, promising to send a composing draught.

Nature begins to assert herself, he is absolutely hungry.

His purse, of which the Inspector has taken charge, contains a large amount of greenbacks, and he is graciously permitted to order his dinner and to smoke a pipe. While he smokes, he is feasting his eyes with the prospect of his enemy beneath his feet, his heel, his iron heel always on the scoundrel's sneering face.

How strange it is with this fever, this ravenous thirst for blood on him, he can eat, drink, and even sleep—sleep without dreaming.

He had always led a temperate and abstemious life—so that it is not to be wondered at that he awoke refreshed, strong and vigorous. At first he knows not where he is, or how he came there, but at the sight of his wounded hand all came back upon him. Again his blood boils, again the devil takes possession of him.

And now a happy idea occurred to him. He sent a message to Mr. Hawk, explaining his position—the result justified his confidence, for no sooner was he brought before the "judge," or sitting magistrate, than he was discharged with a caution.

Mr. Hawk knew how to manage these things wonderfully.

He was free! And perhaps there was yet time! As he walked out into the street he found the lawyer by his side.

(To be continued.)