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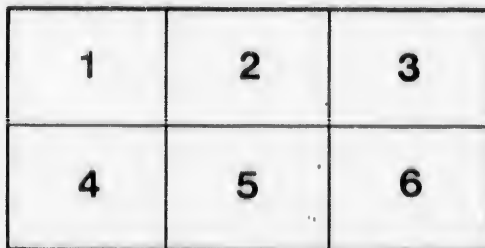
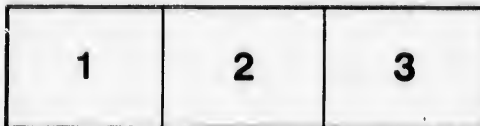
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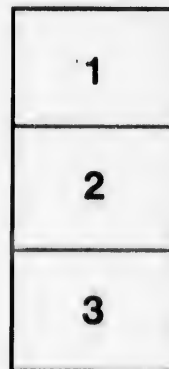
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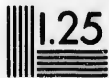
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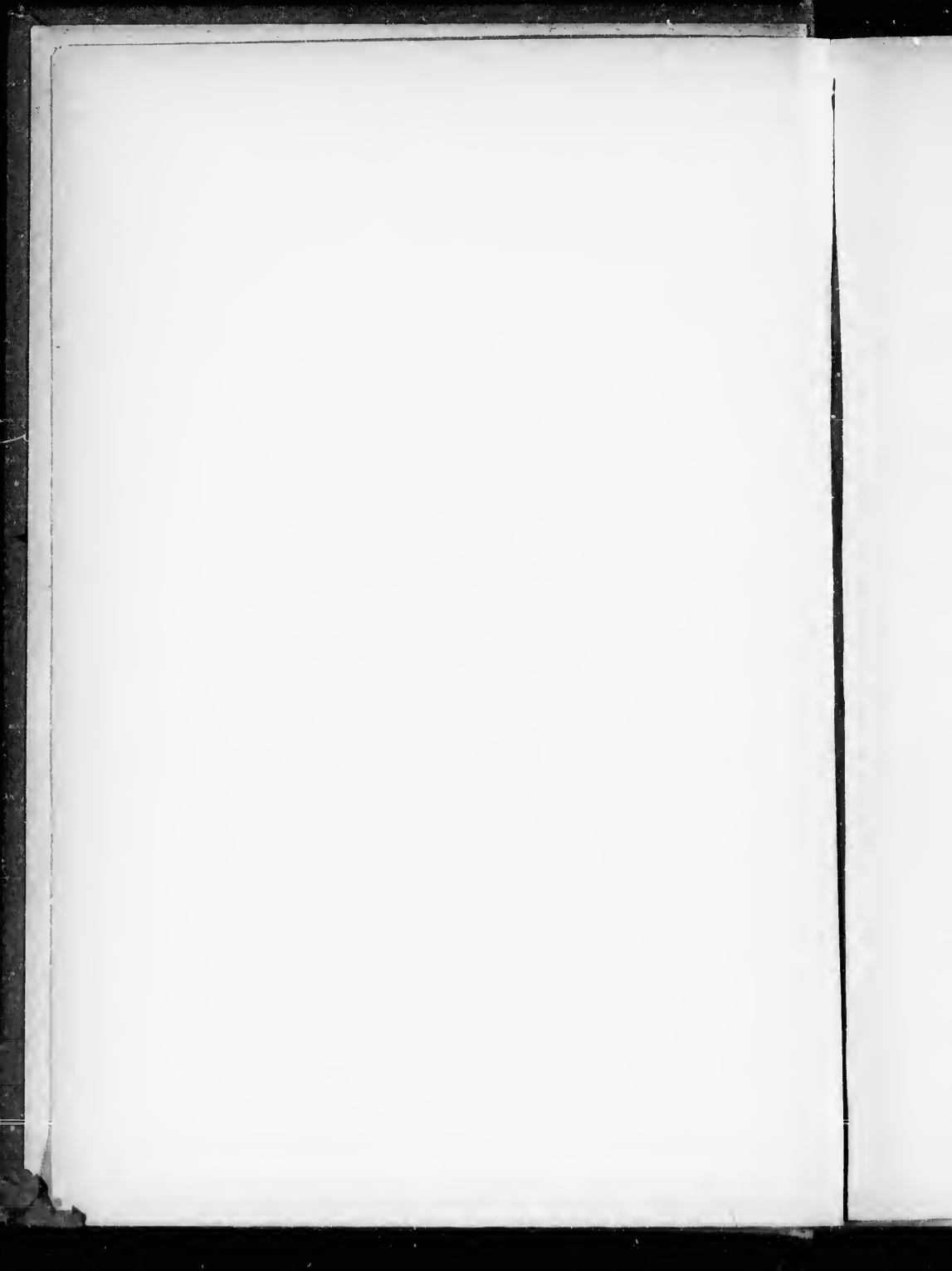


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GOLD DUST

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# GOLD DUST

BY

EMELINE DAGGETT HARVEY

CHICAGO  
CHARLES H. SERGEL AND COMPANY

1892

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# GOLD DUST

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## CHAPTER I

"Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!  
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,  
How wide its agencies vary,  
To save, to ruin, to curse, to bless.—Hood.

"Saint-seducing gold,"—Shakespeare.

In a quiet, old-fashioned house in the suburbs of Toronto on a late spring afternoon in 187—, three girls sat busily sewing, and, after the fashion of girls, chatting in a lively manner.

Nettie, the oldest, was of medium height, square in build and plain in features, with light brown hair, and light blue eyes. Helen, a tall girl of twenty, had the same light brown hair, but her eyes were a fine hazel-gray, large and friendly, honest, womanly eyes, that helped to inspire courage and patience in all so fortunate as to meet their honest glance.

Laura, the youngest, was a slender, graceful girl of seventeen, perfect in form and feature, with great liquid gray eyes, heavy masses of golden hair which she persisted in loosely massing about her small shapely head; in disposition gay, laughing, mischief-loving, coquettish, but intentionally true.

The sisters possessed no marked intellectual endowments, but were fair types of the average English girl of the middle class.

Old Mr. Bassett was English by birth, but having been brought up in the New England States of America, had acquired the "down east" vernacular. He had returned to England when a young man and had there married an English woman. When his youngest daughter was thirteen he had settled in Toronto, where they had since enjoyed a quiet, homelike life upon the old farm in the suburbs of the city.

They kept no servants, Helen and Nettie assisting their mother about the house and dairy, with such small tasks as could be expected from their youngest sister when she was in a "workish" mood.

Eben Bassett was yet hale and hearty, and able to oversee his small farm, which yielded a good support; but they occasionally took a couple of boarders to "help out in the matter of dry goods for the women folks."

The girls seemed this afternoon to be in a state of expectancy. Nettie in her slow fashion, sat swaying back and forth in her rocking chair; Helen sat bolt upright and deftly plied her needle in a swift business-like way as if to indicate plainly that her work was of more importance than any expected guests; and Laura every now and then flung her work down to run to the window or out upon the porch that ran around the front and sides of the pleasant old house, and looked out from under shading hands at the long, winding road that glistened white in the afternoon sunlight.

"Laura, you foolish girl, don't you know a 'watched pot never boils?'" asked Helen in a tone of gentle rebuke.

"O, they're sure to come, and I mean to see them first. I want to see how they look. Papa says the

light one is handsome. Allan I think he called him," and Laura dropped upon the doorstep, and called to her big dog who came bounding upon the porch.

"I wouldn't spend so much time looking for 'em: they'd be sure to come just as soon, and your curiosity will keep; its of amazing vigor and will last some time yet," said Nettie in her drawling voice, while casting a slanting look at her young sister as she half reclined upon the doorstep alternately petting and teasing Sancho. Nettie noticed, too, with a twinge of pardonable envy how fair the girl was even to her eyes and thought how much more so she must appear in the eyes of others.

"My curiosity is very frank, and free to express itself," returned Laura with a merry laugh, "and your frankness is as curious and free of expression," adding after a pause: "I'm not afraid to see and be seen," and she gave another laugh that had a saucy fling in its silvery tones.

"True, and sometimes I am, especially after a long tiresome day's work, and, then, I have never learned to sit and stand in the same way you can; it's not natural, I s'pose," and Nettie looked a shade quieter as she administered the slow rebuke.

"O, I didn't mean that, you know I didn't," and she gave the great head of her dog a pat that elicited another dotting look from his gentle eyes.

"But you can help from making pointed remarks," quietly put in Helen, as she cast a quick look at Nettie's sombre face.

"There, Sancho, we're in disgrace again. Let's hie us to the woods away," and seizing her sun-hat before Helen could offer a remonstrance, she bounded down through the wicket-gate, and accompanied by her dog, was soon lost to sight.

"She's only a child, you mustn't mind her, Nettie;

"I know she's thoughtless," said Helen, as she watched the flying figure of her sister almost enveloped in a cloud of gold-brown hair that glistened in the strong sunlight, as Laura disappeared in the forest which skirted the estate on the west side. "She's only a child, Nettie."

"She's old enough to know her advantages and make much of them; and she's vain of her pretty face, too," answered Nettie in a constrained voice as she snipped off her seam and re-threaded her needle.

"Ever so young a child knows if she's pretty in the glass, and Laura has been flattered all her life. Strange if she don't know and believe some of the things said to her."

"But she's such a flirt; you know it as well as I do, Helen. She'll bring up in some strange manner I'm sure; pride always has a fall," with which doleful prophecy Nettie left the room, followed by the wistful glance of her sister Helen.

Helen was her mother's "right hand," and very reliable and faithful she had found her at all times. She was so strong and womanly, this girl of twenty, that she was invariably taken to be the oldest of the girls.

"But who's that coming, I wonder! only one, so I guess he's not one of the boarders. What a young giant to be sure!" Helen had a habit of talking to herself sometimes, a paternal inheritance.

Out near the gate stood a young man shading his eyes with one hand, while in the other he carried a soft felt hat. He was looking down the road as though waiting for some one. He stood thus for several minutes—long enough for Helen to get a good look at him. Then closing the gate came with a heavy, crunching step up the gravel walk, whistling softly to himself until he got up the steps. He again hesitated and

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looked down the road. No one appeared in sight, and he turned impatiently and knocked at the door.

Helen met him with a cool bow and look of inquiry.

"I'm Robert Morton," said he by way of explanation, "I 'ad to come alone; my cousin's hoff in them woods yonder. 'ere's where I believe we're going to stop."

"Liverpool English," said Helen to herself. "You are quite welcome, Mr. Morton. Will you come in? My mother is away visiting to day, but I'll call father if you'll excuse me," giving him a chair in the meantime.

"No 'urry, I can wait a spell. My cousin will be 'ere soon. He took for them pine trees yonder," pointing to the forest. Helen resumed her sewing and Robert Morton watched her busy hands, wondering if this was the beauty he had heard about down at the hotel; believing that he "'ad seen a due sight 'andsomer," but thought it would be a nice place to board.

They chatted for some moments, Helen occasionally making a remark in her quiet womanly way that left no opportunity for the joke or banter that glittered in his eyes. She thought them a handsome but very bold pair of eyes. She decided he might do for a boarder with a great deal of watching; but he'd be calling her "elen" in his utter disregard of her favorite first initial, which transformed the most commonplace into the queenliest name in the world. Helen loved her name and would permit no nick-naming, and this "young giant" who informed her in such a patronizing way that he had "just come from Hengland, but 'ad lived in Toronto before and knew all about the place," would no doubt, be calling her Nell, too, if he dared, at the bare thought of which her head lifted a trifle higher.

"I'll call father if you'll excuse me," she said finally,

"and let him taking an inventory of the room and its furnishings." Soon after he stepped out upon the porch to sweep with those strong young eyes of his the broad acres that surrounded the house. He had gathered a little gratuitous information on his way when he had pleasantly asked a loquacious farmer the way to his new boarding-house. Whatever he had heard gave new zest to his plans. If there was money in the Bassett family they were of considerable interest to him.

"It is a pleasant place," he said to himself, just as Helen again appeared to inform him of her father's arrival.

A friendly greeting was exchanged, and they sat down on the porch, while Helen went inside to look after the supper, for the afternoon had waned until it was nearly five o'clock.

"We'll have supper before the hands eat," said Helen to Nettie as she went about preparing the evening meal for the strangers. "How do you like him?"

"He's a good-natured looking sort of fellow," said Nettie slowly.

"O yes, but there's mischief in the twinkle of his black eyes, and the English H!" and Helen flung the potatoes into the oven with decision. Evidently something had gone wrong with Helen.

"I wish Laura would be on hand when she's wanted," was Helen's irrelevant answer, "like's not she's on the other side of the forest by this time. She ought to know that I've plenty to do this evening, though to be sure two more don't make much difference. Yes, you may help; set the table. I'm glad to get that much assistance about supper, as Nettie in a mystified voice offered her services in the preparation of the evening meal. So they busied themselves while Mr. Bassett and Robert Merton conversed out on the front porch.

"Supper's ready, father," at last said Helen, never noticing the young man who sat there looking so careless, and with so much of the "auld acquaintance" manner in his talk. But realizing that in her mother's absence she must do the honors of hostess, she said:

"Shall we wait for your cousin, Mr. Morton?"

"O, no, 'e'll be 'ere soon no doubt," answered young Morton, looking off down the road to find confirmation of his statement.

"I think, perhaps, we had better eat supper now before the work hands come in, for to-night you are probably hungry, and it will make a late supper for travelers to wait till after they have eaten," and Helen again looked persistently at her father.

"All right, if you say so, Helen," answered her father. Robert Morton wondered what made the old man take off his hat when Helen came out on the porch to announce supper. He had sat there on that step for three-quarters of an hour with that old hat on his head.

"Helen, where's Laura?" asked her father as he discovered her vacant place so near his own at table.

"O, she's gone for a walk as usual; she'll be back soon," quietly answered his daughter giving him his tea.

"Strange how much that girl likes to walk in the woods," he answered with sly humor. "Girls always do like to stray off by themselves, but they always find somethin' to chatter to if it's nothin' more than birds 'nd squirrels," and he chuckled at his own remarkable penetration.

"In this case, I shouldn't wonder if she finds my cousin, or 'e will find 'er, for 'e started haff in that direction and left me to find my way alone," answered Robert looking at Helen, but appreciating his host's humor.

A little later, up the walk came leisurely the subject

of their conversation accompanied by a young gentleman with whom she was chatting in a lively manner. She was always full of life and gayety, and just now her eyes danced and her cheeks glowed in a dangerously bewitching manner.

The winds swept her blonde tresses against the shoulder of her companion in a way that would have made Helen raise her eyes. But Helen did not see, and the winds played their mad pranks in utter disregard of the fair hands that vainly tried to confine the golden cloud.

"I think I'll have to take the other side of the street," laughed Laura as she stepped away from his side; she saw that she was getting near home, and Helen and Nettie would surely be looking for her. She must not be seen walking so near the "fair one."

"Let me see, you said your name was what? Oh—Allan, then you are the fair one, but," with a coquettish toss of the head, "why don't people let us judge for ourselves?"

"Why?" asked her companion in smiling curiosity.

"Saves disappointment," coolly answered the young girl, with which frank explanation she whistled to Sanchó, and fleetly ran up the walk to the gate, and into the front door where she was met by Helen who asked about the stranger.

"O, he's the fair one," answered Laura trying to look serenely cool.

The young man was now at the door where he was welcomed by Helen and her father, and soon they were, with the exception of Laura, all seated at supper. She surprised them by refusing to appear at the table with the family.

The evening meal was finished and the two young men with their host were seated out upon the porch.

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Nettie and Helen were giving the farm hands their supper, and Laura was eating off the kitchen table.

"I don't want to see them again to-night. I don't like either of them," said Laura in reply to her sister's amazing inquiry at her strange whim.

"All right, I think it is just as well," said Helen humoring her sister's mood. "I hope we will always be of that opinion, and not forget that we are taking boarders for money, and not to get us beaux and husbands."

"You needn't count me in your virtuous plans, Helen, for I won't be bound by any promises," said Nettie with a lazy laugh. "Catch as catch can," is a better policy. Laura will think so by to-morrow, too, with her next mood."

So they laughed and chatted until the evening's work was done, while their father was showing the cousins over the farm and about the stables and gardens. Then as their trunks had arrived the young men were shown to their room by their host, who, with an odd laugh, assured them they could come down in the sitting-room when they got tired of their own company.

The house was a square, old-fashioned structure, with four rooms below, divided by a wide hall that extended through the entire length, on the right of which was the parlor and Mr. and Mrs. Bassett's bedroom; on the left, the sitting room and dining-room; a kitchen was tacked on to the rear of the house with a door opening into the dining-room.

The rooms above were all chambers, planned in much the same way. The room over the parlor was given to the cousins; that over the sitting-room was a guest room; the girls, Helen and Nettie, had the one over the dining-room, and Laura occupied the one over her parents.

As the cousins were left in their room by their host, each took a hasty survey of their surroundings for very different purposes. Robert estimated the money value of everything, admired the luxurious look of the clean, white bed, but did not see the vase of flowers upon the table. Allan threw down his satchel, stepped to the table and sniffed of the flowers, appropriating the sweetness, then quickly strode to the window and swept the lovely view below and beyond, with those keen, appreciative eyes, and saw all that nature offered of beautiful gardens and fields, green hills and shadowy vales, and more, saw down among the flowers the same glimmer of gold that had caught his fancy down in the forest, and wondered if he dare go down.

"I've an idea, Bob," said he to his cousin as he turned from the window. "Better keep it; may not 'ave another in a life time," answered Bob with a jolly laugh.

"All right; it's safest I guess," answered Allan a little nettled at his cousin's rude wit.

"Well if hit's dangerous you'd better let me 'elp you take care of it, old fellow," said Robert thinking better of the proposal and critically eyeing the white bed.

"Oh no, going to keep it," answered his cousin, "ideas are scarce. You wouldn't appreciate such a stranger if it was given you, at which they both laughed in a constrained mirthless way.

"Let's change the subject, Al. 'ow do you like the fair 'elen?"

"I like Miss Bassett very well. She seems a very superior girl. And let me caution you, if you don't mind, to call her Miss Bassett; she's not one to tolerate familiarity from a 'one in ever so small a way."

"I guess I'm not such a muff as not to know she's severely prim. Guess I know enough for that," answered Robert savagely, rising to leave the room.

"What, are you going down in that rig?" asked Allan amazed at his cousin's unconcern about his dress. They had not been able to change their dusty clothing before supper, but a good wash and a vigorous brushing at the hotel, had made them in some manner presentable, as under the circumstances it was all they could do. After their trunks had arrived Allan was soon diving into his for a complete change. He saw with disgust and dismay that his cousin was descending to the parlor in his traveling suit.

"Why, what's the matter with my clothes? Don't suppose I'm going to dress up for that old fogey and his country girls, do you?"

"All right," said Allan, you can do as you like. I'll be down presently; don't wait. I'm going to get rid of these dirty clothes before I appear in the presence of ladies in their parlor."

"Shall I warn them to brace up for a big show? S'pose you'll be on dress parade," said Robert with a sneering laugh.

"Tell them nothing. I may not be down," answered Allan.

Robert descended to the parlor where he met his host and the two elder Misses Bassett.

"Where is your sister? Shan't we see 'er this evening?" he asked of Helen.

"She don't care to come down and we let her have her own way," answered Helen, giving him a seat at the other side of the room.

They were chatting in a pleasant manner when Allan made his appearance. The young man was very becomingly dressed in a light evening suit, a fashion of the times, that set off his fine figure to advantage and transformed him into a well dressed gentleman.

"Tried to make me get myself hup too," said Rob-

ert, "but I thought you'd appreciate my company just as well as I am, so I didn't take the trouble."

It's not very troublesome to be cleanly," coolly answered his cousin, evidently annoyed by the attention his cousin had drawn upon him.

"Al is always too dudish for me. One suit of clothes is enough for a man, 'less 'e works in the gutter. Costs too much. Hif a man ever expects to be worth anything 'e can't spend 'alf 'e earns on clothes; hain't that so, Miss Bassett?" said Robert again turning to Helen.

"It depends upon the amount of his income," she quietly answered without raising her eyes.

"Well, I get \$4.00 per day, and I don't spend more'n 'alf a month's wages in a year for clothes. Guess I look well enough," again looking complacently at Helen.

"I suppose tastes differ," answered she in a constrained voice, and wishing to change the conversation which evidently annoyed Allan, who had been a silent listener, as it did not suit him to discuss his clothing before strangers. There was a sense of indelicacy, of coarseness about the matter which grated upon Allan's sensitive nerves, and which made him recoil as though he had been brought in contact with some vile thing.

It was this very freedom of Robert's in word, and look, and manner that made Allan sometimes detest him. Were it not that he was alone, but for Robert, and that he felt after all, the force of the old saying "blood is thicker than water," he would have left him long ago.

But Robert soon became interested in his pet theme, money making, his own plans and prospects, his likes and dislikes. Allan entertained the young women with an account of his ocean voyage and other subjects more suited to their tastes. Gradually Nettie became

interested in the conversation between Robert and her father, leaving Helen and Allan to themselves.

Mr. Bassett smoked, as did Robert, who boasted to Nettie that he had used tobacco in every form since he was eight years old; he gladly followed his host out on the porch to enjoy a smoke.

"Now Al don't smoke, even, oh! 'e's a dandy! says tobacco'll spoil a man's 'ealth and make 'is breath bad and fill 'is 'air and clothes with its scent. Calls it a vile 'abit too. Oh! 'e's well enough in most things," said Robert confidentially to his companion, between whiffs. "'e's hall right, but 'e's too fine for 'ard work or money-making, hand I tell you, money will tell every time. Allan never'll be worth much, but 'e's good 'nough; halways takes with the girls a sight better'n I do. But 'e's no cub, 'e's a brave fellow; got lots of dash and spirit, brave as a lion if 'e is my cousin; that's what takes with the women; they all like 'im."

Mr. Bassett chuckled to himself and listened, and smoked, stroking his hair in a slow, meditative mood, squinting up his little light blue eyes until there was only a slight line of lash and brow, so closely joined that they were practically one, and emitting whiff after whiff in rapid succession as Robert continued his subject with, "They all like 'im," at which he nodded his head sagaciously toward the subject of conversation and Helen.

"Strange," said Mr. Bassett wisely, "how different whole families take. Now, Helen soars dreadfully high, and Nettie likes money, just suit you. But Laura, you haven't seen my little girl yet; well, the fact is she's the baby and we'n always let her have her own way and pet her a good bit. She's got an uncommon good voice, plays pretty fair, and has such purrin', kitteny ways, till all on a sudden she'll skip

away off t' the woods, 'er up in the loft o' the barn, 'er some sich place—just to be alone. Girls hez sech queer notions anyway, 'tain't gi'en us to understand. But, somehow she seems to brighten the old house better than th' rest; makes things kind of restful like. When I come from work to hear her at the pianner a playin' and a singin', or to see her out there 'mong them flowers o'hern with her pretty face outshining the prettiest posy there, or lying with her head on her big dog Sancho. Seen that dog o'hern? Why that dog is just like a big watchman; takes just as good care o' her ez I could."

Robert had talked of business, his pet hobby, and according to the law, "from the abundance of the heart the lips speaketh" old Mr. Bassett was giving of the abundance that filled "his own heart." Robert could see that the youngest was her father's idol.

"Who's she like hany way? She don't take after you does she?"

"Ho, ho! no, she don't look like me, sartin sure.

"Oh, no!" chuckled the old man, "No, she ain't much like me, that's a fact. Helen is like her mother, only a little more so, 'nd Nettie's more like me; but Laura, well she favors a sister o' mine that I set a great store by. We was allus great chums 'nd that little girl of mine is the livin' image o' her—my sister Jenny. Guess that's why I want to have 'er 'round when I come home. She's not much on the work, though she kin do her share, she's too little 'nd kittenish fer to be of much use in the kitchen. But she's allus a dustin' and a trimmin' up things, and puttin' vases o' flowers round on the mantle-piece and tables 'nd bureaus. Guess the Lord makes some folks just to trim the mantles 'nd bureaus 'nd tables with flowers," and Mr. Bassett took off his hat solemnly, and laid his old clay pipe down as though in silent protest against the incon-

gruity of his subject and his occupation. "Yes, that's what the Lord makes some folks for, to fill the vases on our tables with flowers, 'nd my little girl is one of that kind."

Robert Morton was silent as the old man concluded his talk, that was half conversation, half soliloquy. Perhaps the subject was beyond him. The beauty and poetry of the sentiment he could not appreciate. The pearls were pure and abundant, but they fell in palms all yellow with the glimmer of gold. Oh, the pity of it! The glimmer of gold filled the eyes of Robert Morton, and its clink was his sweetest music. He believed money would buy Heaven and earth. He had yet to learn that Heaven and hell are not purchased by the same "convertible goods."

"Guess I'll go into the house and hear the singing," said he, as voices were wafted out through an open window.

The old man followed his guest in a silent shame-faced way, realizing by Robert's unresponsiveness a lack of sympathy in tastes, and mentally calling himself an old fool for talking to "sech young sprouts 'bout flowers."

They found Laura seated at the piano and Allan turning the leaves of her music. Their voices blended in perfect accord as song after song was tried, until a late hour when the candles were brought, and the old house was silent.

Our young men were interesting characters each in their own way. Robert's mother was a Scotchwoman. His father, an Englishman, had married her in Canada, and when Robert the only child was ten years old, they removed to England, where Allan's mother and father resided with their only son. There the boys' education was begun with a view to professions for both.

But one after the other of the parents had died until, when but a few weeks before leaving England, and just after Allan had attained his majority, and when Robert was but twenty, their last relative, Allan's father was laid to rest in the English church-yard by the side of the others. The two cousins now stood alone with no very near kindred, none upon whom they had, or cared to have any claim, and with the spirit of adventure, and energy quickening their blood, they bade good-bye to England, to land after a short ocean voyage upon America's hospitable, but untried shores.

Through some feeling of curiosity to see his native town, Robert induced his cousin to accompany him to Toronto. Thus it was that they were received into the Bassett family.

Allan had grown up like his father a tall, well-built, soldierly man; like his mother, blonde and handsome, receiving from both parents a goodly heritage, refinement, large heartedness, love of music, flowers and nature generally, all things ennobling. On his father's side the pride of a long line of soldiers whose Lozenge was upon their escutcheon. All their sons are brave and true. All their daughters fair and pure.

Robert was dark, square built and compact; keen dark or black eyes and dark hair; in disposition quick; genial, impulsive, selfish like his English father; from his Scotch mother he inherited a firm belief in the power of gold, also her square well knit form and coloring. The gentle traits in Allan's nature sometimes made him seem weak and vacillating before the strong currents of his cousin's impulsive and domineering will, and it was for that reason he had accompanied him to Toronto.

Robert had spent a large share of his time after he was fifteen with machinists, having learned the iron



molder's trade, in which, being quick, at twenty he was an expert. Having brought references with him from England, he was able to get a good situation immediately.

With Allan it was very different. Half soldier, half student, or gentleman of leisure, he had applied himself to no one thing, so that his services, no matter how faithfully discharged were not so appreciable, I might say marketable, and his salary, when he obtained one, was proportionately small. Though he was much more prepossessing in manners, looks and conversation, yet among business men he suffered by comparison with his cousin.

Young and inexperienced, it had not taken them long to use up the little left them by Allan's father.

Indeed, Robert had nothing of his own, but could earn wages. Now that Allan's money was gone, after reaching Toronto they found work before looking about for a boarding place. Their work was not far distant from the Bassett farm, and wishing above all things to secure the comforts of a quiet home, they had there obtained board through a family by the name of Warren, who were old friends of the Bassetts.

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## CHAPTER II

### RIVALS

We will pass rapidly over the ensuing year. Allan and Robert had remained in the family of Eben Bassett. Allan had become a general favorite with the ladies of his acquaintance. He had been sensible from the first, that a poor young clerk could not look for attention or recognition among the first families of Toronto; so, being lonely and rather fond of society

naturally, he soon became a recognized favorite of a large circle of well-to-do middle class people; and while he laughed and danced, sang and flirted mildly, with all, it soon became evident that for the youngest daughter of his host he had a very decided preference which, as the months had passed, strengthened into something more than friendship. Nor was it fruitless, for the interest was reciprocated by the fair young girl.

But Allan had a dangerous and persistent rival in his cousin Robert. Nettie by this time cherished a strong love for Robert of which he was well aware, but which he did not appreciate or even respect.

One day Laura had been to see a friend and Robert had overtaken her on his way home from town. Allan, who was in the room as they came up the walk listened, and catching the silvery notes of her sweet young voice as she laughed and chatted with his cousin, imagined, as he stood in the open window and looked down upon the moonlit figures that she was happy with Robert, and was nearly jealous.

He could see she did not take Robert's arm, and he felt a trifle easier, for she always leaned upon him very confidently, and so he tried to eke a little comfort out of the girl's distant manner toward his cousin. And had she not given a huge red poppy to Rob when he asked her for a flower for his button-hole, and slyly dropped a sweet white rose into his own hand soon after, when no one could see? Then had she not pinned it on the lapel of his coat, with a bright blush and drooping eyes? Ah, yes, "for Bonnie Annie Laurie he could lay him down and die," if necessary, he loved her so! And he sang in his rich, strong young voice the last verse of the old scotch song.

"I'd a deuced sight sooner live for Annie Laurie, and

I mean to, too, if I can," said Robert coming into the room just as Allan concluded the verse.

"Do you mean that, Rob?" asked Allan wheeling about and facing his cousin. It was the first outright admission that Allan had of his cousin's real intentions.

"Guess I do. Have any objections?"

"None in the least if she wants you," replied Allan in a cold voice from which all the tenderness had flown.

"Well all's fair in love and war, so I guess I'll turn in for the night. You can bay at the moon till morning if you want to; only don't keep me awake."

A few days later Robert came upon his cousin in the road leading out from town. He had been filled with bitterness at the turn of affairs, and attributed Allan's success to his fine manners and handsome personal appearance. Now as he looked at the approaching figure and noted the apparent recommendations to a young girl's fancy, he ground his teeth and clinched his fists in rage.

"I'll have 'er yet, you dog, see if I don't, if I go through 'ell fire to get 'er! She's mine," he muttered between his teeth, then he choked back this boiling wrath as his cousin came up to him with a gay salute.

"How de do, Rob? Hear you've been speculating in real estate. Going to get rich?"

"In time, perhaps. I've sense enough to know the value of money, and brains enough to know how to make it," was Robert's noncommittal reply, given in a gruff voice.

"I wish I had your head for money-making. The Lord knows there's need of it! Give us your secret, Rob. It's precious slow laying up anything at \$45 per month." And Allan impatiently flected the dust off his patent-leathers with his cane.

"In the first place I don't give my secret to you; it

would help you and hinder me," answered Robert setting his feet squarely on the sandy walk, and plunging his hands into his pockets with an obstinate look upon his face. "But hif you want a little sound hadvice let me tell you that hif you spent one alf the time over the ways and means hof money-making that you do hat the glass a dandyng hup you'd 'ave more money. 'Nother thing, fine clothes don't provide for a wife, not by a d——d sight. Hits the solid cash or real estate that does the business hevery time and don't you forget it."

Allen had been struggling with his wrath since Robert's mention of his personal habits, but at his allusion to real estate he had restrained himself for he hoped to learn the truth of the reports concerning Robert's recent investment; as yet they were uncertainties to him, so he bottled up his wrath and said quietly:

"When I get a wife I'll provide for her, don't be afraid, Robert; and as for "dandyng up" as you are pleased to call it, I pay for my clothes. And too, I hate a rough, slovenly fellow as bad as you do a dandy. Confound a man that comes into the presence of civilized people with an oath and a swagger, his clothes filled with the disgusting odor of the vile weed that begrimes his teeth and lips, and fills his unkempt hair. Confound him! I hate such a brute! He's not fit to live." Allan had forgotten himself.

"You 'ate such a brute has bad has I 'ate a brainless, poverty-stricken, beggarly cur," sharply answered Robert between his set teeth, for he understood his cousin. "Al Morton I'd have more shame than to hask a woman to marry me hif I 'ad nothing but a fine face and figure to offer 'er."

"Bob, what do you mean? Be man enough to tell."

"I mean," and Robert struck his fists together savagely, "I mean that hif I were you I would step aside

hand let others 'ave a chance who are hable. You know well enough what I mean! You know but for you I'd be sure of Laura Bassett. I'm hable now to support 'er in good style. You know that you 'aven't one in the family on your side, hand they all happrove of me. What 'ave you to offer 'er? Nothing but a fine face and figure hand dandyish manners; them things won't wear without money, hand money will tell."

Allan knew that his cousin was preferred to him by the Bassett family, and he felt the force of that claim.

"You can't 'ave 'er," continued Robert. "I'll see to that. I stand well with the old man, that's 'alf the battle. I'm going to see 'er now. Want to go 'long?" then he turned back and walked rapidly in the direction of the Bassett farm.

"Taunt if you will," muttered Allan as Robert walked away, "They laugh longest who laugh last. I can wait for she loves me; Annie Laurie loves me."

Allan did not return to the house, but after Robert was out of sight he started off down the road at a rapid pace. He did not want to meet his cousin until he could get rid of himself, so to speak. He had lost control of self, that demon which opposition in this matter of his love for Laura always aroused. Self and jealousy were closely allied now. He was better alone until he had these two fiends in check.

Robert bonyantly pursued his way back to his boasted destination. He believed he knew all the weak points in poor human nature's character, and applied his world lore indiscriminately. "Money will tell" was his favorite maxim. He did not realize that in its use he depreciated his own value. By the logical manner in which he was wont to hurl his thunderbolt at the unwary listener he left the impression that he had a monopoly of world-lore, and that his remarkable and unprece-

dented astuteness had discovered this weak spot in the world's character.

With his faith in the power of money, Robert was bent upon its accumulation, and was very busy calculating his chances in real estate investments.

He had bought a couple of lots in the suburb of the city, upon time, which would in the sure rise of land yield him a good profit in the near future. He believed, too, in a bank account, be it ever so small, and the bank book with its growing list of figures was the beacon light that should illumine his road to success in the pursuit of Laura Bassett's hand.

He felt sure of her father's consent. Mrs. Bassett was a good motherly soul who could be won over easily. The girls were nothing, of course, to him, not even Nettie with her following eyes and doting manner, or Helen with her uncompromising reserve. Robert knew that Laura preferred his cousin: she believed that Allan was a perfect gentleman. If he must, he would show up his cousin in a way that would humiliate him, and he was sure of the result for Laura was proud as Lucifer. But no need of that yet. Women loved the use and display of money. Yes, money was the thing. It made the twinkling-eared female of the equine species travel at an exhilarating pace. He would accumulate money.

Robert's plans to accumulate money were fruitful. His investment in real estate had cost him little. He had begun by purchasing carefully only two lots in a good location. There were others, some half dozen in the same block that he wanted, but there was time enough when he should, from the sale of these two realize a profit. This he had done the day after his encounter with Allan.

He was offered \$300 more than he paid, a clear profit

of \$600. He made the sale, drew up all papers of transfer, received his money, sought out and found the agent and bought the remaining six lots upon the same terms that he did the two first. All this in an hour's time. He had besides the sum of \$800 in the bank with which to build a small cottage upon the choicest of the six lots, a lovely corner, just the spot for his bride.

It was a bold stroke. The speculative spirit was developing in him rapidly. He loved money and the power it gave him. He was rising in the esteem of his friends and employers, and believed himself the object of envy on the part of his rival.

About this time he made application for a better and more remunerative position in the same house where he had been employed. His skill and business ability were appreciated by his employers. He soon obtained the coveted situation at \$100 per month, just double what he had been getting before. He was jubilant. Fortune smiled upon him, and now he could propose to Laura Bassett.

Meeting her one evening when she was coming home, shortly after his encounter with his cousin, Robert was glad to see that she was alone.

"Are you in a hurry, Laura?"

"Not much of a hurry, only going down to the pasture."

"I'm just on my way to see some lots I've bought lately. I'm going to build a house on one of them. I'm not sure that I can choose wisely. I'd like you to go along and 'elp me. I don't want to make a mistake."

"Oh! as to that, I guess you can do that better than I. What should I know about houses and lots?" an-

swered Laura with a coquettish toss of her head and a thrilling laugh that made his heart leap.

"You women folks halways know better about these things. Women 'ave to live in 'ouses more than men."

"Why should we? Men have to live in houses too," said Laura obstinately.

"Laura, men don't 'ave to be in them has much has women. Men should build and fit hup the 'ouse and provide for hit; women should keep the 'ouse, and has they 'ave to live there all the time, they ought to 'ave it built to suit them, too, I think," said he with an insinuating smile.

"O, well then, you ought to wait until you get a wife, if you are going to get one," answered Laura in a tantalizing manner that made her irresistible.

"I'm going to get a wife, soon too. I'm going to build now and I want you to 'elp me plan my 'ouse. I'm going to get married just as soon as I get my 'ouse done, hand I shall like to think that you harranged everything for my wife to be."

"But I shall not know her tastes," persisted Laura laughing shyly.

"Well, I can tell you. Oh! you choose hand I promise she'll be satisfied. She resembles you in some things, hand I'm sure your tastes would suit 'er. I'll run the chances hany 'ow," urged Robert in his bold manner. He had been out since supper and was just returning home. He looked happy and wore an air of extreme satisfaction as though the world was going well with him. His dark eyes looked bright and his whole manner betokened the successful man.

Laura wondered at the unusual change in him, noting and approving of his smart appearance. She thought he must be about to get married. He was a very pleasant sight as he stood smiling and eager before her in



that aggressive attitude, his hat tipped back from his forehead a little, his hands thrust in his trousers' pockets, and his feet planted squarely in an argumentative way. Altogether he was a very pleasant young man to look at. She wondered what had produced the change. She knew he had been in love with her once, but for a month or more he had avoided her, she thought. She wondered if now it was Nettie. What a goose she was not to think of that before; of course, it was Nettie! and Laura's bright eyes lit up and she took a step nearer, unconsciously laying her hand upon his arm.

"O, Robert, is it Nettie?" her whole face beamed radiantly.

"No, it is not Nettie," he answered harshly, looking at the beautiful young creature before him with all his soul in his eyes in spite of his heart's answer.

"O, forgive me, Robert. I thought it might be Nettie," then seeing his changed countenance and anxious to appease his wrath she said, "Of course, I'll go with you and help you choose your lot," but as she removed her hand from his arm she turned and saw Allan standing in the arbor door and looking intently at them.

Her heart gave a bound, a little in dismay fearing that he might not like her evident sociability with his cousin, a great deal for love of him. Her eyes lit up with the sweet consciousness of Allan's love and sent a bright blush to her face. She was so happy that she could afford to be gentle and patient with others, and so she threw a great deal too much innocent kindness and interest into her manner.

Robert had not seen Allan, and was under the spell of her winsome manner, and so they were soon at the spot where he pointed out his lots. After many exclamations on the part of Laura, and a great deal of deliberation on the part of both, they chose the very same

lot that Robert had from the first selected and reserved. It was a nice piece of strategy and it worked charmingly.

Then they decided upon the size and location upon the lot of a six-room cottage that should be surrounded by a low picket fence in front and sides and a high board wall in the rear. "To keep out all intruders in his absence," Robert informed Laura, at which she laughed in girlish glee. Then a great deal of time it took to be sure to plan the internal arrangement of the cottage. But at last it was all done and they started homeward.

It was now nearly dark and the long twilight had slipped by almost unawares. Robert walked part way home with Laura and then bid her good-night, saying he must find his workmen.

"I'm going to put men to work to-morrow," he answered meeting her inquiring look.

"How you do rush things," said she in astonishment, for she had thought he only meant to build some other time. She wondered more than ever for whom he was going to build the house.

"That cottage will be done in about six weeks or two months a'most," he replied with an emphatic nod and enjoying her surprise immensely.

"I didn't know you had so much money," ventured Laura in a mystified manner.

"The money's ready in the bank. I've got hevery dollar of the needful. When the 'ouse is done, I'll want you to help me select the furniture," and he gave another nod, and the happy look in his eyes expressed his satisfaction at his success. "Oh! I can't choose the furnishings, Robert, indeed I can't. You'll have to get your intended bride to do that," and she looked

away now though with an arch smile curling the corners of her mouth.

"All right," replied Robert cheerfully, "I'll get my hinted wife then, if that will suit you any better," with another nod and an ardent look in his dark bold eyes that made her blush again, as she hurried home.

Robert started off down town while Laura sought the arbor more from habit than design; she did not expect to meet Allan, she did not think he would wait for her so long. But he was there and met her with a constrained look.

Not wholly unprepared for the change, but determined to seem herself unchanged, she went up to him and in great glee began telling him of Robert's cottage.

"And he would have me help him plan it and all. It took so long, too, to be sure it is quite an undertaking. O, it is to be a perfect little nest, Allan," and she beamed brightly.

"When will he build?" asked Allan with a queer look on his face as he turned his eyes persistently away in a manner that the girl at his side could not understand.

"O, he's gone now to see the workmen, and he says he'll have it all done for his wife in about six or eight weeks. Just to think! and I tried to guess her name and he wouldn't tell me. I never did think much of his looks, but to-night he was so bright and happy, and assured just as though it was already settled," and Laura laughed in a happy gleeful manner that made Allan's teeth set together. Why should she care for Robert's success? Did the sight of that man's possessions influence her?

"Do you think you could be happy with a poor man?" he asked placing one arm around her, yet not drawing her to him.

"I know it, Allan, if I loved him. Of course, I like nice things, a nice house and furniture, and fine clothes too, just as well as other folks."

How he did long to bind her by a promise to marry him, but he was always met by that evasive look and thrilling laugh. Of her love he had no doubts, but she always said—

"Wait, Allan, no hurry, I'm too young to promise."

Every girl liked a home. He could not offer anything for perhaps years yet. Under the tormenting fears of losing her he turned almost fiercely.

"You love me, Annie Laura, only me?" now closely, almost savagely drawing the lovely girl to his heart.

"I love you, Allan, only you, no matter what may come in the future;" she had put her hands up to his face that had grown so stern and white.

"Again, say the words again." Then she slipped her hands around his neck, and with a sad earnest look in her eyes, said solemnly:

"I love you, Allan, only you. I will love you always. I will be true to you always, living or dead."

"And for Bonnie Annie Laurie I'd lay me down and die," he said earnestly kissing her sweet young face.

"You believe me, Allan?" she asked earnestly.

"Yes, and I'll try to be satisfied. But when I see you with Robert, I feel wicked. I don't know what gives me control over myself, for I want to kill him.

"Allan!" exclaimed the girl springing from his arms and looking at him in terror.

"Yes, I do, I want to deprive him of some of his insolent assurance. But don't feel alarmed, I won't hurt him, and I won't worry you any more, Laura. Forgive me, dear. I was cruel to frighten you so. Come back to me again. I'll not say it again."

