

come rich ; and here I am, a man broken down before his time—a ruin—a catastrophe !”

“Do you drink ?” asked Brian, suddenly.

William Halfday started at the question, and shrank back still more in his chair. It was a leading question, which unnerved him, and set him shaking again.

“What makes you ask such a question as that ?” he murmured, and with a faint effort at dignity.

“Your hands tremble, your eyes are blood-shot, and I have seen so many men like you reeling in the streets. *You do drink*,” he added sharply.

“Never to excess. Don’t misjudge me, my son, too quickly,” cried Mr. Halfday, “or pain me with unnecessary questions. It is hardly fair.”

“This is not an unnecessary question at the present time. It is a most important fact to elicit or disprove ; because,” said Brian thoughtfully, “I must keep the drink away from you.”

“Oh, you need not fear me, or keep anything away from me. You may trust me implicitly,” the father replied.

“I hope so.”

“I know so.”

“That is well,” said Brian, still deep in reverie.

“And I don’t want to be idle,” added Mr. Halfday ; “but to be of service to my country. I am not an old man. I have life and vigour in me, or soon shall have again, if I could find any one to set me up in business—in a little shop, for instance, where I could turn a penny or two, and be less of an incumbrance to you, Brian. I should be independent and happy and grateful.”

“I am a poor man, but I will do something for you in the way you wish.”

“God bless you, Brian—God bless you,” and Mr. Halfday began to cry again.

Brian watched him closely still, but he made no attempt to console him in this second hysterical outburst of tears. He waited till he had recovered from his emotion, with his broad forehead knit in grave perplexity. Beyond the hour he did not see his way yet ; and the mists were thick about him. There was much to be done—much to explain yet to this weak being, cowering and shaking before him in the chair ; and Brian feared the effect of a revelation which

it was not possible to delay for a single night with safety.

“I will help you in every way in my power,” said Brian ; “but you must let me trust you in return.”

“You may trust me with untold gold.”

“You must prove yourself a just and unselfish man.”

“Of course I will.”

“You will let me be your counsellor and guide from this day ?” said Brian.

“I will not have a thought of my own, or a wish of my own, if you will only take care of me,” said the father, abject and servile in his protestations.

“Your first and greatest task begins to-morrow.”

“The sooner the better.”

“And I require all your faith now,” added Brian.

“It’s yours ; I have said so.”

“Then I have something more to tell you.”

William Halfday looked scared at this announcement, and the hands upon his knees began to increase in that tremulous movement which had already attracted his son’s notice.

“James Westbrook, your father’s partner, left England a poor man, but he made a fortune in America, and died rich,” began Brian. “On his death-bed he was, for some reason or other which is hard to understand, the victim of the old mistake, that you and his son had robbed the firm, and ruined Adam Halfday. He had heard of my grandfather’s poverty, and with a mad idea of restitution, he bade his granddaughter discover him and all belonging to him, and enrich those whom his son had helped, as he thought, to ruin. If Adam were living when Miss Westbrook reached England, the money was to be given to him immediately——”

“Good gracious ! Did the girl get here in time ?” inquired the father.

“Yes. She gave him the message five minutes before he died.”

“But the money, Brian ?” said Mr. Halfday, “why didn’t she give him the money first, and the message afterwards ?”

Brian’s face darkened, and the hand which was suddenly placed on William Halfday’s arm gripped the listener like a vice.

“Cannot you see that this conscience-