

you're the only blood relation here, I believe."

And thus I became chief mourner at my own funeral.

The six pall-bearers were Mr. Winterblossom, Jock Fraser and Nichols, Barkley (so soon to be undeceived), the churchwarden and one of the warehouse clerks, a young Englishman of the name of Stanley.

I stood by the grave while the service was being read, heard my body committed to the ground, and the frozen clods, according to the barbarous and hideous custom, rattle on the lid of the coffin, then the benediction.

Even for an assemblage of mere acquaintances, the gathering, I thought, separated with unusual alacrity. I lingered for a while behind the rest, as became a blood relation and chief mourner, and then turning my back on the half-filled grave, walked to the gate of the cemetery.

Four or five men, including Fraser and Nichols, were standing just outside the gate waiting for their cabs. As usual, Fraser and Nichols were at it hammer and tongs, arguing this time on Imperial Federation.

"Shut up Billy and give us a rest," I heard another of the travellers say, "I believe you'd argue on the way to be hanged, Billy."

Billy turned promptly around upon the speaker, a big, burly brother Englishman, like a bantam cock upon a gobbler.

"Well," interposed Fraser, who, like a good-hearted fellow, I suppose, felt he had to say something, "that's the last of poor Billy Horseman, but it's the road we've all got to travel. But," addressing Nichols and the rest, "come round to my place to-night for a game of poker, and I'll sing you a Scotch song that'll make your hair stand on end." And so they separated to their respective cabs.

Declining, with some difficulty, an invitation to return with Barkley to his hotel for tea, I waited until the cabs and hearse were well out of the

sight, and then started on a leisurely walk to my own house, pondering by the way the most fitting manner of achieving the *denouement* of my little plot. I was, I honestly confess, growing a little tired of the affair. I had heard quite enough of my own shortcomings and insignificance to last me for the next twenty years. And I had realized to the fullest extent, my utter unimportance in society, and the exceedingly small place that I filled in the estimation and affection of those whom I had hitherto regarded as my warm, personal friends.

I reached my own house in the course of about half an hour's walk. As I crossed the street, the door opened, and the clergyman who had officiated at the funeral came out, and walked off in the opposite direction. Evidently, he had lost no time in obeying the Scriptural injunction as to the consolation of the widow. He was well and not favorably known to me, being one of those mincing, moustached young fellows, whose whole manhood (if they ever had any) is smothered in affectation and vanity. A single man he was; however, prodigiously admired by my wife as the very pink of clerical propriety. In short, he was one of these creatures known and admired by the ladies, and despised of his fellow-men as a "nice man." "What the Dickens," thought I to myself, "is this airified, dandified, young humbug doing in my house." And yet the man was only doing his duty.

I knocked at my own door, and enquired for my wife of the answering servant girl, with a coolness that I suppose the practice of the last twenty-four hours had given me, but which I certainly had not anticipated.

Mrs. Horseman was in, but did not receive any callers. I presented myself as a relation of the late Mr. Horseman and was very anxious to see his widow on very important business.

I was shown into the parlor by the girl, who, I observed, eyed me closely