"Allan, you've got a terrible disposition. You're

wife will have to go armed all the time. Why even now I am sometimes afraid, too, of you, you look so wicked," and she backed to the other side of the room. "Never fear, dearie; I'll not look so at you, it's only for him; I can't be myself when I think of him."

"Then don't think of him," said Laura, greatly flattered all the same by his vehement demonstrations. She was a little vain that two men should be thirsting for each other's lives for her sake.

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### CHAPTER III

#### AN EXCURSION AND A WEDDING

A few days after the planning of the new cottage, Robert came to his room one night greatly elated.

"What do you say, Al, to our joining the Warrens in a trip to the Falls?"

"When?" asked his cousin in some surprise.

"On the fourth. I'll take Nettie, and you, of course—oh, well, it's generally understood who you'll take, hold fellow," and Robert laughed an odd sort of laugh that somehow did not ring true.

"Tell me your plans, Rob," said Allan who did not seem satisfied.

"Why, there's an excursion to the Falls, and the Warrens are going, and want us to go, too. Mrs. Warren says she wants 'elen to go with them; good h'idea fer she wouldn't go with me, and I wouldn't ask 'er, she'd 'ave to stay at 'ome but fer the Warrens. What do you think h'of it? Think you'll go?" asked Robert with a calculating look of the eye.

"I'll see about it. The fact is I'm not able and it's a damned expensive trip," answered Allan moodily

"O, well, it's all in one's lifetime. I've 'ad to skimp pretty close what with the building and all. But I'm going to 'ave one rousing old time and then settle down," and then Robert laughed a jolly sort of laugh that irritated his cousin who felt that the laugh had a triumphant ring.

"O, you can afford it with your big salary and bank account, but I have only half as much salary and can't get a raise. Beside I'm working for Lee & Watson, doing night work extra, I don't like to take so much time. However, I'll see, perhaps I'll go. I'd like to, if it were not for the money question."

"What the deuce you doing night work for, Al? I never saw you so industrious before."

"I want to make money a little faster than my employer permits in the store; I got this chance preparing and copying manuscript for Lee & Watson. It's hard work, I was up till two o'clock last night. Am never in bed before midnight. That's a fact," as Robert gave a low whistle.

It humiliated Allan that he should be so poor and his cousin so able. Yet he must go with the rest to the Falls and take Laura, or Robert would be her escort, he was sure of that, and this thought actuated him to conclude to over-draw his salary. He hated to, it was against his principles to spend money that was not his own, but he might just this once, for he must prevent his cousin from waiting upon Laura. So he went below, and finding her in the parlor and telling her of the proposed excursion claimed her promise of accompanying him. She, of course, was in great glee. So was Nettie at the prospects of so great a treat. Nettie had never before dreamed of anything half so delightful as an invitation from Robert, her idol.

The following day Allan told his cousin that he had decided to go, but must economize time.

It was arranged that Laura should go to the city with Nettie and Robert where Allan would meet them at the landing. Though Allan did not like the arrangement, yet it was a busy time in Lee & Watson's, and knowing that he could not get back to work in the store until late the next day after the excursion, he had to submit. As he was doing extra work, his employer readily granted him leave of absence for the time required. The whole plan was arranged by Robert.

"You see, Al, she can go in our carriage just as well as for you to get an extra carriage. Then you meet us at the wharf and I'll put up the team in the stable till we come back. You'll save horse hire and your time too, and she can just as well go with us, see?"

"All right, let it be so, though it isn't my way of doing things," reluctantly decided Allan.

"The Warrens and Helen will meet us at the wharf; then we'll go aboard the steamer, just have time. Oh! we're going to have a good time. I'm in for it. Hain't going to foot up the bills until afterward." Robert was enthusiastic.

Knowing that his cousin was cramped for money, Robert bought an extra ticket, thinking that he could easily dispose of it again, and deeming it wise and safe to be provided in case of need. If Allan came all right he would give it to him, in a generous way, for Laura's sake. Beside he liked to provide for the girl whom he loved so passionately.

In the morning, at an early hour Robert dashed up to the gate in a handsome carriage drawn by a span of fine bays. Robert was a fine driver and this morning he was looking unusually well. Nettie was proud of so fine an escort, but was somewhat overshadowed by

the appearance of her younger sister who was more charming than ever in a new dress and becoming hat. Robert was more madly in love than ever.

Arriving at the wharf they looked in vain for Allan and waited until the last minute. Laura was indignant and humiliated by his non appearance. Robert pitied her in her mortification, but wisely forbore to condemn his cousin to her, though he secretly exulted in this cause.

He was generous enough to feel a sort of pity for him, knowing well that the lack of funds had been the cause of his absence. Surely the man knew better than to play into his own hands, for, of course, he must take Laura now that Allan had failed to put in an appearance. Allan knew that she would come with him and Nettie, and she must go on with them. He would see to that, he was only too glad to do so.

"You'll come with us won't you, Laura? and we'll 'ave a jolly time. I've got han hextra ticket, halways best to take one you know, hand there's no hexcuse. Sorry for you, but not for myself, 'nd you needn't be disappointed in the least because Allan chose to back out. I know it must be 'ard on 'im, but—well, 'is salary is small hand guess he 'adn't the money. He knew I 'ad it and would give him all he needed for the trip rather than 'ave 'im back out and spoil your fun."

Robert was sorry for his cousin for the space of a minute and meant what he said, for he could not long endure seeing any one suffer and it was easy to talk; it cost nothing.

So he prevailed upon Laura to go with them and was lavish in every possible means of making the excursion a success.

There was the usual music, dancing and feasting all day and night on board the steamer. Never had they



had such a merry time. Robert knew too well that Nettie would build a good deal on the attentions that he must pay her, and so sought by every possible means to undeceive her. To that end he asked Mrs. Warren to invite her to remain with Helen at her house until the following day. Though Nettie promised, not knowing what else to do, yet she was overwhelmed to find that Laura was going back with Robert in the early morning. That drive from town with Robert was something that she had counted on as an exclusive and very desirable little treat, but now Laura was going instead.

"Allan shall not think I'm breaking my heart for him," said Laura as she started home with her jubilant escort. But he could see she was ill at ease all the time, though, by a great effort, keeping up a show of cheerfulness.

She stepped into the buggy with a merry laugh, seemingly glad of the pleasant ride home in the early morning light, and in answer to their railery, laughingly replied:

"Ah, yes, I'll send for Nettie, but I must go with Robert and there's not room for two."

Of course, Laura meant that Allan should see them drive up to the door of the house, and he should see Robert's very manifest devotion, too.

It seemed an odd arrangement to Nettie, but she, honest soul, choked back the rising sobs and saw them drive away, with a sinking heart.

"He brought me, and leaves me here. He asked to wait upon me, and now he makes no provision for my going home," and she looked at Helen in grieved wonder as though she could help fathom the cause of it all. This she did without delay.

"You'll learn more in a day or two, or I shall be greatly mistaken," said Helen severely, in response to Nettie's look of surprised and grieved questioning.

"You must make up your mind that you've lost him. He'll propose to Laura this very morning, I'm sure."

"Oh, Helen, I can't bear it," moaned the unhappy girl.

"You'll have to bear it. That is woman's mission on earth so far as I can see. But he'll suffer for his perfidy. Some day he'll get his pay for it."

"Don't, Helen! don't say that, he never said a word to me that would lead me to think that he cares for me. He's not to blame if I'm not pretty like Laura. Every one is captivated by her and she's proud of it too."

"I can't help that, he's not honest, not even in your lenient eyes. But we must go home. Mrs. Warren will send us home. Let's go at once, you don't want to stay, do you?"

"O, no. I want to get away from their prying eyes at once," sighed Nettie hopelessly.

Helen's prophecy was correct. Robert proposed and was not refused absolutely. Under the humiliation of Allan's action, Laura half promised to be Robert's wife. She was dazzled by the show of money, just as Robert had intended she should be, for she had a horror of being a poor man's wife, and now that Allan had acted so cavalierly, she would show him that she need not go begging for lovers. And so she half promised Robert that when the little cottage should be quite ready for occupancy she would help him select furnishings; this, too, just as they were entering the old carriage-way at home, right where Allan could, if he chose to look down from his window and see them.

She knew they were a fine looking couple. After all the fatigue of the excursion she was as bright as ever, and Robert did look very nice, and just now feeling successful, he was radiant. And then he had money and could dress her well.

The upshot of it all was that Laura in a measure felt the enthralment of the hour and her position, a recently betrothed bride coming home, betrothed to the man of her choice, coming home to be petted, congratulated, appreciated, instead of creeping off to her room alone, tearful, rebuked by parental coldness, but true! Oh yes, there was a satisfaction in it that made her laugh trill out upon the early morning air, and caught with its bewitching echoes the waking Allan, who through the long night had tossed upon his bed, suffering all the maddening tortures of jealousy. Of course, he looked out just in time to see Robert lift Laura bodily but very tenderly out of the buggy, holding her in his arms a moment and kissing her upturned, blushing face.

"The traitors! I'll be even with them both! God help me I will," he hissed. "I will live for it if I die for it," and then hastily went out to avoid meeting Robert.

Out of the house he rushed, and on toward the woods, like a wild man fleeing from the hands of jealousy and despair, like Cain with guilt upon his soul, like the poor wretched victim that he was of a weak woman's faithlessness, and a scheming rival's treachery. On he rushed through the woods pursued by all the demons in his mental inferno.

When he returned a few hours later, no trace of the tempest that had so recently controlled him was visible. In a quiet manner he wrote Laura an explanation of his previous day's failure to keep his engagement. The letter explained that business matters had come up at the last moment, and out of justice to his employers he was obliged to give them his attention. He had reached the wharf in time to see the boat far out with its gay party of excursionists. He was too late for the

excursion, but not too late to see them, herself and Robert parting at the gate upon their return. Regretting that he had been forced by the exigencies of the case to cause her any embarrassment, he should await her pleasure.

Reading this dignified epistle, and contrasting his stainless integrity with what her instinct led her to believe was treachery on Robert's part, she replied in a manner neither wholly forgiving, nor wholly relentless.

Allan treated Laura with quiet indifference, though it cost him a great effort to do so. He studiously avoided Robert, and to that end, the day after the excursion he changed his boarding place, giving as his reason his belief that it would give general satisfaction and he must be nearer his work. He realized that he would seldom see Laura, never unless perhaps by chance meeting upon the street. But he felt that the time had come when he must put her love for him to the test. He would give her an opportunity, if she was weary of his company, to recover from her weariness.

Laura saw his trunk go, with a heavy heart. She was up stairs in her room and she did not come down until he sent for her. She met him in the parlor very formally, much as she would meet an ordinary visitor. A few words passed between them, on his part stern and haughty; on her part petulant and foolishly careless, words that only served to widen the breach between them.

He did not kiss her, did not even touch her hands, but politely bowed himself out saying:

"You will always be apprised of my whereabouts should you wish to see me, but you can not play fast and loose with me. I will not put myself against any man,

much less Robert Morton," and then he had strode haughtily out of the door and left her pouting upon the sofa, where Helen found her a few minutes later crying like the child she was, and in no mood to be reasoned with.

"You don't know how jealous he gets: and he's cross at me if I look at Robert. Why can't he make more money if he wants me to marry him? He's mad because I went with Robert and Nettie and came home with Robert."

"You should have know that Allan did not stay away from the excursion yesterday without good reason," replied Helen. "You should not have gone without him if you are engaged to him, and certainly should not have come home with Robert alone. Allan has reason to be angry. Laura, a man like Allan is not to be trifled with. He's upright and clean-minded if he is poor. As you value your own happiness, don't be influenced by Robert's money. He is not the kind of a man to make you happy; he's too coarse, too avaricious. If you care for him, let Allan know it, you are too young to be playing the flirt with two men at once. Either give up Robert's money or Allan's manliness. You can't keep both. I'm glad Allan has left. He's risen mountain high in my estimation. I'm sorry to be disappointed in you. Little sister, I must speak plainly now if never again. You are doing a dangerous thing, you are trifling with Allan."

"I can't help it if Robert does like me, Allan blames me for it."

"Allan has a right to think you are trifling with him. He blames no man for honestly loving you, but he has a right to be first in your affections if you are true to him. If you don't care for him let him know it."

"You needn't scold me, Helen. I'm sick of him; he's a tyrant," cried Laura.

"You must tell him so and let him be undeceived, Laura."

"Such a mean, shabby trick to play me yesterday," complained Laura.

"You'll suffer worse ones at Robert's hands, I'm afraid," said Helen quietly. "Do you remember Locksley Hall? When you were reading it the other day I could not help thinking of Robert—get Tennyson's works, Laura, and read that exquisite poem again, and apply the verses from the twenty-first through the next five to Robert, never was gospel truer," and Helen left the room.

Laura obeyed Helen in so far as she read the part of Tennyson's poem and became disgusted with the lack of appropriateness. "The idea of Robert ever liking a horse or dog better than me! He didn't care for horses or dogs at all. It was Allan who liked horses and dogs, bah!" and she flung the book down, and went out upon the porch, where from the west side she could see Robert coming home, and the lines of the twenty-fifth stanza again filed through her brain:

"He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,

Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse."

And Laura fled from Robert, why she could not tell, but she fled in a sort of horror that could not be confounded with bashfulness or coquettishness.

In the next few days Robert did not see Laura except in the presence of one or more of the family. This only served to drive him desperate. So a week passed during which Allan did not call. He had seen Laura at church and had waited outside for her, but she had bowed distantly and passed him by.

He was fast becoming a slave to his love for her. His pride was giving way, so heart hungry was he for her loving companionship. She had grown to be so much more than life to him, a part of his best self, every aim and every wish, every hope and almost every thought were so completely centered about Laura that it was impossible to break asunder the chains which bound him closer and closer every day. So he waited, hoping she would send for him.

About a week after the excursion, Laura went to visit the Warren family. While there they arranged for a party to which they sent invitations to Allan and Robert and Laura's sisters also. Helen declined, but Robert again took Nettie. She, poor simpleton, was glad to subsist upon crumbs; at least she could have his company for a little time, if he did care more for her sister. It takes very little to make a fond woman happy.

Expecting to meet Laura, Allan went with the firm intention of a complete reconciliation. He wrote her that he was going to be there, and begged her to consider herself engaged to him.

Desperately jealous of his cousin, smarting under the humiliation of his defeat upon the day of the excursion, yet as a drowning man clutches at a straw, he hoped to be able more fully to prove that he had been the victim of circumstances on that occasion. It was a very small straw he feared, but it might be a helpful straw; at least it was the only one. Beside he had not obtained her forgiveness for what she no doubt felt was a gross imposition.

The evening of the party arrived. At the appointed hour Robert made his appearance with the exalted Nettie. He had gotten himself up with unusual care. He was tall, compact and well built. A live, magnetic man of generous proportions, bright laughing face and

sparkling dark eyes. To-night he wore the look of the successful business man. Even Allan with his fine form, polished manners and handsome face seemed outshone.

There was an air of proprietorship about him this evening that seemed to indicate that the part was gotten up expressly for him at his request and to meet his views; that somehow, he and not Mr. Warren, was host. He was notably present in the wine room until by some queer manipulation of affairs Allan was within its doors.

Allan and Robert had barely spoken when they met, but now when Allan re-considered his first refusal and concluded to take "just a small drink," the waiter was requested to "serve him with the best brand and not be stingy in the amount, Allan Morton was his cousin," all in a voice sufficiently loud for Allan to hear, but with head averted so that he failed to see the look of the treacherous dark eyes of the speaker.

A little later Allan had become confused and incoherent, and Robert who was not far distant saw that a previously concocted plan of his and Warren's was working charmingly. Allan was getting reckless under the exhilarating influence of Mr. Warren's wine. While Robert made a show of restraining him from drinking too freely, he secretly egged him on to greater excesses. Meantime, he, himself, abstained from tasting wine, a thing unusual, but he must not offend Laura, and he must keep a clear head to night. Again he found numberless opportunities to wait upon, and dance with Laura. Their names were coupled together as he meant they should be: it had helped on many an engagement, and he would have the impression that there was reason for it. Nothing like appearances.

In spite of her love for Allan, Laura was now thor-



oughly ashamed of him. Allan was led upstairs and put to bed in a state of intoxication.

Exulting in the success of his plans, Robert again escorted Laura home that night together with Nettie, and again after the latter had left the parlor and sought her own room to weep out her heart over the loss of her lover, Robert proposed and was unconditionally accepted.

"You know, Robert, I loved Allan from the first, but I can't love any longer where I can't respect, and I shall never respect him again seeing him as he was to-night," she said, as Robert placed a massive gold ring upon her finger.

Laura believed her words and would not even own to herself that she was only humiliated. Love will stand many humiliations, though it is not best to humiliate a proud woman too often, nor too deeply.

The following morning Allan woke from his drunken sleep, sick and overwhelmed by a sense of his disgraceful conduct, and fearful of the results. He had a confused recollection of being "played upon" the evening before. He very well knew that Laura would not be waiting for him, though he asked for her, in case she had extended her visit with the family. He was informed by Mrs. Warren that she had gone home accompanied by his cousin. He resolved that he would not return to his boarding place, but sought his work while yet under the influence of his previous night's excesses.

His flushed face and trembling hands made him bungle his work, and being rebuked, he answered sharply, upon which he was summarily discharged.

Almost crazed by the tide that had set in against him, he sought his boarding place, packed up his few effects, and hastily left Toronto in search of work, with-

out even one good-bye, one parting word to cheer or encourage him.

Falling in with a party of adventurers, he went over into the United States with them, bound for the West. And so we will leave him for the present, journeying away from everything that his heart held dear, no kind word, perhaps not even a thought to lighten his wanderings.

The news of Allan's departure for the west was carried by Robert to the Bassett family and lost nothing in point of color. No one regretted it but Nettie who knew that now there was no hope for her, as there was no longer any doubt that Robert would be successful in his suit for the hand of her young sister.

The consent of Laura's parents already gained, Robert hastened the wedding-day which had been set to take place but a few weeks after the disappearance of his cousin. He feared that at the last moment there might be a meeting; Allan might return, and a reconciliation take place, so great had been Laura's love for him.

She had confessed this love for Allan when he, Robert, had renewed his proposal. So he hurried on the wedding-day just as that morning he hurried on the wedding garments, eagerly, desperately, as though for his life, nervously as though fearing defeat, pacing back and forth in his room impatiently, listening eagerly to the sound of every voice below, and starting as the door clanged after each newcomer, for old Mr. Bassett had bidden all his friends witness the marriage of his daughter to the "likeliest young man for miles around."

While Robert is restlessly pacing up and down his room, in another room the bride to be is cowering at her father's feet, and her father's tender hands gently resting on her head, fearful of disarranging the white

veil and orange blossoms; the hands that are always tender, the voice always kind to his "little girl" are unheeded, as she lays her sunny head upon his knee.

Old Mr. Bassett had been startled into breathlessness at the vision of loveliness, when at her request he had come alone to her room. He had never seen anything so lovely, and so white, but she always was "skeery."

Soon they were informed that everything and everybody was waiting for the bride, and after lifting Laura to her feet, a kiss, a "God bless you, child, you can't be my little girl any more, you must be his," the old man opened the door and admitted those who were to form the bridal procession to the church.

Every one remembered long afterward the white-faced bride, but radiant bridegroom, and many had nodded wisely in prophetic misgivings, for it was generally known that she had once been engaged to Allan Morton.

So the day came and went that witnessed the marriage of Robert Morton and Laura Bassett. He was boisterously happy, and she tried to be, and thus they settled down in the new cottage that her taste and Robert's money had made exquisitely lovely.

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## CHAPTER IV

### A PIECE OF NEWS

My heart stood still with a sudden shock,  
And a terrible fear and dread  
Came over me, for some one's lips  
Were whispering, "he is dead."

The years rolled by. To Robert Morton they had brought prosperity in his business and joy to him in his home. His wife was sweet and fair; his two children beautiful and healthy.

Nettie had gone to live in their home, patient to help care for his children and find a shelter beneath his roof, and thus made her living in a much pleasanter way than in any other for which she was fitted.

Helen had married about two years after the marriage of Laura and Robert and had moved to Brooklyn.

The old folks remained on the Bassett farm, which was not far distant from Robert's residence. At various times they had heard that Allan was in the United States, but beyond an occasional report the quiet of oblivion had engulfed his life.

Robert seldom thought of, or named him. If Laura responded at all she did so briefly. The old wounds might sting and rankle, but she gave no visible sign of suffering. If she ever thought of Tennyson's poem, Locksley Hall, she said nothing to that effect. She seemed contented, a good mother, a faithful, but never demonstrative wife. Nothing of the light-hearted, merry, laughing Laura remained.

One day Robert came home all full of bustle and energy as usual.

"Well, Laura, what do you suppose I 'eard to-day from a man down town? Allan's gone to fight the hinjins in the west! Just like 'im! I knew 'e'd never settle down to anything of hany haccount. 'E'll never be worth a cent, so he might has well go hinto the harmy as be cutting round hall over God's creation."

Laura listened without answering—he was used to her quiet way of receiving his thunderbolts, but had he looked at her he might have seen a nervous clutching of her fingers, an unusual pallor overspreading her face, then—crash! and the glass dish she had held in her hand was shivered into atoms. Of course, Robert noticed that and tried to console her for breaking her

set of preserve dishes; she should have another, better than that.

However, Robert soon forgot the little event; which was but a ripple in his busy life. He hated interruptions in the usual routine; he liked to have things move smoothly.

Robert had prospered in his business, had enlarged the cottage and refurnished it to suit his wife to whom he had ever been, in his selfish way, kind and affectionate.

If Laura had ever regretted her marriage she had given no sign. At times, to be sure, there had been little differences of opinion between them, only whiffs that soon died down and left no serious consequences.

But she had grown colder and quieter as the years had passed by. Robert seemed oblivious of any great change, for he was too happy in the possession of this woman and her children, and too busy money making to let it worry him. He loved her with all the strength of his selfish nature, and was good and kind to her, and so thought, of course, she must be satisfied.

He was yet fond of quoting his favorite maxim, "Money will tell." He was just as fond of illustrating it to the world, which after all was not a very large world. He was bound up in the accumulation of money and the love of one woman and her children.

Money-making is not conducive to the truest refinement, if love for a good woman is, and Robert was not more a gentleman with the flight of time. In fact, it did not need a discriminating eye or exquisite taste to perceive that the Robert of to-day had lost much if not all of the external polish that the Robert whom Allan hated for his boorishness, possessed. He had gotten the prize; no need to bother his head about keeping her. He always found her dainty, though grow-

ing quieter every day. Of course, she was busy, a woman had to be to keep a house and children so well and orderly, and to be always neat and tidy.

And so he did not notice the cold passive manner of his wife nor the touch of her irresponsible lips. He never thought that she possessed soul. He provided her with plenty of money, that was his first and most serious purpose, next to the money-making, and he was good to her in his way.

Then she fell into the habit of thinking, and just there is where she made a mistake; she should have thought less. It is not a good practice, this thinking with the doors locked. Ah, it is best not to think! Better to dash down into the everlasting kitchen and wash and clatter the dishes and even scold the romping children; creating a great noise will help drown the echoes of that sweet voice that makes such dangerous music among the quivering hearts-strings.

And then when evening's work is done, the kitchen work, for woman's work is never done, get out that inevitable basket of mending and mend, mend, darn, darn, but don't think, but don't think, don't think. Just watch the shining needle go in and out of the ragged edges of that huge man's coarse, rough stocking, don't think that shining needle might make a good dagger to ease your aching heart! Just sew gracefully now, as becomes such graceful dainty work for such a graceful dainty creature!

Well, you may shiver, but hard practical work is best for restlessness and rebellion. But do not go to that piano and touch with your trembling fingers its keys; they will only mock you, Annie Laurie. They know too much of your past; and then you have no one to turn the leaves of your music! The shapely hands that did such gentle service so gracefully long ago, may

be grasping a saber, or stiffening in death. Your pride and love of money stung him to death and ruin.

Hark! gentle footfalls approach the closed door. A childish voice begs admittance. This one you cannot deny, and your trembling feet carry you to the door. You give audience to this little one who looks like a miniature Annie Laurie of long ago, only she has eyes of deepest blue; and looking into their depths you cannot deny the childish appeal to come in. You let her come and stand by your side, and touch with those tiny pink fingers "pitty mamma's hair," gently smoothing the fluffy masses, now and then giving the pale cheeks a tender pat as if in pity.

Robert was in no way disturbed by the news of his cousin's departure for the scenes of the Indian troubles in the western part of the States. He was glad indeed. Best thing in the world. He was happy with his wife and children, and Nettie to help lighten the burden of domestic cares for Laura. He believed upon the whole it was a good plan to keep Nettie in the house. Somehow the household machinery seemed to work better than ever, for Nettie was always well and strong, and was sure to have his meals ready, and took good care that his household was in order. Somehow Laura was not able to work, though she never complained. Nettie was good-tempered, cheerful and kind to the children. Somehow Laura was getting awfully nervous of late. Guess she wasn't very 'strong, she looked so white. Yes 'e'd keep Nettie and she would take care of the children, and would have his meals ready and relieve Laura of that worry. He might consult a doctor, a doctor was just the idea; he would bring her up all right. He could afford a good doctor, the best for his wife. He had money, and money would tell with doctors. Of course, they'd soon cure her, make her

strong and well. Money would do it. He knew she was reading too much of late, always reading the papers. A doctor would make her quit reading the papers. She was too nervous. He'd see a doctor right off. But first he must run right down to the office and see Benner about that little matter, they might make a cool \$5,000 out of that deal.

And so Robert did not consult a doctor and the days passed by; he never thought of it again. Instead, one night in early spring he came home looking unusually sober, and holding a paper in his hand. Laura from her upstairs window saw him, and glided softly down the stairs with quaking heart. It was an unusual thing for him to bring a paper in his hand. She knew that the paper contained something of sober import. She had a premonition of it.

"What's the matter, Robert? What's gone wrong?" asked Nettie as she marshalled the children to supper.

"Been looking hover the papers, been reading some news 'bout the trouble hover the hinjins in the States. "Aven't paid much attention to that fuss, but it seems has if I 'ad to to-night, 'nd the first thing my eye. lit on on the list of killed was Al's name, shot through the heart. Poor fellow! he's gone at last."

"Hush! supper's ready, Robert. Come, children, supper's ready and getting cold Hush! don't you see, Robert," said Nettie under her breath, impatiently thinking to herself. "Why will men always bring their bad news home at meal time?"

Pausing and following with his eyes Nettie's mute sign, Robert saw Laura standing in the door-way listening to his news. Then without a word she quietly came in and in a dazed sort of way sat down at the head of the table. She never once looked at him, that great robust man who sat and gabbled between gulps



of tea and huge mouthfuls of food, gabbled of his sorrow at Allan's death, sandwiching between food and drink his foregone prophetic opinions, lacerating the bursting heart of that wretched woman who sat opposite him for the express purpose of replenishing his teacup.

Sometimes she looked steadily into the blue eyes of Una the eldest child, her white lips moving faintly, and answering all demands for "nother cup o' tea" with silent compliance.

Robert asks if she'll "ave some meat," but seems not to notice that she pays no heed to his question. She is not even disgusted or shocked as in former times at his marveious feats in devouring huge quantities of food. She sits quiet, gazing stonily into vacancy, sometimes raising her eyes when one of the children speaks, but always quiet.

Nettie notices that there is not even a flutter of the eyelids, not a quiver of the lips, and she wonders with inward terror if her sister is going mad, for she knows that for all the quiet manner Laura is suffering deeply. She watches her intently, furtively out the corners of her eyes, and is sure that she is controlling herself by a great effort.

Robert was comforted for the loss of his cousin by a hearty supper. Then he went down after supper to spread his news. His wretched wife was glad to hear his heavy step go out the door and go crunching off down the gravel walk. Her heart said, "I'm glad he is gone;" her pale lips forebore to utter such disloyal words, even in the silence of her own room to which she had dragged her weary, trembling limbs, almost sinking down upon the stairs. But she wanted to get away by herself. She had kept up so far with those terrible words ringing in her ears, and that man's crunch-

ing jaws and disconnected gabble jarring upon her heart-strings. Now she sinks down and all her pent-up grief bursts forth in a passion of tears. Thank God for tears! they have saved many a breaking heart.

Robert entered the sitting-room that evening at nine o'clock, with some hesitation. His whole manner was subdued. With the feeling as of one just awakening from a troubled dream or nightmare, he had sought his office and there pondered over the strange appearance of his wife as he had seen her standing in the doorway. She was so white that he should have feared a complete collapse if she had not been so calm all through the supper. He knew that she felt badly, and he told himself that he was soft-hearted not to resent her evident grief for his cousin. How bad she felt he could not tell; one never could tell the depths of a quiet woman's grief, and she had grown so very still and quiet of late. There was no knowing what she would do, but she would get over it. He would not worry her, else he might make her worse. He resolved to go home and ask Nettie; she had seemed to understand Laura perfectly. So he retraced his steps and when he entered the parlor he was relieved to find Nettie alone.

The children had been put to bed early, thanks to Nettie's forethought, and Nettie was there to meet Robert and answer such questions as he chose to ask concerning his wife.

"It was frightful to see her, Robert, standing there so white and horrified, and she never shed a tear. I could hardly keep from crying myself, at the news, and you know I never liked Allan much. But to be shot down in battle! One must have a heart of stone not to feel sorry for the poor fellow's sad fate."

"Yes, yes, hit's too bad for Al, but that's the fortune

hof war. Didn't Laura say hanything before she went hupstairs?"

"Not a word, just left the room in that strange, quiet way of hers that has been growing upon her for some time."

"How long before she first began to read the papers? She used to 'ate newspapers, once she wouldn't look hat one."

"She's been reading the papers ever since you brought home the news of his going to the States. Seems as if she expected something, and she hadn't laughed a hearty laugh since. Indeed, she seldom ever smiles."

"Does she never say hanything? Never talk of Allan to you?"

"Once I asked her if she had ever heard anything about him, but she asked me in an icy tone, "why she should know anything about Allan?" since then I have kept still about him."

"Where is she now?"

"In her room. She's been there since you left the house."

Robert started toward the door, then paused, came back and sat down, saying in a troubled way:

"I guess I'll not disturb 'er. If she wants to cry halone, tears won't 'urt 'er, and they can't bring 'im back. I knew she liked 'im before we were married."

"And she hasn't got over it yet, Robert, be sure of that."

"I s'pose not; though I've tried by kindness to win 'er from all thoughts of 'im. But she was desperately in love with 'im at one time. S'pose hit all came back when she 'eard he was in danger, poor girl! and Robert concluded with a sigh that told how much he felt his failure to win the undivided love of his idolized wife.

He stood gazing moodily into the fire-place for some time, evidently ill at ease.

"I wonder if I had better go up and see her?" asked Nettie.

"No, no. Don't do that. She won't like hit, I'm certain, only make matters worse. I'll go soon if she cares to see me. Hif not, well I'll wait; all I can do I s'pose. Can't make a woman like me against 'er will," said Robert a little bitterly for the first time.

"They say time will heal all griefs. Perhaps she will get over this when she sees there's no help for it, that he is gone and she can't see him," said Nettie consolingly, though she did not believe it. Robert did not answer, he was thinking of his love for that silent woman, that unloving wife who was breaking her heart for another man; and here was a woman whose eyes followed him constantly, full of devotion.

With all his faults Robert Morton possessed a warm, generous heart, ready sympathies that brought the tears to his eyes at mere thought of his wife's unavailing love and sorrow. So he resolved to be patient and kind to her whose unswerving loyalty in every outward wifely duty had so blinded him. When he thought of all the past, over four years, that she had lived with him, with this love burning into her heart, and had yet been dutiful and faithful to him and his children, now as he reviewed it all, his heart felt not one pang of unreasonable jealousy of his dead rival. He pitied her, if she had loved Allan all through those years, yet never once mentioning his name except in the most commonplace manner, and never once failing in her duty as wife and mother, he could trust her; perhaps, God knows, he might win her yet to forget Al when time had healed her aching heart.

So full of the tender charity so rare under such cir-

cumstances, Robert lumbered up stairs and knocked timidly at the door of their chamber, listening vainly for an answer. Opening the door softly he confronted the tear-stained face of his wife whose eyes fell under his close though kind scrutiny.

"I'm sorry you take Al's death so badly, Laura. I thought you 'ad gotten over hall that." He moved to her side and laid his arm kindly around her shoulder, yet she remained silent.

"Can't you hever get hover it? You must know it h'ain't very easy for me to see my wife grieving for hanother man. Can't you try, Laura, for the children's sake, and your own, if not for mine?"

His voice was tender, even beseeching. It seemed to break the icy barriers that had bound her heart-strings, and with a gasping sob she cried out:

"Oh! I have tried all these years, and thought I had succeeded, but it all comes back again. I'm not fit to be your wife, Robert, but I can't forget Allan, yet!"

His hand dropped away from her shoulder at this confession. It was true enough. He had hoped that she would be able to deny it. But she loved his cousin hopelessly and though his own love was as hopeless as hers for Allan, he must yet love her as his wife. He knew that tears would not hurt her. If that icy calmness returned again it might kill her, and believing that she wanted to be alone he said:

"You are best halone to-night. I'll lie down on the sitting-room lounge, and you'd better give hup and go to bed hat once. If there's anything I can do for you, you can let me know."

He saw with deep humiliation the look of relief on her face as she turned away without answering him. He knew that she was glad to be alone, for she was all unstrung and trembling with repressed grief.

Laura was glad to hear his heavy step descend the stairs. She had not thought that, with all his kindness, he would permit even the grim spectre of his dead cousin to fill his place, so uncomplainingly. She deeply felt her unworthiness of his patient forbearance.

Robert Morton was never so much a gentleman, as when he left that room in which he had a royal right to remain, his recreant wife hugging to her heart the picture of his dead rival. This tender charity and self abnegation refined away much that was commonplace in his nature which had been so offensive to his unhappy wife through all her married life. She felt so humiliated, yet grateful for so much, to be let alone to cry her heart out and gain the mastery over herself before another day should demand her constant presence below.

So Robert mercifully left her alone to battle with her grief and overcome it if she could. It had been a hard fought battle, the hardest of her life, it had been the saddest night of her life, too. She had wept and prayed and cursed by turns, cursed with glittering eyes and set teeth the fate that had severed her from her young lover in those old days; cursed herself for her faithlessness, for well she knew that Robert's money had accomplished it all. Sometimes in her wrath she was glad, yes, glad, that he knew of her love for his cousin, and she would taunt him with it! Oh! she cared nothing for his feelings. His feelings indeed! what were his feelings to hers? Her heart would burst with its load of grief!

Then she grew calmer again and sat tearless and thoughtful. Remorse for what had seemed to be an unpardonable and dishonorable weakness had overcome her, and tearful prayers had succeeded wrath.

So the night had passed. Sometimes she heard a muffled footfall upon the floor outside her room, and

once or twice she had heard a heavy, lumbering sound as though a big dog were lying outside the door on the mat. Was it Robert? And she had cursed him for tempting her with his money! Robert whose strong arm she had shrunk from, caring little for his sympathy so long as he left her alone with her grief, and Allan's picture. Robert, her own husband, her children's father! Had it been he who, tired and no doubt sorrowful at her grief, was lying there in the cold, and she, poor weak wretch, disloyal and almost criminal, was breaking her heart over a dead lover?

So the morning had dawned and found her calmer, and humiliated by her own weakness, yet with a new resolution in her heart to be a better, truer wife.

Robert made a great show of attention to the children while talking and laughing immoderately at the most unlaughable things. He took but the merest notice of his wife for which she was grateful. She had been so accustomed to his kind solicitude that she could scarcely understand this new phase. What did he mean? Had he cast her off.

Then she submitted to the caresses of the little ones who were trying to make amends for their father's omission. But she missed something, something that had been of great value to her in her narrow life; something that had grown to be a want, a necessary ailment of her nature, something which, from the very surety of it in the part that had been a staff upon which she had unconsciously leaned, though she had held another image in her heart the while.

She remembered an old saying of her mother's: "Beware of the anger of a patient man." Was he "angry at last?" He had once told her that there was a limit to his endurance. Had she gone beyond the limit when she had told him that she could not forget his

cousin? Had he not known it all these years? Had he been blind to her coldness? For some time she had been so weary of her bonds that she must have shown it in her manner.

So with these thoughts that helped divert her mind from that other grief, she was awake to external influences, and, consequently seemed to have roused herself to the needs of the hour, and the performance of her usual duties and observances of her place. And thus she had gained control of her feelings and appeared calm to Nettie and Robert on the morning after the news of Allan's death, and as the day had worn away and she had betrayed no great agitation in either manner or look, they wisely concluded to say no more about it.

Thus it came about that what Laura believed to be the result of jealousy upon Robert's part was kind consideration, perhaps kinder because blinded by her calmness to a sense of the real depths of her grief for his cousin. Had Robert half divined the strength of Laura's will, the power of self-control, and realized that in just such proportion was her power to love and hate, knowing that she did love his cousin, he might well have trembled at the possible results, were his cousin alive. But he never took the trouble to analyze her manner and looks, to attach any significance to them beyond the fact that she was quiet, did not talk much, which he believed as near to a state of perfection as woman could possibly attain.

But Robert was sure of one thing, Allan was dead and could be only a memory, after all, and feeling sure as to the correctness of the office reports of his cousin's death, he wisely put on a brave face, thinking that in treating the whole unpleasant affair lightly, he would



divest his wife's grief of half its bitterness, dignity, and sacredness.

Sensible man! instead of looking unutterable things and swearing vehemently and noisily to leave her, or send her back to her mother, he never referred to the matter, seeming as cheerful, perhaps more cheerful than ever, kinder if possible to the children, more lavish in his provision for the household, and, according to his life-long faith in the power of money, he put several new coins in his wife's never empty purse, saying to himself, "money will 'elp 'er to forget hit all. 'e never 'ad any. I've got plenty, and money will tell."

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## CHAPTER V

### LAURA'S STRUGGLE

And my soul from out the shadow  
That lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore.—Poe.

For a few days Laura avoided her old father's keen eyes and quiet remarks that somehow probed to the bottom of her heart. No one could see as he had seen, and no one could lay bare her weaknesses and failures to her own eyes as well as he, and so she avoided him even when her heart told her that his sympathy would be so patient, tender, though uncompromising. She knew that he would bid her root out the worse than folly from her disloyal heart, and she could not, she had tried but she could not.

A few days afterward, when people had found nothing new to tell her of Allan, nothing new to guess or imagine, or invent, because they were tired of the subject, Robert brought home and left upon the table quite inadvertently, another paper, a Chicago paper.

That paper not only contained reports of certain prospects in real estate, stock reports, grain deals, etc., all of which Robert was watching with great interest with an eye to the future, but it contained a late and full account of the charge of Allan's company, dwelling upon his unusual daring and courage, of the manner in which he met his death, dwelling upon the details of Allan's small company against hundreds of the foe.

Laura did not go down to supper, but that evening when Robert had gone out and Nettie had settled down to a new novel, and when she thought her parents were asleep in their old home, she stole to the old arbor and amid its dusky shadows cowered in dreadful anguish that would not be smothered. And as she cowered and moaned, heedless of time or event, a faltering step tottered down the walk and approached the arbor door that now always stood open because it refused to close.

So nothing hindered him from hearing her piteously pleading and calling upon the dead, "Allan, come back and forgive me! come back! come back just once and touch my hand in token of forgiveness. Out of the grave, or in the hands of the enemy, dead or alive come back! Oh, my love, I am true to you! I will be true till death. Only come back, dead or alive!"

Struck almost dumb with surprise and horror the old man could only gasp out:

"Why, Laura! what's the matter, child?"

"You know, father. You've heard Allan was shot by the Indians in the States, and I have killed him. I've killed him just as truly as though I had shot him myself."

"The Lord pity ye, ye poor misguided child! the Lord pity 'nd forgive you 'nd heap on my old sinful head the weight of his wrath for your love for 'nother

man as ain't your own husband! Come, set down, child, ye'll wear yourself out. Sit down; yer can't help it nohow, and maybe we can reason it all out together."

"Don't talk to me of reason! You know I loved him always. Why did you let me marry that brute—"

"Hush! child, not a word against yer husband," her father exclaimed severely, interrupting her as she flung out the hot words in bitter denunciation.

"What is he, then? My tyrant, and I hate him, I hate him. I loathe him, the brute!" and she hissed out the words with fearful venom.

There in the dusky shadows the old man's dim eyes saw her passionately clenching her hands and swaying back and forth in her mingled sorrow and fury. But he did not condemn her. How could he deal harshly with this remorseful soul? She was his child, his best loved, and just now she was back again as in the long ago, his little one, needing his love, his sympathy and patience. And in the dimness the sight of her grief and sound of her broken voice bridged the long lapse of silent years that had made her coldness grieve his fond old heart.

Groping his way blindly through the mist of tears, and the shadows of the arbor, he bent over her in infinite pity and yearning.

"It's all my fault, all my fault, every bit! not anybody else. Just blame me, I can bear it, only tell yer old pa all about this thing as has been worryin' ye. I'll not blame ye and maybe we can think it all out together."

He was bending above her, tenderly stroking her bowed head, in the gloom. He was glad of the shadows, friendly shadows to thus shield her honor from chance curiosity.

And when in broken sobs and tears she had told him

of the years of ceaseless strife, trying to be patient and endure; trying to root out of her heart the old love; hoping against hopelessness that she might succeed, failing often and renewing her efforts, then the shock of the first news of his departure for the States, the long silence, now his death at the hands of the cruel Indians; his death was her fault, she had killed him.

With dim eyes Mr. Bassett knelt at the feet of his daughter and poured out his heart to the forgiving, infinite God for help and pardon for her, his little one.

But she heard it not. She clung to the memory of her love, and though she stifled her sobs to listen, yet she heard it not. But she grew calm, and did not refuse her father's offer to walk home with her.

Laura's secret was hers no longer. She had given it to her father, whose sympathy, after all was very comforting. He was patient to talk with her and to "think it all out together," and he was a safe confidant, she was sure of that.

He had touched the most vibrant chords in her heart when he had spoken of her children. She must be a good mother to them: they must never have cause to blush for their mother.

Then her pride came to her rescue and she resolved to take up the necessity of living outwardly as serene as though there were no grim wraith of bitter memory stalking forever in her pathway. She must go on living and doing just the same.

In her sanest moments she was heartily ashamed of the thought. But too late now, her kind old father knew it, and she could not retract or make him forget what he had seen and heard down in the arbor. She blushed with shame at the recollection of it, and resolved, just as Eben Bassett intended she should, to give her children no cause to be ashamed of their mother in the

future. She would bury her sorrow out of sight, and its wraith should not rise up and tempt her again to exhibit her folly before human eyes. Living or dead it should keep it out of sight.

So she went on doing and undoing; believing and disbelieving; strong to-day and weak to-morrow; deceiving herself by some outward form, when fully aware that down in her heart it was all a pitiable mockery. Yet she was brave now in her cowardice; an abject coward in her sublime heroism. In the smallest details of her domestic affairs doing exactly the thing to be done; never shirking a duty to mope in the silence of love-haunted places; sweetly kind and gentle to every one, and even to Robert to whom this new phase in her manner was enchanting to the last degree, and had the effect of extracting many another gold coin from his purse, if money would make her so gentle and altogether lovable, she should have it.

She tried to listen to his coarse jokes and pointless wit, and even made herself believe after a fashion that she had succeeded in the efforts. She never read "Locksley Hall" now. Helen did not know long ago when she had referred her to that poem that it had been Allan's favorite and that he had lovingly told her that "he must grow better for her dear sake if she was to grow like him, in their sweet futurity." Now it was her life-giving duty to forget all that, and appreciate Robert and of course grow like him.

Certainly this was heroism, to hold to one's heart the thing that above all others is most repugnant because it is a duty, surely this is heroism.

But a new thought was of late taking possession of her. Way down in her heart was growing a new hope.

What if after all he was not dead? What if there was a mistake in the official reports? The first report she

did not see. It might contain some clue by which she could build hope; or he might not be dead, only wounded. This thought had come into her heart, like a whisper from some unknown messenger. Thus two weeks went by.

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## CHAPTER VI

### FIGHTING THE INDIANS

It was night in lower California. The Sierra Nevada Mountains looked majestically down into the valley where a cluster of tents had been pitched that very afternoon. Within the tents all is silent as the grave; even sleep is not deep enough to permit dreams or heavy breathing. Without, a solitary picket paces warily to and fro, with keen, restless eyes piercing the gloom of the sombre valley. Occasionally he paused by the smoldering fire to study by its fitful glow a picture that he draws from an inside pocket. Closely he studies the picture, lovingly pressing it to cheek and heart, passionately kissing it again and again, then placing it back carefully in his pocket, he resumes his beat.

Sometimes he paces back and forth for a few minutes, then he listens with close attention to some sound, or echo of a sound that may be but the rustle of leaves, or the hoof beats of the company's horses that are tethered in a gully close by. Thus an hour passes.

Suddenly the picket hears an unusual noise among the horses, and speedily and cautiously makes for the gully, only to find them crowding close to each other trembling and nervous.

Going up to a powerfully built horse, which by the starlight we see is dark or black, the picket lights a

match, and holding it to the animal's face, sees there a look of fright in his eyes as he restlessly paws the earth. He pets and caresses him, talking in a low voice with his mouth close to the animal's ear, stroking his neck, drawing his head upon his shoulder and soothing him by every possible means, then passing among the rest with gentle touch and kindly voice.

After he had succeeded in quieting the horses, he started to return to the tents. When within a few rods he sees a figure skulking away under cover of a low clump of bushes. He levels his Derringer, fires, the figure bounds in the air and falls.

Instantly the camp is alive: the men have been awakened by the pistol-shot. Going to the spot where the man fell and again striking a match to see by its transient blaze his face, the picket, after one quick glance, mutters, "Apaches."

The Indian is dead, or nearly so, and going back to the tent the picket reports the event.

Though the company, to a man, is wide awake, yet the silence of night continues unbroken. With bated breath, tense nerves, eyes keen and step wary, the picket alternately paces his beat, or pauses to listen to the voices of the night, or the thud, thud of the restless horses' hoofs. So the night passes. Nothing more occurs through the rest of the "watch." At break of day the camp is in motion; the horses are visited and cared for and the dead Indian closely examined. He is found to be dressed in all the trappings of war; in his quivers are poisoned arrows, a Winchester, new and heavily loaded, lies by his side; ammunition in abundance is strapped about his person.

By the evidence gleaned, the captain is convinced that a close struggle is at hand.

Hastily preparing their breakfast, the soldiers prepare

for the fray. They bring their horses close to the tents, each man guarding his own, while a scout, he who did picket duty through the last half of the night, is sent out to reconnoitre.

About nine o'clock the sharp report of a rifle is heard down in the valley, and because the scout has not returned his comrades are getting anxious. The captain is restlessly pacing before his tent. An hour passes and the picket fails to return.

But at last, about eleven o'clock, he re-enters the camp with the news that a band of Indians are further down in the valley preparing for an attack. Among them is the great warrior, Bald Eagle, the terror of all white settlers in lower California, and the greatest fighter in the Apache tribe.

"He's the ring-leader in the border troubles," exclaimed the captain. "If we can get him, the rest will weaken. He leads them all into mischief. I'd give my commission to capture him!"

"I'd give my life!" responded the scout in a low voice.

The men were commanded to prepare for hard fighting and hard riding.

All necessary preparations are made, and once more the scout is sent out to reconnoitre, with orders not to go far from camp.

High noon, and the men are eating a hasty dinner, when the scout suddenly bounds into their midst with the startling intelligence that the Apaches are coming, and almost before they have heard the words, the air is rent by a sound that for blood-curdling ferocity cannot be equalled; the Apache war-whoop rings through the woods, frightening the horses, bringing every man to his feet, and the soldiers find themselves surrounded on all sides by a horde of painted savages.



Surrounded as they were, a hand-to-hand fight was the result. Some of the Indians were mounted, some were on foot. The soldiers leaped into their saddles, nerving themselves to fight for life, urged on by the clarion voice of the scout who with dauntless courage seemed to divine the command with the company's captain, as with a perfect indifference to bullet or arrow he charged into the very midst of the red-skins, cheering on his men in that unequal conflict.

Fighting his way step by step, recklessly charging his black horse among the enemy, hewing a path for the soldiers, now firing with the pistol in his left hand, now cutting right and left with the glistening sabre in his right.

In superstitious awe the savages fall back, and by a preconcerted plan he takes sole command. On he charges. Arrows fly about his head; bullets whiz by him. Still he is unharmed and he sees with triumph they are gaining upon their enemies.

One Apache, a powerful and fearless warrior, is holding his own. He sees his braves falling or fleeing, and it maddens him. He aims for the leader of the soldiers. He is met more than half way, for as though simultaneously the soldier reining his horse alongside, charges at the big chief. His sabre glistens for a moment in the bright sunlight; the chief's tomahawk describes a circle, but before it descends upon the bare, blonde head of the scout, his sabre cuts the air, he raises himself in his stirrups, leans toward his antagonist, and plunges the gleaming blade into his body.

He has won a victory; he has slain the great Apache chief, Bald Eagle!

"Gods! if there were many such fiery young heroes! What wonder that the savages turned and fled!" said his admiring comrades. Ever in the thick of the fight,

leading not following, charging at the fighting or fleeing foe, what wonder that a well aimed bullet found him. He did not falter or shrink or run, but onward he spurred his black horse, black because a woman had loved black horses and he had his choice, and this horse with almost human intelligence had gone mad at the sound of musketry and din of battle, and had seemed to catch the spirit of his fearless rider, as dashing fiercely over the dead and dying, striking madly at everything in his way, screaming in his fury, he had fitly borne his wild-eyed rider through the wilderness of bristling guns and tomahawks, clear into the thick of the fight.

The soldier had a purpose in slaying yonder famous chief, noted for prowess in battle. Every one would know it; she, too, might hear of it and remember it in his favor.

He had triumphed; then whizz came a bullet, and darkness followed.

\* \* \* \* \*

What a terrible scene! close by the fallen hero's side lay the chief completely saturated in his own and his horse's blood. Near by a dying soldier told them of the struggle of the two fallen combatants. He had seen the chief aim the tomahawk at the soldier, saw the sweep of the glistening sabre pierce clear through the body of his foe. Then a bullet struck the fallen savage's horse, another the victor; the black horse reared under the sting of the third bullet, and as he felt his horse sinking under him, with desperate energy the soldier grasped the hilt of his sabre, and as he was borne down drew the blade through the body of his falling foe. In the next moment the horses and riders, conquered and conqueror were lying in a confused mass. The Indian's horse was shot dead, while the black

horse in its death struggle was fast crushing out what life remained in his master.

They took the wounded or dead soldier to the captain's tent, where after an hour's probing the army surgeon succeeded in finding the murderous bullet.

"He may live, can't tell yet, he's lost so much blood," answered the crusty surgeon to all anxious inquiries. "He's black and blue from head to foot from his horse rolling over him. Guess he'll pull through unless he's lost too much blood: ain't got much left. Take good care of him; he's an Englishman, tell by his complexion." Then the surgeon passed on to the next sufferer

"What saved him from being ground to a pulp, Lord only knows," growled a comrade. "Zounds! how he fought. I've been a soldier many years; was through the civil war, and I never saw the like of his fighting. He did not fear them Apaches: guess they'll remember him some time. Poor boy! Ah there, Jimmy, be gentle with the brave fellow. We'll get a flask of whisky from the orderly's tent: that'll bring him round."

"Gad! I'd give him my life blood to save his life, I don't forget how he tended me through the fever!"

"And I'll not forget that he took the shoes off his feet to give to me when my feet were blistered from wearing them cursed cowhides the government provides. His were too fine for soldiers and they were just the thing for sore feet like mine, so the lad would not take no for an answer, but dumped me on a log and exchanged shoes with me, laughing at the sorry look of his trade."

"Boys," said a listening comrade, "our comrade will be happier if he never wakes again, for, do what he

would to hide it, I know he had a terrible grief. Poor fellow, some faithless woman played him false."

"Damn the women! they're always in the muddle!" exclaimed a comrade as he stood gazing down at the motionless face of his comrade. He did not mean the fierce denunciation, for he loved the memory of a mother and sister. But he was smitten with grief at the sight of his fallen comrade and this was a good vent to his feelings, and it did no harm to the women.

Just then the plucky wife of the orderly was announced, who with certain others had arrived from the headquarters to ascertain the truth of the recent engagement in which her husband had taken part. After giving each of the living a brave, cheery greeting, she passed on to the "hospital."

"I wonder if he's living or dead," said the sweet-voiced woman to herself as she placed a finger upon the patient's pulse and bent with womanly tenderness above him, looking steadily into his face.

Her question seemed to stir his feeble pulses. He tried to speak, but only by the flutter of his eyelids could she at last be sure he was not quite dead. He had heard her question, "living or dead?" and something from out the past, something potent enough to loose the hold of death, gave the soldier back to life.

His wounds proved not as serious as had at first been feared. He was badly bruised, but there were no bones broken, and under the skillful treatment of old surgeon Hinsdon and the faithful nursing of his comrades his wounds healed rapidly. Youth was in his favor, and the health and strength of an athlete were not exhausted in the process of convalescing.

Every attention was shown him, for America knows a brave soldier and this young lion whom the bullet of the Indians could not intimidate, was after a month's

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invalidism, clamoring for release from the humdrum hospital life.

He was well, he insisted, and demanded permission to rejoin his regiment.

The surgeon growled about his recklessness, threatened him with imprisonment and a physical collapse, but could put him off from day to day only by promising to watch his case, and the moment he felt sure of his patient's safety in the transfer, he would "turn him over to the Indians."

"They'll make quick work of you next time. They owe you one for killing their chief," said Hinsdon laughing in mock ferocity.

"He must be patient: there are heroes in the hospital as well as upon the battlefield," the orderly's wife told him.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was night; reports had come that the hostiles were uniting about five miles away for a desperate struggle. The orderly's wife sits bravely by the side of her husband, for the last time, though she does not know it, and smilingly accepts the news of the morrow's parting, though her heart is full of dread. The boys are looking from one to another, wondering what the conditions of the morrow will be. The sick are wishing they were well or dead. Up and down the path outside the hospital the restless picket paces nervously.

"Give us a song, old boy, you ought to contribute more than a measly Injin chief to our comfort," said a poor fellow who was lying in his bunk inside, with one leg shot away.

"A song! a song!" came from a score who had often before been charmed by his sweet voice.

"What shall I sing? That's all I'm fit for, it seems," he answered impatiently.

"'Annie Laurie!' give us 'Annie Laurie.'"

They saw him start and quiver as though stung by a scorpion.

"I'll not sing that: I'll sing something better for Yankee soldiers," and he sang a comical ditty that had the effect of raising a laugh, a good thing always for a sick soldier if he is not positively death-struck. But that night he was more restless than ever.

Rumors were circulated through "convalescent's row" that some were to be weeded out, a few discharged, and a few sent to rejoin their regiment.

Rumors among soldiers spread like wildfire even in a hospital, and this one, very much against surgeon Hinsdon's wishes, soon reached Allan Morton.

"Then I'm off to the front," he exclaimed.

"Got your 'permit' from Hinsdon?" asked a hopeless case, a victim of arrow poison who dreaded the time when they should be called to give up the comrade who had led that fearful charge, and hoped he might stay at least while he lived. "Got your permit?"

"I'll get it or take it; don't matter which, so long as I'm out of this bog. If I stay any longer it's for your sake, Ted," he answered kindly laying a hand on the pallid brow of the dying man; then seeing the surgeon, said, "There's the old man now, I'll ask him about it."

"Want to go, do ye? You might as well sign your death-warrant. There's going to be some ugly fighting that will need all your strength and pluck."

"That's what I want: I can't stand this any longer."

"Well, off with you, you can go. You start to-morrow, you'll be cut to pieces in less than a week, or they'll make kindling wood of you: them Apaches don't forget!" and Allan Morton got his transfer.

That night he sang for the sick boys with flashing eyes and ringing voice, pacing the long walk before the tents with quick or slow, soldierly step as the spirit of the song dictated.

At last some one demanded a last song.

"'Annie Laurie' to remember you by!" and he did not refuse them, but sang with tender pathos:

"Maxwelton's braes are bonny  
As early fa's the dew;  
An' 'twas there that Annie Laurie  
Gie'd me her promise true.  
Gie'd me her promise true,  
An' ne'er forget will I;  
An' for bonnie Annie Laurie  
I'd lay me down an' dee."

The following morning he was transferred to another company under Howard and was soon following on the trail of the redskins.

In a few days reports came back of his death. "Shot through the heart, Allan Morton."

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## CHAPTER VII

### FIVE YEARS AFTER

Five years have passed over the inmates of Robert Morton's home and have brought apparent peace and prosperity. Robert had become more and more ingrossed in his business. The love of money had intensified as the years rolled by. Year after year, gradual though not pronounced, "distance" was growing between himself and wife. This was due more to his entire absorption in money-making than to any actual outbreak between them.

But the keen poignancy of self-conviction, which to a nature so highly sensitive as Laura's is maddening,

had been softened to a dull, wearisome remembrance by the lapse of time, except under unusual mental depression; at such times the old shadow haunted her remorselessly.

She sometimes wondered if God had comprehended her prayers that time down in the arbor, when she had promised atonement if only he would spare Allan's life. She meant never to see him again; yet only if he might live so that she would not be a murderer, she, the mother of those two innocent children!

How she had prayed, day after day, at work, or at walk. Night after night by her children's bed, hours and hours she knelt there, beseeching the Lord to spare Allan's life and save her from crime; she was so young and thoughtless when she had sent him away!

But the days and weeks and months had fled, until five years had buried her hopes in oblivion. Oh! nothing was so discouraging to hope as the silence that had engulfed the past five years. She never mentioned it to Robert, and Nettie had never spoken of the matter to her since those old dark days, and had seemed to forget that period of her faulty, wayward life. Her children had been too young to remember that event which one evening five years ago the papers had announced. So they could not rebuke or torture her quivering heart by allusion to their dead relative.

Thus we find her one lovely afternoon in the fall of '84 sitting in the pleasant parlor at Woodlawn, the new house Robert had given to his wife according to a promise that he had made that other Robert five years ago.

The mental strain had had an aging effect upon her. She had grown severe and sedate in many ways in those five years. The lines about her mouth were tensely drawn, and the look in her eyes was not a happy



one, sometimes sad, sometimes stern, but never a happy look. She had grown more stately in manners and more womanly in form. There was a marked change in disposition, too; she was more thoughtful of others and kind to the erring and unfortunate. She seemed now to have a keen sympathy for poor condemned criminals who thronged the police courts, or, if fortunate enough to escape, were chased beyond the grasp of the law. She had sometimes suffered keenly at the lashing of criminals by the press. What were their crimes to hers? She had driven a man to death. They had, perhaps, only taken a loaf of bread, one poor little loaf of bread to save life, while she had deprived a man of the hope of a life-time. She had been punished for that. She knew what hopelessness was, she had no hope that her prayer had been heard, but she must from sheer force of habit continue to pray, to beseech. Oh! would the Lord never hear?

She had changed in tastes, too. From the old love of finery and costly dress she had gone to the other extreme and now, in spite of Robert's protests, dressed in the gravest colors, devoid of all ornaments.

Robert had just returned home, a thing unusual for him out of business hours. But business sent him, he promptly explained in reply to his wife's looks of inquiry. He wanted some papers that he had forgotten in the morning, and now he would sit down and visit.

Everything was rich and costly, everything but the dress his wife wore; that looked like the garb of a poor man's wife, it made him indignant at Laura for not adding to the elegant look of the room by dressing better.

"You'll be turning nun, or going as 'ospital nurse yet. You 'ave just the necessary qualifications for a good nurse; sober, sedate and low-spoken," and he gave

his wife a look which she did not fail to understand. The subject of dress had often been discussed between them. But she never capitulated. Now she only smiled faintly and asked in a gentle voice:

"Do you think so?" It was not the the words so much, but the look in the eyes, a far away, yearning look as she gazed out over the distant fields. The smile faded as her glance continued.

"Tell you, Laura, when I join the harmy hover in the States you may go has nurse. 'ow'd you like that?"

"I should like to be a hospital nurse in the army if I had no children," she quietly answered much to his surprise.

"Cæsar! what would you do has harmy nurse?"

"Take care of the sick and wounded soldiers," she answered promptly, and looking her husband calmly and searchingly in the eye, asked:

"What would you do as soldier?"

"O, I'd fight, what's a soldier for but to fight. But you, you'd faint at the first sight of blood."

"Perhaps, but I'd come to, and get used to it like every other unpleasant or hard thing," she replied firmly.

"You 'aven't nerve enough, 'as she, Nettie?"

"I think she has; she has more nerve than half the men ever dreamed of having; almost too much when I cut my finger this morning," answered Nettie, laughing.

"Why, didn't she pity you?"

"Oh, she looked as though cut fingers didn't hurt."

"Suppose it didn't bleed much or she'd collapsed;" he seemed determined to raise a laugh, or perhaps he was only skirmishing around to get her opinion. "Why didn't you go down and take your first lesson in nursing the wounded when Mike McNally was 'urt? Eh, Laura?"

"I was busy at another house," she answered quietly. "Where?" he asked in surprise.

"Mrs. Davis' little Willie had his foot crushed badly and they had to amputate it. Mrs. Davis was sick. I assisted the surgeon. I did not faint either," and she met his look of surprise with a little pardonable pride.

"I didn't know that," answered her husband, flushing a little beneath her proud, quiet look, that somehow made him feel so inferior to her.

"So you see I have one more qualification for an army nurse," she continued with a smile of triumph.

"You 'ave hevery qualification, but we won't decide the matter just now, will we, Laura?" he said, with a look of fond pride in his eyes. He was so proud, when he took time to think of it, of this stately, beautiful woman.

"Nothing to decide. Only I should like to go as army nurse; that is decided already."

"I'll get you a position hif you want to go; give you the best recommendations," he answered in a bantering tone.

"I must take care of my children; my first duty is to them," answered Laura as though accepting his offer in earnest.

"What about me? What hif I fall sick?"

"What to be sure?" she was waiting for a reply.

"I s'pose I wuld 'ave to 'ire a nurse hif my wife was in the 'ospital taking care of others."

"Yes, I suppose so: nurses can be had for pay."

"But I want the best when I'm sick."

"A good nurse, the best can be had for good pay, and Robert Morton is a good paymaster, none better, and money will buy any material thing, even to good nursing. I suppose you know that?"

Nettie had left the room. Something told her there

was an undercurrent of meaning in the conversation between Robert and his wife that ought to be private. But Laura called her back.

"Nettie, will you hold this skein of silk?"

Now, though Nettie was housekeeper in Robert's home, yet every one could see that Laura was mistress, and that a royally imperious mistress she could be as her manner had indicated. As Robert was on his way back to the office he encountered the servant Lizette at the gate. She had been sent out upon an errand for the house, and paused, waiting for Robert to step aside and let her pass upon her way. As she tripped through the gate, which Robert her master held open for her, she flashed a coquettish glance from her coal black eyes and thanked him, very prettily for a servant girl.

Lizette knew that she was very becomingly attired, that the bright plaid suit and turban with the scarlet feather were wonderfully becoming, and she knew that the master was dissatisfied, because his wife did not dress in gay colors and wear fine jewels. She knew that and many other things that were unusual about her mistress. She knew that her mistress was a very beautiful woman, but so cold, so proud and always wore that detestable nun's dress with not a ribbon, not a jewel. And the master was so fond of her, and would give her all the money she wanted; and as for jewels, did she not get a peep into madam's jewel-case when she was sent to madam's bureau for her fan? Madam was very careful of her bureau. What did it contain that madam should keep it under lock and key? Did she care for her jewels? Then why did she not wear them? Was she afraid Lizette would steal them? Was there something else in the bureau that madam was afraid to lose? Some time, when madam was gone she would slyly take another peep. Madam sometimes

forgot to lock her bureau. What harm in just looking at the bright jewels? She would not take them. She was honest, she would not so much as want to take them.

But such sport to see if there was something else. It would be her little secret all to herself, and secrets were worth a price, sometimes.

Lizette was a French Canadian who had been in the employ of the Mortons but a short time. Not over scrupulous, an arch hypocrite, she had already employed her eyes and ears to some account, for she had discovered that "madam" had jewels, and that she did not care for them, and yet, strange to say, she kept her bureau tightly locked, though she did sometimes forget and leave the key in the lock, and madam was not afraid of thieves either.

Lizette had been at Woodlawn about a month when she one day discovered the key in the lock of the mistress's bureau and so, honest girl, she peeped in; but had barely enough time to see the contents of the lovely jewel case when her mistress returned and almost caught her primping before the glass with a lovely necklace around her white throat, a pair of bracelets on her plump arms, and her hands decorated with several costly rings.

They were just what Lizette in her inmost soul decided she must have some day, especially those "lovely bracelets," those she must have. But how? Patience, Lizette. She must not steal. Had she not said that she was honest?

So honest Lizette hastily put the jewels back into the case and had just turned the key upon their tempting glitter, when she heard her mistress's voice calling. This honest girl went below with the smile of an angel upon her face, and was all attention to her mistress's

wants. In fact, she was more than usually attentive. Was madam tired after her ride? Would she have a cup of chocolate? Only a moment and she would bring it, everything was ready. And away the honest girl flew to prepare the chocolate for her mistress.

"What inspires Lizette, I wonder? She is so very kind to-day and thoughtful," said Laura as she sat waiting for the chocolate.

"I never can get quite used to those French Canadians, they're tricky, I believe," answered Nettie as she swayed slowly back and forth in her chair. "But perhaps Lizette is different," she added by way of apology for her severity.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### A VISITOR AT WOODLAWN

The afternoon sun was fast sinking behind a great crimson and gold cloud that lay above the tree-tops in the forest west of Woodlawn. An unusual hush had followed the busy hum of the working hours. Nature seemed in a waiting attitude, inclining her ear as it were, to catch some sound, resting her great heart that had grown tired with the incessant throb of the day's crush and while, holding her fevered breath for very joy. Nature is a tender teacher, a sympathetic mother, who, when we are restless lulls us to sleep by the rhythmic beat of the rain upon the roof, or the gentle murmur of the breezes among the leaves. Or when troubled by the battles of life, she soothes our tumultuous feelings by a counter irritant in the wild winds that go shrieking about our ears, or by a display of fireworks, and booming of heaven's artillery, thus mother-like diverting our minds from our worries. Then, when we

are deeply, breathlessly glad, she too, in sweet sympathy holds her fluttering breath to listen for the sound of silvery voices and rush of hurrying footsteps.

Woodlawn was very quiet and peaceful this afternoon, or rather evening, for already twilight was serenely following the flying footsteps of the busy, rushing day.

Just at this hour and this moment, when the sun is disappearing behind those stately trees in yonder forest that skirts Woodlawn, just as is seen the last smile upon old Sol's rosy face, so rosy that it promises a lovely day, just then from "down the road" Robert, standing at the gate hears the rumble of wheels.

"I suppose I'll know it if hit's hall 'umbug," he muttered to himself. "Looks like a sensation. Sounds like 'im, just and "Lord McGull like" as ever; calls 'imself the prodigal son! Pretty lofty prodigal that! Well I don't begrudge 'im his life. I guess 'e's all right now. 'E's old enough, Lord knows, to 'ave some sense hif 'e hever will 'ave. Humph! some one hin that carriage, sure. Guess it's 'im."

Then he watched the tall, well-built man alight from the carriage, as with tenfold more dignity and his old accustomed ease Allan Morton came up the walk to the gate, extending his hand in smiling pleasure.

After looking into each other's faces for several seconds, Robert found voice to articulate:

"Welcome back, Al," in a queer, choked voice that cost him some effort to control: Allan in firm, well modulated tones answered:

"And I'm back to stay, for a time at least," after which they slowly walked toward the house.

When Laura had first received the intelligence that Allan was alive and on his way to Toronto, it had partially stunned her, though she received it quietly enough, making no comments upon it. She had sat in her

room staring into vacancy for two mortal hours, but she did not faint, or groan, or rave, though two hours of retrospection is likely to leave their impression upon one's visage. Then she seemed impelled by some powerful incentive, an irresistible longing, for she suddenly threw up her hands in a hopeless sort of way, and quickly rising, crossed the room and knelt before the bureau. But she did not open its drawers, only crouched before it, and leaned against it while the tears fell fast upon her white cheeks.

When Laura had grown calmer, because she had wept away all retrospective tears, she prayed for strength to meet the man whom once she had preferred. But she knew that she wanted to do right, to be true. She had prayed all those years to be made guiltless of crime, and the pitiful father had inclined his ear to listen and had heard. Ah! she was innocent of that crime, her hands were not the hands of a criminal! She was free. She could once more put on the garb of gladness and that would please Robert. O, she would be so faithful to him, so true a wife, so good a mother! Ah, God was good, good!

With all the changes which circumstance and time must bring about, Allan was not prepared for so complete a metamorphosis in Laura. In his moments of bitterness he had imagined a short, dumpy woman with hair drawn tightly back and twisted in a pug at the back of her head; eyes dim and face faded and perhaps querulous; dowdily dressed in complete contrast to the carefully attired, dainty girl of his former dreams; she would salute him in a voice like the twang of an old hand-organ, or rasping like a spit-saw, the short, "handy" skirts would expose slipshod feet as stubby as the red hands, that badly kept nails, stains and all would be extended to welcome back "Al," the love of



her sweet, false girlhood. All this, of course, was in conformity to the life she must live with Robert, for "as the husband is the wife is." He was nearing the house as the lines of Locksley Hall filed through his mind, and the master of Woodlawn without ceremony ushered him into the ample hall, saying:

"I guess I'd better take you hinto the parlor, and Laura can--" then he paused uncertainly.

"O, anywhere," said Allan coming to his rescue. "I hope I'm not to be treated as a stranger; that would seem hard."

"O, no, honly I let Laura do the entertaining. I'll bring 'er. You sit down; make yourself at 'ome," then he left the room.

"This is a strange welcome," thought Allan, "but it is the effect of the new home. Money always brings about a more formal style of living," then he rose to meet the lady whom Robert was leading through the door.

"No need to hintroduce cousin, I 'ope," said Robert in a queer jerky voice, "I guess you know each hother."

"Can this be Laura," asked Allan as he bent his handsome head and smiled down upon her.

"I am glad you are alive, Allan; we are all glad to see you again," and she placed her slender hand in his own with such inimitable grace that he could only answer in an absent way:

"I'm glad to get back again alive."

In one glance Allan saw a tall, slender, stately woman, attired in a well fitting dress of pearl gray, the soft folds of which swept the carpet in rich profusion; the stately glance of those clear gray eyes charmed him into forgetfulness of his customary drawing-room courtesies, those shapely white hands were not rough-nailed and stubby, that smile was like the warming

glow of the morning skies, and her voice, "low and sweet," already broke down the barriers which discretion and pride had erected.

"I'll bring in Nettie and the children," said Robert as he left the room.

"I'm thankful for your kind greeting, Laura. While absent I've tried to redeem my youthful errors," said Allan as his cousin left the room.

"And I'm glad beyond expression to be able to greet you in the flesh. That you are alive is enough," said she again giving him her hands. Her voice was low and sweet in her earnestness and he was misled by her manner.

"I did not think that my life was of any value to any one. I'm happy to be set right if I was mistaken," he answered smilingly, clasping the soft white hands that were extended to emphasize Laura's statement.

"It was a mistake. Your death or the report of your death was my keenest sorrow," said she sweetly.

Again he misunderstood her, believing that her old love prompted the words. He forgot for a moment all the long separation, forgot that she was another's wife. She was here before him. He was holding her hands, looking into her eyes and listening to her voice. Oh, it was perilously sweet! In tones trembling with emotion he said:

"Heaven could not have recompensed me for all the years of wandering like this assurance."

"That you are alive is enough. Of course, I am glad to see you again; you are my husband's cousin, and mine too, now."

He dropped her hands that in his earnestness he had retained, just as his cousin came back bringing his two little girls followed by Nettie. Laura wondered at a sudden change in his manner, but soon forgot it.

With all his assurance Robert could not quite be himself in Allan's company. He could talk of his children; not of his wife; of his business in general; not of his money. So he found upon every side little things that interrupted free fellowship. He was accustomed to talk freely of his money, his success, his wife, to all his guests, but not to this man who knew him so well and who "had come back to stay," and who was "a deuced sight 'andsomer than he was years ago." Robert did not quite overcome the feeling of restraint all the evening, in spite of the extraordinary interest with which Laura entered into conversation, and in her graceful way followed Allan in his talk upon his travels, and his engagement with the Indians.

Robert who had little taste for news that did not bear directly upon the business of money-making, was ill at ease.

And this was Laura, the woman of ice! Robert felt very ignorant by comparison, yet he was prouder of her than ever before. She was his wife, and to see her thus ably and wittily conversing with his erstwhile rival filled him with admiration. Al could see how valuable was the prize he had won!

Laura was now seated at the piano in response to the request of Allan, whose hands had not lost their former skill in turning the leaves of her music.

There was no singing of the old, sweet songs upon which their hearts had thrilled in the olden times, but their voices blended in the grand old war songs, the battle-cry of the States. Sometimes Laura's voice was full of tears, sometimes her hands trembled upon the ivory keys, but never did her purpose waver, neither did her pure heart grow weak. She knows there is a terrible ordeal before her. The days to come will be days of keenest conflict with this man at her side, at

her command, an inmate of her house, the lover, betrothed husband of her old, sweet girlhood.

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## CHAPTER IX

### A HARD FOUGHT BATTLE

If music be food, play on.  
 Give me excess of it, that surfeiting,  
 The appetite may sicken, and so die.  
 That strain again! it had a dying fall!  
 O, it came o'er my ear like a sweet sound  
 That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
 Stealing and giving odor!—Twelfth Night.

Allan continued to remain at Woodlawn. To Robert the advent of spring brought the conclusion that his cousin "was a pretty sensible fellow." It came about in this way.

Allan had been a guest at Woodlawn for several weeks. He had soon after his return proposed going to a boarding-house, and also getting a permanent situation. The latter, with Robert's help, was easily obtained, but Robert would not hear to a change in residence.

"What's the use of your roaming habout hany longer: might has well marry and settle down: you'll be 'appier and better. Why don't you, Al—let youthful mistakes and worries rest. Begin hagain. Bury the past. Marry hand settle down, Al?"

"Nettie," continued Robert, answering Allan's look of inquiry, "and she'll make you a good wife, too. Come, I'll set you hup in 'ousekeeping. What more do you want?" and Robert beamed as though he had brought about a very gratifying result.

"And Laura thinks hit will be the best plan hall around," continued the schemer. "Then you'll be in

the family, and hall that, and hit's better for you. Of course, you're to understand you're to make this your 'ome until you 'ave a 'ome of your own," continued Robert with a smile. Robert felt very generous just now; he could afford to, for contrary to his fears, Allan had been a model of propriety since his arrival, and had not transgressed the bonds of cousinly friendship toward Laura.

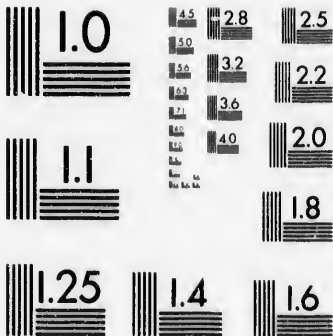
When upon his arrival Allan had proposed finding a boarding-house, Robert had not listened to it, though Nettie had argued that it would be best for all.

"Nettie, hif a burglar wants to get into my 'ouse to steal 'e'll find a way. No use of bolts and bars: 'e'll get in, spite of all the bolts and bars in christendom," answered Robert wisely.

Allan had manifested toward Laura at all times respect and distant courtesy, but never under any circumstances going beyond that.

Did she still care for him, or had she overcome it? The question constantly found lodgment in his brain, and its alluring possibilities filled his heart, for he believed that she welcomed him to Woodlawn with the breath of love upon her lips, and the light of love in her eyes. She might call it by any other name, friendship, interest, cousinly regard, anything that suited her fancy and served to delude others from whom it only screened her real feelings; but he believed that in her inmost soul Laura was true, "Living or dead she would always love him and be true." Those strong, tender natures love deepest and most faithfully, and he had been amazed at the proofs of the strength of her will. He had believed her a willful girl, but not of strong will under continued opposition. But he had been amazed to see her control everything and every one around her. She gave orders; every one sprang to





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obey ; even he had obeyed her tacitly implied wish, or command, to maintain a decorous regard for her wifehood.

But his heart hungered more and more for her sympathy, and, as the days passed, close acquaintance disclosed the beautiful symmetry of her character to his gaze ; so he more vigilantly watched for some sign or token of the coveted boon, but failed to see aught that could be interpreted favorably. She was kind in a distant way, nothing more.

If only she would just tell him in the old way that only the bonds fettered, that in spirit she was true, though in the same moment bidding him be true, he could live on until the end of time with even so small a comfort.

But to be coolly set aside, almost totally ignored, though in his heart he knew the course she had pursued was the safest and best, made him grind his teeth in impotent rage and disappointment.

One morning Allan was passing through the hall when, hearing the soft tinkle of music, he entered the parlor where he found Laura seated at the piano. He looked at her slender, graceful figure as she sat with her back toward him, and folding his arms as was habitual when listening, he stood mute and silent, while the music swayed and surged through his brain, filling him with regret and unrest.

He knew that she was not aware of his presence, for suddenly the time changed and the air of "Annie Laurie" filled the room and made him set his teeth in his struggle for self-control. She had never played it before since his return. She sang the first stanza, then as the last words of the second left her lips she bowed her head upon the piano and gave way to a passion of tears.



In a moment Allan's strong arms were about her, he had drawn her head upon his shoulder and his kisses fell upon her quivering lips and sunny hair.

It had been years since she had sung that song. She religiously rejected it from her *repertoire*, but now its words and tender chords stirred her heart, and broke down the icy barriers which her strong will and good intention had built.

With the strength of years her affection for Allan had increased in spite of husband and children. She did not know how mighty, how resistless its power, until at this hour, unmasked, she no longer repelled his caresses, no longer froze him into silence by cold looks and forbidding manner, but like a little child she wept in his arms. Oh! it had been so long since her weary head had been thus pillowed while his kisses fell upon her lips and soothed her troubled spirit!

Suddenly she reeled and would have fallen had he not caught her swaying form and laid her upon the sofa. He did not kiss her unconscious face, that, somehow, was forbidden him. He did not try to restore her, but rang the bell and told Lizette, that her mistress had fainted, was ill perhaps; then he dashed out of the house.

Lizette watched Allan Morton until he disappeared, then turned from the window to her mistress who lay unconscious upon the sofa. Lizette looked keenly into her pale face, and critically examined her hands and eyelids, in a cool, calculating manner, evidently in no fear or haste. Then she stood still with folded arms and firmly shut lips, and seemed to be thinking deeply, for she did not hear the door open. But as Mr. Bassett looked in upon her and said:

"What's the matter with her?" she instantly threw up her hands and gave a shrill scream of well feigned

surprise and fright, but was hastily suppressed by the keen-witted old man who had little faith in her suddenly acquired pity for his daughter.

He had had enough time to see Lizette as she calmly and very critically stood surveying the unconscious woman, for she had unwittingly left the door ajar and thus he had made no noise when he crossed the threshold.

He had never seen the wily "kanuck" in her present aspect, and he sternly demanded:

"What's the matter with her? What yer doin' to her, you viper?"

"O, my sweet mistress! who haf killed her? She is dead! O, Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

"Shut up yer yellin' an' git the doctor: she's sick," he snarled, as pushing the girl aside he bent over his daughter an instant. As he did so the truth dawned upon him: she had fainted.

The fond father bent over her and discovered no trace or sign of life in his darling. Instantly she was his child again, back in the old days when in some sudden illness incident to childhood she had appealed to him for loving pity. Or, when rushing to him in an agony of grief over the death of a bird or the loss of a pet, he had gathered her in his arms to soothe and caress the sunny head that so trustingly pillowed itself upon his breast. Instantly she was his "little girl" again needing his care. Very tenderly he gathered her in his arms, kissing her pale face and unsmiling lips, calling her by the old pet names that had given expression to his love for her in other days. Still she heard not his voice, neither answered to his caresses, and driven to the verge of desperation he bore her to her room, staggering under her weight, up the long flight of stairs. Placing her upon her bed he half frantically locked the

door just as Nettie came to inquire into Lizette's sudden flight for the doctor.

After dismissing Nettie with a "nobody wants yer. Kin take care o' her myself," he hastily applied such restoratives as he found upon her dressing-case. An open window afforded fresh air, and she slowly revived, just as voices outside the door demanded admittance.

"She don't want yer, she's all right," as the doctor with conscious authority pounded upon the door, thinking, of course, that the door would hastily fly open to science. "She don't want yer, she don't need yer neither: d'ye hear?"

In vain both Nettie and the doctor called and knocked and rattled the door-knob, they were refused admittance.

"I tell yer she's all right, an' she don't want to be pestered with no damned quack nor chattering women, neither, nothin' 'tall. G'way! She's tired out'n yer can't git in, I say. Go off!" with that he further barricaded the door with the commode, after which he returned to Laura's bedside feeling safe from intrusion, but muttering anathemas against people's intrusive curiosity.

Knowing that they could not shake the old man's determination they left the door, and as Mr. Bassett listened to their retreating footsteps he gave a satisfied nod in their direction and turned his attention to Laura who now had fully recovered consciousness.

She had not opened her eyes, but he knew that she was conscious, for when the doctor's peremptory knock had been heard, she had slowly turned her face to the wall, by which he understood that she did not wish to be disturbed. As he took her weak hand and was reassured by the gentle pressure she gave his knotty fin-

gers, he knew that she was in trouble, but, though anxious, he forebore questioning her.

"Yer ain't one o' the fainty kind'n I guess yer clean tuckered out, so you'd better be quiet a spell'n a I'll keep the rest from meddlin'."

He asked no questions, but he understood her; she wanted rest. Yet he hoped that she would open her heart to him as in other days. It would be safer for her, and he could help her with counsel, and sympathy; knowing that her trouble, whatever it might be, would lose half its poignancy if she would share it with one whom she could trust. So, it was with no idle curiosity that he said, looking into her face with tender pity:

"Can yer ole pa help yer, Laura? 'cause yer know nobody'd never know nothin' 'tall about it."

Her silence convinced him that her trouble was beyond him, unspeakable. She lay with closed eyes giving no sign to his question, save by the spasmodic clinching of her small hands that had always been a sign of desperate resistance which he understood. But his heart sank as he found for the first time that she refused to share her sorrow with him. It was as bad, nay worse than standing by her new-made grave, there seemed such a gulf between them.

So leaving a fond kiss upon her cheek he left the room just in time to find Lizette, as he opened the door, scurrying away at a fearful rate.

"Here you, Frenchy, what yer want?" She paid no heed, but disappeared into the room beyond.

He stood waiting a few moments to see if she would return, but concluding that she was too cute for him he went down stairs into the sitting-room to find Nettie.

His mind was not easy about Lizette, though he

could not be certain that she had been listening at the door. She had a sly, curious way about her that convinced him that she was equal to any mischief and would make a good spy, a paid spy. He did not believe that she would take the trouble to pry into such secrets, or sacred mysteries for the sole satisfaction of idle curiosity. It was hardly consistent with her natural characteristics. No, she must have some object in listening at key-holes, or cunningly watching the play of the countenance that reveals so much to the keen observer. What then was her object? In whose employ and interest? For whom was she hunting down this poor tortured soul who lay on her bed with closed eyes, pallid and haggard, taking no notice of even her dearest friend?

He stood pondering the subject a few minutes, waiting for the appearance of Nettie or some one else. But as no one came he started to go back and see Laura once more before he left the house, and was amazed to find Lizette just coming out of the room.

"What yer want? What yer doin' here?" he demanded sharply, stamping his foot and glaring at her fiercely. "Now I tell yer to keep out o' that there room 'n that's 'nough, too."

"I thought I heard my mistress calling," murmured Lizette ready with an answer for any emergency, "the father need not rebuke me, I am afraid that my sweet mistress is sick, she is so still and white," and the wily girl's face was full of sympathy that did not harmonize with the glitter in her eyes.

"She don't want yer if she is sick; she want's ter be alone 'thout yer botherin' her, too, remember," and he went into the room locking the door after him.

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr. Bassett as he paused, looking at the closed door that had just barred out the un-

pleasant face of the French girl, "Don't see how she can help bein' mean 'nd low down: got snake eyes and hisses like a snake. Shouldn't wonder if she can bite like one, too, on the sly. One thing sartin I can't leave Laura in the clutches of that "bomnible kanuck" —blast her picture! 'bieve she'd pizen her if I did. Net's ez slow ez m'lasses in January. Lord! what fools some folks be, most on'em. If I say boo to Hanner 'bout it she'll be paddlin' off down here an' worryin' the poor child to death. I know she don't want Bob to git an idea 'bout her faintin', cause he'll be mistrustin', or somethin', men always are, likewise jealous men be: hain't got no more sense." Then he went into Laura's room and was delighted to find her sitting by the window.

"Well, how're yer feelin'? gittin' stronger?"

"Yes, I'm stronger, but my head aches, and I'm tired. Will you tell them below I don't wish to be disturbed. I want one day to myself, to rest all day," said she wearily leaning her head against the window-sill and closing her sad eyes.

"Yes, yes, child, they shan't disturb you, you kin rest all you want to if that's all; only, don't let them white hands lay idle too long, 'cause you know there's an evil one allus fills idle hands, an' his work is damaging to the soul. Clean hands is most allus busy with somethin' ruther, if it's only doin' and undoin', just like knittin' up yarn, an' ravelin' it out again. I've seen yer gran'ma Bassett do that long time ago. I don't ask no questions, child, but I can mind you of your duty to yerself and family: that's my duty to you."

"Have I failed in my duty, father?" Laura turned her solemn eyes full upon him with a look that rebuked him severely.

Not's I know on, child, not's I know on," he hastily

answered, "an' the Lord grant ye never may; but ye mus'n't min' yer ole pa so's to git put out at him." His eyes were dim and had a beseeching look that melted the ice around her heart as he stepped to her side and bent over her with yearning tenderness.

She closed her eyelids to shut back the tears, for she was yet physically weak, and his tender voice melted her resentment.

"Now, Laura, I'm goin' home'n jist want to say one thing by way of warnin', though it aint none of my business to meddle with your 'fairs. But it's my candid opinion, that thar girl o'yourn, that consarned kanuck is ez full of the meanness o' satan, ez the old feller, himself. She's a sly one'n you'd better git rid o' her."

"I can't father without a good reason," said Laura wearily, "and I have none yet."

"Well you'd better be careful'n keep your own counsel. She's full o' mischief," and he shook his head emphatically.

"How do you know, father? Have you seen anything that would make you think so?" asked Laura languidly.

"Yis, I have. She was listening at your door'n I know she was listening for no good"

"She thought I called her: that was all."

"O, she's glib enough with reasons, but I don't believe half she says, an' you'd better not trust her neither," persisted her father much to Laura's annoyance. He seemed to see this and sought to overcome the feeling of resentment that she might hold against him.

"Course, I don't mean no harm. She's your hired girl'n it's your house: but I'm 'feard you trust her to much, Laura, 'n I don't. I hate the sight o'her!"

Mr. Bassett left his daughter's room with a sad and troubled heart, and it did not mend matters any when, upon going down into the kitchen, he found Lizette

standing in the back door in earnest conversation with a dark, evil-looking man, evidently a foreigner.

The old man's quick eyes caught the glimmer of gold when she hastily plunged her hand into her pocket as the man left, and their haste and confusion convinced him if nothing else could, that she was a dangerous person. The face of the stranger left an unwholesome impression upon Mr. Bassett as of some one whom he had seen before.

Surely he had seen him somewhere, and so forcibly did the matter take hold upon his imagination that the good old man studied over him for days afterward. It was as though in a dream, sometimes vaguely, sometimes distinctly, he saw the dark, evil face loom up out of a crowd. The black eyes were flashing fire, or sometimes looking keenly, searchingly at him from beneath beautiful black brows. He wore his long hair brushed back from a broad, low forehead, and his features wore a white, set, stern look, while beneath a black mustache his white teeth gleamed between cruel red lips. His face though stern was faultless in every outline, a clean-cut, cruel face.

Mr. Bassett had not heard him speak, yet he believed him to be a Bohemian or Italian. In vain did the old man ransack his brain; nothing helped to solve the mystery. Sometimes he almost grasped a clue, but it was gone again in an instant.

The stranger's face haunted him asleep or awake, and tormented him at all hours, and wherever he went. Sometimes he was so sure of the man that he would open his lips as though to call him by name.

He went so far as to ask Nettie and Robert, but received no satisfaction; they had seen no one and were not particularly interested in Lizette's beaux.

The old man so far overcame his honest nature as



to resort to stealthily watching the house, and to that end he found a sheltered nook up in the loft of Robert's barn, from which he could command a full view of the back and sides of the yard. In fact it was an excellent position in which to see the several approaches to the house. So a few days after the above events, he climbed up into the loft and sat waiting for the appearance of the stranger and Lizette.

"Looks dummed mean to be spying around like this," said he to himself as he crept into his hiding-place, "but I vum I'm goin' ter find out sumthin' 'bout that blackamore ef it takes me inter wus places'n this. Guess there's nothin' wus here than cobwebs'n spiders'n sich like: they don't hurt. Jiminy! that's jist what that girl's like; a little black, shiny spider; one of the bitin' kind, pizen too. There, guess I'm ready to take an inventory of that feller if he puts in an appearance. I'd just as lief set here anyhow if he don't, cause it's still'n I shan't be disturbed. Hanner is unusually curious and pryin' lately; seems to think I need a sight of watchin' an' 'tention. Humph! sech a thing as havin' to much 'tention from curious folks. Ef I was as dummed curious as some folks I know I'd put my head to soak! Jiminy! there he comes sure's I live, an' there's the kanuck, too; see him bow to her ez if she was the queen! He's got an ax ter grind an' he wants a sharp edge on't too. Guess she's the one to do the job! Consarn' em!"

They remained in earnest conversation for a few minutes and the man again placed something in her hand and she hastily transferred it to her pocket just as the door of the house opened and Nettie appeared.

Instantly the upright form of the foreigner took the bent, bowed appearance of infirmity or sickness, and his whole manner was that of a suppliant. However,

Nettie soon re-entered the house, the stranger resumed his erect attitude with a mocking bow toward the door and they seemed to proceed in their interrupted conversation.

Mr. Bassett saw him in an excited manner take the girl roughly by the shoulder, and she, shrinking under his rough grasp, seemed assenting to his request. She clasped her hands and seemed protesting, even imploring for life, but again the rude grasp of the stranger's long, slim, white fingers brought her to the required state of submission. He then turned away, but again returned for a minute and shook a menacing finger at her, after which he walked away quickly, erectly as one born to rule and be feared rather than to be ruled and to fear the eyes or power of men.

Lizette continued to stand by the door a few minutes, evidently in deep dejection, but seeing Allan Morton coming up the walk she hastily went into the house.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Laura, I believe we shall move to Chicago," said Robert one evening soon after the above events, "how would that suit you?"

"What is your object in moving to Chicago?"

"Well, several things. I've been thinking of hit for some time; I didn't think hit worth while to say hany-thing habout it, huntil I was sure. Of course, hit's the breaking hup and getting settled in hanother place that bothers me. But I'm going into a business that will take me there hall the time, so I guess we might has well move hand be done with it. I can sell the 'ouse hany day; got a chance to make a big bargain."

"What of father and mother," she asked with a clouded face.

"O, we'll take them right halong too. I can rent a

cottage near us, and they can be just as comfortable as here. More so for Chicago is going to be the liveliest city in the States. It's positively necessary for me to be there, and of course I want my family with me;" he looked up inquiringly.

"I suppose so," she answered gently, feeling called upon to say something. Yet her heart resented his past selfish disregard of wife and children in his eager pursuit of money, so she could not be very enthusiastic over this new plan.

"How do you feel about going? Have any objections?" he asked, being sensitive to the chill in her voice.

"O, if you think best, I am satisfied." She did not look satisfied and he knew it was but another proof of her strong will, this indifference to the subject in question. "Of course, I hope father and mother will go; I should miss father so," her voice trembled slightly, and Robert, immediately relieved that she should consent so readily, vowed inwardly that they should go, for he would hold out such inducements that they would be unable to refuse; so he told Laura his decision, and was greatly delighted to see her evident relief.

"I don't want to leave them, and if they will go willingly, I think I should be glad of the change."

So Robert talked the matter over with the old folks, and was delighted to find them so tractable.

Mrs. Bassett, like all old mothers, was loth at first to leave the spot upon which she had lived so many years, but her old husband believed it was just the thing: of course, he would follow his own children. He believed, too, that the change would be good for Laura, and told her so. He secretly hoped, but did not tell her, that she would discharge the "kanuck," and then her black follower would be left behind, too.

Yes, altogether it was a good plan; he'd go.

## CHAPTER X

WALLIE AND DONNY

In a down-town office, No. 256—St. in Chicago, up two flights of stairs, which, by the way, are seldom used, owing to that modern invention of climbing skyward known as the elevator, sit two men neither of whom will bear the closest scrutiny if one is particular about such little matters as frank, candid eyes, wholesome laugh, honest, clean speech, in fact, honesty and cleanliness in heart, brain and habits.

These men were as unlike as the antipodes, but it might be for that very reason they agreed so harmoniously; if they ever disagreed it was because they agreed to disagree. So harmoniously did they live, that while in No. 256 they breathed and worked as one man, and that one man might be called for convenience Samuel Donovan or Jason Waller, it mattered little which.

Just at present these two worthies were deeply interested in a paper which they held in their hands. I say they, advisedly, for each held a corner of the sheet, and both were endeavoring to decipher its contents.

Though they were known as Samuel Donovan and Jason Waller, with an Esq. after each honored appellation, yet, familiarly, alone in their office, they were tenderly, confidentially, "Donny" and "Wallie."

Samuel Donovan was a big, pompous, red-faced, sandy-haired, yellow-eyed, pug-nosed individual, who dressed gorgeously and sported diamonds enough to cover with glory a half dozen fashionable belles. His companion, Jason Waller, bachelor ostensibly, was tall, thin, with iron-gray hair, piercing black eyes, heavy, black moustache, roman nose, wide, thin-lipped mouth, whose

hatchet face portrayed benevolence, or cruelty and craftiness as the mood or tense might be.

Benevolent, he certainly was, in the big church where he worshipped, and to which he liberally subscribed, beside paying for a high-priced pew, for he was a firm believer in the creed that had been made for just such as he:

"He that giveth to the church lendeth to—Jason Waller."

Then, too, it was eminently respectable to give liberally to the church. His name headed every list and became a synonym for all things good and desirable. Indeed, many a man joined Waller's church, because, when looking about for a correct and exclusive place where he might worship respectably, with credit and comfort to himself, he was told in glowing colors that "our church has upon its lists such men as Jason Waller, you have doubtless heard of him, millionaire, aristocrat, very benevolent; lives in an elegant suite of rooms in the biggest hotel in the city: choose this church. Good music, everything fine, select families. Just the church for people of the best class; nothing common here!"

No one could accuse Samuel Donovan of being "pious," as he called it, yet he, too, was a liberal subscriber to various churches, and certainly his returns were immense.

In his younger days he had been dubbed Don Juan, because of his careless search for a wife, one that he could, or would, keep. Sometimes, too, he had been called a "Gay Lothario." There might have been some connection between this and his troubles about his wives, but to his friend he was Donny.

Just at the present time when we find them in their office, these two friends have agreed that the letter in

their hands contains a clue by which they may, thanks to their astuteness, gain a coveted point.

"Now, this is ours, Wallie, between ourselves, we understand," said Donovan, looking very profound through his little yellow eyes, "ye see, we'll need to spend a heap of money this winter."

"If we're permitted," interrupted Wallie with a terseness about the mouth and a sneer curling the nostrils of his hawk nose.

"We'll be permitted, Wallie, and don't you forget it."

"Can you make a river run up hill?" asked Waller.

"Why not, with sufficient power? They run trains up hill; why not a river?" answered Donovan bringing his fist down upon his big knee with a heavy thud.

"You'll break your knee-pan, Donny, if you get excited, and then I'll have to waste my sympathy on you, and it will exhaust the stock, there is so much of you."

A hearty chuckle that presently ended in a boisterous laugh was all the answer Waller got from his big friend, as for a few moments he eyed him in mock severity.

"Nothing but jealousy: nothing at all. I'll have to get a new partner," and again Donovan exploded in laughter.

"You can't do without me to keep you respectable, you know you can't, Mr. Donovan," replied Waller grimly.

"Respectable! ho! ho! ho! 'Spectable! he! he! he! You'll kill me yet, you old sinner you!" roared Donovan. "There ain't enough of you to make a respectable man. Ha! ha! ha!"

"There's too much of you, Donny, you'll excite the cupidity of the soap manufacturers," answered his fleshless chum in droll humor.

A gurgling laugh followed this monstrous wit which

was interrupted by the entrance of the office boy bearing in his hand a card that he gave to Donovan.

Wiping his eyes with the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, he read the name upon the card, with a nod of satisfaction, gave it his partner, saying:

"What will we do? See him?"

"Have to, I guess. Does it pay to refuse him?"

"Not obliged to see him if we don't want to," quickly answered Donovan blinking fiercely through the mists that still made his glance uncertain.

"The gentleman is in haste," respectfully announced the office boy.

"Let him wait," said Waller, curtly.

"And lose that man's assistance?" asked Donovan, looking over his shoulder at his partner. "The man has money; we shall need his money; he wants power; we want the help of just such men, even without a dollar. Better not let him wait too long, unless we have all the money and assistance we shall need in the future."

Donovan had not counted in vain upon the influence of the last remark. Waller consented to see him, but it puzzled Donovan why his friend seemed so loth or careless about admitting the stranger.

"Show him in: I don't care," said Donovan, "What do you suppose he wants this time?" he asked his friend.

"Money, I guess," tersely responded Waller, without shifting his glance from the window before which he stood staring at some object below.

"Well, we have some to let, of course," said Donovan, curious to know what contrary spirit had possession of his friend.

"We have some, or none, as the case may be," said Waller.

"Shall we have some then? Do stop your staring at that window and attend to business, what's the matter with you?"

Jason Waller turned coolly and answered in a drawling tone, "Why, if he gives good security, we may loan to him; but we shall need to control large sums of money from time to time this winter. Do you think we can do it, if we lend to this man?"

"Guess we can. I shall be handling a large amount independent of the firm's money. You know your own resources, don't you?"

Before Waller had replied to Donovan's question, the door opened and their visitor entered the room.

"How de do! sir, glad to see you," said Donovan, as he grasped the hand of Robert Morton in a friendly way, and in the most cordial manner gave him a seat.

"Business has usual," said Morton, briskly, by way of salute, surveying his host's table piled high with letters, papers, etc.

"Never was out of business," answered Donovan, nodding his head wisely, "just now we have the biggest thing we ever had on our hands."

"A big thing in money-making. I'll venture," rejoined their guest half quizzingly and with a shrewd look in his eyes.

"It will yield money, or I wouldn't spend my time over it," was the answer of Donovan, with a cautious yet off-hand dash in his voice.

"Money will tell," answered Morton, "and hit's the honly thing in God's green earth that will tell!" and he nodded his head emphatically at Jason Waller, who had, except for a brief salutation, kept silent. Now he responded by an assenting nod, though from a lofty height, answering piously as became a man with a christian reputation to sustain:



"Yes, true enough, but money is only given us to put to good uses."

"Just lent us by the Lord," echoed Donovan, stroking down the muscles of his face, for fear their natural tendencies should betray him to their visitor.

"Well that's hall right, but your time's precious, I take it, and I may as well be brief with my business," answered Morton, who was not in sympathy with the last remarks.

Being assured by his hosts that he had not made a false estimate of the value of their time he, proceeded to negotiate for a loan. After some haggling and many questions by way of due caution on their part, they at last granted "as a personal favor," the sum of \$25,000, for a certain time, at a certain per cent, after which Morton went away.

"What do you s'pose that man's up to now?" asked Donovan, as their visitor's footsteps died away in the corridor outside.

"Up to money-getting," laconically answered Waller.

"Wallie, have you got any news to tell?" chuckled the big man of the firm.

"I shall be able to tell you some news later," was the cool answer. "Meantime I'm going to call on that needy female down at '126' that you have so heartlessly neglected. She wants some help: What shall be the figures? twenty-five per cent?"

"'Bout that, twenty-five per cent for sixty days only. I promised to call there myself, but I hate calling on indigent females; they always have a sad story to relate, and that upsets me for business."

"You haven't any of the spirit of self-sacrifice, I see. Doubtless, she would be overwhelmed to see you," facetiously answered Waller, as he brushed an imaginary speck of dust off his coat-sleeve. "However, I hope

she'll be brief and prompt with business, for I hate tears and a scene as much as you do, but I can stand them if it serves my purpose. A case of this kind isn't promising."

"Wallie, you have no appreciation of lonely widows. I guess I had best go after all. You'll be sure to make her cry."

"You don't seem to be informed about my feelings for the widow, Donny. She is a charge of our church, sews for Mrs. Van Tassel, who don't even know her by sight, but asked me to permit the widow to remain in her room a while longer as a personal favor to herself, and insists on paying me with her most fascinating smiles and an invitation to her party next week, eh, Donny?"

"Good enough! Wallie, do you know who's going to be there?"

"Everybody and his wife, if he can get a card, I suppose," answered Wallie nonchalantly, as he drew on his gloves over his long, slim, dark hands.

"But this one hasn't a wife," pursued Donovan, exultantly.

"Then he has my sympathies," replied Waller, in a mock sorrowful voice that convulsed his friend.

"To save your life, Wallie, I will tell you that it is your royal foe."

"Allan Morton?"

"Yes, Allan Morton, he's a lion now. Poor as a church mouse, but a hundred per cent better than his cousin."

"I hate him," fiercely hissed Waller.

"Thought you'd like to know; he'll be there, no doubt; but what surprises me is that Robert is asked, too."

"Humph! can't you see? His lovely wife is the card," replied Waller, sneeringly.

"How in heaven's name did she come to marry that man?"

"Beauty and the beast. Satan always manages such marriages. He'll manage theirs!" with which, Waller rose to go out.

Eyeing Waller's sallow face that had taken on a cruel, rigid look, Donovan saw that which restrained his ready laugh, an honest sacrifice on his part.

After Waller left the office, Donovan sat for a few minutes still whistling softly, for he was too loyal to laugh at Waller in the man's present mood while even his footsteps echoed outside in the corridor. But as the last sound died away in the distance, he burst out in a hearty guffaw and winked and blinked and nodded at the door that had just closed upon the form of his friend.

"Sly dog, that Wallie! smart's a briar. Makes others smart, too. Ho! ho! ho! I must tell that to Wallie: won't he snarl! Ho! ho! ho! How he hates Allan Morton! Can't more'n half tell why. Shouldn't wonder if there's a woman in the case: always is, bless 'er! He don't tell even me what makes him so spiteful against that man. I'll ask him. If he don't tell me, I'll watch him. I have my opinion, though. Wallie mustn't have secrets, it's against our interests. If he has secrets, I can't trust him. He'll be no good. He's deep, is Wallie. Ho! come."

Again the office boy came in bearing a card which he gave to Donovan, as Wallie, for whom the card was intended, was out. Donovan read the name:

"Leon Illardo. What does he want?"

"Don't know. He wants to see Mr. Waller."

"Mr. Waller's out. Tell him to call again."

After the boy went out, Donovan sat a few minutes and pondered over the name on the card. Another

secret, perhaps, and he hated secrets between them. Presently giving vent to an exclamation more emphatic than becoming to a man of his superior business connections, and going to a small secretary that bore upon its silver plate the name of Jason Waller, he opened it with an odd-looking instrument which bore no more resemblance to a key, than Donovan himself did to a good man and a gentleman, and taking from one of its small drawers a sealed letter, he compared the name of the address with the one on the card. They were just the same. "Leon Illardo, No 37—St."

"Cæsar! I saw him writing that letter yesterday. Why didn't he post it? Why didn't he tell me; if it's business, I ve a right to know. Wallie mustn't have secrets that concern the firm of Donovan and Waller."

Now, does it not seem a little one-sided that Donovan should exact the utmost candor from his partner, while he, himself, was possessed of a secret which well might have startled Waller, had he but known that his partner had in his pocket an instrument that could reveal to its possessor the contents of his, Waller's, private secretary?

Before closing the secretary, Donovan copied the name and address in his note-book, and then carefully placing the letter in the drawer just as he thought he had found it, he shut the lid, which fastened by a spring lock, and resumed his seat just in time to meet Waller smilingly, though his mind was full of the mystery of the card which bore the name, Leon Illardo, No. 37—St.

"Had company?" was the first question that put to flight his remaining self-possession, as Waller seemed to eye him with unusual keenness.

"I haven't, but you have," answered Donovan, trying to speak smoothly, but only partially succeeding.

"What name?"

"Leon Illardo, but there is the card," and he threw it upon the table vexed at his thoughtlessness in holding it in his hand but still watching covertly the effect of his words.

"Humph! Leon Illardo! Did he state his business?" asked Waller, stolidly looking at his watch, then seating himself by the table began writing, and waiting a reply with evident composure.

"I did not see him," Donovan replied. "He wanted more congenial company." As Donovan failed to get an answer to his small attempt at pleasantry, he asked impatiently:

"Who is the man anyhow? I've never seen him, never heard of him before. Who is he, Waller?"

"He is just what his card purports him to be, Leon Illardo. Let us attend to our mutual interests," answered Waller, blandly yet firmly.

"O, then, I'm to understand that Leon Illardo is none of my business. You sly dog! I'll set a trap for you. No secrets here if you please!" shaking his finger at Waller. But he did not laugh, a fact which attracted the attention of his partner, who looked at him in a cool, critical way, and only asked by way of rejoinder, not wishing to make Donovan uneasy as he seemed to be:

"How have you employed your time in my absence? Have you been ferreting out my secrets?"

But Donovan was on the defensive in an instant and answered with a brave air:

"You have no secret can't keep any: you're too thin," at which application of the popular slang, the big member of the firm roared and shouted and gurgled, until from very sympathy, Waller, too, suffered a relax-

ation of the muscles about the mouth to replace the grim austerity of his sallow face.

This so delighted his friend that he gazed at him in rapt admiration for a few moments, then went off into another roar that brought the office boy to inquire mildly, if anybody called or was hurt.

Assured by Waller that no one but Mr. Donovan was suffering, and that, owing to his extreme youth and lack of muscle he had not been called, the boy departed, believing that "Mr. Waller was a queer one, but that Mr. Donovan was the jolliest lark!"

"Now I'm prepared to relate my 'experience' while I was out this morning, if you are sufficiently recovered from your last attack of idiocy to listen intelligently," said Waller, relapsing into raillery as the best method of disposing of confusion.

"Go on, I'm all right. Sober as a deacon in a prayer-meeting."

"Don't cast slurs at the prayer-meeting," was the sarcastic reproof of Waller, "don't you know they are the gathering places of angels? Now let's descend to earth again."

Then they opened letters and were soon absorbed in the coming winter's ventures, which no doubt were very promising.

"Now what we want is to get Morton to help us; he's so crazy for money that he'll work like a beaver. We must be able to control a million, or several millions, if necessary. Once launched there is no drawing back. Morton is one of those live, magnetic men who carries a crowd with him. Money will get him every time."

There was no levity now, either in tone or manner. The firm of Waller and Donovan had settled down to business. In that aspect we see them as they are, most

intensely individual, alert, active, grasping, unflinching.

Laughter, nonsense, raillery, were as natural to Donovan as mirthlessness, sarcasm, caustic wit, and sternness were to Waller, yet upon the peal of the door-bell, the tick of the clock, the flash of an eye, both could turn to business with a oneness of purpose that was perhaps the great underlying secret of their mutual success, for each was bent upon the scheme of a lifetime, to be rich and powerful.

These two men had sprung from poverty. Donovan had once been an errand boy; Waller had lived by his wits in New Orleans. They did not refer to these times in the parlors of their rich friends of the present day. There might come a time when they would stand before a crowd whose assistance and votes were necessary to their advancement and, with success, resurrect their plebeian ancestry as attestors to their devotion and sympathy to the people whom they were pledged to serve; there might come a time when they would seek glory in boasting of the old days of starved and naked boyhood, the better to attest to their sympathy for the down-trodden masses whose condition they were trying to elevate. But now to the rest of the world they were Samuel Donovan, Esq., and Jason Waller, Esq. In their office at this present moment they are Donny and Wallie, with their heads low over the same letter which was of vital interest to them. After reading it over and over again, Jason Waller said with a decisive compression of his thin lips:

"We must do as this letter requires to satisfy them. We must get the inside track of the working classes, and in order to do that we must impress upon their minds our interest and devotion, our wealth which we will devote to the cause, the elevation of the laboring

man. Once get their confidence, and they will pour their wage money into our treasury. They are ignorant; many of them neither read nor write: we must get the help of some of their own nationality, too. They are in deadly opposition to the native-born American. We shall need such men as Morton, slaves to their greed for money, to work for us. Morton would scout the idea, but he would sell his soul for money. He does not know it; I do know it. He is just the man. We don't want a man with a conscience alive to every pin-prick of public opinion; when we have done with him there will be ample time to feel sensitive to wasp stings."

"Morton is keen, Wallie: don't lose sight of that and underestimate him," said Donovan, fearing that his friend did not fully appreciate the character of the man whom they wished to employ.

"So am I: never forget that: I know the man, he loves money. His favorite maxim is 'Money will tell.' Don, there are just two things I will have, by fair means if I can, but have them I will. I will be the possessor of a million at least, and the fairest woman on the face of the earth. I don't care how I get her, she must be mine."

His intensity Waller had pushed back from the table and as he hissed out the last words, the tempest within him glowed through his black eyes, and crimsoned his usually sallow face, while his long, dark fingers writhed and twisted about each other as though they were strangling some poor, troublesome wretch who dared oppose him.

This was a new phase in Waller's personality that astonished Donovan and left him no disposition to laugh. He could only stare in surprise at the excited man and wait further developments. He had never



seen him in the character of lover, and had no adequate conception of his vindictiveness toward a rival, although he knew him to be an implacable foe. He was on thorns to know all about it, but he knew Waller too well to ask about his private affairs. The fierce glitter in his eyes made Donovan nervous. His own easy-going nature would have preferred a smoother courtship, without hate, rage, jealousy, perhaps even more, for Waller had plainly meant that if there was an obstacle in the way to his obtaining the "fairest woman" he would not hesitate to remove it. So thinking these things over, Donovan stared at his friend, but vouchsafed no reply.

Conscious that he had lost the mastery over himself to a dangerous degree, Waller arose and went to the window, and remained looking down upon the crowd, until he had become calm again; then with an evident purpose he sought to lead his friend's mind away from the subject that had excited him.

Donovan understood this, and saw Waller start and clutch the window-sill as a look full of passionate hate filled his eyes. Donovan was more surprised than ever at these new evidences of a nature that had been seemingly so foreign to the man. He had always appeared cold and self-possessed.

"What do you see in the street?" asked Donovan. He wanted to talk business and it bothered him to find Waller so absorbed in a matter of which he knew nothing.

"I see," said Waller, drawing himself together again, but yet scowling fiercely, "I see a crowd." But this was what Jason Waller saw: Looking out upon the crowd below, he had seen a lady enter the store opposite. Outside stood her carriage. He recognized the Morton carriage. The horses were uneasy and restive.

The coachman could with great difficulty restrain them from dashing off down the street. Presently he saw Mrs. Morton come out and endeavor to get into the carriage alone. He saw her step back as though afraid of them, for they were fast becoming unmanageable. Then he saw a dark, well-dressed man step to her side, and touching his hat politely offer his assistance.

She smilingly accepted his offer hand and again essayed to enter the carriage, but with no better success than before, even less, for had she not stepped quickly back, partly upheld by the man's supporting arm, she must have been jerked off her feet, for the horses, rendered more furious by the angry voice of the coachman, were now plunging violently.

It was at that time, that with a scowl of hate, Waller saw Allan Morton ride hastily up, and throwing his reins to the terrified coachman, with a grip of steel hold the plunging animals absolutely still.

Donovan had taken in the situation, having been attracted to the window by the looks of Waller; he saw Mrs. Morton take the hand of the waiting stranger who politely assisted her into the waiting carriage, and was driven away; saw Allan Morton mount his horse hastily, watching them until they turned the corner, then dash on after them.

Donovan saw the handsome dark stranger watch until Allan had disappeared, then glancing up at the window a moment, pass up the street.

Looking at Waller just at the moment of that upward glance, Donovan saw a gleam of recognition flash momentarily into his eyes.

"Who is that man?" he asked, as Waller turned his glittering eyes in the direction the carriage and horseman had disappeared, "he seems to know you, who is he?"

"Leon Illardo," quietly answered Waller.

"Leon Illardo! why, that man is a gentleman," said Donovan in surprise.

"Leon Illardo claims to be a gentleman. We are all gentlemen in broadcloth," was Waller's sarcastic reply as he turned away from the window and resumed his seat by the table, and again taking up the subject of the letter referred to in the beginning of the chapter, said, as though his mind had been upon it all the time:

"Now this is just what we want. We must keep this letter to refer to at any time, for it furnishes the assurance without which we would not be justified in going into the thing. Hear this:

"They will not promise what you want, neither will they trust you unless you promise to co operate with us against the city police force. These men are all Germans, Poles and Bohemians, sworn foes to the police force who are all Irish, or nearly all. These men must have the assurance that you will work in their interest: then they will collect their forces and follow you as their friend.'

"What do you think of that, Donny? Here's a big chance for a strong, well-balanced mind to take hold of this thing. These men have practically no head, no chief, and are in a constant ferment over what they believe to be a scheme of the capitalists to deprive them of their rights, the right to big wages for little work. Warden must be nominal head or chief: he is one of them and is a dangerous man who don't care so much for money as power, self-aggrandizement, wants to hold office and boss the rest. They will pour their wages into his treasury until we want it, the fools!

"This hue and cry of theirs would be simply ridiculous were it not the battle-cry of a dangerous people;

but I propose to humor them for a time, let them have their own way and some time they shall pay me well for it. Meantime to control, hold in check, and govern thousands of mad beasts inflamed by strong drink, whose ignorant instincts are alive to the desire to appropriate the wealth gained by educated minds, is no small task; but I can do it. However, all this is small matter to you and I, Donny, so long as we succeed."

"Yes, the little fishes, contrary to custom and habit, may swallow the big fishes. I'll hold the bait," said Donovan who had permitted his partner to talk on uninterrupted, hoping thereby to hear something of the dark stranger, Leon Illardo. But as Waller seemed to steer clear of that subject, Donovan at last went out on business.

Almost before Donovan's footsteps ceased to echo outside in the corridor, Waller was standing before his secretary, and hastily unlocking it, glowered down into the drawers with frowning face and flashing eyes, muttering to himself:

"It has been opened. That letter was placed face downward. Who's so curious about my affairs? Mr. Donovan? He had better be careful; curiosity is dangerous. I didn't think that of Don."

However, upon examination he found the letter had not been tampered with, and smiling sarcastically he put it in his pocket, saying:

"Donny wants to know Leon Illardo: so do others. I can't humor their curiosity yet. My mysterious aid must remain a mystery for a while."

## CHAPTER XI

## ALLAN GOES TO CHICAGO

Allan was possessed by the same spirit of unrest that had actuated him years ago to leave Toronto. A little event in which he was but a cipher influenced him to push on to Chicago.

As the train was leaving Toronto he had seen Lizette in close consultation with the same dark, handsome foreigner whom he had seen upon two or three occasions at the back door of Woodlawn.

He thought it very strange, for the man was plainly of the upper classes, while Lizette was a servant born and bred. Lizette's manner was humble and submissive, even meek and altogether unlike what it had been at Woodlawn.

She had just given him a letter or flat package, Allan could not quite make out which, and disturbed by his own thoughts he did not then care which, but still he continued to look on as the man tore open the letter.

Allan had never liked the appearance of the girl, and now wondered what had induced the handsome foreigner to call at another's back door, when he was evidently accustomed to be received at the front entrance.

He saw the man fling himself upon the rear platform of the train just as it was starting, thus conveying the impression that they had talked until the last minute of time, so the case must have been important. Then amid the gathering gloom Allan saw a rough-looking fellow slouch up to Lizette's side, and speaking to her, was mutely motioned toward the train which he hurriedly boarded while it was moving out.

He saw Lizette step back into a corner and watch closely until the train was fairly started, then turn

away with bent head. All this he could see from his window in the car. His attention was now fixed upon the men who came into his car and sat down in the seat nearest the stove. Though it was somewhat shaded he could see they were busy talking with their heads bent low over a paper that absorbed their attention. From where he sat he could see and not be seen by them, or not plainly seen.

There was such a marked contrast between these two men as they sat in their corner deeply absorbed in their letter, or paper, that one must have noticed them from time to time glancing furtively about, though looking more often at the door.

Allan was not upon the road to Detroit for any other reason than to get away from Woodlawn. He might as well have taken some other road. His desire was to get as far away from Toronto as possible; to go had been his main object in boarding the train for Detroit; what he should do when he got there he did not know, and cared less.

When they were approaching Detroit, Allan remembered that he had better see how Sultan his horse was bearing the trip. He arose and passed back to the box car. While there engaged in soothing Sultan into submission, the train pulled into the station.

He hurriedly returned and found, much to his chagrin, that the two men had left the car. Hastily passing to the next, which as we have before said was the rear car, he ascertained that they were not there.

Glancing out of the window at the crowd, which had just poured from the train, he discovered them upon the platform a little apart from the crowd, and in close conversation with a tall, dark, colorless, well-dressed man, with dark, deep-set eyes and a hawk nose. He saw this man distinctly, for he had just stepped for a

moment by a lamp-post to read a letter that had been given him by Lizette's handsome friend. Evidently the letter contained a disappointment, for the man crumpled it impatiently in his hand and thrust it into his pocket. The handsome foreigner seemed protesting, and anxious to conciliate him, while the third party stood by with his hands in his pockets and waited for a few moments, then with an ugly leer on his face was turning away when he was recalled by the hook-nosed man, and something that gave satisfaction was placed in his hand.

Allan determined to hear their voices if possible, so pulling his hat down over his eyes and his collar about his chin, he strolled by them, contriving to keep within the shadow of a train that stood near by on the track. He was soon rewarded by hearing the third party say:

"I'll be on hand if it's a go. You can count on me for that sum: not a d——d cent less."

"I'll count on you. I'll go on to Chicago to-night. Look out for orders."

"All right, I'm your man," responded the tough, and started away. Upon inquiry Allan learned that the next train would start in twenty minutes. He had yet to transfer his horse and get his gripsack, so he went about it with all possible haste. This he found no easy thing, for Sultan resented being driven or lead into another car where he must suffer the close proximity of other less favored of his species. So it required all his master's persuasiveness and some threats, beside consuming the entire twenty minutes of time to get him up the steep plank walk and into the last stall of the box-car. Even then he pranced without fear of threatened whippings, or regard for his master's promise to leave him behind.

Allan was put out of sorts by the delay caused by

Sultan's obstinacy, for he wanted to be sure of the hook-nosed man, and also of the handsome foreigner. It was some minutes before he could leave Sultan; when he sauntered through car after car in his careless search for a good seat, he was disappointed in seeing nothing of either of the two men; but being on the train, and careless as to what direction he really went, he concluded to go straight on to Chicago.

As the train sped on its way, and he now no longer had any particular object with which to divert his mind, his old troubles again intruded their mocking faces upon him, and like Bancho's ghost would not down.

Now as he had time for reflection, his mind quickly surveyed the past few months since he had been an inmate of Robert's house. He carefully laid each successive day upon the colorless canvas of his memory, and critically surveyed every hour's happenings, subjecting each act and look and word to the most critical analysis. He did the same by every grown member of Robert's household, even including Laura's parents in the process, not omitting Lizette and the handsome foreigner and consequently the two other men who had talked with him in the depot at Detroit. He told himself they had nothing to do with the case. But still the evil faces of those men would obtrude themselves upon his fancy, and while his mental gaze was fixed upon the canvas, would mingle with the faces of those whom he had left at Woodlawn, making an unpleasant conglomeration of dear and hateful, lovely and ugly, good and bad faces that nearly drove him wild at their unpleasant juxtaposition. Do what he would he could not separate them. He was not a fanciful man. He had seen too much of hard, practical fact to be visionary. Why upon earth could that foreigner, who was no doubt Lizette's lover, or that vil-



lainous, hook-nosed individual, much less that low plug-ugly, why should, or could they ever possibly meet Laura?

Yet, though Allan scoffed at himself, and even swore between his teeth, yet that canvas, with its strangely contrasting faces stared him in the eyes through the entire night, or what remained of it and the following morning were still staring at him, when "Chicago" yelled the brakesman, and a moment later he stepped out upon the platform only to come face to face with two of the haunting "subjects," the man with the hook nose and the handsome foreigner.

Allan for a moment stood dumbfounded. But hastily recovering himself, for it was no part of his intentions to seem to be interested in them, he crossed to the other platform. Keeping an eye upon them as they stood in close conversation, he contrived to pass a policeman. The free masonry that is conveyed by an intelligent look was quickly understood by the officer who followed Allan as he started on after them. They were evidently going to leave the station; what more natural?

Hastily writing upon his note-book these words: "Get name and address of two men ahead," Allan dropped it carelessly behind him to be picked up and instantly read by the intelligent officer.

A moment later he passed by Allan with an answering nod and was soon passing the two men who had again halted in an uncertain way to talk. They evidently wanted some information. The officer immediately called another to their aid. He seemed to recognize the hook nosed man, and smilingly addressed the other who stood by awaiting the result of his friend's inquiries.

When he had seen the two disappear in the distance

with their guide, who was an odd-looking fellow, the policeman sought Allan who was waiting for him in the friendly shadow of a corner.

"Well, did you learn their names?"

"What do you want to know for? Of course, I can tell you, but what do you want to dog their footsteps for?"

"What is that to you?" asked Allan, sharply.

"Just this. What do you want their names for. Of course, I can tell you all I know about them, but you must give your reasons. You are a stranger here, or you'd know him, the man with the beak nose," answered the officer firmly.

"Is it money you want first?" asked Allan.

"No, sir. I asked you what you wanted to know their names for, that's fair," persisted the officer.

Looking into the honest eyes of Thomas Denan, Allan told him what had excited his suspicion, and why he wanted the names of those two men, beside giving him as good a description of the third party left in Detroit as he could.

"The hook-nosed man is Jason Waller, a millionaire, aristocrat, big gun in a big church, way up in business circles; if you were not a stranger here you would have known that much; the other, he introduced as his friend Leon Illardo from Europe. That suit you?" asked the officer, smiling.

"Yes, so far as it goes. How long has that Waller lived in Chicago."

"O, I don't know for certain, can find out; but some time, I think."

"Well, I hope for the good of the city there are not many like him. I don't believe in Jason Waller and I don't like his friends," said Allan, fiercely as he saw a droll look come into the officer's eyes. "I'll stake

my life that he's a liar, rogue, and scoundrel if he is prominent in church and business circles!"

The policeman smiled broadly at Allan's ferocity, but said with an emphatic nod:

"Well, if I understand your style you're life's worth too much to stake on such small fry as Jason Waller. I know the man, and he knows me. Catch him introducing his friends to any common officer on the police force, but Tom Denan! I know him. He's afraid of me, too, or of what I know about him, but he's just where I can't touch him!"

The sight of the officer's face that had grown dark and frowning did not tend to re-assure Allan, who asked with some dread of the answer:

"You know this man? What do you gather from what I have told you? What do you think he's up to?"

"I guess you'll hear from him before long; though it may be first in connection with some big scheme for saving the heathen, or to release the "distressed" in this country; perhaps he'll be giving a temperance lecture or two, just to keep his hand in and his name before the public. You'll be seeing him on some future occasion as big as life walk up the isle of one of them big temperance halls, by the side of the most prominent female reformers in the country. Ah, but she'll be thinking she's highly honored by the looks of Jason Waller, but if she'd catch the looks of certain men and women down in the pits she'd blush red for shame, and be after being escorted by one of them wharf-rats instead! Ah! sure and ye'll hear from him: he's up to some deviltry! ye may be sure."

"I want you to watch the man for me. I'll spend every cent I have to pay you for your services, for I'm afraid he will make trouble for my friend."

"I don't want your money. I'm no friend to that man. I'll help you all I can, when I'm off my beat. D——n him, he's a scoundrel that I'd like to see punished."

Allan thought that this man must have some good reason for hating Jason Waller as he looked into his gleaming eyes and watched the play of his strong, good, honest face.

"It was pure luck and chance that I had a day off?" the officer informed Allan as they sat down in the depot to talk a few minutes. After you get something to eat, and you'd better be gitting it now, then I'll show you about the city, we can do a good bit of sight-seeing in one day. Then this evening I want you to go with me and meet some of the boys. If you want work, they'll help you to get your living, and watch that fellow, too. You'll be wanting a nice job I'm thinking, but you'll not be out of pocket to get any little work the boys can put into your way, till you can do better."

"I'll answer for it, it'll be honest work, too. I'll be changing this rig for citizen's clothes after a bit. We'll go over to my room when we start out. I can go about with more freedom."

After a hearty breakfast in the depot restaurant they sallied forth upon their tour of sight-seeing.

By palaces of stone, brick, and marble, upon broad avenues, streets alive with business, and streets made notorious as the abiding-place of infamy, where honor and virtue were bought and sold, where from the insatiable saloon poured forth a stream of reeking, staggering, whisky-befuddled human beings; through back alleys, diving down into dark, damp basements, and exploring tenements, on they tramped with a quick business-like step, none knowing why, or whither,

pausing occasionally before some particular open door to snatch a hasty glance into its vileness and jot down its number and street.

"I can't take you home with me," said the officer as at last when the shadows were falling they brought up down on the lake shore. "I wish I could, but I've got no home since my wife died, I've boarded. But I can get you in where I am if you like, unless you'd rather go by yourself."

"What do you think? Can we work as well together if we board in the same house?" asked Allan.

"No, we can't. You'll be spotted on my account in less than an hour. You had better go to some place near by me. Do you expect any one to join you?" the question came suddenly.

"No, I'm alone and always expect to be," answered Allan, grimly

"Just as well for you at present," responded Denan emphatically. "I tell you, Morton, it's mighty hard, so it is, to rush away from tearful eyes and clinging hands, knowing that the chances are ten to one you'll never be seeing them again, and a chance, too, of being brought home on a shutter. I wish there was a law against married men joining the police force. I've been there, I know what it is."

Allan did not answer. Denan saw that Allan was disturbed, and with his characteristic frankness said:

"You'll have to tell me enough of yourself, your past life, to prevent my making blunders. I don't want to do so, but you know, Morton, no two lives are just alike, and I had a good wife once, and I miss the little woman, yer right I do!"

The two men stood alone upon the shores of Lake Michigan, alone with memory, one saddened by the thought of the blue-eyed wife he had buried three years

before ; the other embittered by the loss of the woman who was to have been his wife.

After Allan returned to his room that night at eleven o'clock, he asked himself, as he sat reviewing the full day's sight seeing and the evening's interesting happenings :

"How can such things be allowed in this country? It's bad enough for London or Paris, but here!"

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## CHAPTER XII

### A NEW HOME

When Laura fully realized the question of moving away, in all its bearings, she felt a positive relief. To leave the scenes of her trials, even though they had been the seats of joys and conquests, was to her the only positive surety against the constant recurrence of similar trials.

It was a part of Robert's plan to live in style in Chicago, so Laura entered into the business of selling off the furniture, and packing up with extraordinary enthusiasm. In feverish haste she hurried on the work, giving herself no time to think. In vain her mother and Nettie told her she was wearing herself out, yet she would see to everything, even to the sending away of those things which had been sold. Of Robert's plans she approved, even to the selling of her piano ; she wanted a new and better one. When the matter of discharging help was brought up, Laura decided to take Lizette : she hated to change and get entirely new servants, and Lizette had grown so capable, and wanted very much to go with her mistress. She had not accomplished this without being obliged to confront the opposition of her father who as a last resort told her of

the foreigner. He had not meant to do so, but upon the very evening of their departure the old man had seen the dark stranger in close conversation with Lizette at the back door.

Mr. Bassett felt it to be her duty to break it up, but Laura thought the man might be a lover, and compressing her lips a trifle thinner she told her father sharply:

"Let her have him. Let her enjoy her love while she may, without fear or favor; she will soon lose him."

In vain the old man attempted to convince Laura that Lizette ought to go; Laura was firm, she knew no reason for discharging Lizette and would not be guilty of meddling with her love affairs.

It was about the middle of November when we find the Mortons again established in a home of their own. It had been a laborious task, selling out, packing up, moving and getting settled again, and it took several weeks to make the change.

We find them living on one of the best streets which is flanked on either side by a line of fine residences. Handsome equipages convey hither and thither richly dressed people; there are grave and gay, good and bad, but all are rich, or have the appearance of wealth, which is just as well for our story.

The Mortons had taken a large, showy house, one of the best in the street, furnishing it elegantly, and now Robert fancied himself his neighbor's equal. He had brought Laura's parents with them, and in one of his generous moods, when the sight of the big house, and the showy equipage that stood out at the door half of the time, made him feel like a rich man, he rented them a flat a mile distant, but easily accessible by street car, and set them up in housekeeping. He had hoped that Allan would return and marry Nettie, but his hopes were vain.

He thought to make partial amends by assuring her a home in his house. So she was retained as house-keeper in the elegant house on — Street, while the erstwhile kitchen girl and maid-of-all-work was promoted to the position of lady's maid to her incautious mistress, a change that was highly satisfactory to her.

During the busy days of packing and getting settled again, Laura had had no time to think, or would take none. What she would do when the last picture was hung, the last closet put to rights, the beautiful new silver and china sufficiently admired to suit Nettie, and the costly furnishings sufficiently admired to satisfy Robert, was a thought that made her knit her brow.

She was not so much elated over the change as the family thought. Just before they left Toronto, Laura was satisfied that she had succeeded in leaving this impression in their minds that she was pleased with the change.

Everything was too new to please, and too strange to charm. Furniture, house, silver, pictures, all were good and costly, but they did not respond to her admiration. The piano was a better and costlier one than the one she had at Woodlawn, but its music was not half so sweet. She missed, already, the friendly look of acquaintanceship that had greeted her upon every side from childhood in the old home in Toronto. This old acquaintanceship she had taken with her into her husband's home. The housekeeper, governess, servants, all were so perfect that they were monotonous.

One evening Robert came home with an unusually alert, active ring in his voice, and a new light in his eyes that reflected two parts pride and one part love.

He had been standing upon the side-walk with two men, before a certain office out of which they had just



stepped, when a carriage rolled slowly by which contained an elegantly dressed lady.

Robert knew the lady, though, as she did not look toward him, he did not seem to recognize her. But the others, pausing in their absorbing conversation, had gazed until the carriage rolled out of sight; then one of them, a showy, big, red-faced fellow exclaimed:

"Who can that be? She looks like a picture of the Madonna."

"She's the fairest woman on earth. I've seen her twice before. She's a stranger, I think," answered the other, never taking his eyes off the carriage until it turned a corner.

They had asked each other, and being unanswered had turned to Robert Morton with their faces full of admiring curiosity, not knowing that a stranger could enlighten them. In proud triumph, Morton answered:

"That lady is my wife."

"The deuce!" exclaimed the big man, with a low whistle.

"Yes, sir: that lady is Mrs. Morton, my wife!" reiterated Robert with a shifting from one foot to the other, and a swelling out of his big chest that made him look not unlike a big turkey cock.

"Then I congratulate you; your wife is very lovely," said the taller of the two, grasping Morton's hand firmly in his long, dark fingers with an ardor that warmed the Canadian's heart, and he said the next moment:

"Come home with me, and I'll introduce you to Mrs. Morton: she'll be glad to meet my friends; halways is."

"Thank you very much, but I'll call in the evening and take you and your wife to—what shall it be, music or the drama?"

"Music by all means," answered Morton, quickly, feeling that now he should gain his point with this man.

"Then we will hear Patti. I'll call at 7:30. Thanks for your kind invitation to call. And about that little business, we'll see you to-morrow," and with a cordial hand-shake, they separated.

So it was that Robert had come home with a new light in his eyes, and a new activity in his manner. He had been proud to hear his wife called the "fairest woman on earth" and "like the picture of a Madonna" by such men as these two kings, Donovan and Waller.

Wallie! the most fastidious, unapproachable and most difficult to please of all western Gotham's leaders, and the very one to introduce them into the circle that he meant to cultivate. Just the thing! and so he beamed all the way home.

Laura was somewhat surprised to be told that she was to receive and accompany one of Chicago's society leaders that evening. She did not brighten, or seem particularly pleased with the announcement, or the flattering remarks which followed, as kissing her with unwonted fondness, he said by way of emphasis:

"E says you're the 'fairest woman on earth.' The other compared you to the picture of the Madonna, whoever she may be, and hall that sort of thing. Eh, Laura!"

"I don't feel in the least flattered by that," said she with cool indifference, "though," she resumed, trying to make amends to Robert who had seemed so elated and gratified, "of course, I shall like to see your friends, and shall enjoy the opera. Yes, we will hear Patti if you think best."

"Of course, we'll go to 'ear Patti! that's hall right! Patty's hall the rage now. You must look your best.

I want to show them a deuced sight 'andsomer woman than they hever saw before," and the great overgrown giant drew her toward him with such a fond look in his eyes, that Laura clinched her slender hands which had been clasped behind her, exclaiming to her better self, "I will love him, yes, I will."

Then a little shiver passed over her as he pressed his heavy mouth on her passive lips in a loud smack, kissing brow, cheeks, and hands in the same boisterous, ardent manner.

Laura was somewhat surprised when, as she came down into the parlor dressed in a light evening silk to receive their guest, a tall, middle-aged, dark, eagle-eyed, hook-nosed man, dressed in a faultless evening suit of black, addressed her in the most polished language, in soft, persuasive tones, and with an exceedingly elaborate bow. She was silent from sheer surprise. She had expected to meet some free-and-easy individual, like Robert himself, who would grasp her hand like a vice, and talk horse, or business in the next breath after flatly complimenting her on her good looks. But quickly recovering herself, she responded politely enough, though in a voice so frigid that Robert chafed in disappointment.

But he was re-assured a few minutes later to see a smile so bright and charming play about her mouth, that he gazed upon her in proud forgiveness of her recent offense, thinking to himself:

"Of course, the man's no beauty: but 'e's rich, a leader, one hof the big bugs. Just the one!"

When the Mortons entered the Chicago Opera House every eye followed the trio, and many an opera glass was leveled at them as they entered the box with Jason Waller.

Robert was proud of his beautiful wife and smiled

and bowed in proud and delighted self-congratulation.

Laura's attention was so absorbed in the singer that she failed to notice the entrance of a fourth party, until she heard her name spoken by Robert. To be sure, the curtain had dropped, but she was thinking, and her brain and soul were full of the sweet sounds of that rare voice which was driving all the world mad. Now she started, to hear :

"This is a surprise, surely, I didn't expect to meet my cousin in Chicago," and she was looking up into Allan's face in bewilderment as he took the hand she held out to him. She had no time to mask, and so the glad flush of joyous recognition flamed up into her face.

Allan was presented to Jason Waller, between whom and himself a mutual hatred took root, the more so, when Robert immediately added in proud self-complacency :

"Mr. Waller was good enough to invite us to come with 'im into his box. First time we've been out of an evening, either to a theatre hor concert, hor anything, in fact, been so busy getting settled. But we must 'ear the great Patty, an' it's a deuced sight better hup 'ere than sitting in the gallery, or down in the body with all them truck."

Allan pitied the proud woman at his cousin's side.

"If one can appreciate good music and is fortunate enough to hear Patti, one need not so much mind the small difference between a box and the gallery. I see several of Chicago's biggest men in the parquet. To hear, is enough. I'm sure Mrs. Morton could appreciate Patti even in the gallery," and he bent his smiling eyes upon her proudly, as if only repeating some old story that she could not fail to understand. She looked up with ever so slight a smile, saying sweetly :

"I've scarcely heard any one else," but she had been

saying to herself, repeating it as a sort of prayer, "I will love Robert, I will be true!" and this answer to Allan was the outgrowth of her thoughts.

Allan remained only a few moments, and took his leave after promising Robert to call soon. Laura did not seem to notice his half-waiting half-assenting answer, for she continued to look upon the brilliant throng below.

Every seat was full at the opera that evening, and many an eye was turned to the box in which they recognized the dark face of Jason Waller, and knew that the peerless woman by his side had kept him from distributing his valuable attentions more impartially.

As Laura stood before the glass that night, taking down the long coils of hair, and laying away the jewels that had sparkled upon her neck and arms, Robert who was delighted with the admiration bestowed upon his wife that evening, more especially by Waller, came and stood behind her, peeping at the fair image in the glass.

"You were the beauty to-night, Laura!" said he, fondly kissing her white shoulder that gleamed above her silk dress.

She did not turn away from his caressing lips, and shudder this time, but delighted his heart by laying her head back upon his broad shoulder, saying in a weary, pathetic voice:

"Take care of me, Robert. I'm so tired of it all!" He thought the evening's rush and whirl had been too much for her, and so said, fondly holding her closer to his breast:

"It's late, you need rest; but you 'ad a good time, didn't you?"

"Yes, the music was good, but, Robert, don't bring any one here again. I don't want any one but you, Rob-

ert, only you: not that man, nor Allan, nor any one but you, Robert."

"O, nonsense!" he exclaimed, half roughly, but kissing her again, "the music's hupset your nerves. Waller's hall right. No great beauty, but 'e's a big gun in 'is church, one of the biggest men in Chicago, level-headed, too. Got lots of tin. I wish I had his pile! He'll call soon, don't snub him, Laura. I want 'is 'elp. An' Al, too, 'e's my own cousin what would folks say? Of course, 'e must come. Just treat him like all the rest; 'e's all right 'nough. Treat 'em all 'like, Laura; safest way," and the big man considered it all settled and unanswerable.

"Very well, if you desire it," answered Laura, forcing herself to speak. But she turned her face away and would not look into the mirror that reflected the satisfied breadth of his face beside her own pale visage with that look of disappointment in the tired eyes.

Robert should be gratified. She would not refuse to see his friends. She would go and come at his beck and call. His friends should be her friends. But she felt that her chains were drawing her in among the dangers, and the dangers would drag her down among the deeps in spite of her desire to uplift herself and be true; in spite of her flight from Toronto and the rest and safety it promised. Now, here by her side, forced upon her attention was that evil man of the world, Jason Waller; on the other hand, Allan.

"You don't look 'alf so bright as you did at the concert, guess concerts don't agree with you hafter hall."

"It's near twelve, Robert. I must see the children before I retire," answered she wearily, as she turned to leave the room, but pausing on the threshold, asked without looking at him:

"When will Mr. Waller call?"

"O, maybe to-morrow. Right away, I guess."

"I'll meet your friends as you wish," said she, in a submissive voice.

"Of course, that's hall right," her husband answered, as with a satisfied grunt he plunged into bed and was snoring in less than three minutes.

After she had visited her children, she returned to her room, but was too restless to retire. Robert was sleeping too heavily to wake easily, so wrapping a soft woollen shawl about her, she opened a window and stepped out upon a small balcony that overlooked the street below.

It was a cold, clear, November night, but she had wanted to get out where she could breathe, regardless of cold, or late hours.

The great city lay asleep, the spires glittered in the moonlight about her. Beneath lay the street amid shadows. Directly under her feet lay the miniature front-yard that her father had measured with contempt that very day. Was that the wind whispering among bricks and mortar?

Her eyes pierced the gloom beneath and clearly saw the figures of a man and woman standing under the parlor window.

"What are you doing there at this hour?" she demanded, sharply. At the sound of her voice the woman disappeared around the corner of the house; and the man stepped over the low iron fence and started leisurely off across the street.

The following morning, upon being questioned, Lizette denied all knowledge of the affair, and nothing could be learned of the midnight visitors.

## CHAPTER XIII

## REVELRY AND SORROW

A few days after, there was quite a conclave held in the big parlors of the —— House, over which Jason Waller presided with his usual suavity.

He had given a dinner in honor of his friend Robert Morton. Waller knew how to oil the machine whose revolving wheels should bring him success. He knew just to a turn of its great machinery how far to go, and when to silence its thud and throb. There were other "alive" faces among the guests, but his was most alive, most vigilant, most intent. It was his secret that he could assume an interest instantly. It was his adaptiveness that made him popular as a leader. No matter what the man's own private misgivings about a project, he could instantly become apparently so earnest from conviction, that his manner would infuse life and create trust where before there had existed but the gravest doubts and misgivings.

It is a fact, no matter how galling to our wounded pride afterward, when we have been forced to retire into familiar obscurity, that we are an easily flattered mob, too readily dosed into a state of gullibility. Such prominent men as Waller knew it: there are many Wallers, and there is always a vast gaping crowd of the common herd to snap at the bait they so skillfully throw.

Morton had been honored by a seat at Waller's right hand, so he was, figuratively speaking, seated at the right hand of every man at the table.

Every eye took in the Canadian's splendid physique, and handsome face. Every man laughed at his too frequent attempts at wit, and winked at his boisterous assertiveness.



Every man believed that Robert Morton was as rich as Cræsus, judging from his position at table.

It was a small, but very exclusive banquet, at which was served a very elaborate menu that required frequent compliments from Waller's distinguished guests to do it justice. The men really liked the good-natured Canadian and were ready to laugh at his pointless wit, or endorse his earnest assurance that "money will tell" when he was called upon for a speech.

The wine had affected his head a trifle, and when Jason Waller proposed the health of "the fairest woman on earth, Mrs. Morton," it was too much for him, he was completely overcome by his feelings, and then and there, swore undying loyalty to his generous host.

Of course, the big member of the firm of Waller and Donovan was present, and was satisfied to take a seat at the foot of the table, from which he could command a good view of their guest, but at an early hour he had collapsed into a state of gurgling, gasping quiescence, having seen so much in Morton's wit and effervescences to laugh at, that he was laughed out, so to say.

The banquet was but a side issue, a means, to help lubricate the wheels of the famous Waller machine.

The fine menu and costly wines were powerful agents to influence men of Morton's stamp: they cost an enormous sum, and they were to bring in good dividends, too, for he was Waller's devoted ally.

Robert thought it was because they were good-hearted fellows and bright enough to discover his value. But among the rest there was a secret understanding that the banquet itself was not the only issues of the evening, not the most important.

It was their intent to test the man whom they wished to employ. He was a comparative stranger. Waller desired to know what he would do under certain con-

ditions, and what effect it would have upon him before they intrusted him so far as to let him into that magic circle. The fact that he had lost his head through wine was not against him so much: they wanted to know what he would do, if he was loose-tongued or close, shrewd, under the influence, and so, skillfully they applied the test, which, with a keenness as surprising as it was satisfying to Waller, Morton sustained.

This little exhibition seemed to amuse the oldest member of the company, Mr. Mark Van Tassel. He said very little, but kept his keen little eyes wide awake, though his amusement found vent in grins of delight, rather than boisterous laughter. When Robert informed them wisely that he always knew a dollar when he saw it, Mr. Van Tassel said that he, Robert, was a keen one.

It was generally understood that in some way Morton belonged to his host: in some way, for some reason outside of the mutual interests of the circle, so he was made much of in deference to Waller, and very generously invited to be one of them. If Jason Waller took up a man they could afford to indorse him.

Before the banquet broke up there was another little strategic move made by Donovan, in which he discovered that already Waller and Morton were on very good terms, and had been together with Mrs. Morton at the opera. Donovan cared so little for music that to hear Patti was no inducement, and he did not envy them their joy; but Wallie was getting mysterious of late, and so he thought to steal a march on him by leading Morton on to get the whole story from him when they were standing before a picture on the far side of the room. So skillfully did he manage it that Morton invited him to call, too, and received his promise to do so at an early date.

That night Robert returned home in a state of de-

moralization. Laura shrank from his kiss. His manner and language plainly indicated that he had drunk too freely of Jason Waller's wine. Stung to the quick at sight of his red face and watery eyes, and not caring to answer his rough, coarse language, she went to another room; this act defined more clearly her feelings toward him in his present condition than the most vindictive language. She said nothing the following morning when they met at the breakfast-table, but the distant look in her eyes forbade any tenderness on his part. In shame-faced silence he drank a cup of coffee, after which he went down town as usual. He did not return to lunch, but ate at a restaurant instead. Returning at six o'clock he met his family at dinner. He was humble and sorry for what he had done, and he saw plainly by the haughty lift of Laura's head that she was drawing herself away from him again as in the past years.

She had been so sweet and lovely for weeks, even months, that he grew suddenly very desperate as he thought of a possible recurrence to their former way of living. He had not then noticed it so much, he had been so busy in his own way; but now, he would miss it sadly. Hang Jason Waller's wine! he'd let it alone in the future!

He humbled himself to tell Laura so and promised, though she did not require it, that he would never taste another drop. Laura hoped that his promise would be kept, for she had a horror of Jason Waller, and his wine was especially evil in its effects. She hoped he would remember his promise for the sake of their children.

With this last thought a new resolve filled her heart; she would be a better mother and not let her duty to Robert so engross her mind and life. Those two little

girls did not come to her with red faces, watery eyes, and breath reeking with the fumes of tobacco and wine; their innocent glance was like the flower in the field; their very presence was a benediction. She would carefully watch and guard them in the future; but as a duty she would try and be a good wife to Robert, though she could not like his new friend. So that evening she was zealous in her efforts to make up to him for her coolness of the morning; and when again peace had been restored between them, she, believing it best and wishing to devote her time to her home and family, said:

"Robert, I wish we might not go to that ball. Must we go?"

"It will seem mighty rude not to go, though you needn't if you don't want to," he answered half sullenly, "you're ready hain't you?"

He felt that she was taking advantage of his recent humiliation and it provoked him.

"I'm ready so far as my dress is concerned; but—very well I'll go, it won't matter much, perhaps." She saw that it was impossible to avoid meeting Waller for whom she had a positive horror and loathing. But she must go to the ball.

Robert had given her *carte-blanche* to array herself as became his wife, and she promised to do so. He spared no expense in the matter of broadcloth and patent leather, for he was to open the ball with Mrs. Van Tassel. It was to be the greatest event in his life and he was in a perpetual state of inflation.

Donovan called in the afternoon and left a good impression upon Nettie, and a gilt-edged card for Laura who was "not at home." Jason Waller had assured him that it was a mark of distinction to be invited by the Van Tassels, and as they strolled down Michigan

Avenue, arm-in-arm, frequently meeting some of the "big" men, who tipped hats, or fashionable women who smiled sweetly, Robert felt all the old, serene self-satisfaction return to him.

Waller had that day asked him to join the firm of Waller and Donovan, hinting very boldly at his ventures in the near future which must yield a rich harvest and unlimited influence.

Money had always been the idol of Robert's heart, but since he had come to know Jason Waller, he felt that "influence" was the power behind the throne. To be influential meant to be sought after, to be powerful as well as rich. So this proposal of Waller's made him feel that now he was in his proper and true sphere, soon to be a rich and influential citizen of Chicago, and he regretted the years wasted in Toronto.

The evening of the ball arrived. Mr. Van Tassel had advised his fashionable wife to give this ball, counting off on his little fingers the names of those whom he particularly wished invited. Robert Morton and wife were among the number, while upon her list was Allan's name.

She had met Allan at a theatre party where he had been introduced to her husband as "the young man who killed the Injun." Now she had a great admiration for dash and courage and, like all womankind, worshiped heroism, so she "took him up" after the fashion of all leaders in fashionable circles, personally requiring his attendance, and urging as a good and sufficient reason, that she had invited his cousins, the Mortons, her husband's friends.

She was determined to get him into her husband's office to help him up in the world. She liked him and every one else should like him also; but she liked best the idea of so delightful a protégé. Allan had been

recognized by the leading papers as the Indian fighter and hero, and was sought out by those whose chief aim in life is to shine in other's glory and parade other's popularity in their own parlors before an admiring, fashionable crowd.

He was a sort of fad just now, because people must have fads; his courage in a hand-to-hand fight with the Indians, the honor and distinction then won, together with his fine personal appearance, handsome face and winning address made him a lion in a month's time, so that already it was a question who should secure him first.

As often as possible he absented himself from their houses, but as he had gotten a position in Mr. Van Tassel's office he could not well decline to attend their party.

"And remember you are to dance the lancers with me, I'll count on it," was her injunction. So he must go, and if he danced with her, and Laura should be there, of course, he must, through courtesy, ask her to dance also.

It was eleven o'clock when Allan arrived at the Van Tassel mansion that night. He had been in a very different place, with very different people, upon a vastly different errand all the evening. He had kept an appointment with Tom Denan and learned that which made his heart stand still for the safety of his cousin's wife. The reports might be idle rumors, malicious gossip, but Robert was no protector. He himself must go to that house and watch his chance to warn Laura. He must tell her of her danger, and Robert, too, if she never spoke to him again.

When he entered the parlor and sought the hostess to pay his respects to her first, she was one of many who formed a little circle around Laura Morton. Al-

Ian's heart stood still for a moment at the vision of loveliness that met his eyes as the circle parted to admit him. Jason Waller stood at her left, though she seemed not to notice him; she had a way of haughtily ignoring any one she did not wish to meet. She gave Allan her hand: with a grave, gentle smile, though not a word to him, she continued to talk with the others. This might have been meaningless, or it might have been full of trust; but the smile and hand-clasp were too gentle to be meaningless. Allan took her card and wrote his name opposite the only vacant waltz and returned it without a word. A moment afterward he saw her led away by Jason Waller, after which he claimed, or was claimed by, Mrs. Van Tassel for the lancers.

Allan saw that the big man of the firm of Waller and Donovan was very attentive to Robert, who had hovered conspicuously near Mrs. Van Tassel when he came in. In Donovan's manner there was so much that was coarse and repulsive that he could with difficulty be even polite to him, while to Waller he was merely civil and did not disguise the fact. He did not believe that Donovan was cute enough to be dangerous, but he was convinced that Waller was a sly, scheming rascal. How he wanted to throttle the man as he led Laura away to dance, though as his eyes followed her in the pauses between the figures and he saw how distant was her manner toward her partner, he took heart.

After supper, when their waltz was soon to be called, he sought Laura who was standing under a bright chandelier; in the strong gaslight she presented a picture of startling loveliness. She was attired in a pale green satin with creamy lace draperies, while upon neck and shoulders were pearls, and in her beautiful hair that was dressed high upon her head had been dexter-

ously woven by the cunning hand of Lizette the same lovely jewels.

"Madam is beautiful to-night!" the maid exclaimed, as she gazed in rapture at the work of her hands.

"Cæsar, you'll make a sensation!" proudly declared Robert as she came down from her room dressed ready to go to the ball.

"She is divinely beautiful!" whispered the charitable.

"She is dangerously beautiful!" responded the "sour grapes" of the gay company.

Allan, too, saw how beautiful, and in his heart deplored the dangerous beauty that was accentuated by a too fashionable style of dress. The bare white arms and shoulders, though beautiful as Parian marble, were far too fair for such men as Jason Waller to gaze upon. These low dresses were an invention of Satan, and Laura must never wear them again! Allan said this to himself, with a knitting of the eyebrows into a positive frown which still lingered upon his face and darkened his eyes as he sought her side a few minutes later to claim his waltz.

"This is our waltz, I believe," he said, briefly and looking over her head. A moment later the band struck up a favorite air, that, strange enough, they had danced long ago, a slow, lazy thing that required little exertion and brought no weariness. Together they circled away, one couple of the many who kept step to the bewitching strains of the dreamy, passionate waltz. Their unguarded feet carried them off into a dangerously beautiful country. They recked not of the return from its fascinating, rose blooming vales. They soared like the bird of freedom upon shining wings up to the summit of sun-kissed mountains. On they circled without a word, occasionally Allan looked down upon her fair, upturned, peaceful face. Once as the crush became



more difficult she seemed to cling closer to him as though seeking to prevent a collision which might separate them. He looked into her tender, happy eyes, and saw that a happy smile hovered about her gentle lips, and it required all his strength to crush back speech, but he shut his teeth and would not say a word.

She seemed to have left the state of existence in which so long she had lived and suffered, and now lived in an ideal embodiment, altogether new and satisfying, which left her nothing to desire. In clinging hands and smiling, speechless lips, and unguarded glance of tender gray eyes Allan at last read his answer. She was true to him. A faithful wife as it was in her power to be, and a devoted mother she would be always, but she was true to him, and he was content. In that moment, unconsciously, she had answered him by every instinct of her pure, faithful heart, she was true, but it was the truthfulness of a faithful first love that will not be killed, nor disowned, but must be allowed a little niche down deep within the most silent resources of the heart. A presuming second love must be satisfied to take a second place and possession.

They had paused an instant, while Laura gathered up her train, when they were surprised to see her father making his way in desperate energy toward her. As he came up to them the look of anxiety and concern that had filled his eyes gave place to one of confusion and indignation as he saw how she was attired, and after one horrified glance at the bare arms and shoulders of his daughter he dropped his head and in a low angry voice, said:

"I had to come for ye: Dot's sick," after which he stalked out, leaving Laura half stunned by his startling intelligence.

"Dot sick? she had never had a sick day in her life, and she was well when I went to the nursery just before I started. O, I must go home!"

"I will conduct you to the dressing-room and quietly call Robert. I think we can manage to slip out without attracting unnecessary attention," said Allan, in a low voice.

In pale affright Laura suffered herself to be led to the dressing-room, from which she soon came dressed, and was soon on her way home.

Morning dawned with little hope for the sick child. The disease that at first was a case of simple croup, showed a disposition to become membranous. All that day the doctor continued to combat the disease, until a council of physicians was called, if but to satisfy the friends. However, the learned specialist only reiterated Dr. Baxter's diagnosis; as a last resort an operation might, but probably would not, give relief. The last resort was brought into requisition and failed, as did every other remedy. Human love and skill were of no avail.

All that day Laura sat by her child with a stony look on her face and in her eyes. She heard every word the doctor said, but she could not be prevailed upon to leave the bedside for a minute. They had brought her breakfast, lunch and dinner successively, but she had left them untasted, and continued to watch her child in speechless horror. The governess or physician administered the medicines, Laura sitting by in silence, not a tear, not a sigh, no questions, no complaints. She seemed frozen to death.

Early in the morning she exchanged her ball dress for a soft white cashmere, without leaving the room or her child's bedside. Now it was dark again, and lights were brought. Two doctors sat watchful and atten-

tive by the patient's side, from time to time indicating by look or sign the progress of the disease. All day Robert had paced back and forth over the great house in boisterous grief. Occasionally the old grandfather would tiptoe softly to the side of the little grandchild, and after a hasty glance at the sufferer would creep back to the parlor again to confer with "Hanner," and moan out his loving sorrow and protestations at "them doctors' ignorance." So the day passed.

It was midnight. The doctors told them that their patient could not possibly live until morning.

Midnight! and Laura sat there still, white, stony, with great eyes trying to read the mystery of death in the pinched little face upon the pillow that but yesterday had been so rosy and smiling. Nobody could read Laura's heart; nobody could hear her pleading for one word or look of recognition from little Dot.

When they thought it was all over, when in the silence of that death-watch they ceased to hear the rustle of shining wings, Dot suddenly stirred, opened her eyes and held up her tiny hands toward her mother, saying just three words, "Mamma take Dot," and in an instant Laura was clasping the little form to her heart, while great sobs shook her like a tempest.

But little Dot lay in her mother's arms only a pale broken lily, smiling and silently happy.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### NEW PURPOSES

After it was all over, and little Dot was left in the silence of her narrow bed, and the great, lonesome house resounded no more to the happy, laughing voice,

the world moved on just the same for all the sorrow at the Morton mansion.

Laura did not envelop herself in crepe: Allan had told her that for her own sake as well as that of Una's she had better not, and Robert hated black; so once more she put on the soft gray dresses that she had laid aside so short a time.

Quiet had settled down over the house of Robert Morton after the funeral of his child. A great many letters of condolence were left at their door; a great many called, but failing to see Mrs. Morton left cards of fashionable size and color, bearing the proper expressions of sympathy, which, after being read, or passed by unheeded, as the case might be, were consigned to the card case, to be made much of by Robert, who saw in those small bits of paste-board signs and tokens of his own financial and social standing. But his wife cared less for them than for a comforting word from her father.

Laura's grief for Dot was quite unobtrusive. She went about the house clad in her plain, gray dress, hungry-hearted, unsatisfied, silent. Dot was gone, dead they had called it. Only Una left; this meant much, for Dot had been sweet, affectionate; Una was a cold, placid child; Laura missed the clinging arms, and bright, artless prattle, the winning ways and caressing lips of her lost child.

Robert, too, was changing since he had joined the firm of Waller and Donovan. Sometimes she did not see him for a whole day; he went out in the morning before she came down, and always lunched down town at a restaurant, frequently not coming home for six o'clock dinner.

From the Robert of old times, with his jolly laugh and boisterous way of giving and receiving caresses, he

had grown glum and more than ever absorbed in business. The nature of this business she did not know, though he had hinted about large "deals" in real estate.

She knew that he was in the firm of Waller and Donovan, and having no faith in either, she had the gravest misgivings for his success, as well as for his personal welfare. But he would brook no interference from any one.

She asked Allan a few days after the funeral of Dot, and he had told her of Waller's reputed bad character, not omitting his own private opinion of the man. This opportunity to warn Laura of her danger and also of Robert's was what Allan had desired, and this done, he kindly told her that unless she should need him, that he should not call again. Laura had come to depend upon him in the last few days, and had been impressed to an unusual degree by his kind though distant thoughtfulness, so that now she listened to his words with a sinking heart. She should miss him so, why need he go? why not call often? There were tears in her eyes when she put the question.

"Don't give up to your sorrow, you have Una; let her comfort you. If I could bear all for you that you have endured the last few days, I would most willingly do so; you know that, Laura."

"But it is so lonely, so desolate without her, my baby Dot. Oh! she's gone, and now you are going away, and the silence will kill me!" wailed the stricken mother.

"Laura, you must not think that. If you could look into some other mother's home, you would see how much brighter and lovelier the passing away of little Dot, than the cruelty by which they have been deprived of theirs. I know it is no time to compare griefs,

yours is so recent and so hard; I know that, Laura, but you have one left. Not far from here a poor mother has lost three, and has not even the comfort of friends. O, if you could see the sorrow and distress that I've seen within the last week, even you would soon bury your sorrow in sympathy for others."

"Where have you seen this trouble? Where is it?" she asked.

"All about us. You need not go a great distance, not within the houses of the rich, theirs is made more endurable by the help of money, the absence of poverty privation, and want. But there are thousands of homes where there is not enough this hour to keep soul and body together; where the mother has to go out washing or sewing to earn bread for the little ones, and while she is gone disease creeps in, death stalks after to await her home-coming at night. There is no money, no money with which to pay for a coffin, no bread for supper, and the living creep away cold and supperless to a bed that would scarcely satisfy the swine, while the poor, wretched mother watches in the silence of death and poverty and absolute darkness through the long hours of the night. Look! see the difference between your life and theirs."

"Will you do me a favor?" she asked, when he had finished.

"Certainly; if I can, most willingly."

"Take this," said she extending her hand that held a small purse. "Do what you can for that poor woman. Tell her I'm sorry for her trouble; it is greater than mine," and her voice dropped way into a sobbing whisper, as she sank into a chair and buried her face upon the cushion.

"Your gift will make her trouble lighter, I'm sure,

said Allan in a low voice, "and the giving will do you good, too."

"Come to me when you need more, and as often as I can I will help you; but don't tell Robert, he don't like to have his money go to the poor. But, Allan, has this woman you spoke of nothing to do with; nothing to eat; nothing comfortable to wear, Allan?"

"Nothing, positively nothing."

"Let us go to her," she said.

Allan saw the look of confidence in her eyes, and consented; it was arranged that at 3:30 they, with the governess, should go on their mission of charity.

Later as they entered the dark, dismal passage-way that led to Mrs. Walton's rooms, Allan was gratified to see how interested Laura had become.

From shrinking from strangers she had assumed a more peaceful look, and quietly followed him up the long dark stairway, sometimes looking around her in stern disapproval, sometimes pausing to look at the gloomy place, but not with any apparent shrinking or hesitation.

There seemed to be a new adjusting herself to the necessities of the case and the new work at hand. It was as though she had left all her sorrow, timidity and uselessness at home, and was bent upon doing, regardless of self. He saw her frequently pause and look about as though trying to become familiar with the location.

At the farther end of the corridor they paused, and Allan knocked at a dark heavy-looking door. A shuffling sound within assured them that some one was coming. At last the key turned in the lock, the heavy door swung open and they were confronted by a bold-faced young girl of perhaps sixteen, who in a confused

way told them, in answer to their inquiries, that her mother was out, but would be in soon.

There was a look of desperate hardness in the girl's face, which, though handsome, yet even at her extreme youth was lined, and no longer fresh and girlish. Dark circles under the large, dark eyes were made more prominent by the pallor that replaced the first flush of confusion.

"We have called," said Allan, as the girl seemed waiting for some explanation, "to see if we can make your mother more comfortable, if she, Mrs. Walton, is your mother? We want to see the little child that died this morning."

"Are you the Mr. Morton who came here this morning?" asked the girl, having fully recovered her wonted assurance.

"I called here this morning, but did not learn that your mother was going out to work to-day. However, we can do quite as well if she is not here. If you will permit we will see the little child now. We have no time to spare."

Laura had brought a large bundle of clothing, and a basket of ready cooked provisions. The latter brought a look of satisfaction into the bold face of the girl as she took it thanklessly from Allan's hand.

As Laura proceeded to open the bundle, Allan was surprised to find she had brought some of her children's clothing.

"These were little Dot's; she don't need them now," Laura explained, as she met his inquiring glance.

"You are a very brave woman, Laura," was his quiet reply as they set about the work of shrouding the dead body in Dot's garments of soft material and dainty make.

"See, Allan, my baby called herself 'Pitty Dot' in



this," said Laura holding up a miniature dress of lace and linen lawn that she was going to put upon the little form before her. For one moment she looked through falling tears at the pretty garment, then passionately kissing its little unfilled sleeves she buried her face in its folds and sobbed like a child.

Very soon, however, the storm passed and Laura proceeded with her work, which was soon complete and as they were leaving, Allan informed the girl that he would order a coffin which would be there very soon.

"Guess it don't matter, the others didn't have none to speak of: just a rough box fer both of 'em," she answered. "Committee said that was good enough for paupers, 'nd put 'em in just as they were. Good enough for paupers! I'd like to know who made us paupers! We didn't! Mum works: so do I when they let me. Pap got work sometimes, 'nd drank it all, 'nd a heap more besides, fast as he got it till it killed him. I had work in a store, selling fancy notions. Too slow; I lit out. Then I went to work for the biggest bug on Wabash Avenue. They said I stole, 'nd hauled me up fer stealin'. I didn't steal not a thing! I sassed the judge and told him I could git all the duds 'nd money, too, I want without stealin'. He sent me up for thirty days, just fer tellin' my mind 'bout rich folks ez call 'emselves Christians. If they be Christians, I don't want no Christians around me. I'd ruther hev sinners; got more decency. Be you Christians? 'cause if you be, ye can git out; I hate Christians!"

Laura avoided direct reply to her question, but asked:

"Can't you get work?"

"They all say I steal," answered the girl, angrily. "No one won't give work to a thief. They say 'Let 'em starve or get work the best they can.' Well, I gets

work the best I can. I don't steal, and I won't starve: you bet!" with a confident toss of her head.

"Where have you been?" asked Allan.

"Been away, visiting," she answered, after some hesitation.

"Well, you will stay here to-day and help your mother," he said, as they turned to go, "will you not?"

"O, I'll stay to please you; you bet!" the girl quickly replied, with a look in her bold, dark eyes that made Allan knit his brows, and hastily turning away he drew Laura and the governess out of the room.

As Laura turned to go she dropped her handkerchief. The girl's quick eye discovered it, and touching Allan's arm as he turned to close the door she gave it to him, saying:

"Here, sir, your wife dropped this, I don't want it."

"Thanks," said he, coldly.

"Don't want no traps set here!" she said, shrilly, with a pert toss of her head.

They rode home in silence, but just as they were driving up to the door, Laura said:

"I'm not sure how much I shall be able to do, but when you need help in a case of this kind, let me know and I will do all I can."

"I'm afraid that I should have to call on you very often," he said, looking into her eyes with a grave, earnest smile.

"Is this a common thing, this want and suffering, and that girl's story?" she asked, in tones of wonderment.

"Very common," he answered, earnestly. "This is a mild case compared to what I've seen."

"How do you learn about those things? Of course, there are the papers; but how do you learn of these special cases?"

"In many ways," he answered, after a pause, "yet there are special means."

"But how do you get the time to see them?" she persisted.

"I have days and hours off from the office. I shall soon give all my time to the work. Chicago is a large city, there is plenty to do."

Laura had never seen such a grave look upon his face.

"If you care, I will call soon again and tell you more about it. Just now I have not the time: I must go to the undertaker's and you must rest; you are tired," and he smiled again in a sort of brotherly way that had none of the old passionate longing, adding by way of explanation;

"I have found my vocation at last and I am no more empty-handed," then touching his hat he hurried away.

Laura set about finding out what means she had at her disposal, and in what way she might assist. Money she had none, except as it came through Robert's hands. Would he help the poor? She might induce him to give her money, but it must never pass through Allen's hands: she was sure of that. Yet Allen of all others was the safest and best ally in this work. But how was she to help him? How was she to carry food, fuel, light and clothing to those poor, destitute creatures whom Allan told her about? What could be worse than the condition of the Waltons? She could give Mrs. Walton warm clothing, a good bed, and food also, yes, and light, but think of the thousands of destitute ones to-night in the great city, without a crust to eat, or a pound of coal, or even light, sitting in darkness! Oh, that was horrible! And Laura shuddered and cowered before the open grate, spreading out her hands to the warmth of its coal fire in an ecstasy of satis-

faction. It was getting dusky in the great house and the maid was lighting the gas.

As Laura descended the stairs, and passed through the long hall, and ample parlor, and into the warm, brightly lighted dining-room, she felt a new and keener appreciation of the comfort which these things brought her.

When Robert came to dinner that evening, he was surprised at the change in the general appearance of things. Delight and approval shone upon his face and in his manner toward his wife; as for the first time in several days he kissed her, saying:

"That's right, Laura: don't sit moping. Light up. Nothing like bright rooms to raise one's spirits."

The bright, warm room and well filled table, and the beautiful face of his wife before him, made Robert forget whatever of business worries and perplexities he may have had through the day. Robert had a heart, and under the influence of his surroundings, he said with sudden ardor:

"What wouldst thou, Queen Esther? And what is thy petition? and I will give thee unto 'alf of my kingdom,' or, in good sound Yankee, I'll do all I can to gratify your dearest wishes."

"Then I may ask a favor, Robert?" she ventured, thinking of the need of it, of its enormity, with a quaking heart lest he should oppose her share in it, as well as his own in the giving.

"Anything in my power," he answered, good-naturedly as though talking to a willful child, "What is it?"

"After supper will do; then I want to talk with you, upon the strength of your promise."

He looked at her for a moment, then threw up his chin, saying: "All right, then changed the subject to one less mysterious. But a few moments after they

had repaired to the parlor, he suddenly wheeled around, and said with a forced laugh that had none of the ante-dinner ring in it:

"Well, hout with it. I see you've got something hon your mind to say; now's your time."

Then with much fear and trembling she began by drawing his attention to their own warm, bright home; of her useless life of selfish ease, gradually growing braver as she saw his eyes become humid during her description of the home of Mrs. Walton. The tender look which came over his face when she spoke of the dead body and its appearance dressed in Dot's dainty clothes, encouraged her to proceed in her story to the end.

After it was all over, and she paused, flushed and tearful, with no favor to frame in so many words, because the story-telling carried with it the weight of a mighty request, he said, for the moment feeling the force of the plea:

"Well, what do you want to do for them; of course, there is some hobject in your telling me hall this?"

"I want you to help me, Robert."

Just then a ring at the door-bell was answered by Robert, with an expectant look upon his face as he ushered into the brilliant room, Jason Waller.

Laura felt that the man was the bane of her life and with cold dignity, excused herself and sought her own room, feeling disappointed and resentful: She had been hopeful of Robert's co-operation in her plans, but now! In her disgust she could not be patient with Waller for interrupting her work, but having nothing else to do, she ordered Lizette to bring her jewel-case.

With marvelous alacrity Lizette placed the velvet case before her mistress, and with the assurance of her class paused to await further orders.

As one after another Laura held up each of the glittering jewels, garnets, diamonds, and pearls, silently computing their value, Lizette took a new attitude expressive of different degrees of admiration that to another would have been ridiculous, but to her mistress, only enhanced the value of her possessions, and made the scheme in her mind more promising.

"Madam is happy to have so fine jewels. O, if I should be so fortunate to possess so fine jewels!"

"See, Lizette! aren't they beauties?" and Mrs. Morton held them up to the light, watching the effect upon the delighted girl. "But I shall never wear such costly gems again. I'd rather have their value in money for better things. Which do you like best," she asked kindly.

"My mistress is so kind to ask her maid to give an opinion. She is the best judge: but if I must judge for one so amiable, so kind, I—" and Lizette paused, and continued, "but if I must judge, I must say the bracelets with the garnets. Oh, Mon Dieu!" and Lizette was overwhelmed by her own feelings.

"You have been very faithful to me, Lizette," said her mistress, with a kind smile.

"My mistress can command me," said the girl, with effusion.

"We will put the jewels away to-night, Lizette, and look at them another time."

The next afternoon Allan called and was glad to find Laura brighter, and evidently under none of the unpleasant influences caused by the visit of the day before.

After he had quite fully explained the nature of the work which they had before them, she sent for the jewel-case, and placing it in Allan's hands, said:

"Look, see what this will do for us."

"What do you mean, Laura?" he asked half bewil-

dered by their beauty and the inference he must naturally draw from her words.

"I shall never wear them again, diamonds, pearls, rubies and all the rest; I shall sell them. I will not wear them, while in this city there is so much suffering. Don't discourage me, Allan, I want to help you in this work."

"Oh! I'll not discourage you, Laura," said he, meeting her shining eyes kindly, "but do you realize what you are doing? These are valuable jewels; I did not know you had such fine diamonds. I never saw you wear those rubies," and he examined the jewels more closely.

"Robert gave me those since we came here. He said he should never question my right to them. Robert must be making a great deal of money, for he said they were very fine, worth a great deal."

"But he'll not want you to sell them. You must certainly ask him about it, I think," answered he, gravely.

Just then Lizette announced ladies in the parlor and Laura excused herself for a few minutes, leaving Allan alone.

Immediately afterward Una came in and together Allan and Una examined the contents of the case, as one by one he tried them upon her neck, wrist, and fingers, in quiet delight watching her eyes dilate with surprise and pleasure at the effect.

He took no notice of the maid who frequently passed through the room, but was relieved when Laura returned, and sent her away with the case, after promising to get Robert's consent before selling them.

"Do you think that your maid will take care of your jewels?" he asked, as Lizette left the room.

"Oh! yes, she is very trusty," answered Laura, confidently.

"But don't you trust her too much, is it not a temptation?" he persisted.

"Oh! no. I think not. If it is, she has withstood it a long time; but I think she is trusty."

"Have you never missed anything?"

"Why, nothing but a few small things such as handkerchiefs," she replied, wondering what Allan meant; but determined to re-assure him, she continued: "and even those small losses are due, I'm sure, to carelessness in the laundry. Oh! no, Lizette is strictly honest and devoted to me."

The evening before Robert had gone out with Waller, and did not return until late. Laura had not seen him for more than a brief good-bye that morning, and as he returned to dinner and signified his intention of remaining at home, she gathered together her wits and her failing courage by the thought of that story of desolation that Allan had told her, and after it was all told she flung herself down upon the sofa beside her husband; he suddenly startled her by saying:

"That's just what Waller says; 'e says it's quite the fashion now for ladies hof the best circles to belong to benevolent societies, and missions, and hall sort of things. Oh, yes, it's hall right. Waller says it's the best thing; builds a man right hup to 'ave 'is wife in such things. Waller will like that immensely!"

"But it doesn't matter to me what he says; it matters what you think, Robert," said she, feeling the beauty of her plans marred by the influence Waller had over her husband. She had never noticed it so much before, but the more she thought of it the less was she pleased at Waller's evident power over Robert. Yet she felt that she must endure it for the sake of the



help that she hoped to obtain from him. "That's hall right," he continued, "hall right! Mrs. Van Tassel was telling me the hother day that she's in the work all the time. You go hon; I'll back you in hany reasonable hamount. Why one 'as to do these things to get to the top of the 'eap! I'm going to get there. Ha, ha, my beauty! 'ow would you like to be Congress-man Morton's wife? Eh, Laura! Yes, you go hon, I've been been talkin' to Waller, and he says go ahead! it'll 'elp me."

No doubt Robert had some brilliant scheme in his head. Laura did not feel the charm of brilliant anticipation that seemed to elate him. She saw that already he had nearly forgotten the little grave at Graceland, and the vacant place so near his own at table. Ambition had stalked in and taken up her abode in his heart; death and sorrow could have no lasting effect upon him. His next remark rendered her almost dumb with a sense of outrage to her so recently wounded heart, as after scanning her critically, he said:

"You'd ought to wear crepe, too, Laura, a crepe veil; Waller says it would hadd weight to your benevolent work, to go about in your carriage dressed in mourning. I 'ate the stuff, but hif it's the best thing for us, why hof course hit's the thing to do."

Laura quietly answered:

"It's too late to make any change in my dress if I would, and I certainly would not do so to please Mr. Waller. I have dressed to suit my own feelings and with reference to your own wishes."

Nothing more was said upon the subject, but Laura felt that she had damaged her cause by refusing to put on crepe in deference to Jason Waller's opinion.

Robert soon rose to go out, urging a suddenly remembered engagement down town, and as Laura foi-

lowed him into the hall, she was surprised to see him put upon his head a hat that was trimmed with a broad band of crepe.

"I had not noticed that before," she said pointing to the sable decoration.

"I think it proper and worth while to respect public opinion," he answered, brusquely, and passed out shutting the door with a savage bang, leaving his wife half sick and wholly discouraged at what seemed the certain failure of her plan for obtaining his co-operation.

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## CHAPTER XV

### A ROBBERY

Robert Morton did not return home that evening, nor that night, a matter which gave his wife much uneasiness and kept her awake until after midnight. After that she had slept until sunrise, but arose tired and despondent and with her mind full of a vague dread.

As she descended to the breakfast-room a letter from him was placed in her hands, telling her that he had been suddenly called away for a day or two, and as he had no time to spare before starting he took that way of informing her. He did not explain the nature of his business.

After breakfast she concluded she would look over the contents of her wardrobe, but was surprised to discover an unusual look about things, as though some one had been careless about hanging up her dresses and some of them had fallen down again. Where were those that she meant to sell? Had Lizette put them away without orders, knowing that her mistress would not wear them again? Probably. Well, she would look over her jewels again, and decide which ones she

would dispose of. Lizette would soon be in and she would then ask about the dresses. She had not spoken to Robert about the diamonds yet, but she would look at them again.

Opening the drawer she ran her slim hand under a large pile of linen and failed to find the jewel-case. One after another with trembling hands she laid the contents of the drawer out upon the carpet, but could not find the jewel-case. She summoned Lizette.

"Where did you put my jewels?" she demanded in an excited manner, pointing to the empty drawer at her feet, "Lizette, where are my jewels?"

"Always I put the jewels where I am bid," she answered, looking down at the pile of linen and other things which her mistress had thrown upon the carpet.

"Look! find them for me if you can, Lizette, help me; or stay, you are sick, my poor girl! I'll find them, only tell me where you put them. Perhaps you put them in another place, in another drawer," and Laura drew out the second drawer. "Perhaps they are in this one."

"No, no," Lizette cried emphatically, "I put the jewels where I am bid, always, in the bottom drawer under the big pile of linen. But," continued she, with a nod of the head and an evasive look in her eye; "I say to madam it is not a safe place for so costly jewels."

"Evidently not, for they are gone," answered Laura, much chagrined at her own carelessness. "And, Lizette, where are my pretty dresses hung?"

"In the blue-room closet, madam," answered Lizette, with some dignity that was not lost upon her mistress, who felt ashamed for asking her trusty maid such a question, which to the girl's mind, at such a time, must convey an insinuation.

"O, that was right; they were not in my wardrobe and I wanted to see them. But what do you think has become of my jewels? Are you sure that you put them in that drawer? Think, Lizette; did your head ache last night? that makes one confused sometimes, you know, and maybe you forgot where you put them," urged Laura, kindly.

"No, no!" reiterated Lizette; "in the lower drawer, right hand, under the big pile of linen, just as the madam bade me. I will help madam move everything," and together they searched the room thoroughly, but with no better success than before, until suddenly she looked under the dressing-case and saw the object of her search.

"With a little cry of delight she hastily opened it only to find that the diamonds and pearls and several rings were gone; the garnet bracelets were left, together with some other things of small value.

She looked at Lizette, who gasped out:

"Mon Dieu! the bracelets are safe!"

"But my diamonds are not," exclaimed her mistress, excitedly. "Lizette, some one has stolen my diamonds! Tell me where are my jewels! tell me at once! Tell me, or I will call the officers and have the house searched."

"I do not know where madam's jewels are, but madam will not call the police if I tell her what I think," and the black eyes of the girl glowed as if with insulted pride.

"What do you think? Tell me, if your opinion is so valuable," demanded Laura, with a sinking heart.

"The madam commands me; listen," replied the girl, impressively; "You left the case of jewels on the table yesterday afternoon while you visit in the parlour. I see the cousin look many times at the bracelets, look close-

ly. He should not do so in the madam's absence."

"What do you mean, Lizette? Do you mean to accuse my husband's cousin of stealing my diamonds?" asked her mistress sternly, yet with a cold horror creeping over her as she thought how completely Allan was in the girl's power unless the jewels were found.

"I accuse no one. I say what I see. I have not the jewels. Madam may search my trunks, the house, everything, it matters not. Madam can call the police, they ask questions. Ask Lizette questions, I must speak true. Lizette will be honest if madam send her away to-day," and the girl's haughty face and flashing eyes expressed more than her words how thoroughly she appreciated her power over her mistress.

Laura saw this and hastened to say:

"Lizette, I'm not accusing you. Forgive anything I've said; I'm so worried, but tell me what you think."

"If madam desire to know, I can say. But madam will be anger," said Lizette, reluctantly yet with dignity.

"Tell me just who you think has stolen my diamonds," persisted Laura, determined to get the girl's opinion.

"I think, if madam must know, I think most certain the grand monsieur, the fine cousin, stole the jewels. Lizette haf no more to say until the law bids her talk," and with an injured air the wily girl was about to leave the room.

"Stay, Lizette, I see you can do my husband's cousin a great injury by your stories. I know that he is innocent: he is too good a man to steal. But you believe this thing of him and can hurt him. Sit down, I want to think."

Laura saw Allan's danger. Lizette felt aggrieved by what she supposed was an accusation, or if she had a private grudge against Allan, she might try to get sat-

isfaction by swearing away his good name. Such things had been and might be again. She hated the thought of purchasing the girl's silence, but she must save Allan from suspicion. So she looked keenly into the stern face of the maid, and said:

"Lizette, will you do me a favor?"

"I am madam's maid," answered she, coldly.

"Yes, I know that; but lay that aside. Will you try to consider how much you may harm Mr. Morton if you tell what you threaten? He is my husband's cousin. My husband will not believe you, but he is gone, and I must do what I can. Lizette, I need not call the police. Oh, Lizette, will you promise to keep still if you are asked about this? Of course, I shall tell my husband about it when he comes home, but I want you to say nothing! Will you promise, Lizette?"

A shrug of the shoulders was the answer.

"What will induce you to say nothing about my loss? I may find the jewels and then you would only be harming an innocent man." Laura looked keenly into the girl's face and saw that which made her desperate.

"What shall I give you, Lizette? Oh, I know. You admire the garnet bracelets so much. You shall have them if you will promise me to say nothing about what you saw, for it really will be doing a great injustice."

Laura had talked rapidly, almost incoherently, yet the girl understood her, and the sight of the long coveted bracelets, as her mistress held them up before her eyes, was too much for her honesty.

"The bracelets! Oh! Mon Dieu!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands ecstatically, "madam may command; Lizette will say nothing. Not anyone shall hear one word, never! Lizette see nothing, hear nothing, know nothing, never!"

Of course, Laura knew what this meant; she was bribing this girl, but she must keep her silent. Allan must be saved if innocent: if guilty—she could not think of that! All this and more passed and re-passed her mind. Suddenly she asked:

"Tell me all you saw, Lizette, I must know what makes you judge him."

"Madam can judge, for what I see. Monsieur Allan Morton take the diamonds, look very closely, a long time. He is great joy to put them on the Una. They haf fine sport. He look at the other jewels, pearls, garnets, all, but most at the diamonds and pearls. He look a great many times at the door, only when he haf the diamonds and pearls in his hands. He look what you call anxiety at the door. When you open the door he quick, lay down the jewels, and fold his arms, so," and Lizette stood up straight, in exact imitation of Allan's erect attitude, with folded arms.

Laura saw how her maid might injure Allan, and smothering her self-contempt she said:

"And if I give you the bracelets will you swear to keep it a secret, swear on that black cross you wear about your neck?"

"Madam ask a great deal."

"Not too much. You must do this thing or I'll sell these bracelets within an hour. I was going out to-day for that purpose. Will you, Lizette, will you swear?"

"I will swear," answered Lizette, after a few moments of deep thought, and producing the cross she repeated after her mistress, a vow of eternal secrecy, concerning what she had seen, or thought, and as she proceeded, Laura growing desperate at thought of the girl's power over Allan, demanded in a stern voice:

"Now kiss the cross."

"I can not," cried Lizette, shrinking back as though dealt a fearful blow.

"You shall: kiss the cross. I command you," sternly demanded her mistress, "kiss the cross, or I'll sell the bracelets."

"Oh, Mon Dieu! so shame to sell so fine jewels for so little. Ah! I am madam's servant," and the girl hastily pressed her lips to the black cross, then held out her hands for the coveted bracelets and grasping them greedily she rushed away, much to the relief of her mistress, who now that she had proved the girl pervious to bribe, hated her, though she, herself, to save Allan had been a party to the transaction.

Allan did not call that day; of this Laura was glad, for do what she would she could not overcome the feeling of dread that had taken possession of her.

So the day wore away in doubt and foreboding. Fearful and nervous about the issues of each successive hour, she was glad when Robert returned at evening.

Business for the firm was his excuse, and she questioned him no further, so relieved was she to hear his hearty voice, and to feel that she was not alone in the house.

That evening after she told Robert of her loss, he called one after another of the servants and subjected them to the closest examination. Lizette was the last. Allan called while she was complacently and with great dignity answering her master's questions.

This was the first he had heard of the robbery, and as he listened to the special points in the case, so greatly was he startled and shocked, that thought was confused and speech came to him slowly. He listened to the conversation between Robert and the servants, with an occasional word thrown in by Mr. Tassett, with an intense regret, not so much at the loss of the



money's worth as at the act itself. The points in the case that startled him most were, that the jewels were stolen in Robert's absence, at night, by some one who knew just where to go for them, how to get them without waking Laura. He heard Robert say this, and vaguely remembered having heard Laura tell him just where she kept them. He saw how unprotected she had been at the time of the robbery, alone in the great house, at the mercy of the servants, Lizette included. He said nothing, but was interested at the questions Mr. Bassett flung at Lizette, the only one who seemed to have any interest for the keen old man.

Finding that he could make nothing out of the investigation among the servants, Robert asked his cousin to remain, while he went out on business, hinting that Laura was nervous and half sick.

Soon he returned, bringing a man who was evidently a detective. Together they searched every nook and corner of the house, and questioned and cross-questioned the servants, but with no better result than before. The man advised Robert to keep quiet: he would undertake to ferret out the burglars.

During all this time, from the moment Allan came, and during Robert's absence and the detective's investigation, Laura had maintained a quiet that was at this time a little strange, and in marked contrast to the anxious, eager look upon his face. She answered all questions that Mr. Wakeup put, with a measured tone of voice as though she felt the importance of each word. But she scarcely looked at, or spoke to Allan.

When Robert had said in an off-hand way, "I came near sending for you, Al, to come and stay with the folks till I got back, but hadn't time: had to make the train pretty lively," and when Allan had answered, "I wish you had, I did not know that you were going away, or

I might have offered what protection my company in the house might have afforded," Laura looked at him keenly, for a moment with a strange, questioning look in her eyes. Allan saw this, and to him her actions were a riddle. Robert believed that burglars had stolen the jewels, and gave the matter into the hands of the detective, who after gathering all the facts possible at hand took his leave, accompanied by Allan who asked the privilege of walking back with him to the office.

"Robert, were the diamonds so very valuable?" asked Laura as the door closed upon Allan and the detective.

"Well, there you 'ave me. It depends upon what you call valuable," answered her husband, evasively. "I didn't pay a big sum in so much money. They might cost another man a mighty sight more than I paid for them, but they're worth enough to make me want to get 'em back, hif it don't cost too much money. Fact is I got 'em by way of business, an' that's just as good to you, isn't it? Got 'em in trade, you may say."

"Will it be a loss to you if we don't find them," she asked, looking into his face anxiously.

"Why, not much. I shouldn't be hapt to pay for such another necklace or ring every day, and might never get such a bargain. What you want to know for?"

"Robert, if it's only for my sake, I had so much rather let them go, than to be worried by strange men, and all the rest," she answered, wearily. "I would rather do without them, than be bothered, if you don't mind."

"Well, that's a queer notion," said Robert, looking keenly down into her face. He saw she looked haggard and worn. "Guess this thing has worried you until you're about played out, ain't you?"

"I'm so tired," answered his wife, with a little gasping sob that went straight to the big man's heart as she came and stood beside him, leaning her head upon his shoulder.

"Well, hif you don't care enough about the things we won't mind 'em. I suppose hit's all a waste of time and money any way. Whoever's got 'em is beyond the reach of the law. Just as you say, any way; if you've a mind to do without 'em, I don't care," and he drew her closer to him, forgetting that only twenty-four hours before he had felt so savage about the matter of mourning.

"And will you discharge that man, the detective? Do, Robert, quick. He'll be here at all times of day, and I can't bear the thought!" and she shuddered visibly.

"Well, well, I'll see 'im in the morning and tell 'im to go 'bout his business, he needn't bother 'bout it. Will that do?" and he laid his ruddy cheek against her head. The caress swept away the years of wretchedness and she lifted her head, intending to touch her quivering lips to his cheek; but his next remark banished her thought.

"After all, there's no money in them diamonds, no great loss, or, of course I couldn't let 'em go so easy."

"I would not wish you to lose any money," she said, in a cold, disappointed tone and slipping out of his encircling arms.

"Oh! that's all right!" he assured her, cheerfully, not noticing the sudden change in her countenance and manner. "I guess I'll step out a few minutes; may be I'll see Wakeup, hand I'll put a stop to all that racket; then he won't be coming round 'ere in the mornin'," and he left the house, though it was nearly ten o'clock.

## CHAPTER XVI

## ALLAN AS ERRAND BOY

A few days after the events in the previous pages, Allan was walking down Wabash Avenue, when he saw the Van Tassel carriage being driven rapidly toward him.

As Mrs. Van Tassel, who was its only occupant, smilingly waved her hand to him, he touched his hat and would have hurried on, but she signified her desire to speak with him.

As the carriage drew up to the curbstone she made room by her side for him, saying:

"Step in, I want to talk with you, we can talk better in here than on a public street."

"My drive with you must be very short, for my time is so limited this morning," said he, as he took a seat beside her, "and I shall have to return soon."

"O, how busy we always are," she exclaimed, as they were whirled away toward the lake shore.

"I believe you wished to speak with me," he said, smiling. "O, yes, if one must count the minutes we will proceed to business. I simply wish to know two things, which I think you can tell me: first, why will not your cousin's wife be friendly with me; second, who is that dark, handsome stranger whom we saw talking with Mr. Waller the other evening? You saw him come into Waller's box, of course, for I saw you look daggers at him."

"To your first question I have no answer, for I have no right to question Mrs. Morton's wishes or motives, and she is not apt to confide in me, or any one else, for that matter. The second question I will answer as best and as briefly as I can. The man's name is

Illardo, Leon Illardo. He is an Italian and socialist of the most pronounced type. He does not belong to the common, but rather to the uncommon class, and he believes he is obeying the Divine law to "become all things to all men:" if he can help his cause. He is a remarkable character; under certain conditions a dangerous one."

"How long have you known him?"

"I have no personal knowledge of or acquaintance with him, but I have seen him a number of times; a few times before I came here."

"And you lived in Toronto?"

"Yes. I saw him on the cars, once; and now if you please, I must ask to be carried swiftly back, for I must go to the office." The truth is, he did not want to answer her questions and she was shrewd enough to know it.

"Mark tells me you are going to leave the office soon. What for?" she asked.

"Yes, I leave in a day or two."

"But why? Can you do better?" she persisted, in no way heeding his growing impatience.

"If it was a question of money, no. As it is I can do better."

"I never saw a man care so little for money as you do. I think it is well you are unmarried," and she laughed lightly, as she bade the coachman drive back.

"Do you think I would let a wife starve?" he asked.

"O, no; but she would believe you were right and live to please you, that is, live in a flat, and dress like a quaker."

"I think the quakers have the best of it," he said, smiling and touching his hat.

"Arriving at the office of his employer he was not a little surprised to find that Mrs. Van Tassel had reached

there before him. She was evidently waiting for some one. He bowed slightly, saying:

"You traveled fast."

"Yes, I did. I started out on business, just think of it, business for a fashionable woman, and I mean to stay here until I can be in a measure successful," giving an emphatic tap with her foot upon the floor, and continuing, "If your time were not so very precious I need not go further," and she waited half questioning with look and attitude.

"My time is at your service now that I must wait for Mr. Van Tassel to return," he answered, politely.

"O, thank you. It had occurred to me that in your work among the poor you may have learned something of a family by the name of Walton."

"Yes, I have heard of one, a widow."

"She rents of Jason Waller, I believe."

"She did," he quietly answered, but she paid no heed to his correction.

"I asked him to let her stay in her rooms and I would give her sewing to take home. I really felt sorry for her, and I paid him out of my pin money for her rent. Didn't she lose a child not long since?"

"She lost three," he answered, gravely, "but she paid him for her rooms, when I didn't, since I came here. Perhaps you gave him money, but it was not permitted to cancel her rent."

"The scoundrel! I certainly paid him quarterly, in advance. And are you sure she has paid him, too?"

"Certainly, for I gave her money on two occasions for that purpose, and know she gave it to him. Not liking the way he treats her I got her another place. I say, I got the place, I mean, I was sent out to do so; I was but an agent."

"And you say she has lost three children?"

"Three, and the fourth, a girl of fifteen, is worse than dead."

"Three dead, and the fourth ought to be! Waller did not tell me of more than one, though she seemed to be very needy."

"Didn't you see her, your sewing woman?" he asked, looking aslant at her, but avoiding her last remark.

"No, it is not necessary; my housekeeper tends to that; only plain sewing," she said, convincingly.

"Perhaps if you should hear her story without any coloring as she would tell it, it might make a friend of you; she needs friends."

"Why, what is so distressing and different in her case from any other?" she asked, subdued by his grave look and manner.

"I prefer you should ask her; she will tell you, I'm sure. It's a sad story, and a hard one."

"Will you go with me to see her?"

"No. I think you had better see her alone."

Just then Mr. Waller entered the room and seemed in no haste to leave when he was told "Mr. Van," for whom he inquired, was out.

"We were just speaking of Mrs. Walton when you came in the room," said Mrs. Van Tassel, eyeing Waller keenly; "Mr. Morton says she has a grievous story to tell, and he wishes me to hear it, what say you, Mr. Waller?"

"I'm not enough acquainted with the Waltons to decide," was his answer. "The stories of that class are pretty much alike, all poor, improvident, many lazy, shiftless, a bad lot; crime and drunkenness run riot, and—"

"Allow me," interrupted Allan with a stern look on his face and a quick flash in his eye, "of whom are you speaking, Mrs. Walton or her daughter?"

There was no doubting Allan's meaning; it was significant, biting, personal, though it might have been ill-timed, impolitic. He did not think or care for that. He thought only of that heart-broken mother, alone with her grief for her dead and her more terrible sorrow for her wayward daughter. He thought of those things and his face grew stern. He was looking at the man before him with the concentrated hate of a life-time of staunch integrity for such a conscienceless scoundrel as he knew Jason Waller to be. A fiery gleam came into Waller's black eyes for an instant, but with a meaning look he replied, politely bowing:

"I have not the honor or the pleasure of so extensive an acquaintance with people of that class. I leave that to good-natured philanthropists like Mr. Morton," then he bowed himself out.

"You are not a friend of Mr. Waller's, I see," said Mrs. Van Tassel after he had gone.

"I hate him," was Allan's savage reply, "as I hate all his ilk."

"Why? Jason Waller is a sort of monarch here. You must bow the knee to his royal Highness, when you go to 'our church' any way," said she with a mocking laugh and enjoying his ferocity immensely.

"Then I'll stay away for a long time, for I'll never fail to show my contempt for such a fraud."

"O, well, the world is full of frauds. I suppose he's no worse than any other: not half as dangerous, because not half as handsome or agreeable to the eye as some of them."

"Do you believe that?" he asked in surprise.

"Certainly. What is more dangerous than a handsome rake? What more perilous than to stake one's happiness upon a false hearted beauty?" she asked the question with intense bitterness. "I am a fashionable



woman: I choose to be. I am a leader of so called fashionable society; my husband's money helps me lead. But that does not blind my eyes. That man is everything vile and false under the sun, but his face is a mirror; it tells the whole miserable truth about him. He may give money to missions and churches: he can afford it, he is the greatest gambler and thief in Chicago; and I know him, too. But," she continued, with a sarcastic smile, "he is not dangerous to people of average intelligence. Now tell me what he meant by his sneering laugh when he left."

"I can't tell, but he meant nothing to my credit," Allan answered, with forced calmness.

"O, he never does, but as he's least dangerous when he threatens, so when he is quiet, calm, smiling, beware! Do you know that man don't believe in honest, sincere friendship: believes that all friendships culminate according to his own approved methods."

"Selfishness, wreck and ruin," said Allan, counting them off on his fingers.

"Yes, selfishness for him, wreck and ruin for others. I tell you, Allan Morton, I may be fashionable, but I have a heart and conscience, and I wouldn't have if I could tolerate that man. Now, I'm coming to what I've got to say; you know a woman always does, if you give her time enough and don't mind the conditions. That man tried to make me hate Mark only a year ago, too. Oh! the wretch! Actually told me, had the assurance to tell me Mark was poor and faithless. As though I cared for poverty; if it comes, I'll stand it side by side with my old lord just as I've spent his money, with his permission, and by his side. Mark is an honest man in my sight, and let any one dare to say to the contrary. I may tolerate them for a purpose, for my husband's interests, but not for their

own, not for my own, of course. Now, I am, or want to be a friend to Laura Morton. She hates me, why, I don't know. Well, let that pass. I won't beg of her. But you must put her on her guard. Waller will make trouble between them, and Robert Morton will settle with him in his hot-headed way of making settlements. I like them both. Morton is not to blame if he has fallen among rogues; rather to be pitied. He's your cousin, but I know that you don't quite like him. Oh! I know it," said she, when he looked up in surprise at her frank accusation. "He likes you better than you like him. But he's a good man in the main, and I like him. I'm going to stand by him, too, for if I'm not mistaken he'll need a friend in less than a month. Of course, I mean Mark and me both. Mark likes him; so do I."

"I see and I am glad to hear it," answered Allan, feeling called upon to respond.

"The trouble of it is, Allan," she continued, in her direct way of coming to the point, "Robert Morton's divinity is too divine, too fine-grained, too delicate in taste and sense, for such a great uncouth bear as he is, so they grow apart year by year, if indeed, they were ever any nearer. Did you know them before they were married?"

"Yes, rather before," was the equivocal answer.

"Why didn't you?—hum—yes, I see—hum—m. I wish—Mark would ever get here when I want him. Here he comes now," and much to her relief her husband trotted briskly into the office, followed by Robert Morton who was talking in an animated manner.

Allan had felt the hot blood mounting to his face and knew that, in spite of his heroic efforts to appear calm he was the picture of conscious confusion. He glanced hastily at Mrs. Van Tassel, and she, too, seemed to be

disconcerted. Of course, he understood her last remark, though so broken and disjointed. He knew that she was vexed with herself for stumbling upon the truth concerning his love for Laura. There was an awkward though brief pause, as Mark Van Tassel looked from Allan to his wife. He was going to make some jocular remark that might be ill-timed, but the quick-witted lady parried it off by knitting her black eyebrows and giving him a knowing look.

"Now you needn't fly into one of your jealous rages, Mark: you're much too old and too sensible; but just give me a check for a cool thousand this blessed minute."

Considering the perfect confidence Mark Van Tassel reposed in his wife, her charge of jealous rage was ridiculous, and delighted the old man immensely; understanding her side long glance from under knitting brows, he readily fell into the same line of conversation and answering with mock severity:

"Not a dollar to spend for jim-cracks for that ball."

"But I want a perfectly gorgeous dress, and must have lots of things beside."

"Yes, lots of things, to deck yourself out with. Oh, no, Elinor Van Tassel, you're dangerous enough now shining around all the young men!"

"Now I protest! Mr. Morton, isn't he stingy?"

"Yes 'e is certainly, an' if 'e don't give you the dress I will," answered Robert much amused by her gayety. "I wish my wife would want new dresses, she don't dress 'alf as gay as I want her to. I like to see a woman look well."

"Only a very beautiful woman, of the Madonna order, can wear those soft gray dresses with charming effect," said Mrs. Van Tassel. "Your wife looks like an angel, and charms like a—woman—in everything she wears,

but I think she is loveliest in light gray (she was looking at Allan now)." "She is not half as lovely in bright colors, or black. She must never wear black. Thanks, for small favors," and she took a roll of bills from her husband's hand. "Now I'm going to spend my money, five hundred for myself, and the rest to quiet my conscience," and she swept gracefully out of the room followed by the twinkling eyes of her doting husband, who chuckling proudly as the door was shut after her, said to Robert Morton:

"Do you know where the half of that money'll go? No? well, she'll give it to beggars. The spendthrift! But she's cute, Elinor is, cute as old Nick! every time she gives a party, or gets a stunning new gown, she gives as much to the poor as she gives for her party and dress. That's what I call keeping debit and credit: she calls it quieting her conscience."

"Pretty costly business," said Robert, grimly.

"Why, what's a thousand dollars to me? I made fifty thousand the other day in that last deal. My money's hers and she spends it wisely, and I get the biggest sort of interest. I get peace of mind, because I make my wife happy in her own way, and she makes me the happiest old coon in the city. See the point? She'll come to me to-night and show me the corner, just the corner of some rich stuff and tell me to wait till the dress is done. Then she'll sail down into the parlor on dress parade, so that I may admire her before any one else does in her new gown. But she'll never say anything about the conscience money till I question her right smart; I know it's all right; that's enough for me: it's her money's well as mine. We know all about where it goes."

All this time Allan had been waiting for a private talk with his employer. Robert was fidgety and ill at

ease, yet evidently had some purpose in being there. Mr. Van Tassel cleared the way for Robert by saying:

"Allan, I want you to do an errand for me; go down to Tinsel's and give him a letter. He'll show you a pair of bracelets that I want to see. Tell me what you think of them. May get 'em for Elinor if we like 'em. Come back soon and I'll see you later. Do you know, Morton," said he as the door closed after Allan, "my wife thinks that man is about as good as they raise this side of the pond. I'm sorry he's going to leave me; don't know how to get along without him."

"What fool notion 'as he got into his head now?" asked Robert, impatiently.

"O, he's going to do something or other in some sort of a scheme to look after the poor people, I guess. That ain't quite it, but it's something in that line."

"Oh! 'e's going to deal hout other people's money, and bring about a sort of millenium," said Robert, with a savage sneer that caused the little man to look up in surprise.

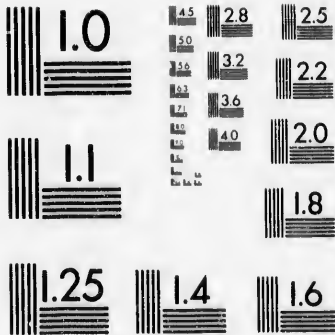
"Well, Elinor says it's always best to bring about the most good to the largest number of people; that's when she's arguing me out of an unusually largesum of money, and I ain't sure but it's true. I'm sorry your cousin is about to leave us. Elinor's taken a notion to him."

"Most women do," said Robert, laconically.

"I thought it would please Nell to have him choose the bracelets," continued Mr. Van Tassel, seeming not to hear him, "and I'm going to get them on the sly for her to wear with her new dress. Then I'll have to give the worth of them to the poor kids around town, or she won't wear 'em. O, she's a tartar about this business," and he bowed Robert out just as Allan returned with the jewels.

"What do you think of them," asked his employer.





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"I am not much of a judge; but they are very beautiful. I like the setting better than any I ever saw, but you must not depend upon my judgment, for I know very little about diamonds!"

"Guess we'll keep them," answered the old gentleman.

"I'm surprised that he didn't want a guarantee of my honesty," said Allan; "I thought he was very unwise to let me carry those jewels back and forth: he don't know but I'll decamp with his property."

"You wouldn't get far. Those folks have private men to guard their interests: they don't trust any man."

Allan remained talking with his employer for an hour or more, then after receiving what was due of his salary, he prepared to leave the office; softened by the old man's evident regard for him, he was inclined to grant any favor that Mr. Van Tassel might ask of him. Just as he was leaving the door he volunteered to take the jewels to his employer's wife.

"You can do that for me, Allan, and it will please Elinor; she likes you and don't want you to leave; so take these jewels to her if only to make your peace," and the little man chuckled in fatherly good nature.

"O, I guess it won't make much difference who carries them to her, if you don't. I suppose I'll do as well as any one for errand boy," Allan said, laughing.

"You young dog! If Elinor wasn't so level headed, I'd be jealous of her. She's always sounding your praises. Go 'long; and mind you come often to see us, and if you ever get into a corner come to Mark Van Tassel. Hear?"

"Yes, I hear, and am grateful for your kindness. I have none too many friends to forget you," said Allan, looking into his employer's keen eyes.



As Allan pursued his way toward the Van Tassel residence, he was subdued by the strength of his old employer's friendship for him, and under the influence of the thought he walked with bent head, and with a half sad, half anxious look upon his handsome face.

He was not conscious of any one's approach, until Robert's voice arrested his attention.

"Hello, Al, where you going?"

O, I didn't see you coming. I'm going to Mr. Van Tassel's."

"All right, thought maybe you was going over to the house."

"Not to-day."

"All right," was the terse reply, as Robert hurried onward, and Allan pursued his way.

A few minutes later he stood in Mrs. Van Tassel's parlor, in the presence of other guests who were coming and going constantly.

He was not a little surprised to find Jason Waller among the number, and was relieved to have an excuse for coming, so without any preliminaries he gave her the case of jewels, saying in a matter-of-fact way:

"I'm sent with this package for you. It has been a pleasure to me to bring it; hope it may give you a greater pleasure," then he would have taken his leave, but was somewhat detained by the entrance of others. "You're in high feather, young man," said Waller in a meaning voice stepping to Allan's side. "Hope you fully appreciate your importance and advantages."

"I'm not aware of any special importance, or advantages: unless it be in attending strictly to my own affairs," was the young man's curt answer, as with a darkening face he left the parlor.

Allan was intensely annoyed by the evil look of Waller, and as he hurried away the frown upon his face

became a scowl of hate. But as he hurried on away from his hated enemy's presence, happier thoughts crowded out of his mind the unpleasant impressions occasioned by Waller's language, and the scowl faded from his fine face under their softening influence, until not so much as a line remained between the frank eyebrows.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### UNDER A SHADOW

The following morning Chicago rang with the news of the boldest of all robberies. This time Mrs. Van Tassel's diamonds given her by the day before. She had said not a word to anyone about them, intending to appear in them in all their glory at the forthcoming ball. After her guests had left, she had gone to her room and there upon opening her package given her by Allan, had first discovered the lovely jewels and divining her husband's intent had put them in her jewel-case without even the knowledge of her maid, to whom she usually showed all her possessions. The following morning when she first discovered her loss, she straightway notified the police, being a woman of prompt action, and they had set about making diligent but quiet search.

Yet in spite of precaution, the story, somehow, leaked out, and by nine o'clock the papers were full of the robbery.

Allan read the news in one of the papers, and in some perturbation hurried to the office of his employer. Not finding him in he immediately sought the home of the Van Tassel's.

Arriving there, he found many others who were filled

with curiosity to know all about the robbery. But the strangest part of it was Mrs. Van Tassel's icy composure and utter disregard of their frequent queries. She seemed determined to lead them away from the subject, and failing to do so, at last requested them to forebear further mention of the affair for it was of little moment to her.

Her manner toward Allan was not quite as cordial as it had been, but this he attributed to her worry about the jewels.

As he rose to go she reminded him, however, that she should expect him to lead her out for the Lancers at Vessage's.

Upon the next day Allan was walking rapidly down State Street, when he was abruptly accosted by a stranger who told him that Mr. Van Tassel wanted to see him at once.

"I'll go round in a short time," answered Allan.

"He's waiting at the office by this time."

"Tell him I'll be there in a half hour, must make another call first. Important, or I'd go right over. I'll be there soon." Much surprised, Allan hurried on his way. At the appointed time he stood before his former employer's door, but just as he was going to turn the knob the door opened and Jason Waller came out.

Allan quickly entered the office, where he was warmly greeted by his old employer whom he found restlessly pacing the floor.

"I'm glad you've come. I wanted to see you, and sent for you. Glad you came so quickly," said the old man, kindly but soberly.

Allan noticed he looked worn and haggard, and kindly said:

"I came as quickly as I could, I had another errand to do first. But what can I do for you?"

"O, it's a whim, I s'pose it's just to ask a few questions."

"Certainly, ask me anything," quickly answered Allan, more than ever mystified by the unusual earnestness of Mr. Van Tassel's manner.

"Allan, my son, who was in Tinsel's yesterday when you got those jewels?"

"Why, several altogether, I don't know just who; I have the impression there might have been eight or ten, I didn't recognize any one. Why do you ask?"

"Well, it troubles me about the thief; they went so mysteriously, and I thought, perhaps, you might help us; some clue, ever so small, would help us out."

"I wish I could, but I don't remember a soul that was there; never remember having seen one of them before. I was careful to avoid displaying the jewels and so dealt purposely with the senior Tinsel. I told him that you would report to him immediately, I hope you did so?"

"Yes, yes, I drove around there after you left for the house," said the old man as he continued his restless walk up and down the room.

"Haven't you any clue yet?" asked Allan troubled by his old friend's unusual excitement.

"Not a clue. Elnor says 'drop it.' She won't let me continue the search."

"Why, that's strange; just so with my cousin's wife. I thought Mrs. Van Tassel was the first to inform the police."

"She did. Now she says she won't run him down; and I won't!" and as the old gentleman made the remarkable statement he looked keenly and kindly into the face of the young man, who saw what struck him dumb with astonishment, a tear slowly coursing down his wrinkled cheek and his thin lips convulsively quiv-

ering as he walked to the other end of the office and looked out of the window a few minutes upon the court below. Returning presently, he had grown calm again, and seating himself before Allan he asked in the same kind tone:

"Allan, have you plenty of money?"

"Nearly all that you paid me yesterday," he answered promptly, wondering what impelled the question. But seeing that his old friend was evidently withholding something, he said: "Is there something else I can do for you?"

"No, I guess not," was the hesitating answer. But as Allan rose to go Mr. Van Tassel took his hand and said in an earnest voice from which every whit of its customary ring had fled, leaving a subdued tremulousness that was as surprising as it was new to Allan:

"My son, if you ever need money come to me; don't get it any where else, or I'll never forgive you, never. Don't beg, borrow nor steal; come to Mark Van Tassel; while he has a cent you shall have it," and he relinquished the hand that he had been giving little grips by way of emphasis, and turned abruptly away to the window again. Allan considered the interview was over, and confused by the unusual display of emotion in one who had never hinted a capability of it, he left the office like one in a dream. He was deeply affected by the old gentleman's evident interest in him, and was grateful for a friendship which he believed to be honest and disinterested. It was not until he had allowed an hour or so to elapse to steady his nerves and clear his brain, could he become in the smallest degree analytical. The result was startling, to say the least, and so horrible that he put the thought out of his mind as unjust and unworthy his old friend's generous kindness. If Mr. Van Tassel did suspect any one he ought

to inform the police, make an arrest, and give him a chance to clear himself.

So back he turned and walked into the office again.

Not finding Mr. Van Tassel in, and being informed by the office boy that he had just gone home tired and sick, Allan hurried to the Van Tassel residence, conscious only of the desire to stand clear before this man whose friendship had suddenly grown so valuable to him.

As he was shown into the parlor, he asked for Mr. Van Tassel and was informed that the master had not gotten home, too early in the day.

Allan was about to leave the house, when Mrs. Van Tassel came gliding noiselessly down the stairway, and motioning him back into the parlor, she seated herself by his side on the sofa without even a word. He could not understand the dumb show of mystery, and quietly waited for her to speak.

"I wanted to see you, Allan, before you left, for now there's no one here. I'm 'not at home' to-day to any one else. They may think what they please, the geese! I can't be at their beck and call all the time; I'm tired of the whole flock!"

"I called to see your husband," said Allan, thinking most of his errand, "and the servant told me he hadn't got home yet. But down at the office the boy told me he left for home feeling tired and sick."

"Mark sick! Oh, no; he's only tired. He's up stairs now, but the bell-boy don't know it. Like myself, Mark's tired of talking about the robbery. Allan, isn't it strange? Don't you think it strange the diamonds should be stolen so quickly after I got them?" she asked the question in a broken and flurried voice, anxiously and keenly looking into his face as though seeking comfort in his answer.

"Yes, it is strange, beyond question. It is of this matter I want to see your husband. I don't know what to say, or how to say it, but I'll risk a square question in good English," and he smiled brightly, looking her frankly in the eyes, to which she responded by a smile so white, so anxious that it seemed but a mockery, yet there was an eager, expectant look in her face.

"Do you, or does your husband, have any idea who is the thief?" He purposely emphasized the last word, and saw her wince as though struck a heavy blow, then she rallied and answered quickly:

"I don't have ideas; you must ask Mark about his," and she laughed harshly.

"Well, I'll ask another question. Do you believe from anything you have seen or heard that I have anything to do with the robbery?" He was not to be put off; but she was ready for his question, and rising haughtily, she said in a clear and incisive voice:

"Mr. Morton, I am not in the habit of receiving a thief as my honored guest and friend." But she did not meet his glance; instead, she continued in a more cheerful voice: "Now drop this tiresome, hateful subject, and never mention it to me again! Hush! I won't hear a word! remember, never unless I broach the subject. Stop, I command!" and thus she silenced him. Then with a true woman's tact she tried to put him at ease.

She led him to talk of his work among the helpless of the great city; of his earlier youth, in short, of everything that was of moment to him. And thus two hours slipped by.

Allan was astonished and out of patience with himself at the flight of time. He had meant to make his call extremely short, and had been seduced into a visit.

But in spite of the loss of time his spirits had risen remarkably during those two hours in the Van Tassel parlor. He came feeling fierce and rebellious: he left the door brightly smiling back a good bye at his hostess, and as he turned to descend the steps Jason Weller passed by, and must have heard him respond in the affirmative when Mrs. Van Tassel bade him come often as he used to do.

After Allan had left, Mrs. Van Tassel quickly, and with the step of a conqueror, ascended the stairs to her room and without ceremony pounced upon her husband in the most uncompromising way, saying:

"Mark Van Tassel, don't for heaven's sake make such a goose of yourself and me again as to do so much as hint or look suspicious against that man! It's a crime against good sense and decency, and honor, for there is such a thing after all."

"Why, Elinor! what's the matter? What's the rumpus now? What d'ye mean? What man?" queried her husband, startled almost out of his senses by her vehemence.

"O, you needn't tell me! You've been as good as suspecting Allan of stealing my diamonds. Allan! just to think of it! Oh! of course, you didn't say so, in so many words; better not! But just let me hear a breath and I'll make it hot for every one concerned! Pretty friend you are! Calling him 'my son,' and telling him to come to you for money, and—"

But her husband made no reply. So getting no consolation from his grim silence she bounced up spitefully, and in her wrath sent her chair spinning over backward as she loftily sailed toward the door, saying in her most cutting tones:

"Humph! I wonder if the county insane asylum has



given up all its inmates? I'll go over to Morton's and see if they have any there."

She ran down the stairs and rang the bell fiercely for the servant.

"Harness Zip to the phaeton, quickly! I'll drive."

A short time after, she stood at the door of Robert Morton's home in bright-eyed impatience. When the door opened she was informed by the servant that Mrs. Morton was not able to see company. Much incensed, she re-entered her phaeton and drove hastily away, muttering to herself "another lunatic." Wherever she called that morning she was met by the usual "Oh-ings" and "Ah-ings" of polite society over her most serious loss, "a few dollars worth of jewelry." Such remarks as "I heard Mr. Morton carried the jewels to you" and "Young men are so fast now days!" "Such a nice young man!" "Yes, I quite liked him," etc., to all of which Elinor Van Tassel could only fume and fret inwardly, and in some cases give sharp, cutting answers, that contained scathing rebukes.

Suddenly a bright idea seized her and she was dashing in the direction of Tinsel's. She, no doubt, had a very satisfactory interview with the senior Tinsel, for when she drove away Napoleon Bonaparte might well have hesitated before daring to risk an encounter, so triumphant and so determined was the look on her face.

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When Allan left Mrs. Van Tassel's door he was annoyed at the evil look with which Jason Waller confronted him, and still more so, when a few steps further on he passed the Morton carriage and received but a cool bow from Laura, its only occupant.

Why he should be so unreasonably annoyed at these two trifling circumstances he could not tell, but so it was. However, as the smile upon his lips and in his

eyes had not faded out entirely, let us hope with him that Waller had not the power to utterly destroy his happiness by an evil sneer; Allan would let that pass; and, as to Laura, she was sad with good reason; was no doubt low-spirited. Of course, he must call there before another day's end.

On his way down town, Allan met several former friends who seemed unable to give him the necessary time for the customary cordial handshake, but instead passed hastily by with a stiff "Good morning, sir," or

"Good day, sir," that chilled the blood around his heart a little, although he was not conscious of it at the time. They were a very busy people in Chicago, and if he was going to stay in Chicago he must be busy too, else he would be swept aside and off his feet.

So he contentedly hurried on, only half noticing the brief and somewhat chary greetings, and in his unconsciousness, admiring the bustling city for its business-like activity that would not permit even friends to waste their time in useless cordiality. So everywhere he went the same look and manner greeted him. Dropping in at a young men's reading-room, and meeting some of those with whom he had had friendliest exchange of courtesies, he was met by averted looks and pre-occupation.

Little groups were formed in various corners who talked in low voices, immediately changing tone and look upon his appearance.

He then walked over to the station to see his trusty friend Denan.

The unusually kind greeting of the policeman warmed the young man's heart, and under its genial influence he forgot much of the cold formality that had met him in the other places.

Grasping Denan's hand, he said:

"Glad to see a man this morning who isn't pressed for time to answer a question, or give a fellow an honest greeting."

"Chicago is on the rush to get to the top of the heap," was his friend's laughing answer. Then a few words from Denan in a low voice brought the "boys" who were at the farther end of the room, with cordial greetings. Though Allan did not feel any special interest in the others, yet for Denan he entertained a warm friendship.

"I think both Robert's wife and Mrs. Van Tassel are doing wrong to give up the search," said Allan, as their talk quickly drifted toward the subject of the robberies.

"They don't realize that this will be an inducement to other crimes; and some other person will not be as lenient, but will, in trying to save his property, forfeit his life. I'd like to see the thieves captured."

"You want to see justice done, do you? So do I," said Denan, promptly. "Women are too tender-hearted. Wakeup says he can spot the thief in the Morton case any minute, and the robberies are so much alike that to get one thief is to get the other. But Morton's wife has bound her husband by a promise not to continue the search; and Mrs. Van Tassel says she'll set the dogs on the first officer or detective that meddles," and the big policeman laughed in a hearty way that infected Allan by its jollity. "Do you know if the two women are friends?" asked Denan, suddenly.

"I don't think they are: that is, Mrs. Morton don't seem to take to Mrs. Van Tassel, though there is nothing marked in it, for she is not over cordial to any one; is, in fact, rather reserved and cold to everyone, and extremely so to me, at times. Mrs. Van Tassel, however, only the other day declared her regard for Mrs. Morton. But they are not intimate. Laura's fault I'm sure. Why?"

"Why I asked is that it seemed as though they could make it up between them to have nothing done to save somebody they like. You know women do queer things, sometimes, and Mrs. Van Tassel is rich and a mighty independent woman."

"Yes, but money shouldn't save a thief, nor false sentiment either," was Allan's answer.

Then they branched off on other subjects of interest.

"Did you hear the Walton girl has skipped?" asked Denan.

"No, she was there yesterday. I was sent there with aid for her mother. I didn't see her, but I heard her voice."

"Well, she's gone; went last evening while her mother was out."

"Have any idea where she is gone?" asked Allan.

"O, it's commonly believed among the police force that Waller's spirited her away. Afraid of his reputation. He needn't be scart; there ain't enough of the man's reputation to make it worth while for even Nell Walton to make any ado about, except among a certain class. She's gone and I'll bet there'll be another blow-out soon. He'll give another spread. Ye see, she threatened him. Seems as if she 'got an idea from some "white" folks that she might reform and live a better life; guess your cousin's wife took her in hand, and so Nell, poor thing, thought that Waller ought to keep his promise and marry her: she says he promised long ago to marry her and make a lady of her; she says that was when he was a 'Christian.' Of course, she's bound to make him keep his word, she says it's the only chance for her, or she'll make it hot for him. Oh! he's got her away. Now about next Sunday you go around to 'our church,' and he'll be there in all his glory, sanctimonious as a saint. But his latest go is an attempt to

get in with the laboring class.' Don't know how true it is, but I hear he's going to put your cousin up for Congress, him and his clique."

"Impossible! Why, Robert hasn't the first idea of American politics, and ought to have sense enough to keep to his old business, money-making," answered Allan, much disgusted by the information.

Much that Denan had said to him he had but half heard. He had noticed one remark, "guess your cousin's wife took her in hand," and he had been thinking of the pure, strong soul of the woman who had gone so soon from the grave of her child into that crime-darkened home, and helped to rescue an erring sister. So the policeman had talked on until his reference to Robert's running for Congress struck his attention and held it.

"Well, you have it as cheap as I do. Maybe it's only a story, but I was told by one of the boys at the station yesterday, and one that's good authority, too. Hoffman told me."

"O, I don't believe it, Denan: it's only a scheme to make money."

"Yes, to make money; build up their fortunes out of the rest," answered Denan, bitterly. "Waller is the cutest rascal alive, and if the honest, hard-working classes don't know him, they shall, if I have to publicly denounce him."

"I'll back you with any evidence that has come to my notice," said Allan. "I think I can bring him to his senses in the Walton case. Her mother told me more than I cared to hear."

"Now I tell you, Morton, I'm your friend, and I tell you that you'd better let me fix that business: it's none too clean and he's got a grudge against you and he'll turn the tables, sure as preaching! Just you keep out

of his clutches, or he'll ruin you. Mind! Don't say a word out loud unless I tell you. I'll let you know when I want you. I want a chance at him: I'll make him remember Tom Denan, then I'll die happy!"

"All right, just as you say," said Allan, wondering at the strange, dark look that came over the frank face of Denan whenever he spoke of Waller. "All right, but it must be done! Don't let him go too far: that is all. There's going to be a big mass meeting down at the hall to-night, shall you be there?"

"Can't to-night, but you go and keep me posted. There's some mischief on foot. I've got another matter to-night. At six, must meet the boys at headquarters. I've only got sixty minutes, just while I ought to be eating my supper."

"How do you get in?"

"Oh! I'm not Denan then, but a rabid anarchist, see?"

"Risky, isn't it?"

"Yes, but some one's got to go. I want to. I've got a plan that's going to bring down our game, and I must go myself for fear of losing some valuable point by another's seeing and not giving a correct report. But I tell you this much, that Illardo is bound to hang yet. Yes, just him," seeing Allan's look of surprise. "He'd just as lief shoot a man as eat; believes it's all right for anarchy's sake."

"How do you know this?"

"Why, they had a meeting down at the Verein and their language was red enough to set Chicago on fire. I reported promptly, but nothing seems to awaken the people. Why, they talked of blowing up some of the biggest places in the city, and swore vengeance against some of the most prominent business men. They talked of bombs, dynamite, pistols. Now that Illardo's not

ignorant; he's well educated and he's very smart, but a dyed-in-the-wool anarchist, and he's led by Jason Waller."

"What! is Jason Waller an anarchist?" was Allan's surprised inquiry.

"Oh! no, Jason isn't anything in particular, but everything in general, for money. But he's got Illardo, body and soul, and it's only in that way he can get him, by helping or seeming to help anarchy. You mind what I tell you, in less than a month Chicago will see a sight to test the strongest nerves."

"What will it be, do you think?"

"God knows, and he don't tell us except by signs; them are pretty plain just now."

"You ought to keep the chief and mayor informed," said Allan, impressed by Denan's words.

"I do; but Mayor Harrison don't seem to wake up. No one believes it half as bad as I know it to be; they think I'm off. They'll see. But who will suffer? The policemen who must protect these same men against their own folly and stupidity, the police who must protect the city when the storm breaks, if they die for it."

"I hope it is not as bad as you fear," said Allan. "Keep me posted, Tom, and don't fail. I'll do the same, I'll stand by you in the trouble, if it comes."

Then they clasped hands and separated.

Turning the first corner Allan saw Illardo talking with Lizette. He was sure it was she; the same motion of hand and head, the familiar general look were hers. He now bent his steps toward Robert's house, believing that there might come a time when his services would be acceptable, and he would not make it unnecessarily difficult for Laura, should she need him, by staying away too long.

He was soon waiting in the family parlor at Morton's with some uneasiness. There was a stillness, a sombre air about the place that became oppressive. He had been admitted by a strange girl, who went to inform her mistress of his desire to see her. He was soon relieved by the appearance of Laura herself, but she was so haggard and worn, that he could only look silently into her face that bore the traces of care and sorrow. A tension about the mouth, and an evasive, haunted look cut him to the heart.

"Laura, tell me what is the trouble, for I know something unusual is worrying you. You are suffering." Allan forgot his own small worries in his distress at seeing her.

"Many things, Allan, since Dot left us," she said, wearily.

"Tell me all about them," and giving her a chair he drew up another and seated himself before her.

"What has kept you away so long? That has worried me a little," she said, with a little quiver of her lips.

"I have been very busy, and I thought that you did not need me," he answered, quickly.

"I do need some one often," she answered, a trifle bitterly. "It would be different if Robert were more responsible."

"Robert! is he less responsible than formerly?"

Laura hesitated a moment before replying, then with sudden energy said, as she quickly rose to her feet:

"Come and see for yourself," and she led the way to the library and there, lying across the table was his cousin. On the table was an almost empty decanter which Allan discovered had contained mixed wines.

"Who has been here with him?" he asked Laura.



"Jason Waller. Who else?" she answered with a sneer.

"Does this thing happen very often?"

"Very often, indeed!" then she startled him by locking the door. Returning to his side, where as they stood they could look directly upon the red, bloated face of the sleeper, she said with the passion of despair, pointing her finger toward her husband:

"This, this is what I sold myself for long ago! This is what I took in exchange for hope, happiness, everything! Am I not well punished for my perfidy? You do not answer. Are you enjoying the exhibition of my honors, the wife of a drunkard, and worse? I could not forgive you that once, long ago, you took too much wine, though he triumphantly told me after it was too late that his hand mixed the drink. I must continue to submit and endure while that man is steeped in whisky!"

"Your eyes were dazzled by his money then. But let us talk no more of these things. Let us forget them," he answered, kindly.

"Yes, yes, my eyes were filled with gold dust," she answered, not heeding his closing remark. "But it drove me wild then, that you should fall to the level which that man occupies both by habit and nature. I have discovered, to my sorrow, that he had not far to fall; you would have traversed unparalleled distances in the descent to have reached the depth of his degradation. Oh, no, he had not far to fall!"

"What, is there more than this—intemperance?" asked Allan, in surprise.

"More than this?" she re-iterated, vehemently, "this is not half! Under the influence of whiskey a man will commit any crime in the calendar."

"Come; let's go out of this; it isn't a fit place for you," and he turned to leave the spot.

"I have to endure it. I had my choice, and choosing that thing, must abide by my folly! Oh, I ought to love, honor, and obey him!" and she laughed a hollow, mocking laugh that chilled the blood in her listener's veins.

He believed her mind was giving way.

"Come out of this room, any way; the air is not fit to breathe," said he, moving nearer the door. "Where is the key?"

"O, I have it. I did not choose to let the servants share in my honors," she replied, with another harsh laugh.

He did not answer, except to take the key from her hand and unlock the door. Seeing that she was extremely pale he motioned her to precede him. Like a little child she obeyed him, and they went to the parlor. Fearing that she was really ill, he prevailed upon her to go to her room.

Upon inquiry he learned that Nettie had taken Una upon a visit to Helen's, so he dispatched a servant for Mrs. Bassett, after which he went for a doctor. He was soon back and was met by the terrified girl who had first admitted him to the house, and who now told him that her mistress was dying.

Without hesitation he followed the girl and found Laura lying in a semi-conscious state, from which she partly roused when he spoke to her, and muttered in her delirium, "I'm true, living or dead. He's drunk! A Jankard's wife! My jewels gone! Who stole my jewels? Allan? No, no! dead, dead, living or dead. Gold! gold! that's what I got! Dot dead, no, Dot's sleeping. I'll be true living or dead!"

With a heavy dread in his heart, Allan listened to

her wanderings, as she tossed from side to side upon her pillow, and was glad when her parents, followed by the physician, entered the room.

After making a few inquiries which Allan alone could answer, the doctor hastily diagnosed the case, shaking his head gravely over its complications, and hinting at brain difficulty aggravated by a sudden shock.

Allan left the room reluctantly, promising to come early the following morning to render any assistance that might be acceptable.

As he stood by her bedside he again caught his name and heard her mutter: "Steal? Never! no hope, no happiness! Gold! Gold! They shall never know! Allan a thief? Never!"

Her mutterings furnished a clue to the mystery of her late conduct toward him. Her manner had been cold, distant, and full of anxiety. The secret was out. She had connected the loss of her jewels with him. Why had he not thought of that before? In her delirium she had vowed to keep it a secret. In her loyalty she might not have hinted it to anyone else; but now when she could not control the wandering tongue, her attendants must gain a knowledge of this, and share in her suspicions, if indeed, they had not done so already, and he would be under the suspicion of the whole family, including Robert, his enemy.

He saw that Robert was sleeping heavily and would continue to do so for hours, so that he could be of no help all that night nor the next day, perhaps. He knew that his presence was necessary elsewhere that evening, so he could not return until the following day.

He lingered a short time in the parlor, loath to leave the house until he again saw the physician, who told him that Mrs. Morton was sleeping and would no doubt

be better in the morning. Greatly relieved Allan hurried away.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### IN THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND

As Allan left the house, he hurried to his room and found a letter marked "Important," from Denan, telling him to call around as soon as possible.

A half hour after as he stood before his friend he was surprised to see him evidently laboring under great excitement.

"Well, Denan, what's up? I got your letter."

"Morton, I've got something to tell you; it cuts me to the heart to have to do it, but it had better come from me than a stranger," answered the policeman, grasping his hand warmly, and looking kindly into his eyes.

"What is it, Tom? I guess I can bear it from you," said Allan, in a re-assuring voice, though his heart gave a thump that nearly took his breath.

"Well, it seems Waller, the scoundrel, has been slurring you with regard to Mrs. Van Tassel's jewels, and Mrs. Morton's also. He don't say anything definite, just hints and slurs, and it's gaining ground, too. Morton, I hate to tell you, but you'll have to hear it from some one, and I want you to keep your wits about you!"

"You are sure that Waller is the one?" asked Allan, calmly.

Yes, he's the man." Denan was surprised at Allan's coolness.

"When did you hear it first?"

"Yesterday. Ye see, in the case of the Van Tassel

jewels, you took them to her and she didn't let a soul know she had 'em beside you and her husband. Somehow it's leaked out. We went to see old 'Van' and he says it's all a lie, and he'll prosecute Waller. Mrs. Van laughs, though she looks so mad, and says she's got a "surprise for all hands and will serve it up at the ball at Vessage's."

"Does she hint what it is?"

"Not a hint; but she's cute. That ball comes off next week."

"Yes, I believe so. I don't keep much track of such things now, though I used to like parties and dancing well enough," answered Allan, moodily.

"Well, now I tell you, Morton, you'd beter keep in with your friends, the Van Tassels. They're solid, and a man can't tell how soon he may need friends."

"You talk strangely, Tom; what has occurred to make you take such a gloomy view of life?"

"Oh! many things. That Waller and all his crowd are getting solid with the very class that we'd like to help, and they'll run against us some day. He was down at the hall yesterday, after I saw you, and he harangued the boys upon keeping a brisk watch of the reds. Yet, I know that he's in with them anarchists. He's playing a double game, and through his men he can carry it on a good while yet, in spite of us. He's your worst enemy."

"Denan, do you think that I stole the jewels? Answer me point-blank," asked Allan, suddenly facing him.

"No, I don't!" shouted his friend, "I never thought so."

"Then what shall I do?"

"Nothing, nothing at all, until some one else does something. If there's nothing done—" something choked Denan, and he coughed.

"No arrests made, I suppose you mean," put in Allan, grimly.

"Yes, no arrests made, time will prove. Meantime, I'm going to work on the case myself, in spite of them foolish women," declared Denan, emphatically.

"Yes, foolish and no mistake! Their foolishness gives me no chance to clear myself," replied Allan, bitterly.

"Morton, tell me all about the affair as far as you know it; I've never heard it yet," said the officer, as though a bright idea had struck him.

It took him but a short time to go over each case as far as he knew about them. His listener took notes of the facts as fast as he related them, and at the conclusion, putting on a more cheerful look he said lightly:

"It's plain enough to me that Allan Morton isn't the thief; guess they'll have to look somewhere else, though it won't create quite so much of a sensation," and he laughed in a grim way, that had no pleasure in it.

"There's no doubt that some one is working against me, though," responded Allan, "for wherever I go, everywhere lacks the cordiality that was manifest before."

"Well you just go on and don't mind. Act as formerly, and we'll see if Jason Waller is going to run everything in Chicago," and the fierce looks of the policeman's eyes convinced Allan that he would not want him as an enemy.

"You remember, do not let on, no matter what you see or hear. There is one against you, and it all depends whether they find a weak spot in your coat; if they do, you are lost."

Then they parted to go, one to the east and one to the west, so to say, for their missions lay as far apart as the rising and setting of the sun.

\* \* \* \* \*

All the first part of the night Laura continued to talk incoherently, and her language furnished to her attendants a clue to her recent mental disturbances. It was fortunate for all concerned that only her nearest friends were by her bedside. About midnight she became quieter and sank into a disturbed sleep that lasted several hours, from which she awoke clear, though very weak and ill.

Of this Allan was told by the servant who had met him, when he called the next morning. He was glad to hear even so favorable a report of her case. He lingered a short time in the parlor, hoping to get something definite concerning her, but as he could see none of the family, he left and was hurrying down the steps when Mr. Bassett came around the corner of the house and said, briskly:

"Mr. Morton, will you come down to the barn? I want to show you something in the way of horses."

"I can't this morning: am pressed for time; another day I'll be glad to," said Allan, wondering what new whim possessed Mr. Bassett, who had never taken to him kindly.

"I guess you can. This horse is an uncommonly interesting critter, and you'd better come; another day won't do," urged the old man, with a sagacious look in his eyes.

Allan saw that there was a hidden meaning in his request, and half smiling, he signified his willingness to go with him.

"Now, Mr. Morton," said he, as he closed the barn door and led the way to a distant corner and faced his companion abruptly, "I just want to say a few words to you without no circumlocution or round-about nonsense. If you know anything about what troubles Laura

and don't do your share to hender it, yer an out and out scoundrel, so you are!"

As the old man paused for an answer, Allan whose amazement began to give way to anger, said in a voice full of disgust:

"You don't imagine that I mean to take upon myself any blame for your daughter's illness, do you? Go into the library and see the cause of the shame and sorrow which your choice has brought upon her, and which has worn her out."

"I know all 'bout Bob, the skunk. But where's them jewels o' hern? who stole 'em?"

"You know as well as I do," answered Allan, sternly; "if that's all you have to tell me I'll go."

"What yer hangin' round these parts fer? Yer know yer only makin' trouble," demanded the irate old man.

"You made the trouble years ago by selling your daughter for money. She got the money, now she has the man. And let me tell you that if you were not an old man, I would settle with you for your insulting language."

Both men were in a white heat by this time.

"What business is it o' yourn, Al Morton, who my daughter married s'long as she didn't marry you? What did yer follow her here fer?"

"I came here first by several weeks, and am free to remain here as long as I see fit."

"Unless the constable lugs you off to jail!" roared the old man, almost beside himself with rage. "Ye done 'nough mischief; ye've been the pest o' her life, so ye have, 'nd you ain't got manliness 'nough to go on off about your business and let her be. Shame on ye, yer white livered cur!"

Allan saw his disadvantage, and Mr. Bassett's chance to make a case against him. Stung to death at the



insulting abuse, he turned and without a word left the barn, and hurried away from the stinging taunts of his accuser's following voice.

He was now convinced that the whole family shared in Laura's distrust, and now that she was better he would stay away from the house. So with gloomy forebodings he hurried away from the scenes of his humiliations. Again as on the day previous, wherever he went he met the averted face, or brief nod and crisp speech of former friends.

Convinced that matters were reaching a climax, he concluded to call once more on his old employer, but upon doing so found to his disappointment that he was out of town and would be absent several days. Wherever he went he met coolness and distrust. He decided to give up trying to face the world as an innocent man, and to keep away from those who evidently lost faith in him.

"One is always welcome at home," he muttered, bitterly as he entered his room a few minutes later, and looking about him thought how desolate a home it was, compared to the one that his cousin had the power to make a paradise instead of the prison it was. As he advanced toward the centre of the room he saw a letter lying upon the table. Hastily opening it he read as follows:

"MR. MORTON: As a friend, I am writing you to help you and save you trouble. If you want to avoid the shame of being asked to resign your place in the 'Aides,' withdraw upon some pretext at the next meeting. Rumor has it that certain reports connected with missing diamonds and the fair owners thereof are the reasons."

(Signed)

"A FRIEND.

Sick at heart Allan read and re-read the anonymous epistle, and sitting alone in his cheerless room that he

had occupied but a few days, he thought with gloomy foreboding of the chances against him.

That was perhaps the blackest hour of Allan's life, and he had seen many, for he felt that public opinion had branded him a thief without giving him chance to clear himself, and he was powerless to act even in self-defense.

To leave the city he dared not; that would confirm suspicion. No, he would remain and prepare to act on the defensive should anything come of this growing distrust.

Allan had little ready money, for in his zeal to aid others he had given up a good position in Mr. Van Tassel's office as private secretary. He might become re-instated, but perhaps the old gentleman had shared in the public distrust; and he hated the thought of returning to his employer disheartened and penniless. He had paid for the month and had yet three weeks to stay. A small sum of money must keep him until he could get work, for he must resign his place in the "Aides" upon the next evening; it might be a premature thing to do, but he was sick at heart and desperate.

A sleepless night left him haggard and care-worn, yet filled with restlessness and anxiety to know how Laura was, and eager to read his fate in the faces of his whilom friends, he started out.

The warm, bright sunlight cheered and brightened the earth and the fresh air revived his drooping spirits. Almost the first person he met was his cousin. He would have passed him with a formal good-morning, but Robert stopped him by saying in a domineering way:

"Old hon! I want a word with you; it might has well be said now has any time."

"Very well; I'll listen," said Allan.

"You went over to the 'ouse yesterday, hand made yourself altogether too fresh about my affairs."

"You are mistaken, sir; I'm not in the habit of taking liberties of any kind; neither do I permit them. Good morning, sir," and Allan stepped away from his cousin's side.

"Old on, sir, you can't go until I give you a piece of my mind!" putting himself in Allan's path in a menacing attitude. "You're too halmighty fresh, and I want you to stay away from my 'ouse, d'ye hear?"

"I hear, and now clear the way," and Allan's gleaming eyes and set teeth convinced his cousin that his blood was up, so he stepped aside. Yet the moment Allan had passed he shouted after him:

"O, d—n you! I'll spoil your beauty for you. If you wasn't my cousin I'd send you to jail!" The next instant he lay sprawling in the dust.

Allan had passed on, but heard his last shout more distinctly than the one to "spoil his beauty." He had not hurried away from his tormentor; instead, had walked leisurely enough, so as to be able to catch his meaning. He was satisfied that Robert meant to brand him a thief. Of what other crimes he accused him he could not tell. So when the threat struck his ear the hot blood leaped to his brain, and with a bound he had brought his clenched fist under Robert's jaw and sent him rolling in the dust, where he lay shouting the most brutal threats and vilest epithets. Against his cousin Allan felt the old enmity filling his heart as it had done in former years. So great was his desire to return and choke the breath out of him that it was with difficulty he continued his course.

To Allan it was now obvious that Robert had been present during Laura's delirium, and thus had gotten his impressions by her disconnected revelations. Of

this he was certain, because in that way alone had her father been influenced against him: the old man had upon the evening of the examination of the servants by the detective plainly suspected Lizette. Such indeed was the case with Mr. Bassett; such was not the case with Robert.

He had just come from a confidential talk with Jason Waller by whom he was furnished with "undeniable proofs of Allan's guilt." After he had sworn solemnly not to divulge the name of his informer he was advised to "run him out of town," as the best means of securing freedom from further raids, and also of preserving the unsullied lustre of his, Robert's, own good name.

Robert was further informed, quite confidentially, that Allan was a frequent visitor at the rooms of Mrs. Walton who had a handsome, unprincipled daughter. She had recently disappeared, perhaps Allan could tell where.

Robert was further made aware of the attitude of certain clubs and societies toward Allan, and the deservedly unpopular situation of the handsome young villain. In great confidence, and warming to his subject under the stimulating effects of good port wine and the flattering acquiescence of his listener, Waller, as a friend, talked of Robert's business and importance in the best circles and of the immense responsibility he must feel protecting himself from everything that might lead to the destruction of that interest. He could see the necessity of keeping a clear record in order to rise creditably in public life. A clear family name was the best passport to good society. Chicago, in spite of her rapid growth and western location, was a city strongly marked by caste. Of course, Robert knew what that meant to a man of his lofty aims and aspirations, abilities, and tastes.

Small things were of the least possible importance to him, Robert Morton, and so after a few more glasses of wine, a few more doses of flattery skillfully administered, there followed a little business as a side issue, during which Robert being very much inflated with wine and egotism signed another paper that was covered with, to him, incomprehensible characters, but which his faithful friend Jason Waller was sure would bring him, Robert, money and honors.

Then to the satisfaction of Waller, who had no more use for him, Robert left, strongly determined to see "Al, and run 'im hout of town," a feat which he was destined to undertake very speedily; we have seen how he succeeded that morning.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### TRUE FRIENDS

All the elite were out again in full feather upon the night of the ball at Vessage's. Inside the spacious mansion, bright lights, exquisite music, choice exotics, rich furnishings, made a "setting" for the crowd of lavishly dressed or undressed belles and their elaborately suited or non-suited escorts.

It was a little late when the Van Tassel carriage drove up to the scene of mirth and revelry. But then Mrs. Van Tassel never did hurry to a ball, and she did not see fit to depart from her custom, just to appease the appetite of Dame Rumor and her court. She knew they would be there, every one of them, and she knew to a jot how they would occupy much of their time between the dances, forming little cliques to talk up the last luscious bit of gossip, the loss of the Van Tassel diamonds.

She had managed it about the invitation for Allan. Spiteful wretch, that Mrs. Vessage, to cut him without an invitation to her party! But she had adroitly managed it all; and three days before, a card with a letter of regrets that his name had been overlooked reached Allan, who tossed it impatiently aside, and meant never to acknowledge it either in person or by card.

But Mrs. Van Tassel had expected this, and pursued him for four blocks that very day before the ball, and when at last he paused long enough for her to overtake him, she took him into her phaeton, and carried him off home with her, upon the pretext of wanting his help in planning a surprise for Mark.

Once home, in her own parlor, she unceremoniously demanded the cause of his long absence, five whole days; of his lean, white appearance and his plans for the future.

Allan could not evade the strong-willed woman who so ruthlessly trampled upon his reserve. With a true woman's tact she ordered a generous lunch spread in her private parlor, declaring that she was as hungry as a wolf—and denying herself to callers, the two had a long, uninterrupted talk. Over a third cup of coffee Allan unburdened his heavy heart to his generous friend, who more than once dashed the tears from gleaming eyes, and with her clinched fist made the pretty dishes on the lunch table dance in her fierce vehemence, when he told her of Waller's connection with his troubles.

"It's the most diabolical plot that ever Satan invented!" she hissed between her teeth as he concluded his story. "Now there's one thing for you to do," and she paused, "you must go—to—that—ball."

"Impossible!" he answered.

"You must go, and with us, Mark and me."

"No, no, Mrs. Van Tassel; I've no right to humiliate you, and you will be sorry if you take Allan Morton, the suspected diamond thief, to the Vessage ball."

"Fiddlesticks! Allan, don't make this thing unnecessarily hard. Help me to help yourself. Do as I want and the way is all clear. I'm a few years older than you, and Mark is many. Mark Van Tassel is my husband; what he says is right and proper, even you can't question it. We shall call for you. Mark isn't feeling very well, I believe he's pining for his secretary; it was a downright cruelty for you to leave him. But if he isn't able to go, I'll send for my brother in Milwaukee. We'll call for you, at what hour?"

"Not until late, if I must go; I must be at another place until ten at least."

"Important?" she asked, eyeing him keenly.

"Yes, very; it could not be more so," he answered, gravely.

She wondered at the importance of an engagement, to a man who was out of business, almost friendless and cast down to the depths of despair. But she did not seek to solve the mystery by questions. In conclusion, after waiting to see if he would explain why so important his next evening's engagement, she asked, briskly:

"Where shall I find you?"

"Where?" he echoed, dubiously.

"Allan, come here; then I'll be sure of you."

"Will nothing convince you that it is a rash charity to take me with you?"

"Nonsense! don't you see I'll get a good partner for one good whirl; otherwise, I'll have to waltz with sticks and poodles. O, I'm nothing, if not politic," and she laughed triumphantly.

Shortly afterward Allan took his leave. That same

evening a note was sent to him requesting him to call on Mark Van Tassel, at his office. The following morning at an early hour he presented himself at the familiar door and was soon standing before his old employer. He was surprised to see him looking worn and ill, and upon inquiry regarding his health, the old man with a wistful smile strangely in contrast with his former brisk cheerfulness, extended his hand eagerly, saying:

"I guess you'll have to take pity on me and come back; everything is at sixes and sevens."

After a long consultation it was decided that Allan should resume work the day after but one.

"And Elinor wants you to go with us to Vessage's jamboree," said Van Tassel, as Allan rose to go.

"I might as well tell you that it will be impossible."

"Why, what's the matter? Nell will be terribly put out," exclaimed his employer, much disturbed.

"I see I've got to give my reason. I promised Mrs. Walton to see that her rent was paid until she got able to work. She's not able yet to do much. Her rent fell due last Monday, and her present landlord isn't much better than Waller was. Not being able to redeem my word, for I've severed my connection with the Aides, I did the next best thing, pawned my dress-suit. She's safe another month, and I don't care enough about parties to regret the act."

"You young dog! Won't Nell rave when I tell her this?" exclaimed his listener, between little gulps and chuckles, "you promised to come to me for money."

"Don't tell Mrs. Van Tassel, women don't understand, the best of them don't. She will think I'm a fool, no doubt, for doing it."

"No doubt. I don't blame her much. I'll have to tell her. She's such a merciless quiz that I'd have to



lie like a pirate to get rid of her. Now, look here, you take this, and get your duds and go with us. D'ye hear?"

"Better wait until I earn it," answered Allan, repelling the offer of a month's salary in advance.

"Take an old man's advice and go to that ball. Elinor knows best and she wants you to go."

"I'd rather not," maintained Allan, but seeing that his refusal brought disappointment he took the money and with a lighter step left the office.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus it was that Elinor Van Tassel appeared among the brilliant throng at Vessage's in all the glory of a splendid dress and regal personality. The royal robe of old gold velvet trailed after her, as she swept the spacious parlors. A new and exquisite fan that she carried in her hand attracted attention, and led the wandering eye to fasten quickly upon the sparkling bracelet upon her right arm, which the short, tight-laced elbow sleeve exposed.

She had entered the room between her husband and Allan, never so haughty, never so regal and uncompromising. She had declared to them both that they must go with her if they walked over hot plough shares.

When she swept down into the parlor of her elegant home, in her "perfectly gorgeous dress," and held up her white arm, to Allan's astonishment decorated with the diamond bracelet, she silenced his inquiry by a brief, "They that hide can always find."

Just so in Mrs. Vessage's parlor she freely flirted her fan, displaying her much talked-of diamonds to the astonished crowd, who after the first shock hastened to do her homage.

"Where did you find it?" "How glad we are for you!" "Did the detective get it back?" etc., were some

of the characteristic remarks which she did not hear, or adroitly parried with laugh and jest, or scathing sarcasm, half concealed under brilliant badinage.

With a smile of proud triumph she beheld Allan reinstated in the good opinion of Chicago's society devotees, and as the music struck up, with a look of her flashing eyes she had the satisfaction of seeing him bow himself away from their midst to offer her his arm.

"How they will hate me?" she exclaimed, exultantly, as they whirled away to the strains of a popular waltz. When the music ceased with a loud blare, they halted before a group which contained Jason Waller and his protégée, Leon Illardo.

It had been a mystery to many how the latter had gained entrée into the most select circles; but Elinor Van Tassel knew that for some reason the man was useful to Waller, and thus, through his influence, the handsome Italian was seen in some of the most exclusive houses.

Mrs. Van Tassel had not recognized Waller the last time she had met him; but with the assured tyranny of an acknowledged leader she concluded to be gracious to-night, and so beckoned him to her side.

"Congratulate me," she said, with her most winning smile, "I've found my bracelet."

"Congratulate you? it has cost you dear to find it. Say, rather congratulate the thief upon his cunning. I wonder what was his *modus operandi* to so successfully elude justice. Perhaps he appeared to the generous Mrs. Van Tassel," and with a cruel sneer, Waller glanced toward Allan at the other side of the room.

"Perhaps no one can explain the *modus operandi* better than Jason Waller himself," and as she fired back this shot, her black eyes flashed a defiant accusation that for a moment compelled silence.

"My friends must look to their filthy lucre, if I am a robber bold," laughed Waller, scornfully. "But intimate friends have a better opportunity of purloining one's wealth and jewels, than a stranger can ever find."

They had moved away and stood a little apart from the rest of the dancers. She wheeled now and confronted him.

"Speak out, Jason Waller, say what vile things are in your mind," demanded Mrs. Van Tassel, with fury gleaming from her eyes.

"Elinor Van Tassel, you can shield your handsome thief! I know where and when you got that bracelet! It is a very good imitation of the first," and he smiled in malignant triumph that roused her to fury.

"Indeed! how do you happen to know so much of my affairs? I should suppose you would find your time fully employed in looking after the prospects of Nell Walton."

"Observation helps me; we can all see with our eyes open," he answered, with the same mocking smile, and totally ignoring her last attack.

"Ah! Does his Satanic Majesty make his chief executive omnipresent?"

"Ha, ha! he laughed, derisively; "I saw you when you ordered the bracelet upon your arm. Are you convinced now?" again smiling maliciously.

"No doubt you saw who stole the other," she hissed.

"Perhaps Mr. Allan Morton can account for them," he replied, with a vicious sneer.

"Coward!" she exclaimed under her breath, "you are scheming to ruin an innocent man, but I'll spend every cent I own to bring you to justice!"

"You may not be able to spend a large sum. Allan Morton ought to be very grateful for the devotion of so distinguished a lady!" and with a meaning smile,

he bowed haughtily and moved away just as Allan came up to tell her that Mr. Van Tassel desired to speak to her.

Very soon after the Van Tassels left, and as Elinor Van Tassel went to her room that night, she was beset by the tormenting thought that Allan's worst enemy knew too much. Had she helped Allan after all? Waller was rich and influential.

"And, Mark, what did he mean? He said I might not be able to spend a large sum in bringing him to justice."

"Oh! he's trying to scare you. You'd better avoid Waller: he's a hypocrite, but I don't want any serious trouble with him. Let Allan keep quiet and this thing will all blow over soon. The women made much of him as usual, and Waller's jealous; that's all."

"Mark, I wish you'd sever all business connections with Waller. I hate him, though I'm not afraid of him."

"I'm going to get clear of him when I can gracefully." Mrs. Van Tassel was a little surprised at her husband's ready concession to her request, but wisely said no more about it.

Upon the following day cards were out to a select few for another banquet at Waller's, among those invited were the Van Tassels and Allan. What the new scheme was they did not know, and did not accept the invitations. Another "dinner!" followed the banquet; a dinner to a few intimate friends, which was to be a quiet affair and to which Robert and his wife were invited. In fact, with the cards to the Mortons was sent a little perfumed missive, stating that it was to be very select and quiet in consideration of Mrs. Morton's recent affliction. Quite tender and sympathetic Waller could become when he chose, and just now he was

repulsively so. Laura tore the note into fragments, and threw them into the fire.

Robert had accepted the invitation without consulting his wife, and when the hour came he defiantly set off alone, not caring evidently, whether she went or not. He was welcomed with effusion by his host, and plied with wine and flattery, and later, with brain muddled and speech uncertain, he was sent to his dishonored home and shame-sick wife. Just now the Mor-ton name was not an illustrious one. Allan was yet under a cloud, in spite of his friends, the Van Tassels; and Robert was rapidly sinking deeper and deeper into the pit which he had once dug for his unwary cousin.

Allan resumed work in Mr. Van Tassel's office the morning after the Vessage ball. He knew that it was the best thing to do for the present, though it was with the understanding that at any time he could resign. Disgust at his failure to make anything of his life, and tired of Chicago, he determined to go back again into the army; there, at least, he would not intrude upon his only relative and would jeopardize no one's good name.

"Chicago will make an out law of me if I stay here much longer," he said, as he was talking over the subject with his employer. "I'm half that now. I find myself in strong antagonism to the nice distinctions that forbid a man retaliating for a deadly injury. If a man destroys my good name, the best of me, I want to destroy his life, the most valuable possession such a fiend can have, and I've a right to. In the army there's some redress for wrongs; I'm going back: I'm not fit for this sort of thing. It grinds to be the butt of another's malice."

Thus he had declared that morning when he resumed work. He was stung to death by the insults and accusations of Mr. Bassett; enraged at Robert's brutal way

of denying him his house; revengeful, but not reckless at Waller's malicious attempts to blacken his character; but, above all, wounded and hurt by the gulf that was growing deeper and broader each day between him and his cousin's wife. Why should she deny him friendly recognition, without giving him a chance to prove himself an honest man? He seldom met her, but when he did, she never more than bowed distantly. She was colder and prouder than ever, and seemed to have withdrawn herself from all social intercourse. Rumor said that she was becoming a devout churchwoman. Yes, Mrs. Van Tassel was right; Waller's sneers and inuendoes, after all, were not so dangerous as Laura's cold, averted face and unfriendly eyes.

But the days had passed by and Allan had continued to remain in Van Tassel's office. He had found plenty to do, for close investigation had brought to light some glaring discrepancies in certain transactions in which Waller and Donovan, as well as several others, had figured conspicuously.

At first Mr. Van Tassel declared that Allan must be mistaken. But with the assistance of an expert who better than any other could uncover the intricate machinery of a ring, they soon convinced their employer that he was on the brink of disaster.

In the meantime Robert was becoming more and more infatuated with Waller and his clique. His hours were no longer so closely devoted to schemes for money-making. He preferred the convivial companionship of such as himself, men who loved cards and wine. Beside this he was a frequent visitor at certain gambling saloons, known only to a "certain class." The old time affection for his family had been, to all appearances smothered out of existence, for now he seldom paid them the least attention, frequently spend-

ing day and night away from home. When, as occasionally was the case, he came home sober, or remained home to recover after some unusual debauch, upon coming to himself, his manner was that of one laboring under some great burden of anxiety, and evidently harassed and depressed; he again flew to his only solace, the wine cup.

Laura knew that disaster must overtake them at some future time, though in what hideous shape the monster would present himself, or how soon, she could not be certain.

Determined to be in a measure ready for it she commenced cutting down expenses by discharging her governess and the girl who for a few days had taken the place of Lizette, who had disappeared under annoying circumstances.

The girl had desired to return to Canada, being very homesick. Later, her mistress had seen her talking on a street corner with Leon Illardo. But as servants had to be paid, and Robert was no longer liberal in his housekeeping allowances, Laura concluded it was all just as well. The orders that had been given so pompously at the beginning of their residence in Chicago had not been countermanded by him, and so all orders at butchers and grocers were promptly filled; but much of the former lavishness had disappeared. Robert did not notice the change, or, if he did, apparently did not care.

But it was all the result of a conference that Laura had with her father. He did not believe in their lavish way of living; his own simple habits required no splendidly furnished house, no elegant carriage, fine horses, liveried coachman; no sumptuously spread table presided over by a richly dressed mistress, attended by

a liveried butler whose wages alone would have paid the expenses of his own simple home.

Robert did not talk of retrenchment in his sober moments; when his tongue was unloosed, he yet boasted royally of "big deals," stunning sales, and ventures which "only such cute men as me and Waller dare monkey with."

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## CHAPTER XX

### WALLER DESTROYS THE PROOFS

April, the month of smiles and tears, had come and gone. Allan had found plenty with which to occupy his time in the office of Mr. Van Tassel.

Investigation had brought to light some glaring schemes of Waller & Co., to swindle Mark Van Tassel; schemes that in some cases had failed, in others had been proven against them on this the last day of April.

Allan seldom met Laura, but in the lapses of time between each chance brief meeting there grew to be less of that glittering iciness in her look and manner, though she simply bowed and moved her lips, as though whispering his name to herself. But there was a pathetic look in her eyes that would have won any other to her; Allan was a soldier; he would die in his cause, but he would not falter.

The kindness of his employer, and the strong, womanly encouragement of Mrs. Van Tassel that was shown more in action than word, had served as a stimulous to contend against all the opposing forces of popular opinion, though he was glad when the currents changed, bringing back to him the friends whom he valued.

He had been asked at their last meeting to resume



his place with the Aides. He declined, however, as he desired to work alone, and resolved to be hampered by the restrictions of no society or club.

He occasionally saw his cousin coming out or going into a saloon, and almost always in the company of Waller or some of his friends. He noticed, too, that if Waller was one of his companions, the saloon out of which they came was of the lowest order, and while Robert evidently had been drinking, Waller had always abstained, or had the appearance of abstinence.

One afternoon Allan obtained leave for a half day from the office. He met Denan a little later and as the later had a few moments to spare, they paused upon a street corner to talk. Allan asked him the news of the strikers.

"Ah, the strike's a big thing and will probably lead to something worse. Ten days ago the *Arbeiter Zeitung* advocated assassination. They say it's humane and just to shoot and burn. Things are approaching a crisis. They're arming and drilling to oppose the police and blow up some of the biggest business houses with dynamite. But we are ready for them at a minute's notice. They're threatening to make trouble for the non union men, too. Things are getting serious. All the traders are going on a strike to-morrow, and the end will soon come. The trouble has been brewing so long, that it will call out police, and state militia, too, I'm thinkin', to quell it."

"Do you really think there will be blood shed, Tom?" asked Allan, anxiously watching his friend's restless eyes.

"As sure as you're standin' there. I'm going to do my duty; that means to shoot if I must, and as they are arming for the same purpose, there's going to be blood shed."

"And if you are there, Tom?" and Allan laid his hand on the burly Irishman's shoulder, in friendly protest at the prospective engagement in which he might be involved.

"I shall be there, by St. Patrick! no one ever saw Tom Denan shirk a duty yet!" was the quick reply.

"I wish I could be with you. Why can't I get on the force as special police?"

"All right, we shall need special police, so the chief says. I'll tell him and we'll give you a chance: be on hand early."

"I'll be there," quickly replied Allan, who saw something akin to a soldier's life in the coming days.

Just then a messenger came scurrying up with orders for Denan to report to his chief at once.

In silence they clasped each other's hands an instant, and looked keenly into each other's eyes.

"Ye'll be there, Morton."

"I'll be there, Tom," and the next instant the officer was rushing away to obey orders. After watching the tall form of his friend pass out of sight, Allan turned, and with a feeling of reluctance left the spot.

Wherever he went that day, he heard men talking together excitedly in groups: some were evidently of the law-abiding citizens who anxiously discussed the serious outlook of affairs; others were friends of the strikers, who conversed in lower voices with heads bent close together, now and then darting fiery glances at a passing policeman, or hissing venomous threats if perchance a handsome carriage filled with well dressed ladies and gentlemen dashed down the street.

About that time, passing over to an opposite corner, Allan saw his cousin coming toward him. He was, as usual, accompanied by Waller and a stranger. He knew that it would be worse than useless to speak to

Robert upon the subject which he had discussed with the Van Tassels, so watched them till they passed by the group of strikers. He saw the men follow Morton and his companions with threatening glances and angry nods.

Reports had come to him frequently of their discontent, of which Waller and his friends were the cause. As Allan watched to see the result of the angry demonstrations, one of their number came over to where he stood, and touching his hat respectfully, said in broken English :

"Mister Morton, I likes to speaks mit you. You be pesser to gits your cousin oud of dem gompanies. I tells you drue. Sometimes, putty quick, right away he gits troubles for goming to some blace vot is not his pizness, Heigh!"

"Where does he go?" asked Allan, wondering what induced the man to come to him, a stranger.

"Blenty blaces; he lies like all dem gapitalists!" answered the man, fiercely.

"I don't know what I can do to prevent it, my good friend. He won't listen to me; I wish he would."

"Vell, I tells you drue; so sure he stays not away dem union meetings, he gits ter tyful, now putty quick, right away!" and the flashing eyes and brandishing fists emphasized his threats.

"Why don't you tell him? He is the one to talk to," then seeing the rest of the group crossing to where they stood, he said, "I have no control over him; I wish I could have; but my cousin is his own master."

The men were all strangers, yet they seemed to know him by name, and saluted him with respect.

"My men, what is the matter?" he asked, as the old dutchman subsided, and a tall, thin, dark-eyed man stepped toward Allan as spokesman.

"I will tell you, Mr. Morton; your cousin is in with our enemies; Waller and his crowd are a pack of liars and thieves. Robert Morton is with them. When one lies, the rest swear to it. Jason Waller's days are numbered; his friends had better save themselves." Then the speaker turned and walked quietly away, followed by his companions, who, after crossing back to the opposite corner, scattered in all directions just as a couple of policemen were seen coming up the street. They always kept out of the way of the police, when their numbers were small.

There had been but few moments of time consumed in the above conversation between the strikers and Allan; indeed he had not been given time to answer the last speaker, so quietly did the men leave the spot. Allan felt that the man's angry words were a message sent to him by some one who meant himself no harm. He believed the laboring classes were all his friends, so he had no fear for his own personal safety; but for his cousin the storm was gathering.

In a short time he presented himself at Robert's office door, but was informed that he had just gone out. He then directed his steps toward Robert's home, but when within a half-dozen rods of it, he suddenly wheeled about and walked quickly in another direction with the words of his cousin upon the occasion of their last meeting ringing in his ears. He would not intrude upon them yet; he would first be sure of a welcome.

Turning a corner he suddenly came face to face with Mr. Bassett, who taken unawares, exclaimed:

"Land o' Goshen! Where you goin' to, Mr. Morton?"

"Nowhere in particular, that is, I was going somewhere, but I've changed my mind," answered Allan without seeming to notice the friendly look in the old man's eyes as he hurried by him.

"Well, if you got any doubts 'bout it you'd better turn back'n make sure," his late antagonist called after him.

"I've no doubts; I'm sure enough," answered Allan.

"Sure of what?"

"Sure that I'm not wanted in Robert's house, and will go where I am," and so saying, Allan walked quickly away.

As though possessed of the demon of unrest, Allan, walked rapidly in the direction of the McCormick factory. He had not been there since the strike, and the men were daily becoming more vehement in their threats of vengeance.

Arriving there he found groups of strikers gathered in earnest conversation. Stepping up to some of the more vociferous, he listened and gathered the trend of their talk; extermination to capitalists and the police force seemed the burden of their threats; eight hours work, or advanced wages was the burden of their demands. While as the result of the teachings of anarchists, they demanded that the wealth of the millionaires should be divided among them.

Having some knowledge of the present state of affairs, he joined in their conversation and was soon able to gain and hold their attention. He then endeavored to persuade them to peaceable measures, urging them to remember their families, and avoid anything like violence, which must only re-act upon themselves and might bring them none of the desired results. He placed himself in the ranks of bread-winners, but as one who would not make the innocent suffer for the transgressions of the guilty. Thus by persuasion he induced many to go home and wait the adjustment of their claims.

As he left the place he learned that the reported gen-

eral strike was surely to take place the next day. He also learned that there was to be a big meeting at Neff's hall that evening, and determined to be there if possible.

It was now six o'clock and he hurried back to his restaurant for supper, after which he started in the direction of the hall, where even at that early hour crowds were already assembled.

Keeping in the line of the crowd that was pouring into the hall, he passed in through the open door, and slipping into a corner, he was able to see and hear all that might be said from the speakers' stand, without being discovered. The most prominent speaker was one already made notorious by anarchy. He was haranguing the crowd of enraged and excited people, which was largely composed of the most illiterate Poles and Bohemians.

Threats of dynamite and fire were freely made, cries of revenge were mingled with the names of prominent capitalists. Waller was execrated as a thief and traitor, who had gained possession of their money by false promises. Cries of "Down with Waller and his accomplice, Bob Morton!" struck Allan as confirming the assertions made to him by the men upon the street that day.

Just at that time a voice, shrill, defiant, and harsh cut the air and rose high above all other sounds, "Death to Waller, the scoundrel and destroyer!" and Allan recognized the voice of Nell Walton, but could not see her for the angry crowd, which seemed maddened by the girl's words.

Then there followed instructions by the principal speaker to make bombs, and arm themselves with guns, pistols and knives ready for the police on the following day when the general strike should occur,

As the mob was becoming more and more excited, Allan quietly and with great caution made his way toward the door, and with tact and presence of mind gained the street without being discovered.

Determining to warn his cousin at all hazards upon the following day, he hurried away from the scenes of contention, and was soon in his room.

Upon the following morning of May 1st, occurred the greatest strike in the annals of Chicago, and the immense number of idle men, and the extent of the dissatisfaction, furnished excellent opportunity for inculcating dangerous doctrine. The anarchist leaders saw their chance and improved it.

Again Allan got leave of absence from the office for the day, and went out upon the streets to gather reports and as early as possible to see Robert to warn him of his danger.

The news-boys were rushing about the streets, proclaiming, "All about the strike!" to the thousands of eager, excited pedestrians, and a walk down one of the principal thoroughfares showed clearly the temper and condition of the public mind.

All business was suspended. Strangers exchanged bits of news, and under breath asked each other if they hadn't better make a hasty exit from the turbulent city. Gentlemen who had never before met certain other gentlemen, and upon any consideration would not have spoken without the formality of an introduction, now talked excitedly and with unfeigned interest to each other, while their wives and daughters were in their rooms packing up. Groups of men gathered at the corners; crowds assembled at the lake front.

Going down town as usual, and not being able to find Waller in the office, Robert had returned home, remaining there all the rest of the day, closely locked

within his library. He was trying to get a little light upon the events of the past few days, as well as upon a letter that he held in his hand. He is clear enough to see that the writer knows what he writes. Robert thinks he knows the chirography. The fact is, Allan had written the letter, but dared not sign his own name for fear that Robert's aversion to him would destroy the influence of the warning it contained. So the writing was familiar, he had seen it somewhere long ago. The letter warned him to avoid all possible collision with the strikers. Threats are freely made to take his life, implicating him with Waller & Co., in defrauding them out of large sums of money; Robert probably knows what is meant. No accusation comes from the writer, only a warning for the sake of his family to keep clear-headed, be more cautious and remain sober.

Robert had remained shut up in his library, reading over and over the letter and papers, hopeful that the storm would pass and leave him untouched.

While Robert is in durance vile, none the less unpleasant because self-imposed, let us peep into No 256 and see how Waller & Co. take the strike.

The company is not present; Waller is alone. He is at present engaged in assorting papers, some of which he places in an envelope before him, the rest he destroys, after glancing up to see that the blinds are closely shut. A step is heard outside, and quick as lightning, with the gliding step of a panther he springs the noiseless bolt into its place, noiselessly returning to his seat, and before the steps die away in the corridor he is again busy among the letters and papers on his desk.

Having completed this task he looks through the things in the table drawer, keeping some small articles,



and burning the remaining ones. Of all the papers, letters and documents that his office contained, only a small package held in a four-by-ten envelope was permitted to escape the flames. With a smile of fiendish glee he watched one after another of the various papers reduced to ashes, and when with the poker he had made sure of their complete destruction, he rose and going to the secretary locked it securely, putting the key in his pocket.

Now the secretary was completely empty, having been rifled to furnish food for the fire just kindled upon the hearth; but locking it gave it the appearance of being used; and appearances had been some of the principal agents employed in building up the external man, Jason Waller.

Presently the low, soft mew, like the cry of a kitten, struck his ear, and turning down the light, he softly slides back the bar, unlocks the door, and confronts Samuel Donovan with whom he descends the stairs.

Meantime, like a tiger couchant, anarchy lies ready to spring; like a tiger licking her chops, her red tongue lolling; her fiery eyes rolling; her white, cruel teeth glittering fiercely in the faces of her victims; her voice low and snarling. Upon whom will the blood-thirsty, monster fasten her sharp, cruel fangs? Whose tender, quivering flesh shall writhe under the agonies of her merciless claws?

Let history tell all that it may; it has not told the half.

But while the hungry beast, anarchy, is waiting to spring, on the night of that eventful 3rd of May, in the office of the Arbeiter Zeitung, a tall, muscular, cruel-faced man is rapidly dashing off the circulars that begin, "Revenge! Workingmen, to Arms!" and closed with, "To Arms, we call you to Arms!"

## CHAPTER XXI

## GOLD DUST

The great city listened with bated breath, resting as she must on the strong hearts, and muscles of steel, of her brave faithful police, who continued to pace their respective beats, waiting the call of duty.

That night, while the city held her breath, while the police waited the command, while the stars shone in the heavens serenely, and the zephyrs swept an anthem across the white-tipped waves of Lake Michigan, in the office of the Arbeiter Zeitung the tall, muscular, cruel-faced man sits gloating over the effect of the circulars that began: "Revenge! Workingmen, to Arms!" and closed with: "To Arms, we call you to Arms!"

That same night, while the blood-thirsty leaders of anarchy were glorying over their hold upon the subservient masses of human putrescence dumped upon America's shores from another land, viewing with fiendish satisfaction the prevailing discontent, hearing the responsive shouts of "Revenge! death to the capitalists and their minions, the police!" issuing from lips that might be to-morrow writhing in self imposed death-agonies.

While all things wait, Leon Illardo is traversing the streets, keen-eyed, alert, vigilant, intense, with mind concentrated upon one thought, one aim, to find Jason Waller whose treachery he had but that day discovered. To find him and bring him before the crowd of revengeful anarchists for punishment.

While the handsome Illardo is prowling about the haunts of Waller, in the home of the Mortons, the master was safely and snugly locked within the library.

He had told Laura to keep the doors locked; to admit no one upon any pretext whatever, "for fear of the anarchists, who she could see by the papers were going to kill all the big men in the city," and he for the first time drew her attention to several columns in a leading daily paper devoted to the anarchists. He told her, too, with a ludicrous mingling of fear and self-importance, that it was the penalty he must pay for being influential and among the upper crust, but that she must carry her head as became the wife of one of the big men, and not admit any one; that was the way they did it; just keep the doors locked. So things continued all that 3rd day of the strike and until the afternoon of the 4th of that memorable May. Filled with anxiety, Laura had obeyed his commands until that afternoon Allan had called, and being denied admittance had left a note which the mystified servant delivered to her mistress, while the writer remained waiting outside.

Remembering her husband's antipathy to his cousin, she hesitated about giving the note to him, but at length concluded to risk all and do so, though fearful of the consequences of a meeting. So she opened his door just in time to see him in the act of hiding a flask of liquor in his table drawer; she said nothing, but gave him the note. Robert read it and tearing it into fragments, fiercely swore to "shoot the hound," but wisely refrained from putting his threat into action, though he freely brandished a loaded revolver which he took from a table drawer. As he seemed too much under the influence of liquor to venture out of the room Laura returned to the hall, and going to the outside door was surprised to find Allan still waiting admittance.

Beckoning him to follow, she softly lead the way to the parlor. She seemed very nervous and excited, and

believing that she was in trouble, he waited for her to speak. She was very much agitated, though evidently struggling for composure, and as she stood before him with hands locking convulsively, with her a familiar sign of suffering, he pitied her even more, his heart softening toward her instantly.

"You want to see me, Laura?" he asked, going around to the other side of the table across which he still looked kindly at her, as though she were a small, frightened child. "Are you in trouble, Laura?"

"What does it all mean, Allan? the threats at Robert, and the trouble that seems to be brooding over us?" she asked, with confidence in the man before her that seemed born of past experience. That her agitation was the result of some desperate strait, Allan did not doubt. "Is there trouble ahead?" she continued.

"Yes, there is trouble: but I think Robert can avoid it by keeping clear of Waller and his clique. He's been identified with them in business, and, of course, whatever they've done that's not honest and square in dealing with others, must be borne by him as well. I've heard threats against them all, Waller and Robert in particular, and though I know myself to be an unwelcome visitor here, yet for your and your family's sake I thought it my duty to warn him; you know the result; he won't see me."

"Allen!" she exclaimed, passionately, "I am not ungrateful. You don't know all; I can't tell you; I'm his wife; I must endure and keep silent. But I do acknowledge your kindly intentions, believe me or not, I do!"

"I certainly came with the best intentions toward all; I'll go with the same purpose if I'm permitted," he answered, grimly.

"You had an errand, Allan, what is it?"

"I don't want to frighten you, Laura, but Robert is in bad odor among the working-classes, from his intimacy with Waller, and there's no telling what may happen. It was to warn him to stay away from Waller that I came. You should have company other than him," pointing with ill-concealed contempt at the library, "You must not be alone."

"I'll depend upon any advice you will offer," she said, eagerly, with a look of childlike trust in her eyes.

"Then get your father to stay here to night; it will be better for you; he can be near you. As I go I'll tell the watchman at the next corner to give special attention to this house, and if you need him send your father for him without delay," then Allan turned to go, saying as he paused by the hall door: "Remember, if I can be of any use let me know; otherwise, I'll not come; you know the barriers, Laura," then gravely bowing himself out he left the house.

Early that morning the Revenge circulars had stirred the waiting city into desperate activity, and additional men were put upon the police force, who with energy and zeal kept the mob well under control, in spite of frequent attempts to break out.

A mass meeting was proclaimed to be held at Haymarket that evening, to which all friends of anarchy were invited and urged to attend.

The morning papers had informed Robert of this, and believing that the attention of the crowd he so feared would be called to that point of interest, he summoned courage to venture out with the intention of visiting his office, to secure certain letters and papers of importance. This office had been the joint possession of himself and Waller, and each kept a key for his own exclusive use.

Through the lonely streets Robert Morton walked,

filled with torturing fear. But he was determined to get to the office and save his papers and then, leaving Laura with her parents, he would start for Toronto on the night train. Quietly he traversed the lonely streets, keeping well in the shade, until he got down to where the presence of a "blue coat" upon each corner gave him a feeling of security.

Arriving at his office he finds everything dark and silent. Something about the place, perhaps his having been absent for two or three days, makes it look strangely unlike the one he had been used to. Something, perhaps the silence, perhaps the shadows in the four corners seemed to suggest an untenanted tomb, or charnel house. He proceeds to open the drawers of his private secretary, but he finds them unlocked and empty! Not a scrap of paper; not a document that should prove him the possessor of thousands upon thousands Waller had promised him. All gone! stolen! By whom? Who could be benefited by the theft? No one but Waller himself. In an instant it all flashes through his brain; his mind is clearer than it had been for weeks, for he had drunk nothing that evening, and now he takes in the whole situation, and he sees that the dreams of the past few months, the ambitions, the hopes, are not yet realized, nor can they be without those papers to prove his interest in certain valuable deals known only to himself and Waller.

Half mad with rage and disappointment he flies from one desk to another, frantically scattering the books about, and is startled into terror by the echoes. In vain his search! not a thing could be found! Everything has been taken by one who knew their value. No one could know as well as Waller. But perhaps he had taken them to his office for safe keeping until he, Robert, should claim them! So hastily locking

the door he starts to Waller's office which is but a short distance away. Arriving there he is confronted by silence. Producing a key that had but two counterparts, one of which Waller and Donovan each carried, Robert soon stands within the silent room. He is as well acquainted with this room as his own, and groping about he finds a lamp, and soon has a light. Its feeble rays help him explore desk and drawers. But to no purpose! The secretary is locked, but lifting it proved it to be empty, or nearly so.

Without hesitation he stepped to a cupboard, and producing a can-opener known only to Waller and himself, he proceeds to "harry" the lock, which, after a half hour's work, at last gives way and reveals an emptiness within that tells to the miserable man that all his life has been greedy for gold, the whole villainous story of fraud and betrayal.

Stunned for a moment by the evidences of his friend's treachery, he stands glaring helplessly at those glaring witnesses, the empty drawers before him. The night is cool, instinctively he turns toward the hearth for warmth, and his eyes are attracted by an unusually large heap of cinders upon the hearthstone. He knows paper ashes when he sees them, and he knows that within those paper ashes upon the hearth, lay his hopes and fortunes.

Still he remains staring helplessly, stupidly, insanelly about the room; at the dim light of the small lamp; and upon the ash-covered hearth. He makes no sound, neither moves hand or foot, just stands silently staring about him at the desolation and wreck that has left such hopeless emptiness in their wake.

He rouses himself enough to feel that he must get out and down the stairs, and start homeward, or to the house in which he lives, to-night he has no home, no

gold, nothing! He is a beggar! Laura is a beggar, too! Less than a year ago he was considered well off. That was in Toronto. Oh! to get back to Toronto again! But useless are the regrets that stir his heavy chest with deep drawn sighs; vain the mists that gather in his eyes at the recollection of his Toronto home. The reality is before him; he is a beggar!

At last he reaches the house which but the November before he had regarded with such pride, and shuffling up the steps and into the door he once more gains the library.

He is glad to sink into his accustomed seat, where overcome by a feeling of extreme weariness, he sits like a half animated lump of flesh, with but one thought racking his heavy brain, as his eyes take in the costly furnishings of the room; He is a beggar, his idolized money is gone!

Slowly his brain clears, and there unfolds to him the infamous plot by which he has been induced to sign papers, which, for aught he knows, may jeopardize his life and liberty; upon promises that he should be the successful candidate for Congress upon the coming election, what a fool he has been to believe such stuff. He had become the tool of those two men and their allies, upon Waller's advice he had sunk his own money, and more, in lavish expenditures to maintain an impressive style of living. Under Waller's influence he had sunk himself into a brute which even his boon companions have forsaken, and from which his long-suffering wife shrinks in disgust and aversion. The mills have been grinding slowly all these years, but they have ground him into degradation and poverty. Ah! that thought frightens him, the future without money, without gold!

It is late, past ten o'clock; Robert wonders if the serv-



ants and all have left. Have they seen the prospective change? Where is Laura? Has she gone back to her parents? Have they all deserted him?

Fifteen minutes past ten, and yet he sits thinking of the past few days and weeks, months and years as one period of time stretched on to another. What a farce life has become! How can he face the world when investigations will reveal his dealings with Waller? How hold up his head when the public sneers at him and calls him a beggar? No, better to end it all at once! A sure aim, a steady hand will bring him peace, or forgetfulness, at least. Now he must have a drink to steady his nerves, so he takes the flask that is yet half full, out of the table drawer and drains it to the dregs, and soon feels stronger for the last act of his life. In haste he writes a short, pitiful letter to his wife, accusing himself, not another, of the deed he should commit. There is only one thing more to do. He deliberately takes the pistol from the drawer, and examines it closely, with a desperate look upon his ashy face, muttering to himself, "Anything but a beggar."

Still Robert sits thinking, with that loaded revolver in his hand, thinking of the past. Again that vast accusing panorama of his life rises up before him, and he realizes that the curse of the world has been his curse, his downfall, gold! gold! gold! and all his dreams have faded, his hopes have fled, his castles have crumbled into dust! and one long convulsive sob more like a heart bursting with grief, than a soul taking its flight; one short, gasping, quivering sigh as of a disappointed life cutting in twain its feeble thread, and the man's head falls forward upon his chest, while the revolver remains in his hand yet fully loaded.

## CHAPTER XXII

## AT THE HAYMARKET

After Allan left that afternoon, Laura remained standing in deep thought for some time. She was perplexed by the complication of distressing circumstances, oppressed by the evident danger which she but half understood, and saddened by the feeling of desolation that took possession of her, as soon as the hall door closed after him. With a great effort she roused herself from her reverie and stepping to the library door discovered Robert fast asleep upon the sofa, and as she stepped to his side and gazed down upon the bloated face of the unconscious man, she felt her heart stirred by unusual pity for him, for she knew that he had been influenced by Waller, and through him was no doubt in danger.

Stifling whatever repugnance she felt toward one so utterly overcome by the coarser strains in his nature, she went back to the sitting-room and sat for a time, forming plans for the future. Failing to arrive at anything definite, she concluded to prepare for something indefinite, for the something that was sure to happen.

Accordingly she went about packing her trunks with clothes and jewels, and collecting whatever she felt she could claim in the face of everything. This she did more to kill time and restore her nerves, than from any apparent immediate necessity. If the trouble blew over she could unpack again; all she wanted, in any event, was the few things she had brought from Toronto.

Having completed this task she descended to the parlor. Everything was so still that she proceeded to the kitchen, but only to find it untenanted; evidently the servants had gone out. Something impelled Laura

to go to the girl's room; she wanted to be sure that some one remained in the house, in case of need. But to her surprise everything belonging to Nora had been taken out of the room. Laura had that morning paid her, and she had gone without a moment's notice. All this seemed strange, unaccountable. Was her leave-taking in any way connected with the trouble among the strikers? What would happen next? She was alone in the great house with no one but Robert, and he might need her protection instead of protecting her.

It was now late in the evening, Laura felt that she must keep busy, why, she did not know; she must prepare for something. So she went to her room and exchanged her house dress for a plain, dark street suit. A cloak and hat to correspond she brought down into the parlor with her. Now she wanted that revolver Robert had, she would get it: he was no doubt sleeping so heavily that she would not awaken him and she knew just where to find it.

Going to the library she was astonished to find it vacant. Robert was gone.

Forgetting her errand in her surprise, she hastily retraced her steps to the parlor, donned her hat and cloak, and leaving the house was soon at the nearest corner, where she told the watchman of her trouble and asked him to send some one for her husband's cousin.

"Is it Allan Morton you'd be wantin'?"

"Yes, he can find my husband sooner than any one else," she answered, trembling in spite of her efforts to appear calm.

"Ye'll hardly find him in his room at this time: he'll be with the police, as has gone to capture them reds to-noight. He towld me brother Tom that he would be there. Sure an' he'll be on hand to help the b'ys, bad luck to them reds?"

"Do you mean the anarchists, they who are making the trouble?"

"The same, mum. An' it's plenty of chance he'll have to help to-noight, for there's trouble down at the Haymarket'n there's small doubt but some wan av thim spalpeens will git shot: maybe, too, some av our b'ys. Maybe the lad himself will git in the muss."

"Will he be in danger?" she asked.

"If there's danger he'll be in the front av it. It's loike a young lion he is, an' not a bit afraid av an anarchist or the whole mess ov thim. The boss knew the man when he put him on to help thim to night.

"Do you think my husband is there?" she asked.

"He'd be in the way, mum, if his head's not jist stiddy," replied the policeman, half smiling down upon the white-faced woman, who put the childish question. "You go back and I'll kape my eyes on the house. You'd better kape indoors to-noight: it be sorry times, and unsafe for ladies on the streets so late. I'll walk to the corner wid ye."

At the corner they met another officer who informed them that he had seen Robert Morton going down town less than an hour before.

Laura felt easier about Robert, who, she believed would soon return home, but as she thought of Allan's danger at the hands of an infuriated mob, she forgot everything but him, to find him, to stand between him and danger.

She knew in which part of the city lay the scene of the strife. Impelled by the devotion that had been repressed and slumbering so many years, she rushed away in that direction, forgetting everything but the terrible fate awaiting Allan. With the policeman's words ringing in her ears, she thought not of the hour.

Time and place faded from her mind. Allan was in danger.

On she rushed, horror lending her wings; desperation giving her strength; devotion making her totally oblivious of the madness of the act. What an interminable road! will it never end? Will she be too late? On she rushes, pausing a moment now and then to get breath. At last she finds herself near the scene and she sees others hurrying in the same direction.

Now she sees crowds rushing toward the scene, and she tries with her small strength to keep pace with them; but one after another passes her in the cruel race. She hears hoarse voices as of men yelling and cheering. Staggering on in desperation, she arrives at last near the scene, just in time to see a small army of policemen marching down Desplaines Street, in pursuit of the maddest, wildest looking mob of men that her eyes ever beheld.

She retreats into the shadow of a corner where she can watch for Allan among the number. Panting for breath, half dead from her long run, she can with difficulty stand, but no one notices her, so wild and excited is the crowd that runs hither and thither, screaming and shouting. Bricks and stones were hurled at the blue-coats; curses and threats fill the air. She watches, closely scanning every policeman, and in fact every one who seems to be in pursuit of the offenders. She is in despair. What if he is killed! Even now he may be dead!

She totters toward a lamp post, fully unconscious of her danger from flying missiles, when over yonder among those policemen she at last sees a familiar form. It is Allan. He is at the front now, the watchman was right, Allan was no coward! He is plainly seen. His tall form, and bare, blonde head, furnish an attractive

target for the stones and bricks, some of which graze him!

One desperate, fiendish female, rendered devilish by drink, and the excitement of the occasion, takes aim at him, but is restrained by another, and the stone is aimed at another, an officer:

The next instant with a shudder Laura sees the man fall: the stone has not missed its mark, though the man struggles again to his feet. There are men standing in a wagon, talking wildly, near to which Allan stands, when suddenly a rushing, roaring, shrieking sound rises high above the din, as a ball of fire shoots through the air from an opposite corner and falls in the midst of the policemen. A terrible scene ensues; but above even the appalling screams of that merciless bomb, and cries and groans of the wounded, the mad yells of the frenzied mob, and the shrill neigh of the terrified horses, rises a cry so full of horror and fear, that the bare-headed man wrestling in the clutches of those demons who have closed about his friend, an officer, hears and blanches at the sound. In another minute, she is in their midst, struggling with that mob of wild beasts, who are dragging Allan under the wheels of a wagon, and out of her sight. Fiercely she struggles, frantically she implores, and with her small hands wrestles and pulls, strains and tugs to get their victim who is evidently unconscious, out of their clutches. Some one, attracted by her desperate energy, helps her, then, another, and at last they get him up between them and bear him out of that seething mob, carrying him a little to one side.

Blood is streaming from a wound in his head; she tries with her tender hands to stop the red river that trickles down over her fingers. Then the crowd surges against them: the police are driving the mob before

pistol-shot and club, and Laura hears the groans and cries of the poor, tortured, wounded victims of anarchy all about her. The crowd surges in between her and the place where Allan lay a few minutes before, carrying her back with the force of the resistless ocean, and when it moves away, he is gone: she can not see where, for patrol wagons are bearing away the dead and wounded.

Desperately she seeks to discover some trace of him, she is told that the wounded will be taken to the hospital, the killed to the morgue to await identification.

Sick with disappointment, Laura feels that she is getting too much exhausted to walk, so looks about for a cab or hack. As none is near, the horror of the scene appalls her, and she starts homeward.

Before going two blocks she is suddenly accosted by a detaining hand upon her shoulder, and a fiendish voice close to her ear. Her shrill scream provokes harsh laughter and vile jest, as frantically she rushes over the interminable pavement, whither she knows not.

As she turns a corner, she espies a solitary man standing by a lamp post. Believing him to be a policeman she asks the direction to her street, and is annoyed to hear him say:

"With pleasure, I will escort Mrs. Morton home," and recognizes the soft, persuasive tones of Jason Walker.

His voice strikes upon her heart a greater terror than the jostlings of the crowd at the scene of the massacre, or the vile hand upon her shoulder from which she had just fled.

Dumb with terror, she rushes away, passing another against whom she almost falls. Recovering herself, she again tries to flee, and almost immediately a pistol

shot cuts the air, a sharp cry is borne back to her, and turning she sees a commotion where but a minute before Waller had stood, and that a murder has been committed, she has no doubt. But what of that, the air is full of murder and bloodshed.

She hears a hasty step following, and terrified, she looks back only to discover that the man is evidently trying to overtake her. Running with all her might cannot take her beyond his reach, and he soon overtakes her, and politely offers his escort, assuring her of the expediency of its acceptance. She can not refuse, and together they thread the silent streets. When near her house he suddenly halts and says :

"Tell your father that Leon Illardo has this night atoned for the wrong done Jennie Bassett by his father, Paul Bretani. I am Jennie Bassett's son," then bowing low, he haughtily strode away. All this she can see, as they halt within a few yards of a street lamp.

It is after midnight when she stands within the silent house, and fearing that Robert will discover her, she softly enters the hall and proceeds at once to her room. Hastily laying her hat and cloak aside, she throws herself down on the bed. Though she fully intended to visit the library after taking a few minutes rest, yet so weary is she, that she is soon fast asleep. Laura did not wake until her father's kind voice roused her the following morning.

"I just came over to get ye to spend the day with mother and me ; it's poky stayin' here with all them rows down town."

She did as he directed. She could not speak for the great horror that filled her heart, at sight of those red stains on her hands. Then she took the cup and looking up into her father's face saw that he was white and disturbed, and inquired if he was sick.



"I'm just as well as can be expected. Now you drink your tea, 'fore it gits cold. I made it myself, seein' there's no hired girl here; she's lit out, I guess."

"But you are trembling, father, what is the matter? Have you heard bad news?"

She was choking back the question that rose to her lips when she first opened her eyes that morning. She wanted to shriek out the bold query. Hastily swallowing part of the tea, and rising with a fixed look upon her face, she said in a voice that would brook no denial:

"Father, tell me the trouble."

"You're mother'll tell ye: she kin tell ye better'n I," he said, evasively.

"She's not here. I'll not leave this house until you tell me," then started toward the door, saying: "Father, has Robert come home? He went out last evening, the first time in three or four days." She saw her father start and look confused, and she repeated her question.

"Yis, yis, child, he's back," then going to her side he placed one wrinkled, trembling hand upon her arm saying softly, as though he were soothing a child in trouble:

"Child, it's just what we 'spected. Don't git scart, but, my poor little girl, it's come, the trouble's come!"

"What is it, father? Where is Robert?"

"In the library: he's there; the men are with him. Come back, Laura, you can't go there!" but she was flying down the stairs, and passing through the library door, which had yielded to her determined efforts, and was soon standing in the presence of two officers, who seemed to be guarding the place.

The men sought to restrain her, when she glided to her husband's side, and discovered the letter on the table before him. They were subdued by her calm-

ness which had been mutely eloquent, until she had espied the pistol in his hand, when with a moan of horror she shrank from the spot.

Robert sat in his chair, with his head lying low upon his massive chest. No sign of any struggle marred the composure of death. One large, still hand, that looked unfamiliar because it was so white, lay on the table over the letter; the other grasped the loaded revolver.

Death had overtaken him, desperately clutching the revolver, as indicated by the unrelaxed fingers, which still clung to the unnecessary weapon.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the days of shadow that followed, they quietly laid the remains of Robert Morton in Graceland, beside little Dot. The big house was given up, the furniture put into the hands of an auctioneer, and within ten days from the night of the Haymarket massacre, they were ready to leave Chicago. Mr. Bassett and his old wife and Laura are sitting alone in their little sitting-room which they are prepared to leave so gladly, upon the following day. They were talking over the strange language of Leon Illardo: "Tell your father that Leon Illardo has this night atoned for the wrong done Jennie Bassett by Paul Bretani. I am Jennie Bassett's son."

These words had come back to Laura after the first shock of her husband's death, and she turned to her father for a solution of their mysterious meaning.

"Jennie Bassett's son!" he exclaimed, half dazed, "I was sure I knowed that man: was sure I'd seen him somewhere afore. Why; to be sure he's the livin' image of that scamp ez stole my sister Jennie away: an' he was a socialist, too, guess that's 'bout the same as anarchy. He uster speak to crowds of workin' men an'

git 'em all excited over their wrongs and poverty, just as they do now. Strange! but it all comes to my mind clear as can be! I knowed I'd seen him somewheres afore; but 'twas so long ago, I couldn't tell where or when. Why, I've thought an' thought'n studied over it til it most took my mind. Knowed I'd seen him. I'll find him and bring him home, if he's decent. I'll bring him to Toronto. I want to thank him for interferin' with that Waller. I kin most forgive his father when I think of it. Well, well! Jennie's son! Why he's the livin' image of Paul Bretani'n that's all I have agin him."

But they did not find Leon Illardo. Instead, a letter came to them that very evening. They read this letter over and over again. They were not able to find the writer, but this letter which they read with interest explains everything. It ran thus:

MR. BASSETT:

As I am about to leave the city, I will clear up the mystery of the stolen diamonds, both Mrs. Morton's and Mrs. Van Tassel's. Allan Morton did not steal them. They were not stolen. To steal is a crime. Anarchy knows no crime in self-defense, or its upbuilding. The jewels were taken to convert into money for the benefit of Anarchy. Lizette stole Mrs. Morton's dresses. Lizette expected to be my wife; I could not marry a thief! She was sly and deceitful, and treacherous to friend and foe.

Jason Waller was the cause of Robert Morton's death. From the first Waller had a scheme to make Morton a tool to help him make money, to win money from the labor classes and then get rid of him. He got him to sign papers and notes while in liquor, and to give his signature to bogus securities by which he, Waller, got a large amount of money. I found this out in time to head off a mob that was after Morton that night of the Haymarket.

I was searching for Waller when I met your daughter

coming from Haymarket square. He was pursuing her. He was bent upon making her his wife. I shot him. Then I walked home with your daughter. When I went back to where I left him, he was dying. A friend helped me carry him to a certain house, where he died in a few minutes after. I found a package of papers in his pocket, all that furnished security to him, and would wrong others. I destroyed that package. He told me that he had burned everything else but that package: that won't harm anyone now: I burned it.

Waller can't harm anyone either; I shot him! That was my revenge. He played me false, he is dead, and buried in a hole out on the prairie. Good for the dog! Allan Morton was hurt the night of the Haymarket massacre. I don't think he is dead. Nell Walton knows where he is. He is taken good care of by friends. If he recovers, he must answer for himself. I don't like him, for, though he was a friend to the poor, he was an enemy to anarchy. I am an Anarchist. I will devote my life to Anarchy.

Now, I will tell you that I am the lawful son of Jenny and Paul Bretani. I am your nephew, and Laura Morton's cousin. I discovered this through Lizette who used to listen, and so heard your family talking about it. Then I resolved to watch Waller, for I knew that he wanted to get rid of Robert Morton, and marry Laura. He told me it was the purpose of his life. In watching him I discovered many things; they made me hate the man. I shot him. He is dead. I shall return to Italy; I hate this land of rich tyranny. I leave to-night.

LEON ILLARDO BRETANI.

This letter furnished Eben Bassett a good deal of satisfaction.

"Well, it clears up the mystery 'bout them diamonds," said he to Laura, as they sat talking over the mysterious Italian. "Allan Morton must have a putty hard case agin some of us 'bout that robbery. I've got to find him and tell him all 'bout it 'fore I can rest, that's a fact."

"That is my work, father. You must not interfere in that. I must find him and tell him everything," said Laura.

"But I've got to apologize for calling him names'n—"  
"And what, father? What more did you say?"

"I 'bused him shamefully. I was desp'rate mad'n I guess I said everything I could think of."

"O, we have all need of his forgiveness. Lord grant it may not be too late to obtain it!" answered Laura, with quivering lips.

They remained several days longer to give the police time to make thorough search, yet they could hear nothing of him, and being anxious to get back to Toronto, they gave the matter into the hands of an officer whose faithfulness and efficiency had been proven upon the night of the Haymarket massacre, and departed for Toronto, glad to leave behind the scenes of their sorrows; the city with its volcano of anarchy; that dreadful Haymarket square; the fated victims of the pistol and bomb; the scenes of false glitter and show in which she had acted a part for a few brief hours, everything that could remind them of the treachery of Jason Waller and the downfall of Robert Morton.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### LIVING OR DEAD

It is summer again, in Toronto, and we will look in upon the Bassett family, in their old home, which by the merest good luck they have bought back.

Old Mrs. Bassett is serenely happy, and tells them so a dozen times a day.

Eben goes about with a look of humility upon his kind old face. He has lost much of that asperity which

characterized both manner and speech formerly, under trying times.

Nettie had married while visiting at Helen's and returned upon a short visit, bringing Una with her. She could not understand her father, in his new character, and to her mother confided her misgivings:

"I don't believe he's going to live long; he's so changed," she said. "He never snaps nor snarls at me now."

"Well, he was pesky hard to get along with, and no mistake," said her mother, pluming her cap-strings, "but now, I just take solid comfort, only Laura, poor girl! she is sometimes so sad! She's devoted to Una. We never talk much about Robert, she seems to avoid the subject; it's the best way."

"I don't think she's sad all the time," argued Nettie. "Sometimes I have seen her with a look of expectation, that's what I call it, in her eyes, but she always grows sad and silent again as though disappointed."

"Nettie, while there's life there's hope. I believe she expects Allan some time," said her mother, confidentially, "I never ask her about him: I'm waiting for her to tell me. I do suppose she tells her father, though."

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The summer had come and gone again. The autumn had followed in her wake and had been succeeded by winter. The ice king's breath had melted upon the window-panes in that old home in Toronto under the genial rays of April sun, and May had brought blossom and leaf in forest and garden.

Again the 4th of May dawned bright, one of those heavenly days which Wordsworth assures us cannot die. The morning papers told Laura that it was the

second anniversary of the Haymarket massacre in Chicago.

Her heart told her that it was the anniversary of that day in which she had succumbed to a stronger will power, and had tried to save Allan.

He had recognized her in that awful hour. Did he scorn her? If alive, would he ever come to Toronto? She had left word with Mrs. Van Tassel, humbling herself to do so, for, in spite of her apparent interest and kindness she hated the woman, still she had thought best to leave word with her, that she was going back to Toronto, hoping that if Allan lived he would get the message.

No sorrow remains in her heart for Robert, dead just two years, she is no hypocrite. She can remember with tender regret, the Robert who in his selfish way, once loved her and was kind to her. She had told herself over and over again, that she had not been a good wife to Robert in those old days, but she had tried to be, and failed utterly. Now, she could only devote herself to Robert's child. This she was telling herself as she stood in the garden, just at sunset, upon the 4th day of May, watching her father, as he came up the walk to give her a few early spring flowers.

"First of the kind I've found this spring, I thought maybe you'd like 'em. S'pose you know what day this is, Laura?" he remarked as she took the flowers and inhaling their perfume, thanked him between little satisfied sniffs that reminded him, as he watched her, of the Laura of long ago. He saw, too, an eager restlessness in her eyes, and it was that which prompted him to repeat his query.

"It's the 4th day of May: I'm not likely to forget it; I wish I could," she answered, still touching the

bright, sweet blossoms to her cheeks and lips, caressingly, and filling her nostrils with their delicate odor.

Just then from away down the road, she saw a figure coming toward them. That was nothing, her father assured her; men came that way often. But as each quick step brought the object of her close scrutiny more distinctly to her view, she said, pressing the flowers over her fast beating heart, while she pointed the other white hand in that direction.

"Father, see him; see that man!"

"I can't see plainly. What's to pay? My eyes are not so good as yourn. Who's a comin'?"

"Father, it is Allan!" and the blossoms fell at her feet, while her eyes dilated with eagerness.

"Allan! the Lord be praised! I've just been a hankerin' arter this moment to see Allan, an' make it up with him 'fore I die. I'll go to Hanner," and away he hobbled to tell his wife the news. She, good soul, was rushing to the door, with open arms, to welcome Allan, but her old husband called her back, saying:

"No yer don't, Hanner! Don't meddle with 'em. There's been too much o' that. I'm mos' bustin' to see him fust, but it's her company, leastwise if she wasn't here, he wouldn't be. I guess he's come for her this time, no mistake!"

Then "Hanner" in a state of excitement, absolutely dangerous, bustled about the kitchen to work off her feelings over a cook stove, while Eben found his time fully occupied in restraining Una from flying down the walk to see cousin Allan.

\* \* \* \* \*

Laura had stood waiting in the edge of the garden, as Allan came swiftly toward her. Happiness radiated from her eyes, and the fading rays of sunlight touching her golden hair with its brilliant shafts, made her



look once more like the Laura of old. Care had no abiding in her heart, and peace had touched with its metamorphosing pencil every feature of her face. A little more dignified, a little more gentle, infinitely more winning, she stood waiting in all her expectant loveliness for the fruition of months of watching and hoping. As Allan came toward her she saw that he was bronzed and ruddy. A bold manliness mingled with the former delicacy that Mr. Bassett had thought too fine-grained. He came toward her, carrying his hat in his hand.

A white scar in the upper right side of his forehead ran up into his hair. Laura thought of that night in Haymarket square, and shuddered visibly, seeing which, a thrill of fear shot through Allan's heart. Tossing his hat upon the ground, he extended his hands, exclaiming with the passionateness of despair:

"I am come for the last time, Laura; what is my answer?"

Then the proud woman flung her white arms about his neck, saying softly, earnestly:

"I love you, Allan, I will love you always, and be true to you living or dead!"

THE END.

